

# WORKING WITH YOUR UNIVERSITY

OUR IMPACT  
IN 2022 - 23





As we close the chapter on 2022/23, we take pride in our achievements and recognise the significant impact our business and community partnerships have had on the work of the Business Engagement, Careers, and Employability Directorate (BECE). We have built on the foundations from last year and I am really pleased to share some of the highlights from our forward-looking partnerships.

#### **Alumni Relations and Development: Strengthening Bonds, Creating Impact**

Our Alumni Relations and Development efforts have thrived over the past year, fostering connections and generating support that empowers our institution. With over 150 engaged individual supporters and a c4% increase in donations, we are truly grateful for the generosity that supports our mission. Since its establishment, 23 major donors have joined our Giving Circles Programme. This, coupled with the success of our inaugural alumni celebration event, where 10,000 stakeholders engaged, highlights the lasting impact of our engaged community.

#### **Careers, Employability and Enterprise: Empowering Futures**

We have invested in our team, which has grown from 4 to 13, and our physical Enterprise and Careers Zone will be launching soon. With an impressive 2,100 students engaged in employability and enterprise activities and a 100% satisfaction rate from student 1:1s, we have created an environment where growth and learning thrive.

The successes of our bootcamps, internships, and 1:1 sessions reflect the team's dedication to empowering students' futures. This year, we ran the biggest careers fairs yet, reaching over 400 students and c100 organisations across the events. Our recent Graduate Outcomes (GO) data paints a fantastic picture of success – an impressive 92% of 2021 graduates are in employment or further study, 2% higher than the sector average.

#### **Business Development and Knowledge Exchange: Cultivating Innovation and Growth**

Our Business Development and Knowledge Exchange (BDKE) activities continue to grow and in 2022/23 we have achieved some significant milestones. 48 KE projects and 6 enterprise growth programmes have been funded, reflecting our commitment to driving innovation and fostering entrepreneurship across the region. With a notable 120% increase in KE income secured and an impressive 93% success rate on project submissions, our dedication to impactful collaborations is clear. Furthermore, our Innovation Centre (ILABS) celebrated its 1st Birthday and membership has increased by an astounding 200%. This embodies the thriving ecosystem of creativity and innovation within our institution.

#### **Apprenticeship Hub: Nurturing Excellence in Learning**

One of the cornerstones of our success has been the continuous enhancement of our Apprenticeship Hub. We are pleased to share that our Ofsted Outcome remains at a resounding "Good," signifying our unwavering dedication to providing a high-quality learning environment. Our remarkable retention rate of 92.1% shows our commitment to student engagement.

#### **A Shared Journey Towards Excellence**

As we celebrate these accomplishments and embark on the next year, we are reminded of the collaborative spirit that drives us forward. The support of our stakeholders, the dedication of our teams, and the aspirations of our students and alumni all contribute to excellence.

With this Annual Review, we invite you to join us in celebrating a year of progress, growth, and engagement. Together, we will continue to shape a brighter future for our community and beyond.

Thank you for your dedication and support.



**Professor  
Gurpreet Jagpal**

Pro Vice-Chancellor  
Business and Entrepreneurship



**30%** of Alumni  
engaging with  
communication\*



**1st ever**  
Connection Week  
held for Alumni



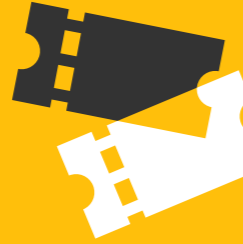
**300+**  
businesses  
engaged



**100%**  
positive student  
feedback



**5** Giving  
Circles  
launched



**167%**  
increase in  
number of high  
value pledges



**£2,236,000**  
Knowledge  
Exchange income  
awarded



**95%**  
Apprenticeship  
retention rate\*\*



**69,000**  
activities completed  
in FutureMe



**2098**  
students attending  
curriculum careers  
sessions

**84%**  
overall  
apprenticeship  
achievement  
rate\*\*



**200%**  
increase in  
businesses centre  
members



**140**  
students  
receiving  
start-up  
support



**92%**  
of graduates in further  
education or employment



**93%**  
success rate on  
Knowledge Exchange  
grant applications



**150+**  
individual  
supporters  
engaged



# CASE STUDIES

This year, the BECE team has continued to build and strengthen its relationships with Suffolk's business, student, and alumni communities. From our support services to our apprenticeship schemes, we have helped to unlock new opportunities, encourage entrepreneurial talent, and nurture business growth.

