



**WEST COLLEGE**  
SCOTLAND



# ANNUAL REVIEW 2019









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# CHAIR'S REMARKS

**This is the last time I will introduce the West College Scotland Annual Review. After completing six years as Chair of the Board of Management, I will be standing down at the end of February.**

I was appointed to the position in 2014, shortly after the College was created by the merger of Clydebank College, Reid Kerr College in Paisley and the Greenock campuses of James Watt College.

In that time, I have been delighted by the progress West College Scotland has made in asserting itself as a leader in the educational and skills landscape of our part of Scotland. We are one of the biggest colleges in the country and have developed a significant profile for teaching and learning, working with industry, community service and good governance.

For me, the highlight will always be our wonderful graduation ceremonies. These are when the College comes together – the Board of Management, the Senior Management Team, lecturers and other staff and, most importantly, our students. I have attended 34 ceremonies and seen and have seen 3,000 students receive their qualifications, ready to move on to the world of work or take the next step in their educational journey, very often to university. This is when I am reminded what a force for good a college education is.

I leave West College Scotland in good hands, with a talented Principal, a creative management team, outstanding staff and an ambitious Board. I thank them all for their support over the last six years and wish my successor the very best for the future.



**Keith McKellar**

Chair, Board of Management



# PRINCIPAL'S REMARKS

**From the outside, it is difficult to understand the breadth, depth and complexity of a modern college.**

No single publication can do justice to the work being done by hundreds of West College Scotland staff who build our important partnerships with industry, support student success and develop our community programmes. Hundreds more work to maintain our buildings, secure our financial future and look after the wellbeing of the 1,200 people we employ.

They do this against a backdrop of technological change, financial challenges and political uncertainty.

In response to some of these, we have developed and published our new Corporate Strategy 2019-2025, which has at its heart four priorities: **Personalisation, Collaboration, Agile & Adaptive, and Digital.**

These acknowledge the shift in student expectations; the importance of building immersive relationships with industry; the ability to respond quickly to opportunities and challenges; and the need for digital capacity to meet the needs of a modern economy.

We continue to work with the Scottish Funding Council and others to develop our estate, especially in Greenock and Paisley, and we look forward to a degree of certainty surrounding Brexit.

I pay tribute to our staff for everything they have achieved in the last year, including the Herald HE Outstanding Employer Engagement Award for our Greenock-based AC Whyte Skills Academy. I am also delighted that Audit Scotland highlighted West College Scotland as one of only two colleges to meet national attainment targets across full-time and part-time courses. But these are only two of our achievements and you can read of many more in the pages that follow.

Finally, on behalf of everybody at West College Scotland, I thank Keith McKellar for his outstanding leadership and support since 2014. His legacy is a vibrant, innovative and forward-looking College, well prepared to meet the challenges of the 21st century.



**Liz Connolly**  
Principal & Chief Executive







# WORKING WITH INDUSTRY

**We believe a modern college has to respond to the ever-changing demands of a modern economy. Employers need people who are digitally literate, flexible in their approach and creative in their outlook. That's why our links to industry are so vital. They give our business partners the chance to shape our curriculum, keeping it fresh and relevant to the needs of the twenty-first century. And we want industry to help us fill skills gaps and develop the future workforce by offering opportunities for students to learn in college and, at the same time, gain real experience of the workplace.**

## **AC WHYTE & CO**

**West College Scotland and AC Whyte & Co have together established an award-winning Skills Academy in a direct response to a skills gap identified by the company.**

The Academy has opened up a flow of highly trained staff for the Barrhead-based construction company, which delivers major refurbishment projects, mainly to local authorities and housing associations.

Early in 2018 the company approached the College to explain it had an immediate skills shortage in relation to wall insulation skills.

The College quickly recognised the opportunities for students, lecturers and the company itself. Our Construction team met senior company management and made a series of on-site visits to better understand overall training needs.



