

INSIGHT

REACH



TRINITY 2021

OxWIB
OXFORD WOMEN IN BUSINESS

NINTH EDITION

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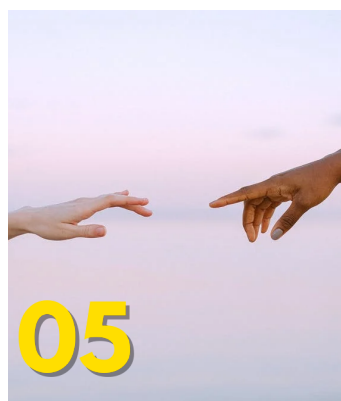
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IMPORTANCE OF REACHING OUT

Zyna discusses how the pandemic has impacted our mental health and the importance many have felt about staying in contact with others



TT21 EVENTS CALENDAR

Be sure to add our upcoming TT21 events to your diaries - you won't want to miss out on these!

PRESIDENT'S WELCOME

I am delighted to welcome you to the ninth edition of *Insight*, Oxford Women in Business' termly magazine!

The theme for this edition of *Insight* is 'Reach'. In the midst of the global pandemic and countless months spent at home, it can be easy to isolate oneself and lose motivation. However, as the light at the end of the tunnel becomes increasingly brighter, it is vital that we continue to reach outwards - to loved ones, old friends, and new ones - as well as inwards in self-reflection. The events of the past year have also shown us how expansive our reach can be. Despite lockdowns, borders, and oceans, we've engaged in meaningful conversations, launched campaigns for real change, and held those in positions of power to account. We're not where we want to be yet, but the strength and determination of our generation is evident. Please, never underestimate your reach.

What follows in this magazine is a range of thought-provoking, educational, and inspiring articles. Thank you to all our contributors, as well as the OxWIB committee for their support in the development of our magazine. In particular, I would like to give a huge thanks to Caitlin, Zyna, and Isabel for all their hard work and unmatched creativity in bringing *Insight: Reach* to life.

I hope that you can take this term as an opportunity to reach out to the people around you as well as to those who inspire you. If you don't know where to start, try attending one (or all!) of our events to interact with our phenomenal speakers or stop by a drop-in to meet some of the other amazing women at the university on a more casual basis.

Happy reading!

Tomisin A. Osibona
President, Trinity Term 2021



EDITORS' NOTES

CAITLIN MACCLAY, GRAPHICS EDITOR

This year has been an uphill fight for everyone and as we marked the anniversary of the first Covid-19 lockdown, I found myself reflecting on what I'm going to be taking from everything we've been through. I feel this Insight issue deals with topics that have been brought to our attention during the pandemic, and shines a light on the positives that have somehow managed to manifest themselves into being. We have had an incredibly tough year but the end is finally in sight. I hope everyone is able to enjoy their Trinity term and any new-found joys they have discovered during the past year.

ZYNA SHOUKAT , GRAPHICS EDITOR

Our last term is just around the corner and I think it is safe to say that the entirety of the last year has been nothing like we expected. As we look forward into a much safer future we must glance back at the lessons we have learned. Our theme for this term has multiple interpretations - many of which you will see in the brilliant articles that follow - but to me, in light of the pandemic, means the reach of the written word and the undeniable reach of the human spirit. I am so grateful to have had the opportunity to work with the wonderful Caitlin and Isabel to create this magazine and we hope all of you find as much joy and in reading the different interpretations of reach as we did!

ISABEL MAY , WRITING EDITOR

As we all begin to feel more hopeful for a return to normal life, a hopeful theme for this term's edition of Insight felt right. 'Reach' can and has been interpreted in many different ways by our contributors but I think every piece will inspire you to reach further and be better. Thank you to the fantastic design editors, Caitlin and Zyna, for making such a beautiful edition of Insight and thank you to everyone who submitted a piece! I hope you enjoy the hard work of so many people. Our theme is also a core part of OxWIB's attitude to this term; please reach out to us by attending one of our events, talking to our members, and you could even try applying to committee.

THE IMPORTANCE OF REACHING OUT

THE DOUBLE PANDEMIC OF SOCIAL ISOLATION AND COVID-19

- Zyna Shoukat

Panic ensued throughout the world as one country after another went into complete national lockdown. With businesses shut down, in-person work at a standstill, and schools and universities having moved online, contact was at a minimum. For the first time in most of our lifetimes, meeting our family and friends was actual criminal activity.

COVID-19 was an unprecedented crisis and its effects have been so far-reaching that no one has been safe from the havoc it has wreaked. It has tested our strength, broadened our minds and pushed us to our limits, but as it settles down, it has given many of us the opportunity to reflect.

A look back at the past year brings me to the most important lesson the pandemic has taught me: the importance of reaching out, whether it be to friends, to families, to romantic partners or to communities.

Over two-thirds of adults in the UK (79%) reported feeling worried about the effects COVID-19 has had on their life. While some degree of worry is understandably widespread, more severe mental ill health issues are being experienced by some groups. IFS analysis found that, taking account of pre-pandemic trajectories, mental health has worsened substantially, by 8.1% on average, as a result of the pandemic. Groups have not been equally impacted; young adults and women have been hit hardest.

There are numerous contributors to worsening mental health that have occurred during the pandemic, including job and financial losses, lack of housing security and quality, loss of coping mechanisms and reduced access to mental health services. The biggest and most reported reason, however, remains to be social isolation.

The struggle to balance literal survival with all the things that make surviving worthwhile has never been so clear, with the COVID-19 pandemic forcing many to sacrifice social connections – and therefore quality of life – for life itself. Human beings are social animals that were not created to live in isolation. We were, instead, made to live, love and learn together and grow with the help of one another. Whether it's shaking a coworker's hand or hugging a friend, most people are accustomed to some level of platonic physical touch on a daily basis. According to Dacher Keltner, a professor of psychology at the University of California, Berkeley, a lack of physical touch can affect people in more ways than they might realize. *"Touch is the fundamental language of connection."* Being trapped inside thus goes against our inherent nature. Hence, it is unsurprising that this lack of human connection has been a struggle for so many.



While social isolation and loneliness were prevalent in the population prior to COVID-19, efforts to reduce the virus' spread via stay-at-home orders, quarantine, and social distancing recommendations have exacerbated an already serious problem. With the exception of “*essential workers*,” the pandemic has meant limiting physical proximity to those with whom one lives. Preliminary surveys suggest that within the first month of COVID-19, loneliness increased by 20 to 30 percent, and emotional distress tripled.

It is important to realise that just because we're physically distant from each other, it doesn't mean we can't still be emotionally close. Maintaining regular human connection is more important than ever as we navigate these difficult times. Psychologist Sabina Read said that while we spend time at home in self-isolation, it's vital that we schedule in regular catch-ups online or on the phone. *“Touch is such a rich source of affirmation, security, safety and being seen for a lot of us. But there are other ways to manifest and nurture that without physical touch in light of the crisis that we're in,”* she said.

For those that have access to them, a range of technologies including Skype, Zoom, FaceTime and apps such as House Party allow people to connect in groups via video chat. Thus, scheduling your regular social catch-ups – whether it's book club, trivia night, family dinners, dance parties or just evening chats with friends in these virtual spaces can be supremely helpful.

