

The Open
University

50
YEARS

openDoor

The magazine for supporters and friends of The Open University

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Celebrating 50 years

Looking back at our fantastic 50th Anniversary year so far.

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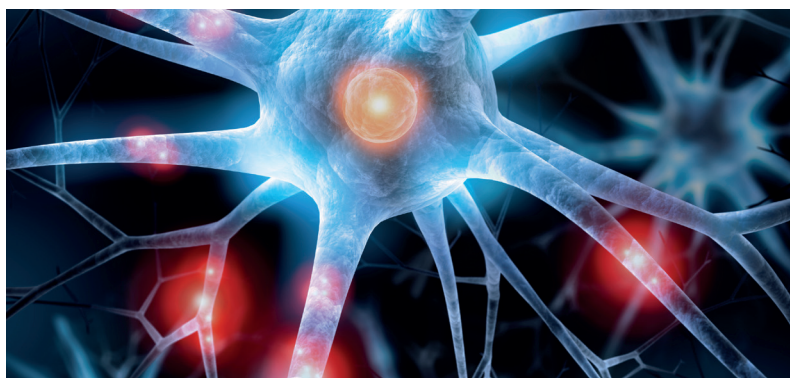
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The Legacy Garden

Remembering the incredible donors whose generosity enables others to experience the gift of education.



Our cover shows a neural network of brain cells at work. Did you know the human brain has about 100 billion neurons?

In this issue, we hope you will find lots to interest you – including the opportunity to contribute to our work around the Future of Learning (on page 4).

WELCOME AND THANK YOU FOR YOUR SUPPORT



For the last 50 years your University has been changing lives – quite simply we could not have done it without you! Thank you so much for your continued support.

Whilst the last issue of Open Door reflected on our history and heritage, we are firmly looking to the future and imagining what the next 50 years will hold. How do you think learning will change by 2070? You can see what exciting predictions our academics have made for the Future of Learning – and share your own ideas – on page 4.

Throughout this issue you will also learn more about the people and the latest projects you are supporting through your continued generosity. It is your kindness that enables us to empower carers and disabled veterans to unlock their potential and transform their lives through learning.

On behalf of your University and our students – past and present – I would like to offer my heartfelt thanks. We have enjoyed a wonderful 50 years so far and with you by our sides, we are proudly looking forward to the next 50 and beyond!

Karen Hart
Deputy Director of Development: Alumni Engagement

THANK YOU FOR BEING PART OF THE STORY

This year has been full of celebrations, birthday cake and overwhelming gratitude for all the OU family who have played an important part in the first five decades of The Open University.

Thank you for being part of the OU story – we simply wouldn't be the OU without you! Here's a quick look back at the 50th Anniversary year so far...

“

50 years on, the OU matters more today than ever before – supporting millions of students to be curious, to believe in themselves and to develop. I can't imagine a more important institution to support and love.

Martha Lane Fox
OU Chancellor

”



“

You are one of the marvels of the academic world and a hope for the future. Congratulations on your birthday!

Sir David Attenborough
Honorary graduate

”



Drumming up smiles! Honorary graduate Dame Evelyn Glennie is pictured here with the OU Orchestra ahead of their fantastic 50th Anniversary concert.

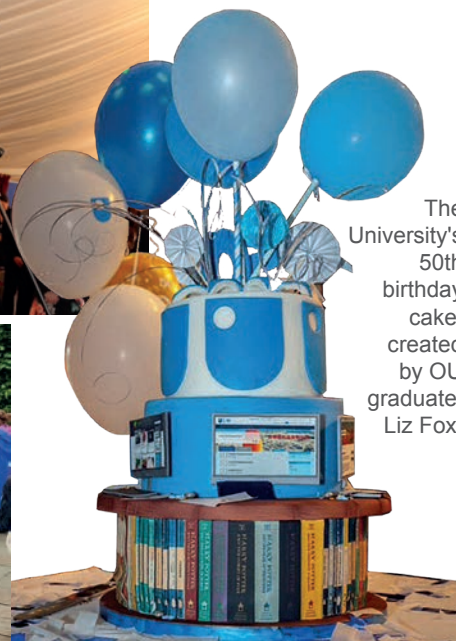
Happy birthday OU! Vice-Chancellor Mary Kellett, OU Chancellor, Martha Lane Fox and Sir David Attenborough celebrate the OU's 50th Anniversary at a special gala dinner.

