

# The Simmarian

Edition 21  
Autumn 2024



St Mary's  
Alumni

ST MARY'S  
SCHOOL OF  
MEDICINE

## In this issue

Alumni  
Interviews

Bakhita Centre  
Celebration of  
10 years

Festival of  
Creativity

Campus  
Developments

# The Simmarian

## Contents

- 4 University News
- 6 School of Medicine
- 8 Olympics and Paralympics Success
- 10 Celebration of 10 Years
- 12 Festival of Creativity
- 13 Campus Development
- 14 Alumni Interviews
- 18 Employability
- 20 Ways to Get Involved



St Mary's  
Alumni



## Welcome to the Autumn 2024 edition of *The Simmarian*!

In this issue, we celebrate the remarkable achievements of our alumni, who are making a global impact across diverse fields. You'll also find updates on exciting developments on campus and highlights from St Mary's impressive successes at the Paris 2024 Olympic Games.

As we look ahead, 2025 marks the 175th anniversary of St Mary's University, a milestone we're excited to celebrate with you! The year will feature a variety of special events, including our annual alumni reunion on **Saturday, 30th August**. We look forward to welcoming you and your families to this memorable occasion.

This edition also shares more about the exciting announcement of our plans to establish a new School of Medicine. Turn to page 6 to learn about this ambitious initiative and how it aligns with our commitment to shaping the future of healthcare education.

We are equally delighted to introduce **Caroline Glen**, our new Director of Development. Caroline brings extensive expertise to her

role, and together, we aim to enrich your alumni experience and foster stronger connections with St Mary's.

The upcoming year promises to be one of celebration, community, and connection, and we can't wait to keep you updated on all that's happening. If you're not already receiving our e-newsletter, let us know at [alumni@stmarys.ac.uk](mailto:alumni@stmarys.ac.uk), so you don't miss a moment.

**Thank you for being part of the St Mary's community. Here's to a wonderful year ahead!**

### The Alumni Office

***Ps We would love to hear from you! If you'd like to contribute to the magazine, suggest topics for us to cover, or share news with your fellow alumni, please get in touch via [alumni@stmarys.ac.uk](mailto:alumni@stmarys.ac.uk)***

## A message from the Vice-Chancellor

As Vice-Chancellor, it is my great pleasure to introduce the latest edition of *The Simmarian*. Within these pages, you will discover key highlights from the 2023-24 academic year at St Mary's. I believe you'll agree that they reflect St Mary's flourishing both in spirit and in achievement.

The year 2025 will mark two significant milestones: the 175th anniversary of our foundation and the centenary of our move to Strawberry Hill. I look forward to celebrating these special occasions with you at our annual alumni reunion on Saturday 30th August 2025.

In March, we had the privilege of conferring honorary Bachelor of Education degrees to our alumni who received a Certificate of Education before 1983. This was a truly special occasion for the University, allowing us to recognise your lifelong contributions to teaching and education. It was also a pleasure to meet so many of you and hear your stories.

Our progress as a university continues to be impressive. I am proud to share that our St Mary's has been named the top provider in the country for Education by the *Daily Mail* University Guide. This follows the School of Education retention of its Ofsted Outstanding rating in all categories for Primary and Secondary Initial Teacher Training earlier this year. As we approach our 175th anniversary, it is fitting that we continue to lead in the field for which we were founded in 1850: the training of teachers.

In keeping with our tradition of high-quality academic and professional education, we are now embarking on an exciting new chapter with the launch of St Mary's University School of Medicine. We will welcome our first cohort of students in September 2026, with the goal of training compassionate and well-rounded doctors.



Whether you graduated last year or decades ago, you are a vital part of our story. Your experiences, achievements, and connection continue to shape the University's legacy. Wherever life takes you, St Mary's will always be a place you can call home.

**Professor Anthony McClaran, Vice-Chancellor**



# UNIVERSITY NEWS

## Honorary Degree Reflections

In the early 1980s, a Bachelor's degree became a requirement for new teachers in the UK, replacing the Certificate in Education. There has been a movement across the higher education sector to award the thousands of individuals who achieved certification prior to 1980 with an honorary Bachelor of Education, which St Mary's is delighted to be a part of.

And so, on Friday 15th March, 2024, 400 alumni, who were awarded a Certificate in Education before 1980, attended one of three honorary degree ceremonies at St Mary's, recognising the immense contribution they have made to teaching and education.

To date, 900 alumni have received their honorary degree. It was a beautiful and emotional day and an honour to have arranged such a special event for you.

**On the day we asked those present to share their memories of their time at St Mary's and we would love for you to watch it.**

**Please view 'Memories of St Mary's University' video. Enjoy!**  
[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=t\\_q-LXyYNyg](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=t_q-LXyYNyg)

“ St Mary's gave me so much, a great preparation for teaching, a group of good friends, wonderful memories of fun and friendship, and, most importantly, it was at Simms that I met and became engaged to the man who was to become my husband. [...] St Mary's set the pattern for our lives. ”

**Alumna Madeleine Coburn (nee Long), 1966-69**



## 175 Years of Inspiring Excellence

Founded in 1850, St Mary's University is one of the country's oldest Higher Education Institutions and has been inspiring excellence for 175 years. Having achieved full university status in 2014, St Mary's is also one of the top-rated modern universities nationally, and has ambitious plans for the future, including its new School of Medicine, to ensure it continues to make a positive impact locally, nationally and globally.

