

## University Court SPECIAL EDITION 2020



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## A note from our CHAIRMAN OF GOVERNORS, TIM SAWYER CBE

Dear valued University Court member,

Sadly the continued presence of Covid-19 has prevented us from enjoying our usual University Court meeting this year, but I hope that this very special edition of Buzz@Beds brings a flavour of life at the University of Bedfordshire as we face the challenges of the 'new normal'.

As many of you would have seen from my last message to you, the Board is absolutely delighted to have secured Professor Rebecca Bunting as our new Vice Chancellor. We wanted someone

who had the ability and passion to take us to the next stage of our evolution as a vibrant and innovative university that is greatly enriched by the diversity of its community, and I truly feel we have found that in Professor Bunting.

I have learned, throughout my time as Chair of Governors, that this University is at its very best when we are talking to our partners in the community, listening to what you have to tell us and working with you for the benefit of students and the wider region.



I have already enjoyed many stimulating conversations with many of you at various University events, and I hope that we will all get the chance to benefit from such opportunities again in the not too distant future.

With best wishes

**Tim Sawyer CBE**  
Chair of Governors

## And from our VICE CHANCELLOR AND CHIEF EXECUTIVE, PROFESSOR REBECCA BUNTING

Welcome to this very special edition of Buzz@Beds!

I am sorry that the current Government restrictions mean that we cannot be together for the annual Court meeting this year, but I do hope that this publication offers something of a personal touch from the University, keeping you connected with us and up to date with all the latest news.

I am delighted to have recently been appointed as the University's Vice Chancellor and I am very grateful for all the kind messages I've received since the announcement.

I have a strong vision for the University and it is one I hope we can all share together. We need to be ambitious for our students and our staff, confident in our abilities and proud of our successes.

We must be truly collaborative, working together, not only across the university, but in our external engagements to ensure that our work is sector leading. My vision is to create a strong and sustainable university, agile in response to opportunities and challenges, and one where innovation and creativity can flourish and all members of our community can thrive.

As you begin reading this publication, I want to take the opportunity to thank you for your continued support of the University of Bedfordshire. You are all members of our Court: critical stakeholders of the University, contributing directly to the lives of our students and to the success of our institution. You all contribute in different ways – from



acting as ambassadors for our university, to directly inspiring, engaging and supporting our students and our researchers. It is through your support that you help us, as an educational institution, to teach those around us – our students and our communities.

With every best wish for you to stay safe throughout the pandemic and I look forward to meeting you all in safer times which, I hope, will not be too far ahead.

**Professor Rebecca Bunting**  
Vice Chancellor and Chief Executive

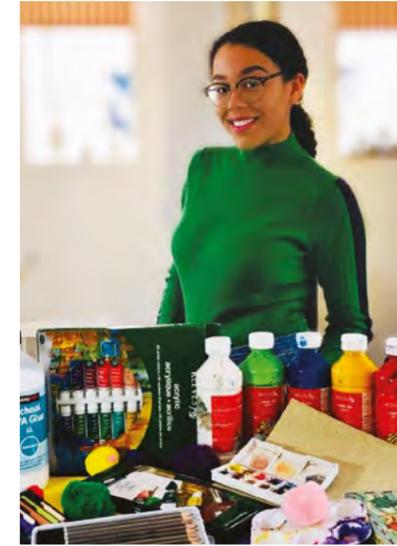
**Proud  
TO BE BEDS**



During the uncertainty of the global Covid19 pandemic, our University community has done some fantastic things which we wanted to celebrate. From volunteering to fundraising, to advising public health policy and to simply making positive memories – these encouraging stories have been the backbone behind our 2020 #ProudToBeBeds campaign.

**Featuring students, staff, Court Members and Honorary graduates, our Proud To Be Beds exhibition showcases the heartening and selfless actions of people who have provided comfort, help and support to others during the first lockdown – and who have made the University 'proud'.**

There are some notable actions from our student body, including second year Primary Education student, Martha Kay, who launched a series of home-learning art classes for children on YouTube. Student, Britzer Paul Raj, volunteered his time to make face masks for care homes, charities and NHS staff and helped to deliver food parcels to those in need – all while continuing to study for his PhD with the Institute for Health Research and, after their tour Croatia was cancelled by the pandemic, our University Football Team ran the equivalent 2,302 miles to Croatia and back to raise money for the NHS Charities Together campaign.



