

Heads You Win: Leading Engineer and Mathematician is Appointed to Drive University to New Heights

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Leading engineer Professor Nigel Weatherill has been named by the University of Birmingham in the line-up of its new top team, charged with realizing the institution's visionary goals for the future.

All five college heads have now been appointed to steer new academic Colleges that are being formed through an ambitious period of organizational change. This metamorphosis will put academic endeavour at the heart of strategic decision-making, reduce bureaucracy and enable the University grasp opportunities more readily.

Professor Nigel Weatherill is to be Head of the College of Engineering and Physical Sciences. The College incorporates the existing Schools of Engineering, Physics, Chemistry, Mathematics and Computer Science. He comes to the position from his present role as Pro-Vice Chancellor for Research at Swansea University.

Nigel was formerly Head of the School of Engineering, Dean of the Postgraduate Faculty and Head of the 6* rated Civil Engineering Department at Swansea University. He has also held visiting research posts at Mississippi State University and Princeton University USA.

His early career highlights include research posts at Anglian Water Authority and the Aircraft Research Association, Bedford.

His main research interests focus on applying mathematics to real-world problems through the use of computational methods and high performance computing. Major emphasis has been in aerospace engineering, but also mathematical modelling in the environment and biomechanics.

His current senior committee posts include Director of the Welsh Development Agency's Centre of Excellence in Computation and Simulation; Scientist in Residence at the Institute of High Performance Computing in Singapore; Editor-in-Chief of the International Journal of Numerical Methods in Fluids; Member of the Engineering and Physical Sciences Research Council's Technical Opportunities Panel; Council Member of the Institute of Mathematics and its Applications and member of the Advisory Board of the Research Information Network.

Talking about his new role, Nigel said, 'I am delighted to have been appointed to the position of Head of College of Engineering and Physical Sciences at this exciting time at the University. Building on the undoubted strengths of the schools, the College provides a real opportunity to further enhance the student experience, to strengthen and diversify our research and to increase our interaction with business and industry. I look forward to working with all staff in the College and across the University in taking the University forward.'

Nigel is to be joined by Malcolm Press, Lawrence Young, Edward Peck and Anne Pauwels who are leading professionals in the fields of environmental science, cancer studies, public services analysis and linguistics respectively. They will sit at the top decision-making table with the Vice-Chancellor.

'Moving from 19 individual academic schools to five unified Colleges will give greater power to those closest to our core business and enable the University to achieve its ambitious forward vision', says Professor Michael Sterling, the University's Vice Chancellor.

He continues: 'We do need to move from being good – in fact very good – to outstanding. To define that for you it's when, internationally, we're known as the point of reference for the media; they come to us to answer questions of world importance.'

'I'm delighted with the calibre of my new team who will make this vision a reality. All five Heads combine an outstanding track record in academia with the leadership skills, ambition and drive to take the University to new heights.'

Professor Weatherill will take up the post on 1 May 2008.

Ends

Notes to Editors

A head and shoulders photograph of Nigel Weatherill is available. Please call the press office.

The formal names for each College have yet to be finalised.

Organisational Change at the University of Birmingham:

The University's Strategic Framework 2005-2010, outlined the ambitions that would assure a position of strength for the University.

The University of Birmingham will:

invest in areas of internationally significant research that have an impact on contemporary society

create a teaching environment that promotes critical thinking, so that our students are enquiry-led learners, recognised by employers for their intellectual calibre

foster a global perspective in our teaching and research activities, preparing students for work in the global economy and encouraging research that has international impact

welcome the expertise of leaders from business and industry to inform the development of the University's education portfolio

The University's current structure includes 19 academic schools, none of which are directly represented on the management board. The University is now in a transitional year leading to the adoption of a 5-College model, where Heads of College will join the senior management team. The re-organisation will:

put academic endeavour at the heart of strategic decision-making

result in fewer administrative boundaries, enabling a swift response to opportunities and greater cross-disciplinary working

create a less hierarchical structure, with greater devolution of authority and responsibility into academic units

strengthen working relationships between academic and professional members of staff

The other College Head appointments:

Professor Edward Peck has been appointed Head of the College of Social Sciences. The College incorporates the existing Schools of Business, Education, Public Policy

and Social Sciences. He currently heads the School of Public Policy and is Professor of Public Services Development and is also Director of the University's Health Services Management Centre.

Professor Malcolm Press will be Head of the College of Life and Environmental Sciences. The College incorporates the existing Schools of Biosciences; Geography, Earth and Environmental Sciences; Psychology; and Sport and Exercise Sciences. Malcolm is currently Head of Animal and Plant Sciences and Director of Research for the Environment at the University of Sheffield where he has held a Chair in Ecology since 1998.

Professor Lawrence Young is to be Head of the College of Medicine, Dentistry and Health Sciences. He comes to the position from his present role as Head of the Division of Cancer Studies and Director of the Cancer Research UK Institute for Cancer Studies at the University of Birmingham.

Professor Anne Pauwels is to be Head of the College of Arts and Law. She comes to the position from her present role as Dean of the Faculty of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences at the University of Western Australia and Chair of the Group of Eight Deans of Arts in Australia.

Economic impact of the University of Birmingham in 2005/6:

Economic impact was £662m and £779m to the city and region respectively

Annual income of over £388.6 million

£64m of disposable income received by staff resident in Birmingham

Over the last 10 years Birmingham graduates have added an additional £146 million to the City economy

Eighth largest employer in the Birmingham/Solihull sub-region, representing 1.2% of total West Midlands employment

Potential £525 million additional input via research activities over the next 10 years, including over 2000 jobs by 2015

£10m estimated visitor expenditure attributable to the University in 05-06

For further information

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