



Spring 2025



gettoday

# UCD - BREAKING BOUNDARIES



SEE ARTICLE ON PAGE 3



# CONTENTS

## FEATURES

**IN PROFILE:**  
Dr Sandra Collins,  
UCD Library



Page 07

**Feature:**  
Care 4 Dairy



Page 15

**Feature:**  
Supporting cancer  
patients to quit  
smoking post  
diagnosis



Page 21

**Feature:**  
Resources for  
Young People  
seeking help with  
Mental Health



Page 27

**Feature:**  
A Step Closer  
to Life-Changing  
Therapies for  
Rare Skin Disease



Page 32

**UCD thanks...**

**Subscribers:** Alessandro Benati, Nicole Black, Marie Boran, Rupert Bowen, Caroline Byrne, Niamh Byrne, Sandra Collins, David Coyle, Aidan Curran, Tom Curran, Mags Darcy, Damien Dempsey, Emma Donovan, Noya Fernandez, Kelly Fitzgerald, Patricia Fitzpatrick, Marina Gheorghe, Beth Gormley, Helen Graham, Ronald Halim, Liz Hannon, Patrice Harrington, Aoife Kilbane, Sylvia Leatham, Deirdre McGillicuddy, Peter McGuire, Sheila Morris, Clár Ní Bhuachalla, Sue Philpott, Siofra Pierse, Claudette Pretorius, Elaine Quinn, Mark Simpson, Sasha Smith, James Sullivan, Julie Tonge, Anna Truman, Emily Watts, Catherine Wilsdon and Miceal Whelan.

**Produced by:** Mary Staunton and Eabha Last  
**Design:** Loman Cusack Design Ltd  
Thanks to: Ann Lavan, Damien McLoughlin, Regina Uí Chollatáin and Ben Tonra

In the compilation of this publication, every care has been taken to ensure accuracy. Any errors or omissions should be brought to the attention of UCD University Relations ([ucdtoday@ucd.ie](mailto:ucdtoday@ucd.ie))

**Cover image:** UCD - Breaking Boundaries





Prof Orla Feely with (l-r) Jim Miley, Director General of the IUA; Gary McGann, Former CEO of Smurfit Kappa Group; Mike Beary, Chair, UCD Governing Authority; and Prof Michael Murphy, President of the NUI.

## ■ UCD sets out its path to 2030 with launch of new strategy

**Professor Orla Feely, UCD President, launched the Strategy to 2030, Breaking Boundaries at an event at UCD O'Reilly Hall on 19 November, setting the course for the next stage of the University's development and growth.**

Under the new strategy, UCD will grow the range of opportunities for students to develop their knowledge and skills and realise their potential in areas also linked to Ireland's future societal and economic success, including significant new provision in lifelong learning and skills development. We will also expand cross-cutting research in areas of excellence and impact within the University, such as artificial intelligence, One Health, sustainability and research for policy, and expand our commitment to Ireland's national culture, heritage and language.

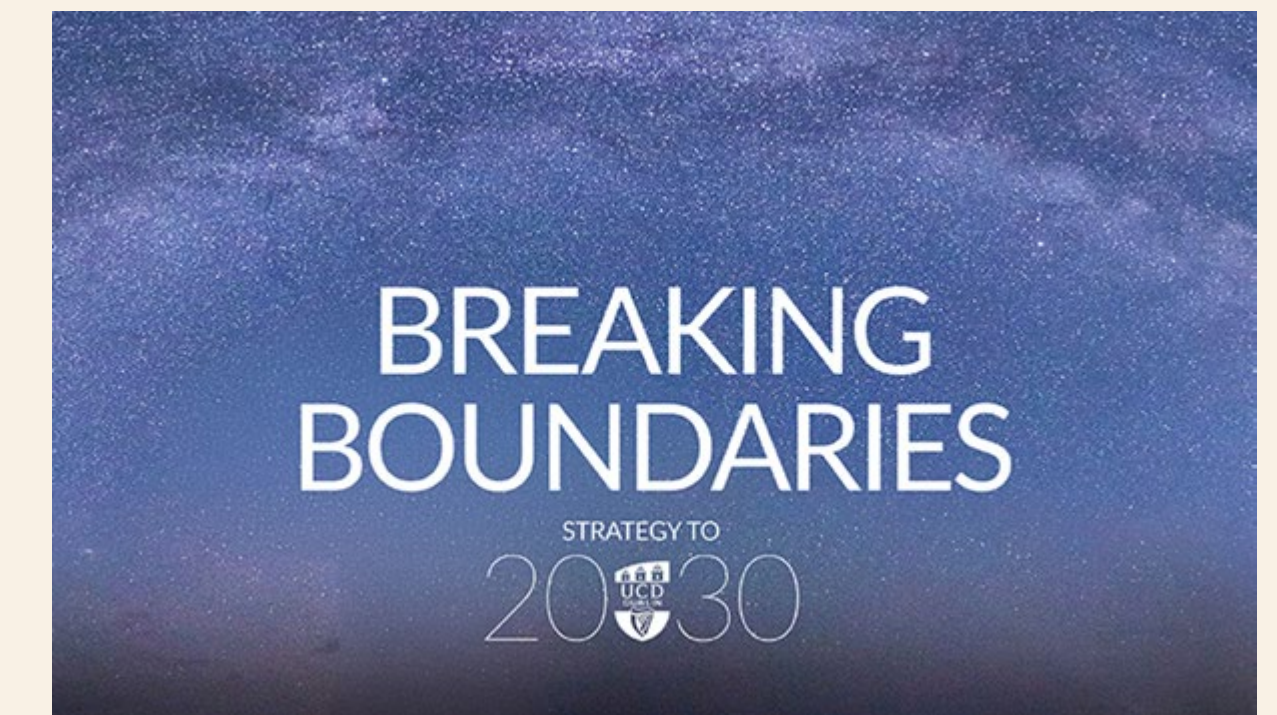
We will also grow our strategic global partnerships and partnerships with industry, and will enhance and integrate our physical and digital campuses.

Specific actions to be taken under the new Strategy to 2030, Breaking Boundaries include:

- The establishment of a major new institute for AI and digital technologies research, education, ethics and policy.
- A new round of hiring of early-stage faculty under the University's Ad Astra programme, with 50 new positions.
- The development of new facilities to showcase and expand access to the University's outstanding range of cultural and heritage collections.
- Steps to reduce the University's carbon emissions by 51% by 2030, and to be on track for net zero by 2040.

"UCD is a university that makes a clear positive difference and delivers impact through our education, research and engagement. This is evident in Ireland, where we have made an unparalleled contribution to the country from the foundation of the state to our recent economic and societal transformation, and now increasingly around the world," said Professor Feely. "With this strategy, we consider how we will step up our impact and all that we deliver as we enter the second quarter of this highly disruptive century."

"The ideas within the strategy are the result of widespread consultation across our university community and with stakeholders. We now look forward to working with all those groups as we implement the strategy, advancing our ambition while reflecting our values through fast-changing times," she continued. "Delivering on the full potential of the strategy will draw on the excellence, commitment and creativity of all in our UCD community and will also require the resources and funding that enable their



work. To this end, we need a government that is committed to investment in higher education and research, recognising them as key drivers of our economy, our nation's health, our cultural heritage and our democratic society."

Under the new strategy, by 2030 UCD will be a leader in university innovation and entrepreneurship, supporting Irish and European industrial competitiveness; a leader in knowledge generation, learning and action across the sustainability agenda; and a source of insight and objectivity on issues of vital importance to society in uncertain times.



Pictured at the strategy launch (l-r) are Triona McCormack, UCD VP for Strategy and External Engagement; Prof Colin Scott, UCD Registrar and Deputy President; Prof Orla Feely, UCD President, and Prof Kate Robson Brown, UCD VP for Research, Innovation and Impact.





Dipti Pandya, Director, UCD Research; Prof Orla Feely, UCD President; and Prof Dolores O'Riordan, UCD VP for Global Engagement.

## Europe Uncovered // Europe Revealed

**"If Ireland is to become a new Ireland, she must first become European." UCD's most famous alumnus, James Joyce, was truly a citizen of Europe, espousing European values and thriving in the creative capitals of the continent. Today, UCD is embracing Europe, taking full advantage of opportunities to excel in research, teaching and innovation.**

UCD's reputation as a global university is growing, but global doesn't have to mean far-flung places. Of the 32,000 students on the Belfield campus, more than 10% are EU citizens (beyond Ireland). Everyday campus life is vibrant and diverse, with a richness of voices and cultures in evidence.

In November 2024, Professor Orla Feely launched the new UCD Strategy to 2030, 'Breaking Boundaries'. At an event to mark the occasion, she said: "We are bringing the best of Ireland to the world, and the best of the world to Ireland". The new Strategy includes a goal for UCD to be "firmly established among the top 20 universities in the EU" by 2030. Planned strategic initiatives include growing global partnerships and building engagement with EU partners and stakeholders.

Europe is a ladder that UCD is using to get to the next level in education, research and policy influence. Access to research funding, membership of influential networks and alliances, freedom of movement for students and faculty – the benefits of engaging with Europe are manifold. And it's far from a one-way street. UCD is hugely attractive to European partners – home to world-class researchers and teaching faculty, with a highly engaged student

population, and English spoken as a first or second language campus-wide.

### Funding research and collaboration

Over the last 35 years, UCD has secured more than €400 million through European funding mechanisms.

Horizon Europe is the largest funding programme for research and innovation at third-level institutes across Europe, with a total budget of €95.5 billion. UCD ranks number 1 in Ireland for Horizon Europe funding, and 23rd among all higher education institutions across Europe.

Our university has secured more than 170 grants under the Horizon Europe Framework programme, including 34 ERC awards. These are prestigious awards earmarked for researchers at the top of their field. What's more, UCD holds over 110 collaborative grants aimed at supporting research to address global challenges.

And these numbers go up if we include all framework programmes – not just Horizon Europe – to more than 710 European grants, with 61 ERCs and over 500 collaborative grants for UCD researchers.

The European Institute of Innovation & Technology (EIT) is another funding avenue available to UCD researchers. EIT brings together organisations across business, education and research, with the goal of finding and commercialising solutions to pressing global challenges. For each global challenge area, there is a network of partnerships known as 'Knowledge and Innovation Communities' (KICs).

UCD is a member of a number of EIT KICs, and is the only third-level institution in Ireland to be a member of the EIT Manufacturing KIC. The I-Form Research Centre for Advanced Manufacturing, based in the UCD School of Mechanical and Materials Engineering, says membership of EIT Manufacturing has been transformative.

"Our involvement in EIT has opened the opportunity for us to collaborate with international networks that we might not otherwise have access to," says Professor Denis Dowling, Director of I-Form. "I-Form has secured over €1 million in funding for collaborative projects in public engagement, training for SMEs, workforce upskilling/reskilling and innovative projects. One significant success story is our 'Manufacturing a Healthy Future' project, which to date has engaged over 4,500 primary school pupils and over 250 teachers in STEM and manufacturing learning, across five European countries."

### Partnerships, networks and alliances

Within Europe, UCD has a long, well-established history of partnership. Aside from the obvious benefits of funding through the likes of Horizon Europe and Erasmus+ (see below), UCD academics show consistent interest in conducting joint research and academic projects with European partners: European organisations form the largest contingent of the top 100 co-publishing partners for UCD. Thanks to the 'Bologna Process', we have a common framework on which to establish successful joint and double degrees that are highly sought after by students from around the world.

