



OUR GREATEST GIFT: EDUCATION





DYNAMIC ENCOURAGEMENT

This academic year we have employed, for the very first time, a Schools Liaison Officer. Lizzie Dobson (matric. 2009) has set about her task with relish. Personable, relaxed, down-to-earth, and strikingly intelligent and persuasive, Lizzie is the perfect person for the task.

She explains, 'I have particularly targeted schools where there is a combination of economic need – indicated by high levels of free school meals – and good GCSE pass rates, combined with low numbers of applications to, and places taken at, Oxbridge. I organise visits to these schools, and from them to Emmanuel.'

Lizzie has her own 'access' story. When at school she really did not picture herself at Cambridge: 'I went to a comprehensive school in North Yorkshire, which does not normally send people to Oxbridge. I knew I wanted to study Natural Sciences, but was adamant that Cambridge wasn't for me. Then, by chance, I met someone on a train who had been to Balliol College, Oxford. She told me about rowing and how it wasn't work all the time. In fact, she raved about it. I was convinced, and from that moment on I wanted to come to Emmanuel. In a sense, she was my Access Officer.'





QUESTIONS, AND MORE QUESTIONS

Often, our access work reaches young people who have no brothers or sisters at university, and whose family has no experience of university. As you would expect from any group of bright young people, questions flow freely. The specific queries reveal how, for some, Cambridge can at first seem like a different world, and a forbidding one.

‘Is it very hard to get in?’

‘How hard is the work?’

‘How often do you feel stressed?’

‘Is it very posh?’

‘Do you have to wear your gown all the time?’

‘What are the rules like?’

‘Do you have to be in at a certain time?’

‘All these different colleges, what’s that all about?’

Lizzie Dobson comments, ‘When I visit schools, I am particularly struck by the pupils who are very quiet and ask little, but come up at the end and say, “Should I read this subject or that?” or “How do I find which college is best for me?” These are often the keenest people, and I make a point of packing my things away slowly to give them the chance to come forward.’



A COLLEGE-WIDE EFFORT

Everyone at Emmanuel cares about access. College outreach for the current year includes:

- the Student Union's access bus taking two three-day trips, one each to Sheffield and Essex, enabling our students to visit up to 15 schools;
- sixty Year 9 students coming to the College for a Languages Day. Students hear about studying languages from Dr Nick White, have a taster Japanese lecture from Dr Laura Moretti and look at Japanese prints at the Fitzwilliam Museum;
- in conjunction with the Cavendish Laboratory, 50 Year 12 students from schools in Essex visiting us as part of the Cambridge Colleges' Physics Experience;
- eight Emmanuel College Fellows travelling to Chelmsford and delivering one-hour taster lectures to 140 Year 12 students;
- thirty Year 11 students coming to Emmanuel to attend a Physics in Motion workshop at the Cavendish Laboratory;
- welcoming Year 12 students to the College for an English and History taster day;
- with the Cambridge Archaeology Department, taking students from schools in Essex to archaeology field sites as part of the Higher Education Field Academy;
- holding an event for schoolteachers, with lectures and a session about applying to Cambridge.



The greatest gift that we, at Emmanuel, can give young people is access to the very best education possible. We passionately believe that gift should be offered to everyone who is capable of making the best use of it, regardless of what school they attended, or where they come from. Emmanuel relies on attracting the very best minds to maintain our pre-eminent position. That is why our access programme, through which we encourage talented young people from state schools to come to university, and especially to Emmanuel, is so important.



WHY YOUR HELP MATTERS

We can only maintain our pre-eminent position at Emmanuel as one of Cambridge's best-performing colleges if we can continue to attract the very best people: the best Fellows, the best staff, the best post-graduates and, not least, the best undergraduates.

Equally, those with genuine talent deserve the opportunity to shine. We believe passionately in providing a first-class education for young people who can benefit from it, wherever they come from. That is a fundamental aspect of Emmanuel's ethos.

The Government's Office for Fair Access has given Cambridge University the target of 60%–63% of all UK admissions being from maintained schools, a figure based on the likely levels of attainment of UK applicants in examinations. The University has responded by developing its Area Links Scheme, by which Cambridge colleges are encouraged to build effective, coherent relationships with schools in specific geographical regions. Emmanuel has been allocated Sheffield and Essex as our areas.

The idea is that we do not simply encourage young people to apply to Emmanuel, but proactively invite them to investigate a university education in general, and Cambridge in particular. Naturally, we would like them to come to our college, but we try to help them find the place that is right for them. In other geographical areas, other colleges are doing exactly the same thing.

With your support this scheme can achieve so much. You could be the catalyst for a talented young person, who might otherwise miss out on university altogether, coming to Emmanuel and going on to great things. Moreover, your support will protect everything that we hold dear about Emmanuel: our very high academic standards, our legendary friendliness and welcome, and our enduring sense of fairness and opportunity.

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