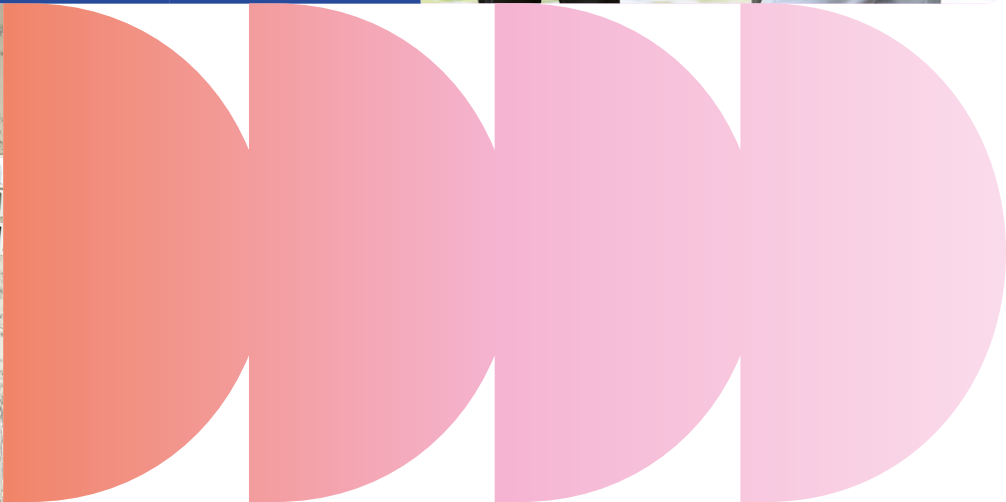
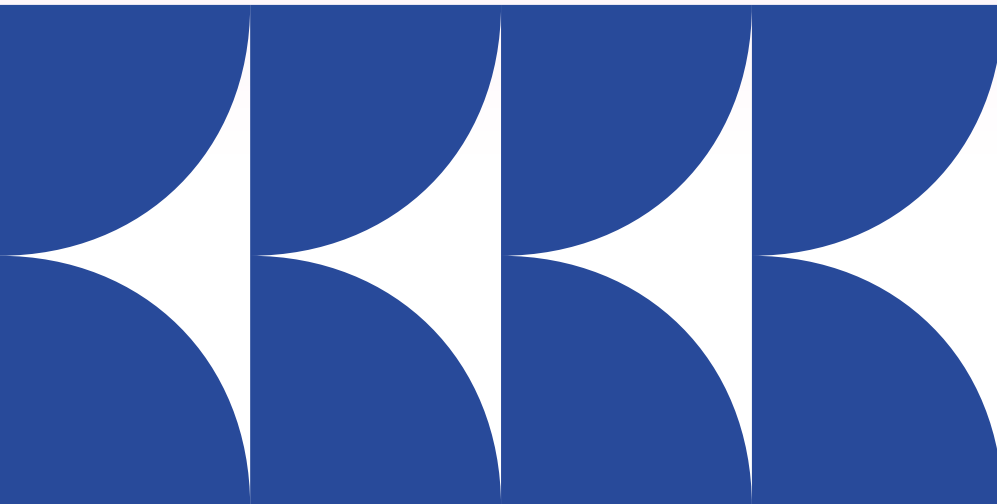


OpenDoor

**Thank you.
You are changing
lives.**



Welcome to your new look OpenDoor

I am so pleased to send you the first OpenDoor magazine of 2023 – designed especially for you, our OU family of donors and supporters.

This issue provides you with an update on the Open Futures Fund, a transformational programme of scholarships and bursaries designed to support students. In line with the OU's social justice mission, we provide life-changing opportunities for carers, disabled veterans, Black students, those seeking sanctuary and, as of this year, young people from care. Thanks to you, since 2018 we have been able to award over 500 scholarships and bursaries! Your support truly is changing lives. You'll hear from a number of beneficiaries, including Jaden and Gemma, who are following their dreams by studying engineering and law.