*The team are setting a great example with this fundraising event. They have turned the disappointment of not being able to go on tour, in these unprecedented times, into a positive project in support of the NHS.*

**Andrew Mitchell**, Head of School for Sport Science and Physical Activity

Stories of inspiring University staff have also shone through, including Operating Department Practise lecturers, Samantha Hull and Andrea Thompson, who in their spare time volunteered to help ICU wards at their local NHS Trusts and our academics and researchers have all contributed in the fight against the disease. Some of these stories highlighted in our exhibition include a research project between the School of Life Sciences and a local SME which looks to improve Covid-19 testing, and the news that Professor Gurch Randhawa has been using his research to help raise awareness of the disproportionate health effects Covid19 has on BAME communities.



*I feel it's my duty to help raise awareness and reach out to communities that may be harder to engage during these uncertain times.*

**Professor Gurch Randhawa DL**

And it's not just our staff and students who have made us proud this year. University of Bedfordshire Court members have been offering solace and support to the community during the coronavirus outbreak.

Honorary Doctor of Arts musician Tom Grennan took the time to help out a local food bank in his hometown of Bedford. Meanwhile our Honorary Doctorate and University Court members Carrie Grant and Adam Croft



have been offering solace and support to the community. Broadcaster and vocal coach, Carrie Grant, took part in a virtual performance where over 65 churches and movements came together from across the UK to sing 'The Blessing' and best-selling author Adam Croft made one of his e-book boxsets completely free to keep readers entertained in lockdown.

Causes supported by the University during the pandemic – such as our work with key local partners to distribute 1,500 Arts Council England 'Let's Create' activity packs to young people across Bedfordshire – also feature in the exhibition. This Bedfordshire-wide effort, funded by the Royal Opera House 'Bridge', delivered resource packs to primary and secondary school children, containing easy-to-follow creative activities and art supplies to help fuel young people's imaginations and support their wellbeing during Covid19 through creativity.

*I'm thankful to the work of our Collaborative Projects and Arts and Culture teams in delivering this opportunity to local children.*

**Dr Gordon Mellor**, Associate Dean of Academic Partnerships

If you would like to view more of our 'Proud To Be Beds' virtual exhibition, please visit our online news pages at [www.beds.ac.uk/news/proud-to-be-beds/](http://www.beds.ac.uk/news/proud-to-be-beds/)



## INTRODUCING OUR NEW Vice Chancellor Professor Rebecca Bunting

By Katy Lelliot

Student in Journalism (BA Hons)  
Editor, University of Bedfordshire's  
'Focus' student magazine

As soon as Professor Rebecca Bunting popped up on our Microsoft Teams call, I instantly felt at-ease and welcome in her presence.

Warm and friendly, the first thing she asked was how I was doing and what course I was studying at the University.

Professor Bunting has recently been appointed as the Vice-Chancellor (VC) at the University of Bedfordshire, following an interim spell since January this year, and it's easy to see why she was offered the role full-time.

Speaking with passion and enthusiasm, Professor Bunting wasted no time in telling me what attracted her to becoming the permanent VC.

"I'd really enjoyed my first few months and I felt that the University was moving in the right direction and I wanted to see through some of those things that I really felt we needed to do," she smiled. "It [the University] got to me. I was enjoying it and I was enjoying the challenges and I really felt I could see where we needed to go. I really like the values at Bedfordshire; I like our purpose, our mission as a University, about the student focus and wanting to provide opportunity to students."

When I asked her about her vision for the University going forward, Professor Bunting had zero hesitation in expressing what she wants to see from the University and the changes that she wants to make happen.

