On February 19, 1921, after the most comprehensive search in the history of Yale, the Corporation elected James Rowland Angell as President of the University. The Corporation committee, chaired by Samuel H. Fisher, had started with a list of almost eighty candidates, but in a few months had pared it down to four. Anson Phelps Stokes, a powerful figure under Hadley and the candidate many thought would be appointed, was eliminated in early 1921, and Angell was elected unanimously. Breaking a Yale tradition, he would be the first President since 1766 who had not studied at Yale (the early Rectors had been Harvard graduates.) Angell received his B.A. in 1891 from the University of Michigan, where his father was president, and earned an M.A. from Harvard. After studying abroad, he taught at the University of Minnesota and then at the University of Chicago, where he remained from 1894 to 1919, rising from Assistant Professor to Professor of Psychology and serving as Dean of the Senior College, Dean of the Faculties, and Acting President from 1918 to 1919. Appointed President of the Carnegie Corporation in 1919, he left that position to accept the Yale presidency in 1921.

The Inauguration Committee, chaired by Anson Phelps Stokes and including for the first time a Provost, Williston Walker, as well as alumni and faculty, decided to hold the ceremony on the same day as Commencement — Wednesday, June 22, 1921. At the time of the inauguration, one of the most unusual features of the event was that delegates attending from other universities, colleges, and learned societies would be housed in the newly completed portions of the Memorial Quadrangle of Yale College, and they would be the first to occupy these rooms.

An inaugural dinner in the ballroom of the Hotel Taft the night before the ceremony was attended by the representatives of “sister institutions” as well as President-elect Angell and President Hadley, members of the Corporation, the University Council, the Inauguration Committee, presidents of national Yale organizations, representatives of the federal, state, and New Haven governments, and the 1921 candidates for honorary degrees. After dinner, speeches were initiated by Provost Walker, who welcomed the delegates to “an important milestone in the history of this ancient University,” noting that “Tomorrow we shall welcome you also to a ceremony unusual in Yale’s history, a Commencement and an Inauguration combined…The past, the present, and the future all claim their share in tomorrow’s celebration in which you and we shall join.”

The joint commencement and inauguration ceremony took place in Woolsey Hall, where the stage was filled by present and former members and officers of the Corporation; the Governor’s staff, the Mayor of New Haven, the Deans, the delegates from Lund, Glasgow, William and Mary, Oxford, Louvain, Cambridge,
and Harvard as well as Messrs. Woolsey and Dwight—the sons of Yale’s tenth and twelfth presidents—and the candidates for honorary degrees. President-elect Angell sat in the chair that had belonged to Yale’s first Rector, Abraham Pierson. An inaugural march composed for the occasion by Dean David Stanley Smith of the School of Music was performed by a full symphony orchestra, and an Inaugural Ode was sung by a student choir. Finally, an honorary Doctor of Laws degree was conferred upon Angell, who thus bore a Yale degree as he was inducted into the office of President.

Angell resigned in 1937, following the rule which he had instituted for the faculty: voluntary retirement at age sixty-five, mandatory at age sixty-eight. His sixteen-year presidency had seen enormous changes in the physical rebuilding of Yale. In addition to the many Sterling buildings on campus—Sterling Chemistry Laboratory, Sterling Hall of Medicine, Sterling Memorial Library, Sterling Law Buildings, Sterling Power House, Sterling Quadrangle, and Hall of Graduate Studies—there were the Harkness bequests resulting in the magnificent quadrangles of each residential college as well as Harkness Hall and the University Theater. Alongside the physical rebuilding of Yale, Angell was determined to foster a first-class graduate school and improve the professional schools, and he left office having accomplished these goals.
James Rowland Angell Inauguration

Commencement and Inauguration were held together; visible in the background are President Arthur Twining Hadley and generals from World War I who were given honorary degrees.
INAUGURAL ADDRESS