Active bilateral partnerships for UCD currently include 292 partner higher education institutions across Europe, with 257 inside the European Union (excluding Switzerland, the UK, Iceland, Norway and Liechtenstein). UCD has European partnerships with 28 countries.

Another way to amplify partnerships across Europe is through our university networks and consortia. UCD is currently an active member of several of these key associations, most of which have a distinct focus or mission.

In 2022, UCD intensified its European engagement by joining Una Europa, an alliance of eleven research-intensive universities working together to create a virtual inter-campus for cross-border, fully integrated teaching, research and societal outreach. Una Europa is realising this vision through the EU Commission's €14.4 million 'Una. Futura' expansion grant to roll out and bed in alliance activities. Key achievements to date include the establishment of a joint degree in European Studies, with a joint degree in Sustainability in the making, multi-partner research collaborations, and knowledge-sharing around public engagement best practice.





### Influence and leadership

A seat at the European table, through networks and alliances, gives UCD an opportunity to influence European policy. Working in tandem with partners amplifies the collective voice. Recently, senior leaders within UCD have taken on key roles of leadership and influence in prestigious European networks and/or alliances.

Professor Dolores O'Riordan, UCD Vice-President for Global Engagement, was elected Chair of the Board of Directors for Una Europa in December 2023. The announcement was made during the alliance's General Assembly, a gathering of 250 members hosted on campus by UCD President, Professor Orla Feely. Around the same time, Professor Feely was named President of CESAER (the Conference of European Schools of Advanced Engineering Education and Research) for 2024/25. CESAER is an international association of universities of science and technology in Europe, representing over 1.1 million students and 96,000 academic staff. Meanwhile, Dipti Pandya, Director, UCD Research, was recently elected Chair of the European Association of Research Managers and Administrators (EARMA). The 400+ EARMA community is composed of institutional and individual members from 47 countries.

### Freedom of movement

As a small island nestled on the edge of Europe, mobility – the free movement of people – has always been hugely important to Ireland. UCD staff, faculty and students have embraced mobility

around Europe with gusto.

Erasmus is a name synonymous with European travel and third-level institutions. Indeed, UCD alumnus Peter Sutherland was considered the 'father' of the Erasmus+ programme, proposing it to the European Commission in the mid-1980s.

In 2024, UCD received a Letter of Excellence from the European Commission in recognition of the University's extensive activity in all aspects of the Erasmus+ programme, including education, student and staff mobility, volunteer activities and sport. Over 10 years, UCD has been involved in Erasmus+ projects worth over €60 million.

UCD has participated in the Erasmus+ programme since it began in 1987, with staff and student mobility. Since 2014, the options have expanded to include funding for traineeships and mobility for staff training. UCD currently sends around 700 students abroad each year and going 'on Erasmus' has become an accepted part of a student's academic life.

### Teaching across borders

Teaching and learning across borders is not easy, but it is the future. The UCD teaching community has an impressive track record in transnational European education – with unique joint degrees such as the BCL Maîtrise in Law or the MA International War Studies – immersing students in multiple perspectives, languages and learning environments. There are also four Erasmus Mundus Joint Master programmes in food

sustainability, humanitarian aid, public health and systems science. These prestigious programmes, funded through Erasmus+, attract the best students globally.

Through Erasmus+, academic and professional staff at UCD are collaborating with universities, businesses and NGOs on a dizzying range of groundbreaking educational projects. In the past four years, UCD has led on or partnered in education grants worth over €13 million to directly address strategic European skills priorities, emerging labour market needs and global challenges. From enhancing undergraduate physiotherapy curricula to building teacher competence in climate change, colleagues across the university are working with partners around Europe and beyond to create the future of European higher education.

### The future is European

UCD styles itself as 'Ireland's global university', but it could equally be known as 'Ireland's European university'. And with the university set on 'Breaking Boundaries' with its new strategy to 2030, Europe is sure to be a core element in how UCD will shape both the future and itself.





Mornington Singers under Prof Orla Flanagan perform world premiere of Signifier...Signified.

## ■ Signifier...Signified

**UCD recently celebrated the impact and reception of Swiss linguist, semiotician and philosopher Ferdinand de Saussure (1857-1913) in a creative, musical way. The Signifier...Signified interdisciplinary evening in Trapdoor@UCD was hosted by Associate Professor Siofra Pierse, Head of UCD School of Languages, Cultures and Linguistics. Music and poetry combined for true interdisciplinarity at this oversubscribed event.**

Inspiration stemmed from poet Zsuzsanna Ardó's poem Signifier Signified I, written as an homage to the influential philosopher of language, Saussure. In Ardó's poem, the inadequacy of language for capturing the essence of individuals is underscored and lamented: "A sign. (sigh)/ Does not embody my body. My story. Memory. My mind./ Not./ I (sigh)".

A number of speakers shone a spotlight on semiotics before the musical performance. Professor Colin Scott, UCD Registrar and Deputy President, traced early intellectual encounters with semiotics, as he referenced the nuanced resonance of Saussure within laws of advertising. H.E. Jenny Piaget, Ambassador of Switzerland to Ireland, generous sponsors, spoke of the importance of semiotic subtlety within the delicate language of diplomacy. Poet Zsuzsanna Ardó, fresh from her Spinaria art exhibition in UCD Classics museum, evoked Saussurean signs, nature and her deep

commitment to climate awareness, evidenced in her transnational project, PlanetWoman. Professor Ardó, now Adjunct Lecturer at the UCD School of Languages, Cultures and Linguistics, shared a recent poem dedicated to her Dublin odyssey.

In a masterly sweep, Professor Bettina Migge, UCD School of Languages, Cultures and Linguistics, traced the impact of Saussure on semiotics and structuralism, and the evolution of interpretations of signs within Linguistics, including in more fluid, postmodern times.

Finally, Technological University Dublin composer Professor Gráinne Mulvey introduced her new choral symphony, a mixed eight-part a cappella choral piece with occasional divisi, also entitled Signifier...Signified. She referenced the process wherein each individual attempts to find their voice, to realise their potential. Professor Orla Flanagan, Trinity College Dublin, then workshopped Mulvey's choral composition with singers from the exceptional Mornington Singers choir. She presented the complexity of the piece excerpt by excerpt, explaining the techniques used, and priming the audience to appreciate complex slides and chords, before the Mornington Singers sang each excerpt in turn.

The musical workshop was a masterpiece in bringing the audience deep inside a challenging, yet beautiful, musical world première. While the event, co-organised by Melanie Pape, filled the new Trapdoor@UCD black box theatre at the very end of January, musings, harmonies and overtones will continue to resound for a long time afterwards.

## ■ UCD One Health Centre designated as the WHO's first Collaborating Centre

**The UCD One Health Centre has been designated as the World Health Organisation's (WHO) first Collaborating Centre for One Health in Europe. This designation acknowledges UCD's leadership in integrating human, animal and environmental health to address global challenges.**

As a WHO Collaborating Centre, the UCD Centre for One Health will support the implementation of the WHO's One Health agenda through research, education, advocacy, knowledge sharing, lifelong learning and capacity-building activities. The Centre plans to develop workshops, modules and outreach programmes for various audiences, including students, public servants, practitioners, policymakers and the general public.

Professor Orla Feely, UCD President, stated that this designation is a testament to the quality and significance of UCD's research and education in this important multidisciplinary space. She emphasised that joining a network of over 800

WHO Collaborating Centres worldwide provides significant opportunities for knowledge exchange and collaboration.

Dr Hans Henri P Kluge, WHO Regional Director for Europe, highlighted the importance of the One Health approach in addressing complex health challenges. He expressed excitement about launching the region's first One Health Collaborating Centre in Dublin, dedicated to driving research that leads to actionable solutions and policy recommendations.

Adjunct Professor Tony Holohan, Director of UCD's One Health Centre, noted that the pandemic has revealed global vulnerabilities and inequalities. He expressed the honour in the WHO's trust in UCD to play a leadership role in One Health and emphasised the Centre's commitment to being at the forefront of research, education, and innovations to make One Health action a reality.

The UCD Centre for One Health, established in 2024, aims to be a national and world-class leader in developing and facilitating strategies to implement One Health. It focuses on research excellence, education and training, community engagement and outreach, policy and advocacy, and building capacity and partnerships.

This designation aligns with the WHO's call for increased commitment and investment in the One Health approach to tackle common threats such as climate change and pandemics.



Adjunct Prof Tony Holohan, Director of UCD's One Health Centre, and Dr Hans Henri P Kluge, WHO Regional Director for Europe, at the official signing of the agreement to make the UCD Centre for One Health a WHO collaborating centre. Credit: WHO / Andreas Beck





Professor  
Tasman Crowe

## IN PROFILE: DR SANDRA COLLINS

Dr Sandra Collins is University Librarian at UCD. Originally a mathematician, she has worked in digital innovation and cultural heritage over 25 years in the public and private sectors. She was previously the Director of the National Library of Ireland, the founding Director of the Digital Repository of Ireland in the Royal Irish Academy, Scientific Programme Manager in Science Foundation Ireland, Master Engineer & Researcher in Ericsson Telecommunications, and Mathematics lecturer in Dublin City University. She received her PhD in nonlinear fluid dynamics from UCD in 1996.



## ■ In Profile...

### Academic Background

With a PhD in nonlinear fluid dynamics from UCD, how has your background in mathematics influenced your approach to library science and administration?

*I started my career as an academic mathematician. I completed my PhD in nonlinear fluid dynamics in UCD with my supervisor Dr Edward Cox, and I developed a deep love of research and teaching which has remained with me throughout my life, even as my roles have changed. I think mathematics is a wonderful foundation for any career as it provides a grounding in logical, rigorous and independent thought, and applied mathematics gave me a robust and practical approach to problem solving that I use every day. As a young person I was inspired by the Galileo quote 'Nature is a book written in the language of mathematics'. I do believe there is something universal about mathematics, and I'm delighted to see my daughter studying mathematics in UCD now!*

### Transition to UCD Librarian

After serving as Director of the National Library of Ireland (NLI), what motivated your decision to return to UCD as the University Librarian in March 2022?

*Over my career I have worked in six different organisations (UCD, DCU, Ericsson Telecommunications, SFI, the Royal Irish Academy and the National Library of Ireland), and since my earliest days working in UCD I always felt that I would like to one day return to my alma mater. When I saw the University Librarian role advertised for UCD in 2021, I knew this could be my opportunity. It was hard leaving the National Library because it was a place that I loved with many wonderful colleagues – but returning to UCD felt like coming home. It has been such a great pleasure getting to know people across UCD and leading the fabulous team here in the Library. We have a big transformation programme underway aligned with the new University Strategy, and I feel this is a period of renewal and redevelopment - and a very exciting time to be working in UCD.*



### Collaborations with UCD

While you were Director of the NLI, a notable project was the partnership with UCD to establish the Museum of Literature Ireland (MoLI). How did this collaboration come about, and what impact has it had on promoting Irish literary heritage?

*The creation of MoLI was one of the most exciting initiatives I was fortunate to work on in the National Library. We were approached by UCD in the concept phase, and it seemed such a natural partnership – two national leaders in literature, research, and cultural heritage, coming together to share Ireland's extraordinary literary heritage with the world – what an opportunity! There was a stellar team working together to bring this project to fruition, and a great team makes light work. I've had the privilege to work with MoLI in my two roles, as Director of the National Library and as Director of UCD Library, and one of my great pleasures is seeing literary treasures from both Libraries on display for visitors to enjoy and be inspired by. And to see MoLI win a European Heritage award from the Europa Nostra jury for its work in fostering inclusion and multicultural dialogue was a fitting recognition for the impact that MoLI has had.*

### Digital Collecting Efforts

You oversaw the acquisition of numerous world-class collections and spearheaded digital initiatives, including archiving over 300,000 Irish websites. How do you envision the role of digital archiving in preserving cultural heritage?