### A New Strategy

"At the moment, we're just starting to think about the new strategy for the University and that strategy is definitely about being ambitious, being an inclusive organisation, being collaborative in the way that we work and striving for excellence, and those are the four principles that I want to operate on," she said, with such a determination in her voice that I have no doubt we will soon see these changes present throughout the University of Bedfordshire.

Professor Bunting clearly has a strong focus on the students at the University, but it was the way she spoke about students and the work that she wants the University's staff to do in helping develop them ready for their careers that really struck a chord with me.

"I really want our students to have the very best start for their careers," she said. "I want the University to be known for the excellence of its work with students, but I also want our staff to be excellent staff and to be doing all the right things to support students in their journey."

Another key focus for Professor Bunting during her time as VC is the research produced by the University and the engagement that the institution has with businesses to "show how strong we can be in that area."

Barely pausing for breath as she rattled these initiatives off, it's clear to me that Professor Bunting is in no

doubt about her vision for the University and she is evidently raring to go in the role.

Professor Bunting is also the first female Vice-Chancellor here at Bedfordshire and this is something she clearly takes incredibly seriously. I was keen to ask her about the significance of this, and it was inspiring to hear the priority she places on the topic of gender equality at all levels.

"I think it's essential that we have senior women leading universities and that we get much closer in numbers with men, so we want strong women with good leadership experience coming through," Professor Bunting said with certainty, "I think it's incredibly important for young women to have role models and for

younger women to see that they can do it – if other women have done it, they can do it."

For a young, ambitious woman like myself, hearing the passion that Professor Bunting has for the change she wants to see is refreshing and gives me hope for the development of universities in the future.

While Professor Bunting may "despair sometimes about whether gender equality will ever happen in my own lifetime," it's women like her paving the way for other young females that will no doubt inspire a new generation of strong women in leadership roles – not just in universities, but on many different career paths.

So, what is Professor Bunting's advice for those young females just entering the field of academia and feeling disheartened by the lack of women in senior leadership roles?

Well, the message is clear...

"Don't ever think you can't do it," she said. "Be absolutely positive, don't let people make you feel that these things are not for you. Get into some good networks and get a mentor – it's important to find a mentor who will help you think through what you need to do and how you need to go about moving into those positions."

### The New Normal

On a wider scale, the University is currently facing the 'new normal' of life during the Coronavirus pandemic.

While students are currently learning through a new approach with a mixture of online and face-to-face teaching, Professor Bunting empathises and relates to the students and staff who may be feeling anxious about what the next few months will bring.

"We're very concerned about people and about wanting to support people in their daily lives and in their professional lives as much as we can at the University," she nods. "Don't feel that you're alone in your concerns, look after yourself, and we've got to remember that there will be light at the end of the tunnel soon and we will come out of this – we will get there but we'll get there together, and nobody is on their own in this."

Despite the challenges posed by Coronavirus, I'm looking forward to seeing Professor Bunting put her own individual stamp on the role and I'm excited to see what initiatives and changes she implements here at Bedfordshire.

Speaking with such ambition and determination, I have no doubt that the University have found an excellent leader in Professor Bunting and we are definitely in safe hands with her at the helm.





**Graduates from our University were invited to take part in virtual celebrations after Coronavirus caused our usual spring and summer ceremonies to be postponed.**

We took the tough decision to postpone the 2020 graduation ceremonies, following disruption and safety concerns due to the pandemic. However, our staff worked tirelessly to curate a series of virtual events to help mark the occasion until our celebrations can happen again in person.

Over 900 final year students from our Business School, Faculty of Creative Arts, Technologies and Science, Faculty of Health and Social Sciences and Faculty of Education and Sport come together online with their lecturers, friends and families.

As well as listing the graduating students' names and pinpointing stand-out achievements, our ceremonies were filled with messages from well-wishers across the our University community, including former Honorary Award

recipients, University Court members, Governors and local VIPs.

