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## Introduction by Dr Hugh Brady, UCD President

### Vision

Within days of the opening of the Catholic University of Ireland in 1854, Cardinal Newman famously asked — what are we here for? Providing a contemporary answer to that question is what inspired our work in framing the UCD Strategic Plan 2005-2008. I am very pleased to report that across all elements of the Plan we are making excellent progress towards our goals.

We are now in a tremendously exciting period for UCD. As did Newman in his time, we too have a clear vision of where UCD can make a telling difference and contribute to Ireland and the world. Positioning UCD as an international centre of excellence in an exceptionally competitive environment is an immense task on which the entire community at UCD has worked ceaselessly.

Approximately 23,000 students are now enrolled across five Colleges and 35 Schools. Twenty five percent of the student body is now engaged in graduate study, and UCD’s research community is now at the forefront of international efforts to expand the frontiers of knowledge.

UCD continues to attract exceptional students. In turn, these students are met by a teaching and learning environment that maximises their potential, stretches their curiosity and meets their thirst for knowledge. The excellence of our fourth level programmes is making graduate research and study an increasingly attractive option. Over half of the class of 2007 continued into further education or training.

We are committed to becoming a leading European research-intensive university that drives innovation and creative discovery within a community of world-class researchers. Combined with being a

national and European leader in graduate education, the excellence and distinctiveness of research in UCD contributes to the social, economic and cultural objectives of a knowledge society.

The number of international students attending UCD rose to just under 3,300, an increase of 4% on 2005/06. These students come from 110 different countries.

In other ways, it has been a momentous year as UCD brought an end to its 124 year link with Earlsfort Terrace in the centre of Dublin city. We continue to advance our ambitious plans to develop the Belfield campus as a dynamic 24/7 centre of living and learning at the heart of a vibrant academic and local community.

We have taken further steps towards meeting our objective of developing the campus into a truly world-class facility. Under the over-arching guidance of our Campus Development Plan, an international competition for the Gateway Project produced a striking proposal by German architect Christoph Ingenhoven. His winning design will enable the UCD Gateway Project to transform the student and staff experience, enrich the local community and contribute to the social, economic and environmental development of the city of Dublin and the county of Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown.

Elsewhere on campus a number of major projects such as the creation of the UCD Science District are under way. Others have been masterfully completed such as the restoration of Belfield House.

The *National Development Plan 2007-2013 (NDP)* articulated a continued commitment to research and investment in capital projects in the higher education sector. The NDP was underpinned by the Government’s *Strategy for Science, Technology and Innovation*, published in 2006.

Both documents are driven by a vision, which I share fully, of placing Ireland firmly on the map in terms of the excellence of our research and its application for the benefit of society.

Cycle 4 of the Programme for Research in Third Level Institutions (PRTLII), funded by the Higher Education Authority (HEA), was launched in 2007 and UCD received almost €30 million for transformative initiatives in both the sciences and humanities. This timely investment in fourth level and research infrastructure will ultimately contribute to Ireland's development as a vibrant knowledge society.



### Implementation of the Strategic Plan 2005-2008

We are now well over half way through the period of our current plan which sets out a vision in three areas where UCD will strive to be the best:

- Teaching and learning;
- Research;
- Impact on Irish society.

The year has seen continued outstanding progress.

*UCD Horizons*, - our modularised, semesterised and credit-based curriculum has been a great success with all of the undergraduate and majority of graduate programmes modularised. I have been particularly encouraged by the imaginative ways in which Schools are collaborating to combine different subject areas and by the focus on defining programmes through learning outcomes.

Some years ago UCD took the major decision that we needed to be a research-intensive university. Research develops our capacity to learn, to inform policy and to innovate. The total value of research contracts rose by 16% this year compared to 2005/06.

As Ireland's largest educational institution, many of our staff are to the forefront of areas of national and international activity where they advance knowledge and offer insights and advice. At a student level too, there has been a marked growth in programmes and activities to develop active citizenship and community engagement.

### Research

UCD continues to build its reputation as a destination of choice for leading research talent, providing an environment in which research leaders can innovate and excel. We are forging exciting educational and research partnerships and collaborations with academic and industrial organisations, enhancing confidence in the university as a destination for quality investment and making it a national leader in research funding.

We have had impressive successes in securing funding from a wide range of sources. A significant number of these are for collaborative research projects. Outstanding work is under way and being recognised by peers in Ireland and abroad. There has also been remarkable progress in commercialising research.

### Student quality

In a period when the demographics of Irish society are offering students a greater choice at third and fourth level than ever before, the students with most potential are still choosing UCD. We increased our market share of high achievers with over 456 students attaining more than 545 points in their Leaving Certificate or equivalent. A major focus has been the development of a student-centred recruitment model which aims to reach out to prospective students at their time of choice with better quality and more accessible Information.

### Student experience

The university continues to make a major investment in the physical and mental development, health and wellbeing of students in UCD. The sporting and society based options continue to grow with major investment under way in enhancing facilities.

The student counselling service has been significantly expanded and initiatives are under way to develop a greater sense of community and shared purpose on campus. As the university

*Dr Hugh Brady, UCD President, accompanies HM King Harald V of Norway during his visit to UCD*

continues to grow, community building becomes ever more important to build a shared sense of our collective work and to make a contribution to the wider communities that surround us.

*Pictured at the presentation of the President's Teaching Awards were (l to r): Dr Oonagh Breen, UCD School of Law, Dr Katherine O'Donnell, UCD School of Social Justice, Dr Hugh Brady, UCD President, Dr Debra Laefer, UCD School of Architecture, Landscape and Civil Engineering, and David Jennings, Deputy Director, UCD Centre for Teaching and Learning*

### Honorary degrees and awards

During the year, UCD honoured a diverse range of people who have made significant contributions to Irish and international life in the fields of business, sport, science, arts and human sciences. Among these was the renowned author Maeve Binchy who received the Foundation Day Medal. She also contributed entertaining reminiscences about her student days in Earsfort Terrace to *Farewell to the Terrace*, a commemorative book published during the year.

*Maeve Binchy with her husband, Gordon Snell, after receiving the UCD Foundation Day Medal*



### Staff

The ability to meet the ambitious goals of our strategic plan is entirely dependent on the quality of UCD's staff — academic, administrative and technical — who support our endeavours. Across the university the recruitment, promotion and retention of excellent people is a priority.

The quality of our teaching is informed by research. The best students are those taught by the best teachers and researchers. We get the best teachers and researchers by funding and supporting their research work in an environment of diversity, critical thinking and openness to ideas.



### Conclusion

UCD has benefited greatly during the period from the wise counsel and experience of the Governing Authority and its chair, Kieran McGowan. I deeply appreciate their support.

We are now emerging from a period of major change that at times has involved some upheaval and disruption. The many noteworthy initiatives which have been completed would not have been possible without the application and resolve of so many staff colleagues.

In my report last year, I expressed the view that having made enormous progress the university was about to enter a much more creative, although still demanding phase. I believe that this creative period is now well under way and across all areas of academic endeavour the committed work of researchers, teachers and students is building an ever growing reputation for UCD.

In a report like this, it is not possible to describe all that goes on in the university. We are all part of a large, diverse and growing community where a very large number of individuals together make valued contributions to our shared goal of collective success for UCD. I am very grateful to them all.

*Hugh R. Brady*

Hugh Brady  
President