



Rhodes Framework for Inclusion, Diversity, Equity and Accessibility Strategies Year 3 Progress Report

We are very grateful to Dr. Sherry L. Turner, Vice President for Strategic Initiatives/ Chief Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Officer, for her work preparing the first draft of this report and her leadership in developing and guiding the implementation of our IDEAS framework.

Rhodes Framework for Inclusion, Diversity, Equity and Accessibility Strategies
 Year 3 Progress Report

Table of Contents

INTRODUCTION 3

***Progress During Year 3* 3**

COMMITMENT.....3

Representation of Diversity Among Our Leadership.....3

Inclusive Excellence Leadership Council.....4

Rhodes Commitment to Inclusive Excellence.....4

CULTURE5

Expressive Speech and Civil Discourse Working Group5

Support for DEI Advocacy Groups.....6

CAPACITY.....7

Training.....7

Faculty Development Series.....7

Orientation for New Faculty and Staff8

CURRICULUM, PEDAGOGY AND FACULTY DEVELOPMENT.....8

Faculty Development and Curriculum8

COMPENSATION AND EMPLOYMENT9

FACULTY RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION10

CLIMATE10

Bias Education Response System10

Assessing Department and Program Climate11

CAMPUS LIFE AND COMMUNITY11

Student Recruitment11

Student Success and Retention Efforts11

Enhancing the Student Experience.....12

***Reflections on Our Journey*..... 13**

***Appendix I – Cultural Heritage Programming*..... 15**

INTRODUCTION

The third and final year of the Rhodes Framework for Inclusion, Diversity, Equity and Accessibility Strategies and three-year plan of action comes to a close this year.

This report summarizes the progress made during the third year of our IDEAS Framework implementation, provides overall observations about our progress, and outlines anticipated priorities for IDEAS 2.0, the second iteration of our IDEAS plan.

Progress During Year 3

COMMITMENT

Representation of Diversity Among Our Leadership

Research consistently highlights the advantages of having diversity among an organization's senior leadership and governing body. From the outset of our IDEAS action plan, we have assessed the level of diversity that exists among the Senior Leadership Team (SLT) and the trustees. The percentage of women and people of color among the Senior Leadership Team have fluctuated slightly these past three years but remained relatively consistent. Of the five SLT hires President Collins has made since assuming office, three, or 60 percent, are women, and two, or 40 percent, are people of color.



Among our trustees, the percentage of people of color has fluctuated slightly over the past three years but remained relatively consistent between 21 and 25 percent. The percentage of women has increased from 37 percent to 42 percent.

Inclusive Excellence Leadership Council

The Inclusive Excellence Leadership Council continues to play an important role in leading and coordinating our framework's initiatives. A primary feature of their work is to ensure that our efforts are integrated among all stakeholder groups. The membership of the Council has shifted over the years as individuals have departed the community or roles were reassigned. During the 2023-24 academic year, council membership included six people. The size of the Council has been expanded for the 2024-25 academic year to include 13 members who represent a broad cross-section of campus. This year's members are listed below.

- Anne Beard, Chief of Staff, Inclusive Excellence Co-Chair
- Elizabeth Thomas, Dean of Faculty Development, Inclusive Excellence Co-Chair
- Katherine Bass, Human Resources Records Specialist
- Melissa Butler, Director of Student Accessibility Services
- Kerri Campbell, Director of College Relations and Community Partnerships
- Eric Henager, Associate Dean for Global Initiatives
- Elin Ovrebo, Associate Director of International Programs
- Leigh Powell, Director of Human Resources
- Jazmine Rodriguez, Dean of Belonging
- Inez Warner, Director of Institutional Equity and Title IX Coordinator
- Beatrix Weil, Chaplain
- Christopher Williams, Director of Student Inclusion and Diversity
- Andrey Zagorchev, Chair of Diversity and Equity Faculty Committee

Rhodes Commitment to Inclusive Excellence

Articulating Rhodes's commitment to inclusive excellence has been an important goal since the inception of the IDEAS Framework and Action Plan. Previous reports have outlined the efforts we have taken to develop the new statement and to engage the community in defining our values pertaining to diversity, equity and inclusion. In the fall of 2024, the Senior Leadership Team agreed that the definitions established in the IDEAS Framework affirm Rhodes' commitment to inclusive excellence.

