Dr. Roderick J. McDavis - Biography

Dr. Roderick J. McDavis began his academic career at Ohio University in 1966, where he participated on the men's varsity track team and was a member of Omega Psi Phi fraternity. Following completion of his undergraduate education in social sciences in secondary education, Dr. McDavis earned his master's degree in student personnel administration from the University of Dayton in 1971. He pursued his doctoral degree in counselor education and higher education administration from the University of Toledo.

Upon the receipt of his Ph.D. in 1974, Dr. McDavis embarked on a progressive and broad career in higher education, which included various academic and administrative roles at the University of Florida, the University of Arkansas and Virginia Commonwealth University. All of these experiences prepared Dr. McDavis to attain his lifelong dream of serving as a college president. He achieved this goal when he assumed the presidency of Ohio University on July 1, 2004.

As the university’s first African American president and only the second alumnus to lead the Ohio University in the institution’s 211-year history, Dr. McDavis has been a tireless ambassador. His contributions to higher education include assisting in the development of the state of Ohio’s technology commercialization implementation plan, the state’s first guaranteed tuition plan, and one of the first of its kind performance-based funding models in the nation. As president, he developed and implemented Ohio University’s comprehensive strategic plan and has been instrumental in the success of The Promise Lives Campaign, which raised over half a billion dollars in support of students and programs, $50 million more than its fundraising goal. The Urban Scholar and Appalachian Scholar programs, The Interlink Alliance partnership, and Ohio University’s commitment to climate neutrality are among the many initiatives that have come about as a result of his leadership.

Throughout his distinguished career, Dr. McDavis has been the recipient of numerous prestigious honors and awards. This includes the University of Arkansas’ Silas Hunt Legacy Award, which recognizes African Americans for significant achievements or contributions to the community, the state, and the nation. In 2007, Dr. McDavis was one of only six president and CEO-level leaders in the state to be recognized with a Leadership Ohio Award of Excellence. He also was inducted into the Association of Ohio Commodores in 2010. Other notable awards include the Post-Secondary Outstanding Educator Award from the North Central Florida Chapter of Phi Delta Kappa (1996), the Black Achiever’s Award in Education from the Florida Conference of Black State Legislators (1997), and Person of the Year in Education by The Gainesville Sun (1995).

Through service on numerous boards and associations, Dr. McDavis constantly seeks to
further Ohio University’s state and national leadership. Currently, he serves on the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) Board of Governors and the NCAA Division 1 Board of Directors. He chairs The Interlink Alliance and the NCAA Division 1 Committee on Academics, and he was recently appointed to the Ohio Third Frontier Advisory Board. His past service includes leadership of the Ohio Higher Education Funding Commission 2.0, the Ohio Board of Regents Commercialization Task Force Academia Subcommittee, Ohio's Inter-University Council, the American Council on Education (ACE) Blue Ribbon Panel on Global Engagement, and the Board of Directors of the American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education, among many others.

Dr. McDavis’ passion for education, mentoring, and preparing our next generation of leaders, thinkers, teachers, and entrepreneurs is evident as he leads Ohio University, building on its historic legacy of diversity and its vision to become the nation’s best transformative learning community.