Thank you for supporting education and research at Flinders University.

Vanshika Sinh received the Lesley Shorne Memorial Scholarship in 2020 – ten years after the passing of highly regarded women’s advocate Dr Lesley Shorne, see page 15.
In a year where we all felt the immense pressure of a global pandemic, many of you recognised the impact of the work we do at Flinders University and felt the need to give generously.

Your contributions allowed the University to undertake a wide range of activities that have supported our students and our research. We could not have done this without your generous support.

It was extraordinary to witness the scale of support we were able to provide through the Matthew Flinders Scholarship for students who suddenly found themselves in terrible need during COVID-19 restrictions. The generosity, warmth and encouragement from the Flinders University community enabled scholarship recipients to focus on their studies by alleviating their financial stress, and I know we will continue to see the positive effects of this for years to come.

We also saw incredible community support in response to the bushfires across South Australia. These contributions have allowed specialised researchers at Flinders University to be at the forefront of major regeneration projects.

Through major gifts and bequests, our world-class medical researchers are now exploring the link between stress and cancer, along with critical research into asbestos-related disease, with the goal of developing new treatments and support to improve patient outcomes.

Our Andrew Thynne Reid Scholarships are helping to attract exceptional teachers and healthcare workers to rural and regional locations across Australia. In 2020 these teaching scholarships were extended to also support social work, midwifery and nursing students to take up rural and regional practical placements.

In addition to financial support, we also have a strong community of volunteers who contribute a huge amount to research at the University. Their time is invaluable as are the programs they support, which provide significant benefits to the environment and the wider community, such as the Granite Island Little Penguin regeneration program.

Thank you for being a part of our continuing journey – your generous support has enabled Flinders University to make an even greater impact through education and research.

Professor Colin J Stirling
President and Vice-Chancellor
Courtney McCallum-Boswell
Bachelor of Speech Pathology

Sam Lancaster
Master of Physiotherapy

Bulat Ishmukhametov
Master of Social Work

Le Tran Chau
Master of Social Work

‘The support offered from the University community is incredible. Just knowing that everyone has created a strong support network for those that are struggling is comforting.’

Courtney McCallum-Boswell
Bachelor of Speech Pathology

‘The Matthew Flinders Scholarship allowed me to calm down and take a deep breath. I felt that I was not alone and that there was support.’

Bulat Ishmukhametov
Master of Social Work

‘I would like to express my deep gratitude to all the donors who are very kind-hearted when willing to support those who are suffering from financial hardship because of the pandemic. I wish you all the best things in life. Thank you from the bottom of my heart’

Le Tran Chau
Master of Social Work

‘Thank you so much! To receive a scholarship was amazing and I honestly do not know what I would do financially without it.’

Sam Lancaster
Master of Physiotherapy

‘I started to get anxious about maintaining my health, and that got me sucked into a growing spiral of worry, which began to affect my studies’ she says.

‘Getting the Matthew Flinders Scholarship changed everything.’

Alleviating her financial stress helped put Olivia’s mind back on her studies, enabling her to complete her first year Human Nutrition subjects.

The Matthew Flinders Scholarship was established with contributions from President and Vice-Chancellor Professor Colin Stirling and from each member of the senior executive team – underpinning the University’s core ethos of being student centred.

The new scholarship was designed to enable students to navigate difficult times, to ensure they could complete their university studies.

“Flinders University has always been a champion of social justice. If this means anything, it is that those with the ability to succeed through education should be given the opportunity to do so,” says Vice-Chancellor Professor Stirling.

Awareness of the number of students facing hardship gained momentum and a ground-swell of support for the Matthew Flinders Scholarship came from across the University community, including many alumni, staff and friends.

So far, the scholarship has supported more than 1,900 domestic and international students at Flinders who were struggling to pay for food, rent and bills.

The generosity of support has also shown the students that the Flinders community cares about them and their wellbeing – a comfort that has created a renewed motivation for students to focus on their studies and achieve their best.

‘I have been amazed that Flinders has provided such fantastic support to students,’ says Olivia. ‘It has made a world of difference to me and it’s been great to feel the support of the whole community at Flinders.’

In 2020 the Matthew Flinders Scholarship, which provided students in need with $2,000 to help alleviate financial troubles, proved crucial for Olivia as she tried to stay on top of her ongoing health issues and focus on her studies.

Living with type 1 diabetes and celiac disease has made Olivia highly conscious of health issues and good diet – fundamental reasons for her studying a Bachelor of Human Nutrition at Flinders. But losing her casual hospitality job due to COVID-19 restrictions and not being eligible for Centrelink payments left her struggling to pay for her required weekly medical supplies.

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After a troubling year disrupted by COVID-19, Olivia Jansen is now ready for a new year of study at Flinders University, thanks to support from the Matthew Flinders Scholarship.
Rethinking how we treat inflammation of the respiratory system has given early career researcher and Flinders University graduate Dr James McEvoy-May an idea that may help reduce the severity of lung injury – an innovation likely to become increasingly important in the era of COVID-19.