Here are their success stories.

# AWARD-WINNING ALUMNI ALARMING LADDER

*Alarming Ladder is an indie game studio founded by University of Suffolk graduates. They started their business while studying Game Design and engaged with the BECE team to get things off the ground. Now, they're helping to inspire the next generation of game makers.*

## The Project

Studying Game Design at the University of Suffolk helped founders Daniel Wiltshire and Hannah Bull take their first steps as entrepreneurs. Here they were introduced to Transfuzer, a government-backed incubator for game studios. They entered Transfuzer in 2022 with Kingdom Run VR, a room-scale VR action-adventure game. They were one of four teams selected for DunDev, a four-week residential programme for early-stage studios. Impressed with their ideas as well as their initiative, Alarming Ladder were awarded funding from the UK Games Fund.

## How We Helped

The BECE team gave them the tools to start and run a business. We offered advice, signposted events, and provided office space and equipment in our Innovation Labs.

**“Amy from the University has been a fantastic contact for us and really helped us on our journey. It’s remarkable the amount of high-quality facilities we have access to and there’s a lot to be gained from a being part of a co-creative space like the Innovation Labs.”**

Now, Alarming Ladder are sharing their experience with aspiring students. In 2023 they hosted a game jam, where students were given awards based on categories such as pitch, gameplay, and prototype.



**“The relationship with the University works both ways. We help inspire the next generation, but also get to tap into the talent pool.”**

So far, we’ve facilitated placements with Alarming Ladder as part of the Game Design programme. This provides students with the opportunity to take ownership of a brief within a real-life studio environment.

## Next Steps

Though still in the early stages, Alarming Ladder have already enjoyed critical and commercial success. Kingdom Run VR won the 2022 Gameplay Award at the Games Innovation Challenge. Their second game release, Snotty’s Sewer, achieved 40,000 downloads in its first week. They will continue working with the University to prepare the next round of students for Transfuzer and are extremely passionate about building a collaborative gaming community in Ipswich and Suffolk.

# ENTERPRISING ALUMNI JUICEMIX BAR

*Priscilla Pinheiro is a University of Suffolk graduate and the founder of Juice Mix Bar in Ipswich. Her Business Management degree provided her with the knowledge and skills to launch her business. Now, the BECE team are helping her take it to the next level.*

## The Project

Priscilla is a true University of Suffolk success story, but her business journey began much further afield. She moved to the UK from Brazil in 2009 and worked as a restaurant manager. This unlocked a passion to start her own food and drink business.

**“That’s why I enrolled in the Business Management course at the University of Suffolk, so that when I started a business, I’d know how to run it the right way.”**

Inspiration struck while studying. She identified a gap in the local market for a fresh juice bar, popular in Brazil.

After graduating in 2021, she opened a pod in Ipswich’s Microshops. The first six months were a success, and she moved into larger premises next door to the University’s waterfront campus.

## How We Helped

Here, she not only took advantage of the student trade, but she also reconnected with us to discover what support she could access as a local business owner and alumni. She participated in a fully-funded business growth programme, where she was awarded a grant of £500. This enabled her to add signage to her shop front. Now, our designated coach is helping her to identify further grant and investment opportunities to scale the business.



**“I’m very happy that the University is in my corner. Whatever I need, they’re always going to give me support. I think that’s what makes the University of Suffolk different. They really get to know you and always check in to see how you’re doing. I don’t think you get that at many other institutions.”**

## Next Steps

Priscilla is a resourceful and resilient entrepreneur. The University of Suffolk are proud to have played a part in her story and will continue to provide her with any guidance she needs as the business grows.

