



## Get to know University Councillor Greg Frankson:



collections of poetry. Current term to 2021.

BA'98, B.Ed.'99, Whitby, ON, Poet and Author, Founder & CEO, Voice Share. Member, Ontario College of Teachers. CESA President 1995-96, AMS President 1996-97, Education Student Senator 1998-99. Chair, AMS Robert Sutherland Task Force 1997-99. QUAA Branch volunteer and Assembly representative 1997-2006. Elected member, University Council 1998-2006 and 2008-16. Member of Queen's Debating Union 1997-99. Poet Laureate, International Initiative for Mental Health Leadership 2007-14. Past Board member, Ottawa Community Immigrant Services Organization and Tropicana Community Services Organization (Toronto). Author of three published

### 1. Why did you select Queen's University?

Back in spring 1993, when I received the three envelopes from the universities I'd applied to, I wasn't thinking about going to Queen's. While I was an Ontario Scholar, I'd barely made it over the line and didn't think I had the grades to get into the Concurrent Education program. I missed an application deadline for Trent Con-Ed, my original first choice, so I knew I wasn't going there. I had my mind set on York – my OAC yearbook is filled with “good luck at York” well-wishes – and they accepted me for Arts while offering me a small entrance scholarship. I'd only applied to Queen's to fill the final spot on my application form. I got the shock of my young life when I opened the third envelope and saw that I'd been accepted into Queen's Con-Ed. My mother convinced me that I needed to go to the school with the best reputation, even if that meant a more expensive and distant path for us to follow for my education. For our finances, I was ready to stay in Scarborough and choose York, but because of her urging that I always strive for educational excellence, I chose Queen's University at Kingston instead.

### 2. Most memorable moment as a student?

There were many important, significant and historic moments during my student years, but the most memorable was the dedication of the Robert Sutherland Room in 1998. When I unveiled the commemorative plaque with then-principal Bill Leggett that day, it was the culmination of an unprecedented campaign led by students from marginalized backgrounds – every student on the Robert Sutherland Task Force was from a disadvantaged group. It was a critical achievement for students that would be crowned a few years later by the naming of Robert Sutherland Hall. It proved without a doubt that BIPOC and LGBTQ+ students have the ability and the power to leave their mark on their alma mater. And, without ambiguity, it said that Black people have always played a key role in building the learning environment, reputation and prestige of Queen's.

**3. What is your job?**

The mission for my consultancy business, Voice Share, is to help professional presenters, teams, leaders, and executives to become more effective communicators at work, home and in the community. I've created the Voice Share Method to show people how to improve their presentation, approach, content, messaging and mindset when it comes to connecting and sharing with others, whether the audience is one, one hundred or one thousand people. It's a natural extension to the facilitation, emceeing, writing, advocacy and creative services work I've been doing for the past two decades.

**4. What's the best career advice you've ever received?**

I wouldn't say this was solely career advice – it was also great wisdom about the journey of life: "Spend your twenties figuring out what you don't want, your thirties figuring out what you do want, and your forties and fifties doing it."

**5. What's the career highlight you're most proud of?**

In August 2007, I was asked to serve as a poet-in-residence for the International Initiative for Mental Health Leadership (IIMHL) being held in Ottawa-Gatineau. It was my first mental health conference. In 72 hours, I was transformed from a person who knew next to nothing about mental health issues, to an impassioned advocate that had a room of hundreds of clinicians, policymakers, carers, and people with lived experience from three continents on their feet, smiling, singing, clapping, and dancing along to my concluding poetic performance. Directly after that presentation, I was asked to serve as the IIMHL's first-ever poet laureate, which took me across Canada, as well as to Australia, New Zealand, Ireland and the U.S. to use poetry to advocate for transformational change in our global mental health systems. That experience is one of the best moments of my life.

**6. How do you spend your free time?**

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, I mostly hang out with my fiancée Maria and her two kids at our place in Whitby. We go for frequent walks in the woods to stay sane during these very interesting times. I also continue to write poetry and articles, advocate on mental health and anti-discrimination/anti-racism and I give my Audible subscription a workout.

**7. What motivated you to stand for election for University Council?**

The first time I occupied an elected Council seat, I wasn't voted into it. In 1998, a year after my AMS presidency, Bill Leggett asked me if I'd be willing to serve out the remaining two years on a retiring member's term. I was still a student, but because I was originally a member of the class of 1997, a class that had graduated, I was also an alumnus by the university's definition. I acquiesced to Bill's prodding and became a Councillor as I entered the final Education year of my B.A./B.Ed. concurrent program. My experience persuaded me to run to be elected in my own right in 2000. That's how they get you, these crafty administrators! I have Bill to thank for initial love of Council and without his intervention, I may not have stood for election so soon after completing my studies.

**8. What are some of your most memorable milestones/accomplishments as a Councillor?**

Sheer longevity, for a start. I've served four non-consecutive terms on Council (1996-97, 1998-2006, 2010-2016 and 2017-present) over a timeframe in which Queen's has had five chancellors (Benidickson, Lougheed, Baillie, Dodge and Leech) and five principals (Leggett, Hitchcock, Williams, Woolf and Deane). In terms of my direct contributions to Council, I'm most proud of my sustained effort to keep equity, diversity and inclusion in the minds and ears of Council, even at times when persistently doing so felt like I was a lonely voice in the wilderness. Now when I look around the proverbial Council table, it's obvious that we are finally catching up. Times have changed, and so too is Queen's – for the better.

**9. Your aspirations for being on University Council?**

I want to share what I've learned with the newer Councillors, particularly new members of colour, about being part of the governance of Queen's and how to make an ongoing contribution. One of the newer members let me know that my presence and participation was very valuable to them, and that has opened my eyes to how I can serve a supportive mentorship role as I near the end of my current term. I also want to continue to advocate for change within the university and place my talents in service to my alma mater in the most effective and transformative way possible.

**10. Do you have any words of wisdom for incoming Councillors?**

As a whole, we have tremendously talented, experienced and giving people on Council, but no one person is good at everything the university needs from us. My advice is simple: figure out the gaps your skills and passions address and fill them. And find ways to enjoy it while not taking yourself too seriously. After all, if you can't laugh at yourself, then who won't?

Connect with Greg on:

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