

LEARNING THE ROPEs of Nature

When his roommate first suggested joining Rice Outdoor Programs and Education (ROPE), McMurry junior and Outdoor Adventure Leader Brian Messar didn't think twice.

"My roommate, Ben [Lindenbaum], is part of ROPE," Messar said. "I kind of followed his lead. I did Boy Scouts in high school, so it felt familiar but this time, it was just a cool thing to do with friends."

Messar's first trip with ROPE was a beach trip to Surfside Beach during freshman year. For a freshman still adjusting to college life, that trip was a revelation.

"It was very cathartic," Messar said. "Houston is such a sprawling city, so going somewhere open and quiet was just... refreshing. It was very hot..., but it was such a nice break from Rice academics."

That sense of disconnecting from hectic campus life keeps Messar coming back to ROPE.

"At Rice, there's always so much going on: classes, meetings, deadlines," Messar said. "But when you're on a ROPE trip, none of that matters. You're disconnected from everything and you just enjoy what's in front of you."

As an Outdoor Adventure Leader, Messar helps plan and guide trips across Texas and beyond, from hiking to kayaking to backpacking.

"We handle everything: transportation, meals, equipment, logistics," Messar said. "We're up at 6 a.m. setting up, and we don't leave until everything's cleaned and put away."

Despite the long hours planning for trips, for Messar, the payoff is worth it.

"Getting paid to do something I'd love to do anyway is amazing," he said. "And the leadership part is huge. You learn crisis management, decision-making, how to guide a group in unfamiliar environments—it's something I even bring up in job interviews now."

In his first year as an Outdoor Adventure Leader, Messar had to attend a multi-day backpacking trip with other new Outdoor Adventure Leaders to train his leadership skills. In the backpacking group, each new leader leads for one day, planning routes, meals, and schedules.

It's a huge challenge," Messar said. "But it makes you confident fast. You don't really have a choice—you're in the middle of the woods."

Over time, that confidence has shaped more than just his outdoor skills.

"I've learned to trust my decisions," Messar said. "When you're leading with ROPE, you don't always have time to debate. You have to be sure of yourself, and that's something I've carried into other parts of my life."

ROPE also helped him find direction in his academic and career goals. A civil engineering major, Messar hopes to work in city planning and sustainable design.

"I want to design cities that actually listen to the people who live in them," he said. "That means thinking about how we live with the environment instead of against it. Being in nature with ROPE keeps that perspective alive."

SCOUTING FOR ADVENTURERS

Brian Messar ('27) talks with Sammie Mahung ('28) during lunch. Besides his involvement in ROPE, Brian also served as a O-Week parent at Jones College.

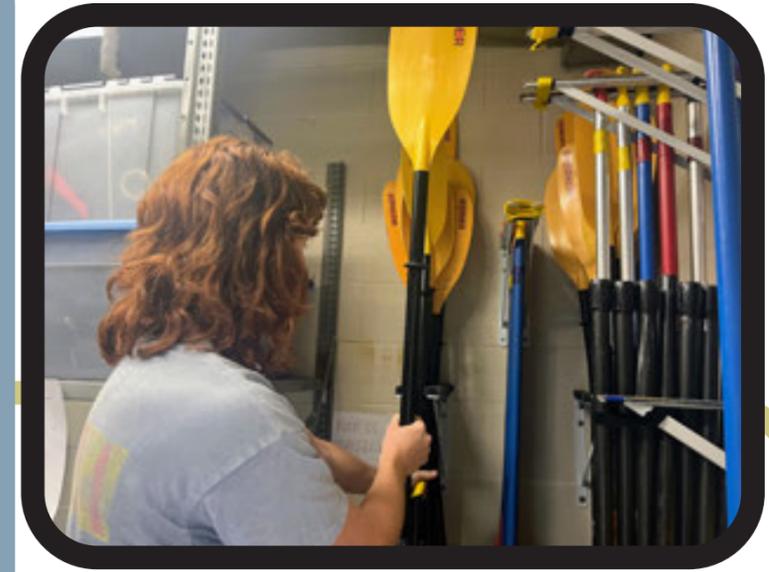
Photo by Alexa Bu



Story by Alexa Bu



SCOUTING FOR ADVENTURERS Brian Messar ('27) talks with another Rice student about the ROPE program. ROPE allows Rice students to enjoy the outdoors, away from the Rice campus. Photo by Alexa Bu



PADDLES UP Brian Messar ('27) takes out a kayak paddle in the Rice Recreational Center. As a ROPE Outdoor Adventure Leader, Messar plans outdoor trips within and beyond Texas, including kayaking trips. Photo by Alexa Bu

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- BRIAN MESSAR ('27)