



Newman Scholars for 2004-5 – from left, Cheng Jiang Huang, Enterprise Ireland Newman Scholar; Aisling O'Riordan, Baxter Newman Scholar; Joanna Griffin, Pfizer Animal Health Newman Scholar; Aoife O'Donovan, Craig Dobbin Newman Scholar; Denise Drudy, Diageo Newman Scholar; Michele O'Rourke, Cuisine de France Newman Scholar; Rebecca O'Mahony, Dunnes Newman Scholar; Pranesh Chatterjee, Piers Newman Scholar. Photograph: Shane O'Neill

# Bringing the best on to the campus



The prestigious Newman Scholarship Programme doesn't just benefit UCD.  
**Jane Suiter reports**

THE Newman Scholarship Programme, one of the most prestigious in the state, is a key plank in UCD's bridge-building with business and industry.

Set up in 1989, the scholarship is named after Cardinal John Henry Newman, UCD's first rector and author of the celebrated *The Idea of a University*. The programme is sponsored by a very large array of companies and supports research in the arts, humanities and sciences.

According to Professor Catherine Godson, vice-president for innovation and corporate partnerships at UCD, the programme is a leading international platform for young researchers in the humanities and science, and is key to UCD's research strategy.

The aim is to allow gifted scholars to embark on a career with time to invest in research. Current scholars are researching areas as diverse as food safety, nephrology, civil engineering and psychiatry.

Over the past 16 years the programme has appointed some 90 scholars and raised more than €8 million from Irish and international companies, semi-state bodies, voluntary organisations and individuals.

The most recent sponsored scholarships are: proteomics (Applied Biosystems), employment relations (Aughinish Alumina and AIB), food safety (Nestle, C&C, Dawn Foods), and rheumatology (Wyeth).

Other current sponsorships are funded by Punchestown Kidney Research Fund, Piers, Pfizer Animal Health Care, Enterprise Ireland, Cuisine de France, Diageo, Baxter Healthcare, Irish Lung Foundation and Dunnes Stores. Former sponsors have included the Irish Lung Foundation, Unilever, AstraZeneca, IMRO, St Vincent's Hospital, Aer Rianta and private individuals.

These investments don't just benefit UCD. According to Bord na Mona, the Newman programme has allowed the company to carry out collaborative research on issues key to its business.

The National Disability Authority found that sponsoring a scholarship in Disability Studies to conduct research on social construction of disability added "significantly to the stock of knowledge and research on issues affecting people with disabilities in Ireland."

Schering Plough says it's delighted to support "the creation of a centre of excellence whereby high

achieving graduates are encouraged to do postdoctoral research in fields complementary to business needs."

Denise Drudy, a current Newman scholar sponsored by Diageo, is one of a very dynamic group in the centre of food safety doing postgraduate research. The main advantage of the sponsorship is prestige, she says. "There is no direct link with my sponsor but we act as an intellectual hub and there are links there if they are needed. In fact, it opens up the whole campus to them, whether it's food safety, legal or another area."

Almost all past Newman scholars have progressed to academic teaching or research positions, a significant minority at UCD. Well known former scholars include Professor Brigid Laffan of the department of politics, who was the Irish Pensions Trust Newman scholar in 1989. She did research during her year for her book, *European Integration and Co-operation*. It was a timely publication given the collapse of communism in 1989 and the subsequent reshaping of Europe.

A founding member of the Institute of European Affairs in Dublin, Laffan was appointed to the Jean Monnet Chair in European Politics in 1991 and appointed vice-president and principal of UCD's College of Human Sciences in June 2005.

Dr Lee Komito of the Department of Library and Information Studies was the L&B Quinn Newman scholar from 1990-93. His research focused on the impact of new information and communications technologies on Irish society and culture.

Dr Deirdre Carabine is the

director of the Institute of Ethics and Development Studies at the Uganda Martyrs University in Kampala. She was the Bank of Ireland Newman scholar 1989-92, during which time she completed the first volume of her work on Greek and early medieval negative theology. Her book covers the period from Plato up to the 9th century Irish philosopher Eriugena. A further book, *An Introduction to the Thought of John Scottus Eriugena*, is published by Oxford University Press.

