


# The Well-Connected

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Prof. Judith Haas, Jamie Augustine '89, La'Sandria Ward '09 and Chris Williams '11





**R**hodes people are very well-connected. In fact, alumni, students, parents, trustees, faculty, staff, friends over time become linked for life in myriad ways.

It all starts in high school, when students who attend college fairs can meet Rhodes Admissions Office staff and perhaps representatives from RAVE (Rhodes Alumni Volunteer Effort). In some cities, Rhodes Chapters—groups of alumni and parents—invite accepted students for get-togethers to learn more about Rhodes.

The next step can involve a campus visit, when prospectives stay with students, meet faculty, attend classes and interview with Admissions.

When students enroll, alums and parents in some of their hometowns throw a send-off party.

Choosing Rhodes is one thing, getting here is another. Around 85 percent of Rhodes students receive some form of financial aid—federal, state, institutional or outside assistance or a combination of any of these. Add to that a history of Rhodes people looking after Rhodes people—more than 50 percent of students attend Rhodes with the help of scholarships or fellowships provided by people who love the college. Students who receive named scholarships sometimes have an opportunity to meet the donors. But there are thousands of others they won't meet—all the alumni and friends whose regular Annual Fund gifts go straight to financial aid and faculty salaries. Students also take courses from some faculty who hold endowed chairs named for people who love Rhodes, and they attend classes, and live, in buildings often named for the donors who provided them.

Relationships deepen throughout their Rhodes years. Thanks to faculty, staff, alumni, trustees, parents and friends, students' intellectual and personal growth flourish inside the classroom and beyond:

- Faculty mentors, whom their students will remember forever, guide them through rigorous courses, projects and research. They suggest and help them secure off-campus internships and counsel them on postgraduate work and careers.

- The Center for Outreach in the Development of the Arts (CODA) connects students with arts organizations in Memphis and around the country, thanks in large part to a grant from friends and the help of alumni and parents.

- The Buckman Center for International Education

connects students with study and internships abroad. Several of the internships are provided by Rhodes trustees, alumni, parents and friends.

- Service scholarships and other programs administered by Rhodes CARES (Center for Academic Research and Education through Service) and the Chaplain's Office offer opportunities for service learning and community service. Several programs are provided by alumni and friends.

- Career Services and Alumni Relations put them on the trail of stateside and international internships and jobs, again, often through trustees, alumni, parents and friends.

- A highlight for Economics and Business Administration students is the annual New York City Career Tour in January, where they meet and network with Rhodes trustees, alumni, parents and friends, learning what it takes to work in the financial markets there.

- Rhodes chapters host career networking events for undergraduates in several cities throughout the year.

- At Homecoming, the Alumni Office sponsors panels of young alumni who live in New York and Washington, DC, to speak to current students about living and working in those cities. Homecoming 2008 added a similar health sciences symposium and a reception with Dan Cullen, Political Science professor who led discussions at several Rhodes Chapters around the country this fall.

The saga continues.

After commencement, some Rhodes Chapters welcome new alums with jobs in their city with, yes, a party, making sure they meet everyone across generations and widening their circle of acquaintances.

There's an old saying that your best friends are your college friends. A quick read of Class Notes reveals who and how many alumni make a point of getting together for mini-reunions on a regular basis. And nowadays, many alums stay in touch through either Rhodes' or their own Facebook and LinkedIn accounts.

Homecoming weekend is prime time for re-establishing old ties with classmates and faculty, yet throughout the year, some alums reconnect in different ways. Alumni authors are encouraged to send two of their books to the Barret Library—one for the Alumni Collection, the other for general circulation. Other alums who are tops in their field are invited to speak to classes in economics, natural sciences, English.

Whatever our relationship is to Rhodes, one could say we are linked (lynxed?)—for life.

## Fashioning a Career

Art History major La'Sandria Ward '09 knows what it means to be well-connected. The Memphis native who attends Rhodes with a Dean's Fellowship and a Rhodes Grant, both provided by Annual Fund gifts to the college, also works on campus part time through the Federal Work-Study Program.

She's also academically well-connected. Last semester, Ward took a class in theater design "to fulfill a requirement."

