



# Rhodes College

DIVISION OF MARKETING & COMMUNICATIONS

## Rhodes College Highlights and Achievements

### Spring 2025

*(covering January 2024 through January 2025)*

Members of the Rhodes College community certainly have something to brag about looking back at last year. The college garnered attention for its curriculum distinctiveness, campus beauty, faculty excellence, student success, outstanding staff, and notable alumni.

July 1, 2024, marked 40 years of the college bearing the name Rhodes College, honoring Dr. Peyton Nalle Rhodes, who served as president from 1949 to 1965. The college had been known as Southwestern at Memphis since 1945, and the Board of Trustees approved the name change in 1984, partly to differentiate it from the many other colleges and universities named Southwestern and to expand the college's national reputation. The college continues to reach the goal of being ranked and recognized nationally.

### National Rankings and Acclaim

- **Architectural Digest** - [64 Most Beautiful College Campuses in America](#)
- **Billboard** - [2024 Top Music Business Schools](#)
- **Diverse: Issues in Higher Education** - [Most Promising Places to Work in Student Affairs](#)
- **Fiske Guide to Colleges** [2025 Edition](#)
- **Forbes** - [2024-2025 List of America's Top Colleges](#)
- **Money** - [Best Colleges in America](#)
- **Niche** - [2025 Best Colleges](#)
- **Southern Living** - [The Most Beautiful College Campuses in the South](#)
- **Study Abroad Aide** - ["50 Best Liberal Arts Colleges in the United States for International Students 2025"](#)
- **The Princeton Review** - [Top 50 Best Value Colleges, Top 20 Best Schools for Internships, The Best 390 Colleges](#)
- **University Magazine** - [College Campuses with the Highest Internship Opportunities](#)
- **U.S. News & World Report** - [2025 Best Colleges, No. 59 overall, No. 29 for Undergraduate Teaching, and No. 38 for Most Innovative Schools Among National Liberal Arts Colleges](#)
- **The Wall Street Journal** - [2025 Best Colleges in the U.S.](#)

## Curriculum Distinctiveness

Rhodes stands out for connections between its strong liberal arts and sciences curriculum and innovative programs connecting classroom knowledge and real-world applications. Rhodes also has received philanthropic investments and joined initiatives with other institutions to build on academic and creative excellence and to transform lives.

Examples include:

- \$75K Grant from The Teagle Foundation to Expand Signature [Search Curriculum](#)
- \$50K Grant from Wake Forest University and Lilly Endowment to Focus on [Character Education](#)
- Newly Established [Spence Wilson Center for Interdisciplinary Humanities](#)
- Rhodes Joining National [Consortium for the Liberal Arts in Prison](#)
- Rhodes President Joining [College Presidents for Civic Preparedness](#)
- [A Rhodes Science Team](#) Selected for the National Advocacy Program for Undergraduate Research
- Rhodes Aiming for New [2026 Carnegie Community Engagement Classification](#)

## Faculty Excellence

Rhodes faculty are interdisciplinary teacher-scholars who receive recognition for their research and publications, professional achievements, service, and their dedication to teaching and mentoring students above all else. The college's highest awards were presented to the following faculty in 2024:

- [Prof. Erin Dolgoy](#) - Clarence Day Award for Outstanding Teaching
- [Prof. Larryn Peterson](#) - Clarence Day Award for Outstanding Research and Creative Activity
- [Prof. Mary Miller](#) - Jameson M. Jones Award for Outstanding Faculty Service

At the 2024 Commencement Exercises, [Prof. William Skoog](#) was presented the Algernon Sydney Sullivan non-student award for giving "selflessly to the college and others."

***Faculty receiving national honors and grants include:***

- [Prof. John Bass](#) invited to perform at the 2024 Festival Internacional de Guitarra in Cartagena, Colombia, and releasing his debut album, *Nowhere In Between*
- [Prof. Carole Blankenship](#) honored for excellence and service by the National Association of Teachers of Singing
- [Prof. Sarah Ifft Decker](#) receiving the La corónica International Book Award at the International Congress on Medieval Studies and an honorable mention by the Society for Medieval Feminist Scholarship
- [Prof. Beck Henriksen](#) selected for the 2025 Sacred Writes: Public Scholarship on Religion program

