

President, Professor Sir Paul Curran's speech at The Rector's Dinner, Mansion House, 1st April 2019



Rector, Chair of Council, My Lord, Sheriffs, Ladies and Gentlemen.

It is an honour to be leading this great university and a privilege to be at the helm in this, its 125th anniversary year. We are proud to be the only university in London to be both committed to academic excellence and focused on business and the professions. Some 20,000 students are studying with us, of whom around 40 percent are postgraduates, 40 percent are from overseas and almost half of our exceptionally able undergraduates are from the most disadvantaged areas of London.

City has certainly come a long way since the Chair of our Governing Body, Charles Dorman, laid our foundation stone in Clerkenwell's Northampton Square on the 9th July 1894. London, at that time, was the world's largest and arguably most powerful city, located at the heart of a major industrial nation and an Empire that spanned the globe. The country had a huge balance of payments surplus, minimal levels of unemployment and commentators of the day portrayed a confident, entrepreneurial Britain fizzing with invention and innovation. They also portrayed a socially unjust London with conspicuous wealth juxtaposed with low wages and grinding poverty; and a commercial London stymied by its under-skilled workforce. Against that backdrop there emerged a consensus around harnessing academic excellence in the service of business, the professions and society. The laying of that foundation stone, 125 years ago, was a commitment to that very consensus.

Clerkenwell, at the time, was a maze of small workshops for clockmaking, electroplating and engineering, interspersed with the occasional furrier, tailor and carrier. The recent Royal Commission on London's Housing had reported that although the area surrounding Northampton Square was inhabited by the 'better classes of the very poor', they lived in slum housing, with families of between six or seven to a room and were plagued by the evocatively termed 'rent racking', where unscrupulous middlemen increased rent slowly and continuously until the tenant

moved on. Chronic drunkenness was common, with The Lord Mayor, Sir Horatio Davies, observing bluntly that the founding of a new institution would: “benefit working men and women not simply for its educational role but because it would also serve to keep young people out of the public houses”.

Many individuals can be credited with linking academic excellence, business, the professions and society in the early days of, what was to become, City. However, two stand above the rest: William Compton and Robert Mullineux Walmsley. Born on his family’s country estate, Lord Compton, the second son of the 4th Marquis of Northampton, went to Eton and Cambridge prior to a series of Foreign Office postings. In November 1883 he decided, for reasons we will never know, to tour his family’s Clerkenwell estate. Those shocking few days were to give purpose and direction to the rest of the young man’s life. He went on to campaign for improved housing and social justice as a local councillor, London County Councillor and Liberal Member of Parliament. More importantly for us, he was appointed to our Governing Body and convinced his father to initiate improvements to local housing and release the centre of Northampton Square for public open space and its corner for our first building. This contribution is marked with a plaque on the Northampton Square side of that very building.

The second individual was Dr Robert Mullineux Walmsley, the institution’s first Principal. He was a graduate of the University of London and joined from what was to become Herriot-Watt University where, as its first professor of electrical engineering, he had become a passionate advocate for the business, professional and societal benefits that could follow in the wake of academic excellence. He recruited high calibre academics with industrial or business experience, he promoted high quality research and he prepared the most talented students for examinations of the University of London. To link academia directly with business and the professions, he pioneered the sandwich course and this remains, by far, his greatest claim to fame. Even in those early days Robert’s dream was for his institution to join the University of London and in 1924, at the age of 70, he submitted our first application. Sadly, later that year and on his way home, he descended from a tram, was hit by a car and died of his injuries. He left a legacy that lives on today in City’s use of academic excellence in the service of business, the professions and society and more recently, of course, in our membership of the University of London.

At the celebration of our 100th Anniversary in 1994 the then Vice-Chancellor, Professor Raoul Franklin celebrated all that had been achieved by setting our pursuit of academic excellence in the context of London’s needs and went on to predict that with almost 7,000 students at City ‘the huge general expansion in student numbers cannot continue into the next century’. With such a reasonable but ultimately flawed forecast to reflect on, I am not even tempted to offer a parting prediction for my successor to use on our 150th Anniversary.

Thank you.

President, Professor Sir Paul Curran's speech at The Rector's Dinner, Mansion House, 12th April 2018



Rector, Chair of Council, Sheriffs, Ladies and Gentlemen.

