

**Citation – Robert Smithies**  
**1 October 2025, 2.30pm**

Presiding Pro-Chancellor, it gives me great pleasure to present Robert Smithies to you for the award of Honorary Fellowship, in recognition of his outstanding and enduring contribution to the University of Sydney through his leadership of Sydney Uni Sport & Fitness and his tireless advocacy for student sport and wellbeing.

A graduate of the University of Sydney with a Bachelor of Laws (Honours), Robert also holds a Bachelor of Science from Marquette University in the United States, where he studied on a four-year soccer scholarship. His early experience in the US college sporting system, instilled in him a lifelong belief in the value of sport and study in shaping young lives—a belief he carried into nearly three decades of service to student sport in Australia.

Robert joined Sydney Uni Sport & Fitness (SUSF) in 2004, initially as operations manager and soon after as executive director—a role he held for 12 years until the end of 2019. Over his tenure, Rob led a team of over 85 staff, managed a \$15 million annual operating budget and a further \$7 million in club funds, and consistently delivered strong financial performance, securing surpluses in 10 out of 12 years. His stewardship was instrumental in transforming the sporting landscape at the University.

Perhaps Rob's most visible legacy is in infrastructure. He oversaw the development of more than \$40 million in new student sport facilities, including the Sydney Uni Sports & Aquatic Centre extension, the TAG Family Foundation Grandstand, the Thyne Reid Boathouse, and the Bruce Pryor Hockey Field. Through his leadership and personal commitment to fundraising, over \$13 million in philanthropic support was raised to help bring these projects to life—ensuring access to world-class facilities for generations of students to come.

Rob's vision extended beyond elite sport. He established and expanded the Programs & Participation Department at SUSF, creating a vibrant offering of social, recreational, and inclusive programs that engaged more than 15,000 students annually. These initiatives, ranging from intramural competitions to water safety programs and wellness sessions, helped make sport and physical activity a core part of the Sydney student experience.

Under his leadership, student memberships grew by 40%, gym and pool attendance more than doubled, and access was made more affordable with a 28% reduction in student membership fees. His business acumen saw SUSF's commercial revenue grow from \$4 million to \$7.5 million annually, enabling greater reinvestment into student programs and scholarships.

Rob was also a distinguished student-athlete, awarded the University's first ever soccer scholarship and, later, a University Blue. He captained Sydney Uni Soccer Football Club to three grand final victories and scored a club-record, 205 goals in 212 games, earning him the NSW Super League Player of the Year in 2004.

Presiding Pro-Chancellor, I present to you Robert Smithies and invite you to confer the title of Honorary Fellow of the University in recognition of his transformative leadership, his vision for inclusive student engagement, and his lasting legacy to sport and student life at the University of Sydney.