We hope to reschedule the 2020 in-person events for 2021 once Government guidelines allow. If you would like to see more on our virtual graduation ceremonies, further highlights can be found on our website, Facebook and Instagram feeds:

- [www.beds.ac.uk](http://www.beds.ac.uk)
- @uniofbedsnews
- @uniofbedsnews
- facebook.com/unibeds

*Thanks to a powerful combination of your remarkable resilience and our dedicated staff, you've made it! Many congratulations. You should be very proud of yourselves, just as we are proud of you.*

**Professor Rebecca Bunting**  
Vice Chancellor



**CONGRATULATIONS to our Student Experience Award winners**

Usually taking place on campus with a black tie ceremony and glasses of fizz, this year's nominees for the Vice Chancellor's Student Experience Awards were encouraged to celebrate virtually with their families and friends.

Each of the winners received a congratulatory personalised email from Vice Chancellor, Professor Rebecca Bunting, and a certificate and trophy were sent to them in the post to proudly display at home!

Her Majesty's Lord Lieutenant and University Court member, Helen Nellis, taking part in the ceremony to present the Lord Lieutenant Community Engagement Award via video link said; 'I have always had the utmost respect and affection for our own University here in Bedfordshire and I have never been more proud of how staff and students are reaching out in so many ways to support and sustain our communities'.



**Time2Grow Benefitting our students and the business world...**

Recently we have seen great success with our latest Time2Grow programme. The concept for the programme is relatively simple – a company has something it wants to achieve and creates a job description for our staff here at the University to advertise and hire in a graduate. This graduate placement is jointly funded between the company and the Time2Grow initiative. Time2Grow has a proven success rate of 34% of our students moving on to full time employment within the company, providing mutual benefit for both our students and the companies involved.

Levello is a leading UK manufacturer of lighting and ceiling accessories and a great example of our Time2Grow programme in action.

**The Challenge**

To continue setting themselves apart from their competitors and consistently delivering high quality products, Levello were looking to improve their quality management systems, increasing productivity and aiding company growth.

**The Solution**

Mohammed Parveys, an Electrical Engineering graduate from our University designed and implemented a new Quality Engineering System, establishing a leaner and more efficient manufacturing process throughout the business.

**The Outcome**

In addition to the increased productivity, Levello have streamlined their quality management process as well as reducing the company's manufacturing waste, thus lowering their carbon footprint. Mohammed also worked in two new product developments taking them forward from inception through to completion, deploying a new 'Surface Mounted Light Fitting' product that Levello are preparing for launch.

The outcome took an even better turn when, following the successful completion of the programme, Levello offered Mohammed a permanent job leading the quality assurance function for the business!

*I was able to apply the skills and knowledge from my studies to a variety of challenging projects at Levello, developing new processes and problem solving along the way. Being offered a permanent role was the icing on the cake.*

**Mohammed Parveys**

*I would highly recommend working with the University of Bedfordshire, as they help to bring highly skilled graduates into the real world working environment, to assist companies with their business growth.*

**Roger Piepenstock**, Managing Director, Levello

If you, or your company, would be interested in participating in the Time2Grow scheme or would just like more information on the programme, or similar initiatives, please visit our website at [www.beds.ac.uk/ies/we-mean-business/time2grow/](http://www.beds.ac.uk/ies/we-mean-business/time2grow/) or contact us via email at [externalrelations@beds.ac.uk](mailto:externalrelations@beds.ac.uk)

**Meet Putteridge Bury's new General Manager, Andrew Keen**

We caught up with Andrew Keen, Putteridge Bury's new General Manager, recently to find out how he has settled into his new role, his vision for the estate and what he is most excited about for its future.

'I am honoured to be the new General Manager of Putteridge Bury, which is an iconic building with gardens and grounds that has been appreciated in its current shell for over 100 years'.

'It's important to carry on the legacy, the best way is to invite the local community and business to use our facilities. I am delighted to lead the team into a new chapter and to host many future events.

*But what is Andrew most excited to be getting his teeth into?*

'It has to be re-opening the business because, as well as hosting many University functions and events, we specialise in weddings, meetings and events and being part of milestone events in peoples life and creating memories'.

