

The background of the book cover is a photograph of a building at night. On the left is a traditional stone building with multiple windows. To its right is a modern glass-walled structure, possibly a library or atrium, which is brightly lit from within. The interior of the glass building shows a series of large, curved wooden arches and several large, glowing pendant lights. The sky above is a deep blue.

Speaking of DUKE

Leading the 21st-Century University

RICHARD H. BRODHEAD

SPEAKING OF DUKE

.....

Speaking of DUKE

Leading the 21st-Century University

RICHARD H. BRODHEAD

DUKE UNIVERSITY PRESS

Durham and London

2017

© 2017 Duke University Press
All rights reserved
Printed in the United States of
America on acid-free paper ∞
Designed by Amy Ruth Buchanan
Typeset in Arno Pro by Westchester
Publishing Services

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data
Names: Brodhead, Richard H., [date] author.
Title: Speaking of Duke : leading the Twenty-first-century
university / Richard H. Brodhead.
Description: Durham : Duke University Press, 2017. |
Includes bibliographical references and index.
Identifiers:
LCCN 2016046668 (print) | LCCN 2016049559 (ebook)
ISBN 9780822368847 (hardcover : alk. paper)
ISBN 9780822372721 (e-book)
Subjects: LCSH: Education, Higher—Aims and
objectives. | Universities and colleges—Administration. |
Duke University—Presidents.
Classification: LCC LB2324 .B77 2017 (print) |
LCC LB2324 (ebook) | DDC 378.756/563—dc23
LC record available at <https://lcn.loc.gov/2016046668>

“Remarks on Being Named President of Duke
University,” was previously published in *The Good of
This Place* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004).

“On the Fate and Fortunes of Public Goods,”
was previously published in *Humanities*,
the Magazine of the National Endowment for the
Humanities 36, no. 6 (2015).

Cover art: The von der Heyden Pavilion at Perkins
Library, Duke University. Photo by Les Todd/
Duke Photography.

CONTENTS

.....

Preface ix

2003

.....

Remarks on Being Named President of Duke
University 1

2004

.....

Freshman Convocation: Authoring a Community 5

*Graduate and Professional Convocation: The Virtues and
Limits of Specialization* 12

Inaugural Address: More Day to Dawn 19

*Remarks at the Induction Ceremony of the American
Academy of Arts and Sciences: Literature as Life* 29

2005

.....

Baccalaureate: On Education and Empowerment 32

*Founders' Day Address: On Founding as a Continuous
Labor* 37

*Faculty Address: Financial Aid, the Problem-centric
University* 44

2006

.....

*Preface to the University Strategic Plan, Making a Difference:
Duke and the Changing Landscape: A Planning
Prologue* 53

2007

Commencement Address at Fisk University 60

Freshman Convocation: The Ethic of Engagement 64

Lessons of Lacrosse 71

2008

Baccalaureate: Frolics and Detours 75

2009

Baccalaureate: Advancing in a Recession 80

In Memoriam: John Hope Franklin 85

2010

*Faculty Address: The University and the Financial
Downturn* 88

*Baccalaureate: Walk Ten Thousand Miles, Read Ten
Thousand Books* 98

2011

*Faculty Address: Budgets, International Opportunities,
the Humanities* 103

In Memoriam: Reynolds Price 113

*Freshman Convocation: On the Use of New
Freedoms* 115

*John Tyler Caldwell Lecture on the Humanities: The Fire
That Never Goes Out* 119

2012

*In Memoriam: Mary Duke Biddle Trent
Semans* 127

Faculty Address: Duke and Race 130

Baccalaureate: Repairing the Broken World 139

2013

Baccalaureate: Connecting and Disconnecting 144

Interview with Stephen Colbert, *The Colbert Report* 148

Freshman Convocation: Receive, Connect, Engage 153

Remarks at the Opening of the Center for Sexual and
Gender Diversity 157

*Presidential Address, The College Board Forum: The Value
Debate in Higher Education* 161

2014

*Lecture at Tsinghua University, Beijing: Interconnected
Knowledge and the Twenty-First-Century
University* 172

*Faculty Address: Leadership Transitions, Rebuilding the
Campus, the Role of Philanthropy* 183

*Commencement Address at Miami Dade College:
Opportunity Changes Everything* 194

Freshman Convocation: On Comfort True and False 201

2015

*Faculty Address: Choices That Made Duke—Medicine,
Athletics, Durham* 205

Remarks at a Community Forum on a Racial
Incident 216

Freshman Convocation: Constructing Duke 220

*Keynote Address, Fiftieth Anniversary of the National
Endowment for the Humanities: On the Fate and Fortunes
of Public Goods* 225

2016

Baccalaureate: I Learn by Going Where

I Have to Go 237

Freshman Convocation: Citizens of Duke 242

Index 247

PREFACE

.....

