



**Opening Day
Of
Kathleen W. Rollins Hall
January 14, 2020
President Grant H. Cornwell**

Kathleen W. Rollins Hall and the program it houses – Rollins Gateway – are the realization of a vision, not of one person, but of a creative and collaborative process. I want to talk about that today, and what it means for Rollins.

I begin with just two expressions of gratitude. There could be MANY more, and will be many more at the formal dedication of the building at the Board of Trustees meeting in February.

The first is to Kathleen W. Rollins and her husband, Gary. Kathleen joined the Rollins Board of Trustees fairly recently. As she came to grasp our strategic plans for Rollins, she was so inspired by the importance of our aspirations for Rollins Gateway and our plans to locate these programs in this building that she and her husband made a gift of \$10,000,000 to make it

happen. We all have every reason to be grateful for them and their commitment to Rollins and its future.

Beyond Kathleen Rollins, I am told that over 130 members of the Rollins community have invested their time, expertise, and energy, collaborating to realize the shared vision for Rollins Hall and Rollins Gateway. I would like to thank every one of you: all of those who have brought this building to life and all of you who endured a great deal of disruption with patience and good will, and who are now residents and colleagues here in Rollins Hall.

Today, I will recognize one person by name. It is the person I asked to lead and coordinate and shepherd this project from the very beginning. It is the person who has worried through every detail of the program and the building process, the person who has organized and encouraged every member of this team effort since we set out to implement our strategic plans in 2017. That person is Micki Meyer!

Shepherding any strategic initiative is challenging, because they are essentially about change and change is hard; change is complicated; change always meets resistance; and **strategic, intentional** change only happens with leadership. Leadership to rally everyone around a shared vision. Leadership that nurtures the Big Picture and solves big problems but who also attends to every specific detail. And this is what Micki has brought to this project every single day. Join me in thanking Micki.

So how does this all happen? How did we come to be here today, and why?

First: you undertake strategic planning to give direction to an organization, to move it from where it is into the future. In our case, we said we would undertake initiatives if and only if they promised to make Rollins better. Better how? Better at fulfilling our mission to provide a superior liberal education for global citizenship and responsible leadership, empowering students to have meaningful lives and productive careers AND better at competing in a fiercely competitive market in higher education.

Thus, students, this project – Rollins Gateway and Rollins Hall – are 100 % about you. They are 100% intended to deepen your engagement in your liberal education, to enable you to organize and realize every enriching educational opportunity Rollins has to offer, and then to put your Rollins education to work in the world.

But the history of how the vision for Rollins Gateway and Rollins Hall came to emerge is worth telling, because it is quite extraordinary.

An early phase of the strategic planning process had us pose a series of strategic questions and to charge task forces to undertake the research necessary to propose

recommendations, creative and thoughtful recommendations for things we could do differently that would make us better.

What is extraordinary about Rollins Gateway and Rollins Hall is that they are the organic amalgamation of recommendations of not one task force, but three!

We asked:

Strategic Question: What is the most promising alignment and organizational structure for our programs in civic engagement, community-based learning, social entrepreneurship, social innovation, and changemaking?

Task Force Recommendations:

- Co-locate community/civic engagement, social innovation, social entrepreneurship, and sustainability programs to create a “hive of engaged learning.”
- Develop unified goals and outcomes, and supporting organizational structure.

We asked:

Strategic Question: What would a comprehensive program look like, consistent with our mission, which prepares each student for post-graduate direction and success?

Task Force Recommendations:

- Infuse Career Preparation into the curriculum.

- Provide scholarships and funding to increase student access to competitive internships and/or other high-impact practices.
- Relocate the Center for Career and Life Planning to the center of campus.

We asked:

Strategic Question: What can we do differently to achieve an increased student persistence rate from first to second year and an increased six-year graduation rate?

Task Force Recommendation:

- Explore student support model co-locating key support services, such as Career and Life Planning, tutoring, pre-professional programs, competitive scholarships, student-faculty collaborative scholarship.

All of these ideas came together in the collaborative vision for Rollins Gateway and Rollins Hall.

In this space we have collected the array of programs that are so distinctly Rollins – they are what we do that make us who we are. In one way or another, they are all versions of experiential learning, programs which help students put their Rollins education to work in the world, to solve problems, to fulfill our mission, to deepen liberal learning and enact changemaking.

In Rollins Hall you will find each pillar of our mission intentionally addressed: global citizenship, responsible leadership, productive careers, and meaningful lives.

And Rollins Gateway is our signature approach to helping each student put all of these together into a narrative of their learning journey through Rollins.

I could not be more optimistic for Rollins, more proud of our mission and direction, or more grateful to be part of a college so intent on keeping our promises to our students for a deeply enriching and empowering liberal education.

Three cheers for this new space and all of the mentoring, creativity, meaning-making, and liberal learning that will go on here.

Fiat Lux!