

Wade Rousse, Ph.D.

President, McNeese State University

Dr. Wade Rousse is an accomplished economist, educator, and higher education leader with extensive experience spanning academic administration, economic research, and private-sector management. He currently serves as the 8th President of McNeese State University in Lake Charles, Louisiana, having been unanimously selected by the University of Louisiana System Board of Supervisors in April 2024.

As president, Dr. Rousse has led a transformative effort to stabilize and revitalize McNeese following years of enrollment decline and the challenges posed by natural disasters and demographic shifts. Through his emphasis on shared governance, strategic planning, and transparent communication, he has implemented a new organizational structure, created advisory and staff senates, and launched a comprehensive strategic plan focused on recruitment, retention, and student success. Within his first year, McNeese achieved its first enrollment increase in 14 years, including a 13% rise in first-time freshmen and full occupancy in campus housing for the first time in over two decades.

Before his presidency, Dr. Rousse served as Executive Vice President, Vice President for University Advancement, and Dean of the College of Business at McNeese. As Vice President, he consolidated seven separate units into a modern Office of University Advancement, integrating athletics, alumni relations, and fundraising functions to generate new revenue streams. Under his leadership, McNeese's Foundation assets grew from \$95 million to \$120 million, and his team raised more than \$40 million in new funding — the largest period of philanthropic growth in university history. He also secured an \$8 million public-private partnership for the Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG) Center of Excellence, expanded corporate sponsorships fourfold, and led multimillion-dollar facility naming initiatives.

Earlier in his career, Dr. Rousse served at Northern Arizona University as Associate Dean for Accreditation and Operations, Interim Director of the Alliance Bank Economic Policy Institute, and Area Coordinator of Economics. His work there advanced the college's AACSB accreditation, faculty development, and regional economic research. A macroeconomist by training, he has also served as a policy research specialist with the Federal Reserve Bank of Chicago, focusing on U.S. payment systems and financial market dynamics.

Dr. Rousse began his career in the private sector, working his way from blue-collar laborer to partner and co-founder of a successful marine logistics firm in Louisiana, and later founded Cajun Capital Holdings, LLC, an alternative investment company specializing in market strategy and hedging.

A first-generation college graduate and Louisiana native, Dr. Rousse earned his Ph.D. and M.A. in Economics from the University of Illinois at Chicago, his MBA from the University of New Orleans, and his B.S. in Business from Nicholls State University. His research has been published in leading journals including the *Journal of International Financial Markets, Institutions & Money* and *Sustainability*.

Dr. Rousse is an active member of the American Economic Association, Western Economic Association International, and the Financial Management Association International, and serves on several civic and athletic boards. Known as a collaborative and forward-thinking leader, he combines the analytical rigor of an economist with the practical insight of a business innovator — guiding McNeese State University toward a new era of stability, growth, and community impact.