



Rhodes College

DIVISION OF MARKETING & COMMUNICATIONS

Rhodes College Highlights & Achievements

Spring 2024

Rhodes College continues to garner extensive local and national media attention for our faculty's expertise and thought leadership, active student engagement, annual rankings, campus events, promotions, and noteworthy awards and achievements. During the fall 2023 semester, the campus witnessed the college celebrate 175 years of learning, inaugurate a new president, and welcome a host of new students, faculty, and staff, all of whom contribute to making Rhodes a place like no other.

College Rankings, Achievements, and Awards

In addition to recognition in publications such as *Forbes*, *Money*, The Princeton Review college guides, *Fiske Guide to Colleges*, and other reputable sources during the early portion of the fall 2023 semester, Rhodes continued to garner recognition for the achievements of our exceptional community, the value of our outstanding liberal arts education, and the transformative experience offered to students.

- The research and experiential learning opportunities students receive here stand out among our peer institutions. Our [Health Professions Advising](#) Program was featured in *The Daily Memphian* for the options it offers students.
- For the third consecutive year, the [Mike Curb Institute for Music](#) was named to *Billboard* magazine's Top Music Business Schools list.
- The [First-Generation Planning Committee](#) offered new programming designed to help first-generation students succeed.
- *Southern Living* featured Rhodes among the [Most Beautiful College Campuses in the South](#).

Rhodes College's 175th Anniversary and Presidential Inauguration

[Rhodes College celebrated its 175th anniversary in 2023](#), inviting the entire community to a suite of readings, lectures, parties, and other events developed by the 175th Planning Committee, the Office of Development, and other partners across campus. These events engaged the community in reflection and celebration leading up to the culminating event of the celebration: the inauguration of President Jennifer M. Collins.

Both our 175th anniversary and the inauguration received broad media coverage.

- [WMC/NBC](#) featured our 175th anniversary in two of its "5 Star Stories" segments: "[175 Years of Learning at Rhodes College](#)" and "[Memphis Milestones](#)."
- The inauguration was a momentous event featuring members of the Rhodes, Memphis, and extended Lynx communities coming together to celebrate our 21st president. The

occasion received coverage in [The Commercial Appeal](#), [The Daily Memphian](#), and [Memphis Parent](#), among other publications.

Additionally, President Collins immersed herself in the Memphis community and made vital connections with the city's thought leaders and institutions. In 2023:

- President Collins was named co-chair of the Public Safety Working Group, which is part of newly elected Memphis [Mayor Paul Young's Transition Team](#).
- President Collins curated the [holiday edition of the ARTSWeek guide](#) for ARTSMemphis, a local arts and culture grantmaking institution.

Faculty Expertise, Thought Leadership, and Achievement

In 2023, Rhodes faculty remained at the forefront, demonstrating expertise and conducting groundbreaking research on various significant subjects.

- [Timothy Huebner](#) was named provost and vice president for academic affairs.
- [Rhodes College Communities in Conversation](#) brought Robert Samuels and Toluse Olorunnipa, authors of the 2023 Pulitzer Prize-winning *His Name Is George Floyd*, to Memphis as part of Memphis Reads, a program offered in collaboration with Christian Brothers University and created to give students a shared academic experience and to connect them with the campus community.

Other Faculty Achievements

- [Tom Bremer](#), assistant professor of religious studies, published "In the worst of America's Jim Crow era, Black intellectual W.E.B. Du Bois found inspiration and hope in national parks" in *The Conversation*.
- [Beck Henriksen](#), visiting assistant professor of religious studies, was selected to participate in the 2024 American Examples program.
- [Raina Belleau](#), assistant professor of art, created an auditory art installation along the Germantown Greenway titled *Tree Tones* for the Shelby Canopy: Our Shared Connection project.
- [Sarah Rollens](#), associate professor of religious studies, recently published an inaugural editorial in the *Journal for the Study of the Historical Jesus*, along with Dr. Robert Myles of Wollaston Theological College.
- [Shana Stoddard](#), associate professor of chemistry, was presented the Tyrone Mitchell Mentor-on-the-Map Award at the 50th annual meeting of the National Organization for the Professional Advancement of Black Chemists and Chemical Engineers. Stoddard also discussed how her mentoring practices will help shape academic mentoring in *ASBMB Today*.
- [Brooke Schedneck](#), associate professor of religious studies, published "What is Walking Meditation" in *The Conversation*.
- [Stephen Haynes](#), professor of religious studies, was among the five winners of the 11th annual Innovation Awards presented by *Memphis Magazine*. The awards recognize the best and brightest who are keeping Memphis on the cutting edge.

