

# GCU **ALUMNI** 2021

The magazine for graduates and friends of Glasgow Caledonian University



**Mairi Lowe**

Redesigning the fashion industry - Page 8

**GCU at COP26**

Highlights from GCU at COP26 - Page 6-7

**Never give in**

Exclusive interview with  
Sir Alex Ferguson CBE - Pages 18-19



University for the Common Good



# Welcome



A warm welcome to the 2021 edition of GCU Alumni, our annual magazine for alumni and friends of GCU.

In a year which has presented many challenges for us all, both personally and professionally, the

GCU community has pulled together to support our students, graduates and the wider community. In this edition, you can read more about the ways in which we have provided vital support through our Common Good Campaign, thanks to the generosity of our alumni, donors and volunteers to whom we give our sincere thanks.

With global leaders in Glasgow for COP26, GCU played a pivotal role, hosting events, talks and projects to facilitate vital discussions on the transition to a climate just world. You can read more about our involvement in COP26, and how our pioneering research is helping to inform how to drive positive social change.

We have an exclusive interview with our inspirational Principal and Vice-Chancellor, Professor Pamela Gillies CBE FRSE, who will step aside in winter 2022 after 17 years of delivering transformational change in Scottish higher education. You can also read stories from graduates, students and honorary graduates including STV Broadcaster Laura Boyd, globally-renowned environmentalist Dr Satish Kumar, and Shulamite Ezechi who is supporting and empowering women from ethnic minorities through her Glasgow charity.

We are also proud to honour our annual alumni of the year and honorary graduates, and tell you more about why they have been recognised by GCU.

As we look ahead to 2022, we send our best wishes for a bright and healthy year to the entire GCU community. The University is always here for you and we will continue to pull together for the Common Good. There are lots of fantastic ways to get involved with your University and we look forward to connecting with you all again in the new year.

Jillian Watt

**Director, Glasgow Caledonian University  
Foundation, Alumni Engagement and Events**  
[alumni@gcu.ac.uk](mailto:alumni@gcu.ac.uk)



## The Big Picture

Absolutely stunning footage of the Atlantic and North Sea waters was projected onto the side of Glasgow Caledonian University throughout COP26.

The installation, created by artists Elizabeth Ogilvie and Robert Page, is entitled 'Into The Oceanic' and promotes nature-based solutions to climate change.



# Contents

- 4 Tackling the climate emergency**  
GCU at the frontline of tackling climate change.
- 6 GCU at COP26**  
We share highlights from GCU's role in COP26.
- 8 Redesigning the fashion industry**  
Mairi Lowe tells us more about Sustainable Fashion Scotland.
- 9 What is fair or climate just about COP26 outcome?**  
Professor Tahseen Jafry gives her verdict on the outcomes from COP26.
- 10 What inspired Annie Lennox to become a social activist?**  
Exclusive interview with our Chancellor.
- 12 A new education system to help save the planet**  
Dr Satish Kumar calls for universities to make education part of the solution, not the problem.
- 14 Alumni of the Year Awards**  
Meet the recipients of our alumni awards.
- 16 Professor Pamela Gillies CBE FRSE**  
GCU's Principal and Vice Chancellor to step aside in 2022.
- 18 Never give in**  
Exclusive interview with Sir Alex Ferguson CBE.
- 20 Common Good Campaign**  
Exceptional support for students who need it most.
- 22 Honoured by GCU**  
Leading figures from around the world honoured by GCU.
- 24 Alumni stories from around the globe**  
Graduates from our global campuses tell their career stories and highlights.

## 26 A sneaky peak behind the glamour of the red carpet

Exclusive interview with journalist and presenter Laura Boyd.




- 28 Celebrating student success**  
Key student achievements from this year.
- 30 The creation of the world's largest civilian hospital ship**  
GCU graduate Jim Paterson's role in providing life-changing medical care around the world.
- 32 Empowering ethnic minority women in a Glasgow community**  
Shulamite Ezechi tells us how her charity supports and empowers women from ethnic minorities.
- 34 A degree double act**  
Stand-up comedian and events professional Chrissy Ross talks about his GCU journey.

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Glasgow Caledonian University Cowcaddens Road, Glasgow G4 0BA Scotland,  
United Kingdom. +44 (0)141 331 3000 [www.gcu.ac.uk](http://www.gcu.ac.uk)



# GCU: Tackling the climate emergency

As the University for the Common Good, GCU is at the frontline of tackling climate change through our cutting-edge research and education, supporting communities internationally, in Scotland, and the rest of the UK.

A portrait of Professor Tahseen Jafry, a woman with dark, wavy hair, smiling. She is wearing a dark blue top and a light blue scarf with a dark blue leaf pattern. The background is a blurred indoor setting with warm lighting.

"The future of our young people and their children is under threat, and we must act now. Together, we have to be the generation that delivers solutions to avert catastrophic climate change. We can accomplish great things, if we work together for the Common Good. "

Professor Tahseen Jafry, Director of the Centre for Climate Justice



**T**he Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are integral to the University's efforts to tackle the climate emergency. The SDGs - issued by the United Nations in 2015 as a blueprint for peace and prosperity across the planet - provide a clear guiding framework for our research and our Strategy 2030 which commits us to 'drive an ambitious agenda for environmental sustainability, embedded across all aspects of our work'.

### **Centre for Climate Justice: championing a fair and just transition**

Climate change is hitting many of the world's poorest people first and hardest, with more frequent and severe storms, droughts and floods, and unpredictable weather destroying people's homes and livelihoods. Our world-leading experts at GCU's Centre for Climate Justice are at the forefront of global research and debates on access to climate finance, the relationship between climate justice and gender justice, the displacement and migration of people due to changes in climate, mental health and wellbeing, climate-related racial injustice, adaptation and resilience, making a fair and just transition to clean energy solutions, energy justice and inequality - working in both rural and urban settings.

### **Building a more resilient future through our cross-cutting research**

Our applied research seeks to address three major societal challenges of inclusive societies, healthy lives and sustainable environments.

Our BEAM Research Centre (Built Environment Asset Management) explores sustainable cities and communities, nature-based solutions and green infrastructure, energy efficiency and performance, geotechnical and eco-engineering, environment impact assessment, water quality and waste water treatment.

Our researchers highlighted to Glasgow City Council that more trees and green spaces are needed in the city's most deprived areas if those who live there are to be protected from the ravages of climate

change, including more flooding and overheating by 2050.

GCU is bringing smart technology to help solve environmental issues, in Scotland and around the world. With funding from the Royal Academy of Engineering we are developing a prototype of an electric scooter for the Indian market, which will use a compact 3D-printed electric motor, powered by a solar battery, and suitably modified chassis.

Our researchers developed an app to develop future chefs who are aware of the impact of food waste on the environment and help them implement practices in the kitchen to reduce it. A GCU team is using electrochemistry to create a gel to remove metals and contaminants from drinking water, while another team has developed a cutting-edge tool to help farmers find the safest way to use organic waste fertiliser in a bid to reduce its damaging impact on the environment.

### **Working with business**

In Sri Lanka, we're working with a host of partners to establish five training hubs for technicians, engineers and project managers to help address workforce shortages in the country's renewables sector so it can deliver 80% of its energy from renewable sources.

The University is leading a European-wide project to foster sustainable fashion skills and develop new business models as retailers and manufacturers seek to address the environmental impact of throw-away fashion and adapt to the changing demands of shoppers. The British School of Fashion has developed a Fashion Business Case collection with Bloomsbury Publishing focused on socially conscious fashion and sustainable luxury.

GCU is an Ellen MacArthur Foundation profiled university recognising our commitment to circular economy related teaching and research. With our campus in London, GCU was the first higher education institution signatory to the Foundation's Circular Economy Direction of Travel which aims to make the UK capital the world's first zero-carbon city by 2030.

The University also supports the United Nations Global

Compact of which Dr Alec Wersun is a member of Global Chapter Council of the United Nations Principles for Responsible Management Education (PRME) initiative - whose mission is to transform management education, research and thought leadership globally by promoting awareness and embedding of the SDGs, with SDG 13 Climate Action at its heart. One of PRME's current projects involves the rolling out Carbon Literacy Training to students around the world.

### **Green GCU**

We are the only university in Scotland to have our Environmental Management System certified with an EcoCampus Platinum award. In 2019 GCU was rated first in Scotland in the People & Planet University League for its environmental and ethical performance. We were Scotland's first Cycle Friendly Campus and have invested in state-of-the-art recycling facilities. We use a combined heat and power system to help reduce the University's carbon footprint in Glasgow and we continue to send no waste to landfill. More needs to be done.

GCU has committed to becoming carbon neutral across all campuses by 2040. We use the Greenhouse Gas Protocol Standards to accurately report our carbon footprint annually, including staff and student travel, procurement and energy use. In 2018-19, our emissions were 31.5% lower than in 2014-15 (the University's baseline) and we have a clear Carbon Neutrality Plan to guide and shape our transition.





# GCU at COP26

**GCU hosted a variety of talks and events, featuring expert analysis from across our academic research community, as part of the COP26 summit in Glasgow. COP refers to Conference of the Parties, being the 197 nations who agreed to a new United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change.**

## Mobilising Equitable, Just and Gender Sensitive Climate Finance

"Protection from many of the effects of climate change is the unjust birthright of the rich and privileged", Dr Mary Robinson told GCU's first COP26 Green Zone event.

