



Reaching out to students to offer advice

The Impact Report

2012-13

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Rescuing students from sharks

"Students are getting poorer every year," says Chantel Le Carpentier, "and the numbers of students getting in high risk debt is increasing." Chantel is our Students' Union's Vice President (Welfare and Community) 2013-14. She adds: "The NUS report 'The Pound in Your Pocket' said students are feeling the pinch now more than ever with the increase in tuition fees and living costs. This has meant that students needing small amounts of money for food and essentials have been targeted by legal loan sharks such as Wonga and The Money Shop."

Thankfully, Essex students have another option. The SU Advice Centre's Hardship Loan is a short-term interest-free loan that can help students through life at the University. In February 2011, the Essex Fund awarded the Advice Centre £10,000 to develop the service

further. Advice Centre Manager Sian Lovesy says the award "allowed us to increase the standard amount we usually offer from £50 to £75. We consider other amounts, too, and the extra money from the Essex Fund also allows us to consider granting money to students who face extreme difficulties and levels of hardship. Plus, our NHS placement students have to travel for their placements, and we can help them with their upfront travel costs."

Since the Essex Fund gave the Advice Centre the money, they have issued 140 loans, worth a total of more than £10,000. "The main uses for the money," Sian says, "are help with food and general living expenses between loan instalments, or to pay for travel and book costs. It is a great service to be able to offer, so students and their studies are not negatively affected during times of hardship. Money troubles can be extremely worrisome, and this is an extremely valuable service which has been greatly enhanced by the Essex Fund money."

That's a view very much backed up by Chantel: "It's helped out so many students. Many of my friends have used the loan to get them through to the end of the week to buy food and essentials before their next pay day or their next student loan instalment. It's been a lifesaver for some students, and the fact that you can apply and receive the loan so quickly has made it a reliable and risk-free answer to money problems. I know that at Essex, the Advice Centre Hardship Loan has been the difference between students either getting into spirals of high-risk, high-interest debt or solving their money issues. It's a fantastic service."



What next?

Thank you for your support in the last year. Your gift really does change lives. The Impact Report this year follows up on some of the things you've funded in previous years to see what the long-term benefits are.

For example, we often say that scholarships change lives, but Gabriela De Luca's story shows how true that is. She was a Masters student in 2011-12 (see right), and is now working for the human rights organisation in Brazil that she had set her heart on before she came to Essex. She attributes her success directly to her studies here and the Santander scholarship that funded them.

That's why your support is vital – especially if you are one of our long-term donors. A direct debit is income we can rely on, allowing us to plan for the future. It means that we can not only support scholarships, bursaries, the arts, student societies and volunteering, but that we can keep on supporting these vital aspects of campus life year after year.

Thank you.

Lynsey Dawson
Senior Development Officer

Santander scholarship success



Gabi at Essex in 2011

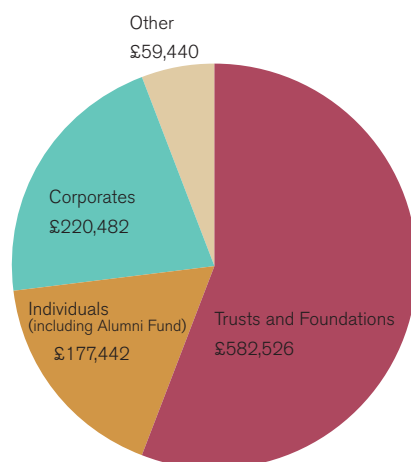
Gabriela De Luca was working as a UN Volunteer in East Timor when she decided to come to Essex. She needed an LLM in International Human Rights Law in order to work in that area in Latin America. Gabi could have taken places she'd been offered at other universities, but during her year in East Timor, she met one other person working in the field – an Essex graduate. So, her mind was made up, but she still had to fund her studies.

When Gabi got her Santander scholarship in 2011, she described it as "a dream come true. In my currency, it's the equivalent of a car! It was literally the only option I had to study here." She duly got her LLM, graduating in 2012. Gabi is now an attorney at the Center for Justice and International Law in Brazil, and says: "I always wanted to work at this specific NGO, and I would never have been able to work in such a high-level international litigation environment without my studies at Essex. We don't have postgraduate degrees at Brazilian universities that offer the same quality and depth of courses in these subjects – and it's difficult to work in this field in

Latin America, because there are so few organizations that focus on it, so it means a lot to achieve this goal"

Essex renewed its agreement with Santander Universities in the 2010-11 academic year. The relationship brings us £255,000 over three years for undergraduate and postgraduate scholarships and travel bursaries for students and staff who want to study or do research overseas – as well as supporting ESCALA, the Essex Collection of Art from Latin America.

