

# \*Holmes

(Continued from page 1.)  
 and a grade-A dairy barn. In 1949, an archway was erected to mark the entrance to the college, symbolizing the institution's growing stature. The arch was tragically lost in the 1990s but was rebuilt in 2015 for the college's 90-year celebration, with a new inscription reflecting its name change to Holmes Community College.

**Navigating a New Era**  
 Under the leadership of presidents Ras M. Branch and Clarence W. Lorange, who succeeded him in 1949, Holmes excelled in academics and athletics. The Bulldogs football team played in several bowl games in the 1940s and won multiple state championships. However, the mid-1950s brought tragedy with the unexpected death of President Lorange and the destruction of the student center by fire.

A new era dawned with the appointment of Frank B. Branch, a beloved figure at the college who had served in many roles since 1936. During his tenure, he expanded the college's district to include seven more counties, creating the nine-county area the college still serves today. Under his leadership, new buildings were added, including the McMorrough Library and the Montgomery Fine Arts Building. Academic and athletic programs flourished, and in 1959, the college was granted a chapter of the prestigious honor society Phi Theta Kappa.

The college continued to evolve, offering classes in multiple locations and expanding its curriculum to include a wide array of career and technical programs like automotive mechanics and practical nurse education. The new coliseum was built and dedicated to Frank B. Branch in 1974.

The most pivotal changes of the late 20th Century were the establishment of new campuses in Ridgeland and Grenada by 1985 and the official name change to Holmes Community College in 1989. This change reflected the college's mission to serve a broader population.

**A Future of Growth and Innovation**

In the past two decades, Holmes has embraced technology and continued to grow. Following the leadership of Dr. Glenn Boyce, Dr. Jim Haffey became the ninth president of Holmes on Sept. 10, 2014, making history as the youngest president in the Mississippi Community College system at age 37.

Under Dr. Haffey, the college has reached several milestones. New facilities have been built across all campuses, including the D.P. "Pat" McGowan Work-

force Training Center in Ridgeland and a new \$8.5 million facility in Grenada. Within the first year of Dr. Haffey's tenure, new sites and property were acquired. On June 24, 2015, Holmes celebrated the ribbon-cutting for the Yazoo County Economic Development and Educational Center in Yazoo City. The new Attala Center then opened its doors in November 2015, and just weeks later, Holmes officially announced it had acquired the approximately 25,000 square-foot building that formerly housed Fitness Lady, plus roughly four acres of prime I-55 Frontage Road access, to expand the Ridgeland Campus territory.

The college has made significant technological strides, continuously adding new programs and expanding partnerships to meet workforce and higher education needs. Holmes has numerous partnerships with local businesses through its workforce division, as well as multiple collaborations with four-year universities and colleges.

Construction is underway for a brand-new Allied Health Facility on the Ridgeland Campus, which broke ground on June 19, 2025. The facility will house the Associate Degree Nursing, Practical Nursing, Occupational Therapy Assistant, and Surgical Technology programs. In addition to classrooms and offices, it will feature a large multipurpose space with banquet seating for 350 and lecture-style seating for 530, allowing Holmes to host more group events for the local community.

Pioneering programs and partnerships have marked recent years at the college. In 2017, Holmes became the first community college in the nation to offer PSY 2543 Applied Behavior Analysis, an online course required to earn the Registered Behavior Technician credential. The same year, the Holmes Grenada Campus became the third location in the state to house an arboretum. In 2018, Holmes set up a training partnership with Ingalls Shipbuilding. Most recently, in 2024, Holmes successfully launched Mississippi's first Amazon Web Services (AWS) Information Infrastructure Pre-Apprenticeship (I2PA) program, one of only three in the nation at that point. The four-week program equips participants with in-demand skills for careers in information infrastructure, concluding with a networking opportunity with AWS experts and contractors.

Recent campus and facility expansions continued the growth trend. In the past six years, the college purchased a 7,000 square foot health club on Highway 12 in Kosciusko, built a new main-

tenance building and cedar pavilion in Goodman, and added a cedar pavilion and lighted walking trail in Grenada. Career Technical Education expanded to include massage therapy, the health care assistant program and culinary arts. The 2022-23 year was one of major development: Holmes added the 1,100-acre Bulldog Ranch, allowing the college to again offer hands-on agricultural electives for credit and serving as the new location for the Electrical Linemen program. The linemen program also made headlines when Gracie Gustafson became the second female lineman student in the state in 2024. Holmes has added a state-of-the-art new athletic facility and weight room in Goodman, and new courtyard area on the Ridgeland Campus, as well.

