Sanmeet Kaur recently met with siblings Ketsia (aged 17), Don (aged 16) and Keren (aged 14) at IntoUniversity’s Nottingham West centre, run in partnership with the University of Nottingham, which celebrated its five-year anniversary this year. Together, the siblings have benefited from both academic and pastoral support at IntoUniversity.

Ketsia, Don and Keren all have very distinct interests and personalities but their similarities lie in their ambition and drive, for themselves and for each other. Ketsia has just completed the first year of her A-levels which celebrated its five-year anniversary this year. Together, the siblings have benefited from both academic and pastoral support at IntoUniversity.

During Academic Support this year Ketsia has been focusing on revision, IntoUniversity has helped me increase my confidence and pass my GCSEs. IntoUniversity has also paired me with my mentor, Amelia, who has been helping me with my personal statement and CV. Amelia makes Biology fun to revise and has opened my eyes to different ways of revising.” Over the summer, Ketsia has been working hard to prepare for the UK Clinical Aptitude Test (UKCAT). The support of her mentor has been invaluable: ‘My mentor brought in her friend who does Medicine and he spoke to me about the UKCAT and how to prepare for it. He told me all about what he has learnt from it, and what I should and should not do. I think it’s made me more aware about what I need to do – before I had a vague idea but now I really know what I’ve got to do in order to get where I want!’

Don has aspirations to become a lawyer, jokingly citing American legal drama, Suits, as one of his inspirations. One of Don’s favourite subjects at school is History: ‘I like finding out about the past and all the different things that happened. It’s interesting to find out how people lived. I also enjoy debating because I enjoy getting my points across and the fact that you have your freedom of speech.’

Despite his initial nerves about ‘starting over again’, Don is optimistic about what the future holds for him. IntoUniversity has helped prepare me for being away from my family for such a long time and how to cope with being more independent.’ When asked if she will miss Don, Ketsia replies, ‘Yes, but he’s going to a good school. When we get offered opportunities like this, we want each other to do well.’

Through IntoUniversity, Don has been successful in securing a place at the prestigious Durham School for Years 12 and 13. The Nottingham West centre staff have played a key role in supporting and encouraging Don. ‘The best thing about IntoUniversity is the staff’ says Don. ‘They are here for you in every aspect and will always try to help you with anything. I didn’t know about boarding school until they told me – I went home and asked my mum. We both realised it was a really good opportunity so I applied through the Springboard Bursary Foundation.’

Receiving his acceptance letter came as a surprise to Don as he says, ‘At first I really didn’t believe it because my mum looked super serious, so I thought I didn’t get in!’ Don has been working closely with Katherine Walker, IntoUniversity’s Boarding Schools Bursary Manager, in preparation for the transition to boarding school.

Through IntoUniversity, we have become more supportive and closer as a family – we want each other to do well!
Continued from front page...

When asked what their best memory of IntouUniversity has been so far, all three siblings gave the same response – the Extending Horizons trip. For Ketsia, the best thing about the programme was 'going to see what a university is really like. Some of the courses were really interesting and there were specific tasters you could get involved in.' Meeting students from other IntouUniversity centres was also a highlight. "We met students from Leeds and it was really good to interact with other people’s say’s Don, with Keren adding, ‘Everyone just got along and had a good time. We felt like we’d known each other a long time even though it was only three days."

As IntouUniversity turns 15 this year, this was the perfect opportunity to ask the siblings about their experiences at age 15. ‘When I turned 15, all I could think about was being the same age as Ketsia! We’re basically twins’ says Don. With just a nine-month age difference between them, Ketsia and Don are a close-knit pair. Keren turns 15 this year and is looking forward to ‘having the freedom to go to more places!’ As Ketsia prepares her applications to study Medicine at university, Don makes the transition to Durham School and Keren begins her GCSEs, all three siblings are in the midst of making important decisions about their educational journeys.

The IntouUniversity Nottingham West centre staff are also excited to see what the future holds for these incredibly ambitious students. Sophie Houghton, Centre Leader recently said, ‘They have high aspirations and are now more certain about how to achieve them. They seize all opportunities and get involved in everything they can. We are really excited to see Ketsia, Don and Keren fulfil their potential and be the bright stars we know they will be.’