Student Achievement

Rhodes students continue to showcase exceptional achievements and show up as impactful professionals and scholars. Their endeavors encompass internships, service, applied research, creative activity, and activism, displaying their significant contributions to our community and society.

Rhodes students compete for and receive prestigious academic awards.

- [Mariam Khayata '22](#) was named a 2024 Rhodes Scholar, one of the world's most prestigious academic awards. Khayata is the eighth Rhodes Scholar from Rhodes College. She was profiled in [The Daily Memphian](#) for her achievements.
- Rhodes students are competing for the [Fulbright U. S. Student Awards](#), the [Thomas J. Watson Fellowship](#), the [Truman Scholarship](#), and many more academic fellowship, scholarship, and award opportunities.

Rhodes students are standout changemakers and community advocates.

- [Brandon Washington '26](#) received the SPARK Award for his youth advocacy work. Washington also ran for Memphis City Council in 2023 and published an Op-Ed in [The Commercial Appeal](#) about his experience and future plans.

Rhodes' Mock Trial team continues to experience monumental success.

- [Rhodes A and B Mock Trial Teams](#) were crowned champions in their respective tournaments this past November. Rhodes A won the Bear Brawl Classic Mock Trial Invitational hosted by Missouri State University and Rhodes B team won first place at Northwestern University's "Mock at the Rock" Invitational. Rhodes' "Red" team took second place at the Missouri State University Invitational.

The research and experiential learning opportunities for students at Rhodes lead to life-changing experiences and academic outcomes.

- [Khulan Erdenechimeg '24](#) and [Harry Dircks '24](#) are empowered to use music to propel their discovery through the Mike Curb Institute for Music. Students from various majors in the [BIOL 105: Everyday Evolution: Genes, Diversity, and Society](#) course participated in hands-on scientific research involving migratory birds.

More Student Achievement Stories

- The [Rhodes Historical Review](#) won third place in Phi Alpha Theta's 2023 Gerald D. Nash undergraduate print journal competition. Students Patsy Wardlaw '23 and Emma Stauber '23 served as editors-in-chief of the award-winning volume. Dr. Samson Ndanyi served as faculty advisor.
- [Several Rhodes students](#) received awards for their research at the Tennessee Academy of Science (TAS) annual meeting hosted on campus in November.
- [Kelsey Steinmetz '25](#), a junior double major in biochemistry and molecular biology (BMB) and Spanish, received the first-place award for her oral presentation at the Arkansas IDEa Network of Biomedical Research Excellence (Arkansas INBRE) conference.
- Senior [Sophia Comrie](#) was named the HR 2023 Student of the Year by SHRM-Memphis. The award recognizes an outstanding college student who has demonstrated leadership, citizenship, and academic, career and technical achievement.

- Neuroscience major and lab intern [Shelby Mrynca '24](#) co-authored a St. Jude Research paper on high-risk pediatric leukemia.
- First-year student [Gaby Medrano](#) was profiled in Choose 901's "Memphis Scholars" series, highlighting her academic journey as a first-generation college student.
- Computer science major [Kyla Burse '24](#) was a featured speaker for the TEDx Peabody Park Youth Event.
- The Rhodes Theatre Guild presented *Fools* by Neil Simon and *The Magic Tower* by Tennessee Williams as part of their 2023 performances.

Staff Achievement

Rhodes staff members are widely recognized as high-performing professionals. Their contributions extend beyond campus functions — they help shape campus culture and enhance the student experience.

- **Gil Villanueva**, vice president for enrollment and dean of admission and financial aid, was appointed to serve on The College Board's SAT Suite Committee. The committee guides the College Board across several topics related to college admissions. It is charged with developing ways the SAT Suite of Assessments can provide access and connect students to college opportunities.
- **Anne Strickland**, director of student engagement, received the Award for Fraternal Excellence from Kappa Alpha Order at its annual convention held in Orlando, FL.

Alumni Achievement

Rhodes alums continue to serve as acclaimed members of the Rhodes community, excelling within diverse industries and globally recognized organizations in Memphis and beyond.

- During Alumni Convocation at Homecoming/Reunion Weekend, the [Rhodes College Alumni Association Executive Board bestowed William J. Michaelcheck '69](#) the *2023 Distinguished Alumni Award*. **Dr. Wilfreda Lindsey '11** was presented with the *Black Student Association 2023 Distinguished Alumni Award*.
- Ambassador [MaryKay Loss Carlson '81](#) was featured in *PeopleAsia* magazine as one of their 2023 "Women of Style and Substance."

