Welcome to the first day of class!

It is 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 the 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. 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 485 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. Thirty-six percent of our entering students are from the South, plus the District of Columbia and 13 other states. Thirty percent are first-generation students, and 33 percent will represent Rhodes in the academic and athletic fields. Thirty-seven percent of all incoming students, including international students, are students of color, with 30 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 transcended the summer 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 ranking organizations. These include:

- **Money’s Best Colleges** in America – 2022 – Top 30
- **Among America’s Best Colleges in 2022**
- **Time** – Ranked No. 13 among top liberal arts colleges for providing economic return to students
- **The New York Times** 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 of just over $300,000 to carry out collaborative research with Dr. Leslie Petty, associate professor of English and chair of the department, as the 2022 recipient of the Joan and Harvey Smith Innovation Award. This recognition affirms what the college already knows – that Rhodes is a place where students and faculty pursue groundbreaking research and are recognized for their efforts.

Athletics

We are proud of the 397 student-athletes who were recently named to the Southern Athletic Association’s All-Sports Honor Roll. These student-athletes have shown remarkable commitment and dedication to their sports. These student-athletes have shown remarkable commitment and dedication to their sports, and we are proud to honor them for their outstanding efforts.

Global Presence

After two years of limited travel due to the pandemic, quite a few of our students traveled overseas this summer. We welcomed 51 members of our men’s and women’s soccer teams 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 work with our Rhodes scientists this summer on some meaningful research projects. And the Up! Neighborhood Revitalization Plan, which was unveiled this summer, culminating a two-year project that involved some of our urban studies students and Juice Orange Mound, a local nonprofit community development organization.

New Leaders

Several new leaders joined the Rhodes team over the summer. I look forward to meeting all of you soon! The university also hosted a 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 James M. Jones Award for Outstanding Faculty Service. The award example she set for young faculty members and professional staff, and our campus as an inspiration to us, and I know it has been a source of pride for many of you as well. I also went on to commend FGSS President David Caddell and Dr. Leslie Petty for their thoughtful and eloquent 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 organizing the Opening Convocation ceremony not only for the students but also the people of Memphis.

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 wonderful special and exciting place this is! I am proud to call Rhodes – and Memphis – my home.

With gratitude,
Jennifer Collins