*Digital Preservation is one of the most pressing challenges facing Libraries and Archives today. As more and more of our contemporary Cultural Heritage is created in digital format, or 'born digital', and as our fragile historical record is in danger of being erased online, it is incumbent on Memory Institutions to develop systems and processes to actively collect and preserve born digital records. The internet is one example of ephemeral digital content that changes daily and is an important record of modern life. Other examples are digital photography collections, writer's archives or political papers which include emails and digital drafts of documents, and social media where public and political discourse takes place on proprietary communication platforms (often amidst targeted misinformation). It is estimated that over 400 million terabytes of data are created each day. Libraries and Archives must work to appraise, collect, preserve and provide access to our fragile digital cultural heritage before it is lost. UCD Library is working to enhance our capacity to secure the long-term preservation and access to a wide range of digital content by deploying digital preservation technologies and infrastructure and developing associated policies and practices.*

### Recognition and Awards

Receiving the UCD Alumni Award in Research, Innovation, and Impact in 2020 is a significant honour. How has this recognition influenced your professional journey?

*I felt very honoured to be nominated in 2020 by the then Vice-President for Research, Innovation and Impact (VPRII), Professor Orla Feely, for the UCD Alumni Award in Research, Innovation, and Impact. It was such a meaningful recognition for the interdisciplinary work I have carried out across multiple roles and disciplines, particularly digital and cultural – and from the University where I spent so many happy years studying and researching. I was thrilled to be named among such esteemed awardees, it's a wonderful celebration of the diverse achievements of UCD alumni, and a highpoint of my career.*

**The creation of MoLI was one of the most exciting initiatives I was fortunate to work on in the National Library. We were approached by UCD in the concept phase, and it seemed such a natural partnership – two national leaders in literature, research, and cultural heritage, coming together to share Ireland's extraordinary literary heritage with the world – what an opportunity!**



### Advancing Women's Stories

In March 2024, you were appointed Chair of the national advisory committee focused on showcasing women's contributions to Irish history. How will the Committee address the under-representation of women's stories?

*This Governmental Advisory Committee was established by the Minister for Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media to consider and make recommendations to help the Government highlight most effectively the achievements, experiences, and voices of women, in the context of our National Cultural Institutions and the National Collections. The Committee's work to date includes a broad stakeholder consultation, research into international best practice, and studies into options for the dedicated presentation, and how to review or audit the national collections. Importantly, we are taking an inclusive approach with due attention to historically marginalised women, including for example Traveller women, women with disabilities, and LGBTQ+ women. Chairing a Governmental Advisory Committee can be a daunting task, but this Committee benefits from the expertise and experience of an impressive membership and the many stakeholders we have consulted, and I am confident that we will deliver actionable recommendations to the Government later this year.*

### Immediate Priorities

With a deep understanding of both traditional and digital library services, what immediate priorities have you identified to address the evolving needs of UCD's community?

*My top priority is the capital redevelopment of the James Joyce Library, our 50-year old main library building which serves users from all disciplines. We completed the refurbishment of Level 3 in September 2023 and it has been a huge success with students. The Library and UCD Estate Services worked with Reddy Architects to create a contemporary design and to deliver 535 student learning spaces,*



*responding to student feedback and the Students' Union. The project won multiple awards for its design and sustainability approach. We are now working on the capital redevelopment of Level 2, the largest floor in the Library. Our plans include creating an additional 429 quality student study spaces (50% increase); a 20-fold increase in collaborative study spaces and group study rooms; open-access bookstacks for the modern teaching and research print collections; new individual sensory study rooms; a well-being and a multi-faith room; a digital content innovation suite and technology hub. This is going to significantly enhance the student experience and support learning for life in UCD.*

*We are also creating a new Cultural Heritage Centre on Level 1. UCD Library has three world-class Cultural Heritage collections, namely UCD Library Special Collections, UCD Archives and the National Folklore Collection (NFC). Between them, they contain rare and unique books dating back to the earliest days of printing; unique digital collections such as the Irish Poetry Reading Archive; the archives of the University; private, institutional and sports archives that tell the stories of the modern Irish state right up to the present day; and, in the NFC, a collection of audio recordings, photographs, artworks and hand written manuscripts that capture the voices of the Irish people. In fact the NFC is one of only two Irish entries inscribed on the UNESCO Memory of the World Register (along with the Book of Kells). The new purpose-built*

*Cultural Heritage Centre on Level 1 will deliver a range of facilities for research, teaching and public engagement including secure and environmentally controlled storage, conservation and digitisation labs, teaching and research facilities, and in time a destination exhibition space.*

### Future of Academic Libraries

Looking ahead, what steps will you take to position UCD Library at the forefront of the evolution of academic libraries?

*We're continually evolving our Research and Learning services to address the current and future needs of our users. Recently we've been breaking new boundaries for academic libraries in Ireland, developing critical digital literacy resources that will equip students with the skills they need to succeed in university and the workplace, and establishing a Community of Practice with the UCD Earth Institute to provide a forum for UCD staff, researchers and students to engage with Citizen Science. We are continually finding ways to design new services and facilities across our five library sites, including a range of spaces for users with sensory needs, a multi-faith room, a research exhibition wall and the UCD Bike Library. Partnering with the Students' Union, UCD Access and Lifelong Learning, and colleagues across faculty and the professional and support units in UCD has opened up many new opportunities.*

*We are also embarking on a major digital transformation programme to improve services and enhance the user experience for UCD staff and students. We are currently conducting a discovery project to understand the needs of the UCD community as we begin planning the implementation of a new platform to improve searching and access to books, journals, and electronic resources, and a new Archival Management System to enhance discovery and access to the Library's unique and distinct Cultural Heritage material. We are also working on the next generation of the UCD Digital Library, an access platform for digitised and born-digital*

*material from UCD Library's Cultural Heritage collections, including historical materials, maps, photographs, and letters.*

*Finally, our new Cultural Heritage Centre will help us achieve our ambitions to steward and share our extraordinary and world-class heritage collections for research, teaching and for all visitors to UCD, a university of Irish roots and global reach.*

### And finally...

How do you relax after a busy day leading the Library team?

*Would it be a surprise if I said reading? Recently I enjoyed reading The Wren, The Wren by Anne Enright, Prophet Song by Paul Lynch, and Intermezzo by Sally Rooney. I also love spending time with friends and family, and I adore my two rescue cats, Coffee and Ellie.*

**My top priority is the capital redevelopment of the James Joyce Library, our 50-year old main library building which serves users from all disciplines.**

**We completed the refurbishment of Level 3 in September 2023 and it has been a huge success with students.**





Professor Patrick Guiry, President, RIA; Prof Anne Fuchs, Director of Humanities Institute of Ireland (HII); Prof Seamus Martin, TCD and Colin Hunt, CEO of AIB.

## RIA Gold Medal in the Humanities

**The Royal Irish Academy has presented the 2025 RIA Gold Medal in the Humanities to Professor Anne Fuchs, Professor of German and Director of UCD Humanities Institute.**

Professor Fuchs has been awarded for her exceptional scholarship in the areas of German literature, culture and critical theory, contributing to the global understanding of modern European thought. Her ground-breaking scholarship on the transformation of German cultural memory, time and temporality from the modern period to the present day, and on modernist and contemporary literature, has led to new lines of research in German Studies and interdisciplinary research areas.

The RIA Gold Medal is one of Ireland's highest academic honours and two Gold Medals are awarded annually to recognise and foster excellence in research which advances the public good, both nationally and internationally. This esteemed recognition celebrates outstanding contributions to science, research and scholarship.

Professor Seamus Martin, a professor of Microbiology at Trinity College Dublin, was presented with the 2025 RIA Gold

Medal in the Life and Medical Sciences for his pioneering research in molecular biology, particularly his groundbreaking work on apoptosis and cancer biology. The distinguished prizes were presented at a ceremony in the Royal Irish Academy with members of the Irish higher education system, and AIB who is sponsor of the 2025 RIA Gold Medals.

President of the Royal Irish Academy and Professor of Synthetic Organic Chemistry at UCD, Professor Patrick Guiry said: "The 2025 awards are a testament to the dedication, passion and intellectual contributions to their disciplines demonstrated by Professor Fuchs and Professor Martin. Their research continues to shape the future of their respective fields, and it is an honour to recognise them with these prestigious awards".

Prior to her current role at UCD, Professor Fuchs held the Chair of German at University of Warwick and University of St Andrews, and a personal Chair in German at UCD. As Director of UCD Humanities Institute she has catalysed numerous transdisciplinary research projects, supporting early career researchers, while also collaborating with other humanities institutes across Ireland, the UK, and the world.

## UCD 49th in the world and No 1 in Ireland for sustainability in QS ranking

**The latest QS World University Rankings for Sustainability, published in December 2024, sees UCD ranked 49th overall, a rise of one place from 50 in 2024. UCD remains ranked number one in Ireland for the second consecutive year and ranks 28th in Europe among the 556 European institutions featured.**

"I'm delighted that UCD has held its position in the top 50 worldwide and its number one spot in Ireland," said Professor Tasman Crowe, UCD Vice-President for Sustainability. "This ranking is the result of the commitment, vision and hard work of many academics, professional staff and students in UCD. It provides a strong foundation for further developing our contributions to sustainability through the integration of our research, education and operational activities and through our wider engagement and partnership."

The QS methodology for the 2025 rankings is based on university performance across three assessment categories, with each subdivided into weighted indicators: Environmental Impact, Social Impact and Governance.

UCD's strongest performance was in the Social Impact, with Equality the highest ranked indicator at 10th globally. Other ranked indicators in the top 100 worldwide, included Environmental Research (69) and Health & Wellbeing (65).

To be included in the QS Sustainability 2025 Report institutions must be eligible for QS World University Rankings, QS Rankings by Region or QS Rankings by Subject.

Topping the 2025 rankings is the University of Toronto, which for a second time has been crowned the world's most sustainable university.

UCD has long been a prominent contributor to sustainability, and played a direct role in the development of the UN Sustainable Development Goals, which span climate change, biodiversity, inequality, poverty and a range of other environmental, social, economic and governance challenges, through the advocacy of Professor Patrick Paul Walsh, UCD School of Politics and International Relations, who was involved in their negotiations a decade ago.



# The University awards Honorary Doctorates and Ulysses Medals



## Colm Bairéad and Cleona Ní Chruaí - Honorary Degree of Doctor of Arts

Irish filmmakers Colm Bairéad and Cleona Ní Chruaí were awarded honorary degrees in recognition of their exceptional achievements in Irish language filmmaking, particularly for their global success with *An Cailín Ciúin* (The Quiet Girl). Released in 2022, the film won seven Irish Film & Television Academy Awards, including Best Film, Best Director and Best Actress for debutante Catherine Clinch. Notably, it became the first Irish film to be nominated for an Academy Award in the Best International Feature Film category.

Professor Orla Feely, UCD President, expressed pride in recognising individuals like Colm and Cleona, whose accomplishments inspire students and positively impact society. Dr Aoife Whelan, UCD School of Irish, Celtic Studies and Folklore praised their role as ambassadors for Irish filmmaking and the Irish language, aligning with UCD's mission to share the best of Ireland with the world.