More Alumni Achievement stories

- Alum [Dan Swanstrom '05](#) was named the 28th Head Coach of Cornell Football.
- Art history alum [Lauren Kennedy '08](#) opened Sheet Cake, a contemporary art gallery located at 405 Monroe Avenue in Memphis' Edge District. The gallery supports artists based in and connected to the regional South and intentionally celebrates women, queer artists, and artists of color. Rhodes art faculty were featured artists in the inaugural exhibition.
- [Jonathan Smoke '91](#) was named SVP for Cox Automotive with an expanded role in sister company Cox Enterprises.
- [Whitney Walker '02](#) was named director of marketing and communications at West Kentucky Community and Technical College.

- [Stanton Brown](#) '14 was named to *Color* magazine's Power 40 Under 40 list, highlighting exceptional young professionals of color.
- [Aaron Fitzgerald](#) '10 was named to the Grist 50 list, which features leaders and innovators from across the country working on solutions to the planet's most pressing challenges.
- [Dr. A. John Wahab](#) '87 received the Rural Physician Lifetime of Service Award from the Illinois Rural Health Association.
- [Marion Keisker](#) '42's story was featured in "The Woman Who Discovered Elvis: Marion Keisker" in *StyleBlueprint* Magazine.

Enrollment and Student Body

Enrollment and Marketing & Communications continue to promote Rhodes to talented and diverse students from across the nation and abroad. Early Decision I and Early Action Decision applicants were up 20 percent and 13 percent, respectively. Application volume from domestic students of color is consistent with last year, while international student applicants are trending ahead. Our application deadline for Fall 2024 has been extended to January 31 to accommodate all families navigating the new FAFSA.

Athletics

Rhodes student-athletes are truly empowering themselves to make the most out of their college journey. Dedicated collaboration between professors and coaches paves the way for Lynx to excel academically and athletically.

- [Rhodes Field Hockey](#) won the SAA Post-Season Tournament.
- [Men's](#) and [Women's Soccer Teams](#) were runners-up in their respective tournaments.
- [Rhodes Football](#) retained the Orgill Cup with a 30-10 victory over Sewanee.
- The [Women's Swimming and Diving Team](#) is ranked 20th in the DIII National Rankings.
- [Rhodes Women's Basketball](#) is off to an undefeated start in SAA competition play.

Fundraising, Stewardship, and Community Engagement

Several significant gifts have been secured that enable advancements across all areas of the college, from academics to athletics. Additionally, this fall the Office of Development hosted several successful events on campus.

- More than 500 families registered to attend **Family Weekend** on September 8-10, including bus tours of Memphis, the Kappa Delta Annual All-Sing competition, and athletic events.
- **Homecoming/Reunion Weekend** followed on September 29 and 30 with a reimagined Reunion Row to celebrate alumni from classes ending in three and eight.
- More than 250 guests—alumni, students, parents, community leaders, and community partners—attended the **Inauguration of President Jennifer M. Collins** on October 15.

- **CajunFest** volunteers cooked for and served more than 400 alumni, students, faculty, staff, and prospective student-athletes at an outdoor feast on October 28.
- To commemorate the 175th anniversary of Rhodes College, the Office of Alumni Relations collaborated with the Department of English to present **the 175th College Anniversary Poetry Reading and Discussion: A History of Encouraging Creative Passion**. The program was moderated by professor of English Marshall Boswell and included readings by acclaimed poets and alums **Patricia Spears Jones '73, Caki Wilkinson '03, and Bailey Hutchinson '13**.
- The 175th anniversary of the college was also commemorated with an alumni service project. Students, alumni, faculty, coaches, and staff operated hydration stations at miles 17 and 20 during the St. Jude Marathon on Saturday, Dec. 2, providing water and Gatorade to thousands of runners during the race.
- The college launched the **Rhodes Parent Association**, which serves as a resource to prospective families, provides career networking opportunities to students, and hosts events on and off campus for students and families. Members support Rhodes by giving any size contribution to the Annual Fund each year.
- **Rhodes Athletics Day of Giving** set record numbers for donor participation and dollars raised this fall. During the 24-hour campaign, 1,310 gifts were made by alums, parents, grandparents, students, faculty/staff, and friends of Lynx Athletics, totaling \$597,201. More than \$300,000 will assist with operational athletic funding such as travel, uniforms, meals, and other expenditures required to run a championship-level athletics program. Roll Lynx!
- Rhodes received a \$250,000 gift from the estate of **Donna K. Fisher '71**. This undesignated gift will be directed to the area of greatest need.
- Rhodes was named as a beneficiary of the estate of **Margaret Polk '43**. Her gift, directed to the area of greatest need, consists of cash and interests in certain real property. The college is seeking a valuation of the real property and has received more than \$550,000 in cash from the estate and income generated by the real property.
- During the first half of the fiscal year (July 1-December 31), the college received confirmation of more than \$2 million in planned gifts. When matured, these gifts will provide funding for vital future initiatives.