Hosted by GCU's Centre for Climate Justice, 'Mobilising Equitable, Just and Gender-Sensitive Climate Finance' featured a keynote address from the former President of Ireland and took place in front of a live audience at Glasgow Science Centre and online.

An expert panel provided insights on the challenges faced by communities as they try to access finance and the success stories of women's negotiating skills around accessing climate finance.



Dr Mary Robinson.

## Social Innovation and Climate Justice

"The world is burning and young people are the planet's only hope", Nobel Laureate Professor Muhammad Yunus told GCU's second COP26 Green Zone event.

Young people set the agenda at the session as some of the University's

most accomplished students from Glasgow, London, and New York quizzed an expert panel at Glasgow Science Centre.

The Social Innovation and Climate Justice event examined how to combat climate change and injustice through social innovation and featured contributions from postgraduate students, researchers and alumni.



Professor Muhammad Yunus.

## Race to Resilience Hub @ GCU

GCU was host to the COP Resilience Hub as part of the Race to Resilience campaign – which aims to create a step-change in global ambition for climate resilience. The importance of climate resilience was underlined by the exclusive screening of two powerful documentaries.

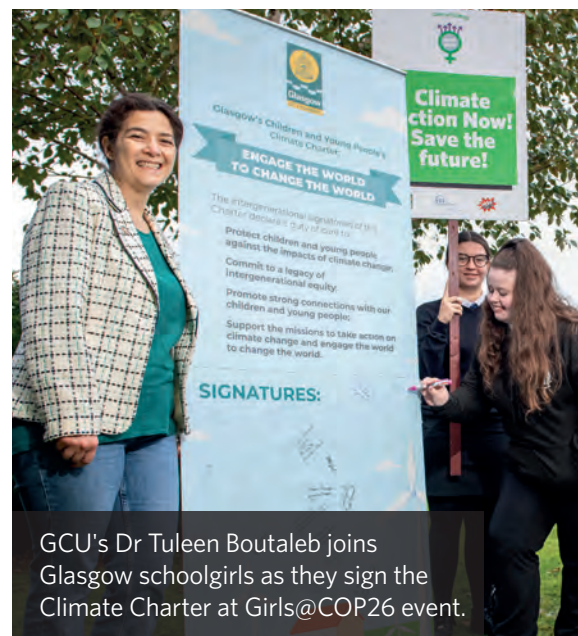
Featuring addresses from UN High Level Champions Nigel Topping from the UK and Gonzalo Munoz from Chile the first film, 'Life on the Frontline', shows the devastating effects of extreme rainfall, rising sea levels and intense cyclones on the land in Bangladesh and the East of India, whilst 'Sustainable Summits: Climate Solutions from the Top of the World', vividly captures first-hand how highland residents and mountain lovers are

finding innovative solutions and regional responses to tackle the climate crisis in the Hindu Kush Himalayas.

## Glasgow schoolgirls trigger Twitter storm after signing Climate Charter

Schoolgirls had their voices heard around the world after creating a Twitter storm, calling for climate action by signing Glasgow's Children and Young People's Climate Charter. The girls hit Twitter to declare: "We are pledging to undertake actions to #EngageTheWorldToChangeTheWorld by signing Glasgow's Children and Young People's Climate Charter. Join with us by sharing this tweet."

The S3 Glasgow pupils attending the Girls@COP26 Conference at GCU signed the Charter aimed at protecting children and young people from the impacts of climate change.



GCU's Dr Tuleen Boutaleb joins Glasgow schoolgirls as they sign the Climate Charter at Girls@COP26 event.





Key speakers at the World Health Organisation Conference in front of a giant 'pollution pod' that mimics the air quality of the future (2040).

## GCU hosts the World Health Organisation's Global Conference on Health and Climate Change

Health professionals and climate experts from around the world, including Julia Gillard, former Prime Minister of Australia and Chair of Wellcome Trust, and Dr Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, Director-General of the World Health Organization, called for urgent action to tackle the growing climate-related

health crisis, during the Global Conference on Health and Climate Change at GCU.

Climate change already adversely impacts the lives and health of billions of people, and will increasingly do so over the next decades. Affecting the most basic health requirements including clean air, safe water, sufficient food and adequate shelter, it also poses new challenges to the control of infectious diseases, and gradually increases the pressure on the natural, economic and social systems that sustain health.

## Addressing Sustainable Goals in the Fashion Industry through Education and Employability

As fashion embraces a sustainable future, GCU, together with our partners on our EU-funded Sustainability Fashion Employability Skills (SFES) project, held an online event to discuss what role can education and employment play in the industry's revolution.

Led by GCU, the project involves Universidad Villanueva, in Madrid, Universidad Politecnica de Valencia, Edhec Business School, in France, and Universidade da Madeira, in Portugal, and has Harris Tweed Hebrides and Madrid-based retail group Tendam as industry partners.

## My Fashion Path: Re-Clothing the Future Conference

Glasgow Chamber of Commerce, Advanced Clothing Solutions and GCU partnered on a sustainable fashion conference held on the final day of COP26. The Re-Clothing the Future Conference was hosted by award-winning Scottish stand-up comedienne Anna Devitt, and gathered students and young people, sustainable fashion businesses and policymakers together to empower young people to shape the future of the fashion industry. Showcasing Scotland's sustainable fashion industry and highlighting the career opportunities within the fashion and manufacturing industries.



My Fashion Path Conference at GCU.

## GCU Common Good Podcast | The COP26 Series

Our special GCU COP26 Podcast Series looked at how the GCU community and beyond is helping to tackle the climate emergency.

The four-part series featured our Chancellor Dr Annie Lennox OBE, Principal and Vice-Chancellor Professor Pamela Gillies CBE FRSE, Nobel Laureate Professor Muhammad Yunus, social activist Dr Satish Kumar, the Met Office's Penny Endersby and Professor Tahseen Jafry from our Centre for Climate Justice.



Penny Endersby, Chief Executive of the Met Office.





# Redesigning the fashion industry

**Founding member of social venture Sustainable Fashion Scotland (SFS) and GCU graduate Mairi Lowe has not paused since graduating in 2020, as she is driving for system change and sustainable fashion.**

**A**s the recipient of a GCU Sir Alex Ferguson Magnusson Award in 2021, Mairi was given funding and support to realise her dream of building a sustainable fashion business. Thereafter, she started working towards her community-led social venture with a mission to connect the fashion community in Scotland.

When asked how fashion waste can be changed, she said: "Put simply, we need to produce less clothing and invest in organisations that are working with the extortionate amounts of existing textile waste. For fashion waste to be transformed, I believe we need genuine

commitment from multiple stakeholders to uproot the extractive and exploitative dominant global fashion system."

She added: "I dream and hope for a fashion system that has potential to strengthen community capacity, improve wellbeing, regenerate the environment, and unlock and catalyse more positive impact across society."

To further raise awareness of sustainable fashion, Mairi's 'Generation of Waste' exhibit was displayed within the COP26 Blue Zone. The exhibit communicated the negative environmental and social impact of textile waste generated by the fashion

industry, highlighted the complexities of fashion's supply chains, and showcased sustainable solutions from around the world that are collaboratively catalysing change.

Commenting on her COP26 experience, she said: "Meeting new people and reconnecting with so many friends from Scotland's sustainable fashion community in person again after lockdown was very emotional and motivating. It was also incredible to meet inspiring changemakers from around the world and to be reminded that we are not alone in our work at SFS."

Reflecting on her university experience, Mairi said she had a brilliant time and added: "If I hadn't studied MSc Social Innovation, I would not have met my now great friend and colleague Liisa Lehtinen, with whom (and a few others) I co-founded Sustainable Fashion Scotland. The MSc Social Innovation course opened my mind to many new ideas, perspectives, and ways of thinking; the research project specifically launched me into the world of systems theory, which is the core theme of my practice today."

[mairilowe.com](http://mairilowe.com)  
[www.sustainablefashion.scot](http://www.sustainablefashion.scot)  
[www.generationofwaste.com](http://www.generationofwaste.com)



# What is fair or climate just about COP26 outcome?

**GCU's Centre for Climate Justice (CCJ) works in close partnership with governments, charities, communities and others around the world to help improve policy, development, business practices and critical insights into climate justice.**

**P**rofessor Tahseen Jafry, Director of the Centre for Climate Justice (CCJ) at GCU, advises governments, UN agencies, global think tanks, NGOs and civil society on how to achieve, create and transition to a fair and climate just world.

Here, Professor Jafry gives her verdict on the outcomes from COP26:

"I think there was a lot of hope, ambition and positivity coming into this COP. We knew there was a lot riding on it because of the global temperature rises.

"On the surface, there seems to have been some positive outcomes. The

decision to end and reverse deforestation by 2030, with countries including Brazil signing up, is to be applauded. Likewise, the EU and US agreeing to cut methane gas by 2040 is also to be welcomed, as are the 40 countries who have pledged to move away from coal, including major users such as Poland.

"One of the biggest issues for the poorest nations at this COP is climate finance. It still remains to be seen what, if any, of the Paris commitment – the \$100 billion pledge – will be taken forward. It has been stated that this is still outstanding and this is a huge

disappointment for the least developed countries.

"The pledges to cut emissions are not far reaching or ambitious enough either.

"The data indicates the world is on track to heat up by 2.4 degrees by 2100. Therefore, we've far surpassed the 1.5-degree limit that was set at Paris. Global warming of 1.8 degrees is possible by 2030, but only if those emission-reduction targets are achieved faster and within the next nine years.

