

of the majority of students we now admit: those who are postgraduates, not undergraduates.

¹ *The Dublin Evening Mail*, August 20, 1868.

² State schools here include grammar schools, comprehensives, sixth form colleges and further education colleges. We have included direct grant schools with independent schools, although up to 50% of direct grant pupils had their fees paid for by the state.

³ W. F. R. Hardie, *Report of Working Party on Admissions*, University of Oxford, 1963.

⁴ Unpublished admissions reports, Archives of the Undergraduate Admissions Office (Bodleian Library).

⁵ University of Oxford Joint Undergraduates Admissions Committee, *Report of Sub-Committee to Review the Operation of Admissions Procedures*, Interim Report, March 1994.

⁶ This was much more common in boys' than girls' schools.

⁷ University of Oxford, *Report of Commission of Inquiry*, Vol. I, Oxford University Press, 1966, p. 78.

⁸ John Izbicki, 'Fewer State pupils apply to Oxford', *The Daily Telegraph*, November 2, 1984.

⁹ D. Donnison, *Report on Independent Day Schools and Direct Grant Grammar Schools*, Public Schools Commission: Second Report, vol. I, London: HMSO, 1970.

¹⁰ The Sutton Trust, *State funded places in independent day schools before 1976*, 2012.

¹¹ Those who scored in the top 10-15% in the entrance exam for the independent schools they were to attend.

¹² S. Power, G. Whitty, E. Wisby, *The Educational and Career Trajectories of Assisted Place Holders*, Sutton Trust, 2006.

IntoUniversity Oxford South East

— addressing educational disadvantage in Oxford

JAMES LAWRIE

IN recent months, Oxford University and the colleges have been understandably keen to trumpet additional commitment to access policies under the Access and Participation Plan announced by the University in May 2019.¹ It will be fascinating to read future assessments of the success of these programmes; to date much access expenditure has seemed to be an 'evidence free zone' where emphasis has been on money spent in pursuit of short-term, politically driven goals rather than outcomes.

However, close to home in Blackbird Leys, there is already a well-established access scheme based on a decade and a half of experience in London and elsewhere, where impact is closely monitored and which provides pointers as to what actually works. Christ Church and Oxford University have for the past five years jointly supported an access programme run by IntoUniversity, an independent charity, designed to assist Oxford's own disadvantaged children.

Why is a programme needed?

Oxford is the second most unequal city in the UK according to the Gini coefficient, a measure of income distribution used to gauge the level of economic inequality among a population. 0 represents perfect equality and 1 represents perfect inequality. The national average is 0.41; Oxford's score is 0.45.²

Much of Oxford's inequality is attributed to the wide gap in attainment between students from disadvantaged backgrounds and their peers, even from a very early age. A recent report by Oxfordshire City Council stated that by age seven only 41% of students from disadvantaged backgrounds in Oxfordshire are reaching the expected standard in reading, writing and maths, meaning that by secondary school they are academically almost 24 months behind their more advantaged peers (*Education Policy Institute*, 2017).

Poor educational outcomes stop many young people from considering university as an option. Only 14% of 19 year olds in Blackbird Leys progress to university compared to up to 81% in North Oxford.³ Even more starkly, 36% of the residents of Blackbird Leys have no academic or professional qualifications compared to 17% for Oxfordshire as a whole.⁴

What does IntoUniversity do?

IntoUniversity established its first centre in North Kensington in 2002 and now runs 30 centres in England designed to support the academic achievement of children from free school meal backgrounds and raise aspiration for higher education. The centres provide, in effect, the advice and encouragement that come naturally to middle class families helping their children achieve their potential.

With financial support from Christ Church, the University and the Queen's Trust, the centre was established in the autumn of 2014 at a Blackbird Leys community centre leased from the City Council.⁵ Employing a team of four full-time trained tutors, mostly recent graduates, the centre has established close links with a range of local schools (Rose Hill, Oxford Meadows, Windale, Pegasus, St Christopher's, Oxford Spires, Cheney, St Gregory's, Oxford Academy) to identify pupils who might benefit from the support that IntoUniversity can provide. Primary and secondary students suggested by the schools and also self-referred come to the centre for Academic Support, where they receive after-school help with homework, coursework, literacy and numeracy. The centre offers one-to-one support with GCSE, AS Level, A2 Level and degree options, coursework, revision, exam techniques, UCAS forms, interview techniques and gap years.

IntoUniversity maintains very detailed records of its contact with its students and their progress through edu-

cation. Over the past five years an average of 114 students have attended Academic Support each term with 64 on average each attending eight or more sessions a term.

