

*Laureation given by Prof. Polly Arnold, Crum Brown Chair of Chemistry, at the Graduation Ceremony on 28<sup>th</sup> June 2016*

Mr Vice-Chancellor, in the name and by the authority of the Senatus Academicus, I have the honour to present for the honorary degree of Doctor of Science,

**Professor MARGARET-ANN ARMOUR**

Margaret-Ann is Professor of Chemistry and Associate Dean of Diversity at the University of Alberta, Canada. She was born in Scotland and received her BSc and MSc from Edinburgh University. She then moved across the pond to study for a PhD in physical organic chemistry. She stayed on for research, and joined the Chemistry faculty at the University of Alberta in 1979, where she soon became a respected scientist, specializing in hazardous chemical management. Very important work. But not her only important contribution to science.

Professor Armour also began working to understand and increase the representation of women in science. Fifty per cent of our graduating chemists here in the hall today are female. But it's not like that everywhere, and it certainly wasn't equal in the 1980's. The proportion of girls studying science was only 30 % then, and the pipeline that feeds the top science positions in industry and academia still leaks women disproportionately. Even today, only 10 per cent of full chemistry professors are female. Back then, only 2 % of engineering professors were female. The pipeline still leaks at every career stage, and due to a variety of factors, it won't just even out with a little time.

Professor Armour recognised this all those years ago, and helped found the WISEST program. WISEST stands for *Women in Scholarship, Engineering, Science, and Technology*, and is a multi-award winning enterprise that promotes gender equality in the sciences. She has served as Vice-Chair and Convener, and has used WISEST as an umbrella organisation through which to create and nurture a series of initiatives to encourage girls and young women to take up and continue in science.

I have a secret contact at the University of Alberta, a fellow lanthanide chemist, who provided me with many stories, in return for a pint and a packet of crisps. Once I had defined crisps. He told me of her staggering list of mentoring, lecturing, and demonstration activities, in addition to her research papers. And as well as receiving many prestigious awards for her work, he also told me that Professor Armour also regularly receives hugs from aspiring young scientists.

The WISEST organisation has now been running for more than a quarter of a century, and has a phenomenal list of industry, government, and academic partners, 100s of volunteers, and 1000s of graduates and participants. Its work now spans more than

just women in science, it's also about widening participation and public engagement. Edinburgh Chemistry was the second department in the UK to be awarded an Athena Swan Gold award. It recognises our efforts to support women in chemistry at all levels and thus make the School a better place for everyone to thrive. Professor Armour's work resonates strongly with our own ambitions for equality and diversity, and in spite of our gold award we have a lot to learn from her.

In 2006 she was made a Member of the Order of Canada, she has twice been named one of the top 100 most powerful women in Canada, and has just had a school named after her. It is hard to estimate the value of her contributions to science. Even if we just think about the financial value, the annual cost to the UK economy of losing brilliant female scientists is around 2 billion pounds. That may only be four times Celine Dion's net worth, but it's clearly a huge waste. We can discuss later whether Celine Dion's salary is money well spent.

She is a truly special Edinburgh Chemistry alumna who has combined success in Chemistry with the encouragement of girls and women throughout her career, as Canada's premier ambassador of science.

Mr Vice-Chancellor, I now invite you to confer on

Professor Margaret-Ann Armour  
the Honorary Degree of Doctor of Science.