- **Commitment:** We will demonstrate institution-wide commitment to inclusive excellence. Such commitment is reflected in our shared definitions of diversity, equity and inclusion; campus standards, community conversations, and policies across all constituencies; the shared responsibility and accountability of every community member; and the willingness of institutional leaders to serve as champions for inclusive excellence.
- **Culture:** We will promote an institutional culture that encourages an equity-focused mindset, promotes campus-wide communication and accountability, and engages everyone in our inclusive excellence efforts.
- **Capacity:** We will increase the capacity of all faculty and staff to promote inclusive

excellence by providing education, awareness and training on inclusion, diversity, equity and accessibility.

- Curriculum, Pedagogy and Faculty Development: We will reflect inclusive excellence in our curriculum, pedagogy and faculty development.
- Compensation and Employment: We will pursue equity in employment representation and compensation for our colleagues across all divisions and at each level of the College and improve recruitment and retention of diverse faculty and staff.
- Climate: We will assess perceptions of campus climate and identify concerns, experiences and needs pertaining to diversity, equity, inclusion and accessibility.
- Campus Life and Community: We will improve the recruitment and retention of diverse students; promote an inclusive campus life and community; and provide appropriate space, activities, leadership opportunities, resources and services to meet the needs of an increasingly diverse student body.

CULTURE

During the third year of our IDEAS action plan, our primary strategies for promoting a culture of inclusive excellence were implementing the recommendations from the Expressive Speech and Civil Discourse Working Group, providing support for DEI advocacy groups, and offering training to the broader community. The following section describes the work pertaining to expressive speech and advocacy groups. Our efforts pertaining to training will be discussed in a subsequent section focusing on capacity building.

Expressive Speech and Civil Discourse Working Group

A lingering goal has been to implement key recommendations from the Expressive Speech and Civil Discourse Working Group. Due to the COVID pandemic and various transitions in leadership, this work was delayed. However, during the Spring and Summer of 2024, Dan Cullen and Elizabeth Thomas reconvened the group, which accomplished the following.

- Reviewed and endorsed the newly revised student policy.
- Recommended that the Senior Leadership Team participate in a “tabletop” case study exercise to clarify how we would balance strong protection and endorsement of expressive speech with what might be determined as intolerable disruption of campus life, if a crisis were to emerge. This exercise occurred on September 30, 2024.
- Invited Keith E. Whittington, the David Boies Professor of Law at Yale Law School, to visit Rhodes in October 2024 and offer a campus-wide plenary on free speech and workshops for administrators, faculty, staff, and students. Whittington is an influential constitutional law scholar and author of the widely acclaimed 2018 book: *Speak Freely: Why Universities Must Defend Free Speech* and the newly published *You Can't Teach That! The Battle Over University Classrooms*.

- In collaboration with the Office of Faculty Development, will pilot a team-teaching initiative in which faculty from different disciplines and perspectives will engage students in shared inquiry around a complex and challenging contemporary issue.

