

Reflections on nine years at Leeds – July 2013

This article is an extension of my last Leader Column, and it is intended to reflect at greater length on the University's achievements during the last nine years. Even though it is the extended version, I will retain the caveat that I make absolutely no claims to be comprehensive in everything that it will cover!

Strategy, Student Education and 'The Partnership'

From the outset we have developed a very clear vision and strategy – an understanding of our long-term mission that is now embedded in our daily life. Encapsulated in our Strategy Map, there has been a clear recognition that we are an international research-intensive university and that we are focused on academic excellence through the close integration of our research, scholarship and education.

At my original interview I showed a slide that simply said 'T = R' – teaching equals research. It says it all, doesn't it? Perhaps these days we would say E=R with 'E' for Education. We've certainly made student education as important as research and have successfully integrated the two. I think that's a huge achievement. That's at the heart of our strategy, and I believe we're delivering on it and bringing our research alive for our students. In my occasional hyperbolic moments, I claim that we are the best at that in the Russell Group – it is, of course, difficult to prove one way or the other, but I am clear that our emphasis on this integrated approach has been a major cohesive force in the 'culture' of the University of Leeds.

We also have a fantastic relationship with our students; the Partnership work with Leeds University Union (LUU) and the quality of our Students' Union is something that I'm going to miss enormously. A major achievement has been our improving scores in the National Student Survey (NSS), which show that we take our students, their education and experience incredibly seriously. The Students Union has won many accolades in my time here and rightly so. Recent achievements include scoring more than 90% in the relevant NSS question, putting us in the top three in the country, and LUU were also identified as the best Students Union in the UK for the support of international students.

Viv Jones and the Student Education team have done a spectacular job of developing the new model for the Student Education Service, and the Curriculum Enhancement Project will enrich the variety and quality of opportunities for our students to study beyond their own immediate course work into 'threads' of additional learning. I'm also very proud of Leeds for Life and the way in which that has become a mechanism for guiding our students to the many different co-curricular opportunities that this University has to offer, enhancing personal tutoring, and really supporting our students in terms of their employability and career options.



With Professor Vivien Jones (back row, far left) and the winners of the Leeds for Life awards 2013.

You might ask if this excellence in Student Education has been recognised beyond Leeds? Sadly, it is not yet recognised appropriately in National league table positions, but that is largely because they measure the wrong thing. Is it more helpful to measure 'spend per student in the library' or is it more relevant to analyse the outstanding quality of the world-class Brotherton Library and its collections? The latter is well known to us all in Leeds, but not measured at all by national newspapers and their league table compilers.

During my time here, we have hosted two visits from the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) and achieved outstanding reports on both occasions, with areas of best practice commended for all to see. Last time the QAA review team identified the following features of good practice:

- The University's comprehensive and detailed policies and procedures for the admission of students to the University
- The extensive development and success of initiatives which contribute to the University's widening participation strategy
- The University's deliberate and coordinated approach to the enhancement of its provision, in line with its aspiration to create a distinctive Leeds graduate
- The strategy to develop students' employability and career options through Leeds for Life and its implementation.

I couldn't have put it better myself but, again, because there is no easy numeric measure of such QAA reports, our comparative excellence is only apparent if prospective students and their advisors make a significant effort to understand our excellence. This is the key reason that we work hard to get prospective students and their families and advisors to come to Leeds, to 'touch' the quality of the University and to feel that they would be well cared for and educated here in this great city.

My final comment on external recognition of teaching excellence relates to the fact that we have more National Teaching Fellows (NTF) than any other university in the country. Our grand total is now 19 NTFs, which is I believe, more than twice as many as any other Russell Group University – that is an incredible level of success that says much about just how much we ‘live our strategy’ here at the University.

Graduation and Graduates

It is interesting to think about just how many students have graduated from Leeds in the past nine years. I’m sure that someone can give me an accurate number, but it must be in the order of 70,000 to 80,000 – a huge number. On average I conduct about 15 ceremonies per season (summer and winter graduations) and there is on average 145 students per ceremony. By my calculation, I have personally graduated between 19,000 and 20,000 students – that’s a very large number of handshakes!

