

RICHARD BERESFORD BURSARY BLOG

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When I applied for the Richard Beresford Bursary, I hoped it might help me find my place in the enterprise education community. I am the Student Enterprise Advisor at the University of Cumbria, managing the enterprise and entrepreneurship activity across five campuses. I only started the role in September 2023 having had no previous experience in higher education. As a team of one (me, 0.4FTE) I felt very much like the new kid on the geographically isolated block.

I was fortunate to complete the EEUK Fast Track programme a short time after joining UoC, and Alison's parting words to network network (was there also something about a framework?) network, stuck with me. I applied for the bursary, hoping to use the funds to travel to other universities to learn from more experienced enterprise educators and shake off some of the Imposter Syndrome. My neurodivergence means I work and interact a lot better in person than I do behind a screen, so having the opportunity to undertake these visits is incredibly helpful.

What has followed in the last six months has been valuable beyond words. Please indulge me while I embrace my inner Gwyneth-at-the-Oscars. Put simply, EEUK and the Richard Beresford Bursary changed the trajectory of my career. During my first visit to the northeast, I applied for a studentship with Northumbria University in neurodiversity and entrepreneurship for my PhD. I managed to time my Nottingham Trent University campus visit to attend the Neurodiversity and Entrepreneurship Association conference, an event which now holds my record for 'Most Times Cried in a Conference'. This further inspired me to apply for a shortlisting judge position at the AGCAS Awards of Excellence 2024 for the Equality, Diversity, and Inclusivity category. Subsequent visits supported my successful application to the UoC Vice Chancellor's Fund, through which I was awarded additional funding to assess Incubator Spaces. It was the networks I made, and the university campuses I visited which made this happen, and I am eternally grateful.

I want to acknowledge the wonderful staff at the following universities who have been so warm and welcoming, Northumbria, Durham, Sunderland, Strathclyde, Lancaster, LSE,

and Nottingham Trent. I have been blown away by the genuine offers of support and guidance, and feel I've made life-long friendships.

A huge thanks to EEUK for this opportunity, it was even more valuable than I had possibly hoped for.