KEVIN WHELAN was the North American Development Council Newman scholar 1989-92. He has researched and written extensively on the Irish Famine and is author of *The Tree of Liberty*. He is the Michael J Smurfit director of the Keough-Notre Dame Centre in Dublin and has been visiting professor at NYU, Boston College, and Concordia University (Montreal).

Dr Philip Nolan was the North American Medical Alumni scholar in 1993-1996. A former director of the Conway Institute, he was appointed UCD registrar in April 2004.

All in all, says Godson, sponsorship of the Newman Scholarship Programme brings to UCD international scholars of the highest calibre.

"The Newman Scholarship Programme acts as a magnet to attract these scholars to UCD," she says. "Sponsorship of the programme is not just an investment in UCD, it also attracts successful graduates back to Ireland as well as encouraging international industrial investment."

## It's the jewel in Ireland's research crown



Science editor Dick Ahlstrom reviews achievements at the Conway Institute

THE Conway Institute at Belfield is a jewel in the crown of Ireland's research infrastructure. The €89 million centre attracted €28.5 million in research funding last year and has no fewer than 125 research teams producing top class science.

Established in 1999, the Conway Institute of Biomolecular and Biomedical Research, to give it its full title, ranks as one of Ireland's largest single centres of research excellence. It moved into a new purpose built headquarters in September 2003, built largely from funds provided by the Higher Education Authority under the Programme for Research in Third Level Institutions (PRTL).

It currently has 450 researchers and staff, most of whom are based at Belfield, but many also work at other UCD locations, particularly the new centre for chemical synthesis, a stand-alone 2,500 square metre building to be opened at Belfield this August.

Conway researchers can also be found in UCD-linked hospitals including the Mater and St Vincent's, according to the Conway's communications and education officer, Elaine Quinn.

The research team includes 125 principal investigators and "career track investigators" who lead research groups with between two and 20 members who are mostly postgraduate and postdoctoral researchers.

"The Conway Institute is probably the biggest in terms of space but also in the level of grants it has received from the Government," says its chief executive Professor Pat Guiry. "The Government has taken a huge leap of faith in us and we have to deliver."

Its entire focus is on biomedical and biomolecular research into human and animal diseases and a key element in its approach is bringing "molecules to medicine", says Guiry.

Basic research discoveries in the lab are brought as quickly as

possible to the patient's bedside, reducing the traditional delays which saw years pass before patients could benefit from research findings.

"We really do bring together the basic scientists and the clinicians in the Conway," says Guiry.

The Conway is establishing tissue banks in the hospitals to provide a biological resource so diseases can be studied, he says. "In the lab we try to find the mechanism of a disease. Once you understand the mechanisms you are well on the way to finding a treatment."

The Conway allows basic researchers in chemistry, biochemistry and other disciplines to interact directly with the clinicians in the field. "It's seamless and that's one of the great things about the PRTL," Guiry says. It forced the universities seeking PRTL funding to get some "joined up thinking" together on how best to gain benefit from the research investment.

It's happening for the patient with improved treatments coming on stream but also in the commercialisation of research discoveries, he says. There is an active programme to bring important discoveries to market via Nova UCD, the college's industrial outreach facility. UCD can nurture campus companies but also alert the private sector to

biomedical and biomolecular research," explains Quinn. It deals with both human and animal conditions. It has four main areas of research including cancer, neuroscience, vascular biology and infection, immunity and inflammation.

This work in turn is concentrated in three centres, the Centre for Synthesis and Clinical Biology, the Centre for Integrative Biology, and the Centre for Molecular Medicine. "All of our investigators would belong to one of these centres," says Quinn.

While there are plenty of biologists and doctors involved in the research, there are also chemists, clinicians, engineers, veterinarians and agricultural specialists engaged in Conway research, Quinn explains. "It's very much interdisciplinary, collaborative work."

