

The University and Campus

Rice is a private, independent university dedicated to the “advancement of letters, science, and art.” Occupying a distinctive, tree-shaded, nearly 300-acre campus only a few miles from downtown Houston, Rice attracts a diverse group of highly talented students with a range of academic studies that includes humanities, social sciences, natural sciences, engineering, architecture, music, and business management (graduate study only). The school offers students the advantage of forging close relationships with members of the faculty and the option of tailoring graduate and undergraduate studies to their specific interests. Students each year are drawn to this coed, nonsectarian university by the creative approaches it historically has taken to higher education.

One of the unique features of Rice is its residential colleges. Before matriculating, each of the university’s 2,700 undergraduates becomes a member of one of nine residential colleges, which have their own dining halls, public rooms, and dorms on campus; most of the first-year students and close to 80 percent of all undergraduates reside at their associated colleges. Because each student is randomly assigned to one of the colleges and maintains membership in the same college throughout the undergraduate years, the colleges are enriched by the diversity of their students’ backgrounds, academic interests and experiences, talents, and goals. A faculty master, who is assigned to each college and lives in an adjacent house, helps cultivate a variety of cultural and intellectual interests among the students, as well as supporting an effective system of self-government. Other faculty or members of the community serve as associates to individual colleges. The experience of college residence is indispensable to conveying the rich flavor of academic life at Rice, allowing students to combine their usual studies with an array of social events, intramural sports, student plays, lecture series, innovative college-designed courses, and an active role in student government.

Graduate students come to Rice for the chance to work closely with eminent professors and researchers who are seeking to extend the horizons of current knowledge. Although most of the approximately 1,600 graduate students live off campus, taking advantage of the city’s readily available and affordable housing, space is also available in the university-owned Graduate Apartments. Graduate students have a voice within the university community through the Graduate Student Association, which organizes and funds regular social events.

Rice offers students the pleasures and challenges of academic life within the peaceful enclosure of a campus widely acclaimed for its beauty. Campus buildings, including an extensive computer center and the 2 million-volume Fondren Library, form graceful groupings under spreading live oaks. Recent additions include the architecturally stunning Anne and Charles Duncan Hall, a state-of-the-art building for computational engineering; James A. Baker III Hall, which houses the Institute for Public Policy and the School of Social Sciences; and E. Dell Butcher Hall, home to the Center for Nanoscale Science and Technology. Additionally, Rice boasts the largest open-air stadium in the city.

Rice students also enjoy all the commercial and cultural advantages of a major metropolitan center. The school maintains extensive technological links to the area’s many colleges and universities, the acclaimed Texas Medical Center, and other resources. And both students and faculty enjoy Houston’s panoply of cultural offerings, from opera to blues clubs and from a renowned collection of post-impressionist art to alternative art spaces. Rice and Houston together provide an ideal learning and living environment.