

## **EUA Annual Conference**

### **‘The Sustainability of European Universities’**

#### **Opening Ceremony**

#### **Welcome Speech**

**March 22<sup>nd</sup> 2012**

**[SLIDE 1]** Good afternoon. I am delighted to welcome you today to the University of Warwick for this important occasion. Before I go any further I would like to thank Professor Rapp for his opening remarks, as well as the EUA for all of their efforts in organising what I am sure will be a fantastic annual conference. **[SLIDE 2]** Most importantly, I want to extend a warm welcome to all of you on behalf of the University of Warwick. It is a great honour to host so many distinguished Heads of Universities from all over the world, and I do hope that you will enjoy your time here.

The conference theme this year is the sustainability of European universities.

**[SLIDE 3]** Europe must perchance deal with a raft of serious economic and political problems, so this issue is obviously ripe for discussion. The question we must all face is, how do universities remain sustainable in a period of such great and sustained upheaval?

As we all know, the modern model of the university was founded in Europe. Von Humboldt’s great vision of institutions, based on principles of academic freedom and high quality research, has been replicated the world over. Represented in this room are the heads of some of the best universities not just in Europe but all over the world. You are the lasting legacy of Von Humboldt’s efforts to found an institution where academics are free to pursue knowledge for knowledge’s sake, and where students can thrive in an atmosphere of intellectual endeavour.

But this vision has become more and more complex as time has gone by.

**[SLIDE 4]** Nowadays, universities must still of course pursue knowledge for its own sake, and create a stimulating intellectual environment for students, but they must do a whole lot more too: act as a forcing ground for economic growth, become central nodes in urban and regional economies, produce social equity, demonstrate research ‘impact’, work as firefighters for global problems,

become international entities, all of this while holding an acute responsibility to provide benefits for the broader public realm.

But they must do all these tasks whilst many of them are experiencing a rapid rate of change. There are, to begin with, reductions in public funding that can range from an annual cut of a few per cent to something much larger. Then, there is a series of academic and organisational reforms, which are currently taking place in many European countries, which can be challenging, to put it but mildly. Again, there is a general shift taking place in the boundaries of the public and private sector with a dramatic growth in private higher education in some countries. Finally, there is the tension between providing a higher education for a burgeoning and increasingly heterogeneous community of learners, in a manner which is both coherent and flexible enough to respond to the changing needs of society, in institutions which were often set up to do something else.

Yet the current context is also one where European higher education is probably as or more successful than it has ever been, judging by all manner of indicators. There is certainly no reason to despair. And I like to think that the story of this university, Warwick, shows why the outlook may be more optimistic than it might first appear. For I believe that Warwick has a good story to tell about how to create a successful and sustainable operation in hard times, while remaining very much part of the European scene.

**[SLIDE 5]** The University came into being in the first wave of post-war university expansion in Britain and can now be counted as easily the most successful of the eight universities that emerged in the UK during that time.

**[SLIDE 6]** You will see from our expansion over the past forty-seven years that we have grown significantly. Today, the University is consistently placed in the top 10 of UK universities overall in national league tables and has been named recently as a member of the English Ivy League because of the high quality of its undergraduate students. In the most recent national Research Assessment Exercise, Warwick was ranked 7th overall, and many of our departments, like Economics, Business and Mathematics are ranked in worldwide top 50 lists. The University plays host to around 23,000 undergraduate and postgraduate students and employs 5,000 staff covering academic, administrative, operational and commercially-facing roles. The institution has a turnover of around just under £420 million per year (over €500 million) and, perhaps most notably,

takes around 20 per cent of its funding directly from government, soon to go down to around 10 per cent in the coming years.

The University is built on the watchwords of innovation, ambition and academic excellence. It was forged in the flames of adversity, and most notably cuts in public funding in the 1980s. But instead of accepting the inevitable, Warwick combined some limited cuts with an aggressive pursuit of opportunities to increase its own earned income. In fact, the institution succeeded not only in replacing the revenue lost but also in generating additional revenue for reinvestment in research and teaching.

In so many ways, then we have had to do it for ourselves with little or no outside help. How has this been possible? [SLIDE 7] Mainly because we have created a range of diverse income streams, ensuring financial sustainability in the longer term.

First, the University has seventeen different commercial operations, which range from the usual retail outlets on campus, to a student temping agency, to a hugely successful Internet jobs business. All of these operations redirect profits back into the academic frontline.

Second, we have a long history of knowledge transfer activity, the most well-known example being Warwick Manufacturing Group which has historically forged very close relationships with industry and has acted as a bridge between the UK's manufacturing industry and the application of cutting edge research. It is no exaggeration at all to say that WMG has been a key element in the rise of the British motor industry over the last ten years through its links with Jaguar Land Rover, and a major moment in the expansion of Indian industry through its links with Tata. We also have a whole series of partnerships with other corporate partners like Cisco and GE Healthcare.

