

GIVING MATTERS

**SUPPORTING
OUR STUDENTS**
Your support in action
PAGES 2-3

ENTREPRENEURSHIP
Supporting entrepreneurship
at Henley Business School
PAGES 6-7

RESILIENCE RUCKSACK
Exploring early preventative
intervention in mental health
PAGES 10-11

LEGACY GIFTS
How a legacy gift is
funding diagnostic testing
PAGE 18



YOUR REMARKABLE SHOW OF SUPPORT

Staff and students at Reading would like to say thank you for the generous support received from you, our donors, in response to our spring telephone fundraising campaign.

During February, our wonderful team of 45 University of Reading students called alumni to connect with them and ask them to consider contributing to the Student Support Fund. In a remarkable show of support, our community donated over £47,000. We would like to thank everyone who has contributed to its success.

During the campaign, students called alumni to talk about their time at Reading, to update them on some of the vital projects the University is working on, and to seek their support for the Student Support Fund. Calls were made to hundreds of alumni, and over 850 of you took the time to talk. You offered valuable advice and guidance to our students on completing their degrees, together with sharing your experiences from the workplace.

Will, one of the student fundraisers commented: "I have had a brilliant start to my time at Reading and I wanted to do something to support other students. By being part of this campaign, not only have I had the opportunity to engage with our alumni and learn more about their life since graduating, but to also raise donations to aid students who may need support to complete their studies."

Many of our alumni also contacted us to say how much they enjoyed connecting with our current students. Katie said: "I just wanted to say that I have now donated and what a pleasure it was to talk to Lucas on Sunday. A lovely, chatty young man. Very personable and a credit to the University of Reading."



Our 2024 Telephone Campaign Student Fundraisers

“I want to express my deepest gratitude for the amazing and generous support that our alumni and donors continue to provide to the University Student Support Fund.”

Alongside the pearls of wisdom, hundreds of alumni also generously contributed to the Student Support Fund. Whether you gave a single donation or set up a recurring monthly gift, your generosity has made a difference in ensuring consistent long-term support for students in need.

Donors support every stage of the student journey and your gifts make a significant impact through funding scholarships, wellbeing projects, and enabling work experience opportunities. Your donations also ensure emergency hardship support is available to students in crisis. The high cost of living has continued to hit students particularly hard. Matt Daley, Head of Student Financial Support at Reading said:

"2023/24 has continued to be challenging for many students as cost-of-living pressures persist. My team has witnessed an increase in the measures students are taking to cut costs to bridge the growing gap between income and essential expenditure. Even with the University's efforts to provide support, many students continue to endure harsh conditions, such as frequently skipping meals and sofa surfing.

I want to express my deepest gratitude for the amazing and generous support that our alumni and donors continue to provide to the University Student Support Fund. Your contributions are crucial in helping our students cope during these financially difficult times. Thank you for making a significant difference in their lives."

Please give a gift today to continue to support students. Thank you. Visit: reading.ac.uk/donate



TRANSFORMING STUDENTS' LIVES

At Reading, we understand that academic achievement is dependent on our students having access to the right support. For many years, University donors have given generously and enabled us to develop an effective student support programme that bridges gaps and transforms lives.

Your support takes many forms. You help students take their hard-earned place at Reading through scholarships and bursaries. You make the difference during their studies and you optimise their future employability prospects.

Here are some of the key ways your donations have made a meaningful and substantial impact over the past academic year.

8

Research grants for undergraduates, offering a rare opportunity for students to gain practical experience as researchers under the guidance of leading experts in their field.

48

Internship opportunities enabling students to gain valuable work experience with local charities and non-profit organisations.

205

Emergency hardship funds to enable students to continue their studies.

2

New Climate Stripes Scholarships.

10

New Alumni Master's Scholarships.

23

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



WELCOME

It is my pleasure to introduce this year's Giving Matters, our dedicated publication for the University of Reading's valued supporters.

I am continually inspired by the generosity of our donors and the profound impact your support has on the University. In a time when financial sustainability across the higher education sector remains a challenge, your donations make so much more possible. From supporting student success to enhancing our research capabilities, you help to ensure we can continue to thrive.

At Reading, our mission is to tackle global challenges through innovative teaching, groundbreaking research and meaningful partnerships. We are proud to be a multi-award winning community playing a sector-leading role in addressing climate change and environmental sustainability through our world-leading research, teaching and campus operations.

