



## RICE UNIVERSITY

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PRESIDENT

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Dear

Happy New Year! It is finally 2012, the year of Rice's centennial. It is also the lunar year of the dragon, which is traditionally a symbol of good fortune, and I for one feel fortunate to be here at Rice as we celebrate a century of achievement.

One of the first things that greeted us in the new year was the appearance of 100 historical centennial banners on lampposts around the campus. In chronological order from William Marsh Rice's original gift in 1891 to Richard Tapia's National Medal of Science in 2011, the banners celebrate major events, milestones and some of the unique features that have played a role in creating the Rice of today. You can find a list of the banners and a map at <http://professor.rice.edu/uploadedFiles/CentennialBannersMap.pdf>. And if your favorite historical event or milestone isn't there, don't fret. We are inviting members of the Rice community to submit suggestions for additional banners. We'll pick the best and add another 20 or so centennial banners to those already on campus. Send your suggestions to Jeff Cox in Public Affairs at [jeffcox@rice.edu](mailto:jeffcox@rice.edu).

Of course, all of this is leading up to our Centennial Celebration Oct. 10–14. Save the date! There will be speakers, concerts, a special homecoming game and many other events to celebrate 100 years of Rice history. Visit <http://www.centennial.rice.edu> for more information. We are also holding an international Centennial Celebration June 8–10 in Istanbul. If you have ever wanted to visit, or revisit, this amazing city, this would be the time. The Istanbul gathering will be an exciting chance to bring together alumni from all over the world to share their Rice experiences, to celebrate the centennial, to hear lectures and to tour one of the most historic cities in the world.

While the big Centennial Celebration will be in October, the campus will continue to celebrate milestones along the way. Coming up is the UnConvention, a play on our Unconventional Wisdom motto, which will feature several days of events from April 11 to 15 that involve every part of our campus. We'll even be taking over the Rice metro station and wrapping four trains with our centennial logo. This is Rice's open house for the Houston community, and we hope those of you in Houston will take advantage of it. For more information about the many opportunities to participate, go to <http://www.rice.edu/unconvention>.

It has been awhile since I have written, so there is a lot to catch up on. (In the future, I am hoping to write shorter, but somewhat more frequent, letters.) Last September, we welcomed 1,000 freshmen to Rice, 50 more than the 950 we had planned for the goal set forth in our Vision for the Second Century (V2C). Thanks to some great work by faculty and staff, we were able to accommodate our students in the residential colleges and classrooms with only a few hiccups. Although the higher than expected enrollment posed challenges, the good news is it resulted from an increase in the yield from our accepted students, and that increase was particularly noteworthy among students from outside of Texas, among Hispanic students and among students interested in the social sciences. And although the number of applications we have received for next fall set a record at about 15,100, nearly double seven years ago, we will hold the 2012 incoming class to 935 students to balance things out and then gradually return to our target of 950 freshmen each fall. Of course, that is quite an expansion from the 59 students who showed up at the matriculation in the Founders Room in 1912!

Much needed to be accomplished to prepare for the opening of Rice, and exactly 100 years ago President Edgar Odell Lovett was in Europe recruiting new faculty. The recruitment and retention of faculty is perhaps the most important activity undertaken by an outstanding research university, and that remains as true today as it was for President Lovett — although the university president plays less of a direct role now. Thus, in addition to our students, we were pleased to welcome stellar new faculty this past fall, most notably three extraordinary scientists we recruited last spring from the University of California at San Diego. They are taking up residence in the BioScience Research Collaborative (BRC), which played a key role in attracting them to Rice because of its outstanding research space and the opportunity to do collaborative research with colleagues in the Texas Medical Center.

Speaking of the BRC, that spectacular research facility is coming into its own. Under the leadership of Provost George McLendon, the BRC is welcoming several new occupants who will be part of the Houston Area Translational Research Consortium (HATRC — or hat trick, as we like to call it). The consortium will take research developed at Rice and other labs in the Texas Medical Center and help shepherd it through the maze of funding, regulation and business planning so that medical breakthroughs can reach the marketplace sooner. The BRC has also been the locus for several major cancer research grants from the Cancer Prevention and Research Institute of Texas (CPRIT).

