

Endorsement from Chris O'Donnell, University of the West of Scotland and UK-wide pay negotiator

Hi fellow members, I am Chris O'Donnell and this message is to endorse Jo Grady as the new General Secretary for the University and College Union.

The reason I'm endorsing Jo is pretty complex, but I'll take you through some of it - and a bit different.

So - what we ask the General Secretary to do is way beyond their job description. And I mean, we, the whole job enforces on top of them in the same way that we have in our own jobs day to day. We ask them to put themselves in the line of harm to represent you and I, essentially.

And by that I mean regularly general secretaries from anyone that we can think of Sharon Graham all the way across to Roz Foyer, receive bullying, receive misogynistic comments, receive attack mail. A Tory television and press attempts to belittle them, ridicule online for whatever...squeaky voices, choice of makeup, themselves, their shape, their size, their clothes, all of that. And we don't see that for other male general secretaries, but that's another point, I suppose.

The key thing is that's the expectation. It doesn't go away no matter who holds this role. So the question for me is who would want to do that to themselves and what characteristics do they have that would mean that they put themselves in that space?

Jo is incredibly wedded to her values, and those values are common to a lot of us. She carries them with a really strong back. She's an incredibly friendly, engaging and welcoming person. She'll speak to anyone. You can see that from all the other testimonies about the picket line. So she has a soft front, but she's absolutely fierce. She has a really strong heart.

And why does she...why does she have those characteristics? Of course, she gives an absolute flying F about you and about me and the sector that we work in and she is guaranteed to put herself in the way of all of that horrific behaviour that attacks her to better our working, our personal, our inclusion and the things that happen to us in higher education, FE, prisons, all of the wonderful places in which UCU members are present.

That's why I'm endorsing Jo Grady.