

Leader column

The promise of more to come

As the first semester draws to a close, we can finish the year celebrating some excellent achievements and confident that 2016 holds the promise of further progress.

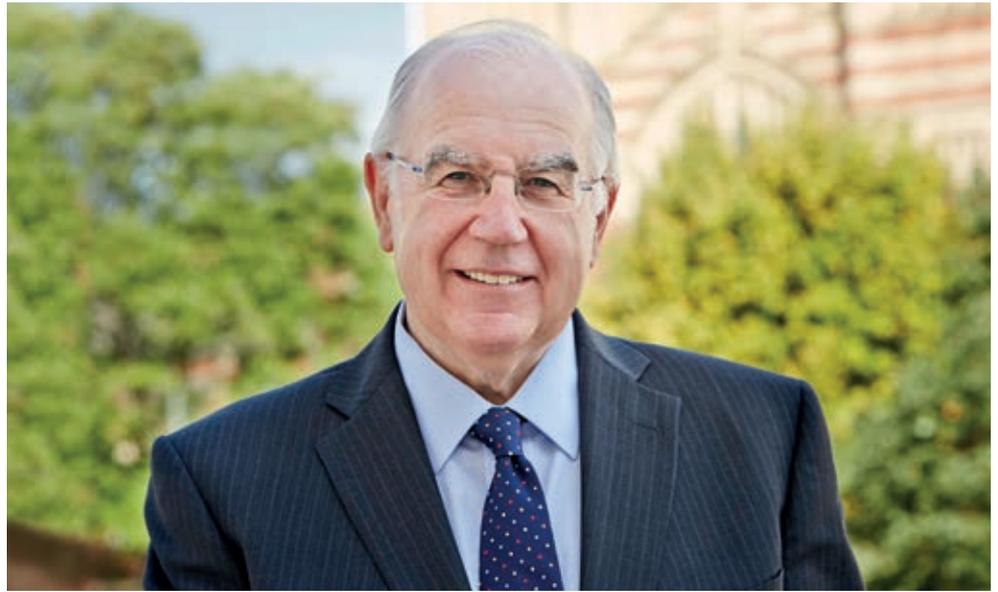
As you will read elsewhere in these pages, our Investing in Knowledge, Creating Opportunity event was a great occasion. Our aim was to highlight the University's economic, social and cultural contributions and bring the breadth of our knowledge and expertise to a wider audience – business, community, academic and the general public. We did this well, attracting visitors to the event itself and enthusing the local media who were keen to spread the news far and wide. We featured on the front page of the *Yorkshire Evening Post*, and even attracted a news crew from BBC's *Look North*. They reported live from the Parkinson Court exhibition, giving us the opportunity to take the University's message into the homes of people across the Yorkshire region.

Staging this ambitious public event represented a step change for the University, and I hope it will herald a new, more open, collaborative and dynamic way of working in partnership with local institutions, businesses and communities. My thanks to everyone from across the University who played a part in making the day such a success.

I am delighted to report that our Making a World of Difference fundraising campaign has reached its £60m goal. This achievement – which was reported at a very successful alumni event, One Day in Leeds* – reflects the generous financial support of some 14,000 donors and the commitment of numerous colleagues across campus. The funding has contributed to important projects at Leeds including: educational outreach programmes; widening participation scholarships; new facilities and equipment on campus; student opportunities; investment in our research such as PhD scholarships, research fellowships and a professorship.

In 2006 we welcomed 19 alumni-funded scholars to the University; in 2015 alumni and other friends are supporting 350 scholars. Our alumni also support students in many other ways, providing career advice and internships and contributing to our extracurricular activities.

The campaign formally comes to a close at the end of this year and we will announce our future intentions early in 2016. The success of the campaign has been a genuine team effort by Alumni and Development, expertly led by Michelle Calvert, our Director of Development.



This also seems an appropriate moment to recognise the achievements of the University's Enterprise Learning team. Headed by Professor Nigel Lockett, the team has swept the awards board this year. Accolades include being named 'Entrepreneurial University of the Year' at the Times Higher Education Awards and receiving the Duke of York Award for University Entrepreneurship at the 2015 Lloyds Bank National Business Awards for our work in encouraging and enabling student start-ups and alumni entrepreneurs. These were preceded by a prestigious National Teaching Fellowship for Professor Lockett and an award for Kairen Skelley of our student start-up service Spark, who was named Higher Education Enterprise Champion. Sarah Underwood also takes great credit for her innovative and determined work in this area, and Andy Duley and Jayne Glennon have made great contributions. A remarkable year for a remarkable team!

Looking forward to next year, we can expect the launch of the new Cultural Institute, one of the key initiatives in our Strategic Plan. In summary, the Cultural Institute will boost our engagement with the publicly funded cultural sector and commercial creative industries, and broker relationships between Leeds academics and an extended network of partner organisations. DARE – the recently renewed creative collaboration with Opera North – our partnership work with Marks & Spencer, and the Memorandum of Understanding signed with West Yorkshire Playhouse have already demonstrated the mutual benefits of these relationships and the public value they can generate. The Institute will also enrich our students' education by connecting them with some of the finest minds in the creative and cultural sector. Their learning experience, skills and employability will be enhanced by a greatly expanded network of volunteering, placements and internships. It's also envisaged that our partners will offer more opportunities for research-based learning and project work.

In addition, the Institute will provide a single focal point through which we can bring together

our cultural treasures, facilities and activities, promoting them to our students, staff, friends and wider external audiences in a much more coherent and exciting way.

Other significant events we can anticipate in 2016 include the formal launch of the Priestley International Centre for Climate, our world-leading centre for climate research, the inaugural Astbury Conversation and conference, the start of building works on our University Innovation and Enterprise Centre, the establishment of the Leeds Institute for Teaching Excellence and Innovation led by Director Dr Rafe Hallett (History) and the opening of the new Treasures of the Brotherton Gallery.

Of course, the year ahead will have its challenges. We must respond to the Government Green Paper on higher education. This set out plans intended to drive up teaching standards, widen access to university, increase choice for students and enhance competition between universities, simplify the structures that underpin higher education and cut bureaucracy. It will need to be assessed alongside the contents of Sir Paul Nurse's review of the role of research councils and the funding landscape, and the implications of the recent Comprehensive Spending Review. The consultation period on the Green Paper runs until 15 January and it is likely that we will channel our response through the national representative bodies, with Leeds-specific additions if necessary.

Before that, however, there is Graduation and the Christmas break – a time for celebration, relaxation and reflection. I would like to thank you all for your hard work and inspiration during 2015 and wish you and your friends and families a peaceful holiday.

Vice-Chancellor Sir Alan Langlands

*See page 6 for a full report.