Bristol is powered by people like you

Impact Report 2019
Foreword

You are the power behind some of the most extraordinary people at Bristol and their achievements. Without your invaluable expertise, advice and wise counsel, and involvement, these incredible personal stories of discovery, dedication, potential and partnership would not be possible. On their behalf, and from me personally, thank you.

I hope you will find these stories as heartening as I do. During a time of great change, our students, academics, researchers and alumni are making the world fairer, safer and more prosperous. In this report you can read how Bristol’s people are designing new technologies to support the health of older people, overcoming challenges to build a future through education and creating stronger international communities fit for today’s connected world.

It is people like them, with you, that together make our University what it is today and will be tomorrow. Thanks to your support, people here at Bristol can reach further towards their potential, whether that is pursuing answers to some of the world’s grand challenges or taking up educational opportunities that previously seemed out of reach.

I am determined that Bristol continues to lead through ground-breaking research and a first-class education that reflects and changes the world around us. We aspire to be more connected, more relevant and more impactful than ever before. As we reimagine and redevelop the University for the 21st century, the support of the worldwide Bristol community of alumni, supporters and friends has rarely been so important.

It has been a pleasure to have met many of you over the course of the last year, whether here in Bristol or in London, Beijing, San Francisco or the many other places that Bristol’s people call home. We have a truly global perspective, an outlook that is enriched by every member of the Bristol community.

Thank you once again for all you have done, on behalf of the people featured in this report, from me personally and from everyone at the University of Bristol, your University. I hope you enjoy reading about the difference you have helped create.

Professor Hugh Brady
Vice-Chancellor and President
Contents

2  Foreword
4  You're raising aspirations
6  You're challenging the status quo
8  You're advancing technology to improve lives
10 You're sharing your expertise
11 You're inspiring the next generation
14 You're supporting healthy minds
16 You're tackling a global crisis
18 You're bringing students and alumni together
20 You're opening up the Bristol community
22 Building together for the future

Cover image
Neve Fay, scholarship student.
'Being a young carer at university means I face some extra challenges, especially trying to balance my time between home and university. It’s also expensive to travel home so much. My scholarship funding has been able to ease some of that financial worry for me.'
You’re raising aspirations

Nieve Fay, Biology student and young carer, tells us how her scholarship has helped her overcome the challenges of attending university.

I really didn’t know if university would even be an option for me. I come from a disadvantaged background and I’m one of the first in my family to go to university. I wasn’t confident that I could even make the required grades, but my family and my school encouraged me and I’m so thankful they did. I was both nervous and excited on the day I found out I’d been accepted to Bristol. My family was so proud of me. They told me to always strive for more, no matter the challenges I would face regarding funding myself at university.

I read about the scholarship online and applied for it. I’m so thankful scholarships exist because mine has played a massive part in helping me fund my first year at university. When I was told I had been successful it felt like a huge weight had lifted off my shoulders. I knew then that I was going to be supported at university and the scholarship would give me more opportunities to get involved in the university experience. I feel so lucky.

The scholarship has financed me to travel home to help my mum on a regular basis, which has been a huge relief. But it’s also helped me to have a broader experience at university. It might sound like really small things, but being able to afford notepads, revision cards, coloured pens, etc during exam revision time without worry has made everything easier. I’ve also been able to join a musical theatre society for a small fee, which is something I would not have been able to do without the scholarship. I’m so grateful to have been able to make new friends and build skills and get involved in some really exciting shows. It’s really helped to make my university experience and meant I can get involved in the things I love.

I’m already thinking about continuing on to do a Master’s degree, which is quite something, given I didn’t even think I was going to make it to university at all. But I love Biology and I’m really enjoying my degree. I’m so pleased that I had the opportunity to further my education and I hope to continue studying Biology. I have a great interest in climate change and hope that one day I can help take us one step closer to saving the world we live in.

I think it’s wonderful that alumni and friends want to support people like me at university. They have no idea how much it can really benefit someone’s life and it has already helped me open many doors for my future and for that I will be forever grateful.

