

BU Honorary Graduate Citation - Debbie Fleming

Chancellor/Pro-Chancellor,

Debbie Fleming is one of the longest-serving Chief Executives in the NHS, and has helped to forge the strong partnership between Bournemouth University and the region's hospital trust.

Debbie was Chief Executive of the newly merged University Hospitals Dorset NHS Foundation Trust prior to her retirement in 2022. Her leadership career has tracked the ever-changing administration of the health service over two decades, which she says has given her skills in creating order out of chaos and leading people through times of uncertainty. Last year she was made an OBE for services to the NHS.

Debbie made her first professional connection with the health sector at age 13, when she took up a Saturday job in her local pharmacy. Initially attracted to the role by the sense of importance and uniform, she quickly discovered the vital role that pharmacies play in their communities and sensed this would shape her future career.

She went on to study Sociology at University of Southampton, where she furthered her interest in health administration and applied to join the NHS Management Trainee Programme. She narrowly missed out, giving her an early lesson in building resilience and teaching her that you don't always get what you want, when you want it.

Instead, Debbie took up a role as a Senior Clerk in Community Services before being accepted a year later onto the trainee scheme. She quickly progressed through various management positions and went on to be Chief Executive of three Primary Care Trusts, Area Director of a regional health commissioning service and Chief Executive of one of the largest hospital trusts in the country.

Throughout her career, Debbie has invested in her own professional development as a leader, including completing an MBA at BU. She advocates the importance of self-awareness, of building trusting relationships and of delivering on what you say. While she has an inbuilt belief that anything is possible, she is clear that leaders are not superheroes, but are dependent on supportive and skilled teams in both their personal and professional lives.

Chancellor/Pro-Chancellor, I have the honour to present Debbie Fleming, and I ask you to confer upon her the degree of Doctor of Business Administration, *honoris causa*.