The Shepherd School of Music is also welcoming several brilliant new faculty members, including clarinetist Richie Hawley, organist Kenneth Cowan, violinist Paul Kantor and his wife, pianist Ginny Weckstrom. Their skills as performers and teachers will help the school, already regarded as one of the best in the country, achieve new highs. These are just examples, with recruitment of accomplished new faculty members ongoing in all schools.

Of course, while the recruitment of new faculty is an important investment in excellence, equally critical are the continuing accomplishments of those who have been with us for some time. I already mentioned that Richard Tapia, who joined Rice more than 40 years ago, was awarded the National Medal of Science by President Obama last fall. Bioengineer and physicist Michael Deem has earned one of the highest scientific honors in Texas, the O'Donnell Award from the Academy of Medicine, Engineering and Science of Texas (TAMEST). Tapia and Deem joined professors Behnaam Aazhang, Pedro Alvarez, George Bennett, Tony Mikos and Krishna Palem named as fellows of the American Association for the Advancement of Science, the world's largest general scientific society and publisher of the esteemed journal *Science*.

Jane Grande-Allen, an acclaimed expert in the biomechanics of heart-valve tissue, received an Established Investigator Award from the American Heart Association, and computer scientist Moshe Vardi was named a Distinguished Service Professor, recognizing his broad and deep contributions to the university. He also received the IEEE Computer Society's 2011 Harry H. Goode Award for his research.

Our faculty members continue to publish books that are adding knowledge across a great span of issues that affect our daily lives. In just the area of religion, a topic that touches on everything from the presidential elections to ongoing conflict in the Middle East, Tony Pinn recently published "The End of God-Talk: An African-American Humanist Theology," April DeConick wrote "Holy Misogyny: Why the Sex and Gender Conflicts in the Early Church Still Matter," Jeff Kripal wrote "Mutants and Mystics: Science Fiction, Superhero Comics and the Paranormal," and Matthias Henze wrote "Jewish Apocalypticism in Late First Century Israel." That's just from one department. And in a related area, Sociology Professor Elaine Ecklund has earned widespread attention for her book "Science vs. Religion: What Scientists Really Think." She and collaborators at the Baker Institute were recently awarded a \$2 million grant from the Templeton World Charity Foundation to undertake a pathbreaking comparative study of science and religion around the world.

Moving from the spiritual to the concrete, we also welcomed former Architecture Dean Lars Lerup back from his sabbatical, a return marked by the publication of "One Million Acres & No Zoning," an examination of Houston as a test case for 21st-century urbanism in an unregulated city.

There are many things about Rice that we like to claim are among the best, some widely recognized, and others less so. Last fall, the Princeton Review published the results of its comprehensive survey of undergraduate students, and to the surprise of no one here on campus, we ranked No. 1 in the country for both student happiness and student quality of life — the latter for the third year in a row. Other categories in which we were in the top 10 included town-gown relations, race-class interaction, best athletic facilities and my personal favorite, "school runs like butter." I also was very proud that the Leiden Ranking of scientific performance, based on impact of faculty publications, ranked Rice fourth in the world.

Less recognized perhaps is our Faculty Senate. Created in 2005, the senate has benefited from consistently superb leadership that has worked closely and effectively with the administration. The senate is committed, like everyone at Rice, to working through difficult issues and constantly improving how we educate and serve our students, and it has made significant contributions each year. The most recent and perhaps most important example is the establishment of a new writing program, which we are working swiftly to implement. Called the Program in Writing and Communication, it will consist of freshman writing-intensive seminars; a new center for written, oral and visual communication; and ultimately a curriculum for writing in each of our disciplines. This will be a major enhancement of our undergraduate education.

