



Welcome to the first day of class!

It is such a joy to have our students back on campus, and thank you to everyone who contributed to making Welcome Week such a wonderful experience for our first-year students. I am truly honored to have joined this incredible community, and I am so grateful for the conversations I have had over the past seven weeks with so many of you to learn more about what you do and your hopes and dreams for Rhodes' future.

I look forward to meeting many more of you in the coming weeks and months as we work together to recruit talented students to Rhodes, enhance the student experience, support our outstanding faculty and staff, and raise the college's national profile. One way I hope to enhance our collaboration and transparency is by sharing a monthly newsletter with you throughout the academic year, and here is the first edition. I will also be sending a similar version each month to our parent and alumni communities.

Last week we welcomed an exceptional class. Of our incoming class of 486 students, 94 percent have a high school GPA of 3.5 or higher, with 54 percent ranking in the top 10 percent of their class. They come from 40 states, plus the District of Columbia and 13 other countries. Fifteen percent are first-generation students, and 31 percent will represent Rhodes on the athletic fields and courts. Thirty-six percent of all incoming students, including international students, are students of color, with 33 percent of all domestic students being students of color.

As we begin a new academic year, I want to share with you a few amazing stories about Rhodes that transpired over the summer.

Rankings

In recent weeks, we have been pleased to learn Rhodes has once again received high rankings from a number of distinguished publications and rankings organizations. These include:

- [Money's List of Best Colleges in America 2022](#) – Top 50
- Among Nation's Best in [Fiske Guide to Colleges 2023](#)
- [DegreeChoices](#) – Ranked No. 13 among top national liberal arts colleges for providing economic returns to students
- The [Princeton Review](#) for best value, internships, and campus beauty

Each of these accolades affirms what we already know – that Rhodes is among the best liberal arts colleges in the nation. Thank you for everything you contribute to our community to make this kind of recognition possible.

NSF Research Grant

Over the summer we learned Rhodes is being awarded a [National Science Foundation \(NSF\) Research grant](#) in the amount of \$639,165 to continue research performed by Professor of Chemistry Loretta Jackson-Hayes and Professor of Biology Terry Hill with students in their labs. The research explores cell growth and division of fungi and has potential to find more effective antifungal drugs. The award will be distributed over three years, with an anticipated start date in January 2023. This is the program's fourth NSF grant for work on cell growth and development of fungi, beginning with the initial support in 2003. Congratulations to Drs. Jackson-Hayes and Hill!

Athletics

We are proud of the 397 student-athletes who were recently named to the [Southern Athletic Association \(SAA\) Academic Honor Roll](#) for 2021-22, making it another banner year in the classroom for the Lynx. Last year Rhodes also topped the list, with 392 student-athletes. Of those recognized, 154 student-athletes participated in fall sports, 59 in winter sports, and 184 in spring sports. These student-athletes had to maintain a minimum GPA of 3.25 while also putting in countless hours of practice and competition. Thank you to all our professors and coaches who support these impressive student-athletes.

Global Presence

After two years of limited travel due to the pandemic, quite a few of our students traveled overseas this summer and shared the Rhodes story internationally. Our Rhodes Singers and Chamber Singers went on an [international tour](#) that took them to Germany and the Czech Republic. Additionally, we had students in [London](#) and [Ecuador](#) for summer study programs, and 51 members of our men's and women's soccer teams traveled to Costa Rica for a nine-day preseason trip in August, where they competed against international competition as they prepare for the upcoming fall season. These are just some of the wonderful ways Rhodes has been represented around the globe.

Community Partnerships

We were honored to have a group of [talented students](#) from Memphis-area high schools working with our Rhodes scientists this summer on some meaningful research projects. And the [Mound Up! Neighborhood Revitalization Plan](#) was unveiled this summer, culminating a two-year project that involved some of our urban studies students and Juice Orange Mound, a local nonprofit group. Thank you to Dr. Austin Harrison and all our students for their collaboration with community leaders on this effort.

New Leaders

Several new leaders joined the Rhodes team over the summer. I hope you'll find time to meet [Gil Villanueva](#), vice president for enrollment, and [Linda Bonnin](#), vice president for marketing and communications, new members of our senior leadership team who joined us July 5. Additionally, we welcomed [Harvey Smith](#) as our new chief information officer last week.

We had a wonderful Opening Convocation last week. I know many of you were there as we honored [Dr. Leslie Petty](#), associate professor of English and chair of the department, as the 2022 recipient of the Jameson M. Jones Award for Outstanding Faculty Service. The example she has set for all of us with her exemplary teaching, service, and research is an inspiration to me, and I know it has been for many of you as well. I also want to commend RSG president David Caddle and Dr. Rebecca Finlayson for their thoughtful and impactful addresses to our new students – they both truly represented the very best of the Rhodes community. Additionally, I'd like to extend my gratitude to members of our faculty who helped the Opening Convocation ceremony run smoothly: Dr. Terry Hill for carrying The Mace of Rhodes College and our faculty marshals: Drs. Leslie Petty, Carole Blankenship, Sujana Dan, and Eric Gottlieb. If you were not able to attend last week's ceremony, I encourage you to watch it [here](#).

As your new president, I am reminded every day of why I chose Rhodes, and why each of you has chosen to be here as well. What a wonderfully special and exciting place this is! I am so proud to call Rhodes – and Memphis – my home.

With gratitude,
Jennifer Collins

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