



# Third-level sector will benefit from €1.2bn boost



**John Walshe**  
Education Editor

HIGHER education got a major boost in the budget with an extra €1.2bn to be spent over the next five years.

Three quarters will go on a massive building programme while the colleges will compete for the remaining €300m which will be drawn from a Strategic Innovation Fund.

The announcements were welcomed by the universities and the institutes of technology and by the Higher Education Authority. But there was disappointment over the lack of additional funding for second level education, for tackling discipline problems and for the further education sector.

The Teachers' Union of Ireland is to hold an emergency executive meeting today to discuss future strategies which could include some form of protest and industrial action. TUI president Paddy Healy said he was very disappointed with the budget.

But his reaction was in marked contrast to that of the third level sector.

Professor Ferdinand Von Prondzynski from DCU said it was the first time a Minister for Finance had focused so strongly on higher education.

"The Strategic Innovation Fund, and the significant capital investment, are

important measures that will support economic growth and knowledge-intensive employment."

The Minister has taken on board the radical proposals made by the university Heads in their submission to the Government, and has allocated significant sums of money to allow substantial progress to be made in the drive to make Irish higher education internationally competitive.

UCD president Dr Hugh Brady welcomed what he called "the pioneering initiative" signalled by Finance Minister Brian Cowen.

The Innovation Fund will be used for a number of improvements and will:

- Incentivise and reward internal restructuring and rationalisation efforts.
- Provide for improved performance management systems.

- Meet staff training and support requirements associated with the reform of structures and the implementation of new processes.

Education Minister Mary Hanafin said that the capital allocation of €900m for third level would enable her to make substantial progress on key projects in universities and Institutes of Technology.

But a discordant note was sounded by the National Association of Adult Education. Director Berni Brady said the budget had ignored adult education again.



**Dr Hugh Brady: welcomed education initiative**