

## **A Vision For Rice University's Second Century**

### **Emerging from President David W. Leebron's Call to Conversation**

As a leading research university with a distinctive commitment to undergraduate education, Rice University aspires to pathbreaking research, unsurpassed teaching, and contributions to the betterment of our world. It seeks to fulfill this mission by cultivating a diverse community of learning and discovery that produces leaders across the spectrum of human endeavor.

The university must take the following steps in furtherance of this mission:

**We must visibly and substantially increase our commitment to our research mission and raise our research and scholarship profile. (More...)**

**We must provide a holistic undergraduate experience that equips our students with the knowledge, the skills, and the values to make a distinctive impact in the world. (More...)**

**We must strengthen our graduate and postdoctoral programs to attract and recruit high-caliber students and young researchers. (More...)**

**We must aggressively foster collaborative relationships with other institutions to leverage our resources. (More...)**

**We must invest in a select number of interdisciplinary endeavors that will enable us to leverage our own strengths as well as the strengths of potential collaborators. (More...)**

**We must continue to invest in our professional schools in architecture, management, and music, as well as the James A. Baker III Institute for Public Policy, and seek ways to integrate their success into the broader university. (More...)**

**We must increase the size of the university to realize more fully our ambition as an institution of national and international distinction that attracts the very best students and researchers from around the globe. (More...)**

**We must become an international university, with a more significant orientation toward Asia and Latin America than now characterizes our commitments. (More...)**

**We must provide the spaces and facilities that will cultivate greater dynamism and vibrancy on the campus and foster our sense of community. (More...)**

**We must fully engage with the city of Houston—learning from it and contributing to it—as a successful partnership with our home city is an essential part of our future. (More...)**

Please check this site throughout the spring for additional details and documents elaborating these 10 points.

## **Advancing our Research Mission and Identifying University-Wide Priorities**

- *We must visibly and substantially increase our commitment to our research mission and raise our research and scholarship profile. We must especially focus on departments and disciplines in strategically selected areas where we have an opportunity to achieve nationally and internationally recognized levels of distinction and achievement. Success in this endeavor will require significant investments in and improvements to our research support, physical facilities, and information technology infrastructure.*

We must invest in a select number of interdisciplinary endeavors that will enable us to leverage our own strengths as well as the strengths of potential collaborators. These interdisciplinary endeavors should include some efforts to which we have already made substantial commitments and new areas that will emerge as we develop our strategic priorities and research vision for the future.

From its inception, Rice has been dedicated—in the words of Lovett—“as much to investigation as to instruction” and to providing a setting in which faculty would join the “pleasures of teaching” with “the privileges of research.” The university has realized much of this ambition with distinction in our undergraduate education and research excellence across many disciplines. The nature of research and creative contributions varies by school and discipline, and thus the support needed for productivity is not the same in all parts of the university. The support requirements must therefore first be identified and defined in each of our schools and departments. Nonetheless, as was made apparent in the discussions pursuant to the Call to Conversation, there are infrastructure needs, both physical and administrative, that must be addressed across the university if we are to achieve the distinction in research to which we aspire.

### ***Building Our Research Infrastructure***

To significantly advance our research mission and our profile of scholarship and creative contribution requires that we invest resources to support fully the work of our faculty. Addressing issues of administrative and technical support for the research enterprise will be crucial in retaining our most outstanding faculty and attracting the next generation of faculty talent. Success in building our faculty requires strong support for research, including administrative support for grant application and grant administration; technical support staff; adequate space; and funds for scholarly research and collaboration. We must work to identify at which levels of the university—central, school, or department—various elements of support are most efficiently provided. To support school and department level investment in research infrastructure, we will continue the recently initiated policy of returning a portion of indirect cost recovery to the schools and departments. In other instances, efficiency will require that we create partnerships across the university, such as the Rice Shared Equipment Authority, to address our research infrastructure and support needs.

Physical space is critical for research activity, and most especially collaborative research activity. We must first assure ourselves that we are using existing space as efficiently as possible and that, as our research needs and priorities change, so too does the allocation of space. Once we have taken the necessary step to use our existing space as effectively as possible, we must make strategic choices about new space. The Collaborative Research Center being planned for the site at University and Main will be a fundamental step forward in both meeting our need for state of the art research space and developing deeper collaborative relationships with the Texas Medical Center. It has become increasingly apparent, however, that this building will not meet our research space needs in science and engineering, and thus we must begin now a planning process for an additional building that will house other strategic endeavors in science and engineering. Similarly, we have begun the planning phases for a new Social Sciences building that should enable us to house our social sciences faculty more effectively. Opening up space at the James A Baker III Institute for Public Policy will create additional opportunities for collaborative research endeavors under the auspices of the Institute. As elaborated elsewhere, our graduate students are absolutely essential to our research endeavor, and space planning must take their needs into account as well.

We must also continue targeted investments in and improvements to our information technology infrastructure. Given the increasing centrality of information technology to research and analysis, as well as the presentation and dissemination of information, we must effectively integrate and support the use of technology in the research of our faculty and the teaching of our students. We are already making major investments in virtually all aspects of our technology infrastructure, having spent nearly \$40 million for IT improvements, and we must now plan both to maintain that structure and to make sure we have the human resources to use it optimally.

The library also has a crucial role in the research endeavors of the university, and its evolving nature in the digital age will bring both challenges and opportunities. We must invest more in providing research and information support to our professors and students through specialized staff and services, and we must secure access to those particular books, collections, and historical archives that further the scholarly activity of our community. Our efforts must engage a broad cross-section of faculty and students in identifying both needs and possibilities for the library of the future and the integration of information resources with pedagogy in such projects as Connexions.

#### *Read Comments*

Provide tools and staff support to help students search for articles in online journals. I am always disoriented when navigating through hierarchies of collections and institutional access points. Also, provide easy access to hard copies of loaned materials (books and older journals). —Alum

Our graduate and postdoctoral programs are critical to the success of our research mission. We must undertake the necessary steps to assure that we have sufficient numbers of such students for the work of our faculty and that our policies enable us to compete effectively for the very best graduate students and postdoctoral fellows. These questions are more fully addressed in the section on graduate students and postdoctoral fellows.

### *Identifying Future Endeavors*

Key disciplinary priorities will be defined by the schools and departments in their strategic planning processes, which should be completed over the next six to nine months. Each school must carefully assess its strengths, weaknesses, and opportunities as it seeks to build programs of national renown. These school-based and departmental processes should be complemented and enhanced by efforts to build interdisciplinary endeavors. We must identify those priorities that will span across schools and therefore assume university-wide importance alongside departmental priorities.

Interdisciplinary centers, programs, and institutes offer Rice an opportunity to leverage our small size by bringing together and integrating strengths across the institution. University resources should be available to support faculty and departments seeking collaborative opportunities as such help is often needed to overcome the significant barriers to interdisciplinary and interinstitutional collaboration that continue to exist. This requires us to infuse our most basic processes and structures—such as search committees and faculty appointments—with a greater interdisciplinary element.