It is an honour and a privilege to be leading this great University of ours at a time of such significant change in higher education. For there can be few institutions so important for the success and wellbeing of a country and the development of its people, or simply “more beautiful than a university” as Poet Laureate, John Masefield wrote in his 1946 tribute. We certainly have come a long way since our Victorian founding fathers established our institution in an impoverished Islington square. Their mission was to provide a ‘place of learning’ and their vision was of an accessible, outward-facing institution, responsive to the needs of this great capital city and the world beyond. Accessibility was facilitated by lowering the barriers of social class, gender and location, with recruiting posters, across London, calling for ‘young men and women of the poorer classes’ to join a college at a convenient location on St John Street. This widening of access continues today; and I’m proud to say that almost half of our exceptionally able UK undergraduates are drawn from some of the most disadvantaged areas of London.

Tonight, however, I want to dwell on those other two components of Victorian accessibility – gender and location. This year we celebrate the 150th anniversary of the admission of the first women to UK higher education and the institution they joined was the University of London. Against that local background, women were considered explicitly in the design of our building, our social facilities and the attractiveness of our courses with, for example, optional sessions in domestic subjects and women’s trades under the pastoral guidance of a Lady Superintendent. However, our primarily scientific and technical courses were for men only and only men were registered for a University of London degree.

This year we also celebrate the centenary of the end of the First World War, in which over two thousand of our staff and students joined the colours; the Representation of the People Act, that gave some women the vote and a new social order, in the wake of both. However, an influx of ex-

soldiers, coupled with the expansion of pioneering new courses such as aeronautical engineering and optics, caused a sharp decline in the proportion of women students. Our second Principal, recruited in the mid 1920s, intended to address this gender imbalance by means of affirmative action. Advertising for women students didn't work; and reduced fees for women students didn't work; but spending time talking to parents of single women employed in nearby Clerkenwell factories did the trick and Marjorie Bell joined us as our first woman engineering student. She was not allowed to be a member of the student engineering society, or even enter the student common room. But Marjorie's quiet tenacity turned the tide and by the time she graduated in 1934 many other women were reading for degrees in engineering. She progressed to a distinguished career, was decorated for wartime service, was a leading light in the Institution of Electrical Engineers and her generous bequest supports women engineering students at City. That brings me back to our founding fathers' belief in the link between location and educational accessibility.

Our latest estate project, an iconic new building for our integrated Law School, has shed new light on our location; as we were not the first to build on its site. The first structure can be dated to 1642, when London took the side of Parliament, the King raised his banner of arms at Nottingham Castle and the Civil War started. In response, and over a period of two hectic years, the City of London Corporation, led by the Lord Mayor of London, Alderman Isaac Pennington; his influential Sheriffs, Aldermen Thomas Andrews and John Langham; and around 20,000 Londoners, built the largest fortifications known in Europe at the time. They comprised a huge earth rampart, forts and redoubts that provided a line of defence, across open fields, well outside London Wall. This massive feat of civil engineering passed through what is now our new Law School site, with Mount Mill Fort positioned imposingly at its centre. The road network constructed to supply this strategically important fort was to provide the blueprint for major transport links that followed and made that impoverished Islington square the obvious place for our Victorian founding fathers to locate their accessible campus.

The broadly-based City of today is built on their aspirations. Well over half of our 19,500 students are women, over a third are postgraduate and almost half hail from outside the UK. The past few years have seen significant change; we have more than doubled the proportion of our staff producing world-leading or internationally excellent research, transformed our campus, increased the satisfaction of our students by more than any other university in the country and joined the University of London. As for the future; we are continuing to focus on quality, we are growing in a way that maintains or strengthens our quality and we are doing this in partnership with others, within City, within London and across the world. Never forgetting that for over 120 years we have sought to serve as a 'place of learning'. For that is the real beauty of a university, defined so well by John Masefield, as "a place where those who hate ignorance may strive to know, where those who perceive truth may strive to make others see; where seekers and learners alike, banded together in the search for knowledge, will honour thought in all its finer ways".

Thank you.

President, Professor Sir Paul Curran's speech at The Rector's Dinner, Mansion House, 4th April 2017



My Lord Mayor, Chair of Council, My Lords, Aldermen, Sheriff, Ladies and Gentlemen.

As our presence in Mansion House reminds us, City, University of London is the university of the City of London and its fortunes are entwined with the rise, occasional stumble and rise again of this great city. One of London's undoubted low points was the great fire of 1666. Sir Christopher Wren, while rebuilding St Paul's, asked a workman to bring him some rubble to mark the corner of what was to be his new dome. The workman hauled over the nearest piece and by great coincidence, inscribed on it, in Latin, was the word, Resurgam -- "May I Rise Again." That phrase captures the optimistic spirit of London from the lows of chronic Victorian social conditions, the blitz of the Second World War and the economic stagnation of the 1970s. And our university has certainly benefited by being part of this long journey to London's current status as one of the world's most significant concentrations of economic activity and most desirable and visited of cities.

