

Our Purpose

St Anne's 2025
Conversation



Our Aspiration

To understand the world and change it for the better

Our Beliefs

1. As a community, we

- a). want to be the home of choice for the brightest and most ambitious students, including those from under-represented groups
- b). take pride in supporting, enabling and promoting our academics' research
- c). inspire and challenge our students to fulfil their academic potential and prepare for future careers
- d). respect, promote and celebrate difference; diversity of people, their ideas, and accomplishments are a rich source of learning for us all
- e). support and guide all in our community to be well and do well, building their resilience and readiness for the future

f). build on the richness of our history, and the achievements of our predecessors and alumnae in our ambition to make a distinct and enduring contribution to the University's future

g). need the funding, facilities and resources of a world class College environment for learning, teaching and research in order to attract the brightest minds and to support their aspirations,

2. As trustees, we

- a). have a duty of care to our staff, students and academics
- b). must leave the College stronger and better than we found it, fit for the long term
- c). inspire every student with the joys of intellectual pursuit as we advance world class research

Our Ambition

To be a diverse and inclusive community contributing to the University's vision to lead the world in education and research, and securing the College's legacy and future

Our Values

Forward looking & Outward facing
Diverse & Multidisciplinary
Ambitious & Down-to-earth
Independent & Collaborative
Rigorous & Supportive

Our Approach

Purposefully & Boldly

University of Oxford Vision: The University of Oxford aims to lead the world in research and education. We seek to do this in ways which benefit society on a national and a global scale.
<https://www.ox.ac.uk/about/organisation/strategic-plan?wssl=1>



St Anne's College: Our Purpose



St Anne's College
University of Oxford

Background

To define the College's purpose in a clear way is essential to guide future decision making and ensure a shared and consistent ethos and direction of travel.

The job of Principal is not that of a Chief Executive but Chair of the Board of Trustees, generally referred to as Governing Body. College statutes are clear that Governing Body is where significant College decisions are made and that its members (over 60 Fellows and five College Officers) determine issues

in a democratic manner. Therefore, a priority for me as a new Principal was to establish what Governing Body wants the future of the College to be, ensuring that they were properly informed of the views of all who have an interest in College, including alumnae and donors.

St Anne's 2025 Conversation

Last summer we launched the St Anne's 2025 Conversation. Over more than 6 months, the Development Office and I, with support from Fellows and College Officers, gathered hundreds of views from:

- prospective students
- undergraduate students
- graduate students
- students' parents
- College staff from all departments
- SCR members
- alumnae from eight decades
- donors
- St Anne's Society Branches, and
- Emeritus and Senior Research Fellows

Tools utilised by the Development Office and our consultants, Betababoon, included;

- online surveys
- paper surveys
- individual structured 'Conversations' in person and by Skype and telephone
- structured focus groups, specifically designed for each group
- workshops, with group and individual exercises, and
- dinner 'Conversations'

It was a tremendous privilege to hear the opinions of so many people who care deeply about the College. We heard many stories and insights from the past, and inspiring and ambitious ideas for the future.

The material gathered from the St Anne's 2025 Conversation was condensed and used in two sequential Governing Body Workshops held in January in order to produce the College's Purpose on a Page. They listed the themes from the 2025 Conversation that Governing Body members were asked to 'bin' (reject), 'bag' (endorse) or 'better' (re-word or add to). Over 40 members of GB attended a four-hour session facilitated by Richard Hytner and Inken Dachsel from Betababoon. The products of this workshop were edited to remove duplication and brought together for further sharing and refinement at a one-hour workshop prior to a scheduled Governing Body meeting. Over 50 members of Governing Body participated in one or both of these sessions. High levels of engagement from all attendees generated a (perhaps surprisingly) high level of consensus and our Purpose on a Page was formally ratified at the end of Hilary Term.

The Purpose: an explanation

We realised early in the process that being part of the University of Oxford is integral to the identity and purpose of St Anne's and that our aspirations and ambitions have to be set in the context of the University's vision.

Aspiration

This is our highest-level purpose, the 'why' we exist and why our people do what they do. I have seen how dedicated so many members of College are to their work and, in particular, the pressure our Fellows put themselves under to conduct their world leading research, tutor their students and support the College in a myriad of ways. I was inspired to hear their answers when they discussed the fundamental 'why' that motivates them. The strong consensus that it is **to understand the world and change it for the better** has been unwavering since it was first shared. This aspiration surely captures what education and research is for at an individual as well as institutional level.

Ambition

This is a statement that captures the 'what': what we are and what we do. It contains ambitions that can at some level be monitored and measured, so we can be clear if progress is being made. Although it appears as one sentence, it contains 5 separate ambitions for planning purposes:

1. to be a diverse community
2. to be an inclusive community
3. to contribute to the University's vision to lead the world in education
4. to contribute to the University's vision to lead the world in research, and
5. to secure the College's legacy and future

Beliefs

These capture what St Anne's is or wants to be and do at its best. They form two sections with the lower 3 beliefs specifically representing the commitments of trustees, i.e. members of Governing Body.



Values

Our values determine how we do what we do and have been paired. In some cases the two concepts clearly complement (forward looking & outward facing, diverse & multidisciplinary) in others they contrast, perhaps reflecting a tension but not a contradiction (ambitious & down-to-earth, independent & collaborative, rigorous & supportive).

Approach

This is deliberately a very short memorable phrase that can be applied by any member of the St Anne's community to what they do: as applicable to a porter or chef in the kitchens, as it is to a new student, tutor, graduate, or the Principal. It is based on the St Anne's College motto *Consulto et Audacter*, translated as **Purposefully and Boldly**. Individually and collectively, members of St Anne's carefully consider their purpose and then are prepared to pursue it boldly.

Helen King

Principal, St Anne's College