

Gazette Supplement



Admission of the Vice-Chancellor

Congregation

12 January

Address by the Chancellor

Professor Richardson -

On behalf of the whole Oxford community - a partnership of students, teachers, researchers, supporting staff, old members and benefactors - I welcome you as the 272nd Vice-Chancellor (or thereabouts) since 1230 when the scoreboard at Oxford began to register these things. You have, Professor, an outstanding record as a teacher and scholar, and have been until recently the head of another eminent university, and we are delighted that the Chancellor and Governor of St Andrews are with us today. I know that you would wish to be judged primarily not on the glass ceilings you have smashed, but on your achievements as an academic leader on both sides of the Atlantic. They provide the principal argument for our choice of you as our next leader, as this world-class university confronts the trials and the opportunities of the 21st century. We hope that you enjoy your years with us, and that your family enjoys them too.

As you know, Professor, Oxford is a great university, with a global reputation for its teaching and its scholarship. We teach young men and women of the highest ability from every continent. Our researchers push back the frontiers of knowledge in ways that can be measured in terms of well-being and prosperity, and in other ways which can hardly be measured at all. As Einstein famously said, 'Not everything that counts can be counted, and not everything that can be counted counts.' We have enjoyed a great past, contributing much to the history and legacy of this country, and of countries and continents far beyond. We believe we are living up to that record today. So it is appropriate when welcoming newcomers here to recall the old Chinese adage that it is better to join a short queue than a long one.

However, we know that it would be a disservice to past and present to go to sleep on our laurels. We face challenges that under your leadership we will need to surmount.

First, an institution remains excellent only by constantly recognising that it must do even better. In some academic areas, we are clearly and correctly thought to be as good as any university in the world, maybe better than any other university in the world. In some areas, the world outside doesn't know how good we have become. In some areas, our reputation (if we are honest with ourselves) perhaps exceeds what we are actually achieving. We reckon, and we are probably right, that the way we teach is the best anywhere and justifies the large subsidy we make as individual colleges and as an independent university to sustain it. Welcome or not, that judgement will come under more fierce scrutiny in the future.

Second, on two points I am sceptical. I do not believe that public expenditure alone determines the quality of a country's higher education. If that were true, Britain would not still have the second-best system of university education in the world. But you cannot easily deny that public investment in universities has some impact on their quality and on their contribution to our future decency, influence and prosperity as a country.

I am also sceptical about the idea that, when other countries spend so much more on universities and research than we do, the competition they offer us is impossible to match. There are other things apart from money that matter to great universities and to ground-breaking research, not least autonomy, academic freedom and free enquiry.

Resources for this great university are likely to remain tight, despite our fine record in winning research grants and profiting from commercial spin-offs from our scholarship.

So we shall need to continue the fundraising efforts by the University and colleges which have been so successful under your predecessors, Professor Richardson, for whose work in this field and in so many others we are enormously grateful. Fundraising is particularly important if we are to continue to ensure needs-blind access to this university; the support we give to less well-off students is not equalled by any other university in Britain. I hope that we can continue to raise the level of alumni participation in fundraising. Our benefactors including old members have been ever more generous. At present, almost 20% of our alumni give money to the University or their old colleges.

I mentioned autonomy and freedom. These are areas where risks crowd in on us. You, Professor Richardson, will not have to be reminded of the wisdom of Edmund Burke, born like you in Ireland, who spoke out for peace with the American colonies which were to come together to create what has been your home. I wonder how many of our political establishment today have read or understand Burke, for whom great and independent institutions were important pillars of a society which is shaped by and respects liberty and order, and which comprehends the relationship between freedom and justice.

Naturally, the state has the right to set out a framework of purposes and standards within which it expects universities to operate. But universities should be left with the freedom to determine how they meet these standards with, as Wilhelm von Humboldt argued almost two centuries ago, a unity of research and pedagogy, the freedom to teach how you want and what you wish to teach, and academic self-governance. A university is not an agency of government, subject to rule by bureaucratic matrices.

