

Gazette supplement



‘Nenikekamen – we have won,’ shouted Pheidippides, or some Greek soldier, after running from Marathon to Athens around 490 BCE to announce victory over the invading Persian army. Legend has it, he then dropped dead... I get that... when it gets to mile 20 everything hurts, trust me. Having just completed my 6th world major marathon in Berlin in blistering heat with blistering feet, I am delighted finally to hang up my marathon shoes.

So, as we gather here on 7 October 2025, still in shock at what antisemitism and hatred wreaked in Manchester last Thursday, let us hope for more kindness. Let us hope for peace in Gaza and for the people of Palestine and let us hope for the safe return of all hostages.

around the world, yours truly included, to blister and bleed, so as to be part of this ancient story. I daresay a robot will run it faster, but it won't carry the value and depth of shared humanity... and so while there is much excitement surrounding artificial intelligence, AI agents and robots, the one thing AI is not is human: would anyone care if a robot ran a marathon in under 2 hours? Our challenge, now more than ever, is how to keep humans and their stories at the heart of our existence.

We are born to learn. Animals learn for survival; human animals learn for the sake of learning more. There's a thrill to it. That self-reinforcing drive, that exponential take-off, which began on an African savannah millions of years ago, is the reason why universities came into existence over 1,000 years ago and have been here since. *Disco ergo sum* – no, that's not a reference to Freshers' Week, rather *I learn therefore I am*. Machine learning is foundational to AI – the key is in the word: learning. I have used machine learning in my neuroscience work for years. AI learns more quickly and integrates vast amounts of knowledge well beyond our individual

capabilities. And now, with the quest for artificial general intelligence, we are in headlong pursuit of that exponential take-off. AI outperforms the human brain increasingly on a daily basis.

There are many technologies that outperform us: cars for speed, planes to fly. But outperforming intelligence is different – especially for an academic whose ‘day job’ is all about our brains. Suddenly, we have a competitor... and that feels deeply uncomfortable. Reasoning, problem-solving, planning, language, perception, learning: the stuff of intelligence. The question for us is: how good are we, really, at some of these things? Some humility is required.

As the 18th-century statistician, philosopher and minister Reverend Bayes observed, the way we perceive the world, the way we interpret any data, depends on our prior information or beliefs as well as on what we detect or see: and that includes priors or stories inherited from our ancestors. And sometimes priors or beliefs overrule inputs or data. Sound familiar? Changing a prior is tough. Bayes’ philosophy is a bedrock for understanding how the brain perceives, and it has also been critical to machine learning. It helps us understand why we – and machines – sometimes make bad decisions. And why, when it comes to the great issues of our time, we need to do more than just confront voters with data. We need to also change their priors or beliefs – and that’s why story-telling matters.

Oxford is leading in AI – no matter the metric, we are globally at the forefront of AI research and its application to discovery and teaching. I have been so impressed by the extent to which our community is experimenting with AI in teaching and research – aided by Digital Transformation support. We must remain at the cutting edge while recognising the need to safeguard our academic integrity, protect ourselves and our students, and provide a safer environment for our data – hence the recent roll-out of a more secure OpenAI ChatGPT Edu. I would particularly like to thank the [AI Competency Centre](#), supported by the Centre for Teaching and Learning, alongside the AI in Education Task and Finish Group for running pilots and developing policies.

Internationally, our [AI in Education Hub](#) at the Department of Education – with collaborators – are leading a human-centred approach to AI in learning for higher education. The Bodleian Library is using AI to imagine the library of the future by digitising 3,500 of the Bodleian’s dissertations to make them globally accessible. Oxford University Press has launched two new AI-enabled search assistants on core platforms. Their Oxford Law Pro supports legal professionals and researchers through AI. *Oxford Intersections* – OUP’s new offering curated by leading academics and global experts from across disciplines is on *AI in Society*.

Presciently, (or not, we hope) OUP’s Oxford Word of the year was ‘Brain rot’...

A landmark [£30 million investment](#) to create the Ellison Institute of Technology Centre for Doctoral Training or CDT in the Fundamentals of AI will complement our involvement with the UK government’s [Spärck AI scholarship programme](#) and our Intelligent Earth CDT for AI and the Environment. Alongside our [Oxford Schmidt Africa–India AI in Science Faculty Fellowship programme](#), these investments are training the next generation of AI thinkers, and they build on 10 years of our Google DeepMind Scholarship programme that has produced 88 graduate scholars. We remain deeply grateful to Honorary Dr Demis Hassabis for his vision in establishing the programme, and to Professor Michael Wooldridge – our inaugural Ashall Professor of AI – who helped lead the charge.

MPLS colleagues secured prestigious [ARIA funding](#) to develop safer AI systems, and our spin-out companies, such as Lumai pioneering energy-efficient AI processors, are tackling its energy demands. MSD colleagues [developed TriOx](#) – a novel blood test for cancer powered by machine learning. And a new collaborative research programme between Oxford’s Big Data Institute and GlaxoSmithKline (GSK) aims to transform drug discovery and clinical trial design using biostatistics and machine learning.

But we aren’t just developing and using AI; we are thinking about it as well: the Uehiro Oxford Institute for the practical application of ethics, the Institute for Ethics in AI and the Oxford Internet Institute together establish Oxford as a leading global hub of expertise on technology and ethics, particularly regarding AI.

I am merely scratching at the surface, but I hope you share my pride in what you, our community, have achieved this past year and how we have embraced this new way to live and learn.

I have pride too in being an alumna of Oxford and to have post-doc’d at Harvard: 2 great places of learning. Harvard’s logo, VERITAS – meaning Truth – and Oxford’s logo, DOMINUS ILLUMINATIO MEA (THE LORD IS MY LIGHT), reflect our steadfast determination to shed light and seek truth, no matter the headwinds. Our job, our heritage is to tell true stories, not make-believe. But we need to tell our stories better, particularly to those who might, understandably, not see how what we do is relevant to them. We need to reimagine how to bring all members of our society inside our lecture halls, because knowledge and truth belongs to us all, and we need to keep all humans learning. The humanities are naturally a powerful means to engage with the public – they represent the very story of humans past, present and future. With omnipresent AI and at a time of crisis for humanities nationwide, Oxford is doubling down.

We are standing up for, supporting and celebrating the humanities like you've never seen before.

