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## AFFIRMING OUR VISION FOR RHODES

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The past two years of faculty, staff, and student examination of the student experience have formed the first step in moving the College past competitive institutions to assume its rightful place among the top tier liberal arts colleges in the country--to be, as Dr. Diehl put it, “the best.” The arduous process yielded the following statement:

*Rhodes College aspires to graduate students with a life-long passion for learning, a compassion for others, and the ability to translate academic study and personal concern into effective leadership and action in their communities and the world.*

From this vision statement the College developed four strategic imperatives. Achieving the vision requires that all of Rhodes’ planning goals carefully align around this guiding aim and these four strategic imperatives associated with it. Faculty, staff, students, and trustees have clarified the College’s vision into a heightened focus on providing a superior and life-changing liberal arts education to talented, motivated students.

The following pages present an executive summary that distills the past two years’ work into a concise statement that forms the basis for the detail to come, a compelling proposal for our students’ future.

**The Student Access Imperative: To attract and retain a talented, diverse student body and engage these students in a challenging, inclusive and culturally-broadening college experience.**

The College is determined to make a Rhodes education available to all worthy students, but there are occasions each year when an eagerly recruited prospective student chooses a rival institution over Rhodes. Those losses are regrettable. Many academically talented students from middle- and low-income families who wish to come here are forced to settle for lesser schools with more attractive financial aid packages. The presence of students from a variety of backgrounds promotes a more vigorous educational experience, more spirited discussion, and deeper self-reflection. Such experiences are the hallmark of top tier liberal arts colleges. The absence of such variety deprives all Rhodes students the opportunity to experience the full advantages of a liberal arts education of national caliber.

The College is united in its desire to make a Rhodes education available to all worthy students. Dedication to increasing the endowment enough to achieve that goal will have a sweeping impact on every aspect of campus life. Students' cultural and educational experiences will broaden and deepen because tuition dollars currently devoted to financial aid will be reassigned to providing more stimulating educational opportunities, such as study abroad and supplemental undergraduate research projects, to all Rhodes students. The College will leap ahead of its competition as it removes the obstacles to student access.

<b>Our Challenge</b>	<b>Our Response</b>	<b>Our Success</b>
<p>To remove the financial obstacles that prevent bright students from attending or leaving Rhodes and to ensure all Rhodes students have the resources to participate in educational opportunities available to them.</p>	<p>To increase endowed and privately funded student scholarships.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The College will be able to attract and retain more academically capable students who currently cannot afford to attend Rhodes.</li> <li>2. A stronger financial aid position will permit the college to be more selective in its admissions process, admitting students on the basis of their likelihood to thrive at Rhodes rather than their ability to afford Rhodes' tuition.</li> <li>3. The removal of financial obstacles to enrollment will improve the likelihood of retaining our students.</li> <li>4. The college will become less dependent upon tuition discounts to meet student needs, and students' tuition dollars will increasingly fund the academic program instead of tuition discounts.</li> <li>5. Students from a variety of ethnic and economic backgrounds will make Rhodes a more challenging and thought-provoking learning environment.</li> <li>6. All students will be able to take advantage of academically enriching programs such as study abroad, undergraduate research and summer internships that are otherwise available only to the financially able.</li> </ol>

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**The Student Learning Imperative: to ensure our faculty and staff have the talent, the time and the resources to inspire and involve our students in meaningful study, research and service.**

Rhodes alumni constantly affirm that the quality of their College experience and the value they continue to derive from it are rooted in their relationships with faculty outside the classroom. Rhodes Scholar John Churchill '71, for example, reports that he attended only one conventional class in his senior year. He spent the remainder of his studies in faculty-guided research projects and directed inquiries. Rhodes aspires to be a college where such experiences are not exceptional but the norm for its students, and the College intends to support and reward the exceptional faculty members who make these mentoring relationships successful.

The College has always taken pride in the fact that its faculty focuses entirely on undergraduate education. As it strives to enhance its standing among the nation's best liberal arts colleges, Rhodes will now seek to diminish the divide between the formal education of the classroom and more informal learning experiences. Students will have the opportunity to absorb information in the ways most suited to their individual learning styles and to reinforce the lessons learned through a variety of experiences. Enhanced mentoring will unquestionably increase student retention, and it will advance the College's ability to graduate students with a passion for learning and the ability to translate academic study into effective leadership and action.

Our Challenge	Our Response	Our Success
<p>To provide intense personal mentoring.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. To reallocate faculty and staff responsibilities in order to create the time for high quality mentoring sessions.</li> <li>2. To support and reward faculty members who are exemplary mentors.</li> <li>3. To provide the high quality technological support for the educational program required to ensure the successful reallocation of time for high quality teaching and mentoring.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The integration of formal and informal learning experiences will erode the perceived divide between in- and out-of-class education.</li> <li>2. In-class instruction will become more meaningful as it is supplemented by out-of-class guidance and instruction.</li> <li>3. Student retention rates will climb as students build relationships with faculty members earlier in the students' education.</li> <li>4. Faculty will be more confident in the support that they receive, resulting in a greater freedom to commit their time to mentorship.</li> <li>5. Students will receive more postbaccalaureate awards, such as Rhodes, Fulbright, Truman, and Watson Scholarships. These successes will result from improved mentorship opportunities such as guided undergraduate research and creative projects.</li> <li>6. Rhodes will fulfill the promise of developing students who are passionate about lifelong learning.</li> </ol>

**The Student Engagement Imperative: To enhance opportunities for learning in Memphis—this metropolitan laboratory beyond our gates.**

The Rhodes campus provides a sanctuary where students can take risks and learn lessons in a safe, unthreatening environment. At the same time, they are expected to emerge after four years ready for the “real world” and prepared to support themselves. Rhodes expects even more—compassion for others, personal concern about the world around them, leadership and action.

