



DARWIN COLLEGE
CAMBRIDGE



Strategic Plan

2022-2032

Nurturing outstanding people and ideas



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Introduction from the Master

In the history of Darwin College there has never been a greater need to promote and foster research, learning and education for the benefit of society.

While our planet faces unprecedented environmental challenges, and humanity has to contend with significant social, economic and political disruption, there are also exciting opportunities for new levels of international cooperation, technological innovation and social change – especially driven by those in higher education.

The aim of this first Darwin College Strategic Plan is firstly to articulate and communicate the distinctive strengths and values of the College, and secondly to share our vision and priorities for the next ten years so that we continue to attract a broad diversity of highly talented students, Fellows, staff and supporters. The plan has been developed iteratively over 12 months through workshops, working groups and consultation, involving collaboration between Fellows, staff, students, College alumni and other members of the Collegiate University.

Dr Michael Rands Master, Darwin College, University of Cambridge
November 2022



“We are international, interdisciplinary and diverse, with up to 800 postgraduate students from over 75 countries in any one year; we are home to the largest number of PhD students of any Cambridge College.”



Our purpose, vision and values

Darwin College was founded for the advancement of education, learning and research, especially among postgraduate students and research students in the University of Cambridge.

Our purpose is to advance education, learning and research in the University of Cambridge by:

- Promoting and fostering excellence in academic education and learning through providing a community of scholarship for its graduate students.
- Creating and nurturing a vibrant and supportive research community for its Fellows, graduate students, other members, and visitors.

- Maintaining and enhancing the endowment, benefactions, buildings, grounds, and facilities of the College for the continuing benefit of current and future generations of members.

From an initial intake in 1964 of 12 PhD students and 12 Fellows, the College has grown to a community of around 800 postgraduate students, 70 Fellows and a wide variety of other members in 2022.



Darwin students take part in a punt race



Darwin PhD student, founder of Climate in Colour and London Design Festival medal-winner Joycelyn Longdon

Our Vision

Building on this foundation, Darwin College aspires to be the pre-eminent postgraduate and research intensive College at the University of Cambridge and, through this, contribute to addressing environmental and societal challenges.

We will support and champion our community within the wider Collegiate University and across the world.



Our Values

The delivery of this vision is supported by the College's core values:

- We value excellence and intellectual rigour in research, education and learning
- We value diversity and collaboration across academic disciplines, cultural perspectives and personal experiences
- We seek to welcome, inspire and empower all members of our community and those around us
- We are supportive, inclusive, respectful and open in our policies, practices and behaviours
- We are committed to a sustainable future and to contributing to solving global challenges.



The origins of Darwin College

The University of Cambridge admitted its first postgraduate students in 1896, and in 1920 offered its first PhD degree.

By 1932, it was recommended that a collegiate institution for postgraduates be established but another 32 years passed before the first postgraduate-only College was established. Thus, Darwin College became the first postgraduate-only College at the University of Cambridge in 1964 and the first College to admit both women and men. It was founded by Trinity, St John's and Gonville & Caius Colleges as a home for research students, together with the growing number of University teaching officers joining the University at that time.

The College was established at Newnham Grange (still the cornerstone of the College's current estate), a riverside property that had been the home of descendants of Charles Darwin from 1885 to 1963. When the site was acquired for the College, the family generously gave permission to use the Darwin name and members of the Darwin family remain an active part of the College community.

It was incorporated by Royal Charter in June 1976 and is now registered as a UK educational charity.



*A woodcut of Newnham Grange,
by Gwen Raverat*

“We expect the Darwin College community to act as a catalyst for change, add value beyond academic scholarship, embrace global engagement and seek to make the world a better place.”



Distinctive characteristics

Our community

We are international, interdisciplinary and diverse, with up to 800 postgraduate students from over 75 countries in any one year; we are home to the largest number of PhD students of any Cambridge College. our Fellowship numbers up to 70 Official Fellows spanning the arts and humanities, biomedical, physical, natural and social sciences, and technology; around 50 post-doctoral research associates; over 40 staff; and 9000+ alumni living in 127 countries.

Our scholarship

Darwin College is intellectually rigorous and vigorous. We are research-intensive with a large population of PhD students, post-docs and Official and Research

Fellows; we run the acclaimed annual Darwin College Lecture Series; our Fellowship includes leaders from globally renowned research institutes based in Cambridge, including the British Antarctic Survey, Microsoft Research and the Medical Research Council's Laboratory of Molecular Biology.

Our culture

We are egalitarian, inclusive, informal and welcoming. We are a multi-generational extended family, sharing College spaces and facilities with the whole community and having no 'high table' where Fellows would be segregated. We welcome families, and value the ongoing involvement of our alumni and Emeritus Fellows.



