

## **Saturday 18<sup>th</sup> July, AM Ceremony**

### **WELCOME**

**Chancellor, Honoured Guests, Colleagues, Ladies and Gentlemen.**

**It is a great pleasure to welcome you all to this very special degree ceremony. I would also like to extend a warm welcome to those of you who are joining us via our webcast both here in the UK and overseas. Wherever you are watching from - London, China or Australia - we hope that you will feel fully a part of the ceremony.**

**I am also pleased to welcome our Honorary Doctoral Graduate today:**

***Mr John Disley, former student, Olympic bronze medallist and co-founder of the London Marathon.***

**We are pleased to be honouring your achievements and life's work today.**

**This is a very significant day. Today we are welcoming back to Loughborough over a 1000 former students, many of whom have not returned to campus since their student days. Some of you have remained local to the area, though others are now living across the world and have travelled from as far away as Australia and Pakistan to be with us today. I feel especially privileged to be able to welcome you all and to recognise your important role in the development of the University as we celebrate 100 years of education at Loughborough.**

**Since our foundation as a Technical Institute in 1909, Loughborough has developed to become a leading UK University. The firm foundations laid by the original Colleges and the underlying values of diligence, excellence and**

friendship that they developed, have underpinned the University's successful evolution. The University you see today may bear little physical resemblance to the campus you knew, but dig a little deeper and you will find the traits that have always characterised the Loughborough Student Experience. What you see on our campus today reflects the broader range of things we do here. In addition to teaching and learning we now have research and enterprise. But we still have sport and we still have a commitment to excellence which means that we are still winning at whatever we put our minds to.

I hope that as you learn more about what we are doing now, you will be as proud of your association with Loughborough today as you were when you started out on your career all those years ago. Let me tell you a little about the journey we have been on and where your University is today.

## **CELEBRATING SUCCESS**

The University has enjoyed some great successes and today is an opportunity for us to share these with you and celebrate some of those achievements.

We were especially pleased to be named *The Sunday Times' University of the Year* in this our Centenary Year and are now consistently ranked in the Top 20 of the many UK league tables.

Of course that success is based on many things. One of these is the quality of the teaching and learning programmes in each of our departments. You will remember how much care your teachers gave to your progress. I am sure you can remember now some of your teachers and the special relationships they made with you. Despite the considerable growth in both staff and student numbers (we now have over 16 thousand students and over 3000 staff), the importance of the teacher/student relationship is still valued by us all. This was reflected in the recent Times Good University Guide where the University was ranked in the top 10 in 19 subject areas – including three areas that were No 1 in the UK.

**Looking to the future, we are confident but not complacent, and we will build on these successes to raise our profile even further.**

## **STUDENT EXPERIENCE**

**Many of you wrote to tell us about how much you enjoyed your time at Loughborough and I am sure that you would agree that the Student Experience at Loughborough is the best! It is now officially recognised as such. The Times Higher Award for the Best Student Experience – voted for by students themselves – has only been awarded for the last three years – and Loughborough has won it every time! In the National Student Survey of finalist students we have been in the top 5 in every year that the survey has taken place.**

## **INTERDISCIPLINARY RESEARCH**

**When you were students here there was not the same emphasis on research and the contributions that universities can make to the growth of knowledge and the development of the economy. We now must demonstrate that in addition to providing a great learning environment for students, we are also making a difference to the UK's knowledge base and economic vibrancy. You will not be surprised to know that we have taken this newer challenge very seriously and now have a great reputation for research that matters. Our ability to combine excellence and impact was recognised in a recent independent national assessment of our research, which led to us receiving the greatest increase in research funding of any UK university without a medical school.**

## **SPORT**

**Many of you here today were involved in sport at Loughborough and will remember with pride wearing the purple tracksuit and striking fear in the hearts of your opponents! You will be pleased to know that we are still the UK's premier University for sport. It is a position based on delivering excellence in sports science and sport technology, as well as in performance, participation and community sport. An example of our performance success**

is that over 50 past and present students and University-based athletes competed at last year's Beijing Olympic and Paralympic Games, bringing home a silver and bronze medal and breaking 15 national and two European records between them.

