

## INAUGURATION ADDRESS

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DCU President

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### **WELCOME**

A Sheansiléir, a chomhleacaithe, a aíonna ghradamúla, a cháirde speisialta, agus a ghaolta, tá mé thar a bheith buíoch daoibh as ucht teacht anseo inniú chun bheith páirteach ins an searmanas tábhachtach seo i saol DCU.

Chancellor, colleagues, honoured guests, special friends, and family, I am immensely grateful to you all for joining us here today to participate in this important ceremony in the life of DCU.

I feel deeply honoured by the role bestowed on me and humbled by the privilege of leading this institution. I am pleased to share this historic day with so many members of DCU's community of distinguished Faculty, Staff, Students, Alumni, Trustees and Governing Authority members.

It is very gratifying also to be joined by representatives from so many elements of Irish society as well as by our international friends and partners

### **EDUCATION BACKGROUND**

By your presence here in such significant numbers, you signify that you value the noble and central role of Education in our society.

In that context, I would like to offer a special greeting to teachers from my past who are present here today and who have played a key role in my formation – teachers from every level: from my Primary Schools, in Dundalk & Co. Armagh, from my Secondary School, Scoil na mBráithre Críostaí, Dún Dealgan (now Coláiste Rís), and from my Alma Mater University,

UCG (now NUI-Galway). Chothaigh agus spreag na múinteoirí seo go léir grá an leinn ionam agus beidh mé faoi mhór-chomaoin acu go deo. All of these teachers nurtured and inspired in me a love of knowledge, its discovery, dissemination and application and I will be forever in their debt.

I am sure that you'll forgive me if I single out 3 teachers who have played a particularly significant role in my life:

Firstly, my late father, Brian, who taught me in 6<sup>th</sup> class of Primary School and who is surely enjoying this moment from above;

My mother, Caitlín, who is here with us today, is a sprightly 91 years old. She was my first teacher -- she had the pleasure of my company for my first 3 years in Ballinaclosa Primary school in Armagh ... and she still believes that I need to be taught a thing or two!

And, thirdly, my lifelong teacher, Catherine, my wife, who has taught me more things than she will ever realise. And, on this day, I also pay tribute to my children, Aoife and Eoin, who educate me every day in their own special ways!

So, you can see that a passion for education is in my DNA .... literally !

## **THE CHALLENGES AHEAD**

It is a tremendous honour and responsibility to serve DCU as its 3<sup>rd</sup> President.

I am immensely moved by the trust bestowed on me and I will embrace this role with vigour and enthusiasm.

I am conscious, however, that I am talking on this important role at a time of immense challenges for the Higher Education sector.

Shrinking budgets, coupled with increasing student numbers, are placing **unsustainable pressures** on Universities.

After all the rationalisation and staff-cuts that we have applied in recent years, the quality of the education that we can provide is under severe threat.

Moreover, the **scale of future demand** will necessitate a doubling in capacity of the system over the next two decades.

Consequently, we will need to provide more **flexible teaching and learning** techniques where students can study anytime and anywhere.

In recognition of the critical state of the nation's finances, it is clear that our sources of income will require diversification beyond our current dependence on exchequer funding.

National funding for research has plummeted after a significant growth period which had enabled us to compete on equal terms on the international stage for the first time.

And these challenges are not solely about funding. The nature of the external environment, the global market in which our graduates have to compete, is changing rapidly both in terms of its skills requirements and its international dimension (the impact of Asian countries, for example, will be immense in the coming decades). So, we must be agile and responsive to this changing world – we must work hard at being distinctive and ahead of the curve.

And so, faced with this critical situation and these mounting challenges, why do I take on this role with such relish?

I embrace this role with confidence, enthusiasm & excitement for **2 principal reasons**, one based on the future and the other based on the past.

**First**, I am excited by a vision of the future, of what DCU can achieve as a modern, dynamic university, a University of Enterprise that can deliver significant value to this nation and can graduate students who can lead the next successful era in Ireland's history.

