

# Former Netflix CPO launches major diversity in tech initiative at Durham University

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Durham University have announced today that they have received a \$3.5m donation to support diversity and future generations of leadership in technology. The donation has been made by Durham University graduate Dr Neil Hunt, Former Chief Product Officer of Netflix, to establish 'The Hunt Programme' in Computer Science. This donation will play a major part in expanding the University's Women in Technology programme tackling the underrepresentation of women in leadership roles in the tech sector.

The Hunt Programme will also establish new scholarships to support students from low income and underrepresented backgrounds, ensuring talented prospective students can access Durham's degree programmes regardless of their background or circumstance. The donation will also be pivotal in launching the Department's first Careers & Internships programme for computer science students, leveraging the University's global networks to give students access to transformative career opportunities in the tech sector - something Hunt sees as critical in his own career trajectory.

Hunt became the first ever Chief Product Officer of Netflix in 1999, steering the company from a nascent start-up providing an online DVD rental service to one of the largest and most recognisable streaming platforms in the world. Hunt is largely credited for the development of this personalised user experience, which is now synonymous with the Netflix brand.

As a successful Durham University Computer Science graduate, Neil has reengaged with his University as a founding member of Durham's Computer Science External Advisory Board. Through this advisory capacity, Neil has taken a fundamental role in shaping the future of Computer Science at Durham, bringing together other senior tech leaders to direct the Department and to launch innovative programmes such as the AMI Women in Technology Scholarships, named for inspirational young tech leader Anne-Marie Imafidon MBE.

Dr Hunt – Durham alumnus and benefactor and now Founder/Chief Strategy Officer of med-tech start-up Curai – says,

"Today's high-tech industry is fiercely competitive for talent, and we cannot afford to shut out 50% or more of the potential from even getting to the starting gate. Women make up just 15% of Computer Science graduates - a figure that continues to fall - and this cries out for correction. My education at Durham University was a key stepping stone to the success that I have been fortunate to enjoy in my career, and I want to maximize the opportunities for those who follow. I hope my gift will inspire others – in industry and in education – to cultivate future generations of innovation and leadership from all walks of life".

William Russell, Incoming Lord Mayor of London and member of the Campaign Board at Durham University says,

"It's inspiring to see Silicon Valley tech giants like Neil investing generously in the future leaders of this sector, especially here in one of the UK's most distinctive universities which is developing an excellent profile in this space. The Campaign Board working on behalf of Durham hope to see this donation leverage a great future for many women currently underrepresented within this crucial field."

Anne-Marie Imafidon MBE, Durham University Computer Science Advisory Board member and CEO of Stemettes says,

“The issue of diversity in tech is systemic, and universities can play a huge part in modelling inclusive cultures and practices for schools and industry to follow. Underrepresentation is about attraction and pipeline, but also retention. I’m pleased to see Durham taking a proactive approach and prioritising inclusivity, and am proud to be part of the University’s AMI Women in Technology programme, which we will be able to expand significantly with Neil’s generous support.”

Neil Hunt’s donation will have a transformative impact on the future of Computer Science at Durham, attracting and supporting more young women into technology and equipping students with the skills they need to be the industry leaders of tomorrow. The University are also delighted to recognise the contribution this gift will make towards its wider ‘Durham Inspired’ campaign, chaired by former Saatchi & Saatchi CEO, Rob Senior, which seeks to support the next generation of inspiration and leadership through Durham.

If you would like any more information on this significant donation, or the Durham Inspired Campaign, or to speak with Neil Hunt, William Russell or Anne-Marie Imafidon about this investment to tackle the underrepresentation of women in technology, please contact Peter Remon at BlueSky PR at [peter@bluesky-pr.com](mailto:peter@bluesky-pr.com) or +44 (0)1582 797 956.

#### NOTES TO EDITORS

Full breakdown of the Hunt donation

The Hunt donation will have an impact on two crucial goals: attracting exceptional talent and building a diverse and dynamic student community at the university, and enhancing the career prospects of Durham graduates and developing their leadership skills.

Funding from the Hunt donation will support four key areas of development:

- The Anne-Marie Imafidon (AMI) Women in Technology Scholarships – attracting, developing, and supporting more young women in Computer Science
- The Hunt Scholarships – attracting the best and brightest students to Durham regardless of their economic background, and delivering outreach events to engage underrepresented areas with computer science technology
- Careers & Industry programme – giving students unparalleled opportunities to undertake meaningful career opportunities in global tech roles, cultivating future tech leaders with hands-on employability skills
- Global College internships – supporting students specifically from Neil’s Durham University college
- Collingwood – to undertake ambitious internship experiences through the college’s prestigious alumni network

About the Durham Inspired Campaign

The Durham Inspired Campaign seeks to support the next generation of inspiration and leadership coming through Durham as a prestigious World Top 100 University, which has over 5000 alumni in North America. As one of the oldest and most distinctive British universities Durham boasts an exceptional alumni community, including recent US Ambassador, Sir Kim Darroch; McDonalds CEO, Steve Easterbrook; and Beam

Suntory Chief Exec, Matthew Shattock.