I am always struck by the joyous nature of the occasion as graduands and their parents and friends come onto campus to celebrate their achievements. To me ‘Graduation’ always signals the end of the academic year and a ‘job well done’, with another cohort of fantastic graduates leaving us to start to make a real difference to the world.



Alumnus Angel Gurriá, Secretary-General of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, and family on the occasion of receiving an honorary degree in 2010.

Research, REF 2014, and research income

Turning to research performance, the Research Excellence Assessment (RAE) 2008 was a good result for us, with a submission which significantly improved our overall quality and saw us ranked 14th on the basis of an institutional Grade Point Average (GPA) of 2.72, up from 26th in RAE 2001. When measured by research power (the number of research active members of staff multiplied by the GPA) we were ranked 8th in the UK, with a total score of 3453 (greater than Bristol at 3260, Sheffield at 3276, but just behind Imperial at 3600, Nottingham at 3707 or Edinburgh at 4509).

We are currently in the final phases of the Research Excellence Framework (REF) 2014 submission and around 1,100 colleagues will be submitted, all of whom, by our own and external assessments, are achieving a GPA of at least 3.0. With an individual submission threshold set at this level, we anticipate that our eventual institutional average will be closer to 3.2 or higher, giving us a research power in REF 2014 of the order of 3500 – a similar magnitude to our previous submission. Of course, this is an early and potentially inaccurate calculation, but it's very encouraging to think that we might rank higher in the overall GPA analysis and yet retain our overall research power.

We've also done extremely well in terms of increasing our overall research income as demonstrated in the table below, which is compiled from our annual reports.

Year	2004-2005	2005-2006	2006-2007	2007-2008	2008-2009	2009-2010	2010-2011	2011-2012
Research £K	74,675	76,409	90,794	101,207	112,570	119,319	123,975	120,431
%increase	-	2.3	18.8	11.5	11.2	6.0	3.9	(-2.9)

We now have the 8th largest total research income in the country, the 8th highest Research Council income (with an amazing 1st national position last year for the Natural Environmental Research Council) and we are 8th overall for Quality of Research Income (QR income) from the funding council, HEFCE. In addition, we have successfully diversified our sources of research income, particularly in Europe, which now accounts for about 15% of our total research income. Looking at European Research Council funding, we're ranked 8th in the UK for their early career fellowship awards and 7th in the UK for their advanced fellowship scheme, in terms of the number of awards. We have also done extremely well in the Framework VII Marie Curie Initial Training Awards and are 1st in the Russell Group for the 14 such awards that we coordinate, and we are also an active partner in another 14. To date, this has brought an additional 46 European postgraduate research students to Leeds.

Despite more difficult financial times, we've also managed to keep our investment programme going and I'm proud of the research investments and the impact that they have had, particularly in terms of interdisciplinary research and education. We've recruited some brilliant people through, for example, the Leadership Chairs initiative, and funded some excellent research, such as the transformation fund projects which seek to address the big, global research challenges. These are rarely highlighted together in a single document and yet their totality represents a really major attempt to make a real difference at the forefront of the academic research endeavour. They are summarised as follows:

- Water@Leeds – impact of climate change on water supply
- Translational Biomedicine and Health
- Africa College – feeding the planet
- Socio Technical Centre – bringing people and technology together
- Institute of Process Research and Development – cheaper medicines

- Building Sustainable Societies – social care systems of the future
- Culture, Society and Innovation – innovation in the cultural industries
- Energy Solutions – low carbon, secure, economic and socially equitable energy supply
- Impact and Innovation in the Arts and Humanities – putting impact at the centre of these disciplines.

These interdisciplinary activities are at different stages of their development; the most successful is water@leeds which now has 150 investigators from across the University engaged in many different aspects of water research and has achieved in the order of £15M of additional research income that would not have occurred without this initiative. Others are also doing well in their recent mid-term reviews and I regard this initiative as one of the most important of the past nine years.