As stated in the introduction to this document, we aim to provide the first stage of elaboration of our vision for Rice. Some of our broader strategic priorities are clear—greater interinstitutional research collaborations; more formalized international outreach, with a particular focus toward Asia and Latin America; and research engagement with Houston through initiatives in energy and urban systems. Furthermore, our position of leadership in nanotechnology—which it can be said that we have propelled forward internationally with the discovery of buckminsterfullerene—must be maintained. Our visibility in nanotechnology symbolizes the powerful impact we can have as a relatively small university through broad-ranging interdisciplinary research activity that attracts and galvanizes faculty in a range of disciplines.

We must select other high-priority interdisciplinary endeavors through consultative processes and dialogue, and our choices should be informed by the strategic planning of the schools. Thus far, members of our faculty have suggested a range of ideas—global health, magnetism and quantum materials, high-performance computing, biomedical translational research, a mind-brain initiative, and the digital library to name just a few—that warrant further exploration to determine our ability to achieve leadership and excellence. We must examine each of these, and others that will no doubt be suggested as we go forward, to identify those endeavors that will serve the university best in realizing its larger aims. Ultimately, we must recognize that our success in interdisciplinary endeavors will depend on our ability to make a coherent set of outstanding appointments across several disciplines.

In moving forward, we must recognize that our most valuable resource is faculty time, ideas, initiative, and leadership. The setting of priorities cannot be solely a top down effort. We must have a mechanism for providing small-to-medium-sized seed grants to faculty who have ideas that could spawn important and strategic research activity and generate high impact. Such a mechanism—a fund for faculty initiatives—will be critical to assuring all our colleagues that there are opportunities at Rice to develop plans that can bring both individual and broad institutional success.

### ***Setting Priorities and Achieving Excellence***

Substantial resources will be required for our success in the range of ambitions we are beginning to formulate. The outcome of our efforts will depend not only on our ability to secure those resources, but also on our capacity to make hard choices and define our priorities. As the schools develop their strategic plans and identify those areas and departments in which they will invest, seven factors elaborated in the Call to Conversation should be considered. This order does not indicate the relative importance of the criteria, and the weight attached to each of the criteria may differ across disciplines.

1. The possibility of making new and important contributions to knowledge;
2. The social importance of the subject matter;
3. Student demand for courses and teaching in that area;
4. The possibility of achieving national preeminence in that area;
5. Opportunities to leverage the endeavor both internally (with other departments and centers) and externally (with other institutions here in Houston);
6. The availability of entrepreneurial and visionary leadership to guide the endeavor; and
7. Our ability to secure external funding.

In sum, these criteria encompass leadership, leverage, excellence, impact, and intellectual merit.

While choosing priorities can be fraught with the potential for conflict, we will succeed by recognizing that the choices we make are necessary for the institution as a whole to advance. Our success will require strategic decision-making at all levels—from departments to centers to schools to the central university. Schools and departments should seek outside reviews on a regular basis as part of their strategic planning. Our centers and institutes must also engage in similar strategic processes. We must have regular, ongoing, and transparent processes of assessment and review to assure we are making the most effective choices possible.

#### *Read Comments*

I think the school should be very selective in choosing which graduate programs should be expanded, and which should perhaps be contracted, regardless of the understandable desire of each department to improve its reputation and national standing. —Faculty

All Rice faculty argue that they need to expand their graduate program in order to be better. Before giving any resources, you need to have an effective, impartial evaluation of the graduate programs in each of the departments. —Faculty

Of critical importance is our ability to reduce or discontinue those endeavors at the university that do not sufficiently serve our goals so that we can commit greater focus and resources to our priorities. Similarly, we must carefully evaluate the efficiency with which we use and administer our resources. We must be willing to change the way we do things if doing so will provide a higher level of service or a more effective use of funds, space, or other resources.

*Read Comments*

It is very hard to turn aside from an initiative once it has gained momentum. If Rice does not cut off existing programs, this greatly limits future initiative. —Alum

## **A Holistic Undergraduate Experience**

- *We must provide a holistic undergraduate experience that equips our students with the knowledge, the skills, and the values to make a distinctive impact in the world. This requires that we reexamine the undergraduate curriculum, as well as focus on enhanced research opportunities, training in communication skills, and leadership development for our students.*

From the opening days of the university in 1912, Rice has recruited some of the most talented and capable undergraduate students in the country and offered them a rigorous and demanding academic experience, supported, since 1957, by an intimate and welcoming residential college system in which our students live and work together. As we seek to imagine and define the undergraduate experience in the next decade and beyond, it is clear that Rice must continue to offer one of the very best academic experiences possible, shaped by interactions with faculty as teachers and mentors. Indeed, the undergraduate program is a key part of the engine that drives the institution. Fundamental to our obligation as teachers is that we constantly reexamine both the substance of the knowledge we transmit and the pedagogies we employ.

Furthermore, Rice must continue its commitment to recruiting the most exceptional students from across the nation and around the world. Our historical commitment to affordability must guide our decisions, including enhancing our offering of both need-based aid and merit scholarships to compete most effectively for the very best students. We must assure that the most talented students—irrespective of their financial circumstances—come to Rice and contribute to the diverse experiences we offer our undergraduates.

The Call to Conversation asked us to take a more expansive view of our mission to educate our students, one that considers more carefully how we prepare them for success after they have graduated from Rice. In addition to providing our students with access to knowledge, we must also help develop the skills and create the experiences that will enable them to have an impact on their profession and in their community and to lead healthy and productive lives. Achieving these goals requires that we reevaluate our undergraduate curriculum, as well as focus on enhanced research opportunities, communication skills, and leadership development for our students.

### ***A Process for Evaluating Our Curriculum***

Responses to the Call to Conversation from all parts of our community indicate that we must again comprehensively examine our curriculum and assure that Rice offers the very best undergraduate education possible. The task is of great importance and must be shaped by an open, transparent, and orderly process. The dean of undergraduates, in collaboration and consultation with the faculty, will assume primary responsibility for structuring a multiyear process that commences with the questions posed in the Call to Conversation about the undergraduate experience.

The first stage of the curriculum review process—slated to begin in spring 2006—asks the faculty to articulate more clearly its goals for the undergraduate program, building on what we have learned from the Call to Conversation. What is it that we want our students to be when they leave that they are not when they arrive at Rice? What knowledge and capabilities do we expect them to have? After articulating these goals with greater specificity, the second stage of the process will assess how well our current curriculum meets the defined objectives and identifies those areas of the curriculum that require additional resources and attention. The third and final stage of the process will focus on the development and implementation of detailed recommendations to assure our curriculum effectively evolves to fulfill the goals set by the faculty. Although this process will be led and decided by the faculty, it must be informed by the perspectives and experiences of the broader Rice community, including current and former students.

As for other aspects of the educational enterprise, we must assess the wide range of services and opportunities we offer our students—from orientation to advising to career services to fellowships—to assure that we are providing the level of guidance and support our students need to achieve their goals both in and outside the classroom. Essential to this process are a reimagining and revitalization of the relationship between “academics” and “student life.” For too long, these areas have inhabited separate spaces in the psychological and organizational structures of the university. Creation of the Office of the Dean of Undergraduates, however, unifies academic and student life under single leadership and signals Rice’s commitment to providing a holistic educational experience that delivers not only a bachelor’s degree but also thoughtfully integrated opportunities for intellectual, social, and moral development.