In *British Universities and Colleges Sport* (the student competition between Universities) we are facing growing competition as other universities increase their investment in sport in the lead up to 2012. You will be pleased to know that Loughborough won the overall competition again this year, thereby extending our record to more than 30 consecutive years.

## **ALUMNI**

I want to stress just how central our Alumni are to our success. Loughborough alumni make a huge contribution to the businesses, professions and industries where they work and to the communities in which they live. This is one of the most significant impacts of the University and we have you to thank for that. The esteem in which our graduates are held is exceptional, and I am sure that this is because of the unique qualities being a Loughborough Student endows on a individual.

We work hard to keep in touch with our alumni. We need our alumni to tell us what we are doing well and to give us advice as to how we can improve so that we are able to continue to produce graduates with the skills that employers need across the world. We are not just preparing students for the UK workforce. Increasingly our students move extensively across the world and work in many different places with different cultures and expectations. We aim to produce graduates who are able to lead multicultural teams and if we are to do that well we need your advice and experience of the world.

Your unique perspective on what we do is invaluable. You are our ambassadors in the wider world and our profile is influenced not just by what we do here but by what you say and do as a Loughborough graduate. I urge

**you to take pride in this role and help to tell the Loughborough story to everyone you meet.**

## **THANKS**

**So today is a great day of celebration – most particularly of your personal time at Loughborough but also of the tremendous work of everyone right across the University today. The achievements I have outlined are the consequence of the highest commitment to excellence, and a real team ethos combined with sheer sustained hard work. I would like to take the opportunity to pay tribute to my colleagues from all parts of the University for their dedication and contributions that have made Loughborough so successful.**

**Just take this degree ceremony, for example. Everyone working at the University has played a part in this ceremony and the day's celebrations. The estate maintenance staff, cleaners, catering and residential staff administration staff in Registry and staff in our Development and Alumni Relations Office have all had a part to play in making this a success and I should like to thank them all. They have been willing to work over the weekend to enable the two ceremonies today, at what is already one of the busiest times of the year. I know we are all extremely grateful to them for enabling such a special occasion to take place**

**We were overwhelmed by the positive response we had to this initiative and by the words of encouragement and support you shared with us. I am sure that you share with me today a sense of gratitude to everyone responsible for the organisation of today's festivities.**

## **FINAL WORDS**

**Today you are our very special guests. I want to dedicate the University's success to you all. Being a successful University is all about helping people to realise their full potential. Universities should be about transformation – transforming lives through education, transforming our world through**

research. You have played your part in the development of Loughborough and have gone on to be that transformational influence across the world.

You deserve to celebrate and enjoy this moment. I want, on behalf of the University and all my colleagues to say thank you to all of you for sharing this day with us, for your inspirational lives and heart warming memories of Loughborough. I hope that this will be one of many future visits to campus for you will always be welcome.

To end I would like to invite [Tasneem Siddeeqe/Matt Prior], the [new/current] Alumni Officer on the Loughborough Student Union Executive, to read to you a poem which was sent to us by former student Vincent J. Couch to mark this special day. He has summed up brilliantly what it means to be a Loughborough student.

### The Loughborough Mark

By Vincent J. Couch BA Econ (hons) DLC Cert Ed.

New and old they blend as one,  
The difference only time,  
Youngsters rising to their quest,  
Driving on to do their best,  
Whatever era proud and bright  
Out to prove their goal is right.  
Year after year with spirit bold,  
Shining beacons to behold,  
No difference then from now to mine  
Just faces in an endless line.

This celebration joins those years  
Their growth, their joy and sometimes tears.  
Arduous test of battles won,  
Increasing standards never done,

**Their bodies stretched and minds in tune  
Glorious times, performance hewn.  
Sturdy, unyielding, ardent youth,  
Robust, resolute, seeking truth,  
Those myriad faces striving on,  
Age after age, determined, strong.  
Then, as now, their timeless claim,  
The Loughborough mark their worthiest gain.**

### **Conclusion**

**In a moment or two you will come to the stage to receive your commemorative medal. Before we do that I should like to ask my colleagues and your families and friends to join me in wishing you the very best for the future and to applaud your very significant success.**