Philanthropic support 2012-13



Manhandling mammals

"Two of our members helped to catch a seal last year," says Emily Godfrey. "It's not easy! One person has to hold it down and cover its eyes while the other makes sure it doesn't move, which could be dangerous for the seal and for their colleague. Then, you have to check it over – eyes, claws and body shape – to see whether it's fit to go back in the wild. This one wasn't, so they had to get it safely into a dog kennel box and take it to a seal sanctuary. It went back into the sea, near where it was found, once it was OK again."

Emily is a founder and former president of the Marine Conservation Society, and her colleagues knew what they were doing thanks to a grant from the Essex Fund. In 2011, £900 allowed eight members to train as marine mammal medics, and three to retrain. Emily says, "It's hard to get good work experience in the conservation sector, and this has helped us with course work and long-term employability. The seal rescue was just one of many rescues we've worked on since."

Emily herself went on one mission with a less happy ending: picking up a dolphin which was washed up in Clacton. "There was nothing we could do for the dolphin, but it was still really positive. Because we were there, making sure

it was picked up, it got a post mortem – so we know it died not from disease but because it was hit by a boat. Information like that can be used to help put legislation in place to monitor the health of marine mammals in Essex."

The society is now entering its third year, and Emily says, "It's grown tremendously. I know many of our members last year joined mainly because of the subsidised training that you helped us to offer. This year, we had over 30 people turn up to our first meeting, with more emailing to see if we could hold another because they couldn't make the first."

The training itself involved lectures and practical sessions on handling, lifting and giving first aid to seals and dolphins and re-floating common whales. Each one involves a very lifelike and life-sized model, which – being water-filled – is very close in weight to the animal in question. "The course helps to give people leadership skills and encourages us to think for ourselves and solve problems in high pressure situations – so it's useful for life," Emily says. "It's helped bring the society closer together, too. There's no better way to make friends than by wrestling a plastic seal in front of 30 people!"



Marine mammal medic training 2011



From recipient to donor



Zarine (second left) at 2008's Town and Gown Dinner

Back in 2007, Latin American Studies with Human Rights undergraduate Zarine Russell faced a dilemma. "I didn't have any financial support as a student, but I had to have a year abroad." The third year of her four year course involved working and studying in Latin America. It's a vital part of the degree – a chance to experience life in the region, and to cement the language skills that come with work in this field. Thankfully, Zarine had an ally, in the form of her local community.

"I lived in Wivenhoe," she explains, "and I applied for the Wivenhoe Bursary." Established in 2005 by the then Mayor and Mayoress of Wivenhoe, the bursary is open to students who live in the town and are involved in their community. "I was doing quite a lot of volunteering work through the Advice Centre and Nightline, where I was on the executive committee." Even given her dedication to others, though, she says "I didn't think I'd get it, so it was a really nice surprise when I did." The £500 bursary "really helped me with some of the costs of going overseas, like visas. It meant a lot, because I was living there, and it's a lovely little community. I came back and did a speech at the 2008 fundraising dinner about my year abroad."

That sounds like a happy ending in itself, but there's more. "I'm working at the Foreign &

Commonwealth Office now," Zarine says today. "I'm a diplomat, UK-based at the moment. Everything I did at Essex gave me the skills I need – the admin, the bar and volunteer work. The Careers Centre helped me put a strong application together. I applied during finals and got accepted a month after graduation. The Wivenhoe Bursary definitely helped."

Zarine's story, then, is one of how an Essex degree – and the experience that comes with it – can shape someone's life. It also shows that a relatively modest amount of money can make a big difference. Zarine is now at an early stage in what looks to be a very promising career, and she hasn't forgotten the generosity of those who helped her. "The money was certainly put to good use," she says, and puts the icing on the cake with the words: "I'm now a regular donor to the University."

The Town and Gown Dinner, which raises the money for the bursaries, is now in its ninth year. It has given out between £1,000 and £2,500 every year, usually to between two and five recipients. It's one of our strongest links with Wivenhoe, and it continues to cement links between the University, our students and the community many of them live in.