### ***Expanding Undergraduate Research Opportunities***

The range of complex challenges facing our world will be solved by students who are educated to understand the limits of the knowledge they are given in the classroom, who are capable of applying bodies of knowledge to new areas in search of creative solutions, and who can tackle open-ended and ambiguous problems that require original thought and analysis. These are the precise skills that undergraduates can acquire through research experiences, and our goal is to provide access to such opportunities for all of our students.

Research in this context is understood very broadly as any opportunity to approach a problem in a critical and open-ended way, ranging from the scientific experiments in our science and engineering laboratories, to the design projects in our engineering classes and architecture studios, to the fieldwork and original analyses of our social scientists and humanists. In the same way that real-world problems do not have easy answers located in the proverbial back of the textbook, open-ended inquiry through research forces our students to discover and apply new bodies of knowledge to arrive at answers and solutions. This type of learning requires the ability to adapt standard theory to nonstandard settings and to develop a deep understanding of the implications and limitations of that theory. This sort of active engagement with theory rarely occurs in a traditional classroom setting, and undergraduate research has proved to be one of the most powerful means of providing such engagement. Most importantly, this kind of engagement prepares our students for the full range of unanticipated problems and challenges they will confront in their professional lives.



*Read Comments*

The many opportunities for research available to undergraduate students at Rice is one of the fundamental reasons I chose to attend. Increasing those opportunities would have wide-ranging effects in not only recruiting talented students, but also furthering Rice's strong emphasis on learning through research. —Alum

One of the appealing things about Rice for me was the fact that it had graduate research capabilities but was small enough that undergraduates could get actively involved in this research. —Undergraduate Student

In a first step toward expanding our already strong base of undergraduate research opportunities, the Office of the Dean of Undergraduates will open a new center in fall 2006 to provide community-based research opportunities for faculty and students to work alongside Houston-based community partners in addressing the wide range of challenges facing our city. This effort is predicated on the belief that Rice students should move beyond simply treating the symptoms of social ills through their admirable commitment to volunteerism and outreach. In addition to providing these service opportunities, we must help our students understand the root causes of social problems and encourage them to take a lead in proposing solutions our community and our nation so desperately need. The newly-established center will allow students to integrate meaningful off-campus volunteer experiences with an academic, research-based inquiry conducted alongside a community partner.

*Read Comments*

I admit, as an undergraduate, I hardly knew what was 'beyond the hedges.' It would seem beneficial to Rice students to engage in service learning projects as part of their coursework so that they can see practical applications of their classroom learning and can learn real ways of contributing to the greater community. —Alum

The role of research in undergraduate education must be recognized by the appropriate awarding of honors. The faculty should consider the possibility that our highest honors should be limited to those undergraduates who complete a research contribution worthy of that recognition. Our undergraduates should be encouraged by the time they graduate to accumulate deeper knowledge of their chosen subject areas and reflect that knowledge through research contributions, rather than the wanton pursuit of multiple majors.

*Read Comments*

I feel that Rice should require a senior thesis from all graduating seniors. —Undergraduate Student

I believe that the academic departments at Rice should take pride in the fact that they have students willing to dedicate a year to research solely for the sake of learning and pursuing a subject they love. I am surprised to learn that after all of that hard work, the fact that my peers and I graduated with honors in our discipline is not even documented on our diplomas. By all

means, that is not the point of writing a thesis, but I feel as though the work should be recognized on our degrees, to say the very least. —Alum

The recent suggestion that we move to adopt “minors” in addition to majors will enhance the opportunities our students have to study more than one area (including at the Jesse H. Jones School of Management for undergraduate business courses), while also allowing them to invest more time in achieving deeper knowledge in a particular topic.

### ***Emphasis on Communication Skills and Leadership Development***

To prepare our graduates to have an impact on a rapidly changing world, Rice should focus in the coming years on further emphasizing effective communication skills and more robust leadership development as essential features of the undergraduate experience.

Communication skills—from writing to oral presentation—should appear more prominently in the curriculum, both in the general education and in the context of the specific disciplines. Our approach to communication must recognize that our students will succeed if they can effectively interact not only with colleagues in their own and other professional and academic disciplines, but also perhaps equally importantly, with nonacademic constituencies. In many fields, the days of the sole investigator are numbered, as problems today are being solved by teams of academicians, researchers, and policymakers working across disciplinary and institutional boundaries. Success in this environment will require our students to effectively communicate their knowledge and ideas to a wide and varied range of audiences within and outside the academy and their profession. We must provide and support the teaching of communication skills to our undergraduate students.

#### *Read Comments*

Our undergraduate education is exceptional; however, I feel it lacks a few characteristics that are essential to excel in life after university. First and foremost, writing. Excellent written communication skills are such an important aspect of success in today’s world and yet we do not actively seek to make this a foundational element of a Rice education. Additionally, I believe that every student at some point in their degree track should encounter a course requiring them to make a presentation, an oral argument, or some other activity that engages them in oral communication. —Undergraduate Student

I strongly agree with you in terms of developing writing/presenting skills. I know very well that half of making your ideas a success in this world is being able to present them effectively, whether in writing or in presenting at an academic conference. —Undergraduate Student

Without forwarding a specific notion of leadership, we must commit ourselves to each student's potential to make an impact in the world. We should take seriously our obligation to their ethical development as young people who understand their responsibilities to our society and our world. We must increase opportunities for the kinds of memorable, transformative experiences—in student organizations, in the community, or on the playing field—that hone the interpersonal skills our students will need to lead and work successfully with others.

### ***Reaffirming the Residential College System***

Although the residential college system was part of Edgar Odell Lovett's founding vision for Rice, it was not until 1957 that this vision became a reality. As we approach the celebration of the 50th anniversary of the college system, it is appropriate to reaffirm the important and distinctive role the residential colleges have played in shaping the undergraduate experience at Rice.

#### *Read Comments*

The undergraduate college system was the single most important part of my education at Rice. I received excellent preparation for medical school, but the college system shaped the person I am today in many ways. —Alum

Rice's college system is its greatest strength and needs to be maintained and strengthened. The college system ensures that students are exposed to a wide variety of cultures, ideas, and experiences (very few universities facilitate seniors and freshmen living side-by-side). —Alum

In anticipation of this half-century milestone, we are reexamining the colleges from a number of perspectives. Though still in progress, these efforts have indicated the importance of returning to the original ambitions of the college system: to foster democratic self-government, faculty–student interaction, and intellectual and cultural activity outside the classroom. These ideals remain fundamental to the distinctiveness and success of the Rice undergraduate experience. As the university plans for the expansion of the undergraduate population—including the goal of housing 80 percent of students on campus—we must take great care to ensure the vitality of the college system. This will require focused and creative efforts to sustain and reward faculty participation in college life and carefully planned additions to and renovations of college housing and university facilities.

The colleges have yet to identify an appropriate model for some integration of graduate students, although the inclusion of graduate students in the founding vision recognizes the important contributions that these mature students can provide to a community of undergraduates. Significant interest exists among a subset of graduate students in being engaged in college life.