For people living alone, the thought of not being able to hug another person for an indefinite period may be daunting but it is important to remember this physical separation is temporary. Checking in with other people who may be feeling lonely, particularly the elderly, can be a good way to feel more connected and create a sense of community.

It is often all too easy to lose touch with those who matter to you in day to day life due to the fast-paced world we live in. Living with a pandemic and constant feeling of impending doom around the corner, for some, the situation worsened considerably. However, for many who felt all too low in a time of isolation and loneliness, they were reminded of the importance of staying in contact with and reaching out to the ones they care for.

Personally, whilst I was physically distancing from many, I was 'socially' closer than ever. We may be physically apart from the ones we love but we must reach out to them – through calls, letters, texts and social media, we can and must stay socially and emotionally connected to them to facilitate our own functioning and ensure that they are doing alright



BEDROOM BUSINESSES

Caitlin MacClay

LOCKDOWN: THE UPRISING OF THE BEDROOM BUSINESS

Covid-19 has brought devastation for many - losing loved ones, as well as losing jobs. UK unemployment rates rose to 5 (the highest in 5 years) and nearly two-thirds of those made redundant were in the under-25 age range. Yet, whilst all of this was going on, for some, lockdown was the push they needed to finally start their own businesses. I interviewed two female-founder small businesses to find out more about how lockdown brought about the start of their business, and how they've found building a company during these difficult times

We are
Granola



VIKTORIJA PENN - 'WE ARE GRANOLA'

Online business selling homemade granola with an emphasis on environmental consciousness.



@wearegranola



hello@wearegranola.com



www.wearegranola.com

WHY DID YOU CHOOSE TO CREATE AND SELL GRANOLA?

Last year was eye opening for me, as I am sure for many others. I had a thought of creating something that I enjoy doing for a long time now, but never had a chance or just was afraid. After deciding to change my life, this was a natural progression. Granola came up during one of my conversations with my brother and I decided to go with it. In addition, I really like a delicious, easy and quick breakfast, so this was a natural choice.

WHAT'S ONE THING YOU'D TELL YOUR PREVIOUS SELF GOING INTO THE PANDEMIC?

Just do it. I think we as humans overthink things a lot. I am really bad at overthinking and this was my breakthrough in a way. So, yeah. If you have an idea, go for it and you will figure things out as you go.

WHAT KEY 3 THINGS HAVE YOU LEARNT FROM STARTING A BUSINESS?

Patience, loving the process and not comparing yourself with others. I wouldn't say that I completely learned these things but I can see that they are super important in order to be able to remove the noise; just go to the beat of your own drum.




HOW HAVE YOU BEEN COPING WITH THE PANDEMIC?

Very up and down. There were days or even weeks where I just wanted to stay in bed; there were times when everything seemed great. I am a very anxious person, so in some ways it made me stop and re-evaluate a lot of things. Of course, it's terrible that we have to live through it, but everything has two sides to it. I guess you can find both positives and negatives in this situation.



JESSICA HOWELLS - 'FLOUR AND FOLD'

Oxford-based bakery, specialising in bespoke 'cakes and bakes' and offering postal brownies and biscuits.

 @flourandfold
 flourandfold@gmail.com
 www.flourandfold.co.uk

WHAT DID YOU DO PRIOR TO YOUR CURRENT BUSINESS?

I was a Sound Engineer in London's West End working on The Phantom of the Opera

HOW HAVE YOU FOUND STARTING A BUSINESS DURING THE PANDEMIC?

I'm my biggest critic, and I think it's so easy to be hard on yourself! It's been an interesting path, but I've enjoyed the journey and am now lucky enough to make Flour and Fold my source of income

WHAT WOULD YOU TELL SOMEONE THINKING OF STARTING THEIR OWN BUSINESS?

I'm my biggest critic, and I think it's so easy to be hard on yourself! It's been an interesting path, but I've enjoyed the journey and am now lucky enough to make Flour and Fold my source of income

WHAT DOES 'REACH' MEAN TO YOU?

shudders

Social media & its algorithms.... Rather than worrying about likes and followers, try to concentrate on the sales instead

WHAT'S THE FIRST THING YOU'LL BE DOING WHEN THE PANDEMIC IS OVER?

Hugging my mum and taking cakes to all my friends and let them finally meet my son!

It's clear from interviewing these two incredible women that starting your own business is no easy task, especially in the current 'Covid climate'. But that didn't stop them. Through determination and resilience, they defied the odds and started businesses when many were forced to close. If that doesn't show how strong we are, I don't know what does.

REACHING YOUR FULL POTENTIAL?

A CASE FOR EXPLORING YOUR OPTIONS

When looking up Oxford interview guidance, it is always said that tutors are not assessing your current knowledge but assessing your potential. A quick google search on 'reaching your full potential' leads to articles promising you seven, four, or ten skills that would be the secret to getting there. But what even is this 'potential' or 'best version of yourself'? If we consider the situations in which this type of phrases is used, it mostly refers to academic or professional achievements. Even in the case that it does not, for example in sports, it still always seems to encompass some kind of competitiveness and being better than others that might not have achieved their full potential.

Potential is a tricky word, but even if we are able to define it in general, that still does not make it clearer what your or my specific 'full potential' is, or what the goal is that you should be reaching towards. An easy answer to this is that you can determine that yourself, that you just have to find your 'passion' and then unleash your potential to follow that path, but I would say it is more difficult than that. We are inevitably very much influenced by what the outside world perceives of what we do, and when considering reaching your full potential, the general perspective of what success is can be very determining. Take the example of Oxford. Almost all students here seem to have the same goal: to get a high-paying corporate job. This could be explained by Oxford being impeccable at selecting students with very similar traits, but I would say a better interpretation is that this is what is considered successful. However, it is quite unlikely that all students pursuing these careers will reach their full potential through that. We are all different people, with different starting points, strengths, and weaknesses, so then why do we all try to go in the same direction? There are of course exceptions to this, and the whole story is much more nuanced than what I will be able to write in a short article, but I do believe these points are worth considering.



REACH YOUR FULL POTENTIAL

Furthermore, why should we reach our full potential? Aristotle defines happiness as a state where one has achieved the best version of themselves, contrasted to fleeting happiness. Following this interpretation of happiness, reaching our full potential would indeed make us happy and if something is not making us happy, we are probably not doing the right thing to reach our full potential, but I don't believe happiness is as simple as that. Moreover, reaching your full potential could thus be seen as reaching for a happy life, which is different from the way in which we usually portray full potential, since you can very well also have a happy life without having a high-paying job and a second house in France.

In the end, this all boils down to the question, what is your full potential? And why is that specific thing your full potential? The only way I can imagine to find an answer to this is to keep exploring, try out different things, and see how you like them, and not get stuck on one path too soon. The second piece of advice I would give is to keep reflecting on this. Think about why you like and dislike certain things. Is it because something gives you a certain status, or because you genuinely enjoy doing it? Even if it is the first, that isn't a bad thing. If you decide you want to do something because of the status it gives you, that is a perfectly valid choice. But I would say it is important you are aware of the reason for making this choice. Lastly, I don't believe reaching your full potential has to be reduced to reaching one specific thing, but that it could consist of many goals, all in vastly different areas of your life. Humans are multifaceted, and it would be a shame if, in pursuit of our full potential, we decide that the best thing to do is to only focus on one specific goal.

