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# REVIEW OF THE ACADEMIC YEAR 2014/2015

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Dean of Medicine & Head, UCD School of Medicine**



This academic year has been another challenging but ultimately rewarding one for the School as it has been for the entire University. I have come to realise that it is the nature of our School – to seek continuously to improve the quality and scope of our activities - never content to stand still. This dynamic is generated by many individual student and staff efforts that it can sometimes be difficult to keep up with the many developments and initiatives.

So, I thought it might be useful to reflect briefly on some of our many achievements and identify some of the major challenges which we enthusiastically set ourselves for the academic year.

Firstly, as you are all aware, in June of this year our community suffered the tragic loss of two of our Stage 3 UCD Medicine students, Eimear Walsh and Lorcán Miller. The unimaginable tragedy which unfolded in Berkeley, California left us all reeling, as it did the nation. A third UCD student, Niccolai Schuster (Stage 2 Arts) also died in the incident. We plan to commemorate these student's lives and the impact they had on our community during their all-too brief time with us. Further details of this will be shared with you in due course.

## STRATEGY & PLANNING

The President has concluded an extensive consultation on our strategic priorities and has launched the University's strategic plan to deliver Ireland's global University. He has encouraged Schools and Colleges to develop their own individual priorities, aligned with the University's ten key strategic objectives and has led a focused effort on six major University-wide initiatives.

We have taken the opportunity to similarly consult across our large School and have published our School priorities, which is in circulation now. These priorities guide our investment and capital development plans for the coming years.

Having come through a period of rapid expansion, we are now entering into a consolidation phase as we prioritise investment in quality enhancement across all our programmes.

Our healthcare system continues to face multiple challenges, not least being the attraction and retention of young doctors and nurses to frontline services. We have witnessed several disputes between various agencies and organisations which I think it is symptomatic of the pressure that all are under. We will continue to offer all possible support to our clinical partners as they strive to provide the best possible patient care to more of our population with no increase in resource. We encourage the Department of Health to work in partnership with clinical staff and note that many of our colleagues have taken on key leadership roles across the health system.

## RESEARCH & INNOVATION

Despite a difficult funding environment, the School has maintained a strong track record of grant funding success. Over the past five years, we have secured an average annual research income of approximately €12.5 million and have total grants under management of approximately €75 million. We have had to work hard to achieve this funding success. For example, the number of grant proposals submitted to funding agencies has doubled. While there are too many to list in detail, I would like to acknowledge the success of Prof Alistair Nichol and Prof Peter Kelly in securing large HRB Clinical Trial Network awards and both Prof Walter Kolch and Prof Martin Steinhoff on their recent EU and SFI successes.

Our research outputs have also significantly improved in the last year. Our graduate research student numbers have increased by 30% over five years to 285 students, two thirds of which are PhD students. While the number of publications remains at about 750 per year, the publication impact has increased by 19% over the past five years.

Our Associate Dean for Research and Innovation, Dr Paddy Mallon and his team have worked to develop identifiable multi-investigator groups such that we can improve our impact, better showcase our research portfolio and build international collaborations. The UCD MR Office has published its second annual research report and the third edition is currently in preparation.

Building effective trans-institutional research collaborations that allow us to access large peer-reviewed grant funding and which build our international reputation, will be an immediate research priority for the coming year. We also hope to conduct an external benchmarking exercise to identify our current competitive strengths. We know that we miss a significant number of the research outputs by our clinical faculty who omit UCD from as their institutional affiliation. I would strongly encourage all clinical investigators to add the School to your affiliation address such that our performance in international rankings accurately reflects the current level of research productivity.

Prof Ken McDonald and his group took the award of Research Paper of the Year at the RCGP conference in Liverpool at the beginning of the year for their randomised clinical trial on the use of biomarkers of heart failure. Professors Michael Turner and Fionnuala McAuliffe and their groups have had a number of successes in their respective research into maternal and fetal health. Dr Sean Ennis and his collaborators have had their research into rare diseases recognised with University centre designation, as have Prof Billy Bourke and colleagues for paediatric research and our bioinformatics research group. These centre designations have already raised our researchers' profiles nationally and international and should assist in building future collaborations as well as consolidating our research reputation.