JAMES ROWLAND ANGELL, JUNE 22, 1921

We celebrate today the auspicious conclusion of a great administration. For twenty-two years President Hadley has served the University with untiring devotion. Under his leadership Yale has grown marvelously in material wealth, in intellectual power, and in educational prestige. I make no attempt, Sir, at this time to rehearse the many contributions which you have made to the history of Yale; but on behalf of all her sons I offer you the tribute of warmest gratitude, unqualified admiration, and sincere affection. Retiring from your administrative duties in the full height of your physical and intellectual powers, may you live long and happily in the pursuit of your chosen studies, an example to all men of the enviable reward which awaits high intelligence and spotless character unselfishly devoted to the public good. “Candidiorem animam terra not tuli.”

This brilliant chapter in the life of the University, always to be associated with the name of President Hadley, draws to a close; and there must perforce be opened a new one upon whose pages we know not what shall be inscribed. Properly and inevitably at such a time we turn our vision forward, and in the few moments which I may occupy I invite your attention to certain considerations bearing upon this unknown future.

I

No thought has been so often brought to my notice by the alumni of Yale as their desire that she should somewhat enlarge her character as a national University. It has for generations been a source of pride to Yale that her sons represented so truly the entire country, and it has been no less a persistent ideal that she should serve the whole nation. I believe that a moment may profitably be devoted to this ideal and some of its implications. It seems to involve several conceptions not always clearly distinguished from one another, but the most frequent and that which may properly be first discussed, whether or not it be of most importance, concerns the undergraduate departments and the wish that their students should represent a wider and more generous geographical distribution than is at present the case.

The day has long since passed when any educational institution can hope to monopolize the function of national representation. Hardly any college is so small or so obscure that it does not count in its student body representatives of widely distant regions, and this despite the fact that every college, large or small, draws the greater part of its students from its own immediate neighborhood. In larger measure perhaps than most of its con-
temporaries Yale has enjoyed a considerable attendance of students from afar, and her problem is accordingly the extension and enrichment of this group, not its creation.

A college may conceivably desire to increase the list of its students from distant regions as a method of attaining great size, but I take it that merely to secure larger numbers is not, in this instance at least, our motive. It is profitable both financially and educationally that an institution should have in it as many students as its physical facilities and its instructional staff can properly care for. Beyond that point new students are generally a liability and not an asset—and this is true from whatever viewpoint the matter be considered. How many more students than are now enrolled Yale can properly serve with her present personnel and equipment I do not know, but in any event I am sure that in proposing to augment the number of young men from distant states quality and not quantity is the dominant consideration, and this I conceive to be an ambition altogether honorable and legitimate.

We should seek the rare outstanding boy, who promises to get from his life at Yale the truest values and to bring to her sound character, fine ideals, and high native intelligence. Such boys, however irregular their academic training may have chanced to be, will create no serious problem. Their orientation will be speedy and their quality will quickly show.

We want these young men not only because of the tonic effect which their presence is sure to exercise on the undergraduate atmosphere, but because if Yale is to remain really national in her thought and feeling, she must keep touch with the various currents of sentiment and opinion constantly flowing through the life of the people, and nothing can so fully assure this sympathetic contract as the presence in her midst of those who are among the finest representatives of the younger generation, from the various parts of the country.

In revising the entrance system the first step has been wisely taken to render it possible for any able boy who has had a high school course to come to Yale; but between making it possible for these youths to come, and the enlistment of their interest in such a program, a considerable gulf is set. Not only must the gates be opened, but guides must point the way.

One form of general publicity against which no possible shadow of objection can be raised is the presence in a community of a Yale man discharging with distinction some duty for which sound character and broad training are indispensable. Yale owes no small part of its attraction for able boys to the example of just such men. When, as often happens, a man of this
kind interests himself in calling the attention of promising lads to the opportunities at Yale, one has the best and most effective form of publicity which can be secured—and one, be it said, which cannot be bought.