We know we have a role to play in enhancing social inclusion in Britain. We know that we have to be even more resourceful and generous in promoting diversity in social background, in gender, in race and ethnicity. But we should not be harried into ill-considered actions that threaten the quality of what and how we teach; actions moreover which may cast doubt on the ability of some who study here to gain a place at this university on their own merits. I fear that some conceivably well-intentioned efforts to make progress in these areas may have the effect of deterring applications from exactly the sort of young men and women whom we want to welcome to our university in larger numbers.

I also detect a few signs of threats to the autonomy of research. I trust that we can avoid Whitehall committees deciding what research universities should be allowed to pursue. That would be a disastrous consequence of taking a wholly utilitarian approach to the role of the academy, as Britain sometimes seems in danger of doing.

Finally, we should be aware of the threat to academic freedom from within the university community itself, in this country and elsewhere. It is deeply depressing, though not perhaps surprising, that the way this issue has played out recently in Oxford has commanded far more media attention than all the wonderful academic stories that have taken place in this university over the past year. Let us go back to the fundamentals. Universities are institutions where freedom of argument and debate should be unchallenged principles. Education is not indoctrination. Our history is not a blank page on which we can write our own version of what it should have been according to our contemporary views and prejudices. We work, we study, we sleep in great buildings, many of which were constructed with the proceeds of activities that would be rightly condemned today. Moreover, many who are studying here or are doing research here are assisted with financial support from similar sources.

Because we value tolerance, we have to listen to people who shout - at a university, mark you - about speech crimes and 'no platforming'. We have to listen to those who presume that they can rewrite history within the confines of their own notion of what is politically, culturally and morally correct. We do have to listen, yes - but speaking for myself, I believe it would be intellectually pusillanimous to listen for too long without saying what we think, reaffirming the values that are at the heart of Karl Popper's 'Open Society' and the

generosity of spirit that animated the life of Nelson Mandela. One thing we should never tolerate is intolerance. We do not want to turn our university into a drab, bland, suburb of the soul where the diet is intellectual porridge.

In an age when liberal order is increasingly threatened, universities are among the most important institutions that can hold back a Hobbesian tide. In Oxford, we will have our own part to play in that struggle. To fail without putting up a fight would be an awful treason to the beliefs and principles that have shaped our history and our present and have made us at our best a shining example of what a university should be and what a university should stand for.

Professor Richardson, you will lead here an autonomous university made up of autonomous colleges. You know that this venture is intellectually rewarding; you also know that it is far from easy. The University does need to be efficiently managed while at the same time its culture of freedom and creativity is recognised and enhanced alongside something which one of your predecessors, Sir Colin Lucas, used to mention: serendipity. There are surely two tasks which will predominate. First, ensuring that the critical study and debate of what it means to be human, the discussion of human values, remains at the heart of what we do as a university. Second, challenging ourselves to find ways in which we can encourage our students to understand that the point of a university is not to prepare them to be financially successful, though their education may well do that, but to find out for themselves a bigger purpose for their lives. Perhaps we forget too often that there is a moral core to what we do.

Professor Richardson, once again, we welcome you as the leader of this ancient university. We look forward to working with you over many years to come.

Lord Patten of Barnes
12 January 2016

Address by the Vice-Chancellor

Chancellor, members of Congregation, ladies and gentlemen, good afternoon.

Thank you for being here, and thank you for inviting me to be here. Thank you, Chancellor, for those warm, thoughtful and energising words of welcome. I am honoured, moved and, in truth, daunted, to be in this position. I am deeply grateful to the Chancellor, to the members of the Nominations Committee, and to Congregation for the confidence you have placed in me by appointing me Vice-Chancellor of the University of Oxford. I can only say that I will devote every fibre of my being over the next seven years to ensuring that you don't live to regret it.

I would like to thank my predecessors Andrew Hamilton, John Hood and Colin Lucas and the many academic, collegiate and administrative leaders who have worked with such talent, commitment, and energy to ensure that Oxford attained and maintained its pre-eminent position in the ranks of higher education globally, and did so without ever losing sight of the centrality of undergraduate teaching. I would especially like to thank Andy Hamilton for his many contributions, his characteristic kindness to me, and his exemplary success in the Oxford Thinking campaign. I know you would like to join me in wishing him well as he exchanges the Oxford spires for the Manhattan skyscrapers.

As we think about the spires of Oxford, let's not forget the people of Oxford, with whom we have shared this city for so many centuries and who have supported the University, housing and feeding us and working with us in our colleges, labs and libraries.

