

# Gazette Supplement



## Vice-Chancellor's Oration 2021

Colleagues, thank you for attending this meeting of Congregation and for making time to hear my annual reflections on the past year and the prospects for the year to come. It is a particular pleasure to see each of you in three dimensions and I'm happy to say that you all look great!

### Introduction

My family are fans of *Lord of the Rings*. I've been reminded lately of the exchange between Frodo and Gandalf when the young hobbit says that he wishes he had not seen these times and Gandalf replies, in effect: 'So do we all. But the question is: What do we do with them?' As we look back on all we have done these past 18 months, I would like to begin by saluting the heroic efforts of everyone in this community during the pandemic. I couldn't be more conscious of the time you have given, the dedication, resilience, adaptability and ingenuity you have displayed. This has been another extraordinary year. From those on the front line of vaccine research, putting in days and nights in the laboratory, to those shouldering the burden of online teaching while home-schooling young children; from those supporting students' mental health to those keeping our buildings clean, warm, welcoming spaces in which to learn and to socialise: I recognise that whatever you do, this year has demanded a great deal from you. Thank you - one and all.

I also want to acknowledge that probably, despite what I hope has been a restorative summer, many of you will be tired. As they say of parenting, so of pandemics: the first two years are the hardest! There is anxiety to contend with. Sleepless nights. The need rapidly to learn new skills. Although, like parenting, pandemics do get easier... often, just when you think you have established a routine, something changes. So we need now, more than ever, to be kind to one another and to ourselves, as

we approach a new academic year. To recognise that each individual has faced challenges particular to their situation, often unseen by others. As we begin to unmask, it is appropriate that we also give ourselves space to think about what has been hidden or suppressed during the crisis, and allow for a period of emotional release, of reflection and readjustment.

Nonetheless, it is also true that in rising to meet a new challenge, you grow. I firmly believe that this University has grown in important ways during this crisis, ways that will positively influence our behaviour and our priorities from now on. Ralph Waldo Emerson observed that 'The health of the eye seems to demand a horizon. We are never tired, so long as we can see far enough.' Now, as we begin to have time to look to the future - I would like to speak not only about all we have achieved in the past year but to invite you to dream. To feel free to imagine the University we would like to be in ten, twenty, fifty years' time. What innovations would you like to see? What changes would you like to bring about? Now is the time to lift our eyes to the horizon and look ahead.

### COVID-19: Adapting and Thriving

Firstly, however, I will say a little about how well teaching and education generally have gone in the year just past. I would like to pay tribute to students - who have overwhelmingly behaved responsibly, with grace and fortitude - and lecturers and tutors, who proved remarkably flexible and adept at creating online content and teaching remotely, while preserving elements of in-person and hybrid education. So much for the idea that old dogs can't learn new tricks. Oxford, the oldest of British universities, learned new tricks almost daily during this academic year.

A good example comes from one of our most venerable institutions, the Bodleian Library. The library closed

its doors on 17 March 2020 but kept the University reading by expanding its digital services. Students and staff received online inductions and the Bodleian iSkills training programme also moved online, giving students and researchers access to research training and workshops.

The Bodleian expanded the hours of its Live Chat service and had responded to almost 7,000 enquiries by March 2021. Additionally, it became the first UK member of the HathiTrust partnership, a major digital repository giving access to around 14 million titles, with an additional 1.5 million copyrighted titles through the Emergency Temporary Access Scheme.

Other aspects of our work pivoted equally nimbly to online platforms. From careers advice to student support, to alumni events: we changed the format of our engagement and discovered the advantages of digital communication, not least its ability to bring together people in different places with minimal carbon emissions. A Digital Education Review is currently taking place to consider how we can build on our progress in the future.

There were challenges, too, of course. We responded by dedicating resources to those who needed them most. We established student and staff hardship funds to which colleagues, donors and the University contributed. We formed a Mental Health Taskforce to consider the immediate needs of students in the pandemic. We introduced a range of targeted measures to ensure students were not unfairly disadvantaged by the pandemic, both at individual and cohort level. A Transition Support Package will be launched this term to help our students adapt to academic life after the pandemic.

As you know, a number of central governance groups were set up under the University's Crisis Management Framework to coordinate the University's emergency response to COVID-19. The result has been an

unprecedented level of new interaction and cooperation across the collegiate University - in effect, a One Oxford approach. The key, for me, about the Emergency Response Team was that it worked exceptionally well because of collaboration between members of different colleges, different disciplines, different departments and divisions. The lead committee, the Silver Group, was fast, flexible, considered, collegial, decisive, and open in its working.

Our pandemic response showed the strength both of our individual collegiate and our shared University structures. Colleges did everything they do best, caring for students as individual members of a small, tightly knit community. University groups were able to take action that kept pace with fast-moving external events, adapting policy and research to collective needs. This integrated model bodes well for the future.

As we return to our offices, and evaluate how we managed during lockdowns, we will examine how we work and, through the New Ways of Working Framework, will generate insights on how we can optimize our productivity while maximizing our individual flexibility. There were many silver linings to this pandemic and it is critical that we don't lose sight of them as we return to some semblance of normalcy.

#### Financial Update

I would now like to turn to the financial update. The headline here is that we are in a positive financial position, which is much stronger than we anticipated last year, when we had to plan for worst-case scenarios. It was at first feared that the overall cost of this pandemic to our University would be in the region of £90 million. In July 2020, Council approved an operating budget for the 2020/21 year, planning for an overall deficit of almost £38 million, which would have been funded by drawing on the University's cash reserves. In fact, however, student numbers did not fall as widely anticipated. As a result, the University's financial position is better than expected. There has been no need to draw on our reserves in 2020/21, but we may need to do so in 2021/22. We are still operating a 'COVID' budget with a Minor Capital Plan half its normal size.