Along with our founding in 1894 and receipt of our Royal Charter in 1966, 2016 was one of the most important years in our history. The world could see that City's fortunes were on the rise. In just a few years we had more than doubled the proportion of our staff producing world-leading and internationally excellent research, modernised our campus and come back into financial surplus. Most importantly, we had increased the satisfaction of our students by more than any other university in the country. In 2016 we not only signaled City's new standing but were also admitted as an autonomous member of the University of London, confirmed our collective ambition to become a leading global university and agreed our plan to get there. Today, we are maintaining our unwavering focus on quality, we are growing in a way that maintains or strengthens quality and we are doing this in partnership with others, within City, within London and across the world. Moreover, we are creating a campus that mirrors this new standing, ambition and confidence.

Only a few days ago Her Royal Highness, The Princess Royal opened our magnificent front entrance and pavilion and by the summer we will break ground on our new Law School building and start to

plan for a remodeled Cass Business School. I am exceptionally proud of what my colleagues have achieved down the years. However, City's resurgence did not happen in splendid isolation. Standing right here at our Centenary celebration in 1994 one of my predecessors Professor Raoul Franklin noted that: "City's future is inextricably bound to the prospects for London as a great international City". And captured, in just a sentence, the interwoven fortunes of our university, London and the rest of the world. It is important to remember that back in 1994 Greater London's population of almost 7 million was around 2 million below its pre-Second World War peak but was starting to increase. The rapid decline in manufacturing jobs had stabilised, IRA bombing was in decline, economic growth had exceeded one per cent, for the first time in five years, major infrastructure projects such as the Channel Tunnel were coming to fruition and London was recovering from its Graham Greene image of seedy bedsits, coin-operated electricity meters and chipped whisky glasses. However, critical commentators of the day held that major cities were increasingly on the wrong side of history, that the computing revolution would remove the reason to live in them and that London would soon be leftover baggage from the industrial era with a destiny similar to that of Babylon, Samarkand or Constantinople.

In the intervening years, of course, London has risen and transformed itself into a post-industrial and liveable metropolis, housing almost one in every five UK jobs and with a population soon to reach 9 million. The powerful combination of increased opportunity, prosperity and immigration that drove this rise in London's fortunes has also been a contributory factor in our university's success. London now enjoys a higher proportion of graduates and more international students than any other major city in the world and a faster rate of school improvement and a much greater proportion of young people progressing to higher education than any other part of the country.

Today, as we know, Brexit, immigration controls, housing costs, air quality and our increasing social distance from the rest of the country challenge the continuing rise of London and as a consequence, of City. However, if history has taught us anything, it is that the great glory of London is not in never stumbling but in rising in a different and more successful guise each and every time it does so.

Thank you.

Vice-Chancellor, Professor Sir Paul Curran's speech at The Chancellor's Dinner, Mansion House, 20th April 2016



My Lord Mayor, Your Royal Highness, Pro-Chancellor, My Lord, Sheriffs, Ladies and Gentlemen.

I stand here at the heart of the greatest capital city in the world. The phenomenal success of London has been attributed to many factors but one stands above all others and that is talent. London can lay claim to the greatest concentration of talented people on the planet. It has a higher proportion of graduates than any other major city, which is underpinned by more world-leading higher education institutions than anywhere else. London is a city that attracts global talent and where global talent can find opportunity. Moreover, it has maintained its excitement down the ages, it was Charlotte Brontë who captured it so well when she said: "I like this spirit of this great London which I feel (all) around me. Who but a coward would pass his whole life in hamlets?"

City University London has been an integral part of London's success story and 2016 is a key date in our history. This is the year in which we celebrate the anniversary of our Royal Charter; join the University of London and launch our ambitious strategic plan to take City to 2026 and beyond. The evening is marked, uniquely by the presence of two Chancellors. Alderman, The Lord Mountevans, Lord Mayor of London and the fiftieth Chancellor of City University London and Her Royal Highness, The Princess Royal and tenth Chancellor of the University of London. The baton will pass imperceptibly between them during the summer when Her Majesty the Queen fixes the Royal Seal to our new charter and we become City, comma, University of London. It has been a great honour and a personal privilege to lead our great University through a period of unprecedented change. We have, in just five years, doubled the proportion of our academic staff producing world-leading and internationally excellent research, modernised our campus and I'm delighted to say, increased the satisfaction of our students by more than any other University in the country.

One thing that hasn't changed is our purpose. What we do day in, day out, year in and year out is to transform the lives of around 20,000 students, create new knowledge, use our expertise to support business and the professions and of course, contribute to the global good of society.

