

The Honourable Anne McLellan, PC

Honorary Doctor of Laws

Anne McLellan has served as a role model for women at the University of Alberta and throughout Canada. Her success in the fields of politics and law—areas where white males still largely hold positions of power—set her apart from many of her peers.

McLellan has been associated with the U of A for 25 years, including stints as associate dean and acting dean in the Faculty of Law. Recently, she was appointed director of the U of A Institute for United States Policy Studies. McLellan worked as a Liberal MP for 13 years, and served in the positions of Attorney General and Deputy Prime Minister; her success stands as a reminder of how society has changed.

“There weren’t very many women when I started law school, and I would hope that people would see that our world has transformed,” she said. “That’s one of the things I hope people look at me and say: ‘Gosh, she was part of this generation where a lot of things in society changed. Most of them—not all—changed for the better.’”

Still, according to McLellan, given that certain aspects of the political atmosphere remain male-oriented, many women resist getting involved in politics.

“Women don’t like confrontation. They are very pragmatic; they want to deliver results; they want to work co-operatively with people, and they don’t like the grandstanding they see in question period and elsewhere,” McLellan explained. “So I think the *culture* of politics is what women don’t like, but we’re going to have to get more involved to change [that].”

—Kim Smith



Sir Keith O’Nions

Honorary Doctor of Science

Through his scholarly British accent, Sir Keith O’Nions comes off as the quintessential scientist, and his credentials back this up: earning a PhD from the University of Alberta, he’s now head of the Department of Earth Sciences at the University of Oxford, has 30 years of service in the UK public sector, and is one of the world’s leading geochemists. He’s also currently the director general of the Research Council in the UK, making him responsible for the \$8 billion distributed annually to UK universities for research.

Still, O’Nions hasn’t forgotten the roots of his career in Alberta.

“When I came here as a graduate student, I guess the U of A gave me a great leg up and kick-start to my career,” O’Nions explained. “I was extremely well trained, so to actually come back and be honoured like this, it’s exhilarating, humbling, and really exciting.”

“I’ve always been proud to be a U of A graduate. When I was involved with negotiations with the Canadian government, they thought, ‘Well he can’t be too bad; he’s a U of A graduate!’” O’Nions said.

In his address to graduating students, he emphasized the possibilities the changing world holds for students venturing out into the world. Issues such as climate change and socioeconomic problems will require young, bright minds to address them.

However, O’Nions wasn’t afraid to take another lighthearted jab at his past career and his future.

“I’ve never had much of a career plan. At least if you haven’t got a really well formulated career plan, you can’t be too disappointed.”

—Ryan Heise



Allen Benson

Honorary Doctor of Laws

Allen Benson never considered juxtaposing his community service work and the qualities that a University of Alberta Honorary Doctor of Laws represents prior to his 7 June commencement ceremony.

“I didn’t bother to spend a lot of time drawing comparisons until after I found out I was actually nominated, and in fact receiving, the doctorate,” the Beaver Lake First Nation member said. “This is a great honour, but it doesn’t interrupt my life in any way. It’s something I can share with my coworkers and my family.”

“It’s really not about me,” he continued. “Honorary doctorates are about all those people that work with me and sort of get out there and make a difference in someone’s life.”

Along with being former advisor to the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs in New South Wales, Australia, Benson is CEO of the Native Counselling Services of Alberta. He has helped create a partnership addressing gang violence, tackled program development directed at homelessness prevention in the province, and spearheaded work in holistic and rehabilitative services for Aboriginal offenders.

“To me it’s really about our society,” Benson said, explaining that the younger generation shouldn’t solely bear the blame for problems surrounding gang violence, drugs, and crime.

And for U of A students approaching the end of their academic lives, Benson advised them to measure their future success by focusing on something they care about.

“[Students should] do whatever they’re passionate about. It doesn’t matter whether there’s a job or career out there for it; if they are passionate about it, they’ll be able to make it work for their life.”

—Natalie Climenhaga



Ten above

A profile of 2007’s honorary degree recipients

PHOTOS BY RYAN HEISE, JOSH NAULT AND MIKE OTTO

Dr Norbert Morgenstern

Honorary Doctor of Science

Dr Norbert Morgenstern’s internationally recognized work and expertise has changed the way geotechnical engineering is taught around the world and has helped transform the University of Alberta into a leading school in the field.

“I like to think I’ve helped [students] to see the world in a more interesting way and motivated them to be passionate about their engineering,” he explained. “I’d like to feel I’ve made a lot of friends with students and taken pleasure in their successes.”

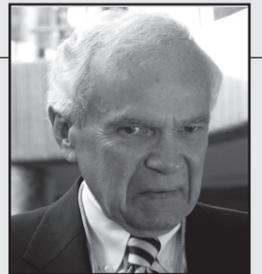
Morgenstern has been at the U of A since 1969, but has also worked as a consulting engineer in over 20 countries. While here, he co-authored more than 300 research publications.

“To be recognized by the institution that you devoted a lot of your time towards is very special,” he said.

Morgenstern takes pride in the accomplishments of his students, many of whom have gone on to receive early recognition themselves.

“A lifelong education and maintaining their curiosity is what we need from [students] and what they need to fulfill themselves,” he said.

—Kim Smith



Dr Maria Klawe

Honorary Doctor of Science

Dr Maria Klawe’s postsecondary career began at the U of A as she embarked on an undergraduate degree in mathematics. But as a self-professed “hellraiser,” she dropped out in her first year, leaving the University—and its math department—on less-than-great terms.

“I was on SU council at the time that I dropped out, and somebody interviewed me for an article about how irrelevant mathematics was. I was dropping out because [math] wouldn’t be useful in making a contribution to the world,” Klawe explained with a sheepish smirk.

“It’s not very complimentary to the math department, but they didn’t hold that against me; they actually welcomed me back a year and a half later.”

From her non-deferential beginning, Klawe has since served as the dean of Engineering at Princeton and dean of Science at UBC, as well as being very active in promoting the position of women in engineering and computing science.

While reflecting on her time at the U of A, Klawe explained that she attributes her success to three important rules that she learned while here.

“The first one is fail openly and often. The second one is suppress jerky behaviour. And the third one is take the time to learn to be good at something you’re really bad at.”

—Ryan Heise



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—Sir Keith O’Nions,
Honorary Doctor of Science