In 2019 we launched the Futures Scholarships at Bristol which award talented students in financial need a total of £4,500. This encompasses £2,000 of funding to help with essentials in their first year and will enable them to make the most of university life. A further £2,500 is ring-fenced for use towards an internship, placement or other employability-focused activity later in their time at Bristol. Students will also receive guidance and career support from our dedicated coordinator. A scholarship gives students freedom from financial uncertainty. It provides them with the option to choose a job that fits around precious study time and makes it possible to succeed.
You’re challenging the status quo

Dr Isabella Aboderin (BSc 1992, PhD 2001), the Perivoli Chair in Africa Research and Partnerships, sets out how this new role will have a far-reaching impact.

I first came to Bristol as an undergraduate to take a BSc course in Cellular and Molecular Pathology, and later returned to do my PhD in Social Policy Studies. Bristol had a great reputation for the work I wanted to undertake, as well as a reputation for being a great city to live in. It’s wonderful to be back here to take up the position as the new Perivoli Chair.

I received a scholarship to do my PhD at Bristol. This great opportunity allowed me to shape an agenda in a field that was only emergent at the time – and my research has already had an impact, changing perspectives and mindsets, in both policy and academic spheres. The narrative at the time (in 2000) was that Africa was a ‘young’ continent and that issues of ageing didn’t matter. My PhD research looked at the social change and decline in family support for older people in Ghana, at a time when not many centres were considering ageing in Africa.

I enjoyed the openness and collaborative spirit at Bristol during my PhD and I look forward to more of the same in my new position.

Why is this role important for Bristol? Well, there is already a large body of Africa research and engagement at the University, but it’s dispersed and lacks a platform for synergy, cross-fertilisation and joint, perhaps more focused, work. The Perivoli Chair and the Perivoli Africa Research Centre will offer such a platform. They will help to forge strategic partnerships and programmes of work that are both policy and scientifically relevant and that build on the areas of expertise that are already unique to Bristol.

The Centre’s approach will also seek to be mindful of, and challenge, the all-too-common unequal power dynamics in UK-Africa research partnerships. For example, who decides the research questions or theoretical frameworks to be used? We need to move toward more deliberate approaches to decolonise the collaborative research we do, opening up to critique and direction from the African continent and pursuing more comparative work.

We can build a coherent programme of work that speaks to core development aspirations in Sub-Saharan Africa and that engages the most relevant policy and civil society actors at regional and sub-regional levels as well as globally. There is much potential, I think, for Bristol to cement its place as a leader in this area of research.

Prior to taking up this position Dr Aboderin held a dual appointment as a Senior Research Scientist and Head of the Programme on Ageing and Development at the African Population and Health Research Centre (APHRC), Nairobi, and was Associate Professor of Gerontology at the University of Southampton.

The Perivoli Trust has funded the Perivoli Chair in Africa Research and Partnership, which is aimed at furthering interdisciplinary research into education, health, sustainable agriculture, social and governance issues in Africa as well as deepening relationships between the University and international agencies, governments and research institutions in the continent. It will build on and add value to the University’s existing strengths across a broad range of disciplines and play a key role in the establishment and leadership of the new Perivoli Africa Research Centre. The new research centre will be a UK hub for collaborative research in Africa, to share expertise and empower innovation to achieve real and impactful change.
‘We need fairer intellectual endeavour between the Western world and the African continent.’
“Technology is the fastest moving opportunity for innovation we have. My work at Bristol has enabled me to design and develop technologies that make an incredible difference to people's lives.”
You’re advancing technology to improve lives

Dr Róisín McNaney talks about some of the new technologies being developed at the University of Bristol to support the health of older adults.

In the last ten years I’ve explored how new and emerging technologies can support people with chronic health conditions. My research focuses on ageing and older adults, and I’m interested in promoting self-care and self-management to equip people with a better understanding of their condition.

One year ago I started at the University of Bristol in a new Lecturer post within Digital Health Engineering, generously funded by The Anchor Society. Bristol is an incredible place to work because of the focus on digital health, and it is amazing to be a part of this health community, supporting older people to live healthy and happy lives.

Technology has enormous potential to support people in functional ways, with the speed of innovation, ease of use and capacity for automation and personalisation. I recently published on a trial for participants with Parkinson’s who wore a cuing device on their wrist to remind them to swallow more often. Regular swallowing prevented saliva management issues, which can be a common symptom of Parkinson’s, and many people said they consequently felt more comfortable eating and drinking in public, which inspired them to meet friends again and combat feelings of social isolation. This piece of technology had enormous impact in a very discreet and meaningful way.