“

I'd like to wish The Open University a very happy 50th birthday. Achieving my OU History degree whilst studying on tour between gigs remains one of my biggest achievements so far. I'm proud to be part of the OU family!

Joan Armatrading
OU alumna and honorary graduate

”



The University's 50th birthday cake, created by OU graduate, Liz Fox.

50 years of pride! Staff and students of the OU celebrate at a Pride event in Scotland, just one of the many events we are supporting.



Join us at an event

There are still several events happening throughout the year – many of which you can watch online from wherever you are in the world.



See the latest events

50.open.ac.uk/events



14 November: Inaugural lectures
'Discovering new planets'

Join us for a double lecture in Milton Keynes as David Rothery, Professor of Planetary Geosciences, presents the puzzle of the planet Mercury, and Carole Haswell, Professor of Astrophysics, explores the opportunities of exoplanets.



Watch online

50.open.ac.uk/events



LEARN MORE ABOUT OUR HISTORY AND SHARE YOUR MEMORIES

50.open.ac.uk

THE FUTURE OF LEARNING 2070

Since its inception in 1969, The Open University has radically changed the face of education. Dreamt up as the “University of the Air” by Prime Minister Harold Wilson, The Open University is now the largest educational institution in the UK and has empowered over two million students in 157 countries across the world to transform their lives through education.

With a pedigree of innovation, some of the brightest minds at the University have predicted what the future of education might look like 50 years from now. The musings come from leading experts in the fields of science and technology, and while they can't know for sure what the future holds, the progress they envisage is truly ground-breaking. Here's a selection of predictions from OU academics.



Virtual reality 2.0

Monica Grady, Professor of Planetary and Space Science

To me, the most important part of learning is doing; you can give students notes, recommend books to read, essays to write, or mathematical exercises to complete – but none of these is a satisfactory substitution for actually doing an experiment. They are important, complementary activities, but for the complete, full-on, exciting and inspirational learning experience, a student has to be doing something themselves.

How will we manage that in 50 years' time? Well, we are not going to be herding students together into a single physical space, but instead will rely more on future technology.

I believe virtual reality is the way forward, but as a much more immersive experience than it is at the moment. Our future students will need to feel the weight of the metal ball and the feather that they are going to drop, hear the hiss and crackle of an electric discharge and smell the chemicals that fix a developing X-ray plate. It will not be sufficient to look at images or videos – that is too passive an experience.

We will develop methods where learning from touch and taste and smell are as important as sight and sound. Our horizons will expand – beyond the boundaries of the Earth – so that we can take advantage of the zero gravity environment of low Earth orbit and the reduced gravity of the Moon as additional laboratories. The next 50 years offer us a wonderful opportunity to become, perhaps not the 'University of the Air', or even the 'University of the Earth', but the 'University of Space'.

The AI coach

John Domingue, Director, Knowledge Media Institute

Beyond 10 to 20 years I believe that the concept of 'self-hacking' will emerge. As outlined by the Israeli historian Yuval Harari, at some point it is entirely feasible that Artificial Intelligence (AI) algorithms will know us better than we know ourselves. With the masses of ingested and analysed data, AI systems will have an understanding of how we are motivated and triggers for changes in our emotional state.