## Missie Collins - Honorary Degree of Doctor of Science

Healthcare activist Missie Collins was awarded an Honorary Degree of Doctor of Science in recognition of her tireless advocacy for the Traveller community and her pivotal contributions to the UCD-led All-Island Traveller Health Study. This honour celebrates Missie Collins' decades-long commitment to addressing health inequalities and ensuring the needs of Travellers are represented at both local and national levels.

As an Irish Traveller, Missie has spent more than thirty years working to improve healthcare access for her community, helping to establish over forty Traveller health projects across Ireland. Her efforts were crucial in the creation of the All-Island Traveller Health Study, a groundbreaking research project that surveyed 40,000 Travellers across the island and provided essential data to inform policy and healthcare practices.



## Orla Guerin - Honorary Degree of Doctor of Arts

Orla Guerin, the award-winning broadcast journalist, was awarded an honorary degree in recognition of her courage and expertise in reporting from conflict zones around the world. A Dublin native, Guerin's career has earned her numerous accolades, including an MBE for Services to Broadcasting in 2005 and repeated Emmy and BAFTA nominations. She became RTÉ's youngest foreign correspondent in the 1990s, covering the collapse of the Soviet Union and the breakup of Yugoslavia, reporting from Sarajevo during the Bosnian siege.

After completing an MA in Film Studies at UCD, Orla joined the BBC as their International Correspondent in the Middle East in 2000. Over the years, she rose to Senior International Correspondent, covering global events in locations such as Kosovo, Moscow, Jerusalem, Johannesburg, Islamabad, and Caracas. Professor Diane Negra, UCD School of English, Drama and Film, praised Guerin for her composed style, commitment to truthful reporting, and her pioneering work for women in television journalism.



## Eugene McCague - Honorary Degree of Doctor of Laws

Eugene McCague, one of Ireland's most eminent lawyers and former Managing Partner and Chairman of Arthur Cox, was awarded an honorary Degree of Doctor of Laws in recognition of his exceptional contributions to law, business and public life in Ireland. A former Chair of the UCD Governing Authority, Eugene played a pivotal role in guiding the University in fulfilling its educational and scholarly mission. His leadership and vision have left a lasting impact on both UCD and the broader Irish academic and legal communities.

Eugene McCague's career has been marked by outstanding achievements in the legal and business sectors, where he has left an indelible mark. His leadership at Arthur Cox helped shape the firm into one of Ireland's leading legal institutions, and his influence extended far beyond his professional work into public life, where he has been a respected advisor and a committed advocate for progress and growth.



## Mairéad McGuinness - Honorary Degree of Doctor of Science

Mairéad McGuinness, former EU Commissioner for Financial Stability, Financial Services, and Capital Markets, was awarded an honorary Degree of Doctor of Science in recognition of her outstanding contributions to both the Agri-Food sector and European Union politics.

Before entering European politics, Mairéad was a well-known figure in Ireland as a journalist, broadcaster, and commentator. She began her career at RTÉ as a radio producer after graduating from UCD with a degree in Agricultural Economics, later working as a researcher on the 'Late Late Show' with Gay Byrne.

In 2020, Mairéad was appointed EU Commissioner for Financial Services, Financial Stability, and the Capital Markets Union by Commission President Ursula von der Leyen. Her appointment, endorsed by all major political groupings in the European Parliament, attests to her remarkable standing as a formidable European politician. As Commissioner, Mairéad has played a crucial role in overseeing the EU's financial sector, leading the EU's sustainable finance strategy, and working to enhance the Capital Markets Union to improve financial access for small and medium-sized enterprises across Europe.



# The University awards Honorary Doctorates and Ulysses Medals



## Angela Moore - Honorary Degree of Doctor of Economic Science

Angela Moore, an accomplished business leader, was awarded the honorary Degree of Doctor of Economic Science in recognition of her outstanding contributions to business, education and societal development. A founding donor of the UCD Moore Centre for Business at the UCD Quinn School, she is the Managing Partner of Ravensdale Capital, a venture investment fund supporting start-ups in consumer data analytics and decision sciences. She is also Managing Director of Macha Capital Partners, a private investment fund with a particular focus on women-led initiatives in Ireland.

Professor Anthony Brabazon, Dean of UCD College of Business, praised Angela's enduring commitment to societal development during the reading of her citation. "A common strand running through Angela's engagements is her selfless focus on societal development and a commitment to the building of a better world," he said. "Amongst the themes closest to Angela's heart are the encouragement and support of budding entrepreneurs, and her deep belief in the power of education to transform understanding, perspective, opportunity, and ultimately, society."



## Marie O'Connor - Honorary Degree of Doctor of Laws

Marie O'Connor was awarded an honorary Doctor of Laws in recognition of her trailblazing career and exceptional leadership. A former Chair of UCD Governing Authority, she made history as the first woman appointed to the role in UCD's 165-year history. During her tenure, Marie navigated a challenging period for the university, enhancing transparency and promoting gender equality in governance. She also played a key role in making both the University Management Team and Academic Council gender-balanced for the first time.

Marie broke barriers early, becoming the first female student in the Commerce programme at Rathmines College. She went on to make history again as the first female partner at Price Waterhouse Cooper (now PwC) in Ireland. Her career at PwC showcased her exceptional drive, creativity, and people skills, contributing significantly to gender equality and higher education leadership. Marie was also instrumental in supporting US investment in Ireland, helping to drive the country's economic transformation. Recognised as an outstanding leader, she played a pivotal role in modernising both the Irish economy and society.



## Professor Kate Raworth - Honorary Degree of Doctor of Economic Science

Ecological economist Professor Kate Raworth was awarded the Honorary Degree of Doctor of Economic Science, in recognition of her groundbreaking work on balancing human needs with planetary wellbeing. The award was presented in front of UCD's first graduating class from its new BSc in Sustainability program.

Professor Raworth is best known for her development of the Doughnut Economic model, a revolutionary approach that redefines economic growth by aiming to balance the needs of people with the health of the planet. This model challenges traditional economic thinking and envisions an economy that respects ecological limits while ensuring that no one falls short of life's essentials. Her work has gained international recognition, influencing leaders at the UN General Assembly and Pope Francis, and inspiring global conversations about sustainability.



## Anthony Smurfit - Honorary Degree of Doctor of Science

Anthony Smurfit, President and Group CEO of Smurfit Westrock, was conferred with an honorary Degree of Doctor of Science in recognition of his distinguished career at the highest level of global business. With a career spanning over three decades, Anthony's leadership has been instrumental in shaping the global paper and packaging industry.

Anthony joined the Jefferson Smurfit Group in 1986, where he served in several key roles across Europe and the United States. Under his leadership, the company grew into a global leader in sustainable packaging, culminating in the successful merger with US packaging company Westrock earlier this year, forming Smurfit Westrock. In addition to his impressive business achievements, Anthony has contributed significantly to both business and society in Ireland and globally, serving on numerous boards and remaining actively involved with UCD. He generously shares his time with students and speaks at university events, offering insights drawn from his vast experience.



## Clare Tuffy - Honorary Degree of Doctor of Science

Clare Tuffy, a pioneering figure in heritage communication, was awarded a Doctor of Science for her groundbreaking work at Brú na Bóinne World Heritage site. A Mayo native, she transformed the site's visitor centre from a traditional tourist facility into a hub that supports local culture and values, creating a strong relationship between the site and its surrounding community.

Her innovative approach to visitor services and outreach has not only impacted Brú na Bóinne but also influenced the management of cultural sites globally. Dr Claire Cave of UCD School of Archaeology noted Clare's ability to engage diverse stakeholders, while her dedication to the UCD School of Archaeology and her role in sharing the significance of Newgrange and the Brú na Bóinne landscape earned her widespread recognition.



## Ulysses Medals

Inaugurated in 2005, as part of the University's 150th anniversary celebrations, to highlight the 'creative brilliance' of its most famous alumnus, James Joyce, the Ulysses Medal is the highest honour that the University can bestow. Previous recipients include the Godfather of AI, Professor Geoffrey Hinton (2024); Booker Prizewinning Canadian novelist, Margaret Atwood (2018); and world leading philosopher and social theorist, Professor Jürgen Habermas (2010).



### Judge Síofra O'Leary

Judge Síofra O'Leary, the first female President of the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR), and the first Irish person to serve in the role, has been awarded the UCD Ulysses Medal.

"This award recognises Judge Síofra O'Leary's remarkable contribution to human rights law over the course of an illustrious career as a legal scholar, judge, and judicial statesperson," said UCD President Professor Orla Feely. "As the first Irish person, and first woman, to serve as president of the European Court of Human Rights, Síofra is a powerful role model for our students. As a graduate of UCD, the presentation of a Ulysses Medal

to Síofra also acts as a kind of homecoming. We are so very proud to be able to recognise Síofra with our highest honour".

A strong voice for human rights, Judge O'Leary has been involved in many noteworthy judgments include a famous dissent in Ireland v UK (2018), where the ECHR refused to revise its 1978 ruling on whether the so-called 'five techniques' of interrogation used by British security forces' during the conflict in Northern Ireland amounted to torture under Article 3 ECHR. More typically, she led the Court in progressive directions, notably in its ground-breaking climate justice ruling *Klimaseniorinnen*.



### Dr Dennis Slamon

An American oncologist credited with saving the lives of hundreds of thousands of women worldwide by transforming the treatment of breast cancer, Dr Dennis Slamon was awarded a Ulysses Medal.

In presenting Dr Slamon with the Ulysses Medal, UCD recognises that his pursuit of novel therapies for breast cancer for over 30 years have shaped the field of precision medicine and paved the way for other targeted therapies in oncology.

"Dr Slamon is one of the most inspirational medical research scientists at work today," said UCD President Professor Orla Feely. "His

pioneering research resulted in the groundbreaking development of the breast cancer drug Herceptin which has proven to be a lifesaving therapy for women with HER2-positive breast cancer. This therapy has saved the lives of hundreds of thousands of breast cancer patients worldwide, including an estimated 1,000 women in Ireland."

The breast cancer drug Herceptin developed from the work of Dr Salmon is the first gene-based drug approved by the US Food and Drug Administration to fight cancer. It is now a cornerstone in the treatment of HER2-positive breast cancer.





Pictured, Assist Prof Paul Brooks, UCD School of Biology and Environmental Science; Seán Leake, offshore and EIA consents manager, Codling Wind Park; and Lis Royle, consents manager, Codling Wind Park.

## ■ Biodiversity project could restore native oyster reefs to Dublin Bay

**UCD has partnered with Codling Wind Park, Ireland's largest planned offshore wind project, to explore the restoration of native oyster reefs and seagrass beds in Dublin Bay. This initiative aims to employ nature-based solutions (NbS) to protect and enhance biodiversity at selected sites along the Irish coast.**

Assistant Professor Paul Brooks, UCD School of Biology and Environmental Science, highlighted the multifaceted benefits of NbS, stating that they utilise the inherent power of nature to provide sustainable solutions to complex problems. The project will focus on eco-engineering approaches to restore oyster reefs and seagrass beds, promoting biodiversity, mitigating climate change, enhancing ecosystem services, and fostering resilience against environmental changes.

Scott Sutherland, Project Director of Codling Wind Park, emphasised the company's commitment to developing the project in a manner that protects and enhances biodiversity. He noted that Codling Wind Park will supply over a quarter of Ireland's 2030 offshore wind target and displace up to 1.7 million tonnes of carbon, contributing significantly to the country's national climate targets.

