Janet Legrand QC (Hon)

Candidate statement

State educated and the first generation in my family to go to University, my education transformed my life. I am passionate about the importance of higher education and the need to level the playing field so that all young people can achieve their full potential, irrespective of their start in life. This agenda has informed my choice of roles beyond the law - in higher education, in widening participation charities such as PRIME and IntoUniversity and as Chair of The Children’s Society.

The University of Edinburgh is a very special place. One of the world’s top universities, it is internationally renowned for its world-leading research, the high quality of its teaching and learning and its entrepreneurial and creative culture. It has a rich history, but is forward focused, with a clear and ambitious strategy for the future, which resonates with me. I identify strongly with the University’s values driven and inclusive approach to the development and implementation of its strategy and I would relish the opportunity to help the University, its students and its extraordinarily dedicated staff all to deliver on their respective ambitions.

I am a people and values based leader. The first woman with a leadership role in DLA Piper and the first woman Senior Partner of a global law firm, I have taken the opportunity to lead on the issues about which I care deeply and to shape my firm’s values; promoting social mobility, diversity and inclusion and social justice. I established my firm’s diversity board, chaired its award winning Leadership Alliance for Women, am an ally of its LGBT+ community and an adviser to the Law Society on its Women in Leadership in the Law programme. I oversee DLA Piper’s HeadStart widening participation programme and its Global Scholarships programme.

I was heavily involved in the development of the Leadership Foundation’s diversity and inclusion policy and its Aurora programme, and have oversight of City’s work on Diversity and Inclusion. As a Trustee of City’s Student’s Union, I have enjoyed supporting the Sabbatical Officers and staff in developing their new strategy and seeing students’ appreciation reflected in improved NSS rankings. The interests of students and staff are central to the University’s ambition to be a destination of choice. I am committed to ensuring that the University maintains that focus and that its ambition to lead Scotland’s commitment to widening participation is realised.

Over the past 20 years, I have played a leading role in the development and implementation of my firm’s strategy to become a leading global business law firm, whilst maintaining a substantial legal practice, representing Governments in international disputes. I now have the time and desire to devote my skills and experience to another great institution. With strong governance experience in higher education (particularly at City and Cambridge), I feel as though the role of Senior Lay Member of Court was written for me. I hope you will agree and give me the opportunity to help lead the University through the next stage of its development.