



University of Essex



Impact Report

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Introduction

Welcome to our Impact Report, our biannual update on the breadth and depth of philanthropic activity at Essex. This report is a chance for us to update, thank and inspire our Essex family.

This edition focuses on scholarships, after the successful launch of our brand-new appeal, Essex Futures. You'll be able to read more about the appeal and how we're planning to make a difference in society, as well as how you can help us achieve our £1m target. You'll also hear from both our scholars and donors about some of the impactful projects they are a part of.

The first way you can help is to spread our message! If you feel inspired by our work, please share this email with friends, family and fellow supporters of Essex. Together, we do amazing things.

ESSEX FUTURES

Unlocking potential
in the next generation



We've launched the most ambitious fundraising appeal in our history

At Essex, we make presidents, house speakers, astronauts, and Nobel prize recipients. Your favourite poets, actors and directors. Nurses, teachers, policy-makers, scientists, and human rights advocates. Academics that push the boundaries of human discovery and knowledge.

And with your help, we're giving the next generation of star Essex graduates that same opportunity by fundraising for £1m worth of new student scholarships and bursaries. We call this generation – [Essex Futures](#).

Everyone has the potential to change the world. But not everyone has access to the finance needed to attend university and study for the degree that will inspire their next steps. We're at a pivotal moment in history, with significant global challenges ahead. The next generation has the potential to tackle them, but not all of them can afford the education which will help shape that potential. Scholarships and investment are the answer.

Already, thanks to the support of our alumni and friends, and pledges made, we have raised over £100,000 to create even more life-changing scholarships.



Scholarship helps Mosebolatan in quest to prevent domestic violence

Mosebolatan Oyedeji is one of the faces of the [Essex Futures](#) campaign. Her story represents our commitment to why we are investing in the generation who will go on to shape our future.

Originally from Ghana, Mosebolatan studied Law as an undergraduate, and then went on to work with the municipal police as a lawyer. It was during the covid-19 pandemic that she saw an astronomical rise in domestic violence cases – both against women and young girls.

She wanted to do more than protect these women and girls after they were already subject to violence; she wanted to be part of the prevention efforts. And Essex is helping her on her way to doing that.

Mosebolatan is now studying for an MSc Applied Data Science, one of our conversion courses. Our conversion courses are designed to help those who have previously studied for a non-scientific degree, in the humanities or social sciences, and provide students with the key skills needed to flourish in a career in data or artificial intelligence.

“I received the Postgraduate Conversion Course in AI and Data Science Scholarship. The scholarship gave me the opportunity to pursue my interest, made my academic year seamless, and my financial burdens were significantly eased.

“As an advocate and defender of women’s and girls’ safety and rights, my goal is to fully understand the nature and magnitude of the violence, and to seek information and guidance on how statistically sound data can be collected and used to support services within the relevant response sector(s), such as health or legal systems.

“Perpetrator data and information on the times and locations of incidents of violence can inform prevention efforts and enable more specific advocacy for policy change. Tracking data over time and monitoring trends can also be used to support those designing and implementing programmes to evaluate the impact of their programmes more effectively.

“Among other uses, that data can then inform agencies’ requests for additional funding. Proper use of the data on violence against women and girls can also empower survivors. By effectively presenting the issue as a national, sub regional, or even global preoccupation, women and girls will understand that they are not alone.”

It's hard not to feel inspired by what our students want to achieve, and the difference they want to make.

We're so proud that our scholarships are offering opportunities to those whose impact on the world might otherwise be missed, and we couldn't do it without the support of donors.

Learn more about similar [postgraduate conversion courses](#) and our exciting scholarships appeal, [Essex Futures](#).



Economics prize celebrates most improved undergraduate students

A generous donation from alumnus Ian Begg (BA Economics, 1975) is funding four new annual prizes in the Department of Economics. The Ian Sinclair Begg Award recognises and rewards undergraduate students with the most improved academic performance. Ian, who worked as a fund manager for nearly 40 years and is now an investment consultant and lecturer, said:

"There is much to be gained by giving back to the community that which the community has given to us. I hope that this Award will inspire students to dedicate themselves to their studies.