#### *Read Comments*

I think that integrating graduate students more into the lives of the undergraduates is very necessary. Currently, they are a separate student body who simply TA our labs. Perhaps if they were assigned to the college system, but not provided with on-campus housing, we would have more interaction. —Undergraduate Student

Perhaps graduate students could be engaged in some of the college sponsored courses and, via academic advising or career services, interact more with the colleges and undergraduates. They do a lot in day- to- day interaction and supervising undergrads doing research projects in the labs now. —Faculty

## Strengthening Graduate Education

- *We must strengthen our graduate and postdoctoral programs to attract and recruit high-caliber students and young researchers. Greater attention must be paid to providing competitive financial support, appropriate teaching opportunities, and attractive campus amenities that will contribute to a stronger sense of community among our graduate students and postdoctoral fellows. Our doctoral programs are central to our ambition as a research university, and we must achieve greater recognition of the quality of our doctoral students and the success they attain.*

Our distinction as a research university is shaped by the quality of graduate students we attract and enroll. Although the schools and departments must naturally assume leadership in this area, university-wide values for our aspirations to excel in graduate education are important, and we must explicitly recognize the essential role that graduate students play in our research mission and the contribution they can make to our undergraduate endeavors.

### *Read Comments*

The questions posed regarding graduate education reach the heart of this issue. While faculty drive our research programs, it is graduate students that provide the engines that move them. Our research aspirations cannot be met without the highest quality students. —Faculty

Excellent faculty members and excellent graduate students go hand in hand. You will not find one without the other. —Graduate Student

We must effectively recruit the highest caliber graduate students to Rice. While this depends primarily on the quality of our faculty and the opportunities that they can create for graduate students, we must assure competitive financial support, generate appropriate teaching opportunities, and create attractive campus amenities. We have already taken measures to ensure that our level of graduate student stipends and other support are more in line with the competition, and we hope to take additional steps in this direction over the coming years.

Postdoctoral students (those having recently earned their PhD) also play an important role in building our research infrastructure and in enhancing education at all levels. This population already makes a significant contribution by working with and teaching undergraduate and graduate students, and we should increase the number of postdoctoral associates and instructors in our programs commensurate with our growth in funding. To enhance our ability to recruit the best postdoctoral fellow, we should pursue an endowed named postdoctoral program of distinction as a critical part of our research fundraising efforts.

### *Read Comments*

It would be good to have some university or school-level programs for recruiting postdocs and integrating them into teaching and interaction with undergrad students. Currently the postdoctorals add a valuable level of contact for graduate students and undergrads in doing research projects in the labs and contributing to teaching a course for nonmajors in the

department. Postdoctoral fellowships would fit into the training mission of the university and could help serve as additional instructional staff. —Faculty

Graduate students (and postdocs) are the heart of the laboratory and often make the largest contribution of time and talent to the research.—Faculty

I also would like to see more postdoctoral fellows at the university. It provides an opportunity for these newly created PhD scholars to work, research, write, and teach. When they leave Rice for furtherance of their careers, I believe it adds to Rice's reputation as a place where scholarship is encouraged and good teaching is supported. —Staff

Although departments are the focus of graduate recruiting, a university-wide effort to advance Rice's reputation as a graduate institution will be critical to our attracting the best and brightest students in the coming decade. Our strategy should be to make "Rice" a recognized name, known widely for its quality of education at all levels. We must actively support departmental and school-based recruiting of graduate students to assure the most effective communication of Rice's programs and offerings. This requires assessing our recruiting strategy and infrastructure and making the required changes to market Rice as an outstanding choice for graduate studies in those areas in which we excel.

*Read Comments*

"Marketing" Rice as a research university is important. This should include highlighting the positive aspects of being a graduate student at Rice, first and foremost a collaborative environment; this is probably better achieved with a university-wide effort rather than with efforts from single departments. Besides marketing, a real improvement in the attractiveness of the graduate programs can only be achieved with better research opportunities, which translates simply in more money and space for the department with a strong focus on research. Recruiting more postgraduate fellows should be part of this strategy because of the potential impact they can have on research efforts. —Alum

Each of the departments will need to examine their programs, ensuring that we offer the best curricula and research opportunities for our students. Advancing in rankings will be critical to achieve the level of recognition that will attract the most talented students. Some departments may choose to focus on a postdoctoral program in lieu of a graduate program, deciding that the resources are more effectively deployed at this higher level. We must assure space and support for departments with strong graduate and research programs and support interdisciplinary graduate programs in emerging areas that have dedicated faculty engagement.

*Read Comments*

It is the strong research program, not more stipends, that attracts top ranked students. The priority should be placed in building strong research programs in the selective areas. —Alum

Our ability to attract high-caliber graduate students requires providing these future professors with appropriate teaching opportunities to develop their pedagogical skills. This experience is valuable not only for those who wish to enter the academy—indeed, it is critical for those seeking academic jobs—but industry expectations also are such that our graduate students must be able to communicate their knowledge effectively to a broad spectrum of audiences. We believe that teaching experience will make our graduates, future teachers, and others more successful in the different kinds of careers they pursue upon graduation.

*Read Comments*

One challenge of Rice's policy of having all courses taught by faculty is that graduate students who hope to become professors have little opportunity to "practice" and learn the techniques of good teaching. This may be discouraging some top graduate students from attending Rice. Some parts of many courses can be effectively taught by grad students with proper mentoring, and I don't feel this would have to be detrimental to the students in the courses. —Alum

Our opportunities for professional development (for a career in the academy) are, as you've acknowledged, lacking. We must have the opportunity to teach or at least assist faculty. Some of the best faculty in the world are at Rice—give us the opportunity to learn from them. —Graduate Student

Although providing graduate students with more teaching opportunities is imperative, the teaching of undergraduates by faculty is a fundamental Rice value that cannot be compromised. Undergraduates indicate that graduate students can be an important aspect of Rice, adding significantly to their experience and enhancing the curricular offerings. In general, graduate students who teach upper-level courses in their area of expertise receive excellent evaluations, suggesting undergraduates often value talented teaching by graduate students as much as teaching by tenure-track faculty. Preparing graduate students to teach more effectively enhances both the undergraduate experience and the value of our graduate training. Graduate students can (and do) lead small study sections in larger introductory courses, and experiences such as these could be enhanced by the departments.

*Read Comments*

Of course, as an undergraduate, I am very concerned about the quality of teaching. On the other hand, I know that: graduate students are some of the best teachers that I've had so far, and they are vital to the intellectual fabric of this school. Expand their ranks, and support them in all ways that you can. —Undergraduate Student

Determinations about graduate student teaching are (and should be) made at the departmental level. There are, however, a variety of ways we can enhance our undergraduate curricular offerings and provide graduate students critical experience in teaching without reducing our commitment to undergraduate teaching by full-time faculty. We might also explore opportunities for graduate students to teach courses through the residential colleges, in specialized programs focused on skills training or discipline-specific pedagogy, or in new summer programs.

As is already the case in many departments, an integral and highly efficient mode for expanding the undergraduate research experience is for graduate students to supervise, teach, and mentor undergraduates in research experiences. This process may include graduate students teaching a seminar or course in their own research area, supervising undergraduates in a faculty member's research program, or advising and providing assistance to undergraduates as they navigate methodological and technology issues pertaining to their research.