This collaboration represents a significant step toward integrating renewable energy development with ecological restoration, aiming to create sustainable and resilient marine ecosystems in Dublin Bay. If approved, Codling Wind Park will be located approximately 13 to 22 kilometres off the Wicklow coast, between Greystones and Wicklow Town, and it will generate 1,300 megawatts (MW) of clean electricity, enough to power over one million homes.



Pictured are (l-r): Rachel Randall, Ola Majekodunmi, Jacob Ellis, Judith Musker Turner, Dr Riona Nic Congáil, Rufus Musafa and Prof Regina Ní Chollatáin.

## ■ St Patrick and St David's Dialogue event

**UCD College of Arts and Humanities and the Office of the Vice-President for Strategy and External Engagement, in conjunction with the Welsh Government Office in Dublin, hosted the St Patrick and St David's Dialogue event in January.**

The event celebrated the connections between Ireland and Wales on the topics of our languages, creativity, cultural wellbeing, future generations and climate.

Professor Regina Ní Chollatáin, Principal, UCD College of Arts and Humanities, and Rachel Randall, External Relations and Trade Manager in the Welsh Government Office in Dublin, opened proceedings and introduced the panel.

Dr Riona Nic Congáil, UCD School of Irish, Celtic Studies and Folklore, chaired the discussion between panellists Judith Musker Turner, Arts Council of Wales; Jacob Ellis, Office of the Future Generations Commissioner for Wales; and Ola Majekodunmi, presenter, writer, producer and Gaeilgeoir. To open proceedings, Ola treated the audience to a performance of her own bilingual poem *Love Letter to the City*.

The full house at the Museum of Literature Ireland was treated to a very interesting discussion on the criticality of the need to strengthen and celebrate our connections with Wales. The audience engaged with the Q&A afterwards.

Finally, poet and lyricist, Rufus Mufasa rounded up the discussions with a vibrant resumé of proceedings, wonderfully trilingual and humorous!



# CREATING A BETTER LIFE FOR FARM ANIMALS



Prof Alison Hanlon



Prof Siobhan Mullan

Animal welfare is moving up the agenda. In September 2024, following a petition of over 300,000 European Union citizens, the first-ever EU Commissioner for Animal Welfare was appointed. Now, Care4Dairy, a project funded by the European Commission (EC) is helping dairy farmers across the EU to provide the best possible care for their animals.





### Creating a Better Life for Farm Animals

Animal welfare is moving up the agenda. In September 2024, following a petition of over 300,000 European Union citizens, the first-ever EU Commissioner for Animal Welfare was appointed.

Now, Care4Dairy, a project funded by the European Commission (EC) is helping dairy farmers across the EU to provide the best possible care for their animals.

Care4Dairy involved a consortium of seven research partners from Sweden, France, Italy, Greece and Ireland, including Professor Alison Hanlon and Professor Siobhan Mullan, both UCD School of Veterinary Medicine. Hanlon is a partner of the European Union Reference Centre for Animal Welfare (EURCAW) *Ruminants & Equines* who led the Care4Dairy consortium.

"I've been teaching animal welfare for almost 30 years, with a research focus on farm animal welfare as well as veterinary ethics and companion animal welfare," says Hanlon. "Care4Dairy was funded by the EC to develop best practices for dairy calves, heifers (female cows that have not had a calf), cows and end-of-career animals.

"While there is EU legislation on the welfare of calves and a general directive on farm animal welfare, there's a lack of EU legislation or any specific directives on dairy cattle. We wanted to ensure that there were standardised recommendations for all 27 EU member states."

At the start of her career, Mullan had worked as a vet in mixed practice and, later, for companion animals. She gradually transitioned

to pure research, with a focus on welfare assessments for practical use, especially in large-scale settings like farms.

"I have a long-standing interest in veterinary ethics," she says. "When I came to UCD four years ago, I became part of the consortium to develop best practice guidelines for dairy care. I was active in developing science-based recommendations for the project.

"This was not a typical academic research

project, in that the main focus was not to generate new knowledge. Instead, it was about gathering the best scientific evidence and farmer guidance and distilling it into a clear set of welfare recommendations for dissemination. To do this, we consulted widely with farmers and looked at existing practices across member states, using these to generate new recommendations. Once these were formulated and themed into factsheets, we put them back to stakeholders'

representatives across the EU for feedback," Mullan says.

Mullan explains that there were differing views among stakeholders, who included academic partners, farming organisations, including Teagasc, Ireland's agriculture and food development authority, and external advisors and consultants.

"We got varied feedback," Mullan says. "This was because some countries have legislation that goes further than EU expectations, whilst others felt some elements of the guidelines would require changes to standard practice in their country. For instance, pasture access for cows is the accepted norm in Ireland, but this isn't the case in all EU countries, which may be guided by differing climate and outdoor conditions."

With these differing standards and expectations in mind, Hanlon and Mullan had to navigate a tightrope: how to ensure the best standards of care for dairy cattle without watering down the guidance or making it impractical for farmers.

"The guides have been structured on two levels, good practice and best practice," Mullan says.

"This is across four domains: feeding, health, environment and behaviour. Within those, good practice approximated to, either, legislative requirements at EU level or standard practice on areas that are not specifically legislated for, such as health protection.

"There were some exceptions, particularly where existing legislation is behind understood







science in areas such as the group housing and feeding rates of calves, and the tethering of cows. We know that, while tethering of cows is still used, it is not good practice; despite this, it is a common winter practice in some countries.

"Meanwhile, many farms already have best practice in some areas of dairy animal care, but others are not widely adopted or are variably practiced across EU member states. These include the cow-calf contact system, where the calf remains with its mother for some period of time instead of being abruptly separated, often within 24 hours of birth. There are different approaches here, including leaving the calf with its mother and milking the cow just once a day, or using one cow as a wet-nurse to feed a number of calves."

Separating cows and their calves at an early stage regularly arises as an animal welfare concern of European citizens. This cuts to the heart of the Care4Dairy consortium's work: improving animal welfare standards without

making life difficult for dairy farmers. But can this circle be squared?

"Evidence shows that, where animals are healthy and have lower stress, they become more productive," says Mullan. "They either produce more milk or become more profitable because they require fewer medicines and treatments, for all sorts of conditions. That said, not all changes are necessarily associated with better productivity or lower costs: they are just reflective of public concern for animal welfare."

In Ireland, for instance, **Eurobarometer surveys** show that 96% of people believe it is either very or somewhat important to protect the welfare of farmed animals to ensure that they have decent living conditions, which is above the EU average of 91%.

"Although Care4Dairy formally ended in May 2024, its recommendations continue to impact the dairy sector, with EURCAW taking over to ensure longevity," says Hanlon. "If and when EU legislation changes, the factsheets can then be

updated. Classically, a project finishes when the funding ends, but we need to track the impact, outcomes and effect of Care4Dairy.

"The factsheets have been written in seven different European languages, while the consortium has also produced podcasts, infographics, newsletters and videos, as well as holding a number of roadshows. There's also an app, Care4Dairy, available on Apple and Android.

"The app was designed to be engaging, with a self-assessment section where farmers can compare their own experience with Care4Dairy's best practice," says Hanlon.

"In Ireland, UCD Lyons Farm in Co Kildare is already doing a comprehensive self-audit of its operations. It also shows success stories where farmers, advisers and vets can upload best practices that they have implemented. It's really important that these fact sheets are living documents and remain relevant."

For more information, see [Care4Dairy.eu](https://www.Care4Dairy.eu)

**Best practice farms have healthy and vigorous calves by providing tailor-made, balanced nutrition, in an enriched environment that supports natural behaviours, and by using management strategies that mitigate stress experienced during weaning.**

**Best practice farms provide bespoke, clean, comfortable indoor and outdoor environments that support the calves' social and mental development as well as their growth. Such farms are more likely to have healthy and vigorous calves expressing a range of positive natural behaviours.**

**Best practice farms promote the best possible health and pain-free lives for their calves by identifying risks, providing prophylactic health care management and ensuring responsive intervention and pain management protocols are used.**

**Best practice farms provide an enriched indoor and outdoor environment with kind, animal-centred human-animal interactions. Such farms are more likely to have confident and social calves who express a range of positive natural behaviours.**

***Professor Alison Hanlon and Professor Siobhan Mullan were in conversation with Peter McGuire (BA 2002, MLitt 2007), a freelance journalist and regular contributor to The Irish Times and to Noteworthy, the investigations unit at TheJournal.ie.***





UCD Alumni Awardees 2024 (l-r) Aengus Kelly (Business Award), Dr Martin von Hildebrand (Social Sciences Award), Dr Clíodhna Lyons (Engineering and Architecture Award), Dr Patrick Boland (Health and Agricultural Sciences Award), Dr Emma Donoghue (Arts and Humanities Award), Paul Gillen (Science Award), Ciara Mageean (Sport Award), John O'Donnell SC (Law Award) and Dr Patricia Scanlon (Research, Innovation and Impact Award).

## UCD Alumni Awards: Celebrating Excellence

**The UCD alumni network is filled with people making a difference at all levels across business, industry, society and culture in Ireland and all around the world.**

In October 2024, Professor Orla Feely, UCD President hosted the UCD Alumni Awards. It is one of the most important nights in the UCD calendar when we celebrate the accomplishments of our most notable alumni, who showcase the breadth and depth of our academic programmes and university values. The awardees are nominated by peers and faculty from across UCD and reflect the very best of ambition, application and achievement having excelled in a range of fields from the Arts to Health, from Business to Agriculture, from Sport to Engineering, from Academic Research to the Arts, and from Social Science to Law.

The nine distinguished awardees who were recognised with Alumni Awards at the gala dinner in UCD O'Reilly Hall were: Dr Emma Donoghue, award-winning novelist, screenwriter and playwright (Arts and Humanities); Aengus Kelly Executive Director and CEO AerCap (Business); Dr Patrick Boland, world-leading orthopaedic surgeon (Health and Agricultural Science); John O'Donnell SC, barrister and award-winning poet and author (Law); Dr Clíodhna Lyons, Innovator and VP for Product and Service Planning Nissan (Engineering and Architecture); Dr Patricia Scanlon, AI Pioneer (Research, Innovation and Impact); Paul Gillen, Global Leader in the fight against Cyber Crime (Science); Dr Martin von Hildebrand, Ethnologist and Anthropologist (Social Sciences); and Ciara Mageean, Irish Middle-Distance Runner and Olympic medallist (Sport).



Pictured at the launch are (l-r) Kathy O'Reilly, Dr Adamaria Perrotta, Prof Oonagh Breen, Benedetta Lobina, Ph.D, teaching assistant and Niamh Byrne.

## Community Engaged Learning Impact Case Studies

**UCD in the Community launched a collection of Community Engaged Learning Impact Case Studies spanning six different modules and capturing evidence of some of the excellent community-engaged learning (CEL) initiatives happening in UCD. The celebratory event brought together UCD colleagues and students October.**

Niamh Byrne, UCD in the Community, welcomed everyone to the launch emphasising the pivotal role that UCD plays within the wider community and the importance of the University going beyond the campus walls to enrich students and the surrounding community educationally, socially and economically.