Support for DEI Advocacy Groups

- Sherry Turner and Elizabeth Thomas drafted a new charter for the LGBTQ+ Working Group and reconvened the group. The group will identify new leadership and continue its key activities in the Fall of 2024. Numerous activities are planned for National Coming Out Day in October 2024.
- Dr. Erin Hillis is now the Senior International Officer at Rhodes. A faculty advisory board for global engagement has been formed under her leadership. The Buckman Center is now the Buckman Center for Global Engagement at Rhodes, with a steering committee, an overarching center, and a clear leader of global engagement efforts. Eric Henager (Associate Dean for Global Initiatives) is focused on working with faculty to globalize our curriculum. This group is working intentionally to make our study abroad program more accessible for all students and to make our curriculum more global. The percentage of students of color participating in study abroad programs increased from 18% in 2019 (pre-pandemic) to 30% in 2024-25.
- Melissa Butler, Director of Student Accessibility Services, was added as an ex officio member to the Faculty Committee on Diversity and Equity. She will advocate for student accessibility issues on this committee.
- Rhodes authorized the purchase of the Accessible Information Management (AIM) software that provides one centralized system for secure, comprehensive Student Accessibility Services (SAS) case management. This will result in more streamlined services for this growing student population. AIM will also result in more efficient case management for SAS staff.
- The Office of Faculty Development sponsored a new affinity group for international faculty. The group's primary mission is to advocate for a more inclusive DEI framework at Rhodes.
- Rhodes purchased Anthology Ally, a new software integration tool for Canvas. This will allow students with alternative format accommodations to easily access their preferred format. It also provides faculty feedback on the accessibility of their content and guidance on how to address these issues.

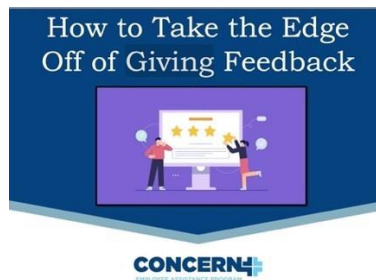
CAPACITY

Training

An important priority has been to increase the capacity of all faculty and staff to promote inclusive excellence through education, awareness, and training. We introduced several new training opportunities during year one of our IDEAS strategy. In our second and third years, we continued to provide mandatory online training courses for all employees using course content developed by our liability insurer, United Educators. In year three, Dr. Sherry Turner created a series of classes focusing on addressing microaggressions at Rhodes. Over 200 faculty, staff, students, and senior administrators received this training, tailored to the needs of each group.

We had hoped to build a curriculum that included both introductory and advanced-level classes, and we were most successful in offering robust introductory-level training to all employees. In addition to the advanced training opportunities described in this document, the development of additional advanced training modules will be a major focus of the plans for IDEAS 2.0.

We specifically wanted to enhance the training supervisors receive on evaluating employees, providing performance feedback, and facilitating employee career development and promotion. Human Resources provided training, through Concern EAP, on providing feedback. We expect to expand our offerings during the upcoming year.

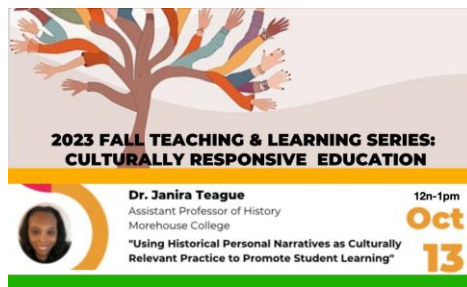


Faculty Development Series

The Office of Faculty Development (OFD) has played an important role in providing inclusive excellence resources and training for faculty. Some accomplishments include:

- Augmenting its 2023-24 and 2024-25 Teaching and Learning series related to Native American heritage by hosting workshops led by members of the Chickasaw Nation on strategies for adding indigenous resources to their courses and by reimbursing faculty who visit the Chucalissa Museum to learn more about our area's tribal land and history.
- Providing examples of language to be included on course syllabi to address various issues, including those that have implications for inclusion, diversity, equity and accessibility (e.g., Open AI use, Title IX, accessibility, accommodations, etc.).

- Hosting Dr. Susanne Even’s talk on pedagogy and Intercultural Appreciation.



Orientation for New Faculty and Staff

The Office of Academic Affairs began instituting changes to its New Faculty Orientation and mentoring program for first-year faculty upon approval of the three-year plan. The orientation for new faculty now includes a summary of the IDEAS framework and initiatives, links to resources, opportunities for questions and dialogue about approaches to inclusive pedagogy and key issues that pertain to faculty. New faculty are also assigned to a mentoring cohort that includes topics related to inclusive excellence. A separate session pertains to our Title IX policy and reporting requirements.

The orientation for staff includes a review of the college’s commitment to diversity statement, anti-discrimination policy, Title IX policy and reporting instructions. Further training is being considered.