We will also update you on a scholarship programme funded by a very special member of the OU family, Dr Nigel Mortimer, who is investing in the future of the planet by equipping scholars with the knowledge and skills required to tackle the climate emergency. Two of these students, Steve and George, provide updates on their studies.

We honour OU alumna Patricia Littlewood, whose generous and inspiring legacy gift has funded Open Societal Challenges, a ground-breaking interdisciplinary research initiative at The Open University, which is empowering OU research teams to tackle some of the key societal challenges of our time. You can also read about a new project led by Dr Fidèle Mutwarasibo in the OU Business School which is addressing the chronic underrepresentation of Black professionals in leadership positions in the UK.

None of this work would be possible without the incredible support of the OU family. Thank you for your generosity, thoughtfulness and determination to help keep education open to all.

Best wishes



Karen Hart
Deputy Director
of Development



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Our privacy policy clearly explains how we will manage and use your data to communicate with you as either a member of The Open University Alumni Association, or as a valued donor, or friend of The Open University. If you would like to find out more about how The Open University manages and takes care of your data please view our latest privacy policy at giving.open.ac.uk/privacy.

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A huge thank you to the OU family



Thank you for your support and the impact of your generosity on people's lives. The Open University is so much more than a university. We are a movement for social change, creating opportunity through the power of education.

Your support plays a crucial role in making education a reality for so many, awarding scholarships to disabled veterans and carers, and now, going further to provide Sanctuary Scholarships for forced migrants and refugees and taking positive action to respond to the disadvantages experienced by Black students. Thanks to you, more than 500 scholarships and bursaries have been awarded to date for students wanting to fulfil their dreams and build better lives.

We work with people from all walks of life, organisations and policymakers on research that transforms lives and addresses the challenges facing people across the globe. Your donations are helping with our research, improving healthcare, tackling poverty, safeguarding the environment, improving policymaking and much more.



I know that times are tough for many with a lot of uncertainty, and yet, you continue to give the gift of education, changing lives and shaping futures. I want to thank you for your kindness and compassion in giving to the OU and for the difference that is making.

With best wishes,



Professor Tim Blackman
Vice-Chancellor of The Open University

 **OU Giving Day**
5-6 July 2023

The countdown has begun!

We are delighted to announce this year's Giving Day will start at 9.00am on Wednesday 5 July and run until 9.00pm on Thursday 6 July. We are inviting all our incredible and inspiring OU family to come together for a truly special experience that will help ensure we keep education open to all.

This year's Giving Day will continue to build on the success of the previous two years where the kindness and generosity of our amazing and committed donor community has helped to provide life-changing scholarships and bursaries through the Open Futures Fund.

Your loyal support will ensure disabled veterans, unpaid carers, Black students, those forced to leave their homes and seek sanctuary in the UK, and young people who have spent time in the care system, can rewrite their futures and transform their lives through Open University study.

We hope you can join us this year and give the gift of education. You can help provide a future full of hope and opportunity for so many.

 **Find out more about Giving Day**
alumni.open.ac.uk/givingday



The Open Futures Fund

The Open Futures Fund is at the heart of The Open University's mission to keep education open to all. When someone has the ambition and the opportunity to succeed, seemingly impossible dreams can become a reality. Due to the incredible support the Fund has received from our inspiring donor community, 2022 saw the launch of the Black Students' Support Fund and Sanctuary Scholarships.

The Black Students' Support Fund was established to help improve the representation of Black students across the University and work towards closing the Degree Awarding Gap so that students are supported to fulfil their potential. We are delighted that our first cohort of 48 students embarked on their scholarship journey in October 2022. Jaden was a recipient of a scholarship, you can read all about him opposite.

Last October also saw the Sanctuary Scholarships programme enrol its first 12 students. Sanctuary Scholarships were specifically set up to provide crucial access to higher education opportunities to people arriving in the UK seeking refuge from threats to their lives.

For many people seeking sanctuary, the security of arriving in the UK after fleeing armed conflict or persecution in their home nation, often means they have their very first opportunity to engage with higher education and/or have access to meaningful employment. Often people seeking sanctuary are successful and highly qualified professionals in their country of origin but need recognised qualifications to continue their careers in the UK.

