

**FACULTY OF MEDICINE:** competitive times

# Good diagnosis for ongoing moves

If medical students survived the trials of the Terrace, they were well prepared for the testing road ahead, writes **Louise Holden**



An academic conferring at Earlsfort Terrace. Photograph: UCD Archive

Prof Muiris X Fitzgerald has had a relationship with Earlsfort Terrace for five decades. From his enrolment as a medical student in 1958 to his position as the last dean of medicine in 2006/2007, he has a long view of the distinguished history of UCD's medical faculty.

The faculty has a closer association with Earlsfort Terrace than any other, as it held on at the Terrace after other disciplines such as arts, science and engineering had moved out of the city.

Prof Fitzgerald remembers his early days at the medical faculty as competitive. In his first year he was constantly reminded that the

road to Earlsfort Terrace was littered with medical casualties. "A shrieking zoologist, Dr Mabel Kane, warned us to look to the student on our right and the student on our left, because only one of the three of us would survive to enter first medical in Earlsfort Terrace," he recalls.

Having survived the massacre, Prof Fitzgerald was keenly aware of the distinguished company he was about to join at Earlsfort Terrace. He was taking his place in a long line of famous medical students who were taught in UCD, like Kevin Barry who was hanged in Mountjoy jail; Kathleen Lynn, chief medical officer of the Citizen Army and insurgent leader

at the City Hall in 1916; and Jim Ryan, the UCD final year medical student who was medical officer in the GPO in 1916.

One aspect of the UCD medical education that has prevailed from that day to this is its diversity of intake. "Medical school classes were extraordinarily cosmopolitan by UCD standards of the time," says Fitzgerald. "One of the great advantages was to mingle with fellow classmates from the US, South Africa, the West Indies, Malaysia, Mauritius and many other corners of the globe."

Former students of the medical faculty enjoyed a roll-call of teachers ranging, he says, from the inspirational to the frightening: Brendan Coakley, Paddy Meenan and John-Willie Harman, Paul Cannon, "The Earl" McCarthy, Ma Crawley, Monsignor Horgan and EJ Conway. More recent students will remember the lectures of Teaching Award winners like John Moynihan, Philip Nolan, Shay Giles, Jason Last, Amanda McCann, Denis Cusack and "Chan the Man".

As the longest course on offer in UCD, it takes six years for a medical student to reach the final medical examinations, no longer to be held in the beloved Great Hall. UCD graduates have made this journey for many decades and many have achieved the highest positions in academic medicine abroad from Harvard to Cambridge - Martin Carey, Prof Garret Fitzgerald, Stephen O'Rahilly, Trevor McGill, Paddy Boland, Paul O'Byrne, Martin Tobin and many others.

"The camaraderie between medical students is bound by six years together confronting dead bodies, the horrors of hospitals and dying at first-hand," Prof Fitzgerald explains. "Groups of UCD medical students chartered planes to the US in an era when that was not common. We had some considerable bonding experiences."

Fitzgerald was one of a select group who returned to the Terrace. "Following my postgraduate education abroad in North America, the UK and Australia, I came back to take up a faculty position in our alma mater. Indeed our president, Hugh Brady, and the current head of the school of medicine and medical science Prof Bill Powderly - and many others - made that same journey," says Fitzgerald.

In the past 30 years medical education in the Terrace has been subject to sweeping change, from a variety of sources. Political intervention has seen student numbers slump and swell, recruitment stall and rally, budgets rise and fall. The faculty has reached out, forming collaborations with the Royal College of Surgeons to form the Penang Medical College. At last count there were over 30 nationalities studying at the faculty.

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Medical Students Overseas Relief (MSOR) provides badly needed services in underdeveloped countries and brings funds from UCD for much needed medical supplies.

Lectures are now available on the internet and systems-based teaching is now part of the educational menu. The rapid growth of the school of nursing and midwifery has brought a new and exciting dimension to medical education at UCD, and the sister schools of diagnostic imaging and physiotherapy have also expanded.

These developments have added impetus to the move from Earlsfort Terrace to a state-of-the-art unified campus in Belfield. "The Terrace, as it was destined to do sometime, will close for the final time," says Fitzgerald.

"Of course there is a sense of loss. However, our feelings of nostalgia are balanced by our excitement at moving to the magnificent Health Sciences Complex that opened in the winter of 2006 under the aegis of Prof Bill Powderly, Dr Marie Carney and Dr Catherine Blake. It now stands beside the Conway Institute for Biomedical and Biomolecular Research - a fitting reflection of the importance of teaching and research in medicine."

"The housing of a wide array of healthcare disciplines under one roof also reflects the long-held philosophy of the UCD medical faculty that inter-disciplinary teaching and research is given the highest priority."

□ Prof Muiris Fitzgerald was professor of medicine and therapeutics UCD 1977-2006 and dean of the UCD faculty of medicine 2000-2006