Ahead of time and on budget – always a delight for a Vice-Chancellor – the Schwarzman Centre for the Humanities has opened its doors to students, staff and the public. It will, we hope, be the largest Passivhaus building in England and the only Passivhaus concert hall in the world. The centre has been developed by the University of Oxford with the support of the largest single gift made to the University in modern times – from philanthropist and businessman Stephen A. Schwarzman. Thanks to additional gifts, his total support towards the project now stands at £185 million.

We are deeply indebted to Stephen: he is a wonderful addition to our Oxford family. Members of the Sohmen family honoured their father by naming the 500-seat concert hall as well as supporting graduate scholarships. 7 academic faculties and 2 research institutes have moved in, but it's a building for everyone. There is a theatre, a 'black box' experimental performance space, exhibition space, a 100-seat cinema, a café or bar to socialise in and a dedicated schools' outreach space – it really is a celebration of what it is to be human. The Cultural Programme has spent the year successfully building relationships with partners across the city and University. The [Visiting Fellowship programme](#) for 2024/25 featured a cohort of artists and practitioners working at the top of their respective fields, such as writer and artist Edmund de Waal. And let me here congratulate and thank Marios Papadopoulos, his wife Anthi and the [Oxford Philharmonic Orchestra](#), who complete their period of residency with the University this year. They have brought music to all and laid the foundation for our new musical programme. We look forward to further collaborations.

The public cultural programme will open with a free celebratory weekend on 25 and 26 April 2026 with activities throughout the building for all ages – do participate. Our ambition is to become the cultural destination alongside London.

Sadly, the story of humans is also the story of untold suffering – witness the world today. And the humanities are playing their part in highlighting this darker side of humans and working to find solutions, such as through the AHRC Policy and Evidence Centre for modern slavery and human rights, a hub for UK-wide research led by Professor Andrew Thompson.

Beyond the human, society is shaped by countless interconnected factors: political, cultural, environmental, technological and economic. So, to address the complex challenges shaping our world – remember, Oxford doesn't do easy – our divisions and researchers are stepping up, working across disciplinary divides to tackle the 'hard stuff'. They are providing much-needed hope.

Our Mathematical, Physical and Life Sciences Division has had another extraordinary year. We are delighted to see the return of Professor Ian Walmsley as our inaugural [Quantum Institute Director](#). The commercial success with Oxford Ionics' \$1 billion-sale to IonQ illustrates our leadership in quantum research. Oxford is well placed to secure the UK's competitive economic position in a projected [\\$1.3 trillion global market](#) just for computing. In collaboration with colleagues in Medical Sciences, [a novel ultrasound-activated nanoparticle system](#) will dramatically enhance antibiotic delivery.

Early intervention, detection and prevention are key areas for our Medical Sciences Division. Research into [maternal anaemia revealed a striking 47% increase in the risk of congenital heart disease in children](#), highlighting the critical importance of maternal nutrition and timely care during pregnancy. And we are proud to see the division, in partnership with international collaborators, [leading and co-leading the Medical Research Council's first 2 Centres of Research Excellence](#) in Therapeutic Genomics and Advanced Cardiac Therapies. Oxford will also lead a new [£50 million MRC Centre to develop brain stimulation device-based therapies](#) and a further £50 million MRC centre to better understand chronic inflammatory diseases. Our efforts in cancer give hope to millions, such as the [MyMelanoma study](#) with the NHS's Digitrials, or our two Centres of Research Excellence on liver and oesophagogastric cancers. And we have [launched a £50 million partnership with GSK](#) to explore the potential of cancer prevention through vaccination, building on Oxford's exceptional track record in vaccine development, and bucking the recent doom and gloom about pharma leaving the UK.

And, lest we forget, the industrial revolution not only changed our way of life, it changed our climate. No amount of rhetoric changes fact. Apples fall from trees. Gravity is real. Climate change is not caused by paracetamol. Science and facts matter. It's important that places like Oxford tell truthful stories, not make-believe ones – but we must also understand what drives the make believe and the human response. We need to better explain the iterative process of scientific discovery, to have the confidence and humility to acknowledge our own priors and beliefs, without fearing that this opens the door to anything goes. This is why social sciences are so important.

I have repeatedly said since the start of my tenure that Oxford can and must tackle the climate and nature crisis using our unparalleled depth and breadth in expertise. So, how are we doing? Well, you cannot lead without first getting your own house in order. Thanks to the dedicated efforts of the Environmental Sustainability Subcommittee and colleagues from across the collegiate University, we are seeing great progress. Our [Laboratory Efficiency Assessment Framework project](#) now runs in over 400 laboratories saving us money and drastically

reducing CO₂ production. 288 solar panels on the roof of the swimming pool help meet almost ¼ of its energy needs. We've met our 20% reduction target on carbon from flights against the pre-pandemic baseline, improved our recycling rates, approved a local transport strategy and participated in the Oxford Bus Partnership. We performed a baseline biodiversity survey across 1,683 hectares of University estate, 23 km of rivers and streams and 61 km of hedgerows – necessary work to develop actions and measure our progress towards achieving biodiversity net gain by 2035. These milestones demonstrate our continued commitment to environmental leadership through action, innovation and collaboration. But they are just the beginning: we owe it to the next generation to push ourselves further.

Planet-scale problems need planet-scale solutions. So how are our researchers helping? Brilliantly, of course: Véronique Gouverneur's chemistry team is [recycling fluoride from 'forever chemicals'](#); Charlotte Williams' [£11 million SCHEMA](#) initiative positions Oxford as a leader in sustainable chemical manufacturing; [Oxford Earth's](#) programme is highlighting the neglected issues of equity and social licence when extracting the natural resources required for the net zero transition. In collaboration with like-minded universities we are [developing hydrogen-powered jet engines](#) to transform aviation, and Chris Ballentine's team in Earth Sciences are finding [pathways to natural clean hydrogen](#) – impressed so far? Well, keep listening... we are learning from our predecessors about biodiversity through the Molecular Ecology of Medieval European Landscapes in the School of Archaeology. [REACH](#), in the School of Geography and the Environment, in partnership with UNICEF and national governments, has improved water security for 10 million people across East Africa and South Asia – with a goal of 100 million by 2030. A [Nature-Positive Economy Index](#), developed by our Smith School of Enterprise and the Environment, the Oxford Martin Programme on Biodiversity and Society, and the Leverhulme Centre for Nature Recovery, in collaboration with the UN and other international partners, offers a practical tool for governments and investors to integrate nature into economic policy and decision-making. And did you realise that Our World in Data, the first port of call for millions seeking information on ourselves and our planet, is hosted by the Oxford Martin School? – which celebrated its 20th anniversary this year! And [the Climate Policy Monitor](#) – a collaboration between the Blavatnik School of Government, the Oxford Sustainable Law Programme and Oxford Net Zero – has mapped the growing global momentum of climate legislation – so important in testing times and illustrating the power of our Social Sciences Division. Staff at the Oxford Botanic Garden travel far and wide to discover new plant species, and EJ Milner-Gulland has shown that dehorning rhinos can drastically reduce poaching. Radical solutions from bold researchers.