# FIRST-CLASS FACILITIES MOCK COURT ROOM

*The University of Suffolk mock court room was completed in 2020. Primarily used to support teaching on undergraduate courses, colleagues in the Law department soon realised that other legal-facing organisations could benefit from the space.*

## The Project

The University of Suffolk has a range of expertise in Criminal Law, including legal academics and former Criminal Law practitioners. They were approached by a Trading Standards authority, whose investigative teams are often required to give evidence in court. As this specialist area is not covered in their training, they turned to the University for support.

Our practitioners designed a two-day course for the Trading Standards team. Day 1 focused on legal procedures and the evidential process. Participants were then shown a video of a mock incident and wrote individual statements based on what they saw. Day 2 took place a few months later. A mock trial was held in the court room, and participants gave evidence based on their statements. The University's law academics acted as the prosecutor, defence, and judge, with a jury made up of undergraduate students and Trading Standards managers. When the trial concluded, each participant received feedback on their performances as witnesses.

## How We Helped

This project was a true collaboration between academia and business. The Trading Standards team got an immersive training experience in an authentic courtroom environment. They gained practical experience, learned new skills, and received feedback from field experts. The participants really enjoyed the training and were able to bond as a team.



The undergraduates got to see the full trial process, something that isn't ordinarily possible within the curriculum. Blending the students with business professionals meant everyone took their role seriously, and the training was more realistic and impactful as a result.

## Next Steps

Now, the Law Team want to take things even further by delivering bespoke training to other organisations and bodies with investigative roles. This represents a fantastic opportunity to showcase the expertise and first-class facilities available, whilst strengthening ties with the business community.

# CREATING CONNECTIONS

## WTW

WTW is a global insurance broker, multi-discipline consultancy, and risk adviser. With one of its largest UK offices based in Ipswich, it has been collaborating with the University of Suffolk to attract new talent and engage the wider business community.

### The Project

WTW had onboarded new staff during the COVID-19 pandemic, meaning many team members did not have a professional headshot. They reached out to us looking for someone with the right skillset, who would also benefit from gaining experience in a large corporate environment.

We connected them with Nicky West, a local business owner and University of Suffolk alumni. Having built a successful career in business communication in London, Nicky studied Photography in the hope of turning her passion into a new career. After graduating, she maintained a strong connection with the University, regularly attending our networking and business support events.

**“The University introduced me to things happening locally that I wouldn’t otherwise have known about. Their events are fantastic, especially those run in conjunction with the Federation of Small Businesses.”**

### How We Helped

Nicky was the perfect choice, as she drew on her corporate background whilst growing her portfolio. She transformed a meeting room into a studio and took over 150 headshots across a two-week period. Despite some apprehensions about being in front of a camera, Nicky worked her magic and put everyone at ease.



This was an excellent opportunity for students to shadow Nicky and gain hands-on client experience in a risk-free environment. As a course alumnus, she knew where to plug any gaps in terms of professional development.

**“The University’s engagement with business is so valuable for students. The degree teaches you the theory and skills needed to create an inspiring image, but it’s important to think about how to turn that into a thriving business. Using photography to help businesses be more visible online and attract the perfect client is a fantastic way to achieve this.”**

### Next Steps

WTW was delighted with its headshots and have already scheduled for Nicky to return next year. It is continuing to collaborate with us on learning and development opportunities for our students and graduates. Nicky also gained a lot from the project and is very keen to continue her involvement with the University.



# SUPPORTING START-UPS ANGLIAN CREATIVE

Aaron Riley is a 2023 graduate and business owner. He decided to take the leap whilst studying Computer Science at the University of Suffolk and set up his own digital web agency. Here's how we helped him kick-start his entrepreneurial journey.

## The Project

As a student, Aaron saw the traditional path into the graduate job market as too restrictive. He wanted to try something new.