Dr McEvoy-May (BMedSc ’13, BSc(Hons) ’15, PhDMed ’20), from the Flinders Medical and Health Research Institute (FMHRI), has been considering how to reduce excess inflammation present during lung disease. While necessary as part of the healing process, inflammation in excess or appearing too quickly can turn a sophisticated defence mechanism into a powerful damage-causing threat.

Understanding how to manage and reduce inflammation at the right time is critical in reducing, and not worsening, disease severity.

With support from Flinders University’s Impact Seed Funding for Early Career Researchers, Dr McEvoy-May is assessing whether a low-to-moderate dose of ionising radiation, typically used during diagnostic X-rays or CT scans, could be a potential therapeutic tool for clinicians to use in their arsenal against inflammation – particularly for respiratory inflammation such as pneumonia or coronavirus disease.

The immuno-modulatory properties of ionising radiation have been well demonstrated in chronic inflammatory diseases. Now comes the time to assess its possibility in acute situations, ‘something society believes is scary and dangerous might actually, in low doses, provide a universal benefit without the risk of detrimental drug interaction or potential therapeutic allergic reaction.’

The $10,000 seed funding grant will allow Dr McEvoy-May to establish a working model and pilot study that could lead to a fresh solution for addressing respiratory disease.

Nurtured through Flinders University’s Impact Seed Funding program, the research of nearly 30 innovative early career researchers is tackling global challenges and making an important contribution to our community.

‘Receiving the Impact Seed Funding is a wonderful beginning to my research career,’ says Dr McEvoy-May.

‘Having recently completed my PhD, it’s an extremely valuable stepping stone, especially in such a competitive industry. It will enable the work necessary to capture larger funding sources and launch my work into the scientific community.’
Having run away from home at 17, hitchhiking across Australia and travelling the world, Mavis Haydon (nee Brown) boldly shunned the conventional path for young women of the 1930s. However, she always regretted not having an opportunity to study at university and was acutely aware of the limited educational opportunities available to many of her generation.

‘She always valued education, but she was never given the opportunity,’ says Mavis’ niece, Trudyanne Brown. ‘It never even crossed her parents’ minds that she would have wanted to go to university.’

Now, with a tightening economy, the opportunity to attend university is beyond the financial means of many talented young people. Mavis, who lived in Adelaide until her death in July 2015, aged 92, was determined to address this inequity and instructed her estate to set up the $4 million Mavis Brown Charitable Trust to support students facing financial difficulties.

Launched in 2020, the Mavis Brown Scholarship currently supports three students at Flinders University with an annual scholarship of $5,000 for up to six years. With as much as $30,000 of support across their degree, this marks the largest scholarship available at the University.

The three inaugural scholarship recipients had each achieved notable academic performance, but were struggling to make ends meet. Angello De Ionno, who was dux of Murray Bridge High School, is pursuing the challenging double task of studying Honours for a Bachelor of Engineering (Mechanical) and a Master of Engineering (Biomedical).

‘Inspired by my father’s practicality and ability to solve problems one at a time without falter, I discovered engineering,’ says Angello. ‘Through two specialisations I decided to combine a broad knowledge of this fascinating subject with the niche field of biomedical engineering.’

Beyond the challenges of intensive study, Angello commuted daily from his parents’ home in Mannum for his study commitments – a taxing regime that left him fatigued and worried about his study plans. ‘I spent nearly three hours each day driving to the campus. It was very draining, and it even left me questioning whether it was worth doing the extra work to continue my high standard of achievement and success.’

Financial support provided by the Mavis Brown Scholarship has enabled Angello to rent accommodation closer to Flinders, so that he can spend more time on his studies instead of travel. ‘The scholarship has bolstered my confidence and self-belief. I had been questioning my choices and whether I had the ability to finish my double degree, however receiving this scholarship extinguished those negative thoughts. I am truly overwhelmed by the support the Mavis Brown Scholarship has provided to me and other students who are struggling’.

A Mavis Brown Scholarship has also been awarded to law student Allison Mason, who has a passion for social justice issues. Having grown up in Waikerie, Allison is now studying a Bachelor of Law and Legal Studies, and a Bachelor of International Relations and Political Science at Flinders University. She hopes to be able to make a real change on the global stage. Allison had difficulty focusing on study due to struggles with physical health issues, which have also impacted her part-time work possibilities. She says the scholarship has relieved a large amount of her financial pressures and anxiety.

‘The Mavis Brown Scholarship has given me the gift of choice. I no longer have to choose work over university, nor work over my health,’ says Allison. ‘It is an incredible gift that will impact my life – not just for the next four years, but for my entire life.’