The Association of American Colleges and Universities recently published *Greater Expectations, A New Vision for Learning as a Nation Goes to College*. This was the result of a comprehensive study of higher education as it exists today and where it needs improvement. One of the report’s key recommendations is that the liberal arts become more practical:

*Liberal education...has the strongest impact when studies reach beyond the classroom to the larger community, asking students to apply their developing analytical skills and ethical judgment to concrete problems in the world around them, and to connect theory with the insights gained from practice.---Greater Expectations, p. 27*

Every student should have a meaningful community service or internship experience in Memphis, but such programs must have deep academic roots. Those roots will spring from the Rhodes Center for Academic Research and Education through Service (Rhodes CARES). This academic program will ensure that students enjoy more opportunities to reinforce classroom learning through research, internships and community service. This approach will prepare students to live fuller, more effective lives of service to their communities and the world. Rhodes can lead American liberal arts institutions in this pursuit.

Our Challenge	Our Response	Our Success
<p>To use our Memphis location to integrate theory and practice.</p>	<p>To build internships, undergraduate research, and service opportunities capable of sustaining clear connections between the curriculum and personal responsibility and action.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The distinction between the “Ivory Tower” and the “Real World” will disappear.</li> <li>2. The College will promote an education that looks beyond the campus to society and the workplace.</li> <li>3. Domestic and international internships will prepare students for a life of service, improve their research skills, promote their personal, social, and leadership development, and increase their employability.</li> <li>4. Rhodes and Memphis forge a closer, mutually beneficial relationship.</li> <li>5. The College will take full advantage of its Memphis location and its values orientation to create a distinctive niche in American higher education.</li> <li>6. Students become life-long learners and responsible citizens.</li> </ol>

**The Student Inspiration Imperative: To provide a residential place of learning that inspires integrity and high achievement through its beauty, its emphasis on values, its Presbyterian history, and its heritage as a leader in the liberal arts and sciences.**

The alumni who love Rhodes do so because it adheres to important qualities—individual honor, personal attention, a values-based education, and timeless architecture. Such a residential, liberal arts experience should make students want to stay at Rhodes until they graduate, but too many students decide to withdraw from the institution. The College has examined the reasons that it fails to retain some students and proposes a strategy for inspiring students to persist in their education here.

This strategic imperative will assure that all students find the inspiration that leads to excellence in living and learning. The new Paul Barret, Jr. Library will be the vanguard of this effort. It will allow the Burrow Library to become a nexus of student services and Palmer Hall to return to its original purpose as a center for the Humanities. The College will also align the curriculum and co-curricular activities to ensure that student experiences throughout the college years reflect the core beliefs upon which this institution was founded.

The result of these efforts will be improved student retention and loyal, engaged alumni who will join forces with us to help Rhodes ascend to the next level of recognized excellence.



Our Challenge	Our Response	Our Success
<p>To inspire every student to take advantage of the Rhodes experience to do his or her best.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. To create a personal sense of belonging in every student that attends the college.</li> <li>2. To develop a first-year experience that eases the beginning student's transition into a new community of learners.</li> <li>3. To maintain the student's sense of place and belonging through improvements to the campus environment and programs.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Enhancements to individual, personal attention during the students' enrollment in the College will result in improved student retention.</li> <li>2. Greater integration of students' learning experience from the first-year through graduation will develop the students' mental, physical, and spiritual facets of personal belonging.</li> <li>3. Programs strengthening the students' relationship to the academic program and the faculty, such as undergraduate research, creative activities, and scholarship will create a more lasting sense of personal responsibility and belonging.</li> <li>4. Space requirements for these activities will involve the renovation of the Burrow Library building and the consolidation of academic space in Palmer Hall as well as a focus on effective learning and laboratory space.</li> <li>5. Enhancing the learning environment while increasing the integration of a student's experiences at Rhodes will promote learning and a sense of place and belonging.</li> </ol>

Any good organization aspiring to achieve greatness must address two questions:

- What can we be the best in the world at achieving?
- What are we passionate about?

Rhodes can be the best in the world at offering a values-based, life changing liberal arts education.

The statue of Charles Diehl reminds the current generation of the fundamental principles upon which the College was founded. His successors—today’s faculty, students, Trustees, administrators, alumni and friends—are united behind the goal of providing a life-changing liberal arts education to every worthy student. With a common vision, a clear outline and the highest aspirations, all are eager to serve and strive to achieve “not merely the good, but the best.”