*Read Comments*

Graduate programs add a lot to the Rice undergraduate experience. Graduate students are serious and they make Rice more academic. One way to encourage interaction is to do what [one] department did last year—allow carefully selected graduate students to teach a course in one of their areas of expertise. I heard good feedback from students in these courses. One thing we should not do is have graduate students teach introductory classes. —Undergraduate Student

My comment concerns the teaching opportunities for graduate students, which are somewhat meagre. On the one hand, that gives us time to pursue our own research; on the other, it makes us less attractive job candidates. I think graduate students could offer non credit lecture series (that wouldn't affect Rice's student-professor ratio) in their area of expertise that would focus on topics that they themselves find fascinating. —Graduate Student

Instead of just providing grad students with a forum in which to teach, I believe that we should provide an environment in which they can learn to teach well. Rice could improve upon the status quo by providing "learn to teach" conferences for grad students or by recording graduate student lectures/sessions for later analysis with a teaching professional. It seems to me that adding graduate student teaching should be designed to be as instructive to graduate students as it is to those being taught. —Alum

In moving forward, we must assure that graduate students engage as full participants in our community. Our goals are to provide graduate students in the coming years with a significant improvement in campus amenities, including eating facilities, as the plans for the Central Quadrangle and recreation center take shape. Additional housing should be constructed, perhaps by including graduate students along with undergraduates, in an off-campus facility near the campus. We are also working to provide graduate students with more adequate space where there are pressing needs.

The Call to Conversation has made clear our need to foster a sense of community and greater interaction of graduate students with each other and with undergraduates. Building the appropriate bridges between the graduate and undergraduate population is an important step in this direction, whether this occurs through formal classroom instruction and research supervision or through more informal involvement in the residential colleges.

*Read Comments*

For Rice to rise to the next level as a national research university, we will need to commit additional resources to our graduate students and start treating them like the valuable members of this community that they are. —Faculty

As a graduate student, I think I felt more part of a department and a part of a circle of fellow students and faculty than I felt a part of the university. In fact, there were certain details, not obvious at first but apparent after a while, that made me, as a graduate student, feel a bit of a second-class citizen. Some things have improved since then, such as graduate housing. However, I'm not sure whether the mindset has really changed since I graduated. —Alum

Graduate students here at Rice suffer to some extent. I for one do not feel that I am part of the university community in the least. Coming to Rice, I was excited for the social dynamic of a small university. However, once I got here, I found a complete lack of intimacy, connection with any other population at the university (including undergrads or faculty), and a general lack of respect. We are not looked up to as mentors by undergrads, nor are we given a place for a cup of coffee and conversation on campus. —Graduate Student

Graduate student quality is an important metric in assessing our status, and we must place a priority on serving the needs of our graduate population to be a first-class research university. Ensuring that our students feel a part of the university, are provided the services and support needed to excel, and have the requisite resources for their scholarly work are all essential components to our aspirations.



## Collaboration to Leverage our Resources

- *We must aggressively foster collaborative relationships with other institutions to leverage our resources. This is particularly important in light of our comparatively small size. Our geographic location offers excellent opportunities, and we are especially well situated to develop substantial strategic research and teaching relationships with the other members of the Texas Medical Center. We also can expand our teaching and research achievement in the arts in part through effective partnerships with the cultural institutions of the museum district.*

One of our greatest comparative advantages as a small research university is effective collaboration with other institutions to leverage our resources. This applies to our research endeavors, our educational partnerships, our administrative infrastructure, and our service mission to the broader community.

Nowhere is our ability to collaborate going to be more important than with the other institutions of the Texas Medical Center (TMC). The TMC's constellation of institutions and research endeavors presents extraordinary opportunities for Rice across the intellectual spectrum: from nanotechnology to global health and domestic healthcare delivery to understanding the human mind to medical ethics. Indeed, virtually every school at Rice has some current collaboration with the TMC, and in every case there are opportunities to deepen and widen that collaboration. While the Collaborative Research Center will represent a physical embodiment of some aspects of that collaboration, we must move with greater speed to identify and exploit the potential for other opportunities across the entire university. We must build both academic collaborations—including joint hires and joint programs when appropriate—as well as strong administrative relationships with the other TMC members that will help reduce the barriers to such collaboration.

At the other end of our campus, the institutions of the city's cultural district also present enormous opportunities to leverage our resources, particularly in all areas that touch upon the arts. These institutions can provide resources that are critical to achieving a more effective and visible program in a range of endeavors, and, conversely, we can offer institutions such as the art museums critical expertise and resources they are unable to provide internally. The growing and deepening collaborations with the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, and the Menil Collection are the most important recent examples of the opportunities that abound in our immediate neighborhood.

In some fields, we need to work more effectively with other institutions of higher education and research in and near the city of Houston through such structures as the Gulf Coast Consortia or bilateral relationships that enhance the educational opportunities of our students and the research potential of our faculty.

Much research at Rice is addressed to understanding and identifying solutions to a wide range of social problems, from the integration of immigrants to the design of effective political and social institutions. There are many potential partners in Houston for such policy-oriented research that we should seek out. Rice is well positioned to make a contribution to Houston and other cities through collaborative research and educational programs that focus on urban systems, sustainable energy, public policy, K–12 math and science education, and capacity-building for our city’s nonprofit and civic sectors. As elaborated elsewhere, such research opportunities can greatly enhance the education of our students as well.

Of course, in today’s world the opportunities for deeper collaborative relationships are not limited geographically, although local collaborations provide opportunities that more distant relationships cannot. It is, however, vitally important that we build sustained and deep relationships in both teaching and research with educational and policy institutions across the globe. This strategic priority is primarily addressed in the section on international outreach.

## **Advancing our Research Mission and Identifying University-Wide Priorities**

- *We must visibly and substantially increase our commitment to our research mission and raise our research and scholarship profile. We must especially focus on departments and disciplines in strategically selected areas where we have an opportunity to achieve nationally and internationally recognized levels of distinction and achievement. Success in this endeavor will require significant investments in and improvements to our research support, physical facilities, and information technology infrastructure.*

We must invest in a select number of interdisciplinary endeavors that will enable us to leverage our own strengths as well as the strengths of potential collaborators. These interdisciplinary endeavors should include some efforts to which we have already made substantial commitments and new areas that will emerge as we develop our strategic priorities and research vision for the future.

From its inception, Rice has been dedicated—in the words of Lovett—“as much to investigation as to instruction” and to providing a setting in which faculty would join the “pleasures of teaching” with “the privileges of research.” The university has realized much of this ambition with distinction in our undergraduate education and research excellence across many disciplines. The nature of research and creative contributions varies by school and discipline, and thus the support needed for productivity is not the same in all parts of the university. The support requirements must therefore first be identified and defined in each of our schools and departments. Nonetheless, as was made apparent in the discussions pursuant to the Call to Conversation, there are infrastructure needs, both physical and administrative, that must be addressed across the university if we are to achieve the distinction in research to which we aspire.

### ***Building Our Research Infrastructure***

To significantly advance our research mission and our profile of scholarship and creative contribution requires that we invest resources to support fully the work of our faculty. Addressing issues of administrative and technical support for the research enterprise will be crucial in retaining our most outstanding faculty and attracting the next generation of faculty talent. Success in building our faculty requires strong support for research, including administrative support for grant application and grant administration; technical support staff; adequate space; and funds for scholarly research and collaboration. We must work to identify at which levels of the university—central, school, or department—various elements of support are most efficiently provided. To support school and department level investment in research infrastructure, we will continue the recently initiated policy of returning a portion of indirect cost recovery to the schools and departments. In other instances, efficiency will require that we create partnerships across the university, such as the Rice Shared Equipment Authority, to address our research infrastructure and support needs.