-Isa Dijkstra



REACHING FOR MY TREASURE BOX

-Clara Marks

tunelessly children's voices screech out
reach for the stars
climb every mountain higher
reach for the stars
follow your heart's desire
tiny feet stomp into wooden floors
deepening the dents left by tiny feet before
dimpled smiles and crescendos of laughter
transform the assembly hall into an echo-chamber of delight

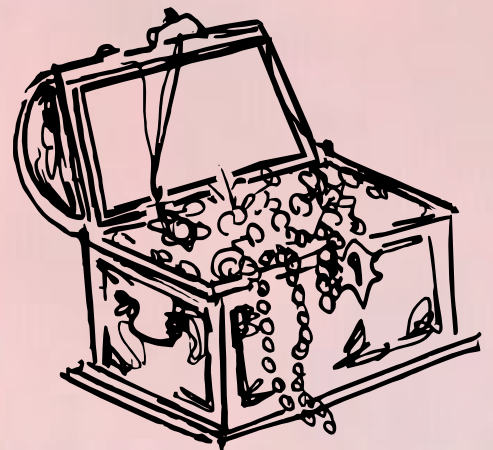
when did the stars start to slip through our fingers
the finish line creeping stealthily away from us
when did our steps become marathons, expectations mounting
saturday hobbies mutating into tick boxes on job applications
when were our hearts' desires replaced with mundane anxieties
from squealing on roundabouts to agonising inside the hamster-wheel of deadlines
when did we start feeling unseen, needing to reach to be seen

when I was young I wrote stories about dragons and tigers
constructed universes on sellotaped sheets of A4 paper
devised oscar worthy performances in my kitchen
created alien worlds where humans were in exile
choreographed professional dance routines in 15 minutes
my dream was simple
act, sing, dance, create, perform, imagine

asked to describe myself in three words I didn't think twice
'creative, bubbly, pretty'
unapologetic, unafraid, unaware
of the taunts chasing pretty girls down corridors
of bubbly women stifling smiles and
swallowing sentences in board meetings
of grandma's shaking knitting needles
wondering what became of her fashion creations

when my teacher said to write about treasure boxes
a hurricane of images and words circled my brain
picking up a pencil I forged a world where sleep and dreams intertwined
a symphony of buzzing, rumbling and rolling tongues
where diamonds and crystals were only as precious as beaded friendship bracelets

I don't know where my treasure box is now
when I find it I'll unlock the dragon's teeth
unapologetically embrace each fluttering corner
tune into the whispered dreams broadcast from women's pillows
reaching dreams
seeing and seen



My Treasure Box
Clara Marks: Year 5

I will put in the box
the buzz of a bee as it buzzes by
the splurt of sea water from a dolphin's back
and the roll of a tongue in a mouth

I will put in the box
two scarlet stars as they twinkle in the sky
the fizz of a bottle of coke
and a drop of rain on the window

I will put in the box
the rumble of thunder as it touches the ground
the first diminutive step of a baby
and the pant of a tiger stalking its prey

my box is fashioned from diamonds and crystals
and the beads of a freshly made friendship bracelet
with smells of lavender and flutters in the corners
its hinges are made from dragon's teeth

I shall sleep in my box
sleep on soft silver clouds as the sun shines from above
then I shall fly to the moon
and eat green cheese on the lovely green moon!

The Oxford Women in Business OutREACH series seeks to spotlight and celebrate women in business societies at other universities. As part of the Oxford Women in Business OutREACH series, Calista Chong, Head of External Relations, speaks to Sandhya Balakrishnan, incoming President of the LSESU Women in Business. The LSESU Women in Business society provides the women of LSE with strong networks, skills and experience needed to be outstanding in their careers. It fills the niche within LSE societies, addressing the specific challenges that women face through various stages of their career, and celebrate the successes of women in business.

It's great to meet you Sandhya. Can you tell us more about yourself?

Hey! I'm a first year at LSE, studying Economics and Economic History. In terms of career aspirations, I'm interested in investment banking and hope to go into property entrepreneurship in the future. Hobbies-wise, I have been doing Taekwondo for twelve years and participated in major competitions, like the Commonwealth Games.

If you were to describe LSESU Women in Business in three words, what would they be?

I would say opportunity, inspiring and motivating!

As incoming President of LSESU Women in Business, what vision do you have for the society?

I'm really excited about expanding people's networks. When I just started studying at LSE, I wasn't able to meet a lot of people, but networking has such a big influence on progressing forward in the corporate world! While LSE has a strong banking and finance culture, the industry lacks women representation. My main focus is to inspire and motivate women to pursue important roles and not be intimidated by the rather male and white-dominated industry. I hope women can all feel competent and confident. LSE Women in Business will ideally be a society and community where we can rely on one another and develop long-term friendships that help us progress together.

All of these sound amazing! As we have been in pandemic season for the past year, how has your society adapted to Covid restrictions?

This year, many events were held virtually via Zoom. Like Oxford Women in Business, we invited many international speakers, some from top companies like Amazon. They might not have been able to speak if it were an in-person event since they were from different countries. Coming into the new President role in September, I envision that there will be more in-person events, so things will be done quite differently.

Is there a particular event organized by the society that you found the most enjoyable?

The Women Empowerment Week in March was interesting. They invited really senior, experienced people to speak. There was also a buddy scheme for first-year students to pair up with someone with whom they were compatible, friendship-wise.

As you said, things may be done differently when restrictions on lockdown ease in the future. What plans do you have for the society?

Our annual Women in Business conference! It is a one-day event, usually held in the Grand Connaught in October. I'm looking forward to reaching out to external speakers and collaborating with other wonderful universities. I think it's a lovely way to widen our networking circle, meet new people and inspire one another. The more people we get, the greater our reach and impact will be. I hope the conference will be something our participants will remember! Panel talks may be tedious but I want them to be fun and enjoyable.



**Sandhya
Balakrishnan**

Incoming President
of the LSESU
Women in Business.



You mentioned that you are interested in pursuing investment banking and property entrepreneurship. How did your involvement with the society influence your career goals?

If anything, being a part of LSE Women in Business has pushed me to pursue these goals even more. In investment banking, I feel that there is a tendency for people to “scare you off” since it is a white- and male-dominated field. Being a woman from an ethnic minority background, my involvement with WIB has made me feel more empowered to break that barrier. I want to be that investment banker who younger kids will look up to in the future.

What do you think is the biggest thing holding women back in the workplace?

I think women tend to be more passive and overthink the steps we have to take in order to advance in our careers. In investment banking and finance in particular, it is a male-dominated industry. The news about Citi having its first female CEO – that only happened in 2021! I also think that women tend to be held back more than men do at the workplace, as they are perceived to be ‘breaking out’ of their socialised role in the patriarchy. Women are perceived to be less strongminded or capable of commanding attention in the boardroom. That’s why at LSE Women in Business, we aim to change the world and women’s perspectives about it.

I agree – women are more likely to suffer from impostor syndrome or experience self-doubt because they are less accustomed to visualising themselves in leadership roles. From what I heard today, the LSESU Women in Business has been doing incredible work to shatter these stereotypes and I can’t wait to see what the society will do for its members in future. Thank you!

Founded in 2000 by 10 undergraduate students, HUWIB has grown into a leading community of empowerment for college women at Harvard and beyond. HUWIB strives to empower and unite a dynamic group of 700+ enterprising young women at Harvard University through business education and experience.

