

Wesleyan Foundation & Aston University

Partnership Impact Report

Second Year

2018 -2021



Wesleyan Foundation and Aston University



Aston and Wesleyan both have a long history of supporting growth and prosperity in the region, and we're proud to be working with you in helping us develop local talent and improve accessibility to higher education.

Our partnership is already making a positive difference to the future of Aston's students, as well as enabling important research to take place which will impact people across the West Midlands. We're delighted to have established this multifaceted partnership with Wesleyan and are extremely grateful for your support.

In 2018, The Wesleyan Foundation committed £100,000 over 5 years to support seven AMS scholarships, annual excellence prizes for one AMS and one Law student, and an annual project fund to support Aston University projects aligned with the Wesleyan Foundation's own focus areas of health, education, social development and innovation.

I am delighted to share with you some of the key achievements, half-way through our five-year partnership. Over the following pages you can read more about:

- **Dr Flors Vinuela-Navarro's project to investigate and improve eye care provision within special schools in the West Midlands.**
- **Pathways to STEM and Business Programmes**
- **Covid-19 Pilot Study Research**

In addition to the above donation, we are also delighted to be working in partnership with Wesleyan to fund a PhD student, Kiran Chohan, who is assessing the social impact and The Wesleyan Foundation's legacy of philanthropy to date.

Last but not least, our partnership has also enabled Wesleyan's own staff to further their professional and academic development by undertaking Executive Apprenticeship MBAs to accelerate their career development while benefitting the business through confident and informed leadership.

I hope that soon we will have the opportunity to welcome you on campus again to meet both the students and staff that your generous support is impacting.



Professor Alec Cameron
Vice-Chancellor & Chief Executive
Aston University

Partnership Impact: Year 1

Research Funding: £10,000 towards Aston's Eye Clinic research "Flors"



Dr Flors Vinuela-Navarro

Aston University is the largest Optometry teaching centre in the UK. In 2019 the centre expanded its research into eye problems experienced by children with special needs, providing a much-needed service in the Midlands area led by Dr Flors Vinuela-Navarro (Flors). Following her experience with children with special needs Flors identified the need for portable equipment to take to special needs schools during the periods of testing and data collection.

Wesleyan Foundation's donation enabled Flors to purchase equipment including: five different types of testing equipment, trial frames, a Retinoscope and a Cardiff-Ulster cube (images below of the purchased equipment). Testing for children was able to commence from April 2020, however due to COVID restrictions testing for children has been at a urgent/essential eye care basis:

- 5 children received testing on an urgent/essential eye care basis
- 32 children received testing on a routine eye care basis (from September 2020)

The success of Flor's research has enabled the continual testing of children with special needs and led to the development of Aston Special Assessment and Binocular Vision Clinic.

Images of the purchased equipment:



Test to assess the children's three dimensional vision and perception of depth



Equipment to estimate the power of spectacles needed by the children: trial frame, Retinoscope and trial lens case



Test to measure children's level of vision: Cardiff Acuity Test and Cardiff combined contrast sensitivity test, combined grating test, Keeler LogMAR and Kay pictures.



Equipment to obtain images of the children's back of the eye and examine their eye health: Panoptic with phone and adaptor.

Feedback from patients:

Oliver attended the Special Assessment and Binocular Vision Clinic in 2019 and was prescribed with a pair of bifocal glasses that have supported his writing and reading

“ We love coming to the Aston University Eye Clinic to see Flors and the rest of the team, and Oliver has really enjoyed his new bifocals. Thanks so much and see you again next Spring! ”

“ Flors looked after me and was very patient and kind. I liked going to the University to see the students who worked hard and showed their cleverness. They helped me and told me everything they were doing. I am not scared now of my operation. ”

Partnership Impact: Year 1

Medical Scholarships Funding for Aston Students

As a result of Wesleyan's kind donation towards Medical Student scholarships, two high achieving students were selected to receive scholarships. Students who were selected for the Wesleyan scholarships had graduated from Aston's Pathway to Healthcare Programme. Scholarships provide students with the opportunity to go to University which, without scholarships, many have fed back that this would not even be considered.

Students that received these scholarships are still participating in their studies, however we look forward to learning of their progress following graduation.



Aston University reached out to the two Wesleyan scholarship recipients of 2018/19

Bernice, (Wesleyan Foundation Scholarship recipient 18/19)

"This scholarship has been immensely helpful to me and I am so grateful. I have been using the money to pay for the ever increasing rail fares, to enable me to commute to University. It has also helped me with funding for necessary equipment such as a stethoscope, and textbooks, some of which I take along to my placements. I have found this most helpful."

"I'd like to say a big thank you for your continuous support, it is greatly appreciated. It means a lot to know that I am being supported and that there is belief from others that I can succeed. Thank you for keeping me motivated."

Anonymous, (Wesleyan Foundation Scholarship recipient 18/19)

"My parents are refugees that have not gone to university. My siblings and I have all went. I live around an hour to 45 minutes from the university. My ethnicity is Somali."

