

As I shall still be working here for a few more weeks, this is mainly an opportunity for me to say some thank you's. For me it is not only education I value from this University but also its ethos that I hold dear. My role as General Council Secretary has been my opportunity to repay my own and my family's indebtedness for that.

Edinburgh University was already widening participation when my Dad, a miner's son, was able to gain his law degree here in the 1930's. His gratitude for that opportunity coloured how he lived the rest of his life. I am proud we now have the General Council Prince Philip Scholarship Fund to give others that opportunity.

A couple of years later Dad had to go off to war. He returned emphatic that better international understanding, fostered by cooperation and collaboration between people from different countries, was essential to maintaining the hard won peace. He was proud that his University took in the Polish Medical School during that time. I am proud that Edinburgh today is formally recognised as a University of Sanctuary.

The problems remain. Social inequality is greater than ever. Today 100m people worldwide are displaced from their homes whether by climate change, conflict or other reasons. The pandemic underlined that the challenges we face are truly global and require international cooperation. I am proud of the part this University continues to play on the world stage to address those issues.

I came here as a student in the 1960's when this University offered equal freedoms for female students – not a universal then. There were exciting new curriculum developments – there were not many places where you could have an introduction to genetics, ecology and computer science on the way to an honours BSc in psychology – particularly if, like me, you came here to read maths! All those subjects were taught by inspiring teachers who were leading researchers in their fields, and all proved valuable in my subsequent career.

Pride by association with excellence is a strong motivator for alumni continuing to support their alma mater. It is pleasing that the University now explicitly recognises alumni as important members of its wider community in its Strategy 2030 but

It can be a challenge to know how the well-intentioned members of the General Council can go beyond their statutory responsibilities to assist the University, without getting in the way of the professional staff. I have been particularly grateful to Chris Cox for his wise counsel in navigating that interface and his inspiring leadership of a great team of people in D&A who give so much practical help and support to the General Council. Thank you to all of them.

I have to confess that in spite of 9 years as a student here – I'm not a slow learner, I did get 3 degrees! - and many years spent in honorary roles offering teaching, clinical and research supervision to Edinburgh students, in all that time I had not heard of the General Council until I was invited to stand for election as a Court Assessor in 2007. We still have a PR challenge.

Now I know that membership of the General Council gives an extraordinarily privileged insight into the workings of the University and opportunities to contribute in a variety of ways. Those

elected members who serve on its Business Committee and those appointed as Assessors on the University Court give generously of their time and experience to the governance of the University. I thank those of them here tonight and in particular Stuart and Philip, who, each in their turn, brought wisdom and experience to convening the Business Committee. It has been a pleasure to work with them all.

This large, complex, dynamic University is made up of a great many truly exceptional people whether in academe, professional services or the other essential roles that make the University function as it does: talented, committed, hard-working, kind people.... You have been invited today because you exemplify all that and more. I and the General Council hold you in high esteem for what we know you do for this University. This is my chance to say a heartfelt thank you to each of you for your engagement with the General Council. You made this role a pleasure for me. Please be sure Callum captures a photograph of you and that you write in the memory book – for me to remember you by in my dotage.

We live in an era of fake news and echo chambers. Good news rarely makes headlines. The General Council's committees meet staff and students throughout the year to keep sighted on what is really going on. We are truly grateful for their time and candour.

General Council members who are accurately informed can fulfil a valuable role as ambassadors for the University, correcting misperceptions where they find them and alerting the University to concerns arising in its wider community that need to be addressed. We try through our communications and events to give our wider membership a balanced view. We enjoy celebrating the University's achievements, but we also appreciate knowing honestly when there are problems and difficulties to be faced, not least in case we can help.

I really want to thank Peter and his senior team for the high calibre of their leadership in these demanding years. In spite of busy roles, they have been unfailingly willing to assist me and the General Council, responding promptly to every query and request. We should also record particular thanks to Sarah Smith who, as Registrar of the General Council, has been a constant support. We look forward to working with her successor Leigh Chalmers.

Our forebears who created the General Council understood that those who had benefitted from education here would go on caring about the wellbeing and prosperity of the University and that academic staff too, should have a voice through the General Council.

What they failed to foresee was the variety of other professional staff who are equally crucial to the success of the University in the 21st century. I can't list them all now but how, for example, would we have got through the pandemic without the stellar work of Gavin, Melissa and their amazing team in IS? I am sorry not to have been able to complete the work to recognise senior professional staff as members of the General Council on the same terms as academics but I have confidence in my successor doing so!

For personal reasons I could not offer a second term of service but it is always good to leave a role before people wish you would! I am leaving this one in William Duncan's very capable hands and I wish him well.

After all these years, I won't miss running my life around University committees - my husband is bracing himself for having his wife more in evidence organising things at home! I do want to thank John though for his tolerance of my preoccupation with the General Council & his great support in all my University activities.

I will miss you all but I remain a General Council member, willing to help if, or when, I appropriately can.

Finally, with a Secretary who is a lay volunteer, the General Council depends heavily on the professional administrator employed by the University to be the Secretary's Assistant. I simply could not have done this job without Alison, who is truly exceptional in her commitment to the General Council and its members. She is very conscientious, hard-working and ever willing to take on every new challenge we ask of her in her wide-ranging role. A big thank you to Alison without whom this job would have been un-doable!