It will be possible to have an AI learning coach which sends you triggers, snippets and rewards to get you in the mood to study. This might include subliminal adverts within a social feed, or online TV guide, that you have a pending assignment or praise, or even a gift, after a particular hard bout of study. In the same way that automated systems have been shown to influence recent elections across the world in the future it will be technically possible for AI systems to influence your study behaviour, and if you wish, for this to happen without you even being conscious.

Full-sensory virtual learning

Shailey Minocha, Professor in the Faculty of STEM

The role of online technologies in learning and teaching will be blended in with books and face-to-face delivery in physical and virtual spaces. Even in online educational environments designed for individual learning, the role of face-to-face interactions in the physical world and in virtual spaces with educators, peers, mentors and with subject experts nationally and internationally will be important for socialisation, for sharing of knowledge and ideas, and for collaborative knowledge construction.

The face-to-face interactions will be seamless between physical and virtual learning spaces: students and educators will dip in and out of these spaces as avatars, or as their real world selves. Further, virtual reality environments will be increasingly used for individual and collaborative learning: such as training via simulations, in procedural learning, and for practising risky scenarios that are difficult or sometimes impossible to construct or simulate in real-life, for virtual travels, and for meetings and conferences.

Be part of the conversation

Now that you've heard from our academics, it's time to have your say! We're giving you the unique opportunity to contribute to our next issue of Open Door by sharing your predictions.

Tell us what you imagine learning will look like in the next 50 years and we'll feature our favourites.



Use the enclosed form or email
alumni@open.ac.uk



What is astounding is the variety of predictions from professors across our institution. It demonstrates how different the nature of learning is across disciplines, environments, and even countries.

We are incredibly proud to support so many students in so many different circumstances to learn and achieve – which is only possible because of our innovative approach to education. The Open University will continue to be inclusive and innovative for the next 50 years and beyond – wherever that takes us.



Mary Kellett

Vice-Chancellor, The Open University



READ THE REPORT

50.open.ac.uk/futureoflearning

TACKLING THE GLOBAL LEARNING CRISIS

Despite huge increases in the number of children that now go to school, there remains over 250 million children around the world who do not, and many millions more are failing to learn the basics by the time that they leave. Recent research* estimates that as many as 90% of primary age children in low income countries leave primary school unable to read and write. This situation has been referred to as the learning crisis.



Matthew Foster, Director of The Open University's International Development Office, explains some of the innovative ways the OU is helping teachers all over the globe to tackle the learning crisis.

Pioneering open and distance learning

Can you imagine teaching over 100 children in a class with little or no resources? This is the reality for many millions of teachers around the world. To help them teach effectively, we are working together to create high quality online learning resources, including practical case studies and instructional videos, that are easy to access and quick to use in the classroom.

One example of this is the English In Action project in Bangladesh which supported every English teacher in the country through the distribution of study resources on SD cards (to avoid costly data charges) which they could insert into their own phones for the cost of US\$2 per teacher. We have also pioneered the use of Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) across Africa to support thousands of teachers to learn and work together to solve the practical challenges they face.

Ensuring nobody is left behind

Girls are affected most by the learning crisis and to support girls who have dropped out of school, we are running blended learning classes in Zimbabwe to support them to return and continue their education. We have also developed new pathways into teaching for women in rural areas of Sierra Leone and Malawi, which allows communities to develop their own teachers in places where the shortage of teachers is most critical.

Another key problem is that refugees around the world are too often excluded from education and find that their existing qualifications are deemed invalid in their new locations. Our open access policy overcomes this barrier and demonstrates just how critical it is that everyone has access to open and flexible modes of study.

Three ways to change the future

As a world leader in the field of open and distance learning, we are focusing on three important strategies that can help us to continue to tackle the learning crisis over the coming years.

