

Gazette Supplement



Vice-Chancellor's Oration 2022

Colleagues, thank you for being here. I would like to thank you particularly for making time to attend this Congregation and listen to my remarks. I would also like to thank you in a wider sense, for being part of this University, and for giving so freely of your energies to make it the dynamic and beloved place of research, learning and community that it is.

As I enter my final term as Vice-Chancellor I have started to muse on the many people, scenes and activities that I will miss, and a few I won't. I must confess that I am very glad that I will never again have to write another Oration!

In reflecting on the year that has passed, I would also like to reflect on what has changed during my incumbency and on how Oxford might change further in the future. So I hope you will indulge me if, at times, I wax both lyrical and prophetic.

Reflection on the 2021-22 academic year

Externally, the past year has been dominated by the war in Ukraine, the cost of living crisis and the death of Her Majesty the Queen. Internally, the academic year has brought the return of some welcome stability to our patterns of research and teaching. We have been able to travel more freely, to interact in person with colleagues at other institutions, and to teach face to face. Yet I know that it has been an exacting year for many people. Though lighter of heart, many are also feeling lighter of pocket as escalating prices and rising inflation take their toll on personal finances. Russia's invasion of Ukraine has inflamed the geopolitical scene, with terrible costs, both personal and economic. Meanwhile, drought conditions, floods and wildfires have reinforced the urgency of the global climate crisis.

I would like to begin by acknowledging colleagues' fortitude in the face of the perpetual change and adaptation that has been required of us over the pandemic years, which might slow in

pace but continues to make constant demands on your flexibility and your resilience. Oxford has made a truly extraordinary contribution to winning the war against COVID; we are now digging into the complex challenges of winning a lasting peace. I would like to thank each and every one of you, individually, for your patience, your creativity and your sheer hard work in getting us to the place we have reached. When I speak of Oxford's achievements, as I am about to do, and look optimistically ahead, as I am also about to do, I do not underestimate the sleepless nights and dedicated hours of planning, lab work, fieldwork, teaching, reading, writing, marking, discussion and administration that have brought us here. You have all brought us here. To you, collectively, belongs the glory and the praise.

Travelling in time 2016-2022

In my admittance speech in January 2016, I wondered what an early graduate might make of modern Oxford if he were transported forward several centuries though time.

In this Oration, I would like you to imagine a different time-traveller. This time our student is a woman. In search of her gown, she entered a wardrobe in her college room in 2016 and has been magically transported to the year 2022. What differences might she discern? How has Oxford changed in these seven years?

Architecture

I'd expect the first thing this student would notice is physical changes to the architecture of the University. Its dreaming spires remain intact, but they have been joined by gleaming towers that lead the way in sustainability, accessibility and efficiency. We have signed off over 30 building projects in the last 7 years, updating our fabric to face the future. That monument to 1960s architecture and construction materials, the Tinbergen, is no more. In its place is a massive gaping hole,

large cranes and fencing depicting the new Life and Mind Building, the largest construction project the University has ever undertaken. The new building will provide a home for the Department of Experimental Psychology and the new Department of Biology, combining the former Departments of Plant Sciences and Zoology. The Life and Mind Building will be one of the largest Passivhaus buildings in the world, designed to conserve energy and reduce emissions at every stage of its life. Like all our new commissions, it is built on the principles of environmental enrichment and open public space.

Our time-traveller would notice many other new buildings too: some, like the Blavatnik, the Weston, the Big Data Institute and the Beecroft, long in development but recently opened; others, like the IDRIM, the Dorothy Hodgkin and the Novo Nordisk building, erected in this seven-year stretch; and yet others, like the great new Humanities building, where the enabling works have just begun. She might notice that the Radcliffe Observatory Quarter with its dynamic new buildings is gradually becoming for the 21st century what the Radcliffe Camera area was for the 18th. If she knew her way around - or had access to a drone - she would also be able to see some of the magnificent recent building projects that have taken place in colleges like the Longwall Library in Magdalen, Cohen Quad in Exeter, Trinity's Levine Building, St Anne's new library and the Back Quad in Wadham. She would also notice, as she cycled down Parks Road, the brand new college: Oxford's 39th, Reuben College.

Admissions and access

The second change I believe our time-traveller would notice is the changing composition of the student body. Undergraduate students today are far more representative of the diverse make-up of British society than they were seven years ago. 23% of those admitted in 2022 came from disadvantaged backgrounds, up from

10% seven years ago. The number of state school students admitted in the same period rose from 56% to 68%. Black British student numbers more than doubled. The number of BME students has risen from 18% to 25%.

These figures are a helpful index of Oxford's increasing openness. Yet they can't begin to convey the joy of even one brilliant student who feared they were not the right type of person to attend Oxford, that something about their schooling was too shaky or their face didn't fit, but who found that they could flourish and achieve their fullest potential here. Nor can raw data convey how much Oxford benefits - academically, socially and culturally - from having the widest possible pool from which to attract students.

I am particularly delighted by the success of the UNIQ and Explore initiatives, which bridge the gap between school and university, inviting students to experience Oxford before they apply. Together with Opportunity Oxford, which, since 2020, has prepared under-represented offer-holders for successful student careers here, and Astrophoria, a brand-new, one-year foundation programme for state school students who have experienced severe disadvantage, these programmes are making a palpable, measurable difference to the chances that pupils with low confidence but high potential will arrive and thrive as students.

