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On behalf of the Board of Trustees, I am pleased to share the executive summaries from the reports of the 2020-2021 strategic task forces: “Climate Change and Sustainability,” “Duke’s Centennial Celebration,” and “Duke and Durham Today and Tomorrow.”

The task forces were created in May 2020 to advance priorities in President Vincent Price’s strategic framework (learn more about the framework [here](#)). The goal was to bring together trustees, administrators, faculty, and students to engage in strategic thinking about key priorities of the university. The task forces met throughout the year, and their work will inform and advise the president and senior leadership as they consider future action.

I hope you enjoy reading these summaries.

Best,  
Maggie Epps

## Executive Summary

As anthropogenic greenhouse gases have accumulated in the atmosphere for more than two centuries, it is clear that near term climate change is unavoidable and thus will require a global shift toward a climate resilient world to reduce and reverse the impacts, inequalities, and injustices that climate change engenders. Additional atmospheric accumulation will further intensify climate change in the long run, so the world must mitigate these threats by moving to a net-zero carbon society, justly and equitably.

To achieve these ambitious goals requires innovative science; a rethinking of social norms and market structures; the development and deployment of transformative technologies; policies to advance new approaches to finance markets; cultural and behavioral change; an educated workforce literate in climate resilience, energy transformation, and justice; and scalable models of success.

A key question is what role should Duke University play in addressing this crisis and contributing to the solutions to it? All too often the narratives associated with climate change have been ones of despair and doom. A more positive, solutions- and impact-oriented perspective is needed. In this spirit, Duke will become **The Climate University** and focus on creating sustainable and equitable solutions to the climate crisis that will place society on the path to a resilient, flourishing, net-zero carbon world by 2050. Duke will do this by engaging every part of the University's mission:

- In **education**, Duke will aim to create a climate and sustainability literate student body that not only understands the origins of this crisis, but can address them through the development and implementation of creative, scientifically informed, just, and responsible solutions.
- In **research**, Duke will prioritize investments in areas in which the University has a distinctive comparative advantage-transforming energy, creating a climate resilient future, and building data driven climate solution strike teams.
- In **operations**, Duke will continue to work toward carbon neutrality in a transparent way through campus development, energy use, transportation systems, and waste management. The University will also look beyond 2024 to develop the next level sustainability and climate vision.
- In our **partner communities** of Durham, Beaufort, and around the globe, Duke will seek to connect authentically so community insight and wisdom can help create more durable social and economic solutions that recognizes our mutual interdependency.

This is an unparalleled opportunity for a world-class university to commit itself to the betterment of society and the healing of the planet. To make progress Duke needs to:

- Secure enabling investments to advance student climate and sustainability literacy as well as the University's research ambitions
- Convene a multi-stakeholder Climate and Sustainability Implementation team to oversee and guide this critical work
- Develop a Duke specific framework to ensure the principles of justice, equity, diversity and inclusion are centered throughout planning and implementation of this entire strategy
- Communicate more transparently about what is already happening across campus and amplify new commitments and actions while being accountable to measurable outcomes and reporting back to the Board of Trustees, the campus, and the community

Climate and sustainability are topics at Duke that stretch across disciplines, interconnect operations and academics, cross campus boundaries, reach into the community, and around the world. As the University embarks on its second century, it is imperative that it address the global challenges posed by climate change with sustainable solutions that challenge existing paradigms to not only benefit current society but create a just and equitable world for future generations.

# Executive Summary

*"Duke is not what it used to be, but  
it is not yet what it ought to be."*

- The Rev. Dr. Luke A. Powery,  
dean of Duke Chapel

## BACKGROUND

Duke University was established in 1924 when James B. Duke, through the Indenture of Trust, designated a gift that transformed Trinity College into a comprehensive research university. In 2024, Duke University will celebrate its centennial—a historic opportunity to celebrate Duke's extraordinary past, communicate the impact of the present, and especially look toward the potential of Duke's future.

## CHARGE

Duke's Centennial Celebration Strategic Task Force was charged with advising and providing strategic insight to the administration for the initial planning phases of the commemoration of Duke's 100th anniversary in 2024.

## PROCESS

The Task Force began by reviewing Duke's previous commemorations and its recent engagement with institutional history, as well as other universities' milestone celebrations. To solicit viewpoints from a diverse group of stakeholders, members of the Task Force conducted 47 interviews with representatives of key constituencies. The Task Force also developed a list of strategic questions and formed three working groups or subcommittees focused on these questions in the categories of Past, Present, and Future.

