



Get to know University Councillor Susan Smith, BAH'91, ICD.D:



Ottawa, ON. BAH'91 Political Studies, Rotman Institute for Corporate Directors, Principal and Co-Founder, Bluesky Strategy Group Inc., a full-service public affairs, government relations, strategic communications and public relations firm. Co-Founder Canada2020.ca, a progressive, federal public policy think tank. Past-Chair of the Global Communications Alliance. While at Queens: QP Manager 90-91, QP bartender and waitstaff 88-90. ArtSci Frosh Week Head Committee Member - '89, Gael -'88, Board Member Queen's Alumni Association - 2006-08, Currently: active political pundit and media commentator – CTV, CBC, CPAC, radio and print, political volunteer, mentor. Current term to 2022.

1. Why did you select Queen's University?

Quite simply – it had the reputation as the best university in Canada and I wanted to go there. I came from a very small high school and was excited about the close-knit community and the chance to learn from my professors and my peers participate in something bigger.

2. Most memorable moment as a student?

I have a couple – the end of Frosh week 1989 from Grant Hall stage and seeing the Gaels and Frosh that were the newest enthusiastic members of the Queen's family; and receiving my degree at Jock Hardy and the laugh my friends in the audience caused for the whole arena.

3. What is your job?

I am a founding partner in Bluesky Strategy Group. We are a full-service public affairs firm – we lobby governments, particularly the federal government - as well as providing our clients with strategic communications advice and media training. It's fun and interesting work – we help people tell their stories in the right way to the right audiences – sometimes to effect policy change or secure funding, sometimes to raise the profile of important issues. It's great a line of work for a political nerd – we get to help clients from all kinds of sectors, so I am constantly applying evolving knowledge to new crises or opportunities for clients.

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

A few pieces of advice have been very helpful along the way, in particular: "They don't have to like you, they just have to respect you"; "respect people's time and you will get another meeting"; and "be discreet". All of these feed into how I interact with people and treating people with integrity. That matters to me and I have been passing the same advice along to young people for years.

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

I've been fortunate to do some fun things in my career. I recently helped the new Yukon University secure \$26 million for a brand new science building at Canada's first university in the North – it will make a huge difference for northern students who can study at home, and also for northern research on climate change adaptation. In 2016, through our think tank Canada 2020, we did a series of events in Washington DC around the state visit of Prime Minister Justin Trudeau to the Obama White House. It was an unbelievably unique and exciting couple of days at a very exciting time in Canada-US relations. The buzz in DC was electric and so many prominent Canadians and Americans participated. Finally, chatting with Barack Obama backstage and introducing him to my son and my Mum at an event Canada 2020 hosted in Toronto in 2017 – Obama is just so cool!

6. How do you spend your free time?



Ha!Ha!Ha! – I caved in and got COVID puppy named Winston in May – first time we've had a dog - so I seem to spend a great deal of time these days retrieving socks and tossing tennis balls! I love to play tennis, read, ski and go to the cottage.

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

Queen's is a special place and is so important to launching students into life. The university and campus life gave me so much opportunity, and I wanted to give back.

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

What I love about University Council is that the Administration listens to our ideas. From reviving Queen's Day on October 16 to feeding into the nomination process for the new Chancellor we have a chance to shape the school in the present and the future. It's also been fun to be part of the Program Committee for the annual Council meetings. Speaking to the Queen's Model Parliament students in early 2020 (pre-COVID) was also a ton of fun.

9. Your aspirations for being on University Council?

To add value and learn from others in any way that I can.

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

Ask questions, speak up at meetings, put your hand up to volunteer on committees. Council is a phenomenal place to meet new Queen's people who have had different experiences than your own on and off campus.

Connect with Susan on

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