CURRICULUM, PEDAGOGY AND FACULTY DEVELOPMENT

During the initial iteration of IDEAS many changes, including those discussed above, have been implemented that pertain to our faculty. Some achievements are highlighted below.

Faculty Development and Curriculum

Through the Office of Faculty Development, Gordon Bigelow piloted a Post-Tenure Success Program that incorporates discussions about DEI and climate.

- Rhodes hired Dr. McKinney Melton as the new chair of Africana Studies at the College. An award-winning teacher-scholar, Dr. Melton’s research and teaching focus primarily on 20th and 21st Century Africana literatures, with a particular emphasis on contemporary Black poetics.
- In January 2024, the Office of Academic Affairs appointed Dr. Laura Taylor as the Faculty

Fellow for Advancing Inclusive Excellence in Faculty Reviews. Dr. Taylor will lead the work on ensuring that our faculty review policies are equitable. Over the summer, Rhodes received a subgrant from the Associated Colleges of the South to support this work during 2024-25.

- Rhodes joined the ACS Faculty of Color Connect, a multi-institution mentoring program for faculty of color in the Associated Colleges of the South.
- Rhodes received an \$800,000 grant from the Mellon Foundation to establish a new Institute for Race and Social Transformation. The institute will serve as an intellectual hub for research and curricular development focusing on racial equity, discrimination, and justice in Memphis and the Mid-South region. Two new faculty, Dr. Charity Clay and Dr. Jasper St. Bernard, have been hired as postdocs, and they will teach courses on and work with students on projects in the areas of African American history and the history of the American South. In addition, several current Rhodes faculty are working with community partners on projects as follows:
 - ✓ Dr. Charles McKinney is leading the Neighborhood Narratives project, which focuses on gathering, preserving, and promoting living histories of individuals from diverse backgrounds.
 - ✓ Dr. Laura Taylor's project supports parent and family empowerment in Raleigh, a majority Black neighborhood in North Memphis.
 - ✓ Dr. Hadi Khoshnevis's project reimagines Memphis from the perspective of housing insecurity.
 - ✓ Dr. David Maxson and Dr. Jasper St. Bernard are leading the Historical Racial Justice Project, which partners with the Zion Cemetery and the Lynching Sites Project to tell previously untold stories, amplifying the lingering effects of racial injustice in Memphis.

COMPENSATION AND EMPLOYMENT

Due to significant changes in leadership and the transition from using Banner and Workday as the College's primary ERP, we were delayed in accomplishing many goals associated with compensation and employment. Those goals and objectives will be incorporated into the IDEAS 2.0 plan. The College did, however, implement its first paid parental leave policy for staff and enhanced the faculty paid parental leave policy.

FACULTY RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION

The Office of Academic Affairs focused intentionally on recruiting and retaining a diverse faculty.

- One-third of the 15 new faculty who were hired or converted to tenure-track in full-time positions were faculty of color.
- Every faculty search committee included a diversity liaison, whose task was to ensure that decisions at every stage of the search process were made equitably. In addition, specific training was offered to search committee chairs and diversity liaisons for mitigating bias.
- Associate Provost Rashna Richards and Director Geoff Maddox completed the Faculty Recruitment and Retention Report for the Academic Affairs Committee of the Board of Trustees in October 2023. This report provided a comprehensive look at our recruitment and retention strategies for faculty since 2019. Its key findings noted that:
 - ✓ We have made some progress in diversifying the faculty in the last five years. In 2018-19, 21% of the faculty included underrepresented faculty. That increased to 29% in 2021-22.
 - ✓ While we have made progress in recruiting a diverse faculty body, faculty of color tend to leave the college at a higher rate than white faculty. We need to develop new initiatives focused on retaining faculty proactively.
- Academic Affairs is committed to salary equity across divisions and ranks. In 2024-25, the office will conduct a salary study to ensure that we are compensating faculty equitably.

CLIMATE

Our focus during the final year of IDEAS has been on modifying our BERS process and understanding perceptions of campus climate.

