

Supporting ethical female leaders - Laidlaw Foundation and Oxford Saïd announce new £1.8million 3-year funding gift

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The Laidlaw Foundation, in collaboration with Oxford Saïd and Reuben College, has reaffirmed their commitment to empowering female scholars through the renewal of its prestigious Laidlaw Scholarship.

The new £1.8 million philanthropic gift, to be dispersed over the next three years, will enable thirty exceptional female scholars from diverse backgrounds, and who would have been hindered from studying an MBA at Oxford due to financial constraints, to be eligible to receive education support.

The generous funding supports the School's commitment to delivering diversity and inclusion in businesses, start-ups and boardrooms across the world – this year, our MBA class became one of the few in the world to break gender parity at 51% female. The class also has 97% international students, representing 63 nationalities and 23 sectors.

Commenting on the new agreement, Oxford Saïd Peter Moores Dean, Soumitra Dutta, said:

'We are incredibly grateful to the Laidlaw Foundation for their continued generosity and support. Providing exceptional female scholars with the opportunity to complete our MBA will bolster their considerable talents in business and set them up for even greater success, as leaders and change makers. I look forward to welcoming our next generation of Laidlaw Scholars, and celebrating their journey beyond education, when they become part of our lifelong alumni community.'

Commenting from Laidlaw Foundation, Chief Executive, Susanna Kempe, said: 'Our hope is that Laidlaw Scholars will go on to lead in every sector and geography; inspiring a fairer, better, more sustainable world.'

Oxford Saïd welcomed ten Laidlaw scholars at the start of the 2023's Michaelmas term. One of those is Echika Obijiaku, founder and CEO of Mwanga, a services tech company driving responsible use of credit in Africa via ethical tech-enabled collections. Her aim is to help consumers have a sustainable relationship with credit, and her goal of ensuring ten million people are debt-free by 2030 exemplifies one of the Laidlaw Scholarship values of leading ethically and paying it forward.

Commenting on becoming a Laidlaw scholar, she said: 'It is a huge honour to be a part of one of the most prestigious communities supporting emerging female leaders and gaining a world class business education and global networks.'

Her classmate, Patricia Goncalves, added: 'I feel incredibly honoured to have been selected as part of an exceptional community of women that have been driving societal change across the world. It has not been easy to carve a career as a first-generation University graduate, with no pre-existing network and clear career role model.'

Patricia attended this year's COP28 as part of the Oxford Saïd COP delegation, served on the Council of Europe and is an NGO leader, advocating for access to human rights and quality education. As a sustainability expert, she recently spearheaded the creation of a Just Transition initiative at Deloitte UK.

In addition to financial support, Laidlaw scholars benefit from a range of on-course activities and priority access to events at Oxford Saïd and at Reuben College. They also join a unique and powerful community of Laidlaw alumnae.

About Saïd Business School: Saïd Business School at the University of Oxford is a vibrant and innovative business school, embedded within a 900-year-old world leading university. We create programmes and ideas that have global impact and reach. We educate leaders, change makers and innovators across every industry and sector. Our groundbreaking research and exceptional teaching transforms individuals, who transform businesses, which transforms the world. We create impact from within. www.sbs.ox.ac.uk

About the Laidlaw Foundation: The Laidlaw Foundation invests in the education of the underprivileged and underrepresented in order to break the cycle of poverty, reduce inequality and develop a new generation of ethical leaders. Our funding supports five core programmes:

Sponsoring the Laidlaw Schools Trust – a growing, Multi Academy Trust in the North East of England, providing extraordinary education that transforms lives;

Developing a new generation of diverse leaders who embrace research-based decision-making and ethical leadership through our Laidlaw Scholars Leadership and Research programme at the world's leading universities;

Ensuring more women reach the C-Suite by providing MBA scholarships at London Business School, Oxford University's Saïd Business School, HEC Paris and IE; and supporting women from lower socio-economic backgrounds to attend university through the Trinity College Dublin Trailblazer programme; as well as, Turbocharging good businesses by investing in start-ups founded by Laidlaw Scholars through a \$50m venture capital fund, Laidlaw Scholars Ventures; and

Building innovative and inspiring spaces in which pupils and students excel.

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