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*Richard Levin
Shares His Vision
for Yale University*



Richard Levin:

A Dedication to Life-Long Learning

Richard Levin, president of Yale University, recently took time out of a busy summer schedule, which included a trip overseas, to reflect on his career, the achievements of his 13-year tenure and the importance of positioning Yale as an international institution. Revealing and enlightening, Levin exhibited a passion for his work, and a great affinity for New Haven.

Richard Levin's interest in education can be traced back to his days as an under-graduate student at Stanford University. Being exposed to a wide range of ideas facilitated many interests, and his experience culminated with time spent studying in Italy.

“My undergraduate experience made me understand the value of a broad liberal education — that is, an education that exposes you to many forms of human knowledge and accomplishment, teaches you to think in several different ways, and inspires the joy of learning,” said Levin. “My time in Italy as an undergraduate, and in England as a graduate student, also convinced me that an international experience is an essential element of becoming a well-educated person.” After receiving his bachelor's degree in history from Stanford in 1968, Levin studied politics and philosophy at Oxford University, earning a Bachelor of Letters. He continued his graduate work at Yale, receiving a Ph.D. in economics in 1974, and joined the university's faculty that same year.

Although he admits his career path had much to do with his passion for learning, his interest in being an active member of a university community started at a young age. As an undergraduate, Levin played a key role in Stanford's student government. This interest in being a pro-active member of a university continued through his first days on Yale's campus.

“In my early days on the faculty at Yale, I became immersed in the work of several important university committees,” Levin said. “Later I served as director of Graduate Studies and chair of the Economics Department. The move to ever greater responsibilities seemed natural. It suited my abilities and temperament.”

After a run as dean of Yale's Graduate School of Arts and Sciences, Levin was named president in 1993.

The 13 years he has served as president of Yale makes Levin the longest serving Ivy League president. His tenure has been marked by great change for the university, as well as for the city of New Haven. Establishing an effective partnership with the city was a specific area of interest for Levin almost immediately. Not only does he have a great affinity for the community, but he saw the benefits that an enhanced cooperation between the two entities would bring.

“From the day of my inauguration as president of Yale in 1993, I made it a priority to build a strong partnership with our host city,” said Levin. “In order to better coordinate our economic, political and community outreach efforts, I established the Office of New Haven Affairs, first under the outstanding leadership of Secretary Linda Lorimer.

“I then recruited veteran developer Bruce Alexander to return home to Connecticut to become vice president for New Haven and State Affairs, and he has done an extraordinary job of encouraging economic development in the city and region, and creating educational and cultural partnerships between the university and the people of New Haven. I have stayed closely involved with Bruce’s work over the past eight years.”

During Levin’s term, more than \$1.5 billion has been invested in Yale spin-off companies, and the school has directly contributed \$100 million to improvements in New Haven. The community initiatives are many, and include the Homebuyer Program, which was established in 1994. According to Levin, the program provides \$25,000 over 10 years to university employees who buy houses in designated neighborhoods of New Haven.

“Currently, nearly 750 Yale employees have taken advantage of that offer and made a commitment to live in the city where they work,” said Levin. “The program has been extraordinarily successful in enhancing neighborhood stability and in increasing the city’s economic base.”

Other achievements Levin helped initiate include the renovation of the Broadway shopping district, the recruitment of businesses to the Chapel Street downtown district, and attracting a number of retailers to the Audubon Arts District.

As Levin noted, Yale is now New Haven’s largest real estate taxpayer and the biggest contributor to the city budget besides the State of Connecticut. This year alone, Yale will pay the city more than \$10 million in taxes, voluntary payments and fees.

“Each year, Yale draws over 550,000 visitors to New Haven,” said Levin. “These visitors spend more than \$40 million annually here. All of this is good for Yale and good for New Haven. I count the increasingly robust partnership between the city and the university as one of the proudest aspects of my presidency.”

However, the boon to the city offered by Yale goes beyond financial benefits. Levin also stressed the importance of the Yale student body and faculty being involved in the community.

“I am very proud that more than 2,000 Yale students participate in tutoring, mentoring, and other youth development programs each year, and that we welcome more than 10,000 New Haven public school students to campus for educational and recreational programs,” said Levin.

Personal Connection to the City For all the work that the university has done in the area of renovation and improving New Haven, Levin has a personal affection for the city as well.

“My family and I have long known that New Haven is large enough to be interesting and small enough to be friendly,” said Levin. “It is a city with enormous benefits. I travel extensively as part of my job and I can say that there are few, if any other, cities of our size that have as much to offer and as much vibrancy as New Haven. Recent rave reviews for New Haven in The New York Times, Business Week and elsewhere say the same thing: we have extraordinary cultural and culinary offerings.”

As president of Yale, Levin has made an effort to further the university’s role in the cultural life of New Haven. As an example of this effort, he pointed out Yale’s involvement in the annual International Festival of Arts and Ideas, an event that draws thousands of visitors to the region.

“New Haven also offers tremendous diversity, and the mix of people of all backgrounds is one of our greatest strengths,” said Levin. “My colleagues and I think that all of the aspects and assets of New Haven make it an excellent place for students to learn. Students at Yale can experience the diversity and opportunity of a lively urban environment that is both accessible and welcoming.”

A Global Landscape of Learning What will surely go down as one of Levin’s most lasting achievements is the effort to broaden Yale’s scope to an international level. The centerpiece of this focus in recent years has been the developing relationship between Yale and China.

“China is of special importance, not just because of our deep connections and long history, but also because it is, I think, destined to become the second strongest economic power in the world over the next 20 years or so,” said Levin, addressing the internationalization of Yale.

“China is a country with a history of valuing education and rewarding merit that is unusual among developing countries. There’s a culture of educational attainment that suggests to me that China will be at the forefront not only economically, but educationally as well. The Chinese governments are investing on an unprecedented scale in their top universities, and soon, many of these universities will take their place among the world’s greatest. It is in our best interest to develop partnerships with these universities, and together, we can reach goals that would be unattainable on our own.”

The international focus, which ties into Levin’s own time as a college student and the impact he felt studying abroad had on his educational experience, offers new opportunities for Yale students as well.

“To prepare for leadership in today’s world, I firmly believe that it is more necessary than ever for our students to be knowledgeable about cultures and societies with norms and

values other than our own,” said Levin. “We live in an interdependent global society, and we must be prepared to interact in this society and to be aware of the tremendous opportunities this world has to offer. I believe that our university must encourage its students to experience other countries as well as to study them in the class-room.”

Towards this measure, Yale has committed that by 2008 all students will have the opportunity to work or study abroad. This past year, Yale helped place 900 undergrads in international internships, fellowships and study abroad programs. Moreover, Yale has significantly increased the number of international students who currently study at Yale, a 28 percent increase over the past 10 years.

Still Work to Be Done Thirteen years in the president’s chair haven’t diminished Richard Levin’s passion for education, or for furthering the betterment of his university. As he pointed out, avoiding complacency becomes a question of sustaining energy and motivation.

“To be successful in the same job over along period of time, you have to redefine your agenda,” said Levin.

Whether it’s traveling to China (some-thing he has done five times in the last four years), or pulling up a chair next to a student in the dining hall, Levin continues to bring passion to his job every day. And it’s a job that continues to transform Yale and offers a greater vision for New Haven.