**Second**, I am both assured and invigorated by the **incredible legacy** that I inherit here today. This is a legacy of substantial achievements, of major infrastructural developments, a legacy of values, but, most of all, a legacy of people, a wonderful community of faculty and staff committed to excellence at DCU, a community that has worked through difficult times before and prospered, a community that weathered the storm in the early days of this institution and displayed the pioneering spirit that we need to rediscover now.

## **LEGACY**

Let me elaborate briefly on that legacy and illustrate it by some compelling examples:

DCU is Ireland's youngest University.

Only 30 years ago, NIHE Dublin, as it was then, admitted its first students (just 200 of them).

21 years ago, NIHE was elevated to University status and became DCU.

In those 21 years as a University, DCU has made incredible progress.

Since our establishment, over 35,000 students have graduated from DCU and are now playing key roles in many sectors across the world, most especially in Ireland.

Today, DCU has nearly 11,000 students enrolled, including close to 800 research students. And, when we include those partner colleges formally linked to DCU (such as St Patrick's College, Drumcondra, Mater Dei Institute of Education, and All Hallows College), the number of students that are studying for DCU degrees is greater than 14,000.

But these impressive numbers alone do not tell the full story of DCU's significant achievements, its impact and its values. Let me summarise some of these by examining a range of the University's activities and metrics.

## **1. Global Rankings**

An analysis of University rankings is one means, however imperfect, of assessing a university's status and progress. The nature of this ranking system typically benefits older, larger universities.

DCU is ranked currently in the top 300 universities in the world – at 279<sup>th</sup>.

This position takes on a much greater significance, however, when we examine the League Table for the top 300 universities and find that it includes only 4 Universities that have been established in the past 30 years and that only one of those is located in Europe!

And so, we may state proudly that DCU is the youngest European University in the Top 300 Global Rankings.

This is quite an achievement!

## **2. Degree Programmes**

DCU is widely regarded as an innovator in the provision of novel degree programmes which anticipate the needs of society and employers.

For example, DCU was the first Irish University to introduce work placements as an integral part of its degree programmes.

DCU was the first Irish University to introduce joint degree programmes in languages and business.

DCU was also the first Irish University to introduce Japanese as a full subject on its undergraduate degree.

## **3. Research & Innovation**

DCU has a strong reputation for its research across all its faculties.

Some of the larger-scale initiatives come from **Science, Engineering & Computing** areas. SFI -- Science Foundation Ireland -- is the major national funder in this context and it sets the bar at the highest quality level with all its funding decisions based on international peer review. CSETs are SFI's flagship awards, involving multi-million investments and large-scale

industry-academic partnerships. Of the 10 CSETs established to date, DCU has an exceptional record in leading two (BDI and CNGL), having a half share in a third (Clarity) and a significant involvement in a fourth (LERO). This represents a greater than 25% share of this high level research activity nationally – yet again, DCU punches above it's weight!

SFI also makes major Research Professorship awards to world-class individuals. Professor Oliver Dolly and his team at the International Centre for Neuro-therapeutics at DCU, are developing drugs that control communication in the nervous system and therefore control muscle behaviour. Several serious human conditions are due to over-activity of muscles, for example, spasticity in stroke or cerebral palsy. The drugs being developed here at DCU are proving to be amazingly effective – a testament to the quality of the research.

#### **4. Access Programme**

No issue characterises DCU's values better than its Access Programme. DCU has always been committed to social inclusion. As President Mary McAleese stated here in DCU just 3 weeks ago, "Social Inclusion is infused in the very essence of DCU."

The average college going rate in Ireland is approximately 55%. In some areas of South County Dublin, that rate increases to 86%. In areas of North Dublin, in this neighbourhood, it is as low as 7%. The DCU Access Programme was established in 1989 to allow equality of access to education for students from socially- or economically-disadvantaged backgrounds. That year, the first four students from Ballymun entered this university on Access Scholarships. Today, it has evolved into a national programme, and includes students from every county in Ireland. Now in its 20<sup>th</sup> year, the DCU Access Programme is the largest and most successful initiative of its kind in Ireland. Today on our campus, there are over 400 Access students.

