



Rhodes College

DIVISION OF MARKETING & COMMUNICATIONS

Rhodes College Highlights and Achievements

Fall 2024

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.

Members of the Rhodes community celebrated [Rhodes Giving Day on April 10](#)—raising \$270,033 from 1,340 gifts—a new record for Rhodes for the number of gifts made in one day.

National Rankings and Acclaim

Since the spring semester 2024, recognition for Rhodes includes:

- **Architectural Digest** - [64 Most Beautiful College Campuses in America](#)
- **Diverse: Issues in Higher Education** - [Most Promising Places to Work in Student Affairs](#)
- **Forbes** - [2024-2025 List of America's Top Colleges](#)
- **Money** - [Best Colleges in America](#)
- **Niche** - [2025 Best Colleges](#)
- **The Princeton Review** - [Top 50 Best Value Colleges, Top 20 Best Schools for Internships, The Best 390 Colleges](#)
- **Southern Living** - [The Most Beautiful College Campuses in the South](#)
- **Fiske Guide to Colleges** [2025 Edition](#)
- **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](#)

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 this year include:

- [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. 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. Shaolu Yu](#) selected as a faculty associate to work on the ASIANetwork project titled Documenting Asian American and Pacific Islander Voices and Stories
- [Prof. Earl Wright II](#) featured in *Fifty Key Scholars in Black Social Thought*

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

- Five members of the Class of 2024—Lucia Berkey, Riley Damiano, Piper Huddleston, Gwen Williams, and Palmer Mihalevich—received [Fulbright U.S. Student Awards](#) for the 2024-2025 academic year.
- 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.
- 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.

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.
- 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 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](#).

About the Student Population

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

- Approximately 1,800 students are 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.

[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.

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.