"We have less than a decade left to tackle this crisis. The clock is ticking. That clock is a time bomb for the poorest – especially women and girls – who are on the front line of the climate crisis. Much more emphasis needs to be given to access and availability of climate finance to the poorest communities. In order to support livelihoods, health and wellbeing, radical change is required.

"Women and girls suffer the most – both physically and mentally – and we have not heard enough about that during this COP. It's been shocking that the desperate needs of those most affected by the climate emergency, especially those in developing nations, have not been at the heart of these negotiations.

"A more significant issue is the work plans and approaches to ensure the money actually gets to grassroots communities – rural and remote. Remember, these are the people that have contributed the least to climate change and yet are suffering the most.



Professor Tahseen Jafry.







# What inspired Annie Lennox to become a social activist?

**Legendary singer-songwriter, social activist and GCU Chancellor, Dr Annie Lennox OBE, revealed that her grandparents and Eurythmics partner Dave Stewart's stepfather inspired her to become a social activist fighting for climate action.**

**D**r Lennox spoke with pride about how her working-class grandparents fought for social justice.

"My passion for social activism came from my father's side of the family, who were working-class shipyard workers and socialists. One half of my family were very socially conscious and activists between the first and second world wars.

"My grandparents were social activists working outside the factory gates, handing out pamphlets, fighting against the fascists that came up to Scotland trying to persuade working-class people to join the fascist movement. I only found out about my grandparents' activism later on in life.

"Some of that consciousness has come from hearing these issues being discussed around the dinner table. It wasn't beaten into me, but somehow or another, there is something in the Lennox DNA that is very aware of injustice. It has always been the case. I feel it in my bones. It is in my blood and I cannot walk away from it.

"When I went down to London in 1971, something significant happened to me.

Dave Stewart, my partner in Eurythmics', stepfather was passionate about the glaciers melting.

"He had every book on the subject. Every Sunday, he used to go with a placard down to Camden Lock and tell people that the ice caps were melting and we were going to be flooded. It sounded quite eccentric at the time, but he knew that huge climate justice organisations were picking up on this.

"That is why I am so passionate as Chancellor of Glasgow Caledonian

**“There is something in the Lennox DNA that is very aware of injustice.**

University to encourage and inspire our students to actively take part in tackling this climate emergency.

"This is a real, serious, global, pending catastrophe - I'm not going to mince my words because we can't hide it under the table anymore. We must speak candidly about it. Our young generation must inherit the earth and it must be a fit place for our children and grandchildren, otherwise we have no future.

"As Chancellor, my role involves young students who work hard to become graduates, scientists, visionaries, planners and leaders. I'm

deeply concerned about the challenges they will have to face in the years that lie ahead."

Aberdeen-born Dr Lennox, now living in America, said she has given up meat and become vegetarian to help reduce her impact on the planet but wishes she could do more.

She added: "I'm living here in America. Everything is plastic. To be quite frank, it haunts me because I don't personally know how to change a system that is all around me.

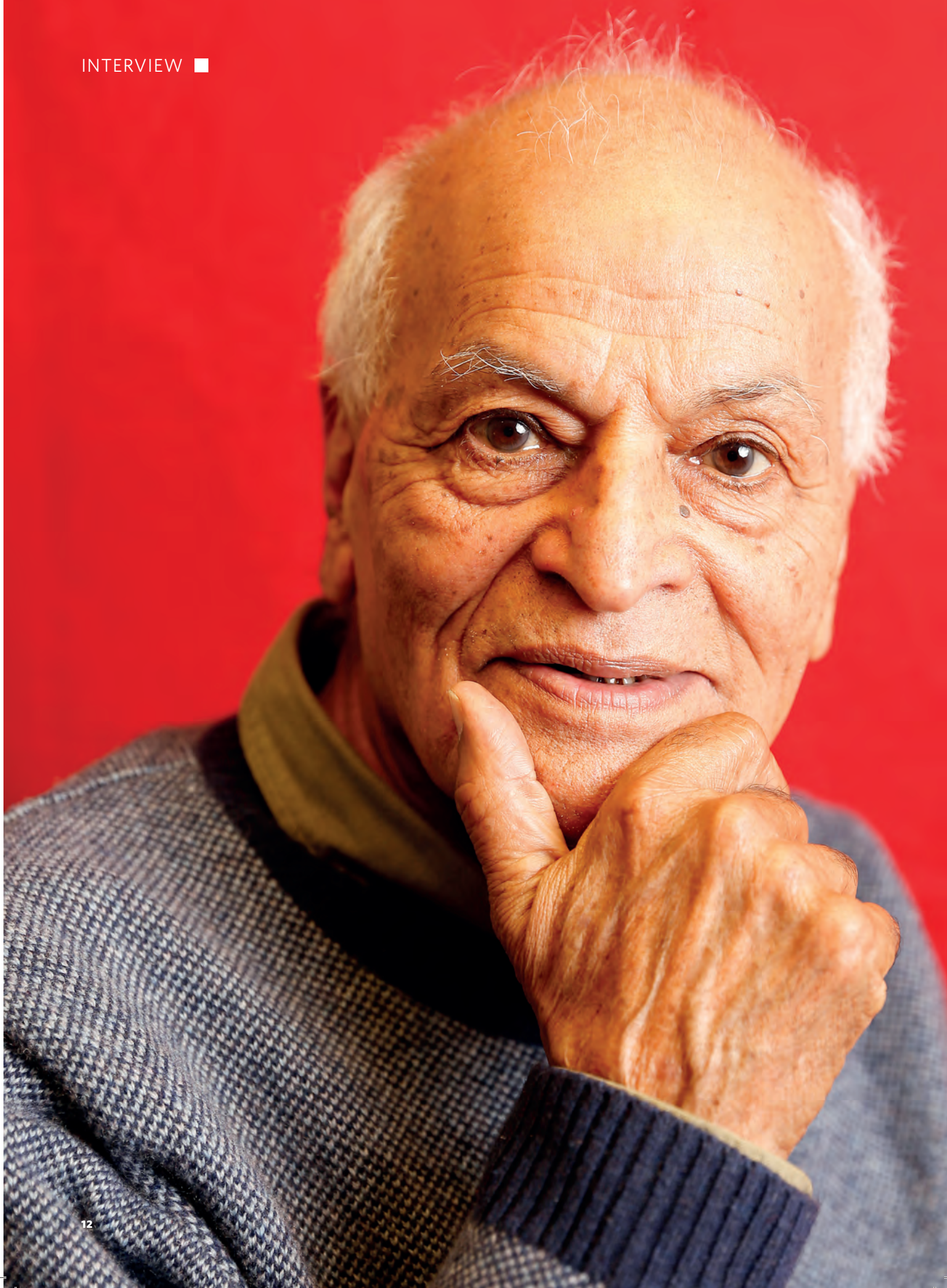
"If there was one thing, my one change is becoming vegetarian and not eating red meat. I live with despair; I am dreadfully anxious about our future. Every day I feel 'Oh my god, we're stuck'."

Dr Lennox hopes that after COP26 world leaders will "walk the talk".

She said: "Being around COP26, everyone is focused on climate change but afterwards, when everyone leaves, one has to walk one's talk. If large countries such as India and China do not get on board and really genuinely try to reduce their emissions, we are in real jeopardy.

"The latest UN report says we are missing the opportunity to build back better after the pandemic and if we don't, we face disastrous temperature rises of at least 2.7C if countries fail to meet their climate goals. That is really sobering. COP26 is not about the talk - it's about meeting the pledges, so the outcome remains to be seen."







# Global climate activist calls for a new education system to help save the planet

Globally-renowned environmentalist and GCU honorary graduate, Dr Satish Kumar, is calling for a new education system to be introduced in universities around the world to help save the planet.

As COP26 ends in Glasgow, he insisted that education was contributing to the climate crisis and the current system being used in many universities was out of date.

Dr Kumar said: "We must have a new education system. Education is more than a resource for the economy. Nature is a source of life itself and we have to bring this into our education.

"We need to educate young people that we are not here to conquer or exploit nature. We are here to revere nature and live in harmony with nature. That nature-centred education has to be brought into the 21st century.

"It has to change from a 'me' education to 'we' education. That is the new challenge for our 21st century. Education is part of the problem. We need to make it part of the solution.

"All the problems we face today of climate change, social inequality, the fossil fuel industry and big corporations emitting lots of pollution and waste, are designed, led and created by highly educated people from some of the big universities of the world such as Harvard, Yale, Cambridge and Oxford.

"Universities around the world today are out of date. This old education is

teaching young people to look at nature as if it was only a resource for the economy. They are still training young people to go out in the world and get jobs which will produce pollution, waste and carbon emissions, creating more global warming, climate change and social injustice."

However, he hailed Glasgow Caledonian University (GCU) as one of the best in the world for addressing

**"We need to educate young people that we are not here to conquer or exploit nature."**

climate change and injustice, and urged other universities to learn lessons from its education system with new paths and ways of learning aimed at protecting the planet.

Dr Kumar said: "Glasgow Caledonian University is one of the leading universities to address these climate issues in our modern times, but in the rest of the world, most of our universities are still following the old educational system, which was

designed for the industrial age in the 19th and 20th century.

"I congratulate the University for its wonderful work. I hope that this example can be implemented and practised by other universities so that they can bring nature, ecology, environment, social justice and gender equality into the education system and not just teach students how to get a job and be successful."

Activist and speaker, Dr Kumar has been a Jain monk, nuclear disarmament advocate and pacifist, and is founder and Director of Programmes of the Schumacher College International Centre for Ecological Studies.

