

Chapter 1 – Building Distinction at Duke: Past, Present and Future

Our planning process has focused on continuing to build and shape a distinctive identity for Duke among the top echelon of research universities. We have witnessed a remarkable rise to prominence since the 1838 founding of Union Institute and James B. Duke’s 1924 transformative gift to Trinity College that created Duke University. Over time, we have developed strong graduate programs that complement core original strengths in undergraduate education in the liberal arts and professional programs. Our standing has extended from a predominantly regional one only a few decades ago to a national and international one at the highest rank. Our trajectory had been steep in recent decades, spurred on by former president Terry Sanford’s vision of “outrageous ambitions” for our university. To continue and further steepen our trajectory of excellence, we will need not so much to seek to replicate the faculty and programs of the schools with which we compete but to strengthen our own distinctive identity. This means drawing on qualities that have already brought us to preeminence and, even more, developing innovative new areas that will make us particularly well-suited to meet the challenges at the intersection between the frontiers of knowledge and changing social needs. In doing so, we will not only attract to Duke the finest faculty and students but also mark Duke out as a flexible institution that best meets the challenges of education, discovery, and service that we believe must be hallmarks of the 21st century university.

To make progress in this way, we must define this distinctive identity to which we aspire and candidly assess our current strengths and weaknesses. It is only in this context that our goals and strategies can make sense. Duke’s ambition is targeted not towards rankings but rather towards achieving a place of real leadership based on substantive contributions to society through the education we provide, the research that faculty pursue, the lives our graduates lead, and our direct involvement in making our local community a better place to live and work. While these ambitions are not unique to Duke, we pursue them and frame our identity in unique ways:

- Duke was founded on a close collaboration of the liberal arts education for undergraduates and training for careers in the learned professions. This is a vital and distinctive legacy at Duke today, where the major schools and programs of the university all operate in close physical proximity to one another and where joint degree programs and interdisciplinary research flourish.
- Through a distinctive combination of schools and the relationships among them Duke combines strength in core arts and sciences disciplines with outstanding programs in business, earth and environmental sciences and policy, engineering, law, medicine, nursing, public policy, and theology. This combination of resources allows us to both deeply explore basic issues in disciplinary research areas and to address enduring and emerging intellectual and policy problems from multiple perspectives, responding rapidly to the needs of our students and the wider society. Out of this combination comes, for example, the ability to address such issues as the care at the end of life, the ethics of the genomic revolution, and the racial components of disease. Our advantage is not these particular programs, as important as they are, but the institutional resources and culture that allow us to evolve and adapt programs to changing needs.

- Duke is committed to both enduring and emerging fields of knowledge. Universities have a uniquely important societal role in the preservation and understanding of the many strands of our intellectual heritage. The new world we are shaping is inevitably an extension of the past and present and deeply informed by them. Therefore the preservation and critical examination of human experience, thought and invention through the humanities and interpretative social sciences is a critical component of the education of our students, the research of our faculty and of our project to put knowledge at the service of society.
- It is easier at Duke than at most other major private research universities to establish multifaceted relationships that span professional interests. Duke has a culture of innovation and collaboration rooted in its long tradition of academic freedom and the ease of interaction in an academic community of Duke's scale and location.
- Duke expects of its faculty excellence in the classroom as well as in research. Our best researchers and scholars are not given, and do not expect, reduced teaching loads. Classes are typically small, allowing students and faculty to work together closely.
- Duke is a community of deep engagement for students outside the classroom, in community service, the arts, political organizations, and academic competitions. The campus provides an increasing number of opportunities to link classroom and experiential education through opportunities for service-learning, internships, and mentored research.
- We have a strong history of campus spirit fostered through excellence in collegiate athletics. Student athletes engage in the full range of extracurricular sports from intramural and club organizations to nationally ranked championship teams.
- We have a tradition that fosters moral and ethical reflection, responsible leadership, and spirited debate. This tradition permeates Duke in many ways: through the central presence of the Duke Chapel, the broad influence of the Divinity School, the relatively new presence of the Freeman Center, and innovative programs such as the Institute for the Care at the End of Life and the Kenan Institute for Ethics.
- Our robust faculty governance system and the active roles played by students, through such avenues as Duke Student Government and Graduate and Professional Student Council, provide abundant opportunities for leadership, linking faculty and students with each other, campus administrators, and trustees.
- Duke is committed to the value of diversity in all its forms as part of the celebration of human life and as a fundamental foundation for effective teaching, learning, inquiry, and collaboration. This commitment is never perfectly realized; it has deep roots, but requires constant nurturing. A special part of this commitment is our strong support for effective financial aid programs in each of our schools; these programs help ensure that our university is accessible to talented students from many diverse backgrounds and that all our students benefit from participation in a diverse academic community.