We can't wait to welcome you back to campus! Whether it's reconnecting with friends, reminiscing about your university days, or simply celebrating this incredible milestone, we hope you'll join us.

**SAVE THE DATE**

For now, save the dates and [register your interest](#) in the annual reunion. You can help us spread the word too – why not set up a WhatsApp group for your year and make a weekend out of it?

**Let's celebrate 175 years of St Mary's together!**

-  **Mass to celebrate couples married in the University Chapel**  
Saturday, 17th May 2025
-  **Alumni Annual Reunion**  
Saturday, 30th August 2025



**Founded in 1850**

**TOP 5**  
in the country for teaching quality  
2024 Sunday Times Good University Guide

**TOP 50 in UK**  
2024 Good University Guide

**The Gold Standard**  
for Student Experience in 2023 Teaching Excellence Framework  
Rated Silver Overall with outcomes typically very high quality

**5,000 students**  
from **70** countries

**TOP 10**  
for student satisfaction  
2024 Complete University Guide

Rated Ofsted **OUTSTANDING** in every category since **2011**

**St Mary's: the best place to be a teacher**

We have been ranked the best university for Education in the Daily Mail University Guide 2024. This follows the School of Education retaining its Ofsted 'Outstanding' rating for the third time in all categories for Primary and Secondary Initial Teacher Training. These developments cement St Mary's reputation as one of the country's very best providers of teacher training.



# SCHOOL OF MEDICINE



A new School of Medicine at St Mary's will open its doors to students for the first time in September 2026. Our mission is to train the next generation of doctors to lead with expertise, excellence, and compassion – ultimately transforming the patient experience and transforming lives. A doctor who graduates from St Mary's will be someone who excels in both medical science and human connection, placing patients at the heart of every decision.

The founding of the School of Medicine is a moment of enormous significance in the history of St Mary's and plays to our traditional strengths. At St Mary's we are already an established provider of programmes in health sciences, bioethics, end-of-life care and education. We will deliver a modern curriculum, enriched with cutting-edge technology, digital learning, and outstanding teaching in the unique, historic and nurturing environment of Strawberry Hill. Students will receive diverse placements to provide hands-on experience in both conventional healthcare settings and a variety of other enriching environments, such as palliative care, the criminal justice system, and schools for children with special needs.

As an inclusive Catholic university seeking to empower our community to have a positive impact on the world, the creation of the School of Medicine at St Mary's comes at a crucial juncture. The UK is facing a severe shortage of doctors and healthcare professionals,



which has led to longer waiting times, increased strain on the NHS, and gaps in patient care. So, we are both forging a new approach to medical education and contributing to the plan to double the number of doctors trained by 2032.

## A Historic Moment for St Mary's – And for You

As a valued member of the St Mary's alumni community, you've already played a part in our story. Now, we invite you to join us in writing its next extraordinary chapter.

We're asking our alumni to support the University's mission by contributing to this transformative project. Together, we can create a legacy that will change lives for generations to come.

## How You Can Make an Impact

- **Provide Scholarships:** Support talented, aspiring doctors who might not otherwise afford to study medicine, helping them pursue their dreams and make a difference in the world.
- **Fund the Building:** Help create a medical school designed to inspire learning and innovation, with cutting-edge teaching spaces and facilities.
- **Equip the Spaces Inside:** Contribute to specialised rooms, from simulation labs to digital anatomy studios, ensuring our students learn with the best tools available.

## Ways to Give

- **£10 a month:** could help ensure our teaching spaces are continually equipped with essential tools and resources.



- **£25 a month:** could contribute to a collective alumni fund that sponsors student scholarships.

- **£100:** could cover the cost of equipment, such as a stethoscope, for one student.

- **£250:** could help fund state of the art medical equipment.

A larger gift of £500, £1,000, or more could fund scholarships, advance research, or transform learning spaces—leaving a lasting legacy at St Mary's and shaping the future of healthcare.

## How to Make Your Gift

You can make a gift online through our Just Giving page <https://www.justgiving.com/campaign/supportstmarys>

**Alternatively, if you'd like to discuss your gift, please contact the Alumni Office:**

Call us on **020 8240 8200**  
Email us at [development@stmarys.ac.uk](mailto:development@stmarys.ac.uk)

If you'd prefer to send by post? We'd be happy to send you a form or additional information.

## Thank You

*Your generosity will be recognised as part of this historic effort, and you'll be part of a community creating a legacy that changes lives for generations. Thank you for considering a gift to St Mary's School of Medicine.*

# OLYMPICS AND PARALYMPICS SUCCESS

51 of our athletes have participated in the four Olympic and Paralympic Games since Beijing 2008. Collectively, we have won 17 medals, prior to Paris 2024, and achieved a gold medal at every Games since Beijing.

## How did we do in Paris?

Twelve athletes from St Mary's and the Endurance Performance Centre competed at the Olympic and Paralympic Games in Paris this summer, taking part in athletics, triathlon, rugby sevens, and para-cycling events, and representing Great Britain, Jamaica, and France.

