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**University of
Reading**



SUPPORTING OUR STUDENTS

Your support to the University of Reading has enabled us to develop an effective student support programme that bridges gaps and transforms lives. Through a mix of one-off gifts in response to fundraising appeals, regular donations and legacy bequests, here are just a few examples of the ways your donations have made a difference to students in the last 12 months.



Research grants for undergraduates, providing the unique chance for them to gain hands-on experience working as a researcher, supervised by world experts in their subject.



Empowering Change scholarships supporting international students to join our specialist postgraduate programmes that tackle major global issues including climate change, food security, poverty and equality.



Wellbeing guides and videos designed to help students and staff to access mental health and wellbeing information and tips to help them to thrive.



Digital support fund grants for IT equipment.



Emergency hardship funds to enable students to continue their studies.



Match-funded student-led crowdfunding, which enhanced curriculum learning.



Sporting Excellence Scholarships that enabled elite student athletes to compete at the highest level alongside their studies.



Student ambassadors to support the development of the Life Tools programme, designed to help students reach their full potential.



Postgraduate CARA fellowship, enabling a refugee researcher to safely continue their investigations away from conflict zones.



For many years, our donors have given generously to support the next generation of brilliant minds on their journey through higher education.

You support every stage of the student journey and your donations have a significant impact by funding scholarships, wellbeing projects and enabling work experience opportunities. Your donations also ensure emergency hardship support is available for students in crisis.

Phebe is studying to become a Physician Associate (practising medicine). She had prepared for the year and had carefully budgeted for living costs, with the support of her mother.

"I never expected to need student support funding. I had budgeted well and I knew what I could afford; my mum had a good job and she was supporting me. But that all changed suddenly when my mum unexpectedly went into hospital."

Phebe received an emergency grant to cover living costs while her mother was in hospital. The funding enabled Phebe to pay her rent, buy food and spend time with friends.

"When I found out I was eligible for a student support grant, I was so relieved.

The financial and emotional support I received helped me so much. It was amazing to know that people cared so much about students like me that they were willing to help us."

The Student Support Fund is a key way to assist those in need. By making the fund accessible and open to all students facing financial difficulties, we can ensure that students will not have to make the difficult decision to leave education due to financial strain.

The cost of living crisis has also hit students particularly hard. Matt Daley, head of student financial support at Reading said:

"This last academic year was really difficult for many students as cost-of-living pressures compounded the already difficult impact the global pandemic had. We saw an escalation of the measures students were taking to cut their costs in an effort to meet the growing gap between income and essential expenditure.

“This last academic year was really difficult for many students as cost-of-living pressures compounded the already difficult impact the global pandemic had.”

I want to express how grateful I am for the generous support that our donors continue to give so that we are able to help students cope in these financially difficult times."

Please give a gift today to help students like Phebe overcome financial emergencies. Thank you.

www.reading.ac.uk/donate



WELCOME

I am delighted to introduce Giving Matters, the publication for the supporters of the University of Reading.

At Reading we are committed to addressing global problems through our teaching, research and partnerships, and it is your generosity that drives forward imagination, transforming it into life-changing impact. You help us tackle the most pressing issues facing our world today by enabling our students and academics, both at home and across the globe, to achieve more.

What makes learning truly powerful, though, is the commitment to share it. Our students and staff are encouraged not only to learn, but to share their knowledge with others. I hope you enjoy reading about the successes and triumphs you have made possible. You support environmentally sustainable innovation, enable more young people from low-income households access a university education, and fund research into diverse areas including cancer. Through the efforts of our community we continue to enhance our global reach and further our impact.

As we enter the winter months, we continue to face challenges to student wellbeing, not least the cost of living crisis, which has hit our students and community hard. Your generosity has been a vital lifeline for many students, helping transform the circumstances of students facing financial hardship.

For all this and more, you have my wholehearted thanks on behalf of our University community.

Thank you for your support.

Professor Robert Van de Noort
Vice-Chancellor

JUST IMAGINE IF...

