David W. Leebron

David W. Leebron has served as Rice University’s seventh president since 2004, a period of growth and transformation for the university. As part of a strategic vision adopted in 2005, the university has significantly increased the size and diversity of its student population, enhanced its educational and research missions and funding, increased the capacity and vibrancy of the campus with $900 million in new construction, created a campus art program and added to its arts offerings, deepened its relationship with its home city of Houston, built strong international relationships and programs, and earned greater visibility locally, nationally and across the globe. Supporting all these efforts was the successful $1.1 billion Centennial Campaign.

A native of Philadelphia, Leebron is a graduate of Harvard College and Harvard Law School, where he was elected president of the Harvard Law Review. Following a judicial clerkship on the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit, he taught at the UCLA School of Law in 1980. After two years practicing in an international law firm in New York City, he joined the faculty at the NYU School of Law in 1983. In 1989, Leebron joined the faculty of Columbia Law School, where in 1996 he was appointed dean and served in that position until coming to Rice. He is a member of the political science faculty at Rice, and has written about international trade and investment, torts, privacy, corporate law and human rights. He has also been a visiting fellow at the Max Planck Institute for Comparative and International Private Law in Hamburg, Germany, and a Jean Monnet Visiting Professor at Bielefeld University.

Leebron is a member of the Council on Foreign Relations and the American Academy of Arts and Sciences. He serves as chair of the boards of Internet2 and COFHE; vice chair of the Association of American Universities; on the boards of the Greater Houston Partnership, BioHouston, Jacobs University Bremen and the IMAX Corporation; and on the NCAA Board of Governors and Division 1 Board. He is the recipient of an honorary degree from Nankai University in Tianjin, China, is an honorary professor of law at Tianjin University, and has been awarded Commandeur de l'Ordre National du Mérite by the government of France and the Encomienda de la Orden de Isabel La Católica by the government of Spain. He received the Roy M. Huffington Award for Contributions to International Understanding from Asia Society Texas and was recognized as the International Executive of the Year by the Greater Houston Partnership.

Leebron and his wife, University Representative Y. Ping Sun, have two children, Daniel and Mei.