"I use the scholarship mainly to help with my travel or any equipment needed (e.g. stethoscope)"

"I feel encouraged to do better and to show that this opportunity was not wasted."

"I just want to be able to say thank you for this opportunity."

Partnership Impact: Year 2

Research Funding: £10,000 towards Aston's Pathway to STEM and Business

Aston's Pathway to STEM and Business programmes recruit A Level students (aged 16-18) from disadvantaged backgrounds across the West Midlands. The programme sits alongside learners' A Level studies and equips them with the knowledge and skills to apply to University; whilst providing an insight into University life.

Wesleyan Foundation donated £5,000 to each programme which contributed to the running of the programmes for learners. This year the programme activities were adapted to an online setting in line with the government's COVID restrictions. Activities included: e-mentoring, UCAS statement support, A level revision bootcamp, engagement with current Aston students.

Pathway to STEM 2020 cohort impact

100% graduated

100% applied to University

72% learners applied to Aston University for STEM related courses

72
Pathways
STEM and
Business to
learners

Pathway to Business 2020 cohort impact

100% graduated

100% applied to University

71% learners applied to Aston University

Feedback from Pathways learners:

“*The pathway was such a wonderful opportunity and I'm so grateful for the experience. It helped me open up and learn so much about what the next stage of my life will look like.*”

“*The Aston Pathway Programme has allowed me to build my confidence and make new friendships along the way!*”

“*I've loved being on the programme and I've gained so much information and knowledge on how to manage stress and work effectively which I was having many problems with!*”

“*The APP pathway helped me to gain a much more in depth understanding of preparing for applications to and life at university by providing an opportunity to work close with students and educators. A valuable experience that gave me the skills and left me with a stronger clarification to navigate the steps for my future plans.*”



Partnership Impact: Year 2

Medical Scholarship Funding for Aston University Students

A following two medical students were selected to receive the Wesleyan scholarship funding in the second year of the partnership.. Students who are selected to receive the scholarships had graduated from Aston's Pathway to Healthcare Programme. The cohort of students who received scholarship funds were asked about how receiving a scholarship has impacted them and the majority noted that it encouraged them to work harder as they have been recognised in this way.

All students that received scholarships in 2020 are currently in their first year of studies, however we look forward to the opportunity to report back the success of our medical students.

Aston University reached out to the two Wesleyan scholarship recipients who wish to remain anonymous:

Scholarship recipient 1 was born and raised in Birmingham and is the first in the family to go to University.

"This scholarship has made me realise the rewards of hard work if I didn't get into uni I wouldn't have gotten any scholarship"

"Thank you for Believing In me enough to donate"

Scholarship recipient 2:

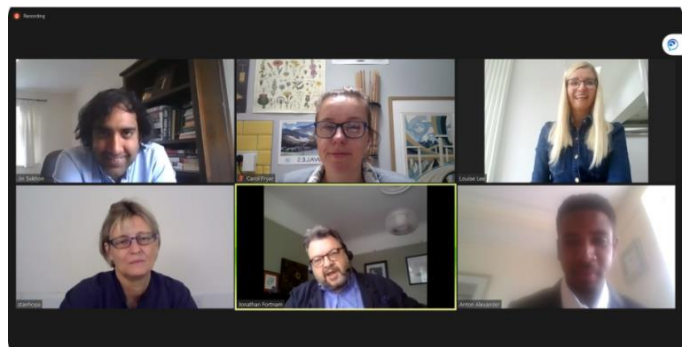
"The scholarship money was a big help for me as I really wanted a laptop to help my studies. Before purchasing my laptop, I hand-wrote my notes, which not only took a lot of time but was also very inefficient, as I tended to waste time trying to make my handwriting look fancy, and spent time trying to draw the right images."

"I would like to thank the donor of this scholarship very much, as if it weren't for the scholarship, I may have been in a very different position today with my studies"

The Wesleyan Foundation Prize 2020: Law & Medical

The Wesleyan Foundation donated £1,000 towards prizes for Medical and Law School students: The Wesleyan Foundation Prizes. Prizes were awarded to: two medical students, with the highest attained grades, and one law student, who stood out with excellence selected by the Dean.

As a result of COVID-19 the prize ceremony for law students took place online. A Wesleyan Foundation representative was able to attend virtually to present the award to students.



Wesleyan Foundation & Aston University Partnership in the Press

NEWS RELEASE - WESLEYAN SUPPORTING MIDLANDS TALENT DEVELOPMENT WITH ASTON UNIVERSITY

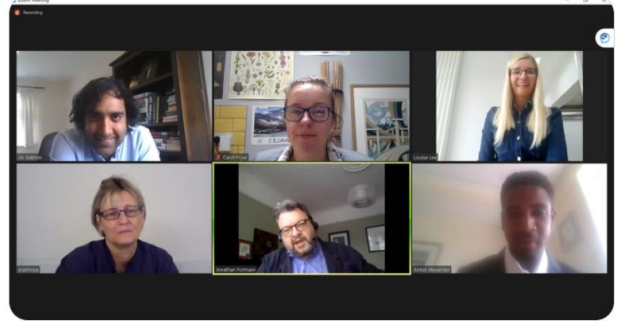
Posted 03 August 2018

Share:    



Aston Alumni @AstonAlumni · Jul 16, 2020

Huge congratulations to final year student, Anton Alexander, who was awarded The **Wesleyan Foundation** Law Prize online today. At the prize giving Louise Lee from the **Foundation** commented that Anton "was a very worthy winner for going above and beyond".