Q. Hi! Can you tell us more about yourself?

Sienna: Hi! I'm Sienna, a junior at Harvard currently studying for a year at Oxford majoring in Psychology and Women, Gender, and Sexuality Studies. I'm a full-time content creator and Co-President of Harvard Undergraduate Women in Business.

Esther: Also a junior at Harvard studying Bioengineering with a minor in Global Health and Health Policy! On campus, I'm a student researcher, one of the college's Technology Innovation Fellows, Co-Captain of our engineering school's peer concentration advisors, and Co-President of HUWIB.

Q. If you could describe Harvard Women in Business in three words, what would they be?

Sienna: Passionate. Empowering. Family.

Esther: Community. Mentorship. Enterprising.

Q. As Co-President of Harvard Women in Business, what vision do you have for the society?

Sienna: I see a WIB that is at the forefront of championing an inclusive, diverse community of women at Harvard. Diversity of all kinds is a mindset we want to constantly cultivate throughout every facet of our organization. My vision for WIB is for every single woman on Harvard's campus to be able to look at who we are and what we stand for and say, "that's where I belong."

Esther: There are so many initiatives we have in mind, but the important thing here is rather than me pitching all these different ideas, I want to underscore the need for us to support and encourage ideas from our members. I want to give a heavy emphasis on keeping a diversity mindset throughout all of the fantastic work that WIB does and be diversity driven, a conscious choice we should make into a habit in WIB. By developing projects mindful of WIB's diversity and inclusion values in our members and also the career opportunities we showcase through WIB, we can truly hold up to our core mission to empower and unite a dynamic group of enterprising collegiate women.

Q. Your ideas sound incredible! Diversity has also been at the forefront of our minds, at Oxford Women in Business. How has your society adapted to Covid restrictions?

Sienna: We definitely had to do some reshuffling of committees and internal structure to adapt, redefining everyone's role in a COVID world. All of our events, conferences, trips, and everything else we were used to running in person had to become virtual. I think in many ways it made us stronger as an organization, however, because we saw people step up and show their commitment and love for WIB in so many incredibly unique ways we may not have been able to see otherwise. Despite a global pandemic, our Chairs and Committee Members constantly brought their enthusiasm, new ideas, and fearlessness to everything we have done in the past year.

Esther: Agree with all that Sienna said!



Sienna Santer



Esther Koh

Co-Presidents at Harvard Undergraduate Women in Business (HUWIB).

Q.What future plans do you have for the society?

Sienna: I can't wait to see WIB expand in every single direction. The possibilities are truly limitless. I'm looking forward to WIB featuring more events around a wide array of industries within business, from highlighting women making waves in the fashion industry to promoting women in blockchain and cryptocurrency. We just added our new Philanthropy and Investing committees this year as well, and I look forward to seeing our new impact investing initiatives and funding female startups within the Harvard community.

Esther: Adding on to Sienna's points, speaking more broadly, we want to further encourage cross-committee initiatives this term. Despite the challenges brought on by the pandemic, we saw a burst of creativity from our members to organize events overcoming these obstacles. We want to continue these initiatives and broaden WIB's impact on entrepreneurship and enterprising spirit in general from exploring investing to highlighting the start-up space.

Q. Sienna, has your experience as a content creator influenced your outlook on business? Can you tell us more about what you have learnt along the way?

Definitely ! I essentially run my own business so it's taught me a lot about being financially independent and taking charge of my finances, managing my time and knowing my worth, negotiating five-figure brand deals with companies and establishing relationships, and cultivating an entire brand from scratch. I feel like business can be this daunting and vague word but actually going through the small motions that make up different parts of business has empowered me to carve a space in the industry for myself and tell myself I belong there.

Q. Esther, has your background in STEM influenced the way you approach or understand business?

By gaining this traditional background in STEM and learning practical business skills through experiences such as in WIB has really provided me with a unique perspective on addressing questions in not just researching and developing emerging technology but also how to successfully translate that commercially and bring it to the market for broader use. Cultivating skillsets from these two spheres and building a bridge between technology and business has been my drive and core of what I do and hope to continue.

Q. The both of you have excelled in your respective disciplines and fields and I think this really attests to the diverse possibilities of business and HUWIB. My next question is: what are your career aspirations? Have they changed since your involvement with the society?

Sienna: The dream is to join all of the incredible female founders and run my own company one day. There are so few women in the C Suite, and 2% of all VC funding globally goes towards female-led companies. I want to change that. It has been a goal of mine since before I entered Harvard, but joining and now leading WIB has given me the confidence and skills to believe that I can actually accomplish it.

Esther: Planning on pursuing a PhD after college. May be atypical for a bioengineer like me to be in a business org on campus, but I learned so many invaluable skills through WIB and hope to engage in biotech ventures during and after graduate school. Especially in the start-up world, this space is so male-dominated and is entrenched in these Zuckerberg-like stereotypes of which I hope to help break.

I definitely agree with what Esther mentioned about there being entrenched stereotypes, especially in certain fields or industries. Building on this, what do you think is the biggest thing holding women back in the workplace?

Sienna: I think there's a lot of systematic sexism and internalized sexism that often isn't addressed or as apparent. The most important thing is to continue to have conversations out in the open about equality and hold companies and people accountable. I especially love to see companies have tangible goals such as 50% female leadership by a certain date, as workplace values truly stem from the top down, and it's so important to have women making the decisions up there.

I can't agree more. From what I heard today, HUWIB has really ambitious and exciting plans for its members and I believe it will continue to thrive under your brilliant leadership. Thank you so much for agreeing to this interview!

HOW FAR CAN I REACH?

**To me, the word 'reach' evokes reflections on what I am capable of achieving.
In other words, how far can I reach in life?**

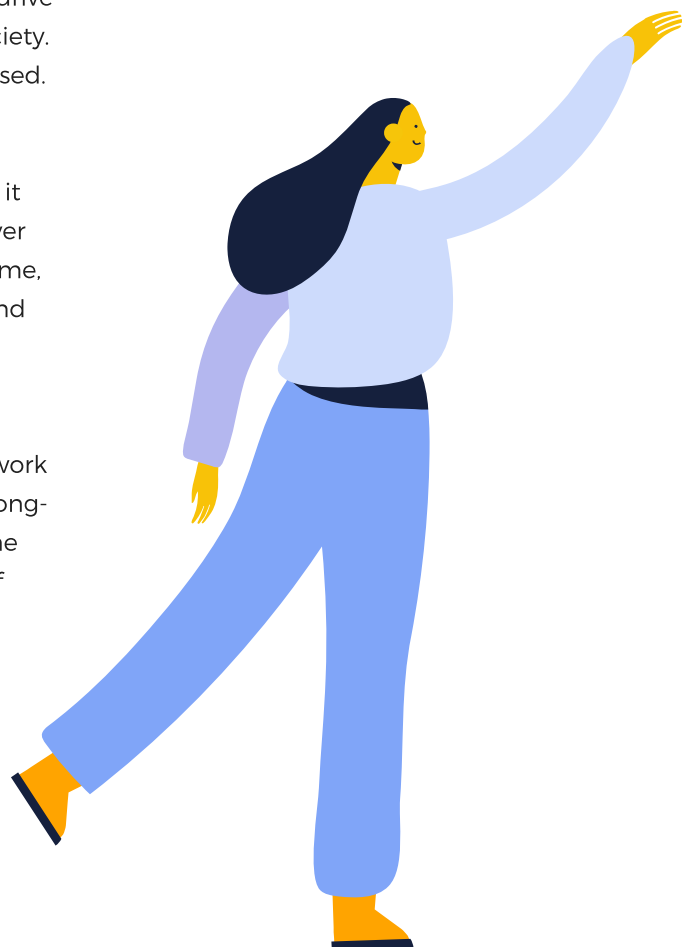
We may aspire to have a particular job and believe that once we get it, we have reached our peak. Alternatively, it could be that fulfilling our potential depends on how we perceive ourselves, and some may believe that you can never stop improving. Regardless of how one may define it, I believe that the word 'reach' implies expansion and progress.