**“I didn't want to find myself working my way up the corporate ladder, only to realise I'd chosen the wrong ladder!”**

So, he took the initiative and set up his own digital web agency. Anglian Creative provide web design, development, and hosting services. They also work with partners to deliver other marketing services, such as graphic design, social media, and Google Ads.

## How We Helped

The BECE team gave Aaron a clear sense of direction and helped him develop a comprehensive business strategy. Together, we put a roadmap in place to take him from a sole trader to the owner of a limited company.

In 2022, he took part in our Enterprise Programme. After pitching to a panel of experts, he was awarded funding to push his business idea forward.

**“The University and Innovation Labs have helped me and my business in so many ways. They're so supportive and creative with their solutions, which helps with business like mine!”**



Aaron attended a range of our events and networking opportunities. Here, he built up essential contacts and a strong sense of community.

**“One of the biggest parts is the community. Even when I'm not there in person, I still feel very connected.”**

Having access to free office space at our Innovation Labs also fostered a sense of belonging and facilitated introductions to other Lab members across East Anglia.

## Next Steps

Anglian Creative is at the start of its journey, and the future looks exciting. As an alumnus, Aaron can take advantage of lifelong access to our business support. We'll be here to help him take on the challenges and opportunities of scaling a business as and when they happen. This is his message to Suffolk's aspiring entrepreneurs:

**“If you've got the support to do it, just go and do it! Don't keep thinking 'I'll do it one day'. Make today day one.”**

# INNOVATIVE RESEARCH MULTIPLAI

*MultiplAI are using AI to transform the way cardiovascular diseases are detected. Looking to collaborate on a new processing model for mRNA data, they reached out to the Business Engagement team at the University of Suffolk.*

## The Project

Heart disease is the leading cause of death globally. However, detection is still reliant on lifestyle risk factors, such as high blood pressure and cholesterol. MultiplAI use AI and machine learning to examine gene expressions in patient mRNA to improve the detection of cardiovascular risk.

Despite successes with their universal genomic screening, they wanted to go a step further. They believed that machine learning methods used to detect patterns in text data could help crack hidden codes within the mRNA structure and map their sequences. This could revolutionise the way researchers develop cardiovascular treatments.

## How We Helped

Without the right expertise in-house, they needed a specialist collaborator. Through networking events at the Haverhill Epicentre, they discovered the Business Engagement team at the University of Suffolk. We connected them with Dr Kasia Chatsiou and Dr Suha Al-Naimi from the Digital Futures Institute. They'd been working on large language models and were on the lookout for innovative, real-world applications.

They successfully applied for an Innovation Voucher worth £15,000 to conduct a 6-month pilot. This enabled them to conduct a review of the existing literature and test the concept. MultiplAI provided anonymised data sets and our academics supported with the development of a basic script and pre-processing pipeline.



## Next Steps

With the pilot yielding encouraging results, they're now applying for further grant funding and exploring the potential for a Knowledge Transfer Partnership.

One of the challenges that emerged during the pilot was the processing power required for this volume of data. They plan to use the University's newly launched AI servers to overcome this in the next phase.

**"I come from a cardiology background. I've acquired a knowledge of computing and informatics, but always looked at through a medical lens. It was fruitful to share ideas and work with people who have a completely different take on informatics."**

**Dr. Santiago Miriuka,  
Co-Founder, CEO &  
CTO, MultiplAI**

# AMBITIOUS APPRENTICES SIMON RICHARDSON



*Simon Richardson is currently undertaking an FdA Nursing Associate Apprenticeship with the University of Suffolk. We talked to him about his achievements and why he thinks apprenticeships are the future.*

## **What made you decide on an apprenticeship?**

I'd been working at the hospital for about six years and wanted to move up the ladder. Going back to university full-time without an income wasn't an option. I saw the FdA Nursing Associate Apprenticeship advertised on the Trust intranet page and decided it was a great opportunity to build my career.

