

# Fondren Fellows Project



Any questions can be directed to [fondrenfellows@rice.edu](mailto:fondrenfellows@rice.edu).

## Name

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## Project Title

History Project for Rice University's School of Engineering 50th Anniversary

## Description:

In 2025, the School of Engineering will commemorate its 50th anniversary. This research and writing proposal seeks to chronicle the school's history and highlight its impact on engineering education and innovation. Fellows will collect and analyze archival records and write summaries with citations for identified topics. The research and writing conducted by the fellows will be used to support the following deliverables:

- A coffee table book of the school's timeline and milestones
- The creation of a digital timeline wall that will be constructed in Duncan Hall.

## Project Summary:

The historical project for the School of Engineering is well-suited for the Fondren Fellows program, aligning with its mission to enhance academic enrichment and community engagement through library resources. This research and writing initiative aims to document and preserve the School of Engineering's history by creating a comprehensive archive for future generations. The research and writing conducted by the fellows will be used to create a coffee table book and will serve as the content that appears in a digital timeline wall to be constructed in Duncan Hall.

The impact of this project will be multifaceted. It will produce a valuable educational resource and support research within and outside of the school. The project will deliver a detailed account of the school's evolution, achievements, and contributions to engineering by compiling archival records, conducting oral histories, and analyzing historical data. This resource will benefit students, faculty, and researchers interested in the evolution of engineering education at Rice.

The project will also promote interdisciplinary collaboration. Our engineering staff will partner with librarians and archivists to gain experience in research methodology and historical

documentation. This collaboration will improve the fellows' academic experience and deepen their understanding of the historical context of their field.

Supported by the expertise within the Fondren Library and key individuals within the School of Engineering, the feasibility of this project is high. The library's archival collections, digitalization equipment, and skilled staff provide a solid foundation for the project. In addition, existing relationships with alumni and faculty will facilitate the collection of oral histories and additional archival materials.

### **How many fellows are you requesting?**

We are requesting three fellows.

### **Key tasks that the Fondren Fellow(s) would work on:**

#### **Fall 2024: Research & Interviews**

- Identify archival documents, photographs, and other historical artifacts, using guides available at [archives.library.rice.edu](http://archives.library.rice.edu), and already digitized content online at [digitalcollections.rice.edu](http://digitalcollections.rice.edu). Some relevant materials may also be in the School of Engineering offices and School of Engineering digital resources.
- Track the resources used in a shared spreadsheet so that citations may be properly made and all team members can view what is being used for which narrative threads.
- As needed, digitize physical records using scanning and photography equipment available in the Woodson Research Center.
  - Discuss technical specifications and file naming conventions for scans with archives staff, as quick reference scans and high-resolution publication scans have different requirements.
  - Store scans in a shared folder linked to a tracking spreadsheet
- Conduct oral history interviews with key figures (faculty who helped establish departments and former deans). These interviews are intended to capture firsthand accounts and fill in the gaps in the written records. Each fellow would conduct 2 longer-length interviews.

#### **Fall 2024 – Spring 2025: Writing**

- Synthesize information from various sources to support the creation of a cohesive narrative of the School of Engineering's history.
  - Each fellow will write modules for an assigned decade. Topics for modules may include school “firsts,” engineering innovations, and building dedications.
  - Fellows can provide indexing support, creating a systematic list of the contents to help researchers and other writers locate and access specific information quickly and efficiently. This process could include tagging and categorizing documents, photographs, and other materials to facilitate easier navigation and retrieval.
  - Long-form articles will be written by a contract writer hired by the school.

- The contract writer will also use the modules created by the fellows to develop content for the coffee table book.
- The writing created by the fellows will also be repurposed for use on the digital timeline wall and the ongoing promotion of the school's 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary on social media, the school's website, and newsletters.
- The school has partnered with a design firm to set the strategy and pacing of the coffee table book. The School of Engineering's communications team, along with the design firm, is selecting the topics to be covered and determining the length of the modules. A book map is in development. It will lay the foundation for the writing phases and topics included in each.

### **Fall 2024 – Spring 2025**

- Regularly communicate progress and findings with the engineering team and library staff.
- Participate in team meetings to discuss challenges, share insights, and coordinate efforts.

### **Qualifications for applicants:**

- Historical research methods and writing preferred
- Experience with data organization, cataloging, and using databases or content management systems
- Strong teamwork and communication skills to work effectively with staff and other partners
- Ability to analyze historical data, identify trends, and synthesize information
- Effective time management, adherence to project timelines, and meeting deadlines
- Proactive in identifying and solving problems and taking responsibility for project tasks
- Interest in engineering history is a plus

### **What would students learn through their participation in this project?**

Students would gain a deeper understanding of the history of engineering and its impact on education and society, as well as broaden their exposure to interdisciplinary collaborations. Students would hone their skills in hands-on historical research, data management, project management, collaboration, communication of findings and critical thinking and analysis.