This and our many other successes are built on the strength of our University community, which we celebrate in many ways. I hope many of you were able to join us at our annual Community Festival, which brings together our community of staff, students, local residents, donors and alumni. With the help of legacy funding, we are excited to further develop the programme for next year's festival on 17 May 2025, fostering even greater connections and opportunities for engagement.

Through the efforts of our community we also continue to enhance our global reach and connections. We are immensely grateful to all those who act as ambassadors for the University around the world. Your efforts help to extend our reach, build partnerships and reinforce our global reputation.

I hope the stories in this issue of success and progress that you've made possible inspire you. Together, we are shaping a bright future for our University and the wider community.

Thank you for your continued support.

Professor Robert Van de Noort
Vice-Chancellor

SUPPORTING

How donors help students succeed at Reading and beyond



Sheyla (centre) on her internship at the Berkshire Multiple Sclerosis Therapy Centre

The University has consistently invested in services to support students, but demand for these services continues to grow. There are now over 23,000 students at Reading and it is vital that the University keeps pace with increasing and evolving needs.

Finance is one of the biggest concerns for today's students. Rapidly rising cost of living issues are compounded by government student loans that have not kept pace with inflation, placing the heaviest burden on those from disadvantaged backgrounds. We are committed to finding new ways to provide support.

NEW SCHOLARSHIPS

Scholarships are one of the most impactful ways of helping and we are proud to have been able to launch two new scholarships this year – the Alumni Master's Scholarship and the Climate Stripes Scholarship. The University's new Alumni Master's Scholarship was launched ready for September 2024 entry.

The Alumni Master's Scholarship is funded by alumni, for alumni. All alumni are able to apply for the scholarship, and we are delighted that thanks to you, our first 10 scholars have just enrolled and are studying subjects as diverse as History and Cognitive Neuroscience.

Kate, who has just enrolled said: "I am truly delighted to receive this scholarship and so grateful to the alumni donors who have generously made this award possible. Without this scholarship, I would certainly struggle financially, and I would not have the opportunity to engage so fully in my studies due to the necessity to take on more paid work. This award allows me to immerse myself in my course and gives me the freedom to pursue additional research and opportunities which will benefit me

STUDENTS

in the future. On a personal level, this scholarship has boosted my confidence and self-belief; I feel that with the support of the University community I am able to pursue my academic goals. I would like to pass on my sincere thanks to all of the donors for their kindness and generosity!"

CLIMATE STRIPES SCHOLARSHIP

This is a new scholarship which was made possible thanks to the generosity of donors who share the University's passion for Climate Science and improving climate education. The scholarship provides £10,000 (made up of a £5,000 tuition fee discount and £5,000 as a grant towards living expenses) and is for Masters students on the following three courses: MSc Applied Meteorology and Climate, MSc Atmosphere, Oceans and Climate, and MSc Climate Change and Artificial Intelligence. With applicants from 22 different countries, we are excited that our first two recipients have started at Reading this term.

Browse reading.ac.uk/planet/climate-resources/climate-stripes to find out more about our climate stripes.



HENLEY BUSINESS SCHOOL BURSARY

Undergraduates studying at our triple accredited Henley Business School can also access financial support. Donors support bursaries which are awarded to talented students who can demonstrate a significant financial need. Students receive support in each year of their course.

ALI'S STORY

Ali has successfully completed his BSc in Accounting and Management. Thanks to receiving this bursary, he was supported throughout this academic journey and now works as Junior Accountant with SSS Public Safety. He said: "The bursary

allowed me to complete my undergraduate course with financial ease, something which I had always worried about prior to starting university. I was able to focus on my studies with full dedication as I did not have to worry about financial stress.

Your donation certainly made my life better in both the short and long term, as I was able to complete a degree and get a good job in accountancy at a great firm. I thank you, you have truly helped me reach my full potential."

INTERNSHIP SCHEME

Whilst bursaries and scholarships are there to support students getting to Reading, the internship scheme is one of the ways the University supports students in optimising their future employability.

“This experience has been invaluable in helping me understand the marketing and fundraising landscape within the non-profit sector and witnessing the Centre's dedication to improving the lives of those with MS was truly inspiring.”

The Reading Internship Scheme helps students find meaningful work experience, allowing them to develop their employability and transferable skills in readiness for the graduate labour market. Evidence shows that work experience can make a real difference with securing strong graduate outcomes and this is especially true for students who come from disadvantaged backgrounds.