Innovation and Entrepreneurship

We've got better at fostering and benefiting from innovation, particularly since we moved our innovation closer to the academic community by launching the new Research and Innovation Service and, more recently, the Sector Hubs. The latter act as a strategic gateway for developing partnerships with business, particularly small and medium size enterprises (SMEs), around the following areas of interest and expertise:

- Climate and Geohazard Sciences
- Culture and Creative Technologies
- Digital Technologies
- Energy
- Food Security
- Health Services
- High Value Chemical Manufacture
- Medical Technologies,
- Pharmaceutical and Biopharmaceutical,
- Professional Services
- Social Care
- Stratified Medicine
- Transport Systems
- Water

Another vehicle for interacting with SMEs has been the Knowledge Transfer Partnership scheme, currently overseen by the Technology Strategy Board. Over recent years we have run over 100 of these awards, placing us in a top five position in the Russell Group. We have also supported the development of entrepreneurship in the city and region as a key partner in the Goldman Sachs 10,000 Small Businesses programme. This has been a major success and the small companies that we have helped through this initiative have already created an additional 300 jobs – an excellent result in the midst of the recent recession and financial crisis.

Recognition of our sustained excellence and our long-term contribution to UK society came in the form of two Queen's Anniversary Prizes, for the Institute of Transport Studies in 2009 and the Institute of Medical and Biological Engineering in 2012. Collecting these prizes from the Queen and Prince Philip, together with our Chancellor, Lord Bragg, and Professors Mark Wardman and John Fisher (also Deputy Vice-Chancellor) respectively, were memorable and grand events. On each occasion our students were also invited to meet the Queen and discuss their contributions – they were wonderful and I was certainly very proud of them all.



John Fisher and I meet the Queen and Prince Philip when receiving the Queen's Anniversary Prize for the Institute of Medical and Biological Engineering 2012.

Partnerships

We must, too, recognise our key partnerships with world-class organisations such as Marks & Spencer (M&S), Opera North, ARUP, Yorkshire Water and Sinochem. Each is remarkable in its own way, but both the Opera North and the M&S partnerships are quite unique in the sector. The Opera North partnership now has over 100 active projects involving every faculty in the University – a remarkable explosion of effective interaction. The M&S partnership was originally centred around housing the M&S Company Archive on campus in the Michael Marks building to develop and exploit the academic and historic value of the archive. This partnership is now blossoming and creating many different opportunities across the entire campus, from new joint research projects to fully funded internships at M&S for our students, as well as sharing thoughts and expertise on high-quality governance.



Opening the M&S Company Archive in 2012 with Dame Stella Rimmington and M&S Chairman Robert Swannell.

We are also a key player in academic partnerships, including White Rose, N8, Yorkshire Universities and most importantly the Russell Group, which I thoroughly enjoyed chairing for three 'interesting' years (2009-2012). The latter was particularly important in raising the profile of the University of Leeds with our peer institutions, with Government, and in the media.

Access and widening participation

We have a great track record of widening participation through the Access and Community Engagement team and schemes like Access to Leeds. In recent times our efforts have been redoubled to combat the potential negative impact of the introduction of £9k fees on admissions of students to our University from low income families and lower socio-economic groups. Over 2000 of our students have given more than 65,000 hours of volunteering support to local schools, charities and community groups and of these, many act as mentors and tutors to help raise aspirations and academic achievement in over 240 local schools. Coupled with our relatively generous bursary scheme and the philanthropic support we have received to support such students, we have seen participation from low family income groups improve from 20% to 22% in the 2012-13 entry cohort, in what might otherwise have been a very difficult year.

