The sure way to get an A

Scott Bradrick
IntoUniversity Brighton

For the final project for the Careers in FOCUS sessions, Scott and his friend from school, Chris, are designing an educational app that will help students get higher test scores—we’ve called it Study Pal—a name which Scott is very proud of. He confidently states that ‘this will become the app of the future’ and has relished the creative aspect of this process, designing a website, Facebook page and Twitter feed with a catchy slogan: ‘the sure way to get an A!’. This idea stemmed from the knowledge he had about GCSE exams becoming more difficult for his generation of students. He thought ‘It will be a challenge but I’m looking forward to it – if you get a high grade after that challenge that’s definitely something worth achieving and worth talking about with your friends’. The FOCUS session ended with students pitching their product and business proposals to other students. Scott and his ‘business partner’, Chris, delivered a professional and convincing pitch which resulted in ‘Study Pal’ being voted the winner.

‘If I hadn’t come to that first workshop, I never would have had the confidence to enter.’

Scott is determined to go to university and grasp every opportunity which comes his way. When asked what he would like to do when he’s older, Scott said, ‘Geology – studying the planet. I want to watch nature’s fireworks.’

Maths at the centre. Scott has become a strong leader amongst his friends at Academic Support and is clearly held in high regard by his peers.

Acting as an ambassador for IntoUniversity, Scott has helped a number of his peers become regular attendees

With the confidence gained from his involvement at IntoUniversity, Scott entered into a competition to be a member of the British Youth Council (a charity run by young people to empower them and promote their views). He told the Brighton centre staff: ‘if I hadn’t come to that first workshop, I never would have had the confidence to enter.’ He earned his place on the Council by writing a piece on the challenges and successes of his life. His responsibilities so far have involved a residential trip to Crawley where he had the opportunity to meet the Council representatives and take part in many team-based activities. He said ‘I really enjoyed the opportunity and the challenges really helped my teamwork’. He has also been invited to 10 Downing Street to meet the Prime Minister in the new year which he is very much looking forward to.

During Scott’s time at IntoUniversity Brighton, he has made the most of the programmes open to him: completing five sessions of Careers in FOCUS, thoroughly enjoying a three-day Extending Horizons trip, Leadership in FOCUS, a Buddy Day, a Business in FOCUS Day and a Holiday FOCUS Week.

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Farah recently joined the IntoUniversity Head Office team as a Fundraising Officer with responsibility for individual giving. Farah previously studied for an MSc in Social and Cultural Psychology at the LSE and, prior to that, gained her BSc in Biology with Psychology from Queen Mary, University of London.

Shortly after starting at IntoUniversity, Farah Ahmad visited IntoUniversity Brighton, which opened in the Moulsecoomb area of the city last autumn. At after-school Academic Support Farah met with Scott, a Year 10 student from Varndean School. Scott has been attending IntoUniversity since January 2015 and has taken part in every programme available to him at the centre. He recently won a national competition to become a member of the British Youth Council.

Scott’s first contact with IntoUniversity came when staff at the Brighton centre delivered a workshop to a Year 9 cohort at his school. Since then, Scott has shown impressive commitment to Academic Support, attending sessions twice weekly. Scott values the benefits of these sessions: ‘I come here to do my homework and for the peace and quiet really. I’ve got the materials I need.’ The staff at the Brighton centre have also helped in the improvement of his grades and Scott is grateful for the amount of support he has received in achieving this: ‘I got a C1 for my Spanish speaking which is the highest I’ve ever got – the highest I got before was a C3, so a C1 is going up two sub-levels.’

Scott’s willingness to learn and to help others has encouraged peers from his school to reap similar benefits from the programme. By acting as an ambassador for IntoUniversity, Scott has helped a number of his peers become regular attendees on many IntoUniversity programmes. Even whilst speaking with Scott, he is encouraging the girl sat next to him to get help with her

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University wins Charity of the Year at the Charity Times Awards 2015
An interview with the girl sat next to him to get help with her

Farah Ahmad

An interview with Director of The Queen’s Trust, Nicola Brentnall
Q & A with Stuart Billingham, Trustee of the Unite Foundation
Sanjeev Bhaskar, OBE

Best known by many for his television series Goodness Gracious Me, Sanjeev first started off in a career in marketing. After realising this wasn't for him, Sanjeev pursued a career as a comedian. Alongside a successful career in comedy, he was appointed Chancellor at the University of Sussex in 2009. The University of Sussex sponsors our IntoUniversity Brighton centre where Scott (see first page) is a student.

Did gaining a degree open doors for you? Did you always know that you would go to university?