City's story started in the 1880s. London had become the world's largest and arguably the most powerful city but suffered from binge drinking and skill shortages. The response was a Draconian alcohol tax that was hypothecated to match-fund the establishment or development of ten advanced educational institutions across the capital. They included Birkbeck, which was to focus on part-time learning, Battersea, which was to focus on science and became the University of Surrey and Northampton, which was to focus on engineering and became City University London. Our matched funding came from the Marquess of Northampton, Earl Compton his son and the City's Livery Companies. The Islington-based institution opened its doors in 1894. Our early growth was based on students, from some of the poorest areas of London, who read for a University of London degree in engineering. This was to change in the aftermath of the Second World War when our fortunes and those of the capital became ever more closely entwined.

As London grew, we grew as a College of Advanced Technology and then as a University but were stopped in our tracks by major cuts to higher education funding in the early 1980s. In response, City retrenched, consolidated and concentrated its efforts on business and the professions, international and masters students. This was aided by the acquisition of St Bartholomew School of Nursing and the Inns of Court School of Law and very close alignment with the needs of a rapidly changing London. Before long, we had the largest postgraduate law, postgraduate journalism and postgraduate speech & language provision in the country and we tracked the capital's rise as it became the world-leading centre for business and finance.

Our Cass Business School is now among the global elite of business schools with accreditation from all three quality agencies and an MBA ranked among the world's best. Today, our capital has around 50,000 academic staff, is a magnet for research funding and is home to more international students than any other city in the world. Since Victorian times City's students, staff and supporters have sought to play their part in London's success. At the celebration of our centenary in 1994, my predecessor, Professor Raoul Franklin noted: "City's future is inextricably bound to the prospects for London as a great international City. The full networking of London-based institutions has yet to be achieved and the tremendous potential strength of London as a centre for education is not fully realised". Joining in partnership with our friends at the world-renowned University of London will, I'm sure, help us to realise that tremendous potential.

Thank you.

Vice-Chancellor, Professor Paul Curran's speech at The Chancellor's Dinner, Mansion House, 22nd April 2015



Chancellor, Pro-Chancellor, My Lords, Aldermen, Sheriffs, Ladies and Gentlemen.

It is an honour and privilege to be leading our great University through a period of unprecedented change in both our performance and our partnerships. I am pleased to say that one thing which hasn't changed is our purpose. What City does day in, day out, year in and year out is to transform the lives of around 20,000 students, create new knowledge and use our expertise to support business and the professions.

I started my first speech at this event some four years ago by talking about our early history. We started life in Victorian times as a venture supported by Livery Companies, with core funding based on a mix of philanthropy and a tax on strong drink. The aim was to combine public improvement and advanced education using a model that had been pioneered by our neighbour; Queen Mary. An educational charity and board were established in 1891 to guide this early development along with the development of similar institutions in the vicinity, most notably, Birkbeck. I noted that in a little over a century and from a single London Square, City is now positioned among the top five percent of universities in the world; that we aspired to be the only university in London to be both committed to academic excellence and focused on business and the professions and that we needed to prepare ourselves for the regulatory, financial and competitive storm that was coming our way.

At that time, the need for us to change, the urgency of that change and fortunately, the direction of that change were very evident. We therefore defined where we were, in terms of quantitative indicators, decided exactly where we wanted to be in similar terms and swiftly implemented a Plan to take us there. The Plan involved investment in 280 outstanding members of academic staff from around the world; renewal of our infrastructure; revitalisation of our estate and changes to our ways of working. We are still on that journey and it's going rather well.

The entry grades and satisfaction of our students have never been higher, our research grant and contract income has never higher and the quality of our estate has never been higher. For example, only last month we opened the largest student sports facility in central London, hot on the heels of several refurbished buildings and six innovative underground lecture theatres.

Of all our achievements though, our most challenging has been to balance our books after seven years in deficit and our most significant has been that of doubling the proportion of our academic staff undertaking world-leading or internationally excellent research. At the end of last year, the Government's Research Excellence Framework confirmed that in terms of research quality we were the most improved university, per funding council pound, of any in the UK. And last month this was translated into a welcome increase in our core research funding. However, effecting such a rapid change in City's performance was in many ways easier than the less tangible and much longer-term challenge of repositioning ourselves in terms of both our internal partnerships and our external partnerships.