From the beginning we were absolutely determined that we would protect all existing jobs and salaries and that we would finance any deficit by cost-controls where possible on buildings maintenance and instituting a temporary hiring freeze. We would not put any staff or student services on the line, cancel new projects, or make

contingent scholars and staff bear the cost of financial uncertainty associated with the pandemic. I am convinced that this was the right approach, both ethically and practically. We have treated the pandemic as an opportunity for timely investment in technology, in health and safety, in new research facilities and staff accommodation, in access measures, and in adopting the Oxford Living Wage for staff. All of these investments in people and infrastructure will continue to pay off beyond the pandemic, as part of our long-term vision.

#### Philanthropic Support

This year has also seen an upsurge in charitable giving to the University. We brought in £236 million in new gifts, our second highest ever: a veritable fountain of philanthropy that will allow Oxford to flourish in the future. Among many notable individual gifts, we received £100 million from Sir Jim Ratcliffe and Ineos, to create a new Institute for anti-microbial research. The Ineos Oxford Institute, launched last January, will rapidly advance research, education and collaboration in the field of antibiotic resistance. Antibiotic-resistant bacteria are growing, and spreading at alarming rates, leading the WHO to declare anti-microbial resistance one of the top 10 global public health threats facing humanity. It is estimated that 700,000 people die each year as a result of drug-resistant diseases, with this number predicted to increase to over 10 million deaths per year by 2050. Our new Institute is thus poised to address a challenge of whose urgency many are as yet unaware, potentially saving millions of lives. The IOI will create collaborative, cross-disciplinary links across the sciences and will link the Departments of Chemistry and Zoology in the new Life and Mind Building, which is currently under construction.

There are other examples of extraordinary generosity, not all of which I can mention here, but all of which deserve our heartfelt appreciation. Oxford's vaccine research and development has been further boosted by the endowment of Professor Sarah Gilbert's Chair in Vaccinology by the Saïd family and Professor Adrian Hill's chair by the Mittal family. A Kavli Foundation grant will create a Kavli Institute for NanoScience Discovery, while the Peter Bennett Foundation gift for the Bennett Institute for Applied Data Science will pioneer improvements in the use of data, evidence and digital tools in healthcare and policy. The Taylor Chair of German Language

and Literature has been permanently endowed thanks to a donation from the Dieter Schwarz Foundation. This is a particular boost since German language studies are currently under threat in universities across Europe, with many departments of German having closed in the UK in the last ten years. Following a munificent gift of £80 million in support of Reuben College last year, the Reuben Foundation has provided further support for the college this year and will expand support for undergraduate bursaries.

We have received verbal commitments from the UK government and private individuals of £200 million, to establish a new Pandemic Sciences Centre under the directorship of Professor Peter Horby. As you know, in response to the pandemic, the University mobilised its extensive scientific capabilities across multiple disciplines, applying its experience with epidemic infections, and partnering with academic peers, industry, public health agencies, health systems, and governments. The Pandemic Sciences Centre will harness this expertise to unite disciplines and sectors to tackle complex problems; increase global access to essential science capabilities and interventions; and build agile, equitable partnerships and technologies that can respond to pandemic threats anywhere and at any time. Working with colleagues across a pandemic sciences network, it will become our very own bomb disposal unit, ready to anticipate and defuse the next viral explosion.

#### Vaccine Research

Few people across the globe are unaware of the triumph that has been the Oxford AstraZeneca vaccine created by the Jenner Institute and the Oxford Vaccine Group led by Professors Gilbert, Hill and Pollard and their extraordinary team of researchers, volunteers and supporters. This vaccine, on which work only began in January 2020, has now been approved and licensed for use in more than 170 countries and is being manufactured in 20 countries. More than a billion doses have been distributed with the goal of 2 billion by the end of this year. The number of lives that will be saved and ameliorated by this vaccine is incalculable; it is certainly one of the fastest, most effective interventions in global health that has ever been mounted.

This extraordinary achievement has involved multiple contributions. Oxford's extensive existing national and international partnerships were a significant factor in the development of the vaccine at lightning speed.

We also had the knowledge and experience to set up a global vaccine trial, which recruited more than 24,000 participants to ensure that results were valid for all regions of the world and for different ethnic groups. Our unique structure meant that we were poised rapidly to deploy a core Oxford team of more than 280 staff who worked with thousands of colleagues at trial sites across the UK and in Brazil, South Africa and Kenya. Early doses of vaccine were manufactured here in Oxford at our Clinical BioManufacturing Facility before we joined forces with an external manufacturer in Italy to provide the doses needed for a trial on a scale, and with an impact, we had never experienced before.

Crucially, the University entered into a partnership with AstraZeneca to ensure that large quantities of vaccine could be produced for both UK and international use and that it would be *distributed on a not-for-profit basis in perpetuity in the developing world and for the duration of the pandemic elsewhere*. I want to stress the extraordinarily, indeed stunningly, humane and enlightened nature of that commitment. I do not think that AstraZeneca has received anything like the credit it deserves in the Press and in the public mind for this decision. These billion doses of a life-saving vaccine have been produced and delivered to the world at cost. Not for profit. This is how we transform the world for the better, forever, for everyone. Truly, as Virgil said, *'sic itur ad astra'*: this is how one journeys to the stars. Although, in truth, at times it has felt more like the RAF motto amended: *'per ardua ad Astra(Zeneca)'*. In any crisis, there are profiteers, who make a fast buck out of a desperate situation. Through valuing people over profit, AstraZeneca and the Oxford vaccine will assuredly find themselves on the right side of the balance sheet of history.

