

University philanthropy: The Oak Foundation

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Key findings

Established by the Anglo Zimbabwean Alan Parker and his Danish wife Jette the Oak Foundation is one of Europe's bigger family foundations. They are longstanding Swiss residents and the Oak Foundation is registered in Switzerland.

Oak Foundation was established in 1983 and today has 11 programmes, through which it has made more than 5,440 grants to organisations around the world. Its six main areas of activity are: Environment, Housing and Homelessness, International Human Rights, Issues Affecting Women, Prevent Child Sexual Abuse and Learning Differences.

According to our analysis of Oak Foundation funding from 2014-20:

- Oak has given \$74.6m to 65 universities in 14 countries;
- 93% of funding went to 58 universities in North America and Europe.
- The biggest country beneficiary was the US which awarded \$43.4m to 33 universities and colleges.
- The second biggest country beneficiary was the UK. 13 British universities received \$17.4m in Oak funding.
- The third biggest country beneficiary was Canada. 5 Canadian universities shared \$3.1m over the past 10 years.
- John Hopkins University is the single biggest recipient of Oak funding.
- 31% (\$22.8m) went to European universities, making Europe the second biggest regional recipient of giving after North America. 20 universities in six European countries benefited from Oak funding. 76% of European funding landed up at UK universities.
- Oak awarded \$2.3m to three African universities – Makerere (Uganda), Mpumalanga (South Africa) and the University of Cape Town (South Africa).

About UniversityPhilanthropy.com

UniversityPhilanthropy.com is the dedicated research arm of The Cape Partnership, a London-based public affairs and policy advisory firm. Our research looks at trends in philanthropy and giving to universities.

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Key facts

In 2020, the Oak Foundation awarded \$282m in grants. According to our review, around 10% of that funding went to universities and higher education institutions.

Oak reports that in 2020 the biggest area of giving (\$71m) was to environmental projects. Its second biggest area of giving (\$45m) was to child sexual abuse prevention. While universities were not big recipients for environmental funding, they did feature significantly in child sex abuse related grants.

Top 10 non-US recipients of giving by Oak Foundation:

University	Country	2010-19
Oxford	UK	\$8.9m
Uppsala	Sweden	\$1.9m
Goldsmiths Coll.	UK	\$1.8m
Imperial Coll.	UK	\$1.8m
Cape Town	S. Africa	\$1.7m
London School of Tropical Medicine	UK	\$1.4m
Bedfordshire	UK	\$1.3m
New Bulgarian	Bulgaria	\$1m
Ontario College	Canada	\$1m
Calgary	Canada	\$0.9m

Top five university beneficiaries of Oak funding 2014-20:

University	Total	Main funding areas
John Hopkins Univ.	\$11.5m	Child sexual abuse
University of Oxford	\$8.9m	Multiple Sclerosis, Covid-19
University of North Carolina (Chapel Hill)	\$6.0m	Learning differences
Columbia University	\$3.5m	Child sexual abuse
East Carolina University	\$3.3m	Learning differences

Prevention of child sexual abuse

Tackling child sexual abuse is a major focus for the Foundation. It runs two sub-programmes to: (1) promote, advance and scale up solutions to reduce child sexual abuse; and (2) engage with and hold global institutions accountable to prevent abuse and to end impunity for child sexual abuse.

The single biggest award in our seven year review of Oak funding was made in 2020 to John Hopkins University. Oak gifted \$10.3m for a programme to identify and evaluate the most promising child sexual abuse perpetration prevention interventions.

The second largest award was an award of \$2.8m made also in 2020 to Columbia University to fund a project for the World Bank to prevent and respond to the sexual exploitation and abuse of children arising from the large-scale projects it funds. It also awarded \$1.2m to a project run by Boston College in Rwanda with a focus on prevention of child sexual abuse.

These three projects amounted to over half of all funds awarded to universities in 2020.

About our research

The purpose of this research was to identify giving by the Oak Foundation between 2014-20. We used data published by the Foundation through its annual reports. For more information, contact: office@capepartnership.com