The act of reaching is as relevant to our daily lives as it is to our aspirations – someone who chooses to do anything unconventional is reaching out further than those around them. Personally, I have lived my life within the restraints of other people's standards, because I was afraid to stand out. I would only do what was expected of me and avoided the things that may have gotten me further in life but were out of the ordinary. Even when those around me saw my potential and encouraged me to pursue it, I held myself back. It felt as if I had no drive at all as I kept myself within a tiny box, hidden within the rest of society. I was being restricted by the problematic beliefs that I had internalised.

But now, I realise that a life without reaching is an unfulfilling one. Instead of feeling envious of those who are reaching their potential, it dawned on me that I could be that person too. How would there ever be creation if everyone was afraid of doing something different? To me, the feeling of satisfaction which accompanies genuine behaviour and doing something which aligns with my long-term goals is more rewarding than sticking to my comfort zone.

At the moment, my relationship with myself and my goals is still a work in progress. It isn't easy to move away from the doubts I have held long-term, but I believe that if there is something to aim for, it is worth the effort. Regardless of how society makes it seem, we are all worthy of reaching.

- Aisha Basir





Reaching for a face mask or reaching for help

HOW SELF CARE HAS BECOME TOXIC

- Caitlin MacClay

Self-care: the responsibility of an individual in regard to health management without the aid of a medical professional. Somehow this act of simply looking after ourselves has become an estimated \$9.9 billion industry (stats from SmartBrief) and growing as we're told to 'look after ourselves' by going on a walk, taking a bath, or in some extreme cases, go on retreats that can cost thousands of pounds. However, this poses a big problem. For some people, the reason they're in the position to need 'self-care' is due to external factors such as burnout from over-working. Yet rather than turning to professional help, we're told to light a candle and meditate because we should apparently be responsible for our own 'health management'.

Doing a face mask isn't going to get rid of the fact that you have a deadline in 24 hours time that you're nowhere near completing. Drinking a green juice isn't going to make most people's anxieties disappear. So why do we keep reaching for these 'self-care' gimmicks, rather than reaching for actual help?

Going into lockdown saw the emergence of celebrities sharing how they were coping with the new way of life. Alongside many of these social media posts were the shiny products they were promoting, often either their own products, or products they would get commission on. We saw the evolution of self-care reach new heights, going from 'eat good quality meals' and 'go on daily walks' to 'use this

"REACHING FOR HELP, BE IT IN THE FORM OF A FRIEND OR A PROFESSIONAL, NEEDS TO BECOME HOW WE VIEW SELF-CARE RATHER THAN BUYING PRODUCTS THAT ARE ENDORSED BY THE CELEBRITIES THAT FILL UP OUR SOCIAL MEDIA FEEDS."

An example of this is the controversial company Goop, founded by Gwyneth Paltrow, designed to deliver "cutting-edge wellness advice...and a curated shop of clean beauty, fashion and home", as well as posting blog-style entries, including "Self-Care for the Cubicle-Bound". The list details ways that those with office jobs can perform acts of 'self-care' on themselves during the day, including using facial oils and inhaling calming vapours. The meaningful thought may be there, but the overall message is clear: don't look bad at work if you're having a tough time by using our products that will only set you back \$110 and \$44 respectively.

The reality is that for most people going through a hard time, using an expensive facial oil isn't going to help with their problems. Self-care is about the responsibility we have of looking after ourselves but this gets misinterpreted to mean that self-care can only be achieved on our own. Sometimes this is achievable and we can look after ourselves. But now that self-care is being advocated as a form of treatment for mental health issues, this view needs to be changed to the responsibility of looking after ourselves, with or without the help of others.

Reaching for help, be it in the form of a friend or a professional, needs to become how we view self-care rather than buying products that are endorsed by the celebrities that fill up our social media feeds.

I will still use face masks, light candles, and make my favourite foods when I'm stressed. But I will also talk to my friends and family (and if needs be, a therapist) when things become too much. This combination of the two is the true definition of self-care.





RUFARO STYLING X

OXWIB

OxWIB President, Tomisin Osibona, interviews Joy
Mpofu - Vice President at Morgan Stanley and Founder
of Rufaro Styling

PLEASE TELL US A LITTLE BIT ABOUT YOU AND HOW @RUFARO_STYLING CAME ABOUT?

Born in Zimbabwe and growing up and living in the UK and Switzerland; my love of style and fashion has been a consistent thing keeping me confident everywhere I went.

Through my experiences, I have discovered that what I wear is the unspoken language of the workplace. It gives the impression of who you are and what you can bring to the job before a word is spoken.

From studying and completing a degree in law, life has led me to a fulfilling career in investment banking for the past 8 years. I have discovered that with every step I have taken in my career, my wardrobe has evolved to reflect my inner confidence and ambitions.

Which is why I started Rufaro Styling – a workwear blog, focused on empowering women through contemporary workwear whilst building a community of like-minded professionals.

Rufaro means Joy in my native language Shona. I am my brand.

Do you think how one dresses has become more or less important now that most things are taking place in a virtual setting?

Personally, I still believe first impressions count. Even in a virtual environment I think it is important to make an effort. Not only does it impact how you are perceived but also how confident you feel.

I am definitely conscious of maintaining my personal brand even though we have gone virtual and that might mean wearing loungewear during the day, but as soon as I have a virtual meeting, I make an effort to stay on brand and dress appropriately.

Will 'dress to impress' still be a good mantra once we return to the office?

The old adage of dressing for the job you want still holds true to me. If you want to hold your own and be perceived as a serious contender for a top position, you need to dress the part. So important to have a wardrobe that makes you feel good.

How do you show off your personal style within the confines of a dress code?

Whilst it's important to take in the dress constraints of the environment, it's also just as important to feel like the real you at work. So my advice is to find a combination of the two, but lean more heavily to the dress code. For example, if you like colour, then it's no problem to wear a colourful blouse, but pair it with a formal black, grey, or black suit. Alternatively, simply adding a piece of jewellery to a more conservative outfit helps to personalise the look.

How would you describe your workwear style? What is your go to outfit when getting dressed for work?

My style is always evolving and when I buy clothes I always keep in mind how a new item fits with a consistent style. If I was to describe my workwear style in 3 words it would be elegant, chic and feminine. I love a smart blouse, fitted trousers and heels.

How has your corporate style evolved to take comfort into account when working from home?

The meetings may be virtual, but how I am perceived is still real – albeit with some slight adjustments depending on my mood. I am certainly not wearing a pencil skirt or tight dress at the desk, however maintaining some form of work uniform helps me stay focused. My contribution isn't the same when I'm in a tracksuit. !