The college which expects to succeed in this field must also take the high schools into its confidence, explain fully its purposes and seek frankly to cooperate as far as may be in the efforts of these schools to meet their local obligations. One truth must be clearly understood and cordially accepted: that while as a matter of law Yale stands on an independent foundation, in fact she is as much a part of our national system of education as any state university, and she must bear her just responsibilities in solving the problems which this circumstance involves. She must conceive of the schools not merely as sources of raw material for her purposes, but as institutions with which she shares the common task of training for citizenship.

Yet deeper and more fundamental than any of these things in attracting exceptional men the country over is the actual life and work of a college itself. There must be men of outstanding scholarly distinction and attainment on the faculty, men who are recognized leaders in their several fields of scholarship, men genuinely gifted as teachers, who honestly enjoy teaching. The ideals which dominate faculty and student body alike must be clean and sound and reverent, grounded on sincerity, integrity, and loyalty, otherwise the moral and spiritual life of the college will inevitably decay. The most invaluable asset which any college can possess is a deserved reputation for giving a thorough and honest training to body, mind, and spirit. No sham college discipline can stand the acid test of experience as disclosed in the careers of its alumni; and to this test every college must submit.

We want these marked boys of whom we have been speaking not only for our own selfish advantage and for whatever advantage we can pass on to them, but also because we believe that Yale gives a distinctive training which, when carried back into homes and communities scattered all over the land, will be of high service in the multifarious undertakings of the nation. To be sure, not all our graduates will return to those parts of the country from which they came, but many will, and by so much the Yale contribution will be the more widely distributed.

In holding these beliefs, we need not urge that all academic virtue and wisdom abide with us, much less that they will perish when we perish! The high achievements of other institutions we gladly recognize and admire.
But there are broader and perhaps more pregnant conceptions of Yale’s place in the nation. Our colleges and universities comprise essential features of our national character. They reflect and largely determine the nature of our intellectual leadership, and although we have no national system of education in the strict sense of the phrase, because of that very fact each of our great universities has an added obligation to play its peculiar part to the limits of its powers. Time immemorial Yale has been sending out an unfailing stream of young men equipped with the discipline of a liberal education to meet the varied demands of the community. How well they have responded to the test is shown by the long honor roll of those who have achieved fame in the nation’s service; but a great university must also train men directly for the learned professions, and this too Yale has done. That public interest should in general be more actively enlisted in the undergraduate departments, that alumni sentiment should be at this point most vivid and devoted, is entirely intelligible in view of the history of American university development. This fact however must not blind us to the further fact that powerful professional schools with high ideals and drastic standards constitute one of the most bracing influences to which the college can be exposed. To train in the most thorough possible way a rigorously selected group of men for the great professions is to render a national service always needed and never too well performed. Who ever really wishes Yale to keep her place in the front rank of the great universities must view with sympathetic interest any step which promises to strengthen the fiber of her professional work, for she cannot discharge her full obligations to the nation if she fails at this point.

Just at this moment the colleges and universities are confronted with an extremely grave crisis, by reason of the dearth of properly qualified teachers in many branches of study. For the recruitment of this profession with persons of high intellectual caliber and sound training our Graduate School has a very special obligation, which it shares with other schools of its type.

I fear that the community is not yet aroused to the danger that the career of the productive teacher, scholar, scientist shall so fall away in its attractiveness to men of high quality that our universities may presently be largely staffed by inferior individuals. It is obviously futile to look for intellectual leadership from men of second rate capacity, and I cannot believe that our people will ever knowingly consent that training for the higher intellectual achievements, whether in commerce, industry, the professions, or statescraft shall be choked by mediocrity and inefficiency at the source. Certainly the war taught the public the value of university men and univer-
sity training with a thoroughness which nothing else could have done; and they have shown their appreciation by drafting for business and industrial service many of our leading university teachers, while at the same time they have sent their children into the colleges and universities in numbers never before known. As a consequence, the unprecedented growth of our institutions of higher education has created a demand for teachers with which our present supplies are wholly inadequate to cope.