We have made some progress, though at a much slower rate, on staff diversity too. There are more BME staff now, particularly in senior roles; they comprise 19% of members of Council as against 4% seven years ago. There are also more female statutory professors - now 19% compared to 15% in 2016 - but still far too few. One area in which there has been a discernible change is in the appointment of female heads of house.

I vividly remember in Hilary term 2016 the female heads of house invited me to join them at their termly brunch. We were a small group sitting around the kitchen table in Somerville. Very thoughtfully, they gave me a welcome gift: a box of lavender-scented toiletries designed to reduce stress, and a voucher for the PictureHouse theatre to use on a night off. I managed to use all the scented soaps and baths salts that first term, but when I had a night off - several years later - I discovered that voucher for the PictureHouse had long since expired. Today, that same group meets in dining halls, and we are so many. Sixteen women have been appointed Head of House since 2016, ten of whom were the first woman to hold the position. No fewer than four

heads of house are now called Helen. Now that's progress. (I like to think of them launching 4,000 scholarships!)

Advancing outward

A third change I think our visitor would notice is that Oxford in 2022 seems more open to and engaged with the world than ever before. We have made astonishing scientific and technological advances that have visibly been placed in the wider service of humanity and the University's reputation has never stood higher than it does at this moment.

The shining light that, above all, has illuminated this path of engagement with a wider public is our COVID response. I am convinced that Oxford's extraordinary response to the demands of that crisis will go down in history as one of the fastest and most effective public health interventions ever mounted. The impact of Oxford's applied research on global understanding and management of COVID-19 has been multi-faceted and its reach simply astonishing. To date, the Oxford AstraZeneca vaccine has been administered over 3 billion times. It was calculated to have saved 6.3 million lives by the end of 2021, more than any other COVID vaccine. The effective therapeutics discovered by the RECOVERY trial saved many more hundreds of thousands of lives.

The Oxford vaccine has had such an enormous impact in part because it was developed, not for profit, but to be distributed at cost. That was a heroic agreement on AstraZeneca's part and one I will always champion. The ability to choose to treat the products of our research as an infinite social good, rather than merely goods to market, distinguishes university collaborations from purely commercial ones, underlining the powerfully humane nature of our mission. It underlines too the importance of research universities to the country's success, in every sense. Oxford rose superbly to the emergency of the pandemic and contributed our expertise in ways too numerous to recount, but included developing tests and treatments, the contact tracing behind the COVID app, detecting hotspots and patterns of infection, and analysing everything from the effectiveness of government responses to the needs of children affected by lockdown.

The scale of the effort was unprecedented: 350 researchers in Oxford and around 2,000 worldwide; 1,752 journal articles on COVID-19; 48,000 patients taking part in the RECOVERY trial. Many members of

our community have rightly been recognised with honours and awards. But I do not forget that all of you were involved in some aspect of difficult planning, teaching, research, administration or maintenance during the pandemic, and that to your collective actions we can attribute the smooth running of this University at a time when every day brought new bumps, directives and decisions.

For all its hardships, the pandemic has accelerated Oxford's transition to new technologies, transformed our libraries into global digital hubs and shown us new ways to teach and foster lifelong learning. It has forced us to work together as a community more intensely than ever before, improving health and safety, and integrating everything from professional services to mental health provision. It has trained us to be fit to face the future. We are stronger than before.

Alliances with the marketplace

Our time-traveller from 2016 might be less immediately aware of what has changed in Oxford's relationship with business - but if she visits the ever-expanding science parks and innovation facilities I think she will be deeply impressed to meet the men and women who are taking Oxford's ideas into the marketplace.

In the not-too-distant past, business and industry were considered *infra dig* at a university like ours. Not any more. Our income from industry is now the highest of any university in the country. Together with industry partners we are conducting research and applying it directly to real-world problems, from antibiotic-resistant bacteria to climate change. Quite aside from philanthropic gifts, investment in the University has soared over the last seven years. Among our funding partners is Novo Nordisk, which has invested £115 million in a new research centre as part of its collaboration with us on type 2 diabetes. We have formed a partnership with Amazon Web Services to create a test bed for cloud-based research accelerating advances in AI and Data Science, and we have joined with GlaxoSmithKline to create the Oxford GSK Institute of Molecular and Computational Medicine. Since 2016, the University and Oxford University Innovation have created an astonishing 149 spinout companies, more than doubling the number formed since 1957. Oxford companies have attracted £5.7 billion from investors in the last decade, £1.6 billion in 2021 alone. We are one of the fastest-growing university innovation ecosystems on the planet.

Another indicator of Oxford's growing self-confidence and willingness to engage externally has been our decision to go to the markets to secure bond financing. This involved first securing a 'Triple A' rating from Moody's, and then going on a road trip to persuade potential investors that Oxford was a worthy investment for the next hundred years. This was a spectacular success. We secured £750 million for a hundred years and subsequently an additional £300 million at a fixed interest rate of 2.4%. If we chose to do so we could buy this back today for a fraction of the cost. This was the largest, longest and cheapest bond in British higher education history.

We adopted a similar approach in our agreement with Legal & General, who have agreed to invest £4 billion in Oxford over the next decade. This long-term investment will enable us to build the staff and student accommodation and academic buildings we so badly need without having to search for capital to do so.

Altruism and aid

Then, if our visitor were to peep into our coffers, I think she would marvel at the gifts that have been left there: gifts that will secure new scholarships, new accommodation and new research facilities that she might wish to use in the future.

