

PRESIDENT'S RESEARCH AWARDS 2010

Professor Noel O'Connor School of Electronic Engineering and CLARITY: Centre for Sensor Web Technologies

The 2010 President's Research Award for Science and Engineering is made to Prof. Noel O'Connor of the School of Electronic Engineering and the CLARITY Centre for Sensor Web Technologies. Noel has been in DCU for all his professional life. He was an undergraduate in the then NIHE Dublin, graduating with a First Class B.Eng. degree in 1992. He then moved on to PhD studies and was jointly supervised by Noel Murphy and Sean Marlow, completing his PhD in 1998.

Even as a PhD student, his ability to conduct independent research was clear, but he has sustained the momentum in the years since then through his contribution to the growth and success of the Centre for Digital Video Processing, the Adaptive Information Cluster and now CLARITY, the Centre for Sensor Web Technologies. He was appointed to Senior Lecturer in January 2006 and to Associate Professor in June 2008, a rapid rise through the ranks reflecting a great talent with strong achievements.

Noel has made, and continues to make, significant contributions in basic research, in applied research and in the commercialisation of his research. At a basic level his contributions are in the area of extracting context and semantics from all kinds of multimedia content. The outputs of his basic research transition into his applied research activities in areas like configurable and energy-aware hardware, social interaction with media and applications in personalised health and sports. His **commercialisation activities** (for which he was given a special award by DCU INVENT in December 2009) have just led to a company, in which DCU has an equity stake, taking up residence in DCU INVENT and licensing some of DCU's technology, developed by Noel and his team.

Noel O'Connor's publication rate is consistently high and he has several hundred refereed papers, book chapters, books and presentations at conferences. He has published in the highest ranked journals in the field and amassed nearly €9 million in research funding over the last 20 years, and has filed several patents. A notable characteristic of Noel and his work is that his work is highly collaborative, and he works and publishes with people of many different backgrounds. His interdisciplinary activities have contributed hugely to EU networks. He also makes significant contribution to teaching and supervision – he has graduated 13 PhD students, all since 2006. One of his PhD graduates comments that Noel is an *“incredibly effective person and a clear communicator, and I never left his office without feeling positive and enthusiastic about the research that we'd discussed”*.

Noel has been a real ambassador for his research colleagues, for DCU, and for Ireland and this has resulted in more than one multinational corporation locating new jobs here in Ireland. One senior international executive who has worked with him says: *“When I first encountered him several years ago, he seemed to be just one of many promising junior researchers around the world in multimedia. But over the years he has made the transition to seasoned principal investigator by progressing in all dimensions of the job: he's technically deep and broad and articulate in both the written and the spoken word. He's also unfailingly positive and enthusiastic, even in the face of daunting difficulties”*.

Professor Noel O'Connor has to be an exemplar as researcher, teacher, mentor and internationally recognised leader, and is a very worthy recipient of the 2010 President's Research Award for Science and Engineering.