SOLVING THE WORLD'S PROBLEMS, ONE BUSINESS AT A TIME

Dave Okech (Aquarech, Finalist 2019), Paul Lindley OBE, Shreya Aneja (Nostos Homes, winner 2022)



The challenges the world faces are well documented. Poverty, inequality, disease, climate change and natural disasters affect many of the world's population. We urgently need innovative solutions.

Ambitious in its desire to make the world a better place, the University of Reading has for many years supported and run projects related to these global challenges. Our Climate Stripes, created in 2018 by Professor Ed Hawkins as a way to demonstrate how average global temperatures have risen over the past two centuries, are a well-recognised example of such work.

JUST IMAGINE IF...

It was natural that we should become involved in the just IMAGINE if... award. It was co-founded in 2019 by the University and Paul Lindley, entrepreneur, social campaigner, best-selling author, and, since July 2022 Chancellor of the University. Just IMAGINE if... is a biennial business innovation award supporting entrepreneurial ideas designed to address the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals.

The award is a further demonstration of our commitment to promoting environmental sustainability, combating climate change and our desire to bring University-led research and business initiatives together to work for social good.

As Paul Lindley put it, "Just imagine if one brilliant idea could change the world. Then just imagine if we could combine the transformational power of quality education and research to turn that great idea into a life changing reality."

RESEARCH, SUPPORT AND INCUBATION

Confirmed by the University as its flagship business innovation scheme in 2023, just IMAGINE if... offers a sponsor-funded research award and business support package worth £100,000 from the University's Henley Business School, known for its strong track record in supporting businesses as they establish themselves and grow.

The 2024 award process opened in October. Anyone aged 18 or over, anywhere in the world can apply. Each applicant submits their business idea, supporting one of the United Nations' 17 Sustainable Development Goals, along with a business plan and video presentation. Applications will be matched with appropriate schools in the University according to the type of research they identify that they need, and marked against a matrix of criteria to create a list of finalists.

“Just imagine if one brilliant idea could change the world. Then just imagine if we could combine the transformational power of quality education and research to turn that great idea into a life changing reality.”

Finalists will then develop their proposals during a three month incubation period with mentors, each a successful entrepreneur in their own right, and the Henley Business School Centre for Entrepreneurship, which will provide business support.

The process will culminate on the 20th and 21st of March with just IMAGINE if... 2024, a two-day event at Henley Business School Greenlands campus where the winner of the award will be selected and announced.

JUST IMAGINE IF... 2024

Each finalist will present their proposal, with a question-and-answer session, to a panel of business specialists. Key business metrics will be carefully examined, with points awarded according to the quality of each idea, its business veracity, how well the proposal holds up in the face of scrutiny, how novel it is, and how well it supports the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals.

On the Thursday afternoon each finalist will again present their proposal to an invited audience including event sponsors, finalists' mentors and local business people. Voting on the proposals will then take place, with a gala dinner in the evening at which the award winner will be announced.

INDIVIDUALS, NOT CORPORATES

It can be easy to assume that the answers to the world's problems lie with established corporates, but this is often not the case. The solutions often lie with individuals with lived experience of the issues and fresh ideas for their solutions – people who recognise that the best businesses not only make money, but also deliver tangible social and environmental good. It's those individuals that just IMAGINE if... is looking for.

The University is funding the event, website and associated promotional activity, but would welcome enquiries from those interested in sponsoring all or part of the award. If you'd like to help change the world for the better, please get in touch at giving@reading.ac.uk

To find out more about just IMAGINE if... visit justimagineif.co.uk or scan the QR code



SPORTING EXCELLENCE

HOW DONORS HELP OUR ELITE SPORTSPEOPLE

Your support has a significant impact on the careers of our elite athletes. Student life is challenging financially, especially when you have to balance the multiple demands of studying, training and competing.



The University's Sporting Excellence Scholarship was created in recognition of the additional challenges faced by individuals competing at the highest levels while also studying. It provides a grant to help such students with sports-related costs, including competition fees, equipment, club memberships, and travel to and from training and events.

A GROWING SUCCESS

Funded by donors, the Scholarship is now in its fourth years and has been a great success, attracting increasing numbers of applications. For the 2022-23 academic year, 26 scholarships were awarded,

across a broad number of sports ranging from canoe polo to athletics, rugby to weightlifting.

