David W. Leebron

David W. Leebron left the deanship of the Columbia University School of Law to become the seventh president of Rice University on July 1, 2004. Much like Rice’s legendary first president, Edgar Odell Lovett, Leebron brought to the post a powerful international vision and equally strong commitment to the local community. He is currently leading Rice through a period of growth and renewal based on the 10-point Vision for the Second Century he launched during his first three years in office. As he promised in his Oct. 2, 2004 inaugural speech: “Our ambitions shall be unbounded and so, too, our contributions. … Our reach will span from the nanoscale to the cosmos, from our neighborhood to cultures around the globe, from understanding of past civilizations to predicting the future of the universe, from the aesthetic appreciation of the arts to the understanding of the principles of commerce, from the architecture of our cities to the energy of our oceans.”

Under Leebron’s leadership, the Rice campus is undergoing some $850 million in construction projects to add two new residential colleges to house a 30 percent growth in the undergraduate student body, a 10-story research center to deepen Rice’s collaboration with the Texas Medical Center, physics and sociology buildings, and new campus amenities including a library-based pavilion and recreation center. He has emphasized building Rice’s international impact with active outreach to Asia and Latin America and, at the same time, has strengthened the university’s local presence with multiple programs that connect students and faculty with Houston. Leebron has welcomed to Rice the Dalai Lama, former U.S. President Bill Clinton, former Indian President Abdul Kalam, a delegation of Chinese educational leaders on only the third U.S. trip of its kind and hundreds of other global political and academic leaders.

A premier international research university, Rice is home to the James Baker III Institute for Public Policy and highly ranked music, architecture, natural sciences, social sciences, engineering, humanities and business schools. Its wooded 285-acre campus is located next to the Texas Medical Center, the world’s largest, and near the entertainment and culturally rich assets of Houston, one of few cities with a full menu of ballet, theater, opera and symphony, as well as sports.

A native of Philadelphia, Leebron is a graduate of Harvard College and Harvard Law School, where he was elected president of the Law Review in his second year. After graduating in 1979, he served as a law clerk for Judge Shirley Hufstedler on the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals in Los Angeles. He began teaching in 1980 at the UCLA School of Law and at the NYU law school in 1983, where he also served as director of the International Legal Studies Program. In 1989, Leebron joined the faculty of Columbia University School of Law where in 1996 he was appointed dean and the Lucy G. Moses Professor of Law. Leebron also served as a visiting fellow at the Max Planck Institute for Foreign and Comparative Law in Hamburg, Germany, and as the Jean Monnet Visiting Professor of Law at Bielefeld University. Currently part of the political science faculty at Rice, Leebron has authored a textbook on international human rights.
and published articles on issues of international trade, human rights and corporate finance.

Leebron is a member of the New York state bar, Carter–Baker Commission on Federal Election Reform, Jacobs University Bremen Board of Governors, Harvard Law School Visiting Committee and the boards of directors of the Greater Houston Partnership and IMAX Corp. He also serves on the centennial committee for Tongji University in Shanghai, China. In 2006, Leebron was presented with France’s Commandeur de l’Ordre National du Merite.

Leebron is married to Y. Ping Sun and has two children, Daniel and Merissa.