And as I think about people to thank I would like to keep my deepest thanks for my husband, Thomas Jevon, and our three wonderful children who keep me grounded in the realities of growing up, acquiring an education and making one's way in the modern world.

Scholars have been coming here to study, teachers to teach and students to learn for so long that we don't even know precisely how long. We do know that teaching existed here in 1096. We know that the University rapidly developed after 1167 when Henry II banned English students from attending the University of Paris, an early example of what might be considered regulatory over-reach, and an early indication that education is an international phenomenon. Indeed, the first known overseas student arrived in 1190. We know that scholars have been thinking,

writing and teaching at this university for a very long time. They were here for hundreds of years before the printing press, before Genghis Khan established the Mongol empire, long before Agincourt, and even before the Magna Carta. Very few organisations or institutions have lasted nearly as long. This university, and others like it, and there aren't many, have lasted this long because of the enduring value of what we do.

John Stuart Mill was elected Rector of my old university, St Andrews, in 1865. When he addressed the students he told them that 'A university exists for the purpose of laying open to each succeeding generation... the accumulated treasures of the thoughts of mankind.' I can never hear that sentence without thinking immediately of the Bodleian and the Ashmolean. Mill went on to say:

'The moral or religious influence which a university can exercise consists less in any express teaching, than in the pervading tone of the place. Whatever it teaches it should teach as penetrated by a sense of duty; it should present all knowledge as chiefly a means towards worthiness in life, given for the double purpose of making each of us practically useful to his fellow creatures, and of elevating the character of the species itself, exalting and dignifying our nature. There is nothing which spreads more contagiously from teacher to pupil than elevation of sentiment, often and often have students caught from the living influence of a professor, a contempt for mean and selfish objects, and a noble ambition to leave the world better than they found it.'

The world has changed since Mill spoke. At that time about 13,500 academic articles were published each year. Today the figure is over 1.5 million. There were 200 students at St Andrews, 1,400 in Oxford and less than 10,000 nationally, as compared with 2.3 million today. The fundamental purpose of universities, however, has not changed, and that is why we have survived and thrived.

Universities do serve as guardians of our culture, but they also serve as engines of the economy, as drivers of social mobility, as foundations of our democracy and always as generators of ideas. They have done so for hundreds of years and if we do our jobs well they will continue to do so for hundreds more years.

There is, of course, nothing inevitable about the survival of universities, and

longevity in itself is no virtue. Many of the universities that existed both in Europe and Asia when Oxford began are unknown today. Those that have flourished have done so by staying firm in their commitment to their core values, while adapting to the changing world around them. As the famous Huxley-Wilberforce debate in the University Museum in 1860 made clear, Darwin's insight was that it is not the strongest, but the most adaptable, that survive.

The Chancellor referred to my compatriot, Edmund Burke: like him, I am a graduate of Trinity College Dublin. Burke belonged to a small and distinguished group of Irishmen that included his contemporaries Castlereagh and Wellington, who were largely written out of Irish history, in part because of their role in British history. Burke famously wrote in his *Reflections on the Revolution in France* that a society without the means of change is without the means of its own conservation.

This university has changed over the years. It has grown in size, in the range of the subjects taught and in the make-up of students and staff. I wonder what an early graduate would think if he were transported forward through time. He would be surprised by the comfort of our lives, the quality of the food, the luxury of electricity and cars, he'd be surprised by the absence of clerics and the presence of women, but the basic model would be familiar to him: scholars convening to study together and students travelling to learn from them.

The extent of the change might briefly be disguised by the ancient traditions we still practise. We are now participating in a traditional ceremony, we are dressed in our ancient academic robes, many of us are wearing strange hats – some stranger than others – we have Bedels and a Page – all demonstrating the affection and respect in which we hold our customs. Our traditions draw us together as a community. They bind us to our predecessors and our successors, but it is our responsibility to ensure that they do not fossilise in our hands. They must not become an immutable bundle passed like a sealed package from one generation to the next. Rather, we inherit our traditions, we infuse them with our values, and we pass them on to the next generation, subtly altered, containing part of ourselves, and enriched from having been in our hands.

