

President's Vlog Transcript: 31 July 2025

Introduction

Duncan Ivison: Help people understand, what is the philanthropic campaign?

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Gala Konteva: I can definitely say I'm so grateful for my funders, but also I'm inspired by the by their generosity, and their desire to help.

Vanessa Omo-Ogbewi: The scholarship, I would say, has opened doors I never thought I would walk through, it has made me feel a big, huge sense of belonging at The University of Manchester.

Duncan Ivison: It's about relationships, isn't it? I mean, the relationship that you have as a recipient with the donor, but also then the relationship that the donor has with the University.

President's Message

Duncan Ivison: So. Hi, everyone. Duncan Ivison here. Here we are in the South Asia Gallery of the Manchester Museum. And we're here to talk about philanthropy and as many of you know, this year will see us launch our first ever major philanthropic campaign. You know, one thing I think about quite a bit is just how this university was actually created out of gifts, out of philanthropy. Indeed, even the Museum itself all started with a gift. Philanthropy really is a transformational aspect of everything we need to do in our upcoming strategy, but also more generally. And I'm really delighted that we've got some colleagues here to talk about, you know, how they've been supported. But also talk more generally about the campaign to come. So I'm going to ask everyone to introduce themselves and then we'll get a conversation going. So Vanessa. Yes. Vanessa

Vanessa Omo-Ogbewi: Hello everybody. My name is Vanessa. I'm a second year student studying Chinese and Business and Management, and I'm also a recipient of the RWS Brode Scholarship.

Gala Konteva: Hi, everyone. My name is Gala Konteva and I'm a first year PhD student funded by the Sear family donation, and my project is focusing on developing a novel treatment for lung cancer.

Jemma Gurr: And I'm Jemma Gurr, and I am a Deputy Director in the Division of Development and Alumni Relations.

Duncan Ivison: Great. So you can see we've got a fantastic panel. So, Jemma, we're gearing up for the campaign, maybe help people understand what is a philanthropic campaign.

Jemma Gurr: Philanthropy touches every single aspect of life at Manchester. So supporting students, supporting our researchers, supporting innovation – so getting our research out into the world – and also our fantastic cultural institutions. So we're sitting here today in the South Asia Gallery, which is one of the areas that donations have supported. The campaign for us really is an opportunity as we as we look towards 2035 to elevate all of that to reach more people, to be bolder and clearer about our philanthropic message, and get more people on board so that we can make even more of an impact.

Duncan Ivison: Now, as you said, it touches on students, our research, maybe. Vanessa, if I could start with you. So maybe tell us a bit about your journey, your story, how you came to the university and how has the scholarship that you got enabled you to do the things you dreamed of doing here?

Vanessa Omo-Ogbewi: I came here when I was 13. Growing up in Italy, I didn't have, like, much representation about people that look like me. But then I came to the UK and suddenly I saw people that looked like me in every sort of job. And that started like my my goal and my dream to come to university. But coming from like a low-income household with a single parent, I felt like those financial burdens a lot. The scholarship, I would say, has opened doors I never thought I would walk through. Yeah.

Duncan Ivison: Give me an example of some of those. Yes.

Vanessa Omo-Ogbewi: So I took my first international trip ever. I went to France, Paris. But when I went there, I, I fell in love, honestly. I was like, wow, maybe I could be Vanessa in Paris. I really see myself just being here. So it has been an amazing opportunity to be an RWS Brode scholarship, and it has made me feel a big, a huge sense of belonging at The University of Manchester.

Duncan Ivison: I've met the Brode family and, you know, they're very passionate about supporting students. So yeah, student support, really important part of the campaign. But Jemma, we're also thinking about research as well.

Jemma Gurr: We are and research at all levels, and particularly our fantastic early career researchers who are really the, the kind of future pipeline of research leaders. So Gala, talk about you. So you're a cancer science PhD student?

Gala Konteva: Yes, I'm a cancer scientist. I am also an international student from Bulgaria, and I moved to the UK to do biological sciences first in Leeds. And then I decided to apply for this PhD project, funded by the Sear's family donation. And now I am on my first year. And I can definitely say I'm so grateful for my funders. But also I'm really inspired by their generosity, and their desire to help cancer research. And they are people that, my research can have a really great impact on. And I think that's wonderful that there are people out there willing to, first of all, help early researchers like me and also have such a beautiful impact on global health. But also their family has been affected by cancer. That's why they are willing to drive cancer research.

Jemma Gurr: And it's a reminder, I think, of the really personal reasons that many people have for giving.

Duncan Ivison: You're right, it's about relationships, isn't it? I mean, the relationship that you have as a recipient with the donor, but also then the relationship that the donor has with the University. A lot of people watching might be wondering, how do they get involved, you know, if I'm a student or if I'm a researcher, how do people get involved in the coming weeks and months ahead?

Jemma Gurr: Every year we have, we have thousands of people donate to the University, and that includes alumni, students, colleagues and people who just see Manchester as a really good place to change the world. I guess the point to make is, the campaign's going to support every single area of the University, and therefore it's going to transform our impact on the world in all of these different ways. And that means that there is a role for absolutely every single colleague to play whatever role they they have in the University. So as well as giving, volunteering, fundraising, it's about all of us getting behind this. The campaign is all of ours. And it's our opportunity to really make a difference in the world. So just, coming to our launch event, posting on social media about the campaign, talking to people across the University and beyond about philanthropy, these are all really simple ways that colleagues can make a really big difference to the campaign.

Duncan Ivison: If you had one message to, you know, maybe students or colleagues watching, watching this series, I mean, what would you say to them about philanthropy?

Vanessa Omo-Ogbewi: I think that it is important for people to give people that can to give in order to, give them opportunities for students that may have gotten forgotten by the system and for them to excel in this new system.

Duncan Ivison: I guess. I mean, cancer, as you said, touches just about every family, right? And yes, everyone at some level is touched by cancer. So obviously, for you philanthropy's enabling you to do, as you said, really interesting, groundbreaking work. So if you had a message to the Sear family or to other potential, colleagues, what would it be?

Gala Konteva: I would also say that I think philanthropy is very, very important and is very important to give, you know, the supportive, idea of philanthropy. That's what inspires me so much and what I try to do myself as well, to inspire other people around me and just help each other. I think that's the key message of this.

Duncan Ivison: Fantastic, it's a great message. So, the campaign is going to be launched in November. We're already underway. One thing I've been talking about is how I think the really great universities of the 21st century are going to be the ones who get their work out into the world, making a difference faster, and philanthropy will help us do this. Philanthropy will help get cancer drugs out of the laboratory into patients more quickly. Support for our students will help more students who don't currently benefit from the extraordinary education we can offer, get to university, or get to some form of higher education, ensure that more and more students can have those experiences. So it's about creating impact that otherwise wouldn't happen. And, you know, the history of the

University, sort of reflects that and we want our future to reflect that too. It's been great having you guys join us today. And Jemma, thanks very much for coming along as well. Watch this space. It's philanthropy is one of the things that's going to help transform our University for the better over the next ten years. So thanks very much.