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Tribute to Michelle

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TRIBUTE TO MICHELLE

MILA HESLIN

A former student of Professor Michelle Markham, Mila first shared the reflections contained in this article in a video tribute presented at the memorial service held at the University following Michelle's passing. Her contribution speaks to Michelle's remarkable gift for mentorship and the deep personal connections she forged with her students and colleagues. We are honoured to include this heartfelt tribute in this special edition.

My name is Mila, and I have had the privilege of being one of Michelle's students. Michelle was more than a brilliant teacher - she was my mentor and friend. It's a privilege to share a few words about the remarkable person she was and to honour her memory.

9 years ago, I sat in one of Michelle's lectures for the first time. I didn't know it then, but that day marked the beginning of one of the most meaningful mentorships of my life. I was approaching my final year at university and finding myself increasingly unsure about what I wanted to do after graduation. I'll be honest in saying that tax was definitely not on my list of considerations. But Michelle's energy, wit and passion for the subject were contagious, so I enrolled in her tax class as an elective. 9 years later, I can say with absolute certainty that it was one of the best decisions I've ever made.

I'll never forget one particular moment that perfectly captured who Michelle was. She was an exceptional networker and often invited Partners from major firms to speak to our class. It was both exciting and intimidating. After one such presentation, I nervously tried to approach a Partner, unsure how to start a conversation. Michelle noticed immediately. Without missing a beat, she poured two glasses of juice, handed them to me, tapped the Partner on the shoulder, and said, "John, Mila has a brilliant assignment topic that she'd love your opinion on."

Then she gave me a quick wink and disappeared, leaving me to find my footing.

That moment changed everything. The paper we discussed that day was eventually published in an international journal, something Michelle made sure to proudly share with what felt like everyone in the tax world. That opportunity led to an internship, then to a job, and ultimately launched my career.

This is just one of many examples of Michelle's unwavering belief in her students. When the time came to pursue my Law Masters, choosing her as my supervisor was a no-brainer. Over those 4 years, which spanned full-time work, a global pandemic, and a move to the other side of the world, Michelle remained my greatest supporter. Despite her demanding schedule of teaching, marking, publishing, and presenting at international conferences, she managed to turn around feedback on my chapters within hours. She was tough but fair, always pushing me to refine my ideas and stand by my conclusions, though never shying away from telling me when they didn't quite make sense.

When I finally crossed the finish line and my thesis was published, Michelle celebrated my success as if it were her own. And in our later catch-ups, she would proudly share stories of her newer

students' achievements, always helping them build connections and find their footing in the professional world.

Michelle was truly one of a kind - generous, brilliant, and fiercely committed to the success of her students. I don't exaggerate when I say that meeting her changed the trajectory of my life.

I feel deeply fortunate to have been her student, and even more grateful to have felt her belief in me. Her last message to me ended the way so many did: I am so very proud of you, Mila. Hugs, Michelle.

I know her loss will be felt deeply by the entire Bond community, and by the many students and colleagues all around the world who, like me, were lucky to learn from her. Her legacy will endure in the countless students whose careers she helped shape and whose lives were enriched by her guidance.

My love and sympathy go to Peter, and to her family and friends who share in this grief. I am so proud to have known Michelle, to have her name printed next to mine in my thesis, and to have called her a mentor and friend.