

# *citation*

## *Honorary Fellow of COL*

*Professor Brenda Gourley's ancestors moved south to KwaZuluNatal from Lothian in Scotland and she has come back north again to Milton Keynes. Her family motto is Profunda cermit, which means "She understands profoundly". She has shown this quality in abundance in a career that led her to become the first woman Vice-Chancellor in South Africa and then the first female Vice-Chancellor of the Open University here in the UK. Brenda Gourley is an outstanding figure, a person who stands out for speaking her mind and leading from the front.*

*Before coming to the UK, she was Vice-Chancellor of the University of Natal, which was transformed under her leadership, giving access to a wider variety of students and focusing on the demands of a "knowledge society". She chaired the South African Universities' Vice-Chancellors' Association and is now the Chair of the Association of Commonwealth Universities.*

*Professor Gourley's belief in the importance of an organisational "vision", combined with her accountant's attachment to facts and measurement make her an acute strategic thinker who pays close attention to both systems and leadership.*

*Professor Gourley is keenly aware of the rapid changes gathering because of the digital environment. She has lead the Open University to embrace the Internet in a way*

*that formal education practitioners can understand through access to the course materials that the Open University now provides free of charge to the world.*

*In doing this, she has to navigate confusing waters where universities are increasingly being seen as businesses trading a commodity, whereas traditional publishers are turning their proprietary books into courses and registering learners. The Open University must sail a careful course to remain a leader in the rapidly changing world of learning and ensure that its graduates find a meaningful place in the knowledge economy of today's world.*

*She has undertaken a personal campaign to enable her native continent of Africa to benefit from all that the Open University has to offer. This has meant raising substantial funds and inspiring the whole institution to engage in the exciting challenges of African development. The result is that already some Open University programmes are household words in Africa's educational community.*

*In light of her achievements, I suggest that her family motto be reworded to read: "She understands and achieves profoundly". I now call on the President and Acting Chairman to confer upon Professor Brenda Gourley, the title of Honorary Fellow of the Commonwealth of Learning.*