Physical space is critical for research activity, and most especially collaborative research activity. We must first assure ourselves that we are using existing space as efficiently as possible and that, as our research needs and priorities change, so too does the allocation of space. Once we have taken the necessary step to use our existing space as effectively as possible, we must make strategic choices about new space. The Collaborative Research Center being planned for the site at University and Main will be a fundamental step forward in both meeting our need for state of the art research space and developing deeper collaborative relationships with the Texas Medical Center. It has become increasingly apparent, however, that this building will not meet our research space needs in science and engineering, and thus we must begin now a planning process for an additional building that will house other strategic endeavors in science and engineering. Similarly, we have begun the planning phases for a new Social Sciences building that should enable us to house our social sciences faculty more effectively. Opening up space at the James A Baker III Institute for Public Policy will create additional opportunities for collaborative research endeavors under the auspices of the Institute. As elaborated elsewhere, our graduate students are absolutely essential to our research endeavor, and space planning must take their needs into account as well.

We must also continue targeted investments in and improvements to our information technology infrastructure. Given the increasing centrality of information technology to research and analysis, as well as the presentation and dissemination of information, we must effectively integrate and support the use of technology in the research of our faculty and the teaching of our students. We are already making major investments in virtually all aspects of our technology infrastructure, having spent nearly \$40 million for IT improvements, and we must now plan both to maintain that structure and to make sure we have the human resources to use it optimally.

The library also has a crucial role in the research endeavors of the university, and its evolving nature in the digital age will bring both challenges and opportunities. We must invest more in providing research and information support to our professors and students through specialized staff and services, and we must secure access to those particular books, collections, and historical archives that further the scholarly activity of our community. Our efforts must engage a broad cross-section of faculty and students in identifying both needs and possibilities for the library of the future and the integration of information resources with pedagogy in such projects as Connexions.

#### *Read Comments*

Provide tools and staff support to help students search for articles in online journals. I am always disoriented when navigating through hierarchies of collections and institutional access points. Also, provide easy access to hard copies of loaned materials (books and older journals).—Alum

Our graduate and postdoctoral programs are critical to the success of our research mission. We must undertake the necessary steps to assure that we have sufficient numbers of such students for the work of our faculty and that our policies enable us to compete effectively for the very best graduate students and postdoctoral fellows. These questions are more fully addressed in the section on graduate students and postdoctoral fellows.

### *Identifying Future Endeavors*

Key disciplinary priorities will be defined by the schools and departments in their strategic planning processes, which should be completed over the next six to nine months. Each school must carefully assess its strengths, weaknesses, and opportunities as it seeks to build programs of national renown. These school-based and departmental processes should be complemented and enhanced by efforts to build interdisciplinary endeavors. We must identify those priorities that will span across schools and therefore assume university-wide importance alongside departmental priorities.

Interdisciplinary centers, programs, and institutes offer Rice an opportunity to leverage our small size by bringing together and integrating strengths across the institution. University resources should be available to support faculty and departments seeking collaborative opportunities as such help is often needed to overcome the significant barriers to interdisciplinary and interinstitutional collaboration that continue to exist. This requires us to infuse our most basic processes and structures—such as search committees and faculty appointments—with a greater interdisciplinary element.

As stated in the introduction to this document, we aim to provide the first stage of elaboration of our vision for Rice. Some of our broader strategic priorities are clear—greater interinstitutional research collaborations; more formalized international outreach, with a particular focus toward Asia and Latin America; and research engagement with Houston through initiatives in energy and urban systems. Furthermore, our position of leadership in nanotechnology—which it can be said that we have propelled forward internationally with the discovery of buckminsterfullerene—must be maintained. Our visibility in nanotechnology symbolizes the powerful impact we can have as a relatively small university through broad-ranging interdisciplinary research activity that attracts and galvanizes faculty in a range of disciplines.

We must select other high-priority interdisciplinary endeavors through consultative processes and dialogue, and our choices should be informed by the strategic planning of the schools. Thus far, members of our faculty have suggested a range of ideas—global health, magnetism and quantum materials, high-performance computing, biomedical translational research, a mind-brain initiative, and the digital library to name just a few—that warrant further exploration to determine our ability to achieve leadership and excellence. We must examine each of these, and others that will no doubt be suggested as we go forward, to identify those endeavors that will serve the university best in realizing its larger aims. Ultimately, we must recognize that our success in interdisciplinary endeavors will depend on our ability to make a coherent set of outstanding appointments across several disciplines.

In moving forward, we must recognize that our most valuable resource is faculty time, ideas, initiative, and leadership. The setting of priorities cannot be solely a top down effort. We must have a mechanism for providing small-to-medium-sized seed grants to faculty who have ideas that could spawn important and strategic research activity and generate high impact. Such a mechanism—a fund for faculty initiatives—will be critical to assuring all our colleagues that there are opportunities at Rice to develop plans that can bring both individual and broad institutional success.

### ***Setting Priorities and Achieving Excellence***

Substantial resources will be required for our success in the range of ambitions we are beginning to formulate. The outcome of our efforts will depend not only on our ability to secure those resources, but also on our capacity to make hard choices and define our priorities. As the schools develop their strategic plans and identify those areas and departments in which they will invest, seven factors elaborated in the Call to Conversation should be considered. This order does not indicate the relative importance of the criteria, and the weight attached to each of the criteria may differ across disciplines.

1. The possibility of making new and important contributions to knowledge;
2. The social importance of the subject matter;
3. Student demand for courses and teaching in that area;
4. The possibility of achieving national preeminence in that area;
5. Opportunities to leverage the endeavor both internally (with other departments and centers) and externally (with other institutions here in Houston);
6. The availability of entrepreneurial and visionary leadership to guide the endeavor; and
7. Our ability to secure external funding.

In sum, these criteria encompass leadership, leverage, excellence, impact, and intellectual merit.

While choosing priorities can be fraught with the potential for conflict, we will succeed by recognizing that the choices we make are necessary for the institution as a whole to advance. Our success will require strategic decision-making at all levels—from departments to centers to schools to the central university. Schools and departments should seek outside reviews on a regular basis as part of their strategic planning. Our centers and institutes must also engage in similar strategic processes. We must have regular, ongoing, and transparent processes of assessment and review to assure we are making the most effective choices possible.

#### *Read Comments*

I think the school should be very selective in choosing which graduate programs should be expanded, and which should perhaps be contracted, regardless of the understandable desire of each department to improve its reputation and national standing. —Faculty

All Rice faculty argue that they need to expand their graduate program in order to be better. Before giving any resources, you need to have an effective, impartial evaluation of the graduate programs in each of the departments. —Faculty

Of critical importance is our ability to reduce or discontinue those endeavors at the university that do not sufficiently serve our goals so that we can commit greater focus and resources to our priorities. Similarly, we must carefully evaluate the efficiency with which we use and administer our resources. We must be willing to change the way we do things if doing so will provide a higher level of service or a more effective use of funds, space, or other resources.