**Beth Potter** won two Bronze medals for Team GB in the Women's Triathlon and Mixed Relay events. This was her second games, having competed in the 10,000m in Rio 2016. After Rio, Beth transitioned to triathlon, going on to become World Champion in the 2023 World Triathlon Series.



**Beth Potter**

**Adelle Tracey** competed in the Women's 800m and 1500m events for Team Jamaica.

**Emile Caires**, became Team GB's best Olympic marathon finisher in 20 years after placing fourth in the men's race. Emile ran the marathon in a time of 2:07:29, just 29 seconds behind Kenya's Benson Kipruto who took the Bronze medal.



**Adelle Tracey**

**Aaron Grandidier** took a Gold medal in the Men's Rugby 7s with France. The French side faced Fiji in the final, with Aaron scoring two tries to help secure a 26-14 win and the Gold medal.

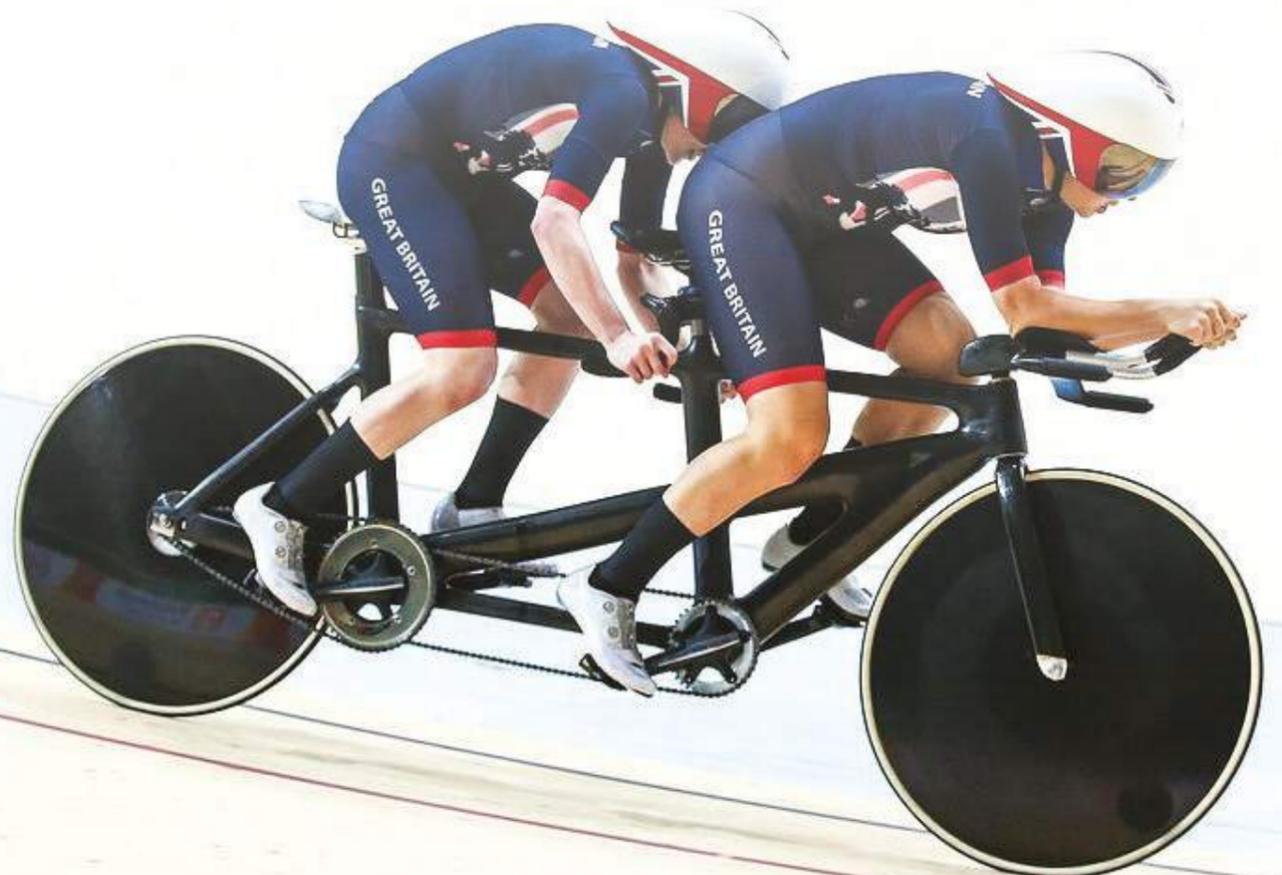
**Revée Walcott-Nolan** and **Elliot Giles** reached the semi-finals for Team GB in the Women's 1500m and Men's 800m races respectively. Elliot was called up a week before the Men's 800m events after St Mary's associate Jake Wightman had to pull out due to injury.

**Three alumnae** and **one current student** competed for Team GB in the Women's Rugby 7s tournament. Emma Uren was named captain of the squad, with current Master's student Lauren Torley and alumnae Ellie Kildunne and Abi Burton joining her. The team reached the quarter finals and finished 7th overall.