The University of Reading believes that no student should take on extracurricular work experience unless it pays a living wage. Yet many charities and smaller not-for-profit organisations struggle to provide opportunities because of lack of funds. Donors are helping bridge that gap by giving organisations access to student talent.

In the last academic year, donors enabled 48 more students to undertake internships with charities and not-for-profit organisations.

Sheyla studies Biomedical Sciences at Reading and recently completed an internship as a marketing and fundraising intern at the Berkshire Multiple Sclerosis Therapy Centre. She commented:

"This was an incredibly rewarding experience. The entire team and members of the Centre fostered a supportive and positive environment, and the experience was undeniably worthwhile. I gained hands-on experience with crafting marketing materials, creating social media content, and assisting with fundraising applications.

This experience has been invaluable in helping me understand the marketing and fundraising landscape within the non-profit sector and witnessing the Centre's dedication to improving the lives of those with MS was truly inspiring. I felt that my contributions, however small, were part of something much larger and impactful. This internship not only equipped me with valuable skills and knowledge but also solidified my desire to pursue a career that makes a positive difference in the lives of others."

To read more about Sheyla's experience visit reading.ac.uk/connected or scan the QR code



ENTREPRENEURSHIP INITIATIVES

Supporting entrepreneurship at Henley Business School

Henley Business School is widely regarded as one of the leading business schools for supporting entrepreneurship, with cutting-edge research co-ordinated by Henley Centre for Entrepreneurship, with many events and other initiatives led by Henley Enterprise Lab.

The Centre nurtures our current University of Reading and Henley Business School students to develop their entrepreneurial mindsets, build connections with local businesses and alumni, and explore the practice of entrepreneurship through high-quality research.

“We support the innovators of the future at every stage of their journey, connecting them to the support they need to grow their business ideas.”

SUPPORTING STUDENTS

Student entrepreneurship initiatives are important to Henley Business School and the wider University of

Reading, and are a vital opportunity for students to put entrepreneurship into practice. There are numerous exciting events and competitions that students across campus are invited to get involved in, and one of these is the Henley Greenshoots Seed Finance Award Scheme.

GREENSHOOTS SEED FINANCE AWARD SCHEME

The Henley Greenshoots Seed Finance Award Scheme's aim is to support start-ups. It does this by awarding cash prizes to start-ups that show the potential to grow and become sustainable businesses. It is targeted at businesses recently launched by students.

It is sponsored by Santander Universities. The initiative underscores a global commitment to supporting higher education and fostering innovation through financial and practical support.

Remy Foucher, Relationship Director at Santander said: "At Santander, we recognise the crucial role that entrepreneurs play in building and strengthening the UK economy. We support the innovators of the future at every stage of their journey, connecting them to the support they need to grow their business ideas. I look forward to continuing to follow the progress of all

the winners of the Greenshoots Seed Finance Award Scheme."

SIX PROMISING STARTUPS

The Greenshoots Seed Awards event took place earlier this year, celebrating the achievements of six dynamic entrepreneurs. The successful businesses each received a £1,500 cash prize to help cover specific operational costs associated with starting their ventures. The funds are to cover various essential expenses such as prototyping, inventory purchases, customer sampling, legal contracts, domain registrations, trademarking, and CRM subscriptions.

The winners have been invited to apply for the Santander X UK Awards 2024 Competition, where they have the chance to win up to £25,000 in equity-free funding. Successful applicants could then compete in the Santander X Global Awards 2024, facing off against top early-stage businesses from Europe and Latin America.

To read more about the winners visit henley.ac.uk/entrepreneurship or scan the QR code



EMPOWERING FUTURE CLIMATE SCIENTISTS

Professor Sir Brian Hoskins' Japan Prize funds a New Fellowship for Early Career Researchers

Professor Sir Brian Hoskins has been an academic at the University of Reading since 1971 and is a leading meteorologist and climatologist.

Earlier this year he was awarded the prestigious Japan Prize in recognition of his outstanding contribution to research in understanding and predicting extreme weather events.

The Japan Prize is an international award that recognises contributions to the development of science and technology worldwide. Sir Brian, who was knighted in 2007 for services to the environment, won the award alongside his US colleague Professor John Michael Wallace of the University of Washington.

UK EARLY CAREER RESEARCH FELLOWSHIP

To celebrate this award, and to continue and enhance the long-standing collaboration between scientists working on climate and atmospheric science in the UK and Japan, Sir Brian has chosen to use the Prize money to endow a new fellowship for Early Career scientists from Japan.

