



November 16, 2005

Re: ARA Endorses Call to Conversation

Dear fellow alumni,

The July launch of President David Leebron's Call to Conversation marked the start of an exciting time in the Rice community. For the past five months, Rice alumni, faculty, staff, and students have engaged in a dialogue on the challenges and opportunities that Rice faces at present and will face in the coming decade.

The process through which this conversation has occurred has been remarkable. President Leebron made available a number of avenues to solicit, receive, and process feedback, including reaching out to the Association of Rice Alumni (ARA) to engage Rice alumni. The Call to Conversation document was made available to every Rice alumnus and alumna, with each one of us given the opportunity to share our views on the direction Rice should take over the next several years. In addition, President Leebron sought feedback from the entire Rice community through alumni receptions in Houston, regionally, and internationally; small-group gatherings on campus and elsewhere; and individual meetings with key university and community leaders.

The ARA board has encouraged alumni to attend C2C events and to log on to the website to provide individual feedback. Open conversation such as this is invaluable for an alumni population that cares deeply about its alma mater—as Rice alumni most certainly do.

Response to the Call to Conversation has been heartening. Even with Rice students, faculty, and staff being the stakeholders for whom the campus experience has the most immediate impact, about one-third of responses through the C2C website came from Rice alumni.

As conveyed at the outset of the Call to Conversation process, President Leebron and the Board of Trustees will use input from the C2C to help chart Rice's course for the next seven to ten years—the details of which President Leebron will begin to unveil in the spring. In the meantime, President Leebron has shared with the ARA board several prevailing themes that emerged from feedback to the C2C, which likely will be taken under serious consideration as the plan is developed. When the university's plans are ultimately announced, the ARA will actively seek ways in which we can assist the university in achieving its ambitions.

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Alumni feedback was overwhelmingly thoughtful and balanced, reflecting a sincere desire among alumni to play a constructive role in envisioning a future for Rice having, in the words of Rice's founding president, Edgar Odell Lovett, "no upper limit." Comments from alumni represented a range of opinions, of course—but with broad consensus on several themes.

### *Size and Culture*

With regard to the many questions raised in the Call to Conversation, the one that was of most interest to alumni is that of Rice's size. Alumni expressed an openness to moderate growth in the student population—an opinion that is not surprising when you consider that alumni as a whole have already witnessed growth: from approximately 1,350 undergraduates from 1930 to 1950, to just over 1,600 in 1960, to a 50% increase in the undergraduate population by 1970 to 2,400, and then a gradual rise to about 2,900 undergraduates today. Growth has been a constant in Rice's graduate student population as well, with the number of students doubling or tripling in every decade from 1940 to 1970: from 54 students to just under 700. Rice's graduate student ranks have risen between about 30 and 45 percent in each decade since 1970, with the number of students increasing from 900 in 1980 to approximately 1,900 today. There is no single, unified alumni experience with regard to Rice's size, and alumni are open to measured and strategic growth—with one important caveat: that growth should not come at the expense of Rice's distinctive culture. Alumni emphasized different aspects of that culture: a close-knit community, access to meaningful learning opportunities both in and outside the classroom, research opportunities for undergraduates, and preserving the integrity of our beautiful campus are a few examples. Alumni support the idea of growth as long as the things that are good and unique about Rice are not sacrificed along the way.

### *Commitment to Excellence*

Alumni response to the Call to Conversation also reflects a keen interest in the student experience at Rice and in maintaining and enhancing Rice's reputation at providing an unparalleled undergraduate education. This includes not only the classroom experience—led by top-tier faculty—but also interaction with such faculty outside the classroom, research opportunities, and a curriculum that includes attention to developing communication and leadership skills. At the same time, alumni recognize the need to enhance the graduate student experience at Rice: to provide a graduate experience that is in keeping with Rice's overall commitment to excellence and that will attract the talented graduate students needed to support Rice's position as a research university of the highest caliber.

### *A Sense of Community*

A vibrant Rice community is important to Rice alumni, and we recognize that the student experience is but the first step in what—for the benefit of us all—can and should be the start of a lifelong relationship with the university community. The college system provides a wonderful framework for building relationships within the campus community and for forging friendships that can last a lifetime. We should not overlook, however, the synergy provided by the sum of all parts. Rice needs to consider even more ways to build relationships within the Rice community and a greater affinity to the institution, thereby strengthening the value of the Rice network—lifelong. This could start, as the Call to Conversation suggests, with renovated facilities and better-conceived outdoor space that invites not only cross-campus interaction, but interaction among more members of the Rice community: undergraduate and graduate students, faculty, staff, and alumni.

### *Rice in the World*

Rice alumni reside in all parts of the U.S. and all parts of the globe, and we have a keen sense of both Rice's impact in the world and the renown accorded to our alma mater. It is perhaps not surprising—and again, in keeping with Lovett's bold aspirations for what Rice should become—that Rice alumni hold high ambitions for our university. From the impact and respect Rice can and should have in the city of Houston, and in ever-widening circles: among our peer institutions, throughout the United States, and across the globe, Rice alumni expect for our alma

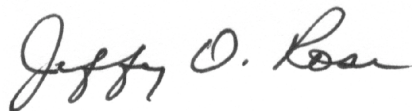
mater to be an institution of note. We want the body of research produced at Rice to make a contribution to the issues our world faces today. We want the value of a Rice education to be held in the highest esteem. In addition to the commitment to education and research that is at the heart of Rice's mission, Rice can advance its reputation and effect in the world through enhanced relationships and strategic collaborations—at the local, national, and international level. We applaud Rice's continuing efforts for better engagement with the city of Houston, from paving the way for students to explore the city's amenities, to expanded collaborations with the Texas Medical Center and Houston's museum and theater districts to create new research and learning opportunities. We appreciate the education Rice provides for talented young people, and its resolve to attract the brightest students from not only Texas, but across the nation. And with technology and socioeconomic interdependencies making the world a smaller place, Rice cannot overlook the importance of international collaborations and having a more international student body.

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We respect and appreciate President Leebron's efforts to engage alumni in the Call to Conversation. It is clear that the president is taking great care in crafting his vision for Rice and carefully weighing the counsel of the institution's many constituencies. We support both the president and the Board of Trustees as they begin to make plans to enhance our university and encourage all alumni likewise to lend their support as Rice plans for the years to come.

We hope that the president will continue to involve alumni as the real work of implementing the university's ambitions begins. We look to the future with great enthusiasm and commitment to leading the way for alumni involvement as the Rice of tomorrow takes shape.

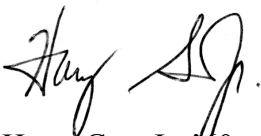
Sincerely,



Jeffery O. Rose '77  
President  
Association of Rice Alumni



J. Kevin Bartol '81  
Immediate Past-President  
Association of Rice Alumni



Harry Gee, Jr. '60  
President-elect  
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