As many of you will know, Oxford's contribution during the pandemic has gone much further than vaccine creation, embracing every facet of the crisis. The large-scale RECOVERY trial, led by Professors Peter Horby and Martin Landray, to test potential COVID-19 treatments, also got rapidly under way, resulting in several existing drugs, including the cheap and readily available dexamethasone, as well as tocilizumab, being approved for treatment. Between July and December 2020, dexamethasone is estimated to have saved around 12,000 lives in the UK and 650,000 globally. Other divisions across Oxford have been analysing variants of the virus and created rapid COVID tests. The Blavatnik School has been collecting

information on different governments' varying policy responses to create a 'Risk of Openness Index' to help countries decide when it is safe to open. Social scientists have been exploring vaccine hesitancy and attitudes to vaccine passports. Colleagues have also been studying the mental health impact of lockdowns on children and the impact of the pandemic on poverty and inequality. Now that we have flattened the curve of infection, we must address how to flatten the steep curve of inequality exacerbated by the crisis, both nationally and globally.

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#### Other Highlights of Science Research

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Research on COVID-19 does not exist in a vacuum. It has been made possible by the broad and varied context of research that is only possible in a university setting. Oxford teams have been responsible for a malaria vaccine that in 2021 was shown to have high-level efficacy of 77%. In July, Professor Tomáš Hanke at the Jenner started Phase one clinical trials of an HIV vaccine while the Oxford Vaccine Group has launched trials of a plague vaccine. The Jenner currently has new vaccines targeting seven pandemic threats in development based on the ChAdOx vector technology. These are exciting developments, with potential to transform millions of lives.

Meanwhile, we have stepped up research into the most significant challenge now facing humanity: climate change. Many of our colleagues are working to ensure the success of COP26. The Smith School is the national hub for CO<sub>2</sub>RE, the CO<sub>2</sub> removal hub. Colleagues in the Smith School are also working with the UN to map the world's green recovery spending and analyse the potential environmental impact. Our Environmental Change Institute is the lead partner in a project assessing the role of climate change in extreme weather events. In June this year, a new technology developed by Oxford researchers in partnership with the European Space Agency piloted the detection of flood events from space. Last November, the Oxford Net Zero Initiative was launched, drawing on the University's world-leading expertise in climate science and policy to address the critical issue of how to reach global 'net zero' in time to halt global heating.

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#### STEM and FLOWER: The Vital Importance of the Arts and Humanities

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While we could not be more proud of our scientists, who have forever interred the notion that the Fens is the place at which to pursue science, I want to emphasize in this Oration

that we are equally proud of Oxford's continued contribution to the Arts and Humanities. Our Humanities departments have consistently come top of the subject tables in various university rankings in recent years - we came top for Arts and Humanities in the latest QS World University Rankings.

It seems especially important at this time to re-state the infinite value of the Arts and Humanities, because we are living through a period when they are frequently depreciated. Universities are threatened with a future in which public funds will support only students taking degrees related to science and technology. There is talk (much of it from MPs themselves privileged to be raised on a rich educational diet of arts and social sciences) of arts degrees being 'worth less' when the high costs of university tuition are computed against the graduate salary students can, on average, expect to earn. The implication of this grimly utilitarian rhetoric is that the arts are luxuries. As a society, we cannot afford them. The needs of the individual and the community are better served by learning that leads more directly to financial reward.

In fact, the creative sector does make big money. The creative economy is estimated to contribute a net value of more than £101 billion to Britain's GDP. Despite bookshops being closed, British people bought a record 200 million books in 2020. It is vital to the economic health of the sector that diverse talent is not lost because the most gifted young writers, actors, musicians, artists, historians and linguists of the future never found their calling - or lived in the wrong postcode to be able to respond.

When we demean the arts, we stand to lose something more profound. The Humanities may have been reconceived as a business. But it remains their true business to make us reconceive our humanity. As the late, great, Seamus Heaney so eloquently argued, 'poetry and the arts... fortify your inner life... Listening together and knowing things together... is what a culture is.' In the uniquely stressful period of the pandemic, it is creativity and communication that have sustained us.

So I say: yes, we need STEM subjects. But, to follow the organic metaphor through, we also need FLOWER subjects. Film and Fashion Design and Fine Art. Law, Languages and Literatures. Oratory and Opera. World History, Ethics and Epistemology and Religion. We need to stay open to cross-pollination - as a society that is more than its economy. And as a

University that seeks to create new dialogues between different sectors, cultures and viewpoints, where all forms of knowledge, investigation and imagination can bloom.

This dialogue is essential to the vision of the Stephen Schwarzman Centre for the Humanities, whose progress - I'm delighted to say - has forged ahead in spite of the pandemic. The building is on track to open in 2025. The Humanities Cultural Programme held a successful series of online cultural events during the pandemic, which were watched more than 85,000 times. Oxford scholars in the Humanities have given hundreds of hours of their time to create free content during the pandemic: public lectures on history; poetry workshops; exhibitions; music. They have helped make sense of the pandemic from all angles and encouraged us to think beyond it. Among other initiatives, the Faculty of Classics seized the opportunity of distance learning to support the teaching of Latin to over 500 pupils in state schools with the Classical Conversations series. As the philosopher Martha Nussbaum, drawing on Socrates, has argued: 'Democracy needs the Humanities': to nurture critically astute, empathetic, and politically engaged citizens.