The Fellowship will enable academics from Japan working in any area of the dynamics of weather and climate to spend 6-12 months working in the Meteorology department at the University of Reading.



“I am delighted to fund this new Fellowship that will build links between scientists in Japan and the UK who will develop the next big ideas in our subject.”

BUILDING LINKS AND DEVELOPING NEW BIG IDEAS

Professor Sir Brian Hoskins explains the importance of introducing the new Fellowship.

“The advancements of weather and climate forecasting over the past half century have been extraordinary. Useful warnings of cyclones or floods can now be provided days and sometimes weeks

ahead, and there is an understanding of how continuing greenhouse gas emissions may change patterns of weather decades or centuries ahead.

Yet in the face of climate change and increasing numbers of extreme weather events, a new generation of talented scientists is needed to work together to find answers to the many remaining mysteries of weather and climate. This is why I am delighted to fund this new Fellowship that will build links between scientists in Japan and the UK who will develop the next big ideas in our subject.”

FUTURE FUNDING

The University of Reading has one of the largest concentrations of researchers in weather and climate science in the world and it is felt that many critical problems could be tackled more effectively with

greater international cooperation in weather and climate science.

The generous donation made by Sir Brian means we can support an annual visit from a talented young researcher every year for the next decade. This decade will be critical for climate action and for advancing our understanding of how climate is affecting destructive extreme events.

The University is now actively seeking match funding for the Fellowship scheme, so that it will run in perpetuity and the brightest young Japanese scientists will continue to collaborate with and learn from the University's internationally recognised team.

To read more about the Japan/UK Fellowship visit reading.ac.uk/meteorology/japan-fellowship or scan the QR code



RESILIENCE RUCKSACK

Exploring early preventative intervention in mental health



Whilst mental health problems can affect us at any stage of our lives, there is a higher risk of, and rapid increase in, mental health difficulties during early adolescence. 75% of individuals who experience mental health issues say their problems first emerged before they were 18. A universal approach that focuses on early intervention and prevention could provide a sustainable solution for promoting mental health and greater resilience in adolescents.

EARLY INTERVENTION

This is the aim of an innovative study aiming to improve adolescents' resilience and wellbeing, equipping them early on with evidence-based preventative strategies and engaging them in dialogue relating to mental health. The study is being run by the Charlie Waller Institute, with funding from a number of organisations including the Charlie Waller Trust and the Jasmine Foundation.

The proposed solution is a new and exciting initiative called the "Resilience Rucksack". This project is inspired by the baby box in Scotland, in which every new born baby receives a box comprising essential items to support a healthy start in life. Akin to the baby box, the vision is that young people transitioning from primary to secondary school will receive a rucksack containing items that research has identified as beneficial for adolescent's mental health and wellbeing.



AIMS

Based on the experience and research in teenage mental health, the team aim to build a sustainable and scalable public health intervention model for supporting the mental health needs of children and young people at this time of important life-transition.

The initial phase of the project involved co-producing and co-designing wellbeing items and tools with young people and their relevant representatives (school teachers/staff, parents/carers) using a robust research evidence approach. A key focus was truly listening to young people's lived experience and creating science-backed products based on what they felt would have the most impact. By engaging pupils directly in this innovative and creative way, the team have been able to provide fun and evidenced-based tools to support their resilience throughout their school years, and for life. These include a journal kit and the *Sleep Well, Being* comic amongst other tools which you can read about using the QR code link.

Following the initial design and pilot stages, a series of 30 Resilience Fairs were launched earlier this year in eight schools across Oxfordshire and Berkshire, directly engaging with over 1,000 pupils. Researchers and mental health professionals set up booths illustrating evidence-based approaches for building resilience and maintaining wellbeing. Each booth represented each of the central themes of this research: Sleep, Movement, Friendship, and Self-Compassion and contained

wellbeing tools that young people were able to choose for their personal resilience rucksack.

At these fairs, students in year 6 and 7 visited the booths, selecting items they engaged with and felt would work best. The aim was to engage them in dialogue on mental health issues, reduce the stigma associated with mental health matters and promote its improved literacy and awareness.

“Wow wow wow! What a couple of days! I just wanted to say an absolutely HUGE thank you to you and the team for the last couple of days. It has been absolutely incredible and I have heard so many positive comments from our young people.”