#### **5. Sport**

Sporting activity is an important part of the University experience for any student. Success is always desirable but is not the end in itself! DCU values sport and has had considerable successes in recent years. I will give just 2 examples: In GAA, by winning the Sigerson and O'Connor cups this year, DCU became the first university ever to be the Men's and Women's 3<sup>rd</sup> Level senior football champions in the same year. In 3<sup>rd</sup> Level athletics, DCU have been the overall Men's and Women's champions for the last 3 years.

#### **6. Infrastructure**

Infrastructurally, this campus has been transformed dramatically from its humble beginnings 30 years ago. Today, right across the campus, one can see impressive buildings serving

every need of a modern university: a State-of-the-art Library, world-class research facilities, residential apartment blocks for over 1000 students, an outstanding sports centre, and this beautiful venue here, The Helix.

## **7. My Predecessors**

Of course, none of this happened by accident.

DCU's achievements, infrastructural developments and values derived primarily from strong leadership, leadership with vision, leadership that delivered on that vision.

DCU has been privileged to have had two wonderful Presidents whose leadership has brought it so impressively to this point in our history.

I am very fortunate to have worked under both Presidents, Dr Danny O'Hare and Prof Ferdinand von Prondzynski.

Growing up in Dundalk and attending the same school as he did, I was aware of Danny's academic achievements from a very early age. For me, Danny was a pioneer, an ever-present symbol of commitment to higher education and the transformation of its landscape. Danny, it must be immensely gratifying and rewarding to look at all of this and to know that you planted the seed and nurtured its early and vigorous growth.

Ferdinand arrived at DCU in the first year of this Millennium, and I have worked closely with him ever since then. For most people in this country, the very name Ferdinand immediately conjures up the image of an excellent communicator who has elucidated the Irish Higher Education scene for the past decade. Ferdinand embraced his strong inheritance from Danny and further developed this campus and DCU's reputation to what it is now. So much growth has happened under Ferdinand's watch that it would be impossible to list it all! You too, Ferdinand, must be hugely proud of your legacy.

I am grateful to both of you for your encouragement, your support and your mentoring.

You both have set incredibly high standards for me! It truly is a challenging act to follow!

## **THE FUTURE: VISION & PRINCIPLES**

So our past record gives us very firm ground to stand upon and confidence to meet the present challenges.

What therefore of the Future?

As I said earlier, I am driven by a vision of the future, of what DCU can achieve not only as a distinctive and innovative force in Higher Education but also as a key contributor to **Ireland's economic and social wellbeing** through the quality and creative mindset of our graduates, through innovative research outputs and through strategic engagement with selected partners.

My vision is one of DCU embracing the role and meriting the brand of Ireland's "**University of Enterprise**".

My vision is based on a form of **Pragmatic Patriotism**, whereby we align our mission and strategic agenda with the needs of society and deliver outputs of significant value to our nation.

DCU has core values that have stood the test of time and are worth repeating here:

- a commitment to excellence in education, research & innovation
- a commitment to providing a supportive environment for our students
- a commitment to Social Inclusion
- a belief in the value of partnership
- a focus on interdisciplinarity in our education and research

Building on these values, we have a **distinctive Mission** in Irish Higher Education.

I believe that:

*In our pursuit of excellence in education, research & innovation,*

*We should prioritise engagement with the enterprise sector (be it commercial, social or cultural),*

*We should focus on issues of direct societal importance,*

*We should contribute to national economic, social and cultural progress, especially in our region,*

*And we should do all of this within an inclusive and student-centric environment*

With that mission as a platform, my vision for DCU over the next decade rests on 4 key

Principles:

- **Transformation**
- **Enterprise**
- **Translation**
- **Engagement**

**Let me now elaborate briefly on these 4 principles:**

## 1. Transformation

I have a passionate belief in the **transformational impact** that a university education can have on the lives of young people

- Enabling the realisation of their ambitions
- Enhancing their destinies by nurturing and unleashing the personal potential in every student.