The school curriculum gives little sense of the university experience of concentrated learning in a specialist area. IntoUniversity's FOCUS programme offers young people learning experiences, which aim to immerse them in a single topic or subject area. It includes primary school workshops and FOCUS Weeks; secondary school workshops and holiday FOCUS activities; Extending Horizons weekends away; and after-school Careers in FOCUS.

In Michaelmas Term 2018, for example, the centre hosted six FOCUS Weeks on the themes of Macbeth, Zoology and Evolution, and nine 'What is a University?' workshops with Year 5 students. Teachers have commented that the chance for students to visit a college as part of the FOCUS Week has given them an inspiring insight into life at the University and how this is something to which they can aspire. A total of 1,049 children have participated in the FOCUS Weeks over the past five years.

"IntoUniversity has created a stable learning environment for my three boys. It is a support network that they can always rely on when they need encouragement with their academic work, or just an extra helping hand. After collecting my sons from academic support sessions each week, they come home feeling motivated and happy. My two eldest have both told me they will go to university and I have no doubt that they will achieve this."
(Parent of three students who attend IntoUniversity Oxford South East)

Students aged 10-17 attending Academic Support have the opportunity to join a Mentoring Programme. They are paired with a current university student, who provides help with school work, social skills and confidence-building. The mentors act as role models who have already made it to university, and encourage the young people to think about their futures and raise their aspirations. The centre currently has 30 mentoring pairs.

There are also three corporate pairs with volunteers supporting older students with university applications and the transition to university life. On IntoUniversity's Corporate Mentoring Scheme, Year 13 (Upper Sixth) students are paired with graduates in full-time employment. They are supported throughout their final year of school and first year of university. Young people from IntoUniversity's target groups are more likely to drop out of university in their first year than their peers, so with the help of their mentors they feel encouraged to continue with their study.

IntoUniversity's impact

The success of the Blackbird Leys Centre is tangible. Over the past 5 years 68% of school leavers applying from the centre have secured a university place, principally at Oxford Brookes, Coventry and Birmingham. Moreover, more than 3,000 young people have been supported in some way by the centre and 1,370 have visited an Oxford college or the University for a range of events. Separately, 49 students from the IntoUniversity network have been awarded places at Oxford University, of whom four attended the Blackbird Leys centre.

"IntoUniversity is very motivational. It has really taught me to push the boundaries and to try to be the best version of myself, because there is always room for improvement. IntoUniversity continues to surprise me with new opportunities; each opportunity allows me to integrate new skills into my plans for the future." (Elizabeth, Year 13 student at IntoUniversity Oxford South East)

The active involvement of student volunteers has also been a very positive aspect of the scheme. Over the five years of its existence, 135 Oxford undergraduates and graduates have been involved as student ambassadors and mentors providing a very tangible bridge to the university experience. A recent Oxford graduate, Dr Molly Gilmartin, for example, organised—off her own bat—a one day event at the Royal College of Physicians entitled 'IntoMedicine' to enable selected IntoUniversity students to get a detailed introduction from recent graduates on getting into medical school and what a career in medicine entails.

Lessons learned by IntoUniversity

Nationally, IntoUniversity's network currently engages with more than 30,000 disadvantaged students a year with similar outstanding levels of progress to university. Hugh Rayment-Pickard, Chief Strategy Officer, believes that the key lessons that the charity has learned over the past decade are:

- Educational attainment is strongly linked to the places and communities that young people grow up in. This is why it is important to work in the communities where poor young people live.
- This has become worse over the past 50 years: for children born in 2000, where they live is a more powerful predictor of academic success than it was for those born in 1970 (*Social Market Foundation*).
- Educational advantage and disadvantage is passed down through the generations: graduate parents tend to have children who will also be graduates; parents with few formal qualifications with have children with few qualifications. Long-term sustained effort is required to reverse this phenomenon.
- Ensuring everyone gets a good education is crucial to addressing poverty: according to the House of Commons Parliamentary Report (2019), four of the five main factors influencing future poverty concern young people's education: educational attainment, parental qualifications, home learning environment and non-cognitive development.
- Young people from the UK's most disadvantaged backgrounds are half as likely to go to university and 15 times less likely to enter a top university, than those from the most advantaged backgrounds.⁶

It will be interesting to see how these lessons can be absorbed and built upon by the new Oxford University app.

¹ Source: <http://www.ox.ac.uk/news/2019-05-20-two-new-oxford-initiatives-help-students-under-represented-backgrounds>.

² Source: <https://www.centreforcities.org/reader/cities-outlook-2017/city-monitor-latest-data/13-gini-coefficient/>

³ Source: POLAR 4, Office for Students.