St Crispin's Secondary School, Wokingham, Berkshire.

NEXT STEPS

Following the Resilience Fairs, the team are now evaluating the students' experience of the fairs and rucksacks, with academic papers due to be published later this year. It is already clear that this project resonated with people in many different ways. The team have received much positive feedback and local councils are currently in discussion about how the project can be scaled up on a larger local and regional level.

There has been some incredible media coverage of the study too, widening the reach of the work and helping create a lasting legacy. Indeed the resources are now being signposted on the BBC Children in Need website and have been featured on BBC Newsround this October.

THE KEY – FUNDING

None of this would have been possible without funding totalling some £100,000 from a number of donors, all of whom have asked for their contributions to be used for mental health research. This covers research costs, the Resilience Fairs and necessary materials.

Professor Stella Chan, who manages the project said: "Building psychological resilience through preventative measures at a young age can go a long way to reduce suffering. The Resilience Rucksack project combines research knowledge with adolescents' lived experience to co-produce wellbeing tools. These were brought to schools in Resilience Fairs earlier this year, and we are now in the evaluation phase. None of this would be possible without the generosity of the University's alumni and supporters. A very big Thank You!"

Funding for pilot research is especially important as once the proof of concept has been established, researchers can then apply for other funding to develop ideas further. Once the pilot research is completed, the Charlie Waller Institute will have a robust body of evidence, which can be used to pitch to funding bodies, local government and the NHS for a much wider rollout of the Resilience Rucksacks programme.

Resilience Rucksacks is a unique exploratory project, trying a new approach which has real potential to deliver important improvements in our understanding of what works in early, preventative mental health interventions.

To learn more about the Reading Resilience Network visit research.reading.ac.uk/reading-resilience-network or scan the QR code



A LASTING

LEGACY

The Jane F. Gardner Studentship, which will be available on a three-yearly basis from 2025, will offer its recipient a career-founding opportunity to work on their chosen aspect of Roman history, Latin language or literature with a freedom rarely available for doctoral funding.

A LIFELONG COMMITMENT TO CLASSICS



Professor Jane Gardner (1934-2023) was an important historian of many aspects of ancient Roman social life. Among her areas of expertise was the

Roman concept of the familia. We obviously translate this as "family", but the ancient institution was perhaps a more flexible and expansive one than our own, encompassing not only blood relations but a range of human ties both practical and emotional.

The Reading Department of Classics was Professor Gardner's familia in this ancient sense. She gave it decades of her life and energy. Initially employed part-time, she was appointed Assistant Lecturer in 1964, Lecturer in 1966, Senior Lecturer in 1988 and Professor of Ancient History in 1993. Long after her retirement in 1999, she continued to be active in academia and in the Reading Department of Classics, attending weekly research seminars in the Edith Morley Building even when wheelchair-bound, until infirmity eventually prevented it.

A LASTING LEGACY

In this light, her impact will continue to be felt in the department through a very generous legacy gift resulting in the Jane F. Gardner Studentship, which will provide doctoral funding on an aspect of Roman history, Latin language or literature. In Doctoral funding for humanities subjects in the UK, especially in its more generous forms, is extremely scarce so this will provide its future recipients with a career-founding opportunity.

Professor Emma Aston, Head of Department, commented: "Professor Jane Gardner, as a Classicist from a working-class background, recognised the immense importance of funding as a way of breaking down barriers to the accessibility of education at every level. The Jane F. Gardner Studentship will allow talented doctoral students to undertake high-level research in the field in which Professor

Professor Jane Gardner, as a Classicist from a working-class background, recognised the immense importance of funding as a way of breaking down barriers to the accessibility of education at every level."

Gardner herself made such an impact - the study of ancient Roman history, culture and texts. It is a wonderful way of celebrating her legacy, and commemorating her generosity to early-career scholars."

OVERCOMING OBSTACLES

Professor Gardner understood the value of such an opportunity better than most. From a working-class Glaswegian background, she relied on obtaining, through her

own talent and merit, a series of grants, scholarships and prizes at school and at University. The best insight into the sheer grit it took to achieve the eminence she did within the field may be gained by reading her own autobiographical essay in R. Goldman ed., *Breakthrough* (1968). It is fitting that a scholar from such a background would wish to remove obstacles from the path of early career researchers, helping to provide more equality of opportunity in academic life at all levels.