The audience heard from two inspirational speakers whose modules featured in the case studies:

- Kathleen O'Reilly, UCD College of Business, presented her Consulting with NGOs Module for undergrads. Kathy spoke about the importance in providing students with the opportunity to "contribute to the local community while learning real business consulting skills", both inside and outside the classroom.
- Professor Oonagh Breen, UCD Sutherland School of Law runs the NGO, Law and Social Change Module and spoke passionately about being able to take the benefits of higher education and apply them in the real world to

the benefit of all. Professor Breen spoke about how the module allows students to give back, share knowledge of charity law and support deserving NGOs "with whom we are privileged to partner".

To conclude the event, Niamh Byrne and Dr Adamaria Perrotta, UCD School of Mathematics and Statistics, thanked UCD Global for providing the funding to develop the case studies. Attendees were encouraged to introduce community engagement into their work, and to share the case studies with colleagues and community organisations hoping to get involved.

UCD strives to play an active and positive role within our communities, but often the people and success stories around community engagement activities across the University are unseen and unrecorded. UCD in the Community recognises the need to shine a light on these activities while, at the same time, supporting the establishment of new and diverse community initiatives.





Annemarie Ní Churreáin, UCD's Writer in Residence for 2025.

## UCD Writer in Residence 2025

**Poet Annemarie Ní Churreáin has been appointed as UCD's Writer in Residence for 2025, as announced by the Arts Council. Hailing from the Donegal Gaeltacht, she has published three books: *Bloodroot* (2017), *Town* (2018), and *The Poison Glen* (2021). She also serves as the Poetry Editor at *The Stinging Fly* magazine.**

In 2016, Annemarie received the Arts Council's Next Generation Artist Award and was a co-recipient of its inaugural Markievicz Award in 2019. Expressing her enthusiasm for the residency, she stated, "As a poet, I'm attracted to the culture of care enshrined into literature and to writing as an act of discovery. UCD offers a vibrant space to continue my discoveries through language and to be of service to others who are on that same journey. I'm looking forward to working alongside some of the most talented staff, students and researchers in the country".

She is among nine new Arts Council artists in residence announced across Irish universities for 2025, with each

residency valued at €30,000. She will have access to a dedicated workspace on UCD's campus. The residencies span various disciplines, including literature, film and traditional arts. They join six artists and organisations previously awarded residencies in higher education institutes for the 2024-2025 academic year, focusing on children and young people's arts.

Maureen Kennelly, Director of the Arts Council, highlighted the significance of these programs, stating: "The Artist in Residence programmes help embed creativity in education, providing critical support to artists as they advance their practice, while also creating vibrant opportunities for students and staff to engage directly with professional artistic expression. They make for a profound exchange that inspires and uplifts both the artistic and academic communities".

The previous UCD Writer in Residence was author Colin Barrett, whose debut novel *Wild Houses* was longlisted for the 2024 Booker Prize. Barrett is a graduate of UCD's MA in Creative Writing.



Assoc Prof Carla Moran awarded the 2024 American Thyroid Association Van Meter Award.

## 2024 American Thyroid Association Van Meter Award

**Associate Professor Carla Moran, UCD School of Medicine, was awarded the 2024 American Thyroid Association Van Meter Award. The Van Meter Award Lecture, established in 1930, recognises outstanding contributions to research on the thyroid gland or related subjects. The award is given each year to an investigator who is not older than the age of 45 in the year of the award. The Van Meter award winner is kept secret until the time of the award lecture during the annual meeting.**

Dr Moran is Consultant Endocrinologist and Associate Professor at UCD, the Beacon Hospital and St Vincent's University Hospital. In her presentation entitled

"Advances in diagnosis, phenotyping and management of Resistance to Thyroid Hormone", she outlined her contributions to the understanding of discordant thyroid function

testing, identification of novel phenotypes or forms of resistance to thyroid hormone, and her approach to management of these rare conditions.

Dr Moran has a particular interest in thyroidology, having completed a thyroid fellowship and PhD in Cambridge. She has established a referral service for rare thyroid disease in Dublin and continues to perform research. She has published over 70 peer reviewed papers,

book chapters and reviews, with a current H-index of 26. Dr Moran regularly contributes to international conferences as an invited speaker, is an invited member of UK & European guideline development committees for thyroid disease and has recently been elected to serve on the Executive Committee of the European Thyroid Association. This is the first time an investigator from Ireland has won this prestigious award.





## ■ Elevating the Campus Food Experience: One Bite at a Time....

**Over the last twelve months, the University has been working on the ambitious initiative to revolutionise the food-on-campus experience, partnering with our catering partners to deliver affordability, quality and diversity. Inspired by a university-wide survey of faculty, staff and students, these changes are a direct response to our Community's feedback, and the results are already making a difference on food across campus.**

Affordability is a cornerstone of this effort, especially in today's economic climate. UCD's campus food partners have introduced set price points of €5, €7 and €9 at the Main Restaurant and Pi, alongside a 15% price reduction across all retail units. Food trucks, now a permanent fixture, offer meals at 30% below standard retail rates, and even filter coffee and tea has dropped to a budget-friendly €1.50. These measures ensure that faculty, staff and students can enjoy high-quality dining without breaking the bank.

Quality and variety go hand in hand with this initiative. Everyone can enjoy authentic Chinese cuisine at the Confucius Institute restaurant, grabbing a Mexican burrito or Korean food

from The Walkway's new food hub, or indulging in freshly made Italian pasta and Base Pizza made on site every day at the Main Restaurant's revamped eatery. From Bubble tea to Moroccan rice bowls at Pi, sushi to premium pastries, our campus food partners are working to deliver food options that cater to every taste, including more vegetarian and plant-based options.

Sustainability is another key focus, aligning with UCD's ethos. Our partners are sourcing ingredients locally through the Leinster Larder, earning a 3-star SRA sustainability award. All packaging is now 100% compostable, and the Positive Carbon AI system is driving us toward zero food waste by 2030 while the 2GoCup & Bowl scheme aims to eliminate disposable cups by 2027.

This initiative isn't just about food, it's about community. New social spaces, like the refurbished Coffee Dock in the Veterinary Building with its microwaves and cozy seating or more outside seating, invite our community to connect over meals and fuel camaraderie over great food. For more details, reach out to Pia Polotto, UCD's Catering Campus Manager, at Pia.Polotto@ucd.ie.



Pictured (l-r) are: Dr Niamh Power, ESAI; Prof Tasman Crowe; Andy Fanning, EPA; Dr Rajat Nag, Environ Co-Convenor; Prof Paula Bourke, Head of UCD School Biosystems and Food Engineering; Dr Gerald Barry, Deputy Director, UCD One Health Centre; Dr Junli Xu, Environ Co-Convenor, and Fiona Quinn, Environ Co-Convenor.

## ■ Irish Environmental Researchers' Colloquium

**The UCD School of Biosystems and Food Engineering and the Environmental Sciences Association of Ireland co-hosted the 35th Irish Environmental Researchers' Colloquium (ENVIRON 2025) in UCD on 10-12 March. The ENVIRON colloquium is the largest gathering of environmental researchers in Ireland, and at this year's event, over 57 posters and 88 oral presentations were delivered. The event continues to offer a valuable platform for researchers at different stages of their careers to present their findings to a wide audience drawn from academia, government bodies, industry and the public.**

Professor Tasman Crowe, UCD Vice-President for Sustainability and Dr Gerald Barry, Deputy Director of UCD's One Health Centre welcomed delegates. The theme for the 35th colloquium was 'One Health Solution for a Sustainable Future' and it connects to most of the 17 UN Sustainable Development Goals such as Zero Hunger, Good Health and Well-being, Clean Water and Sanitation, Affordable and Clean Energy, Industry, Innovation, and Infrastructure, Responsible Consumption and

Production, Climate Action, Life Below Water, and Life on Land. ENVIRON 2025 aimed to reflect how research in different areas could collaborate to create solutions for a healthy and sustainable nature and environment for the well-being of all living organisms in this world.

The conference included a dynamic mix of workshops, poster presentations, oral presentations and keynote addresses. The conference also wished to engage the general public and contribute to the wider discussion on sustainability with a public panel discussion on 'Your Sustainable Shopping list- how can you engage in more environmentally conscious shopping'.

A highlight of the conference was the Student Prizegiving, with UCD Students receiving awards including Fangting Bai who was awarded Best Wastes and Resources Management Presentation, Ultan O'Donnell who was awarded Best Natural History Presentation, Raphaela Ferreira who was awarded Best Analytical Chemistry Poster and Sarah Nasr who was awarded Best Overall Oral Presentation.



# Smoking Cessation



Prof Patricia Fitzpatrick

## Giving up Smoking for Cancer Patients

UCD Today spoke to Professor Patricia Fitzpatrick, UCD School of Public Health, Physiotherapy and Sports Science, who was awarded the Engaged Research Impact prize at this year's UCD Research Impact Competition. This award was presented to the runner-up whose case study most strongly demonstrated meaningful collaboration with the public and stakeholders. Her research project showed impressive evidence of patient engagement, which led to improved treatment outcomes and positive effects on patients' health.



# Smoking Cessation

**Giving up smoking is difficult at the best of times - so how can medical professionals help cancer patients to quit when they're going through the worst of times?**

For Professor Patricia Fitzpatrick, Full Professor and Associate Dean for Public Health at UCD, and a Consultant in Preventative Medicine at St Vincent's University Hospital, this dilemma was at the heart of a major research project for her and colleagues. "It came about after the Irish Cancer Society noted, anecdotally, that cancer patients are not being offered support to quit," Fitzpatrick says. "The Irish Cancer Society wanted to look at the feasibility of smoking cessation for patients with cancer and they put out a call for a research group to undertake this research for them. I put together a core team to investigate with colleagues from the UCD School of Public Health, Physiotherapy and Sports Science; Associate Prof Kate Frazer and Dr Patricia Fox, UCD School of Nursing, Midwifery and Health Systems; Professor Amanda McCann, UCD School of Medicine; and Dr Ailsa Lyons, St Vincent's University Hospital; alongside hospital collaborators." Several of the team had worked in the areas of cancer prevention and smoking cessation, including running a smoking cessation service at St Vincent's University Hospital, as well as working with patients and the public on preventative medicine, for a number of years.

**Of course, cancer diagnosis and treatment can be traumatising, stressful - even existentially terrifying. Cigarettes, however, can be an immediate - albeit temporary - route to reducing stress and anxiety, especially for people who are addicted. Does that make it harder for medical professionals to broach the subject?**

"When there is a lot going on in a person's life, it may be hard for them to give up something that brings them some comfort," says Fitzpatrick. "But we listened to the patients with cancer in our study and, through a number of qualitative interviews, found that they wanted to be asked about their smoking. They wanted to be told why they should give up, and that it wasn't too late to give up. And they wanted doctors and nurses to bring it up with them."

"Not only that: they wanted to be asked repeatedly and consistently. So, while it might not be appropriate to diagnose a patient and then immediately raise smoking cessation, there are plenty of opportunities during treatment for it to be raised. After this, they can be referred to a smoking cessation service. They may not find it easy to stop, but they want help and, over a longer period of time, for the health professionals to follow up with them."

**If a patient is going through the trauma of a cancer diagnosis, and smoking provides them with comfort - even if that comfort is only temporary and is quickly followed by withdrawal symptoms from the toxic chemicals in nicotine - isn't it kinder to delay smoking cessation?**

"There are good reasons to quit immediately," says Fitzpatrick. "We already advise all patients, regardless of the reason for surgery, to give up or at least refrain from smoking before an operation; this is because it helps improve wound healing, as well as reduce the risk of complications. Indeed, one large study showed that, for every week that a person didn't smoke before an operation, there was a 19% reduction in post-operative complications, including infections. On the other hand, people who continue to smoke after a diagnosis are at higher risk of poor wound healing, treatment toxicity and a more likely recurrence of the cancer and a second, primary cancer related to smoking."