GCU Principal and Vice-Chancellor Professor Pamela Gillies CBE FRSE welcomed Dr Kumar's passion for change and his praise of the University's forward-thinking education system.

She said: "The tide is turning. Universities around the world are now making commitments to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals to cement their commitment into real actions."

Dr Kumar was awarded a Doctor of Laws (LLD) at GCU's summer graduations in recognition of his outstanding contribution towards promoting peace and the environment through his activism.



# Leading the way towards a brighter, more sustainable future for all

**The Alumni of the Year Awards are an annual honour, celebrating the successes and contributions of our amazing graduates.**

The Awards recognise alumni who have achieved early career success - excelling in their field - as well as graduates who have made an outstanding contribution for the Common Good, or to the life and development of the University.

This year we particularly welcomed nominations to recognise graduates who are actively contributing to tackling the climate emergency.

GCU is proud to recognise three exceptional graduates from our

Glasgow and London campuses. These individuals are making a powerful global impact, helping to guide the world towards a more sustainable and climate just future.

## **Morgan Mickelson**

**MSc Climate Justice 2019**

**GCU Alumni of the Year 2021**

After five years of working in the environmental sustainability field and witnessing the environmental injustices throughout the United States, Morgan made the decision to move to Glasgow and study a Masters in Climate Justice at GCU. While completing her studies, Morgan received the Sir Alex Ferguson Magnusson Award which enabled her to travel to Vanuatu and study the links between women's empowerment and adaptation to climate change.

Upon graduation, Morgan moved back to the United States where she sought to work on policy and began her work with local governments. She now serves as the Director of the Office of Sustainability with the City of Indianapolis, Indiana. In this role, Morgan is responsible for implementing the City's first sustainability and resilience action plan.

To date, one of her notable accomplishments is developing and passing the first-ever piece of legislation, related to climate action, to come from Indianapolis's Office of Sustainability.



**"I am incredibly honoured to receive the Alumni of the Year Award. GCU's mission of serving the Common Good is close to my heart and I aspire to uphold this mission by serving the public through working in my local government. This alignment of values makes receiving this award so much more special to me."**

## Martin Johnston

BSc Environmental Management and Planning 2011

### GCU Alumni of the Year 2021

As Sustainability Manager for NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde, Martin drives the change and improvement agenda for sustainability and climate change to ensure delivery of the outcomes aligned to the UN Sustainable Development Goals.

He now leads a new department responsible for multiple strategic work streams, as sustainability has risen further and further up the corporate agenda due to government policy and targets of being Net Zero by 2045. This will be one of the biggest challenges the NHS will face in the next decade as the process begins to decarbonise the health service whilst maintaining effective primary and secondary care, and meeting Scottish Government targets.



"I am genuinely taken aback at being presented with this award and would like to thank my colleagues past and present, friends and family for their support and guidance in my career to date. I would also like to thank my sponsor for this award within NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde, who has been crucial in supporting the changes we are making to tackle climate change. Finally, I would also like to thank the University for equipping me academically which has helped me to get where I am today."



"I am really honoured to be presented with this award and mostly ecstatic it is related to my sustainability findings. GCU London gave me an amazing opportunity to explore my curiosity and for that I am truly grateful."

## Mirabelle Uche

MSc Fashion and Lifestyle Marketing 2019

### GCU London Alumni of the Year 2021

Shortly after school, Mirabelle started a clothing line based in Nigeria. It is a small business where everything is made in country, and made to order rather than mass produced. All fabrics and labour are sourced locally and made in their atelier in Nigeria.

Mirabelle established EMBé in 2019, a sustainable, ethical and fair clothing line which launched their website ([www.embe.ng](http://www.embe.ng)) in November 2021. The clothing line is focused on making pieces that make individuals feel confident and comfortable. Their core value is to create sustainable clothing that represents a world with diversity, maximum inclusion, and promotes individuality.

She has also been a voice for sustainable fashion online, encouraging others on how to make better sustainable clothing choices.



# Exclusive interview with Professor Pamela Gillies CBE FRSE

**GCU's Principal and Vice-Chancellor will step aside in 2022 after 17 years of delivering transformational change in Scottish education. We spoke to Professor Gillies about her time at the University.**

**You have worked all over the world, starting your career in public health before moving into education. What are you most proud of from your entire career?**

That's easy, hands down the opportunity to lead GCU working alongside so many talented staff. There have been tears along the way, but lots of fun, laughter and success. And, our outstanding Chancellors, Muhammad Yunus and Annie Lennox, as well as our Founding Donor, Sir Alex Ferguson have all added pixie dust to our endeavours.

**Talk us through your first day as Principal, what was it like and how did you feel?**

It was back in January 2006 and I was Principal-elect for two months alongside the outgoing Principal, Dr Ian Johnston. I was full of trepidation as it was a challenging transition. The University was in a difficult position financially and tough decisions needed to be made.

I became Principal and Vice-Chancellor in March, at which time staff voted to go on strike, and I had to cross the picket line - so not an easy start. I took teas and coffees out to the staff, and asked them openly what their concerns were, and what they would like to see happen. That has always been my approach, to have open and honest conversations.

I was supported by my first Chair of Court, Martin Cheyne, although all four of my Chairs, Martin, Tony Brian, Hazel Brooke, and Rob Woodward, have all been exceptional. Our dynamic, and inspirational Chancellor, Magnus

Magnusson, also stepped forward to support me at the time.

I remember Magnus introduced me to Vigdís Finnbogadóttir, former President of Iceland. She came into my office, walked past me, and shook the hand of our Pro Vice-Chancellor for Research, Mike Smith and said "nice to meet you Vice-Chancellor." Then she turned to me and said "Pamela, Magnus has told me all about you, I know you are the Vice-Chancellor but right now you are not projecting that." And, she was right.

From that moment, I knew I had to lose the imposter syndrome. In the weeks that followed I addressed staff to set out my vision. To succeed I knew we had to do two things - be international in our outlook, and establish a research culture.

Not all staff were on board at the time, but most did come around. Over time we have heightened imagination and ambition, developed international excellence in research, and embraced the Common Good.

**What are you most proud of from your time at GCU?**

The people, definitely the people. Claire Hulsén, began as my Executive Assistant, progressing to our now brilliant Director of Strategy and Planning, Julie Burns, my Head of Vice-Chancellor's Office has won awards and is a recognised leader in her field, and the late Ailsa McKay. I remember meeting her and being so impressed. I called her Professor McKay to which she said "I am not a Professor," I replied - "we need to work on that."

Seeing people progress like Tahseen

Jafry who is now the Director of our internationally renowned Centre for Climate Justice, Paul Queen has become a fantastic Director of Finance, and Anita Simmers who was recently appointed as the new Dean of the School of Health and Life Sciences. Our Student Presidents have also been outstanding, and passionately committed to working in partnership with the University. It's so rewarding to see Stephanie Pitticas join us as Director of Recruitment and Admissions, helping to stimulate our recruitment success.

There are too many careers to mention, but being able to support people to flourish is something I am particularly proud of.

As well as the people, I am proud of our internationally recognised impact-focussed research. That wasn't me, our researchers achieved that. I can provide encouragement, and give a nudge, but the success is down to each of our researchers, and a fantastic research strategy underpinned by the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals that was developed by Cam Donaldson.

And, of course, the quality of our teaching - particularly during lockdown - it has just been astonishing, as has the support provided by all of our staff to our students.

**What was your greatest challenge, professionally or personally and how did you overcome it?**

Professionally, without a doubt it would be Glasgow Caledonian New York College. At the time, we presented three options to Court. One - was set up a



recruitment office, two - deliver non-credit bearing courses, or three - get our Charter and become the first UK University to deliver degree programmes in New York.

The University Court, on the back of the London campus success, wanted us to be ambitious so opted for the third. The ambition was great, but it was stressful. It took much longer to navigate the process, we had to lobby hard, and deal with a lot of negative press which very much focussed on this being my personal project. But we did it. It is a big, brave ambition, and success doesn't happen overnight. It will take time.

Personally, there have been three main occasions. Consoling the parents of Karen Buckley, a talented young student who was brutally murdered. It was a really difficult period. The family were distraught, and the whole University was just in shock.

More recently, we had the sudden and tragic loss of Lisa Johnson, my Executive Advisor. Julie Burns and I spent time with her family, and that was really tough.

And finally, undergoing major surgery for breast cancer in November 2019. Whilst I know I am mentally strong, you realise the importance of your health. Luckily, I have a terrific

Deputy Vice-Chancellor, James Miller, who stepped up and was a truly great support. He, alongside Julie, knew that I needed to quickly return to work, probably too early in my treatment after my operation. They supported me through that process, and looked out for me, as did other members of our amazing GCU family. Coping with difficult situations like these are made possible by having strong, empathetic colleagues around you.

**GCU is the University for the Common Good, a mission that has been brought to life through your leadership. How important do you think this is to GCU's continued growth and success?**

It is absolutely critical as it gives a shared sense of purpose. What is special about GCU is that we have clear examples of how we have delivered for the Common Good; from our Graduate Apprenticeships, to Glasgow Caledonian College of Nursing in Bangladesh, and our multi award-winning widening access programme the Caledonian Club.

Our shared sense of purpose is not only among our staff, but with our community of talented students, wonderful alumni, generous donors, and

friends. The GCU community is something very special.

**What do you want your GCU legacy to be?**

That is impossible to say. I think that should be for others to judge. But, I would like to be remembered for leaving the University academically and financially secure - a sustainable university, with a strong sense of purpose, delivering for the communities it serves locally and internationally.