*Read Comments*

It is very hard to turn aside from an initiative once it has gained momentum. If Rice does not cut off existing programs, this greatly limits future initiative. —Alum

## Investments in and Integration of our Professional Schools

- *We must continue to invest in our professional schools in architecture, management, and music, as well as the James A. Baker III Institute for Public Policy, and seek ways to integrate their success into the broader university. We must also seize opportunities for bold new endeavors when they arise, but we should not fund new schools out of the general resources of the university.*

Professional education has an important role to play in a great university. Engineering and architecture, from the founding of Rice, have played a critical role in establishing the extraordinary reputation of our university. Two additional professional schools—music and management—were added in the 1970s. More recently, the Baker Institute was established in 1993. Today, all of them make important contributions to our national reputation and international visibility. The professional schools and the Baker Institute are integral to Rice’s missions of research, teaching, and the betterment of our world, and they provide us with tremendous opportunities to engage locally and globally.

One of the distinctive attributes of our engineering school is its strong integration into the university in both research and education. The integration of engineering—including cross-school collaboration with natural sciences—is so strong that the school is not thought of as a separate enterprise as it is at many other universities, but rather a part of the university’s overall strength in both graduate and undergraduate education and research. Because of this historic integration, there is little here—and in other parts of this document—that does not obviously and immediately apply to the school of engineering.

The schools of architecture and music, while remaining somewhat more separate in both their structure and pursuits, have established national and international reputations at the highest levels and add immensely to the visibility of Rice. Their success serves as an example of what even comparatively small schools can achieve, and their remarkable integration of graduate and undergraduate education demonstrates clearly how each of these populations benefits from the presence of the other. What may be less obvious is the important role these schools play in the achievement of our broader strategic goals for global reach and local engagement. The success of the architecture and music schools warrants further investment in their trajectory of excellence.

For the Shepherd School of Music, the highest priorities include the funding of scholarships and the construction of an opera theater. The university should support these endeavors. As audiences on campus, across the city, and around the world have discovered, the Shepherd School’s flagship orchestral program is among the finest in the country. The school aims as well to have a nationally renowned opera-training program of a stature equal to the orchestral program. An essential part of this will be the construction of a viable opera theater appropriate for a world-class opera and voice training program. The school should continue its extraordinary engagement with Houston and especially its efforts to bring music experience and instruction to younger students and audiences of the city.



The architecture school's research and teaching focus on urbanism makes it a critical participant both in our efforts to contribute to Houston and in our plans to establish strength in the area of urban systems. The school is also reaching out to make connections to other urban centers around the globe, and that should be an important component of our plans for international outreach, especially in Asia and Latin America. More recently, the school has embarked on endeavors that build on the university's broader priorities—from our connection with the Texas Medical Center and other local institutions to the development of interdisciplinary research endeavors.

The Jesse H. Jones Graduate School of Management is emerging as a world-class business school with multiple, high-quality research programs. We must increase the integration of the Jones School with the broader Rice community through joint degree programs, greater access to courses across school boundaries, collaborative research, areas of excellence tied to key stakeholders, and joint initiatives that engage the business community, particularly in Houston. The Rice Alliance is an excellent example of the integration of the Jones School with the broader Rice community, and so are the range of executive education offerings and the Action Learning Projects that provide the expertise of MBA students to Houston's business, nonprofit and civic organizations. Although we should not start a separate undergraduate business degree program, we should make available some of the Jones School resources to undergraduates as part of their education. The proposal to establish a business minor is a step in the right direction.

The Baker Institute for Public Policy is an integral part of Rice University, having brought in faculty to conduct substantive research alongside Baker Institute Fellows, and has greatly enhanced the profile of the university nationally and internationally. Its research programs have reached across disciplinary boundaries and focused on issues of great importance to our city the nation and the world, including energy, health and tax policy, science and technology, conflict resolution and border policy. In its brief history, the Institute has contributed beyond measure both to the University's local engagement and national and international outreach, including its extensive efforts in public policy research and programs on both Latin America and Asia. It is already recognized as one of the leading non-partisan policy institutes in the country and can provide a major public policy forum for programs which would complement area and global studies on campus.

Although the Institute does not have a degree granting program, its success has brought, and should continue to bring, unique opportunities for our undergraduates through the Baker Institute Student Forum and the Institute's summer internship program in Washington, D.C. In the years ahead, the University and the Institute should seek to identify additional ways to allow a broader segment of undergraduates to benefit from its remarkable success, and to contribute to its research programs. We should also seek to support the creation of a Fellows Program at the Baker Institute to provide training to future policy makers from around the globe.

## **Growth to Achieve Our Ambitions**

- *We must increase the size of the university to realize more fully our ambition as an institution of national and international distinction that attracts the very best students and researchers from around the globe. Growth will enable us to develop a more dynamic and diverse campus environment, increase our faculty in strategic areas, improve our services, enhance the employment opportunities for our students, more effectively use our infrastructure, and build a more vibrant national and international alumni base.*

Growth in undergraduate enrollment must be carefully planned and occur in ways that preserve the distinctive features of our culture and campus, provide an undergraduate educational experience characterized by meaningful direct interactions with faculty and residential life in the colleges, and maintain and enhance the extraordinary quality and diversity of our student body. Our undergraduate student body should become more national and international, reflecting our status as a premier research university. In light of these considerations, Rice's undergraduate enrollment will be increased to approximately 3,800 students within the next decade.

The Board of Trustees has unanimously approved an increase in undergraduate enrollment by approximately 30 percent over the next decade. We now must move forward in the planning and implementation of this expansion, including an immediate focus on additional housing. This will involve building two residential colleges, possible expansion of existing colleges, and the exploration of a Rice-affiliated off-campus facility to house both undergraduate and graduate students. We will also begin taking steps to assure our applicant pool grows to preserve our selectivity as we expand the student body.

## A Greater International Orientation

- *We must become an international university, with a more significant orientation toward Asia and Latin America than now characterizes our commitments. The great universities of the 21st century will inevitably be global universities, and although we are comparatively small, that ought not be seen as an obstacle to our global reach. We should begin by increasing the number of international students in our undergraduate student body; develop research, student exchange, and other relationships with distinguished universities and policy institutes around the world; and foster the international learning (both here at Rice and around the world) of our faculty, students, and staff.*

We see new evidence each day of the increasingly global context for the human experience. Adequate preparation of our students requires that they be able to learn from and work in more than one culture. The diversity of our student body must therefore extend beyond our national borders. We should continue to encourage our students to take part of their educational experience abroad, but we should also make sure they find at Rice an international environment as well. Currently, our undergraduate student body is only 2.9 percent foreign, which is very low in comparison with our peer universities. We should aim at a minimum to double this amount. Our graduate student body, by contrast, is very international, and we must assure that we can maintain our ability to attract the best graduate students from all over the world to study at Rice.

Our research endeavor must also not be confined to our national borders. We benefit not only from our ability to attract the best researchers—whether faculty, students, or postdoctoral fellows—from around the world, but also from the intellectual bridges we build between our university and those in other countries. Each school and department at the university should seek to build such connections, identifying strategic partnerships with universities of distinction in their respective areas of inquiry.

Although the primary emphasis must be placed on the department choices that will lead to the most fruitful and intense collaborative relationships, we should also seek to coordinate such endeavors to build more effective bridges at the institutional level. Because we are small, we must select some geographic priorities. In light of the importance of Asia, and China in particular, in the decades ahead, we should build greater international relationships on that continent. Our location in Houston serves as an advantage in developing relationships with Latin America, and in particular with Mexico. We must continue to explore how best to build institutional relationships and to leverage the resources that we already command in each area.

