

Myr-Lou Rollins*

February 5, 1935 – April 2, 2026

Myrtle Louise Rollins Wade, affectionately known as “Myr-Lou,” lived a life defined by passion, adventure, and an unwavering dedication to dance. She was born on February 5, 1935, in Corpus Christi, TX. After high school, she traveled to Los Angeles with her dance partner, Lowell Purvis, where she studied at the Hollywood School of Dance and trained in African Contemporary dance and Ernest Belcher Ballet, experiences that helped shape her future career as an educator and artist. Returning to Texas in 1953, Myr-Lou earned a Bachelor of Arts degree from Texas State College for Women in 1956 and a master’s degree from Texas Woman’s University in 1958. During her college years, she traveled extensively with dance groups, including a memorable trip to New York City where she met modern dance pioneer Ruth St. Denis. Myr-Lou began her career at Oklahoma State University in the fall of 1956 and spent three decades inspiring students through dance instruction. She taught ballet, tap, jazz, and other forms of dance in several different buildings on campus as the program evolved over the years. Earning tenure in 1971 and retiring in 1986, she remained a steadfast advocate for dance education and played an instrumental role in establishing the dance minor in 2016 within the Department of Theatre. More than anything, she cherished her students, whose growth and success brought her tremendous joy. Even after retirement, Myr-Lou remained deeply connected to OSU. She was a founding member of the OSU Emeriti Association and enjoyed interaction with her fellow retirees. Myr-Lou had a generous philanthropic spirit, especially when it came to supporting OSU students. She often went without the niceties of life so that she could save and invest her money. This allowed her to establish multiple scholarships for OSU students. She took a personal interest in the students she supported. She often attended their performances and met with them personally. Her support extended beyond scholarships as she became a mentor to first-generation students. Her influence continues to be felt through the countless students she inspired, the dance program she helped build, and the scholarships that will support aspiring artists and nurses for years to come. Her legacy of generosity, mentorship, and love for the performing arts will remain an enduring part of OSU and the community she so faithfully served.

*This memorial statement about Myr-Lou Rollins was recently presented by President Hess to the OSU Board of Regents.

