

# Changing the world with Lancaster



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LUMS Advisory Board Chair Dr Brian Tempest talks about his time at Lancaster, and his determination to 'give something back'.

Occasionally when Dr Brian Tempest is on the platform addressing the UN or a major conglomerate, the global pharmaceutical expert remembers the advice of his chemistry professor at Lancaster University: that a presentation should be delivered like a golf stroke, slowly and smoothly.

These words were enacted every Wednesday afternoon for Brian as a young PhD student (PhD Chemistry 1968-71) when he and the rest of the 'polymer team' joined the golf-mad Professor John Bevington on the course - at the academic's insistence. Brian's modest golfing skills did not improve much, but the tip made sense and his presentation skills have helped make him a renowned expert on globalisation in the pharmaceutical industry. His advice is now sought after by companies trying to work in and with the Developing World, particularly in the area of generic drugs.

Now chairman of Lancaster University Management School's Advisory Board, Brian says: "I would not even have got onto the ladder without my PhD from Lancaster and that is why I want to give something back."

This most pragmatic of Lancastrians, who describes himself as a global businessman, has been involved in setting up pharmaceutical companies in most countries of the world. He has been the CEO of an Indian drugs company, living in India for a decade. Even now, in his official retirement, Brian is non-executive director of five Indian firms, each of which he visits six times per year, and edits the Journal of Generic Medicines, not to mention advising the UN and the WHO. He considers he has a lot to be grateful for.

His contribution to Lancaster University life these days is in the form of lectures on health care and globalisation, plus his good-humoured and dynamic chairing of the Management School's Advisory Board.

Born and brought up in Morecambe, where his father was a barber, Brian was motivated to work hard to avoid having to take on the hairdressing business and took his BSc in Chemistry at Aston University. Professor Bevington examined his thesis there and invited him to study with him at Lancaster University.

This was in 1968, soon after Lancaster University was set up. Following interviews in makeshift premises in the city centre, he found himself working in state-of-the-art laboratories on the brand-new campus. Most of his time was spent in the laboratories with, what was considered, the elite polymer team.

His research in the then-fashionable polymer field was on the Copolymers of Styrenes - in particular Dimethyl Fumarate, which has now become a valuable drug in the treatment of conditions like MS and psoriasis. Ironically, Brian himself developed an allergic reaction to the drug he was investigating.

This was not a factor in his decision to move, following his studies, into the world of commerce via a management training position with Beecham Pharmaceuticals. Marketing was fashionable and exciting. He rapidly proved himself and moved on to various companies including a stint as general manager for Searle Pharmaceuticals (where he presented the annual budget to Donald Rumsfeld, later US Defense Secretary), Glaxo regional director for the Far East, and Fisons World operations director in the US.

At this point India entered his life. Parvinder Singh, the head of a small Indian company called Ranbaxy Laboratories, invited him for a cup of tea in a Genevan hotel and asked him to join his small generic drugs company and to work towards the dream of establishing India as a leader in the global generic drugs business. He bought into the vision and spent eight years living and working there, eventually becoming Ranbaxy's CEO and MD.

During that time, he led major changes in Ranbaxy which had a major influence on the global pharmaceutical industry, including the first Indian buyout of a European generics firm (Bayer generics in Germany) by Ranbaxy, expansion into Europe and the USA and the company's achievement of billion-dollar status.

He left the company when he retired at 60 in 2008 and since then has run a consultancy, alongside his non-executive directorships including the UN Governance Board's Medicines Patent Pool, Glenmark Pharmaceuticals, Fortis Healthcare, SLR Diagnostics, and his journal editorship.

Now looking at the drug industry from a slight remove, he has an element of pessimism about its ability to avoid some kind of postcode lottery, given the rise of highly expensive innovative drugs costing as much as \$250,000 per course of treatment, compared with some generic drugs costing as little as \$1. The inequality pains him.

He said: "India is considered a pharmaceutical success because it provides the US with more than half of its medication, but the UN and the WHO see India as a failure, because it cannot get that medication out to the Indian villages."

The desire to give something back motivates his continued links with India. It also motivates his commitment to working with Lancaster University Management School, by chairing its Advisory Board. He is proud of the school's position as one of the top ten in the UK and top 100 worldwide. He speaks with enthusiasm about his multi-disciplinary Board colleagues - coming from a number of countries including China, Africa, UAE and the USA - and the "freshness and energy" of the group.

He always combines meetings at Lancaster with a catch up with friends who formed part of Professor Bevington's team during his student days, but enjoys the enthusiasm of the university meetings in themselves - whether it is talking about course content, construction plans or the Management School's place in the world rankings.

That enthusiasm makes the meetings Brian chairs fun. According to Management School Dean, Professor Angus Laing: "Apart from Brian's invaluable experience and knowledge from which we benefit, we can guarantee that he will always have a pertinent quip or a practical observation to bring us back to earth if needed!"

Practicality is an essential ingredient in Brian's life. Now based in Haslemere, Surrey, he and his wife live and work on a 50-acre fruit tree farm. He describes his ideal day as working on "cerebral matters" like phone calls and writing in the morning, and driving a tractor or chopping wood in the afternoon.

Helping Lancaster University is about helping what he describes as 'my own growth engine' and he thrives on the energetic atmosphere: "I do it because it pays something back for my own education, but also because I feel I am helping improve the education of the wider business community. Ultimately, it's about changing the world."

**There are a whole host of ways in which alumni can continue to be involved in the LUMS story. Find out more on [our alumni pages](#).**