Big City Bright Future

Sinead Smith

Sinead is IntouUniversity’s Head of BlackRock Partnership and Student Enrichment. Sinead joined the charity in August 2010 and was previously Cluster Manager for the North and West London centres.

It is now becoming tradition that each year in April hundreds of excited Year 13 students gather at King’s College London for the Big City Bright Future Insight Day. The Insight Day is their first step towards gaining a place on the Big City Bright Future internship, a scheme designed by BlackRock in partnership with IntouUniversity. The scheme gives students the chance to undertake a three-week paid internship at a top city firm ahead of going to university. Students take part in a selection process where they must complete an application form and a telephone interview before being invited to attend an insight day. With only one in five applicants gaining a place on the final programme, competition is fierce. For those who make it through the subsequent rounds of CV submissions and face-to-face interviews, the experience can be life changing.

The programme kicks off with Bootcamp - an intensive training week at King’s College London which equips the students with the skills they need to excel in their subsequent two-week placement in one of the 17 participating firms. With workshops on networking and presenting with confidence, the students have the chance to develop their awareness of crucial skills. The rate at which the students develop their confidence is amazing. On Day One, only the most confident students rise to the task of delivering an impromptu presentation from the front of the auditorium. By Day Five, students who had never imagined presenting in front of a large group are confidently able to deliver their presentations to an auditorium of over 100 people.

This confidence continues to increase as the students undertake the two-week placements in their firms. One of the key learning points for many students is that there are people from similar backgrounds in the firms already, and if they work hard enough then they too could be returning to the company as newly-hired graduates.

‘I think the thing that I enjoyed the most and learnt was that everyone has a similar backstory to you. Before, I thought that everyone comes from rich areas and no one is really that different in the office. But after talking to people and telling my story, it was so refreshing to know that people from the same background, and some people from even harsher backgrounds, have still made something of themselves — I took a lot away from that, to know that I can do anything if I want to.’ — Big City Bright Future student from 2017.

It is vital that, as a charity, IntouUniversity continues to do all it can to instil this sense of self-confidence in students. A study by High Fliers Research revealed that students who have completed internships are three times more likely to gain a job after university and polls suggest that a third of graduate vacancies in any given year will be filled by applicants who have already worked for that specific employer. It is clear that programmes such as Big City Bright Future can be important drivers of social mobility.

The programme is already having an impact, with eight students from the 2016 cohort successfully gaining spring internships with graduate employers. Two previous Big City Bright Future students have spent the summer working at BlackRock, whilst another student is in the middle of a year in industry at Goldman Sachs. Abel, a student from the charity’s Hammersmith centre completed Big City Bright Future in 2015 and was successful in gaining a place on the BlackRock summer internship this year, after competing against thousands of applicants.

Students also recognise the opportunity that has been awarded to them and, as a result, are more likely to want to ‘give back’ and support IntouUniversity in the future. Ten current mentors are previous Big City Bright Future participants from 2015 and 2016, and 24 students from this year’s cohort have already completed the mentoring training and are ready to be paired with their IntouUniversity mentees.

Ochako, from the Walworth centre, sums up what these opportunities have meant for him: ‘The exposure that the various programmes have given me has been unparalleled. I have learnt what it means to work in the city and be a professional. The work experience programmes have really broadened my horizons, nurturing my self-worth while simultaneously growing my commercial awareness. These experiences, alongside my academic studies, have played a huge role in helping me to secure a place at UCL as well as a Tuitions Paid Scholarship from an investment bank. I think they are an integral part of the support IntouUniversity offers. The ability to transport pupils from schools like mine to the offices of American Express, BlackRock and so on really does go a long way in steering us in a positive direction.’

Hugh Raymoent-Pickard, Chief Strategy Officer and Co-Founder of IntouUniversity, speaks at the BlackRock Gives Gala Dinner in September 2017.

