

UNIVERSITY COLLEGE DUBLIN
HONORARY CONFERRING
Tuesday, 16 June 2009 at 12 noon

TEXT OF THE INTRODUCTORY ADDRESS DELIVERED BY **PROFESSOR PATRICK GIBBONS**,
UCD School of Business, University College Dublin on 16 June 2009, on the occasion of the conferring
of the Degree of Doctor of Laws, honoris causa on **KIERAN MCGOWAN**

Kieran McGowan was born in Dublin and received his early education at Synge Street CBS. He grew up in a commercial setting, Kieran's father was a grocer and the experience of operating a small shop in Rathmines imprinted in Kieran the importance of values such as customer service and market knowledge-values that featured prominently in Kieran's subsequent career. In 1961, after completing the Leaving Certificate, like many talented people of the time, he joined the Civil Service as an Executive Officer and was assigned to the Patents Office.

In 1967 Kieran joined the Industrial Development Authority. A short three years later that organisation was de-coupled from the Civil Service and established as an independent organisation, with a separate recruitment process and with a direct relationship to government. As my colleague, Professor Tom Garvin notes in his book, Preventing the Future:

"An interesting feature of the evolution of the IDA was a drift away from scatter-shot patterns of grant-aided welcome for any industry, in favour of a tendency to 'make bets' on certain types of industry. This reflected in part a process of learning by experience that eventually made the IDA an internationally envied repository of experience, wisdom, long-range thinking and simple cunning in the area of developmental economics and politics."

Under the visionary leadership of its first Chief Executive, Michael Killeen, the IDA became the world's pre-eminent development agency. This achievement was based on the formation of a highly customer-focussed, achievement oriented and competitively-focussed corporate culture. The IDA's network of international offices "sold" Ireland as a destination for investment, with remarkable success. As the IDA

grew, Kieran continued to progress and completed the B.Comm. degree at UCD in 1973. In 1984, he was appointed Director of International Marketing, working with the then Chief Executive, Padraic White.

The economic landscape of Ireland in the 1980s was relatively bleak. Yet, the success of the IDA's international marketing in the period is still visible today, across many projects and particularly in two iconic projects. The first, the IFSC which was started in 1987, and where Kieran played a key role as part of the high-level marketing group for the project. The second iconic investment is Intel's commitment to establishing wafer fabrication facilities at Leixlip. This success, not only impressive in its own right, but also in demonstrating that Ireland could successfully host high-tech manufacturing.

These achievements undoubtedly contributed to Kieran's appointment as the third Chief Executive of the IDA in 1990. Under his leadership, the emphasis on customer service, competitive attitude and ambition for the country's success was heightened and Ireland continued to attract not only vital new investment but also importantly, deepening investments from companies already established here. As the then Taoiseach, Bertie Ahern T.D. remarked on Kieran's retirement from the IDA, in 1998:

"The fact that during his eight years as Chief Executive the IDA has doubled the annual job creation of overseas companies, halved the cost of job support and trebled the impact of IDA supported companies on our economy, is fitting tribute to his energy, drive and vision."

After Kieran had retired from the IDA, he continued to provide public service through Board membership of bodies such as Enterprise Ireland, Intertrade Ireland, World Special Olympics, The Irish Management Institute, the National Lottery Company and Cooperation Ireland. Kieran's commitment to education and in particular his perspective on the links between education quality, research success, industrial development and rising living standards motivated his commitment to Chairing the Board of the Dublin Molecular Medicine Centre, a collaboration between UCD and Trinity College and subsequently his appointment as the first independent Chair of the UCD Governing Authority.

In addition to these public contributions, his commercial acumen was immediately recognised in the private sector and a series of appointments to the Boards of publicly quoted companies ensued. Among other non-executive Directorships, he has held or currently holds Board positions at Irish Life and Permanent plc, Elan Corporation and United Drug plc. Since 2007, he has been non-executive Chairman of CRH plc, another one of Ireland's pre-eminent international organisations. In recognition of his contributions to industry, Kieran was awarded the RDS Industry Gold Medal in 2008.

Kieran's ability to succeed in both the public and private spheres attest to highly developed, yet, some might say, paradoxical competencies- in managing ambiguity yet being achievement oriented, in being diplomatic yet competitively focussed and in being a good administrator while being decisive. Yet the paradox can be resolved with reference to the competencies developed those years ago in Rathmines and honed throughout his career-his ability to relate to people, to identify their concerns and to provide solutions. All this done in an understated, quietly competent and highly personable manner.

As the then Taoiseach, Bertie Ahern T.D. remarked Kieran's is a "remarkable record of practical patriotism", a patriotism dedicated to the improvement of citizens' living standards through enhancing our nation's international competitive position, the international competitiveness of companies located here and the advocacy of the centrality of education to this nation's welfare.

Praehonorabilis Praeses, totaque Universitas,

Praesento vobis hunc meum filium, quem scio tam moribus quam doctrina habilem et idoneum esse qui admittatur, honoris causa, ad gradum Doctoratus in utroque Jure, tam Civili quam Canonico; idque tibi fide mea testor ac spondeo, totique Academiae.