

Endowment Impact Report 2013

Endowment gifts from alumni and friends enable the University of Birmingham to offer scholarships to excellent students, attract outstanding academics, buy equipment and enhance our facilities. Your support is indispensable to the University's excellence.

What your support helps us to achieve

'The University of Birmingham continues to maintain a strong financial base within the higher education sector. Our income grew to £490 million between July 2012 and July 2013 and by that measure, we remain the equivalent to an FTSE 250 organisation! Through careful management, we have thus far delivered the University's capital programme across a range of facilities through generating cash for ourselves. Given the pace of investment required to support the enhancement of the student experience, we secured external finance in 2012 from the European Investment Bank which will help us to deliver our transformational schemes – in particular the library, sports centre and the student hub at the earliest opportunity, maximizing the benefits from those facilities for all of our students.'

'The University holds a portfolio of long term investments, the management of which I liken to a tightrope walk – a constant balancing act, as there is always a risk of loss of capital against our revenue return. We are diversifying our risk, however, and now

include hedge funds and commodities alongside equities, bonds and property asset classes in our portfolio. The income from our investments is used primarily to fund academic posts and scholarships which are a recurrent cost – and therefore we have to be cautious in how we invest to ensure we can sustain that support each year. Last year we generated £5.3 million in investment income. Endowments allow the University to plan for the future, remain financially strong and support the staff and students who excel in their field.'

'The surplus for the year was £8.1m, and though planned, was much lower than the historic trend, because we have invested heavily in enhancing the student experience at Birmingham, focusing on employability, IT services, and more academic tutoring.'

'I would like to thank you for your investment in the University.'

Gill Ball OBE FCCA, Director of Finance



The Paul and Yuanbi Ramsay Endowment



Paul and Yuanbi Ramsay gifted an endowment to the University of Birmingham in 2003. Students in Computer Science benefit from the Ramsay's generosity in the form of undergraduate and postgraduate bursaries, alongside innovative research in the school of Computer Science. Academics are supported via the endowment with research funding and a research travel fund, which enables them to travel and showcase their research. There is always strong competition for the awards, which are assessed by the School's Research Committee.

What giving means to us

'We thought it better to give some of our estate while we are living rather than leaving it all in our wills. This way we can see the effect and the recipients can put it to work much sooner. For Computer Science we hoped to fund research that might not have been possible and support students who might not otherwise have been able to attend university. We find meeting the students supported by our gift incredibly rewarding.'

Turn over to read about the Ramsay endowment and its impact



What your support means to us

Dr Peter Tino, Reader in Computer Science

'The Ramsay research funding supports projects with fresh, new ideas that can be difficult to fund. I passionately believe in smaller manageable projects that form the backbone of larger research streams and in this sense the Ramsay funding is absolutely essential. I had several ideas that needed testing before proceeding to larger projects so I am very thankful for the Ramsay funding I received. I was able to invite expert collaborators on several smaller pilot research projects. Some of the ideas developed within these projects were published in top journals and resulted in two large research grants. Ideas developed in these projects also helped to formulate a Marie Curie intra-Europe fellowship application that was funded and is starting in 2014.'



Dr Ata Kaban, Lecturer in Computer Science

'I had the good fortune to benefit from the Paul and Yuanbi Ramsay research award on several occasions. It enabled me to explore creative ideas with no complications and without delay. My explorations led to collaborative research projects being featured in high impact publications, and some invaluable lessons. None of it would have been possible without this award and I am very grateful.'



Behrang Sabeghi Saroui, Doctoral Researcher in the School of Computer Science

'I am a self-funded student from Iran, working on automatic recognition of handwritten mathematical notes on whiteboards. My research could help millions of people, particularly those with visual impairments, to have notes on the whiteboard read out loud for them.'

'Last year, the political situation at home made it extremely difficult for Iranian students to focus on or even continue their studies. There was no legal way of transferring money to the UK. Dr and Mrs Ramsay's generosity made it possible for me to continue my studies in very difficult times. I truly hope that one day I will be able to help students achieve their goals just as they have helped me.'



What giving means to me



Freda Thornhill donated an endowment to the University in 2007. The endowment was set up as an annual award in memory of her parents, Fred Grocott (BSc Applied/Pure Science, 1934)

and his wife Norah (CertEd, 1939). The Grocott Award supports second year undergraduate students in Biosciences in their field or project work and is based on financial need.

'I wanted to honour my late parents' lifelong commitment to supporting the University and the Guild of Graduates. I chose to endow a gift to the University in their name.'

It gives me great pleasure to know that the bursary helps worthy Biosciences students with financial constraints to access a field

trip abroad. I'm delighted to know that this experience enhances their studies and contributes to their dissertations and CVs.

'It is so satisfying to know that individuals have benefitted from this gift at such a crucial stage in their degree course, and that the award will continue ad infinitum. I have thoroughly enjoyed the experience of formulating this unique bursary with the Biosciences staff and the Development, Alumni and Business Engagement team.'

Freda Thornhill, (BPhil(Ed), 1994)

What your support means to me



'Receiving the Grocott Award has made a huge difference on my final year at university. It allowed me to study gopher tortoises in Florida for my dissertation project, which has been the best experience of my life! I have learned so much and have been able to strengthen my career network significantly.'

'The award has provided an invaluable experience, influencing my final year options and my future career. I intend to apply for an internship at Archbold Biological Station Florida, where I completed my dissertation research. I would then like to do an MSc and a PhD with the ultimate aim of becoming a field zoologist. I am very grateful and thankful for Mrs Thornhill's support – it has really made a difference.'

Anna Gardner, 3rd year Biosciences

Could it be you?

We love planning ahead and being able to offer our donors the very best giving experience, so we are looking for donors who would like to be featured in next year's Endowment Impact Report. If you can help, please get in touch with Lauren Ashford, Donor Relations Officer: donorrelations@contacts.bham.ac.uk

Learn more

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