- 1 We will do more to influence**
Whilst the educational resources that we develop are openly available, we need to work harder to build the case to use them by showcasing past success. In many parts of the world open and distance learning has a bad reputation – this is often due to low quality provision and something we must change.
- 2 We will work more closely with other universities**
In many countries with low educational achievement there is a gigantic gap in education provision between secondary education and university, with a very small percentage of students reaching higher education. We will work with the other 60+ open learning universities around the world to fill this gap and provide flexible, highly accessible bridging courses to take learners from secondary education to employment, self-employment, or further education.
- 3 We will focus on filling critical skills gaps**
There is a massive global shortage of nurses and front-line health workers, with the World Health Organisation projecting a shortage of 13 million health workers by 2035. The scale of this challenge can only be met through the use of open and distance learning.

Looking ahead

As part of our much-valued alumni and supporter community, I hope that you will recognise the key value of the OU's work-based pedagogy. This allows learners from around the globe to develop knowledge through practical application and by working with others rather than simply studying alone. There is still much to do to tackle the learning crisis and many discussions are needed on continued government investment into education. However, we are committed to doing all we can to ensure that education remains open to all – to every single student, no matter where they are in the world or what obstacles may be in the way. This has been our mission for the past 50 years and with the challenges ahead, it is more important than ever.

Thank you for your continued support of international development projects. You have enabled us to touch millions of lives across the globe and through your ongoing generosity, we can continue to touch millions more.

*UNESCO Institute for Statistics. (2017)

