Farah Ahmad recently met with brother and sister, William and Emily Dao, at the launch of IntoUniversity’s newest centre in North Islington. Emily, aged 10, and William, aged 8, were both brilliant ambassadors at the centre launch for IntoUniversity North Islington and, though nervous to begin with, they thoroughly enjoyed their time speaking to all the guests. Emily and William are both regular attendees at IntoUniversity Hackney South’s after-school Academic Support sessions.

Emily and William are recent additions to the Hackney South centre and began attending Academic Support in autumn 2015. They discovered IntoUniversity through family friends who also attended the after-school sessions. William mentioned that ‘they told us that it was a good place to learn and get extra support.’ The team at the Hackney South centre said that ‘both students are eager to learn, but felt that they needed extra support with their studies.’

Since attending Academic Support, the centre team proudly reflect on Emily and William’s time at the centre and have noticed how much the pair have developed in such a short space of time. ‘Emily and William have grown in confidence. Both, especially William, are very keen to contribute and present in front of the class in sessions.’

When asked why they keep coming back to the centre every week, Emily says ‘because it is fun and the teachers are nice’ with William adding that ‘IntoUniversity is a good place to learn, study and make friends!’ They both agree that IntoUniversity has been instrumental with improvements at school: ‘I get help with my homework, especially with checking my homework. It has helped my school grades to improve’ says Emily. For William ‘It has helped with my teamwork. I am now better at teamwork in my PE lessons at school.’

They both especially enjoy the end-of-term parties that the centre hosts to celebrate the achievements and hard work of students. William explains that ‘I like the first session of a new term because I get to change tables, meet a new teacher and learn new things.’ From this statement it is clear that William is an outgoing student who pushes himself to overcome new challenges. Older sister, Emily, declares her favourite parts of IntoUniversity are ‘studying and getting to present my work to other students’ and, as the Hackney South centre staff have mentioned, they both thrive from presenting when given the opportunities in centre.

IntoUniversity is a good place to learn, study and make friends!

Outside of school and attending Academic Support sessions regularly, William and Emily like to keep themselves busy. ‘We both like movie nights. We ride our bikes with our Dad almost every Sunday! I like reading – my favourite book at the moment is “A Vampire Rat” says Emily. They both attend a drama club and have high hopes in pursuing an acting career in the future.

To help with their confidence, William and Emily were asked to attend the IntoUniversity North Islington launch in the autumn term. They were thrilled by the opportunity to speak to adults they were not familiar with as they did not have much experience of this. Emily admits ‘We were both a bit nervous at first because we did not know the best way to go up to people and ask them questions about university’. After a little while, both Emily and William became more comfortable speaking to adults and William says they really enjoyed it and had fun. ‘When we spoke to different people, it taught us that lots of people have different opinions which was nice.’

With such growth in confidence since their short time at IntoUniversity Hackney South, it comes as no surprise to the centre team that both William and Emily have incredible motivation and ambitious plans for the future. Emily proudly announces ‘I want to be an actress. Next term I am in the Royal Shakespeare Company’s “A Midsummer Night’s Dream” playing the part of a little girl.’ William states ‘I want to be an actor too – in the movies and on stage. I played the part of Tam in the musical “Miss Saigon”’. The IntoUniversity Hackney South centre staff are very much looking forward to the years ahead for William and Emily and supporting them with any new challenges they face.
We have an exciting year of challenge events coming up and we would love you to take part.

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<th>April 2017</th>
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**London Marathon**

If you’d like to sponsor Matt or follow his progress, look out for the London Marathon, set to take place on Sunday 23 April. Matt is looking to raise at least £7,500 for IntoUniversity, which he helped to launch.

Matt Griggs is hard at work training for this year’s London Marathon, which he will run in memory of his late father. He said: “If you’d like to join our staff members, are preparing to take on this 24-mile route which includes a 5,200ft (1,585m) ascent. If you’d like to join our staff members, are preparing to take on this 24-mile route which includes a 5,200ft (1,585m) ascent.