**“ This is an exciting model. West College Scotland and AC Whyte working in partnership are bringing together colleges and the private sector to deliver skills and training that the industry actually wants and needs, with guaranteed jobs at the end of it. ”**

Derek Mackay MSP, Cabinet Secretary for Finance, Economy and Fair Work





**“ We will nurture these students, educating them with relevant content and skills, instilling our company values and building them into future stars of AC Whyte. ”**

Jennifer Phin, Managing Director of AC Whyte

By August 2018, we had gained accreditation for specific Scottish Qualifications Authority units, providing AC Whyte's team with a Level 2 qualification in External Wall Boarding and External Render application. Together, we developed the remaining course content, which included an understanding of AC Whyte's culture, ethos and values.

The AC Whyte Skills Academy is located in a newly refurbished workshop on our Finnart St campus in Greenock, complete with AC Whyte signage and livery. The first cohort of apprentices ranged in age from 19 to mid-40s.

In September 2018, the Skills Academy was formally launched by Derek Mackay MSP, Cabinet Secretary for Finance, Economy and Fair Work.

More than half the students who started have now secured full-time employment with AC Whyte and in June 2019 we were delighted to win the prestigious Herald HE Award for Outstanding Business Engagement.

The AC Whyte Skills Academy is an excellent example of how a college can work with industry to identify and close skills gaps, while at the same time allowing students to train in class and gain skills in a real workplace environment.

**“ I've learned new skills, got a trade and a job at the end of it all. ”**

Kenny Mearns, 19, from Greenock





## WCS WITH SCVLPTVR TRAINING ACADEMY

SCVLPTVR is one of Glasgow's most prestigious hairdressing enterprises. In August 2018, we set up the **WCS with SCVLPTVR Training Academy** to take teaching out of the classroom and into the salon. Learning at the Academy sees students presented with challenges designed to develop not only their vocational skills but also those other skills that all modern employers are looking for. Students help set prices, use their own social network platforms to market themselves and the salon and are given responsibility for their own time management and the development of important industry contacts. All students finished the course and all have been offered permanent jobs!



## FLEXIBLE WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT FUND (FWDF)

West College Scotland is one of the country's largest providers of training through the Flexible Workforce Development Fund. In 2018-19, we helped upskill and retrain staff from more than fifty employers from across the private, public and third sectors. We have nurtured new client relationships and developed new products to meet market demand. Our training ranges from Leadership and IT skills to Health and Safety and Resilience-building.



## RECOGNISING GREAT EMPLOYER ENGAGEMENT

In September 2019, the College instituted the **West College Scotland Fellowship** awards. Among the first recipients were Colin Taylor, Managing Director of Neat Living, which designs a range of energy-efficient homes, and David Ross, Director of Glasgow architects Keppie Design. Colin and David have set client-focused projects to give students real-life work experience of design – working to deadlines, presenting to clients and building industry contacts. Hundreds of Design students have benefited from our partnerships with both.





# SERVING OUR COMMUNITIES



**We hold a unique position among the communities of the West region. West College Scotland is the thread linking people with education, schools with employers and the future with the past. We seek to widen access to education for people from all backgrounds. We work with many organisations, including our local authority partners, to deliver economic development priorities. And we engage with some of our most vulnerable citizens to improve wellbeing and enhance opportunities.**

## **CLEARING PATHWAYS, OPENING DOORS**

**Chloe Allan, Ashleigh McBay and Samantha McLean are among the youngest students ever to graduate from West College Scotland.**

**“ The excellent partnership forged between our school and West College Scotland has enabled our young people to access a more relevant and flexible curriculum with a clear focus on developing skills for learning, life and work. ”**

Linda Booth,  
Headteacher, St Peter the Apostle, Clydebank

The trio – all in sixth year – attended school and came to College four afternoons a week to study HNC Business. They did so as part of the Vocational Schools Programme. In September 2019, they were awarded their certificates by the Principal at a formal graduation ceremony in Clydebank Town Hall.

Chloe, from St Peter the Apostle school in Clydebank, is now studying for a Masters in International Business at Strathclyde University, while Ashleigh and Samantha, both from Clydebank High, have begun Business courses at Glasgow Caledonian University.

The girls were just three of hundreds of secondary school pupils who came through our doors in 2018-19 as part of our Vocational Schools Programme. This is an important and growing part of our work in the community. It is designed to allow senior-phase pupils to taste and explore subjects they may not have had the chance to study at school. As Chloe, Ashleigh and Samantha found, the Programme can be a wonderful way for young people to gain relevant skills, and progress straight to work, to an apprenticeship, to college or university.