I invested in the comfiest M&S straight leg joggers (the type that when you stand up on camera it isn't a faux pas) and typically match them with silk blouses or a roll-neck and for the warmer weather – sleeveless wrap tops or sleeveless roll-necks.

'Rufaro means Joy in my native language Shona. I am my brand.'

What would you wear on the first day of an internship to make a good impression?

Virtually

I would wear a simple blouse, something that says I care about this internship but I also acknowledge that I am not in the office – choose a block colour. Some great affordable brands for smart blouses – Massimo Dutti, Zara, Baukjen and – if you want to splurge – The Fold.

Then it's nuanced depending on the type of meeting – if it's a team meeting and your team is pretty casual, you can wear a cardigan or roll-neck; if you are doing a presentation or attending a client meeting I would wear a smart shirt with a blazer. Take your cues from your environment but also be confident to dress smart for all virtual interactions if that is what you enjoy.

In Office

If you're heading into the office, I would suggest a suit for your first day to gauge how formal everyone else is dressed and then revert to smart trousers and a blouse or a structured wrap dress are my favourites.

How do you dress appropriately but still remain cool over the summer?

Look for light fabrics that can breath – I have a love hate relationship with linen but it's my go to fabric. Some other great fabrics are cotton and lyocell.

How do you dress down but still look professional on Casual Fridays?

Casual Friday in an office will always be the hardest look to get right – my fail safe look is a blazer, blouse, jeans and ballet pumps. Any version of that and you are good to go.

Do you always have to wear heels?

PC answer; no...Un-PC answer; I would say it depends where you are working. Buy some comfortable block heels so you feel comfortable while in them.

What is the shortest a dress or skirt should be?

No higher than above the knee!

What would you recommend in terms of shoes, bags, and jewellery for summer internships?

My three must haves for a virtual environment.

Blouses: Invest in well-made blouses that shape your body and make you feel comfortable

Loungewear: Invest in comfortable loungewear that you would feel confident to wear in public – again, just to ensure you still look professional should you have to stand for any reason.

Jewellery: Simple touches of jewellery can elevate your look with minimal effort. A good pair of earrings or a minimal necklace.

Any final workwear dos and don'ts?

DO

Do make sure you feel comfortable with what you are wearing; there is nothing worse than having to readjust your outfit all day and feel self conscious.

Don't wear clothes that would make people distracted - inappropriate cuts. Also strappy tops - still a workwear faux pas.

DON'T

JOY'S STYLE INSPIRATION:




Jessica Pearson from Suits



Anine Bing, the designer

To get contemporary workwear inspiration (both office and virtual), follow Joy:

 @rufaro_styling

 Joy Mpofu.



M&S COLLECTION
Cotton Straight Leg Joggers
£12.50



GOODMOVE
Straight Leg Yoga Joggers
£29.50



MANGO
Flowy blouse
£49.99



Zara
Draped neck blouse
£19.99



& other Stories
Ruffled Mulberry Silk Blouse
£95



& other Stories
Wool Blend Tortoise Button Cardigan
£65



Zara
Basic Blazer
£19.99



Astrid & Miyu
Molten Pendant Necklace in Gold
£65



Monica Vinader
Fine Beaded 16' - 18' Chain
18ct Gold Plated Vermeil
£60

REACHING OUT TO YOUR MIND

I am sure everyone reading this article will have heard about the now very popular term 'mindfulness'. An image of someone meditating, probably with their eyes closed, trying to feel calm and relaxed will come to our mind. But mindfulness is not about finding peace or trying to feel better (both however, happy consequences of practicing), it is 'moment-to-moment awareness of one's experience, without judgement', as defined by The Oxford Mindfulness Centre. Fundamentally, it is a human capacity (we all have it!) that is best understood experientially, as well as conceptually. It is the ability to observe oneself, without trying to change anything. Simply gaining conscience of what is already there, and accepting it.

We live in a frantic world of constant change, unlimited tech resources and overstimulation. It is very easy to lose the sense of self, and not dedicate time to oneself when there are so many other things to be done. With all of these distractions and activities in our lives, it is fundamental to know how to pause to connect with our mind, listen to our bodies and accept whatever it is that we are feeling or experiencing.

I have found mindfulness to be life changing. After completing an 8 week long mindfulness course last term, I can happily say it has become part of my daily routine. It is a way to see life; a choice to live your life in a more aware, stimulating and insightful way. I would love to share all of my experiences with you, but I believe mindfulness to be a journey of personal growth and development. Instead, I want to share three simple practices that you can start to incorporate into your day to day life to experience it yourselves. I encourage you all to try it, even if it's a week long experiment, it is definitely worth it.

10 finger gratitude

Take a minute before going to bed to reflect on the day that has just passed. List 10 good things/ things you are grateful for that have happened that day using your fingers.

On 'good' days, millions will come to mind but make an effort to complete the 10 fingers even if you've had a 'bad' day. Gratitude and appreciation help us practice positivity and see the good side of everything. It is a great way to end the day as we remember the good and enjoy small details that made us smile.

According to Robert Emmons, the world's leading expert on gratitude, there is not one area of life that doesn't improve when we use gratitude as the lens from which to view it. So be thankful, practice positivity, and find joy.

The Three-step Breathing Space

This practice only takes 3 minutes and helps break up your day and give you time to reflect on yourself and your feelings at that instant. It can be useful if you are feeling stressed, angry or just happy. Practice it every day for the next week and you will start to feel a deeper connection with your mind. (But of course, the more the merrier so do it as many times as you can and want!)

How-to: Each step is 1 minute long (use the timer on your phone or just do it for as long as it feels right.) Close your eyes if you can.

Step 1: Observe what is going on in your mind and body right now. What thoughts are around your head? What feelings are here? Any sensations in the body? We're not trying to change anything, but opening up to what is already here.

Step 2: Bring the attention to the breath. Narrow the spotlight of attention to sensations of the breath in the abdomen, tuning into the changing physical sensations of the in breath and out breath for their full duration. If the mind wanders, simply acknowledge where it went and gently escort it back to the breath.

Step 3: Expand the focus of your awareness around the breath to take in the whole body, as if the whole body were breathing now. Become aware of your posture, facial expression, sensations on the surface of the skin and from inside the body. Holding in awareness all the sensations in your body right now, just as they are. Coming home to the body, coming home to this moment.

TIP: 'Link' this practice with something you do every day (ie. drinking coffee/tea or just before a shower), so that it is easier to remember to do it.

Habit releasers and exploring

This is a practice that requires no extra effort. Simply begin to break small habits that you have developed in your day to day- it will help you awaken from the autopilot. Some examples are:

- Walk on the other side of the street than you usually walk on
- Pick a different chair to the one you usually sit on in class/hall.
- Go for a 10 minute walk without a destination- let yourself wander around observing the beauty of your surroundings
- Notice a part of your body as you walk or your clothes rubbing against your skin
- Listen to the birds chirping- don't just hear them!

These small things really shift our perspective of the activity we are carrying out, and make us live and feel the experience as if we had never done it before.

INTERVIEW WITH TAI FAYOSE AND SAM WITTE

Tai is British-Nigerian with a legal background in financial services. She has worked in financial crime and regulatory compliance and is currently the Head of Financial Crime Compliance at the CDC Group.