BlackRock Charity of the Year 2017-18

The success of the Big City Bright Future programme has led to an exciting development in IntouUniversity’s relationship with BlackRock. IntouUniversity was delighted to have been chosen as BlackRock’s Charity Partner of the Year alongside mental health charity, Heads Together. This two-year partnership has already seen great successes in its first eight months, with over £300,000 in funds being raised so far from events such as the Gala Dinner (pictured), Charity Quiz Night, cake sales, cycle challenges, half marathons and rowathons. Teams from around the firm have been keen to get involved directly, with BlackRock staff volunteering over 1,200 hours to paint centres, do mock interviews, become mentors or support our primary students choose their future aspirations. The Big City Bright Future students with their incredible talents, motivation and eagerness to learn have acted as fantastic ambassadors for IntouUniversity, meaning that staff already have an understanding and a level of respect for what IntouUniversity is trying to achieve.
When we began our work just over 15 years ago, we had not anticipated the level of success IntoUniversity would go on to achieve. The charity began in 2002 as a response to the educational inequality faced by young people in West London. Initially, the project worked with secondary school students, however it quickly became apparent that in order to have a transformative impact our work needed to start with primary students, before attitudes towards education became fixed.

Since the launch of our first centre in North Kensington, IntoUniversity has been providing children and young people across the country with the tools to overcome these barriers and go on to university or another chosen aspiration. Many of the students we work with live in overcrowded homes, meaning they often have no quiet place to study, their parents are unable to support them with their schoolwork, they have low levels of confidence, English may not be spoken at home and some are looked-after young people.

Today, IntoUniversity operates 24 local learning centres in nine UK locations. We are extremely grateful to all our supporters for enabling us to continue our essential work in the most disadvantaged areas across the country.

Key achievements

- Built 22 university partnerships since 2010
- Reached over 77,000 students since 2002
- Supported over 9,000 IntoUniversity students’ progress to university since 2002
Nicholas Wheeler
Founder and Chairman of Charles Tyrwhitt Shirts

Nick Wheeler founded Charles Tyrwhitt in 1986. The company sells shirts online, by mail and through 22 stores in the UK, USA and Germany. With sales of £220 million, the business focuses on delivering outstanding products and an excellent level of customer service. Nick is married to Chrissie Rucker, founder of The White Company. Nick enjoys flying helicopters, skiing, cycling, tennis, shooting and photography.

Farah Ahmad
Farah, Senior Fundraising Officer at IntoUniversity, recently met with and interviewed Nick at Charles Tyrwhitt HQ, to find out more about why he supports IntoUniversity and how to become a successful entrepreneur.

You run an incredibly successful company, how did you achieve such an impressive entrepreneurial empire?

I think the most important thing I’ve done is I’ve just stuck at it. When you start a business you have to have a vision for what you want to achieve and I always knew when I started, if you start a shirt business it’s never going to be an overnight sensation. It’s not a Facebook or a Google. The shirt market was not growing at 50% a year like mobile phones or laptop computers. I always think if you’re an entrepreneur you have to decide early on whether you want to own a small slice of a big pie or a big slice of a small pie. I decided I wanted to own the business so what I wanted was a big slice of the big pie! To do that it takes a hell of a long time. It’s not revolutionary, it’s evolution. Every day, thinking of ways to do things a little bit better. If you add all those days together – and I’ve had 30 years of them – you end up with a good business. It’s funny when people say how did you achieve such an impressive entrepreneurial empire? because I feel that I’ve done nothing extraordinary – I’ve just done something for a long time and I’ve stuck to it. It’s about ‘great quality, great service, great value’ and it’s sticking to that day in, day out.

Is there another business you wish you had started?

Hindsight is a wonderful thing. First of all you have to ask yourself what was the reason for starting the business in the first place. I wanted my own business because I wanted to be in control of my own destiny. I never liked working for anybody else. I used to have holiday jobs when I was at school and university and I worked for the consultancy Bain & Company for two years after leaving university. I loved Bain and it was a great business but I knew that I didn’t want to work for somebody else. Some people think ‘I want to have my own business because I want to make a lot of money’ I think if you start a business because you want to make a lot of money there’s a high chance you’re not going to succeed. The question I get asked by people arent entrepreneurs is ‘will you ever sell your business?’ as if that’s the whole reason for doing it. If you establish that the reason for starting a business is not the money, then there’s no other business I wish I’d started. I look at Michael Dell who started Dell computers and Charles Dunstone who started Carphone Warehouse, which were industries that were massively fast-growing. They’ve grown huge and impressive businesses. In a way, I could say that I wish I’d started Dell computers or Carphone Warehouse or, to be honest, Facebook and Google. I’ve always wanted to have the best shirt business in the world. Whatever you choose to be you have got to be the best in the world at what you do. I want to be the best shirt-maker in the world. I’ll keep on plodding away.