To emphasise our commitment as an institution, on World Environment Day in June we co-hosted the [Right Here, Right Now global climate summit](#) in partnership with UN Human Rights. This event, the largest climate justice gathering of its kind, featured a rolling 24-hour global meeting, in person and livestreamed, with contributions from universities and experts across 5 continents spanning Global North and Global South, as well as 36 events in Oxford hosted by departments, colleges, student societies and community partners.

It is clear: people still want climate action. So, Oxford is now embarking on one of its most urgent and unifying campaigns: to channel our research and education towards the twin global challenges of reducing emissions and strengthening climate resilience—contributing solutions and leadership where they are most needed. By uniting our breadth of expertise with bold new initiatives—many of which can only be realised through philanthropic partnership—we will equip future generations to lead responsibly in a changing world, deliver climate intelligence for all through open, accessible platforms, and transform Oxford itself into a living laboratory for climate sustainability and biodiversity recovery. Working with partners and collaborators from across the globe, Oxford is stepping up to help shape a more sustainable future. I am grateful to all those research leaders from across all divisions for participating in the convening sessions this past year to develop Oxford's climate story and campaign. Onwards.

Another shop window to Oxford, to hope, to the power of knowledge, human endeavour and our shared human story, are our great gardens, libraries and museums. The Ashmolean Museum, History of Science Museum, Museum of Natural History, Pitt Rivers Museum, Oxford Botanic Garden and Arboretum, and the Bodleian Libraries, together welcomed over 3.5 million visitors last year – exceeding for the first time pre-pandemic numbers. They are rightly some of the most popular attractions in Oxfordshire. And if you've not seen my Fire & Wire video podcast with Xa Sturgis taking in some of the Ashmolean's greatest treasures then you are missing out – he's awesome, and the museum truly is a King Alfred's jewel... And researchers from the Bodleian Libraries, together with collaborators, combined X-ray scanning at the Diamond Light Source with cutting-edge AI to reveal the Epicurean philosopher Philodemus' words 'On Vices', unseen for 2,000 years, because they lay buried after the eruption of Mount Vesuvius inside the vulcanised scroll PHerc. 172. Talk about story-telling! – just as the Pitt Rivers Museum tells stories, such as the Maasai Living Cultures project that was awarded the 'Partnership of the Year' at the 2025 Museum & Heritage Awards.

I've said it before, and I'll say it again: the quickest route to impact is through innovation. It still surprises me

that people don't think of Oxford as the leading hub for innovation in the UK, and arguably Europe – we have long topped various charts. The recent Spotlight on Spinouts report showed that 10 universities are responsible for 53% of all UK spinouts, with Oxford maintaining its position as the leading origin institution, aided enormously by Oxford Science Enterprises. Our students are pretty good too. EnSpire – our student entrepreneurship hub – has supported the creation of 29 social enterprises in addition to commercial successes such as [Evolvare Biosciences](#), just accepted onto the prestigious Y Combinator programme.

Faculty success innovation stories include [Intelligent Ultrasound acquired by GE Healthcare](#); [Semantic Technologies acquired by Samsung](#); and of course, we celebrate the remarkable success of OrganOx, with their pioneering device that keeps human organs alive outside the body, bought for a record-breaking \$1.5 billion by Terumo. That transaction, which is subject to regulatory and other approvals, would be the largest acquisition of an Oxford University spinout to date, and one of the most significant venture capital exits in UK university spinout history. Congratulations to one and all.

Our newly created Oxfordshire Strategic Innovation Taskforce has worked tirelessly with key stakeholders, town and gown as well as government, to develop a united and ambitious vision for Oxford, Oxfordshire and the nation. We are thrilled to have a government-backed Growth Commission and that the Ox–Cam ARC and railway line to connect our 2 great universities is 'back on'. Our wonderful colleges are helping too, with landmark developments by St John's at Oxford North, Magdalen in the Oxford Science Park and Exeter now joining the innovation ecosystem party. These developments are critical to the mission I outlined at the start of my tenure: to strengthen Oxfordshire's position as a global innovation hub, but with a focus on driving equitable economic growth – this must and can benefit all, particularly those living here, as well as providing opportunities for shaping policy and unlocking new investment, talent and impact. And that is why, in November, we are launching Equinox – for Equitable Innovation Oxford – as the name to encapsulate our collective ambition. Oxford's spinout activity spans all 17 United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals. Our Increasing Diversity in Entrepreneurial Activities Initiative, or IDEA, is disrupting the world of innovation. 39% of Oxford spinouts have at least 1 female founder – 20% above the UK university average, and almost double both the regional and national averages for innovation-based companies. And, for those who think you cannot do good and help the economy, let me bust that myth right here: the Oxford–AstraZeneca vaccine not only saved over 6 million lives in year one of use, but saved the world economy over £2 trillion. That's impact.

Partnerships with Birmingham and early discussions with that great city of Liverpool (my historical roots) illustrate how we can help build the UK economy through an innovation network connecting our great research-intensive universities anchored in fantastic cities with great talent – and that includes our skills in the creative arts, humanities and social sciences as much as it does those in life and physical sciences.

As we become giddy with the possible, let us take a moment to celebrate further this past year.

Habemus Cancellarium! Lord William Hague became Oxford's 160th Chancellor this year. The new process facilitated a record number of alumni from around the world to vote electronically. William and his wife, Ffion, have hit the ground running, a superb addition to our Oxford family, already bringing great benefit to us through their dedication, experience, love and hope. William is an absolute delight to work with, and Encaenia was a wonderful celebration for our new Chancellor. We were delighted to honour 8 extraordinary individuals drawn from broadcasting, journalism, politics, academia, literature and sports – and it was personally thrilling to host Mo Farah, as he knows a thing or two about running...