Mavis Haydon was an inspiring 1930s maverick whose love for education now provides a pathway for outstanding Flinders University students to excel, thanks to a scholarship named in her honour.

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Supporting Education

Mavis Brown Scholarship

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The adventures of Mavis Haydon.

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Volunteers rescue Little Penguin research program

Scientific research by community members, or citizen scientists, and Flinders University student volunteers is providing a solution to a threatened species research program on Granite Island in South Australia.

The population of wild Little Penguins on Granite Island has been the subject of intensive study by Flinders University researchers since 2012, but the research was under threat after recent disruptions to the nightly monitoring of the penguins.

Compiling data about the penguins had been conducted by guides hosting nightly tours of Granite Island for the public – but the combination of COVID-19 restrictions on gatherings, and attacks by foxes that almost halved the Little Penguin population to only 16 animals, put a stop to the tours.

In October 2020, several Flinders University students living in the Victor Harbor area answered the call to join a nightly volunteer roster – including Lucinda Gray, Maddie Turley and Nicole Fickling. The students were joined by an enthusiastic collection of local citizen scientists to monitor the penguins each night – putting the research program back on track.

Dr Diane Colombelli-Négrel (PhD(Biol) ’09), Flinders University Lecturer in Animal Behaviour and South Australia’s only Penguin Ecologist, is thrilled by the volunteers’ enthusiasm.

‘It’s an important two-way information process. Not only do we assess the behaviour of individual Little Penguins, but the program also has an influence on human behaviour,’ says Dr Colombelli-Négrel.

‘Through studying the effects of human disturbance on Little Penguins, we can help prevent any further shrinkage of their population.’

The annual public census of the Little Penguins on Granite Island attracted the largest group of volunteers, with 65 helpers – including Flinders students – spending a day to count and locate active burrows all around the island.

What they found is encouraging, noting that the remaining adult Little Penguins on the island are breeding.

‘Our work is making a difference,’ says Dr Colombelli-Négrel, ‘and it shows the input of citizen scientists working at its best.’

Donation to support KOALAS in KI BUSHFIRE RECOVERY

When horrific bushfires raged through Kangaroo Island in January 2020 up to 80 per cent of the island’s koala population was killed. The fire also destroyed 210,000 hectares of their habitat and food supplies, impacting the survival of the estimated 8,500 remaining animals.

To ensure the good health of this embattled koala population, research is needed to study the surviving koalas and help steer their best possible chance to repopulate and flourish.

A $150,000 donation by Kangaroo Island Wildlife Park will enable a Flinders University research project led by Professor Karen Burke Da Silva, Dean of Education in the College of Science and Engineering at Flinders University.

Professor Burke Da Silva was approached by KI Wildlife Park owners Sam and Dana Mitchell at the recommendation of two Flinders alumni who now work for them – Billy Dunlop (BSc ’14) and Michaela Haska (BSc(Hons) ’15). The graduates were among a dedicated group of rescuers who brought over 650 injured koalas to an emergency triage centre established by the KI Wildlife Park at Parndana during the devastating bushfires.

So far, 250 of these rehabilitated koalas have been released back into their natural habitat, which includes a 53-hectare bush block in the KI Wildlife Park.

This three year research project will allow the Flinders team to apply successful research methods they have employed to examine other species in intricate detail, recording details of gut health and reproduction patterns, through to assessing whether the koalas are having an impact on surviving trees through over-browsing.

The Flinders team will also engage citizen scientists and tourists to participate in monitoring and recording details about each of the individually microchipped koalas.

‘By doing this we will establish very detailed individual profiles of surviving koalas that can give us a unique insight into how this population is recovering from the fire,’ says Professor Burke Da Silva.

‘What we learn from here will be able to be applied across South Australia to help other vulnerable koala populations,’ says Professor Burke Da Silva. ‘It’s research that will have a lasting effect.’

Kangaroo Island Wildlife Park’s Dana and Sam Mitchell.

Commencing later in 2021, the KI Wildlife Park will also fund a Flinders-led $300,000 Koala Genetic Rescue Program enabling researchers at the University to identify problems that arise from in-breeding within small koala populations.
Tony Preston represented by Archibald Prize winner Yvette Coppersmith.

Tony Preston by Anthony Preston, 2014, oil on linen, 40.5cm x 30cm.
We are deep-diving, discovering, innovating and inventing.
Research is a fundamental cornerstone of our mission as a university. Through research and research-led teaching, we build and develop the knowledge and capabilities that improve lives and enhance our society.

FLINDERS UNIVERSITY RESEARCH INSTITUTES

OUR RESEARCH CENTRES

Assemblage Centre for Creative Arts
Centre for Crime Policy and Research
Centre for Marine Bioproducts Development
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90% of our research is rated world-standard or above
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The Impact of Giving report is published by the Office of Communication and Engagement, Flinders University.
Printed in South Australia by Flinders Press using soy-based inks on environmentally responsible paper.
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