Bias Education Response System

Held bias “summit” with administrators from Academic Affairs, HR, Student Life and Strategic Initiatives to identify issues and major needs. The process identified a number of challenges that must be addressed in order to have a system that is effective and garners trust. Following conversations with the Senior Leadership Team, some initial parameters were set that will guide the committee’s subsequent work.

Assessing Department and Program Climate

Elizabeth Thomas, Sherry Turner and Gordon Bigelow began laying the foundation for work that is designed to assess and enhance the culture in various academic departments and programs. This work is slated to continue during the 2024-25 academic year and with the next iteration of our IDEAS framework.

CAMPUS LIFE AND COMMUNITY

We are pleased with the positive progress that has occurred in the areas of student recruitment, success, retention and overall experience.

Student Recruitment

- We enrolled one of the most diverse classes in Rhodes history this year.
- Rhodes joined the American Talent Initiative, a collective of 137 top public and private colleges and universities across the nation working collaboratively to expand access and opportunity for highly talented low- and moderate-income students.
- The Enrollment Division added three new community-based organizations, bringing the total to eight partners (Arkansas' commitment -AR, Chicago Scholars -IL, College AIM - GA, Cristo Rey Network -US, EMERGE -TX, Golden Door -US, IDEA network – TX, YES Prep – TX).
- The Founder's Scholarship (academic) was established to promote socioeconomic diversity.
- The Class of 2028 is a talented, diverse class. There are 45% students of color (including international students of color), 12% are international students, 17% are first generation, and 22% are Pell-eligible.
- Rhodes now has a full cohort of Posse Scholars and will graduate the first group in May 2025.

Student Success and Retention Efforts

Increasing student success and retention is an important institutional goal. A Student Success and Retention Committee (SSRC) was launched in 2022 to identify strategies to improve student success, retention, persistence, and graduation. The SSRC, consisting of representatives from Academic Affairs, Student Life, Strategic Initiatives, and Enrollment, performed a comprehensive review of barriers to retention and graduation. The work will be continued by a newly appointed committee. Of significance is the development of initiatives to support our First-Generation college students.

Enhancing the Student Experience

- Training and equity in the selection of student leaders has been an ongoing process. Advanced and intermediate training will be incorporated into the IDEAS 2.0 plan.
- One of the most visible student leadership roles are the student representatives to the Board of Trustees. Elected by their peers, in 2023-2024 they included one woman and two students of color, and this year, three women and two students of color.
- Created the Office of Student Inclusion & Diversity to support Rhodes First (our first-generation program), the MVP Program, and student DEI programming, advising cultural student organizations and cultural/heritage months celebrations, and managing the Unity Lodge and Lynx Pantry. Chris Williams began as Director of Student Inclusion & Diversity in June 2024.
- The Lynx Pantry is a community-driven initiative designed to nourish and support students. This collaborative effort between RSG, the Office of Student Inclusion & Diversity, and Belonging at Rhodes is in the old Brooks Room in Hyde Hall.
 - ✓ Diverse Food Options: Enjoy a variety of food items, including halal, kosher, and non-dairy options.
 - ✓ Essential Supplies: The Staff Advisory Council collected toiletries and sanitary items.
 - ✓ Weekly Bread: Enjoy weekly bread donations from the Gingerbread Co.
- The Office of Student Life initiated mandatory DEI training for its staff on Antisemitism and Islamophobia in Spring 2024.
- All first-year students participate in One College Nation, a highly interactive DEI program during Welcome Week. It is designed to equip participants to develop and practice essential skills to develop cross-cultural relationships and intercultural competencies and create an inclusive campus community.
- We greatly increased our cultural heritage programming. (please see appendix)
- We dedicated the National Pan-Hellenic Council (NPHC) Plaza during the Spring of 2024. The plaza celebrates the importance of nine historically Black sororities and fraternities. We had 90 individual donors representing students, alumni, parents, and friends who contributed to this project. This joins the Unity Lodge as a designated space for our students of color.