- Duke is well managed. Because of its youthfulness, size, and regional base, the university has always had to manage its resources with extreme care, and today's levels of academic excellence are dependent on this continuing stewardship.
- Duke takes pride in the accomplishments of its alumni, their engagement in life-long learning, and their continued willingness to serve and support the university. During the 2006-2007 academic year, we will work with the Alumni Association to determine specific ways the participation of alumni can make a difference to the achievement of the goals and strategies presented in this plan.

Our quest for academic excellence and our determination to be among those institutions that define the best in higher education, both in the U.S. and globally, is inextricably bound up with these principles. Like any other great university, Duke depends on attracting outstanding faculty, students, and administrative leaders. But it is how their talents and energies work together that matters, and Duke is a particularly conducive place for working together to advance knowledge, for interdisciplinary collaboration to address problems, and for the transmission of values and experiences through participation in an intergenerational community in which we learn from each other and challenge each other to excel.

Mandates for Planning at Duke

Duke has long recognized the importance of institutional planning and self-assessment. Five years ago, self-examination and thoroughgoing strategic planning highlighted a degree of unevenness, and even fragility, in our accomplishments. To mention just a few of those areas of concern, our academic facilities, especially in the sciences and engineering, had substantially deteriorated to the point that they were becoming impediments to hiring the faculty and attracting the graduate students we wanted. We also felt strongly that our undergraduate curriculum failed to deliver on the full promise of a true liberal arts education, much less provide our students with the rich intellectual environment and developmental experiences that would be essential to preparing them for the new century. Some of our professional schools were somewhat complacently riding on historical laurels as their competitors refurbished their programs and reputations, while others were riding a crest of innovation without yet having the depth of faculty achievement that would stand them in good stead for the long haul.

Guided by our last strategic plan, *Building on Excellence*, we took steps to shore up these weaknesses to ensure the quality of our programs was fully worthy of our reputation. In this process, we created new excitement in a number of programmatic areas, strengthened our culture of inter- and multi-disciplinary undertakings, and emphasized our collaborative strategic approach to academic and institutional progress. These changes were substantive in quality and substantial in number; in many cases, they are also as much means to ends as the ends themselves. These recent developments have greatly enhanced our ability to become far better, but they do not themselves establish that excellence.

As we proceed with the next phase of institutional life, we have identified five fundamental planning mandates:

1. **We must recognize that the university's work is organized principally, if not exclusively, through our schools, not as islands but as reservoirs of talent and energy whose cross currents connect us in ever changing ways:** We build success by supporting our schools and their investments in faculty and students in ways calculated to build distinctive areas of programmatic strength within and across schools. While this principle is deeply established at Duke, the challenge remains to balance investments in core capabilities of each of the schools with programs and infrastructure that cross school boundaries. The work of the central administration has been precisely to make to the schools stronger and to foster their collaboration.
2. **We must emphasize the quality of our faculty and the support we provide them to achieve their full potential as leaders, scholars, and teachers:** We aim to attract the very best faculty at Duke. But what do we mean by the *best*? It is a question that should not be answered in the abstract, but answered specifically for Duke. What kind of faculty is best for Duke? In the aggregate, we want a faculty that is chosen not only for breadth and depth of their knowledge and skills but also for innovation and flexibility, a faculty that can push the frontiers of knowledge and respond to unforeseeable opportunities and challenges. As individuals, we seek members of our faculty who have not only achieved mastery in their fields with demonstrated or potential national and international leadership capabilities, but also entrepreneurs, risk takers, institution builders and collaborators. We want faculty members who themselves are committed to life-long learning, and who will over time take on new challenges, move on to new problems and into new fields, forming new collaborations and connections with other members of the university community. And we want faculty who care deeply about teaching and the lives of their students. That means faculty who work hard to communicate their materials, innovate in their teaching methods, and engage students in the most effective ways, both inside and outside the classroom. We want faculty who can model not only the life of the mind but the life of engagement in civic issues, the arts, community service, and in the application of their professional knowledge and ethical commitments to the service of society.

Duke is fortunate to have many faculty members who live up to these ideals. But we have work to do, both in encouraging and enabling current faculty to move beyond traditional interests and methods in their teaching and research and encouraging more responsibility for the lives of our students outside the classroom. The demands on our faculty are many and often intense, and we need to keep these pressures in mind as we encourage fresh approaches and new involvements. Overall, our goal now is to steepen the trajectory of faculty improvement to more fully realize these ideals. In some part, this is a matter of nurturing and supporting the many excellent members of faculty now on board. But it also means treating each recruitment as a precious opportunity. If we have attained a solid base of intellectual strength in our faculty in the last decade, with some peaks of excellence, we need now to bring that base to a higher level and to build substantially more areas in which people think that Duke is *the place to go, the place whose lead to follow*. This leadership role cannot depend only on individual personalities – although individual leadership is certainly important; rather, to be sustainable, such leadership will depend on the quality of the resources we offer, the programs we mount, the collaborations we build. But above

all it will be the product of the aspirations of our schools, departments and interdisciplinary programs, their self-confidence in seeking the best faculty, their patience in attracting them, their willingness to hear their needs, and of the capability of the administration to back these aspirations with the appropriate resources.