A gift in your will can give future generations of students and researchers a chance to thrive at Reading and beyond. For more information on leaving a gift in your will, please get in touch with Janice Galvin, giving@reading.ac.uk

CROWDFUNDING

How donor funding saved vital Reading storybook sessions and sparked impactful project development



THE JOY OF READING

Children in Whitley Wood are learning about the joy of reading and improving their literacy skills thanks to storybook sessions run by researchers from the Institute of Education at the University of Reading.

The Whitley Wood Playgroup provides free weekly storytelling and play sessions for families with children aged 0-4 in the Whitley Wood Area. Designed by early literacy experts and teachers, storybook sessions are integrated into the playgroup in order to expose toddlers to the enjoyment of reading.

The sessions involve a short children's storybook being read twice – once at the start, and once at the end. In between the readings, children are encouraged to engage with activities that connect to the story. Free copies of the book are handed out at the end of the session.

THE FUNDING CHALLENGE

In 2023, The Friends of the University of Reading awarded grant funding to initiate the scheme designed by a group of researchers based at the Institute of Education at the University. Associate

“We are deeply grateful for the generous support of our donors, whose contributions have made it possible to launch and expand these sessions.”

Professor Daisy Powell and Professor Holly Joseph lead the project, and Ms Elli Walker and Ms Rainna Puno-Levett, who are Whitley-based community researchers involved in setting up the project, now run the playgroup sessions.

Attendance grew rapidly and now as many as 16 families make use of the sessions every week. Friendships have blossomed between both parents and children, with noticeable improvements in children's enthusiasm towards books and reading. As research shows, such early shared reading activities strongly predict later literacy and overall academic achievement.

With the research funding due to end in April, a university crowdfunding

scheme was launched. Within a few days, over £8,000 was raised which will sustain this playgroup for another year.

Professor Joseph said: "We are deeply grateful for the generous support of our donors, whose contributions have made it possible to launch and expand these sessions. Looking ahead, we aim to fund further sessions at Hexham Road, Oxford Road, and Whitley Wood in the coming year."

EXPANDING THE RESEARCH

Following the success of the pilot scheme, the project was shortlisted for a University of Reading Research Award and is now being expanded to other local areas. With financial support from Reading Borough Council, further sessions will be held at the Hexham Road Community Centre, while additional funding from the University Community Fund and the Englefield Trust will help launch another session on the Oxford Road.

Efforts are also underway to secure research funding to examine whether shared storybook events effectively engage families who stand to benefit the most. By directly reaching out to communities, researchers can identify the families most in need and measure how participation in these sessions influences early language and literacy development.

The team is now actively connecting with national policymakers, championing a community-centred approach they believe could make a big difference nationwide. They have engaged with Matt Rodda MP and Sir David Bell, who is writing a report on early childcare for the government.

To find out more about storybook sessions and donate visit research.reading.ac.uk/ready2read or scan the QR code



TREE TALKERS

The Flow Beneath the Bark: Understanding Water Movement in England's Oaks



In English woodlands, oak stands as a symbol of resilience and longevity, each tree shaping the landscape around it for centuries. No tree can survive long without water supply to its leaves, but connecting its majestic canopy to the soil beneath its roots is a complex process.

Oaks are remarkable for their ability to draw vast amounts of water from the soil, regulating their own survival while also playing a crucial role in shaping the climate around them. Through their extensive root systems, oaks access water reserves that smaller plants cannot reach, not only sustaining the tree itself but also stabilising the surrounding environment during periods of drought. Understanding how oak

trees manage water reveals insights into the delicate balance of gathering the water from the soil and losing it to the atmosphere via the leaves to support photosynthesis.

THE CHALLENGE

Measuring the water flow in trees is no simple task. It involves a series of complex measurements, tracking the movement of water from the soil, through the roots and the stem, and up to the leaves.

“We are very grateful for the donation that enabled us to purchase and install the sensors. They are sending us hourly data on tree water use, among other things, which we can use to infer tree health.”

Water travels upwards through a thin layer of wood found just under the bark, called xylem. It consists of specialised cells that create a continuous network of 'pipes' through which water flows upward, driven by transpiration and root pressure. The flow of water is closely linked to the environment. There is no upward flow in oaks during the winter as the absence of leaves creates no demand. Similarly, no photosynthesis during the night reduces the upward flow to near zero. Come a summer morning, however, the leaves create sudden demand for water and the daily upward flow of water can start.

