

Fundraising at Russell Group universities

Summary

- Russell Group universities are incredibly grateful for the donations of time, money and other resources given by our alumni and other supporters.
- Whether donations are small or large, ongoing or one-off, the generosity of alumni and others helps create a lasting positive impact on education and research, and on social, cultural, sporting and other activities at our universities.
- Donations help fund everything from bursaries for disadvantaged students to new academic facilities which benefit students directly. From cancer therapies to conflict resolution, alumni donations have helped our universities invest in cutting-edge research that is changing the world for the better. The benefits spread much wider than just the university campus.
- Our universities seek to build mutually beneficial relationships with their students that last a lifetime and fundraising represents one way in which alumni can remain engaged with their university and contribute towards the positive impact they make.
- When there are changes in guidance on best practice around fundraising our universities follow these closely. All Russell Group universities in England and Wales are registered with the Fundraising Regulator* and we take issues such as donor privacy very seriously. (*NB: fundraising regulatory regimes in different areas of the UK vary as a result of devolution.)

The importance of fundraising

Philanthropy and public donation has always had a significant influence on UK universities, with a number, such as University College London and the University of Sheffield, having been founded on the support of donors. Today, our universities continue to benefit from historic donations and bequests, but even more important are the ongoing links we have with our alumni and other supporters who generously donate their time, money and sometimes other resources to the wider benefit of the university community.

Our alumni are themselves an integral part of the university community and support institutions in a variety of ways. Financial donations are just one aspect; many also volunteer through mentoring programmes, providing guest lectures, contributing leadership experience (such as on university committees and councils), and give time to support particular activities often linked to their own interests or experience while at university.

Each university will have its own priorities and plans for how it uses the money it raises, but there are a number of common areas:

Scholarships and bursaries: These enable our universities to attract and support outstanding students no matter what their background. Alumni donations change the lives of students who otherwise may not have entered higher education, helping improve social mobility by widening access to degree study.

Academic skills enhancement: Alumni donations boost the number of opportunities available to students to develop their academic skills, for example providing opportunities to participate in

international exchanges and conferences or undertake fieldwork where they can explore their subject area beyond the classroom.

The student experience: Student-led clubs and societies make a significant contribution to the student experience. As well as enhancing the social lives of students, the investments made in this area play a fundamental role in supporting their wellbeing while at university as well as their preparation for entering the workplace.

Research: Donations provide vital funds that enable our universities to invest in ground-breaking research that pushes back the boundaries of knowledge. This helps deliver direct benefits to society for example through new medical treatments, improvements to public policy and advancing our understanding of major challenges such as food security, environmental change and the ageing population.

Facilities: These are often supported by larger donations or as part of a specific fundraising campaign. Alumni donations help build modern libraries, sporting and other facilities that students and researchers benefit from directly. Many of these facilities, such as museums, galleries, theatres, and botanic gardens are also open to the public.

University fundraising is dependent upon building long-term relationships with donors. It is clear that our alumni, more than anyone, have experienced the benefits of university study and want to give something back. Fundraising now provides a vital source of investment that enables universities to carry out their core charitable activities of education and research in the public interest.

Governance

Our universities take their responsibilities around the governance of fundraising very seriously. The Russell Group engages with the Information Commissioner's Office around issues such as data protection and, right from the start, we worked with the Government as it set up the Fundraising Regulator and developed the Fundraising Preference Service. Because of devolution, there are some different approaches across the UK, but all Russell Group universities in England and Wales are registered with the Fundraising Regulator.

All of our members are now preparing for the new General Data Protection Regulations which will come into force in March 2018, but beyond that they also regularly update their practices as guidance evolves.

Some recent examples of the impact of fundraising at Russell Group universities

Enhancing the student experience

*As a result of the generous donations made to the **London School of Economics and Political Science (LSE)**, 76 student-led initiatives were funded in 2016/17. Their Annual Fund works closely with the LSE Students' Union and student groups to ensure a broad range of initiatives can be supported, for example:*

- The LSE Music Society launched a teaching programme which has so far enabled 50 students to learn or teach musical instruments.*
- The Beyond the Classroom Student Union lecture series highlights the opportunities available for students to pursue alternative careers outside traditional sectors.*
- The LSE Student Union hosted their first ever Refugee Week with speakers being flown in from abroad to deliver valuable insights and raise awareness of the challenges in this area.*

Supporting access to higher education

*In 2016, the **University of Sheffield** received a significant gift of £350,000 from the widow of an alumnus who received financial support himself while studying at Sheffield. Hedley Howe (BEng Civil Engineering 1927, MEng Civil Engineering 1928) went on to become a highly successful civil*

engineer, and his gift has been used to set up the Hedley Howe Engineering Scholarships. For the next 30 years, these scholarships will support five new MEng students from widening participation backgrounds each year with an annual £1,200 scholarship. Over the life of this fund there will be a minimum of 135 Hedley Howe Scholars. Given that the UK is currently suffering from an engineering skills shortage, these awards will make a vital difference in attracting the brightest students, regardless of background, to study Civil Engineering at Sheffield.

Enabling the development of key academic skills

At the **University of Exeter**, alumni and friends of the University donated more than £4.9 million in 2015/16 enabling a range of enhancement projects and initiatives to be funded. One of these is a project to expand the experience of those studying Geology. This has supported a programme of monthly field visits for geologists (amateur to PhD) exploring geological sites with external guides; there have also been workshops on the wider cultural aspects of geology and support for skills development in the use of GPS and GIS equipment to collect and analyse data.

At the **University of Southampton**, generous donations from alumni and other supporters enable the costs of fieldwork for those studying marine biology MSci degrees to be subsidised. This ensures the widest possible access to outstanding fieldwork opportunities around the globe.

Facilitating cutting-edge research

A gift of £5 million from **Cambridge University** alumnus R. Derek Finlay will support fundamental research into the causes of disorders such as Alzheimer's and Parkinson's disease. This generous gift will be used to fund the completion of the Chemistry of Health building and support new research into neurodegenerative diseases. The building, which is due to open in 2018, will house the Centre for Misfolding Diseases, which is driving ground-breaking research into how protein molecules 'misfold', leading to diseases such as Alzheimer's, Parkinson's and type 2 diabetes.

Responding to global challenges

At the **University of Manchester**, donations have helped fund the Humanitarian and Conflict Response Institute which played a key role in the eradication of the global Ebola crisis. A medical NGO within this Institute called UK Med coordinated the UK's response to the crisis which involved training and sending 153 NHS volunteers to Sierra Leone.

Providing opportunities for undergraduates to learn and grow and supporting life-changing research

At **Cardiff University**, donations last year topped £4.5m, pledged and given by more than 700 alumni and friends. The money raised is helping to fund a range of professional internships, research placements, and programmes to study, work or volunteer abroad. 160 runners from the #TeamCardiff community fundraising project took up the challenge of running the Cardiff University/ Cardiff Half Marathon. Collectively, they raised an impressive £32,000 for cancer research and neuroscience and mental health research.

Restoring iconic buildings to their former glory

Donations made by alumni of the **University of Edinburgh** have helped to fund major restoration and redevelopment of the famous McEwan Hall, scene of graduations, exams and many other events for more than a century. The hall, built between 1888 and 1897 through the largest single private donation in the University's history, from the brewer William McEwan, has long been in need of repair. While undertaking those works the University is restoring the building to its original status as a major asset for both the University and the city of Edinburgh.