But her talent for costume design led her professor, David Jilg '79, to suggest she apply for the section he would lead in the summer 2008 Rhodes Institute for Regional Studies. Three students would design the costumes for the January 2009 Opera Memphis production of "Scott Joplin and Treemonisha," a work that tells the story of composer Scott Joplin's struggle to have his opera "Treemonisha" produced during his lifetime.

Ward didn't need convincing. Nor did Katie Grills '10 and Natalija Kokoreva '10, who also signed on. The three participated in the program as fellows of Rhodes' Mike Curb Institute for Music, created in 2006 through a \$5 million donation from the Mike Curb Family Foundation. Mike Curb is founder and chairman of Nashville-based Curb Records and the family foundation. The institute aims to foster awareness and understanding of the distinct musical traditions of the South and

the impact of music on its culture, history and economy.

During the summer the trio thoroughly researched the opera "Treemonisha" and locales in which the Opera Memphis production are set, late 19th-century Texarkana, AR, and early 20th-century New York. They studied history, clothing styles, Joplin's life and a film production of the opera before finally "being turned loose" in

says she and her colleagues will resolve the dilemma well before opening night.

The group met over the summer with Opera Memphis artistic director Michael Ching, showing him a PowerPoint presentation of their plans.

"Mr. Ching was happy about our color scheme. He said it looked like the one for an Opera Memphis 'Porgy and Bess' production, so

they could pull some of those costumes and mix and match with ours, which is good because 'Treemonisha' has a 40-member chorus," says Ward.

Ching also liked several of the students' ideas, such as dressing both the chorus of dancing bears in Texarkana and the New York producers in the same suits.

Noting Ward's enthusiasm and work ethic, Prof. Jilg invited her to design the costumes for McCoy Theatre's February 2009 production of Neil Labute's play "Fat Pig," a request she readily accepted.

Earlier in the 2007-08 academic year, Ward took an art history

course from her adviser, Prof. David McCarthy: Topics in Art History—Photographs from the *Memphis World, 1949-1964*. The *Memphis World* was an African-American newspaper published from 1931-73 whose photographers included such luminaries as Ernest Withers and the Hooks brothers. The class culminated in a joint project with



La'Sandria Ward '09

Hancock Fabrics where the project began to come to life.

"We wanted the costumes to be historically correct," explains Ward.

The trio agreed on colors, color schemes, which character should wear what, how the costumes would move, but Treemonisha's wardrobe is still "under consideration." Ward graciously



the Memphis Brooks Museum of Art, which is mounting an exhibition of the photos through Jan. 5, 2009. Nineteen additional photographs were on view at Rhodes' Clough-Hanson Gallery earlier this fall. The students' assignment: to write the catalogue entries. All semester, they scrolled through microfilm at the public library and scoured the phone book for names of the subjects' relatives in hope of

recording oral histories. Ward has three entries in the catalogue, all won at the microfilm reader; her subjects had no survivors.

Ward's academic connections have taken her into several realms in the community; now she's looking beyond.

"I once told Prof. McCarthy that I wanted to go into costume or fashion design. One day during the Institute this summer, Prof. Jilg

told me he and Prof. McCarthy had been talking about me, and they decided it would probably be in my best interest to study abroad. Since then, I've been looking at schools in Paris, along with New York and Los Angeles."



To see the students' costume designs for "Scott Joplin and Treemonisha," visit [rhodes.edu/magazine](http://rhodes.edu/magazine).



## Channeling the Renaissance

History major Chris Williams is studying to go to medical school. He's also minoring in French. His adviser is French professor Shira Malkin. Next year, with Malkin's help, he plans to study abroad in Aix-en-Provence. This year, with physics professor Ann Viano's help, he holds a prestigious physics fellowship. This happens at Rhodes sometimes. It also happens that there exists a peaceful coalition among Williams and the history, French and natural sciences faculty. They work it out. Biology professor Alan Jaslow, director of health professions advising, gives Williams plenty of help, too.

The sophomore from Baton Rouge, who attends Rhodes with the help of a Cambridge Fellowship (provided through Annual Fund giving), holds the Rhodes InMotion Musculoskeletal Research



Chris Williams '11

Fellowship. InMotion, a Memphis-based musculoskeletal institute, is a nonprofit orthopedic laboratory whose mission is to "reduce disability and to improve mobility for the musculoskeletal patient through translational research." Its research fellowship provides a

Rhodes undergraduate research opportunities in both clinic and laboratory for two summers and one academic year. Williams is involved in "determining the different rates of 'wear' among various hip implant-bearing materials in a patient population."