The Scholarship is just one aspect of our sports provision, which includes clubs and facilities for a vast range of sports. We have long recognised the importance of extra-curricular activities – they build character, reduce stress and combat loneliness, providing those taking part with a ready-made community of like-minded people. Sporting and other extra-curricular achievement can also strengthen students' CVs, demonstrating important characteristics such as good time management, motivation and commitment.

GIVING MATTERS spoke to two Sporting Excellence Scholars – Finnola Stratton, Year 2 Philosophy, Politics and Economics, and rower who represented the U23 GB team at the European championships and Isabella Wessels, Year 2 Psychology, and ITF Taekwon-Do who represented GB in the ITF Taekwon-Do World Championship 2023.

ISABELLA WESSELS – ITF TAEKWON-DO

Isabella has pursued Taekwon-Do since starting it largely by chance, when she was four years old, "To copy my older sister". On being selected for the England team when she was 14, she decided to focus all her energies on the sport, giving up swimming and running, in both of which she was competing at county

level. "It was a difficult decision," she said, "but, eventually, it came down to the disciplined nature of Taekwon-Do, which I love, and the excellent relationship I have with my coach."

“I know how much a scholarship can impact what you can do. Even a small amount of extra money gives you more freedom to focus and excel.”

With six international competitions under her belt, Isabella came to Reading fully committed to Taekwon-Do. Aware that universities often have financial support available for elite athletes, she applied for a Sporting Excellence Scholarship. "There isn't much, if any money in Taekwon-Do," she noted, "But regular training and competition are costly."

For Isabella, on top of equipment costs and competition fees, those expenses included travel to and from a new Taekwon-Do club in Basingstoke once she had moved to Reading to start her degree course.

Help with competition fees has been a particular boon. "Even local competitions have entry fees but it's really important to compete as much as possible," she explained. "Competing more means better fitness, more experience, and those local events provide a great warm up and preparation for major competitions." The scholarship also helped her with buying new England team kit for the 2023 European championships.

FINNOLA STRATTON – ROWING

Finnola started rowing at her local club when she was 13 and looking for a sport that would engage her. She loved it, and progressed well – so when she came to choose a university, finding one with a good rowing team was a priority. It was the University's team and squad that made Reading her natural choice.

Before university, Finnola had won a Sports Aid Scholarship, designed to support athletes at the top of their fields. "I know how much a scholarship can impact what you can do," she observed. "Even a small amount of extra money gives you more freedom to focus and excel. Applying for the Sporting Excellence Scholarship was a no-brainer."

Balancing costs and income is difficult for most students and even more so for elite sportspeople, making additional funding near essential. Finnola has found the Scholarship particularly helpful in one area.

"One of the most impactful things has been that it's made sports psychology and physiotherapy financially viable for me," she said. "Without the funding you wouldn't think they were even an option, but as an elite athlete, you really need them. Training two or three times a day while working and studying puts your body and mind under stress, so these have been massive upgrades for me."

Both Finnola and Isabella are clear: it would not be possible to engage in sport at this highest level while studying without the Sporting Excellence Scholarship and they are very grateful to their donors.



Rowing image: ©AllMarkOne

CANCER'S HIDDEN SECRETS

HOW DONORS' GENEROSITY MAKES ESSENTIAL RESEARCH POSSIBLE

Despite remarkable advances over the years there is still much about cancer which is poorly understood. One such area is metastasis – the process by which cancer cells spread around the body.

Pre-metastatic cancer can usually be cured, but this is rarely the case once it has metastasised – 90% of cancer deaths follow metastasis. We need a deeper understanding of the process.

That's the aim of novel research under way at Reading, funded by donors, Roger and Jennifer Isaac, who are both University of Reading Graduates and long-term donors to the University.

Undertaken by PhD student Kimberley Perry alongside Professor Phil Dash, Head of the School of Biological Sciences and Professor of Cancer Biology, the research focuses on cancer cells' behaviour on arriving at a new site in the body, having migrated from their original tumour.

THE KEY

Key to the research is metastatic dormancy – the tendency of metastasising cancer cells to become dormant and (until they reactivate) harmless, on arriving at a new site.

