

Hofstra University Celebrates Its First Rhodes Scholar

Hofstra University is proud to announce its first-ever Rhodes Scholar - biology major and Honors College student Resa Nelson '26.

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EINPresswire.com/ -- During her time at [Hofstra University](#), [biology](#) major Resa Nelson '26 fell in love with working in the laboratory and the field, searching for solutions to complex scientific problems. Her passion for research and service has led the [Honors College](#) student to become a Rhodes Scholar.

Established in 1903, the Rhodes Trust, which administers the Rhodes Scholar program, awards recipients with two years of postgraduate study at the University of Oxford in the U.K. A total of 106 Rhodes awards are being offered this year to young scholars from 25 constituencies around the globe. It is one of the most prestigious academic honors in the world.

"I am absolutely delighted that Hofstra has its first Rhodes Scholar, and I congratulate Resa Nelson on this

momentous achievement," said Hofstra University President Susan Poser. "Identifying and supporting students for national and international prestige awards is one of the implementation steps of Hofstra 100, the university's new strategic plan, and I thank Provost Charlie Riordan and



Resa Nelson of St. Peter parish on the island of Antigua, is Hofstra University's first Rhodes Scholar and Antigua's second.



Dr. Javier Izquierdo thinks Nelson's recognition as a Rhodes Scholar is only the beginning of what she will accomplish.

Associate Provost for Academic Support and Global Initiatives Suzanne Pike, for their work in supporting students in pursuit of these awards."

Nelson, 21, was selected from among nine finalists representing the Commonwealth Caribbean, which includes Anguilla, Antigua, The Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, the British Virgin Islands, the Cayman Islands, Dominica, Grenada, Guyana, Montserrat, St Lucia, St. Kitts and Nevis, St. Vincent, Trinidad and Tobago, and the Turks and Caicos Islands. Nelson is the second Rhodes Scholar to be selected from Antigua.

Nelson, who resides on the parish of St. Peter, came to Hofstra with the intent of going to medical school. "I wanted to be a doctor," she said, "but once I started doing research, I realized I loved the act of discovery, the process of asking questions, and finding answers."

Nelson's curiosity and strong work ethic opened doors to remarkable opportunities across the United States.

Under the guidance of Hofstra Biology Professor Javier Izquierdo, Nelson has been researching methods for converting odorous sargassum seaweed found on the beaches of Antigua and throughout the Caribbean into biofuels and other bioproducts.

"Hofstra has given me the technical skills and mental fortitude to pursue the work I want to do in the world—and the research I hope to continue beyond Hofstra," she said.

During the summer of 2024, Nelson received funding from the National Science Foundation that allowed her to study at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, examining the ways T-cells identify cancerous cells.

This past summer, she spent 10 weeks at the University of California Irvine exploring how glycosylation genes affect brain function.

"I just love cell biology," Nelson laughed. "If I'm in a tissue culture room, and I'm growing cells, transferring cells, and looking at cells under the microscope – that is what I call a perfect day."

This enthusiasm has endeared Nelson to her professors and classmates.

"Resa is an outstanding student, but even more important is that she's an outstanding person," praised her mentor, Dr. Izquierdo. "She's not just academically strong. She also has done a lot of service and a lot of important things for the Hofstra community. All of that comes together in the package that is Resa, and that is what made her a fantastic candidate for the Rhodes."

Nelson's interest in becoming a Rhodes Scholar began years ago through her experience in the Antigua & Barbuda Youth Symphony Orchestra, where she served as first chair flutist. When Nelson learned that the orchestra's founder was Antigua's only Rhodes Scholar, a seed was

planted.

Nelson later toured the U.K. with the orchestra and performed at the University of Oxford's Christ Church. The institution's historic links to colonialism and slavery fueled Nelson's ambition. "If the labor of my forefathers and foremothers helped build that institution," she reflected, "it would be really meaningful for me to learn there."

Beyond her academic achievements, Nelson is deeply committed to service and mentorship.

She volunteers at a local middle school, tutoring students and advocating for those who need extra support. "Education for kids is something I'm passionate about," she said. "I know what it's like to grow up where your options feel limited. Having someone believe in you can make all the difference."

Faith also plays a central role in Nelson's life. "Servant leadership is something my dad emphasized," she explained. "Jesus served people by washing their feet. My research is how I serve and how I plan to contribute to the world in a meaningful way."

Dr. Izquierdo is confident that the Rhodes Scholarship is just the beginning of what Nelson will accomplish in the future.

"I would not be surprised if we're talking about Resa becoming not only a Rhodes Scholar, but the president of a corporation or a Nobel Prize winner at some point," he said. "She's someone who is dedicated to doing positive things for our world."

Earlier this year, Hofstra earned the R2 research designation from the Carnegie Classification of Institutions of Higher Education, a testament to the University's dedication to research, innovation, and societal impact.

Nelson's studies, research experiences, and the support she has received from her professors exemplify the goals and pillars of the Hofstra 100 strategic plan, launched by the University in 2024.

Ginny Greenberg
Hofstra University
+1 5164636819
ginny.greenberg@hofstra.edu

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