INNOVATIVE MEASUREMENT TECHNIQUES

There are several ways to measure these changes. We have recently installed a number of TreeTalker sensors on oak trees in Shinfield which measure water flow in two different ways. The first method uses the difference in water pressure in a living tree trunk between night and day; this is so

big that the stem expands in girth every morning. This expansion is measured by a simple electrical sensor which tells us how much the trunk expands and shrinks every day.

The other method calls for installations of sap flow gauges. Put simply, these are heating elements and temperature sensors a couple of centimetres apart. The heating element warms the water in the xylem and the sensor measures the heat transfer as a result of upward flow. Heat loss data is then analysed and so we can calculate how much water the tree is using.

LEGACY FUNDING IMPACT

TreeTalker sensors, which for this project have been funded by a generous legacy gift, are transforming how we study water flow in trees by providing continuous, long-term data. Installed directly on the tree, these devices collect information over many years, offering invaluable insights into the seasonal patterns of water use. They also reveal how different weather conditions, such as too much or too little rainfall, or heatwaves, influence water uptake.

Professor Martin Lukac, who is leading the project, enthused: "We are very grateful for the donation that enabled us to purchase and install the sensors. They are sending us hourly data on tree water use, among other things, which we can use to infer tree health. The oak trees we wired up are close to future development, so we can observe its effects on oaks in real time. This is an amazing opportunity to contribute to the current debate on building up the green belt."

TreeTalkers help us understand how a tree's age affects its water needs and overall health. By monitoring the water movement within trees we can observe how trees respond to environmental changes. This knowledge will help us better protect and preserve our woodlands.

COMMUNITY GLOBE TRAIL

Community crowdfunding brings globe sculptures to campus

Initiated by our Chancellor Paul Lindley, the University of Reading is now home to four globe sculptures which mark the legacy of the transatlantic slave trade. The artistic globes have been installed at prominent locations around Whiteknights and have created a Globe Trail that is part of a permanent public art on campus project.

The globes were originally created for The World Reimagined art-education initiative in 2022, which gave the public the opportunity to learn from the past, understand the present and reimagine the future. More than 100 globes were displayed all over the UK.

After the exhibition, they were made available, and the University launched a crowdfunding campaign to purchase some to create a public art trail on campus.

“Each globe takes you on a journey of discovery. It is important to understand our past in order to create a more hopeful vision for the future.”

FUNDSPACE IN ACTION

Reading FundSpace is the University's bespoke crowdfunding platform which has been developed for our students and staff to support them in the creation and delivery of their unique and engaging fundraising projects.

Using FundSpace, donors were invited to contribute towards the costs of bringing the globes to Reading to help create this new legacy, aiming to understand our

history, cherish our diversity and reshape our future.

Following the successful crowdfunding campaign and an overwhelming display of generosity from donors, the University became the proud hosts of these extraordinary contemporary artworks. Each piece explores a different theme and the selected designs were voted on by staff and students.

WHAT THE GLOBES REPRESENT

Dr. Hannah Lyons, Curator of the University Art Collections at Reading, said: “The University of Reading is proud to host the work of four incredible contemporary artists, who each explore different themes that reflect the legacies of the transatlantic slave trade. From exploring the complexity of Britain's relationship with Africa, the Americas and the Caribbean,

to celebrating the spirit and culture of the African diaspora, each globe takes you on a journey of discovery. It is important to understand our past in order to create a more hopeful vision for the future.”

The Globes were officially unveiled in September at a special event which celebrated public arts, gave thanks

to our exceptional donors, and shared plans for future education programming and collaborations. They can be found in the Main Palmer Quad, in front of the Library, outside Park House and the garden next to URS building.

SUPPORTING OUR STUDENTS

How a legacy gift is funding diagnostic testing for students

One in five students at Reading have registered a disability with the Disability Advisory Service (DAS). These disabilities range from mental health challenges and mobility impairments to long-term health conditions, as well as increasing numbers of students with Autism and ADHD. The service is a vital part of the University's Student Services, playing a key role in ensuring that students with disabilities receive the support and reasonable adjustments they need to thrive.

DAS offers a wide range of services, from developing individual learning plans to creating tailored safety plans, peer mentoring programmes, and providing training, resources, and advice and guidance for students and staff. Their core mission is to foster a supportive and inclusive environment, as healthy, happy students are more likely to be engaged and successful.