The cure, if cure there be, for these conditions is undoubtedly to be found in better academic salaries, in more congenial conditions of work and above all in a more generous recognition of the importance of the scholar’s function by the general public. If with this change of public attitude there go such possibilities of income and of protection in old age as to assure to the prudent freedom from intolerable economic embarrassment and the ability to lead the normal life of the comfortably circumstanced citizen, able men will certainly be drawn into the profession in rapidly increasing numbers.

III

Human institutions like human beings necessarily adjust themselves to the changing tides of life, otherwise they fall into decay and perish. Colleges and universities constitute no exception to this inflexible and doubtless benign rule. To-day as always after a period of upheaval in men’s methods of thought and conduct the university has as its most compelling problem the preservation of those elements in the old whose value has been proved while seeking out and testing that which is significant in the new. Respectful of the great traditions of the past, we must nevertheless recognize the peculiar exigencies of the present, and the radiant promise of the future. The university is essentially a living thing. Like other organisms it must grow by casting off that which is no longer of value and by taking on that which is, and in this process it will always grieve two groups of its friends: those who distrust the new and lament the old which is discarded, and those who regret the old which is retained while craving more of the new. Yet somewhere between motionless stagnation and incessant flux lies the region of healthful development.

Furthermore the undergraduate college of to-day is under a vigorous cross fire from those who, on the one hand, fear that it is deserting the ideals of liberal culture and from those, on the other, who equally fear that it is not, and who desire that it should become an institution of more definitely vocational character. The advocates of the latter view are wont to protest that the present college curriculum affords a training which is at best of
dubious value, if designed to secure either culture or discipline. They allege that it is pursued by the average undergraduate without enthusiasm and with a minimum expenditure of effort, that it is largely responsible for the development of the dense undergrowth of so-called college activities which monopolize so large a part of students’ energies, and that it should give way to a curriculum organized in such a manner as to appeal to the same motives which make the severe discipline of the strong professional schools so attractive to young men. It must be admitted that generally speaking the professional and vocational schools evoke from their students a more earnest and devoted attitude of study, a more substantial interest in their work, than that which characterizes the students of liberal arts colleges. On the other hand, they undoubtedly sacrifice some very real though intangible values in their accent upon obvious utility. Without desiring to abandon a scintilla of whatever is of genuine worth in the disciplinary and liberal culture ideal of college training, it is fair to urge that we study afresh the problem of motivation in our students. A liberal education at which the average student balks and perhaps only a portion of which is all he will actually assimilate, may be defeating its own purposes by an insistence upon the form when the substance has already fled.

The protagonists in this controversy are not so much divided by a complete diversity of ideals as by a difference of opinion as to the stage at which the one type of training should give way to the other. So far as I am aware, all are agreed that beneath vocational and professional training of every kind there should be a substratum of general and liberal education. Divergence of opinion arises only when one undertakes to assign the point at which this form of education shall yield to one of more utilitarian character. In the judgment of certain of our educational authorities, four full years of liberal college training should precede entrance upon any strictly professional studies. In the judgment of others, perhaps equally competent, law and medicine may be entered upon advantageously after two years of liberal training. Still other competent opinion would hold that for engineers no general training beyond that given in the secondary schools is of indispensable moment; and similarly not a few would urge that admirable training for certain forms of business and industry may be based upon no more of liberal studies than is included in a high school course, or at best in such a course with one additional college year. In short, we are dealing in this question not so much with a proposal to abolish altogether from our training the ideal of liberal education; we are rather attempting to redefine its content and to state afresh the boundaries where it may properly give way to training of another type.
Inside the ranks of the advocates of liberal culture itself there is a secondary conflict centering on the possible deletion from the curriculum of certain of the subjects traditionally identified with their ideal; but this is an issue which may well be left to some other occasion for discussion.

IV

Not wholly distinct from these questions which we have been discussing and still meriting a separate emphasis because it is critically important and yet often forgotten is the contribution of the university to the discovery of truth. To push forward the boundaries of knowledge is at once the high privilege and the profound obligation of the university.