**Yorkshire Three Peaks Challenge**

We’re proud to be a gold charity partner of Deloitte Ride Across Britain, which means you can now apply for one of IntoUniversity’s limited charity places for a greatly reduced price.

The Yorkshire Three Peaks Challenge takes on Pen-y-ghent, Whernside and Ingleborough peaks, in this order and usually in under 12 hours.

To take on Britain’s world famous long-distance cycle challenge, 969 miles of the best riding in the UK from Land’s End to John O’Groats. Every detail has been thought of to give you a hassle-free experience.

**Deloitte Ride Across Britain**

You recently started donating monthly to IntoUniversity, what inspired you to give? It actually went completely over the top of my head that I wasn’t donating to the one charity that actually support my own physical activity, which is why I only recently started donating! As a supporter of various different organisations, it made sense to give something into the IntoUniversity. What is satisfying to know is that my donation could provide X or Y to a centre or help fund a day out or trip away for students. I can actually see the outcomes that my donation can help provide, first hand, in contrast to other organisations.

What do you want to say to someone thinking of volunteering for IntoUniversity? IntoUniversity will provide you with a fun, friendly and challenging environment within which to give some of your time to help better a child’s knowledge, understanding and wisdom of life. Staff will aim to support you so that you can get as much (or as little) out of your time as you wish to offer. There is no pressure put on you to be one of the staff – just committing to turn up and aiming to try your best for a child in any given situation is what is appreciated.

How would you describe IntoUniversity in three words? Giving children choices.

**Lin Proctor**

Lin Proctor is Head of Learning & Apprenticeships Design, Faculty Academies of which Perico Academy, a partner school of IntoUniversity, is a member.

At Perico Academy we have been working with IntoUniversity for many years. The support it provides to our students both through scheduled workshops in school and beyond is invaluable. Although we are located in SW1, more than 75% of our students are eligible to be part of the IntoUniversity programme, so there is always a eager waiting list of students wanting to be involved.

The value of a staff, as the third-party endorsement that the IntoUniversity team bring to the messages they deliver to our students. The need to develop resilience, to develop a growth mindset and to take their aspirations to the next level—this is the kind of thing that IntoUniversity can bring to the table.

We’re able to get as much (or as little) out of your time as you wish to offer. There is no pressure put on you to be one of the staff – just committing to turn up and aiming to try your best for a child in any given situation is what is appreciated.

Help us to inspire young people for generations to come with a gift to IntoUniversity in your Will. If you already have a Will, you can add a legacy with a simple codicil.

To find out more, visit www.intouniversity.org/legacies or email us at legacies@intouniversity.org

**UCAS 2016, End of Cycle Report**

In 2016, young people from the most disadvantaged backgrounds were 3.8 times less likely to go to university than those from the most advantaged backgrounds, and they were more than 10.5 times less likely to go to a higher tariff university.

**Georgia Jeffery**

Georgia Jeffery, 21, is a current student at IntoUniversity. She said: “Going into university was a big step for me as my family isn’t well-off, my grades were decent but I knew I would need additional support when I got there.”

You have been volunteering as an Academic Support tutor at IntoUniversity for two years now, can you tell us about a particular highlight from your time at the centre? I very much enjoyed the mock debate that we conducted at our family engagement session on the subject of ‘PE in SW1, more than 75% of our students are eligible to be part of the IntoUniversity programme, so there is always a eager waiting list of students wanting to be involved. The value of a staff, as the third-party endorsement that the IntoUniversity team bring to the messages they deliver to our students. The need to develop resilience, to develop a growth mindset and to take their aspirations to the next level—this is the kind of thing that IntoUniversity can bring to the table.

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Spotlight

‘University is much more than a stepping stone to a career.’