Lifelong learning

One of the most difficult unsolved issues when I first arrived nine years ago was that of the future of lifelong learning in the University. At that stage we had two separate entities, the School of Continuing Education (SCE) and an Office for Part-Time Education (OPTED), both of which appeared to be in competition with each other and neither of which was adequately hooked up with the rest of the University. Without dwelling on the detail of this review, we closed both SCE and OPTED, and simultaneously opened the Lifelong Learning Centre and recruited a new Director and Deputy Director. This Centre has been a huge success as it is now much more closely integrated with the faculties and does an excellent job for mature and part-time learners, as well as doing great work interacting with communities that are relatively difficult to engage in higher education.

International Students, internationalisation and world league tables

We now have an internationalisation strategy underpinning recruitment activities, and have seen a huge growth in international students from just over 2,500 in 2004 to nearly 5,000 in recent times. Our global community is thriving and we've just come top of the Russell Group in the International Student Barometer, a great indicator of how satisfied international students are with Leeds. Initiatives like Study Abroad, the Global Community and our Intercultural Ambassadors ensure that all our students can take part in international activities.

We're heavily involved in the Worldwide Universities Network (WUN), with our academics providing leadership in and around the Global Challenges, which were introduced during my tenure as WUN Chair. The initial aim of the Challenges was to promote cross-institution collaboration but they've taken on a much more significant life which has prompted increased interaction with national and international policy-makers and organisations. WUN now encompasses 19 research-intensive institutions spanning six continents. Maastricht University, the University of Rochester and the Chinese University of Hong Kong (CUHK) are all recent additions, with CUHK particularly good news for Leeds as we have many alumni in Hong Kong.

We have many other bilateral relationships with universities all over the world, but particularly important are the flourishing relationships of our Law school with the East China University of Politics and Law in Shanghai and the joint Confucius centre that we host here in partnership with the University of International Business and Economics in Beijing. Many other partnerships are at various stages of active development in Singapore, Hong Kong, Osaka in Japan, Brazil, and elsewhere in China including Xiamen and the South Western Jiatong University.



Deputy Vice-Chancellor Professor John Fisher with Professor Tony Chan, Vice-Chancellor of Hong Kong University of Science and Technology.

With respect to world league table positions we have not yet fulfilled our ambition of securing a top 50 position, and this endeavour has been complicated by the development of many

new league table methodologies. If we adhere to the original QS world league table (originally published in the THE but now published separately), then our results as outlined below demonstrate improvement over time and a more consistent position in the top 100 over the past four years. To put it another way, if during the tenure of the next Vice-Chancellor, the QS world league table improves to the same extent, Leeds will sit very close to the top 50 universities in the world. No pressure there then!

Year	2005	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
QS Rank	133	103	121	80	104	99	85	93	94

Alumni and Development

In nine years we have pulled together a world-class alumni and development team. We've just had our 10,000th donor and are in contact with over 200,000 alumni in 140 countries. That's a huge network of people who are our natural supporters. Their wide-ranging support – student placements, inspiring students, entrepreneurship and donations – is a building block that will stand us in good stead for decades to come. Success has been down to a massive team effort from the Alumni and Development Team, the campaign steering group, the academic community, and alumni themselves, as well as friends of the University, many of them serial donors. For myself, I've thoroughly enjoyed my contacts with our supporters – I have met some extraordinary people and I will be ever grateful to them for their friendship and for their support. Our recent campaign weekend was a huge success and the introduction of a 'court of benefactors' for our most significant donors was an incredible and highly enjoyable occasion. Although we haven't formally launched the campaign, our thematic approach has worked well, raising over £30M of new philanthropic income. The campaign themes are focused on:

- Our Students
- Human health
- Climate Change
- Global Society and Business
- Arts and Culture

Health and Safety

Working closely with the three campus unions and with support from colleagues, we have effectively tackled what was an initially poor track record in Health and Safety and have set about changing our Health and Safety culture. We launched a fantastic University-wide campaign called '*Me and You*' – remember those bright yellow posters? The overall impact was dramatic and we have gone on to win many awards, not only for the campaign itself but also for the improvements in our Health and Safety track record. Most importantly, the serious accident rate fell from greater than 6.0 to just 2.5 per thousand. To reinforce a culture that really values health and safety, we invented the Vice-Chancellor's Health & Safety Awards, which are a prominent annual reminder of our continuing commitment to getting this right. I believe that this will be a lasting achievement, largely because we have won the hearts and minds of our staff on this key issue, which is after all to their own

personal benefit. A big thank you from me to all involved – it is the best example of a massive University-wide team effort in my time at Leeds.



