

Rudd Foundation Awards 50 Full-Ride Scholarships to 2026 Rudd Scholar Cohort and Launches New \$1,000 GRIT Award

WICHITA, Kan. (February 26, 2026) — The Rudd Foundation is proud to announce the selection of its 2026 Rudd Scholar Cohort, awarding 50 full-ride scholarships to Kansas high school seniors who reflect the Foundation’s core values and have demonstrated exceptional character, drive, and commitment to building a meaningful future.

The 2026 Rudd Scholars will attend four Kansas partner universities: 21 at Kansas State University, 17 at Wichita State University, 7 at Fort Hays State University, and 5 at Emporia State University. With this selection, the Rudd Scholarship Program has now reached 77 counties across Kansas, extending opportunity and support to communities statewide.

“Each year, I’m humbled by the caliber of Kansas students who apply,” said Corri Roberts, Vice President of the Rudd Foundation. “The strength of character, grit, humility, and drive we see in these young people is remarkable. Selecting our final group is never easy, because there are so many students who deserve to be celebrated.”

In addition to welcoming the newest class of Rudd Scholars, the Foundation is introducing a new recognition for outstanding students who advanced deep into the selection process: the \$1,000 GRIT Award, presented to 23 recipients this year. This award honors students whose perseverance, resilience, and work ethic stood out throughout a highly competitive review process.

“While we can only offer a limited number of full-ride scholarships, we want our semi-finalists to know this clearly: their hard work has been seen, and it matters,” Roberts added. “The GRIT Award is one way we can recognize their effort and encourage their next steps.”

Since its inception in 2018, the Rudd Foundation has awarded 313 Rudd Scholarships to Kansas students, supporting them not only financially but also through meaningful programming, mentorship, and a community designed to help scholars thrive in college and beyond. The program’s impact now extends well beyond current scholars, with a Rudd Scholar alumni network of more than 100 graduates who are building careers, serving their communities, and helping strengthen Kansas for the next generation.

The Rudd Scholarship is a full-ride opportunity created to remove financial barriers and open doors for high-achieving Kansas students with financial need. But from the beginning, Mr. Rudd’s vision was bigger than financial support alone; it was about creating a lasting ripple effect across the entire state. By investing in students who need a hand up, the program helps develop the leaders and contributors Kansas communities need, creating

long-term impact not only for individual scholars, but for families, employers, and communities statewide.

As the program continues to grow, the Foundation is working toward a goal of reaching 200 active Rudd Scholars annually across our four partnering universities, while protecting what makes the program special: strong support, real relationships, and a scholarship community that feels like family.

About the Rudd Foundation

The Rudd Foundation is a privately funded nonprofit established through the generosity and vision of benefactor Mr. Leslie Rudd, a Wichita, Kansas native. Mr. Rudd clearly defined six focus areas for the Foundation's giving, reflecting his commitment to strengthening individuals and communities across Kansas and beyond.

Today, the Foundation's signature initiative is the Rudd Scholarship Program, which provides full-ride scholarships and comprehensive support to Kansas high school seniors pursuing higher education.

Media Contact:

Corri Roberts, Vice President

Rudd Foundation

316.847.4828

info@ruddfoundation.org