## **Tell us more about the programme.**

It's a two-year programme that gets you to Level 5, bridging the gap between nurses and nurses' assistants. It's been a challenge, working twelve-and-a-half hour days and university once a week. However, it has been worth it and has done so much for me already.

## **What have you enjoyed about working with the University of Suffolk?**

The lecturers are really supportive, both with the academic and mental demands of the course. They treat us like equals, and you really get the sense that they want us to do well. They're always on hand to help, offering tutorials and answering our emails, sometimes in minutes! Learning in a practice setting has made a huge difference. You learn so much more from talking, observing, and doing rather than just memorising things from a textbook.

## **Has the apprenticeship opened up any new opportunities that you didn't expect?**

I was nominated for the Suffolk Learner of the Year Award. I was also put forward for the Student Nursing Times Award. It's given me the opportunity to build a network of high-profile people. Student Nursing Times really inspired me. I saw what other people had done and thought: "I want that to be me." Since then, I've been driving the introduction of coaching bays, where two students work in a bay together to care for three patients holistically.

It's helped us utilise our students more effectively and they get so much more from it. We're in discussion with the Education and Quality Improvement teams at West Suffolk and are hoping to roll it out Trust wide.

## **Why are apprenticeships so important?**

I've seen a big difference between direct study nurses and those on an apprenticeship, in terms of skill level and confidence. I think apprenticeship is the way to go, particularly for something like nursing which is a very hands-on. People have seen what I've accomplished as an apprentice and gone on to apply at the University of Suffolk.

## **What are your plans for the future?**

Once I've finished, I'll move on to the follow-on apprenticeship to get my Level 6 and become a qualified nurse. After that, a whole world of opportunities will be open to me. I'm even considering a relocation to Australia as positions are very in demand.

# INSPIRING INTERNS

## COREY SADLER



*Corey Sadler is a BSc Computing student. We caught up with him to find out more about his internship at 3adesign, a software and hardware solutions provider. We also spoke to the CEO, David Atkins, to discuss the business benefits of engaging with the University.*

### **David, how did you first get involved with the University of Suffolk?**

I went to a series of meetups at the University and joined a group interested in hackathons. We set up Innovate Suffolk in 2019 and ran a hackathon at the University. I'm a Senior Visiting Fellow and visit regularly to engage students and deliver guest lectures.

Over the past four years, we've brought a number of apprentices and interns into 3adesign through the University, including Corey.

### **Corey, could you tell us more about your internship at 3adesign?**

It was a four-week summer internship. This meant I could dedicate myself to the project full-time without compromising my studies. I worked on an independent project using Anvil, a platform for building web apps using Python. Essentially, I was creating an online editor for businesses to design their own asset labels, which 3adesign would then print and distribute.

### **What skills did you learn?**

I didn't have much experience with Python, so had to learn the ins and outs of a new programming language. It vastly improved my confidence using Python and introduced me to all the things that are possible with it. Giving demos to colleagues helped build my personal and professional skills. I have a much better understanding of how to present my work to people who may not understand how it works.

### **How has Corey's work benefitted 3adesign?**

This was a project that we wouldn't otherwise have been able to tackle. It struck the perfect balance for an intern project by being low risk and high impact. It wasn't business critical, meaning Corey had space to learn, but could be profitable further down the line.

### **Is there potential for you to work together in the future?**

Within a few days we saw great results from Corey, and by week two we discussed taking him on after the internship. Now he's working with us two days a week alongside his degree to turn his work into a marketable product.

### **Corey, do you have any advice for current/future students?**

Absolutely, experience (especially in the IT field) is invaluable, and you should take every chance you can to learn more about the industry you're interested in. If something comes up which could help you to develop the skills you need, take it!

### **David, do you have any advice for businesses interested in engaging with the University?**

The potential benefits from working with the University are huge. This year alone we've recruited two graduates, and we currently have two degree apprentices working with us. The University should engage as many businesses as possible. So many businesses like ours have meaningful projects to work on, and it's great for students to learn on the job.

## **University of Suffolk**

Business Engagement,  
Careers and Employability (BECE)

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