Philanthropy is as old as the University itself. But we have experienced a step change in the scale of giving. Philanthropic fundraising results have more than doubled in the past seven years. In the year that ended in July we raised £249 million, our second-best year ever. Our best year was 2018-19, when we raised £259 million. By contrast, in the year ending July 2015 our total raised was £89.7 million.

The major gifts that have come in recently have included £175 million from Stephen Schwarzman, £155 million from Madame Thao, £100 million from INEOS, £90 million from the Reuben family and £50 million from the Poonawalla family. These gifts are notable for their scale, ambition and generosity. They are also notable for the fact that not one of them comes from a graduate of the University. It again speaks to our growing engagement with the world that people from all across the planet, without a personal connection to the University, are so attracted by the potential and the blinding excellence of our research that they wish to invest in us.

Not included in these spectacular figures is a \$93.3 million gift we

celebrated just last week. This fabulous gift will fund scholarships for African students here in Oxford and a significant set of collaborations between the newly launched Pandemic Sciences Institute and partners in Africa.

Our graduates have long been generous to their colleges, and some have been extraordinarily generous to the University too. But I know of no university in the world which can attract such investment from non-graduates. There has also been a notable improvement in fundraising collaboration between the University and its colleges in recent years, and the gift from Madame Thao shows just what can be accomplished when we work together.

In addition to these mega gifts, there are other important gifts too. In February, the Jonathan Cooper Chair of the History of Sexualities was established in the History Faculty in association with Mansfield College. The new Chair will expand the study of LGBTQ+ history at Oxford and become the first fully endowed specialist post of this type in the UK. This month we celebrate the first anniversary of Brenda Stevenson assuming the newly endowed Hillary Rodham Clinton Chair of Women's History. These are Chairs that belong at Oxford's table, shaking up a seating plan first established centuries ago, and I am delighted to have been Vice-Chancellor at their inauguration.

In recent years we also closed the Oxford Thinking Campaign, which exceeded its £3 billion target, and we have started the planning for the next fundraising campaign around key themes crucial to the future of the University and indeed the planet.

It's nice to reflect on all these As: the ways in which our new architecture, admissions and access practices, advances such as the COVID vaccine, alliance-building with industry and philanthropic aid have grown in the last seven years. All of these improvements have made Oxford more open, more diverse and more outwardly engaged: a university richer in its resources and in its relationships, and more confident of its place in the world.

Achievements and global standing

Our time-traveller will note that many things remain unaltered, pre-eminently the public recognition of Oxford's achievements. In 2016, for the first time in its history, *Times Higher Education* (THE) named a British university the top university in the

world: Oxford. Every year since then we have retained the top spot. This year's ranking will be announced next week in New York. I don't know about you but I am betting on a straight flush! I should note that last year THE ranked our Medical Sciences Division the top medical school in the world for the 12th consecutive year.

Other accolades have poured in. Between 2016 and 2022 we have had:

- 1 Fields Medal;
- 1 Abel Prize;
- 3 Queen's Anniversary Prizes; and
- 3 Nobel Prizes (2 more for alumni).

Furthermore:

- 45 scientists were elected as Fellows of the Royal Society and 33 received Royal Society awards or medals;
- 57 colleagues were elected to Fellowship of the British Academy; and
- 110 members of the University were recognized in the Royal Honours.

REF 2021: the Research Excellence Framework

Also unchanged is the range and calibre of Oxford's research, as demonstrated by the REF.

In the 2021 Research Excellence Framework, Oxford made the largest submission of any university in the UK. We submitted over 3,600 researchers in 29 subject areas, and over 8,500 research 'outputs'. The results showed that Oxford is a powerhouse: we produce the largest volume of world-leading research in the UK. Particularly pleasing in our submission were the hundreds of impact case studies highlighting the immense social value of our work to communities across the globe.

I would like to mention just a few of the research case studies here from the arts and humanities, as there is always a danger of these subjects being overshadowed in the press by stories involving more quantifiable impact. The arts and humanities do high-stakes, often life-saving work too: it is simply that we cannot compute emotional resonance, the value of communication and argument in quite the same way as we calculate medical outcomes. But I do know that my blood pressure falls when I listen to Frederick Delius's 'In a Summer Garden'. In one project submitted as a case study, the Faculty of Music entered into a novel collaboration with the Faculty

of Engineering Science to catalogue Delius's work and make it available to new audiences.

Meanwhile, in the Faculty of History, researchers explored the Jewish country house, partnering with the National Trust to uncover untold stories of Jewish life that show members of the 19th-century Jewish community not in the ghetto but in the chateau.

The Faculty of Classics submitted a case study highlighting work on the school curriculum, arguing for the use of Classical rhetorical tools to improve the analytical and 'oracy' skills of school pupils, while the Faculty of English submitted a study that included a fascinating online exhibition about a trio of trailblazers: Christian Cole, one of Oxford's first Black African undergraduates; Alain Locke, the first African-American Rhodes scholar at Oxford; and Oscar Wilde.

These kinds of project extend the arts in ways that open up dynamic new conversations.

The Oxford AstraZeneca vaccine is, of course, the most celebrated example of our recent scientific research impact, but the REF highlighted many more wonderful examples of how we make a difference in the world, from tackling malaria to new therapies for depression, from reducing carbon emissions through climate policy, to using digital tools to improve parenting skills and reduce child abuse.

