

issue. We have training programmes with university staff members. We want staff members to be able to listen, but they shouldn't be the only source of support for every student.

Our main goal is to make sure that every university has a strategic response to mental health. We support the recommendations of the #stepchange framework, which was launched by Universities UK in 2017 to help improve the mental health of students and faculty members in higher education. Universities must look at their needs and have a specific plan of action to make sure everyone has access to support and treatment.

When the mental-health charity Student Minds started in 2009, many universities denied that they had a mental-health problem on their campus. But the conversation has changed. Now, universities say, 'We know we need to do something, but's what the right thing to do?'

Students also have to look after each other. It's common for people to tell their peers about their troubles but no one else. A 2014 UK study by the Equality Challenge Unit found that 75% of students with mental-health challenges disclosed the issue

**“Universities must look at their needs and have a plan of action to ensure everyone has access to support.”**

to peers (see [go.nature.com/2qvhd8k](http://go.nature.com/2qvhd8k)). But according to the Health Education Statistics Agency, only about 3% of all students in the 2016–17 academic year formally reported a mental-health issue to their university. As the discussion continues, hopefully more students will feel comfortable reaching out to supervisors and administrators.

People don't recognize that students have a different experience from other young people. When it comes to National Health Service funding, Student Minds is one of a few groups trying to get more student-health-care models. There's a misconception that students are privileged and don't need extra support. I had my own mental-health concerns as a student, and while I'm much better now, I know how mental health can affect everything. Once you see it, you can't unsee it.

University should be a place where someone can thrive regardless of anxiety or depression. If you have the right support, you can have a diagnosis and still do well. If that support isn't there, you can have no diagnosis and still be stressed. Staff should see university as an opportunity to support people and set them up for their future. If you can help them at university, you're setting them up for a win. ■

#### INTERVIEWS BY CHRIS WOOLSTON

Interviews have been edited for clarity and length.

# TURNING POINT

## Political expatriate

*Theoretical chemist Alán Aspuru-Guzik was among many US citizens who talked of moving to Canada after the November 2016 election of Donald Trump as US president. Now, Aspuru-Guzik has made good on his declaration, and will begin a new post in July. He explains how the US political climate prompted him to leave his tenured post at Harvard University in Cambridge, Massachusetts, after nearly 20 years in the country.*



#### Why are you leaving the United States?

The nation is at a crossroads. Is it going to continue as a civil society in which politicians and people from different sides respect each other? Or is it going to become a country that has lost political decency and dialogue? Why not use my skills in a country where I don't have to worry about the next national drama, and can concentrate on my science and be with people who share my values?

#### What will you be doing?

I've accepted a post as a Canada 150 Research Chair in theoretical and quantum chemistry at the University of Toronto, worth Can\$1 million (US\$780,000) a year for 7 years. I'll also be a faculty member at the Vector Institute, which is the new artificial-intelligence research institute in Toronto.

#### What is the Canada 150 programme?

The Canadian government announced last year that it would invest Can\$117.6 million to enhance the country's "reputation as a global centre for science, research and innovation excellence, in celebration of Canada's 150th anniversary". Canadian institutions get a one-off lump sum to attract top-tier researchers.

#### What disturbs you most about the US political environment?

We don't have a very civilized way of passing budgets, so even though spending for science was increased, it's tied up with military increases. We have to try to solve climate-change problems. But the United States just left the Paris agreement. I am a dual US–Mexican citizen. I have been here for 20 years, and it doesn't look like it's getting better. Even when the Democrats were in power, the same political war was being waged between the parties. This is the way democracies end — not by coups anymore.

#### What was it like to work in the United States as a dual national?

I've been lucky to be in some of the most inclusive places in the United States. I lived

roughly half of my time in California and half of it in Massachusetts. I have a PhD; I helped to launch start-up companies; I'm a professor at Harvard and I've published a lot. I'm one of the very privileged in the United States. But how about others who are not? Why should I not worry about them?

#### Are there drawbacks to vacating your position and leaving collaborators?

I'm leaving a favourable ecosystem. But there are many other great places. Toronto is one. It's one of the most diverse cities in the world, and Canada is leading the world in artificial intelligence and quantum computing. I plan to continue my collaborations at Harvard and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology in Cambridge with key collaborators, and I'll continue to expand them in Canada.

#### What are your thoughts about leaving the United States and Harvard in general?

All moves are bittersweet. I'm not leaving in any way or form because of Harvard. I'm thankful for them as a platform for my career — they were extremely supportive. Some people believe that one should spend forever in a single place. I think that shouldn't be the case. Sometimes we should do this more often. So I also think it's great that somebody else will take my position at Harvard and that there will be new activity.

#### What do you see as the main cultural differences between the United States and Canada?

In Canada, people on the street emphasize how welcome you are. And even though you have disagreements, you can still respect your opponents. ■

#### INTERVIEW BY BRIAN OWENS

This interview was edited for clarity and length.