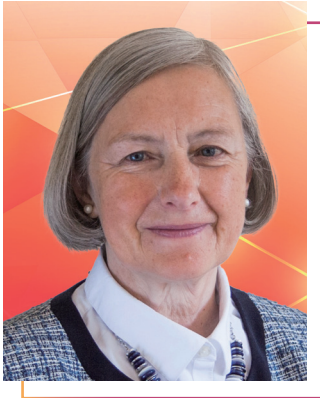


## **Honorary Doctor of Social Science**

### **Dame Madeleine Atkins**



*Public Orator Professor Matthew Manning*

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Mr Pro-Chancellor:

Dame Madeleine Atkins, President of Lucy Cavendish College at the University of Cambridge, has a stellar track record of advancing the course of higher education in the United Kingdom (UK). In her various capacities as a teacher, researcher and higher education regulator, she has worked diligently to bring the university sector and society closer together as the former should, in her words, be broadly reflective of, and serve, the latter. Dame Madeleine has taught at high school level, trained teachers, lectured and researched in universities, and offered consultancy on higher education development to government bodies and agencies in the UK and internationally.

Dame Madeleine graduated from Girton College, University of Cambridge, majoring in law and history. She subsequently obtained a postgraduate certificate in education from the University of Oxford and a PhD from the University of Nottingham. From 1998 to 2004, she was the Pro-Vice-Chancellor of Newcastle University and from 2004 to 2013, the Vice-Chancellor of Coventry University. Following these appointments, in 2014 she became the Chief Executive of the Higher Education Funding Council for England, the organisation that oversaw and regulated universities across England, ran the Research Excellence and Teaching Excellence Frameworks and distributed core and project funding to higher education institutions. In 2018, she assumed her present position as the 9th President of Lucy Cavendish College.

Dame Madeleine's service to higher education is celebrated by many prizes and awards bestowed upon her, including Commander of the Order of the British Empire in 2012 and later Dame Commander of the Order of the British Empire in 2018 for her contributions to the higher education sector in the UK, an Honorary Fellowship from Girton College in 2015, and Honorary Doctorates from the University of Nottingham in 2017 and the University of Gloucestershire in 2018.

Founded in 1965, Lucy Cavendish College was originally established to provide women of mature age with a route to research careers and professional advancement at a time when such women had few ways to gain access to the University of Cambridge. The College's founding DNA was therefore to open the Cambridge door to students of exceptional potential from an under-served and historically excluded demographic. Then in 2019, under Dame Madeleine's leadership, the College's Trustees decided to open that door much wider still to provide the opportunity of a Cambridge education to exceptional students from all under-represented groups from the standard age of 18 years regardless of gender. Planned growth, including the admission of many more international students followed, with the full support of the University. Today, Lucy Cavendish College is one of the five largest colleges in Cambridge and, in the words of the previous Vice-Chancellor, is seen as the "Vanguard of Change". It is by far the most diverse college and includes students from 85 countries and regions drawn from across the globe. One in four of its UK undergraduates are the first in their family to go to college, and 92% are drawn from state schools compared to the University average of 72%. All meet or exceed the toughest of the University's entrance requirements.

The broadening of student recruitment is the first step in ensuring the College's success. Under Dame Madeleine's leadership, the College established a unique, on-line outreach initiative that prepares high school applicants for the stringent academic requirements for which Cambridge is famous. Once at the College, they can also avail themselves of employability programmes, including mentoring and internships, to be competitive in the international job market for graduate talent. In this way, Lucy Cavendish students gain the confidence to thrive academically, reaching their full potential, and then to succeed professionally after graduation in their chosen field.

Modern-day problems call for interdisciplinary thinking. International students arriving at Lucy Cavendish College are struck not only by the different nationalities and cultures represented in the student body, but also by the immersive opportunities for

interdisciplinary learning that equips students to approach pressing global issues such as climate change in a well-informed way. In Dame Madeleine’s view, the insulated nature of academia was a thing of the past. Today, the boundary between universities and the rest of the world should be porous. Knowledge learnt is knowledge applied, and universities should maintain a close working relationship with society. At the same time, students should develop what she calls an “enterprising spirit” to learn to frame problems, assess them with due consideration to the parameters in which they exist, and then to solve them resourcefully in ways that are sustainable.

Earlier this year, City University of Hong Kong (CityUHK) entered into an agreement with Lucy Cavendish College that offers the opportunity for CityUHK students to study for a year in the community of this famed College whose vision aligns very well with our own. Dame Madeleine also looks forward to the day when graduates from Lucy Cavendish College can take advantage of CityUHK’s vibrant entrepreneurial environment, in the company of talented students with an equally strong interest in addressing global issues. The joint Future Global Leaders Programme is particularly close to her heart as it aims to cultivate the next generation of innovative, enterprising leaders equipped with the environmental, social and governance skills needed to drive positive changes for humankind and our planet.

Mr Pro-Chancellor, the ambition of widening the door of universities to admit exceptional talent regardless of background is on-going and may never be fully achieved. Yet, as Dame Madeleine demonstrates, there is every reason to commit to this aspiration and to find constructive ways forward. CityUHK is fortunate to ally with Lucy Cavendish College at the University of Cambridge under her leadership. Mr Pro-Chancellor, may I present to you Dame Madeleine Atkins, an eminent educator, for the conferment of Doctor of Social Science, *honoris causa*.