

2012 / 2019

## Strategic Plan

Priorities, aims, achievements



**GIRTON COLLEGE**  
CAMBRIDGE

# The Plan

The 2012-2019 Strategic Plan aimed to enhance Girton's inclusive research-infused learning environment, consolidate its outstanding scholarly reputation, and raise its profile on the world stage.

The Plan embraced four academic priorities and three supporting aims, all underpinned by the principle of good governance.

We are proud of all the Plan has achieved, though we present it as a work in progress. The pursuit of inclusive excellence, standing against discrimination and inequality in all its forms, fostering positive learning, working, and living conditions that are diverse, supportive, and safe for all, will always be a challenge. We remain committed to that challenge – to upholding Girton's worthiest traditions – as we face a rapidly changing, ever-challenging world with energy, sympathy and vision.

# Academic Priority 1

## Widening Participation

Girton was the first UK HEI to offer degree-level education to women. The principle of inclusive excellence remains at the heart of our Strategic Plan. A commitment to diversity, inclusion and belonging underpins all aspects of the College's policy and practice in outreach, admissions and everyday life.

### Widening Participation today

Building on a foundational aim of inclusion, Girton attracts an increasingly diverse body of well-qualified students from within and beyond the UK, across all subjects and degree types.

- We have consistently exceeded University Widening Participation targets, and by 2019 were ahead of the curve on the University's 2025 intake targets.
- Key fundraising targets include undergraduate bursaries and international studentships; these are set to exceed expectations.
- 30% of undergraduates and nearly half of our postgraduates self-identify as BAME.
- Between 2012 and 2019, just under 1 in 4 undergraduates and nearly 70% of postgraduates came from countries outside the UK.

# Academic Priority 2

## Adding value


Adding value at Girton means supporting students to realise their potential and achieve bespoke educational goals.

We focused on helping individuals exceed their expectations (in relation to quantitative and qualitative benchmarks), secure year-on-year improvement in performance, and embrace excellence in other endeavours.

### Adding value today

To help students achieve results and attain degrees that realise potential, exceed expectations, and show excellence overall we:

- Invested more resource into small-group teaching.
- Fundraised for 13 College Fellowships.
- Incentivised success through scholarships and prizes, and subject society activities.
- Made key appointments to promote academic skills and accelerate career development.



“As an ambitious strategic plan comes to a close, Girton lives up to its reputation as a triumph of hope, looking confidently to a future steeped in the principles of excellence, inclusion and an ethic of care.

**Professor Susan J Smith,  
Mistress of Girton College, Cambridge (UK)**

# Academic Priority 3

## Supporting all-round personal development

Studying at Cambridge is a life-changing experience: an all-round educational adventure that extends beyond academic excellence into all aspects of personal development. We aimed to support individuals, with an emphasis on wellbeing, transferable skills and creative engagement with music, literature and the arts, as well as sports and other recreational activities.

### All-round personal development today

Girton's living, learning and working environment actively supports all-round personal development, promoting wellbeing, enhancing scholarly performance, and improving career prospects.

- The College promotes positive wellbeing for all its members through a variety of services and programmes, including Thrive, which ran over 100 events between 2017 and 2019.
- Girton has invested in sports, music and the arts, combining superb facilities with Fellowships for visiting artists and musicians recruited to engage the entire College community.
- As well as providing every student with a personal tutor to safeguard wellbeing, we have taken steps to protect our community against all forms of harassment, discrimination, bullying, homophobia and racism.

# Academic Priority 4

## Maintaining a world-class Fellowship

Girton's success as a centre of education and scholarship depends on a skilled Fellowship celebrated for excellence in teaching and research, and for delivering an unparalleled level of pastoral support through the tutorial system. We aimed to attract and maintain a Fellowship that is sufficiently large, diverse and motivated to excel in their own field, operate the College, deliver the curriculum, and support a raft of wider educational goals.

### A world-class Fellowship today

Girton enjoys a large, gender-balanced Fellowship – a self-governing community of scholars – who inspire students through world-class teaching, learning and research, nurture a collaborative spirit, and practise an ethic of care.

- Girton has an 80-strong research-active Fellowship spanning the natural and medical sciences, arts, humanities and social sciences.
- There is a vibrant social, intellectual and interdisciplinary environment anchored on College events and affairs, which has nurtured both research collaboration and teaching excellence, including 10 Pilkington Prize winners.
- The diversity of the Fellowship has been enlarged through support for early-career Research Fellowships, Visiting positions and Honorary Fellowships.



# An underpinning of good governance

Moving nimbly with the times, Girton has seen a steady strengthening of its governance structure and taken steps to be at the leading edge of good practice.