At the start of our journey in 2010, City University London was a federation of very successful Schools. Each could be observed to have a strong history, identity and culture and to operate as independent small stars in the broader academic firmament. However, the market-driven pressures of the previous decade had clearly made this a rather isolating, unsafe and expensive place to be. Our clear challenge continues to be that of working in partnership: internally, with ourselves and externally, with like-minded universities in this great capital city of ours. Internal partnership is, of course, crucial if, to quote Aristotle: "The whole is to be greater than the sum of its parts"; while developing and fostering external partnership within London has been a very public aspiration of City since as long ago as 1924. For example, at the time of City's centenary celebrations in 1994 the Vice-Chancellor of the day, Professor Raoul Franklin noted that: "City's future is inextricably bound to the prospects for London as a great international City. The full networking of London-based institutions has yet to be achieved. The tremendous potential strength of London as a centre for education is not fully realised".

Our two-step ambition, first to work together as 'one City' and then, in partnership with others will take rather longer to achieve than the somewhat swifter change in performance I described at the beginning of my speech. Fortunately, we have many inspiring examples of this journey of partnership to learn from. Some of the best-documented examples are the coming together of communities, states and cities to form strong countries that are then eager to form alliances and unions with other like-minded countries. We tend to think of Latin American countries such as Brazil, which used a mix of politics, patriotism and the power of personality to move from isolated autonomous states to their current position, as a strong partner within the Latin American trading bloc.

The British Museum's excellent and very recent exhibition on Germany provides an example much closer to home. The exhibition was curated around that country's complex transition from a group of powerful and independent Hanseatic League cities that came together in the 19th century and emerged from the 20th century as a confident nation at the heart of Europe. We will, of course, maintain our purpose, as that is what we do; we will further increase our performance, as that will benefit those we serve. However, we will continue to increase our emphasis on partnership within City and partnership beyond City. For it was Sir Winston Churchill who noted that: "If we are together nothing is impossible".

Thank you.

Vice-Chancellor, Professor Paul Curran's speech at The Chancellor's Dinner, Mansion House, 23rd April 2014



Chancellor, Pro-Chancellor, Your Excellency, My Lords, Aldermen, Sheriffs, Ladies and Gentlemen.

It is an honour and a singular privilege to be leading this great University of ours at a time of significant transformation. The University of today bears scant relation to the Islington institution that opened its doors some hundred and twenty years ago this year. The city it served was so very different. London was the largest and arguably the most powerful city in the world but was on the cusp of fundamental change. If there is one event above all others that captures the character of that very particular era for me, it must be the 'Great Horse Manure Crisis of 1894'. It occurred because the capital's flourishing economy was stymied by a pre-industrial transportation system based on over 100,000 horses.

Into this vibrant global city was born an academic institution with a commitment, as its motto says, to serve mankind. And it achieved this by joining in partnership with others. One of the earliest examples was a pre-First World War collaboration between lecturer, Frederick Handley Page and the national Aeronautical Society that led to the best aeronautics course in the world and the country's first publicly-traded aircraft manufacturing company. We have remained true to the spirit of our founders and today are the only university in London to be both committed to academic excellence and focused on business and the professions.

This powerful combination has served us exceptionally well. We are among the top five per cent of universities in the world, recruit independently of social and financial background and maintain our top ten ranking for student employability. We are now building on the success of this position with a vision of moving the University into the global elite. John Ruskin encouraged us to: "Dream lofty dreams and as you dream so shall you become. Your vision is the promise of what you shall at last unveil." And although painful at times that is exactly what has been happening at City.

In only a few years we have more than doubled the number of academic staff producing research of international quality; increased markedly the qualifications of our incoming students, our grant income and our various rankings; and have done so while decreasing our costs, revitalising our estate and focusing explicitly on the needs of our students. And I am pleased to say that the satisfaction of City's students is now the most improved of any university in England. However, one thing has not changed - our greatest achievements are still in partnership with others. Of course our oldest partnership is with the City of London and like all great partnerships is based on friendship. For as Aristotle reminds us: "Friendship is essentially a partnership." This partnership is visible through our strong links with the Livery Companies and through The Lord Mayor who serves as our Chancellor.

There are a multitude of less visible partnerships but one of which I am particularly proud is our joint sponsorship of the City of London Academy Islington. This was a struggling school. But we have worked collaboratively with an exceptional Head and senior team who have almost doubled the proportion of their A to C GCSE grades. Nowhere is partnership more obvious than in our research. In recent years our outstanding academic staff, again working with others, have developed colour vision tests for airline pilots; oxygen monitors for infants; and software to test for eye disease, the safety of nuclear power plants and the matching of DNA profiles. They have changed the law in relation to equality and influenced national policy on issues from care homes to employee ownership to the food we eat. It is humbling to think that an increase in the capacity of every hard disc in the world and a decrease in both the steel used for new buildings and the world's consumption of electricity can be attributed to collaborative research undertaken right here at City.

