Building the Future
Spring 2022
I have joined St Hilda’s at a pivotal time – that small breathing space between the completion of the spectacular and prize-winning new buildings at the entrance to the College and the start of the second building campaign, which will see additional, much-needed accommodation created at the rear of our site. In positioning the College for the future, we will focus on making our new buildings more environmentally sustainable in tandem with the University’s Net Zero strategy. We are currently waiting for approval from Oxford’s Planning Committee, after which we can turn ambition into reality, once again. We will release the finer details of the new campaign as soon as we are able to, so the following pages contain an overview of our fundraising priorities in the coming months and years.

I was most impressed, when I first visited St Hilda’s, to see how the whole community had pulled together throughout the challenges of the pandemic to ensure that all of our students could continue to access the world-class education our alumnae once experienced. Our Senior Members were a big part of that effort, donating to our emergency Covid-19 Fund to cover the costs of the extra measures needed to keep everyone safe, and supporting our students through additional book and equipment grants, as well as our vital bursaries programme. I hope most sincerely that our community will work together once more to secure the funds needed for our next building, which will provide 32 new student bedrooms, as well as other crucial facilities.

I look forward to meeting as many Senior Members as possible during my first year as Principal.

Professor Dame Sarah Springman DBE FREng
Principal
Alongside the clear financial benefits, those living in a St Hilda’s room have the security of knowing that their accommodation will be well maintained, there will be no unexpected additional costs such as utilities, and there is no risk of eviction at short notice. All this ensures that our students can concentrate fully on their academic studies, without such uncertainty weighing heavily on them.
Part of the plan for a more environmentally sustainable future for our site, the Villa Building will not only provide new student accommodation, but will do so using the latest technology to minimise our carbon footprint. The Villa Building, sited on the space currently occupied by the tennis court, will be constructed to the Passivhaus Standard, resulting in a minimal impact on the environment and setting an example to our counterparts across the University. It will also offer valuable facilities such as teaching rooms, social spaces, and a gym available to all members of the College community.

The provision of student accommodation is vital for attracting first choice applicants to St Hilda’s and underpins our commitment to access for students from disadvantaged backgrounds. Our students face greater financial challenges than ever before, due to the year-on-year rise in rents in Oxford, often making living out in private accommodation during the second year impossible for students without assistance from their families. Living in a heavily subsidised College room for just 27 weeks of the year, rather than having to pay for 12 months at a far higher rate, saves our students an average of approximately £2,500.

What is the Passivhaus Standard?

Passivhaus, or Passive House, certification requires a building to use minimal power for heating and cooling to produce the lowest possible ecological impact. This is achieved through various means including:

- Super-insulation of exterior walls
- Heat recovery from mechanical ventilation
- Optimised heat retention from the sun and occupants’ activities
- Airtightness to avoid unnecessary heat loss

All of this comes at a greater expense than a regular construction, but the higher initial outlay to achieve this ultra-efficient building means that ultimately the Villa Building will cost significantly less to run, as well as having a far smaller impact on the environment.
St Hilda’s has offered more undergraduate bursaries over the last two academic years than ever before, but the demand for them outstrips the funding. Talented prospective students from lower income families are having to base their college choice largely on the availability of additional financial support. At St Hilda’s, we know we can offer outstanding teaching as well as welfare and pastoral support, and first-class facilities. We therefore urgently seek greater support for bursaries to provide the financial underpinning that allows use to live up to our ethos of ‘Excellence and Equality’. As the world goes from crisis to crisis, St Hilda’s seeks to increase the support it can offer to students whose futures are affected by these events, and to create pathways for them to fulfil their academic ambitions. With this in mind, we are pleased to be partnering with the University’s new Refugee Scholarship Programme to aid students who have been displaced due to conflict or persecution.

“Bursaries level the playing field for a lot of students – it means you can get the most out of Oxford without worrying about whether differences are going to hold you back, even before you apply. Having that support gives you the chance to feel like you do belong and you do have a chance to succeed as much as anyone else.”

Tumi Ogundamisi, 2nd year Psychology & Linguistics

“My bursary really encouraged me to apply to Oxford in the first place. It allows me to focus on my academics rather than having to worry about funding my education. Bursaries also impact the College as a whole, enhancing diversity by making sure that wealth differences are not a filter that limits anyone from coming to University. They really go to the core of the College’s values.”

