

Get to know University Councillor Letitia Golubitsky, MSc'06



What is your most memorable moment as a student at Queen's?

I have so many great memories as a graduate student at Queen's, it is hard to choose the most memorable. I am reminiscing with joy the first time I arrived in Kingston. It was a very cold winter day (January 2003) when I have arrived in Kingston from Toronto Pearson Airport. My roommate was waiting for me at the bus station across the Douglas library. We used the time on the bus to get to know each other. She told me that she speaks Farsi, she is from Iran and that she is a graduate student at Queen's. When we finally arrived at my new home in Canada, she surprised me with what she called a traditional Iranian home-made salad. I told her: "Are you sure it is an Iranian salad? This is a traditional Romanian salad we eat back home for holidays". As a graduate student at Queen's, I was fortunate to make many meaningful friendships with friends from different cultures and different backgrounds with whom I share more than just the passion for a great home-made meal, but also the passion for continuous learning, for pushing ourselves beyond our limits, for taking risks and for enduring.

Please share a little bit about your current career

I have worked for the past decade as a professional in the banking industry at three top Canadian investment banks. I started my career in banking as a model developer at TD bank working on mathematical models for forecasting market variables and for calculating exposure with the trading counterparty. Later, I have joined CIBC in a more senior role as a model developer working on commodity models for capital markets risk management. The most recent role was at the Bank of Montreal, where I have worked for the past six years as a model validator in Model Risk.

I have strong interpersonal skills facing multiple stakeholders: regulators, model developers, model validators, auditors and academics.

I am a lifelong advocate for cutting edge education and research. I hold a PhD in Mathematics from Western University, a Masters degree in Mathematics from Queen's University and a Master degree in Financial Mathematics from McMaster University.

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

During my doctoral studies in mathematics, I found myself at the cross roads twice. First time, it happened at Queen's when my advisor left to another university and I found myself with a prestigious scholarship but deeply alone and for the first time I found myself "lost". The best

advice came from my mentor at Queen's who said this to me: "Don't beat yourself up, be gracious with yourself when life takes a new turn. Embrace change!"

The second time it happened after I graduated from my doctoral studies. I turned down a postdoctoral fellowship and accepted instead a scholarship in Financial Mathematics. For the second time I found myself "lost". The best advice came again from my mentor who said to me: "Learn to push yourself outside of your comfort zone. We all change career at some point. Accept change. Change is constant".

What is the career highlight you are most proud of?

There are many "first successes" in my career in capital markets risk management and in academia that I am proud of. I was one of the very first female model developers across three Canadian banks specialized in modelling commodities. I was one of the very few female model validators in trading market risk in Model Risk.

I am proud of my first research paper published in the Communications in Algebra journal.

How do you enjoy spending your free time?

I love taking fitness group classes in hot yoga, Zumba and cardio. I enjoy swimming and downhill skiing. I love reading books in English, French, Italian and Romanian.

In my free time I love planning my next vacations. I enjoy cooking and listening to jazz music, electronic music, pop rock and classical music.

What motivated you to stand for election for University Council?

My graduate studies at Queen's University from 2003 to 2006 were a life changing experience and as an alumna I would like to give back to the Queen's community. I would love to be a source of inspiration for the young students and to be able to participate in the decision-making process of their studies at the university.

What are your aspirations for being on University Council?

I am the Chair of the Canadian AI 2022 conference leading the industry track. AI is pushing the innovation boundaries across all disciplines, and industry has been investing heavily in various AI technologies. There is a high demand for graduates with an AI background from industry and research labs. First, as a Queen's Councillor I would like to be a university ambassador who successfully advocates for new learning opportunities for students in the AI/ML space.

Second, I would like to successfully advocate for women in STEM and be able to support diversity of thoughts among students from different cultures and different backgrounds.

Is there anything else you would like to add or highlight?

I am a proud mother of a talented daughter in mathematics and science. My daughter, Vera Golubitsky who is currently pursuing an International Baccalaureate high school degree in the Waterloo region has won last year multiple math contests and she took second place at the Engineering Science Fair.

Vera took part last year the Math summer camp at Queen's University.

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