Get to know University Councillor Kate Wilson:


Present professional portfolio: Commercial Lead, Cambridge Judge Business School spin-out; Strategy review lead, University of Cambridge; Interim Campaign Director, Cambridge Children’s Hospital. Fellow and tutor – St. Edmund’s College, University of Cambridge.

2012-2019 Chief Operating Officer - University of Cambridge, Development and Alumni Relations.

1996-2012 Various business development and operations management roles: UK telecoms and media (start up and FTSE 100). Non-exec director, financial services.

1. Why did you select Queen’s University?
   Our family was pretty focused on Queen’s – I was born in Kingston, grew up in a house on the edge of campus, my older brothers attended Queen’s, and my father taught at the business school for a decade after his corporate retirement. I couldn’t imagine a better undergraduate experience. I liked it so much, I even returned as in the early 90’s to work as a staff member in the advancement office!

2. Most memorable moment as a student?
   Hard to pick one. Super fond memories of my first year in Vic Hall. I had a blast as a Gael in frosh week, when you have the swagger of knowing your way around, and the reality of what-comes-after-graduation is far off. I had a brilliant Soviet politics prof who broadened my horizons significantly through his teaching. Few things beat the feeling of marching to Richardson stadium on a sunny fall Saturday to cheer the Gaels on.

3. What is your job?
   I spent the last several years building the advancement operation at Cambridge, which is a role that enabled me to reach into pretty much every corner of the University. Since leaving my role as COO last year, I’m balancing contract work around the University’s biomedical campus and business school, and which draws on my blend of higher education advancement and commercial experience.

4. What’s the best career advice you’ve ever received?
   This isn’t advice on how to build a career, but rather advice that is more day-to-day. I had a sales colleague who swore by the “power of the pause”. Particularly in difficult professional situations - when you’re feeling on less-than-sure footing, it’s tempting to rush in to try to provide an answer, to fill the available air space. Force yourself to pause. Often someone else fills the gap which keeps the conversation flowing – or at the very least, gives you time to plan your response.

5. What’s the career highlight you’re most proud of?
   It might be the launch of the University’s £2billion campaign in 2015. It took a year to plan and was highly consultative in the very complex landscape that is Cambridge. It convened several hundred of
the University's leading donors and the same number of academic and students for a weekend programme that brought the case for support to life. It was authentic to Cambridge while being edgy, progressive, and relevant – it fostered a sense of community around philanthropy and allowed us all to suspend critical thought, and marvel at the institution’s capacity for impact. (And it catalysed significant gifts in support of the University’s mission.)

6. **How do you spend your free time?**
   Right now, my husband Jon and I are enjoying a lot of quality time (!) with our sons who are working/studying from home due to lockdown. On FaceTime with our daughter who is in the Hague at University, or with my mom in Kingston. Walking our dog, running, yoga, gardening, cooking.

7. **What motivated you to stand for election for University Council?**
   Although I’ve lived in the UK for almost 25 years, my connection to Queen’s, Kingston and Canada is strong – and my experience at Cambridge seemed very relevant to share.

8. **What are some of your most memorable milestones/accomplishments as a Councillor?**
   It is probably the work of the nominating committee. Its remit has become more substantive of the past 3 years, and I believe has contributed to Council’s effectiveness – so that’s satisfying. Tka, Katrina, Zehra, John and Anita are superb committee members: their wisdom and commitment is invaluable.

9. **Your aspirations for being on University Council?**
   As a councillor, I aspire to direct my unique blend of skills and competencies to be of value to Queen’s. Being a member of Council is a great entry point to becoming involved in roles that matter to the University’s present and future.

10. **Do you have any words of wisdom for incoming Councillors?**
    Think beyond the annual Council meeting to the skills and competencies you have to offer through the course of the year. What does meaningful engagement as a Councillor look like to you? Seek out and step forward for opportunities to contribute. Vote in all Council elections.

11. **Anything else you would like to add/highlight?**
    I think I’ve said more than enough!

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