I find I can’t take too much credit for my career as it involved a huge number of people to make it a success. I’m happy to be a part of that. If there’s any pride, it’s generally in the people that I’ve worked with. However, in terms of my contribution, I’m proud of the fact that I’ve tried and do try to be a good team player and to conduct my dealings with as much egalitarianism as I can.

What took you from marketing to comedy and acting?

In a word, litigation. I sued my last marketing employers for breach of contract. They countersued and it took two years for the case to be resolved, which they settled out of court. I couldn’t get work for those two years as no one would interview someone who was litigating against their employer. I did voluntary work at my local hospital and started to write again, like I had at university. I contacted my friend, Nitin Sawhney, and suggested we put on a show just to fill time and to hang out a bit. The show we did was seen by BBC producers, who told me that this was the material they’d been seeking for a proposed sketch show, the show that became Goodness Gracious Me.

Who were your role models growing up?

I think I had lots of role models for different aspects. I think I wanted to be Elvis Presley, Roger Moore and Rajesh Khanna (Bollywood star). Maybe I still do. My mother was a huge influence. She was academically gifted but also funny and massively generous of spirit. I’m still drawn towards people who have a combination of high creativity, humour and generosity. In fact, if they don’t have the latter, I’m not that interested.

Of which part of your career are you most proud?

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You are currently an Ambassador for a range of charities including the British Asian Trust, The Prince’s Trust and Pratham UK. Why is involvement in philanthropic activities, in particular those related to education, so important to you?

There’s always someone worse off than yourself and being involved with any kind of philanthropy is a good way to remind yourself how fortunate you are. Education seems to be the answer, or at least the start of resolving most difficulties and issues. If encouraged at a young age, a love of learning becomes a lifetime’s pursuit.

What attracted you to the role of Chancellor at the University of Sussex? What have been your highlights in role so far?

I was extremely surprised and honoured to be asked, particularly following in the mighty footsteps of the great Lord Attenborough. Sussex had been my first choice many years ago but I didn’t get in. I liked the ethos of the university and it seemed poetic that I would be asked to be a part of the institution two decades later. The graduation days are extraordinary experiences. To be part of the graduates’ story, even briefly, is a total honour. It is very infectious and uplifting to be in a room so full of potential, achievement and joy. Beyond all of that, it is huge fun and I encourage a playful atmosphere. It’s the graduates’ and their families’ day and I do all I can to make it memorable for them.

What do you think are the biggest challenges for young people in the UK at the moment?

That’s a big question. I think it’s not to be drawn into dogma. Education should teach you to think for yourself. Debate is always healthy and a fundamental aspect of intelligence is to hold two contradictory arguments in your head at the same time. Ethics and empathy are powerful healing tools. Young people have the power to shape the kind of society we all live in and many feel frustrated and alienated. A good education can go a long way in addressing that.

If you could give your younger self some advice, what would it be?

Try using compassion as a marker instead. Be careful whom you choose as role models. Today’s ‘get rich quick’ instant gratification superstar may well be tomorrow’s sad tabloid story.

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Try using compassion as a marker instead. Be careful whom you choose as role models. Today’s ‘get rich quick’ instant gratification superstar may well be tomorrow’s sad tabloid story.
Our first major fundraising project, Making a World of Difference launched in 2004. One of the five themes of this was ‘Students’, a strand focused on aspiration, achievement and skills. Aware of the low progression rates among pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds in Leeds, we made outreach programmes central to this. When we encountered IntoUniversity and learned more about their mission, it was clear they were a natural partner for this endeavour. The project made sense practically as well as in terms of our shared values. The partnership would allow us to extend our work to primary and secondary students. We added part-funding for an IntoUniversity centre to our fundraising plans in 2014 and began to formulate a strategy.

With IntoUniversity’s funding already in place the goal was to open the first centre in October 2014. This left just four months to secure the necessary funds. After discussing the campaign with the major gifts team we identified a pool of 12 potential donors, with the aim of securing a series of large gifts. Although many of these donors had a history of giving, two of them were new donors, an indicator of the project’s attraction and appeal. We arranged a visit to an established IntoUniversity centre in Nottingham, allowing each Development Manager to see first-hand the valuable work of IntoUniversity there. Every one of them came back utterly enthused about the project, an enthusiasm that made their approaches to potential donors all the more persuasive.