**Corrine Hall** concluded her third Paralympic Games in Paris with three bronze medals in para-cycling for Team GB. This brings her total Paralympic medal count to seven, adding to the two golds, one silver, and one bronze she earned at the Rio and Tokyo Games.



**Aaron Grandidier**



# CELEBRATION OF 10 YEARS



The **Bakhita Centre** is a leading centre for research on slavery, exploitation, and abuse. Established in 2015, the centre will celebrate its 10th anniversary next year. We sat down with Professor Carole Murphy, Director of the Bakhita Centre, exploring its impact over the years.

## Inspiration and Evolution

Carole's drive to establish the Centre came after attending the 2014 Santa Marta Conference, an anti-trafficking event supported by Pope Francis. "It was a powerful moment," she recalls. "It was announced that St Mary's would become a hub for undertaking applied research on trafficking prevention, pastoral care, and re-integration of victims. That's how the Bakhita Centre was born."

The Centre, originally called the Centre for the Study of Modern Slavery, was launched in 2015. Over the years, it has had three Directors, each bringing expertise in areas like organised crime, diplomacy, and practitioner training. Carole became Director in 2022, with a focus on victim support and professional training. "Our mission has remained consistent: impacting policy and practice, raising awareness, and creating opportunities for victims and survivors. Practitioner training and survivor education has also become a key part of our work," she says.

<https://www.justgiving.com/campaign/bakhitacentre>



## Challenges and Rewards

Managing the diverse range of projects at the Centre can be tough, Carole admits. "Every project is different, from developing training programmes to leading research. It's a balancing act."

Despite the challenges, the work is rewarding especially when it comes to the Horizons Summer School, a programme for survivors that launched in 2021. "Meeting the women who come through Horizons is one of the best parts of my job. Many of them go on to further education or new careers, and they often credit Horizons for building their confidence."

## Research That Makes a Difference

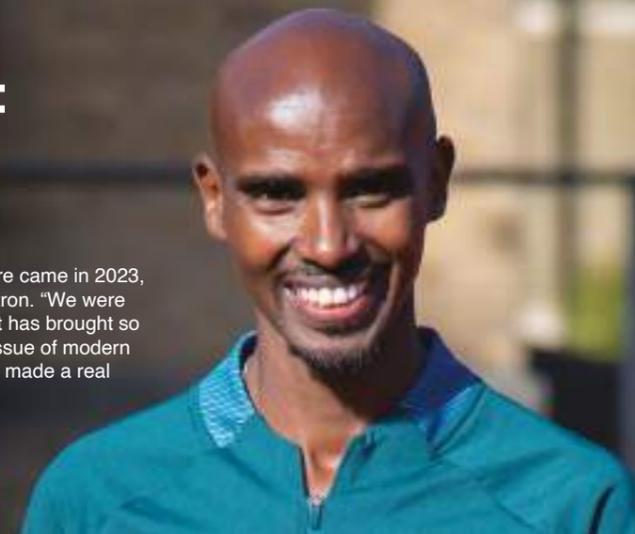
The Centre's research has led to real change in how survivors are supported. "Our projects focus on victim identification, support, and prevention. One of these involved developing a model of culturally competent and compassionate care for survivors, aimed at driving changes in both policy and practice. We are transforming this model into an open-source training programme and have delivered masterclasses to several support providers," Carole explains. Another study focussed on British victims of modern slavery, highlighting the need for greater awareness of the vulnerabilities that lead to criminal, sexual, and labour exploitation.

"In 2018, I published A Game of Chance? Gaps in Long-Term Support for Survivors of Modern Slavery, which was used in a court case that led to significant policy changes. The findings contributed to the suspension of the Home Office's 45-day rule and the introduction of the Recovery Needs Assessment for long-term survivor support," she says.

The Centre has also been instrumental in developing National Training Standards for professionals delivering support to adult and children survivors of modern slavery.

## Sir Mo Farah: The Centre's First Patron

One of the biggest boosts for the Centre came in 2023, when Sir Mo Farah became its first patron. "We were thrilled", Carole says. "Sir Mo's support has brought so much attention to the Centre and the issue of modern slavery in the UK. His involvement has made a real difference in raising awareness."



## Advice for Aspiring Researchers

For alumni and young researchers interested in combating slavery and exploitation, Carole offers straightforward advice: "Understand the complexity. There's no easy solution to a problem this big, and it will require systemic change on multiple levels to tackle it. You can make a difference through focused, community-based efforts. That's where I encourage students to direct their energy."

## Looking Ahead

As the Bakhita Centre marks its 10th anniversary, its mission is stronger than ever. "We want to keep promoting trauma-informed, culturally competent care and ensuring that survivors are treated with the respect and dignity they deserve" Professor Carole Murphy.

Imagine the courage it takes to rebuild a life after enduring the unimaginable. Survivors of modern slavery and human trafficking face daunting challenges as they seek to reclaim their futures - but together with your help, we can make a difference.

By giving today, you'll ensure we can continue offering essential services and creating opportunities that make a lasting difference in the lives of survivors.