"My hope is that my professional background in Finance through the United Nations Organisations will inspire the future graduates to follow a career path which may encourage a strong element of responsible giving."

Ian gained his BA Economics in the 1970s at Essex. He worked as a stockbroker and fund manager for 10 years at JP Morgan Chase and HSBC in the City of London, before moving to Vienna, where he worked as an institutional fund manager for the OPEC Fund for International Development for 26 years up to 2014. He is now an investment consultant and a lecturer, a keen golfer and a badminton international. He visits Essex regularly.

Ian explained the background to his decision to offer the award: *"It has always been my strong belief that we should make every effort to inspire as many people as possible, hopefully by our own*

demonstration, that there is much to be gained 'giving back to the community that which the community has given to us'.

"I hope that this Award will first and foremost contribute to inspiring students to dedicate themselves to 'exceed the expectations' of all staff and students in the Department of Economics throughout their studies at Essex, whilst being rewarded for that academic achievement. The Award will also contribute to 'responsible financial management' and allow students to focus on their studies.

Professor Marco Francesconi, who set the award up with Ian, said: "The Department of Economics is delighted and honoured to have received this generous support from our alum Ian Sinclair Begg to promote resilience, determination and high-quality performance among our students. The award is a clear testament of Ian's indefatigable attachment to Essex and Economics. We cherish this endorsement wholeheartedly and hope it will serve new generations of undergraduates and enable them to succeed in their studies and in life."

The awards will take place for the first time this summer and will recognise most improved academic performance on a course owned by the Department of Economics, including any joint courses, by:

Comparing year marks between Year 1 and Year 2. The student with the most improved performance will be awarded £650. The 'runner up' will be awarded £350.

Comparing year marks between Year 2 and Year 3. The student with the most improved performance will be awarded £650. The 'runner up' will be awarded £350.



Scholarship puts Liam on the fast stream to success

It was thanks to a Santander Scholarship which covered his tuition fees that Liam O'Brien was able to return to Essex for a Masters in Organised Crime, Terrorism and Security, having already studied Modern History and International Relations at undergraduate level. After graduating from his Masters, he joined the Civil Service on their sought-after Fast Stream graduate programme and is now a Policy Advisor for the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport.

"The scholarship raised my confidence. In the application, I explained my achievements to date, and what my goals were for the future. To then be awarded the scholarship felt like a 'vote of approval' of these goals and achievements. It was before the time of postgraduate student finance, so I simply wouldn't have been able to afford it otherwise"

"Essex was special for a number of reasons. It had been the university where I had studied my undergraduate at and found the teaching experience to be fantastic. I also appreciated the campus itself, from the brutalist library to the natural environment such as the lakes."

"Academically, I liked that my lecturers were open to challenging received wisdom. No singular ideology or opinion was expressed as the objective truth. Rather it was taught that there were many competing theories and even ideological lenses from which a person could analyse issues from."

After graduating, Liam was accepted into the Civil Service Fast Stream, one of the most competitive and sought-after graduate programs in the UK.

“The Essex way of thinking, challenging orthodoxy and looking at issues from a range of perspectives, has served me well in my ability to brief senior politicians on some of the most important issues the government and society has faced.

“In the Civil Service, I have enjoyed roles across government. This has included immigration reform in the Home Office, working as a policy advisory for the National Police Chiefs' Council, and working as a diplomatic desk officer for both the Department for Exiting the European Union, and later the Foreign Office.

“For nearly two years I worked in the Cabinet Office's Covid-19 Taskforce. In this role I was the lead policy advisor on Covid-19 international comparisons, providing No.10 and the Prime Minister with briefings on what comparator countries were doing to combat the virus.