Which businesses are you most envious of and who are your biggest competitors?

I want a business where our customers, suppliers and the people who work in the business love Charles Tyrwhitt. I like it when people come up to me and they say ‘this is the best place I’ve ever worked’. I like it when a customer comes up and says ‘I’ve been buying your shirts for 20 years and every time I put one on it makes me feel great’ or ‘I’ve bought my first shirt from you last week and it’s the best shirt I’ve ever had’. The businesses I’m most envious of are the ones that people really love. Businesses that people love more than my customers love Charles Tyrwhitt. It is businesses like Virgin, a lot of people love Virgin because they champion the consumer. I look at the Sunday Times best places to work and I want Charles Tyrwhitt to be in there.

Our biggest competitors in the UK are Marks & Spencer and Next. Just because they’re the people who sell the most shirts. When we look at where most of our new customers are coming from, they’re coming from Marks & Spencer and Next.

What would you say has been your biggest business failure?

How did you overcome this?

My biggest business failure was in 1994 when the business was going pretty well, and I basically got a bit bored. So I thought, I’m going to buy another business. I bought a chain of children’s clothes shops called Patrizia Wigan. They had five shops and I lost more money in three months than I’d made in the last three years. I don’t know what I was thinking! What we’re trying to do is be the best shirt business in the world, selling great quality shirts to men and suddenly I went and bought a children’s retail clothes shop – it was a disaster that was a big lesson and we went bust which was a bit of a shock. We overcame it by realising that was a monstrous mistake and bought the business back with nothing from the receiver.

For many of the young people that IntoUniversity work with, the biggest challenge they are now experiencing is applying to university. What experiences and lessons did you have whilst in university that have since assisted you in your business ventures?

When you apply to university, you have to think very carefully about what course you’re going to do. There are some courses that are very full on and you do a lot of work but there are other courses with less time spent in lecture theatres and more independent study. I think it’s getting harder now because there is a lot of pressure and you’re paying a lot of money to go to university so you’ve got to come out with a good degree. University is a fantastic opportunity to experiment with business ideas. If you want to be an entrepreneur then you need to really get stuck into it at university because it provides a safety net for you. I had lots of businesses at university – a Christmas tree business, a photography business, a shoe business and most of them were a disaster but you learn a lot. I think it’s difficult to beat the practical nature of starting a business and giving it a go, especially getting out there and selling stuff to people. If you can sell stuff to people you can be a success in life.

Why did you choose to study Geography?

I actually did Geography because I wanted to get into Cambridge and so I looked around and I found that Geography seemed to be one of the easiest ways to get into Cambridge. Then I didn’t get into Cambridge so that was a bit of a disaster! I arrived at Bristol and tried to change and they said absolutely no way – you applied for Geography and you’re jolly well doing it!

You work with IntoUniversity by supporting their entrepreneurship programmes, what first inspired you to work with the charity?

I have been very lucky because I came from a family who sent me to a great school, which was fee-paying, and it was the normal progression to go to university. If you look at people who have been ‘successful’ in life, they generally have been to university. It’s a big leg up and it’s a big help. For me, everybody who went to my school went to university, pretty much. It was just the sort of thing you did and I think the world is an unfair place unfortunately, but I think it’s very unfair that a lot of schools don’t send anybody to university. I’ve always felt that working with young people and helping them to get on in life and help themselves is a way to make the world a better place. I just love the success that IntoUniversity has had. It helps those who didn’t have the good fortune I had growing up and giving them the leg up that they need and deserve to make their lives better.

What are your hopes for the future of IntoUniversity?

There’s a need and IntoUniversity is opening new centres at a good pace, but there is a big need for it. IntoUniversity hasn’t yet saturated the UK market by any stretch of the imagination and so I would hope that they would continue to grow and continue to keep the same ethos and have the same success as they’ve had to date.
Through your partnership with IntoUniversity, you recently attended and launched the charity's Academy of Enterprise week, did you enjoy the day?
I loved the day. I always find it incredibly uplifting when you meet people, some of whom have had a really tough start in life, who realise how much potential they have. Everybody has a lot of potential and the biggest obstacle is making people believe in themselves and believe that they have the potential to get on and do it. I thought that the students at the Academy of Enterprise week were just fantastic. They would get up and go. They were really engaged and I think the week could make a real difference to their lives. It’s quite small things that can make big differences to people’s lives. You just have to make little things click in somebody’s mind. Fundamentally, making them believe there is no limit to what they can achieve. If you can make that happen then that’s really exciting. I think I saw that happening on that day.