If would like to find out more about our Putteridge Bury campus or you are interested in holding a personal or business event here please contact [externalrelations@beds.ac.uk](mailto:externalrelations@beds.ac.uk)



**Putteridge Bury**  
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- Conferences
- Corporate events
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- Civil ceremonies
- Christmas parties
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- Funeral receptions

An award-winning conference and wedding venue, this iconic property is a wonderful place to do business or host a function

“ Thanks to all at Putteridge Bury who, once again, couldn't do enough for us – we were very well looked after. *Whitehead PLC* ”

Putteridge Bury, Hitchin Road, Luton, Bedfordshire LU2 8LE  
Call 01582 489069  
Email [conferencecentre@beds.ac.uk](mailto:conferencecentre@beds.ac.uk) [PutteridgeBury](https://www.putteridgebury.co.uk)  
Visit [www.putteridgebury.co.uk](http://www.putteridgebury.co.uk) [PutteridgeBury](https://www.putteridgebury.co.uk)

**YOUR UNIVERSITY NEEDS YOU**

**We value the support and commitment of all of our University Court members.**

If any of the features in this magazine have inspired you to get further involved in a new venture with us there many ways to contribute to the activities of the University, for example:

- Offering expert advice in the form of guest lectures/work-shops for our students. If you can bring anything to the Faculties we would love to hear from you!
- Offering your name or company's name to buildings, facilities, campaigns, internships and bursaries where appropriate.
- Offering your story/profile to be included in University publications for marketing and advertising purposes.

Helping the University to establish links with employers and organisations to promote and provide opportunities for interactions for our students such as; work experience placements, paid internships, volunteering opportunities, research and training and development.

Providing careers advice to our students; raising aspirations through mentoring and/or coaching final year students, sponsorship and endorsement of our redeveloped Career Development Award.

Acting as ambassadors for the University and increase awareness of its achievements, expertise and aspirations locally, regionally, nationally and internationally

Supporting fundraising activities both for the University in general and for specific initiatives and projects, such as donations and bursary schemes.

Understanding and supporting the University in order to foster, establish and maintain beneficial links between the University and its wider community and society.

We would love to hear from you and please contact [externalrelations@beds.ac.uk](mailto:externalrelations@beds.ac.uk) to put forward a proposal or just to have a further chat about anything you have read today.

# A FINAL THOUGHT

from some of our

# COURT MEMBERS



*The University of Bedfordshire has become an important part of Bedfordshire's identity. As its Court member and a passionate champion of education and community empowerment I am ambitious for it and will continue to support its development as a centre of excellence for innovation, research and wellbeing – locally and globally.*

**Dr Nazia Khanum OBE DL  
(Deputy Lieutenant)**



*I joined the University Court upon finishing my term as President of Beds Students' Union back in 2014. It has been a great way to stay connected to the University and keep up to date about all of the work of the institution. I have really appreciated being able to network and meet other members of the Court and valued conversations with colleagues old and new.*

**Jordan Lewis (former President,  
University of Bedfordshire  
Students' Union)**



*I was invited to the University Court two years ago. For me, the role has been so rewarding to be part of the Graduation Ceremonies and to attend various events at the University, in addition to helping the students and teachers with corporate connections.*

**Vinod Tailor MBE DL  
(Deputy Lieutenant)**



*I have had the pleasure of being associated with the University of Bedfordshire, and its predecessor, The University of Luton, since 2000 as Vice- Chair of Governors, Member of Court and, for the past nine years, as HM Lord-Lieutenant. The vision and mission of the University has been notable for its determination to encourage a broad diversity of students to study in an environment where their horizons will be raised and the richness of international perspectives on issues allows for revealing debates and increased understanding of how problems can be solved through innovative partnerships. The journey of the University has not been without its twists and turns and the Governors and Members of Court have played a key role through the years in helping to keep the ship steady. The University of Bedfordshire is of vital importance to the continuing development of our county and of our nation. It is my honour to be an enthusiastic supporter and wish the new Vice-Chancellor best wishes as she takes on this significant role in our community.*

**Her Majesty's Lord Lieutenant of Bedfordshire, Helen Nellis**



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