Eight of the 12 scholarships awarded were to Ukrainian students and we are delighted that it has been possible to offer them a future full of hope and opportunity after facing so much uncertainty due to the outbreak of war in their home country.

Jaden and his fellow students on our scholarship programmes are determined to transform their lives and rewrite their futures through the power of an Open University education. Providing them with much needed access to the OU's unique distance learning model, it offers them the opportunity to fit their studies around their specific needs and other commitments, giving them the greatest chance to acquire new skills, knowledge and build a better future for them and their families.

 For more information
www.bit.ly/openfuturesfund

The Open Futures Fund Black Students' Support

Jaden's passion is inspiring his dream for the future

Jaden has always had a passion for mechanics and transport, in particular buses and trains, and this has inspired his dream to play a part in shaping the future of mechanical engineering and design.

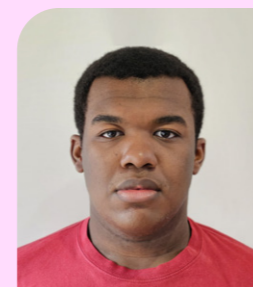
At the age of 4, Jaden was diagnosed with autism which has affected his educational journey. At school, his favourite subjects were maths, science and design and technology, and after his GCSEs, he completed a 2-year BTEC course in engineering and achieved a triple distinction.

He attended a traditional university for a year but did not feel comfortable in that environment and decided to look around for alternative options online. He discovered The Open University which meant he could complete his qualification while still living at home in an environment he felt comfortable in.

"And best of all," explained Jaden, "the Open Futures Black Students' Support programme is allowing me to study for free and has removed the barriers that were in front of me. It is allowing me to pursue my dreams. I know this is all thanks to the generosity of the OU family.

"I was elated when I found out that I had a place on my chosen course of engineering, but I was also nervous to start with as I didn't know what to expect!

"It is very important to me to have flexible education as I can study at whatever time is convenient for me, and I don't feel the pressure of having to study at a certain time as I know I can access course materials and tutorials online at any time.



"Studying at the OU has allowed me to get into the habit of studying independently. One of the things I have been taught is to make a study plan to easily manage my study time, break times and family time."

Jaden's dream is to complete his degree and find a job in mechanical or design engineering – ideally in the transport industry.

Jaden's scholarship was made possible thanks to Spirax-Sarco Engineering plc

The power of a scholarship can be truly life-changing and many of the students who have been awarded a scholarship have shared what it means to them to receive such an incredible opportunity. Below we share just a few of the messages from our newest students whose lives have been changed forever thanks to you, our kind and caring donor community.

I migrated to the UK as a refugee under asylum in 2013. I was still young, around 18 years of age. My dream was to always complete my education as I always knew this was the way forward to a better future for my life.

Sanctuary Scholarship recipient

The war in Ukraine has completely changed our lives. I was forced to leave my home, work, family and start building my life from scratch. All plans that we built collapsed in an instant. This education will allow me to be a qualified specialist and will provide an opportunity to gain knowledge and experience.

Sanctuary Scholarship recipient

Having fled my country due to the invasion, bearing in mind the terrible circumstances, I must focus on positive aspects of my life now and as soon as it came to my knowledge about the scholarships, I told myself that I have to seize the opportunity to apply.

Sanctuary Scholarship recipient

This scholarship is to me what a bridge is for a person trying to cross a deep and fierce river. It is, to put it in simple terms, a vehicle to a better future where I can improve mine and my community's situation.

Black Students' Support Fund recipient

I would love the opportunity for a fresh start. I have spent a lot of time going from job to job never truly feeling like I was fulfilling my true purpose in life. I have reached a time in life where I am no longer willing to be defined by my perceived limitations – it is time to focus on my career and become someone my children and myself can be proud of.

Black Students' Support Fund recipient



These programmes would not be possible without the generous and thoughtful support of the OU family.

You are helping to keep education open to all. Thank you.