What most struck you about the young people you met that day?
I think it was their positivity and drive. They were proper budding entrepreneurs. There was no feeling that they were there because somebody had told them that they had to be there. They were there because they really wanted to be there and they wanted to get up and make a difference. That’s what it’s all about; it’s finding that attitude in young people. That attitude was there in abundance with all the people I met.

What advice would you give any of the students we work with?
I would probably say that the really important thing to do with your life is to make a difference. So when you die, the world is a different place to the world it was when you came into it. I think the opportunity to make a difference is there for everybody. It’s not necessarily about making a big difference, it can be a small difference but it’s making sure you really do make a difference.

I went to see a talk by Malala [Yousafzai]. The whole ‘Malala movement’ of giving young people a voice. I think that’s something that most people forget; that it’s possible by doing small things and leading by example, you can make a massive difference to the world you’ve got to make sure you change the world, to a greater or lesser extent.

IntoUniversity is celebrating its 15th birthday this year. When you were 15 years old, what were your dreams and aspirations for the future?
I think if you ask most 15 year olds — my kids are 20, 19, 17 and 13 so they span either side of 15 — most 15 year olds don’t know what they want to do. When I was 15, I always wanted to have my own business. It meant I was always thinking of ways of doing it and rushing off and doing things and it was always a bit of a sprint. I remember when I left university and I went to work for Bain — I spent two years at Bain — and then I thought I’ve got to get into my business now otherwise I’m never going to do it. I remember feeling then at 24 that life was passing me by. That’s nine years after being 15. I think when you’re 15, you need to just try everything. You need to have a really open mind because you’ve got another 70 years to go.

Every opportunity, say yes. If somebody says do London to Brighton on a bicycle when you’re 15, do it — it’s a good challenge! You’ve got to push yourself. Get out there, be really open-minded and just embrace everything.

I recently did a really fun Q&A interviewing Nick Wheeler in front of a cohort of IntoUniversity students. Nick and I had the opportunity to sit with the students in break out groups and it was wonderful to see them engaging passionately with entrepreneurial ideas.

I have been an entrepreneur all my life and I am so thrilled that, thanks to Nick, IntoUniversity now has the opportunity to inspire and support young people who want to follow this path.

Of course, becoming a successful entrepreneur is always a challenge but if our young people want to succeed and we can help to nurture and facilitate their ambitions then it can make for such a fulfilling life and be a terrific ladder for social mobility.

James Lambert, Chairman of Trustees, IntoUniversity

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Academy of Enterprise 2017
As part of IntoUniversity’s commitment to engage young people over the long-term, the charity has launched a Student Associate Network, which provides support to its students once they have left school and progressed to Higher Education or employment. In June, IntoUniversity held the first annual Academy of Enterprise for students in the Associate Network.

The Academy of Enterprise aims to give IntoUniversity Student Associates a hands-on experience of what it would be like to run their own business. During the five-day programme, students meet seasoned entrepreneurs, business people, founders and influencers who mentor and instruct them on all things business. The week provides a unique opportunity for students to step outside their comfort zones and network with industry experts. Students work in teams of five or six and get equipped with a start-up loan of £250. All profits made are retained by the students.

Get aspire in your inbox – email farah.ahmad@intouniversity.org to subscribe
RU Alumnus Spotlight

Bartek Zakrzewski
Bartek was born in Poland and moved to the UK in 2004, aged 13. Shortly after arriving, Bartek enrolled at IntoUniversity North Kensington. With the centre staff’s help, Bartek attended Rugby School on a scholarship and gained a place at Kingston University to study Law.

Can you tell us a bit about your background?
I moved to the UK from Poland in 2004, knowing only a few words in English. Naturally, school life wasn’t particularly easy but IntoUniversity dramatically accelerated my learning. Ever since my very first FOCUS Week in 2005 I have been heavily involved with IntoUniversity as both a beneficiary and supporter. There is no short answer to this question really but the dozens of opportunities IntoUniversity gave me, and prepared me for, have shaped me into the person I am today. I would struggle to find something which has had as much impact on my school life and career as the support and mentorship I benefited from through IntoUniversity.