The success of our COVID response was only possible because of research partnerships that have been built over years so that they are ready to pivot in days to meet the need of the hour. Over the last seven years, the Jenner Institute has advanced multiple key vaccine research programmes to the point of clinical trial, most recently for malaria and HIV, while work to create vaccines for diseases such as Ebola, Rift Valley fever, rabies and plague continues apace. In 2018, Oxford researchers also demonstrated the effectiveness of a vaccine against prostate cancer. They later demonstrated that the technology behind the COVID vaccine has potential in treating cancer. In recent weeks they have turned to monkeypox.

This is an apt demonstration of the truth that in research, no topic or team exists in isolation. Research developed to combat one threat may have multiple unforeseen applications. Last February researchers from the Big Data Institute took a major step towards mapping the entirety of genetic relationships among humans: a single genealogy that traces the ancestry of all of us. I imagine I am not alone in

finding this particular project especially meaningful at a time of political polarisation, when human difference is often exploited to foster conflict. Oxford possesses the great advantage of being inherently interconnected; its many different forms and branches of research share a common basis in the organic structure of the University, allowing them to interact. In every way, then, our research and our teaching bring people together, and emphasize our interdependence. To support this endeavour we have created both a Strategic Research Fund and a Strategic Innovation Fund to offer seed funding to researchers to develop nascent ideas before applying for external grants. These funds also provide a new mechanism for funnelling the financial returns from innovation back into University research activities.

Teaching

While research makes the news, education remains the core activity that defines Oxford for most of our students. It has been a joy to watch students graduate in person after a long pandemic pause in ceremonies: mortarboards occasionally flung so high one wondered if they'd return. As we begin to return to normal after so many upheavals, it is worth reflecting on improvements of recent years that have upgraded our teaching practices.

The Centre for Teaching and Learning was established in 2019 to provide a focus for academic development in this area. The centre has enabled stronger collaboration across educational development and digital education. All students now have access to a core digital learning platform based on Canvas, which offers greater flexibility and accessibility to learning resources. 30% of our exams remained online this year as we began to question how many assessments really need to be handwritten in a silent hall in subfusc.

We launched the biennial Vice-Chancellor's Education Awards, to recognize and celebrate excellence in education across the collegiate University.

We have also stepped up funding for students, with the launch of a new undergraduate financial package in 2020, supporting over 2,500 students each year, with an annual spend of £8.5 million. The Crankstart scholarship programme has expanded from 175 new scholars a year in 2016 to 520 scholars today. This summer, in the face of the cost of living crisis, we have increased the Crankstart bursaries by £500 per student.

I believe that the new frontier for access is bringing support for postgraduate access to the same levels as support for undergraduates, so that we can attract the very best students. Crankstart has now been extended to postgraduates, with 8 scholars selected this year, and UNIQ+ has grown to 130 students this summer. We have made over 40 offers to students for fully funded Academic Futures Scholarships and are working with Cambridge on a UK Research and Innovation/Office for Students-funded initiative entitled Close the Gap to promote access to graduate degrees for BME students. Thanks to Oxford University Press we now offer over 200 Clarendon Scholarships, and through the Graduate Endowment Matched Scholarship Scheme (GEMS) £30 million from the University's endowment is used to match £60 million of donor funding to create over 70 endowed graduate scholarships. In addition funds raised in the past four years have supported 1,179 students with expendable graduate scholarships.

Administration

There are always areas where we could improve. In my final Oration, I would like to mention a few areas where we still get a B, as against our A*s in other subjects. The biggest B is bureaucracy. Both internal and external pressures have led to the growth in our administrative structures and staffing.

Five years ago we commissioned a benchmarking exercise which demonstrated what we intuitively knew: that our administrative costs are unusually high, that compared to our peers a larger share of our support services are based at departmental level, and that we have an unusually large amount of transactional activity reflecting paper processes. There is no escaping the fact that the devolved structure we have chosen to organise ourselves is very expensive and requires lots of administrative duplication.

The other pressure is external. The Office for Students (OfS) published 600,000 words in regulatory documents in 2020-21, almost double the word count of 2017-18 and 30% more than Tolkien took to write *The Lord of the Rings* trilogy. Last January, the OfS issued 699 pages of consultation documents with a two-month response deadline, at a time when we were planning for an Omicron-induced lockdown. The OfS Regulatory Framework runs to 166 pages. It has a further 43 pages of Updates and Amendments, 6 of explanation of the amendments, and

20 setting out national standards for higher education. To this are added 6 Regulatory Notices and 20 pieces of formal Regulatory Advice. I can't help noticing that the US Constitution is in a similar format and runs to a total of 19 pages.

The heavy weight of regulation continues to be an unsustainable burden on university administration. Meanwhile, in my seven years as Vice-Chancellor, we have had eight Secretaries of State for Education.

Inequity between the colleges

Another feature of contemporary Oxford that is as old as the University itself, and that has not changed in the past seven years, is inequality between the colleges. Both students and staff at poorer colleges often complain that their peers in wealthier colleges get more than they do. It was ever thus. In the late 15th century the wealthy colleges hired the best teachers and paid them well, while students at poorer colleges had to pay to attend their lectures.

Poorer colleges continued to struggle to employ staff of the same calibre as the wealthy colleges into the 19th century, with the added burden of having to fund teaching in the 'new' subjects like sciences and languages.

