



## Get to know University Councillor Elena Christopoulos, BA'10



### **Why did you select Queen's University?**

I wanted to attend a university that had the best science curriculum in Canada so I could establish a solid foundation in sustainability and as a climate scientist.

### **What is your most memorable moment as a student?**

The moment I realized I wanted a career in sustainability and as a climate scientist. I met many amazing professors at Queen's University who became my mentors and helped shape my career. They helped make this dream a reality.

### **Can you tell us a little about your career?**

As the founder of a sustainability management consulting firm, my contributions have helped create over 500,000+ green jobs worldwide with 60% of the positions going to women and BIPOC. As a climate scientist and political advisor, I have actively worked throughout my career to bring more women and BIPOC to the table and have successfully managed over 40 political and environmental campaigns worldwide.

I recently furthered my education at the Yale School of Public Health with the Yale Center on Climate Change and Health (CCCH). I know a world with a stable and safe climate is one in which human health and diverse ecosystems can thrive.

As a Commissioner for the City of Santa Monica, my role is to advise the City Council on sustainability issues and policies relevant to women and girls. As a member of the LGBTQIA+ community, I use my voice to ensure we are represented.

### **What is the best career advice you've ever received?**

I was once told by one of my mentors to cultivate confidence. She said confidence is a better predictor of career success than competence. That's not to say that competence isn't important, but

just doing a fabulous job might not get you ahead. Research shows that confidence makes up 79% of your “gravitas”. This advice is especially true for women. We need to take up more space.

### **What’s the career highlight you’re most proud of?**

My career path has led me in two directions: climate science and politics, one always seemed to influence the other. Accordingly, I have two highlights that I am so very proud of.

My first highlight is implementing the first urban wind turbine in North America (260m) located in downtown Toronto, and then constructing the first urban wind turbine and energy program on a community college campus in Los Angeles California.

My second highlight is becoming a Commissioner in the City of Santa Monica. I have worked behind the scenes in politics for over 20 years and never thought I would run for a political office. As they say; all politics are local and I am very proud of the work that I have done on the local level in the sustainability field, improving women’s rights, a housing advocate and increasing voter registration (especially for the Gen Z folks).

### **How do you like to spend your free time?**

I think it is so very important to take time for things you love besides work. Even if you love your work, you need balance in your life. I think it is very important to remember that you are not your work.

With that said, I do love to spend time in nature and that includes hiking, biking, surfing and playing soccer. I also took a Leica photography class recently and quite enjoy taking photos which ultimately does allow me to enjoy the outdoors.

### **What motivated you to stand for election for University Council?**

My time as a student at Queen’s University was one of the hardest, most transformative periods of my life. As a Survivor, I understand that many students struggle at university, and it is my goal to be a voice for those who have felt overlooked, are coping with trauma or mental health issues, or have had a challenging university experience.

### **What are your aspirations for being on University Council?**

It is a privilege to serve the Queen’s community on the University Council and I hope to bring a compassionate lens to ensure that all students thrive throughout their academic and professional careers and that no one is left behind.

### **Is there anything else you would like to add/highlight?**

I reside and work in both Canada and the United States and believe this gives me a unique perspective which I will bring to the University Council. I am also the Queen’s University Alumni Southern California Branch President and a Member of the Queen’s University Alumni Association Board.

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