Keeping education open for 262 disabled veterans

The Open University's Disabled Veterans' Scholarships Fund (DVSF) has been in existence since 2018, rewriting the futures of 262 veterans who have been injured or disabled in, or due, to service. The accessibility of higher education can offer transformative opportunities for veterans, giving them the chance to retrain for a new career after leaving the military.

In October 2022, the University saw the latest cohort of 50 students embark on their OU studies. This was made possible thanks to the incredible generosity of our alumni and supporters.

You may remember hearing previously from Steven Wilson, former 1st Battalion Parachute Regiment, who talked openly about the life-changing impact his DVSF scholarship has had on his life. Steven's military career was dramatically cut short when he was involved in an explosion that left him with life-threatening shrapnel wounds. His injuries were so severe that he was forced to leave a career he knew and loved, and one he had envisaged being in for many years.

The adjustment to civilian life was a long and challenging one, but over 20 years since his injuries, and with nothing to lose, Steven discovered and applied for a scholarship to study with the OU. Last summer he qualified, achieving a Diploma in Adult Health and Social Care which helped him secure a new career with his local council.

Reflecting on the change of direction his life had taken with the help of the OU's generous donor support, Steven said:

"This is an amazing opportunity, it gives others a light at the end of the tunnel, the chance to retrain for a job that would bring meaning and brings a sense of purpose back to their lives."

Thank you to everyone who donated and supported our appeals. Scholarships like Steven's, and many others, just wouldn't be possible without the kindness and compassion of our amazing OU family, who have helped make a truly life-changing difference for so many.

As the Disabled Veterans' Scholarships Fund enters its sixth year of providing transformative learning to those who need a second chance in life, the collective power of philanthropy, when you our OU family come together, continues to inspire us all. We hope that you'll continue your dedicated support to this incredible Fund and enable more students to access a future full of hope and opportunity. We aim to provide up to a further 50 places this year to more disabled veterans giving them a vital chance to open up their futures.



Throughout the months of November and December 2022, you came together to support disabled veterans by donating to our fundraising appeals and the Big Give Christmas Challenge. We are delighted to share the fantastic news that thanks to the generosity of more than 1,800 individuals, over £126,500 was raised towards the OU's Disabled Veterans' Scholarships Fund, which was helped by the Big Give's match-funding opportunity that so many of you participated in. Thank you.

Mark Parsons
Head of Alumni Fundraising



Opening up education for 112 carers

Being an unpaid carer can have far-reaching consequences. Many carers feel that educational opportunities are closed off to them due to their circumstances, impacting their chances of building a better future for themselves and their families. Thanks to our wonderful alumni and donors like you, the OU continues to keep education open to more and more carers every year.

Through our Open Futures Fund, the OU offers Carers Scholarships - the first scholarships of this kind in the UK. Each year scholarships are awarded to unpaid carers giving them the gift of higher education. The University's modular, flexible study arrangements are ideal, as they enable carers to study at home, or on the move, at times that best fit in with their other responsibilities.

The Fund has awarded 112 scholarships since it launched in 2019 as part of the University's 50th anniversary celebrations and we are delighted to share with you that we have our very first graduate, Gemma, who graduated at the Birmingham Symphony Hall surrounded by her whole family.

Gemma's Story

Gemma heard about the OU Carers Scholarships via an online advert. At the time, Gemma was mainly absorbed with caring for her 14-year-old son whose severe cerebral palsy means he needs 24 hour-a-day support. But Gemma held on to her dream to study towards becoming a barrister and to advocate for individuals with disabilities. She knew this could positively impact the lives of many other families with similar experiences to her own.

As soon as she started the course, Gemma quickly realised how committed she was to her subjects and worked exceptionally hard to get a first in each module she took. She often studied in the middle of the night or early hours of the morning when there were other carers to look after her son and she could concentrate on her studies.

"Getting the best grades made me feel that I was doing justice to those who believed in me and awarded me the scholarship," explained Gemma.

"My family were very encouraging and understanding, especially my husband. The children even helped by reminding me when my assignments were due and how many words I had completed of the assignment. I know that they believed in me and were incredibly supportive."