Our priority focus will be in developing in each student a spirit of inquiry and enabling all students to realise their full potential both in careers and as citizens in society. DCU will continue to develop rounded graduates (at both 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> level) with enterprising mindsets, graduates that are widely sought after by employers, and graduates that can deliver their own future.

A 2010 report by the Expert Group on New Skills for New Jobs prepared for the European Commission states the following:

*“Many of the jobs in 2015 and most of the jobs in 2030 do not currently exist and cannot be foreseen yet.”*

Such is the pace of change and unpredictability of the future that one of the key characteristics that we desire of graduates, and of the university from which they graduate, is responsiveness, and adaptability to change.

DCU will take a lead in the curriculum development that will demonstrate this responsiveness. New degree programmes or interdisciplinary combinations of existing programmes will be required.

**Our** graduates will be ready for the changing world! And we will work in an innovative way across faculties to make this happen.

How will we reflect this principle in our actions?

**At Undergraduate Level**, in addition to the disciplinary depth of each degree programme, we will equip students with a set of personal skills to enable them to navigate the particular challenges of the coming decades -- skills such as leadership, creative problem-solving, entrepreneurial principles and strategic thinking.

**At Postgraduate Level**, we will replace the traditional apprenticeship model with one in which the PhD student experiences a broader training that incorporates generic skills

(including Project Management; Ethics & Commercialisation skills) – in ‘so-called’ Structured PhD programmes. These will enable our PhD graduates to be highly competitive for the world of employment in diverse sectors of the economy.

## 2. Enterprise

The next key Principle is Enterprise.

By our actions and, most importantly, by our delivery, DCU will merit the brand “The University of Enterprise”.

There are two elements to this.

First, **within DCU**, we will create an environment that stimulates and rewards Entrepreneurship & Innovation at all levels. We will encourage creativity and a spirit of enterprise throughout the learning process.

Second, from **outside DCU**, the enterprise sector will view DCU as the university that embraces deep engagement with that sector and is responsive to it. In doing so, we are building on an already impressive track record in this regard.

The Innovation Task Force, which reported recently to the Irish Government, aims *“to make Ireland a Global Innovation Hub so that, by 2020, Ireland will have a large number of innovation-intensive companies, many of which will be Irish-headquartered & owned.”*

In order to make this happen, the Task Force requires of our Education System

- *“that we promote innovation & creativity*
- *that we foster Entrepreneurial skills at all levels of education, and*
- *that we strengthen linkages between education & industry”*

I am determined that DCU will deliver on those recommendations and play a key role in Ireland’s future economic well-being.

How will we do this? Here are just some examples of what is planned:

- I will establish a DCU Enterprise Advisory Board, comprising global and national leaders from the Enterprise Sector, who will advise us on how to enhance our partnership with that sector, on how to ensure that our degree programmes are at the leading edge internationally in terms of enterprise needs, and on how to imbue an entrepreneurial spirit in our graduates. I am delighted to announce today that Dr Craig Barrett, former CEO of Intel and a great advocate of Ireland, has agreed to join that board.

- The DCU Ryan Academy for Entrepreneurship, which is a partnership between DCU and the family of the late Tony Ryan, will play a key role in our enterprise strategy. You may have read the announcement in this weekend's newspapers about the establishment of a seed venture fund for early-stage technology start-ups that will be managed by the Ryan Academy. This is unique for a University but reflects again DCU's innovative, enterprise-aware approach in developing, through partnership, an initiative that addresses a recognised gap in the innovation pipeline from concept to product.

### 3. Translation

The 3rd key Principle is Translation.

Translation is the term we use to describe the conversion of knowledge into practical use.