### Rankings

Times have changed since the Chancellor of the University, Harold Macmillan, responded to the announcement of the Robbins Committee by saying: 'What's the point of having a commission? Everyone knows that Oxford is better than anywhere else.' Nevertheless, this has been another year in which our international ranking as a university continued to rise to even headier levels of acclaim. In the QS World University Rankings, Oxford moved up from fifth place to second place in the 2022 list, just behind MIT. It remains the highest-ranked university in the United Kingdom and in the world outside the United States of America. We were named University of the Year by *The Times* in 2021 in recognition of our work on access and on the vaccine; we were awarded first place in the *Guardian* university rankings of 2021 and 2022, and, for the 6th consecutive year, number 1 in the *Times Higher Education* World University rankings. This is an extraordinary collective achievement that affirms our status as Britain's leading university across the board.

### Honours

It has also been a year of well-deserved national and international honours for many of our staff. There are so many that I cannot name all the recipients individually. Seven members of the University were recognised in the New Year's Honours List and fourteen in the Queen's Birthday Honours list for 2021, including key members of our research response to COVID-19. Six of our scientists have joined the Royal Society as Fellows, five were elected to fellowship of the British Academy and eleven to the Academy of Medical Sciences. Dr Samson Kambalu, Associate Professor of Fine Art in the Ruskin School, won a place on the Fourth Plinth in Trafalgar Square for his sculpture 'Antelope', following a public vote in which more than 17,000 people voted. Meanwhile, four of our early career scholars were awarded £100,000 Philip Leverhulme Prizes for work that has already had an 'international impact' and eight post-doctoral fellowships were awarded to Oxford academics by the British Academy. I congratulate you all.

### Economic Impact

Perhaps the most dramatic indicator this year of the impact of the University of Oxford as a whole came in a startling report produced by London Economics in July, which estimated the total impact of the University's activities on the UK economy in 2018-19 to be £15.7 billion, with 40% of this economic impact occurring outside the South East. This figure demonstrates that, for every £1 invested in Oxford, research and innovation generates more than £10 for the UK economy.

While such figures represent only one way of considering the ultimately inestimable value of what we do, these numbers are a raw index of the power of your work, as researchers, teachers, and communicators, to benefit society, locally, regionally, nationally and internationally.

### Access and Diversity

I am delighted to say that we have continued to make great strides in widening undergraduate and postgraduate access this year and I am determined that this is one area where we will continue to move forward. Access must become so deeply embedded in Oxford's DNA that it is part of everything we do.

The proportion of incoming UK students from state schools stands at 68%. The proportion of incoming undergraduates from the least

advantaged backgrounds is 20%, up from 18.8% last year and making progress towards our target of 25% by 2023. We do not yet have figures for ethnicity for incoming students but the proportion of students identifying as Black and Minority Ethnic rose to 23.6% in this year's class. Our intake of Black British undergraduates has almost trebled in the past four years.

Applications for graduate study increased 18% to reach almost 40,000 applications. Within this there has been a dramatic 53% increase in applicants from Black British or mixed Black backgrounds applying for postgraduate study. We believe this is a result of the introduction of our Black Academic Futures Scholarships. This programme was announced last year as part of our efforts to address underrepresentation of Black British students at postgraduate level. Sixteen PGR students were offered places in the inaugural cohort, receiving full funding along with induction and other on-course support during their studies. Thanks to generous funding support from across the collegiate University, we will be expanding the scheme to support both PGT and PGR courses for 2022 entrants.

We intend to support a new generation of students of colour not only through dedicated scholarships at both undergraduate and graduate level, but also through a visible commitment to diversity and representation at all levels of the University. This month, we welcome Professor Brenda Stevenson who starts as the Hillary Rodham Clinton Chair of Women's History, and Dr Meleisa Ono-George who starts as Associate Professor of Black British History.

This time last year I announced the creation of a Race Equality Task Force. The members of the Task Force, drawn from all across the University, have been working since Michaelmas term, focusing their discussions in several different work-streams and bringing in external expertise. They have produced a consultation document setting out principles, priorities and recommendations. All members of the community - students and staff alike - are invited to respond to the consultation, after which the Task Force will present a set of recommendations to Council. I invite each and every one of you to engage with this consultation.

### Sustainability

The pandemic caused us all to change our behaviour to protect our grandparents. The climate crisis

requires us to change our behaviour to protect our grandchildren. Despite the challenges of the pandemic, we have successfully launched our new Environmental Sustainability Strategy, committing the University to achieving net zero carbon and biodiversity net gain by 2035. We have, moreover, created a new University committee, the Environmental Sustainability Subcommittee, to embed sustainability in the University's high-level governance and decision-making and to oversee and direct progress on delivering the strategy. Key environmental information, focusing on our greenhouse gas emissions and impact on biodiversity, will now be included in the University's Annual Review, to enable us to track our progress on delivering the strategy over time.

This year's events - of record-breaking temperatures, catastrophic forest fires and floods - have heightened awareness that humanity can no longer behave like Nero, fiddling while the biome burns. Moving from Nero to Net Zero will, however, take courage, resources and imagination. Oxford is determined to lead in this shared endeavour, on which the future of all nations and peoples, and all living creatures depends.

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### Innovation

The wonderful thing about our University is that it is like a tidal pool: with each vibrant new intake of students, it becomes a new place with a new community of inhabitants, who can remake Oxford afresh. As the poet Keith Douglas wrote of Oxford:

*This then is the city... of beginning,  
Ideas, trials, pardonable follies,  
The lightness, seriousness and sorrow of  
youth.  
And the city of the old, looking for truth.*

Oxford has a long and proud history of innovation. We created the first university library in England, in 1327, and opened the first public museum in the country, in 1677. Oxford men founded two religions: John Wesley and Methodism and John Wycliffe and the Lollards. Oxford graduates founded two American states, Pennsylvania and Georgia, and organizations ranging from the African National Congress - Pixley Seme - to the Samaritans, Chad Varah.