[Donate here](https://www.justgiving.com/campaign/bakhitacentre)  
<https://www.justgiving.com/campaign/bakhitacentre>

# FESTIVAL OF CREATIVITY

## An update from Mark Griffin, Head of Drama

Last spring saw the School of Liberal & Creative Arts inaugural Festival of Creativity. Over the course of 16 jam-packed days, students and staff from across the portfolio showcased a huge breadth of creative and intellectual talent.

As befits a newly constituted School, much of the focus was on pulling together as a new group, opening up new perspectives, and introducing disciplines to each other. The festival also let the broader university community know that we had arrived and were ready for action.

Equally, we wanted to use the opportunity to reach out into our local communities and build networks and partnerships that would both encourage more interest in the current work of the School and alert potential employers to the quality and value that our students carry with them. 12 venues across Richmond and Hounslow - theatres, galleries, arts centres, schools and colleges - hosted our work, creating new audiences and interest.

Planning for the Festival began in September 2023. A brilliant steering group made up of both staff and students shaped a programme of over 50 individual events. Some ideas won immediate approval, some developed, some fell by the wayside, but as Christmas approached a fascinating and varied programme had begun to emerge.

The fortnight itself went by in a blur. We had installations, talks, presentations, screenings, plays, poetry, live music, debate, journalism, artists in residence, exhibitions, walking tours, parties, readings, society launches and a creative arts mentoring event with our friends at The Exchange in Twickenham. Our work was seen by over 1500 patrons, including many alumni who used the festival as an opportunity to revisit the campus.

So many colleagues pulled together to make the Festival work, but three students in particular - Mary Mannering, Shekinah Brown and

Tatiana Alafouzo - really went beyond expectation in delivering brilliant and original work. So inspiring was their commitment to the project that we have now validated a new Level 6 option module. This will allow us to encourage and reward the enterprising spirit and dedication that many of our Creative and Liberal Arts students bring to project design and management.

**The second Festival of Creativity will take place between March 29th and April 13th, 2025.**



**Our work was seen by over 1500 patrons, including many alumni who used the festival as an opportunity to revisit the campus.**



# CAMPUS DEVELOPMENTS



## with Chris Paget, Director of Estates and Campus Services

Over the past year, we've have seen exciting changes to our campus. We sat down with Chris, to discuss the latest developments and what lies ahead.

### Major Campus Developments

Reflecting on the past year, Chris highlights several key projects: "We've completed significant renovations to the Waldegrave Suite and launched the new e-Sports arena, where teaching has already begun. We've also finished the 1850 building, a flexible space for large events, and we're currently in the design phase for the Centenary Building, which will house the new School of Medicine. We aim to start construction by April next year."

### The 1850 Building: A New Hub for Students

The 1850 building is a central part of the University's evolving campus. "It's an extension of our 'Student Heart' project, designed to integrate spaces like the Library and Dolce Vita Lounge into a cohesive environment. Now, students can move seamlessly, indoors, all the way from the Chapel to the 1850 building," Chris explains.

The building itself houses the student bar and features flexible seating, a stage, and a nightclub-quality sound system. It has capacity for up to 950 people, making it ideal for social events and open days. "It's already been a hit," Chris says. "At a recent board games night, 200 students attended—far more than in the past."

### Restoring the Historic Waldegrave Suite

Renovating the Waldegrave Suite was essential to improving accessibility and updating its facilities. "The suite is beautiful, but wasn't very accessible, so we added a new entrance and installed a lift, making the space dignified and easy to access for all visitors," Chris notes.

Further restoration is planned, including new flooring and wallpaper, as well as lighting upgrades. "These improvements will help us preserve the heritage of the building while making it more functional."

### Centenary Building

The upcoming School of Medicine is a source of great excitement. "The School will be located on the site of the current R Block, which will be demolished. We're working with Ridge architects to design a two-storey building that meets the best practices in medical education," Chris shares.

The Centenary Building will feature a lecture theatre, clinical teaching spaces, and an anatomage facility for electronic anatomy teaching. "It's a prestigious addition that will further enhance the University's reputation," he adds.

Preserving the University's heritage while modernising its facilities is a priority. "Historic buildings like the Waldegrave Suite are vital, both for their beauty and for the heritage they represent," Chris says. "We're committed to restoring these spaces while also creating modern, flexible environments like the 1850 building."

The Centenary Building will reflect this balance, combining contemporary design with respect for the estate's historic character.

### Alumni Support for Future Developments

Alumni play a crucial role in supporting the campus's future. "One of the most valuable ways alumni can help is by sharing contacts or businesses that can assist with restoration work," Chris explains. "With heritage grants becoming harder to secure, any support, financial or otherwise, would be invaluable."

Chris encourages alumni to stay connected and visit the campus. "We want you to see the progress we've made and be part of this journey, whether through donations or by sharing expertise."



# ALUMNI INTERVIEWS

We are excited to share with you a series of interviews featuring members of our alumni community who are making their mark on a global scale. Their achievements span a diverse range of fields, showcasing the far-reaching influence of our graduates.

## WINCIE KNIGHT, CLASS OF 1998

Wincie is the Senior Vice President of Global Inclusion at Paramount. She began her career at Nickelodeon, one of Paramount's global brands, shortly after graduating from St Mary's.