Enduring, endless excellence – that's Oxford. Ranked the top university in the world for a record-breaking 9th consecutive year by the *Times Higher Education* rankings (arguably the most rigorous ranking system worldwide), I am hopeful for a 10th this week. And we have maintained our top 5 or number 1 position in all other global and UK ranking systems too. 14 faculty members were recognised in New Year and King's Birthday Honours lists, with 8 Oxford scientists elected Fellows of the Royal Society, 8 academics elected Fellows of the British Academy and 1 an honorary Fellow. 4 Oxford researchers were honoured with Royal Society Awards for outstanding contributions to scientific discovery, public engagement and research culture.

Our Vice-Chancellor's Awards, now in their 2nd year, showcased our excellence with over 1,300 individuals nominated in 160 award entries across the 11 categories. The VC's Award for outstanding contribution I awarded to a fantastic example of us Firing & Wiring, working together with the city, the county and the world. An Oxfordshire quarry worker stumbled upon dinosaur-like footprints at work one day; he immediately thought to contact his local university for help, and our Natural History Museum sprang into action, uncovering the world's 5th-longest dinosaur trackway with 200 footprints now meticulously documented for research. Through global media, events and exhibitions, public excitement was sparked worldwide. This is how it should be: the public working at ease with their local University to co-create the story of our past, sharing in the joy of discovery and understanding.

Our students remain an inspiration, and I so enjoy my breakfasts, dog walks and cheering on clubs and societies, including watching our student engineers race at Silverstone in their impressive hand-built car. Despite losses in the 2 most-publicised sporting fixtures (we will win again...), we won overall across all fixtures completed against the Light Blues. The same goes for league and cup competitions at the British Universities Competitive Sports, with over 50% wins and draws combined. In keeping with my desire to be ‘streaming as well as dreaming spires’, we soft-launched OU Sport TV – do watch. I wish to thank all our participating students for their dedication in representing Oxford and I encourage you all to support them. Just imagine what we might achieve with better facilities for the thousands of students and staff who participate in sport and want to be physically active. I will not relent on our grand vision for Oxford Sport.

This academic and extracurricular success is only possible because of the dedication of you, our staff and students. So let me take this opportunity to thank everyone who is part of our collective story to seek truth through our research, to disseminate it through our teaching and to communicate and curate it for the world. I would like to particularly thank those outgoing Pro-Vice-Chancellors who have served tirelessly over the past nearly 10 years, and who have left an indelible mark on Oxford for the good, notably navigating us through difficult times during the pandemic: Professor Martin Williams (Education), Dr David Prout (Planning and Resources), Professor Chas Bountra (Innovation), and this term Professor Anne Trefethen (Digital). And I am grateful that we have new faces to pick up the reins to serve you alongside me; Professor Freya Johnston (Education); Professor Alex Betts (External Engagement, Sport and Community); Professor Heidi Johansen-Berg (Strategic Initiatives); Dr David White (Chief Digital Information Officer), with more to come this year. And as we say our fond farewells and heartfelt thanks to loyal and brilliant Heads of House, we welcome 6 new colleagues as their successors and wish them well. The positive working environment you create is why local young people want to join us as apprentices. I am delighted that Oxford University received the 2025 Apprenticeship Employer of the Year out of 250+ employers at the Oxfordshire Apprenticeship Awards.

However, Oxford’s story is not just one of headlines and honours. Many colleagues feel stretched by heavy workloads, by navigating complex systems, and by a funding model that has not kept pace with reality. Many of our students arrive full of talent and ambition but also face challenges with mental health, belonging and safety. These truths cannot be brushed aside. If hope and kindness are to be more than words, they must shape how we treat one another inside this community as well as how we engage with the world beyond it.

That is why the University’s People Strategy is so important, bringing together several ongoing initiatives, including a focus on our safety culture through the EveryDaySafe programme and improvements in how we manage bullying and harassment. It also comprises my flagship Pay & Conditions report. Since we committed to spend about £129 million over 5 years, we have created a new £1,730 Oxford University Weighting for University staff; extended paternity leave to 12 weeks (121 individuals have already used the scheme – we even won this year’s Working Dads Employer Award); introduced an interest-free rental loan; and helped with visa and NHS surcharge costs for international staff – 14 initiatives delivered this past year. We hope these reforms will strengthen recruitment and retention, all of which will directly influence Oxford’s continued Excellence. I am delighted that our Pay & Conditions Review recently made the shortlist for the 2025 Award for Excellence in University HR. I will keep the pressure on throughout my tenure, rest assured.

Balancing the need to protect students from misconduct with the need to protect freedom of speech and the right to protest under new Office for Students obligations is not easy. I am grateful to all those involved in getting the Statute XI changes approved. Our in-person Healthy Relationships and Consent Workshop programme will be rolled out across more colleges this year – I call on all students to participate, and our Task-and-Finish Group will ensure that Oxford has more robust approaches to protecting students from sexual misconduct. Our [Code of Practice on Freedom of Speech](#) is being reviewed in light of finalised guidance by the OfS, as the new Higher Education (Freedom of Speech) Act comes into force.

I know that our colleges and departments work tirelessly to nurture our students, and yet we still face tragic losses, bringing unimaginable suffering to families and friends. Our heartfelt sympathies go to all those affected. The Student Welfare and Support Staff are deeply committed in their vital work. Anxiety, depression and mood disorder, relationships and academic issues remain the predominant presenting issues for students seeking support. On average, a student is seen within 10 days and, with over 300 students offering peer support across 37 colleges and 3 departments, we have additional means to support our students’ needs.

Registrations for disability access remain high at around 23%, in line with sector trends. Our largest ever Being and Belonging survey of disabled students is providing the vital information we need to make changes. This term OxAbility will be launched from the Careers Service, designed to help disabled students gain meaningful work experience with Oxfordshire-based employers, thanks to a van Houten Award. I am so grateful to all the services for their dedication, often at crisis moments, across the collegiate University. And our Student Union are playing their part too, having

undergone a long-overdue review and transformation. I am enormously grateful to everyone involved, especially the outgoing officers, Eleanor and Lauren, and I have every confidence in the new team.