In the 14th century John of Gaddesden authored the earliest surviving medical textbook. 400 years ago this year we established the Botanic Garden, to support medical research. In the 17th century Thomas Willis was celebrated

for his innovations in dissections and mapping the brain, while Robert Hooke was the inventor of microscopy. In the 20th century, Oxford women such as Vera Brittain, Winifred Holtby and Dorothy L. Sayers led new approaches to feminism, pacifism and the detective novel. More recently Oxford has graduated brilliant entrepreneurs like Anne-Marie Imafidon, who founded Stemettes, a social enterprise inspiring thousands of young women across Europe to study STEM subjects.

Oxford researchers pioneered the invention of lithium-ion batteries, of the kind you carry in your phone and laptop and which will probably in the future power your car. We also pioneered satellite meteorology, with infrared remote sensing to track the earth's land and sea temperatures, detect forest fires, and the hole in the ozone layer - innovations that couldn't be more relevant to meeting the challenges of today's environmental crisis.

Our COVID vaccine development has showcased the fact that innovative collaboration between industry, academia, and government is crucial in finding solutions to global challenges. In addition to partnerships with AstraZeneca and Ineos, we are producing ground-breaking diabetes research with Novo Nordisk, pioneering sustainable aviation solutions with Rolls-Royce, and using cutting-edge research to enhance public engagement with the National Trust. We have also just announced a partnership with Podium Analytics to create Oxpod, the UK's first Institute for the study of Youth Sport Medicine and Technology, with the goal of reducing youth sport injuries.

Oxford University Innovation has had a record-breaking year, with 31 companies created. Through OUI, the University has now created over 270 companies, including 200 spinouts - more than any other UK university. Our business research income is the largest of all British HEIs and continues to grow: this year's income was £180 million. Investors continue to back Oxford's innovation growth: over £1 billion was invested into Oxford's companies over the past year. Our support for innovation spans the Humanities and Social Sciences as well as Life and Physical Sciences. We are also creating an increasing number of new companies with social purpose including tackling homelessness and fighting poverty.

We work closely with OSI (recently renamed Oxford Science Enterprises) to help our researchers accelerate

translation of their research into patient, societal, industrial and economic impact. Just last week we witnessed the highly successful IPO of Oxford Nanopore, an Oxford spinout specializing in handheld and desktop DNA and RNA sequencing. It is valued at almost £5 billion.

We can do even more. As you know, I have entered the penultimate year of my tenure as your Vice-Chancellor. Now I am going to pause for a moment. I would like you to think during that moment: if you could take a single year, what innovations would you make? What would you like to see at Oxford that has never been seen before; what would you like to change? Who would you collaborate with? Perhaps they are sitting near you now. What funding or other support might it take to build the castle in the air that is now vivid in your own imagination? I hope that after this Oration, as blood begins to circulate again in bodies that have sat for too long on hard wooden benches, you will share these ideas and that they will circulate back to me. I am eager to hear them.

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### Future Plans

Having invited you to think about future plans I thought I'd outline some of mine; ideas and plans in various stages of gestation that, with colleagues, I've been working on for some years and that I hope to see embedded during my time here. The first I've already mentioned: the Pandemic Sciences Centre. We have an opportunity to leverage the global interest in and admiration for our work by creating a Pandemic Sciences Centre that will be a magnet for academics who wish to come together to ensure that the world is never again brought to its knees by a pandemic. A comprehensive university is the ideal home for such a centre as we can harness the talents of the social sciences and humanities to work alongside medics and scientists from across the globe and across the disciplines.

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### Continuing Education

Another field of opportunity I see ahead of us is continuing education. Again we have a proud history on which to build. Oxford Extension was established in 1878. In the 1880s and beyond it held lectures from Cornwall to Lancashire. These were short affordable courses intended 'to offer a citizen education to the great masses of the working people' in civics, public health, philosophy, history, literature, law and politics. Audiences in Oldham and Hebden Bridge routinely approached 1,000 per

course. Two-thirds of the participants were women, at a time when women could not yet attain degrees.

The challenges of the past eighteen months are sometimes referred to as ‘unprecedented’. One precedent may be the challenge Britain faced after the devastation of World War One. A Ministry of Reconstruction was established, whose Committee on Adult Education was chaired by the Master of Balliol. The Committee’s landmark 1919 Report argued that lifelong learning would be vital for the economy, for society, and for democracy. It detailed the leading role played by Oxford’s ‘University Extension’ courses, successfully calling on other universities to follow suit. A century later, the Centenary Commission on Adult Education was again chaired by the Master of Balliol, Dame Helen Ghosh. Its 2019 Report argued that lifelong learning remains of vital – indeed growing – importance. It called on all universities to contribute to this vital national effort. We have heeded that call.

Over the past ten years our Department for Continuing Education has seen student enrolments increase by 50%, to well over 20,000 a year – from day schools to doctorates. We intend to develop a more holistic access agenda, with increased emphasis on mature learners from non-traditional backgrounds who have a range of prior qualifications and experience. We can further develop digital education based on the University’s research and scholarship. In both respects, Oxford can seek to widen worldwide access to the University to all who have the potential to benefit from it. We have a fabulous opportunity to reimagine what we mean by access to an Oxford education, using technology to remain true to the original mission but within a global, digitally enabled framework.