DCU places a strong emphasis on the efficient **translation** of research results into real societal benefits. This focus on translational research implies a direct engagement with grand challenges of societal relevance. We are making a **firm commitment** to prioritise such societal grand challenges in our research – issues such as health, the environment, energy needs, multi-culturalism – what we call **societally-oriented research**.

Let me give you some examples of our plans in this regard:

Developing efficient technologies to reduce electrical energy consumption can contribute greatly to the reduction of global carbon emissions. At DCU's Nanomaterials Processing Lab, researchers are developing **intelligent green technology** to minimise wasteful consumption of energy. In a complex engineering project, involving 18 EU partners and a budget of nearly €20m, the plan is to reduce electricity demand in consumer and medical devices by up to 25 percent by 2020.

DCU's Community Interpreting Research Group deals with the kind of complex interpreting that takes place in business negotiations, hospitals, GP surgeries, and legal contexts -- where it is absolutely critical that people who do not speak the same language can communicate effectively. Such interpreters need very sophisticated **linguistic and intercultural skills** as well as an in-depth knowledge of the subject field involved, be it medicine, law, or business. This type of research is truly translational.

As you may know, we have been engaging in deep dialogue with the Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland (RCSI) and NUI, Maynooth with a view to establishing a synergistic alliance between the 3 institutions across a range of our activities. We will shortly launch a major initiative in Translational Biomedical Research that combines the research expertise of

two research-intensive, non-medical universities (DCU & NUIM) region with Ireland's largest medical school (RCSI) and its associated hospital-based Clinical and Translational Research Centres.

The primary focus of this initiative is on key disease areas (**e.g. cancer, cardiovascular, cystic fibrosis**) and we will develop advanced bio-imaging, diagnostics and drug delivery solutions.

#### **4. Engagement**

The 4<sup>th</sup> and final principle is Engagement.

In the 21st century, a modern university cannot be an ivory tower. Creating knowledge for society and educating our future generations requires engagement with all facets of the world. We need to be engaged both locally and globally.

DCU has a long history of civic engagement with our region through initiatives such as the Access Programme that I referred to earlier and collaborative initiatives with partners such as Ballymun Regeneration Ltd and Dublin Airport Authority. A very good example of such local leverage is the new BSc programme in Aviation Management with Pilot Studies that will admit its first intake of students this Autumn. This pioneering programme is a joint initiative between DCU Business School and Faculty of Engineering & Computing together with the Aviation Industry.

But, we live in a globalized society and there is a key role for global engagement, especially for a University that prioritises societal challenges and innovation. It is especially important for our graduates to have a broad multicultural appreciation and this can be achieved best by education and research programmes and international mobility. In this context, we will continue to develop our strategic international relationships looking not only to the West but also to the East. We believe strongly in expanding our education and research partnerships with institutions in Asia and I am particularly pleased that we have Ambassadors here today from India, China and Japan. Your Excellencies, you are very welcome!!

As a nation, of course, we have historic and strategic relationships with partners in the West, especially in North America. I am very pleased that the Chancellor of the University of Massachusetts at Lowell, the Right Honourable Marty Meehan, is here today and tomorrow morning, in my first act as President of DCU, I will co-sign with Chancellor Meehan a Memorandum of Intent to collaborate on education and research issues of common interest. That in itself is a symbol of the priority of global engagement for DCU.

I would like to highlight one major example which truly embodies my strategic vision for DCU across the areas of Enterprise, Translation, Regional Engagement and Innovation.

The Eastern Corridor between Dublin and Belfast is and will continue to be the largest and fastest growing centre of population and economic activity on the island of Ireland. This corridor, stretching north from DCU, through Fingal, Dublin Airport, Drogheda, Dundalk and across the border to Belfast offers massive untapped potential to DCU.

An analysis of the data\* associated with this corridor reinforces the scale and multi-faceted nature of this opportunity:

By 2020, there will be over 3.5 million people on this island living within a 90 min journey of DCU.

By 2020, over 75% of national GDP will be generated within 1 hr of DCU.

Over 60% of national employment will be within this same area.

The majority of that employment will be knowledge-based.