Our Darwin College Student Association (DCSA)

The vibrant self-governing DCSA organises a diverse range of social and welfare events, represents the student voice in College decision making, runs over 30 clubs and societies, and provides excellent peer support to fellow students including various underrepresented groups.

Our governance

Our Fellows, students and Officers play an inclusive role in College Governance and decision making. The College has a Governing Body (the ultimate authority in the College) comprising Official and Research Fellows, and a Board of Trustees (College Council). Council is formed of Senior College Officers, elected Fellows and Student Representatives. Various committees, on which there is normally student representation, report to Council.

Our home and gardens

The College is based in a cluster of former family houses with beautiful informal gardens, alongside the river Cam (with two islands and a punt house) and at

the heart of the University and adjacent to the City Centre. We provide outstanding catering, a diverse range of accommodation and communal spaces for students and claim the best College Bar in Cambridge. We are open for students and Fellows all year round, and for many of them, the College is their home.

Our commitment to addressing global challenges

The world is facing a growing number of social, economic, political and environmental challenges, which research and academic communities have an opportunity and a responsibility to help address. Our Fellows, students, staff and alumni address major challenges such as inequity, sustainability and health through College-wide activities and their research, education and own actions.

Our name

The College was established in the buildings of a family home which had for decades played a significant role in the intellectual life of Cambridge. We are proud of our ongoing association with the extended Darwin family through the naming of the College.

Lilac flowering outside the College buildings



Our Future: aims and priorities 2022–2032

We have developed this Strategic Plan for the next 10 years to strengthen and sustain Darwin College. The aims and priorities identified are aspirational areas for growth to enhance the College for current and future generations.

The Plan does not call for a growth in the size of the College community but does assume that the proportion of doctoral students to non-doctorial students (across the whole student body) remains around 2/3 to 1/3 to maintain and strengthen our research excellence.

The delivery of much of this Strategic Plan is predicated on a successful fundraising campaign that will launch in 2023, while other aims and priorities will be achieved by a change in focus. Implementation of the Plan, including setting targets and timetables, will be through ongoing work programmes and planning by College Committees, teams and individuals, including representation from across the spectrum of the College community.



Dr Adam Rutherford addresses the Darwin College Lecture Series, 2020

© Sir Cam

Strengthen and champion the College's contribution to academic excellence and research impact

We are deeply committed to supporting research and scholarship for the benefit of wider society. To enrich our contribution, we will:

- a. Foster interdisciplinary and novel collaboration across the College's research community of students, postdocs, Fellows and alumni by establishing a Collaborative Research Fund.
- b. Expand research funding to provide additional, rapidly awarded, PhD stipends and Post-Doctoral Research Fellowships; and partner with institutions (including companies) to establish part- and full-time sponsored postgraduate studentships and postdoctoral Fellowships.
- c. Enhance the Darwin College Lecture Series to attract a worldwide audience and harness innovative ways of communicating/sharing lecture content and outputs to achieve greater impact and global reach.
- d. Strengthen the communication of research undertaken by members of the Darwin College community by refreshing our Research Seminar series, hosting Research Days and Networking



Graduates in the garden

Events for students, post-docs, Fellows and alumni to showcase their work and, importantly, enhancing our College communications capacity to share knowledge both within and beyond the Collegiate University.

- e. Collaborate with the University of Cambridge to support its interdisciplinary strategic research initiatives/centres and to create jointly appointed Fellowships with University Departments.
- f. Facilitate worldwide research networks around selected global challenges to facilitate interdisciplinary research using the College as a hub and partnering with like-minded institutions, especially through the Darwin alumni network.

Foster a diverse and inclusive College community that nurtures and supports our students

Enhancing our culture by the provision of excellent pastoral care, and promoting physical and mental health and wellbeing, are essential to achieving academic success and preparing our students for life beyond their postgraduate education. To strengthen the support for our community, we are developing and

will implement a sector-leading equity, diversity and inclusion plan for the College that will:

- a. Ensure the size and composition of the College community is balanced to foster a strong community feel and sense of shared identity.
- b. Champion our values across the College community and facilitate shared cooperation between

Fellows, students and staff through enhanced communications and collaborative working, governance and problem solving.

- c. Provide a broad range of College resources and services (pastoral care, funding, catering, accessible spaces, activities) that support the entire College community.
- d. Continue to attract and support a wide range of College members from diverse backgrounds (including ethnic, gender, socioeconomic, academic), across all the various College functions and levels of responsibility, to enrich the College community.
- e. Foster a healthy work/life balance for students, staff and Fellows.

Enhance our College estate, facilities and services

Darwin prides itself on being based in a series of former family homes, allowing as much access as possible to all areas and facilities for everyone, and being centrally located alongside the river with attractive informal gardens. While the location is exceptional, it is also constraining, with few opportunities to expand within our existing footprint because several of our buildings are historic and therefore listed.



