

Innovation & Entrepreneurship at UCD

UCD hosted its seventh *Universitas 21* event from 4 to 6 March 2015 with 39 delegates from 15 universities attending the U21 Early Career Researcher Workshop: Innovation & Entrepreneurship.

The conference was opened by Professor Bairbre Redmond, UCD's Dean of Undergraduate Studies, Deputy Registrar for Teaching & Learning and the UCD *Universitas 21* Manager. Along with a roll call of the universities present, Bairbre also delivered a crash course in 'caint as Gaeilge', teaching delegates the very important difference between the words slán and sláinte. Dr Gemma Marakas then followed by delivering a short presentation on *Universitas 21*.

The first workshop session, *Academic, Commercial and Social Entrepreneurship – viable opportunities for researchers?* featured presentations by, Dr Antonio Ruzzelli (CEO, Wattics Ltd), Dr Kevin McCarthy (CEO & Founder, Aficionado), Dr Kevin Tsia

(Department of Electrical Engineering, University of Hong Kong) and Dr James Cunningham (Director, Whitaker Institute, NUI Galway). Each spoke about their own work and experience in the area of academia and the translation of this work into the entrepreneurial sphere. The session was moderated by Aoibhinn Ní Shuilleabháin of the UCD School of Mathematical Sciences. Delegates and panel members engaged in an open Q&A session during and after the presentations.

After lunch, a session with a difference! *Straight Talking Science* saw Dr Niamh Shaw, a performer, scientist and engineer and alumnus of 'Second City Improv' in the United States, and Patrick Sutton, the Director of the Gaiety School of Acting delivered a lively and informative session on performance. They covered how to deliver your message with impact and brought delegates through the performance of

a presentation. Participants were also introduced to games such as 'bunny bunny'. Delegates were then afforded the opportunity to view each other's posters on display in the O'Brien Centre for Science.

Day two was led by UCD's Innovation Academy, with Professor Suzi Jarvis and Dr Eileen Diskin heading up a design thinking challenge. This day was organised in conjunction with Dublin City Council which proposed the challenge to design an urban seating solution for Dublin city centre. Participants began the day by taking part in a LEGO Duck Building Challenge and an introduction to design thinking. Delegates were then asked to take to the streets and speak to the Dublin public about seating in

of Ireland), Dr Mary Liz Trant (Head of Skills and Enterprise Engagement, Higher Education Authority), and Martin Hynes (Chief Executive, European Science Foundation), all delivered valuable presentations to the participants about funding bodies and how best to leverage funding.

This was followed by a 'World Café' where everyone (delegates and panellists) gathered to discuss the session and come up with ways forward with regard to research, innovation and entrepreneurship. The session was recorded by Eimear McNally, a cartoonist note-taker.

One delegate summed up the whole experience, saying: "I found it really

valuable to connect with such a diverse range of disciplines on topics that were not 'home' to any of us. It challenged me to think about assumptions that are inherent in my usual approaches and strategies. It also increased my awareness of unintentional bias and how even constructive criticism can inhibit ideas. Seeing what solutions can be offered when all ideas are presented before

being considered/debated/improved was thought-provoking. In addition, I now have a better understanding of what U21 has to offer – I've encouraged my undergraduate tutees to engage with the programme and my PhD student is applying for funding to support travel to another U21 partner, where she will now have some contacts to engage with. The keynotes were of particular benefit for my research – either as potential interviewees for a case study or as possible research collaborators in the future. Overall the event was challenging (plenty of time spent outside of my comfort zone) but also enjoyable and it will influence my research agenda."

Claire Redmond
General Manager
UCD Research

www.universita21.com/link/ECR2015report

ECR workshop delegates from around the network



the city centre. Some participants used the opportunity to plan in The Queen of Tarts, while others decided to introduce their ducks to some of the sights of the city!

After lunch, delegates got to work brainstorming and developing prototypes for their seating solutions, which were reviewed by Shane Sutton from Dublin City Council.

Friday's session was opened by UCD President Professor Andrew Deeks, who gave participants an overview of research, innovation and entrepreneurship at UCD. His opening address was then followed by a panel discussion entitled *Making Friends & Influencing Funders*, moderated by UCD's Vice President for Research, Innovation & Impact Professor Orla Feely. Professor Mark Ferguson (Director General, Science Foundation Ireland and Chief Scientific Adviser to the Government