Much of my work at Bristol is done using SPHERE technology (Sensor Platform for Healthcare in a Residential Environment) to help monitor symptoms of Parkinson’s. Developed by the University of Bristol, SPHERE is a platform of supporting technologies which include a wearable wrist device, silhouette cameras and ambience sensors that are used in the home to help paint a picture of someone’s daily movements, behaviours and sleep and eating patterns. We are currently collecting data from over 50 homes across Bristol that have SPHERE technologies installed, allowing us to chart changes in an individual’s daily life which might indicate health deterioration.

The more we understand, the better equipped we are to put things in place to help people with chronic conditions, like Parkinson’s. The longitudinal studies we are running give us an expansive knowledge we wouldn’t otherwise have and allow us to collect data without needing much effort from the participant, providing us with valuable insight into the effectiveness of someone’s healthcare plan and any interventions or medications they might be taking.

This post has really enabled me to develop vital research, engage with innovative projects like SPHERE and, with invaluable support from alumni and friends, participate in a community of people invested in improving the quality of life for older adults.

The University is proud to partner with many local trusts in Bristol, including the Anchor Society. The Anchor Society was established in 1769 to support older adults in the Bristol area, and works with organisations, charities and individuals on projects that encourage wellbeing and alleviate loneliness for older people in the region.
Rebecca Hellen (BA 1994) tells us her reasons for becoming a mentor.

I studied Art History and History at the University of Bristol and decided that a career in conservation was a great combination of the practical and academic. I then went on to study Science Chemistry for Conservators, before doing my postgraduate study at the Courtauld Institute of Art. In 2002 I started my role as Paintings Conservator at Tate.

The art world can be quite daunting. I didn’t come from an artistic family and like Hudi, I went to a state school, so I know what it’s like to try and enter a world you have little connection to.

Being a mentor was an opportunity for me to explore a broader and more open kind of coaching style than I’ve done before. It was really interesting working with someone much younger than me. I work a lot with postgraduates who are already committed to a career in conservation, but undergraduates are different – they are at a more influential and critical stage of their professional life.

I really enjoyed working with Hudi. I gave her some advice about talking to senior people and general etiquette, as it’s not something you necessarily learn. There are lots of very bright, relaxed and passionate people in the art world and it was really good to remind someone in Hudi’s position that everyone is human and that we all started out somewhere.

The mentorship was a flexible, easy-going arrangement and it was so satisfying knowing I could make a difference to Hudi’s final year experience. Mentoring is a great way to help make good things happen for the next generation.
...and inspiring the next generation

Hudi Charin (BA 2019) shares her experience of the Bristol Mentors programme and the impact it has had on her experience since graduating.

I’d never studied History of Art before coming to Bristol so I didn’t really know what to expect. But I read *The Story of Art* by E. H. Gombrich and suddenly I was hooked. I thought, ‘Oh my gosh, that’s my degree!’

In the summer of my second year I was really worried about applying for jobs and internships. I didn’t really have anyone to speak to about it and most people I knew were studying other subjects. So when Bristol Mentors contacted me it was a real relief. I was stunned and delighted to be partnered with Rebecca Hellen, Paintings Conservator at Tate.

I didn’t know much about conservation before but I do now! On our first meeting, Rebecca showed me around the *Edward Burne-Jones* exhibition at Tate Britain, which was amazing. She showed me before and after x-rays of the paintings she’d worked on and shared so much knowledge about how the exhibition was put together. It was such a privilege to get that behind-the-scenes insight.

It can be really lonely applying for jobs. Rebecca was an amazing sounding board for any questions I had and she taught me so much about the different roles within the art industry. It also made such a difference to have someone from the art industry look over my CV and job applications. Since meeting Rebecca I’ve secured four internships at galleries in London, while previously I hadn’t managed to get any. I’ve also done a placement with Bristol Museum, I’ve made some really good contacts and I’m thinking about applying for a Master’s which Rebecca has been able to help me with too. This mentorship has made such an enormous difference.