Sam is a German-Nigerian economist and has experience in working with non-governmental organizations. She is currently completing her PhD in Economics at Oxford and upon graduation, she will be joining an institutional asset manager as an early career investor.

Sam and Tai are inspiring in so many ways. They are always looking to use their achievements and success to empower others and help them uncover their potential. They both have a passion for mentorship and have extensive experience in coaching young adults on self-development. They recently launched AspireXAccess, a mentorship platform which enables young adults to discover and pursue their own paths to success. It was a great honour to welcome them to OxWIB as part of our Inspirational Women Series.

Q. Can you tell us about your background and how you got where you are today?

Sam: I am a German-Nigerian economist, and I was always interested in Nigeria and in exploring the differences in electricity provision across countries. I always took note of that and wanted to do something about it, or at least understand it better. I went to a good high school in Germany and after graduating, I decided to study in London: I was interested in development economics. I was expected to go down a certain route back home, become an architect, a doctor, or a lawyer, and leaving Germany was the first time I did something that was frowned upon. I've ended up on a very unconventional path that is serving my career and life aspirations extremely well. Doing what you want can be uncomfortable at times, but this experience taught me that everything you need to know about your life path is already inside you.

Over the course of my career I have seen young folks in a similar struggle; being dragged in a lot of different directions by a lot of different people and not knowing what they want and where their heart is. That's how AspireXAccess as an idea came about in my mind. I decided I wanted to work with young people and tell show them how to be authentically you, and that everything you need to know about your life is inside you already. I was also preparing to pivot from development economics, having worked with the World Bank and the IMF, to the finance sector. And that was giving me a mix of insecurity and excitement I wasn't sure if it's the right thing to do. A year later, it is becoming clear that this has been right for me. My unconventional, unique path is being acknowledged. So again, this reinforces the fact that the more authentic you are, the easier it is to seize opportunities.

Tai: Wow, I'm always inspired when Sam speaks. I was born in London to Nigerian parents, and both of them are very connected to back home. I speak Yoruba fluently and was very much brought up in a traditional Nigerian home with very high expectations. Unfortunately, given the circumstances when my mother came here, despite her being educated, she did not only do an office job, but had to do odd jobs as well, just so that she could maintain the mortgage to raise five of her children with their required needs. As a consequence of this, I didn't always have access and resources to academic and professional mentors. Separately, I didn't have aunts and uncles working in large corporate institutions or in the legal professions as I used to see on the TV. I remember saying during the Inspirational Women Series interview that I got a lot of my inspirations from watching Law and Order as a young child. I remember thinking "Wow, I want to wear a suit". That's where I would say my access came from. I never had a mentor, or anybody to give me advice on how to do things and approach opportunities in the real world. It's strange that I got so much of my inspiration from watching TV because we always tell young children not to.

I knew I wanted to be a lawyer from quite a young age, I went through the standard education and everything went smoothly. Then at that point, I thought that I wanted to do more, so I decided to do a masters. That was when I came into the whole world around international finance, development, the works of the UN or the World Bank, and I was amazed by it. I realised that I didn't want to work in courts and be a lawyer. I'm very interested in law, but I actually want to work with different types of people – economists, tax specialists, financiers, investors, and lawyers. One of my professors at the time at Queen Mary's suggested regulatory compliance because it keeps you referencing law and regulation but also exposes you to different types of professions and skills which was great. It is from that point on that I never looked back. I decided that I wanted to get into compliance and work in an investment management firm. That was it, and here I am today.

I am still learning, as we all are. I faced many challenges, professionally in terms of finding my feet, what profession I wanted to pursue, how I wanted to be perceived and come across. And there's always that conflict from coming from an African background where we tend to be very direct, so learning how to read the room and be politically correct was a very interesting journey.. I had to apply myself in so many ways, and a lot of it has been quite challenging because I never had the support, the mentors, and the right access in that way to bring me to where I am today – I've had to do a lot of self-development and self-learning. All in all, I am grateful for my background and a dedicated mother without whom I would not have the self-drive, motivation and determination to be where I am today.

Q. What inspired you to found AspireXAccess?

Tai: For me, everything started with Sam's LinkedIn post which was very specific around assisting youth in Nigeria. I've always has a passion to have impact and help others, and used to do it privately, so I was interested in sharing the insights from my professional experiences with Sam.

My personal belief is that things happen for a reason. And the encounter I've had with Sam, from that post on LinkedIn to where we are today, feels almost like it was ordained by someone. When we spoke on the phone for the first time, we immediately started aligning on views. I was talking to Sam about coming from an area in East London that's considered disadvantaged, the secondary school I went to, and the challenges that I faced. One of the things I wanted to do is go back to where I grew up, and Sam thought that was a great idea. She grew up in Germany and wanted to understand how the London system works.

I think the partnership that Sam and I have works because we bring two very distinct experiences and perspectives into it. She's had a lot of experience when it comes to access which I didn't have, and I bring that experience of not having access. And opposites do attract. Some of the things we have in common is that we want to have impact, we want to give back, and we see ourselves as fortunate, and that birthed AspireXAccess. It's a truly beautiful story.

Sam: I don't think we've ever talked about it in that way – someone with access and someone without access coming together, it's a very astute observation. AspireXAccess has taught me that you never have to wait to become "successful" according to some objective definition, like reaching the peak of your career, to start giving back. AspireXAccess is not me giving back, it's really a part of my identity. I come from a background where I almost didn't get into this really good high school in Germany, that's what the LinkedIn post Tai was referring to is about. A tiny chance event changed the course of my life at this critical juncture. Followed by hard work and sweat.

So the reason why I came from an access background and Tai less so is by chance. It was determined by a few moments. We ended up living up to the challenge and expectations. And the reason why I say it is that it's important for people to understand that if you're authentically doing your thing, things will come out of it that serve the community. You just follow your heart and good things will happen.
Hhh

Q. Could you expand on your vision for AspireXAccess?

Tai: Sam and I would like to stress that AspireXAccess is not a Black Lives Matter initiative. Another beautiful thing about Sam is that she is mixed-race. Everything she represents is togetherness. For us all lives matter. I went to a comprehensive school and we had disadvantaged people from many different backgrounds. To me, all of those people need to be touched. A key aspect of AspireXAccess is that it's about all backgrounds and races - not one specific race.

Sam: Exactly. One of the first things we said about AspireXAccess is that this is not about racial lines. It's the socioeconomics that determine where you end up in life. The skin colour coincides with it at times, we know that certain groups tend to be disadvantaged. But in the UK, a lot of white kinds are highly disadvantaged but do not get talked about because it's not currently fashionable to be white and poor. Hence Tai and I do not subscribe to that idea.

Q. What are the values you would like to promote through your platform?

Tai: Respect. By respect I mean respecting each other, respecting yourself, your values and your background, and bringing all that to the table. It's really interesting because a value can have so many different interpretations depending on where you come from and what you care about. But I think the values of self-love, honesty, and integrity in everything that you do are key. One of the things we are going to be asking our mentees is "What do you care about?". It's important to really think about who you are and stay true to yourself which is what AspireXAccess will bring out.

Sam: To build on that, since Tai you mentioned to "bring out", the other value that we're trying to promote is to have values. Don't try to be a complete blank canvas that different institutions can put their stamp on. Have your own values and have your backbone, because then you'll know how to make those difficult decisions when you need to. For example, there will be moments when things might get a bit unethical. I was working on a collaborative project and I found that it wasn't in line with my scientific standards. If you don't have your values, you'll just want to do what's expedient. I found it best to break off that collaboration.