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### Begbroke

You will remember that two years ago I announced a partnership with Legal & General to enable us to build more academic space and, crucially, affordable staff housing. We are beginning to see the fruits of this partnership in the construction of the Life and Mind Building and the proposed renovations in Court Place Gardens. We have just submitted a planning application for Phase 1 of the project at Begbroke. This will double the size of our existing Science Park and provide much-needed research lab and spin-out space. The target completion date, subject to planning, is 2024. By then we will be well advanced in our

plans for Phase 2, utilizing the entire 188 hectare site. The plans envision 1,950 homes – over 800 of which will be subsidized accommodation for University staff – a primary school, community centre, recreation facilities and further innovation space. Our vision is to create a unique innovation district built with sustainability at its core: benefiting our graduate students, staff and the local community.

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### Warneford

Our plans in Warneford are at an earlier stage, but the concept is enormously exciting. I hope we can advance it in my remaining time here. As many of you will know, the Warneford is the oldest psychiatric hospital still in use in the UK. The idea we have discussed with Oxford Health and a potential donor involves building a new 21st-century psychiatric hospital; housing all our scholars and practitioners of psychiatry and related areas in an adjacent building; and building a college for our medical and other students, all on the same site. All three developments should work harmoniously together. The plan would be to knock down the high walls (metaphorically, that is, the walls are listed) that once hid these patients from the world and to open up the site in every sense, bringing students and researchers in and creating synergies with our nearby Medical Sciences Division. We envision this once-forbidding site becoming welcoming and well connected: a beacon for good practice in mental health.

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### California

Finally, and least far advanced, is an opportunity that has emerged in California. We have been soliciting ideas across the University for the past two years on ways in which we might turn a potential gift of prime academic space and an endowment to our strategic advantage by extending and accelerating our research into global problems, by facilitating collaboration with surrounding universities and West Coast industries, and establishing an inspiring facility on the Pacific Rim. This would be a daring, blue-skies undertaking that invites us to dream on a large scale and consider, free of constraint, how we can best use our research expertise to face the future, before it faces us. I welcome your thoughts.

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### One Oxford

As I move toward the close of this Oration, I would like now to turn to the topic of unity.

Inter-college rivalries used to be part of the fabric of Oxford’s male-dominated culture of raids and skirmishes, pranks and escapades. In the 19th century, students of St John’s stole bricks from the foundations of Keble College, to prevent building work advancing. In the 1960s, Balliol students turfed the Junior Common Room of Trinity College, so that surprised undergraduates stepped onto an indoor lawn complete with daffodils. More problematically, in the early years of the 21st century, Pembroke students painted a Christ Church cow pink. Although these kinds of college rivalries are now usually confined to the sports field and the Norrington Table, the culture of colleges behaving as self-contained entities, which act primarily in their individual interests, has been persistent.

Our response to the pandemic, however, has shown how productive we can be, and how fast and decisive, yet open and accountable, when we collaborate and act as One Oxford. If there is one lesson the global politics of the last few decades can teach us, it is that division is easily stoked. Nationalism is on the rise and a concomitant withdrawal from global concords and international organisations. We have seen polarization of opinion on key issues, from Brexit to vaccine passports. Social media thrives on acrimony and the triggering of negative emotion: smears, sneers and jeers.

Oxford academics are, alas, not immune to these attacks or to the ‘culture wars’ that seek to harness difference of background or culture and foster antipathy between different social groups, or individuals holding opposing views. It saddens me to see early career researchers fearing for their reputations, or mature academics embroiled in disputes, as a result of engaging in public debate. I have constantly been reminded this year of the difficulty of maintaining tolerance and civility in a public realm where, particularly in politics and the media, the climate around speech and individual viewpoints is becoming ever more hostile and extreme. I have been reminded that, while I can – and will – defend colleagues’ right to free speech to my own last breath, the University cannot fully protect them from the consequences of expressing their views.

In response to external pressure toward division and dis-integration, it is more important than it has ever been that Oxford models a different way of being in the world. A focus on international collaboration. On free speech but also

the power of listening, of intellectual generosity and respect for others, whatever their background or beliefs. On global responses to global issues. Instead of walls, we need to build bridges. This habit of mutual respect, civility, tolerance, collaboration and seeking unity of purpose despite our diverse views starts with us as a university. When we act as One Oxford, we model the practice we want to prosper, showing ourselves to be bigger than our differences.

I am deeply proud of this University and of all who are part of it. No university has done more to find solutions during the COVID crisis; no university has done better in negotiating it and thriving despite it. We have not merely weathered this storm; we have chased it, studied it, and found the means to shelter millions from its impact.

As the intensity of a storm begins to diminish, the light has a different quality: often it seems sharper and clearer. As the pandemic recedes in the UK, I believe that our vision for the future will gain new clarity and focus from what we have endured and how we have adapted. There is a freshness now to so much of what we once took for granted. I hope that as we commence this Michaelmas term, with the scrunch of fallen leaves underfoot and the enticing smell of new books, the sight of an undergraduate gown billowing around a bicycle as it rounds the corner of Broad Street, we can begin to rediscover the joy of social encounter. Of meeting colleagues for coffee; of spending time in the shared space of our beautiful buildings; of seeing students on the river and the sports field, seeing them act, and dance, and sing. I wish you a new academic year of renewed optimism, of fresh experiences, and innovative thought. Good luck, God speed, and as they say where I come from; ‘*Go n’eirigh an bother libh.*’ (May the road rise with you.)