Studying dormant cells is challenging. They are invisible to established detection strategies, which only work with numerous, active cancer cells. A priority, therefore, has been to develop new ways of studying cancer cells as they arrive in new parts of the body.

The research relies on a process called decellularisation, where cells are chemically removed from a mouse liver. The liver is one of the most common yet least studied sites for the spread of cancer. After this process, researchers are left with Extracellular Matrix (or ECM), a natural framework of proteins defining its structure.

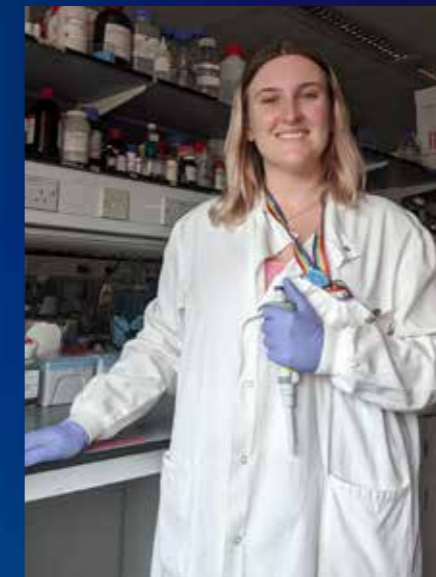
Meanwhile, cancer cells are genetically modified to produce fluorescent proteins from jellyfish and coral, making them visible under the microscope. Injected into the decellularised liver, they can be observed, tracked and measured as they arrive in their new environment, become dormant and later re-activate.

Professor Dash is excited by the possibilities. "We could use healthy liver cells from donors to grow human

liver tissue in the ECM, and then inject fluorescent cancer cells to observe how they interact with human tissue. Or, with age and obesity both risk factors for cancer, we could use tissues from older or obese animals," he said. "We could use the process for other organs and tissues, too. It's an entirely new, flexible framework for doing this essential research."

THE FUNDING CHALLENGE

With the project lacking the predictability that funding bodies favour, donor funding



“I've been passionate about cancer research for years – the Isaacs' generosity reignited the flame when it seemed snuffed out.”

has been pivotal. Future stages of the project may be more attractive to funding bodies, but this stage is essential to get to those later stages. Professor Dash puts it bluntly: "We would have struggled to get this project funded without the Isaacs."

Roger and Jennifer Isaac have recently donated specifically to support Kimberley and her research. "We're so impressed with Kimberley, Phil and the team, and the research they're doing," Roger observed. "And the University has really got the balance right when keeping in touch

– engaged but not pushy. We feel our contribution is valued."

Kimberley certainly values the Isaacs' generosity. Having chosen Reading for her undergraduate and master's degrees because of the opportunity to focus on cancer, she wanted to progress to a PhD. It was entirely thanks to the Isaacs that she was able to.

LIFE CHANGING

Until several months into her master's degree, researching liver metastasis, there was no funding for a PhD. Late that year, she was looking at alternative PhDs and even teaching jobs. Nothing really fitted, and it looked as if, as well being unable to do the PhD she wanted, she would have to abandon her life in Reading entirely.

At this point the Isaacs were talking to Professor Dash about focusing their donations entirely on cancer research. The result was full funding for Kimberley's PhD and the necessary equipment. "It was an overwhelming, life-changing moment," Kimberley recalled.

The impact for Kimberley has been significant. She's been able to present and defend her interim research findings at Turin's European Association of Cancer Research Conference and Geneva's World Congress Cancer Conference, as well as teaching in Biology practical sessions at the University, and continuing to build her life in Reading.

She expresses sentiments we often hear from students who have benefited from donor funding: "I've been passionate about cancer research for years – the Isaacs' generosity reignited the flame when it seemed snuffed out. I'm so grateful to have the opportunity to do my PhD, and for all the possibilities it's opened up."

Professor Dash commented in similarly enthusiastic vein: "Thanks to the Isaacs, we can do this essential science while training a highly capable, motivated research scientist. Over the long term, this giving could make a staggering difference."