Tai: One of the things I took away from my secondary school, which was a comprehensive school, was their motto which was "success comes through effort and determination". It's a beautiful motto because it can be read in different ways depending on your values, and it lives with me until today. I remember when being younger, success meant passing my exams, whereas now as a professional, success to me comes through the effort and determination I put into building up my team. My notion of success has moved from being about myself to now being about empowering our mentees at AspireXAccess, empowering the junior staff I'm hiring, and giving them the tools to enable them. To me that is success, and effort and determination is what I put in to make that success a reality.

Q. What does mentorship mean to you and why is it important?

Sam: To us, mentorship is not a hierarchical thing. We use the words mentor and mentee for organisational purposes. By some it is interpreted as the mentee being helped by the mentor. However, this is not it. Mentees have their innate abilities, as everyone has their potential. But there are a lot of layers that have been added to that - expectations, false values, pressure, and lies about what it takes to do well in life – which start to strangle the individual. What the mentor-mentee relationship does at AspireXAccess and hopefully beyond that, is to break off those layers of concrete and let the person shine. Nothing speaks louder than letting a person shine and do well.

WHAT WE'VE LEARNED ON THE ANNIVERSARY OF ONLINE LEARNING

-Yingsu Mao

A decade ago, the growing presence of MOOCs painted a rosy outlook of ground-breaking expansion in the reach of education. For the first time, tens of thousands of students from Spain to India gathered in the immense virtual classroom of MIT. Those who could not afford the time and cost of full-time education accessed engaging videos from home at their own pace. Many predicted with enthusiasm that online learning would bring a revolution to education, making quality courses equally available to everyone.

Fast forward to 2021, and the golden words "online learning" seem to have lost much of their appeal. One year on from when the pandemic forced almost all the schools to reach their students via the Internet, virtual education has failed to embody the once lauded democratisation of education. Mentioning "online learning" brings to mind the endless lecture videos, Internet breakdowns in tutorials, and Zoom socials where screenshots serve as group pictures. Students from across the educational spectrum are yearning for the return to the traditional classroom experience.

They have good reasons to yearn for the traditional methods. The mass experiment of entirely remote education has exposed several issues that had gone unnoticed when online learning was in its infancy. Students complain about the difficulties of concentrating in front of the screen all day long, which is particularly challenging for younger children. According to an ONS report, 52% of parents with school-aged children said a child in their household was struggling to continue their education at home. 77% of these parents gave lack of motivation as one of the reasons. The virtual social life that comes with completely online education hardly makes things better. ONS surveys among university students found over half of the respondents dissatisfied or very dissatisfied with their social experience in autumn 2020. As a result, it is no surprise that over half of university students agreed that their mental health had worsened during the pandemic,² while 43% of homeschooling parents reported that it was negatively affecting the well-being of their children.

Apart from negative well-being implications, the democratising impact of online learning is also being reconsidered. Instead of applauding the widening reach of education, critics are worried about the worsening digital divide. When the first lockdown struck, private schools were generally more prepared to move their teaching online than state schools. In a survey by Teacher Tapp back in March 2020, 69% of teachers in independent schools were able to broadcast a video lesson, compared with only 40% of those at state schools. Even when teachers manage to post learning materials online, students may struggle to access them. According to the estimate of America's education department, nearly one in eight American children do not have a desktop or laptop at home. The situation is only worse for students in lower-income countries such as Uganda, where some adolescent girls have started working instead and might never return to school at all. Furthermore, poorer students who successfully access remote learning are still more likely to fall behind. A study by researchers at Harvard and Brown universities shows that good grades in tests on Zearn, an online maths platform, were correlated with the median household income in the student's neighbourhood.⁴

Nevertheless, some remain optimistic about the future of online learning. They point out that many of the concerns are results of the unprepared transition compelled by the pandemic. Indeed, surveys suggest that schools are much more confident with remote teaching under the second lockdown than the first. Teachers are more likely to hold live lessons, and schoolchildren are putting in more work per day. This fuels the confidence that problems with online learning can and will be addressed, leaving it free to fulfil its previous promise of broadening the reach of quality education.

Such optimism is partly reflected in the boom of online learning platforms during the pandemic. The move from prestigious universities into online teaching has added a layer of respectability. The rapid change in the world also drives the demand for new skills to stay competitive in the turbulent job market. On the supply side, universities are more willing to cooperate with online learning platforms to serve students around the globe. These factors have given online learning platforms further confidence to expand their business models, although most are yet to be profitable. Coursera, for example, has planned to raise up to \$100m through an initial public offering.

Looking back on the anniversary of mass online learning, the past year has sparked some previously unimagined scepticism around the model. However, this might have also been a rare opportunity to experiment with online learning on a massive scale. Seldom have students from the UK to Japan had such a common experience that they can all relate to and handily employ in any small talk. Hopefully, the year of online learning will mean more than a shared experience. If thoroughly examined, it could be a universal source of lessons to improve the reach of education in the future.

Mentorship Programme

Helping students reach their goals

The Oxford Women in Business International Mentorship programme is the society's newest initiative. It aims to build connections between women in established careers and female students studying at the University of Oxford.

Having been on the mentorship programme for the past two cycles, I've had the pleasure of having two caring and wonderful mentors who gave me great advice on navigating my career options and shattering misperceptions about certain career paths. Highly recommend signing up for this mentorship programme if you're feeling lost about your career options or would just like to hear from someone who's established in your field of interest!

- Calista Chong

Experienced women from various different sectors connect with and help students through career development, while ultimately forming a long lasting professional relationship. The programme therefore aims to benefit both the mentors and mentees involved. Having run the scheme successfully in the Trinity and Michaelmas Term of 2020, we are confident that the programme has a meaningful impact on participants.



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Any current or former student of the University of Oxford can join. If you have graduated, simply select 'Alumni' under 'Degree Type' and you will receive updates about what OxWIB is up to.

DO I NEED TO BE A WOMAN?

Absolutely not! Members who do not identify as female are welcome to our socials and speaker series, which aim to highlight prominent women across a range of industries. You can also receive tailored career opportunities for which you are eligible.

DOES MEMBERSHIP COST ANYTHING?

No, membership is completely free. All of our events are hosted with the generosity of our sponsors. You can read more about them [here](#).



Events Programme

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Week 0

WED OxWIB x OSG: Introduction to Consulting

Week 1

WED Representation Counts Coffee Chat
FRI Drop-in: Summer in Oxford

Week 2


MON Inspirational Women: Fanny Bourdette-Donon
THU Jumpstart panel and Q&A
FRI Women in Fashion panel

Week 3

WED Drop-in: Wellness Wednesday ;
Pink Week Karaoke Night x OU
FRI From idea to start-up: An Entrepreneurship Masterclass

Week 4

TUE Inspiration Women: Jaqueline Gold
WED Wisser Academy Presentation
THU Confidence Workshop
FRI Women in Music panel





Events Programme

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Week 5

THU Drop-in: Meet the Committee

Week 6

Week 7

WED Drop-in: Sharing our planet

Week 8

Please note that event dates are subject to change. For the most up-to-date information, check out our Facebook page at facebook.com/oxwib





OxWIB

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NINTH EDITION