⁴ Source: 2011 Census.

⁵ <https://intouniversity.org/content/intouniversity-oxford-south-east>

⁶ UCAS 2018. (This is using UCAS's deprivation measure)

Get Involved! There are always ways in which you can participate in IntoUniversity's programme whether as an individual volunteer or mentor or by providing access to academic experiences such as lab visits or subject specific presentations. Please contact Laura Duncalfe (laura.duncalfe@intouniversity.org) if you would like to visit the centre in Blackbird Leys and learn more about its activities and how you can help combat disadvantage. The next five years, again sponsored by Christ Church and the University, will be exciting for these young people!

Scrutinising: how's that going in Oxford?

G.R. EVANS

THE Strategic Plan Programme Board seems to have a great deal of clout for a body which comes so low in the hierarchy of Oxford's Committees.¹ It answers to PRAC, which is the Committee entrusted with 'monitoring and implementing the University's Strategic Plan, setting its annual budget, and resource allocation'.² But it does so largely invisibly. It cannot be read about among the Statutes and Regulations. It is 'a temporary committee established by Council under section 24–26 of Statute VI and as such it is not set up by regulation'.³ The only information available on the open web appeared in the *Gazette* of 25 April in answer to some Congregation Questions. There it is explained that the SPPB:

'will assume collective responsibility for implementation of the Strategic Plan 2018–23, and will consider, and report regularly (normally at least once per term during 2018/19) to PRAC.'

Its membership comprises the Vice-Chancellor, the six Pro-Vice-Chancellors,⁴ the four Heads of Divisions, one Head of House, with three UAS officers attending, the Registrar, the Director of Finance and the Director of Planning and the Council Secretariat. It was 'subsequently' agreed to include a Proctor or the Assessor as a member.⁵

It is not open to much scrutiny:

'Its agendas and minutes will not be published but, subject to considerations of confidentiality, its reports to Council may from time to time be published on Council's website in accordance with Council's Standing Orders'.⁶

I was concerned enough to make an FOI request for the SPPB's agenda and minutes a few days after the Meeting of Congregation on 7 May. The disclosure was refused on the grounds that it would inhibit frank discussion by the SPPB. This is of course a reason recognised under the FOIA s.36 (2)(b) where it is deemed that disclosure might prejudice the 'effective conduct of public affairs'. Another indicator of the secrecy of the Board's conduct?⁷

But meanwhile the SPPB has now added to its first venture, the Parks College proposal, a scheme to form a partnership with Legal and General to the tune of £4bn, announced the day after Encaenia on June 27, with the emphasis on housing for University staff and graduate students. An announcement in *The Times* on 23 July suggested that this was to be spent (instead? primarily?) on:

'a vast investment programme to build not one, but two collaboration and innovation hubs along the lines of Silicon Fen just outside the city centre. It intends to create thousands of high-tech science ventures to capitalise on the university's research talent.'

Articles appear from time to time in the *Oxford Mail* making it plain that neither the Parks College nor the Legal and General partnership plan can be expected to proceed at the cost or to the timetable so far mentioned. New 'partners' are announced, for neither the University nor Legal and General is going to be doing the actual building.⁸ Delays are noted, for example on Farndon Court,⁹ for which Congregation was told 'funding of £10.3m had previously been approved'.¹⁰ There is news of mounting expense and delay on other expensive projects to which the University is already committed, notably on 1 August that the Tinbergen building is now scheduled for completion in 2024, but still with no planning application submitted.¹¹ The plan for a new Humanities Library on the ROQ site with the Schwarzman donation was announced with a fanfare earlier in June, but with as yet no mention of the disputes an earlier scheme prompted before it had to be aborted for lack of funding a decade and a half ago. Those can be expected to recur.¹²

Audit and Scrutiny

For more than a decade Oxford has had a watchdog to keep an eye on such worries on behalf of Congregation. In 1999, as a protection when the 'North' changes to the University's Congregation approved a Resolution requiring a 'review of the operation of the new governance structure after five years'. This was to:

'pay especial attention to [the] transparency, efficiency and democracy of the new governance structure, by a body consisting of members directly elected by Congregation for this purpose (two from each constituency), to be chaired by a retiring or recent Proctor'.¹³

On the arrival of John Hood as the new Vice-Chancellor in 2004, this changed.¹⁴ A review was to take place sooner, and Hood was to chair it. Its five other members were no longer to be elected by Congregation, but merely 'proposed' or *ex officio*.¹⁵ The Resolution approving this went through without challenge.

The 'review' produced its Green Paper, *Oxford's*