

Oration for Professor Alan Barrett

To be Delivered 17 July 2018, by Professor Nigel Dimmock
Chancellor

The honorary graduand whom I have the pleasure of introducing this morning is a world expert in the field of vaccinology and infectious virus disease. I am delighted to welcome to our graduation ceremony
PROFESSOR ALAN BARRETT.

Alan Barrett is a virologist whose bread and butter is combatting mosquito-borne viruses that cause a variety of tropical diseases, many of which such as yellow fever, dengue fever, West Nile and Zika, you will have heard of. Alan is British – he started here at Warwick, more about that later, but plies his trade in the USA. He holds one of the highly prestigious Distinguished Chairs at the University of Texas in Galveston, Texas. That's south of Houston and bang on the Gulf of Mexico. It's a grand place for hurricanes. Alan is also something of

a whirlwind himself being a Professor in the Department of Pathology and in the Department of Microbiology and Immunology, Director of the University's Sealy Center for Vaccine Development, and Director of the World Health Organization Collaborating Center for Vaccine Research in Emerging Infectious Diseases. He has made many major research and health policy contributions to the World Health Organization's approach to vaccines.

Alan's research focuses on the molecular basis of pathogenesis and vaccine development in relation to flaviviruses, a family of viruses which are transmitted by infected mosquitos or ticks. Flaviviruses cause infections in some of the poorest areas of the world, particularly in tropical and sub-tropical regions, and are therefore a high priority for the World Health Organization. However, with climate change and global warming the range of these viruses is increasing to areas where they were previously absent. A few years ago West Nile spread into the USA where now it is endemic.

Alan Barrett is an internationally recognised leader in his field. In addition to his academic work he advises civil authorities in the USA on infectious diseases topics. He has an invited presence in Singapore, advising on medical research and environmental health. In the UK he has been an advisor to the Medical Research Council, and an international assessor for the team that recently evaluated research at the University of Warwick.

We could go on and on about Alan's achievements which are many and outstanding, but this morning I want to reach out particularly the new graduates in the auditorium, to say to you that not so many years ago Alan was sitting just where you are, having been awarded his BSc in Virology from what is now the School of Life Sciences. I know all about this as I was one of the guys who taught Alan in lectures, tutorials and lab classes, possibly in some of same rooms and labs that you have just vacated. Alan went on to complete his MSc and PhD in Virology here between 1975 and 1983 under my supervision, so we know each other very well. This is not the moment or place to reveal

his youthful indiscretions, but rather to emphasise that Warwick was the starting point for Alan as it is for you new graduates. What I remember particularly about the young Alan, was his energy, commitment, application, and determination to get things done. All you graduates are bright young people and I'd like to remind you that energy, commitment, application, and determination are just as necessary for the realization of your potential, as it was (and still is) for Alan.

It is a great pleasure to welcome him back to Warwick today for the award of his fourth Warwick degree!

Chancellor: in the name of the Senate, I present to you for admission to the degree of Doctor of Science, *honoris causa*, ALAN BARRETT.