THE institute uses four recognised measures to gauge its success on the research front, and by any comparison it's doing quite well. These measures include publications, grant awards, thesis submissions and technology transfer into commercial enterprises.

Over the 13 months covered by the 2004 annual report the Conway had 270 publications in peer reviewed journals, 47 per cent of them journals with an impact factor (a measure of the journal's significance) of more than 3.0.

In terms of thesis submissions, students at the Conway handed in 54 PhD submissions during the 13 months of the review with additional theses for Master of Surgery, Doctor of Medicine and others.

On the technology transfer front, the Conway also performs credibly. It accounted for four new patents on intellectual property and two patent applications. There were also two licensing agreements signed during the year and six campus companies are currently trading on the back of research conducted at the Conway Institute.

Highlights of year at the Conway, according to Quinn, include the opening of the Proteome Research Centre, headed by Professor Stephen Pennington and the news that Dr Bill Watson in the Centre for Molecular Medicine would be heading the Prostate Cancer Tissue Bank Consortium.

Also new is the creation of the Applied Neurotherapeutic Research Group within the Centre for Integrative Biology. Professor Ciaran Regan will head the Group, which got funding worth €7.7 million from Science Foundation Ireland in January 2004. This centre is a collaboration involving UCD, TCD and the Neuroscience Discovery Group in drug company Wyeth.



Professors Mike Dunn and Stephen Pennington in the Proteomics Research Centre in the Conway Institute

discoveries of interest to them.

"We hope to build on such industrial relationships in the future," says Guiry. "It's the way we are going in the future."

Clearly the Conway is doing what is expected of it. The institute is currently assembling its 2004 annual report and, when released later this summer, will make for interesting reading. The Conway attracted €28.5 million in research funding during the reporting period from September 2003 to end September 2004.

Science Foundation Ireland accounted for 54 per cent of this figure with other funders including the Health Research Board, the Irish Research Council for Science Engineering and Technology, Enterprise Ireland, the EU and the Wellcome Trust.

"The Conway focuses on

## From the beginning, Celtic Studies have been cherished



Rose Doyle reports on the very special place of Celtic Studies in the UCD scheme of things

CELTIC Studies have always, and naturally, been of academic and cultural importance in UCD. Dr Patricia Kelly, dean of today's faculty of Celtic Studies, points out that "Celtic Studies is part of Cardinal Newman's legacy" – the tradition goes back to the very beginnings of the university.

Newman was acutely aware of the work and lectures of Claremont and native scholar Eugene O'Curry. "O'Curry was a man of tremendous learning," says Kelly, "steeped in the knowledge handed down by generations Ireland's men of learning."

"Newman later went on to raise money for the publication of O'Curry's book, *On the Manuscripts of Ancient Irish History*. We owe the status of the faculty to Newman's understanding."

When the NUI was founded in 1908, Celtic Studies was one of the first faculties to be set up. Now, as part of UCD's academic restructuring, the Celtic Studies faculty will be replaced in the autumn by the School of Irish, Celtic Studies, Irish Folklore and Linguistics, set within the new College of Arts and Celtic Studies. Students in the new school will be offered five subjects – Modern Irish, Early Irish, Linguistics, Welsh and Irish Folklore.

Patricia Lysaght, UCD's professor of Irish folklore, admits to happily making her hobby her life's work. She is unequivocal



Dancing on the Pier at Clogherhead, County Louth. Photograph: Maurice Curtin, 1935

– copyright: Irish Folklore Collection, Department of Irish Folklore, UCD

when she says that the faculty of Celtic Studies is "the jewel in the crown" of the college. Enthusiastic and infectious, she points out that "the faculty has had very important UCD chairs right from the beginning. It has chairs of Early Irish, Classical Irish, Celtic Archaeology, Modern Irish, Early Irish History, Welsh and Irish Folklore."