As part of the centennial, the senate, in partnership with the administration, recently launched a series of campus conversations titled *Rice 2032: Building the Vision in Disruptive Times*. Three such conversations will occur this semester, with a fourth scheduled for the fall. The first was held in January on teaching, and it was a terrific dialogue among members

of the faculty, administration and several trustees. The aim is to look reasonably far into the future to identify likely changes in the higher education landscape and to prepare Rice to adapt to and take advantage of them..

Also in January, we held a forum that drew almost 500 people to hear Athletics Director Rick Greenspan and me discuss Rice's vision for athletics. This is first and foremost a vision that puts our student-athletes' success above all else, in part by ensuring their integration into all aspects of the Rice experience. Our athletes have the same broad dimension of skills and aspirations as do all Rice students. So, yes, we have a football player who is also an outstanding cello player, to mention just one example. We also rolled out exciting plans for a new football training facility (that will in fact serve all student-athletes) and for significant stadium improvements. All of this, like so much we aspire to do, depends on our ability to raise funds from Owl fans.

In our athletics programs, as everything at Rice, we are committed to values that have sustained us for a century. Over the last year, we have articulated some of those values more explicitly in our internal communications. In doing so, we have used the four letters of our name to build a statement of core values: R for responsibility, I for integrity, C for community and E for excellence. We hope our students will carry those values with them throughout their lives. You can learn more about those Rice values at [http://www.professor.rice.edu/professor/Office\\_of\\_the\\_President.asp](http://www.professor.rice.edu/professor/Office_of_the_President.asp).

The campus revitalization that we undertook as part of the V2C is nearly complete, and construction has at least temporarily slowed down. Thanks to the generosity of the A. Eugene Brockman Charitable Trust and a grant from the National Institute of Standards and Technology, last summer we opened the Brockman Hall for Physics, a beautiful new research facility that features new interpretations of the traditional Rice brick motif. With the physics faculty housed in Brockman, we renovated their former building, historic Herzstein Hall, into a wonderful new home for our highly ranked political science department. That in turn opened up space for the Baker Institute to add new programs and fellows.

Speaking of which, the Baker Institute was recently ranked the No. 24 think tank in the United States and the No. 17 university-related think tank in the world, testimony to the quality of the policy research by its fellows. But the institute is also creating educational opportunities and internships for undergraduate students. As an example, several students spent last summer at Institut français des relations internationales (IFRI) in Paris. Looking forward, the vice president for education at the Qatar Foundation recently provided a grant for a new Rice student initiative that will take place in February and March in Doha and involve 12 Rice students from the schools of music, natural sciences, engineering, social sciences and humanities.

The Jones Graduate School of Business has also seen a steady increase in its rankings, placing in the top 20 schools in the country in the latest Financial Times ranking and sixth in BusinessWeek's ranking of Professional MBA programs. Its primary engagement with undergraduates — the relatively new business minor — has proven extraordinarily popular with our students. This involvement with undergraduates by both the Baker Institute and the Jones School reinforces one of the things I like to say about Rice: There is no part of the university that is not engaged in undergraduate education. This distinguishes us from almost all other research universities.

That, of course, does not take away from the vital importance of graduate education, which remains one of the essential pillars of a successful research university. Again, I could cite accomplishments that go on for pages, but here are a few examples. Last fall, the U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) funded a research proposal by Sumedh Warudkar, who is also president of the Graduate Student Association. His project was one of only 17 selected by DOE for a program to develop new technologies for capturing carbon dioxide from coal-fired power plants.

Graduate students Dane Powell and Lucas Hartsough were among the first group of 81 students to receive NASA's Space Technology Research Fellowship Grants this year. Jeffrey Reep, a graduate student in space physics and astronomy, was one of only seven students in the country to win one of NASA's coveted Earth and Space Science Fellowships this year. Noteworthy as well is that one of our many graduate school alumni at NASA, Gerald Fishman, shared the prestigious \$1 million Shaw Prize in Astronomy last year. These achievements reinforce Rice's long history of collaboration with NASA in space science research, something we commemorated last fall with a series of seminars and programs that made up the NASAversary, a centennial event.

