



**Bournemouth  
University**

## **MICHAEL RIORDAN**

Pro-Chancellor,

Michael Riordan has given long and outstanding service to this University as Director of Human Resources. Previously he held senior executive posts in the NHS. He was a key member of the University's Executive Team through two eventful decades, particularly in the changes of the past five years which have greatly strengthened BU's national and international profile.

Michael's Irish heritage includes a strong family engagement in higher education going back more than 100 years. His father was one of ten children from a modest background and all, including five girls, graduated from the National University of Ireland between 1911 and 1930. Other aspects of his family background include community leadership and business interests. All these themes came together in his human resource management career.

Michael read for a combined degree in Philosophy, Latin and Irish at NUI Maynooth, and then Theology at St Patrick's College Maynooth. At first he was heading for the Catholic priesthood, but he found this was not for him, and his first job was with the John Lewis Partnership in Oxford Street, where he started as a Christmas temp and worked for five years, mainly on the selling floor. His last year was spent in the training department, and this role took him into his next career move, as Staff Trainer with the NHS at Farnborough. Then to the Wessex Regional Health Authority at Winchester, as HQ Personnel Officer. This very formative learning experience, not least in engaging with trades unions, ensured that (as he puts it) Michael was 'neither surprised nor flummoxed' by what he encountered later. His last Health Service post was Director of Personnel for the West Surrey and North-East Hampshire Authority, where for six months he was also Acting District General Manager after his colourfully eccentric boss left suddenly.

In 1990 Michael brought this strong background of personnel expertise and executive experience to the Dorset Institute of Higher Education as Director of Human Resources. It was unheard of to make a personnel appointment at such a senior level in the higher education sector; but those times of great institutional change required it, and Michael faced a series of management challenges in the early days as the Institute gained independence, then achieved Polytechnic status and later

became Bournemouth University.

Two of Michael's major achievements stand out. BU is the only UK university which has successfully negotiated and established a new contract framework for its staff. The University needed to do this in order to remodel and strengthen its academic profile and position. Michael led the long process of negotiations with unions at local, regional and national levels, and his determination, patience and skill were rewarded in 2008 when the new contract was implemented for academic staff.

Michael's foresight and drive also led the University to establish job evaluation mechanisms for all staff groups; and this, in the mid 1990s, provided a system for determining equal pay for work of equal value. Few other UK universities did so at the time, but all have subsequently adopted this practice.

Throughout the past five years in which BU has raised its standing remarkably, Michael played a key role in the Executive Team, particularly in the recruitment of nearly 200 new academics, and in promoting the Releasing Research and Enterprise Potential scheme, which is believed to be the university sector's largest staff-development programme. He was always at the centre of decision-making, in HR and across the spectrum of institutional leadership. In the Executive and the University Board he built a well-founded reputation as a consistent and dependable colleague, an astute manager of change and a wise adviser.

During his 20 years with BU, Michael was also responsible for professional departments including Student Services and the Registry. He is rightly proud to have changed the institution from being a musical desert with just one piano (these were his words) to one which now provides expert tuition, good practice facilities and student scholarships in music. And there was also another and less obvious dimension to his life here. Many colleagues found him a kindly and trusted counsellor, and he always had time for people who needed his help.

Michael has been dedicated and committed to the development and success of this University, and throughout 20 years of far-reaching change he provided a unique continuity of institutional knowledge and insight. He has played an enormous part in making BU a large and proud University which enjoys a strong and growing national and international reputation.

Pro-Chancellor, I have the honour to present Michael Riordan, and I ask you to confer upon him the degree of Doctor of Arts, *honoris causa*.