Oxford has a proud culture of freedom of speech, despite what some claim. College-based events and our [Sheldonian Series](#) that we launched last year have proven popular and successful. Featuring a range of speakers, the Sheldonian Series tackled the topics of democracy, life and truth during our termly events. This year's theme is POWER: the power of speech amid cancel culture; the power of activism at a time of social and political uncertainty; and the power of satire in helping us make sense of the world. By modelling what good discussion, debate and disagreement look like we are further equipping our students for the world they enter. We are also reminding them that words matter; they affect people and have consequences. We are a community, so let's have more kindness.

We follow with close interest the extensive public debate on DEI in US universities. At Oxford, we have crafted a distinctive path, grounded in centuries of tradition, finding the best talent, wherever we can, and then striving to ensure that talent thrives once here. Nothing new. This is where we stand, and it is where the middle ground of British public opinion stands too.

Oxford will lead by example and help shape the public debate. This week (0th week), we are delivering in-person inductions about an inclusive student experience to more than 3,000 freshers at 24 colleges. Last year, 78% of students who took part agreed that they understood EDI better and felt more confident about handling conflict or disagreement as a result. In addition, we will continue providing specific training for JCR and MCR leaders.

And remember: a commitment to EDI, as we are practising it, goes hand in hand with our commitment to academic freedom and free speech. Oxford is a universe of diverse ideas and that comes from a diversity of talent – it is the bedrock for creative invention that benefits all. That's how and why we stay number one.

I've said it many times: talent is everywhere but opportunity is not, except at Oxford... opportunity is our story. There is nothing new here – I came to Oxford 40 years ago this very week from a local comprehensive school, Gosford Hill. The other weekend, I awarded a posthumous MPhil degree, 100 years late, to Mākereti Papakura – the first Indigenous woman to study at Oxford. I was proud to do so and even more proud to know that my colleagues of 100 years ago gave this woman the opportunity of an Oxford education simply because she was brilliant. And we can and must push ourselves further, considering today's needs.

Some people try to disparage these efforts, to needle the negative. I say Oxford, like Britain, has kind and generous people who share a profound sense of fair play. I'm proud that Oxford is leading the charge to give all children a fighting chance. Let me be clear: no-one is excluded if you have the smarts... but our school system and COVID has impacted educational attainment and confidence very unevenly. We will use our smarts to keep finding those students with raw smarts, so don't be put off applying.

Oxford is now at every step of the journey from primary school to university – inspiring pupils from the very start of their education and supporting teachers too. Research from our Department of Education informs us what additional materials are needed for teachers to stem the lack of attainment and leaky pipes in UK schools. Working in collaboration with the Challenge Academy Trust in Warrington, the research was turned into classroom teaching and learning materials. And that is why I was delighted last week to launch Oxford's offer to the UK: OxPlore Teach – our new online platform for teachers to support inspirational learning, skills and ultimately success for our schoolchildren. Now that's fair play.

Since 2020, and in collaboration with the colleges, we have made 1,300 offers for a place on the Opportunity Oxford bridging programme that has also supported a further 1,400 eligible students with access to its summer academic online course, OppOx Digital. This programme helps students thrive when they get here on our highly demanding degree courses, and we are doing more through our government-approved access and participation plan around on-course study skills. We now have around £11 million in bursary support for estranged or care-experienced students, as well as students from lower-income households, including Crankstart and Reuben Scholarships. We offer one of the most generous undergraduate bursary packages in the UK: opportunity meeting talent with 3,598 students supported since the inception of Crankstart Scholarships in 2012. We very much welcome the maintenance grant announcement by our alumna, Bridget Philippson, though we might disagree about the suggested mechanism to fund it. I'm sure the government will be pleased to learn that Oxford already provides to 1 in 4 of our undergraduates a bursary equivalent to 60% of a full government maintenance grant. And we will do more.

And, while graduate study at Oxford remains highly desirable to students around the world, with applications increasing by 8% overall, I am delighted that Council has approved the UK's first University-wide graduate access strategy. We continue our efforts to make sure that fees and bursaries are not a prohibitive factor in graduates coming to study here. The Academic Futures scholarship programme, for UK Black and Mixed-Black students, refugee and displaced students, and care-experienced students, continues to

grow, supporting over 100 scholars this past year. And we are growing as a University of Sanctuary. We now have a Colleges of Sanctuary scheme, enabling colleges like Reuben to follow in Mansfield's and Somerville's footsteps, with others to follow. This year, we have over 150 offer-holders from sanctuary backgrounds, of whom more than 50 will receive full scholarships. However, to be competitive with our counterparts in the USA and both retain and attract the very best graduates to the UK and Oxford, we must have funding for every graduate student. And that is why I have set an ambitious target for one of the fundraising campaign's goals – £1 billion for new graduate scholarships, if anyone is listening...

In keeping with our entrepreneurial and innovative spirit, we continue to evolve what we teach. Medical Sciences is offering 5 new courses over the next 2 years, including one in pain neuroscience which delights me. In Social Sciences the new [MSc in Applied Financial Economics](#) combines residential teaching with online delivery, while the Department of Education's flexible postgraduate diplomas in [Early Childhood Education](#) and [English as an Additional Language](#) will expand access to part-time learners. Such courses speak to Oxford's growing desire, bottom-up, to engage with new ways of disseminating knowledge and bringing the benefits of an Oxford education to an ever wider public.

One of Oxford's great stories is our Department for Continuing Education. For nearly 150 years it has been educating hundreds of thousands of part-time learners from every age group, background, culture and country – rooted in our passion that education is for everyone. We were born to learn. More people don't go to university than do – and we are committed to bring the joy of learning as and when people are ready. Oxford Lifelong Learning (OLL) – its new name as of 2025 – is a powerful vehicle for that mission. I am grateful to colleagues there for developing an Oxford Crisis Education (OxCRED) programme, building on the extraordinary work undertaken by my medical colleagues at OxSTAR and OxPAL to support medical students in Gaza complete their training. And let me here congratulate and thank the outgoing director, Matthew Weait, for his outstanding leadership. By aligning it more closely with GLAM, OLL affirms and celebrates its historical roots, when its mission depended on taking books from the Bodleian to its regional centres across the country. Another great and historic Oxford story where opportunity brings hope.

