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Context

Few if any institutions have played as significant a role in the building of a nation and the preservation, enhancement and transmission of its heritage as UCD. UCD and its graduates have been central to the development of an independent and modern Ireland.

Now, in a time of unprecedented economic crisis, UCD is committing its intellectual resources to the rebirth of economic prosperity in Ireland through its development of innovation as the third pillar of its activity.

This strategic plan has been informed by perhaps the widest consultation process ever undertaken by an Irish university with feedback sought and gained from civic, commercial and cultural leaders as well as UCD alumni, students and both current and retired staff. At its heart is a vision of UCD as a major contributor to the creation, development, dissemination, interpretation, assimilation and application of new knowledge in the 21st century. It was UCD graduates who led the development of independent Ireland into a major international success story by the end of the 20th century. It will be the task of the next generation of UCD graduates to play a similar role in our new, global context.

3.1. Local and global context

As this plan is being written, the global economy as we have known it is in crisis. Amid the headlines announcing new crises almost by the day, it would be all too easy to embrace the counsel of despair. The challenge facing us is not to yield to such dark counsels but to maintain our quality programme offerings throughout the downturn. We will continue to plan, act and invest strategically so that we will be well positioned when economic conditions improve. Moreover, UCD will play its part in forging that recovery through our education, research and innovation pillars.

The initial imperative is for us to be persuasive advocates for the enduring value of investment in Irish higher education. The solution to the current crisis will be developed by our finest and most sophisticated minds, the cultivation of which is the very stock-in-trade of a university. Another challenge we will face - one whose dimensions are, again, global - will be the competition for both student and staff talent: securing, developing and retaining the brightest and best students and teachers will be critical for success.

This is truly a crossroads moment for Irish higher education, where a measure of audacity could achieve so much while failure of nerve could put us back decades. Ireland is at a crucial point in its economic and social development. Our continued prosperity depends upon a smooth and rapid transition to an innovation- and knowledge-driven society.

A distinguishing mark of this plan is the emphasis it gives to innovation as the third pillar of UCD's activity, complementing the traditional twin pillars of education and research. Innovation will be mainstreamed in our 3rd- and 4th-level programmes and in all research activity in the timeframe covered by this plan. A commitment to innovation implies a recognition that we can no longer be a society that relies upon knowledge and inventions created elsewhere but one that participates in, contributes to and exploits leading-edge research and development. Our commitment to innovation will be manifest most clearly through our collaboration with TCD in the *Innovation Alliance*. This is itself a response to the stated national policy priority of developing Ireland as a smart economy as set out in recent Government publications.



Ireland can and should lead the way in developing the higher-education system that produces the new graduates to create, adapt and thrive in the global economy. The universities are central to ensuring Ireland continues to advance this objective. Investing in universities means investing in new and more knowledge and innovation capacity, in the production of a competent and flexible labour force. What is new is that we now need to be at the frontier of the skills process. What has changed, quite dramatically, from the time of the genesis of the Celtic Tiger is that our labour force is no longer low-cost. We have to compensate for this by being smarter, by being in the vanguard of the innovation cycle.

Knowledge is the currency of universities. It is the achievement of competitive advantage in the global contest for knowledge that will refuel Ireland's recovery and will translate directly into economic growth and social cohesion. With proper investment, universities are drivers of economic growth and social change. They hold a unique place in society as an environment where information and prior knowledge are used to educate and develop highly skilled personnel, to stimulate innovation and to create new knowledge through research. UCD is, additionally, an environment that nurtures innovation and promotes a spirit and culture of entrepreneurship, enabling knowledge and innovation to be made actionable for economic and social benefit.

The new Ireland will be created by the young people of today. Through their already-well-developed programmes of reform, Irish universities are producing a new breed of entrepreneurial 3rd-level graduate who will enter and improve both the workplace and the wider society. This reformed 3rd-level sector underpins a new world-class 4th-level that will be critical to creating the knowledge economy and to securing Ireland's international competitive advantage.