When our partnerships really come into their own is when we take what we do exceptionally well, work with others and generate something completely new for the greater good. For example, we are working with a media company to provide a novel pop-up university in the heart of London's Tech City, Europe's fastest growing hi-tech cluster. The university pops up every Wednesday evening to provide interactive learning for young entrepreneurs while their innovative companies undertake research with our staff, employ our students, stay on the cutting edge and thrive.

Also, in partnership with sponsors we run the unique Olive Tree Programme, which enables exceptionally able Israeli and Palestinian students to read for a degree at City. They work together, learn together and return to be leaders in their communities. As I discovered on a recent visit, the good will this programme generates for City, London and the UK in both Israel and the Palestinian Territories is enormous. Throughout its hundred and twenty year history City University London is proud to have worked in partnership with so many and has been successful in doing so. As Henry Ford noted: "If everyone is moving forward together then success takes care of itself."

Thank you.

Vice-Chancellor, Professor Paul Curran's speech at The Chancellor's Dinner, Mansion House, 10th April 2013



Chancellor, Pro-Chancellor, My Lords, Aldermen, Sheriff, Ladies and Gentlemen.

It is a great honour and a singular privilege to be leading this great University of ours at a time of significant transformation for higher education as a whole and for City in particular. I am exceptionally grateful to our many friends in the City of London and beyond who continue to offer advice and support. As Shakespeare said: "A friend is one that knows you as you are, understands where you have been, accepts what you have become, and still, gently allows you to grow." This evening I'll not talk about the issues of the day; although I would like to take this opportunity to acknowledge the passing of one of our most illustrious Law alumni - Baroness Thatcher. May she rest in peace.

I want to use this opportunity to reflect on the challenge City has always faced of maintaining a healthy balance between the practical and the academic. City was established in Victorian times to meet the educational needs of Clerkenwell, which was packed to overflowing with small workshops for watch and clock making, electroplating and mechanical engineering and also for the manufacture of an item of gentleman's clothing invented by the eponymous local tailor Jacob Trouser. The founders of the fledgling institution contrasted the pressing and practical needs of the economy with the academic world of ideas, scholarship and abstract thought. They realised, most wisely, that a suitable balance would not be struck by chance. Their inspired response was to work with employers not only to create an infrastructure of buildings and practical courses but also to populate them with those whose feet were firmly on the ground but whose head was often in the clouds. These early recruits were exceptionally bright but poorly prepared local students, many of whom progressed to University of London degrees and enthusiastic, practical but typically idiosyncratic academic staff.

In 1896 Dr Charles Vickery Drysdale, an Electronic Engineer, was one of the first lecturers to be appointed. While he taught what was he always dreamed of what may be. His contributions to optics saw him elected as President of the Optical Society; his development of sonar depth sounding

saw him appointed as Scientific Director for the Admiralty and his publications on the link between population control and world peace saw him appointed as President of the globally influential neoMalthusian conferences of the 1920s. However, he will be forever remembered as the founder of the Family Planning Association. A City building carries his name, as does the country's first family planning centre in Southwark. Drysdale and his contemporaries lived City's creative tension between the utilitarian and the abstract, the local and the international, the instrumental and the intellectual. At the level of City, this balance has been and still is, contested and very mobile.

Two of the larger post-war moves have been towards academia in the 1950s as College of Advanced Technology status was achieved and towards business and the professions in the 1980s when government funding plummeted. The balance struck over the past two decades has served the University particularly well. Today, we are a confident institution numbering some 17,500 students and over 2,000 outstanding staff. City is ranked within the top 5% of Universities in the world, the top 30 in the UK and the top 10 in the UK for both student employability and starting salaries. But this balance is unlikely to serve us well in a world of even greater competition and where academic reputation and the academic experience dominate student choice. So we need to move the balance towards the academic again while retaining our hard-won strength in business and the professions. In response to this challenge we have taken five actions. Our first has been to recruit research-excellent academic staff from around the world. We have just recruited our 122nd new academic and will recruit at least another 20 before the summer in the largest academic recruitment initiative in the country. This will help us develop our areas of strength and potential, more than double the number of world-leading academics who can take our students to the cutting edge of their subjects and prepare us well for the next national assessment of research quality.

Our second action is to recruit outstanding undergraduate students, regardless of their background. Our entry requirements have increased dramatically; our applications are running comfortably ahead of the national trend and our investment in needs and merit-based scholarships has increased significantly. For example, our Lord Mayor of London merit-based Scholarship is the most generous in the sector.