A team from the Faculty of Engineering receiving the Vice-Chancellor's Award for Health and Safety 2012.

Our staff and leadership

During my time here, I have not given formal lectures to students or staff, although I have (bizarrely!) given the occasional external lecture right here on our campus. Most of my University 'teaching and lecturing' has been in the form of staff development, much of which has been undertaken with the superb help and expertise of the Staff and Departmental Development Unit (SDDU). It has been a lot of fun to be involved in the induction programmes for all staff, bringing new joiners up to speed on the University and our Strategy. Particularly enjoyable has been the programme for new Professors where we discuss our expectations of Professorial leadership and what new Professors might expect of us – an initiative that has generally received very high feedback scores. I have also enjoyed teaching on the 'Tomorrow's Leaders' programme and hope that my input has been of value to those thinking about greater leadership responsibility in their future career. When I first came here, I was advised that I would find a 'leadership deficit'. I'm not sure I agree with that original analysis (source protected!) but I am confident that we have definitely seen a sea change in recognition of the importance of, and willingness to become involved, in high-quality leadership throughout the University.

Sustainability

We now have a culture that takes sustainability incredibly seriously. Our Sustainability team has input into activities across the University, from curriculum design to procurement of goods and services. Colleagues and students, too, are making their contributions through the Green Impact scheme and the behaviour changes prompted by the *It All Adds Up* campaign. We are now a 'zero waste to landfill' University – a fantastic achievement. A great example of that was the effective programme of recycling that was put in place to cope with the redistribution of some 40,000 items of furniture from Bodington Hall. Some of the desks even ended up being made into dinosaurs for children's play areas!



Presenting Hannah Robb with the 'Outstanding Student Contribution to Sustainability Award' – with a little help from a 'Deskasaurus' – 2013.

Estates

Our estate encompasses more than 600 buildings with an insurance value in excess of £1bn. Parts of the estate date back to the late 1800s and there are many Grade 1 and 2 listed buildings, including the 1960s Chamberlain-designed science block, as well as the Brotherton Library and the Parkinson Building. Backlog maintenance was in excess of £100M in 2004, but much of this was addressed with the investment of some of the initial student fee income post-2006. Backlog maintenance now stands at £50M.

Having proudly announced, following my arrival in Leeds, that I was 'mainly interested in people rather than new buildings', I soon recognised the link between the two! Since then we have variously spent between £20M and £70M per annum on capital expenditure, with a grand total in excess of £300M. We have tried, where possible, to tackle space issues via more effective use of existing space and have achieved some superb programmes of re-designation and re-design to make such space fit for purpose. There has also been a major programme of new building for both academic and service functions, including the following projects:

- Earth and Environment building
- Law School now called the Liberty building

- School of Performance and Cultural Industries building – stage@leeds
- Institute of Health Sciences and Innovation hub
- The Marjorie and Arnold Ziff (student services) building including specialised facilities for international students and for lifelong learning
- The Edge – a sports complex including the largest gymnasium in UK higher education and a swimming pool – we are the team that finally built the swimming pool after some 40 years deliberation!
- Two student residences; Storm Jameson and St Mark's Flats. The former is of such high quality that it attracted the Chinese Olympic team for their pre-games (London 2012) training camp and the Canadian Paralympic rugby team
- A purpose built (120 place) nursery facility for staff and students – a joint venture with the LUUs
- Michael Marks Building which houses the M&S Company Archive and exhibition
- Centre for Energy Research building.
- Institute of Medical and Biological Engineering building

All of these projects were delivered on time and within budget, due in no small part to the excellence of our Facilities and Estates team. We are currently planning further expenditure in the order of £159M over the next five years, including a new state-of-the-art undergraduate library.