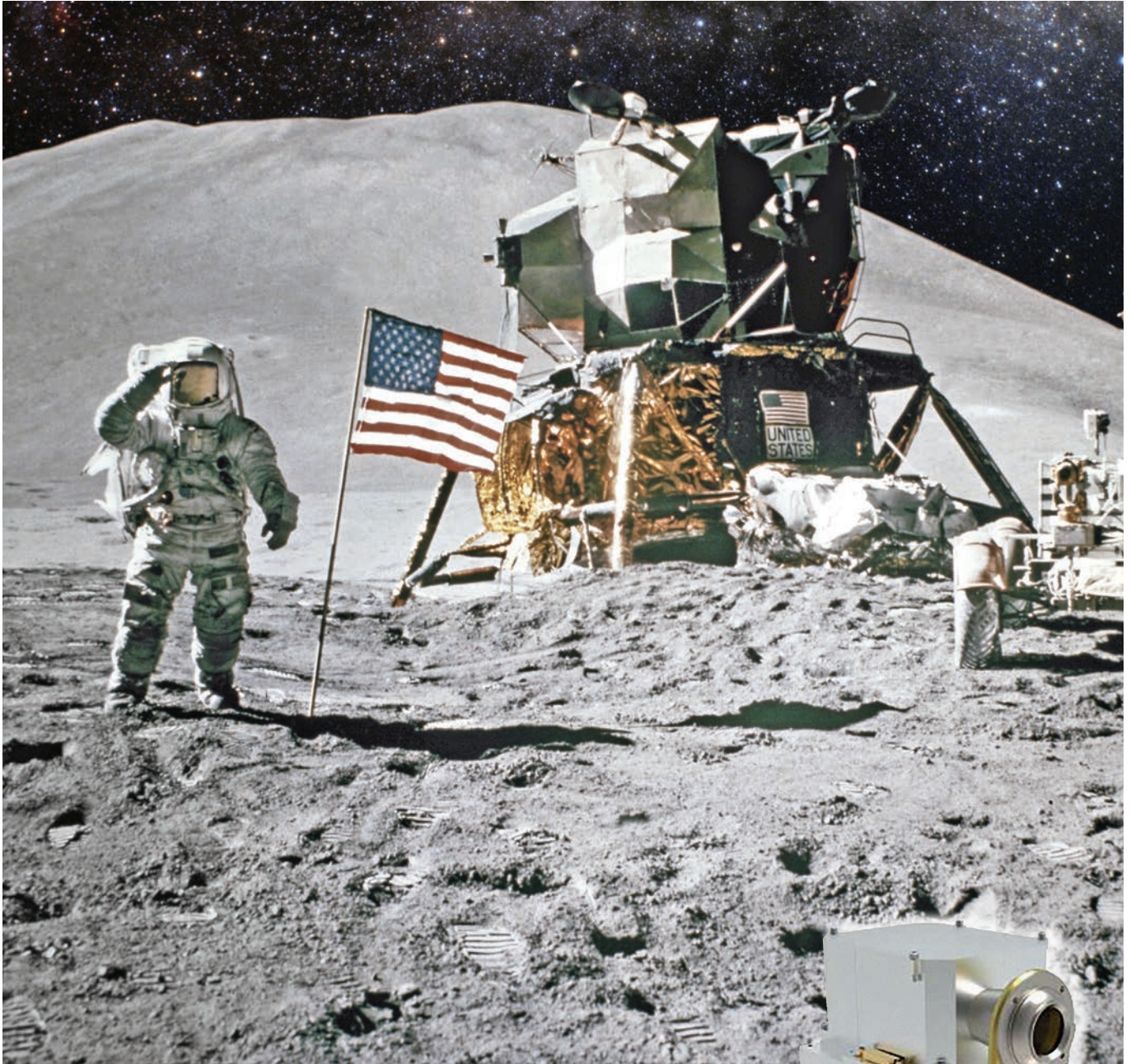


**FIND OUT MORE ABOUT
THE OPEN UNIVERSITY'S
INTERNATIONAL
DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS**

www.open.ac.uk/ido

English in Action (EIA) enables millions of people across Bangladesh to improve their English as a route out of poverty and into work. Teachers use a low-cost, basic phone to play spoken English audio clips in their classes. Active participation by local and national government stakeholders drives sustainability.





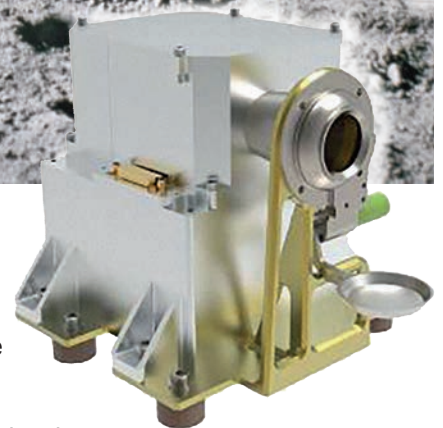
OU PARTNERS WITH NASA FOR MOON MISSION

We are delighted to announce that scientists from The Open University are supporting one of a series of ground-breaking missions by NASA to go back to the Moon.

These new US missions, together with others involving the OU, could ultimately pave the way for the next human visitors to the Moon. It's a prime example of the world-leading lunar research carried out by OU academics, which includes researching methods that may help build future habitats.

