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Global Woman of Vision: Kim Campbell

This multi-talented woman is helping graduates develop skills to see the world through an interdisciplinary lens.

by Lesley MacDonald



photography by Bryan Cooper

Kim Campbell's first taste of leadership came when she was just a teenager. "When I was a teen, I wanted to be the first woman secretary general of the UN," says Campbell. "I had this consciousness of wanting to break barriers for women." She started her journey by becoming the president of her high school student council at Prince of Wales Secondary School. From there, Campbell has held many roles. She served as Canada's 19th Prime Minister — the first, and only, female to hold the role. She taught at Harvard Kennedy School of Government, was a president of the International Woman's Forum, was the first female defense minister in any NATO country, and much more. "I always felt that I wanted to live a life that was just beyond my own kind of pleasure...that there needed to be a broader purpose," says Campbell.

With such a diverse body of experience, Campbell could take her career in any direction — but she's opted to help produce the next generation of leaders. Nearly a decade ago, Campbell was asked to give a presentation about whether or not leadership could be taught, in support of a new Peter Lougheed Leadership Initiative. "My view was...we are all taught," says Campbell. "We are all products of many different forces that inform our views about the world, and the question is are the things that we've learned the things that are useful to us, or are some counter productive, are some of them things we need to unlearn if we are going to be effective leaders or players."

In 2013, the conversation began about potentially creating a new program at the University of Alberta — and Kim Campbell had a discussion with the president of the institution. "I said, if you're looking for somebody to roll their sleeves up and actually create it, that might be of interest to me," says Campbell. And with that, she became Founding Principal at the University of Alberta's new Peter Lougheed Leadership College (PLLC).

<https://youtu.be/Z9qnkarayoM>

"What the university was hearing... was that graduates are coming out of universities with very good technical skills but they don't have the soft skills to deploy what they've learned," says Campbell. That's the type of thing that PLLC hopes to teach. The students involved still pursue their regular degrees, but they add the interdisciplinary PLLC curriculum as well.

In a sense, Campbell's incredible diverse and multi-faceted career makes her the perfect fit for the organization. This year, the first PLLC class will graduate, and they're currently recruiting the third class. "I hope that it helps to create an identity of the U of A as not just a great university, but also a place where students get this opportunity to develop those skills that will make them even more effective and to help them live really consequential lives."