“My proudest achievement has been completing the Fast Stream graduate programme. This required passing a number of increasingly difficult boards, which culminated in promotion. It was the combination of many years of hard work (and a good degree of luck) stemming from not only my professional career, but also my time at Essex.

“Earlier this year, I joined the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport. In my role as a policy advisor, I aim to promote connected cities, ensuring that the technology we use to improve critical infrastructure and public services, is secure and effective.

“I want to support Essex students who want to enter the civil service, at any level. I think it is of paramount importance that we have individuals from universities such as Essex, to promote diversity of thought in central government.”

Scholarships offer opportunities to those whose impact on the world might otherwise be missed and we're investing in the next generation of pioneers, innovators and trailblazers through our £1m Essex Futures appeal - [learn more](#).



Wilkins Colley supports PhD student with full scholarship

Essex graduates interested in pursuing a PhD in Psychology are now eligible for a full scholarship thanks to Arnold Wilkins, Emeritus Professor in the Department of Psychology.

The Wilkins Colley Scholarship, which is due to be awarded this autumn and is worth over £50,000, is the product of a generous gift from Professor Arnold Wilkins and match-funding from a legacy gift to the University from the local Silberrad family.

Professor Wilkins, who worked at Essex in the Department of Psychology for nearly twenty years, designed the Intuitive Colorimeter, which was launched in 1993, and was a co-lead on the new [Intuitive Colorimeter Curve](#) which he describes as ‘the brainchild of a knowledge transfer partnership between Cerium and the University of Essex’. The Curve enables practitioners to accurately and quickly prescribe tinted lenses to patients with visual stress-related reading problems and associated medical conditions.

With the royalties received from his life-enhancing lens development, he was inspired to donate a large sum to the University which now forms the Wilkins Colley scholarship – a full scholarship to be offered to an Essex graduate registered for a PhD in Psychology. The research topic is open to any topic that can be supervised by a staff supervisory team within the Department.

We are so grateful to both Professor Wilkins and the Silberrad family for their generous donations which now offer a life-changing opportunity for an Essex graduate.



Inaugural Henry Centre Prize awarded to trainee counsellor

Essex graduate Natalie Corbett, founder of [The Henry Centre](#), is the new sponsor of an annual prize to support the next wave of talent within the Department of Psychosocial and Psychoanalytic Studies.

The Henry Centre was founded by alumna Natalie Corbett in 2020, just a year after she graduated from Essex with an MA in Psychodynamic Counselling. The private counselling and psychotherapy centre, based in Westcliff-on-Sea in Essex, provides high-quality, meaningful and ethically minded therapy for individuals, couples and children.

Our psychodynamic counselling course is a clinical training programme for professionals working either with adults or children and adolescents. Students gain practical experience through placements in schools or local agencies and acquire a professional qualification to work therapeutically with adults or children and adolescents.

On launching the centre, Natalie said: *“My aim is to provide an excellent standard of care for our clients and promote the idea of psychodynamic thinking within the local community.”*

Just two years after opening, it’s now the proud sponsor of an annual prize to recognise the upcoming talent in psychodynamic counselling. The Henry Centre Prize awards £2,000 to the student who achieves the highest mark in the reflective essay as part of the MA in Psychodynamic Counselling (36-month variant).

Natalie said, *“by starting the Henry Centre Prize, we are continuing our work in helping to support and develop new talent within the local psychodynamic community.”*

Student Kayleigh Migliorini was awarded the inaugural prize for the 2021/22 academic year and said:

“I was very surprised to be awarded The Henry Centre Prize. It has given me a huge sense of achievement and a much-needed confidence boost after a testing year. I am extremely grateful to The Henry Centre for their generosity, as the award will help to make a substantial dent in the course fees for year two.

“The award prompted me to find out more about The Henry Centre and make contact with its founder Natalie Corbett. I was touched by our conversation, as Natalie expressed a genuine interest in my essay and my journey. The Henry Centre has subsequently offered to support me in any other way that they can, which will hopefully help me to connect with the psychodynamic community and provide a valuable resource for my learning. The Henry Centre is clearly committed to nurturing future practitioners, and I look forward to building a relationship with them.”