4th-Level Ireland is being created right now by a new and very different higher-education sector - one characterised by flexibility, responsiveness and innovation as well as by a fresh retrieval of the best elements of Ireland's eminent educational traditions.

The most important output then from our national *Strategy for Science, Technology and Innovation (SSTI)* will be a new breed of creative, innovative graduate formed in an environment of research, discovery and entrepreneurship. These graduates will populate Irish and multinational organisations in future, ensuring that we are a step ahead of competitors in terms of innovation and value. The learners of today will be the leaders of tomorrow who will deliver a new Ireland and a new world.



3.2. UCD's key achievements, 2005/2008

This plan builds on a platform of successful achievement over the period of the UCD Strategic Plan, 2005/2008. Key achievements over the course of that plan include:

3.2.1. Education and the student experience

- Introduced a truly modular, credit-accumulation curriculum at all levels of all programmes, branded at undergraduate level as *UCD Horizons*.
- Fully embraced the Bologna process by aligning UCD programmes with the three-cycle model (bachelors, masters and doctoral) and by placing emphasis on learning outcomes and quality.
- Enhanced doctoral education with the introduction of the UCD Structured PhD. The UCD Structured PhD enriches the doctoral student experience and provides an appropriate platform for the expansion of doctoral education. UCD has emerged as a leader in graduate education with the creation of five dedicated graduate schools. UCD now hosts 31 per cent of all full-time PhD students in Ireland.
- Developed UCD orientation programme and a range of scholarship schemes to ensure that top students are attracted to and supported while at UCD, as signalled in our dramatically improved performance in relation to CAO (Central Applications Office) first preferences.
- Generated significant increases in the number of UCD staff receiving externally reviewed teaching awards, grants and fellowships.

3.2.2. Research

- Progressed substantially toward becoming one of Europe's leading research-intensive universities, now ranking 33rd amongst universities in Europe (QS World University Rankings 2009 - top European universities).
- Increased peer-reviewed publications by 50 per cent along with a citation rate substantially above average and a high rate of publication in high-impact journals for existing staff across a range of fields. This success is reflected in a 230 per cent increase in competitive funding awards which reached €115 million in 2007/2008.
- Ranked the most successful institution in the Science Foundation Ireland Stokes Chair and Lectureship Programme with 16 awards over a three-year period.
- Demonstrated success in both inter-institutional collaboration and interdisciplinary programmes.
- Developed five dedicated research institutes, two Science Foundation Ireland (SFI) Centres for Science Engineering and Technology (CSETs), upwards of seven SFI Strategic Research Clusters and three major industry partnerships as well as some of the largest national investments in research, including the NIBRT and the National Digital Research Centre.

3.2.3. Innovation

- Augmented infrastructure at NovaUCD in order to exploit the commercial opportunities of UCD-generated research outputs.
- Increased year-on-year volume of inventions, patents and licences by over 50 per cent.
- Through NovaUCD's incubation facilities and related innovation services, UCD has supported 45 high-tech and knowledge-intensive companies, including 15 spin-out companies. This has included such widely publicised success stories as ChangingWorlds and BiancaMed.
- The 25 new ventures currently located at the centre have over 200 employees with investments and realisations in UCD companies of over €200 million.

3.2.4. Transformational

- Completed a radical transformation of UCD academic structures from a configuration of 11 faculties and 110 departments and academic centres to one comprising a more streamlined model with a much reduced number of colleges and schools.
- Introduced a Performance Management Development System (PMDS) which has been successfully completed by over 3,000 staff.
- Implemented a multi-annual financial strategy and budgeting process at university, college, school, support centre and institute level.
- Introduced a university-wide identity and replaced the myriad of logos across the university with a single modern branding in tandem with a comprehensive revamp of the website.
- Secured major gifts, including lead gifts from Dr Peter Sutherland, towards the development of the new UCD School of Law and from the Hume Street Trust towards the Charles Institute as well as a major gift from AIB to the New ERA access programme.