

'Oxford's link to India dates back to 1579'

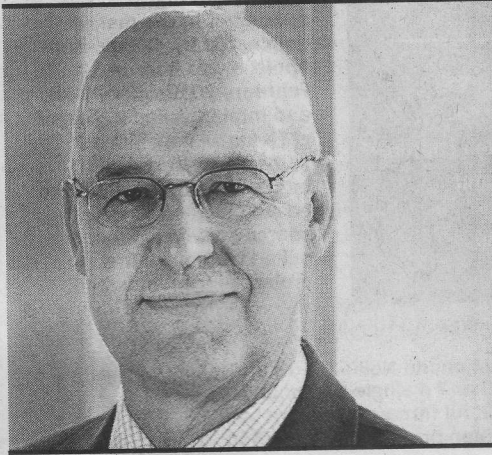
Professor Andrew Hamilton, Vice-Chancellor, University of Oxford, talks about the University's 900-year-old history of research, its deep alumni focus and the various scholarships and bursaries available to talented Indian students, regardless of their financial background

What does Oxford do differently that makes it an institute of educational and research excellence?

We have been in existence for 900 years and that gives a lot of time to evolve and adapt towards excellence in all areas. But no institution survives that long without doing new things. Two distinctive features of Oxford are the collegiate and the tutorial system. Colleges act as small communities, and each college is a mix of academics, postgraduate and undergraduate students and college staff, all doing different subjects. The tutorial is at the core of undergraduate teaching at Oxford. It offers students a unique learning experience in which they meet regularly with their tutor.

How would you define an education institution which is world class? And what are the building blocks for it?

The essential thing is a commitment to excellence in all areas — research, teaching, and administration. To be world class an institution must be



able to attract and identify the very best students, academics and staff — our students come from over 140 different countries. Finally, excellence is not cheap. Universities need good funding to be world class. For Oxford, that comes through a mixture of research bodies, charities, government funding, and the generosity of our donors and alumni — as well as managing the resources we have wisely.

How is Oxford able to generate so many research papers?

Oxford's research activity involves over 1,600 academic staff, more than 3,500 research staff, and over 5,000 postgraduate research students. Our research income has doubled in the last five years.

One of the things that help

in research is not having rigid disciplinary lines. In our collegiate system we have small communities of academics and researchers doing different subjects. And we have several research centres with a dedicated interdisciplinary approach.

What is the link between teaching and research?

The University's two primary areas of activity are research and teaching and these are strongly linked: students are taught by leading researchers in the field, a process which benefits the students and also, the researchers themselves.

What role does industry and government play in making Oxford a hub of research?

The government is important

Today, Oxford University is a thriving location for the study of India. We have a postgraduate degree in Modern South Asian Studies, including language studies, and the new MSc in Contemporary India welcomed its first intake of students in 2008

ing them regular information about developments at Oxford. Our worldwide alumni network comprises more than 190 individual regional groups, in places like Paris, Auckland and Zimbabwe. In India there are groups in Mumbai, New Delhi, Kolkata and Pune.

What are Oxford's plans for growth in India?

Our longstanding connections with India date to 1579, when Father Thomas Stephens, from New College, Oxford, was the first recorded Englishman ever to visit India. Ties have strengthened through time, with the creation of the Boden Chair in Sanskrit in 1832. The Indian branch of Oxford University Press, established in 1912, has a proud tradition of publishing its own distinguished scholarly list.

Today, Oxford University is a thriving location for the study of India. We have a postgraduate degree in Modern South Asian Studies, including language studies, and the new MSc in Contemporary India welcomed its first intake of students in 2008. Oxford scientists are connecting with their Indian counterparts through unique networks in physics and cancer research.

Oxford has various scholarships and bursaries available for talented students, but priority is to increase that provision, so that the very best students can come to Oxford.

How does Oxford engage with its alumni?

Oxford alumni's ongoing relationship with the university is crucial. Because of the very personalised education Oxford offers, our graduates have strong bonds with their alma mater. The individual colleges and the university as a whole invest a lot of time in alumni relations — from inviting graduates for events to send-