Juan Valencia, 2nd year Geography

Maintenance loans are based purely on household income, and can drop to as low as £4,422. The government’s household finances calculation does not allow for variation in expenses, including how many people live in the household and regional accommodation cost differences. Many families considered to be ‘higher income’ are still not in a position to fund their children at University. These figures do not take into account the predicted inflationary increases in 2022-23 which will drive up rents and utility bills for students.
Graduate support

The next financial pinch point for students comes when they consider graduate study. They face the additional burden of higher course fees, full-time accommodation needs rather than just the nine-month academic year, and requirements to attend conferences and seminars. We are pleased to be able to offer a range of scholarships, travel grants and research grants to our graduate students but, as with our undergraduates, a more comprehensive scholarship programme is needed to ensure that we can attract the most talented applicants from around the world and support them to make the most of their postgraduate course.

One example of the support we are making available to our graduate students is the new Clinical Elective Grants programme. This allows our Clinical Medicine students to travel and support themselves while gaining first-hand experience in places where healthcare provision may be severely limited. The majority of students travel abroad to benefit from the opportunity to acquire valuable new skills. This, while a more expensive option, gives them a much wider perspective. The provision of such grants makes St Hilda’s a more attractive option for pre-clinical students deciding on the next stage of their education.

Equal access to the Library

St Hilda’s is in the early stages of planning a significant alteration to the layout of the basement of the Library, allowing all students straightforward access to its facilities and holdings, as well as creating new spaces for study groups.

The current layout of the Library means that the only step-free access involves leaving the College site entirely and re-entering further along Cowley Place. Students requiring this step-free access are therefore disadvantaged and marked out from their peers. The proposed new entrance to the Library will be at the far end of Hall Garden, via an attractive landscaped ramp for all to use.

An additional benefit of this refurbishment is that the Anne Elliott Garden, currently in a little-used area between the Library and Cowley Place, can be moved to the new landscaped entrance. This memorial will be re-dedicated and will include the original benches in this more prominent site, creating a welcoming space in the name of this much-loved Fellow.

We will share further details as they are confirmed, but there will be several new naming opportunities so please contact Bronwyn Travers (details on the back cover) if you would like to learn more.

$1,200 can provide a named Clinical Elective Grant to allow a medical student to gain vital experience.

$24,000, paid over two years, can establish a named Graduate Scholarship.

There are so many brilliant international applicants that are offered a place at the University of Oxford but can’t join because of the increased tuition fees. It would be lovely to have more merit- and need-based scholarships for such students.”

Usama Pervaiz, DPhil Clinical Neuroscience

“This fund will provide so many opportunities for students to go abroad to different places and experience different cultures. As a medical student, I would really appreciate the extra funding for the elective to expand the possibilities of where I could go.”

Saarah Karim, pre-clinical Medicine
St Hilda’s has long prided itself on its distinction in the sciences, with our academics being at the forefront of some of the most significant recent developments, including the high-profile discovery of the Higgs boson. With our Principal having recently been awarded a damehood in recognition of her work in engineering, this commitment to the sciences goes right to the very top. To expand on the already world-class scientific education and research taking place at St Hilda’s, we now seek funding for two new key posts.

Breaking new scientific ground

Biomedical Sciences
Our first Biomedical Sciences students started here in 2016, and have now graduated and gone on to very promising careers in this field. This subject, which complements our pre-existing Biochemistry and Medicine courses, has attracted the very best applicants every year. To ensure that we can continue to offer this subject in the short term, we currently seek funding for a Career Development Fellowship for the next five years. Our longer-term goal is to endow a new post in perpetuity to secure the future of Biomedical Sciences at St Hilda’s. This important post will require an investment of £1.5 million, and can be named for the donor.

Quantum Computing
Quantum Computing is a particularly exciting field for research. It is in its early stages and the opportunity is there for talented researchers to make a profound difference. Quantum Computing exponentially increases the speed of data processing and underpins developments in many fields.

We are delighted to have recently established a new Associate Professorship and Tutorial Fellowship in Quantum Computing. The appointee will join Dr Aleks Kissinger, our current researcher in Quantum Computing, and will allow the College to admit three undergraduates per year for Computer Science (as single honours, or with Mathematics or Philosophy) – a first for St Hilda’s!

Quantum Computing is a key research area that is increasing in importance rapidly, as technology becomes ever more demanding. As well as teaching and supervising research in this topic at both undergraduate and postgraduate level, the new appointee will also teach core Computer Sciences to undergraduates, meaning that our students will not be reliant on tutors at other colleges. To allow St Hilda’s to continue teaching and researching at the cutting edge of technology, we seek to make this a permanent post at a cost of £1.5 million. We will be pleased to name the post for the donor.

We seek donors to secure permanent posts in both Biomedical Sciences and Quantum Computing. These each require an investment of $2,125,000 and can be named for the donor.
To make a gift to support these fundraising priorities, please visit www.st-hildas.ox.ac.uk/donate

If you would like to discuss naming a space, bursary, or item, please contact Bronwyn Travers, Development Director and Fellow:

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Including photographs by Jim Stephenson, John Cairns and Peter Cook