These disparities in the quality of staff have long since evaporated, but what has persisted is a sense of injustice among many students and staff that they do not all have access to the same resources. The central University has never been able to resolve this.

What has improved is the relationship between the University and its colleges. We saw this during the pandemic when the colleges and the central University worked hand in glove to ensure that our teaching and research were protected. We saw it in the gift from Madam Thao, which will benefit Linacre College, the Blavatnik School and future generations of graduate students. We saw it most recently in the response to the brutal Russian invasion of Ukraine. The colleges and University worked together at lightning speed to create a package of support for Ukrainian students and scholars. We can take particular pride in the fact that together we are welcoming 26 Ukrainian graduate students on full scholarships this month.

Governance

Lastly, getting a terrible F for 'fossilized', is how the University governs itself. In 1913 an unnamed

correspondent of the Chancellor, Lord Curzon, described the University's governance as 'the worst form of government ever devised by the wit of man'. His proposals for reform were blocked after 105 consultation meetings, 23 special sittings of Council and a succession of Congregation meetings. More recent efforts at reform have met a similar fate.

About 9,000 members of our community are eligible for membership of Congregation; about 5,500 choose to join. Meetings are rare and sparsely attended, and the highest postal ballot turnout in my tenure was about 1,600, on the EJRA. It takes only two members of Congregation to pose a question and require a meeting of Congregation, which in turn requires the presence of 27 University staff and officers. The meeting of October 12, 2020 was one of the more memorable. Neither of the movers of the question nor those who submitted supplementary questions attended; instead a lone, silent person sat in the well of the Sheldonian Theatre. It was far from clear to me at the time whether she was in fact a member of Congregation or whether, given the large bags she laid down beside her, she was a passerby taking a break from shopping in Broad Street.

Many elections for Council and other University committees remain uncontested. Elected and unelected seats are often vacant as nobody wishes to take them. (132 lapsed vacancies at last count.) Participatory democracy requires participation. If people are unwilling to participate then we ought to ask ourselves, why? As Oxford moves forward to become an ever-more modern institution, it would be good to think that its mode of governance might adapt.

Financial update and future challenges

The bottom line of my financial update this year is that the University's balance sheet remains strong and healthy, with £5.2 billion in net assets in 2020-21. There are, however, very good reasons not to be complacent. 'Winter is coming', as the ominous portent in *Game of Thrones* has it. I see four key challenges for the years ahead.

First and foremost is the cost of living crisis. Many of us have never before experienced inflation at currently predicted rates. The scale of the crisis occasioned by the Russian invasion of Ukraine and the economic fallout of the pandemic has taken us all by surprise. The impact of the crisis will fall differently on different students, on different staff and on different colleges. As ever, the most vulnerable

will be the most adversely affected. We cannot fully shield staff or students from financial harm but Council is committed to doing what it can to mitigate the impact. We must work together and each in our own way do what we can to moderate the impact on our community.

A second challenge is public investment in our universities. As our costs spiral the fees for teaching remain frozen; their real-term value shrinks with each passing year. We also need to ensure that the government fulfils its promises to invest in our research. We still do not know whether we will be able to participate in Horizon Europe, but it seems less and less likely with each passing month.

On December 30, 2020, in the presence of his senior advisers and industry leaders, the prime minister promised Oxford £150 million for our new Pandemic Sciences Institute. I, in turn, committed to raising an equivalent sum privately so that Oxford and the UK would have an institute that would retain our best scientists and serve as a magnet to scientists from around the world, and together we could ensure that the world is never again caught unprepared for a pandemic. We have fulfilled our part of the deal and raised our share from several generous donors. We are still waiting for the government to fulfil its side of the bargain.

More broadly, defending education, and universal access to education, has never been more important than it is at this moment. There has been a rash of departmental closures at fellow institutions, especially in the arts and humanities, as well as political posturing about eliminating degrees that do not immediately lead to well-remunerated employment. These are dangerous contractions that have the potential to give birth to intolerance and a narrow view of the goods education delivers. Oxford degrees will always be ranked and rewarded highly in the global marketplace. But the truest measure of a great education is not what we are paid, but what we are made by it. We are not defined by the price others will offer for our labour, but by the values we hold, the creative ideas we develop, the relationships we build, the social benefits we bring, and the number of people our lives enrich practically, emotionally and intellectually.

The third challenge we face is an internal one. Are we prepared to hold ourselves to account? We have rightly celebrated our REF results but a closer examination clearly indicates that,

while much of the work we do is world leading, not all of it is. Are we prepared to address the weaknesses exposed? We have a probation system in which 100% of our academic staff pass probation. We may be omniscient in our hiring decisions, but it seems unlikely. Unlike most universities we have an EJRA, and it has proved deeply divisive. Many colleagues prefer having an EJRA (designed to promote intergenerational fairness and diversify our senior ranks) to having our performance appraised. I believe that every staff member at Oxford should have such confidence in their own work that they are prepared to allow it to be objectively assessed.

The fourth and final challenge I will mention is the need to preserve academic freedom and freedom of speech for our staff and students. The recent, appalling attack on Salman Rushdie shows that when writers and academics speak out, there are people willing to cut them off. I have been shaken by the level of threat and harassment experienced in recent years by some of our academics, especially female academics, and especially via social media.