£1m grant to shape our research in plant science

Essex has long been at the forefront of plant productivity research and, as part of a successful bid made by our Trusts and Foundations team, it has received a £1m funding boost from the Wolfson Foundation to create a new state-of-the-art indoor crop growth facility.

The £3.5million facility, Smart Technology Experimental Plant Suite (STEPS) is due to open next summer, housing four unique environmental growth rooms with a suite of fully automated and adjustable environments, and bringing together expertise, research power and technology from across subject areas including life sciences, artificial intelligence and business.

How does this affect you? Well, with the expected growth in human population by 2050, a step-change in agricultural productivity, sustainability and resilience is needed to keep up with demand.

Professor Chris Greer, Essex Pro-Vice-Chancellor Research, said:

"The STEPS facility will take our already transformational research in this area to the next level, strengthen our partnerships with a diversity of stakeholders, and deliver real-world impact to mitigate the effects of climate change on global agriculture."



Hardship Fund continues to support students in need

Following the outbreak of coronavirus, we rightly focused our fundraising efforts on emergency support through our Hardship Fund – and thanks to our community of donors we have raised more than £315,000 since April 2020.

These funds have helped to ensure that we could provide vital financial assistance to students when they have needed it most. And in the past year, whilst covid-19 related hardship has decreased, we've still seen a huge demand for financial support.

Most recently, when war broke out in Ukraine, we once again called on our alumni community to support the Hardship Fund, knowing that many of our Ukrainian and Russian students were placed in difficult circumstances, both personally and financially.

How has the Hardship Fund helped?

In the 2021-2022 academic year:

- We awarded 437 hardship grants to Essex students
- Our average time to process applications was just 5 days and 14 hours – doing everything we can to ease the stress financial burdens can put on students
- In total, we've awarded more than £357,000 – contributions come from both the Hardship Fund appeal and internal funding

We'll continue to fundraise for the Hardship Fund, because we know there will always be students who find themselves in immediate financial need, through no fault of their own. We couldn't do what we do without the support of our alumni community, and we are so grateful. Thank you.

How the Hardship Fund supports students

Rising energy costs

"I'm living in student accommodation over the summer and our energy supplier messed up and gave my entire house a large lump sum of money to pay.

"The Hardship Fund payment will help me pay off some of the debts I made trying to pay off the bills, as well as anything remaining - helping me sustain myself through the first half of summer such as paying for medication." Student wishes to remain anonymous

Economic turmoil

"I applied for the hardship funding because my country, Sri Lanka, is facing its worst economic crisis. The value of the rupee has depreciated drastically, there is little to no access to food and fuel. Transferring money from one country to another has become a serious issue. I applied in order to relieve my parents from the significant stress they are facing, trying to figure out how to send money through for accommodation or food.

"It will mainly go towards my living and accommodation costs. This gives my parents more time to figure out our finances and reduces the stress of how I will be able to manage here in the UK without having relatives send money through for basic necessities. I'm very grateful this opportunity is available." Student wishes to remain anonymous

Loss of part-time job

"I lost my part-time job which was my only source of income for food utilities and accommodation fees. Being a Masters international student from a third-world country, it was difficult for me to manage to live in the UK being self-funded.

"It will now help me to survive here for the next few months to pay my accommodation bills. I am currently doing my dissertation and this fund will really help me to concentrate on my studies without the need to worry about having a roof on my head." Antony James, MSc Artificial Intelligence

[Donate to the Hardship Fund](#). If you're a student, find out more about [how to apply to the Hardship Fund](#).

We hope that you have felt inspired reading the latest edition of our Philanthropy Impact Report.

It is the support and generosity of our community of donors which helps makes what we do possible.

From all of us at Essex, thank you.