**“ I had such a good experience and found it to be a great way to gain more independence from school before leaving. I think WCS is a great learning environment. The staff and students are all so friendly and welcoming. ”**

Chloe Allan, HNC Business graduate





## INVER RACERS

The Deputy First Minister John Swinney visited our Motor Vehicle workshop in Greenock in September 2019 to meet and congratulate four schoolboys who will fly the saltire at Silverstone, the home of British motor-racing. The boys, all students at Inverclyde Academy, told the Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills how their Formula 24 racing cart had seen off all-comers in the Scottish heats of the Greenpower Challenge at East Fortune. The boys explained how they worked with WCS lecturers and the Developing the Young Workforce team on the project, which also involved fund-raising, sponsorship and marketing.



**Inver Racers is a prime example of how Developing the Young Workforce (DYW) supports partnerships between schools and colleges to give young people the chance to broaden their horizons and gain real-world engineering skills which they can apply in the world of work.**

John Swinney MSP,  
Deputy First Minister



## OUTSTANDING CONTRIBUTION TO THE LOCAL COMMUNITY - WORKING WITH VETERANS

Our commitment to some of our most vulnerable citizens was recognised in June 2019 when the College was shortlisted in the Outstanding Contribution to the Local Community category at the Herald HE Awards. As signatories of the Armed Forces Covenant, the College is committed to helping veterans develop skills and improve wellbeing. Since November 2018, our Complementary Therapy students have been working with veterans and staff from the Scottish War Blind Association in Paisley and The Erskine Reid MacEwen Activity Centre in Bishopton to deliver treatments such as massage, aromatherapy and



mindfulness. So far, about 40 ex-servicemen and women - many of whom suffer from service- and stress-related conditions have benefited.

**“ We have been able to offer a number of different therapies which is great. The students offer the veterans an impressively wide choice. ”**

Debs Dickson, Centre Manager, Erskine Reid Macewen Activity Centre



## CELEBRATING OUR COMMUNITIES

The College marked the 200th anniversary of the death of **Greenock**-born James Watt, by awarding a James Watt Prize to the Inverclyde student who had most excelled in STEM subjects – Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths. It was awarded to James Bradley, an inspirational young man who overcame serious health issues to resume his education at WCS in 2016. James now studies Applied Science at HNC level and is a STEM ambassador, working with Inverclyde school-children to engage them in science.

We further strengthened our partnership with the HMS Hood Association when we hosted a moving ceremony to mark the 100th anniversary of the



launch from John Brown's **Clydebank** shipyard of one of the Royal Navy's greatest vessels. The College also accepted on long-term loan a model of HMS Hood from the Association. It is now on permanent display in our Clydebank campus.

And we were delighted when John Byrne agreed to become a Fellow of West College Scotland. John Byrne, who was born in **Paisley**, is an artist and playwright of the first rank who has made a huge contribution to the culture of Scotland. He also supports the John Byrne Award for school-children across Renfrewshire and accepted his Fellowship at a ceremony in the historic Paisley Abbey.





# SUPPORTING STUDENT SUCCESS

**We teach more than 22,000 students, full-time, part-time and online. It's our job to support them throughout their time with us. We want their experience of West College Scotland to be as rewarding as it possibly can be. Once again, in 2018-19 there have been many wonderful stories of student achievement. In fact, every one of our students has a story to tell!**

## **STUDENT OF THE YEAR 2019**

**Kike Pawlik is an inspirational young woman whose time at West College Scotland shows the heights that can be scaled when an individual's hard work and natural talent align with a college's commitment to support them, academically and pastorally.**

Kike came to Scotland 12 years ago when she was still in her early twenties. Her dream was to become a designer and in 2019 she graduated from College with an HND in Interior Architecture and Design. She was also named our Student of the Year.

During her time with us Kike faced many of the challenges that come with living in a new country. But the College was able to support Kike and her young son as she worked through them, helping her to achieve so spectacularly.

