



*From the Office of the American Secretary*

Elliot F. Gerson  
American Secretary  
The Rhodes Trust  
8229 Boone Boulevard, Suite 240  
Vienna, VA 22182-2623

November 21, 2020

703 821 5960  
Fax 703 821 2770  
admin@rhodesscholar.org  
www.rhodesscholar.org

**\*\*\*\*\* NEWS RELEASE \*\*\*\*\* NEWS RELEASE \*\*\*\*\* NEWS RELEASE \*\*\*\*\* FOR  
IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**WASHINGTON, DC / November 21, 2020** – Elliot F. Gerson, American Secretary of the Rhodes Trust, today announced the names of the 32 Americans chosen as Rhodes Scholars representing the United States. “Never before has a class of Rhodes Scholars been elected entirely virtually, with both candidates and selectors participating safely, independently and digitally.”

Gerson described this year’s class: “This year’s American Rhodes Scholars—independently elected by 16 committees around the country meeting simultaneously—reflect the remarkable diversity that characterizes and strengthens the United States. Twenty-one of the 32 are students of color; ten are Black, equal to the greatest number ever elected in one year in the United States. Fifteen are first-generation Americans or immigrants; and one is a Dreamer with active DACA status. Seventeen of the winners are women, 14 are men, and one is non-binary. These young Americans will go to Oxford next October to study in fields broadly across the social, biological and physical sciences, the humanities, and public policy. They are leaders already, and we are confident that their contributions to public welfare globally will expand exponentially over the course of their careers.”

Rhodes Scholarships provide all expenses for two or three years of study at the University of Oxford in England—ranked the #1 university in the world in some global rankings—and may allow funding in some instances for four years. Mr. Gerson called the Rhodes Scholarships, "the oldest and best-known award for international study, and arguably the most famous academic award available to American college graduates." The Scholarships were created in 1902 by the Will of Cecil Rhodes and are provided in partnership with the Second Century Founders, John McCall MacBain O.C. and The Atlantic Philanthropies, and many other generous benefactors. The first class of American Rhodes Scholars entered Oxford in 1904; those elected today will enter Oxford in October 2021.

Rhodes Scholars are chosen in a two-stage process. First, applicants must be endorsed by their college or university. This year more than 2,300 students began the application process; 953 were endorsed by 288 different colleges and universities. Committees of Selection in each of 16 U.S. districts then invite the strongest applicants to appear before them virtually for interview.

This class includes the first Rhodes Scholars ever elected from Southern Connecticut State University and from the University of California, Santa Cruz. Also elected was the second Rhodes Scholar from Lafayette College, the first having been elected more than a century ago. South Dakota State University also had its second winner, the first since 1952.

Applicants are chosen on the basis of the criteria set down in the Will of Cecil Rhodes. These criteria include first and fundamentally, academic excellence. This is a critical but only threshold condition. A Rhodes Scholar should also have great ambition for impact, and an ability to work with others and to achieve one's goals. In addition, a Rhodes Scholar should be committed to make a strong difference for good in the world, be concerned for the welfare of others, and be acutely conscious of inequities. Although the Trust strives for the most inclusive application pool possible through outreach efforts, consideration of balance or diversity are not factors in selection. And finally Gerson said, "a Rhodes Scholar should show great promise of leadership. In short, we seek outstanding young people of intellect, character,

leadership and commitment to service.” Gerson said “these basic characteristics are directed at fulfilling Mr. Rhodes’s hopes that the Rhodes Scholars would make an important and positive contribution throughout the world. In Rhodes’s words, his Scholars should 'esteem the performance of public duties as their highest aim.'”

Applicants in the United States may apply either through the State where they are legally resident or where they have attended college for at least two years. The district committees met separately, on Friday and Saturday, November 20 and 21, through a virtual platform across the country. Each district committee made a final selection of two Rhodes Scholars from the candidates of the state or states within the district. Two-hundred thirty-eight applicants from 86 different colleges and universities reached the final stage of the competition, including nine that had never before had a student win a Rhodes Scholarship.

The 32 Rhodes Scholars chosen from the United States will join an international group of Scholars chosen from 23 other jurisdictions (more than 60 countries) around the world, and for the second year, two Scholars from any country in the world without its own Scholarship. In addition to the 32 Americans, Scholars are also now selected from Australia, Bermuda, Canada, China, the nations of the Commonwealth Caribbean, East Africa, Germany, Hong Kong, India, Israel, Jamaica, Kenya, Malaysia, New Zealand, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, Singapore, Southern Africa (South Africa, plus Botswana, Lesotho, Malawi, Namibia and Eswatini), Syria/Jordan/Lebanon/Palestine, the United Arab Emirates, West Africa (including Benin, Burkina Faso, Cape Verde, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Ivory Coast, Liberia, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Nigeria, the island of Saint Helena, Senegal, Sierra Leone, São Tomé and Príncipe, and Togo), Zambia, and Zimbabwe. Over one hundred Rhodes Scholars will be selected worldwide this year, including several who have attended American colleges and universities but who are not U.S. citizens and who have applied through their home country.