Prof Ronan O'Connell and fellow editors launched the 6th edition of Operative Surgery of the Colon Rectum and Anus at the annual meeting of the American Society of Colon and Rectal Surgeons. Long regarded as the definitive operative textbook in colorectal surgery, the 6th edition is a comprehensive atlas of contemporary operative practice that covers all aspects of operative technique.

At the meeting, Prof O'Connell received an Honorary Fellowship of the American Society of Colon and Rectal Surgeons. Prof O'Connell also recently received an Honorary Fellowship of the American Surgical Association. We congratulate Prof O'Connell on his continued success.

We look forward to integrating Systems Biology Ireland formally into the School and seek research synergies with clinical colleagues and with the Conway Institute. We have recently strengthened the UCD Clinical Research Centre resource to provide better support to clinician researchers who currently make up 50% of our research activity. We hope to also develop these supports further in coming years by creating a clinical trials interface to allow our investigators to lead major international clinical studies.

The UCD Centre for Emergency Medical Science held a highly successful second annual research symposium which drew a very large audience in person and, as is now common place, many more who participated via social media. We congratulate the CEMS team on another highly successful year.

We continue to have strong undergraduate student research activity through intercalated masters and our innovative Student Summer Research Awards, perhaps the second highlight of our academic year. We continue to be impressed by the range and quality of laboratory, clinical, patient advocate, education and technology-based projects which have emerged through this initiative. My thanks to Dr Amanda McCann and her team on the continued success of this scheme which celebrates its 10th birthday next year.

## EDUCATION & PROGRAMMES

As a result of planned expansion of intake into each of our programmes over recent years, the School has this year reached peak student numbers across all stages. Over the past six years, total undergraduate student numbers have increased by 30% and within our clinical years by 38%. Our graduate entry medicine programme is now fully recruited. We have also increased both the number of graduate and professional taught programmes and the number of students in these programmes.

I would like to congratulate our Associate Dean, Professor Jason Last on his recent appointment to an Education Development and Innovation role. I know that Jason has an ambitious plan for enhancing medical education research and diffusing modern teaching and assessment methods throughout our curriculum.

We have, and will continue to develop a number of key education leadership roles across a range of subject areas. We are delighted to recognise Dr Katherine Howell and Dr Suzanne Donnelly who received 2 of 7 University Teaching Fellowships awarded in this academic year.

There has already been a significant growth in the number of medical education research projects in development across the School and we are particularly strongly represented at a national level in INMED and at an international level through Universitas 21. Indeed, the School has maintained a strong and active participation in the U21 Health Science Group. We have also established an effective partnership with Shenzhen University and look forward to welcoming 15 Chinese students to Dublin in September for the second year of this joint Masters programme.

We have refurbished new student study facilities at the Mater, St Vincent's and Holles Street and are currently assessing student facilities across a number of other clinical affiliates. We welcome three new partners in medical and radiography education in Midland Regional Hospital, Mullingar, the Mater Private Hospital and the Beacon Hospital and are seeking to expand our primary care training and research networks. We are building academic supports in educational technology to facilitate increasing distance and e-learning activities.

## INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

The School has a long and distinguished tradition of international student recruitment. Today 31% of our students are from overseas and hail from 44 different countries overseas. They greatly enrich the cultural diversity of our programmes and ensure that we remain focused on our goal of being a world class medical school within Ireland's global university. I commend Prof Pat Felle and his team for their sterling efforts throughout the year in international recruitment. As we continue to diversify our intake streams, we create an ever expanding travel footprint for the team to support.

## QUALITY & ACCREDITATION

I offer my congratulations to the UCD Diagnostic Imaging Group on their continued international research success – the group secured top radiography prize at Europe's largest radiology conference for the fourth successive year – and on their successful programme accreditation by the new health and social care profession council (CORU). I know the hard work which underpins these success and I congratulate Dr Louise Rainford and her team.

In the next academic year, we will be undertaking a formal external review as part of the University's quality procedures. We are assembling a School Working Group to prepare for this exercise under the leadership of Prof Walter Cullen.

We are also in the process of re-establishing the School's Safety Committee. I would like to take this opportunity to thank Dr Jenny Thompson for her considerable leadership in this area over many years. Jenny and her anatomy colleague Dr Shay Giles both left the School at the end of the academic year and will both be sorely missed.

