With Howard Lamar in place temporarily as head of the administration, the search for a new President began. The Reverend Robert Wood Lynn, a member of the Corporation, headed the committee assisted by Marie Borroff, Sterling Professor of English, as a faculty counselor. And in an innovative move much appreciated by the faculty, members of the faculty served on the search committee for the first time in Yale’s history. To the delight of all, a Yale faculty member—Richard C. Levin, Frederick William Beinecke Professor of Economics and Dean of the Yale Graduate School—was chosen to lead the institution. Yale’s twenty-second President is the first man from west of the Mississippi to serve in that position. A native of San Francisco and a graduate of Stanford University who attended Oxford after receiving his B.A., Levin earned his Ph.D. in economics at Yale in 1974. He was appointed to the economics faculty that year and never left New Haven. Upon his appointment, Professor Boroff noted the qualities that convinced her that Levin was the right candidate for the job: “He knows the University, his specialty is economics—which will be invaluable to Yale at this time—and he’s a wonderfully warm, balanced person.”

The traditional investiture ceremony was held in Woolsey Hall on October 2, 1993. It began with the march by the President and his faculty colleagues from Sterling Memorial Library to the Cross Campus, where the President-elect joined the procession of administrators. Escorted by Senior Fellow Sid R. Bass, he made his way to Woolsey Hall and was seated in Abraham Pierson’s chair. The Glee Club raised their voices in an anthem composed by Fenno Heath, director emeritus of the choir, based on text chosen by the President: the second chorus of Sophocles’ Antigone, which begins, “Numberless are the world’s wonders, but none more wonderful than man.” The formal presentation of symbols then took place. There was a bit of amusement when the President’s Collar would not close properly, but aided by Secretary Linda K. Lorimer, the Senior Fellow solved the problem and, with Lorimer’s pat on the President’s back and a round of applause, the ceremony continued. The President, in his new role, then presented his inaugural address.
Richard C. Levin Inauguration
INAUGURAL ADDRESS

RICHARD C. LEVIN, OCTOBER 2, 1993

In the second chorus of *Antigone*, Sophocles celebrates humanity: “Numberless are the world’s wonders, but none more wonderful than man.” The chorus sings of humanity’s power over nature: “Earth, holy and inexhaustible, is graven with shining furrows where his plows have gone year after year, the timeless labor of stallions.” And the chorus praises our ability to use language and reason to create a social space in which people can debate what is good: “Words also, and thought as rapid as air, he fashions to good use; statecraft is his.”

We celebrate today our University—a monument to the achievement Sophocles extols. We preserve humanity’s achievement in our collections of books and manuscripts, works of art and architecture, objects and artifacts. We impart an appreciation of that achievement by our teaching and augment it by our research.

My teacher and colleague, James Tobin, Nobel laureate in economics, wrote some years ago that Yale’s primary mission is the preservation, advancement, and enrichment of knowledge and culture. He observed correctly that Yale is one of the very few universities in the world with the tangible assets, human resources, and internal culture to make possible serious dedication to this ambitious task. Ours is a very special place. We are proud of our capacity to advance knowledge in the sciences, the humanities, the fine arts, and the learned professions, and we are especially proud that within the select group of institutions that share this capability, Yale is the most committed to the teaching of undergraduates. At this inaugural, this time of looking forward, we rededicate ourselves to our primary mission, and we reaffirm those values that sustain us in its pursuit.

The tragedy of Antigone and Creon teaches that human potential can be fully realized only when the laws of society resonate with the deepest truths about ourselves. This is our aspiration for the social order we create within the University. As scholars and teachers, we live by values intended to permit the full flowering of the human spirit. We cultivate human potential by a profound commitment to free inquiry and free expression. Only through the unfettered application of “clear intelligence” can we advance genuine understanding of nature and ourselves. We ask hard questions and answer them honestly, and we follow reason wherever it leads, however treacherous the terrain. We practice what we teach our students: Question every assumption, and pursue every argument in the search for truth.
We live also in a wider world beyond the ivy walls, a world in which we bear enormous responsibility. Like Antigone, the University stands for transcendent principles, those which permit the preservation of culture and the advance of knowledge. To avoid the fate of Antigone and Creon, our principles must coexist in harmony with the principles that govern the civil society of which we are a part. It follows that our responsibility is to educate and to lead, to shape the values of the wider world so that they, too, encourage the full realization of human potential.