"The ability to have the opportunity to study alongside the caring role will provide change and make such a difference. It helps carers feel a sense of accomplishment."

Gemma knows that studying with the OU was down to the incredible support of everyone in the OU family who donated to the Carers Scholarships Fund. She says "your donations make a massive difference. The life of a carer involves a lot of giving and to be given the opportunity to study can be very fulfilling for a carer, when accessing brick universities is not an option. This scholarship fund has meant that carers have a chance to focus on something alongside their caring role. Thank you."



I want to make a difference to other families and give them the hope they so rightly deserve.

Gemma
Carers Scholarships Fund recipient



 [Learn more about the Open Futures Fund alumni.open.ac.uk](https://alumni.open.ac.uk)



Students in receipt of scholarship funding are able to access additional support and are typically highly motivated to succeed. We see a common theme across the schemes of students being highly committed to their studies and achieving positive outcomes despite the additional challenges they already face.

Colin Beesley
Senior Manager, OU Academic Services



We would like to thank the CareTech Foundation for their kind support of The Open University's Carers Scholarships over the last few years.

Building happier futures together: Care Experienced Scholarship

The Open University has launched a new programme in collaboration with the John Lewis Partnership, to offer young people with experience of being in care the opportunity to study an undergraduate qualification for free.

Young people who have spent time in care can face many significant barriers to entering and succeeding in higher education. This scholarship has been designed to provide care experienced young people a life-changing opportunity to study for a higher education qualification with the UK's largest distance learning provider.

The Care Experienced Scholarship is launching this year, offering four full undergraduate scholarships to young people aged 25 and under, who have spent time in care and have faced significant barriers to entering and succeeding in higher education.

The scheme is closely linked to the John Lewis Partnership's existing 'Building Happier Futures' programme, which looks to support, harness the talent, and improve the lives of young people who have grown up in care.

Professor Tim Blackman, Vice-Chancellor at The Open University, said: "We want to ensure that young people who have been in care have the same chances and opportunities in life as other young people. Education enables students to pursue their passions, to be creative, curious, and develop lifelong skills and knowledge that can unlock brighter futures and careers. It is an experience that should be open to everyone.

"The flexibility of the OU in enabling part-time study while working and offering the opportunity to study from anywhere in the country, means that we are well placed to support young, care experienced students to succeed with us. In the current financial climate, we are pleased to offer this additional financial support which we hope will remove further obstacles to study."

Dame Sharon White, Chairman of the John Lewis Partnership, comments: "Too few young people leaving the care system are given the opportunities they deserve. In fact, more young people are likely to be made homeless than go to university.

"This scholarship programme is a significant moment in ensuring we start to correct that inequality, as well as to harness the exceptional talents and abilities of the care experienced community. We are therefore delighted to be working alongside The Open University to provide this opportunity for care experienced young people and to help them discover all the incredible things they're capable of.

"This is just the start and we are committed to flying the flag for the care community for the long term to ensure they not only feel seen and heard, but empowered and supported to reach their fullest potential."



Less than a quarter (22%) of young people who are care experienced are in education, training or employment, compared to nearly two thirds (57%) of their peers. Employers are missing out on the potential of thousands of young people who leave the care system every year.

Professor Tim Blackman
Vice-Chancellor of The Open University



Empowering the Black leaders of the future

Black professionals remain underrepresented in leadership positions due to a lack of opportunities, discrimination and significant structural barriers including unconscious bias and racial economic inequalities.

Could potential leaders of the future be prevented from climbing the career ladder because they do not have access to the contacts or the right networks? Is society creating an ongoing cycle of inequality?

Partnering with organisations whose mission is to increase inclusion, impact and representation for Black people in the UK, a team jointly led by OU Business School academics, Dr Fidèle Mutwarasibo, Director of the Centre for Voluntary Sector Leadership and Dr Owain Smolovic-Jones, Senior Lecturer in People Management and Organisation, has created a unique Black Leadership Empowerment Programme (BLEP) which draws on the excellence in research and teaching of the OU's Business School.