3. **We must further develop our capacity to support creative, entrepreneurial, interdisciplinary teaching and research among our faculty and students:**

Through these efforts, we aim to institutionalize the conditions for innovation and responsive engagement with emerging fields of knowledge, medical and technological challenges, and public policy issues. While we have made substantial and deliberate progress in launching and supporting interdisciplinary initiatives, significant challenges remain in the areas of faculty appointments – where we have not yet assured that our interdisciplinary centers and institutes can have a significant role in departmental and school hiring – and in facilitating cross-school teaching. We must also assure the longer-term financial viability of our successful major initiatives beyond their initial period of strategic funding. To do so, we must strengthen our resource allocations processes, our space planning, our faculty appointments and mentoring processes, and our mechanisms for cross-school teaching and research.

4. **We must continue our efforts not only to draw the best of students into our applicant pool but to also increase their willingness to come to Duke:** Excellent students want excellent students as their peers, and excellent faculty want excellent students as their students. This is true in all our programs – undergraduate, graduate and professional – and in each of them we are in competition with other fine institutions that have the same ambition. But just as we asked what it means to attract the *best* faculty for Duke, we ought to consider also what we mean by the excellence in our student body, by the *best* students. And again, this question should be answered not in the abstract, but by articulating what is the best student for Duke. We want students who are smart and can master their material, but, just as important, we want those students who are bound to be life long learners, who will learn across fields, who will want to make a difference beyond their own personal gain, who aspire to leadership in their chosen fields, who will welcome collaboration, and who will continually develop their ethical foundations. Such students, we are convinced, are attracted to the programs that best feed those interests and that best attract like-minded students.

By and large, Duke attracts excellent students, and they create outstanding communities within their schools and departments. We know, however, that many of the most talented students in a number of our programs decline our offers of admission for traditionally stronger schools. While we can expect that real program differences will lead individual students to prefer another school, Duke should have an equal chance of attracting top students against any school in the country. In some schools, particularly the Graduate School, our effectiveness is partly a function of our financial aid offers, and the current Financial Aid Initiative will help address such gaps. More generally, we know that students are attracted primarily by the excellence of the academic programs they are considering. Hence the best means of attracting and engaging the very best students is to ensure that we have outstanding, distinctive programs.

5. **We must ensure that every student who receives a degree at Duke is fully prepared to meet the challenges of life in the 21st century:** We seek to develop students who are intellectually, experientially, and ethically prepared to enter a world characterized by globalization, rapid and constant change, daily encounters with persons of substantially diverse backgrounds and experiences, and have facility with technology and the opportunities and challenges it presents. Every student must be educated in both the disciplines and in the way the knowledge developed in multiple disciplines can be brought to bear to address and solve intellectual and societal problems of great significance. Finally, a well-educated person must be one who has a zest for life-long learning and an ability to learn about and appreciate differences of culture, experience, and background and their implication for the building of relationships and an understanding of the nature of ethical challenges and how they can best be addressed.

These five mandates set the context for our planning process, which began in the fall of 2004 when departments, institutes, and schools were asked to undertake a substantial self-assessment and to examine and identify areas fundamental to their intellectual strength and reputation. In this process, all were asked to evaluate their strengths, provide strategies to enhance their activities, and identify the infrastructures and resources available that were critical for success. Schools were also asked to identify areas of potential comparative advantage that could arise from effective collaboration.

The planning process actively engaged faculty in meaningful ways. The highest priority identified was faculty development. Additional priorities included enhancing the undergraduate, graduate, and professional student experiences; assuring the competitiveness of our Ph. D. programs; and investing in programs and facilities.

The Provost's office also created cross-school faculty working groups, which were given the opportunity to propose new signature academic programs. These planning activities were coordinated with parallel efforts by Duke Medicine. The oversight of Duke's planning efforts has been the responsibility of a faculty-chaired Planning Steering Committee, which evaluated school, institute, and working group reports. In addition, the plan profited from discussion with existing faculty committees, such as the Executive Committee of the Academic Council, the Academic Programs Committee, the University Priorities Committee, the Committee on Faculty Diversity, the Information Technology Advisory Committee, the Library Council, and the Council for the Arts as well as the Dean's Cabinet and the Academic Affairs Subcommittee of the Board of Trustees.

The thoughtful and iterative discussions of these groups have framed the academic plan and its six goals:

Goal 1: Increase the Capacity of our Faculty to Develop and Communicate Disciplinary and Interdisciplinary Knowledge

Goal 2: Strengthen the Engagement of the University in Real World Issues

Goal 3: Attract the Best Graduate and Professional Students and Fully Engage Them in the Creation and Transmission of Knowledge

Goal 4: Foster in Undergraduate Students a Passion for Learning and a Commitment to Making a Difference in the World

Goal 5: Transform the Arts at Duke

Goal 6: Lead and Innovate in the Creation, Management, and Delivery of Scholarly Resources in Support of Teaching and Research