Wesleyan and Aston Law School

  5  16 

ASTON STUDENT TO HR GRADUATE AT WESLEYAN ASSURANCE SOCIETY

Harjap / March 26 / Uncategorized

Jess Lambie graduated from Aston University in 2016 with a BSc Psychology (Hons) degree. She is now working as an HR Graduate at Wesleyan Assurance Society. We caught up with her to find out more about her life after Aston.

How did you secure your graduate scheme?

I love to learn new things, to analyse patterns and to create –



Wesleyan and Aston celebrate scholarship success

18 August 2020



The Wesleyan Foundation, the charitable Birmingham financial firm Wesleyan, is celebrating its successful second year of its partnership with Aston University to help young people from disadvantaged backgrounds into medicine.

The partnership has already seen the Wesleyan Foundation donate £73,000 in funding.

Aston University and Wesleyan join forces to support less advantaged youngsters

2019 Aston Alumni Magazine

A partnership between Aston University and Wesleyan is supporting young people from less advantaged backgrounds into medicine and providing development opportunities and project funding to students, employees and partners of both organisations. Wesleyan is a financial services mutual focussed on supporting doctors, dentists, teachers and lawyers, and has a strong corporate responsibility ethos. It is passionate about developing growth and prosperity in the region and improving access to higher education. The five-year partnership with Aston provides an annual subsidy for University projects that support enhancements in the fields of health, education, social development and innovation. This year marked the first intake of Wesleyan scholars into the Medical School and the first member of Wesleyan staff to complete an Executive Apprenticeship MBA with Aston. Zak Gurhan, a medical scholarship recipient, said "As well as the financial help, receiving the scholarship has made me feel really proud. It made me feel like I was part of something special."

BIRMINGHAM'S PROFESSIONAL NETWORK

JOIN TODAY

MFUTURE

« All Events

This event has passed.

SIGNPOST: GROWTH MINDSET CONFERENCE

FEBRUARY 8, 2020 @ 8:00 AM - 5:30 PM

Along with Wesleyan and Aston University, Women in Banking and Finance are bringing a prestigious growth mindset conference to Birmingham next month to give Midlands the chance to learn from some of the most inspiring and successful people in our industry.

The motivation behind it is to enhance your mindset and show you the clear path to developing your career in 2020. In order to do that we're going to be exploring current technological, social and economic landscape impacts whilst also hearing from industry through a choice of workshops and interactive Q&A panel discussions.

It will be an action-packed day with keynote speakers, headlined by **Lord Stephen**

A Glimpse at Year 3 of the Partnership

Executive MBA Students

Aston University has welcomed Wesleyan colleagues onto our Executive MBA course. A course that combines study and full-time work. The following colleagues enrolled onto the course in 2018 and 2020:

- Rajinder Chima
- Claire Bagnall
- Philippa Rose Thackray
- Sonya Harper
- Genevieve Marianna Rose Kangurs
- Matthew Glyn Mostyn Jones

Research Funding: £10,000 towards COVID-19 Research Pilot Study

Aston University's academic Dr Michael Larkin is undertaking research to understand people's experiences of assisted breathing interventions and critical care for COVID-19, in order to understand their psychological needs for long-term recovery.

In a pilot study, a small number of Covid-19 survivors who have received ICU care and respiratory support will be invited to participate in a qualitative research study. They will be offered a choice of interview types (telephone, videocall, email) with optional visual materials (e.g. drawings, photographs) to help describe their experiences. We will learn about the best ways to engage survivors in this kind of research, and about their preferred ways of participating. This will help us to develop plans for a future, larger study. Our preliminary qualitative analysis will identify underlying patterns in their accounts, highlighting common experiences, and the meanings associated with them.

Further Wesleyan Medical Scholarships for Aston Students

A further two Medical Students have been awarded scholarships which we look forward to updating Wesleyan Foundation on their progress.

£1,000 donation to The Wesleyan Foundation Prize: Law & Medical

Excellence prizes will be awarded to Aston Medical and Law students at their graduations. We hope to have the opportunity to invite a representative from Wesleyan Foundation to present the prizes to students.

PhD Student Kiran's PhD research into social impact of the Wesleyan Foundation

Kiran Chohal has just entered her third year of her PhD research into the social impact of the Wesleyan Foundation. Her research aims to: measure social impact, provide a deeper understanding of Wesleyan philanthropic CSR actions, communicate insights to key stakeholders, provide research and insight to others of how to measure social impact and strengthen Wesleyan & Aston's professional cooperation as partners for future collaborative research projects. We look forward to learning the outcome of her research.