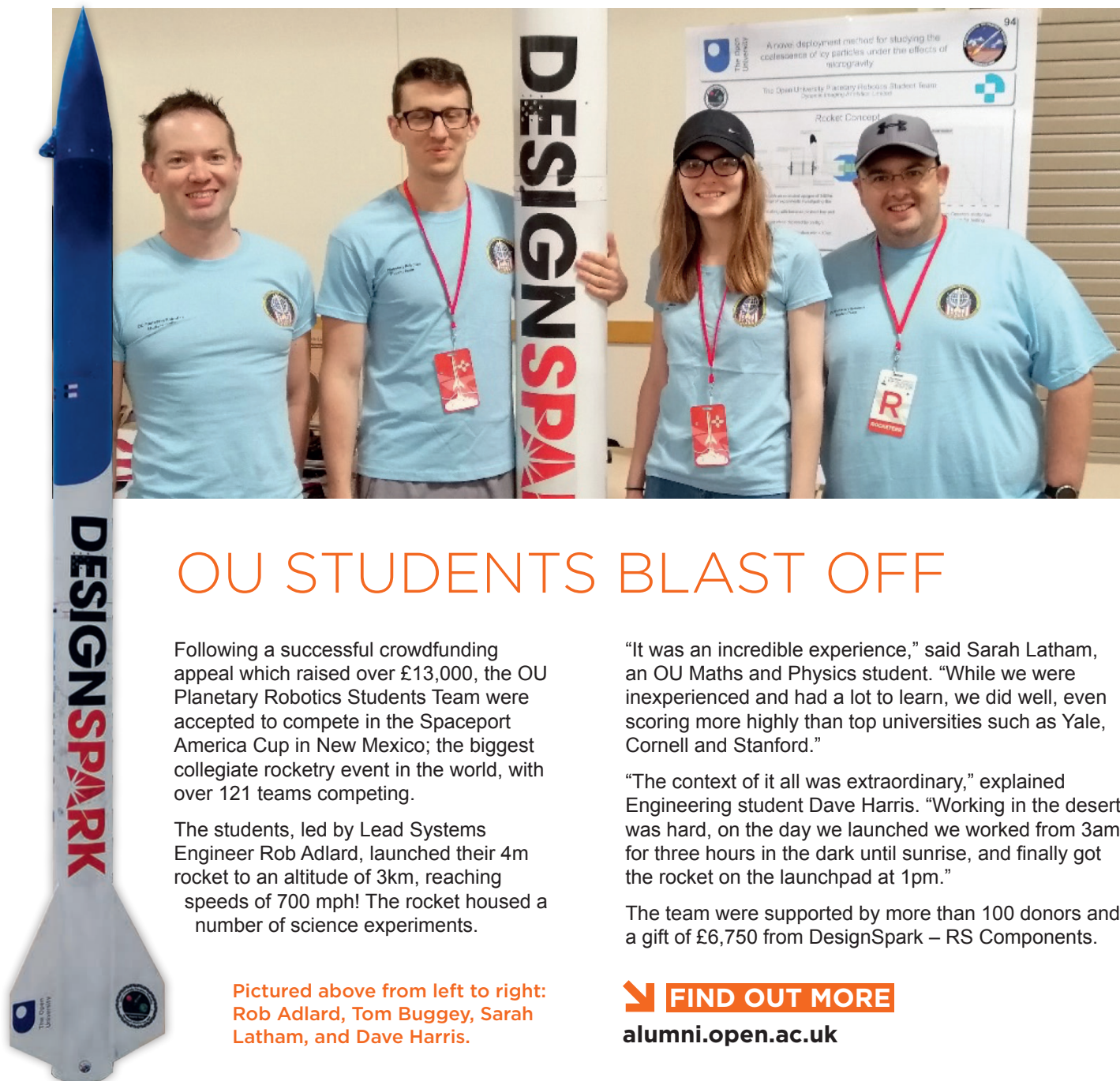
The OU has teamed with NASA Goddard Spaceflight Centre (in co-operation with the European Space Agency) to develop an instrument called PROSPECT Ion Trap Mass Spectrometer (PITMS) to monitor the very thin atmosphere near the surface of the Moon.

The instrument will be carried to the Moon in 2021 by a commercially-provided lander, under NASA's Artemis programme, and could help us to study the dynamic behaviour of water on the Moon today.



 **FIND OUT MORE**

www.open.ac.uk/research/news/



OU STUDENTS BLAST OFF

Following a successful crowdfunding appeal which raised over £13,000, the OU Planetary Robotics Students Team were accepted to compete in the Spaceport America Cup in New Mexico; the biggest collegiate rocketry event in the world, with over 121 teams competing.

The students, led by Lead Systems Engineer Rob Adlard, launched their 4m rocket to an altitude of 3km, reaching speeds of 700 mph! The rocket housed a number of science experiments.

Pictured above from left to right: Rob Adlard, Tom Buggie, Sarah Latham, and Dave Harris.

"It was an incredible experience," said Sarah Latham, an OU Maths and Physics student. "While we were inexperienced and had a lot to learn, we did well, even scoring more highly than top universities such as Yale, Cornell and Stanford."

