Welcome from the Master

The world of higher education is on the verge of a major shift. In the last few months we have come to learn of changes that will affect students for years to come. Looking back, it has been a strategically important year for Birkbeck and we have worked hard to gain parity for the part-time sector as well as secure the long-term future of the College.

This year Birkbeck was shortlisted for the Times Higher Education of the Year award and the College was also shortlisted for the Times Higher Education shortlisted for the Times Higher Education and Anti-semitism funded by the Pears Foundation. All donations increase our ability to provide world class facilities and resources for both students and academics.

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The College received a number of pledges from those who intend to remember Birkbeck in their wills. Gifts received from legacies help to secure the financial health and safety of the College in the future. Past donations have resulted in cutting-edge, internationally recognised research as well as enabled hundreds of students to take advantage of the opportunities that Birkbeck offers.

Our fundraising achievements ensure that we can continue to meet our objectives to develop the campus to support excellence in teaching and research; make higher education accessible to students for whom money is a genuine barrier to education; and deliver an outstanding student experience with teaching from world class academics. The chart below shows how donations in the last academic year have been spent in these three key areas. It is perhaps pertinent to note that Birkbeck has been engaged in fundraising since its inception. During the College centenary in 1923 a fundraising publication outlined the primary aim of Birkbeck, one which still resonates today. Thank you for your commitment and support in the last academic year – Birkbeck is truly grateful for your help.

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This building will create an environment for the Arts and Information Technology.

The proposed building is central to London Thames Gateway Development Corporation and Newham Borough Council’s plans to transform the area surrounding stratford. Planning permission has been granted for the construction of the facility.

Gifts of up to £50 million have been secured through a £1 million donation from the Garfield Weston Foundation, gifts alumni and Birkbeck’s former students, and a £2.5 million donation from the Garfield Weston Foundation.

Green light for Stratford

Planning permission has been given for the shared education building being developed in Stratford, in partnership with the University of East London (UEL). Birkbeck and UEL have also signed a memorandum of understanding to work together in Higher Education in East London by attracting new students who would not otherwise consider going to university.

The building will create shared teaching facilities for both higher education institutions and their partners, and will include Newham Sixth Form College (New vC) and the Theatre Royal Stratford East. A range of departments from each university will be housed in the building, alongside dedicated spaces for subjects including Law, Performing Arts, Dance, Music and Information Technology.

The Master, Professor David Latchman CBE, commented: “Our two universities have been working together since 2007, increasing the flexible, part-time study opportunities available to the people of east London. This building will create an education centre which

encourages and promotes progression into higher education for local people, supporting the economic development of the area. The university centre will be used by all members of the community, regardless of their prior educational attainments; it will offer them the opportunity to acquire skills that are needed for a rapidly changing local economy.

Paul Allen, Chair of the Board of Governors, said: “This is the first major construction project to be delivered under the existing East London University scheme and it is an important step forward in the delivery of our strategy for growth and development.”

Professor Andrew Simonds, Principal of Birkbeck, added: “This building will provide a first-class environment for our students and staff, allowing us to deliver world-class education to the people of Stratford and beyond. Birkbeck is committed to delivering high-quality education and research, and this building will enable us to do so even more effectively.”

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making higher education accessible to all under-represented groups. Now in its fourth year, the project has contributed to rapidly increasing student number in east London. Without the funding provided by such generous gifts from our alumni, friends and supporters, Birbeck would not be the institution it is today. Thanks to the support of Birbeck’s mission, we continue to deliver a great student experience and fulfill our commitment to helping ambitious individuals change their lives.

Delivering a greater student experience

Birbeck has always been committed to ensuring students have the best possible learning experience to enable them to achieve their educational aspirations. This aim is reflected in College’s fundraising priorities and with donations from charitable trusts and foundations, as well as generous contributions from the Alumni Fund, we have been able to make progressive changes and improvements to the student experience. Notably, we opened the Student Support Centre in September 2009. The first ‘stop shop’ aims to simplify every student’s journey from initial enquiry through to graduation. The centre offers face-to-face advice, information on access to services across the College and is open during the day, in the evenings and at weekends. This advance in student support would not have been possible without donations from former students.

With the help of larger donations from charitable trusts and foundations, the College has been able to introduce further initiatives to help the transition into studying for students who are new to higher education or returning to learning. Many students who seek academic help at the My Birbeck centre are pointed in the direction of the Study Skills Support team who facilitate one-to-one help and online training to students who wish to develop essential skills in essay writing, numeracy, research and presentation. The Rayne Foundation has supported a writing and training project aimed at those wishing to improve their mathematical skills, focusing on those who have been out of education for some time. This interactive programme enables students to work at their own pace and access the guides externally. The Esmée Fairbairn Foundation continued to fund work with non-traditional students who might not generally consider entering higher education. The College targets mature students in east London and partners with local organisations such as nurseries and community groups to provide entry level courses for single mothers and other...
Over the last year, Birkbeck’s alumni volunteering programme has gone from strength to strength with a record number of graduates giving up their free time to help at College events. From giving talks at Open Evenings to mentoring current students, our alumni have shown real commitment.

This comes as welcome news for Birkbeck. Carly-Dee Stewart, the Alumni Officer who oversees the volunteering programmes explains: “We are delighted to see so many alumni keen to volunteer. For a unique institution like Birkbeck, our former students truly understand how to balance study with working and family life. We really value their input at events, such as open evenings and induction days. Their advice helps to put anyone considering coming to Birkbeck at ease about managing part-time study.”

For many of our alumni, welcoming new students to Birkbeck is great way to give something back to the College and its students. “I remember my own hesitation before registration, especially in terms of time management, but overall, studying at Birkbeck was a positive turning point in my life. Volunteering has given me the opportunity to share this experience with other students in the same position and express my enthusiasm for the College,” said former student Lynette Spencer.

The feedback from students has been overwhelmingly positive: “I was very impressed with the former students’ talk. It was interesting to listen to another student’s experiences and very reassuring to hear that studying part-time and fulfilling other commitments can be done. I came away from the talk feeling even more enthusiastic about my course, and far less worried! Hard work yes, but do-able!”

In light of this success and the increasing popularity of the volunteer programme, the alumni team will build upon the current range and number of volunteering opportunities available during the year. These will include an expansion of the mentoring scheme and activity at Open Evenings, giving many more alumni the chance to make a difference to Birkbeck’s students.

To find out more about volunteering opportunities contact Carly-Dee Stewart by emailing c.stewart@bbk.ac.uk or phoning 020 7380 3127.