**Louise Richardson**

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#### Addendum to the Vice-Chancellor's Oration

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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 University: Dr Bashir Ahmed, Senior Postdoctoral Research Scientist, Physiology, Anatomy and Genetics; Dr Lidia Arciszewska, Senior Research Fellow, Biochemistry; Professor Fraser Armstrong, Professor of Chemistry, Inorganic Chemistry; Dr Judith Asselin, Deputy Laboratory Manager, Women's and Reproductive Health; Joe Atherton, Facilities Manager, Computer Science; Steve Barlow, Senior Analyst Programmer, IT Services; Elizabeth Barnes-Moss, Head of Administration and Finance, Oncology; Dr Paul Barnwell, Associate Professor in the Historic Environment, Continuing Education; Professor Helen Barr, Professor of English Literature; Professor Charles Batty, University Lecturer in Mathematics; Professor Andrew Baum, Professor of Practice, Saïd Business School; Nicholas Bayley, Departmental Lecturer in Psychodynamic Counselling, Continuing Education; Alastair Beck, Analyst Programmer, IT Services; Professor David Beeson, Professor of Neuroscience; Fran Bennett, Senior Research Fellow, Social Policy and Intervention; Dr Pamela Berry, Senior Research Fellow, Environmental Change Institute; Dr David Boshier, Senior Research Associate, Plant Sciences; Professor Adrian Briggs, Professor of Private International Law; Dr Marion Brown, Pathology; Professor Peter Brown, Director of the Medical Research Council Brain Network Dynamics Unit; Elizabeth Callow, Health Care Libraries; Janet Carver, Laboratory Technician, Women's and Reproductive Health; Elizabeth Cloke, Executive PA, MRC Weatherall Institute of Molecular Medicine; Stephen Curnock, Laboratory Technical Manager and Deputy Departmental Safety Officer, Biochemistry; Professor Julie Curtis, Professor of Russian Literature; Professor Mary Dalrymple, Professor of Syntax; Professor Peter Darragh, Director of Undergraduate Teaching, Biology and Biological Sciences; Professor Nicholas Davidson, Associate Professor of History of European Renaissance; Professor Dame Kay Davies, Professor of Genetics; Mark Davies, Mechanical Services Engineer, Estates Services; Dr John Davis, Associate Professor of History;

Professor Keith Dorrington, Associate Professor of Physiology; Valerie Dunn, Research Associate, Education; Professor Peter Edwards, Professor of Inorganic Chemistry; Professor Martin Farrall, Professor of Cardiovascular Genetics; Professor Ray Fitzpatrick, Senior Research Fellow, Population Health; Dr Paul Flather, Europaeum; Professor Bent Flyvbjerg, BT Professor and Chair of Major Programme Management, Saïd Business School; Professor Andrew Fowler, Associate Professor of Applied Mathematic; Dr Elizabeth Frazer, Associate Professor of Politics; Professor Judith Freedman, Pinsent Masons Professor of Tax Law and Policy; Julie Furze, Laboratory Manager, NDM Jenner Institute; Professor Elspeth Garman, Professor of Molecular Biophysics; The Revd Canon Dr Robert Gibbons, Associate Tutor in Theology and Religious Studies, Continuing Education; David Gibson, Head of Education Policy Support; Professor Vincent Gillespie, J.R.R. Tolkien Professor of English Literature and Language; Andrew Goff, Head of Consulting Services, OUI; Professor Martin Goodman, Professor of Jewish Studies; Professor Alastair Gray, Professor of Health Economics; Professor Leslie Green, Professor of the Philosophy of Law; Dr Emina Hadzifejzovic, Postdoctoral Research Associate, Chemistry Research Laboratory; Dr Stephanie Halford, Senior Research Scientist, Clinical Neurology; Jane Henderson, Epidemiologist, Cancer Epidemiology Unit; Professor Christopher Hodges, Professor of Justice Systems, Socio-Legal Studies Centre; Kenneth Howse, Senior Research Fellow and Deputy Director, Oxford Institute of Population Ageing; Professor Laura Hoyano, Professor of Law; Dr Stephen Hughes, Senior Postdoctoral Scientist and Islet Laboratory Manager, Surgical Sciences; Tina Jackson, NMR Research Technician, Chemistry; Professor Susan Jones, Professor of English Literature; Dr Lisa Kallet, George Cawkwell Tutorial Fellow and Associate Professor in Ancient History; Joanna Kay, Studio Manager, Brand and Design, Public Affairs Directorate; Professor Catriona Kelly, Professor of Russian; Maria Kendall-Belcher, Executive Assistant, Medical Sciences Divisional Office; Giles Kerr, Chief Commercial Officer, Finance Division; Carol Knott, International Nurse Coordinator, Clinical Trial Service Unit; Professor Dominic Kwiatkowski, Professor of Genomics and Global Health and Director of Centre for Genomics and Global Health; Thaddeus Lipinski, Systems & e-Resources; Professor Laurie Maguire, Professor of English