Bristol Mentors is the University of Bristol’s alumni mentoring programme, providing career-focused support for students from under-represented backgrounds by matching them with an alumni mentor. If you want to find out more, you can visit bristol.ac.uk/alumni-mentors
‘I will take this mentoring experience with me for a long time. It has been so valuable. It’s really important that students know there are people out there who want to help.’

Hudi Charin (BA 2019)
‘When you’ve landed a great position in a well-respected institution, you’re really lucky to be doing what you do. So, I thought why not return the favour and put it back out there?’

Rebecca Hellen (BA 1994)
By the end of my undergraduate degree I was extremely busy and very stressed from overwork. So much so that I didn’t even realise I needed help. Over the summer my parents realised I was struggling, and I went to the GP. Unfortunately, when I went back to start my Master’s my mum was diagnosed with cancer at the same time, which was devastating. I didn’t know if I should carry on with my studies, or if I should drop out. I found out via the University’s website what support was available to me. I got an appointment for the Counselling Services within two weeks and I went to see them. But you know, for me, the hardest thing is to talk about what I’m going through. I was offered regular counselling, but it really didn’t feel like the right fit for me. Then the counsellor told me about the Healthy Minds Programme and I was accepted onto that, which has been amazing.

I was assigned a mentor for three months. I had to meet him at the gym once a week for a minimum of an hour. He taught me so much about myself, and how to make sure I had balance in my life. I did a lot of strength-based work, to rebuild myself after my ill health. Confidence building in the gym led to confidence outside of it. I really didn’t feel comfortable with a traditional type of talking therapy, it’s not for everybody. But actually, my mentor was getting me to discuss things without me realising it.

For the following three months I then had free gym membership and I made a lot of new friends in my exercise classes, who were very supportive. The Healthy Minds Programme really worked for me because I did need a contact, a human being to report to and to support me. I found this a better fit than a traditional therapist’s office. That’s why this programme is so important and it’s so key that it remains funded. You have to meet people where they are and for many students getting ‘counselling’ via sport is a game changer.

Once I completed the programme I took a course to be a Run Leader, which was also provided by the University. I started off doing a 10k with a running club I’d formed. I felt I was helping other students, giving back in return for the help I received. I finished the year by running the London Marathon and raising more funds to support Healthy Minds and I’m really proud of this.

I achieved my MA in Law and now I’m excited to start work. I’ll be bringing with me everything I’ve learned about taking care of myself and my wellbeing.

The Healthy Minds programme aims to help students experiencing mental health difficulties. Based at the Indoor Sport Centre, students are supported to take positive steps to improve the way they feel. Referral is via Student Wellbeing Advisers, the Student Counselling Service or the Mental Health Advisory Service. The programme includes accessible, social and inclusive classes, gym and sports opportunities. Physical activity has been shown to release chemicals that boost mood. Regular activity also gives students the benefits of a structured routine and a strong sense of community.
‘I’ve had so many difficult decisions to make in recent times and I’m not sure I could have made it through my MA without this programme. I’m so grateful to the alumni and friends who continue to fund this wonderful service at Bristol.’
‘This bequest has had a domino effect, unlocking further funding and driving our research programme forward.’
You’re tackling a global crisis

Matthew Avison (BSc 1994, PhD 1998), Professor of Molecular Bacteriology and Director of the University of Bristol’s Anti-Microbial Resistance (AMR) Research Network, demonstrates the world-leading research underway, and how a legacy gift has been used to help prevent one of the greatest threats to global health.

My role over the last couple of years has been to work collaboratively across the University to develop the Bristol AMR Research Network and to lead a community to tackle this global crisis. Originally this work started as a collaboration between the different Science schools and has now grown to include important work in other varied disciplines, including the Social Sciences, Law and the Arts.

Antimicrobials (antibiotics) have underpinned global healthcare for decades. Their widespread use, however, has led to AMR which means they are increasingly ineffective in fighting infections. It is a complex and global problem. The University of Bristol’s AMR Network is an interdisciplinary research consortium designed to help fight the challenges posed by AMR, which severely threatens human quality of life and life expectancy across the world.