### 1. How did your time at St Mary's shape your career in media?

St Mary's enhanced my love for the arts, theatre visits and performances. I built many wonderful relationships at St Mary's, and by the time I graduated, I knew I was ready to pursue a career in media. The supportive environment at St Mary's played a big role in shaping my direction.

### 2. Can you tell us about your role as Senior Vice President of Global Inclusion at Paramount?

My role as Senior Vice President has truly been an incredible journey. I started out with Nickelodeon, one of Paramount's global brands—and this month marks 25 years with the company, which is over half my life! In my current role, I collaborate with leaders worldwide to champion diversity, equity, inclusion (DEI), and belonging across Paramount. One of my key responsibilities is overseeing our network of Employee Resource Groups, which has grown to over 40 chapters globally. I'm also proud to have launched Paramount's Global Inclusion Week in the UK, which has evolved into a company-wide event spanning 30+ countries, packed with DEI-focused initiatives.

### 3. How do you think media companies can better serve underrepresented groups, both on-screen and behind the scenes?

Media companies need to embrace diversity in content creation to better serve underrepresented groups. At Paramount, we have our *Content for Change* initiative, originally launched by BTN (Black Television Network), to break down the societal narratives that perpetuate racism and hate. Now, the entire Paramount family supports this mission across brands. *Content for Change* leverages data-driven insights to transform our creative ecosystem from the

content we produce to the supply chains that support it and the culture that underpins everything we do.

Television is a powerful medium to challenge biases and stereotypes, so portraying people of diverse ethnicities, genders, sexual orientations, and abilities authentically is essential. Equally important is representation behind the scenes. This means casting a wide net in recruitment across all levels and fostering a truly inclusive workplace culture. Companies must be intentional about DEI in both content and organisational structure to help build a more inclusive, representative media landscape.

### 4. What advice would you give to young professionals, especially those from underrepresented backgrounds, aspiring to leadership roles in the media industry?

Know your worth, keep honing your skills, and build a strong network—your network is your net worth. Surround yourself with supportive people and seek mentors to guide you.

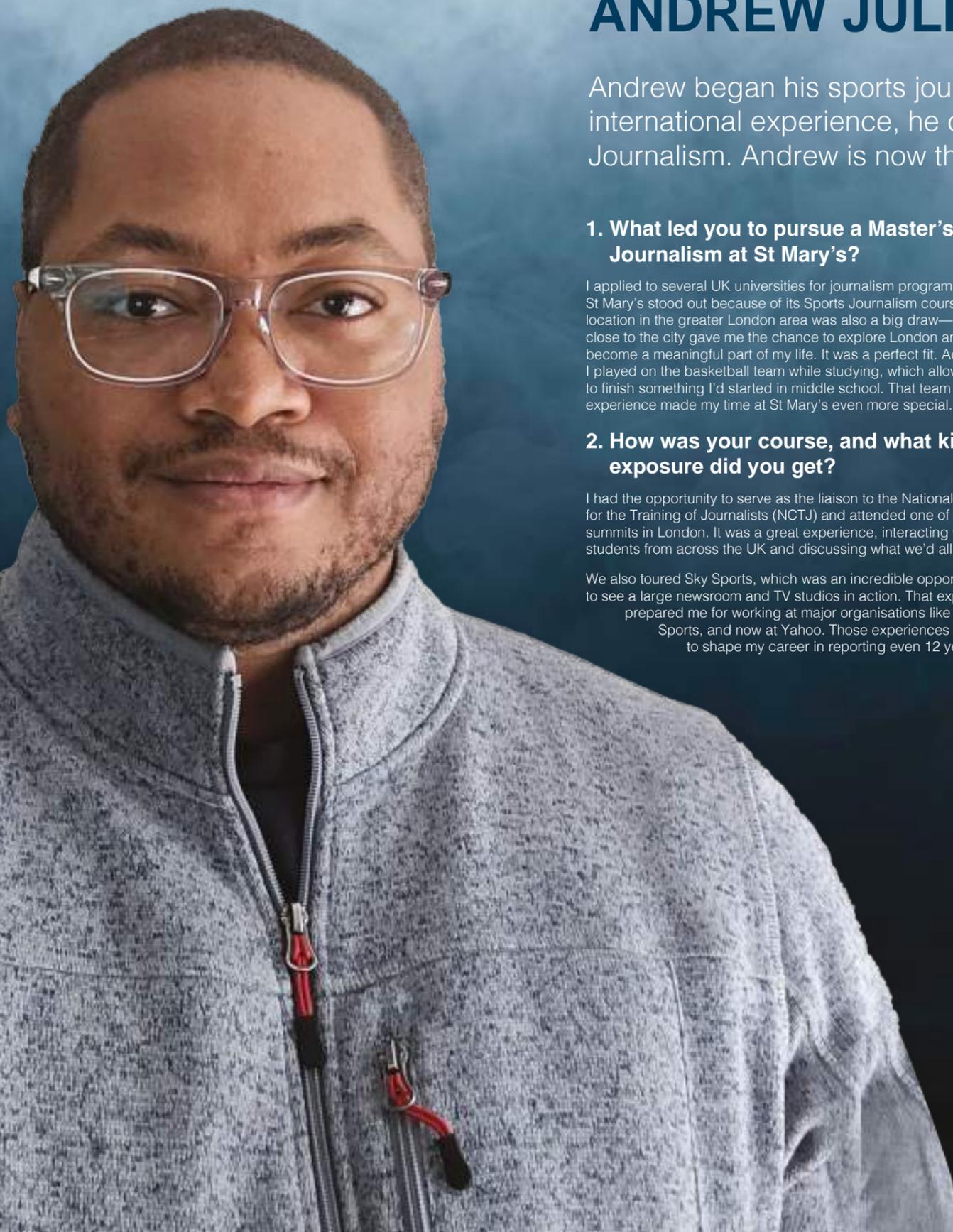
### 5. What excites you most about the future of media, and where do you see the most potential for growth in inclusion?

