

Citation - Samantha Meers AO
14 May 2026, 2.30pm

Chancellor, it is with much pleasure that I present to you, Ms Samantha Meers AO, for admission as an Honorary Fellow of the University.

Ms Meers is a distinguished alumnus who graduated with a Bachelor of Arts and Bachelor of Laws in 1989, and a Master of Letters in 1999. Her background in law, media, and business, combined with a lifelong passion for the arts, led her to co-found the Nelson Meers Foundation, Australia's first private ancillary fund, in 2001 with her late father, businessman and philanthropist, Mr Nelson Meers AO.

As Chair of the Nelson Meers Foundation, Ms Meers has led the Foundation over the past 25 years in supporting programs and organisations that create positive change, and promote individual wellbeing, community cohesion and cultural tolerance, particularly through the lens of the arts and culture. This has included sustained investment in some of Australia's most important institutions.

Under her leadership, the Foundation has funded more than 300 diverse and innovative projects since its inception. In recognition of the University's ambition to enrich its cultural offering, the Foundation was a founding donor to the Chau Chak Wing Museum, helping bring to life its vision as a creative hub for Sydney.

The Foundation's work embodies a strong family ethos: that culture is central to compassion, connection and citizenship. One of its central tenets is, *'in order to live as compassionate human beings, we need to construct a society that enables us to develop imagination and empathy in all dimensions - emotional, intellectual and spiritual.'*

Staying true to this vision, Ms Meers has held numerous influential roles across the not-for-profit sector, spanning the arts, climate action, and gender and social equality. These include Chair of the National Portrait Gallery, Chair of Belvoir St Theatre, Chair of the Brett Whiteley Foundation, Trustee of the Art Gallery of NSW, a board member of the Sydney Symphony Orchestra and of Energy Leadership Australia, and advisory positions with government and with the University of New South Wales and the University of Sydney. She has been honoured as a Fellow of the Royal Society and the State Library of NSW for her commitment to the cultural sector. Her recognition as a Fellow of the Australian Institute of Company Directors underscores her enduring commitment to excellence in governance and ethical leadership across the not-for-profit sector.

In 2018, she was awarded the Order of Australia, 'for distinguished service to the community through philanthropic support for arts programs and cultural institutions, and to a range of charitable organisations.'

Ms Meers has served on the Board of the University's Power Institute, with the Foundation funding Power Publications and its Digital Portfolio Project for several years. Her continued support has enhanced the accessibility and longevity of Australian arts thought leadership.

As the first woman in her family to attend University, supporting first-generation university students and promoting social inclusion is a cause close to Ms Meers' heart. For many years, the Foundation has backed the Widening Participation in English project, which engages and inspires students from diverse and disadvantaged backgrounds through the arts.

Tellingly, Ms Meers was once nominated for this Honorary Fellowship several years ago alongside her father but graciously declined to highlight his remarkable contributions. She has been a shining example of the values we hope to foster in our alumni.

Chancellor, I heartily commend Ms Samantha Meers to you and invite you to confer the title of Honorary Fellow of the University upon her.