"My main area of focus is RSA—radio stereometric analysis," Williams says. "It's a process that was developed in Sweden where you basically take two X rays and fire them simultaneously at a target point—the hip, arm, leg. In surgery, when the hip implant is put into the body the surgeon shoots tantalum markers—tantalum is a

heavy metal that shows up on X rays—in both the implant and the top of the femur. By doing this you can create a three-dimensional model of the hip, the implant, everything. Based on the position of the beads, you can figure out if the implant is moving, how much





creep there is, how much wear. Normal X ray techniques allow us to look at this in millimeters; now we can see it in micrometers. It's really good for predicting whether or not a hip or knee implant is going to be successful in the long term. In the past, we haven't been able to predict that; you'd have to take it out of people after 20 years and see how the implant has performed."

Williams' fellowship allows him to work with people from the entire Memphis community. This summer, he worked with Dr. Robert Heck '91, an orthopedic oncologist at Campbell Clinic.

"In that project I looked at different ways to repair a humerus (the long bone of the upper arm that extends from shoulder to elbow) to prevent it from fracturing when it's been attacked by a tumor. In the late stages of cancer, patients develop bone metastases. It weakens the bone,

makes it very fragile and likely to break. You remove the tumor and repair the bone in a way that stabilizes it and allows the patient to regain the use of that limb. The goal is to reduce pain and make the quality of life better for that person."

The summer project called for working with cadaver bones, a unique opportunity for a college sophomore, says Williams. At the end of the fellowship, he'll get to work on his own project, form his own questions, experiments, conclusions—"all before I'm a junior."

Back on campus, Williams the realist pursues his love of the liberal arts.

"If the med school thing doesn't work out, or if I decide that being a doctor isn't for me, I might be a teacher," he says. "I'm trying to keep my options open. I'm majoring in history because it's my interest—it's always been my favorite subject,

and I figure if not now, when?"

Having these options, plus getting to know Rhodes people helped Williams choose Rhodes over four other colleges.

"I attended two gatherings for accepted students in New Orleans—one for Rhodes and one for another college," he says. "That's where I decided Rhodes would be the place for me. I looked at the difference between the two kinds of people who went to these schools and realized I fit in a lot better with Rhodes people.

"Rhodes really does have your best interests at heart. That's one thing I've found about this place. My mom and dad are on the Parent Council. Every time they come home from a meeting, they say, 'They're really looking out for you here. They really want you all to succeed.'

"I know that for a fact—the opportunities I'm getting here are unparalleled."



## Teaching Across the Board

Judith Haas, who teaches and serves the Rhodes community across the board, is connected to the college in many ways. An assistant professor of English who also teaches second-year Search and Feminist Theory, she also serves as:

- Chair of Women's Studies, which is undergoing a name change to the Gender and Sexuality Studies Program
- Co-director of postgraduate fellowships with Mike LaRosa, associate professor of history and director of the Latin American Studies Program

- Secretary-treasurer of the Rhodes chapter of Phi Beta Kappa

"In addition to teaching courses such as Chaucer, medieval lit, Dante and first-year writing seminar, I've taught the English Department's contribution to Search since I came to Rhodes six years ago—two to three courses a year in addition to one English course and Feminist Theory in the Women's Studies Program," says Haas. "I've always taught second-year Search, which covers the 1600s to the late 1980s. We begin with Machiavelli and end with a Don DeLillo novel, *White Noise*. I

like teaching sophomores—I think they can be somewhat overwhelmed in the first year of the course, and by the second, they're starting to have opinions. I enjoy that."

Haas particularly enjoys teaching Feminist Theory.

"It's sort of been my baby, re-working and re-thinking it every year, trying to figure out what students minoring in the program really need," she says. "I guess I teach in the two most interdisciplinary programs in the college—Search and Women's Studies. There are many ways in which they're antagonistic to each





other—for example, much of Search involves great books great men have written, and the Feminist Theory class is critical of that tradition. But you have to know that tradition in order to see the critique. It’s very useful to me to say in Feminist Theory class, ‘Do you remember what John Locke wrote about equality in the 17th century? Well, here’s what he was missing.’ I like to have those two traditions to speak to each other, and students need that Search education to understand the Feminist Theory class.”