As Rushdie himself has said, 'I've always thought that democracy is like a town square or a bazaar...in which passionate disagreements are constantly taking place. The ability to have such disagreements is what one might call "freedom".' I hope that one of the things that students learn when they come to Oxford is how to disagree well. I've always believed that the value of a university education lies as much in the doubts it creates as in the facts it imparts. Back in January 2016 I quoted John Stuart Mill's point that a university's influence on its students rests on what he called 'the pervading tone of the place'. I hope that, if it has not always done so in the past seven years, in future the tone of Oxford will always live up to the 'elevation of sentiment' invoked by Mill.

1922/2022

We face these and many other challenges. Looking around us in 2022, we see a landscape of political and economic uncertainty. I am reminded that 1922 was also a difficult year: a year of train strikes in America, of hyperinflation in Germany, of civil war in Ireland and the rise of the Fascist party in Italy. Yet 1922 is now remembered as the *annus mirabilis* of modernism, inspired by the slogan 'Make it New'. It became the year, famously, of James Joyce's *Ulysses*, of Virginia Woolf's *Jacob's Room*, of T S Eliot's *The Waste Land* and of the

founding of the BBC. In 2022, we too face strikes, inflation, the effect of war on Europe and the rise of far-right politics. Yet, I dare to think that we can channel some of the same fresh, invigorating, innovating energy that made modernism so electric. I would like to invite you to make it new. To make Oxford new, as we must each academic year.

The time-traveller returns

Before I close I would like to imagine the Oxford I hope our time-traveller will discover when she returns 10 to 15 years hence.

I imagine her arriving by bicycle on one of the car-free routes that run from Iffley to Osney, from Cowley to Cumnor. The air is warmer but the streets are greener. She will pass the new Court Place Gardens where graduate students and their families live in new energy-efficient homes set in wildlife-friendly gardens. She will visit friends in Begbroke, a new thriving academic community where staff and graduate students live in subsidized accommodation with new schools for children and a science park offering exciting career opportunities. She will meet an old tutor, now a fellow at the new Radcliffe College next to the Warneford, where a bright new hospital opens up the world of mental health. She will take a break to participate in a hybrid meeting with colleagues in the Bay Area, in Suzhou and in Berlin as they all debate the ethics of AI with colleagues in Oxford. In the evening she returns to the city centre by electric tram, joining the crowds to take in a concert by the world's foremost young violinist in the fabulous concert hall at the Schwarzman Centre.

Less tangibly, she finds a city and a university that feels welcoming, accessible and integrated, that is One Oxford. She remembers Oxford once felt exclusive and otherworldly, steeped in ancient mystery and privilege, with rumours of secret tunnels running between the Oxford Union and 10 Downing Street. She recalls her mother looking anxiously at the college gates - some of Britain's biggest, oldest and most beautiful doors. To a tourist they were closed. To a disabled visitor they were impenetrable. Now, as she wheels her mother into the concert hall to join her, she reflects that the exclusive iconography of ivory towers and ivied stonework has shifted; there are now glass elevators, transparent admissions policies and physical and virtual spaces where diverse public views are welcomed.

Before she leaves she also realizes what she didn't hear: not once during her visit did she hear somebody referred to as the first female anything!

A new head: Irene Tracey

Oxford, like Rome, may seem an eternal city, defined by its history and continuity. Yet it changes all the time. Take the Sheldonian heads, for example - the 17 rather wild-looking herms of old men that surround this building and the History of Science Museum. They are not as old as they look. They are the third set, carved in the early 1970s as replacements for a Victorian set that had weathered away. The first set of heads was commissioned by Christopher Wren in the 1660s, from a local sculptor, and nobody knows for sure what they are supposed to represent. They might be Greek sages or Roman emperors, but they don't conform to classical numbers or models from antiquity. One suggestion was that they are pop-eyed with shock at how little Gilbert Sheldon was prepared to pay for the theatre that bears his name. In 2019, four artists were commissioned to fashion some new heads, incorporating women of colour into the parade of faces outside the building where we award our degrees and hold our solemn convocations. Eminent or absurd, a tribute or a joke: the Sheldonian heads mean not just one thing, but many possible things depending on the viewer. Oxford, too, is less set in stone than it looks.

As you will be aware, Oxford's nominal head - the Vice-Chancellor - will change in 2023. For me this is significant, but the University will continue to be very securely guarded and carefully led by my successor, Irene Tracey, who has all the qualities of a distinguished neuroscientist and an intimate familiarity with Oxford in all its aspects. Irene has experienced this university as an undergraduate, a postgraduate researcher, a professor, the director of what is now the Wellcome Centre for Integrative Neuroimaging, and Warden of Merton College. She has excelled effortlessly in every role that Oxford has given her, and there could not be a safer or more able successor.

Please give her your best support. Being a head (as the Sheldonian heads can tell you) is an honour and a privilege, but it does expose you to all kinds of weather. You will be an occasional lightning conductor for anger in the form of incandescent emails. There may be press pile-ons, which one might compare to pigeons roosting (or worse) in one's hair. 'Irene', as you know, is a personification of 'peace' in Greek. I can

wish my successor no greater happiness than that her advent brings a further period of calm and consolidation after the worst of the pandemic's storm.

