

ST HILDA'S COLLEGE
2019 – 2024 STRATEGIC PLAN
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

St Hilda's College's Strategic Plan 2014-19 introduced a major programme of development to enable it to provide a college room for all undergraduate students as well as offering new and enhanced social and teaching spaces. This necessitated a significant fundraising programme, the 125th Anniversary Campaign.

These construction projects and associated fundraising activities carry over into the 2019-24 period to which this plan relates, and through this plan College seeks to make the most of opportunities arising against the backdrop of the significant construction programmes underway. The College anticipates major benefits arising to its members from the completed construction projects, especially the improvement to students' undergraduate experience through the increased availability of student accommodation and graduate experience through improved common room facilities.

The College's objectives are the provision of an excellent education and the support of world-class academic research. These constitute its 'core strategies' and it is in these areas that this plan is focused. The College appreciates that these objectives cannot be attained without effective support systems in place, and these aspects of the College's operation are fundamental to the overall success of the College. These are referred to in the plan as 'enabling' strategies.

The strategies within this plan are focused on achieving the following broad outcomes:

- (1) Attracting the **best undergraduate and graduate students**, whatever their background, and teaching and supporting them so that they can each achieve their full potential;
- (2) Attracting and retaining the **best academic staff** through the provision of appropriate and beneficial support and opportunities;
- (3) Enabling and supporting **world-class research** by its academic staff, both enhancing the College's position within and its contribution to the collegiate University as a research institution of international standing, and creating an inspiring and challenging educational environment for our students;
- (4) Enhancing the **College's reputation** both within the wider academic community and amongst potential applicants;
- (5) Ensuring that the **size and shape** of the College remains optimal for the successful pursuit of its ambitions, and being flexible enough to take advantage of opportunities as they arise;
- (6) Ensuring the College retains a **secure financial position** for both its day-to-day operation and its bigger strategic projects;
- (7) Maintaining and developing the College's **facilities** to enable the effective support of its operations and the greatest benefit from its activities.

The Strategic Plan sets out how the College's 'core' and 'enabling' strategies operate in the context of achieving the overall outcomes noted above.

CORE STRATEGIES

Education:

- (a)** The Education Strategy seeks to increase the number of first-choice undergraduate applicants. Perceived as central to achieving this was the aim to increase housing provision for undergraduates. College is keen to enhance diversity among its applicant pool and will participate in programmes that work with identified high-achieving underrepresented groups. In addition, it will investigate its offer-rate gaps between different groups, with a view to understanding the reasons for any gaps and determining how they might be addressed.
- (b)** College wishes to support its undergraduates to achieve their full potential. To this end, it will investigate the most effective manner of providing academic and financial support, as well as ensuring fair provision and accessibility of College facilities.
- (c)** The number and proportion of graduate students in College has increased considerably over the past decade. College recognises the importance of supporting graduate students to achieve their potential and benefitting from their college association. College will ensure its graduate numbers do not exceed those for which College is able to provide appropriate support. To ensure continuity, College will aim to maintain or increase the proportion of research graduates within its graduate community.
- (d)** Recognising the value provided by the Fellowship in the teaching it undertakes, the College is also keen to monitor and manage the size and shape of the Fellowship while taking advantage of opportunities arising, and supporting each individual Fellow so that they are able to achieve their academic objectives.

Research:

- (a)** The Research Strategy emphasises the importance of supporting the research of fellows and other academic staff, and recruiting to enhance the College's research activities and profile. It seeks to achieve this through developing a steady recruitment strategy for Junior Research Fellows (JRFs), continuing its strategic recruitment of Associate Research Fellows (ARFs) and Senior Research Fellows (SRFs) and watching for opportunities to offer college affiliation to suitable postdocs.
- (b)** Recognising that an enhanced research culture supports academics in the effective development of their work, promotes the reputation of the College and encourages the academic development of students, College aims to develop its research culture. It will seek to do this in part through the continuation of the College research funding initiative. College will review the management of events and maintain a strategy for raising the profile of College's research activity. College will also investigate possible mechanisms by which opportunities for discussion and discovery of mutual interests might be provided.
- (c)** College aims to facilitate research impact and knowledge exchange. To achieve this, it will develop a more detailed Research Strategy, focusing on College-based research, which will encourage and support (i) the development and facilitation of impact case studies and knowledge exchange activities, where relevant, and (ii) proactive consideration of ways in which research activities within the College could be integrated with the larger research environment in Oxford where good opportunities present themselves.
- (d)** A key strand of the College's Research Strategy for 2019-24 is the development of the new St Hilda's Centre for Clinical Therapeutics [subsequently renamed the Centre for Therapeutic Innovation] so that it can become a world-leading centre of excellence for multi-disciplinary research in medicines development.