**What's next for Professor Pamela Gillies?**

I want to continue my work in public health, I have plans for a book with Anthony Morgan, and also one with Caroline Parker on values. There are potentially several projects in the pipeline, but there will also be some time for relaxation. Whilst, the amazing Fiona Stewart-Knight is a wild water swimmer, for me swimming in the mild Greek Mediterranean waters is my idea of bliss!

Look out for our interview with Professor Gillies in 2022 as she talks to us about the important role alumni and donors play in the development of the University.



# Never give in

**Exclusive interview with Sir Alex Ferguson CBE, as he talks about the making of 'Never Give In', the critically acclaimed film about his career, his life threatening health scare, and life after retirement.**

## **At what point did you know you wanted to make a documentary about your life?**

When I retired, my son Jason wanted to record interviews with me to look back at my whole career. He filled in 40 years of my background in football. I wasn't aware the ultimate idea was a film, and maybe it wasn't at the time.

He had been approached by others previously but it wasn't until Andrew McDonald and John Battsek got in touch with Jason, and he was really impressed with them and the work they'd done, that we really considered it. They were knowledgeable, knew their business, and were workers. We knew we could work well with them. But we still didn't have someone to direct it. They phoned Jason one night and suggested he direct it. For me this was fantastic, it settled me right down in terms of opening myself up.

## **What was the story you wanted to tell?**

Ultimately, I think that for anyone from a working-class background, there is a gateway for everyone. There is a ladder you can climb. It just requires a certain type of determination; the never give in attitude.

## **What was it like working with your son Jason?**

I really enjoyed it, because it was comfortable, and I knew he was capable.

There were parts that Jason said had to go in. Such as the situation with Rangers, which was a difficult part, but it was a really important part of my life. Having supported them all my life, getting that opportunity to play for them, then they bring up Cathy's

religion. It was disappointing, for a club of that size, and I should have said. I let myself down, I let my wife down.

But it determined the route of my life. I took away one thing about why big clubs are big clubs, it is expectations. I have always worked with expectations, like I did at Manchester United. The expectation is to win. Play the right way – but to win. If we ever lost a game it is because we didn't live up to the expectations that we set ourselves.

## **Revisiting your recent health scare must have been hard. What was your reaction, when you first saw the film?**

The start was so emotional. I was like 'crikey'. I didn't know we were going to start with this. I was expecting to see me at school, or at a party. So, you know, it was quite traumatic, it brings your attention to it, and makes you sit up.

There are moments in the film that are sore. After the brain hemorrhage I lost my voice. I was actually sitting with my grandsons, I couldn't get a word out. They called a speech therapist in who asked me to write down names of my family, players, teams, and animals. After about 10 days my voice came back, and I was so relieved. To lose my memory would be bad enough, but to lose my voice also, I couldn't handle that.

Overall, I thought it was well-balanced, and a really great piece of work from Jason.

## **The film uses a lot of archive footage. Was there any footage that surprised you?**

The apprentice strike. How Jason managed to get that I don't know. He

sent me a clip through and asked if I was in it. I said "that's me at the front." It was unbelievable.

I must say it was one of the proudest moments of my life. I was an apprentice toolmaker at Remington Rand, making typewriters and shavers. We were better paid than the rest of the engineers at the Hillington Estate at that time, so there was no need for us financially to go on strike, and certainly not for me as I was part time at football earning £14 per week, and about £7 as an apprentice toolmaker. A lot of apprentices in the Glasgow area at the time were married young, with kids, and that was the reason I thought it was worthwhile going on strike, to help others that weren't as well-off as we were.

I held a meeting in the gents' toilets, and we had 10 apprentices – two for each year – but one was off. Legally you can't go on strike unless you have a two-thirds majority. It came to four each, and I put my hand up and said "casting vote, we're out". So, I had to go to the superintendent, chap on his door, and tell him the apprentices had decided to go on strike. He said, "you can't you are indentured apprentices," and I said "Mr Cameron, the whole of Scotland is waiting for us." He told me to get out, but actually he was quite proud.

We walked out that factory, and all the workers were hitting their machines with their mallets and hammers, and that is where the photograph is taken. Amazing!

## **Why is giving opportunities to young people so important to you?**

It is a generalisation, but a lot of managers place their store in the first



team. And that is correct because it will keep them in a job. But I always believed in building a football club, and a stepping stone for young players to get into the first team.

If you give young people an opportunity they don't want to let you down, they are often inspired by being given their opportunity. I showed real interest, and looked for them to thrive.

**As our Founding Donor, you have supported nearly 300 students through the Sir Alex Ferguson Scholarship and Awards Fund. How do you feel when you hear the impact your support has had?**

The reason I chose Glasgow Caledonian University was when I came up to receive an honour, they took me round, and I saw this primary school in one of the lecture theatres. So, when Jason and I decided we wanted to do something, to give support, it was an obvious choice, your whole university is about young people. And that was the right platform for me – no question about that.

Every time I go there, and I meet all the young people, some are buoyant and some are shy. You see the different

personalities, and characters, but overall they are all thriving on the opportunity of being supported.

When I receive the applications, and I am reading them, sometimes I am nearly crying at the challenging situations they have come through. Be it their mother is ill, or dad unable to work. It is amazing how society today has such a large percentage of young people suffering. And that inspires me to do what I can for Glasgow Caledonian – and it is the right place.

**What is the best advice you've ever received?**

Don't miss an opportunity. The big opportunity in my life came when I tried to call off from a game with St Johnstone. I had broken my nose, cheekbone, and my eyebrow in a head clash in the reserve team, and I was out for six weeks. That's when I met my wife Cathy for the first time. She didn't know if I was a gangster or a boxer!

Anyway, when I got the plaster off, I wasn't doing well in the team, so I took out papers to go to Canada as that's

where my aunt was, my dad's family were all over there.

Then the next day I scored a hat-trick against Rangers. And from that moment on, I did not miss the opportunity to be a footballer.

**Who inspired you?**

Mrs Thompson, she was fantastic. She came from the other side of the road, she came from Hillhead. When she came to Broomloan Road Primary School it had the highest absenteeism in Glasgow, and she used to go round every boy and girls house and speak to the parents "if your boy or girl is not in my class tomorrow I will be up to see you again." She had such determination.

**What is next for Sir Alex?**

Well, I had a bucket list when I retired, so I went to the Oscars. It was fantastic! I went to the Masters, the Kentucky Derby, and I'm still trying to talk my wife into letting me go to the Melbourne Cup, but I am too old she says!

**What do you want your legacy to be?**

People look at the successes. But for me my legacy is that I gave young players a chance, and that is really, really important. You gain the loyalty from them, the trust from them, and even today many of them keep in touch with me.

It's the Ferguson motto; success after difficulties – you have to keep going and you get there in the end – never give in!



# Common Good Campaign receives exemplary response

**Recognised by the Scottish Parliament as an exemplary response to the challenges arising from the pandemic for young people, the GCU Common Good Campaign has raised over £400,000, and benefitted over 1,400 students to date.**

The significance of the work of the GCU Foundation has heightened as a result of the devastating impact COVID-19 is having on our students, with those from challenging backgrounds being hardest hit and many more being pushed into hardship. Loss of part-time jobs, increased pressure on mental health, and wellbeing, and an incredibly challenging graduate employment market has meant that many of our students find themselves overwhelmed by covid's impact on their futures.

Our Common Good Campaign,

launched in November 2020 with the support of our Founding Donor, Sir Alex Ferguson CBE, is raising funds to provide bursaries for students with no access to income or family support, to help enhance student mental health and wellbeing support, and to boost the number of match funded internships available through our Mentoring, Internships, Networking & Talks (MINT) Programme.

GCU graduate, James Kelly MSP, raised a motion in the Scottish Parliament which saw our Campaign

being commended. The motion is testament to the thousands of alumni and friends who have generously supported our students financially, and in-kind. The University was also honoured with a 2021 Circle of Excellence Grand Gold Award from the Council for Advancement and Support of Education (CASE), a global non-profit association dedicated to educational advancement, and shortlisted for the 2021 Times Higher Education Award for Outstanding Student Support for the MINT Programme.



The Scottish Parliament  
Pàrlamaid na h-Alba

Motion Number: S5M-23421

Title: Glasgow Caledonian University Foundation's Common Good Campaign

**That the Parliament recognises the profound and rapid impact that the pandemic has had on the lives of young people, especially those leaving education and about to enter the world of work; welcomes the work of the Glasgow Caledonian University Foundation in launching its Common Good Campaign; understands that the campaign, backed by Sir Alex Ferguson CBE, seeks to reach out to alumni and friends of the university to ask them to consider giving back financially or in-kind to support students in the three main areas in which they are being most affected, student hardship, mental health and wellbeing, and employability; commends this effort from the university foundation, and sees it as an exemplary response to the challenges arising from the pandemic.**





### When Martin met Midge

In April 2021, GCU honorary graduates, Martin Compston and Midge Ure, took part in a special online event to help raise funds for the GCU Foundation. Together as part of our event, they shared stories from their careers to date, speaking for the first time about Martin's portrayal of Midge in the comedy drama, *Urban Myths*, as well as sharing what has inspired their commitment to supporting a variety of charitable causes, including our very own Common Good Campaign.