From 2004 to 2017 I had the honor to serve as president of Duke. It would be hard to name a more interesting job. First, there is no overstating the miscellany of a university president's work. In no other post could you have the responsibility to recruit a dean of engineering, a chaplain, a football coach, and a leader for a massive health care system, while being ready to talk with any student who walks through the door.

To increase the interest, it's the special nature of universities that they focus the deepest hopes and most perplexing challenges of our culture. In many ways, the first years of the twenty-first century were a bright time for higher education, especially in private institutions. Financially there was some margin for investment (never enough), so these years allowed for renovation, innovation, and experiment. But as they advanced in some directions, universities found themselves facing new forms of difficulty in these years, Duke along with every other.

Unlike the previous great period of expansion for universities in the 1950s and 1960s, in recent decades prosperity has been much more unequally distributed, such that even when gifts from generous donors have run high, access and affordability have grown more challenging. After the Great Downturn of 2008, the cost issue was compounded with another challenge. Suddenly even well-educated people were asking, Is it really worth it, this mysterious thing colleges provide? As rarely before, universities needed to defend the most elemental assumptions of the education we offer—but it would not do to just stay in place. While preserving the best of tradition, universities have needed to re-create their programs for new times, having the courage to change while resisting facile nostrums of reform.

All the while, there were other challenges on the horizon: how to accommodate the increasingly global world our students will live and work in, to name just one. Meanwhile old questions took challenging new forms. Having opened their doors to excluded groups many years

ago, universities now wrestle with the question of how to achieve the deeper integration—the full measure of inclusion for all and the optimal enrichment of each *by* all—that more diverse campus communities could deliver.

These are questions university presidents wake up to every day. The point is, there is no picking and choosing among them. Approaches to such issues need to be endlessly recalculated in changing campus situations, with dozens of audiences to listen to and coax along and without forgetting our basic mission: advancing knowledge and unleashing human potential.

If you are the president of Duke, the job has a further interest. It's different being president of Duke because Duke is just a very different kind of place. Having come here as an outsider and having looked every institutional fact in the face for thirteen years, I still find Duke's mythology to be substantially true. The youngest of America's top universities, Duke still has some of the spirit of a start-up. Compared to other leading universities, Duke's culture is deeply communal, broadly collaborative, and quite receptive to innovation.

At a school with that temperament, you would not escape a single one of the hard facts of higher education at this time. But you would have some prospect of working together, answering questions in new ways, striving to create the version of education that will yield the fullest benefit for individuals and our society today.

This book is a chronicle of my work as president of Duke—not in the sense that it lays out all the tasks I was enmeshed in but in that it registers my attempts to work through the challenges and opportunities higher education confronted during my years in office. The book is a series of talks. Each originated as an actual person speaking to some particular set of people gathered for some particular occasion. As such, the pieces mean to underscore the fact that, however complex and cumbersome universities may appear, at their core they are places of personal interaction and personal exchange. I call the book *Speaking of Duke* because, as I have come to understand, speaking is not an ornamental or incidental part of the president's work. Day by day, a president will be involved in a greatly varied mix of activities, but the job that is the president's before any other is the job of voicing the ambitions of the university, enlisting

others to share those ambitions, and proposing new ways those ambitions can be fulfilled.

The talks come in a variety of genres. The convocation addresses were addressed to freshmen as they arrived at college, uncertain how to make use of this strange new world. The baccalaureate addresses were delivered to students as they prepared to graduate, uncertain about their new life and how a Duke education would assist them. At Duke the president gives an address to the faculty academic council every year on major issues before the university. I include samples of this genre, speaking on financial aid, international strategy, race, athletics, urban revival in Durham, and a host of other topics.

Increasingly as my Duke career went on and especially after I chaired the American Academy of Arts and Sciences Commission on the Humanities and Social Sciences, I spoke to national audiences on liberal arts education and the too easily ignored value of my own specialty, the humanities. Several of those pieces are included here. Two talks were given at institutions very different from Duke where I had the honor to be the commencement speaker: Fisk University, one of the country's oldest historically black universities, and Miami Dade College, arguably the most diverse and democratic institution of higher education in the United States.

A sad but important work of the president is commemorating people who created the university through the devoted exercise of their gifts. Three pieces here honor three Duke giants: John Hope Franklin, Reynolds Price, and Mary D. B. T. Semans.

I first thought to arrange these pieces by genre, but I came to believe it more revealing to order them as they appear here, gathered by the year in which they were delivered. In effect the book is a chronicle, registering highlights (and occasional lowlights) of successive years, while allowing the reader to see how issues entered the consciousness of the university and played out over time—as the 2008 financial crisis reverberates across genres here for a period of several years.

