

## **The Honorary Graduand: Dr Paul Phillips OBE**

The Orator: Jo Midgley

### **Dr Paul Phillips is to be awarded the Honorary Degree of Doctor of Education.**

Since becoming Principal and Chief Executive of Weston College in 2001, Dr Phillips has led the organisation through a remarkable transformation that has seen it become one of the most successful colleges in the country, earning Ofsted's 'Outstanding' rating and winning both 'College of the Year' and 'Overall FE Provider of the Year' at the Times Educational Supplement Awards 2015.

Weston College is one of the FE sector's greatest success stories. In just over a decade, it has been transformed from an organisation with an annual turnover of £9million and a trading deficit, to one that turns over in excess of £50million and with building investments of over £60million.

Dr Phillips has led the College through projects that have created world-class facilities and pioneered flagship models of learning, through collaboration with local, national and multinational employers, which have successfully improved the aspirations and job prospects of young people and adult learners across the country.

He has led the College on a journey of expansion that has seen it open two more campuses and a plethora of satellite centres, double the number of full time courses it offers and become a University Centre in partnership with the University of the West of England.

Under his direction, the College has created facilities for learners with learning difficulties and disabilities, including an autism spectrum residential facility which encourages its learners to engage in social activities and helps them to prepare for independent life.

Over the last 15 years the College's academic growth has doubled its student intake, but despite this rapid expansion, Dr Phillips has endeavoured to keep students at the heart of everything the College does, ensuring that the quality of the organisation's teaching and learning is consistently improving in tandem with the College's academic and financial growth.

Under his leadership, Weston College's FE and HE pass rates have risen to exceed national benchmarks. Last year, in a national student satisfaction survey, Weston College has been rated as the best college in the South West for the third consecutive year. 95% of students rate the College as a great place to study and learn.

It is still the only Ofsted 'Outstanding' and Investors in People 'Gold Standard' College in the West of England.

In the HE sector, Dr Phillips' expansion of Weston College's provision has created a wealth of new degree options which have enabled more and more people in North Somerset to enter into the university-level education.

Currently, 99% of the College's Honours students achieve relevant employment within 6 months of graduating. Last year, 21.3% of the College's graduates achieved first class honours degrees – above the national average of 16%.

The continuous development of Weston College and its provision is turning Weston-super-Mare into a centre of excellence for teaching and learning. Dr Phillips' vision is to create a 'learning village' in Weston, and through the Inspirational Futures Trust intends to ensure that people across the South West are given access to outstanding educational provision throughout their academic lives.

The Honorary Degree is awarded in recognition of Paul Philips' service to education across the South West.