I am only one of thousands of examples of pupils who have gone through IntoUniversity and come out stronger and better as a result.

You’ve recently opened a business, can you tell us about it?
After a few years in the industry, I decided to partner up with a couple of my contacts and start my own currency and international payments company. We work primarily with corporate clients across a number of industries helping them implement and execute a strategy in managing currency-related risk.

You are now a Corporate Mentor at IntoUniversity, but why did you first start attending the North Kensington centre?
The very first time I attended was the Sports FOCUS Week in 2005. One of the IntoUniversity representatives came to my school at the time and encouraged us to get involved in the FOCUS Week over the upcoming half term. I thought it sounded like a lot of fun but I hadn’t the slightest clue how much impact that small step would have on my future career.

What was the greatest experience and/or lesson that IntoUniversity gave you?
In 2007, IntoUniversity recommended me for a scholarship to Rugby School. As it turns out I was lucky enough to secure a place and proceeded to spend what I can only describe as the two best years of my life at the boarding school in Warwickshire. The support I received there, combined with that from IntoUniversity, made me think I could try absolutely anything without fear of failure and it is arguably the single biggest reason I decided to start my own business.

You went to Rugby School on a scholarship – with the support of IntoUniversity – how did it feel going into such a prestigious school?
I won’t lie, I was a little concerned about fitting in as I had always attended comprehensive state schools and felt my socio-economic background, rather modest in comparison to my peers, might be a barrier. Within my first week at Rugby I realised I could not have been more wrong. As I mentioned before, they were the two best years of my life and I’ve made lifelong friends from around the world. Having attended a number of state schools in Poland and London, as well as university in the UK, Rugby School was the only place where discrimination just wasn’t something we were exposed to. I would imagine this ethos is the very reason IntoUniversity has such a strong relationship with the school.

How did your experiences at Rugby School help you when progressing through university and your career?
Rugby is a place where you can try just about anything and you feel confident doing it. The support at the school was incredible and fear didn’t play a part in any decision-making because the leadership, teachers, tutors and other pupils formed a safety net of sorts for anyone who was willing to try something new. I carried that level of confidence throughout university and my career, which was, and still is, an incredible feeling.

Why have you continued to maintain a relationship with IntoUniversity?
The sheer pleasure of spending time with the many IntoUniversity staff I met throughout the last 12 years notwithstanding, I know first-hand the impact a little kindness and support can have on a child or young adult. I do my best to stay in touch and offer support because I feel I’m in a very unique position, having been on the other end of FOCUS Weeks, careers sessions and mentoring schemes as a child.

IntoUniversity has been doing incredible work for many years and I am only one of thousands of examples of pupils who have gone through IntoUniversity and come out stronger and better as a result.

When you were 15 years old, what did you see yourself doing in the future?
I always dreamt of being a lawyer but the dream had no clear, and achievable goals or milestones. With the help of IntoUniversity I completed my Law degree as well as a number of legal work experience placements. It just so happens that one of the placements I did was in financial services and I soon realised I’m better suited to that than law.

University Progression

IntoUniversity recently published its 2017 Impact Report. This report demonstrates the transformative impact IntoUniversity is having on young people in some of the most deprived communities of the UK. Reporting on Higher Education progression data is one of the ways in which the charity can highlight the difference it is making.

To read or download the full IntoUniversity 2017 Impact Report, please visit intouniversity.org/our-impact

75% % of students progressing to Higher Education
IntoUniversity students

22% 37% Benchmark based on national data published by DfE

% of students progressing to Russell Group universities
IntoUniversity students

16% Students nationally

5% are applying to university or are enrolled in an Access/ Foundation course

11% are in work or have an apprenticeship

5% are unemployed or undecided

75% achieved a university place

What are the outcomes for IntoUniversity school leavers?

2016 IntoUniversity school leavers

5% are studying at a Further Education college

These figures in the above table are rounded so add up to 101%
Expanding our reach to Clacton and Liverpool

Kizzi Keast, Team Leader at Into University Clacton

Kizzi studied Law at the University of Stirling and has a PGCE in Secondary ICT and a Masters in Education from the University of Manchester. Kizzi has worked as an ICT and Computer Science teacher at two different secondary schools before joining Into University Southampton in 2015.

