

Biographical Information

Professor James McWha
Vice-Chancellor and President
The University of Adelaide

Professor James McWha is the University of Adelaide's 19th Vice-Chancellor since 1874. He began his Vice-Chancellorship on 5 August 2002. Professor McWha came to Adelaide following a highly successful term of office as Vice-Chancellor and President of Massey University in New Zealand from 1996-2002, where he was also Chairman of the New Zealand Vice-Chancellors' Committee in 2001-2002.

Professor McWha has an outstanding record as a teacher, researcher, manager of research institutes, academic administrator and communicator. A native of Northern Ireland, he graduated with BSc and BAgr (with Honours in Agricultural Botany) from the Queen's University of Belfast in 1969 and 1970. He received his PhD from Glasgow University in 1973, prior to taking up an appointment at the University of Canterbury in New Zealand, where a period as a lecturer in the Department of Botany was followed by a term as Head of the Department of Plant and Microbial Sciences.

In 1985 he returned to Northern Ireland to take up a joint appointment as Professor and Head of Agricultural Botany at the Queen's University, Belfast, and Deputy Chief Scientific Officer in the Northern Ireland Department of Agriculture. In 1989 he was appointed Director of the Fruit and Trees unit of the New Zealand Department of Scientific and Industrial Research, and from 1992-95 was Chief Executive Officer of HortResearch (the Horticulture and Food Research Institute of New Zealand Ltd).

Professor McWha is actively involved in the higher education sector on an international level. He has served on the Council of the Association of Commonwealth Universities (2001, 2006-07), and was elected to a two year term as Honorary Treasurer of the ACU in mid 2007. He also hosted the 2006 ACU Conference of Executive Heads at the University of Adelaide. He was Secretary-General of the International Association of University Presidents from 2002-05, and was appointed Secretary-General Emeritus of the IAUP in 2005.

He has played an important role in the development of quality assurance systems in Australia and New Zealand, and has been a director of the Australian Universities Quality Agency since 2003.

His past and present memberships and appointments include the Council of the National Institute of Agricultural Botany, the Board of the New Zealand Foundation for Research Science and Technology, the Board of the New Zealand Dairy Research Institute, the Board of the American Chamber of Commerce in New Zealand, and a range of directorships including Industrial Research Limited and a number of other public and private companies. He is presently a director of the Group of Eight Ltd, the coalition of Australia's leading universities.

Professor McWha was among the citizens of South Australia to be recognised in 2003 by the award of the Centenary Medal for his services to education, and in May 2004 was awarded the degree of Doctor of Science (honoris causa) from Massey University in recognition of his outstanding contribution to Massey and his advocacy for New Zealand's education system.