So, DCU is located in the **future engine of Ireland** and my core vision is that DCU will be a key force in this region and play a pivotal role in the **next wave of its economic, social and cultural development**.

This fortunate proximity opens up many opportunities for DCU in areas such as life-long learning, professional graduate schools, and Innovation Zones that build on our core research strengths. These opportunities can be realised through the development of strategic partnerships both south and north of the border.

Let me give just 2 examples:

1. I am committed to working with partners in the establishment of a significant **Science & Technology Park** in this region with a focus on knowledge-based industries. I have studied (and have seen at first hand) excellent examples of the transformative impacts of such parks internationally.

2. By 2020, over 35% of the nation's population over the age of 60 will live in this region. Many in this population will be educated but will expect to be educated more.

Together with stakeholder partners we will explore how we can make DCU an **Age-Friendly University**. This will build on the pioneering Intergenerational Learning Project that is led by Trudy Corrigan in the School of Education Studies, and which aims to bring together third level students and older learners in a third level learning environment.

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\*Kindly provided by Dr Conor Skehan, DIT.

## **To Parents**

Many of you here today are parents – who have experienced (or are about to experience) the anxieties of releasing your loved ones into a university environment where you hope they will not only survive but prosper.

- Where you hope that they will realise their potential and ultimately find satisfaction in a rewarding career.
- Where they will broaden their horizons and develop strong positive values.

Let me assure you of this:

DCU is a university that is inclusive and committed to supporting our students, **your children**, along their journey of learning and personal development.

At DCU, students will experience the true concept of an Alma Mater Studiorum ... the nourishing Mother of Studies that Nuala Ní Dhómhnaill captured so beautifully in her poem today. DCU is a university where we pursue excellence in education and research, and where we seek to deliver the next generation of leaders, entrepreneurs and 'transformational thinkers' in our country.

I believe that our students (both undergraduate and postgraduate) benefit hugely by being exposed to role models of excellence. With this in mind, I am happy to announce today that we will be establishing the DCU Nobel Laureate Lecture Series, an annual event where a Nobel Laureate from one of the 6 prize areas (Physics, Chemistry, Medicine, Literature, Economics, Peace) will come to DCU to deliver a public lecture in this venue. The first such lecture will take place in the coming academic year.

## **Thank You for Ceremony**

Before I conclude, I wish to express my sincere appreciation to all those who helped make this day

possible. In particular, to the Inaugural Committee made up of staff from across the campus and the many volunteers assisting this afternoon. I thank my colleagues who joined me in celebrating DCU by processing in today's ceremony. I appreciate the greetings offered by our speakers this afternoon and especially the efforts of Deputy President and Registrar, Professor Anne Scott, our Master of Ceremonies for guiding the programme. Of course, I am particularly grateful for the wonderful music and poetry, composed by Shaun Davey and written by Nuala Ní Dhómhnaill, and performed so beautifully by the National Chamber Choir, the DCU Choir, Liam O'Flynn, and the accompanying musicians.

## **Closing Words**

Finally, I wish to address the DCU Community:

Chancellor, Academic Faculty, Staff, Students, Alumni, Trustees and Governing Authority members,

I stand here before you,

honoured by the role bestowed on me,

humbled by the privilege of leading this institution about which I am passionate,

immensely grateful for the legacy of my predecessors,

inspired by the challenges ahead of us,

but confident that, with the wonderful DCU community behind me, we will not only overcome those challenges but continue to excel in those areas that are at the core of this institution (teaching & learning, research and innovation) and that we will have a transformative impact on this region and this country in the decade ahead.

I wish to leave you now with a Seamus Heaney quotation taken from his 70<sup>th</sup> Birthday speech – I believe that it is particularly appropriate for DCU:

*“We should keep our feet on the ground to signify that nothing (or no-one) is beneath us, but we should also lift up our eyes to say that nothing is beyond us!”*

Go raibh míle maith agaibh.

Prof. Brian MacCraith

DCU President

July 13, 2010