A recent legacy donation has allowed the University to expand its support for students with Autism and ADHD. Thanks to this funding, students can now be referred for Autism and ADHD assessments, based on the recommendations of their Disability Adviser. This service offers critical relief from long NHS waiting times, helping students access timely diagnoses and necessary support.

NEW SERVICE LAUNCHED

The first Autism assessment was conducted in May 2024. One student who benefited from an early assessment said: "I found the process quick and easy. It saved me a lot of time, as otherwise I would be waiting for an NHS assessment. I found it helpful and I'm happy I have been given the diagnosis needed. The people involved with the process were lovely and I found the examination detailed."



“The process was quick and easy. I found it helpful and I'm happy I have been given the diagnosis needed. The people involved with the process were lovely and I found the examination detailed.”

The funding will allow approximately 25 assessments to be conducted each year. Six students were assessed during the summer term. Students are triaged first by a Disability Adviser and then by a DAS Manager, ensuring that those with the most urgent needs are prioritized and the growing waitlist is managed effectively.

Tasha Perkin, one of the Disability Advisers said: "I have had a student who has been assessed and received a diagnosis. They are now able to apply for Disabled Students' Allowance which will really benefit and enable them to engage with their studies more effectively."

RESPONDING TO STUDENT NEEDS

The need for these assessments is underscored by national data. As of June 2024 over 187,000 people in England were waiting for an autism assessment; this has grown from the pre-pandemic level of 35,000 in February 2020. This new service cuts down waiting times and is already making a significant difference for students who need timely support to succeed in their academic journey.

Kate French, a Disability Advice and Guidance Manager commented: "Lots of students have requested the diagnostic service we are now offering. We can't fund them all, but this service is supporting some of our most vulnerable students and that's so important."

Through fantastic initiatives like this, possible through a legacy donation, the University of Reading is continuing to enhance its commitment to fostering an inclusive environment where all students can access the support they need to achieve their full potential.



Over the past year we've had the pleasure of hosting several events bringing together our alumni community around the world.

GLOBAL CONNECTIONS

Our Vice-Chancellor, Professor Robert Van de Noort, was joined by over 100 alumni at an Alumni Drinks Reception in Beijing in September 2023; later in the year alumni from the University and Henley Business School gathered in Nigeria to reconnect over drinks and food; and over the summer of 2024, the Vice-Chancellor hosted a memorable alumni reception in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, which saw nearly 100 Reading and Henley graduates connecting and reminiscing.

All these events were a celebration of lifelong connections and shared experiences, reminding us of the enduring bonds formed at university as old friends reunited and new connections were formed. The Vice-Chancellor delivered inspiring addresses that highlighted the importance of alumni connections and the University's ongoing commitment to supporting our global network of graduates. He said: "All our achievements as a university are the result of our whole community – including our alumni – working together to deliver on our mission to help people change the world through research and education."



COMMUNITY FESTIVAL

In May 2024 the University held its second annual Community Festival, bringing together the whole University community to enjoy a day of fun, family-friendly activities on Whiteknights Campus. For the first time, we held several exclusive alumni events including campus tours and an Alumni Drinks Reception.

Many of our graduates joined the Alumni Drinks Reception, enjoying a lively gathering

over lunch and drinks. The atmosphere was vibrant as alumni reconnected with familiar faces and made new connections. Campus tours gave them the chance to revisit their old academic buildings and halls, while also admiring the new developments.

We're already looking forward to next year's Community Festival, taking place on Saturday 17 May 2025. Save the date in your diary – we'd love to see you there!

STAY CONNECTED

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

Browse CONNECTED: reading.ac.uk/connected or scan the QR code



Sign-up to receive CONNECTED: rdg.ac/sign-up or scan the QR code





Make your gift by debit or credit card online at reading.ac.uk/donate

GIVING MATTERS


For more information, please contact:


The Fundraising Team


**Room 100,
Whiteknights House
Whiteknights Campus
RG6 6UR**


giving@reading.ac.uk
+44 (0)118 378 8006

reading.ac.uk/alumni

 University of Reading Alumni and Supporters

 University of Reading Alumni

 @uoralumni

 @UniRdg_Alumni

100% recycled

When you have finished with this document please recycle it



THE QUEEN'S
ANNIVERSARY PRIZES
FOR HIGHER AND FURTHER EDUCATION
2021



Registered with
**FUNDRAISING
REGULATOR**
The University is an exempt
charity (reference X 8145)