A FARMER'S LEGACY

Marshal Papworth – funding a sustainable future. How a farmer's legacy is transforming developing countries' agriculture



Born into a farming family in 1939, Marshal Papworth became a successful and respected farmer in his own right, as well as something of an adventurer who travelled widely overseas. On his travels he was struck by the difficulties faced by communities in developing countries in accessing food and safe water. He felt these could be mitigated by sustainable farming practices and improved agricultural techniques.

Today the Marshal Papworth Fund, established with a legacy left by Marshal after his untimely death in a flying accident, provides scholarship and bursary programmes for students from developing countries. These students, who otherwise would not be able to afford to come to UK universities, can then help their home nations grow themselves out of hunger to enjoy a more sustainable future.

Reading's Graduate Institute of International Development, Agriculture and Economics (GIIDAE) Marshal Papworth scholarships are an excellent example of these scholarships in action. They also demonstrate our interdisciplinary approach, working with policy-makers, the public and other stakeholders for the benefit of our global society, the economy and the environment.

A GLOBAL INVITATION

GIIDAE Marshal Papworth scholarships are open to applicants from developing nations with offers to study on GIIDAE master's agriculture programmes. Scholarships are awarded to talented individuals with the potential to motivate people and communities in their home country towards positive change.

Because of the University's work and areas of emphasis, our GIIDAE scholars have until recently typically come from sub-Saharan Africa, but the programme's reach is broadening continually, with students now also coming to us from developing countries in South America, Asia and other regions.

We welcome four scholars each year for full-time, one-year master's programmes, with combined funding from the Marshal Papworth Fund and the University covering tuition fees, a monthly allowance for accommodation and living expenses, and special learning events.

MAKING A REAL DIFFERENCE

Having completed their master's degrees, our Marshal Papworth scholars return to their home countries. Many work with aid agencies and other NGOs, while others have become effective

agents of change in their nations, harnessing the skills and knowledge developed during their time at Reading to transform policy, livelihoods and societal norms for a better, more sustainable future.

Shabrina Nida Al Husna (MSc Food Security and Development, 2023) from Indonesia, expressed the views of many of her fellow GIIDAE Marshal Papworth scholars: "I have gained a range of new perspectives which will enable me to become part of the solution as the world strives to address increasingly complex development issues in a more responsible and sustainable manner.

"The support received from teaching staff has boosted my personal and professional development, while securing a full scholarship has proved to be a valuable stepping stone to making a greater future contribution to humanity."

Phillip Harawat (MSc Applied International Development) from Malawi said, "The scholarship fulfilled my dream of studying for a higher degree related to rural development at a prestigious university, delivered in a world-class facility that makes learning exciting and memorable – something that I wouldn't have been able to achieve for myself."

Ten years on from the first Marshal Papworth scholarships at the University of Reading, the programme is going from strength to strength, entirely because of the generous legacy gift of a visionary farmer from East Anglia who saw a need and set out to meet it. Our sincere thanks go to Marshal Papworth and family.



Helping students gain crucial career skills as they raise project funds

“It’s incredible. There’s no way we could have done so much without it.” That’s Nicola Botha, Year 3 Film and Theatre undergraduate student, talking about Reading FundSpace, the University’s crowdfunding platform.

FundSpace was launched in 2018 to help student sports clubs/societies secure crowd funding for equipment and events. Since then it has gained traction and has been used for various innovative projects and by academics to raise research funding.

BREAKING NEW GROUND

In 2022 FundSpace extended its reach again to support curriculum-related student activity, with Dr Dominic Lees, Associate Professor of Filmmaking, spearheading a move to use it to allow students to raise funds for their film projects.

Dr Lees saw that, as well as allowing students to raise project funds, the platform would provide practical experience of fundraising in the creative world. The result has the platform’s busiest year yet with 19 projects across the University’s film, theatre and TV courses.

As part of their course modules, students receive guidance on the benefits of engaging external supporters in their work. They are

helped with preparing their crowdfunding pitches and are given fundraising support throughout their projects.

FUNDSPACE IN ACTION

Nicola had worked on a number of filmmaking projects before using the platform to raise funds for her Year 2 Creative Screen Practice coursework, so she had a clear understanding of just how challenging creating a film on a very low budget can be.

“The quality of students’ creative work has visibly improved as a result of crowdfunding.”