UCD is unique in having a full department of Welsh, says Lysaght. The college is "probably the only higher level institute which offers facilities for studying such a broad range of Celtic Studies, which include Scottish Gaelic and an expertise in Breton."

The Faculty and the Department of Irish Folklore began their celebrations of UCD's 150 years in December with a jointly hosted event which marked both the sesquicentenary of Celtic Studies in UCD and the 100th anniversary of the scholar/author Maire MacNeill.

LYSAGHT is enthusiastic about the changing college. "These are exciting times at UCD, with all of the restructuring. It's a very exciting time too for Celtic Studies, which will have a place in the new Ireland. We find now that Irish has become a working language in the EU."

Language, she believes, is the key to understanding a culture. "Early Irish is very important. It was the language spoken when Ireland was revered for learning."

"One of my greatest moments took place at St Gallen in Switzerland some years ago – they have manuscripts there of the early Irish monks and I remember coming out after seeing them, looking west and feeling how extraordinary it was that I shared in this heritage and that the language was still in use on the rim of Europe. Irish scholarship is still revered in Europe and because we have the Irish language we still share that tradition."

Given her commitment, it's a surprise that she arrived at her subject almost by accident. She qualified as a barrister, returned to UCD to study classics, discovered Irish folklore was a subject and made her choice.

"I'm very privileged to have my work as my hobby," says Lysaght. She firmly believes that "a country which doesn't value its language is on shaky foundations. Think of the foundation of the State, the importance of language then."

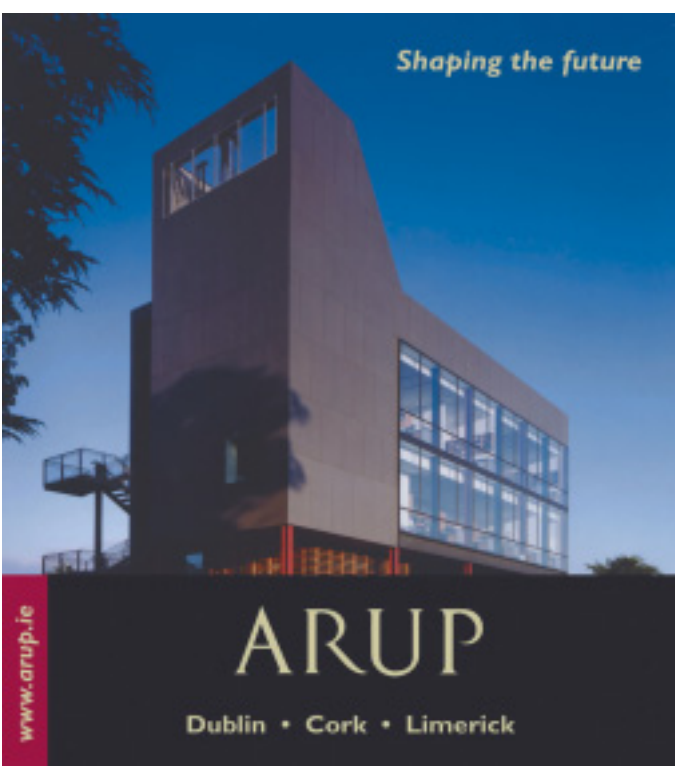
"Now, in times of wealth, there's far more interest in language and culture than is apparent on the surface. In a prosperous world people search for an identity – and with that goes pride in Irish culture and our folklore."

This searching is not confined to Irish people. The newer ethnic communities in Ireland,

particularly those from middle and eastern European, have "a great sense of culture and language as well as an understanding that to be part of a country means familiarising themselves with host culture and language."

She sees "an ever growing demand for Celtic Studies from old Europe – France, Italy, Spain, the 10 accession countries and Russia. There is also great interest in the US." UCD, she says, is one of the best places to come to for such studies, with Belfield having one of the world's largest folklore archives.

She sees a bright future for Celtic Studies and Folklore. "It's part of what we are, after all – and because we want to maintain and celebrate the wider language and culture with others we've recently set up the Friends of Celtic Studies here in UCD."



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