Staff from IntoUniversity made themselves available to meet prospective funders and explain IntoUniversity’s aims and the plans personally. Alongside this, they provided us with a large amount of information for prospective donors, including Impact Reports, case studies, and other promotional and marketing materials. All alumni who expressed an interest in the project were encouraged to visit a centre and many did so. That every single donor who visited a centre donated to the project is a powerful statement of the impact of first-hand experience of IntoUniversity’s work.

IntoUniversity Leeds East was just the beginning. As the centre rapidly attracted students and a number of the donors made it clear that their gifts were just a start, we began to discuss the possibility of opening another centre. After these meetings it became clear that a second centre was viable and we began to raise funds. The result was IntoUniversity Leeds South, which is due to launch officially in spring 2016.

Insight

IntoUniversity Leeds East was just the beginning

Recognising and realising potential

Professor Stuart Billingham, Unite Foundation Trustee

For over 30 years Stuart has worked in the Higher Education sector, with a particular focus on Widening Participation. Though now retired from his position at York St John University as Pro-Vice-Chancellor, Stuart remains an active supporter of and pioneer in widening access.

Could you tell us a little bit about your academic background?

I managed to get six GCSEs (GCSEs in those days) in Arts, Sciences and Humanities, and four A-levels in English, Geography, General Studies and History. I studied Government and Sociology at the University of Essex for my first degree and went on immediately to do a one-year MSc in Social Science, specialising in what was then called ‘Race Relations’, at the University of Bristol. Finally I completed my PhD at Bristol having researched the politics of German immigration policy, whilst living and teaching there, and comparing it to the UK. The thesis included a comparative case study of policy on the education of minority ethnic children.

How has that influenced your career so far?

My research interest in the education of minority ethnic children led me to join a special unit dedicated to promoting the progression of young people from these groups to Higher Education, established at Lancashire Polytechnic (now the University of Central Lancashire) in the 1980s. I developed this work into a wider concern with questions of equality of opportunity in general – and later Widening Participation in particular – in universities. This research interest has informed every university role I have had, whether as a Lecturer, Head of School, Director, or lastly as Pro-Vice-Chancellor.

What has driven your belief in Widening Participation?

My father was an unskilled labourer and my mother a nurse (known in those days as a ‘lady’s nurse’). Neither had ever thought about university education for themselves. I did, however, know that some of my cousins on my father’s side of the family had been to university – including Cambridge – and when I heard about their experiences I thought ‘I want to do that!’ At first, I also thought ‘but can someone like me go to university?’ My school was very very encouraging and always told me I was good enough academically to go to university. Without all that consistent, positive, encouragement I know it wouldn’t have happened.

Widening Participation is about recognising and then realising potential. Too much potential goes unrecognised.

What was the proudest moment of your career?

That has to be the day my Vice Chancellor knocked on the door of my office and said ‘good afternoon, Professor Billingham! My career, my publications, my contributions in several ways in my field, had been considered by over 15 professors: some from within the University, some from other universities in the UK, and some from institutions overseas. The consensus was that I merited the title of Professor – the first in either my father’s or my mother’s family.

What was the best piece of advice you received as a young person? Who was your role model growing up?

I was once told, ‘Focus! Concentrate!’ as I hurtled down an 80-foot cliff face whilst learning to abseil. I was about 14 years old. I didn’t follow that advice which resulted in a very painful and quite serious injury to my left hand, caused by severe rope burn. The lesson I learned? Heed those who give you good advice based on their extensive experience.

We asked over 200 teachers what impact IntoUniversity has had on their pupils:

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<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>% of teachers responding ‘definitely’ or ‘probably’</th>
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<td>Do you think they are more likely to go to university?</td>
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<td>Have you noticed positive changes in their behaviour?</td>
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<td>Do you think they are more likely to achieve their career goals?</td>
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<td>Have they enjoyed attending IntoUniversity?</td>
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<td>Would you recommend IntoUniversity to other schools?</td>
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Sir Alan Langlands (Vice-Chancellor of the University of Leeds) and Professor Vivien Jones (Pro Vice-Chancellor for Student Education) celebrating the official opening of IntoUniversity Leeds East.
Spotlight

‘Within the IntoUniversity centres the most exciting thing happens: young people’s curiosity and imagination take flight’.

Nicola Brentnall, MVO
Nicola joined The Queen’s Trust as Director in January 2012. Prior to this, she worked as a Strategy and Governance Consultant to The Prince of Wales’s Charitable Foundation and as Company Secretary for The Prince’s Trust.