"The context of it all was extraordinary," explained Engineering student Dave Harris. "Working in the desert was hard, on the day we launched we worked from 3am for three hours in the dark until sunrise, and finally got the rocket on the launchpad at 1pm."

The team were supported by more than 100 donors and a gift of £6,750 from DesignSpark – RS Components.

FIND OUT MORE
alumni.open.ac.uk

TEAM OUFO TAKES UP THE CHALLENGE

Team OUFO are a team of Open University engineering students aiming to gain experience with real life projects relating to the aerospace sector. The team want to gain vital experience so that they are better equipped as graduates to take on the challenges that arise when undertaking projects in the work place. In addition to the practical skills required, they will also develop their teamwork, time management, project management, budgeting and presentation skills.

The team plan to enter the IMechE UAS Challenge in 2020. The competition is a national engineering competition held annually involving major universities from across the UK and around the world. The

competition involves the design and build of an unmanned aircraft to achieve a humanitarian objective, such as delivering aid to a remote location. It has been the Institute of Mechanical Engineers' leading challenge in the aerospace sector since 2014.

Earlier this year, the OUFO team raised a fantastic £4,103 thanks to the generous support of donors through the University's crowdfunding platform, the OU crowd.

FIND OUT MORE
www.teamoufo.co.uk

TRANSFORMING LIVES: ONE

“Education changed my life.” “I never thought university was for me,” “I finally believe in myself,” – these are just some of the powerful messages we receive from our incredible students.

Making education accessible for all has always been at the heart of the OU mission and through your generous support, we can continue providing scholarships to students who otherwise wouldn't have the opportunity to study. These life-changing scholarships enable students to explore new worlds and to work towards lives and futures they only dreamed of.

Each scholarship is a powerful gift and we are delighted to be able to update you on how your support is making all the difference.



“It was the best way to improve both our lives”

In 2010, Holly Harrod's life changed forever. Holly's husband suffered a severe stroke that left him partially paralysed and only able to speak a few words. Knowing that her husband would be left with permanent disabilities, Holly gave up her career in financial services to become his full-time carer.

“Being a carer is incredibly isolating and lonely,” says Holly. “It is stressful, it is hard work and it is time-consuming. The opportunity to return to my studies and do a PhD with the OU was amazing. It has been an incredibly rewarding experience for me and has not only allowed me to regain my identity, but also to do something I have absolutely loved and to potentially develop a whole new career in the future.

“It has also helped my husband, because he sees how much I have enjoyed studying, and also no longer feels that his disabilities have prevented me from achieving what I wanted to do. I hope that The Open University can encourage and support more carers into studying because, for me, it has been absolutely the best way to improve both our lives.”



Giving carers the gift of education

Every single day, another 6,000 people in the UK take on care commitments. These selfless people give up so much to look after their loved ones. With a lack of time, money and support, the idea of higher education often seems like an impossible dream.

That's why we launched the first-ever UK Carers Scholarships Fund in early 2019 to ensure that nobody is left behind.

Your response to the Fund has already been incredible. It is only through your generous donations and ongoing support that we can provide scholarships for these deserving carers. So far, you have helped to raise an amazing total of £350,000, which means at least 17 carers will be able to study with us.

On behalf of your University and all the lives you are helping to transform: thank you! We would not be able to do this without you.