[SLIDE 8] Third, the drive to innovate has been a constant within the institution. In recent years, we have developed a growing portfolio of activities that make Warwick stand out. Just in the last couple of years, for example, we have opened the national Nuclear Magnetic Resonance Centre. With the Royal Shakespeare Company, we have founded Teaching Shakespeare, an initiative aimed at transforming the classroom experience of Shakespeare through delivering high-quality online professional development for teachers of Shakespeare all over the world. We have set up the Warwick in Africa programme, which sends Warwick (and now National University of Singapore)

mathematics students to teach Maths in South Africa, Tanzania and Ghana and which has already helped 90,000 learners. The International Gateway for Gifted Youth aims to bring together gifted and talented learners from the UK and overseas as a global online community of gifted and talented learners. Our new Knowledge Centre showcases the best of Warwick's research, and acts as a portal to bring Warwick alumni back into the university throughout their lives. Through these kinds of initiatives, and many more, Warwick has produced a diverse ecosystem of initiatives.

The final vital element of Warwick's growth has been an institutional proclivity to look outwards from what is obviously the most important region in the UK, the West Midlands, with its battery of thriving universities – Aston, Birmingham, Coventry and so on. We have a thriving overseas student population of around 35 per cent of our total student body, while 25 per cent of our academic staff also comes from outside the UK.

Our engagement with Europe in particular is indicative. There is a story that circulates that British universities are somehow standoffish in Europe. It's not true but it's particularly not true of Warwick.

**[SLIDE 9]** To begin with, there is the inward and outward flow of staff and students from the university to the rest of Europe. Students from the rest of Europe form ten per cent of our student body, up by about fourteen per cent in recent years. We are one of the largest users of the Erasmus student mobility programme in the UK, and, unusually, we send as many students elsewhere in Europe as come to spend time at Warwick. The Erasmus programme is becoming increasingly popular with our staff as well, with about 100 staff members spending time at European universities in this year alone. But we go farther than this. We are currently setting up a new Hispanic Studies department which will sit alongside French, German and Italian departments. Over 450 of our academic staff are from EU countries other than the UK. Oh, and our Deputy-Vice-Chancellor is a Belgian!

**[SLIDE 10]** Then, there is research funding from Europe, where we have had great success in recent years. Key highlights include the award to Warwick of two out of five Social Science FP7 Large Collaborative awards last year, which were worth €17m in total. More broadly, our awards from European sources are on the increase, rising to well over ten per cent of our research income in 2011.

**[SLIDE 11]** Again, we have had our own academic base in Venice since 1967. To begin with, it was simply a case of some of our history and art history students spend a term there as part of their degree. But we now use the space for all manner of research activities, including numerous conferences, seminars and vacation schools. Our work in Venice was recognised in 2010, when we were awarded the prestigious Venice Prize for Cultural Communication.

So that is a potted history of how we have got to where we are. But it is never enough and here at Warwick we are conscious that we can never rest on our laurels. We are conscious that we must never let our history dictate our future direction of travel. We must always seek out new and creative ways of sustaining the future of the University but these now need to be on the global stage.

That is why in the past year, Warwick has taken great leaps in the development of its programme of internationalisation. We are branching out internationally to form what we call a globally connected university, in which we will cooperate and collaborate with other universities, both nationally and internationally, in order to do exciting things that we really can't do alone.

**[SLIDE 12]** The biggest part of this project at the moment is our partnership with Monash university in Australia, which has grown in the past three years from a core strategic partnership, to a deeper, more substantive alliance, which will incorporate joint appointments, joint activities in research, new modes of teaching using especially developed software and joint use of our networks of campuses (including in Prato and Venice). We would like to reach a stage where all of our students and staff have the opportunity to be genuinely internationally mobile. There are other developments - a partnership with Queen Mary University, London, for example – **[SLIDE 13]** as well as Warwick's recent bid – which is still being considered I should add – to be part of an Applied Sciences Facility in New York City, along with six world-leading universities and several global technology corporations. So despite the adversity, these are exciting times for Warwick. I am delighted to be able to welcome you here while we are in the midst of such significant international developments.

**[SLIDE 14]** In conclusion, I want to finish with a resounding urge for co-operation. I am of the view that greater cooperation, rather than competition, between European universities is the path forward. The ways and means of

doing that is, of course, a discussion for another time. But to paraphrase Jean Monnet, we must work together, and show that beyond our differences and geographical boundaries lies a common interest. I am sure that the EUA provides an ideal forum for the emergence of a new solidarity between European universities, a solidarity we can build now that will hold us in good stead for the future. It was the vision of the founders of the European Union. It is still a good vision.

**Thank you**