About Me

Hi, I’m Zainab, a second year PBS student at Newnham College. I’ve been heavily involved with access projects throughout my time at Cambridge which I hope demonstrates my determination to widen participation and ensure Cambridge is accessible to all.

I am a proud northerner, from a Pakistani immigrant and working-class family. I attended a failing state-comp in Bradford where applying to Oxbridge was an extremely mystifying process. I have experienced first-hand the challenges of attending a school that did not receive enough funding, the role of teachers who actively discourage applications to prestigious universities and the regional disparities within Cambridge.

Experience

Access Officer for the BME Campaign & Islamic Society.

* Organised an ISOC mentoring scheme for Y12/Y13
* Organised an Interview Workshop with Newnham College Admissions
* Delivered presentations about life in Cambridge as an ethnic minority and available support
* Run parent and student Q&A sessions

Cambridge Campus Team Member - Project Access

* Recruited over 300 student mentors
* Organised and helped deliver a Post-Campus Conference for the mentees who took up their place at Cambridge this year.
* Delivered a 3-day residential application ‘bootcamp’ in Vienna for low-income students/those with regional barriers to prestigious international universities.

Proposals

Within this role, I would work hard to:

* Maximise the impact of the CUSU Shadowing Scheme - I have and will continue to work with CUSU Access to try and match mentors and shadows on criteria such as ethnicity, faith and region to ensure maximum insight can be provided.
* Focus efforts onto regional outreach – Focus work on the often forgotten about regions such as the North, Wales and Scotland. Colleges have different link areas but the areas that they cover and the respective efforts put into outreach work can vary hugely. One way of targeting such students could be via webinars and online outreach work.
* Increase collaboration and communication between those in the access sphere - to ensure that events/ WP schemes run efficiently as possible, so that resources can be used to their greatest extent. I will also organise a core group of Access Officers from BME cultural societies, so we can work effectively in regard to minority access.
* Introduce a ‘Meet the Cultural Societies’ Fair at the Shadowing Scheme & the University Open Days - ‘BME’ as an umbrella term can be problematic as for each group, the barriers faced differ. These would be relaxed events where potential applicants can meet students who best represent them and discuss their experiences of Cambridge.
* Introduce BME-focused campus events – Access does not stop once you get to Cambridge. Ethnic minorities have a slower career trajectory than their white counterparts after graduation. I will work with organisations that run careers/networking events specifically for BME students in order to support them in their future aspirations once they are here.