DCSA President 2022-23, Chelsea Edmonds

Enhancing the quality of our estate and facilities is essential not only for student and staff well-being, but also to attract the best students and Fellows and to maintain a steady revenue stream from our accommodation.

To improve our buildings, spaces and services, we will:

- a. Develop and deliver an estate-wide Masterplan to ensure that the College estate: (i) provides the quantity and diversity of accommodation needed for students, Fellows and staff (including those with families); (ii) has adequate shared spaces for the College community; and (iii) is environmentally sustainable.

- b. Implement our current Masterplan for the Hermitage and Dining Hall to create appropriate social/working spaces including a new garden room/common room/café and enhance the College catering, DarBar and other communal facilities.

- c. Adapt some College accommodation to provide appropriate residential space for the Master (when needed), improved guest rooms and spaces to host and entertain College visitors.

- d. Explore the practical and economic viability of providing nursery/creche facilities for members of the College community, potentially in collaboration with the university and/or other colleges.

- e. Upgrade the College IT/AV systems and capability to enable high quality, user friendly and globally accessible communications including hybrid working and 'video-conferencing'.

- f. Develop a communications plan for the College that strengthens and diversifies both internal and external communications, and raises awareness of all aspects of the College.



Chen Ye, Darwin PhD student in Engineering and DCSA Families Officer, with his family

Expand and diversify College revenue without compromising our primary purpose of supporting students and fellows

Darwin remains self-sustaining financially. Revenue from student fees and rental and catering income, together with unrestricted income from the existing endowment, cover the operating costs of the College. We are fortunate not to rely either on additional conference or hospitality revenue, or on income from activity unrelated to education, learning or research. This is a strength but it does mean that we need to secure additional funds to be able to advance our contribution to research, better support our students and enhance the facilities and services we provide to the whole College community.

Our aspiration to contribute more to addressing global challenges further increases our need for additional financial resources.

To provide such additional resources we will:

- a. Prepare and deliver the first Darwin College Fundraising Campaign to secure the support needed to implement the priorities identified in this Strategic Plan.
- b. Diversify our supporter base by building on the strong academic heritage and international standing of the College to include donors (beyond our alumni) who are interested in supporting the global impact the College can have through the implementation of this Strategic Plan.
- c. Grow the College's financial reserves by building the endowment and establishing a Collaborative Research Fund and a College Sustainability Fund.
- d. Continue to ensure that College funds are responsibly invested.



Act on and promote solutions to global challenges including sustainability

Darwin College has a track record of contributing ideas, knowledge and innovation to tackle environmental and societal challenges, via its distinguished past and present Fellows, students, alumni and events.

To play a significant role in championing solutions to these challenges and act as a catalyst for change, we will:

- a. Initiate an ambitious College-wide Sustainability Plan that enables the College's estate to become at least carbon zero by 2032, and which fosters behaviours and actions that reduce individual and collective environmental impacts more widely. This will include ensuring that all energy sources used in College are supplied from renewable sources, including providing heating and hot water using new technologies such as heat pumps.
- b. Create and promote sustainability best practice guides for use by all the College community both in College and beyond.

- c. Establish a rolling programme of College activities (research collaborations, education and outreach initiatives, interdisciplinary seminars, practical actions within College) to contribute to selected global challenges, especially those identified by the Global South. We will focus on 3-5 'priority projects' for 2-3 years at a time in collaboration with specific partner institutions.
- d. Establish a College Sustainability Fund to support collaborations that address sustainability both within and beyond the College.
- e. Foster collaborations with other University, College and local initiatives addressing global challenges where Darwin can add value.
- f. Collaborate with our highly qualified and globally distributed alumni network to share knowledge and inform/engage key decision makers.

Promote Darwin internationally as a destination of choice for students and fellows committed to addressing global challenges.

Top left to bottom right: Professor Emily Shuckburgh, Director of Cambridge Zero, leads the University's understanding of and response to climate change. Professor Jonathan Heeney, Head of the Laboratory of Viral Zoonotics, is working to prevent the next pandemic through vaccines. Professor Sir Harry Bhadeshia, Emeritus Tata Steel Professor of Metallurgy, has developed innovative forms of steel which use minimal resources. Professor Dame Jane Francis, Director of the British Antarctic Survey, heads the world-leading centre for polar science



Conclusion

Since its foundation, Darwin has established a unique place in the life of the collegiate University. As the College prepares to enter its seventh decade, we have a secure financial base; an engaged and active community of students, Fellows and staff; and a strong commitment to making a difference in the world.

This strategic plan outlines how we aim to build confidently on these firm foundations to deliver our vision for the next ten years.





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