With the elections announced today, 3,548 Americans have won Rhodes Scholarships, representing 326 colleges and universities. Since 1976, women have been eligible to apply, and 605 American women have now won the coveted scholarship. Approximately 2,000 American Rhodes Scholars are living in all parts of the U.S. and abroad.

The value of the Rhodes Scholarship varies depending on the academic field and the degree (B.A., master's, doctoral) chosen. The Rhodes Trust pays all college and university fees, provides a stipend to cover necessary expenses while in residence in Oxford as well as during vacations, and transportation to and from England. The total value of the Scholarship averages approximately US\$70,000 per year, and up to as much as approximately US\$250,000 for Scholars who remain at Oxford for four years in certain departments.

American Secretary Gerson also today announced news and developments about the Rhodes Trust in Oxford and globally.

Over recent years and as noted above, the Rhodes Trust has increased the number of Scholarships awarded annually to ensure that the world's diversity is reflected in the community at Oxford. The most recent expansion increases the number of Rhodes Scholars studying at the University of Oxford at any one time to more than 250.

The Rhodes Trust has also been further developing its Character, Service and Leadership Program for Scholars in Residence, and Rhodes Scholars become part of a lifelong fellowship. Over 8,000 Rhodes Scholars have gone on to serve at the forefront of government, education, the arts, NGOs, commerce, research and other sectors. They are well known advocates for expanded social justice and have advanced the frontiers of science and medicine. In recent years the Rhodes Trust has also partnered with several other remarkable organizations to create:

- The Mandela Rhodes Foundation, focused on providing postgraduate educational opportunities and building exceptional leadership capacity in Africa.
- The Atlantic Institute, acting as a knowledge-sharing and supportive hub for the seven interconnected Atlantic Fellows programs, assisting this diverse community of leaders working to advance fairer, healthier, more inclusive societies.
- The Schmidt Science Fellows program, seeking to expand the horizons of the next generation of leaders and innovators in the natural sciences, engineering, mathematics, and computing.

- The Rise program, an initiative of Schmidt Futures and the Rhodes Trust, which will build a network of exceptional young people who are committed to helping others throughout their lives.

For more information about the Rhodes Trust in Oxford and in the rest of the world, please contact Babette Littlemore at [babette.littlemore@rhodeshouse.ox.ac.uk](mailto:babette.littlemore@rhodeshouse.ox.ac.uk).

The full list of the newly elected United States Rhodes Scholars, with the states from which they were chosen, their hometowns, and their American colleges or universities, follows. Very brief profiles follow the list.

For further information about the U.S. Rhodes Scholarships, please contact:

Elliot F. Gerson  
American Secretary  
The Rhodes Trust  
8229 Boone Boulevard, Suite 240  
Vienna, Virginia 22182  
703-821-5960  
[elliottgerson@gmail.com](mailto:elliottgerson@gmail.com)

Beginning Sunday, November 22 and through next week. Mr. Gerson may be reached for press inquiries or comments at [elliottgerson@gmail.com](mailto:elliottgerson@gmail.com) or at 202-288-1195. Joyce Knight and Thom Yu of the American Secretary's Office will be able to provide details on how to reach Scholars-elect, and may be reached at [joyceknight@rhodesscholar.org](mailto:joyceknight@rhodesscholar.org) or [thom@rhodesscholar.org](mailto:thom@rhodesscholar.org). Beginning Monday, November 23, questions can be directed to Ms. Knight and Mr. Yu, or Mr. Gerson, at the Rhodes Trust office in Vienna, Virginia at 703-821-5960.

PLEASE NOTE: Given the time challenge and complexity of 16 concurrent district selections across the United States, initial versions of the short bios and winners' list included with this press release may contain small errors, typographical and otherwise. Most are corrected within 24 hours, so always check [www.rhodesscholar.org](http://www.rhodesscholar.org) for the most up-to-date versions. In addition, you may find photos of the winners on the global Rhodes Trust website, [www.rhodeshouse.ox.ac.uk](http://www.rhodeshouse.ox.ac.uk), where they will be uploaded as soon as practicable.