My Vice-Chancellor's Colloquium for interdisciplinary 'upskilling' of our students continued with the theme of climate. We expanded the programme to 30 undergraduates, 15 participating colleges and more than 30 DPhil facilitators alongside a new slate of 9 senior academics. It is a resounding success, and we will continue this year with the expanded numbers but aim to provide an additional colloquium on, you guessed

it, artificial intelligence. I am so grateful to all those involved.

In my inaugural speech, I fumbled my French, so I'll try again: *Reculer pour mieux sauter: Take a step back to jump further*. As we grapple with rising numbers of students coming to us who potentially over-use AI, we must step back and remember that our 1,000-year history of the tutorial and close-teaching is more essential now than ever. A 21st century Alan Turing might well ask: can humans think? We need to make sure they can: memory, logic and problem-solving, cognitive dissonance and friction – we do not yet know the cost to our brains if we abdicate these abilities to an algorithm. And as a former President of Magdalen, Martin Routh, presciently advised a student over 200 years ago: 'you will find it a very good practice, always to verify your references...'

So, while we embrace the wonders of AI, let us step back, double down on Oxford's bespoke, personalised, finely tuned teaching, the tutorial, in order that we jump further ahead in this world of AI to ensure humans can and will still think in the 22nd century. That is why our development campaign will also focus on securing tutorial fellowships at our beloved colleges.

World-class teaching and research need excellent professional services to support them. I am grateful that the recently approved professional services review is underway. We know our current model, highly devolved and often overlapping, can be better. Shared Leadership Groups will be responsible for the collective ownership of each end-to-end professional services area, helping us work in a more joined up way across central, divisional and departmental teams. Pilot schemes in the Faculty of Law, Nuffield Department of Medicine, NDORMS and Paediatrics are witnessing measurable improvements. Now we need to scale-up our ambition for change – better services for our academics and students and freeing up time for our staff. I know that staff feel over-worked and pressurised. These changes should help, so please support this endeavour.

On finances: well, thanks to the generosity of our donors, it has been a continued period of success for philanthropy at Oxford. Over £340 million has been raised across the collegiate University during the financial year 2024/25. Recently, we announced a gift of £27 million from the Paul Foundation, to establish the Oxford Centre for Emerging Minds Research, a pioneering initiative aimed at achieving better mental health outcomes for children, young people and families in collaboration with the founder, Patrick Paul. We were deeply saddened by the news of Patrick's death in August 2025.

And the recent £118 million support for our world-leading vaccine research from the Oxford Ellison Institute of Technology consolidates further our

mutually beneficial relationship with this innovative and exciting venture. We remain grateful to Professor Sir John Bell for getting EIT off the ground, and to Larry Ellison for his continued determination to work with us for the benefit of society. It is so important to recognise those donors who have given so significantly, and it was my absolute joy to welcome Sir Jim Ratcliffe, Chairman of INEOS, and his family and friends to receive the University's highest recognition award, the Sheldon Medal, in February 2025. Combating antimicrobial resistance is not easy, but with their support we stand a fighting chance. And he got a real kick, forgiving the pun, when the New Man student choir sang an unexpected rendition of *Glory, glory Man United...*

Regarding research income, Oxford leads – by a staggering margin of £195 million – the UK higher education sector by securing in the last financial year over £778 million in competitive research funding. We are even back to near pre-Brexit levels of Horizon Europe funding. Congratulations to you all – a testament to your excellence.

However, against this backdrop of good news, financial instability remains a key concern within the UK's Higher Education sector, and, regrettably, several universities have been forced to announce redundancies. The increase in the undergraduate fee cap, by a few hundred pounds to £9,535, offers some relief, but is more than offset by the National Insurance increase. This near-static 12-year-old fee equates to £6,700 in today's money, yet the cost to the collegiate University to teach an undergraduate at Oxford is around £25,000. As we have approximately 79% UK students as undergraduates, this level of subsidy is not sustainable.

Thankfully, we have additional financial income streams that help make ends meet. Oxford is not cheap to run. The Oxford Endowment Fund has a total net asset value of around £6 billion and provides critical income to keep the lights on in laboratories, libraries and lecture halls. I am deeply grateful to Sir Paul Ruddock for his chairmanship since OUEM's inception as he steps down, and to all the team for their stewardship of our funds. Increasingly, spinouts and licence deals provide further income, as does OUP. We are better placed to face the headwinds, but we are not immune to the pressures. Therefore, the development campaign that we will soon launch could not come at a more important time; we must build financial as well as physical and human capital resilience across the collegiate University.

Our ageing and complex estate is a genuine cause for consternation. We don't have the efficiencies, value for money or quality that I expect for this university. Our new Estates Director is up for the challenge. When we get it right, it's sensational, like the Schwarzman Centre and the Life and Mind Building – the latter a joint venture with Legal & General that is utterly

brehtaking... I might pack up being VC and return to the labs! Thank you to all those involved. Our new Estate Strategy must make that quality the norm. I am delighted that the £35 million new Global Health Building at Old Road Campus is approaching completion, and a major new facility for pandemic and vaccine research is rising out the ground, thanks to the Poonawalla family and the Moh Family Foundation. Finally, we are moving forward with our ambitious plans to redevelop the Warneford Hospital site in partnership with Oxford Health NHS Foundation Trust and a generous benefactor. The vision includes a new postgraduate college focused on medical sciences, a dedicated mental health hospital and specialised research facilities for Psychiatry and related neuroscience disciplines – addressing the major societal challenge of mental health.

Finally, when I started nearly 3 years ago, I said we could and should walk a path between being a globally leading institution and a better local anchor institution. That is why I created a Local and Global Officer position, now a full Pro-Vice-Chancellor. Today, this work is more important than ever. If the public are to understand why universities matter, then we must engage locally to make a difference. It's not enough to just give facts: people have to find an emotional connection. Good stories do that, and so this year we published our first local engagement report, [Beyond Town and Gown: Towards a More Inclusive Oxford](#). It highlights how we are working collaboratively to support a brighter future for our city and county, and our ambitions for the future. Our [Young Sport Leaders Programme](#) expanded this year to include 7 local secondary schools. The Bannister Mile has become a calendar 'thing' for Oxford. A more flexible Staff and Student Volunteer Scheme is up and running. And our Careers Service is making impact through their Making a Difference programme, helping students solve real business challenges for local and international social enterprises.