Did you go to university? What did this mean to you?
I read History of Art at UCL but studying there and that subject was something that happened accidentally. Originally, I had intended to study English Literature, but I missed out by one grade. I remember thinking ‘this is a disaster, I can’t study English and my life is over!’ - quickly picking myself up though, discovered the course at UCL, interviewed for it and got the place. The degree was both challenging and rewarding. I was thrown into an entirely new world, living in a city with galleries on every corner. I also had the opportunity to go to Venice to undertake a Guggenheim internship, an intensely wonderful and enriching experience. Years after that first degree, I went to Birkbeck to study for an MA in Corporate Governance and Business Ethics, adding a more vocationally focused degree to my CV.

Could you describe your career path?
When I left university I had no clear sense of a vocation or direction but I was very open to any sort of opportunity. Although I graduated during a recession, which made finding a job more difficult, I was lucky enough to find one in sales. This set me on the path I am now. I went from telephone sales to field sales to running a centre for unemployed people, in turn leading me to The Prince’s Trust which then led to The Queen’s Trust. So a lot of different moves in which I have learnt a lot from a range of individuals but every one of them has helped bring me to the point where I currently am, working in a position which is a joy and privilege.

What has struck you about the young people you’ve met at IntoUniversity?
The desire of the young people at IntoUniversity to learn. There is an energy and curiosity shared by both the young people and the staff to explore new topics, new ideas and new opportunities. The idea that there is a huge exciting world out there and it is theirs to seek out and enjoy is quite extraordinarily powerful. Within the IntoUniversity centres the most exciting thing happens: young people’s curiosity and imagination take flight, a world of new possibilities opens up that may have not even occurred to the students before. Each centre has its own personality but there is a consistency in the welcoming and positive environment created by the incredibly well-motivated, well-trained and intelligent staff. IntoUniversity centres are compelling as they are in such interesting places, where there is so much potential, but the young people there just need someone to empower them, to tell them that they can achieve.

Could you tell us about the history of The Queen’s Trust and its philanthropic aims?
The Queen’s Trust was set up to commemorate the Queen’s Silver Jubilee. Lord Vincent was asked to run the appeal and they were overwhelmed by the public response. Over the course of 1977 there were a number of large and small fundraising events. People had street parties, there were Sunday collection plates, there were all sorts of things and over £14 million was raised, which in today’s prices is probably just shy of £150 million. About £3 million of that money was distributed to charities in the following years and the rest was invested. When I became the Director of The Queen’s Trust, a role I had never held before, I was suddenly responsible for £35 million. This was a privilege, but also a challenge. You have pretty much a blank sheet of paper. The Trust was established with the purpose of helping young people help others. With this in mind, I set out to look for a number of organisations that had an excellent idea, very good leadership and a strong financial position, and the relationships developed from there. Change happens in a variety of ways, demonstrated by the diverse approaches of the organisations we work with. The charities we work with are so exciting in terms of the change that they are bringing about for young people throughout the country who just deserve a better shot at long-term success in life. That’s what motivates The Queen’s Trust and why we try wherever possible to support the fundraising of the charities we work with to broaden our impact still further.

What do you think is the key to raising the aspirations of young people?
The key to raising young people’s aspirations is to tell them not to think that things are impossible because of your background. Aspiration is not about ‘why not me?’ but about ‘why not me too?’ Encouraging young people to be flexible, open, prepared to try and to be slightly fearless. When starting out in the job market we should be open to the chances that are there, seeing the path ahead and the potential in different job roles.

What advice would you give to people about to start university or embark on a career?
Do as much research as possible. If you are going to university look at all the options available, the clubs, the societies and the opportunities for studying abroad. Once you are there take advantage of these opportunities as much as possible, you never know where they might lead you.
If you are embarking on a career think about what motivates you and keep that in mind when looking at opportunities. Don’t just look at what is local, spread the net, think about what could take you all over the world. Never underestimate yourself or exclude yourself from competing for roles. It is all about being confident and having a positive world view.

Did you encounter any inspirational figures when you were younger?
The head of my house at school, Mr Baker, was inspirational in his approach to involving often reluctant young people in different activities. He was very energetic and always positive, he believed that everybody had a chance at achieving something and believed in the best for his students. His energy motivated his students to put themselves out there and not to be afraid to fail.

What else drew you to IntoUniversity?
In the way it operates, its considered approach, its great service, its considered approach, its and smartest organisations out there. IntoUniversity has approached its expansion in a very intelligent way, in the process creating a very strong track record.

Building on a partnership established in 2013, The Queen’s Trust has generously granted IntoUniversity £1,000,000, the largest one-year grant in the charity’s history and a significant investment in our strategic growth. This funding has allowed us to support our existing network and open three new centres in Southampton, Leeds and Bristol.

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