Coming back to Houston, if you are on campus, I hope you will take the time not only to read the Rice banners — preferably while walking rather than driving — but also to notice the vast increase in campus art. These are pieces by acclaimed artists like Surls, Villarreal, Robson, Tagliapietra and Kubricht. There is now a spectacular owl sculpture by Geoffrey Dashwood outside the Rice Memorial Chapel, and coming soon are a statue of President Lovett by Bruce

Wolfe and a site-specific installation called “Mirror” by internationally acclaimed artist Jaume Plensa. Nearing completion is the skyspace by artist James Turrell next to Alice Pratt Brown Hall. This is shaping up as a stunning work, providing a beautiful structure, a unique way of viewing and appreciating the sky and its subtle colors, and a space for chamber concerts.

With all the new buildings you might be worried about the wildlife (no, I don’t mean the wild life) on the campus. But Rice alum and Jones School Adjunct Professor Robert Flatt captured our campus owls in his beautiful book of photography, “Rice’s Owls.” (You might recall that we also used photos of a new batch of baby owls by Rice photographer Tommy LaVergne to create our popular holiday e-card.) Rice has also become a destination for migrating birds, to the delight of area birdwatchers, and was recently certified a Tree Campus USA. And the squirrels, even in the midst of the drought, seemed fatter than ever.

Just a few years ago, sending a letter like this to the Rice community by email was an innovation. Now it is so — yesterday. So in addition to visiting [www.rice.edu](http://www.rice.edu), which is packed with great Rice stories and information, you can follow Rice developments on Facebook, YouTube and Twitter. I took the bold step of quietly launching my own Twitter account two years ago (@davidleebron) and found the limitation of 140 characters actually appealing. (No doubt, by the time you get to this point, you are probably wishing I had stuck to Twitter for this letter as well.) I often use Twitter to promote Rice’s accomplishments and events, but also occasionally to note what I am up to, comment on current events, or point out an interesting book, article or movie. It’s been fun, especially when it’s interactive.

Before concluding, let me say a few words about our finances. I am happy to report that, after two years of belt-tightening, Rice is entering its centennial year in strong financial condition. Our endowment had a significant return of more than 22 percent in the last fiscal year that helped recoup many of the losses suffered in the economic downturn. Even at the worst of the downturn, with prudent budgeting we were able to sustain our V2C construction and growth plans, retain and recruit top faculty, and substantially enhance the academic, recreational and social environment for our students.

Meanwhile, I am pleased to report that we have now raised \$775 million toward our \$1 billion Centennial Campaign goal, and that includes \$85 million toward our vitally important \$100 million scholarship goal. Thanks to our generous alumni and other supporters, Rice will have resources to invest in even greater academic excellence in our second century. With the great leadership of Susie Glasscock ’62 and Bobby Tudor ’82 and tireless work by volunteers across the country, I have every confidence we’ll reach our goal by the end of the campaign in 2013. To learn more about how the Centennial Campaign is helping transform Rice, go to <https://giving.rice.edu/report/>.

I would like to end by going back once more in history. Among the many things President Lovett so well understood was the importance of getting attention for his new university. It seems remarkable today that 100 years ago this month, a full half-page spread, with wonderful drawings of Lovett Hall, William Marsh Rice and President Lovett, appeared in the New York Times under the headline “Murdered Man’s Estate Founds Great University.” Here is what the Times had to say:

“The significant feature of this new educational enterprise in the Southwest is that it stands for an educational plan new in that section. ... With the endowment that the Rice Institute has, and with its trustees and President free, as they are, to operate it as they will, the institute will have a rare and interesting opportunity.

“It really means the birth of another big university, and the planting of a university in a part of America where a big, free, untrammled, thoroughly equipped university cannot but do good work. The South Texas city ... is certain to find in its young university an important addition.”

Indeed, we have much to celebrate in the progress we have made toward fulfilling our founding vision and in the justifiable optimism about what lies ahead. I look forward to sharing this historic moment with many of you as I embark on a series of presidential visits as part of our Centennial Celebration.

With warm regards,



President David Leebron