I'm incredibly excited about the future of media. Advances in technology offer huge potential to make media more inclusive, both in production and for audiences. Automated accessibility tools like real-time subtitles, translations, and audio descriptions will make content more accessible to people with disabilities. On the production side, tools like voice recognition can open doors in scriptwriting and editing for individuals with physical disabilities.





**I gradually transitioned into larger roles, eventually covering national and international news at CBS and now at Yahoo Sports.** ”



## ANDREW JULIAN, CLASS OF 2014

Andrew began his sports journalism career in Florida. Seeking international experience, he chose St Mary's for his MA in Sports Journalism. Andrew is now the Senior Content Editor at Yahoo Sports.

### 1. What led you to pursue a Master's in Journalism at St Mary's?

I applied to several UK universities for journalism programmes, but St Mary's stood out because of its Sports Journalism course. Its location in the greater London area was also a big draw—being so close to the city gave me the chance to explore London and have it become a meaningful part of my life. It was a perfect fit. Additionally, I played on the basketball team while studying, which allowed me to finish something I'd started in middle school. That team sports experience made my time at St Mary's even more special.

### 2. How was your course, and what kind of exposure did you get?

I had the opportunity to serve as the liaison to the National Council for the Training of Journalists (NCTJ) and attended one of their summits in London. It was a great experience, interacting with students from across the UK and discussing what we'd all learned.

We also toured Sky Sports, which was an incredible opportunity to see a large newsroom and TV studios in action. That exposure prepared me for working at major organisations like CBS Sports, and now at Yahoo. Those experiences continue to shape my career in reporting even 12 years later.

### 3. Is there a favourite sport you like to report on?

Honestly, I enjoy whatever sport is happening at the moment. I love events like the NCAA basketball tournaments for their unpredictability and exciting performances, and I look forward to the NBA playoffs, the French Open, and Wimbledon. When the American football season starts, I'm equally passionate. While sports reporting can be repetitive, the unique stories that emerge in each sport keep things interesting for me. I'm lucky to cover a wide variety of sports and appreciate each for its own excitement.

### 4. Could you share your journey from graduation to landing your first journalism role and your current position at Yahoo Sports?

Before attending St Mary's, I worked as a sports reporter for a radio station in Miami. After graduating, I returned to the U.S, but finding a job took about a year due to the tough media industry climate in 2013-2014. I eventually returned to my previous radio station, which was a challenging but valuable learning experience. That period taught me perseverance and patience, qualities that are essential in this field.

Not long after I was able to secure a position at CBS in Florida, thanks to some colleagues from my undergraduate days who helped connect me to the right people. Support from family and friends during those challenging times was also crucial in helping me move forward. From there, I gradually transitioned into larger roles, eventually covering national and international news at CBS and now at Yahoo Sports. Each step of the journey has brought new challenges and growth, shaping my career in ways I hadn't anticipated when I first started out.

### 5. What advice would you give to students pursuing a career in sports journalism?

My advice to students is to take in everything during your studies, internships, and early jobs. Be open to saying yes to opportunities, even if you're not sure you can do everything required. Embrace challenges, as they'll help you grow and gain experience.

To read the full interview, please visit our website.  
[www.stmarys.ac.uk/alumni-stories](http://www.stmarys.ac.uk/alumni-stories)

# EMPLOYABILITY

As an alumnus of St Mary's, you have lifetime access to our employability support, including our careers consultant appointments, live job board, and online support platforms.

Our main online platform is CareerConnect, where you can access all our services: you can book 1-2-1 appointments with our career consultants (on campus and remotely), search our online jobs board, improve your CV and covering letter through our online advanced AI tool CareerSet, and research industries and different types of work. Register with CareerConnect.

We offer a free vacancies board for employers, so if you are hiring, please do get in touch and we can advertise your roles to our students. Email us at [careers@stmarys.ac.uk](mailto:careers@stmarys.ac.uk) to find out more.

<https://careers.stmarys.ac.uk/unauth/graduate/register>

## Would you like to be a mentor for **BE SMART**

Be Smart gives UK students who identify as either Black, Asian, or an ethnic minority the opportunity to access and participate in career-enhancing initiatives that will help them stand out from the competition and potentially step into and succeed in the career or venture they choose as a graduate.