A degree is now a major investment for young people. What would you say to anyone considering whether or not to go to university?

I’d tell them university is the opportunity to shape the life they want. As someone who didn’t go to university, I’m very aware that Higher Education is by no means the only path to a successful and fulfilling career. I am, however, a big believer in the power of aspiration to transform people’s lives and there’s no better place than university to unlock it. If you grow up with a particular vocation in mind, it provides an opportunity to lay down the academic foundations of your career. If, like many people, you don’t, university provides the time and space to develop your interests and explore different avenues.

But, for every generation of students, university is much more than a stepping stone to a career. It moulds them as individuals and provides a critical bridge to adulthood, where they can learn the interpersonal skills they will need for life. This is more important today than ever before. For all the enormous benefits of technology, I’m concerned that many young people are growing up in a digitalised world where experiences are virtual and, all too often, actions have no consequences.

For me, the life skills people acquire at university are every bit as important as academic qualifications and when I visit our properties up and down the UK, nothing gives me more satisfaction than watching our students make the transition from teenagers to resilient adults equipped for everything that lies ahead.

Unite Students is the UK’s largest provider of student accommodation. How do you see your role in helping students get the best out of their time at university?

We provide a high-quality and secure living environment where young people can develop academically and socially. This means more than simply a roof and four walls. Because we know that while for most people university is a time of excitement and opportunity, it can also be a time of anxiety and stress. Our research shows that students who feel well integrated are more resilient and better equipped to navigate the transition to university, so we aim to provide an environment which, in both physical and non-physical terms, helps them to achieve this. For example, as well as providing lots of common space where students can meet and interact, we train our people to help them identify any students who may be struggling so they can help them find the right support. We are also currently piloting a programme of student ambassadors to help students through their arrival and first few weeks with us.

What do you think can be done to prepare students better for their time at university?

Going to university is a big step for young people. I suspect that many of them either don’t know what to expect or have somewhat one-dimensional expectations of university life which, along with all the opportunities it offers, we know has its fair share of academic – and sometimes social – challenges. Clearly it’s in no one’s interest, including ours, that a student drops out of university early and I think there’s a lot that universities, schools and companies like Unite could do to work with sixth forms and university applicants to ensure they have a realistic understanding of what to expect when they go to university. I’d very much like to see more action in this area.

What do you think can be done to encourage and help more people from disadvantaged backgrounds go to university?

This is a deep-rooted and multi-faceted problem and, sadly, the latest data from UCAS does not suggest that things are getting much better. However it also shows that things can be done. Applications from women, who have traditionally also been under-represented among university applicants, are rising.

Tackling this issue will require concerted action. The first challenge is for universities to recognise the enormous disadvantages that some applicants face in their admissions policies. I was, for example, greatly heartened by the University of Bristol’s recent announcement that it plans to ring fence some places for applicants with lower grades from disadvantaged backgrounds.

The second issue is funding and, in this area, I’m enormously proud of the work of the Unite Foundation, which is currently providing accommodation and a generous living allowance for 134 students from severely disadvantaged backgrounds at universities across the UK.

The third and perhaps most difficult issue is a more cultural problem. The fact is that many people simply never consider the possibility that university could be an option for them. Once again, I think universities, schools and the private sector all need to do more to identify, encourage and inspire talented school children who may not have otherwise thought of applying for university.

Richard Smith, CEO, Unite Students

Richard became CEO in June 2016 after working as Unite’s Managing Director of Operations since 2011 and joining the business as deputy Chief Financial Officer in 2010. Prior to Unite, Richard worked in the transport industry in the UK, Europe, North America and Australia, including 13 years at National Express Group.

We would love to hear your feedback about aspire. To get in touch or to find out more about Into University please visit our website www.intouniversity.org, drop Farah an email at farah.ahmad@intouniversity.org or call us on 020 7243 0242.

You can also follow us on @IntoUniversity www.facebook.com/IntoUniversity

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