Never was the opportunity and need for the scholarly and dispassionate study of the great problems of life more urgent. Two generations ago the tension in the intellectual world of America was perhaps greatest in the field of theology. Then came the period of Darwin and the tension was transferred to the field of biology and natural science, but still with theological implications. To-day undoubtedly the tension is greatest in the field of economics, of political and social theory—what we sometimes call the social sciences. Many good citizens are disturbed, somewhat needlessly I suspect, by the alleged radical character of our collegiate instruction in these fields and by the supposed spread of radical heresies among our students. Whatever may be the facts in this particular issue, certain it is that we need in all these matters the most painstaking and thoughtful examination of the problem by men of wide experience, thorough training and utter impartiality, in order that we may know the truth and act accordingly.

What is true of the social sciences is, if possible, even more true in the range of the physical, chemical, and natural sciences. Not only is man’s understanding of the great fundamental processes of nature at the threshold of a great new revelation, but the applications of fresh discoveries in these sciences is every day bringing essential changes into the practices of industry, engineering, agriculture, medicine, and all the arts by which civilized man maintains himself. An institution in which the spirit of inquiry is not vigorous and alert is an institution intellectually moribund. The practical working out of certain phases of the problem of research is perplexing, for the university has other duties not always easily adjustable to the requirements of prolonged investigation; but none of these difficulties is insoluble. Not every man should devote the larger portion of his time to research. Such a privilege should be won by proved ability.
Meanwhile, it will always be true that where the great investigators and scholars are gathered, thither will come the intellectual elite from all the world. So Pasteur drew bacteriologists to Paris, so Helmholtz brought physical scientists to Berlin as J.J. Thomson drew them to Cambridge, and so it will always be. No university can in these days of arduous competition hope to have at any one time many of these preeminent scholars on its staff; but no university is quite worthy of the name and none is quite serving to the full its own day and generation, that is not, through its productive scholarship, enriching human life and enlarging the borders of human understanding. In this high citadel of the spirit whence proceeds the pure flame of intelligence in its mastery of life, may we always find men worthy of the great Yale tradition, able to keep in the forefront in these most enduring contributions to human progress!

V

In conclusion I wish to address a few words to the members of the graduating classes.

As the dark mists of the great war roll slowly away, America is standing upon the threshold of a new day. To us as a people it brings unparalleled opportunities, deep and compelling obligations. For all humanity it is of paramount consequence in what manner we meet this crisis. If we are guided by the divine that is in us, we may yet transfuse into permanent forces of beneficence those superb impulses of self-sacrifice and loyalty which characterized our national attitude in the war. On no one of our institutions does this burden of national responsibility fall more heavily than on the colleges and universities. Theirs it is to set a new standard of excellence, a new ideal of service to mankind, a new conception of the devotion of trained intelligence to the essential needs of humanity.

In the war America gave generously of her sons and many of you here present served bravely in our battle lines; but compared with our allies and with our enemies alike our losses were relatively insignificant. For them the flower of one whole generation has been practically destroyed. On us who were, in the Providence of God, so largely spared, and particularly upon you young men of the graduating classes, there rests the sacred duty to live worthily of the dead, to hold high the ideals for which they gave their lives and to bring to our common humanity, as far as in you lies, the gifts which were in the hands of your comrades fallen overseas. This is an obligation which I know you gladly acknowledge and which you will earnestly strive to meet. When the call has come, the sons of Yale have never failed. The sum-
mons to-day is no longer the bugle call to war, but the relentless command to enter upon the long, hard task of bringing back a distracted world to ways of sanity and peace.

Imbued with the true Yale spirit of loyalty to country and to God, take up this task manfully and unafraid, and join your prayers with ours that the divine Providence which has watched over this venerable institution for more than two centuries may still preserve and guide it in all the days to come, giving us, into whose hands the sacred trust has been confided, wisdom and power and devotion to pass on unimpaired to coming generations the benediction of its spirit.