### Be Smart has three main components

1. Self-Development and Professionalism Workshops
2. One-to-one Mentoring from Industry Professionals
3. 30 hours Paid Internship (London Living Wage)

We would love our alumni to mentor current students on this programme. If you are interested in supporting us through mentoring, please email [careers@stmarys.ac.uk](mailto:careers@stmarys.ac.uk).



## CHRIS BRYDE, CLASS OF 2023

Chris, a former U.S. Marine Infantry Machine Gunner, lost both legs to a Taliban IED explosion in Afghanistan. After years of recovery, he turned his focus to academics, earning a BA in Creative and Professional Writing and an MA in Creative Writing: First Novel at St Mary's. He recently published his debut novel, *Uppunner*, which has become an Amazon bestseller. Chris is now pursuing a PhD in Creative Writing at St Mary's.



### 1. Can you tell us about your upbringing in Alaska and how that shaped your path to becoming a US Marine?

I grew up on the Kenai Peninsula, Alaska, in a place where there were probably more bears and wolves than people. You have to be tough growing up in such a wild place and I suppose that is part of the reason that when I chose to join the military, I wanted the hardest and picked the Marine Corps Infantry.

### 2. What drew you to St Mary's to pursue a MA in Creative Writing? And how is your PhD in English Literature going?

I chose St Mary's for several reasons. Being a Catholic institution was important to me, but what really stood out was the strength of its Creative Writing programme. Plus, the University's location, close to some of the best fishing spots on the River Thames, was a bonus! I thoroughly enjoyed both my BA and MA here, and I feel privileged to now be continuing my academic journey with the PhD in English Literature.

### 3. Your book *Uppunner* has become a bestseller on Amazon. Can you share the inspiration behind writing it, and the story behind the title?

*Uppunner* quickly became an Amazon #1 Best Seller in the Afghan War History category and reached #2 in Hot New Releases in the Disabled Fiction category. The inspiration behind writing the book was my desire to tell an honest account of what the Afghan War was really like. Initially, I didn't set out to write an anti-war novel, but as I

wrote truthfully, that's what it evolved into. An *Uppunner* is a Machine Gunner who is mounted on a gun turret. I spent most of my time in Afghanistan as an *Uppunner*.

### 4. Can you describe your writing process? Do you have any habits or routines that you follow?

For me, the key to productivity is putting in the hours at the library. I've found that maintaining a routine of reading, researching, and writing every day is essential. It helps me keep both the word count and the quality of my work consistent.

“The inspiration behind writing the book was my desire to tell an honest account of what the Afghan War was really like.”



# WAYS TO GET INVOLVED

## Mentor and Inspire

Your journey can inspire others. By mentoring students or recent graduates, you can share your experiences, guide their career choices, and help them navigate their futures with confidence.

- **Join our Mentorship Programme:** Connect with students eager to learn from your expertise.
- **Share Your Story:** Participate in panel discussions or alumni talks to inspire the next generation.

## Reconnect and Celebrate

The St Mary's community is always here for you. Our alumni events are an opportunity to reconnect with friends, celebrate shared experiences, and see how the university is evolving.

- **Join us on 30th August:** Our Alumni Reunion Day is a chance to revisit campus, rekindle memories, and reconnect with fellow graduates.
- **Come for a campus visit.** We would love to welcome you back sharing new developments and wandering down memory lane together.

## Support Future Generations

A gift to St Mary's doesn't just support the university—it supports the students and future leaders who embody its mission. Whether you give a little or a lot, your generosity will help transform lives.

- **Fund Scholarships:** Enable students from all backgrounds to thrive at St Mary's.
- **Support the New School of Medicine:** Help create spaces and equip labs that train the compassionate doctors of tomorrow.

- **Make a Regular Gift:** Join other alumni in sustaining the university's work by giving monthly or annually.

- **Become a Friend:** Join other's in supporting the development of the University and students.

- Leave a gift in your will.

## Be Part of the Legacy

Every act of giving—whether it's your time, talent, or treasure—strengthens the St Mary's community. Together, we can continue to shape a brighter future.

## How to Take Action

- Sign up as a mentor or find out about opportunities, speak at alumni events or to discuss a gift:
- Email us at [alumni@stmarys.ac.uk](mailto:alumni@stmarys.ac.uk)
- Call us on 020 8240 8200
- Join the 31st August Alumni Reunion Day:

Visit <https://www.stmarys.ac.uk/alumni/reconnect/events.aspx> for details and to register your interest

- Make a Gift Today:

Support scholarships, the School of Medicine, or other key initiatives at [www.justgiving.com/campaign/supportstmarys](http://www.justgiving.com/campaign/supportstmarys)

*Thank you for being part of the St Mary's story. Let's create the next chapter together.*

## Stay Connected with Us

After graduation, you're not just a former student – you're part of a vast global family comprising nearly 57,000 Simmarians. The Alumni Office is dedicated to ensuring you remain connected with St Mary's and fellow alumni. Our mission goes beyond just maintaining ties; we're here to facilitate meaningful interactions, offer assistance in your career path, and provide opportunities to reconnect.

What We Offer:

- Networking opportunities
- Events and Reunions
- Benefits and discounts
- On-premises library access
- Proof of degree

<https://www.stmarys.ac.uk/alumni/alumni-and-development-relations.aspx>