The Women’s Studies Program is for all students, Haas emphasizes.

“We’ve changed the name to attract more students. We’ve definitely had some wonderful male students, but it’s been difficult to draw them in. It’s the study of gender, although the topic of women is still a major part of what we do. Some students come in very skeptical, then find themselves challenged. We want to show students that this is a legitimate area of knowledge—that



Judith Haas

challenging norms is legitimate.”

The program offers a minor, and internships are available at a variety of local and national agencies.

Haas’ concern for students is evident outside the classroom. As co-director of postgraduate fellowships, she and Prof. LaRosa counsel students on academic life after Rhodes. Because these are new positions which they began coordinating well before classes

began this fall, there is more to be written on the subject in the future.

Well cast in another leadership role, Haas has worked with the Rhodes chapter of Phi Beta Kappa since coming to the college. A Phi Beta Kappa herself, she holds her Ph.D. from the University of California, Santa Cruz, and B.A. from Wesleyan University in Connecticut.

“As a member of the PBK executive committee, I helped choose memberships and interview students for the Peyton Nalle Rhodes Award. Four years ago, I took over as secretary-treasurer from [biology professor] Terry Hill. I plan events, the

induction, luncheon and visiting speaker every year. It’s a nice way to be involved.

“The thing I like best about it is the many second-year students I meet in Search who, two years later, become members of Phi Beta Kappa.

“Doing what I do, you reach so many students. I really enjoy that.”



## Fanning the Flame

Rhodes trustee Jamie Augustine ’89 has been connected with Rhodes ever since he was a student. The senior vice president of the Memphis office of international

investment services company Raymond James firmly believes that “Rhodes is a lifelong commitment if you’ll allow it to be.”

Augustine, who majored

in economics and business administration, “had a job right out of college working for Doug Southard ’75, owner/principal of Southard Financial in Memphis. My



second job was in New York working for Bill Michaelcheck '69 and John Sites '74 at Bear Stearns.

"That made a huge impact on my career," he continues. "In turn, when I came home in 1994 and worked at Morgan Keegan, a lot of people there had interns, but my group didn't. So I immediately started bringing in Rhodes students. It wasn't long before I started getting calls from people in other divisions asking me to introduce them to someone from Rhodes.

"Our students are always well prepared, and I'm seeing it all over again. Doug Lensing '08, who was a student trustee and president

of Rhodes Student Government last year, was interested in the bond market and would talk to me about it. When an opening in my firm came up this summer, Doug came to work for us. He now works directly with me in our strategies group. From the beginning, everyone at Raymond James has been most impressed with him."

Augustine is thankful to this day for the opportunities he had at Rhodes.

"Because of the size of the school you learn to communicate what you know. In my business, it's not just what you know, it's how effectively you can communicate what you know, both in writing and orally," he says.

"For example, Dr. John Planchon, one of my economics professors, dropped an entire letter grade from one of my papers for one grammatical error. I went into his



Jamie Augustine '89

office and said, 'You've got to be kidding—you're giving me a B on this?' He said, 'If you turn in a grammatical error like that when you're in the real world, they're going to can the project and they're probably going to can you.' Now, when people send me things for review, yes, I mark it up.

"When I was at Bear Stearns I called professor Planchon and professors Chuck Orvis and Mark McMahon and said, 'I have to thank you for the attention I got at Rhodes. I'm coming into a rookie class with Ivy League MBAs. I am so intimidated, but I know I can do it thanks to the quality of my education.' I tell people all the time I can't *imagine* that I could have received a better education anywhere else."

Augustine, who played football for the Lynx, values lifelong friends and lessons gained at Rhodes.

"My closest friends are a group from childhood and the group from college," he says. "The opportunity I had to play football taught some life lessons. You learn about teamwork and that life isn't always fair, but you have to hang in there for your teammates. And in the classroom, you know you're going to be successful at Rhodes because you *have* to learn."

Both Augustine and his wife, Tanya, who have three young children, are active in the life of the college.

"My wife didn't go to Rhodes, but she feels she did," he laughs. "I'm not going to force our children to go to Rhodes,

but I will insist they take a long, hard look at it.

"It's never too late to re-engage in Rhodes and stay engaged. It's a central part of my life. So many people have such fond memories of the time they were here. When you get re-connected, you feel like you're still here." 