Peroration

Finally, I would like to thank everyone here for seven years of collegiality and collaboration, discovery and debate, and even the occasional complaint. I left my home in Tramore shortly after my 17th birthday to hitchhike to Dublin to go to university, and I have studied and worked in universities ever since. My journey from County Waterford to Oxford by way of Harvard and Scotland was made possible exclusively by my education. I cannot imagine any more worthwhile career. And I am truly proud to have been your Vice-Chancellor. As my compatriot W B Yeats said as a young man, moony and star-struck by Oxford: 'I wonder anybody does anything at Oxford but dream and remember, the place is so beautiful. One almost expects the people to sing instead of speaking. It is all like an opera.'

I am the last person to attempt an aria, but I know that when I return to America, I shall both dream of Oxford and remember it. For now, I have the privilege of spending one more term at the head of this brilliant University. I wish you inspiration and success in all your endeavours, the freedom and courage to embark on new projects, and the patience and time to return to old ones. I look forward to serving and supporting you into the future in any way I can. Many of you are the best of colleagues at what is globally acknowledged to be the best of universities. Your possibilities are boundless. May your intellectual journeys this year be fearless and fascinating. I hope they will take you to fresh destinations that fire the mind with wonder, and fill the heart with song.

Thank you.

Louise Richardson

Addendum to the Vice-Chancellor's Oration

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

Professor Anna Sapir Abulafia, Professor of the Study of the Abrahamic Religions, Theology and Religion; Dr Olorunsola (Shola) Agbaje, Senior Medical Statistician, Oxford Centre for Diabetes, Endocrinology and Metabolism; Nicholas Baldwin, Student Welfare and Support Services; Professor Roger Barton, Archaeology; Professor Buddha Basnyat, Centre for Tropical Medicine and Global Health; Professor Nigel Biggar, Regius Professor of Moral and Pastoral Theology, Theology and Religion, and Director, McDonald Centre for Theology, Ethics and Public Life; Professor Dorothy Bishop, Senior Research Fellow, Experimental Psychology; Carol Brady, Deputy Head of Student Administration (Postgraduate Taught Courses), Continuing Education; Graham Bray, Head of Administration and Finance, International Development; Professor Julia Bray, Abdulaziz Saud AlBabtain Laudian Professor of Arabic, Asian and Middle Eastern Studies; Jeremy Brett, Research Support Manager, Engineering Science; Professor George Briggs, Professorial Research Fellow, Materials; Dr Neil Brodie, Archaeology; Professor Michael Broers, History; Dr Colin Brooks, Manager, Language and Brain Laboratory, Linguistics, Philology and Phonetics; Dr Stephen Broxholme, Wellcome Centre for Human Genetics; Dr Richard Bryan, Research Computing Manager, Biochemistry; Professor Malcolm Bull, Professor of Art and the History of Ideas, Ruskin School of Art; Irshad Bux, IT Support Officer, Medical Sciences Divisional Office; Professor Robert Chard, Professor of Chinese Classics, Asian and Middle Eastern Studies; Professor David Clark, Professor and Chair of Experimental Psychology; Professor Eric Clarke, Heather Professor of Music; Emeritus Professor Kieran Clarke, Professor of Physiological Biochemistry, Physiology, Anatomy and Genetics; Professor Alan Cocks, Professor of Materials Engineering, Engineering

Science; Ian Combella, Network Engineer, IT Services; Denise Conway, Director of Business Management, IT Services; Marion Couldrey, Co-Editor, *Forced Migration Review*, International Development; Dr Linda Covill, Project Manager, IT Services; Dr Sally Crawford, Archaeology; Jane Cunning, Assistant Administrator and PA to the Professor of Linguistics, Linguistics, Philology and Phonetics; Linda Curson, Area Safety Officer, Materials; Dr Susan Daenke, Structural Biology; Dr Sarah Darby, Associate Professor and Senior Research Fellow, Environmental Change Institute; Carol Davey, RDM Investigative Medicine Division; Andrew Dawson, Bodleian Special Collections; Gary Douglas, Departmental Health and Safety Officer, Engineering Science; Dr Kim Eric Drexler, Senior Research Fellow, Future of Humanity Institute, Philosophy; Professor John Duncan, Senior Research Fellow, Experimental Psychology; Anne Dutton, Careers Adviser, Careers Service; Robert Eadie, SharePoint Consultant, IT Services; Steve Emery, University Fire Officer, Safety Office; Johan Fopma, Head of Electronics Group, Physics; Professor Brian Foster, Donald H. Perkins Professor of Experimental Physics; Angelina Gibson, Social Science Library; Susan Gillis, Finance Division; Marion Greenleaves, Clinical Neurosciences; Keiko Harada, Lecturer in Japanese Language, Asian and Middle Eastern Studies; Professor Neville Harnew, Professor of Physics; Trevor Harris, Deputy Building Services Manager, Physics; Professor Daniel Healey, History; Maggie Howe, Head of Desktop Services, IT Services; Professor Charles Hulme, Professor of Psychology and Education, Education; Dr Philip Inglesant, Contract Manager and Trainer, Computer Science; Emeritus Professor Peter Jeavons, Computer Science; Gill Jenkins, Radiation Technical Assistant, Safety Office; Jeri Johnson, Associate Professor of English; Elizabeth Jones, Research Funding Associate, Research Services; Tracy Kaye, Graduate Studies Administrator, Centre for Criminology, Law; Professor Nicholas Kruger, Associate Professor of Plant Sciences, Biology; Professor Aditi Lahiri, Professor of Linguistics; Howard Lambourne, Mechanical Workshop Technician, Chemistry; Professor Stephen MacFarlane, Lester B. Pearson Professor of International Relations; Dr Michael Macnair, Associate