I am the speaker in these pieces, but they are not about me. The story is of an ambitious university navigating its way forward through difficult currents in ever-changing weather. I hope, however, that a few things will be clear about the author: how grateful I remain for the privilege of serving

Duke, how engaging I found the challenges of this job from first to last, and what confidence I have that Duke will continue to flourish long after I have passed the baton.

Finally a few words of thanks. A university is the collaborative labor of thousands of faculty, students, alumni, and staff. I offer thanks for the inspiration and good company of all who shared my adventure at Duke. They are far too many to name, but my gratitude is no less for remaining tacit.

There are a few people I must single out for special mention. My closest daily associates in the Office of the President were Lisa Jordan, my executive assistant; Richard Riddell, my chief of staff; and Carolyn Gerber, my special assistant. Their invisible hands helped with every good thing that happened during my term of office. I thank them for their loyalty and support.

A group of extraordinarily talented administrators were my partners in leadership over many years. Many of Duke's most promising initiatives had begun when I arrived; most bore the mark of Provost Peter Lange. Peter continued as provost for ten years of my presidency, serving with an unrelenting energy and creativity to which all Duke is in debt. In my final three years, Sally Kornbluth brought a different temperament but the same high quality of intellect and leadership to the role of provost. Utterly unruffleable, always able to see a way out of even the most daunting problem, Sally taught me a phrase that had never been in my vocabulary before: "It'll be fine." Thanks to her, it usually was.

Victor Dzau agreed to leave Harvard and take the plunge as chancellor of health affairs at Duke shortly after I agreed to take the plunge from Yale. He was a brilliant and imaginative leader to the half of Duke that lies in the Health System, and he remains a good friend. When Victor left Duke to head the Institute of Medicine, it was my good fortune to recruit an outstanding successor, Gene Washington, whose warm humanity and acute strategic sense will lead Duke Health forward long into the future.

Tallman Trask, who has served as executive vice president for more than twenty years, saw me through my entire presidency, handling every issue of university finance and construction (among many others) with a mix of integrity and ingenuity that remains a wonder. The Duke we know would not exist without the intelligence of Tallman Trask.

Invisible in their effect on campus but absolutely critical to Duke's success have been the men and women who served as university trustees. No university has been more fortunate in its board. Totally devoted to Duke and deeply appreciative of faculty and student talent, the trustees I served with have supplied this university with wisdom, judgment, all manner of expertise, and many forms of support. I could not have asked for better partners or friends. I will name my five board chairs as my way of thanking all my trustee colleagues: Pete Nicholas, Bob Steel, Dan Blue, Rick Wagoner, and David Rubenstein.

My last mention is of a person I met in a university in our early twenties who, to my endless good fortune, has been my partner and companion in everything my adult life has contained. This is my wife, Cindy Brodhead. We took on this job as a joint commitment, and she has more than done her part. Duke has no more ardent fan.

I became who I am thanks to my experiences as a student, and, such is my luck, my education has never stopped. I have embraced every part of the president's vast portfolio, but the heart of my work has been serving the primal mystery by which minds are awakened and discover their powers. In that expansive sense of the word, I dedicate this book to the students of Duke University.

Durham, North Carolina
September 4, 2016

Remarks on Being Named President of Duke University

Perkins Library, December 12, 2003

I thank you all for this exceptionally warm welcome. When you know me you won't often find me at a loss for words, but you'll pardon me if I'm a little overwhelmed. This is one of the great moments of my life.

Let me tell you a true story. I had been brought down to Durham, in thick disguise, for a final stealth interview last Friday, and since there was a blizzard going on where I come from, my trip home was complex. I could only fly as far as Washington, and in my circuitous journey from that point forward, I had a long cab ride. The cabbie, an Afghan immigrant, was very affable and interesting, and we fell to talking. After a while, he said, "If you don't mind my asking, what do you do?" "I'm a college professor," I told him, in my usual discreet and unrevealing way. Without losing a beat he replied, "Oh! It's the dream of my life that my daughters will go to Duke."

Hearing this was like getting an electric shock. This man, a total stranger and random specimen of humanity, could have had no idea where I was coming from or what I had on my mind. But Duke was in *his* mind, though he had absolutely no connection to it, and on his mind as what? A name for something excellent, a name for something to aspire to, a name for a place that would open the door to knowledge and all the life opportunities that education can provide. I hope that man's daughters do come here. But you know what? By the time I was in that cab, it had also become my dream to attach myself to this university and

all its meanings and promise. Lucky me! It came to pass. I've been admitted to Duke, and I'm coming.

This has been a big decision for me, as big as any in my life. Let me say a word about how I came to it. I was not restless. I was not looking for a job. I've had a wonderful life at a great institution. I may be America's least disaffected employee. Yale has been a great place to teach, my first and most abiding passion; also a great place to do my scholarly work and pursue my intellectual life; and my current job has given me a thousand challenges and opportunities for what I care for most: strengthening the work of education. When I was first contacted by your committee, however, my curiosity was piqued. Duke is one of the handful of top universities in the world, after all, and if I went anywhere, it would only be to somewhere like that. So I entered into discussions, and under your committee's skillful tutelage, I came to have a clearer and clearer sense of this place. You already know it, but let me try to tell you what this stranger and outsider saw.