Kike is now studying for a degree at the Glasgow School of Art. The GSA was so impressed with Kike that they accepted her straight on to the second year of her course. Kike is the first West College Scotland student ever to achieve that.



**“ It’s been three years at West College Scotland and I already miss it! I had an amazing experience. It’s a very friendly environment and the course filled me with confidence. ”**

**Kike Pawlik, September 2019**





## STUDENT WELLBEING

**While most students adapt well to life at WCS, others sometimes struggle with the demands of a college education. That's why we've put in place a range of measures and initiatives to make sure they stay at West College Scotland and achieve the best qualifications they can.**

Student wellbeing and mental health is an important priority for the Scottish Government, and the College's HR professionals work closely with our Students' Association to develop different support services.

In February 2019, Richard Lochhead MSP, the Minister for Further Education, Higher Education and Science, oversaw the signing of a Student Mental Health Agreement between Students' Association President Nicole Percival and our Principal Liz Connolly.

The College has also appointed a dedicated Student Wellbeing Advisor and set up Gie's A Break cafes to give students a place to enjoy a cup of tea, reflect and chat through any issues that might be concerning them.

These are just a couple of examples of our commitment to ensuring that our students have the best possible experience at West College Scotland.

We know life is tough for many of our students. We will support them whenever we can to ensure that as many of them as possible stay in education and achieve what they are truly capable of.

**I am encouraged to see West College Scotland prioritising student wellbeing and I was glad to oversee the signing of the Mental Health Agreement between the College and the Students' Association - an agreement that I am sure will positively impact the experiences of students at the College.**

Richard Lochhead MSP,  
Minister for Further  
Education, Higher Education  
and Science



## STUDENT TEAM OF THE YEAR

The West College Scotland Students' Association is a vibrant and effective team, representing the student body across our campuses. Last year's President Nicole Percival helped to reinvigorate the SA, developing a series of initiatives along with our student support teams and HR professionals. In March 2019, Nicole and her colleagues won Team of the Year at the National Union of Students annual award ceremony. In September, the College acknowledged Nicole's outstanding contribution by making her an inaugural Fellow of West College Scotland.



## ASSOCIATION OF HAIRDRESSERS AND THERAPISTS (AHT) AWARDS

The AHT national competitions are great ways for students to test their skills and creativity against their peers from across the rest of the UK. In February 2019, WCS students won 18 gold, silver and bronze medals over an intense two days of competition at Blackpool's famous Winter Gardens.



## GRADUATIONS 2019

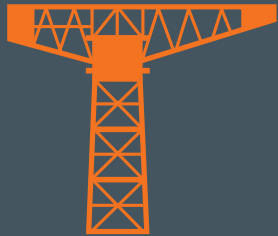
Nearly 700 students, along with 3,000 family members and friends, attended five spectacular graduation ceremonies in September 2019. Together, they raised the roof at Clydebank Town Hall, Paisley Abbey and Greenock Town Hall. Good luck to them all!





# AT A GLANCE

## Campuses in



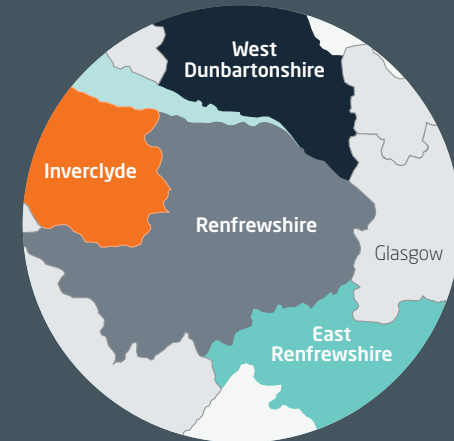
Clydebank



Greenock



Paisley



**22,100** students



Mode of study:

**84%** Further Education

**16%** Higher Education



**40%**

of our students come from communities within the **20% most deprived** areas of Scotland



Teaching **4,000** pupils  
from **32** schools



Total income:  
**£66** million



Delivering more than **1,000**  
**places** within the **Apprenticeship**  
**Family** by 2020



One of the largest employers  
in the West region:

**1,209** staff

**1%** of total regional  
employment



**96%**  
of our students go on to  
**positive destinations**



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