

## **UNIVERSITY GAZETTE FLYSHEET SUPPORTING PARKS COLLEGE**

### **Introduction**

In anticipation of the upcoming meeting of Congregation on 7<sup>th</sup> May 2019, we'd like to reiterate some of the key points in support of establishing a new graduate society in the University (provisionally to be named Parks College).

We are enormously grateful for the advice and input on the proposals for Parks College that many members of the University have given us during a thorough consultation process over the past few months. This has included Question & Answer sessions with nearly 400 staff and students, online questionnaires, focus group discussions, website articles, and briefings to a wide range of University and Conference of Colleges committee meetings, from the University's Finance Committee to the Conference of Colleges Graduate Committee. We appreciate the help we have been given to shape the vision and practical plans for the new graduate society. To date, there has been a great deal of collaboration and support, and we look forward to continuing to work with colleagues across the collegiate University in establishing Parks College on solid foundations.

### **Accommodating graduate student growth**

The University's 5-year Strategic Plan for 2018-23 set out a framework of priorities, several of which revolve around managing anticipated growth in student numbers over the next five years. The number of University graduate students has grown steadily since the 1950s, with the foundation of St Antony's (1950), Linacre (1962), St Cross (1965), Iffley/Wolfson (1965), Green (1979), Templeton (1983) and Kellogg (1994). Since 2008, the number of *applications* for graduate study at the University has grown from 13,456 to 29,098 (with increases of 79% in the Humanities Division, 105% in the Social Sciences Division, 154% in the MPLS Division and 184% in the Medical Sciences Division).

There is no doubt that many highly-qualified students, wishing to come to Oxford for graduate study, are unable to find a place. It is also the case that, in some departments, academics are not able to have the number of research students that they would in equivalent institutions. This could have a detrimental effect on our academic standing in the future, since graduate students are central to the University's research efforts. Parks College would offer 50 post-graduate research (PGR) places in 2020-21, with 200 PGR and post-graduate taught (PGT) students being admitted each year from 2022-23 onwards. This would contribute significantly to meeting the University's stated ambition to accommodate 850 new PGR and PGT students each year by 2023.

### **Extending the benefits of College affiliation**

St Cross College and Iffley College (which later became Wolfson College) were both set up to allow University researchers and teachers with no college affiliation (so-called "non-dons" at the time) to become Fellows of a College. There are now more than two hundred Research Professors (RSIVs) in the University, and even more Senior Research Fellows (grades 9 and 10), some with the title of Associate Professors, who do not have a College Fellowship. Parks College will of course not be able to offer Fellowships to all of these, and not all them would want to have a College association, but it will go some way towards integrating members of that community better within the Collegiate University.

Parks College will also be a new vehicle for fostering interdisciplinary and collaborative research, in part by following a similar approach to other graduate colleges (see for example <https://www.wolfson.ox.ac.uk/research-clusters>), by organising college activities around a number of research clusters. Initially, our thematic clusters will be: Artificial Intelligence and Machine Learning; Environmental Change; and Cellular Life, each of them broadly defined. These themes have been chosen for their wide reach across the four Divisions of the University, their strongly

interdisciplinary nature, and Oxford's existing and potential strengths in these areas. Other research clusters (probably another five or six) will be introduced as the College Fellowship grows.

### **A 21<sup>st</sup> century College space**

In seeking a “home” for Parks College, we have been fortunate to be able to build on plans that have been in progress over the past 3-4 years for the redevelopment of the Radcliffe Science Library (RSL). This project was instigated in 2015 by Bodley’s Librarian, working with the then Heads of MPLS and Medical Sciences Divisions, with the aim of re-designing the RSL and its services to align more closely with the needs of students, researchers and other academics. We have discovered with the RSL a great deal of common ground when thinking through what is required for a 21st century research and study space – flexibility, quiet areas, excellent resources, social spaces, and access to the latest digital communications and research technologies.

Integrating the existing RSL redevelopment plans, which include converting the basement to enable the creation of the *GLAM Museums Collections Teaching & Research Centre*, with the proposals for Parks College has been an opportunity to recognise shared principles of scholarship and research, while also adapting and improving facilities to meet the requirements of building users, whether for quiet study, cross-disciplinary interaction or public engagement. The RSL Redevelopment Project Board and Parks College Programme Board have been working harmoniously together to meet the different ambitions for this shared space.

Once the user space requirements for Parks College had been completed, it became clear that a different space would be required for the dining hall. We hope that this will be the Inorganic Chemistry Teaching Lab. That part of the Parks College building programme has been delayed to allow a 2-year period of temporary use of that space by the Centre for Doctoral Training in Inorganic Chemistry for Future Manufacturing, as agreed with the Head of the Chemistry Department.

### **Conclusion**

This flysheet cannot possibly sum up the full academic case in support of the establishment of Parks College. However we believe that the clear evidence of an acute need for more graduate places across all four Divisions, as well as the desire to provide more academic colleagues with the benefits of a college affiliation, will convince members of Congregation to welcome the foundation of Parks College as a new graduate society of the University. More than that, though, we believe that Parks College offers an opportunity to build on the best of Oxford's collegiate system, and to add its own distinctive offering. The intention is to create a collaborative research and social community whose members will embrace the opportunity to interact with fellow researchers beyond the boundaries of their own disciplines.

We encourage all members of the University to visit our website, where we will continue to publish information and opportunities to engage with us as the proposals develop: please see <http://www.ox.ac.uk/about/organisation/future-projects-parks-college#>

Signatories (members of the Parks College Programme Board):

Professor Lionel Tarassenko, Programme Board Chair and Head of the Department of Engineering Science; Professor Anne Trefethen, Pro-Vice-Chancellor (People & GLAM); Professor Matthew Freeman, Head of the Sir William Dunn School of Pathology; Professor Jane Langdale, Professor of Plant Development; Professor EJ Milner-Gulland, Tasso Leventis Professor of Biodiversity; Janet Stott, Deputy Director, Museum of Natural History; Liesl Elder, Chief Development Officer; Richard Ovenden, Bodley’s Librarian; Dr Stuart Wilkinson, Head of the Knowledge Exchange & Impact Team, Research Services; Catriona Cannon, Deputy Librarian, Bodleian Libraries; Dr Joanna Rhodes, Head of Finance & Administration, Department of Engineering Science.