

Keith Bedell-Pearce, CBE

Awarded Chancellor's Medal on Friday, 22 July 2022, with oration given by Sir David Normington, Chair of Council and Pro-Chancellor

Chancellor

The Chancellor's Medal is awarded rarely and only to individuals who have made a particularly significant contribution to the work of this University.

Keith Bedell-Pearce is one of those individuals. He has been connected with Warwick for over 50 years and in that time has given tirelessly, generously and voluntarily of his time and expertise.

The story actually begins in 1968 when he was a postgraduate student here at Warwick in the forerunner of the Warwick Business School. In those days it was called the School of Industrial Relations and Business Studies and, like the rest of the University, it was very new indeed. He obtained an MSc in Operational Research and Statistics, with a thesis examining the potential of computers for running mathematical models for forecasting retail stock. This was way ahead of its time. In 1968 most of us had no idea what a computer was, let alone that they would eventually take over the world.

So there in 1968 began Keith's lifelong commitment to Warwick University, for which we must all be very grateful. Twenty years after graduating, well established in his career in management and corporate finance, he was appointed to the now highly successful Warwick Business School's Advisory Board – a position he still holds. In 2007 he was made an Honorary Professor. In 2009, Keith was appointed a lay, that is, an independent, member of the University's Governing Council, and two years later, became the University Treasurer – overseeing the University's finances, perhaps the most critical roles for an external member of Council. He served as Treasurer for almost 10 years, finally retiring in 2020 during the pandemic but not before he had helped steer the university to financial safety through the first phase of the pandemic.

I don't suppose that most of you graduating here today have ever given much thought to how the University is governed. But the University's Council is the ultimate decision making body of the University. It comprises representatives of the academic and non academic staff and of students, members of the University's senior leadership and a external independent members drawn from all walks of life, who are in the majority. It is essential that those external members are knowledgeable and

authoritative, but also that they care deeply about this university, its students and its staff.

From my perspective as Chair of the University's council, Keith Beddell Pearce has been that ideal external member. He brought to our deliberations expertise gained during a long career at the highest levels. In 1981 he joined the Prudential as a portfolio manager and over a career of more than 20 years he worked in systems design, as an in-house solicitor, as director of an investment management business, and as marketing director. He ran operating businesses in the UK and abroad, and was for ten years a main board director. Immediately after retiring – but retirement is a word unknown to Keith - he was appointed chair of the Student Loans Company, a post he held until 2008; in 2004, the Government asked him to become chairman of Directgov, the first serious attempt to put Government information and services on line. In the 2009 Birthday Honours he was awarded a CBE for his public service.

Imagine having on your board – all in one person - someone who combines knowledge of the public and private sectors and has expertise in senior leadership, financial management, investment, pensions, system design and

IT. Add to that his lifetime commitment to this university and you have the perfect mix for a Council member.

Keith has been a key figure in the university's governance for over 10 years. Chairing the Finance and General Purposes Committee, our most important committee and serving at various times on many others. He has helped shape the University's strategy and overseen its sound finances.. His time has been a period of extraordinary growth in the University's history. When he joined the Council in 2009 the university's turnover was about £370 million; today it is £670 million. In 2009 there were 12,000 students, now we are heading for 30,000. Research income was £73 million per annum; today it is £130 million. There was no Oculus or Faculty of Arts building. No Lord Battycharia building. No Sports hub. No Degree apprenticeship building or Maths building. or IBRB. All this achieved and the university finances still sound and secure.

But we would not be celebrating Keith today if he was not also a thoroughly decent human being. A great support and friend to successive Chairs, Vice Chancellors and Finance Directors. A wonderful colleague to many of us in the university. And great fun as well. He has contributed not just his professional expertise but also his personal knowledge of Warwick, of who

we were 50 years ago, who we are now and who we want to be. There are few people I know who understands this place as much as he does or is as committed to its continuing success.

Thank you Keith. We are indebted to you. I know of no one who deserves the Chancellor's Medal more.

So, Chancellor: in the name of the Senate, and with the enthusiastic support of Council, I present to you for the award of the Chancellor's Medal,

KEITH BEDELL-PEARCE .