BA (Hons) Occupational Therapy student Chantel tells us more about the impact of the financial support she has received:

"When I heard the news that I had been chosen for a scholarship I actually cried because I couldn't believe something had gone right for me. Knowing people care and

want to help has given me the inspiration to work hard and not let anyone, including myself, down. Having children, a mortgage and a limited income, the pressure this takes off is huge. This shows me that there are good people in the world willing to help people like me. I could not be any more grateful."

BA (Hons) Risk Management student Callum Hughes, has benefitted from the support of an alumni mentor, he told us:

"This is the best service I have signed up to throughout my four years as a student at GCU. Having a career mentor allowed me to focus on my dissertation whilst also building my CV and applying for graduate level positions. Having professional guidance from a mentor in the field of Risk Management allowed me to grow in confidence and gain an understanding of what responsibilities I will face within the industry. Reflecting over my past 4 years at uni, I do regret not getting involved in more services, but my decision to opt in for a career mentor was life changing."



To find out more and support the Campaign visit: [www.gcu.ac.uk/foundation](http://www.gcu.ac.uk/foundation)

If you would like to discuss a specific area of support or other ways of giving such as pledging a legacy or GAYE, a tax efficient way to give via salary deduction, the team is always here to help. Contact [foundation@gcu.ac.uk](mailto:foundation@gcu.ac.uk) and we will be in touch.



# Honoured by GCU

Leading figures from around the world have received honorary degrees in recognition of their outstanding achievements in their field and contributions to society across a range of backgrounds.



**Jonny Benjamin MBE**  
*Mental health campaigner, author and vlogger*  
**Doctor of Letters**

In recognition of his outstanding commitment and contribution to mental health services and suicide prevention.

**Ricky Ross**  
*Singer-songwriter and broadcaster*  
**Doctor of Letters**

In recognition of his outstanding contribution to Scottish music and culture, and support for the GCU Archive Centre.



**Susan Collin Marks**  
*International peacemaker and peacebuilder*  
**Doctor of Laws**

In recognition of her outstanding contribution to the promotion of peace and advancement of human rights.

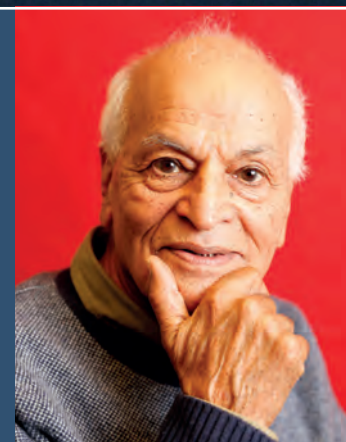


**Harriette Campbell**  
*Founding member of African and Caribbean Women's Association*  
**Doctor of Science**

In recognition of her outstanding community engagement over 30 years supporting African and Caribbean women in Scotland, many from the nursing profession.

**Satish Kumar**  
*Activist and speaker*  
**Doctor of Laws**

In recognition of his outstanding contribution towards promoting peace and the environment through his activism.







**Professor Jackie Taylor**  
*President of Royal College  
 of Physicians and  
 Surgeons of Glasgow*  
**Doctor of Science**

In recognition of her outstanding contribution to Geriatric Medicine, dedication to improve health and well-being in the workplace and addressing workforce challenges within the NHS.

**Mark Hogarth**  
*Creative Director of  
 Harris Tweed Hebrides*  
**Doctor of Letters**

In recognition of his outstanding commitment to fashion, design and branding as applied to iconic Scottish brands.



**Arlene Smith**  
*Founder of Brightest Star*  
**Doctor of the University**

In recognition of her outstanding contribution and ability to provide hope, empathy and love through adversity, in memory of her son Jack.

**Ian Urquhart**  
*Former Chairman of  
 Johnston's of Elgin*  
**Doctor of Business  
 Administration**

In recognition of his outstanding leadership, development and senior management of quality iconic Scottish products, notably cashmere and whisky, with a wealth of other contributions across many sectors.



**Michael Kerr**  
*Former Great British Rugby  
 Paralympian*  
**Doctor of Science**

In recognition of his outstanding sporting achievements and contribution to higher education in advancing and profiling the development of sport for athletes with a disability.





# Alumni stories from around the globe

**With campuses in London and New York, and collaborations around the world such as our partnership with the African Leadership College in Mauritius, our students can enrich their study experience through our global network.**



## **Glasgow Caledonian New York College**

Glasgow Caledonian New York College (GCNYC) is New York City's College for the Common Good. Our Master of Science degrees examine business, fashion, and risk management through the lenses of sustainability and social impact. Let's meet one of our GCNYC graduates:

Elizabeth (Liz) Pulos is Director of Global Sustainability at Converse, responsible for shaping and leading the enterprise sustainability strategy as part of Nike's Move to Zero initiative. In this role, Liz tracks progress against social and environmental targets, oversees sustainability governance and initiatives across the business, and collaborates cross-functionally to develop systems that drive impact.

### **Why this career path?**

"After receiving my bachelor's in International Trade & Marketing from Fashion Institute of Technology (FIT), I worked at an NGO (Non-Governmental Organisation) focused on labor standards in factories, which led to a role at Macy's in Sustainability and Social Impact. GCNYC came onto my radar because Macy's was a member of their Fair Fashion Center and they were offering scholarships and fast-tracked applications for the first cohort."

### **How did GCNYC shape your journey?**

"Most formal education doesn't teach you how to think. Anyone can read a book and learn content, but solving problems is hard. GCNYC is a place where fashion professionals interested in ethical production and consumption can meet and share ideas."

### **Any advice?**

"COVID-19 has accelerated the need for companies to focus on environmental and social impact, and the financial risks and opportunities associated with environmental, social, and governance issues. This means we need to look beyond the traditional corporate social responsibility and sustainability teams to incubate these ideals at every level of the organisation. GCNYC can act as a connector of creative professionals who seed smart solutions throughout the industry."

Find more about GCNYC here: [www.gcny.com](http://www.gcny.com)





## GCU London

GCU London is our postgraduate campus located in an ultra-modern environment in the heart of London. Situated on Fashion Street, in Spitalfields, one of London's most vibrant areas, the campus is close to the globally recognised financial and fashion industries. GCU London offers a unique range of MBA and MSc courses, high quality teaching and links with international businesses. Let's meet one of our GCU London graduates:

Erika Alvarez is the Founder and Creative Director of London based creative studio KOUA MEXICO, which blends fashion and traditions by supporting indigenous groups in local towns in Mexico. She is also taking on a new project, KOUA STUDIO, a creative studio for fashion and interior designers to encourage them to use their handmade bespoke textiles on their collections to give economic

opportunities to local communities in Mexico, and to show more transparency in their production chain.

### Why this career path?

"Fashion is always something I have wanted to do since I was a child, but there were not many opportunities in the industry in my country. It took me a while to take that journey. Now that I have my own business/brand, I can't imagine myself doing anything else."

### How did GCU London shape your journey?

"GCU London helped me a lot to build the business side of my career. Doing a master's degree in fashion was the most important grounding to build my brand and set a strategy."

### Any advice?

"Definitely follow your heart, your dreams and your passion. That's the fuel that will keep you going in a crisis, in a

pandemic, and to ultimately succeed.

Use your talent to give to others, and to contribute to this world. In your student years learn and get experience. That will always be your most powerful weapon."

Find more about GCU London here: [www.gculondon.ac.uk](http://www.gculondon.ac.uk)



## African Leadership College, Mauritius

GCU is the academic partner of the African Leadership College (ALC), a pioneering venture created by entrepreneur Fred Swaniker with the aim of transforming leadership in the world's fastest growing continent. The College now has hundreds of students enrolled in degree programmes accredited by GCU. Let's meet one of our ALC graduates:

Computer Science graduate Heritier Muhire is a Service Desk Technician at CompuCom Systems, responsible for managing their information systems and providing technical support to fellow employees. While at ALC, Heritier also received a Santander Magnusson Award to set up a non-profit enterprise in Rwanda, employing local women to produce sanitary pads and soaps, enabling them to access these products and earn an income.

### Why this career path?

"I am passionate about technology, and that's why I pursued Computer Science. In a digital age, technology is a major part of people's lives, it makes it easier, more fun and helps improve the living conditions. I knew a computer science degree would open a door for diverse job opportunities across industries such as software development and allow me to develop problem-solving, critical-thinking, creativity, and analytical skills."

### How did ALC shape your journey?

"Through ALC employer partnerships, there is a Mauritius based technology company that was looking for a computer science graduate. I applied and got my first full-time job after graduation. Having a computer science degree gave me a big

advantage in my career as it helped me adapt to the work environment faster, and expand my skillset in the IT field, which makes me stand out as a valuable employee on the market."

### Any advice?

"Please stay committed to your mission. Embrace uncertainty, it is normal to face challenges. Never let the obstacles make you give up, just trust the process. Believe in yourself and never settle for less. Cherish the network you make through ALC. Build long-lasting relationships, attend those networking events, and take advantage of career fairs. Sometimes it is not about what you know, but who you know."

Find more about ALC here: [www.alueducation.com](http://www.alueducation.com)



# A sneaky peek into the reality of the red carpet

**Journalist and presenter Laura Boyd has had an exceptional career behind and in front of the camera, interviewing some of the biggest stars in the world. And it all started for her at GCU.**

**W**hen we speak, Laura is fresh from the red carpet, where she interviewed Daniel Craig for the new Bond movie, *No Time to Die*, at the world premiere.

Laura said: "It was amazing, but not quite as glamorous as it might have appeared! I got the train down in the morning, was loaded with the cold and felt horrendous, got changed for the red carpet in the train toilet, and stood for hours in freezing torrential rain while it slowly soaked through my long dress.

