125th Anniversary Convocation Address

November 4, 2010

Rollins President Lewis M. Duncan

George D. and Harriet W. Cornell Professor of Distinguished Presidential Leadership

One hundred and twenty-five years ago today, 66 students gathered in the Winter Park Congregational Church for the first day of classes at Rollins College. Within a few days they would move to the loft above Ergood's store which had been converted into a temporary classroom. Five months later, the first two campus buildings would be complete. On that first day, the library comprised a copy of the Bible and a dictionary. Scientific equipment consisted of a thermometer and a ruler, which also served the mathematics department. The faculty numbered six, for a student:faculty ratio of 11 to 1.

Today, more than 3,000 students attend Rollins' three divisions. Nearly 80 buildings, totaling approximately 1.5 million square feet of space, serve our campus community. The Olin Library houses more than 300,000 volumes. Recent additions to our science laboratories include a horizontal electrophoresis system, a DNA synthesizer, and a high-speed electronic speckle pattern interferometer. Our student:faculty ratio is 10 to 1.

2010 also marks the anniversary of several other notable events in Rollins' history—occasions worthy of celebration even if they were not part of this milestone year. In 1960, the Institute of General Studies, which would become the Hamilton Holt School, was inaugurated. In 1985, the new intellectual center of the campus, the Olin Library, was dedicated. That same year, Rollins and our MBA program were awarded accreditation, placing our Crummer School in an elite group of graduate business schools.

Although Rollins' mission has evolved from the 19th century to the 21st to incorporate education for global citizenship as well as responsible leadership, we remain committed to the vision articulated by the College's founders: “to promote the general interests of education; to qualify ... students to engage in the learned professions or other employments of society; and to discharge honorably and usefully the various duties of life.” On this Founders’ Day, we are honored to welcome some of those students, our alumni, back to campus to talk with us about Rollins and their lives. Their accomplishments are the true measure of Rollins’ success and the founders’ legacy.

As we celebrate 125 years of achievement, we recognize that the College we know today is the sum of innumerable individual contributions. We salute the trustees, faculty, staff, students, alumni, parents, neighbors, and friends who have transported us to this morning. Generous and loyal benefactors have stepped forward throughout Rollins' history—from providing for the College's founding to rescuing it from financial peril, to assuring its health for future generations. Since 1885, the citizens of Winter Park have been our partners in creating and sustaining a dynamic synergy between our communities, and it is our pleasure to welcome you into our academic home.
We stand on the shoulders of those who came before us and we strive to leave for those who follow us a college that is stronger, brighter, and greater. On this 125th Anniversary, we celebrate Rollins' history and reaffirm our shared commitment to fulfilling the promise of its luminous future.

Fiat Lux!