The Marjorie and Arnold Ziff Building completed in 2008.



The Edge completed in 2010.

Finance

Over the past nine years we have enjoyed well-managed finances, with continued financial growth and good financial outcomes, with surpluses each year (apart from one year of planned deficit (see below)). Please remember that surpluses are good, they do not represent 'profit', and they give us the cash we need to invest in our future. In more volatile times with more variable income, it has been important to achieve the larger surpluses of recent years.

These results have been achieved without a separate Finance Committee – our finances are run by Finance Director Jane Madeley and her team, through the Vice-Chancellor's Executive Group (VCEG), and in close liaison with the Council. This ensures that our finances and our overall University strategy remain closely aligned. A summary of the financial performance during the past nine years is as follows (all figures in £000s).

Year	2004-2005	2005-2006	2006-2007	2007-2008	2008-2009	2009-2010	2010-2011	2011-2012
Total income	367,248	383,159	422,334	460,178	497,207	517,741	543,002	537,555
Surplus	11,178	8,204	19,586	18,334	11,002	(1,893)*	37,797	67,448**
Total net assets	270,008	295,997	365,595	390,340	367,864	459,274	461,211	504,604

* denotes a year in which we spent £14.566M on a restructuring programme. The surplus before this exceptional cost was £12.744M.

** denotes a year which included a one off capital gain of £20M – the underlying operational surplus was £47.5M.

In order to keep the finances in good shape we have had to take some tough decisions. During a period of national austerity and considerable uncertainty in a period of change in the financing of higher education, we undertook a major initiative to implement a cost savings and efficiency exercise of £30M per annum, which became known colloquially as the 'economies exercise'.

We knew that to leave the situation untouched ran the risk of putting us into a very difficult financial position. We realised, too, that our review processes weren't good enough and that we had to renegotiate the organisational change process. We came out with something that is fair, collegiate and involves colleagues in owning potential solutions. It has given us a vehicle to do some important work that has led to dramatic improvements in academic and financial performance.

More recently, the vagaries of student recruitment in the new marketplace have dealt us a relatively difficult year with a loss of some £15M of annual income. Because of the hard work that we had done in the economies exercise, we were able to cope with this loss of income and adjust accordingly. This year's surplus is currently projected to be about £10-12M.

Last year in particular, but also throughout this year, student recruitment has been the number one issue for us. We have all dealt with it incredibly professionally, and are in good shape and alert to what we've got to do next. There has been a huge amount of work in schools and services to make sure that we're doing our very best in student recruitment conversion activity, whilst also spending our money very wisely to enhance the student experience. The Integrated Planning Exercise has just finished and given us a much clearer understanding of what needs to be done to keep us academically and financially sustainable.

Difficult moments and regrets

If I have a regret, it's about the pace at which we've made changes. We're not fleet of foot yet – we need to respond to the market and move from idea to delivery faster. We're beginning to change, but there is more work to do. We've woken up to the highly competitive nature of higher education in the modern era. We accept things are never going to go backwards. In fact, they're going to get more challenging, but I think that understanding has helped to build our confidence.

Other difficult moments largely relate to times of the more serious disagreements with staff and trade unions, including the pay dispute in 2006, the 'red-circling' issue (as we migrated everyone to a single pay spine to achieve equal pay for work of equal value) and the more difficult of the organisational reviews, particularly Biological Sciences. In all these cases we tried as an executive team to tread the fairest path, without compromising key principles whilst tackling these tough issues – never easy. Dialogue, some degree of flexibility, and common sense lay at the foundation of gradually moving forward with each of these problems.

In some of these moments there were significant and at times difficult questions and criticisms of my commitment to the University of Leeds, in part related to our chosen commuting lifestyle as a professional couple. This darker side of life as a VC usually ended up back-firing on the perpetrators, as the court of reasonable academic opinion made their own, more measured judgements.

The lighter moments

I have also picked out a few highly enjoyable personal moments, some of which are at the trivial end of the spectrum!