AMR involves many different factors – technological issues, environmental issues, poverty issues, regulatory issues – which are all underpinned by human behaviours and their social and cultural drivers. For this reason, the Bristol AMR Network works across all faculties of the University. We have physicists and engineers working together to develop machines to identify whether bacteria are resistant to antibiotics or not, we have biologists providing them with the materials to test their inventions, and we have social scientists to explain how this might influence the practices of the people who are using antibiotics in the first place. We have human geographers, medical anthropologists, chemists, medics, vets, people working in agriculture and experts in stakeholder engagement. AMR is an enormous problem that requires a multifaceted approach and funding this research is an ongoing, essential requirement.

With support from Ivan Way’s legacy gift, we were able to unlock matched funding from the Medical Research Foundation and support two AMR PhD studentships at Bristol this year. This legacy bequest was transformative, allowing us to recruit the very best people for two four-year research roles. This is now our second cohort of AMR PhD students, who are also involved in a wider national training programme led by Bristol AMR where 150 students from across the UK come to Bristol for an annual week-long residential course, enabling them to tackle AMR by working across disciplines.

It is Ivan Way’s legacy bequest that has enabled us to build on the success of this PhD programme, continue to support ground-breaking research, and train the AMR researchers of the future.

One of the PhD students supported by Ivan Way’s bequest who starts in September is a molecular microbiologist and computer scientist who will develop methods to help clinicians better use antibiotics in hospital treatment. The other is a vet who will be researching how we can reduce AMR on dairy farms. This legacy gift not only presents a life-changing opportunity for these two students, but will also contribute to our understanding of one of the world’s biggest global health crises. It represents a significant impact for AMR research, for the wider interdisciplinary AMR Network, for the PhD students and those involved in the training programme and, indeed, for world health.

Legacy gifts to the University of Bristol help our students thrive, support ground-breaking research and ensure that the University remains at the forefront of academic excellence. Many of Bristol’s achievements throughout our history have been supported by gifts in Wills from our generous alumni and friends.
You’re bringing students and alumni together

Siyan Ruan (MSc 2014), Beijing alumni network Leader, explains why Bristol networks are so important for students and graduates to feel connected.

The Beijing alumni network is a volunteer-led group that works closely with the University of Bristol to host events and activities for graduates based in Beijing. Our first meeting back in 2015 brought together more than 250 graduates, and we now support Bristol’s China Graduation Celebration, sit on Career Panels and organise meetings and events.

Studying at Bristol is a very precious memory in my life. I can still remember the nights we spent in the library, the excitement when I delivered an assignment, the sense of relief when I finished my exams, the fulfilment when I handed in my final thesis. It was challenging, but so worth it. I still benefit now from my experiences at university.

As an international student arriving in Bristol, everything was so fresh to me. I can recall the first day I arrived, staying in a hotel and thinking ‘It’s like being in a British film!’ Banksy’s artwork and trip-hop music were so amazing and new to me. I also made a lot of friends in Bristol who I am still in touch with now. Bristol gave us the opportunity to tackle some of our challenges together.

The University of Bristol has a community of over 12,400 alumni in China and over 2,000 Chinese students at Bristol, making it the largest international network. There are volunteer-led networks in Beijing, Shanghai and Shenzhen, which nurture and support a family of graduates, and there are other international alumni networks based in Hong Kong, Malaysia, Singapore and the US.

When you have shared memories of a place, you have a shared language. The Beijing alumni network – and the alumni network more broadly – gives graduates the opportunity to meet other people who have experienced Bristol, who have been shaped by the same city, the same university, and perhaps by the same memories. It provides a significant connection for those who studied together.

As part of the Beijing alumni network we also meet current Bristol students who are doing placements, internships or who are studying abroad in China. I often recognise myself in these students, excited and sometimes a little bit shy in a new and unfamiliar place. I was so supported when I moved to Bristol that I feel moved to pass on that kindness to current students and do what I can to ensure they have a positive international experience.

Bristol alumni networks are based all over the world, keeping graduates connected with Bristol and each other. These groups enable members to connect and network with like-minded alumni, share advice and expertise, and attend exclusive events.

Bristol alumni networks are based all over the world, keeping graduates connected with Bristol and each other. These groups enable members to connect and network with like-minded alumni, share advice and expertise, and attend exclusive events.
‘I’ve met a lot of outstanding alumni through the Beijing Alumni Network. It helps us stay connected to our shared experience.’
‘Compared to my old life I feel so fulfilled, I can do things, I can have an impact on the world. I feel like now I’m really living.’
You’re opening up the Bristol community

Simi Modupe, Sanctuary Scholarship recipient, shares how this support from alumni and friends has changed her life.

