The Creative Hub at Churchill College

Creative endeavour is the motor of future success. It is widely recognised that creativity flourishes most readily between existing disciplines, calling for an openess of mind that is best fostered by sharing a common goal with people of contrasting approaches. Enthusiastic Fellows in Architecture, History of Art, Biochemistry, Computer Science, Engineering, Mathematics, and Plant Sciences, amongst others, are keen to revitalise and encourage the spirit of interdisciplinary thinking and creativity on which the College was founded in 1958. The Creative Hub will host a dynamic programme of events and create a platform geared towards bridging academic disciplines, and forging new collaborations, so that our students can better respond to the challenges of the 21st century.

Students of all disciplines, undergraduates and postgraduates, will have the opportunity to make things together. The Hub will be a place for creativity and innovation, including a multi-purpose project space, to explore, design, test, scale, build and present ideas – technical, social, artistic and more. It is also aimed at engaging the widest possible audience, both local, national and international, developing an active communication and exhibition strategy as well as a reputation for excellence.

Much more than a building project, this will be a facility unique to Churchill College, providing a ‘maker’ space in the disused oil store next to the squash courts at the front (Storey’s way) entrance to the College. It has been designed by the pioneering architecture collective ‘Assemble’ who won the Turner Prize for Contemporary Art in 2015, and includes Joseph Halligan, a Churchill alumnus (architecture, 2006) as one of its leaders.

The Creative hub will include workshops, both digital and traditional, with equipment to enable students to experiment with different techniques to bring artistic and design projects to fruition. To support the various projects it is intended to have a technician on hand to offer advice, skills and training. Although many University departments have their own workshops, Churchill will be the only Oxbridge college that has such a facility for truly interdisciplinary endeavours.

It is not unusual for our students to combine excellence in an academic area with a hobby which may include design. However, unless they are studying architecture or engineering, students would not generally have access to a creative working space. The Creative Hub will allow groups of students from disparate disciplines, and with a wide range of interests, to join together and be creative - for example, they might conceive a theatre set in Virtual Reality and then invite a director to use it to optimise the lighting and staging of their production, or to work with schools on collaborative projects, or jointly to create a device that meets some as yet unidentified or unsatisfied need. The programme for the Hub will include group projects, as well as talks, performances and exhibitions to influence, inform and inspire students, as well as attract future applicants and visitors to the College.

The Hub is aimed at re-articulating the founding mission of the College for the 21st Century and beyond. It will help form and inform the next generation of innovators, the pioneers who can make a difference through meeting the demands of our ever-changing world.

The overall cost of the project is £3.58 million, and building will start once £1 million is achieved.

Project plans

Capital expenditure

The building project cost is to provide a roof and transform the space within a disused oil store at the front of the College, to provide workshop facilities and storage on three levels and a double-height exhibition and project space. The large, double-height space will also be used for talks and outreach which will benefit from an entrance on Storey’s Way, making it accessible to the general public. In addition to a variety of tools, the workshops will be equipped with a 3D printer, and other advanced digital equipment such as VR.
View through the squash courts: workshops to the left, project space to the right

Exhibition in the project space:

Endowment

A Director will be appointed to inspire and support a dynamic range of projects and encourage creative collaboration. This is envisaged as a senior academic role occupying 40% of the Director’s time. The Director will organise an annual programme of speakers, exhibitions and other associated events, whilst allocating resources to student projects in order to support creative endeavours. They will also recruit and supervise technicians. The Director will report to a Committee, and annually to Governing Body of the College.

Technical support is required to advise students, train them in relevant skills, and supervise their use of tools and equipment. It is envisaged that one senior technician be employed 60% full time, with a further budget equivalent to 40% full time available to the Director to secure additional specialist technical services on a flexible hourly basis. These posts would suit experienced technicians who enjoy working with students, perhaps having stepped down
from a full-time University position, and who would be willing to work when students are keen to do so on afternoons and weekends.

**Running costs** will be required to cover the replacement and upgrading of equipment, consumables, speakers’ costs, publicity etc.

**Costs**

We have up to date costs, including a surveyors’ assessment of the building cost, including VAT, contingencies and all professional fees. The floor area of the hub is 138 square metres.

**Capital expenditure**

- Building work: £750,000
- Equipment and fittings: £250,000

**Required endowment**

- For Director (40% fte): £860,000 to generate £30,000 per year
- For technicians: £860,000 to generate £30,000 per year
- For running costs: £860,000 to generate £30,000 per year

**Total**: £3.58 million

**Establishing the Creative Hub**

To have the entire facility named, together with the Director post, a donation of £3.58 million would evidently be required. Various elements of the Creative Hub could alternatively be named separately. For example, naming the Hub as a physical space would require a donation of £1.5million. We would also welcome support to the endowment of the Hub, so the Director’s post could be named for £1million.