Our traditions remind us of our obligations to our forebears; they are a part of our conversation with our predecessors and our successors. If we permit our traditions to become a legitimisation for the exclusion of others we do these traditions a disservice.

We cherish our traditions but we must not allow them to become a rationalisation for the protection of privilege. We must never forget just how extraordinarily privileged we are to live and work in this amazing place which for hundreds of years has been home – and remains home – to some of the most creative minds on the planet.

One can pick any field and marvel at the contributions made by scholars at Oxford. From Roger Bacon's conception of science as the experimental study of nature in the 13th century; to William Harvey's work on the heart and Thomas Willis's work on the brain in the 17th century; to Dorothy Hodgkin's discovery of the structure of penicillin during World War II; to the Oxford Knee today, people at Oxford have been responsible for some of the most important medical discoveries. Our current medics are continuing this trend as evidenced by the fact that Medicine has been ranked #1 in the world for the fifth year in a row.

The religious life of the country has similarly been greatly influenced across the centuries and across the denominations by men like John Wycliffe, Sir Thomas More, Cardinal Wolsey, John Wesley and Cardinal Newman, not to mention the generations of clerics who have played such pivotal roles in their local communities. The intellectual life of the country, and far beyond, has been immeasurably enriched by the writings of philosophers such as Erasmus, Hobbes, Locke, Toynbee and Berlin.

I find it simply astounding to consider that this one university has been home to poets: John Donne, Gerald Manley Hopkins, Shelley, Auden, Eliot and Robert Penn Warren; home to writers: Samuel Johnson, Jonathan Swift, John Buchan, Lewis Carroll, Oscar Wilde, Graham Green, CS Lewis, VS Naipaul and so many others; home to extraordinary men like Sir Walter Raleigh, Edmund Halley, Adam Smith and Christopher Wren.

Their contributions to British life and to humanity at large are incalculable. It is no exaggeration to say that this country, and indeed the world, would be a much lesser place without their work. And let's not forget, of course, that the University has educated 26 British prime ministers, 30 global leaders, 50 Nobel laureates and 120 Olympic medal winners.

This is both an awesome and inspiring lineage, and a huge responsibility. Their achievements should both inspire and humble us as we contemplate how we navigate the changing waters around us.

The challenge for us is: What are we going to do to prove ourselves worthy of this extraordinary inheritance? How are we going to continue to contribute at the highest levels across a range of disciplines? How are we going to enhance this legacy? It's our turn. What are we going to do with it?

We have many advantages; we have access to the half of the population who were excluded throughout much of Oxford's history. We have access to people from all over the world and greater means to bring them here. We have resources of which our predecessors could only have dreamt.

Just a month ago I attended the memorial service for the late, great Professor Stanley Hoffmann. He was my teacher, mentor and friend, and I wish he were here today. He belonged to that extraordinary generation of European intellectuals who survived the catastrophe of the Second World War; he moved to America and devoted his career to trying to understand what had happened and how to prevent its recurrence and to appreciating what might have been lost.

Stanley was fond of paradoxes and always spoke in threes. He would have delighted to have seen someone at the helm of a famously traditional, male, British institution who was not at all traditional, male or even British. Stanley would have delighted in the paradox of new 21st-century theories of education discovering the powers of personalised education, long valued and practised in the traditional tutorial system of ancient colleges here. He would have delighted in the paradox of an institution often considered inward looking and British focused selling 135 million educational books and resources in 63 languages across 150 countries last year alone, and 33 million students learning English with OUP materials.

We face many challenges and the Chancellor has alluded to several of them but in homage to Stanley Hoffmann I will limit myself to three external challenges and three internal ones. Externally we face technological change, globalisation, spiralling costs and pressure for value.

Advances in technology are transforming all our lives and in myriad ways. Students now arrive at university fully networked with their friends and family around the world. They are accustomed to instant access to information on the internet, to watching films on laptops and to reading books on tablets, and to doing all three simultaneously while eating lunch and chatting to their mother on Skype.

Interestingly, one of the trends in technological developments is towards personalisation: of medicine, of our phones, our cars, our online newspapers and our social networks. A personalised education is of course at the heart of what has always been provided in our Oxford colleges. Far from educating students for a particular job, we must educate our students with the flexibility and creativity to be prepared for jobs we cannot even imagine today.

