

University of Sussex Business School partners with Peter Bennett Foundation to open a ground-breaking new institute to tackle society's greatest challenges

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The University of Sussex has today (Tuesday 27 June 2023) announced that it has received a major donation from the Peter Bennett Foundation, a philanthropy organisation, to establish the Bennett Institute for Innovation and Policy Acceleration. The Institute will be based in its world-renowned Science Policy Research Unit (SPRU).

The Institute has been established to address and develop urgently needed policies and solutions to tackle some of society's greatest challenges. The first of these will be climate change, with a focus on the following three priorities:

Addressing changes in behaviour and practice in relation to climate change, both locally and globally;

Focusing on net-zero industry policies in production and manufacturing processes;

Accelerating policies that promote energy and climate justice.

The Institute will be based at the University of Sussex Business School and will draw on expertise across the School. It will bring together academic research, insights from corporate executives, entrepreneurs, scientists, engineers, and policymakers.

While its primary focus will be on climate change, it will also, in time, tackle other issues, including health, security, immigration, and trade. Initially the Institute will have three professorships: an institute director and named chair (a professor); a professor of sustainable finance, and a professor of innovation and energy policy.

The University, which has matched the donation from the Peter Bennett Foundation with its own investment in the new Institute, will officially open the Institute later in the year.

The Institute will be inspired by other recent policy challenges, such as the COVID-19 pandemic, which proved that policy can be developed and implemented much faster than had traditionally been believe when needed. Its ambition lies in capturing this same sense of urgency to implement policy responses to climate change.

Professor Sasha Roseneil, Vice Chancellor of the University of Sussex, said:

“Nothing is more urgent or more important right now than tackling the global climate crisis. I am delighted therefore to announce the establishment of the Bennett Institute for Innovation and Policy Acceleration at the University of Sussex. We are extremely grateful to the Peter Bennett Foundation for their generous and inspired gift, which is enabling us to found this Institute, and which the University of Sussex is match-funding.

“Sussex has been recognised as one of the top 50 global universities for sustainability. We are making a transformative contribution to tackling the great challenges posed by our heating planet. Solutions to the climate crisis must be accelerated, and this is what this Institute sets out to do.”

Professor Steven McGuire, Dean of the University of Sussex Business School, said:

“This is a hugely significant donation from the Peter Bennett Foundation and the Institute will help to set a new pace for policy change based on scientific evidence whilst addressing the climate crisis head-on. The Institute will draw on the Business School’s world leading expertise and global impact of its research in climate change and sustainability, climate finance, and innovation. Its overriding purpose is to find ways to tackle climate change and decarbonise economies. We simply don’t have thirty years to wait – we have to act now.”

Peter Bennett, of the Peter Bennett Foundation, said:

“The Peter Bennett Foundation is excited to partner with the University of Sussex, its Business School and SPRU to establish the Bennett Institute for Innovation and Policy Acceleration.

“A key goal of the Peter Bennett Foundation is to enhance productivity, new ideas and innovation, that improves the quality of life for all.

“As a society we are faced with a growing number of challenges - major examples range from climate change to facilitating faster innovation to enhance the pace of economic growth and its distribution. The potential impact of this work has far-ranging reach in the United Kingdom and beyond.”

In 2021, the University of Sussex Business School had six academics listed in the top 1% of the Clarivate Highly Cited Researchers list. It ranked first in the UK for annual research income (Chartered Association of Business Schools 2020/21) which underscores the impact it is having in the world today.

The School excels in other areas too. The Shanghai Ranking 2022 Global Ranking of Academic Subjects found that the School was a World Top 51-75 for Economics, and third in the UK for journal citations in Management. The Research.com Top University Ranking 2022 found that the School was tenth in the UK for Economics and Finance. In the Leiden Ranking, the School came fourth in the UK for impact within social sciences and humanities, with the proportion of top ten percent of publications. The Times Higher Education World University Rankings 2023 found that the School was eighth in the UK and Top 60 in the World on Citations in Business and Economics.

The School is renowned for its distinctive research and deep interest in how the policy environment shapes organisational strategies and innovative capacities. Its research strengths are in areas such as:

- o Energy, climate change and climate justice
- o Food security
- o The future of work
- o Trade and trade policy
- o Innovation and technology; Entrepreneurship

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