

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.