

The University of Edinburgh

Senatus

12 December 2001

Action Requested

The Senatus is invited to adopt this Special Minute.

**Special Minute:
Noreen E Murray FRSE FRS**

Professor Noreen Murray studied botany as an undergraduate but realised the enormous potential of microbial systems for genetic studies and has spent the past 45 years developing a reputation as an outstanding molecular geneticist, initially working with fungi but then moving on to make major contributions to our understanding using the bacterial model species *E coli*. After a PhD in Birmingham, Noreen moved to Stanford where she spent a productive period of almost 5 years. She returned to this country with a fellowship at Cambridge and a little later joined the staff of the Medical Research Council, and moved to Edinburgh in 1967 as a member of the MRC Microbial Genetics Unit, located in the UK's first Department of Molecular Biology. The work of Noreen and colleagues in the unit was at the forefront of the recombinant DNA revolution and she has continued to make major research contributions to this field ever since. Her most notable contributions have come from fundamental studies of restriction enzymes and the development of cloning vectors based on the bacteriophage lambda, along with their use in facilitating studies on gene expression and to develop efficient expression systems for several of the enzymes that are now used in every molecular biology lab around the world. Her studies provide the basis for genetic engineering.

Between 1980 and 1982 Noreen moved to the European Molecular Biology Laboratory in Heidelberg as a Group Leader and while there she developed new lines of research and important collaborations. Fortunately for us she then returned to Edinburgh to continue her dynamic research programme and training several excellent postgraduate students and research associates. In addition to her busy research career, Noreen has always been heavily involved in the teaching of molecular biology and has inspired many students to enter research careers in this area. Her lectures have always been meticulously prepared and highly informative.

Noreen's research has been recognised by election as a Fellow of the Royal Society in 1982 and of the Royal Society of Edinburgh in 1989, the same year as being awarded the Gabor Medal of the Royal Society. She was appointed to a Personal Chair in Molecular Genetics at the University of Edinburgh in 1988. In recent years, she has been awarded an honorary degree from the University of Warwick and also with her husband, Professor Sir Kenneth Murray, honorary degrees from UMIST and Birmingham University. The award from Birmingham was particularly pleasing as it was there where Noreen and Ken first met as students. Her long and distinguished career in bacterial genetics was recently recognised when Noreen was awarded the Fred Griffith Review Lectureship by the Society for General Microbiology.

Noreen has served the wider scientific community in several ways, having been heavily involved in committee work that includes three years as President of the Genetical Society and periods as a member of Council of the Royal Society and of the Biotechnology and Biological Sciences Research Council. These and other external commitments have not prevented Noreen from also serving tirelessly on many committees within this University. Noreen is a Trustee of the Darwin Trust, a charity that has benefited the University enormously through its contribution to capital projects and by

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enabling many gifted young overseas students, mostly at the PhD level, to study in Edinburgh. She has taken a keen interest in the activities of these students while in Edinburgh and in their further careers.

Noreen has shown little sign of slowing down and still works hard in the research lab. She holds very high standards in all her work and sets an excellent example for younger scientists to aspire to. She is a supportive colleague and has made many friends in Edinburgh. We wish Noreen and Ken much happiness in their retirement and hope that they can persuade themselves to enjoy some free time.