ENABLING STRATEGIES

Financial and Investment:

- (a) College's main objective in this area is to retain a secure financial position for both its day-to-day activities and its strategic projects. This will enable investment in its facilities and activities, the ability to provide the best opportunities, as well as the security to weather uncertainty and change.
- (b) College aims to increase income from accommodation and conferences, as well as its targeted fundraising [see *Development and Alumnae Relations section*].
- (c) Significant borrowings were undertaken in order to complete Phase 1 and College needs to keep in view a strategy for repayment of borrowings in 2045 and 2055 respectively.
- (d) College will keep investment policies under review to ensure the best outcome for College's finances.

Facilities:

- (a) College's recent and planned development will enable the provision of student accommodation for all undergraduate students who wish to live in such accommodation throughout their degree. This is a long-held ambition of the College. While the current plan period is focused on the extension of College's undergraduate accommodation, the College retains a watching brief on the provision of graduate accommodation.
- (b) College takes accessibility very seriously, both in terms of physical access to facilities and the provision of non-academic support. It aims to be in line with, if not ahead of, provision elsewhere.
- (c) It will remain a priority to ensure the maintenance and refurbishment of existing buildings continues while considerable focus is on the new buildings and facilities.
- (d) The College recognises that the Library provides a significant and important resource for its students and academic staff. The College will consider the design and implementation of a new Library strategy.
- (e) College recognises that the world-class music facilities provided within the Jacqueline du Pré Music Building (JdP) are a benefit and a draw not just to Music students, but to all students who are musicians and those who appreciate music and other performance arts. Further the JdP provides a valuable link with communities surrounding College. The College aims to maintain its high standard and develop its programme.

Communications:

- (a) The website should provide a one-stop shop source of information for external and internal target audiences. In particular College communications should improve the accessibility and visibility of relevant information for potential applicants.
- (b) College communications should focus on (a) informing - the provision of day to day information as well as progress reports on the College's building works, (b) celebrating - sharing information about the quality and achievements of College members, and (c) promoting – publicising research and outreach activities, promoting College as a venue for events, raising College's profile within surrounding communities and encouraging participation by members in College events.
- (c) The website will continue to be amended as necessary to ensure it satisfies the relevant requirements of The Public Sector Bodies (Websites and Mobile Applications) (No 2) Accessibility Regulations 2018.
- (d) College recognises the importance of research to the College's reputation and operation. In reflection of this, the Communications Manager will work with Research Committee to develop a consistent, innovative and thorough approach to publicising the College's research activity as well as a communication strategy promoting College as a research institution.
- (e) Communications policies which seek to mitigate risks arising from outdated and inconsistent information and from the potential for misunderstanding arising from comments from multiple sources within College will be introduced and publicised.

Information and Communications Technology:

- (a) College acknowledges that the quickly changing developments within the area of information technology and the varied expectations of members can create challenges.
- (b) The College will ensure that users' needs and expectations are met whenever possible, and will make available mechanisms for highlighting needs. The College ICT strategic direction will be user-focussed rather than driven by technology alone.
- (c) The College will explore the practicalities of utilising external data centres, will collaborate where appropriate to achieve cost savings and will seek to move toward a secure mobile computing environment.
- (d) The College recognises that with greater access to facilities and information comes the need for regular refreshment of policies and practices to ensure the maintenance of appropriate information security and governance in acquisition, handling, storage and disposal of data. The College's information security and data governance policies and guidance will remain broadly in-line with guidance from the Conference of Colleges.

Development and Alumnae Relations:

- (a) College recognises that successful development work is fundamental to the long-term financial stability of the College. Further, a strong alumnae network boosts the College's reputation and helps to develop a strong sense of community.
- (b) The College's 125th Anniversary Campaign featured a range of elements: buildings, student bursaries and scholarships, and teaching and research, with a particular focus on the funding of the building programme.
- (c) The College's development campaign will be updated to plan for the funding of Phase 2.
- (d) The College will develop targeted, relevant and enjoyable events that are also opportunities for alumnae and other potential supporters to engage with the College and to give to appeals that are meaningful to those distinct groups. College will identify representatives from within those groups to develop relevant initiatives.
- (e) The College recognises that the demographic of the College's donors is changing and will seek both to encourage involvement in events by more recent graduates and to develop relationships between the College and those without existing connections through research interests.
- (f) Recognising the enthusiasm of alumnae and students and recent graduates to share/benefit from experience and expertise, the College will move beyond the current committee set up for careers networks to include other forms of mentoring and support. This will include investigating the use of an online platform in place of exclusively in-person events.