

# VICE CHANCELLOR'S SPEECH

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## DEGREE CEREMONY

**Professor David Wallace - Loughborough University**

**Friday 11 July 2003**

**PROF. KHURSHID AHMAD**



## VICE-CHANCELLOR'S SPEECH

### **Professor David Wallace**

Lord Lieutenant, Chancellor, High Sheriff, Mayor of Charnwood, Pro-Chancellor(s), Pro-Vice-Chancellors, Loughborough Students, Ladies and Gentlemen

First, a very warm welcome to this degree ceremony. Welcome, also, to all of you who join us through our web-cast. We take great pride in attracting scholars from all over the world and are delighted that your family and friends can share this special occasion with us.

I am particularly pleased to welcome our new Chancellor, Sir John Jennings. He follows in a distinguished line, and I look forward with keen anticipation to working with you sir, in the advancement of this great university, in the service of students, staff, industry and society at large.

I am pleased also to welcome our Honorary Graduates:

Frances Cairncross, for her contribution to the public understanding of economics, and to the social science research community; and Professor Khurshid Ahmad, for his contribution to the Islamic Foundation, and to the understanding of Islam. By accepting this degree, you are adding to the lustre and the reputation of the University.

At degree ceremonies we celebrate the achievements of our new graduates. I ask all guests to rise now and join me in congratulating those receiving degrees today.

This is also an opportunity to celebrate some of the University's recent achievements.

In the league tables of the 100 or so universities published in the major newspapers we have continued to strengthen our overall position: 13th in the Financial Times, 12th in The Times, and 8th in The Daily Telegraph. These place Loughborough amongst the elite universities in the UK, delivering outstanding value on every measure in international comparisons. In these tables, our strengths are those that matter to students and business: teaching quality, graduate employability and research in collaboration with industry.

Interestingly, none of these tables takes into account other measures in which Loughborough has excelled. We have won our fourth Queen's Anniversary Prize, for our contribution to education and research in sport. Only two other universities in the UK match this.

The Higher Education Funding Council for England publishes performance indicators for research, based on the value of research grants and contracts and the number of PhD students, per academic staff cost. This year, in both of these indicators, we were number one.

Even more impressively, in terms of this research expenditure, Loughborough has the best innovation activity in the country, according to the annual survey by Nottingham University Business School, which records spin-out companies, patents and licences.

### **DEPARTMENTAL HIGHLIGHTS**

The international reputation of the economics department is underlined: by the more than 100 international students in its Masters programme in Economics, Banking and Finance; by the appointment of Professor David Llewellyn to a Task Force advising the South African Government; and by the presentation to Professor John Presley of the Islamic Economics Prize by the Islamic Development Bank, an exceptionally distinguished award, made only every five years.

The breadth of impact of Geography is reflected in the work of Dr Jon Beaverstock and Professor Peter Taylor, who made direct contributions to the Treasury's voluminous assessment of the 'famous five' 'tests'. It is no reflection on any political views in the department that the result was the only 'test' to be awarded a pass mark - that which assesses the Location of Financial Activity!

Social Sciences, with the highest possible grade in the last Research Assessment Exercise, has continued to produce research of vital social significance: on children caring for parents with severe mental illness; helping the NSPCC improve their telephone hotline; continuing their high profile research analysing the content of the mass media; and on people's experience of the 'e-society' – the growing place of the internet and similar technologies in our lives. The department's undergraduate teaching programmes have all been placed in the top four nationally in their subject areas by the Times league tables.

You will understand therefore why I am so delighted to place on record my deep thanks to all staff for the quality of your work and your commitment to the University. My heart-felt thanks and congratulations to you all.

### **LOUGHBOROUGH STUDENTS UNION**

Loughborough Students Union also adds exceptionally to the quality of student life.

Rag has had its best year ever, raising more than £300,000 for local and national charities, bringing the total for the last eight years to well over £2M pounds – well ahead of any other University. I know that the new Chair of Rag, Andy Norris, is intent on doing just as well this coming year, and you can do your bit to help after the Ceremony, when Rag collectors will be on the prowl! Please give generously to help the worthy causes they support.

And student sport at Loughborough remains unrivalled both in participation and achievement. Once again we were crowned overall UK University champions, the men now for 23 years in a row, and the women for a quarter of a century. The closest challenger gained fewer than 1,300 points to Loughborough's 2,800 – the largest winning margin ever.

We are rightly proud of the Loughborough Student Experience, which we create in partnership with the Students' Union. I offer my warmest congratulations to you, Gina, as President, and to all of the Students' Union team: simply the best, better than all the rest.

### **INVESTING FOR THE FUTURE**

These achievements of students and staff reflect the fact that, in terms of what it delivers to students and society, Loughborough is a world-class university. But we are not complacent, and have been investing to position us even more strongly for the future.

£35M of sports facilities, including the English Institute of Sport, funded by Sport England Lottery, will create the best integrated sports development environment in the world – a statement by no less an authority than former student Sebastian, now Lord Coe. The 50m pool and many other world class facilities are now in use, and the National Academy of Cricket will follow later this year. The magnificent Sir John Beckwith Building, is truly the Centre for Sport.

The completion of the Cope Auditorium, with generous support from the Cope Trust, has provided us with a new concert hall with superb acoustics.

In order to strengthen further our outstanding partnerships with industry, in April, we invested £35.5M in acquiring the adjacent 163 acre site of the former British Gas Research Centre – probably the largest single investment by any UK University to further partnerships with industry. We announced last month the formation of a Systems Engineering Innovation Centre, in which BAE Systems will invest £59M, supported also by £4.5M from the East Midlands Development Agency.

Loughborough can therefore look forward confidently to the future. Our biggest risk remains fluctuations in Government funding policy.

### **FAMILY SUPPORT**

Almost all of you graduating today will have relied on the support of family, friends or employers to help you towards your success. For many of you, understanding and encouragement were perhaps even more important than financial support. I invite all of you who are about to receive your degrees to show your personal appreciation by standing up, turning round and joining me in applauding all those who have helped you so much.

One of the many joys of Loughborough is meeting former students and hearing of their pride of association with the University. The Alumni Association can help all of you to remain in contact with Loughborough and each other. As members, you can help future students in so many ways - as an ambassador, in student placements and employment, and directly in the development of the University. As unfolding Government policy on fees and funding show, your support for the university will be vital to ensure that students in the future will be able to benefit in the way that you have.

We hope that the quality, relevance and breadth of your Loughborough experience will help you in a rewarding career and a satisfying life. May your affection for Loughborough and your interest in learning be a constant inspiration.

Well done, and good luck to all of you.

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PROF. KHURSHID AHMAD