**From the American Secretary:**

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e are delighted to introduce the United States Rhodes Scholar Class of 2014, as always a remarkable group of passionate, talented, and ambitious young Americans. Our selectors faced the almost impossible task of selecting the winners from an applicant pool which would be the envy of any graduate institution in the world. But of course, our selectors look for much more than superb academic credentials. We seek people who will absorb the special riches of Oxford in their highly varied journeys to public-spirited leadership in the decades ahead, and in all fields of human endeavor.

The Rhodes Trust celebrated its 110th Anniversary in Oxford in September 2013. This year, however, is the 110th Anniversary for the U.S. Scholarships, as only Southern Africans and Germans were in the Class of 1903. The Class of 1904 were the first American Rhodes Scholars to sail to England, to disperse among Oxford’s quadrangles, and to begin a legacy unlike that of any other program in international higher education in the world—and indeed the inspiration for all other programs of international education exchange established since then.

The Rhodes Trust has never taken its position for granted. We have always recognized that Oxford need remain one of the world’s finest universities, as it has. Indeed, throughout our history, the Trust has contributed in many ways, directly and indirectly, to assure that Oxford remain among the world’s leading institutions. But we have also recognized that we must do far more than provide a financial bursary for an Oxford degree. We have always—through Wardens and their staffs, and then through Rhodes House as a convening venue—enriched and leveraged the University’s and the colleges’ offerings in myriad ways. Those extra benefits of the Rhodes Scholarships will continue to grow in our second century.

One way they will grow is through the generosity of the Rhodes family. An extraordinary demonstration of that was the donation of £75 million from John McCall McBain (Quebec and Wadham ’80) and Marcy McCall McBain. With their gift, gifts from other Rhodes Scholars, and the gifts from those not Rhodes Scholars who admire what the Rhodes Scholarships stand for, we hope that the Scholarships can be secure in perpetuity.

There are other ways for growing impact as well. While American Rhodes Scholars have long had an active alumni organization, many smaller Rhodes constituencies have not had the requisite scale for the same level of activity. The Trust, however, now does much more to maintain and strengthen a truly global alumni network—and we will increasingly forge connections across the world, and not just social ones, but ones focused on solutions to critical global challenges.

Rhodes House will also play a greater role among Scholars-in-Residence than it has in the past. Expect soon to see many ideas implemented to strengthen the Rhodes experience in Oxford—and in Scholars’ early, mid-, and even late careers. The Trust is exploring a leadership curriculum for Scholars in residence, convenings on the world’s problems, creating and matching service opportunities, fostering inter-generational connections, and expanding the Rhodes geographical footprint. The Trust will also continue to examine, refine, and adjust, if necessary, its selection methods. After all, our unique selection process may be the most important ingredient to our success. It would, nonetheless, be a mistake to assume uncritically that its success is best assured always by leaving well enough alone.

The Scholars of 2014, as you can see, range well across the breadth of the University’s offerings. About half will do M.Phil. degrees, two-year graduate degrees that combine some of the strengths of Oxford’s unrivaled undergraduate teaching with independent research. Some of those will continue on to doctorates in the same field. Most of the others will start with a one-year master’s degree. Some of those will follow that with another one-year master’s degree and others will continue from that platform to a doctorate. Finally, three will do a B.A. degree—not a lesser degree by any means, but one still ideally suited to some (as it used to be for almost all of us).

What is not evident from what you read in this brochure is that the degree choices of fifteen of the thirty-two are different from those they listed in their applications. This is not unusual and is a reflection of several independent factors. First, the odds of election are so long that it is not surprising that students would not take the time necessary to be certain of their choice before winning. In addition, most U.S. Rhodes Scholars-elect are academically qualified for many different degrees, given the breadth of U.S. undergraduate education (compared to that of other countries). Finally, the number of Oxford graduate degree options is so great, and the differences with most U.S. graduate degrees so large, that most Scholars-elect benefit significantly from the opportunity to discuss their options with my office, with Rhodes House, and with Rhodes Scholars with current or recent experience in the various degrees.

Regardless of their degree choices, we have no doubt that these new Scholars will make great impressions in Oxford—and this is of course our fundamental hope: lasting impressions in the world thereafter, each in her or his own way making positive differences and especially for those less fortunate than themselves.

Elliot F. Gerson

(Connecticut and Magdalen’74)  
*American Secretary of the Rhodes Trust*