Most prominently, smoking is associated with lung cancer but, Fitzpatrick points out, it is also a cause or contributor to head and neck,

lip, oral and throat cancers. Smokers are also at greater risk than the general population for breast, bladder, renal and pancreatic cancers, and it also increases the risk of the human papilloma virus (HPV) being more persistent and leading to cervical cancer, too. The HSE already has a chronic disease prevention initiative called Making Every Contact Count (MECC), under which doctors and nurses are trained to raise issues such as diet, weight and smoking with patients who have these risk factors.

"Our study found that, while doctors and nurses often refer to dietitians and to physiotherapy, they did not regularly refer to smoking cessation," says Fitzpatrick. "In St Vincent's University Hospital, we have the largest preventative health unit of any hospital in Ireland, but other specialist hospitals may have only one staff member working in this area, or occasionally none."

The rapid review conducted as part of this research highlighted that internationally there is a shortage of trained professionals and referral practices for smoking cessations in some hospitals. With all of this in mind, the team reviewed hospital discharge data on patients who smoked; it was, says Fitzpatrick, imperfect information, but it did help them to identify trends, including that while smoking rates have fallen in the general population, they have plateaued or risen for patients with cancer.

Patients and oncology staff were recruited for the qualitative interviews from St Vincent's University Hospital, the Mater Misericordiae University Hospital and St Luke's Radiation

Oncology Network, each of which are specialist cancer hospitals, with St Luke's being the major radiotherapy centre in Ireland. Professor Amanda McCann, the Chair of the Patient Voice in Cancer Research, was part of the team and facilitated a workshop with cancer patients guiding the researchers.

"We had three patient representatives on the team, and they were very helpful and supportive of the research, says Fitzpatrick. "One of them gave up smoking during the project, with the help of the smoking cessation advice service at the Mater. "The best intervention of all is to prevent people from smoking in the first place, so many of the national interventions to prevent smoking are focused on preventing children from starting. But for those who want to quit, intervention by a doctor, nicotine replacement therapy and group support can all help. Of course, some people will relapse, but it's important to acknowledge that and keep trying."

The UCD team presented their work to Tobacco Free Ireland, the Irish Cancer Society and the National Cancer Control Programme (NCCP). Now, new programmes are being rolled out nationally. As a result of their research, the NCCP made smoking cessation for cancer patients a priority in its next National Cancer Strategy. "This has started slowly, starting with University Hospital Waterford," says Fitzpatrick. "We recommended a champion in each hospital who can provide information and support for smoking cessation. The NCCP needs to ensure at least one smoking cessation officer in each hospital. At times, patients with cancer won't be ready to hear about smoking, so it's a question of picking the right time to bring it up and knowing how to refer for specialist support. It's important - as the patients asked - that it isn't just casually mentioned once, but that it is raised persistently when they are seen for oncology treatments."

**Professor Fitzpatrick was in conversation with Peter McGuire (BA 2002, MLitt 2007), a freelance journalist and regular contributor to The Irish Times and to Noteworthy, the investigations unit at TheJournal.ie.**





## UCD Teaching and Learning Awards

**The UCD Teaching and Learning Awards 2023-24 were presented by Professor Colin Scott, Registrar and Deputy President, at a ceremony on 25 February 2025. These awards, the highest honour bestowed by the University for teaching and learning, are an opportunity for the UCD community to recognise colleagues for their outstanding contributions in the pursuit of teaching excellence and the enhancement of student learning.**

Between November 2023 and the end of August 2024, over three thousand nominations were received from students, faculty and staff. The content and volume of their nominations are a testament to the huge achievement of UCD colleagues in creating such a positive impact on so many lives. In their nominations, students praised the awardees for their enthusiasm, professionalism and kindness, their knowledge and passion for their subject areas, and their commitment to student learning and well-being. In particular, they cited the hard work, innovative teaching, and dedicated mentorship demonstrated by the awardees in creating a rewarding UCD student learning experience. Congratulations to all.

Nominees were invited to apply initially at College level. Following a competitive process there were 74 college-level awardees.

There are two award schemes, tiered, with awards at College and



University level, and the university ceremony honoured 15 individuals for their inspirational and transformative impact on their students' learning experience.

**Teaching Excellence Awards recognise individual faculty and staff in teaching roles for sustained commitment to teaching excellence and student learning, and have been awarded to:**

Professor Oonagh Breen, UCD School of Law

Dr Sarah Comyn, UCD School of English, Drama and Film

Professor Eileen Gibney, UCD School of Agriculture and Food Science

Associate Professor Mary Higgins, UCD School of Medicine

Professor Colm McLaughlin, UCD School of Business

Mrs Kathleen O'Reilly, UCD School of Business

Dr Adamaria Perrotta, UCD School of Mathematics and Statistics

Dr Nicolas Pillai, UCD School of English, Drama and Film

Associate Professor Susan Rackard, UCD School of Veterinary Medicine

Associate Professor Paul Ryan, UCD School of Business

**Awards for Exceptional Contribution to Learning recognise individual UCD employees who are engaged directly in teaching or in facilitating student learning, and have been awarded to:**

Dr Cian Davis, UCD School of Medicine

Dr Aoife Claire MacCormac, UCD School of Nursing, Midwifery and Health Systems

Mr Alan Morgan, UCD Innovation Academy

Dr Matthew O'Brien, UCD College of Science

Ms Emer O'Daly, UCD School of Architecture, Planning and Environmental Policy

## Veterinary Ireland Distinguished Service Medal Awarded to Professor Michael Doherty

**The Veterinary Ireland Distinguished Service Medal was presented to Professor Michael Doherty at the Veterinary Ireland AGM & Presidents' Dinner.**

The award recognises Professor Doherty's work in furthering the advancement of the veterinary profession through research, education, leadership and his mentoring of generations of veterinary practitioners at UCD. The National Council and members of Veterinary Ireland also wished to specifically recognise Professor Doherty's role spanning two decades as Editor-in-Chief of the Irish Veterinary Journal (IVJ), his promotion of the profession, and his work in furthering its clinical and scientific advancement in print and online media.

Professor Doherty is Emeritus Full Professor of Veterinary Clinical Studies and former Dean and Head of the UCD School of Veterinary Medicine. A Diplomate and former President of the European College of Bovine Health Management, he is the only Diplomate who has been recognised by the European College of Small Ruminant Health Management in the Republic of Ireland. A

former Executive Member of Animal Health Ireland, and Chair of the AHI Technical Working Group on the control of BVD, Michael has been involved in the promotion and development of national herd health programmes in Ireland and in the delivery of UCD's Graduate Certificate in Dairy Herd Health.

Professor Doherty served as Dean and Head of the UCD School of Veterinary Medicine from 2016 to 2023, during which time, the School successfully navigated accreditation by the American Veterinary Medical Association, the European Association of Establishments for Veterinary Education, the Australasian Veterinary Boards Council, the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons and the Veterinary Council of Ireland. An educator, researcher, leader, friend, and mentor to all in the School of Veterinary Medicine, Professor Doherty led the School through the unexpected challenges brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic, displaying ingenuity, adaptability and acute leadership, empathy and support skills in dealing with this challenging period.

An Irish speaker, Professor Doherty also acted as Chair of UCD's Bord na Gaeilge, overseeing the creation of a new Irish language



*Prof Michael Doherty receives the Veterinary Ireland Distinguished Service Medal from Veterinary Ireland President Jane Pigott.*

module in communication skills and the development of strong links with the Scottish Gaelic community in the universities of Glasgow and Edinburgh.



# ■ Ireland's Only Financial Times Ranked Full-Time MBA

**The Full-Time MBA programme at UCD Michael Smurfit Graduate Business School has been ranked 73rd globally in the highly reputed Financial Times 2025 MBA Rankings, an increase of 18 places from 2024. The ranking places the UCD Smurfit School MBA as Ireland's only MBA programme ranked in the prestigious top 100 list.**

The Financial Times ranks MBA programmes based on several criteria as part of its analysis. UCD Smurfit School's notable accomplishments were in the 'Salary Percentage Increase' category, where Smurfit MBA alumni saw an impressive 91% salary increase from their salary before the MBA to the time of the rankings survey, which is three years post-graduation.

In addition, UCD Smurfit School ranked 5th in the world in the 'Value for Money' category.

The placement builds on the success of the December 2024 news that placed UCD Smurfit School as 21st in the FT European Business Schools Rankings, which is considered the 'Ranking of Rankings' in terms of measuring business schools' quality and range of ranked programmes.

Professor Anthony Brabazon, Dean of UCD College of Business said, "The 2025 global rankings reaffirm UCD Smurfit School's status as Ireland's top-ranked business school and a European leader in MBA and business education. Our continued investment in world-class faculty, cutting-edge facilities, and an internationally focused curriculum is driving student success and securing our place among the best business schools worldwide."

For the ninth consecutive year, the Financial Times has also named UCD Michael Smurfit Graduate Business School among the top 30 in Europe.

Considered the 'ranking of rankings' in terms of measuring business schools' quality and a range of ranked programmes, the latest FT European Business Schools Rankings place UCD Michael Smurfit Graduate Business School at 21st. UCD Smurfit Executive Development achieved a FT ranking of 46th globally for its Open Enrolment programmes and 33rd for Custom programmes.

The individual programme rankings take into account graduate outcomes, including salary and career progress, as well as factors such as quality of research and international and gender diversity of students and faculty.



Leon Brown, Féile na Fuaime organiser with guest artists from the performing groups, 'Burnchurch', 'Sibéal' and 'An Chéad Ghlúin Eile' in UCD's Astra Hall.

## ■ Seachtain na Gaeilge 2025

**Gaeltacht UCD students highlight the increased variety of career opportunities with Irish and share the best of the Irish language song tradition with a live concert.**

Eagraíonn mic léinn Theach na Gaeilge, scéim chónaithe Gaeilge na hOllscoile raon éagsúla imeachtaí ar champas agus lasmuigh de gach aon bhliain. I mí Feabhra 2025, d'eagraigh siad 2 imeacht faoi leith; Aonach na Gaeilge agus Féile na Fuaime. Leag an t-aonach darbh ainm 'An Ghaeilge sa Ghnáthshaoil', béim ar dheiseanna fostaíochta agus áineasa do luacht labhartha na Gaeilge. B'é scoláire Theach na Gaeilge Cormac Ó Dubhláine a tháinig ar an gcoincheap seo agus d'oibrigh sé i gcomhar le UCDSU agus Cumann Gaelach na hOllscoile leis an dtionscnamh a chur i gcríoch. Thug Cormac cuireadh chuig 35 cuideachta agus institiúid Ghaeligh, ó 32 contae in Éirinn, seastán a bheith acu i Halla Astra UCD, agus ghlacadar uilig leis an ndeis chun buaileadh le pobal na mac léinn. I measc na rannpháirtithe, bhí: TG4, GaelGoer, An tAontas Eorpach, Raidió na Gaeltachta, Raidió Rí Rá, Coimisiún a Meán, Cumann na bhFiann, Ógras, Dréimire, Cumann na bhFiann, Vicipéid, An Garda Síochána, An Cumann Lúthchleas Gael, Foras na Gaeilge, Coláiste Uisce, Údarás na Gaeltachta, Comhlachtaí Aistriúcháin agus An tSeirbhís Chúirteanna. Bhí plé-phaineál ar stáitse i lár an

lae a phleigh deiseanna gairme agus ba é Aodhán Ó Dea, duine de mheantóirí Theach na Gaeilge agus iar-Uachtarán UCDSU, a bhí ina fhear an tí. Mar chlabhsúr ar an ócáid, labhair beirt aoichainteoir, An tOllamh Regina Uí Chollatáin, Ceann Dámh na nEalaíon agus na nDaonnachtaí UCD atá ina Cathaoirleach ar Fhoras na Gaeilge, agus Jarleth Burnes, Uachtarán ar an gCumann Lúthchleas Gael. Thug na cainteanna agus an ócáid féin spreagadh do rannpháirtithe agus do chuirteoirí araon.