Our new Local Policy Lab is working with Oxfordshire County Council to support evidence-based public policy. We are supporting Oxfordshire's commitment to being a Marmot County – addressing the socio-economic underpinnings of health inequality. Beyond Oxford, we must develop deeper links with Westminster and Whitehall. The [Oxford Policy Engagement Network \(OPEN\)](#) is one such vehicle and their inaugural policy forum this summer, on the theme of 'Risk and Resilience', covering climate, health and technology, illustrates what is possible through our convening power. However, without a better and more coordinated shop window, to connect our brilliant academics and their research findings to those who are interested in evidence-based policy-making, we are not helping as much as we might to serve and shape key policies that affect us all. Something to work on this year. And, of course, our alumni are powerful ambassadors for why universities matter. 129 alumni and associates received

King's Honours in the last year and 1, Simon Johnson, won a Nobel Prize in Economic Sciences. We had over 16,000 alumni attending events over the last year, with almost 1,000 at Meeting Minds this September. I so enjoy meeting you, as does our Chancellor, and we remain proud to call you alumni.

Later this term, Council will publish Oxford's Strategic Plan for 2025–30, setting out how we will sustain our excellence while tackling the hardest challenges of our time — from economic growth through equitable innovation to climate resilience. The achievements I have spoken about today are not isolated successes, but part of that shared strategy or story for the years ahead.

The late Pope Francis chose Hope for this, the Church's jubilee year. Hope and kindness are the foundations on which trust, creativity and progress are built. As I look ahead, I want Oxford to be remembered not just for what we discovered, taught or built, but for how we did it — with Hope in what is possible, Truth as our North Star and Kindness in our hearts. That is the Oxford story we must keep writing together.

Addendum to the Vice-Chancellor's Oration

Oxford University notes the retirement this year of many distinguished members who have contributed to the University's intellectual life over the years. The University also notes the retirement of members who have retired from administrative, library or service posts in the University¹:

Ade-Biyi Akinola, IT Support Officer, Materials; Susan Allcock, Senior Digital Project Manager, Bodleian Digital Library Systems and Services; Professor Paul Beer, Professor of Chemistry, Inorganic Chemistry; Colin Beesley, Head of Media Services, Physiology, Anatomy and Genetics; Susan Belson, Cleaner, Chemistry; Dr Chris Blackwell, Area Safety Officer, Chemistry; Andrew Bowie, Technology and Data Analyst, Saïd Business School; Professor Keith Buckler, Associate Professor of Physiology; Dr Simon Calcutt, Atmospheric, Oceanic and Planetary Physics; Caroline Carter, Accounts Payable Assistant, Saïd Business School; Christopher Cattermole, Head of Planning and Resource Management, IT Services; Professor John Chalker, Theoretical Physics; Alison Chandler, Biomedical Services; Dominic Checksfield, Pension Finance Manager, Finance Division; John Christian, Finance Business Partner, Saïd Business School; Viviane Clark, Biomedical Services; David Clensey, Project Manager, IT Services; Dr Ian Clifton, Researcher, Organic Chemistry; Linda Collins, Senior Trial Manager, Oncology; Professor Stephen Collins, Associate Professor of Engineering Science; Michael Corlett, Senior Analyst/Programmer (.Net), IT Services; Arijia Crux, Research Evaluation Coordinator, Research Services; Siobhan Cuniffe, Senior Researcher, Oncology; Professor Jan Czernuszka, Associate Professor of Materials; Mike Dadd, Senior Research Assistant, Engineering Science; Professor Mary Daly, Professor of Sociology and Social Policy; Professor William David, Professor of Inorganic Chemistry; Catherine De Lara, Research Assistant, Experimental Medicine; Regula Dent, Experimental Psychology; Professor Michael Devereux, Professor of Business Taxation, Saïd Business School; Andrew Dixon, Head of Service Management Office, IT Services; Professor Stephen Duncan, Professor of Engineering Science; Robert Durno, Estates Services Engineering and Maintenance; Sharon Dyas-Correia, Head of Collections and Resource Description, Collections and Resources, Bodleian Libraries; Professor Klaus Ebmeier, Professor of Old Age Psychiatry; Dr Mona Edwards, Laboratory Manager, Geography; Daniel Ellis, IT Officer, Engineering Science; Pauline Facer, Estates Services Facilities Management; Sean Faughnan, Director of Finance and Administration and Director of Technology-Assisted Lifelong Learning, Oxford Lifelong Learning; Dr Teresa Finlay, Senior Health Services Researcher, Primary Care Health Sciences; Professor John Foord, Professor of Chemistry, Physical and Theoretical Chemistry; Nigel Ford, Estates Services

Security Services; Josephine Francis, HR Manager, Computer Science; Martin Freeman, Estates Services Technical Services; Professor Christopher Garland, Professor of Vascular Pharmacology; Professor Elizabeth Gemmill, Professor of Medieval Economic and Social History, Oxford Lifelong Learning; Elizabeth Gibbs, Head of Open Access Collections, Radcliffe Science Library; Anne Greening, Reception Team Leader, Saïd Business School; Carol Griffiths, DARS Senior Data and Insights Officer, Development and Alumni Engagement; Professor Christopher Grovenor, Professor of Materials; Professor Pekka Härmäläinen, Rhodes Professor of American History; Christine Hargreaves, Senior Librarian, Bodleian Digital Library Systems and Services; Martina Harley, HR and Office Administrator, Planning and Council Secretariat; Dr Michael Hawcroft, French; Gary Hawkins, Physics; Professor Li He, Professor of Computational Aerothermal Engineering, Engineering Science; Professor Jotun Hein, Professor of Bioinformatics, Statistics; Professor Stephen Heyworth, Professor of Latin, Classical Languages and Literature; Graham Hillsdon, Opto-electronic Engineer, Engineering Science; Sara Hitchens, Counsellor, Student Welfare and Support Services; Jill Hopkins, Research Grants Manager, Centre for Human Genetics; Colin James, Support Technician, Computer Science; Professor Lindsay Judson, Professor of Ancient Philosophy; Professor Stephen Kearsey, Professor of Cell Biology; Professor Peter Kemp, Professor of Public Policy, Blavatnik School of Government; Jane Kent, Research Grants Manager, Materials; Yukiko Kissick, Senior Librarian, Japanese Library; Professor Colin Kleanthous, Iveagh Professor of Microbial Biochemistry; Mark Kuspisz, Oracle Financials Senior Test Analyst, Finance Division; Professor Marc Lauxtermann, Byzantine and Modern Greek; Sarah Loving, Communications Officer, Mathematical, Physical and Life Sciences Divisional Office; Angela MacCarthy, Orthopaedics, Rheumatology and Musculoskeletal Sciences; Darren Mann, Senior Collections Manager, Natural History Museum; Richard Mason, Estates Services Security Services; Jonathan McAslan, e-Resources and Open Access APC Manager, Collections and Resources, Bodleian Libraries; Madeline Mitchell, Personal Assistant, Surgical Sciences; Professor Trevor Mutton, Professor of Teacher Education and Tutor in Educational Studies (Modern Languages and Professional Studies), Education; Neil Nicholson-Watson, Pharmacovigilance Coordinator, Jenner Institute; Dr Svanhild Nornes, Postdoctoral Research Scientist, Physiology, Anatomy and Genetics; Professor Mohamed-Salah Omri, Professor of Arabic and Comparative Literature, Asian and Middle Eastern Studies; Professor Catherine O'Regan, Director, Bonavero Institute of Human Rights, Faculty of Law; Professor Rebecca Park, Senior Clinical Researcher, Psychiatry; Professor Brian Parkinson, Experimental Psychology; Professor