"I was due to film a live piece to camera for STV, for which we had to film the stars coming down the red carpet, and quickly send that back to the studio so they could edit and add in to my live piece. The stars were really late arriving so we only got that footage to the studio ten minutes before my live segment. As we approached the time I was due to go live, I couldn't hear anything on my earpiece, and we discovered all the communications were down in the studio. With a few seconds to go, and having almost completely lost my voice because of my cold, I had to just go for it and improvise which was an adrenaline-fuelled blur! I got through it and I have to say, I have never been

more relieved and elated in my life!"

Laura started at GCU in 1998, when the media world was a very different one, and the internet was a relatively new concept.

She said: "I was 17 when I applied to GCU. I had always done theatre, singing and acting, and wasn't sure what path

**"I loved interviewing Rod Stewart, and Dolly Parton.**

to take. A friend who I went to school with mentioned the media course at GCU because she wanted to get in to TV, and it struck me that I would quite like to do that too.

"My overall feeling about GCU was that it was a really warm, accepting place, with people from all walks of life. It was really inclusive, which was a wonderful thing to be part of. The experience I got from my GCU course, particularly the documentary making, really helped when I went in to work in the field, and it's definitely where I got the TV buzz from."

Laura was able to do work experience at STV while she was still a student, two weeks after graduation she got a call to offer her a job, and she has been there ever since! She started life as Assistant Editor on programmes like *Taggart*, *Scot Sport*, and *Politics Now*. STV made a lot of programmes in-house, so she was involved initially in the edit suite, adding captions, labelling tapes, and acting as a runner.

Laura's talents were quickly recognised, as was her enthusiasm to work hard and seize every opportunity.

She tells us: "The drama school child was always lurking in me, so at STV I used to just put myself out there for absolutely everything. At that time, STV would cover big concerts, so I would volunteer to be a runner, and get to learn about big outside broadcast productions, which I used to love. It was extra cash in hand and I got to meet the stars!

"I was asked to do voiceovers for a time, and then became a Promotions Producer, because editing and promotion go hand in hand. I knew I wanted to move through the different roles in programme-making. Online production was still very new at that





stage, and I worked on the STV website when it first started. We went out and filmed short videos, bands and that type of thing so I got involved in that side early on. It slowly evolved and I started doing more and more of the showbiz side of programming. Then ended up on the news! Which was quite strange, as I don't think I look like a news journalist, and it is a very straight field for broadcasting, whereas I am very bubbly. But STV have been amazing at letting me explore new areas without having to change my style. You have to just make the most of every opportunity, grab things when you can, and speak to everyone. The internet has opened up a whole new level of opportunity now, and there are so many ways to put yourself out there and showcase your work, especially if it's something you are really passionate about.

"Nowadays, we are Multimedia Journalists, which means although we are in front of the camera, we do absolutely everything. We will film a piece, script it, present it, edit it, and produce it. So every single skill you learn at university is put to good use."

"I have been lucky enough to interview so many amazing people

through my career. I interviewed the esteemed actor Brian Cox the other week, and he was amazing, a real Scottish legend.

"I loved interviewing Rod Stewart, and Dolly Parton. So often, interviews with big stars are very much a production line and timed to the second, so it's wonderful to have time to chat. I do get nervous but I am genuinely interested in people, and try just to be as relaxed and natural as possible. I have the utmost respect for my colleagues who do hard-hitting news, they are the ones who have to ask really difficult questions. For me, it is an absolute joy of a job, no two days are ever the same, and one of my favourite things is just chatting to people. Often,

people observing me interview people assume I am old friends with the interviewee, when in fact we have just met."

Now she has Penelope, her 2-year-old daughter, Laura has to juggle her job much more than before. "I used to work every hour God sends, go to every single event I could, and really put myself out there, and now I have to work to balance that, especially as I live with cancer. You learn to make the most of the time you do have.

"But as I've got older, I find it easier to balance, and maintain a healthier way of working to look after my mental health too. That is something I wish I could have told my younger self, to think more about self-care."



Laura with George Clooney.



Laura with Rod Stewart.



# Celebrating success

**Our students continue to be our finest ambassadors, achieving success and industry recognition, nationally and internationally. Here are just some examples from 2021.**

## The UN highlights GCU's commitment to the Sustainable Development Goals

The United Nations has selected Glasgow Caledonian University's Strategy 2030 and a student research project, the Fashion Detox Challenge, as examples of Sustainable Development Goal best practice.

Both case studies now feature on the UN's website among hand-picked "breakthroughs and success stories" from across the globe.

The Fashion Detox Challenge was created by PhD Student, Dr Emma Kidd, in a bid to address overconsumption and reduce clothing waste.

The public intervention project encourages shoppers to take a 10-week break from buying new clothes.

More than 300 people have so far signed up and most have adopted more sustainable clothing practices, such as repairing old clothes, buying second-hand items, or swapping garments with friends.

Emma discussed how the United Nations has selected the project to be listed on their website as an example of a sustainable initiative that companies or individuals can use to contribute to the sustainable development goals.



Emma said: "One of GCU's professors, Natascha Radclyffe-Thomas, was aware of my work and when a call for 'Best Practices' came up through GCU she highlighted my project and suggested that it might be a good fit.

"So, I submitted a case study that summarised what the project is, and I sent it off and didn't really think anything of it.

"Next thing we found out we were included and I just can't even describe what that means to me because it's everything that this project was geared towards."

You can find out about the Fashion Detox Challenge here: [fashiondetoxchallenge.com](https://fashiondetoxchallenge.com)

## Game for saving the planet

Visitors to Glasgow Caledonian University experienced first-hand what a devastated planet earth might look and feel like, thanks to a host of educational video games created by students.

The games, designed to teach players about climate issues and possible solutions, were available to play in the University's Sir Alex Ferguson Library, and had been created during a 48-hour development marathon, organised as part of the institution's COP26 activity.

Students from GCU's game programmes (BSc Computer Games, BSc Computer Games (Art and Animation), BSc Computer Games (Design) and BSc Computer Games

(Software Development) were armed with a brief to create games that raise awareness of climate change and its effects, or highlight possible solutions to solving or acting on climate change.

They were joined by students and game enthusiasts from the UK and across the world. A panel of videogame developers and experts from GCU's Centre for Climate Justice decided on the best games for demonstration.

Third-year Construction Management student Nagineh Azar, 21, and fourth-year Social Sciences student Catherine Mackie, 21, were really impressed with the quality of the games.

Nagineh said: "We really loved the games. This is a really great way to

engage young people in the issues of climate change."

Catherine added: "The games looked great and really good fun. It's a new way of raising awareness of climate change and helping young people understand what is going on, as well as what they can do about it."





## Student engineers bring flat-pack wind turbine to COP26

A flat-pack wind turbine designed by a Scots school pupil and created by engineers at Glasgow Caledonian University was displayed at COP26.

The portable turbine, invented by Douglas Macartney when he was 15 and a pupil at Royal High in Edinburgh, was showcased at the global climate summit's Green Zone on November 7 after the idea was handpicked from 11,000 entries in a national competition run by the not-for-profit organisation Primary Engineer in 2019.

The idea has been developed by several teams of undergraduate engineers from GCU, working over several years to create a viable prototype – including the addition of two solar panels.

The original concept was inspired by a flat-pack refugee shelter created by Swedish furniture giant Ikea.

It's hoped the turbine may one day be mass-produced to generate electricity for refugee camps where there is no access to a power source for cooking and lighting.

The device, which can be assembled without any specialist training, could also be used to help areas recovering from natural disasters and in rural settlements far from grid connection.

Dr Susan Scurlock MBE, founder of Primary Engineer and an honorary graduate of GCU, said: "We are

delighted to showcase the work of GCU students, how they have taken a pupil's drawing of an idea and made it into not only a physical object, but a wonderfully engineered and useful one at that. Our aim is to encourage the creativity of young people in solving problems and link that to the knowhow of engineers."



## Tabitha flies the flag for GCU at the UN Climate Change Conference of Youth



Students' Association Vice President for the School of Health and Life Sciences, Tabitha Nyariki, proudly represented Glasgow Caledonian University at the UN Climate Change Conference of Youth (COY16).

COY16 is recognised as the most significant youth gathering of its kind with its power to directly influence the UN climate negotiations. One of the major outputs of COY16 was a policy document crafted by attendees, which members of COP26 considered as part of the negotiation process.

Tabitha, originally from Kenya, said: "From every session I attended, and every conversation I engaged in, it was clear that the youth need to be loud and bold about their climate activism, using their voices to demand more from our governments, have more sustainable lifestyle choices and amplify indigenous voices, particularly those from the Global South who are just as much affected by climate change but do not have the resources to combat the effects."

# The man who led the team who created the world's largest civilian hospital ship

**Nautical engineer Jim Paterson has dedicated his life and career to developing and operating hospital ships to provide life-changing health care to those who need it most all over the world.**

Jim first joined Denholm Ship Management in Glasgow, initially as a cadet, and they organised for him to come to study at Glasgow College of Technology, one of GCU's founding colleges, leaving home to do so at the tender age of 16. He studied during term time then went to sea or did vocational training at the Nautical College in Glasgow during the summer, graduating in 1976 as a qualified marine engineer.