I’m the youngest of my siblings and the first person in my family to go to university. The idea of this kind of study was unheard of in my community. It felt like a miracle when I got into Bristol. There is no way I would have been able to take up my place at university without this Sanctuary Scholarship.

After school I lost several years to immigration issues and red tape surrounding that. I also couldn’t get any funding to study; it was a difficult time. I was living in London. But I wasn’t really living, just barely surviving. At one point I was working in a hotel starting at 3am and doing a 10-hour shift. I often had to sleep on the street before going on to my next job.

The relief when you get your visa is immense. But the doors don’t just open, you must work so hard to get anything. When I learned that Bristol had these Sanctuary Scholarships, it was the chance I needed. I persevered to make the grades and was so proud when I was offered a place to study Economics. When I was at school there had been an outreach visit from Bristol and the people who came made it sound so exciting and energetic to study there, they really brought it to life, so you can imagine my excitement when it was confirmed that I was going to go there.

I love it here, I’m learning all the time and the Scholarship has made a huge difference to my life as a student. I couldn’t possibly do this degree alongside the number of hours I was working before, rushing from one job to another.

This year I’ve been helping with the programme to welcome new Sanctuary Scholars and support them as they get to know the city and University. Everyone has been through major challenges, many fleeing from war in Syria. They’ve all got a different story, but we’re united by a huge sense of optimism for the future and our ambition to get the most out of our time at Bristol.

The city really suits me, it feels like there’s a community here. And I feel like me in Bristol. I’ve made some wonderful, strong friendships and have already had some great support from the Careers Service, who’ve helped me with my plans for what I’m going to do after graduation. In fact, I’ve had so much support that really the only main challenge is dealing with Bristol’s hills! When I first moved here I couldn’t get over how hilly it was, but now it’s a place I call home.

We recognise that individuals from forced migration backgrounds face additional barriers in accessing higher education and employment. Sanctuary Scholarships are made available to qualifying applicants who are asylum seekers, refugees or on Limited Leave to Remain in the UK. The aim of the Sanctuary Scholarship is to enhance opportunities for people from asylum-seeking and refugee communities, and to aid integration.
Thank you for choosing to support the University of Bristol.

Your generous philanthropic support, gifts of time through volunteering and invaluable advice are helping to power our researchers, our academy, our students and the enduring impact we have in improving the lives of local communities in the city, nationally and worldwide.

I am very fortunate to meet many of those whose lives and work have been transformed by the amazing support of our alumni and friends, a selection of whom are featured in this report. What strikes me most is the talent, enthusiasm and sheer dedication of our research investigators and students alike, whether they are seeking new knowledge to ultimately tackle the crisis of antimicrobial resistance or studying at Bristol thanks to securing a scholarship. They remind me that Bristol’s people, with your help, are building for the future.

Through an innovative use of new technology, Dr Róisín McNaney has helped people with Parkinson’s Disease to combat feelings of social isolation. Simi Modupe has overcome seemingly insurmountable challenges and is now studying Economics at Bristol. And Grace Kendrick’s approach to nurturing good mental health and wellbeing saw her graduate with an MA in Law and ready to start her career.

It is vital that we continue to build a community which fosters diversity, cultivates talent and enables more people like Róisín, Simi and Grace to thrive and flourish. Excellence is central to research, teaching and the student experience at Bristol.

The University is investing significantly, along with your philanthropic support, in further growing our capability and enhancing our standing in an increasingly competitive worldwide Higher Education sector.

Across the institution, we are investing in new buildings and facilities, including the new University Library and developing our curriculum and programmes to ensure the academy and our students can realise their shared ambitions and full potential.

I hope that you will feel inspired by the personal stories in this Report, and renewed in your confidence to continue your support and to build together for the future.

Thank you once again for your tremendous support this year; we cannot do it without you. I look forward to meeting you at one of our many events in the future.

Stephen O’Connor
Director of Development and Alumni Relations
# The year in numbers

## Donor numbers

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## Impact statistics

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Thank you for keeping Bristol brilliant