1 This addendum represents a full listing of individuals we have received notification to include.

Georgina Paul, Associate Professor in German; Professor Cláudia Pazos-Alonso, Portuguese; Professor William Peel, Professor of Law; Dr Scot Peterson, Departmental Lecturer in British Politics and Government, Politics and International Relations; Bosiljka Petrovic, Finance Manager, Chemistry; Gina Pitson, Estates Services Business Administration; Professor Rutger Ploeg, Professor of Transplantation, Surgical Sciences; Professor Christopher Pugh, Professor of Renal Medicine; Dr Paul Roberts, Research Keeper, Antiquities, Ashmolean Museum; Professor Lyndal Roper, Regius Professor of History; Dr Alistair Ross, Associate Professor in Psychotherapy, Oxford Lifelong Learning; Professor Ronald Roy, Professor of Mechanical Engineering, Engineering Science; Professor Ramon Sarró, Professor of Social Anthropology, School of Anthropology and Museum Ethnography; Professor Martin Scheinin, British Academy Global Professor, Bonavero Institute of Human Rights, Law; Michael Schott, Undergraduate Administrative Assistant, Chemistry; Professor Robert Scotland, Professor of Systematic Botany, Biology; Professor Julie Selwyn, Professor of Education and Adoptio; Edward Sharp, Senior Marketing Manager, Saïd Business School; Professor Iram Siraj, Professor of Child Development and Education; David Smith, Research Technician, Pharmacology; Professor Julia Smith, Chichele Professor of Medieval History; Carol Steels, Personal Assistant, IT Services; Professor Endre Süli, Mathematical Institute; Paul Sullivan, Head of Security Services and University Marshal, Estates Services; Dr Geoffrey Sutton, Research Scientist, Structural Biology; Lorna Swadling, Personal Assistant, Computer Science; Lynda Swan, Trial Manager, Oncology; Michael Tacon, Physics; Dr Adrian Taylor, Director of Graduate Studies, Materials; Professor Peter Taylor, Norman Collison Professor of Musculoskeletal Sciences; Professor Robert Taylor, Condensed Matter Physics; Dr Rosalind Temple, French; Deborah Thomas, Translational Research Office Administrator, Medical Sciences Divisional Office; Dr Peter Thompson, Sydney L. Mayer Associate Professor of American History; Stig Topp-Jorgensen, Physics; Joanne Valentine, Assistant Registrar (MSTC), Medical Sciences; Professor David Vaux, Associate Professor of Experimental Pathology, Sir William Dunn School of Pathology; Professor Andrew Wathen, Mathematical Institute; Margaret Watson, Academic Services Librarian, Law Library; Professor Catherine Whistler, Keeper (Western Art) and Professor of the History of European Art, Ashmolean Museum; Andrew Worth, Immunomonitoring and Sorting Core Facility Manager, Jenner Institute; Harvinder Wright, Data Analyst, Planning and Council Secretariat; Dr Weimin Zhang, Postdoctoral Research Assistant, Chemistry; Professor Andrei Zorin, Russian and other Slavonic Languages.

This year the University community has lost valued colleagues whose early deaths have been a source of great sadness:

Professor Glen Loutzenhiser, Professor of Tax Law; Professor Béla Novák, Professor of Integrative Systems Biology, Biochemistry; Professor Nik Petrinic, Professor of Engineering Science; Professor Ian Shipsey, Head of the Department of Physics and Henry Moseley Centenary Professor of Experimental Physics; Professor Edman Tsang, Professor of Inorganic Chemistry; Robin Wilkinson, Administrative Officer, Estate Services (Security Services); Dennis Yborde, Interconnect Operations Manager, Particle Physics.

Finally, we pause to remember the contributions of those colleagues who have died in retirement over the past year²:

Dr M H Abel; Miss H M Ashurst; Mr W J Bannister; Dr H C Bennet-Clark; Mr P J Berry; Mr S Brown; Dr B C M Butler; Miss R H Cannell; Mr S R Cooper; Mr J H Coulter; Ms K M Davies; Mr A P Dawson; Dr B C Elford; Dr B M Everett; Miss J L Farmer; Mr A J Flavell; Mrs I M Fleming-Boyd; Professor V A Gillespie; Professor C F Graham; Professor I P Grant; Mr R M Haigh; Mrs L Hayes; Professor C C Hood; Mr R A Hunt; Professor S D Iversen; Dr O L R Jacobs; Professor I M James; Mr J M Kaye; Ms S L Keildson; Dr A A A Kwaasi; Dr F L L Lama; Mr M A Martin; Dr R A Mason; Dr M L McRobbie; Dr S Millar; Mr A C Montefiore; Dr C M Mould; Ms B E Neville; Mr C W Newbury; Mr R Norrie; Mrs B M O'Reilly; Dr J M P Palmer; Mrs K M Pattullo; Dr M A Pelling; Professor R A Pring; Professor W G Richards; Miss C Sisam; Dr M Small; Dr J Takacs; Professor K S Thomson; Mrs S C Tschiggfrie; Mr D G Vaisey; Dr K V R Walker; Professor M J Whelan; Mr A C Willis; Mr B E Woolnough.

2 This addendum represents a full listing of individuals we have received notification to include.