“I’m really happy with FundSpace – we raised £1,000,” she commented. “It made a huge difference to our production, as well as being a great practical learning experience.”

FundSpace made that difference in several ways. Nicola’s film, Picking Flowers in the Meadow, about a bereaved woman trapped in a cult, required specific locations and costumes that had to be paid for.

Looking beyond the funds it brought into her project, Nicola has warm words

for the platform itself. “It’s been great to get this practical experience. As well as getting additional funding for my film, I have hands-on experience with crowdfunding, I understand how it works and how to budget around it. These are essential career skills in the creative world.”

MATCH FUNDING

Over and above this, FundSpace beats all other crowdfunding platforms for our students, because each campaign attracts match funding. This match funding is available entirely due to the generosity of donors. It makes FundSpace unique, allows students to plan and execute better, more challenging projects, and can make a huge difference to their education and future prospects.

Dr Lees summed up, “The University’s crowdfunding facility has proved a hugely important learning opportunity for our students. Student film producers have experienced the process of sourcing finance for their module project work, managing their film budgets and maintaining responsible relationships with their investors. The quality of students’ creative work has visibly improved as a result of crowdfunding.”

To read more visit rdg.ac/fundspace

OPPORTUNITY KNOCKS

UROP: today’s research – tomorrow’s researchers. How donor funding provides more undergraduate research internships



SEAS OF CHANGE



Shelby Mantle, a Year 3 Geography undergraduate, worked with Paul-Arthur Monerie, Postdoctoral Research Assistant in Meteorology and Tillys Petit,

Research Scientist in Meteorology, to investigate whether uncertainties in North Atlantic sea surface temperatures can drive uncertainties in precipitation changes in Africa’s Sahel region.

UROP – the Undergraduate Research Opportunities Programme – is an internship programme giving undergraduate students the opportunity to work during the summer holidays on research projects.

At the University of Reading, where UROP has been running for over a decade, it’s a success story we’re particularly proud of, and one that this year has donors to thank for its expansion.

A CHANCE TO TRY RESEARCH

Tom McCann, Projects Manager at the University’s Careers Service, runs UROP. He explained the programme’s rationale: “Ask any academic how they got started in their field, how they first broke into research, and there’s a good chance they’ll say that someone, at some point, let them have a go. For those who want to try their hand at

research – to discover what it’s about and how it’s done, working on a real research project in a real research environment – UROP is perfect.”

At Reading, our research work spans a vast array of subjects, its outputs shaping and influencing culture, policy, health, business and the environment around us. This internship programme gives undergraduates the opportunity to develop their transferable skills, employability and understanding of the research environment.

ADDITIONAL PROJECTS

Last summer, donor funding enabled 10 additional UROP projects to go ahead. More opportunities for undergraduates to do research has led to a broader spread of research undertaken, with more students going on to pursue research as a career.

“It was enjoyable and lively with interactive sessions about what I have learned and what we planned to do.”

Shelby’s UROP internship helped her develop her Python coding skills and gain a deeper understanding of her field and of research environments.

“It was enjoyable and lively with interactive sessions about what I have learned and what we planned to do. Overall, really fun and far exceeded my expectations, and I couldn’t ask for better supervisors,” she commented.

To read more scan the QR code



SUPPORTING YOUNG PEOPLE

Centre for Autism launches a new wellbeing hub focused on autistic thriving.



The Wellbeing Hub launches in November 2023. Its aim is to co-produce and deliver neurodiversity-affirming activities that support autistic young people and their families to live their best lives. We hope to create an inclusive community where autistic young people, their families, and supporting professionals can engage in meaningful collaboration focused on the idea of autistic thriving. Our approach to these activities is underpinned by our commitment to research and the development of evidence-based practices.

These aims have been developed over the past year with autistic young people and their families in a scoping study to establish how the Wellbeing Hub might best meet their needs. This study also involved consultation with colleagues in local education and health services to establish what autism-specific support is currently available and where gaps may exist.