Science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) subjects underpin our entire economy, from power generation and electricity distribution to healthcare, transportation and communication. However, it is estimated that around 40% of employers are finding it difficult to recruit for STEM-related positions, and this is expected to worsen in the future. With an ageing workforce in these fields it is vitally important that we develop STEM education to inspire the next generation.

Anglia Ruskin University is committed to the promotion of STEM subjects, and between 2007/8 and 2012/13 saw a 51% increase in STEM student numbers. In 2015 the University received £5 million of HEFCE funding for a new science centre which will allow them to continue to work towards filling the skills gap in the region. In addition, Anglia Ruskin is working with Into University to establish a STEM-focused learning centre in Clacton-on-Sea, addressing educational disadvantage and inspiring future generations of engineers, developers, doctors and other STEM professionals.

Clacton-on-Sea was historically a thriving seaside town, attracting high numbers of tourists between the 1950s and 1970s. Jaywick, a small town to the west of Clacton-on-Sea, was originally built as a holiday village, comprised of temporary accommodation. However, it now has a permanent population of around 4,600. According to the Index of Multiple Deprivation 2015, Jaywick is the most deprived neighbourhood in England, and it is reported that 33% of children in Clacton-on-Sea are living in poverty.

I began working for Into University in 2015 as a Senior Education Worker in Southampton. Being part of the team that set up the Southampton centre has provided me with a wealth of knowledge and experience that I can use in my new role in Clacton-on-Sea. Into University has given me the opportunity to work with a much wider age-range of young people and to see them learning in different contexts.

Since taking up the role of Team Leader in Clacton-on-Sea this year I have been working hard to build relationships with the local schools and other community groups. One of the really amazing things about Clacton-on-Sea is how friendly and open everyone is, and how keen people are to work together.

I’m excited about the specialist facilities we will have, including a computer suite. Computing can really empower students – we often assume that young people are ‘digital natives’ and that they can already use computers, however, there’s a difference between using a computer, and being able to explain how it works, and to create content for it – to write programmes and learn to code.

I’m really looking forward to having the centre set up, meeting the team, and being involved in transforming it from an empty space to a thriving learning centre, having a real impact on the local young people.

If I could give myself, or any 15-year-old advice it would be this:

It’s OK to not know exactly where you want your life to go right now, as long as you’re working hard and being the best version of yourself that you can be in this moment.

We now have

24 centres in

9 cities across England

Liverpool has always been a fantastically vibrant and thriving city. It achieved European Capital of Culture status in 2008, boasts a world UNESCO heritage site, two global football clubs, four universities, and is birthplace of The Beatles. Liverpool’s rich cultural history attracts millions of tourists from around the world, drawn to its colourful musical heritage and bustling shopping district. In 2014, Rough Guide readers voted Liverpool the fourth friendliest city in the world.

Accolades aside, the Liverpool City region is ranked as the second most deprived of the 39 Local Enterprise Partnership areas. Into University North Liverpool will be opening in autumn 2017, in partnership with the University of Liverpool and the Liverpool Football Club Foundation. Anfield, where the centre will be based, is ranked as one of Liverpool’s most deprived wards. Over 36% of Anfield’s population have no qualifications and only one in ten residents are qualified to degree level or higher, which is half the city’s rate. The Anfield ward is 93% white working class, a high-risk group in terms of Higher Education access; with white working class boys least likely to enter university. This is the first time in Into University’s history that every single school in an area meets our criteria, clearly indicating the high level of need. Anfield has a vibrant community culture, and many local organisations are determined to work hand-in-hand to support vulnerable and excluded members of society.

Into University, the University of Liverpool and the Liverpool Football Club Foundation will be working in collaboration to address underachievement and social exclusion among young people aged 7 – 18 in the local area. The partnership will aim to provide the centre with volunteers, mentors, workshops and exciting new opportunities for Into University North Liverpool students.

I was thrilled to learn I had been appointed to the role of Team Leader for the North Liverpool centre. Into University is a forward thinking, innovative charity and I’m delighted to take on the challenge of overseeing the centre move from its set-up phase into it becoming a thriving Into University centre! We are currently building relationships with local schools and academic departments at the university, spreading the word far and wide among community organisations in the area and beginning to plan exciting and immersive FOCUS weeks.