In his latter days at Denholm's, there was a big downturn in the industry and they were looking for voluntary redundancies, so he ended up leaving and going to Bible College to become a missionary. While there, he heard about

Mercy Ships. As a faith-based organisation, he saw this as the perfect opportunity to combine his practical knowledge with his faith, and a chance to help people. He joined Mercy Ships

**“It is almost like waving goodbye to family.”**

initially as Chief Engineer in 1987, leading the Marine Operations Department for almost 25 years before becoming Marine Executive Consultant. There he and his team transformed

many ships including the Africa Mercy and Anastasis into living working hospitals, sailing all over the world, bringing hope and healing to the forgotten poor, and providing life-saving medical treatment in countries where countless people suffer and die from 'diseases of poverty' that can be easily cured.

Jim tells us: “The one that really resonates with me is from many years ago, when we first joined Mexico after a big earthquake there was a desperate need for healthcare. The team there had befriended a ‘Shoe Shine Guy’ who had a cleft lip and palate. In Scotland, this is the third most common birth defect and babies have corrective surgery when they are around six months old. This guy was 45 and never had the opportunity to have his fixed. The team persuaded him to come to the ship to have the operation, which is a big step in a lot of these countries, particularly as 17 million people die every year from unsafe surgeries. He had the operation and the surgeon who performed the operation got a letter from this man five years later thanking him, and saying he had his first-ever kiss aged 50 as a result of the surgery.

“Another one I always remember is when we were in Jamaica and the Salvation Army School for the Blind brought 50 kids over to see the Ophthalmologist, and he was able to restore sight for 14 of them. They had all been blind since birth and they could see for the first time ever.



Jim waving goodbye.



“With cataracts, we do a lot of older people, but for young people, that changes their entire life, enabling them to work and support their families.”

Notably, Jim led the team behind the project to design, fit and launch the world’s largest civilian hospital ship. The Global Mercy, a real labour of love for Jim, set sail in 2021 and will begin service in sub-Saharan Africa in 2022. It brings world-class surgical care to local patients facing life-threatening ailments throughout West Africa. From correcting cleft lips and palates, to

congenital deformities, and restoring eyesight, it is estimated that more than 150,000 lives will be changed onboard the Global Mercy through surgery alone over the vessel’s 50-year expected lifespan. It has six operating theatres, wards for up to 200 patients, laboratories and clinics.

Kirkcudbright born Jim has lived in Texas, US, since 1995 with his wife. They have three grown up children and six grandchildren. When the pandemic hit in 2020, Jim had just returned home from China, taking him seven months to

be able to return. However, he put this time to good use, and Mercy Ships still continued to operate in some capacity, sending PPE to hospitals and partnering with UNICEF to get vaccines to Africa.

Jim was able to return to China for the final 10 months of completion for the Global Mercy, who is now sailing, and has her official launch this year. He said: “When we finally said goodbye to the Global Mercy in China, it was one of those days where you feel very happy and sad at the same time. It is almost like waving goodbye to family.”



# Bringing love and empowerment to ethnic minority women in a Glasgow community

**Growing up as a woman in Nigeria, a country where gender-based violence, rape and female genital mutilation (FGM) are commonplace, Shulamite Ezechi faced a number of personal challenges of her own. Finding the strength to overcome these struggles inspired her to help other women and empower them to fulfil their full potential.**

In 2015, Shulamite made a life-changing decision. She left behind her career in dietetics and human nutrition to create a charity, ANYISO, to work with African and ethnic minority women in Glasgow, the city that became her home in 2009 when she moved from her native Nigeria to study at GCU. She tells us: "I found GCU to be so incredibly welcoming, accessible and supportive, especially for international students. I remember how friendly everyone was, and when I needed extra support, help was always at hand."

Shulamite is on the First Minister's National Advisory Council on BAME (Black, Asian, Minority, Ethnic) Women and Girls and has also served as a member of the Refugee Women's Strategy Group, served as a board member of North Glasgow Community Food Initiative, and actively contributed to the review of many policies that affect ethnic minority women and young people.

ANYISO fittingly means 'we belong', in a local dialect from an Igbo tribe in Nigeria. Most of the women supported by the charity are refugees and asylum seekers, while some have faced gender-based violence and some are victims of rape, abuse, and FGM. The team of staff and volunteers from the local community assess the women and provide tailored support dependent on their needs. They have provided support for over 3000 so far, and were recently recognised with Charity of the Year at the Prestige Awards.

Shulamite said: "You must love the women to be able to support them. The women need emotional support to be able to face their challenges, they need someone to lean on."

As well as a drop-in service, ANYISO offers lots of workshops and activities

**"You must love the women to be able to support them."**

for children and adults such as ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages) classes, food hygiene, first aid, music and dance classes, sewing and knitting, and empowerment

programmes, to help them to regain their confidence and enhance their ability to go back out into the world and fulfil their true potential.

Men are welcomed to a number of their conferences and training sessions. Shulamite added: "We encourage men to attend our conferences, seminars and events to help them understand the challenges faced by women, raise awareness of these issues and help tackle violence against women."

They also run a food bank, with donations from supermarkets and other food outlets. There is no voucher system nor criteria, as the team feel there can be a stigma attached to this and can be prohibitive. Instead, those who need it simply come and help themselves.



A community-led sewing workshop in Glasgow.



The team stay in touch with the women and they can visit any time for additional help or support. Thanks to the volunteer opportunities and training provided with ANYISO's partner organisations and colleges around Glasgow, many of the women have progressed in their career of choice, or to higher education, armed with the language skills, confidence and ability to express themselves in a different country and culture.

"My passion is to support people and to make a change," said Shulamite. "The drive for change inspired me to do what I am doing now. The only fulfilment one can have in life is doing what you are passionate about. I don't see my passion as a job, I enjoy it and find fulfilment in it. I am so proud of the progress we have made and the people we have been able to support. To see the smiles on their faces, and the positive changes in their lives. Especially when they come to Scotland as a new country, knowing no-one, feeling vulnerable. Being able to help and support them, and help them integrate into the community. To see the drastic change that makes in their lives is wonderful. They share their testimonies with us, and to see how they have changed, and how it has positively impacted the lives of their children, it gives you a real sense of fulfilment and pride, and encouragement to move forward and strive to do more."





# A degree double act

**We hear from our very own comedian Chrissy Ross about how he felt going from his undergraduate to postgraduate degree at GCU.**

## **Can you tell us why you chose to study your programme at GCU?**

I felt it would be the best place to develop my professional practice for the events industry.

## **Why did you decide to continue further study at GCU, and what support did you receive?**

I really enjoyed my undergraduate course in International Event Management and studying on campus. I chose to continue at GCU and do my postgraduate MSc in International Tourism and Events Management (ITEM) because I knew the staff and I knew the high level of teaching I would receive would help massively in my professional development.

The support I received from my lecturers throughout my studies was great. Claire Bereziat, Daniel Baxter, Nick Davies, Pauline Bell, Mandy Sheridan, and Maren Viol were exceptionally knowledgeable about the modules they taught. They were also inspirational and encouraged us all to achieve the best we could, to challenge ourselves, and to be the best version of ourselves academically and professionally.

I also received support from the University through the COVID Winter Fund and the Discretionary Fund, which massively helped as all the work I had lined up for 2020/2021 evaporated due to the pandemic and subsequent lockdowns.

## **How did further study help your career?**

Further study has helped me broaden my horizons and taught me the importance of collaboration and resilience. The MSc course was brilliant for developing my professional practice, and in helping me develop knowledge and skills to operate more efficiently and effectively within my industry.

## **What advice would you give to anyone thinking of doing further study?**

I would say that we are always learning in life, be it experientially or academically and if there is a course that can develop the skills and knowledge you desire, go for it.

## **What was it like being a stand-up comedian alongside your studies?**

During my undergrad it was hectic. I counted 423 events I either organised or performed at throughout my first four years of study. The postgrad was not as hectic, in fact, I wish it was but alas the pandemic shut down events. I have enjoyed returning to the stage recently, supporting my friend Gary Faulds at his gigs. They have been a lot of fun.

## **What are your plans for the future?**

At present I am performing stand up at the weekends and teaching at GCU during the week. I don't think I have ever been as content and happy at work as now. Though it's just until January, I am absolutely loving being back at GCU teaching, and it is a lot of fun.



Find out more about our Loyalty Scholarships at:  
[gcu.ac.uk/postgraduate](https://gcu.ac.uk/postgraduate)



# Alumni words of wisdom

We asked graduates working to combat the damaging effects of climate change what their top tips would be for people wanting to help tackle the climate emergency.

Get involved in whatever way you can. You don't have to be qualified to make a difference in your family, community, business or school, just be passionate.

MSc Sustainability Energy Technology graduate David Ross who is now Operations Manager at Integrated Environmental Solutions (IES) Ltd, a leading global innovator of sustainable analysis technology.



The smallest action can have the biggest impact. The only enemy is carbon, so work together - even with your competitors.

BA(Hons) Marketing graduate Kathleen MacLean who is now Head of Growth at EV Energy Group, who manage a platform enabling electric vehicle charging to make it greener, cheaper and simpler for customers.

Think about using less water when you're cooking, taking a bath or just brushing your teeth. Take advantage of rain and create a system at home to capture and store rainwater. There are many resources on the internet on how to do that easily. Think about the environment before throwing recyclable materials away and try reusing them in creative ways.

MSc Energy and Environmental Management graduate Edgar Espinal, a Sustainability Specialist with FAO, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations.





# University for the Common Good



Alumni Engagement Team, Glasgow Caledonian University

T: +44 (0) 141 331 8769 E: [alumni@gcu.ac.uk](mailto:alumni@gcu.ac.uk)



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