Only a few years ago universities were being declared defunct, dead at the hands of Massive Open Online Courses. The initial wave of euphoria that greeted the arrival of MOOCs, in which world-famous teachers could teach their courses, for free, to anyone - and everyone - interested, has been tempered by the reality that the completion rate for these courses rarely hits 5%, that those taking the courses tend to be well-educated males in first world countries, rather than impoverished women and men in the developing world, and that successful business plans, the means by which participation is assessed, and costs covered, have not been developed. The early experience of MOOCs has demonstrated what has long been known here: that there is no substitute for the personal interaction between student and teacher.

But there is no going back: technology will transform how we operate.

The pace of change is accelerating at a breath-taking rate and we need to be able to keep up. Today most of us carry more computing power in our cell phone than existed on the Apollo space mission. In 2010 Eric Schmidt of Google pointed out that: 'Every two days we create as much information as we did from the dawn of civilisation to 2003.' New technologies provide extraordinary opportunities through the powers of digitisation to make our unrivalled collections available across the globe to anyone with access to the internet. Technology provides challenges to our libraries but we can preserve the library as an intellectual hub of university life by bringing new technologies inside, adapting to the ways our students learn, educating them to be wise consumers in a world of information overload, teaching them the difference between information and knowledge, and instilling in them a desire for wisdom.

We must always remain open to the potential of new technologies and have the agility to exploit the opportunities they present us.

The much criticised - and more often consulted - world rankings and global

league tables remind us that we are operating in a global marketplace. This is not a new phenomenon but the scale is unprecedented. We now compete globally for both academics and students. Nearly 50% of our academic and research staff are citizens of foreign countries, along with 62% of graduate students and almost 18% of undergraduates. Globally an estimated 5 million students are studying outside their home country, a figure that has more than doubled in a decade.

As travel becomes cheaper and communications easier, as more countries offer instruction in English, as immigration policies become more restrictive in some countries, and others invest heavily in a targeted group of campuses, patterns of mobility are likely to change. We are already seeing early indications of this. We have also seen the rapid development of transnational education as universities establish branch campuses overseas either alone or in partnership with local universities.

In straitened times foreign students are major financial contributors. In 2011-12 the higher education sector as a whole generated £10.7 billion in export earnings for the UK. The real contribution of foreign students, however, is not captured by these figures: it lies in the diversity of perspective they bring with them. I used to teach classes to masters' students in St Andrews on terrorism. It is rare in these classes for more than two students to share a nationality. The quality of debate that takes place in a classroom in which nobody shares your assumptions, and yet everyone respects your right to an opinion, on a topic as charged as terrorism, is unrivalled. It is exactly the kind of education we should be providing our students to prepare them to enter a globalised world.

It's not only students who are mobile, of course. Academics are even more so. The brain drain is now a brain train as academics move across borders from one university to another in search of opportunities and resources. Half of the world's top physicists no longer work in their home country and cross-border science collaboration (as measured by the percentage of internationally co-authored articles) has more than doubled. Oxford is well represented in this development. Our Centre for Tropical Medicine, for example, is conducting cutting-edge research at its labs in Kenya, Vietnam and Thailand and numerous other countries.

Competition for students, staff and research funding is not in itself a problem - on the contrary, it can cause us to raise our game,

to learn from others, to question how we do things and to figure out how to do them better. The trend towards globalisation, nevertheless, will pose real questions for the place of universities as national institutions as their students, staff, research funding and even teaching facilities become less and less national.

This brings us to the rising costs of education and who should pay for it. Derek Bok, former President of Harvard, once said: 'If you think education is expensive, try ignorance.' Education is expensive, and likely to become more so; it is also invaluable. The benefits of education, both financial and intangible, accrue both to the individual and to the society in which they live and work. It seems reasonable to me, therefore, that the costs should be shared both by the individual and by society at large.

There are many factors driving up the costs of education: new technologies and global competition are two; another is investment in ensuring that those with the talent to be admitted have the resources to attend. These are all necessary costs, willingly incurred.