My previous work as a teacher in Liverpool and my experience of delivering the new national curriculum will help me to support the team to plan engaging and successful sessions, in line with the expected outcomes for each year group. Additionally, teaching in an area of high socio-economic deprivation has given me an insight into the various daily challenges faced by many of the families and young people we will be working to support. It’s extremely rewarding to be part of the impact that Into University North Liverpool will have in the Anfield area.

If I could be 15 again I would tell myself the following 15 words:

Don’t be worried about the future, work hard at school, be kind and have fun!
Empowering Futures supports Academy of Enterprise students

Laura Vanessa Munoz
Entrepreneur and Speaker, Chief Empowering Officer for Empowering Futures. Passionate about connecting people, entrepreneurship as a lifestyle choice and spreading good ideas!

@_LauraVanessa

Can you tell us about your educational background?
I studied in public schools in Mexico most of my life until I was awarded with the Chevening Scholarship and I came to the UK to study a postgraduate degree in International Public Relations at Cardiff University.

Coming to the UK for my postgraduate degree changed my life. I acquired a new network of friends and colleagues, I learnt to appreciate more cultures, I learnt about the values of the British society and have integrated those values into my life and my business.

What did having the opportunity to go to university mean for you?
I have always been passionate about learning, although at times, I felt the traditional education system didn’t give me enough tools to gain confidence, resilience, problem solving or time management skills. However, university did open the doors for my career, especially as education, public relations and entrepreneurship are the areas I am passionate about and without the right foundation I would not have been able to achieve my goals.

University is essential for your social network and now more than ever your social capital is crucial for success

Who were your role models growing up?
I believe that parents are our main role models; in my home country as in the UK, we are most likely to end up doing just as well as our parents, there are opportunities for social mobility but it is always a challenge.

However, when I was 16 years old, I met an amazing Canadian entrepreneur called Maria Kritikos and she became my role model for many years, not only was I inspired by seeing a dynamic young woman take action but she was also very kind and wanted to help others. After meeting her and becoming friends, another world opened for me, by seeing a dynamic young woman take action but she was also very kind and wanted to help others.

Can you tell us about your current business, Empowering Futures?
Empowering Futures is a social enterprise built on robust experience in Higher Education and entrepreneurship. Our passion is to provide focus, tools and support to university students to fulfil their potential. We run a skills development programme by connecting bright entrepreneurs with talented university students from minority backgrounds to collaborate on specific marketing projects.

Why is social entrepreneurship so important to you?
I believe that social enterprise is a catalyst for progressive change. It is a fair way to do business and this allows us to tackle social problems, improve people’s lives, support communities and/or help the environment. When a social enterprise is successful, society is the main winner. At Empowering Futures we promote social mobility and advocate a culture of collaboration.

What attracted you to work with IntoUniversity, and specifically, our Academy of Enterprise students?
Empowering Futures and IntoUniversity have shared values and it was a pleasure to share my expertise creating and facilitating programmes, I believe the work that IntoUniversity does for students is crucial and the right step for a better future.

We both support the same target audience but at different stages in their life and that’s why I believe IntoUniversity and Empowering Futures are excellent allies. In our Spring Cohort we had Sophia Cann, an IntoUniversity Alumna, and this is what she said about her experience of the programme:

With the help of Laura from Empowering Futures I was given the opportunity of being the Marketing Project Leader of a high-end swimsuit brand for three months.

In this role, I was in charge of all the social media platforms of the brand and had to create posts that would increase engagement with customers. During this time, I was supported by Empowering Futures on how to make the most effective posts for maximum customer reach, how to schedule my posts and also how to formulate a social report that would show how my posts had increased on a weekly and monthly scale. For someone that wanted to get more exposure to the fashion world, this opportunity was invaluable and I would not have got the most out of it had it not been for the guidance from Empowering Futures.

Sophia Cann
IntoUniversity Alumna

IntoUniversity is celebrating its 15th birthday this year and we’re asking our contributors about life at 15. What advice would you give to your 15 year old self?
Surround yourself with positive and healthy people, take care of your mind, be grateful of everything you have and learn something new every day.