

Professor Dame Sarah Springman Biography

Professor Dame Sarah Springman DBE, FREng, is the Principal at St Hilda's College, University of Oxford. Sarah was educated at Wycombe Abbey, and then went on to read Engineering Sciences at Girton College, Cambridge. After five years working on civil engineering projects around the world, she returned to Cambridge to read an MPhil (St Catharine's) and a PhD (Magdalene) in Soil Mechanics. Sarah was the first female Research Fellow at Magdalene College, Cambridge, before going on to become a university lecturer in 1990. In 1997, Sarah moved to ETH Zurich, Switzerland, becoming the first female Professor of Geotechnical Engineering in Western Europe and the first female Professor of Civil Engineering in Switzerland. Her expertise lies in soil-structure-interaction and geotechnical aspects of natural hazards. Sarah was Rector of the university from 2015-2021.

Alongside a fulfilling career in engineering, Professor Springman was also a high-performance athlete, representing Great Britain and Northern Ireland in triathlon from 1984-1993. During this time, she competed in the 1990 Commonwealth Games in Auckland, New Zealand and won 21 European Triathlon Union Championship medals in both triathlon and duathlon. In 1992, she was elected Vice-President of World Triathlon (ITU), serving until 1996, where she lobbied for triathlon to become a recognised sport in both the Olympics and the Commonwealth Games, and wrote the women's action plan for Triathlon: 'to achieve equality of opportunity, recognition and reward'. For her work in sport, she was awarded the Lifetime Achievement Award at the Sky Sports Sportswoman of the Year Awards in 2013.