Less necessary is the ever-increasing cost of compliance with ever more bureaucratic, ever more intrusive and ever less useful regulation, much of it, paradoxically enough, designed to ensure value for money. Instead it diverts resources – both financial and intellectual – from the central tasks of research and teaching. Strikingly there is little or no effort to measure the effectiveness of all these measurements and no correlation at all between the degree of public funding and the degree of bureaucratic control. There is, however, an incontrovertible and empirically based correlation between the quality and the autonomy of universities.

In a time of limited national resources insistence on value for money is understandable and we must be keenly cognisant of our obligations to the state that funds us. Our time horizons, however, are longer. If we continue to do what we do best we will inevitably help the country manage its future. If we can provide leaders for tomorrow who have been educated to think critically, to act ethically and always to question, these are the people who will prevent the next financial crisis; who will help us to grapple with the fundamental questions prompted by the accelerating pace of technological change, as we confront profound ethical choices about the prolongation and even replication of life. People who will force us to confront the costs we are imposing on the next

generation by our wasteful use of the earth's resources; who will articulate our obligation to the vulnerable, the poor, the victims of war, oppression and disease, wherever they live. If we continue to focus on research and teaching, we will produce both those destined to make transformative scientific discoveries as well as those who can assess the implications of those discoveries for the rest of society. These contributions may never be translatable to a spreadsheet, but they are invaluable.

In order to remain globally competitive we have no alternative but to become altogether more creative in devising ways of raising revenue to supplement declining public investment. Private philanthropy is one way, and Oxford has been highly successful in this regard, but we have to do more if we are to compete with the eye-watering endowments of our American competitors. Another way is to capitalise on the extraordinary talent in the University and energetically forge links with industry and other external groups to develop and translate ideas born here. Again, we have led the way nationally in this regard but are behind many international competitors.

Simply put, if we are going to maintain a pre-eminent position in a fast-changing world we are both going to have to operate more efficiently and to generate additional sources of support.

As we address all these challenges, and many others, we have many advantages. We know that we continue to serve as a magnet for brilliant students and staff; we know that we are united by a belief in the power of education to transform lives, in the pursuit of truth as an end in itself, a belief in the value of what can't be counted, a belief, in Seamus Heaney's words, in 'the books stand[ing] open and the gates unbarred' in being 'here for good in every sense'. It is as a community encompassing many perspectives but with shared core values that we will also address our internal challenges.

The internal challenges we face are very different.

First: How do we organise ourselves to ensure that we are creating the best possible environment for the remarkable academics and students drawn to work here? How do we organise ourselves to ensure that we use our most valuable and finite resource, our time, on the research and teaching that attracted us into academia in the first place? How do we ensure that the exceptional people drawn here derive real intellectual benefit from being in the company of so

many others? How do we ensure that we organise ourselves to respond with agility to opportunities as they arise? In short: how do we ensure that the whole University of Oxford is greater than the sum of its many fabulous parts?

Second: How do we replace ourselves? How do we ensure that we are continuing to attract the very best students and scholars? In an increasingly complex world the best may not be those who look and sound like ourselves. They may not be those who naturally think of coming to Oxford. Those with the greatest potential may not be those who have already attained the most. We need to go out and seek them.

Third: How do we ensure that we educate our students both to embrace complexity and retain conviction, while daring 'to disturb the universe'; to understand that an Oxford education is not meant to be a comfortable experience, an Oxford education is not intended to guarantee a livelihood? How do we ensure that they appreciate the value of engaging with ideas they find objectionable, trying through reason to change another's mind, while always being open to changing their own? How do we ensure that our students understand the true nature of freedom of inquiry and expression?

These are the questions I bring with me to this role. These are the questions I hope to harness the extraordinary talents of the women and men who study and work here to help find answers. We need to figure out how to work more effectively together internally in order to compete more effectively externally, to advance this unique institution, to secure our place among the top universities in the world, and ensure that we stay there.

The time is limited: students have three or four years, I have seven, faculty have more but it's finite too. Let's all make the most of the time we have here in this privileged, magical, extraordinary place to leave it even better than we found it. Let's keep our eyes firmly fixed on the future, without forgetting the traditions that bind us to our forebears and the values and interests that unite us to one another.

Please join me: it will be hard, it will be fun, but we owe it to those on whose shoulders we stand, and Oxford deserves no less than our very best.

Thank you.

Professor Louise Richardson
12 January 2016