Reflections on Our Journey

Since April 2019, when the Board of Trustees approved the IDEAS Framework, and we began to implement the three-year action plan, the world has changed. We embarked upon this journey not fully anticipating leadership transitions, changes in the higher education landscape, and nationwide attacks on diversity and inclusion in legislatures and on our college campuses.

We are thankful for the unwavering commitment of our Board of Trustees, who not only valued the work but ensured that the College never lost sight of its goals – even during moments of intense change. We were ambitious and overestimated how much we would be able to accomplish in three years. Yet we persisted, and still believe that our priorities are important ones for the College to undertake. We have already begun to lay the foundation for IDEAS 2.0. Our work will begin by picking up those efforts that were previously delayed.

When the College embarked upon this work in 2019, there were several assumptions that guided our thinking that we will revisit now.

The Need for An Intentional, Comprehensive and Strategic Approach

One key assumption was that our work would have a greater impact if it were undertaken in an intentional, comprehensive and strategic way. We implemented three strategies for doing so:

We were intentional in linking the IDEAS Framework to the Rhodes College Strategic Plan. Although the strategic planning process was well underway by the time work on the IDEAS Framework began, we wanted to convey that our progress toward inclusive excellence was of strategic importance because it was essential to the long-term success and sustainability of the College.

We abandoned the crisis-oriented model of diversity planning that is characteristic of many colleges and universities and, by contrast, developed a three-year plan of action.

We attempted to minimize “islands of excellence” – unique, model programs that exist in pockets of the institution. An early component of our work was bringing together campus leaders who were engaged in work related to DEI, identifying potential champions, and fostering opportunities for collaboration.

The Critical Need for Data Collection, Benchmarking and Assessment

A second assumption was that it was critical to track our progress toward diversity, equity, access and inclusion goals using the appropriate data collection, benchmarking and assessment metrics. Although we have relied heavily on our institutional data, Rhodes should continue to

ensure that it is collecting, analyzing, disaggregating and reporting on various dimensions of diversity; campus climate; the experiences of members of various privileged and marginalized groups; and College policies, practices and procedures. The development of more robust data collection could serve as an important device for ensuring that Rhodes accomplishes its goals.

The Need for Industry-Specific Conversations about Diversity, Equity and Inclusion

A third assumption was that our commitment to inclusive excellence should be pervasive at each level and within each division of the institution. We expected that each division leader would be attuned to DEI-related conversations, challenges and needs occurring within their respective professions and, in turn, lead that work at Rhodes. Senior Leadership should ensure that their employees are connected to their professional associations, increase their awareness of diversity and inclusion challenges, and develop the appropriate intercultural competencies required to work with increasingly diverse constituencies.

Concluding Thoughts

We commend all the hard work that was undertaken by members of the Rhodes community to promote inclusive excellence and accomplish the goals outlined in our IDEAS Framework.

Although much work remains to be done, we have made significant strides in creating a more welcoming and equitable community. We look forward to the work that will continue.

Appendix I – Cultural Heritage Programming

Hispanic Heritage Month

- WEPA Wednesdays - Latinx music and cuisines featured in the Rat each Wednesday of the month
- Bachata Class with the Rumba Room

Costumes & Cultural Appreciation Workshop

Native American Heritage Month

- Book Club – *Probably Ruby*
- Sponsored visit to C.H. Nash Museum at Chucalissa (low student interest)

LGBTQ+ History Month

- Drag Trivia

MLK Day Events – canceled because of a snowstorm

Black History Month - light programming because of a snowstorm

IDEAS Forum for Students - canceled because of low student interest

Women’s History Month

- Sponsored Women’s Lacrosse Game
- Women in Comedy event - canceled because of student death

Arab American Heritage Month

- Bazaar with MESA
- Sweeteye Coffee Truck (Palestinian-owned) on campus

Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) Heritage Month

- AAPI Gala
- Thingyan Pool Party

Jewish American Heritage Month

- Passover Goodie Bags
- Senior Havdala

Mosaic Graduation