Making volunteering a pleasure

One of the biggest grants made by the Essex Fund since it was established in 2002 has been £15,000 for a minibus in 2010 – an amount matched by the Students' Union. Since then, we've told you how it has become "a much-used asset to the University", but we thought you might like to hear a bit more detail from some of the people who use it.

Sports Development Manager Dominic King says, "We use the bus for lots of our volunteering projects and, because it has a wheelchair-accessible ramp, we can include all students. It's also fully adaptable, so we can remove the seats to create more space to move big items for projects as well as fitting wheelchairs in. We are looking to do more work in Disability Sport, too, which will see the ramp used more."

Just having the bus makes getting to and from volunteering projects easier for all students – and that means more support for the Students' Union's vTeam. They do some great work in the local community, such as the Refugee Teaching Programme, set up by second-year Literature & Mythology student Frazer Merritt. At Colchester's Fresh

Beginnings centre, he and other students "teach English and maths classes for children and run a language café for teenagers and adults. There are women-only classes on Wednesdays, too. The knowledge we share enriches their lives and helps them adapt to a new country – and we learn a lot about foreign cultures."

Dom King adds that "one of our vTeam members said the minibus made it really easy to get to the projects, and that it was 'always a pleasure to volunteer for vTeam', so we know the bus is helping us to engage with the local community and get students involved in projects which give them skills for life and really enrich their experience of university."



Some of our vTeam volunteers in 2013

Extending Nightline

In January 2010, Essex's pioneering Nightline service got an Essex Fund grant of £325 – a relatively small amount of money, but one which allowed it to set up a new, free phone line to help more students. Nightline's two existing numbers are free to those on our Colchester Campus, and the 0800 number now allows those in Southend, Loughton or elsewhere in Colchester to benefit from its confidential listening, emotional support and information service when other services aren't open.

Katherine Reid, Nightline's Publicity Officer for the 2013-14 academic year, says, "The number of calls we receive has gone up since then. In the 2009-10 academic year, when the phone line went in, we had 116 calls. In 2012-13, we took 158 calls from people who needed someone to talk to, in confidence. So,

we know the free-phone off campus number has helped us to reach and help more people."

Nightline is perhaps one of the ways in which Essex has most changed the university landscape in the UK. The service began here on 7 May 1970 in a prefab hut with one phone, no toilet and 12 student (and two staff) volunteers. It was soon followed by similar organisations at other universities – some of whom visited Essex to find out more. The service now operates at 90 universities, reaching around a million students, and, as one of its founders Geoffrey Hosking says, "Nightline is indeed a significant achievement. There is no question that Essex has a major success to celebrate here."

Thanks to those of you who support the Essex Fund, it's an Essex achievement that goes from strength to strength.



Outside the Nightline flat

Permanent roles for 9 out of 10 Essex interns



Some of our successful interns

Nine Essex students and graduates on a Santander internship scheme have gone on to permanent roles with their companies.

Ten of our students and graduates went on three-month placements with SMEs (small and medium enterprises) during the 2012-13 academic year, after Santander announced 500 UK-wide internships in July last year. All but one of our alumni were offered and accepted permanent roles with their companies at the end of the placement – and the remaining graduate took up a permanent role with a different company just after she finished her internship.

As a result of our success, Essex students will have 30 Santander internships in 2013-14. The scheme is part of Santander Universities' funding for higher education in the UK, which was worth £7 million in 2012. The students and graduates who take part are paid £3,000 for their work during the placement, which is half funded by Santander and half by the SME partners. SMEs – companies with up to 250 employees or a turnover of up to £50m – generate three-quarters of all new jobs in the UK.

One of the successful graduates, Charlotte Morgan (BSc Psychology), who secured an internship at CloudZync for marketing, PR and events, said: "The Essex Interns team was incredibly helpful. They made me aware of the placement, which was perfect for my career interests. My work experience role as a Communications and Events Assistant at the University also provided me with invaluable skills. Essex prepared me to be ahead of the game in a very competitive job market."

Matthew Kay (BSc Computer Science), who is now a software developer at the same company, said: "My final year project was recognised at the University's Computer Science and Electronic Engineering open day by the Chief Technology Officer of CloudZync. I was offered a full-time internship which totally exceeded my expectations. The University taught me numerous applicable skills to work in a company at the forefront of cloud technology."

Essex Interns manages over 100 internships each year. If your business could offer one of our students an opportunity like this, please contact Lynsey:

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Santander staff with scholarship recipients