## STAFF & ORGANISATIONAL CHANGES

In the coming year we plan to fill a number of clinical professorial vacancies including Professors of Medicine, Pathology and Gynae-Oncology at the Mater Hospital as well as Professors of Microbial Diseases, Intensive Care Medicine, Paediatrics and Senior Lecturer in Obstetrics & Gynaecology at St Vincent's, Our Lady's Children's Hospital Crumlin and the National Maternity Hospital respectively. We are also replacing a number of lecturer positions which have arisen in the Biomedical Sciences Section as a result of retirements and other staff departures and as part of our planned staff expansion.

We offer our congratulations to UCD Medicine graduate Prof Cecily Kelleher who has been appointed as College Principal of the College of Health and Agricultural Sciences. We look forward to working closely with Cecily and with the other Schools in the new College.

Another change which has arisen out of the President's refinement of academic structures is the renaming of our School to 'the UCD School of Medicine'. When we were originally constructed, the term '& Medical Science' was considered important to recognise both the large biomedical science and radiography staff cohort. It is a testament to how they have fully integrated into the School that this subtle distinction is no longer deemed necessary. As we are quick to point out, we produce many fine doctors but we also train radiographers, biomedical scientists, advanced paramedics and many more healthcare professionals.

## ALUMNI

We have an extensive alumni network across the globe and we were delighted to see so many of them attend our annual alumni reunion in May. We extend our best wishes to Dr John Fitzgerald who has been appointed as President of the UCD North American Medical Graduates Association. John and his compatriots are enthusiastic about mentoring our students and new graduates to help secure residency and elective opportunities across North America.

We were delighted that Dr Patricia Scanlan was recognised in the inaugural University Alumni Awards for her phenomenal work in paediatric oncology in Tanzania and look forward to celebrating another distinguished alumnus success in November.

## SPORTING & CULTURAL SUCCESS

Our students continue to be successful across a range of extra-curricular activities across the University and beyond and I commend them on their many successes. MedSoc is one of the most active student societies and were recognised by the Students Union for both the 'Best Faculty Day of the Year' and for the 'Publication of the Year' for the very impressive second edition of the Student Medical Journal.

Our students continue to achieve on the sporting field also in Athletics, Football, Hurling, Rugby, and Soccer. In addition to national success, elite athlete Mark English took a silver medal in the 800m event at the European Indoor Championships adding to his previous outdoor bronze in the 2014 European Championships. Mark qualified for the 2016 Olympics in Rio from a competitive field at a Diamond League meeting in London. Biomedical Science student and UCD Hockey player, Leah Ewart led the national delegation at the 2014 Youth Olympic Games in China.

Dora Gorman, Ciara Grant and Siobhan Killeen have also had very successful sporting years for both club and country. Our best wishes to the three who represent Ireland in the World University Games in South Korea next month. Radiography student Siobhan scored an extra time winner for Raheny United in the Women's Senior Cup Final to defeat, would you believe, UCD Waves! Her team also won the League Cup in April in similarly dramatic fashion while at the same time, Jack McCaffrey was taking the Man of the Match Award in the National Football League Final. Jack has had numerous eye-catching performances for the Dublin Senior Footballers throughout the year and looks certain to add to his All-Ireland, National League and Leinster Championship successes. Radiography graduate Ryan Wylie won an Ulster Senior Football Championship Medal in Monaghan's victory over Donegal. Josh Murphy (Stage 2 Medicine) took over the captaincy of the Ireland team during the U20 Rugby World Cup.

It was nice to see both the current holders St Vincent's and the Mater contest the Dublin Hospitals Football Cup at Belfield. An Irish medical team comprising mostly UCD students or alumni took part in the World Medical Football Federation Championships in Longbeach, California. The 'Docs in Green' acquitted themselves well, beating the defending champions and drawing against the European champions as they finished in 7th place in their first world cup finals appearance.

Our students have had numerous other sporting and artistic successes and we congratulate each on their own individual achievement.

## CONCLUDING REMARKS

I think you'll agree that by any standard we've had a very successful year. We look forward to building on this success next year.

There is an old Irish expression 'Ní hé lá na gaoithe lá na scolb' (A windy day is not a day for thatching). It is important that we proactively invest across the School to ensure that we sustain our success and so that we can meet the windy days ahead with confidence.

I would like to congratulate each and every one of you on your individual successes and thank you for working together to deliver our School achievements.

-Prof Pat Murray