Dear Friend,

I am writing to you today to update you on one of our immediate key priorities at Robinson, and to invite you to be part of this important initiative.

Our College was founded as an egalitarian and progressive place of study; it’s something we have always prided ourselves on. We were the first Cambridge college to be co-educational from its foundation. We are a place of innovation and ambition. We have always understood that academic excellence and pastoral support go hand-in-hand, and Robinson endeavours to be a place where students of all backgrounds can thrive.

Alumni will remember well that support for students has always been an important part of the Cambridge model. At Robinson, our support network currently includes our Tutors and Senior Tutor, the College Chaplain, our in-house Nurse and a College-based Counsellor; but demand for their services is growing, and changing. We must meet that increased demand, and that is one reason for making this appeal. But, just as important, we want to keep Robinson among the most forward-looking and imaginative of the Cambridge colleges in our approach to welfare and wellbeing.

So we want to expand the support network at Robinson. Its work will be co-ordinated and shaped by a Head of Welfare and Wellbeing, a post we hope to recruit as soon as possible. Some of the work will be acute, recognising and responding to clinical and critical need, but we will place an equal emphasis on preventative and non-medical interventions: helping students to live, eat and sleep healthily, and improving access to fitness facilities. A safe and confidential space for students to meet with this team is also a priority and work will soon begin to create a Wellbeing Centre in Thorneycreek House.

Why are we raising money for this rather than funding it from existing resources? The answer is that the last couple of years have been difficult for Robinson and its community. Loss of conferencing and rental income, along with unexpected additional expenditure to make the College safe for our students and staff, has resulted in a large budget deficit. Thanks to generous donations to the recent Coronavirus Emergency Appeal and the 2020 Telephone Campaign, our friends and alumni provided much-needed funding that enabled us to support better those students whose mental health had been affected by months of lockdown and family strain. This allowed us to double our College-based counselling provision and increase the hours of our College Nurse. The
extra funding is also providing additional help for specialist mental health support, often matched by the University’s Crane’s Fund. Those were important steps forward, but there is still much to be done to ensure this investment in our students’ wellbeing is adequate and sustainable. The enclosed brochure will tell you more about how, with your help, we hope to achieve this ambition.

I understand that now may not be the right time for you to make a gift but, if you can, it really will help. All gifts are genuinely appreciated. Together, we can ensure that our students achieve their full potential at Robinson and that our College leads the way in welfare and wellbeing at Cambridge.

With my best wishes

Richard