I have enjoyed many wonderful musical performances in the Clothworkers Centenary Concert Hall and in the Great Hall. The early stages and the semi-finals of the Leeds International Piano competition and the recitals from past winners feature prominently in my thoughts because of their amazing quality and the fact that they take place on campus. I also have wonderful memories of Sir Harry Christophers' 'The Sixteen' choral singers and of the Opera North orchestra at full tilt in the Great Hall. I have also thoroughly enjoyed being a member of the Opera North board and the many productions we have seen at Leeds Grand theatre and elsewhere over the years.

Perhaps top of my list though, because of the unique and historic nature of the event, was the return of The Who – live at Leeds for the second time in 2006, some 35 years after the first concert, famously captured on the original live album. I remember that album so well – I was 17 years old and very into rock music at the time. The Who were spectacular in the Refectory, after we unveiled the now famous blue plaque live on Sky News.



Pete Townshend signs *Live at Leeds* album.



The famous blue plaque outside the Refectory.

Yet another great highlight was the London 2012 Olympics and the 150 or so members of staff, alumni and students who assembled in Hyde Park to support the Brownlee brothers in their quest to make Olympic history. There we were, dressed in our green and white T-shirts, co-branded for the occasion with the University of Leeds and Brownlees, making so much noise that we clearly propelled Alistair to Gold and Jonathan to Bronze medals! It was a wonderful display of camaraderie amongst the lifelong community that is the University of Leeds. Just a couple of weeks later we witnessed Claire Cashmore win no less than three Paralympic medals, two silver, one bronze. It was an extraordinary achievement by Claire and the Brownlee brothers – all recently recognised with our award of honorary doctorates.



If I am allowed a light-hearted 'boyhood dream moment', it would be meeting Twiggy at the opening of the Marks and Spencer Company Archive exhibition. Yes, I confess, there was a small, couldn't resist, slightly lingering peck on the cheek!

Thank you and farewell

Since announcing my departure, I've had many lovely emails, letters and comments from people on campus. The reception from our students when I received the Rileys Award for lifetime achievement almost had me in tears. The leaving present from the Deans also provoked some emotion – a single 'red brick' dressed with a metal plaque complete with the Leeds logo on which was inscribed 'Leeds (is) for Life' – you bet it is! As I write this article, there are still two leaving events to go – one with Council and then the big one with all staff – both of which will, I'm sure, be incredibly emotional moments.



Receiving a lifetime achievement award at the Rileys 2013.

Most of all, I have to say a big thank you to all of you, my colleagues. The people I've worked with have been fantastic, and I've been staggered at their dedication to this institution. For their professionalism, hard work and tolerance, I want to publically thank all my office staff over the years, particularly Jill Sewell (nee Pharaoh), Sharon Beckram, Jo Vernon, Gemma Griffiths and Sarah Touloupis – the University simply wouldn't function without them and their excellence has made my life made much easier over the nine years.

I want to take this opportunity to thank all those in the various leadership positions that I have worked with, particularly the Heads of School, Heads of Service, Pro-Deans and the 21 different Deans. Most importantly, I have had a wonderful series of people work with me as members of VCEG and they have been a truly outstanding team. Three were here when I arrived and they now survive nine years of working with me and my departure – others have come and gone but, for those of you that have read the book, there is no doubt that we have been a 'Great Group' and we have certainly made a small 'dent in the Universe'.

I would also like to thank everyone that I have worked with on the University Council. They have been supportive but appropriately challenging at times, often tolerant, thoughtful and above all helpful and wise. They have always exhibited great dedication to the University, so a big thank you from me personally and from the University of Leeds.

Finally, I wish my successor, Sir Alan Langlands, and everyone at the University, all the best for a marvellous future. I will be keeping a weather eye on you all from the southern end of the East Coast line!

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Michael', with a long, sweeping horizontal stroke underneath.

Michael Arthur
Vice-Chancellor
University of Leeds (2004-2013)