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A MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT



Rhodes College



Dear Rhodes Community,

Welcome back to campus! I especially want to welcome new students and their families who are joining our wonderful community for the first time. Rhodes is truly a place like no other, and we are all looking forward to a terrific year ahead.

In total, this year's **student body** comes from 44 states (plus Washington, D.C.) and 46 countries. Approximately 29 percent are student-athletes, and about 40 percent will participate in fraternity and sorority life. Our first-year class of 400 students consists of student body presidents and class officers; sports team captains; yearbook, newspaper, and literary magazine editors; student body chaplains, class valedictorians, and National Merit scholars. They have founded clubs and organizations focused on global poverty, women's empowerment, and education reform. Additionally, our first-year students include published medical researchers, certified nursing assistants, a theatre director, a competitive Irish dancer, and an artistic swimmer. We also have accomplished musicians and artists, including a Royal Conservatory of Music pianist, two principal orchestra violinists, a ballerina, and multiple artists and actors. I can't wait to see what they do next! What a wonderful addition they are to our campus.

During last week's Opening Convocation, we awarded the **Jameson M. Jones Award for Outstanding Faculty Service to Professor Loretta Jackson-Hayes** for her sustained commitment to leading, mentoring, and opening doors for others throughout her career. Her service has expanded opportunities for students, supported her colleagues across Rhodes, and extended the reach and reputation of the college into the national scientific community. A member of the Rhodes community since 2003, Professor Jackson-Hayes has held a number of leadership positions, including Chair of the Department of Chemistry. Her impact has been felt by our students, her faculty colleagues, and others across the nation. From 2022 to 2024, she served as a program director in the Division of Molecular and Cellular Biosciences at the National Science Foundation in Washington, D.C. Her service is continually grounded in the conviction that colleges become stronger when they invest in their people. Congratulations, Professor Jackson-Hayes! We are honored to work alongside you. I invite you to read more about her exciting work [here](#).

We recently learned the college has been awarded a three-year Institutional Impact Grant of \$600,000 by the **Educating Character Initiative**, a project of The Program for Leadership and Character at Wake Forest University. The Educating Character Initiative is funded by Lilly Endowment Inc. The grant will be used as we continue to integrate character education into our curriculum and student experience, and to support the re-alignment of the college's motto: Truth, Loyalty, Service. You can read more about this grant and the college's project [here](#). A special thank you goes to our project's

faculty leaders Lori Garner (chair), Benjamin Curtis, Mary Miller, and Hadi Khoshnevis, and staff members Matthew Bailey, Jim Duncan, Jazmine Rodriguez, Amy Moen, Richie Trenthem, and Jessica Cowan.

Thanks to the generosity of our entire community, we also had a fantastic fundraising year. We had total gifts and pledges of \$22,854,347. This is up more than \$5.2 million and 23 percent over last year. The Annual Fund raised \$2,547,963, which is our highest amount since 2019 and our second highest amount in over 10 years. We also had the highest total of gifts to the endowment since FY2007, with \$8,762,747 in endowment gifts. Please know every dollar raised has such a profound impact on our students, faculty, and staff, and I am very grateful to our hardworking Development and Alumni Relations team and all our volunteers for their exceptional work this year.

Rhodes recently landed a spot in the top 10 colleges recognized by LinkedIn for our **powerful alumni connections**. Thank you to all of our alumni who not only enhance the academic experience of our students by providing counsel, internships, and connections, but also provide job placements and other opportunities. Our students are blessed to have such a strong alumni network. And, just yesterday, it was announced that we are in **The Princeton Review's The Best 392 Colleges: 2027 Edition**. We ranked #8 for Most Beautiful Campus, #12 for Lots of Race/Class Interaction, #16 for Most Politically Active Students, and #20 for Lots of Greek Life.

In other rankings and awards news, **Forbes** has named Rhodes to its "America's Top Colleges" list once again as one of the nation's top 500 colleges, and we also received a financial grade of A from the Forbes College Financial Grades assessment, which reports on the financial health of more than 900 private colleges and universities in the U.S. Rhodes has also been selected for the **FirstGen Forward Network Class of 2026**, which highlights our commitment to enhancing the college experience and promoting success for our first-generation students. Seventeen percent of this year's first-year class are first-generation students. The **Rhodes chapter of Mortar Board**, a national honor society for seniors, received the prestigious 2026 Golden Torch Award. This is given annually to the organization's most exceptional chapters. And, lastly, but certainly not least, **Money magazine** named Rhodes to its Best Colleges in America list once again. All of these announcements can be found on the [Rhodes homepage](#) under What's New at Rhodes.

We have some exciting **physical plant improvements** taking place on campus, including renovations at Kennedy Hall, Frazier-Jelke, and the Lynx Lair. A new artificial turf was installed at Crain Field over the summer. I will be excited to share more details in the coming weeks about a reimagining of our outdoor spaces which is taking place this fall thanks to one of our generous donors.

I want to congratulate our very talented **Rhodes Theatre Guild** students for receiving 11 nominations for Memphis Ostrander Awards, which recognize the best in local theater. Additionally, our cast of Urinetown has been invited to perform at the Ostrander Awards ceremony on August 30, which is a tremendous honor.

Please **mark your calendars** early and plan to join us for Family Weekend September 25-26 and Homecoming/Reunion Weekend November 12-14.

Once again, I am inviting students to meet with me during my student office hours, either individually or in small groups of up to five people. It's a great time for me to meet students and to learn about their ideas and suggestions. I would also be delighted to talk to students about law school and any dreams they have for their future after Rhodes. You may schedule a time [here](#).

I am so grateful that each of you is part of our wonderful community. Roll Lynx!

Jennifer Collins
President



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