Our third action is to maintain and strengthen our position as the country's leading University for postgraduate programmes. For example, our Masters programmes in Law, Journalism and Speech & Language remain the largest in the country.

Our fourth action is to invest up to 165 million pounds in our infrastructure, estate and academic processes. This will provide the facilities our students want and will increasingly demand in a world of strong international competition and higher fees.

And finally, we will enhance our international reputation by creating high quality partnerships and collaborations to support the research of our academics and the education of our students. For example, next Monday City University of New York will become the latest partner in our network of like-minded institutions. In just a few years' time my aim is to be standing before you expounding on City as a leading global university positioned not within the top 5% but within the top 2% of universities in the world. It will be a wonderful moment, I'm sure, but not, I suggest, as personally exciting as right now for many of us in this room. Because right now we have set our course, we are working together and we are on our journey. And, as Robert Louis Stevenson said: "to travel hopefully is a better thing than to arrive."

Thank you.

Vice-Chancellor, Professor Paul Curran's speech at The Chancellor's Dinner, Mansion House, 9th May 2012



Chancellor, Pro-Chancellor, Your Excellency, My Lords, Aldermen, Sheriffs, Ladies and Gentlemen.

My second year as Vice-Chancellor of City University London is fast drawing to a close and it continues to be an honour and an enormous privilege to lead such a superb organisation. During this time I have had the pleasure of representing this great University of ours at many events across the capital. This has been a direct result of our profoundly strong links with business, the professions, the City of London and its Worshipful Companies. Our unique relationship with The Lord Mayor of London, our Chancellor, is one we value greatly and we celebrate here tonight. Of course, I have a vested interest because: "where there is no Chancellor, there can be no Vice-Chancellor."

Last year, I told you about our Victorian origins and interwar development. By the time we obtained University title in the mid-1960s we were trading on our aspiration to serve this great capital city and recruiting not only UK undergraduate students but increasingly large numbers of international students and postgraduate students to professionally-relevant courses. This trend accelerated sharply some 30 years ago when City decreased its dependence on the State and increased its dependence on this deregulated part of the student market. This resulted in popular courses, employable students and strong finances.

Today, we see a confident, outward-looking institution numbering some 17,000 students from around 150 countries and over 2,000 outstanding staff from around 50 countries. We have an integrated academic community with a sense of direction that is now beyond doubt. By 2016 our commitment to academic excellence and our focus on business and the professions, combined with a pride in the quality of our education, research and enterprise will have established us as one of the top 2% of universities in the world. This distinctive position will be difficult for others to emulate and offers potential students the attractions of both reputation and employability. We have now started to take the actions that will make this Vision a reality. But as you will be only too aware, we are making this transformational move at a time of national turbulence in Higher Education.

But I'm pleased to say that during the last year, this turbulence, with perhaps the exception of the muddle over student visas, has facilitated rather than prevented City from moving forward.

Our first action is to recruit outstanding academic staff from around the world. Sixty have already been appointed, fifty are being appointed and sixty more are to be appointed later this year. This is currently the largest academic recruitment initiative in the country. It will help us to develop our areas of strength and potential and more than double the proportion of world-leading academics who are educating our students.

Our second action is to recruit outstanding undergraduate students, regardless of their background. Our entry requirements have increased dramatically, by at least two 'A' level grades across the board, in this year alone. But at the same time we have increased significantly the availability of needs-based and merit-based scholarships. For example, our Lord Mayor's Scholarships remain the most generous in the sector. My Lord Mayor, the Corporation's endorsement of these scholarships means a great deal to us, and thank you. As a result the vast majority of our undergraduates will be joining our strengthened academic environment with As and Bs at 'A' level, or their equivalent. The government has removed the quotas on such students so we are expanding our undergraduate offering. Cass and the School of Law are leading the way on this.

Our third action is to maintain and strengthen our position as the country's leading University in our postgraduate masters programmes. We are also almost doubling the number of doctoral students.

Our fourth action is to invest up to 165 million pounds in our infrastructure, estate and academic processes. This will provide the facilities our students want and will increasingly demand in a world of strong international competition and much higher fees.

Finally, our fifth action is to enhance our international reputation by creating high quality partnerships and collaborations world-wide. This will support the research of our academics, the education of our students and the global visibility of our University. In addition to our existing partners I am delighted to say that we have representatives from two of our newer partners here tonight: Professor Steinbach from the Technical University of Berlin and Professor Lowndes from Northeastern University in Boston, Massachusetts - welcome.