The programme, initially being launched in Autumn 2023 as a two year pilot, will support learners to develop the techniques and power to create change. It will help students develop skills in leadership communication, influence, problem solving, and building and maintaining coalitions for change. Modules will be delivered through a blend of online and in-person learning which will be via a network of learning hubs where students will have the chance to meet and share their experiences, learning from one another and working together to produce Black leaders of the future in business and in the community.

The programme will ultimately help to dismantle the inequalities that remain across workplaces and society and help address the stark disadvantages faced by Black people.

 **Contact us for more information**
tracy.grunwell@open.ac.uk



The Black Leadership Empowerment Programme (BLEP) emerged from discussions between community partners concerned with racial inequality and The Open University. It aligns with the OU's social mission and addresses

two of the OU's key success indicators – the underrepresentation of the Black students' cohort and the Black students' awarding gap. BLEP builds on the Centre for Voluntary Sector Leadership's research on the leadership of racialised minority voluntary sector organisations. The study emerged in response to racial inequalities exposed by the Covid-19 pandemic and the 2020 Black Lives Matter protests' call for racial equity.



Dr Fidèle Mutwarasibo
Director of the Centre for Voluntary Sector Leadership in the OU Business School

Black employees hold just 1.5% of top management roles in the UK private sector

The Race at Work Black Voices Report, 2020

In 2021, the number of Black executives working at the leadership level of the UK's top 100 companies fell to zero

Green Park Business Leaders Index, 2021



Tackling the climate emergency

The need for green energy solutions is more urgent than ever before. A recent report suggests the world is on track to exceed 1.5C warming in the next decade, which would lead to catastrophic consequences for the world's ecosystems.

The OU is playing a key role in addressing the crisis by equipping a new team of global thought-leaders committed to tackling the climate emergency.

Generous donations from OU alumnus, Nigel Mortimer, former Professor of Sustainable Energy Development and a former Director of North Energy Associates, a renewable energy and sustainability consultancy, have funded seven scholarships for postgraduate students looking to study an MSc in Environmental Management, including Steve and George.

The successful scholars are expanding their knowledge of environmental protection and natural resource management, developing key skills that will help tackle the climate emergency.

Thanks to his immense generosity, Dr Nigel Mortimer's donation will fund two of a further five scholarships this year. Find out how the qualification is changing the lives of scholars selected to join the programme.



Given the urgent action required on reversing environmental degradation, generally, and mitigating global climate change, specifically, our hope is that recipients will be able to make significant positive contributions on current and future environmental challenges whilst, at the same time, benefitting from opportunities to realise their potential and enhance their career prospects.

Dr Nigel Mortimer



Steve Owino studies with the OU from Kenya. His passion for environmental sustainability and academia led to him becoming a recipient of a full scholarship for an MSc in Environmental Management in 2021 and thanks to his immense dedication to his studies, is already studying for his final module.



I had always aspired to continue with my education so that I could gain knowledge and skills to help my local community.



Steve Owino
MSc Environmental Management Scholar

George Baiatu is the first postgraduate student in his family and says his OU studies have inspired him to join the fight to save the future of the planet. He plans to begin his PhD as soon as he graduates, exploring how a systems thinking approach to land management can help to reduce flooding.



It is not an overstatement when I say that this scholarship has changed my life and opened a range of opportunities I would not have dreamed of before.



George Baiatu
MSc Environmental Management Scholar

With your help, we can provide even more MSc Environmental Management scholarships in 2023



Make a gift today
alumni.open.ac.uk/donate

Remembering Patricia and her incredible legacy

The last few years have changed our lives in so many ways, but one constant has been the incredible impact that legacy gifts to The Open University continue to make, to our research and our students.

Last year, the University received an incredibly thoughtful and generous legacy from OU alumna, Patricia Littlewood. Patricia worked for Cancer Research and later became Senior Chief Technician in the Haematology and Blood Transfusion Department at Rotherham General Hospital and was awarded a medal for twenty five years' service. She received her degree with The Open University in April 1987 and felt deeply passionate about helping others to achieve their ambitions in life. This is what led her to leaving a legacy to The Open University. Patricia's incredible gift will support a number of scholarships and also the Open Societal Challenges Programme (OSC) which aims to empower OU research teams to tackle some of the key societal challenges of our time.

