

Professor Clifford Douglas Blake AM

The honorary degree of Doctor of Educational Administration was conferred upon Professor Clifford Douglas Blake AM in 2001.

Citation

Chancellor, I have the honour to present Professor Clifford Douglas Blake AM for the conferring of the degree of Doctor of Educational Administration (honoris causa).

Clifford Blake graduated from this University in 1958 with the University Medal in Agriculture. He went to the Rothamsted Experimental Station in England on a Sir Benjamin Fuller Travelling Scholarship and completed a doctorate at the University of London. A Rockefeller Travelling Fellowship to the United States of America enabled him to visit centres of biological teaching and research. After this extensive experience abroad, Dr Blake returned to the University of Sydney as a lecturer in plant pathology. He was promoted to senior lecturer in the Faculty of Agriculture and served as the Wilson Fellow and Senior Tutor at St Andrew's College.

In 1971, when still in his early thirties, Professor Blake accepted appointment as the Foundation Principal of the new Riverina College of Advanced Education. The College was created from a merger of the Wagga Wagga Teachers and Agricultural Colleges, and Professor Blake took on the difficult and delicate task of unifying its two diverse elements. Over the next twenty years, by a unique combination of imagination, pragmatism and energy, he managed to build the fledgling institution into one of the most diverse and dynamic colleges of advanced education in Australia. His leadership contributed significantly to the opportunities the College provided for students and staff in the region, and to the development of the higher education sector.

During this period, he served as a member of the Board of Adult Education in New South Wales, a member of the Advanced Education Council of the Commonwealth Tertiary Education Commission and Chairman of the NSW Advanced Education Conference. For his long, diverse and distinguished service, he was made a Member of the Order of Australia in 1988. Professor Blake went on to play a critical part in the establishment of Charles Sturt University, formed by the amalgamation of the Riverina and Bathurst Colleges of Advanced Education. He was appointed Foundation Vice-Chancellor and a Professor of the University, and in this office, served as President of the Australian Higher Learning Board of Governors, Foundation Chair of the National Conference on Open and Distance Education, and Convenor of the New South Wales Vice-Chancellors' Conference.

Professor Blake is an Elected Fellow of the Australian Institute of Agricultural Science, was awarded the Farrer Memorial Medal for distinguished contributions to agricultural science in 1996, was granted the freedom of the City of Wagga Wagga and is an Honorary Citizen of the City of Bathurst.

Clifford Blake is a country boy from the Hunter Valley. He has given back in full measure to rural Australia by developing a new concept of regional higher education. He has overseen the introduction of courses and research that offer young people from rural areas opportunities to study and to make their future lives in the country. Furthermore, he is responsible for the introduction of a range of new academic disciplines that increase the professionalism of those in the workplace.

One may measure the lasting contribution that Professor Blake has made to the cultural life and economic fabric of regional New South Wales by the achievements of the institutions he has led. Charles Sturt University has more than doubled in size since its establishment; gained a national award in 1997 for success in teaching students with no family experience of tertiary study; and is now offering its degrees in over thirteen countries around the world. As well as Police Studies, Pharmacy and Media Programs, the university has a cheese factory and a successful winery. It is a regional leader. These developments are a testimony to his managerial skills, care for staff and students, determination and vision.

Chancellor, I have great pleasure in presenting to you, for admission to the degree of Doctor of Educational Administration (honoris causa), scholar, educator, and patron of the Arts, Professor Clifford Douglas Blake AM.