City University London has come a long way since Victorian times and its transition continues in the same direction, guided by its motto, "to serve mankind," and its aspiration to excel. This is a credit to many colleagues past and present. They have been quick to embrace the view voiced by Machiavelli that: "Whosoever desires constant success must change his conduct with the times." Such change is not easy, especially at the moment as we strive to concentrate talent here at City. But the compensations of working in a high-performing institution that values all that we hold dear, remains as appealing today as it did when James 1st proclaimed: "Were I not a king, I would be, a university man."

Thank you.

Vice-Chancellor, Professor Paul Curran's speech at The Chancellor's Dinner, Mansion House, 7th April 2011



Chancellor, Pro-Chancellor, My Lords, Aldermen, Ladies and Gentlemen.

I joined City University London as its Vice-Chancellor almost eight months ago and it's been a great honour and a privilege to find myself inside rather than outside some of our great national buildings, as a result of our profoundly strong links with the City of London, its institutions and its Worshipful Companies. I have met so many fascinating people in the last 8 months. It seems that I have eaten my way around the nation's capital, thanks to everyone's generous hospitality. But I must say that at the end of a gruelling week of berobed days and white-tie evenings, I'm often reminded of the old joke about the difference between a shopping trolley and a Vice-Chancellor? You know the one which goes, "You can get more food and drink into a Vice-Chancellor, but only the shopping trolley has a mind of its own."

As you may know, City is extraordinarily well-placed in the world of Higher Education as we offer something that is genuinely different and we've been doing so since Victorian times. Our founding fathers were very clear about what they were doing. Their mission was to provide practically based education from a north London Square but their vision was of an outward-facing institution, responsive to the needs of this great capital and the world beyond. By the time we obtained University title in the mid-60s City was clearly trading on the virtues of London to recruit ever more international and particularly postgraduate students, to professionally relevant courses.

This approach was summed up by my predecessor Professor Raoul Franklin. He said, quite simply, that: "City's job was to make other Universities' graduates employable." Today, as the Lord Mayor reminded us, City is in the top ten for both graduate employability and starting salaries. And because around a quarter of our students hail from outside the EU and around a third are postgraduates we have one of the lowest dependencies on direct Government funding in the country. And in a world seemingly dominated by cuts this puts us in a very favourable position. In a little over a century and

from that single London Square, City has developed into a confident institution numbering 22,000 students and 2,500 outstanding staff. Today it ranks among the top 5% of universities in the world.

But what of the future? I am delighted to tell you that only last week, following a considerable amount of consultation, our Council approved an exciting new Vision for City and committed to make it happen. Those describing this great University of ours in 2016 will say that we are: A leading global University committed to academic excellence, focused on business and the professions and located in the heart of London. We are proud of the quality of our education, research and enterprise and are ranked within the top 2% of universities in the world. We are, of course, making our changes at a time of great national change.

Most university funding from Government for undergraduates is about to go. Undergraduate fees are about to go up. In just two decades the UK has moved from elite to mass higher education, bringing a sharp increase in the cost to Government and a sharp decrease in funding per student, with all that means in terms of quality. This was clearly unsustainable. So in 2006 we saw the introduction of relatively low undergraduate fees coupled with the promise of a review. The resultant Browne Review - that's Lord Browne not Gordon - was wonderfully simple in its conception; Government funding would move from universities to undergraduates who in turn, would pay the money back to Government when they could afford it. The political compromises made in those frenetic winter days before the reworked Browne recommendations were voted into law, led to the introduction of two 'caps' on fees, one at £6,000 that could be breached and one at £9,000 that could not.

For City this has provided an opportunity to make a major change to our undergraduate education en route to our new Vision.

So from next year:

- We will - be significantly more selective in our admissions
- We will - be investing heavily in new academic staff and student related facilities
- and we will - be charging £9,000 a year for undergraduates, subject, of course, to approval by the Office for Fair Access.

There are understandable misgivings about the impact of these higher fees on future City graduates but there is simply no other way to maintain the excellence of what we offer. But we're putting in place mechanisms that will offset the risks that these changes may bring.

I'm delighted to say that along with our supporters and friends, many of whom are here tonight, we will build on our generously funded widening access activities and

- offer matched funding for over 70 National Student Scholarships per year
- and invest over a million pounds a year in outreach and retention activities such as maths tutoring, master-classes, summer schools and a host of departmental specific activities from karting, led by Mechanical Engineering to community radio led by Journalism.

Together, these will help us to engage with those communities in the City of London and beyond who do not have a history of sending their most able students to higher education. City University has come a long way since its early Victorian days. It is certainly larger and more ambitious but what it does is as important as ever - as Benjamin Disraeli reminds us: "Upon the education of the people of this country, the fate of this country depends."

Thank you.