A WHOLE FAMILY APPROACH

Autistic young people told us that they valued autonomy-supporting approaches

rooted in understanding and acceptance of their authentic ways of being. In tandem, parents of autistic young people told us that they needed more guidance in developing the parenting styles their children valued most. This need is most acute in the initial period following an autism diagnosis, but more longer-term support is also needed. They also told us that they needed more guidance in supporting their children's mental wellbeing, particularly in terms of anxiety.

We are therefore planning to develop and pilot a programme which provides neurodiversity-affirming parent support which is personalised, parent-centred and accessible beyond the initial post-diagnostic period, plus an anxiety programme to be delivered to families and education professionals.

For autistic young people, our plan is to develop a range of offerings centred on the areas they identify as most meaningful to them. Our scoping study highlighted that support with understanding one's autistic

identity and developing self-advocacy skills were particularly needed, so this will be our primary focus in the early stages of the project. Beyond this, our aim is to continue to work with autistic children and young people to co-develop and co-produce activities which align with their personal priorities.

TRAINING FOR TOMORROW

We are passionate about supporting the professional workforce of the future and are proud to be a training centre of excellence in a range of specialisms which are vital for providing the right types of help.

The Wellbeing Hub will make an important contribution towards the development of future clinicians, educators and researchers working with autistic people and their families. Student work experience placements will form a key component of the new Hub. It will operate with around 12 MSc students each year, supervised at all times by qualified clinicians and researchers ensuring students receive valuable practical experience.

LEGACY GIVING

Legacy gifts have played a vital role in the history of the University, helping to shape the world-leading institution we are today. It is thanks to a generous legacy bequest that the Centre for Autism Wellbeing Hub can be launched and services made available free of charge or at a very low cost, making a real difference to so many people's lives.

For more information, visit research.reading.ac.uk/autism or scan the QR code



Volunteers provide invaluable support to the University community. They contribute in a myriad of ways, such as speaking at careers events, supporting students in their former departments, and sharing their stories in our alumni magazine Connected.

Our mentorship programme, Thrive, is going from strength to strength, thanks to our alumni volunteers. This year saw nearly 250 matches made between alumni and current students, with one student saying: "Thrive provided me with a great opportunity to broaden my network. My mentor was a great sounding board and gave useful advice based on his own experiences which was invaluable."

Holly Forsyth, Career Mentoring Manager, said: "Alumni volunteers are hugely valuable to our programme. The advice alumni provide to their mentees makes such a difference, helping students plan their careers and gain confidence. We'd love to hear from alumni who'd like to get involved."

SUPPORTING FUTURE GENERATIONS

Alumni support our student recruitment team by attending events, giving presentations about life at Reading, and featuring in alumni profiles. Hearing first hand experiences from alumni provides a great deal of reassurance to prospective students and their parents.

“I had a fantastic evening at the Celebration of Volunteering. It was inspiring to meet so many likeminded people and recognise everybody's truly amazing achievements.”

Junyuan Shao was first encouraged to volunteer by a friend. He recalled: "A fellow Reading graduate asked if I'd be interested in being interviewed for an article. I was more than happy to discuss my time at Reading, as well as talk about my career post-graduation. I was also pleased to be able to offer advice to prospective international students."

CELEBRATION OF VOLUNTEERING

This year we were delighted to hold the inaugural Celebration of Volunteering awards. Held jointly with the Students' Union, the event brought together alumni, students, staff, and members of the local community who give up their time to volunteer. The event showcased the wide variety of volunteering our university community is involved in, including working with female survivors of abuse in Nepal, litter picking and narrating audio books for blind people. Alumnus Jack Abrey, one of

the winners said, "I had a fantastic evening at the Celebration of Volunteering. It was inspiring to meet so many likeminded people and recognise everybody's truly amazing achievements."

We look forward to hosting the Celebration of Volunteering Awards again next year – if you know a volunteer who goes above and beyond, keep an eye out for nominations opening in early 2024!

STAY CONNECTED

Sign-up to our digital alumni and supporters magazine, CONNECTED, to keep updated about how our global community and inspiring alumni are impacting the world's most pressing issues.

Browse CONNECTED: <https://sites.reading.ac.uk/connected/> or scan the QR code



Sign-up to receive CONNECTED: <https://www.reading.ac.uk/alumni/update-your-details> or scan the QR code





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GIVING MATTERS

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