

# HISD PRESS RELEASE

## HISD graduate selected as Rhodes Scholar

*Liana Wang attended Bellaire HS, participated in HISD's EMERGE program*

Nov. 25, 2019 – Houston Independent School District graduate Liana Wang has been selected to join the 2020 Rhodes Scholarship class from a pool of nearly 1,000 U.S. applicants who attend top colleges and universities throughout the nation.

"This is a testament to the community that has brought me here: my family, friends, professors, and supporters throughout my life, including my teachers and mentors in EMERGE and HISD," Wang said. "They motivate my work and I hope my time at Oxford helps me better achieve my goals of pursuing a more just and equitable society."

[Click here](#) for a photo of Liana Wang, credit: The Rhodes Trust

The Yale University senior is a graduate of Bellaire High School. She and 31 other students from across the nation are scheduled to begin their studies at the University of Oxford in the United Kingdom in October of 2020. They will be joined by dozens of students from other nations. The acceptance rate of the Rhodes Scholarship program is less than one percent.

"This is incredible news for Liana, her parents, Yale University, Bellaire High School and the district as a whole," HISD Interim Superintendent Grenita Lathan said. "She is taking our mission of creating global graduates to a new level. Having a former student selected to study at Oxford also speaks to the great work of our EMERGE program which Liana completed."

HISD's EMERGE program empowers and prepares high-performing children from underserved communities so they can attend and graduate from the nation's top colleges and universities.

HISD's Chief Strategy and Innovation Officer Rick Cruz founded the college-readiness program and remembers Wang as an outstanding student.

"Liana stood out, even among students who are extremely motivated and the cream of the crop," Cruz said. "We celebrated her admission to Yale, and we are now elated to celebrate her selection by the Rhodes Trust. I know she and her family are overjoyed. We can only imagine what greatness lies ahead for her."

Wang is a 2016 graduate of HISD's Bellaire High School.

"I remember how incredibly high-achieving she was," Bellaire High School Principal Michael McDonough said. "We were duly impressed when she was accepted to Yale and it is astounding

that she has now been accepted to Oxford. The Bellaire High School community is exceptionally proud to be part of her amazing story.”

Wang is an Economics major at Yale. Her research examines shifting patterns of inequality in the U.S. and the impact of the tax and welfare system in addressing inequality. She serves as the first undergraduate co-director of a human rights law clinic at Yale, and she has worked with asylum-seekers. Wang is also a volunteer tax preparer who assists low-income residents in New Haven with their tax returns.

Wang is the first in her family to attend college. At Oxford, she will pursue a graduate degree in politics that will provide training in research and methodology and prepare her for doctoral research.

HISD’s EMERGE is described as a program that puts ideas into heads, inspiration into hearts and opportunities into hands.

To learn more about HISD’s EMERGE program and to see a video, click [here](#).

The Rhodes Trust defines its international scholarship program as one that “brings together and develops exceptional people from all over the world, and in all fields of study, who are impatient with the way things are and have the courage to act.”

To see the full list of 2020 American Rhodes Scholars, click [here](#).

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The Houston Independent School District is the largest school district in Texas and the seventh-largest in the United States, with 280 schools and more than 209,772 students. The 333-square-mile district is one of the largest employers in the Houston metropolitan area, with more than 27,000 employees.

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