Language and Literature; Annie Martin, Datacentre Operator, IT Services; Professor Colin Mayer, Peter Moores Professor of Management Studies, Saïd Business School; Professor Diane Mayer, Professor of Teacher Education; Robert McCarthy, Director of Development and Alumni Relations, Saïd Business School; Susan McCormack, Ashmolean Museum; John McDonnell, Programmer, Clinical Trial Service Unit; Professor Ewan McKendrick, Professor of Law; Gillian McLure, Teaching Office Administrator, Biochemistry; Gillian Middleton, Head of Administration and Finance, School of Anthropology & Museum Ethnography; Professor Christopher Minkowski, Boden Professor of Sanskrit; Professor Timothy Morris, Professor of Management Studies; Professor David Murray, Professor of Engineering Science; Professor Kim Nasmyth, Whitley Professorship of Biochemistry; Professor Christopher Newbold, Professor of Tropical Medicine; David Newburn, Systems Manager, Medical Sciences Divisional Office; Professor Robin Nicholas, Reader, Condensed Matter Physics; Nilton Nogueira, Senior Facilities Support Technician, Population Health; Professor Heather O'Donoghue, Professor of Old Norse; Professor Polly O'Hanlon, Professor of Indian History and Culture; Catherine Owen, Executive Assistant to Professor Sir Andrew J Pollard and Line Manager to the CTSO, Receptionist, Oxford Vaccine Group, Paediatrics; Professor Andrew Parker, Professor of Neuroscience; Tatjana Petrinic, Health Care Libraries; Professor Kim Plunkett, Professor of Cognitive Science; Professor Barry Potter, Professor of Medicinal and Biological Chemistry; Mike Primett, Change Manager, IT Services; Professor George Ratcliffe, Head of Department, Plant Sciences; Professor Irene Roberts, Professor of Paediatric Haematology; Lynne Roberts, Personal Assistant, Paediatrics; James Robertson, Biomedical Services; Professor Ritchie Robertson, Professor of German Language and Literature; Eve Rodgers, Head of Administration and Finance, Education; Professor Mark Sansom, David Phillips Professorship of Molecular Biophysics; Professor Subir Sarkar, Professor of Physics; Professor Robert Saxton, Professor of Composition; Dr Janet Smart, Reader in Operations Management, Saïd Business School; Professor Duncan Snidal, Reader in International Relations; Kathryn Southey, Peter Medawar Building Administrator, NDM Experimental Medicine Division; Dr Sarah Spencer, COMPAS Director of Strategy and Senior Fellow,

Anthropology and Museum Ethnography; Lesley Swarbrick, Area Coordinator for the Advanced Mathematics Support Programme; Behnam Tahzib, Project Manager, IT Services; Marianne Talbot, Associate Tutor in Philosophy and Director of the Certificate of Higher Education, Continuing Education; Dr Emmanuela Tandello, Associate Professor in Italian; Ian Taylor, Principal Mechanical Services Engineer (Projects), Estates Services; Val Timms, Finance Officer, Mathematical Institute; Angela Truesdale, Head of Administration, Orthopaedics, Rheumatology and Musculoskeletal Sciences; Professor Frank Van Den Heuvel, Senior Research Scientist, Radiation Oncology and Biology; Dr Nicholas Van Hear, Senior Researcher, COMPAS; Professor Borivoj (Boris) Vojnovic, Group Leader for the Gray Trust, Oncology; Jane Vowles, Pathology; Professor Roman Walczak, Senior Researcher, Particle Physics; Carol Walker, Research Assistant, Radiation Oncology and Biology; Professor Stephen Weatherill, Jacques Delors Professor of European Law; Gill Wells, Head, European and International Team, Research Services; Martin Wilkins, Pathology; Barbara Wright, Administration Manager and PA to Director of Estates, Estates Services; Dr Luzheng Xue, Associate Professor (Immunology), NDM Experimental Medicine Division; Professor Ghassan Yassin, University Research Lecturer, Astrophysics; and Professor John Young, Senior Clinical Research Fellow, Clinical Neurology.

This year the University community has lost valued colleagues whose early deaths have been a source of great sadness: Professor Marcus Banks, Professor of Visual Anthropology, School of Anthropology and Museum Ethnography; Mrs Anna Barton, Adult Research Nurse, Paediatrics; Professor Angus Brian Hawkins, Director of Public and International Programmes, Continuing Education; Ms Monika Porada, Administrative Officer, Atomic and Laser Physics.

Finally, we pause to remember the contributions of those colleagues who have died in retirement over the past year: Mr Simon J Abele; Mr James Allen; Mrs Patricia Band; Mr Edward A Baskerville; Dr David Brink; Mr J D Brown; Dr Clark Brundin; Mr Roy Butler; Professor Thomas Cavalier-Smith; Dr Margaret Christie; Dr G S Claridge; Dr George Cranstoun; Dr Eugene Csocsan De Varallja; Mr J W Davies; Mr C J Day; Mrs J M Day; Mr Stuart Deakin; Mr J D P Donnelly; Professor A J Downs; Dr Michael P Esnouf; Dr Michael Fenwick; Dr

Raymond Franklin; Mr Michael Gardner; Mr G Hodgson; Professor R G Hood; Dr Kenneth Hylson-Smith; Mr M H Ivory; Dr D B Kenning; Mr Brian John Knapp; Mr F J Lampport; Mr Jamie Long; Dr Patrick Magill; Professor Cyril Mango; Professor Norman March; Professor Laura Marcus; Miss Judith McAuliffe; Dr David Millard; Dr Iain Morley; Reverend John B Muddiman; Professor James Peter Neary; Dr Julie O'Donnell; Mr John B P O'Sullivan; Mr Christopher Anselm O'Toole; Dr Zbigniew Pelczynski; Miss Nina Phipps; Mr Anthony E Pilkington; Dr William D Rae; Dr Robin L Rees; Miss Susan Reynolds; Mr Martin E Robinson; Dr Robert Sim; Dr Crispin J S Simpson; Professor Peter Sleight; Mrs Jane A Struthers; Professor Bryan C Sykes; Mr B E Taylor; Mr J T Thomason; Dr Bruce Tolley; Mr John Torrance; Professor Alain Viala; Miss Clare Wagstaff; Dr Gerald Warner; Professor Frederick Whatley.