One of Yale’s principal responsibilities to society was enunciated in its founding charter. In 1701 the General Assembly of Connecticut approved “An Act for Liberty to Erect a Collegiate School,” which it described as a place “wherein Youth may be instructed in the Arts and Sciences who through the blessing of Almighty God may be fitted for Publick employment both in Church and Civil State.”

For nearly three centuries Yale has fulfilled its founding mission with distinction, supplying leaders to the nation and the world. Fourteen Yale alumni served in the Continental Congress; four signed the Declaration of Independence. Three of the last five presidents of the United States and ten of the 100 senators now in office have Yale degrees. Until recently, Yale educated more leaders of major U.S. corporations than any other university. Yale produced the greatest American scientists of the 19th century (Benjamin Silliman and Josiah Willard Gibbs), two of our greatest inventors (Eli Whitney and Samuel F.B. Morse), the first African-American to receive a Ph.D. (Edward Bouchet), the founder of sociology in America (William Graham Sumner), and the father of American football (Walter Camp). From Cole Porter to Maya Lin, few institutions rival Yale’s record in producing artistic, dramatic, and musical talent of distinction. Yale alumni served as the first presidents of Princeton, Columbia, Williams, Cornell, Johns Hopkins, the University of Chicago, and the Universities of Georgia, Mississippi, Missouri, Wisconsin, and California.

We help shape our society through the highly visible and distinguished leaders we educate, and we also improve public life and public discourse by cultivating in all our students those qualities of mind most conducive to the health of democracy. By encouraging our students to reason carefully and to form independent critical judgments, we prepare them to be thinking citizens for a lifetime. As an institution, we remain committed to this Jeffersonian conception of the role of higher education in our democracy. By encouraging freedom and independence in our students, we help defend freedom and independence for all.
Yale’s early 18th-century mandate was to educate leaders and citizens for a small New England colony. By the mid-19th century, our compass had become the whole nation. As we enter the 21st century, we must aspire to educate leaders for the whole world. Our curriculum increasingly reflects those forces that have integrated the world’s economy and must ultimately, if we are to survive the dual threats of war and environmental degradation, integrate the world’s polity. We must focus even more on global issues if our students are to be well prepared for world leadership, if we are to be a world university.

We influence the wider world by educating leaders and citizens. Through our efforts to discover truths about humanity and nature, we also influence, not always intentionally, the material well-being of our nation and the world. I refer in particular to the substantial contribution that University-based scientific research has made to technological progress and economic growth since the end of the Second World War. Scientific advance is the ultimate source of growth in industrial productivity, which in the modern economy is the principal source of improvement in the standard of living. Advances in basic science provide essential knowledge for researchers in industry and open, often unexpectedly, entire new areas for industrial application.

Since the Second World War, research conducted at our universities has led to dramatic increases in the food supply and human longevity. University-based scientific research and training have also given this country an enormous advantage in international competition. Despite the widespread belief that America’s strength in international markets is eroding, American firms have consistently led the world in those industrial markets in which technology is most closely linked to advance in science. Ironically, the practical consequences of scientific advance are often most profound when the underlying research is least influenced by commercial considerations. The revolution in biotechnology arose from discoveries made in the pursuit of pure knowledge of the molecular basis of life.

Our national capability in basic research was built by the farsighted policy of public support for university-based science articulated during the Truman administration and pursued consistently, though with varying intensity, ever since. Today, the scientific capability of American universities is the envy of the world. We neglect its support at our peril.

As we seek to educate leaders and citizens for the world, as our discoveries spread enlightenment and material benefits far beyond our walls, we must remember that we have important responsibilities here at home. We contribute much to the cultural life of New Haven, to the health of its citi-
zens, and to the education of its children. But we must do more. Pragmatism alone compels this conclusion. If we are to continue to recruit students and faculty of the highest quality, New Haven must remain an attractive place in which to study, to live, and to work.

But our responsibility to our city transcends pragmatism. The conditions of America’s cities threaten the health of the republic. Our democracy depends upon widespread literacy, and literacy is declining. Freedom for all requires that those without privilege have both access to opportunity and the knowledge to make use of it. We must help our society become what we aspire to be inside our walls—a place where human potential can be fully realized.

At this time of looking forward, we reaffirm the values of our past: to preserve and advance knowledge, to defend free inquiry and free expression, to educate leaders and thinking citizens, to teach the world around us to give scope for human achievement, and to nurture human potential. We reaffirm these commitments not merely as ends in themselves, but as means to improve the human condition and elevate the human spirit. Let us resume our “timeless labor.” Let us leave “shining furrows” behind.