

UNIVERSITY OF LONDON FOUNDATION DAY 2009

Chancellor, in accordance with the Charter, Statutes and Ordinances of the University, I present to you this person on whom we wish you to confer the Honorary Degree of Doctor of Science.

Professor Julia Goodfellow, CBE

Your Royal Highness and Chancellor, Julia Goodfellow has had a distinguished career both as a scientist and as an academic leader in the closely linked worlds of universities and the Research Councils.

An internet search using the key words Julia and Goodfellow reveals a successful career both as a scientist and more recently as an academic leader. It also reveals that a Julia Goodfellow works as an expense reduction analyst for a franchise business and proudly announces that she has generated a 6-figure income in only 12 months in role. Reassuringly, however, inspection of the relevant website reveals that this is a different Julia Goodfellow and that the University has not chosen to honour an expense reduction analyst.

Of course, the University has ample reason to honour Professor Julia Goodfellow both for her distinction and for her long association with the University. Following a first Degree in Physics at the University of Bristol and a PhD in Biophysics at the Open University, she took up a Post-doctoral research position at Stanford University.

Her association with our University began in 1980 when she returned to the U.K. to take up a position as Research Officer in the Crystallography Department of Birkbeck. So began a period of over 20 years working at Birkbeck during which her steadily increasing scientific distinction was matched by greater and greater administrative responsibilities.

Her scientific research focused on the role of water in the folding of biologically important proteins and on the consequences of misfolding in producing human diseases. Throughout this work, as befits a biologist who initially studied physics, Julia has pursued an interdisciplinary approach combining experimental methods with computer modelling to obtain results which could not be derived with either methodology alone. As a young scientist, Julia calculated that the then current methods of computer modelling would require 365 years of computer time in order to complete her project. The obvious conclusion of this was to devote herself to the improvement of computer models and then apply these to the dynamics of protein assembly.

The growth in Julia's scientific reputation during her period at Birkbeck was paralleled by her willingness to take on considerable administrative responsibilities. In 1996, she became Head of the Department of Crystallography. So effectively did she carry out this role that in 1998 she became Vice-Master of the College. In leading the highly successful submission to the 2001 Research Assessment Exercise, she demonstrated a sensitivity and appreciation of all the diverse areas of the College's research. Perhaps such sensitivity is not surprising in one whose hobbies are tapestry and female detective fiction and who illustrates her lectures on the importance of water using an image from the Bayeux Tapestry showing Norman soldiers crossing the calm seas of the English Channel.

It was inevitable that the growth in Julia's reputation as a scientist and administrator during her period at Birkbeck would attract national recognition. She was invited, for example, to join the Councils of the Biotechnology and Biological Sciences Research Council (the

BBSRC) and the Central Laboratories of the Research Councils (CCLRC), as well as committees of the Engineering and Physical Sciences Research Council (the EPSRC) and the Wellcome Trust.

Her effectiveness in these roles led ultimately to her move from her full-time position at Birkbeck to become Chief Executive of the BBSRC, the first woman to head a Research Council. Her success there is perhaps best indicated by a quote from the Science and Technology Select Committee of the House of Commons, a body not noted for its praise of Research Councils. In describing the BBSRC, the Committee “considered the administration to be largely transparent and efficient and most importantly supported by the community”.

As Chief Executive of the BBSRC, Julia was responsible for a number of potentially controversial areas of research including, cloning, stem cells and plant genetic modification. She created a Bioscience for Society Strategy Panel placing public engagement on an equal footing with other aspects of BBSRC strategy. Julia’s interest in this area has continued to develop with her recent appointment as Chair of the British Science Association which promotes public understanding and accessibility of science.

In 2005, Birkbeck appointed Julia as a Fellow of the College. During the internal discussion of my proposal to do this, the point was raised that Julia was still a member of the College staff, being officially seconded to the BBSRC. Birkbeck had never awarded an Honorary Fellowship to a serving member of staff and so there was concern about what would happen if Julia, as a Fellow of the College, returned to Birkbeck at the end of her period with the BBSRC.

It was obvious to me, however, that this was not likely to be a problem. Clearly, Julia’s enormous talents were likely to be recognised by a senior post elsewhere when she left the BBSRC and the chances were very slim that she would return to her laboratory in Birkbeck.

I was not surprised, therefore, when in September 2007 Julia became Vice-Chancellor of the University of Kent. In this role, Julia has emphasised many of the themes which she espoused at Birkbeck, notably research excellence combined with widening participation and the fact that Kent has many students who combine work and study. Moreover, during her time at Kent, Julia has not neglected her role in the wider scientific and educational community by producing a report on science in schools for the Department of Innovation, Universities and Skills. This continues her long standing interest in promoting scientific education and in encouraging women in the development of their scientific careers. This is further evidenced by her Trusteeship of the Daphne Jackson Trust which provides Fellowships for women returning to scientific careers after having undertaken family responsibilities.

Although Julia Goodfellow cannot claim to be an expense reduction consultant, she has received many honours including the CBE in 2001, the Woman of Outstanding Achievement in Science Award in 2006 and Honorary Degrees from several universities, as well as an Honorary Fellowship from Birkbeck.

Your Royal Highness and Chancellor, it is with great pleasure that I ask you to add to these honours by conferring on Professor Julia Goodfellow, CBE, the Honorary Degree of Doctor of Science *honoris causa*.

Delivered by Professor David Latchman, Master, Birkbeck, University of London