The OSC Programme functions through an interdisciplinary community of researchers who are committed to research towards a particular Societal Challenge. Challenges are based around three collaborative Themes – Sustainability, Living Well, and Tackling Inequalities, as well as a fourth 'Transversal' Theme of International Development. The Themes were developed through an extensive consultative process that involved over 2,000 people, including many OU alumni, through a survey and a series of workshops.



Patricia Littlewood

Gaia Cantelli, Senior Manager for the Open Societal Challenges Programme explains: "So far, the incredibly generous legacy funding from Patricia has been used to support over 25 Challenges, including research into a tool that helps paediatric patients report their pain levels independently, an Artificial Intelligence advisor that supports disabled students, and a study on how game theory can help us understand environmental risk.

"Other projects currently being supported include research into how everyday steps can help us age better, new approaches to wetland conservation, and Europe's first Observatory on Online Violence Against Women."

The University is so grateful to, and proud of, Patricia – in accordance with her wishes her legacy gift is supporting both research and OU students and her generosity will have far reaching impact for years to come.



Read more about legacy giving
<https://giving.open.ac.uk/legacy>



I believe The Open University attracts some of the boldest global thinkers because of its commitment to its social mission, which is to be open to people, places, methods and ideas. We work with innovators, activists,

academics, organisations and policymakers, so that collectively, we can tackle some of the world's most critical challenges. Our strategic focus is on developing inclusive research that empowers communities in the UK and worldwide and gives them agency in driving positive societal change. The incredible legacy gift from Patricia Littlewood has contributed enormously to our ground-breaking Open Societal Challenges programme. It has significantly enhanced our interdisciplinary approach, allowing us to bring together individuals from an even broader range of disciplines, industries, sectors and countries; critical for transformational change. We are so grateful to her for her kindness and generosity.

Professor Kevin Shakesheff
Pro Vice-Chancellor,
Research and Innovation



Explore our research
open.ac.uk/research/faculties-themes

From OU graduate to Legacy and Alumni Fundraiser

One thing that makes The Open University's Development Office so special is that many of our team are OU alumni who fell in love with the institution and went on to join us as staff. We know that amongst those who advocate most passionately for the University are those who have experienced its life-changing impact first-hand. One of those staff members is Steve Lowe who is responsible for talking to our alumni and supporters about remembering the University with a gift in their Will.

Find out more about his role and how he ended up working in legacies...

"I was a County Councillor for Bedfordshire Council when, after 8 years (back in the 1980s), I decided to pursue new adventures. A good friend of mine suggested that I take up an Open University degree. I was intrigued and embarked on OU study for 6 years, achieving my BSc (Hons) in Politics in 1995. I loved being an OU student. The whole experience was most enjoyable (apart from having to get up in the early hours of the morning to see the lectures on BBC2!).

I'd been an editor for a series of newspapers and, in 2015, had just retired. I happened to discover an OU advert looking for telephone fundraisers, and I thought I'd apply and see what it was like. The team behind the calling were so friendly and inviting, and later that year I took part in a six week calling campaign speaking to fellow alumni about their experiences of the OU.

The following year, an opportunity arose to become a permanent member of the Development Office. Now I'm working as a legacy fundraiser, primarily my role involves speaking to alumni over the phone, by email and quite often face to face about leaving a legacy to the OU. Over the years I have met some incredible people who have shared some truly fascinating



The OU Legacy Garden

stories and felt able to share with me their motivations for supporting future generations of students in this way.

I feel a huge sense of pride and privilege in working for the OU and its mission to keep education open to all. I am fortunate to be able to build wonderful relationships with our incredible alumni and donor community, for whom many would not have had the opportunity to access higher education if it wasn't for the OU and who want to give others the same chance in life that they had."

Talk with Steve about how your legacy can support The Open University and our students



01908 655 905

steve.lowe@open.ac.uk

