

## PRESS RELEASE

### **Participants Announced for Queen Elizabeth Prizes for Education: USA Exchange 2026**

#### **Flagship programme brings eight UK universities and colleges to Washington DC to advance transatlantic academic collaboration**

**LONDON 14 January 2026** – The year 2026 marks the 100th anniversary of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II, the founding patron of the Queen Elizabeth Prizes for Education, the highest honour awarded to universities and colleges in the United Kingdom; it is also the 250th anniversary of the Declaration of Independence in the USA.

In this historic year, the Royal Anniversary Trust has devised the Queen Elizabeth Prizes for Education: USA Exchange, to celebrate and commemorate both Her Majesty's dedication to education and her tireless commitment to international diplomacy – in particular, the UK's special relationship with the USA.

The Exchange will bring representatives from eight Prize-winning alumni institutions to Washington DC for a four-day programme in October 2026 to meet with selected US academics who work in similar fields. It is designed to provide opportunities for new transatlantic collaborations and partnerships between UK and US universities and colleges that will have a beneficial legacy in the long term.

The eight UK universities and colleges were selected by a panel of eminent judges including representatives from the Trust's Higher and Further Education Panels.

Sir Damon Buffini, Chair of the Royal Anniversary Trust said: "The Queen Elizabeth Prize for Education: USA Exchange is a landmark initiative, launched in a year of historical significance on both sides of the Atlantic. Honouring Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II's enduring legacy in education and diplomacy, the programme brings together the very best of UK academic excellence with leading minds in the United States. By convening Prize-winning alumni institutions in Washington DC, the Exchange creates an unparalleled platform for forging ambitious transatlantic partnerships with a lasting global impact."

## **UK Participants | Queen Elizabeth Prizes for Education USA Exchange 2026**

**University of the Arts London** was awarded a Prize in 2023 for shaping the fashion industry of the future through global leadership and pioneering work in environmental and social sustainability. During the Exchange they will engage with US researchers and practitioners to inform a new wellbeing framework for fashion that can influence policy, guide industry practice, and help redefine fashion as a driver of cultural, ecological, and social justice.

**The University of Edinburgh** won a Prize in 2015 for excellence in the diagnosis and treatment of coronary heart disease, playing a major role in the reduction in death rates through innovative treatments and guidelines. The Exchange is an opportunity for cross institutional and transatlantic collaboration that will accelerate and synergise the investigation and characterisation of coronary and valvular heart disease, enhancing the future management and treatment of these conditions, benefiting patients around the world.

**Edinburgh Napier University** was awarded a Prize in 2015 for their research in wood science and UK timber construction, reducing the carbon footprint. They plan to collaborate with USA academic partners to implement a strategic alliance in the Push for More Timber in Construction and More Sustainable Forestry.

**City of Glasgow College** was awarded a Prize in 2023 for life-saving research into oxygen depletion in enclosed and confined spaces on board ships. This Exchange provides an opportunity to deepen international collaboration with the global maritime sector.

**Keele University** was awarded a Prize in 2009 for their pioneering early intervention and primary care in the management of chronic pain, particularly back pain and arthritis. The United States is a global leader in technological innovation, including AI and Virtual Reality, and this is what they plan to explore during the Exchange.

**Queen's University Belfast** was awarded a Prize in 2015 for their Centre for Secure Information Technologies. During the Exchange they will be partnering with Northeastern University's Cybersecurity and Privacy Institute to advance research, education, and international collaboration in cybersecurity and AI.

**Scotland's Rural College (SRUC)** was awarded a Prize in 2017 for a genetics research project showing farmers around the world how selective breeding can significantly increase milk yields, improve economic efficiency and reduce carbon footprint of dairy farming. During the Exchange they will focus on

strengthening transatlantic collaboration in livestock genetics, data integration and AI to support sustainable and climate smart food systems.

**UCS College Group** was awarded a Prize in 2023 as the first Further Education college to deliver nursing degrees locally, opening up new career routes for all ages and responding to workforce challenges within the local National Health Service (NHS). Through the Exchange, they aim to share best practice, learn from international partners, and demonstrate the vital role Further Education plays in delivering higher-level health skills within a university-led system.

## **USA Host Institutions | Queen Elizabeth Prizes for Education USA Exchange 2026**

The following US universities and colleges, based in Washington DC, will host the UK and US delegates during the Exchange:

American University  
Howard University  
Johns Hopkins University Bloomberg Center  
Northern Virginia Community College (NOVA)

### **Notes for Editors:**

**The Queen Elizabeth Prizes for Higher and Further Education** are part of the UK's national honours system, recognising outstanding work by UK universities and colleges which demonstrates excellence, innovation, benefit to the institution and benefit to the wider world. First awarded by Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II in 1995, the Prizes are granted every two years by the Sovereign on the advice of the Prime Minister following a rigorous and independent process of review carried out by the Royal Anniversary Trust, an independent charity. The Prizes were formerly known as the Queen's Anniversary Prizes for Higher and Further Education.

The UK institutions participating in the **USA Exchange** are all former winners of the Queen Elizabeth Prizes for Higher and Further Education. They were selected via a competition open exclusively to Prizes alumni. The Royal Anniversary Trust is grateful for the support of its primary sponsor, Amazon Web Services (AWS) in this endeavour. The Trust is also pleased to have the support of the British Council and the UK's Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office.

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