First, Duke is a university with the feel and human scale of a small school but the intellectual resources of a big school, with a college anchoring a full array of outstanding professional schools. Second, and this is rarer than you may recognize, Duke is a university whose different schools and centers and departments not only coexist but actually interact, and even like to interact. I've been to a lot of universities in my day, but I've never been to one where there was such a powerful sense of interschool and interdisciplinary collaboration and of the special dynamism such interactions can breed.

Third, and I felt this very powerfully, Duke is a young school that has managed to raise itself into the top ranks in a fairly short time but that manifestly continues to rise and to want to rise. When I took my stealth tour, I loved your campus, which is so beautiful in a traditional way, but what I really loved was the coexistence of tradition and heady forward progress: all those cranes towering over the Gothic buildings, saying that the building phase at Duke is something of the present and future, not just the past. I was particularly floored by those great modern research facilities hidden just behind the West Campus quad. They show that this is a school capable of having major aspirations and seeing them through—plus, at Duke all that scientific and medical research activity

is right next door, where undergraduates can feel its energy and get in on its excitement, not miles away in a separate kingdom.

In the same vein, I found Duke a school with a strong sense of priorities for future improvement, priorities to my mind quite brilliantly articulated that are proof of your faculty and administration's ability to think and work together on important challenges. I've also felt no defensiveness here about improvement, no desire to treat the status quo as the pinnacle of progress. So it's a school that has come a long way, wants to go further, and is unusually well positioned to succeed in doing so.

But then, over against all this dynamism and drive, or accompanying it with no sense of contradiction, I also learned that Duke is just an overwhelmingly friendly place, a place full of people who are both very smart and very nice, a place where people appreciate each other, are relaxed around each other, care about and enjoy each other, and have a healthy sense of the good things of life. In addition to the sense of community on campus, it's also a place that takes seriously its role in the community—the community of Durham, the Research Triangle, and North Carolina more generally. If it's true that we live in a knowledge economy, then universities have special things to contribute to the surrounding world and a special obligation to make those contributions. In Duke I saw a school that wants to be a good citizen in the strong sense of that word, and I believe in that.

Put it all together—what you are and what you want to be—and I must say, it made an impression. A growing impression: I moved, over the course of the last weeks, from being intrigued to deeply interested to quite excited by what I saw here, and I had a stronger and stronger sense of the work to be done here and the fun there might be in doing it. And then came the day when, as Huck Finn said, I had to choose, forever, betwixt two things, and I knowed it: my wonderful life in a known world or the adventure of Duke. Well, you know my choice. I'm a person of strong attachments and powerful devotions who has a lot of energy and wants nothing more than to use that energy on behalf of the deep goals of universities: education, the creation and transmission of knowledge, and the training of the young for constructive lives in the world. It has been my pride to do that work at Yale. Today I transfer my loyalty to this place: from here forward, it will be my honor to do it at Duke. The switch

should not be hard. Everything I own is blue, and I am used to four-letter names.

Let me say a few words of thanks. The first is to the search committee and its extraordinary chair, Bob Steel. During the time when I scarcely knew Duke, these folks embodied Duke for me, and they could not have shown it in a more appealing light. They were by turns smart, serious, committed, and fun. What struck me the most was how much they loved Duke and appreciated and admired each other. I could like a place like that, I thought—and here I am. Second, in addition to being wonderfully helpful to me as I tried to get a sense of Duke, Nan Keohane has been a most remarkable president. This is bad for me in one way but good in another. On the one hand, she sets terribly high standards for her successor, and I'm sure I will live to regret the many days when people say "When Nan was here" or "If only Nan were here." Thanks, Nan. But far more than that, Nan has helped shape a university where the faculty trusts the administration (and even likes the president) and feels that we are all working toward common goals. I am lucky to inherit that achievement. This time I mean it: Thanks, Nan. Third, and here I will not say by any means all that's in my heart, I thank my family—my mother and father, who nourished my education in every way, and my wife and son, who give me strength and joy every step of the way. I'm a person who has had many blessings. My new life at Duke is among the chief of them. But my family is at the heart of them.

Last, to every member of the Duke community, let me say thank you in advance for the work we will do together. People speak of educational leaders, but the main truth about universities is that absolutely nothing happens in them through the strength of one. I bring high hopes to this job, but whatever I accomplish will be accomplished through our common labor and with your constant help. Together, you have made this a great school. Together, let's keep it great and make it better yet. I pledge you my full commitment to Duke and to what we will make Duke through our work together.