

## Get to know University Councillor Don McNamee:



**DON MCNAMEE** (Arts'95) is a seasoned education leader whose career spans executive leadership and global consultancy. He currently serves as Director of Education Technology at Saigon South International School, and has previously held roles as Head of School in New Zealand, Chief Innovation Officer in the UAE, and Leadership Executive with Apple Inc. in Canada. At Queen's, Don was a member of the Arts'95 Intramural Council throughout his studies, co-chaired the University Intramural Council and is a permanent executive member of the Class of '95. He received both the ASUS and AMS Letter Award for his contributions to sport and to the City of Kingston, and was awarded the Queen's Arts and Science Cup for his leadership in intramurals. A founding member of the New Zealand Queen's Alumni Branch, he has participated in alumni events across Canada, Singapore, and the UK. Don holds four post-secondary degrees, including in urban economics, GIS, education, and educational leadership. His work focuses on ethical innovation, digital strategy, and capacity-building across Southeast Asia.

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

As a Kingston native, Queen's was always part of the landscape of my upbringing — not just physically, but culturally. Its reputation for academic excellence was well known, but what drew me in even more was the vibrant student life: leadership opportunities, athletic programs, and a sense of community that extended far beyond the classroom. My older cousin, then in his third year, spoke passionately about the intellectual challenge and personal growth he experienced at Queen's. His encouragement, combined with my own desire for a rigorous and well-rounded university experience, made Queen's the clear choice.

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

While I explored a range of subjects — from computer science and economics to GIS and psychology — one of my most unexpectedly rewarding academic experiences was a course on 19th Century Canadian Literature. It deepened my appreciation for storytelling, identity, and the layered nature of our national history. Beyond the classroom, serving as Co-Chair of Queen's Intramurals was another highlight — a role that allowed me to lead, collaborate, and contribute to campus life in a dynamic and community-focused way.

### 3. What is your job?

I currently serve as the Director of Education Technology at Saigon South International School (SSIS) in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam. In this role, I oversee the strategic integration of digital tools, infrastructure, platforms, artificial intelligence, and instructional coaching frameworks that empower both educators and students. My work spans systems leadership, faculty development, AI policy, and global conference leadership — always with the goal of improving teaching and learning.

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

"Lead from values, not from titles." Early in my career, a mentor reminded me that credibility is earned through consistency, care, and clarity — not job descriptions. That insight has helped me navigate roles as an educator, CIO, Apple executive, and now Director across multiple continents. It reminds me that leadership is a service, not a status.

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

While I've been fortunate to speak at major conferences and lead system-wide transformations, what I'm most proud of is building enduring cultures of innovation in schools. At SSIS, we've launched a human-centered AI strategy, redefined STEAM learning, and created professional development that actually shifts teacher practice — all while keeping student and educator wellbeing at the core. That's the impact that lasts.

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

I stay active and connected — I'm a ball hockey player (no ice in Vietnam!), a runner, and often found exploring the outdoors. I also have a deep love for literature, technology, and global travel. Most importantly, I'm a proud father of two teenagers who inspire me daily with their curiosity, talent, and perspective.

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

Queen's shaped my foundation — not only as a scholar, but as a citizen and leader. I've always believed in the responsibility to give back, and now, with decades of global experience in education, I want to help Queen's navigate its own transformations. From AI to internationalization to mental health, the challenges are real — but so are the opportunities. I'm ready to serve, to listen, and to contribute.

### **8. Your aspirations for being on University Council?**

My goal is to be a bridge — between tradition and transformation, between global insights and local values. I want to help ensure Queen's continues to lead not just in academic excellence, but in preparing students for a world of complexity, diversity, and rapid change. Whether it's advocating for digital innovation, global engagement, or holistic student support, I aim to be a thoughtful, strategic, and values-driven voice at the table.

### **8. Anything else you would like to add/highlight?**

I bring a deep respect for the legacy of Queen's — and a bold optimism for its future. I'm not just interested in maintaining what's working; I'm eager to challenge what could be better. I hope to bring a spirit of service, curiosity, and systems thinking to every conversation. Thank you for the trust — I look forward to contributing meaningfully.

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