Student and athletic achievements have also been historic. On Dec. 4, 2016, the Holmes Bulldogs football team made history by winning their first NJCAA Bowl with a 28-21 win in the Graphic Edge Bowl. In 2019, the Lady Bulldogs soccer team made it to the NJCAA Gulf South District Championship for the first time in the college's history. The Lady Bulldogs soccer team won the MACCC title after going 8-1-1 during the regular season conference play in 2022-2023 and finished as the National Championship Runner Up that year.

In other notable developments, in November 2020, Holmes alumnus Rocky Vaughan's design for a new Mississippi Flag was passed as the new flag referendum. Additionally, Rollin Beans coffee was added to the Holmes Ridgeland Student Union during the 2024-2025 school year.

Holmes' commitment to excellence is reflected in recent accolades: Niche ranked it as Mississippi's top community college and among the best in the nation. It has also been selected as an educational partner for Amazon's Career Choice program.

**Capturing the Holmes Story**

To celebrate Holmes' centennial during the 2025-26 school year, two of the college's Phi Theta Kappa chapters are focusing their Honors in Action projects on preserving the college's history. The Kappa Alpha Chapter (Goodman Campus) has chosen "Preserving Stories" as its theme, focusing specifically on Holmes' 100-year history.

"To honor this legacy, members are developing a podcast that will feature interviews with alumni, faculty, and staff, alongside archival research," said Goodman Campus Phi Theta Advisor Simonee Miller.

# US search and rescue teams deploy to help Venezuela earthquake response

Story by Emily Hallas, Washington Examiner

US search and rescue teams deploy to help Venezuela earthquake response

Teams from California to Florida are helping Venezuelans rebound from devastating earthquakes that killed over 900 people, according to the latest death toll figures authorities announced on Friday.

Search and rescue operations are entering their third full day, after Venezuelan

"Their goal is to digitally preserve these stories in the campus library, ensuring Holmes' rich history remains accessible for generations to come."

Meanwhile, the Ridgeland Campus Phi Theta Kappa Chapter is documenting Holmes' history through a different medium. Ridgeland Campus Advisor Lisa Anglin explained that students are continuing a book of Holmes' history, focusing on the last 50 years.

"They are also telling the oral history of Holmes by interviewing students, faculty, staff and alumni," Anglin said. "They will compile all the stories into something spectacular that will last for the next 100 years."

This year's celebrations honor a century of achievements while looking ahead to a future of continued expansion. The college invited all living members of the Holmes Sports Hall of Fame to its banquet in April. In August, faculty and staff formed a giant "100" on the Goodman campus football field for a drone photo, symbolizing a unified spirit. The college is also distributing commemorative blankets and Compass Coins, which represent the guidance and support it provides to stu-

officials estimated at least 920 people were killed and over 3,300 were injured from a pair of powerful earthquakes that shook Caracas on Wednesday evening. With magnitudes of 7.2 and 7.5, the earthquakes are among the strongest to rock the country in over a century.

International rescue teams, including groups from the U.S., have been deployed to help the embattled country as it grapples with the devastation caused by the earthquakes in the capital and nearby cities. President Donald Trump and Secretary of State Marco Rubio called to offer their support, acting Venezuelan President Delcy Rodriguez said Friday evening, including by sending rescue workers, "specialist equipment, support for temporary shelters and humanitarian aid for the affected families."

"We are deeply grateful for this gesture of friendship and cooperation," Rodriguez said, after Rubio's State Department activated a third urban search and rescue team to help with recovery operations.

The State Department has power to activate "task forces" from each state to respond to such emergencies.

The teams from Florida

Task Force 1 and 2 in Miami-Dade County consist of 80 personnel and six canine teams.  
 "Every single person that lives in Miami knows someone, a friend or family member, that is in Venezuela," Miami Mayor Eileen Higgins said, referencing the area's strong Venezuelan diaspora. "We are scared for them, and we are worried for them."  
 They join two other task forces from the U.S. that have been activated to head to Venezuela. A team from Virginia landed in the South American country on Friday, bringing firefighters, doctors, and structural engineers as well as search-and-rescue canines.  
 Several faith-based groups from Virginia are also helping out in Venezuela, alongside Virginia Task Force 1. They include Operation Blessing and Mercy Chefs, which sent feeding teams to respond to the disaster.  
 In California, the Los Angeles County Firefighters International Urban Search and Rescue team has been deployed as part of U.S. aid operations. The group consists of 71 search-and-rescue experts, six K-9 teams, and 84,000 pounds of critical equipment.  
 "First thing that we're expecting is a lower level of resources, and we don't know what state those resources are in after the earthquake," LA County Fire Captain Aaron Katon told KTLA. "So we're really going in expecting the unexpected, but ready to do the job that we do every day."  
 The death toll is expected to climb even higher once the 72-hour mark from when the earthquakes hit occurs on Saturday evening.

## PAST BEHAVIOR

By Timothy E. Parker

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