

Professor Sir Ralf Speth, Hon DSc

Wednesday, 18 January 2023, pm

Chancellor

It gives me great pleasure to introduce SIR RALF SPETH, one of the world's leading automotive engineers.

Sir Ralf was CEO of Jaguar Land Rover for 10 years, leading its transformation to a global premium business and respected leader in automotive technologies.

Of course, this University and Sir Ralf need no introduction each other. He is a Warwick graduate, with a Doctorate of Engineering in Mechanical Engineering and Business, where he studied with the much missed Lord Kumar Bhattacharyya, plus an Honorary Professor in WMG.

So it is a particular pleasure to welcome you this afternoon.

Ralf Speth began his professional career at BMW where he stayed for 20 years before joining Ford Motor Company's Premier Automotive Group and later the industrial gases and engineering giant Linde Group, running its global operations. In 2010, he became Chief Executive Officer of Jaguar Land Rover. He increased JLR's workforce significantly, particularly here in the West Midlands, and championed Research & Development, particularly emphasising sustainability, which became JLR's 'Destination Zero' mission.

Under his stewardship, JLR became the first premium automotive manufacturer to design and engineer an all-electric performance SUV, the ground breaking Jaguar I-PACE - the European and World Car of the Year in 2019.

In 2016, Sir Ralf was appointed to the Board of Tata Sons a role he has continued since his retirement as JLR Chief Executive Officer in 2020. In April 2022, he became Chairman of India's TVS Motor Company – one of the largest motorcycle companies, exporting bikes to more than 60 countries.

At JLR, Sir Ralf focussed on sustainability, research and training. The company won the Queen's Award for Sustainable Development in 2015. It pioneered lightweight, recycled aluminium bodied vehicles, and by 2020 was carbon neutral in its UK manufacturing processes. He transformed JLR into one of the nation's biggest spenders on R&D, pioneering innovations in electrified, smart and autonomous vehicles, setting up its own battery assembly plant at Ham's Hall in the West Midlands.

Sir Ralf was instrumental in the creation of the National Automotive Innovation Centre (NAIC) here on campus – one of Europe's largest collaborative automotive R&D facilities, bringing together academics and industry to develop future vehicle technologies and mobility solutions. At the formal opening of NAIC, by the now King Charles III in February 2020, Sir Ralf described his vision for NAIC: 'Here,' he said, 'academics and suppliers will develop a smart, safe infrastructure that integrates autonomous vehicles and public transport; design zero emissions vehicles powered by smart-chargers and renewable energy, and discover material and digital manufacturing innovations that will eliminate waste' - helping us to move to a world of zero emissions, zero accidents, zero congestion.

He has also stressed the importance of supporting young people to become the next generation of engineers and of continuing to train those already in post. From his strong support to the WMG Academy for Young Engineers to the launch, in 2015, of the JLR Lifelong Learning Academy, in collaboration with WMG. Each playing a key role in addressing a growing demand for a new generation of engineers, designers and researchers.

Sir Ralf is a hugely influential figure in the automotive industry, nationally and internationally and was Make UK's Outstanding Industrialist of the Year in 2014. He has ensured that the automotive industry remains firmly embedded in the Midlands, giving the region a leading role in automotive innovation and research. He has been a good friend to this University, helping us to set up a network of alumni and contacts in India as we seek to develop more research and teaching partnerships there.

The excellence of his sustained contribution to science and engineering is recognised through his election as a Fellow of both the Royal Society and the Royal Academy of Engineering. HM The Queen honoured him a Knighthood for his services to the automotive industry. We are delighted to add to Sir Ralf's honours today.

Chancellor: We are honouring today one of the University's great friends and supporters. In the name of the Senate, I am particularly delighted to present to you for admission to the degree of Doctor of Science, *honoris causa*, PROFESSOR SIR RALF SPETH.