Professor of Law; Professor Kevin Marsh, Centre for Tropical Medicine and Global Health; Helen Marshall, Finance Division; Maria Marshall, NMR Support Technician, Chemistry; Professor Timothy Maughan, Oncology; Professor Richard McCabe, Professor of English Language and Literature; Dr John McCormack, Manager, New Services Strategy, Begbroke Directorate; Professor Alister McGrath, Andreos Idreos Professor of Science and Religion, Theology and Religion, and Director, Ian Ramsey Centre; Julie Minns, Graduate Operations Manager, Economics; Elizabeth Mitchell, Head of HR Analytics; Geoffrey Moore, Finance Division; Simon Moulder, Facilities Manager, Physics; Dr Karma Nabulsi, Associate Professor of International Relations; Eva Oledzka, Bodleian Special Collections; Maureen O'Neill, Development Director, Law; Eric Peasley, Engineering Science; Alan Percy, Student Welfare and Support Services; Professor Colin Please, Professor of Industrial and Interdisciplinary Mathematics, Mathematical Institute; Professor Alan Mark Pollard, School of Archaeology; Professor Thomas Powell, Professor of Strategy, Saïd Business School; Janina Pownall, HR Business Partner; Linda Ranford, Capital Projects Administrator, Estates Services; Professor Catherine Redgwell, Chichele Professor of Public International Law; Rita Richards, Sir William Dunn School of Pathology; Professor Julian Roberts, Professor of Criminology, Centre for Criminology, Law; Frances Russell, Hazardous Waste Technical Officer, Safety Office; Anne Saunders, Ashmolean Museum; Professor Simon Saunders, Professor of the Philosophy of Physics, Philosophy; Alastair Scott, Head of Brand Operations, Saïd Business School; Professor Michael Sharpe, Professor of Psychological Medicine, Psychiatry; Helene Sheridan, Finance Division; Robin Silvester, Area Safety Officer, Physics; Ian Smith, Manager, HFS Backup and Archive Service, IT Services; Professor James (Andrew) Smith, Professor of Plant Sciences, Biology; Professor Roland Smith, Lincoln Professor of Classical Archaeology and Art, Ancient History and Classical Archaeology; Professor Dennis Snower, Senior Research Fellow, Blavatnik School of Government; Carole Souter, Master of St Cross; Professor Giuseppe Stellardi, Associate Professor of Italian, Medieval and

Modern Languages; Professor Margaret Stevens, Professor of Economics; Dr Adrian Stokes, Interim Director of Continuing Education; Professor Richard Stone, Professor of Engineering Science; Jacqueline Supple, Research Administrator, Computer Science; Dr Oren Sussman, Reader in Finance, Saïd Business School; Marian Taylor, Oncology; Professor Alain Townsend, Professor of Molecular Immunology, RDM Investigative Medicine; John Tranter, Bursar, St Cross; Professor Peter Tufano, Peter Moores Professor of Finance, Saïd Business School; Professor Stanley Ulijaszek, Professor of Human Ecology, School of Anthropology and Museum Ethnography; Robin Vincent, Spray Forming Technician, Materials; Nenad Vranjes, Electronics Workshop Manager, Chemistry; Graham Wells, Research Assistant, Botnar Institute for Musculoskeletal Sciences; Professor Peter Wilshaw, Professor of Materials; Dr Kevin Young, MBA and Executive Degrees Recruitment Manager, Saïd Business School.

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

Dr Gina Crivello, Young Lives Senior Qualitative Research Officer, International Development; Dr Suet Ling Felce, Bioinformatician, NDM - China Oxford Institute and RDM - Weatherall Institute for Molecular Medicine; Mr Robert Iles, Senior Systems Administrator, Social Sciences Divisional Office; Ms Marina Kujic, Graduate Admissions Coordinator, International Development; Mrs Ellen Moilanen, Academic Administrator, Reuben.

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

Professor David G Andrews; Dr Derek Bergel; Miss Kathleen Bicknell; Professor Richard S Bird; Professor Oliver J Braddick; Mrs Leandra Briggs; Professor A H Buchanan; Professor J Burley; Dr John Burns; Mrs Yvonne Butler; Mr Anthony Cockshut; Mr Lesley R Cooper; Professor Peter Dickson; Professor K G H Dyke; Professor David Edwards; Professor John H Elliott; Professor Godfrey H Fowler; Mr Geoffrey C Francis; Dr Athula Herath; Mrs Carol L Holder;

Dr Alastair M Howatson; Professor A M Hudson; Professor Michael C Kaser; Dr Catherine E King; Mrs E Krishna; Mrs J M Laming; Professor R H Lonsdale; Professor Peter A Mackridge; Professor George MacPherson; Mr Muhammad K Malik; Professor Barry McCormick; Mrs Judith M McIntyre; Dr P C Nye; Professor N F Palmer; Mrs Julia R Parker; Dr Courtenay S G Phillips; Professor J Raz; Dr R C Repp; Mr Lory Rice; Mr D S Richards; Mrs J Richards; Professor Graham G Ross; Mr Barry J Sheppard; Professor Rebecca Sitsapesan; Mrs Doreen Stoneham; Professor Fredric W Taylor; Sir Crispin C C Tickell; Professor John F J Toye; Dr Stuart Turnbull; Mr R Undy; Dr T R Ware; Mr Francis R Warner; Dr Donald G Wild; Mr W G Wooster.