The College is a model of good governance when measured against benchmarks within the charitable and higher education sectors, and is open to best practice in other sectors. Contributing factors include:

- Stronger financial governance, through the work of the Audit and Scrutiny committee.
- An independent professional Secretary to Council.
- Regular trustee training.
- A mid-year strategic review and an annual review of governance.
- A streamlined committee structure with full integration of student representatives.

# Supporting Aim 1

## Developing the operational estate

A degree at Girton is a complete residential experience, and our estate plays an essential part in this. The estate is also integral to revenue-raising. A key strategic challenge is to develop and manage the estate to perform this dual function.

We aimed to steward facilities responsibly, work towards carbon neutrality, and enhance the sustainability of our heritage buildings.

### The operational estate today

Girton's operational estate has been restructured and improved to optimise its contribution to the educational goals of the College and to financial and environmental sustainability.

- We invested £15m into the operational estate, adding 50 en-suite rooms at Ash Court, creating a Social Hub and renovating the Porters' Lodge.
- We secured a long lease on a 325-room purpose-built postgraduate complex at Swirles Court, Eddington.
- The complement of student rooms grew by 33%; over half (57%) are en-suite, and there has been a ten-fold increase in accessible study-bedrooms.
- We made substantial progress towards carbon neutrality and environmental sustainability, twice receiving the University's GOLD Green Impact Award.

# Supporting Aim 2

## Securing financial sustainability

Girton is a registered educational charity, with good financial governance and prudent contingency plans. Operational costs routinely exceed income (from investments, fees and rents, conferences and events); the growth of the endowment, the work of the development office and the generosity of benefactors are therefore vital to meet student needs and realise ambitious plans.

We aimed to place the College on a sustainable financial footing, manage costs, improve the efficiency of the operational estate, and increase commercial income.

### Financial sustainability today

Girton's balance sheet is stronger than it has ever been, reflecting a prudent investment strategy, estate rationalisation, Summer Programmes development and a successful endowment fundraising campaign. The College is on target for a cash-positive budget thanks to efficiency gains, improved business performance, and growth in both permanent endowment capital and free reserves.

- A Great Campaign is on target to raise £50m for the endowment in cash gifts and legacy pledges by 2021.
- We have completed a contingency planning exercise, introduced five-year rolling budgets, and implemented 'quick wins' initiatives from a PWC review.
- Our free reserves increased from £17m to £32m this period.

# Supporting Aim 3

## Enhancing communications

Girton relies on a dynamic and effective communications strategy for internal cohesion and external profile.

We aimed to improve the effectiveness of internal communications and information management to ensure that Girton's vision, mission, values and strategic aims were agreed, understood and implemented effectively. We further aimed to create an effective programme of external communications and information management to raise Girton's profile among potential students, alumni and the wider community.

### Enhancing communications today

Girton completed an ambitious revision of communications and information management to improve internal operations and enhance external visibility.

- We launched a new website and increased our social media presence.
- The College ran a branding programme for the 150th anniversary year across all platforms, which enhanced both internal and external awareness of our aims and achievements.



An inclusive environment  
**where excellence thrives**

In **2017-18** and **2018-19**  
we won the  
**Gold Green  
Impact Award**  
leading to **Platinum**  
in **2019-20** and **2020-21**



Fundraised for  
**13 new**  
College Fellowships

An **80-strong**  
**gender-balanced**  
research-active Fellowship  
(2012-2019)

A **vibrant community**  
of over  
**160 Fellows** in all

**10 Pilkington  
Prize winners**  
for teaching excellence

**Free reserves**  
**increased** from  
**£17m to £32m**

We invested  
**£15m** to improve  
**the operational estate**



Nearly **700**  
Fellows' publications  
profiled in Girton's  
annual review called  
'The Year'

**2012-2019** Trustees  
**50%**  
were women



**20** new  
**Undergraduate Bursaries**  
**5** new  
**International Studentships**



**2012-2019**  
**1,593**  
**College scholarships and  
prizes** and  
**690**  
**book tokens** were  
awarded for **academic  
excellence**



**954** Undergraduate  
Bursaries provided to  
**meet financial need**  
between **2012-2019**

**30%**  
of undergraduates and  
**nearly half**  
of our postgraduates  
**self-identify as BAME**

 **160**  
**THRIVE** Thrive events



**9 Helen Cam**  
Visiting Fellows since **2011**

**4 Brenda  
Ryman**  
Visiting Fellows since **2011**

**5 Artists-  
in-Residence**

**3 Musicians-  
in-Residence**



Our College  
Gardeners won the  
**Innovation for  
Engagement  
award 2018-19**

  
**Outstanding**  
onsite sports facilities