- [Prof. Timothy Huebner](#) selected as the 2024 John T. Hubbell Prize for best article published in *Civil War History*
- [Prof. Kate LeCroy](#) receiving more than \$100,000 in a grant from the United States Department of Agriculture to study disease dynamics and health outcomes of mason bee communities
- [Prof. Qian Shen](#) awarded a U.S. National Science Foundation grant in the amount of \$502,946 to conduct research that could lead to development of new antifungal drugs
- [Prof. Shana Stoddard](#) invited as a member of prestigious interdisciplinary scientific honor society Sigma Xi and receiving the 2024 Lloyd N. Ferguson Young Scientist Award for Excellence in Research
- [Prof. Be Stone](#) receiving the Stephen E. Bronner Dissertation Award, which is presented annually by the Critical Political Science Caucus of the American Political Science Association
- [Prof. Earl Wright II](#) featured in *Fifty Key Scholars in Black Social Thought*
- [Prof. Shatavia Wynn](#) selected for the 2024 Hybrid Teaching and Learning Workshop for Early Career Religion Faculty Teaching Undergraduates
- [Prof. Shaolu Yu](#) selected as a faculty associate to work on the ASIANetwork project titled Documenting Asian American and Pacific Islander Voices and Stories

### ***New Books by Faculty***

- [Prof. Michael LaRosa](#) (co-written with Bryce Ashby '00) published *Immigration, Policy and the People of Latin America: Seven Sending Nations*.
- [Prof. Charles McKinney](#) co-edited with Prof. Françoise N. Hamlin of Brown University *From Rights to Lives: The Evolution of the Black Freedom Struggle*.
- [Prof. Scott Newstok](#) collaborated with John Guillory on *On Close Reading* and produced the Close Reading Archive, a free public humanities database that compiles over 600,000 words of commentary.
- [Prof. Shadrack Nasong'o](#) published *Kenya and the Politics of a Postcolony*.

## **Student Success**

Rhodes is noteworthy for the vast number of opportunities it offers students to do research, internships, service projects, and study abroad, as well as providing resources for student success. Here are some notable student achievements.

### ***Competitive National Awards***

- Six members of the Class of 2024—Lucia Berkey, Riley Damiano, Piper Huddleston, Gwen Williams, Palmer Mihalevich, and Caroline Calogero —received [Fulbright U.S. Student Awards](#) for the 2024-2025 academic year.
- Julia Blackmon '24 received the [Thomas J. Watson Fellowship](#), which provides a one-year \$40,000 grant for purposeful, independent exploration outside the United States.
- Johnathan Burch '27 was selected for the [Douglass-O'Connell Global Internship in Ireland](#).
- Molly Hirner '25 received the [Fulbright Canada-Mitacs Globalink Research Internship](#) to conduct advanced health economics research at the University of Waterloo in Ontario during summer 2024.

- Cali VanCleve '26 was selected as a [Key into Public Service Scholar](#) by The Phi Beta Kappa Society, and she received the [Boren Scholarship](#) to study Russian in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan.

### **Top Prizes at Conferences**

- Kathryn Edwards '24 won [first place in the research poster competition](#) at the spring meeting of the National Organization for the Professional Advancement of Black Chemists and Chemical Engineers.
- Catherine Prabish '27 won [first place for her physics presentation](#) at the Arkansas IDeA Network of Biomedical Research Excellence Conference. Jack Harper '25 received honorable mention for his poster presentation.
- Parth Sinojia '25 [took the top prize in the undergraduate category](#) at the Memphis Area Collegiate Geospatial Showcase, and Jake Ackerman '24 was runner-up.
- Rhodes students were awarded [third place for STEM research](#) presented at Louisiana State University.

### **Rhodes Sponsored Competitions**

- Drishti Bhatia '26 won the [Rhodes College Venture Challenge](#), gaining the \$15,000 Grand Prize to help launch PlatePlan, which she co-founded with Winston Gasch '26.
- Brooke Taylor '24 received [The Steve and Riea Lainoff Crop Trust Fellowship in Honor of Cary Fowler '71](#) to work for Global Crop Diversity Trust in Bonn, Germany.
- Several students were awarded [internships abroad](#) through the Mertie Buckman International Internship Program, Morelle Legge International Internship Program, Wasfy Iskander International Internship Program, and William Theodore Eckles International Internship Program.

### **Other Student Accomplishments**

- Rhodes Mock Trial program finished in the [top ten in the national championship](#).
- Rhodes Theatre Guild [won multiple Ostrander Awards](#), honoring the best in local theater in the 2023-2024 season.
- Portraits of six members of the Class of 2024—Asya Bray, Sam Frank, Oliver Hurst, Claire Kiernan, Hailey Smith, and Justin Thompson—were added to [Rhodes College's Hall of Fame](#) on the second floor of Southwestern Hall. Selection to the Hall of Fame, which was established in 1931, is based on individual merit, leadership in student activities, service to others, and overall contributions to the campus community.
- Students led efforts to establish the [National Pan-Hellenic Council Plaza](#), which pays tribute to historically Black sororities and fraternities.
- Rhodes Student Government President Claire Kiernan '24 led efforts to establish the [new walking trail](#) on campus.
- At the 2024 commencement, Mia-Miracle Craig and Oliver Hurst were presented the [2024 Algernon Sydney Sullivan Awards](#) for “giving selflessly to the college and others.” Blair Kinsey received the Peyton Nalle Rhodes Phi Beta Kappa Prize, the college's highest academic honor, which is awarded to the graduating senior who has best demonstrated an exceptional combination of scholarship, creativity, and achievement and a commitment to the liberal arts and sciences.