## A More Vibrant and Dynamic Campus

- *We must provide the spaces and facilities that will cultivate greater dynamism and vibrancy on the campus and foster our sense of community. To achieve this, we must provide more attractive campus-wide amenities, including a new recreational facility, a reconfiguration of the Rice Memorial Center to house a more substantial dining facility, and the enhancement of outdoor spaces with a special focus on the Central Quadrangle. We should make a greater commitment to incorporate art into the campus landscape and interior public spaces.*

As we reaffirm the college system, we must recognize that it is a part—an important and vital part—of a greater whole. The campus-wide experience at Rice must be equally attractive and dynamic if we are to serve all of our students well. A more vibrant campus experience is shaped by the quality of the facilities we offer outside of the residential setting. Informal interaction and dialogue is an essential part of the community we are seeking to create, and it is essential that we create opportunities for meaningful intellectual, social, and cultural interactions between undergraduates, graduate students, and faculty. Greater attention to the broader campus experience of both our graduate and undergraduate students will be important in the coming decade.

From Rice’s founding, Edgar Odell Lovett desired “the physical setting of the [university] be one of great beauty as well as of more immediate utility.” Although our campus is defined by an architectural design of beautiful buildings and elegant landscaping, it nonetheless lacks a sense of vibrancy and dynamism that offers all of our constituencies adequate spaces for social and intellectual engagement.

### *Read Comments*

I am often surprised how little human activity is evident on the campus between classes, for instance. I have never been to another college campus where, at some points in the middle of the day, there is virtually no one on the sidewalks or in the quads. And I believe this is a shortcoming; we are missing crucial vitality and energy that is found on other campuses across the country. —Faculty

As a first step toward achieving these aims, we propose a new vision for the Central Quadrangle—the space bound by Fondren Library, the Rice Memorial Center, and Herring Hall—that will transform it into the social center of the campus. This process will involve building a café pavilion on the back of Fondren, a renovated student center with a substantial and attractive dining facility, and landscaped outdoor spaces to invite a greater concentration of energy and interaction.

### *Read Comments*

Graduate, and in general, academic culture thrives in coffee shops and other spaces as this. We need something desperately. —Graduate Student

I would like to urge that the student center be significantly expanded with an eye to improving student life on campus. There need to be food options around the clock and perhaps throughout the campus. There need to be bigger and better facilities for students to congregate to work on projects together or to find a quiet nook for individual study. Furthermore, I would like to see the student center become a main attraction on campus, one that we can be proud to bring visitors through. It needs to be more modern, welcoming, and larger. —Alum

Better neutral common spaces are needed, like a coffeehouse with a real place to sit and places with enough light to read. (Need space for interaction, for casual conversation, for meeting, for reading, for relaxing—this space simply doesn't exist yet, in my opinion.) An architect with a vision needs to do some serious revamping/expansion of the student center. —Graduate Student

Rice could greatly benefit from increasing in size from “tiny” to “small.” This increase could bring more of the options of a bigger school to our undergraduate experience here. One thing I think is important is a better student center. With the college system already somewhat separating students from each other, it would be much nicer to have a better area for all students to come together, with a better area to hang out and more food options. —Undergraduate Student

To complement this design and our larger goal of fostering campus community, we must build as soon as feasible a modern and attractive recreational facility, located diagonally across from the Rice Memorial Center and across the road from McNair Hall, home of the Jesse H. Jones Graduate School of Management. The construction of this facility is one of our top priorities, as it is necessary to secure our competitive position and to foster the well-being of all members of our community.

#### *Read Comments*

While our academic facilities are beyond compare, our recreational facilities are a detriment to the campus and a disservice to the students and faculty who use them. If we are to educate the whole person as you say, we should provide the same caliber environment for physical development and extracurricular endeavors as we do the academics. —Undergraduate Student

The university needs to construct a student activities center that would include full recreational opportunities for students. The current recreation center's weight room, pool, and various courts, except for tennis, are substandard and create a recruiting deficit. —Staff

As we engage in design and construction, we also must commit ourselves to integrate art into our campus spaces, both indoor and out, and to care for that art, demonstrating its value to the entire university community and to our city.

## Engagement with Houston

- *We must fully engage with the city of Houston—learning from it and contributing to it—as a successful partnership with our home city is an essential part of our future. We should do so by continuing to integrate Houston into the educational experience of our students, by emphasizing selective areas of research especially important to the city (notably energy and urban studies), by making tangible contributions to improve our city (particularly K–12 education and environmental quality), and by continuing to provide innovative educational and cultural resources to the broader Houston population.*

The relationship between Rice and Houston must shape our thinking about the future and our planning for the university. As a matter of educational philosophy, civic responsibility, and competitive advantage, Rice ought to be fully engaged with the city of Houston and capitalize on all that it has to offer. Gatherings with civic and corporate leaders to discuss the Call to Conversation affirmed how important it is for Houston to have a research university of national and international distinction. Rice cannot succeed without the support of this city, its leaders, and its institutions. Conversely, we do not believe that Houston can succeed in its ambitions without a first-class research university of national and international reputation like Rice.

Engagement with Houston begins with our academic mission. We have created numerous relationships with Houston that inform the scholarly work of our faculty and the intellectual conversations on our campus. We must continue to support the contributions our professors already make to better understand the challenges facing our city, and we must bring greater emphasis to energy, healthcare, and urban studies as centrally important arenas of research and activity. The James A. Baker III Institute for Public Policy, the Rice Alliance, the Collaborative Research Center, and other interdisciplinary endeavors are central to our engagement with Houston.

We consider Houston an essential part of the education we offer to students as an urban university. We are already incorporating into our recruiting and admissions materials the many attractions and benefits of studying in America's fourth-largest city. We believe that the city should be more accessible to our students in every way, and our efforts on this front have already produced measurable results.

Complementing the many volunteer and outreach programs already in place at Rice, the Passport to Houston—a program providing undergraduates free access to the light rail bordering our campus as well as museums and other cultural institutions—and new shuttle bus routes to the Rice Village and area stores have allowed our students to take full advantage of what they can see and learn beyond the hedges.

We now seek to make Houston a more integral part of the formal education our students receive at Rice, making the city another laboratory for discovery through community-based research and learning experiences. Our ambition is to bring the city's nonprofit and governmental organizations together with our talented undergraduates to work collectively on the range of pressing environmental, economic, social, and technological challenges in our community. Some

of our students and faculty are already engaged in such projects, and we hope to extend these exciting learning opportunities to a wider range of interested undergraduates and professors.

Although Rice's engagement with the city is far-reaching and diverse, we must recognize our responsibility as an educational institution to create opportunity and equality by opening our doors to our community. We have made and must continue to make a distinctive contribution to K–12 education in this city, through the training of teachers and by providing opportunities for students from underrepresented populations. We must continue to make available our tremendous educational and cultural resources to the many thousands of Houstonians who come to our campus, whether it be for continuing studies and business education—including professional development to help Houstonians advance in their current careers or begin new ones—or to take in a concert, lecture, or exhibit. We must strategically examine our hundreds of mutually beneficial collaborations to find even better ways for Rice to make a meaningful difference in our community.

Rice from its founding has had a special relationship with Houston, and this relationship must form a central part of our ambition for the institution as we near the beginning of its second century.