## STRATEGIC RECOMMENDATIONS

- The Centennial is an enormous opportunity for Duke to articulate its **remarkable trajectory**—unparalleled in the history of higher education in America. A joyful celebration will deepen understanding of Duke's history, inspire pride in Duke's astonishing first century, and lift up Duke's **unique** identity and characteristics.
- At the same time, the celebration should be balanced with a forthright acknowledgment of **challenges** in Duke's history and periods of discrimination and exclusion. This is an opportunity for candid reflection and meaningful **reckoning**.
- The focus should be on the **people** who have built the Duke community—including the famous as well as previously overlooked or under-examined legacies.
- There should be an effort to communicate Duke's **impact, discoveries, and leadership** across the university—in research, teaching, clinical care, the arts, athletics, innovation, service, global connections, and more. Events should project and reflect Duke's academic excellence and institutional aspirations to serve society and address local and global challenges.
- The approach to the Centennial must be **creative** and incorporate multimedia technology.
- The Centennial should acknowledge Duke University's **deep historic connection to The Duke Endowment** and its enduring and transformational support of the university's strategic priorities.
- **Duke and Durham:** Duke's history is intertwined with Durham's. We should emphasize that the people of Durham built Duke, highlight Duke's investments in downtown Durham and imagine how Duke will engage in the Durham of the future.
- The Centennial should extend a compelling avenue for **alumni, parents, and friends** to engage more deeply with Duke.
- To create momentum for Duke's next **campaign**, Duke will use its centennial as a pivotal moment to celebrate the accomplishments in its first century and paint a bold and inspiring vision for Duke's impact on the world in its second century.

## I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Durham is Duke's home, and the two have an interdependent relationship. Both the city/county and the university have grown in size and composition. The Durham of today has evolved into a thriving city with rapid economic growth. But that prosperity has not reached many of Durham's long-term residents with historical inequalities persisting, social and health disparities widening, and the Raleigh-Durham region ranking among the lowest in the nation for economic mobility.

In 2019, President Price launched *Toward our Second Century*, a strategic framework that charges Duke to "forge purposeful partnerships with our neighbors in the region." This framework calls upon Duke to define and sustain purposeful partnerships that can embody Duke's institutional commitments of engaged scholarship, anti-racism, and health equity. Duke has an opportunity to become true partners with the community by actively listening to leaders and residents to solve Durham's most pressing problems, by engaging in strategic and equitable ways, by being transparent about its shared history, and by creating and tracking common goals to improve quality of life.

To provide strategic insight into Duke's efforts to broaden collaboration with the Durham community, the Duke and Durham Today and Tomorrow Task Force listened extensively to Duke and Durham stakeholders, including more than 50 leaders, residents, and subject matter experts. Through these discussions, the task force addressed a range of topics including Duke and Durham's shared history, existing university-community engagement activities, the current state of Durham, and how Duke might define and evaluate its partnership efforts. After reflecting on community conversations with several hundred community leaders held prior to the task force's assembly, members endorsed the plan of the Office of Durham and Community Affairs to advance five focus areas and strategic priorities in collaboration with community. These are:

- Housing - Housing affordability and infrastructure
- Health - Food security and nutrition
- Education - Early childhood and K-12 school readiness
- Employment - College and career readiness
- Community - Nonprofit capacity

Ultimately, the task force recommends enacting purposeful partnerships through clarifying meaningful engagement, coordinating community engagement activities across Duke, and tracking key indicators to monitor Duke's community engagement outcomes in collaboration with the broader community. The task force further recommends to:

- Adopt a statement of purpose that communicates a shared understanding of Duke's community engagement
- Build a digital platform that maps, matches, and documents impact using catalyzing technologies for meaningful and sustained engagement
- Create strategic councils in each focus area comprised of university and community experts
- Plan for a center for civic and community engagement to coalesce resources and connect academic schools to community affairs
- Develop a set of indicators based on local economic data and statistics that can demonstrate progress and outcomes related to the five focus areas

The Duke and Durham Today and Tomorrow task force concludes that Duke is poised to create a new strategy for the Duke-Durham relationship - one that is enduring and impactful. To do so, in the words of President Vincent Price, Duke must be "fully committed to deepening our productive collaborations, engaging more openly with partners and critics alike, and strategically aligning our core institutional missions of education, research and patient care with the needs and aspirations of our surrounding communities."