- Field Hockey, Women's Swimming, Men's Swimming, and Women's Lacrosse teams won SAA Conference titles.
- [Track and Field athletes who ranked nationally](#) include TJ Clayton '24 (100 and 200 meters), Justin Davis '27 (long jump and triple jump), and Olivia Freeman '26 (100 meters).
- More than 200 Rhodes athletes were named to the [SAA Spring Honor Roll](#).
- [Dania Verbena '27](#) received the Premio "Joven Inspiración Guatemalteca" (Young Guatemalan Inspiration Award) from the Congress of the Republic of Guatemala and Jóvenes Artistas por la Justicia Social.
- [Rhodes Mock Trial Team A](#) won the inaugural Texas Showdown, an invitational tournament hosted by the University of Texas School of Law Nov. 16-17. Top teams from across the nation competed.
- [Rhodes Mock Trial Team Black](#) won the invitational tournament hosted by Missouri State University Nov. 1-3.
- Hunter Rheinfrank '26 was recognized as Best Lobbying CEO and Sofia Lewis '28 as Best Media Reporter '28 at the [Tennessee Intercollegiate State Legislature's 55th General Assembly](#) held in Nashville in November 2024.
- The [women's and men's swimming teams](#) ranked 21<sup>st</sup> nationally in Division III.

### **About the Student Population**

The college offers more than 70 majors and minors for students to pursue, and new in the fall 2024 semester was a major in data analytics and a minor in linguistics. Here are other notable stats about the student population.

- Approximately 1,800 students were enrolled for the fall 2024 semester.
- Multicultural and international students make up 38 percent of the student body.
- More than 80 percent of students participate in community service.
- About 70 percent complete at least one internship.
- About 66 percent study abroad or at off-campus sites in the U.S.
- About 40 percent belong to social fraternities/sororities.
- Students are involved in more than 130 student clubs, organizations, and intramural and club sports
- Nearly 30 percent of students play a varsity sport.

### **Outstanding Staff**

Rhodes staff highly engage with students, providing support. Not only are Rhodes staff celebrated by the college, but they are also recognized by outside organizations for their outstanding work. Here are some examples.

- Four Rhodes employees—Sara Harris, Kate Collier, Melissa Campbell, and Elisha Vego—were recognized with the college's [2024 Outstanding Staff Awards](#).
- [Darlene Brooks](#) of the Barret Library received the 2024 Excellence in Advising Award presented by the Mortar Board National College Senior Honor Society.

- [Brian Foshee](#), who retired in spring 2024 as director of physical plant, was presented the college's Distinguished Service Medal at commencement.
- [L. Angela Webb](#) of campus safety was sworn in as president of the International Association of Campus Law Enforcement Administrators.
- [Steve Webb](#) was recognized as Southern Athletic Association Coach of the Year for both the men's and women's swimming and diving teams.

## Notable Alumni

Rhodes alumni consistently report career advancement and lifelong benefits as a result of their education. According to the Post-Graduation Survey for the Class of 2023 released this year by Career Services, 65.18 percent of the class were employed, and 32.47 percent were continuing their education.

Alumni also earn distinctions in their respective professions and continue to engage with their alma mater. Here are some examples:

[Dr. Cary Fowler '71](#) was named a 2024 World Food Prize Laureate.

Walmart Executive [Julie Gehrki '02](#) delivered the address at Baccalaureate Convocation. She also was named president of the Walmart Foundation.

[Kelsey Rena Glasper '21](#), [Eraine Leland '21](#), and [Scotty Wicker '22](#) were selected for the National Science Foundation Graduate Research Fellowship Program, following a national competition.

[Bryce Hayes '20](#) was named one of College Sports Communicators' 30 Under 30.

[Eric Mathews '02](#) was recognized with *Memphis Magazine's* Innovation Award.

The American College of Physicians named their workforce development initiative—the ACP Ryan Mire, MD Summer Internship Program—in honor of [Dr. Ryan Mire '93](#).

[Rene Orth '07](#) composed the music for the opera *10 Days in a Madhouse* commissioned by Opera Philadelphia and Tapestry Opera and is the winner of the 2024 Award for Best New Opera.

Poet Laureate of New York [Patricia Spears Jones '73](#) was awarded a \$50,000 fellowship by the Academy of American Poets to undertake a meaningful and innovative project that will enrich the lives of community members.

[Dorothy Sanders Wells '82](#) made history becoming the first woman and first Black person elected as Bishop of the Episcopal Diocese of Mississippi.