Ms Janine Watson - BA(Econ) Hon 1981

Dear electors, I would like your vote please in this election to the General Assembly because The University of Manchester changed my life, and I believe it must continue to offer life-changing experiences to others.

I grew up in an English market town, picturesque but with little diversity, intellectual challenge or culture. And since I arrived in Manchester in 1978 to study economics, the University has encouraged me to embrace all those and more.

My studies kick-started a career for 20 years as a political journalist in Liverpool and Manchester, before I switched to marketing, promoting Manchester to the world.

Twelve years ago, I joined the University’s Alumni Association Advisory Board and I’ve been delighted to help as the University has developed a full role in the future of the North West. Six years ago, I was elected chairman of the Board and we now engage online and through fascinating events with around 350,000 alumni worldwide, encouraging them to give back life-changing assistance through mentoring, careers advice or funding to young students of today.

I see the General Assembly as essential to scrutinise and communicate to wider audiences the developments at the University, its academic excellence and financial responsibility while encouraging social responsibility in local communities, including the schools my own children attended, and encouraging volunteering.

This year I was privileged to take part in a film for the University’s Great Sustainability Challenge, in which new students must make decisions about their environment - great fun and very worthy. My term as Chairman of the Alumni Association also comes to an end, and I believe membership of the General Assembly is the best possible way to remain involved, ensuring that the University of Manchester continues to reach its full potential at the heart of this city and this region.