**SUPPORT MORE
CARERS LIKE HOLLY**

Visit giving.open.ac.uk
Call 01908 655 044

SCHOLARSHIP AT A TIME

Supporting our veterans

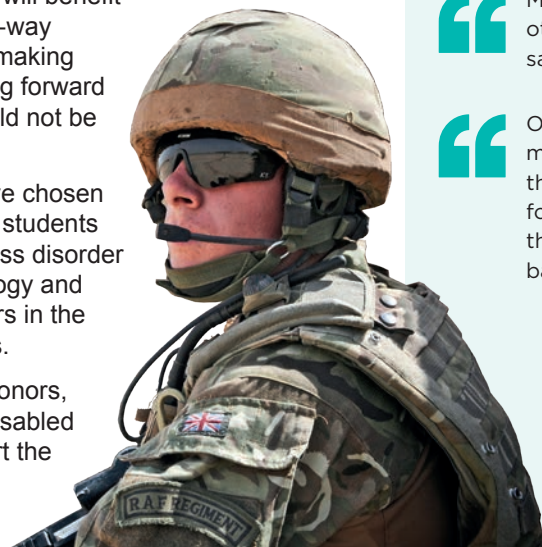
The Disabled Veterans' Scholarships Fund – the first of its kind in the UK – gives those disabled during or due to military service the opportunity to rewrite their futures through access to free education and ongoing disability support.

Thanks to your support, we are delighted to report that over 100 veterans will benefit through the Fund. Those part-way through courses are already making great progress and are looking forward to futures many believed would not be possible.

Though the subjects they have chosen are varied, a large number of students living with Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) are studying psychology and express a desire to help others in the same situation as themselves.

Thanks to the generosity of donors, we can continue to support disabled veterans so that they can start the next chapter of their lives.

Image © Crown Copyright



Feedback from our student veterans

Current Disabled Veterans' Scholarship recipients share what the scholarship means to them:

“ My drive is to get qualified and help other veterans who have been in the same situation as me. ”

“ Operations and illness over the years can make you hit rock bottom and it's hard to think about the future. I now have a hard focus, I've got assignments, so I do have to think ahead. It gives you that focus back in life. ”



**GIVE A GIFT
OR FIND OUT MORE**

giving.open.ac.uk

Your place in OU history

Thank you to everyone who has donated in our 50th Anniversary year and to the 7,000 that have chosen to have their generosity recognised by having a shield on the **Tree of Learning** sculpture.

The impressive tree will burst to life on our Walton Hall campus. It will be adorned with thousands of gold-coloured shields that hold the names of donors who have kindly supported our 50th Anniversary Scholarships Fund.

Clare McHugh, also known as MissFire, a talented artist, designer and blacksmith based in the Forest of Dean, has been commissioned to bring the sculpture to life. She will create the 22-foot sculpture over the course of 15 weeks ready to install towards the end of the summer. The response has been so amazing MissFire has had to redesign elements of the tree to ensure that we can accommodate all the shields!



Clare McHugh, known creatively as MissFire



**TO DONATE AND
ADD YOUR SHIELD
TO THE TREE**

[alumni.open.ac.uk
/donate](https://alumni.open.ac.uk/donate)



**FOLLOW
MISSFIRE'S
PROGRESS**

[instagram.com/
missfiremetalartist](https://instagram.com/missfiremetalartist)

REMEMBERING LIVES AND LEGACIES

Earlier this summer, alumni, supporters and families joined us at our Legacy Garden Annual Celebration to honour and remember those who have recently passed and left a legacy to the University.



The beautiful garden is our visual testament of gratitude to our legacy donors and their families.

At this year's event, we remembered 26 people who generously included the University in their Will. Many were former students and 'pioneers', studying with us in the OU's very earliest days. Each and every one has paved the way for generations of students to come.

Among them was Jennifer Mary Booth. She was one of the OU's early students, who began studying with the University in 1975. Jennifer went on to study an amazing 25 modules over 30 years and completed four degrees with the OU. Her passion for learning will live on in those who benefit from her generosity.

Jennifer is remembered in our garden and her gift, along with those of our other incredible donors, will enable more students to access life-changing education.

The power of saying 'yes'

By saying 'yes' to leaving a legacy to The Open University in your Will, you will be changing the lives of future students, who would otherwise not have the opportunity to pursue higher education.



**LEARN MORE ABOUT
LEAVING A LEGACY**

Email giving@open.ac.uk
Call 01908 659141

GET IN TOUCH



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