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## Introduction by Dr Hugh Brady, UCD President

### Vision

As the current UCD Strategic Plan reaches its conclusion, and as we turn our focus towards the 2009–2013 period, it is appropriate to reflect on achievements to date and our aspirations for the future.

The compelling vision and appropriately ambitious objectives set out in the UCD Strategic Plan 2005–2008 have for the most part come to fruition. We have achieved our stated objective of becoming a leading international research-intensive university that plays a central role in shaping contemporary Ireland.

UCD has never ceased to take up John Henry Newman’s challenge to be “the alma mater of the rising generation”. Over the past 12 months, the university has continued to advance knowledge and foster learning in an atmosphere of discovery, creativity, innovation and excellence, eliciting the very best from our students, and contributing to the social, cultural and economic life of Ireland.

We will now work towards identifying the next set of priorities of the university. The focus in coming years will be on consolidating recent developments, strengthening undergraduate programmes, growing and developing graduate education and improving the links between education and research. If UCD and Ireland are to compete and succeed in this uncompromisingly competitive arena, UCD’s Strategic Plan 2009–2013 must be bolder and more imaginative than ever before.

### International repute

*The Times Higher Education Supplement* (THES) placed UCD in 177th position for 2007, a jump of 42 places from 2006. This climb is due to the

international recognition gained by the new *UCD Horizons* modular curriculum and the striking increase in research activity in both the arts and the sciences.

UCD is justifiably proud of its achievements in developing and implementing a fully modular, semesterised and credit-based undergraduate curriculum – *UCD Horizons* – which is now seen nationally and, increasingly, internationally as a model for student-centred, flexible quality education at undergraduate level. Student numbers for 2007/08 continue to reflect the university’s strategy of attracting the best students from Ireland and elsewhere. In 2007/08, the number of international students representing 116 countries on campus rose to just under 3,600, an increase of approximately 8% from 2006/07.



The figure for CAO first preferences to study at UCD increased by 5.2% in February 2008 and our proportion of high-achieving students who realised over 540 points in the Leaving Certificate increased to 21% of those talented students. Our strategic efforts to increase the numbers of graduate research students are also bearing fruit:

*Student ambassadors play a key role in UCD’s strategy of continuing to attract the best students*

UCD PhD students now account for 30% of the Irish university PhD community.

UCD aims to be a socially inclusive university where students from diverse backgrounds participate fully and equally in all facets of university life. The university welcomes students with a disability, mature learners and students from lower socio-economic groups. Students from under-represented groups and non-standard entry routes comprised 14.5% of incoming undergraduate entrants in 2007/08.

Though UCD academics are making great strides in the area of world-class research and attracting funding for this, the university continues to be under-funded in terms of its core grant from public funds. I have campaigned actively, with my fellow university presidents, to address this difficulty. My role as the President of the Irish Universities Association in 2008 has given a real opportunity to pursue this objective and has proved to be both challenging and rewarding.

### Research and innovation

UCD continues to build its reputation as a destination of choice for leading researchers, providing an environment in which they can innovate and excel. UCD has had an extremely successful year in the area of research funding. Contracts awarded exceeded €100 million for the first time, with the total value up 19% to €114.7 million. Researchers at NovaUCD submitted 50 invention disclosures last year, representing an increase of 35% on 2006 figures.

### Campus Development Plan

UCD has embarked on a wide array of initiatives aimed at establishing Belfield as a vital hub of public engagement with extensive student facilities. Designed by Ingenhoven Architects, the Gateway Project masterplan will underpin the development of an exceptional student experience on the Belfield campus. The redevelopment of the UCD Science Centre will provide a transformational resource for Irish science, and the building of the new UCD Sutherland School of Law will provide our Law students with a state-of-the-art learning environment. We have also actively enhanced wooded areas to form a coherent campus perimeter that boosts the overall quality of life for all living and working on the campus. The Governing Authority's approval

of a comprehensive energy policy and strategy for UCD has significantly reinforced our sustainable campus ambitions. The continued installation of artworks on campus enhances the environment for students, staff and visitors alike.

### Universitas 21

UCD hosted the *Universitas 21* AGM in May 2008, welcoming presidents, vice-chancellors and senior managers from 22 of the world's leading universities. A highlight of the week was the *Universitas 21* Symposium, which addressed the topic *Strategic Partnerships with the Developing World: A new direction for Universitas 21 in research and education*. I am proud that UCD has taken the lead in co-ordinating the *Universitas 21* networks' combined efforts in international development studies and will be spearheading a number of major funding applications in support of this work.

### Honorary degrees and awards

During the year, UCD honoured a range of people who have made significant contributions to Irish and international life in the fields of business, the arts, medicine, science, journalism, economics, social science, trade unionism and botany. Irish poet Thomas Kinsella was awarded the UCD Ulysses Medal in recognition of his standing as a leading Irish poet.

I am continually impressed by the diversity of people who visit our campus. Over the past year our students and staff got the opportunity to engage with authors such as Jung Chang and JK Rowling, ground-breaking scientists such as Dr James D. Watson, and entertainment figures such as comedian Will Ferrell and actor Ralph Fiennes.



Irish poet Thomas Kinsella was awarded the UCD Ulysses Medal on 16 June 2008

*Pictured during the Taoiseach's visit to the UCD campus in April 2008 to attend a conference marking the 10th anniversary of the signing of the Good Friday Agreement (from left): Professor John Coakley, Director, UCD Institute for British-Irish Studies; An Taoiseach Mr Bertie Ahern TD; UCD President Dr Hugh Brady; and Rt Hon Mr Shaun Woodward, Secretary of State for Northern Ireland*



### Notable mention

I was particularly proud to welcome the then Taoiseach, Bertie Ahern TD, to UCD on 3 April 2008, the day after he announced that he was to resign from his position on 6 May. It was fitting that he visited the campus, amid a clamour of media activity, to deliver the keynote speech at the UCD Institute of British-Irish Studies conference marking the 10th anniversary of the Good Friday Agreement.

In my *One to One* interview with RTÉ in July, I reiterated the university's focus on the holistic development of individual students and staff as well as the wider objectives of the university. I am continually encouraged by the interest the public has in UCD and the positive feedback I have received.

### Staff

The university's staff members are central to the realisation of our Strategic Plan. Through the continuous development of staff members' skills, alongside the strategic recruitment of new staff, UCD offers its entire community an exceptional environment for teaching, learning, research and personal development.

To provide our students with a quality, world-class learning establishment, UCD recruits academic staff members who are recognised leaders in their respective fields of expertise. UCD is committed to funding and supporting their research work in an open environment.

### Conclusion

UCD has benefited greatly during this period from the measured counsel and experience of the Governing Authority and its chair, Kieran McGowan. I am deeply grateful for the guidance and support they offer me and my Senior Management Team in working towards achieving UCD's strategic objectives.

We have made enormous progress in this past year. I believe that we can carry this momentum forward with a mind to achieving so much more in the next Strategic Plan.

*Hugh R. Brady*

Hugh Brady  
President