Ceiliúradh ar an gceol agus ar an amhránaíocht ach go háirithe a bhí sa dara imeacht Féile na Fuaime. D'eagraigh Leon Brown, scoláire eile de chuid Theach na Gaeilge ceolchoirm den scoth leis an dtrí banna, 'An Chéad Ghlúin Eile', 'Sibéal' agus 'Burnchurch'. Bhailigh slua ollmhór i Halla Astra agus bhí gach éinne ar an urlár ag damhsa roimh dheireadh na hoíche. Ba dheis an ócáid seo mic léinn UCD, cairde, tuistí agus pobal na Gaeilge lasmuigh den champas, a thabhairt le céile. Tá ardmholadh ag dul do mhic léinn Theach na Gaeilge, UCDSU agus an Chumann Gaelaigh as seachtain bríomhar ionchuimsitheach a eagrú.



## ■ UCD Community Choir Winter Celebration



Members of the UCD Community Choir performed at the Winter Celebration, organised by Culture & Engagement. Led by Caoimhe O'Neill, Principal and Director of Singing at Encore! School of Performing Arts, the event was organised to bring colleagues together prior to the break for Christmas. The UCD Staff Music Group also entertained those attending.





FORSEE UCD Research Group: Dr Arjumand Yunus, Prof Aphra Kerr, Dr Elizabeth Farries, Dr James Steinhoff, Dr Alexandros Minotakis, Prof Eugenia Siapera and Dr Patrick Brodie.

## UCD Centre for Digital Policy launches €3 million EU research project

**A new €3 million EU research project led by the UCD Centre for Digital Policy exploring the benefits and risks of Artificial Intelligence (AI) from a societal perspective in order to enhance AI capabilities and EU regulatory frameworks commenced in February 2025. The FORSEE (Forging Successful AI Applications for European Economy and Society) project is funded through the Beyond the horizon: A human-friendly deployment of artificial intelligence and related technologies funding call under the Horizon Europe programme.**

The project aims to broaden the concept of AI success beyond technological and economic efficiency and provide insights that will structurally enhance capacities to anticipate, evaluate and manage the future and long-term opportunities and challenges associated with AI.

Led by Dr Elizabeth Farries, Director of UCD Centre for Digital Policy, the consortium includes eight partners from universities, research institutions and think tanks across six European countries. Dr Farries said, "Focusing on sustainability, labour and economic efficiency, gender and engagement with civil society, our research group will offer broadened awareness of the risks

and opportunities of AI, based on our grounded research."

Professor Niamh Moore-Cherry, Principal of the UCD College of Social Sciences and Law said: "As the development of AI technology accelerates, it is crucial that we gain a better understanding of its economic, societal and ethical implications as well as its technological success. The FORSEE project is part of a growing portfolio of research across a range of disciplines in our College focused on AI and data science and we are delighted to be hosting it."

Engaging with institutions, civil society organisations and the broader public, the FORSEE team will discern the current criteria of AI success to highlight potential tensions between existing AI applications and EU priorities, and evaluate impacts on economy and society.

The consortium brings together a broad range of partners encompassing interdisciplinary expertise across legal and policy analysis, political economy, computational social science, information and communication, media and platforms studies, collaborating with academics from computer science. Participating UCD researchers include Prof Aphra Kerr, Dr Arjumand Yunus, Dr James Steinhoff and Dr Pat Brodie.



Matt O'Keeffe, Prof Meriel McClatchie, Gary Ryan, Prof Kate Robson Browne and Prof Frank Monahan at the UCD exhibit at the 2024 National Ploughing Championships.

## UCD at the Ploughing

**The team from the UCD School of Agriculture and Food Science was delighted to be back in Ratheniska, Co Laois, for the 93rd National Ploughing Championships in September 2024.**

The School had a large stand at the event and with just under 250,000 attending this year's event over three days. It was a fantastic, enjoyable week with everyone in great spirits helped by the incredible weather throughout.

AgriAware, Protein-I and the Amgen Biotech Experience participated in the School's exhibit this year providing exciting interactive stations for visitors to the tent and we were delighted to welcome colleagues from UCD Micro-credentials and Gaeltacht UCD throughout the week.

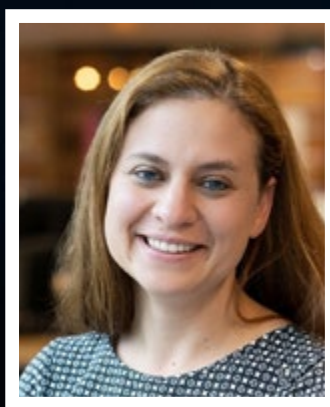
Student, alumni and staff panel discussions took place each day with crowds filing in to hear about studying Ag Science and student life in UCD, our undergraduate and postgraduate programmes and the exciting research and agri developments at UCD.

Panellists included: Matt O' Keeffe, Irish Farmers Monthly editor; Gary Ryan, Director of AgTechUCD Innovation Centre; Professor Kate Robson Brown, UCD Vice-President for Research, Innovation and Impact; Professor Frank Monahan, Dean of Agriculture and Head of the UCD School of Agriculture and Food Science; and Professor Meriel McClatchie, UCD School of Archaeology.

Also joining UCD over the three days were: Sarah McIntosh from the Irish Farmers Journal; Marcus O'Halloran, Agri Aware Executive Director; Jack O'Connor, MSD; Una Sinnott; Shauna Jager, Bord Bia; Susan Maher, BOI and ASA President; Niamh Bambrick, ASA Past President; Maeve Cooper, UCD Ag Soc Auditor and Career Chair; Emily Cassells; Noreen Lacey and Sophie O'Sullivan, IFAC; and sports star Daire Cregg.



# Transforming Online Mental Health Resources for Young Adults

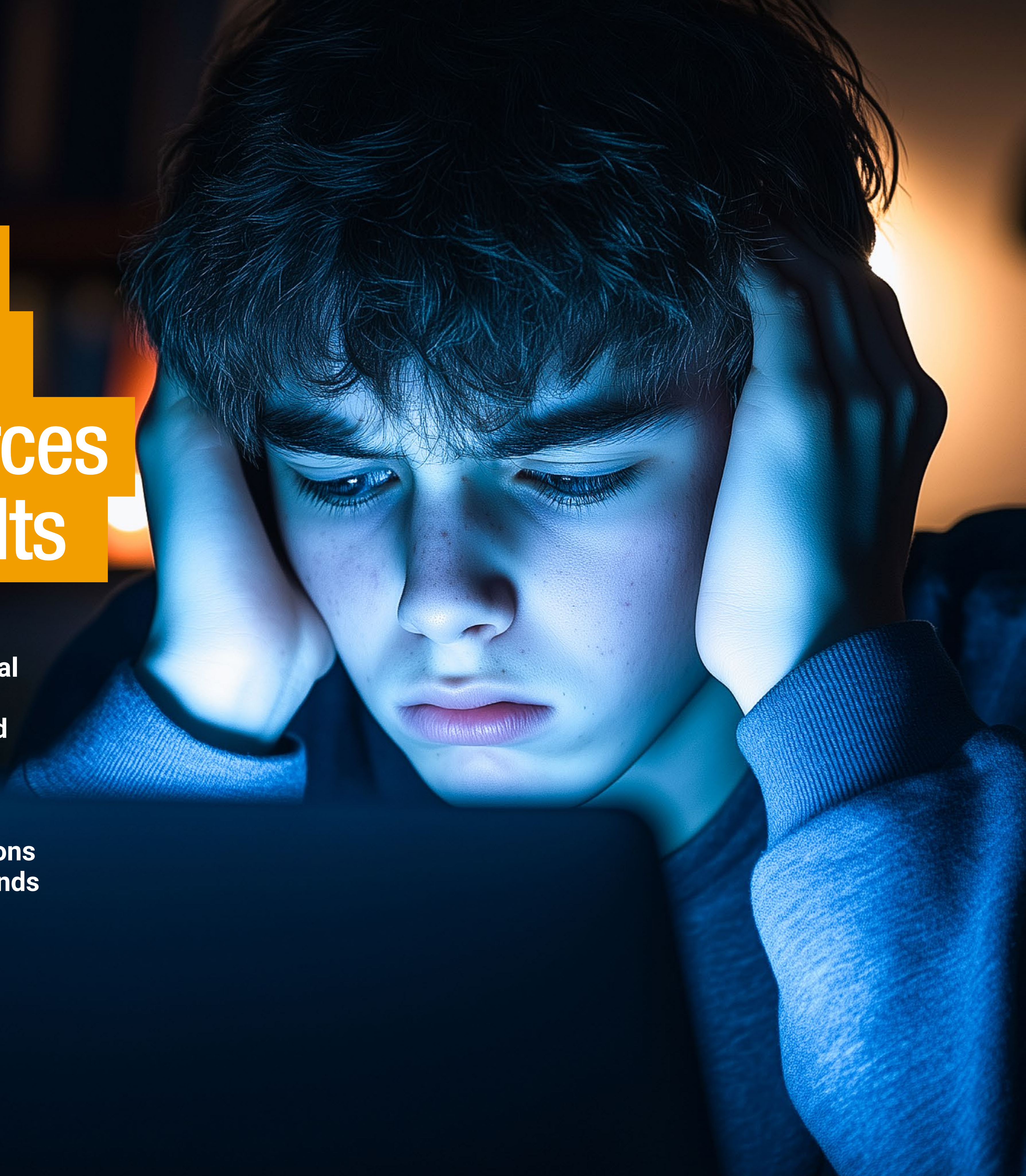


Dr Claudette Pretorius,  
UCD School of Computer  
Science



Associate Prof  
David Coyle

**For many young people facing mental health challenges, the first step toward support no longer takes place in a therapist's office or through conversations with family and friends - it begins online**







**Research from UCD, led by Associate Professor David Coyle and Dr Claudette Pretorius, UCD School of Computer Science, highlights the critical role the internet plays in shaping how young people seek mental health support, uncovering both its potential and pitfalls. Their research earned them a runner-up spot in this year's UCD Research Impact Competition.**

According to Pretorius, a key researcher behind the study, young people often encounter distinct barriers online compared to offline help-seeking. Among the most significant challenges is discerning credible resources amid an overwhelming abundance of options.

"The biggest barriers online include credibility: how to find credible sources of information, credible places to go. Because there's so much choice online, it's harder to choose between what to click into and which paths to take. Because it's overwhelming, it might just shut someone down completely, especially if they're not very mental health literate. Additionally, a lot of online information can be quite generic. It doesn't necessarily speak to everyone, and that can be confusing and put people off," she added.

Their research, published in the Journal of Medical Internet Research, initially involved a systematic review to identify these barriers and facilitators of online help-seeking among young people. This foundational study became highly influential, cited in the World Health Organisation Global Report on Assistive Technology and becoming one of the most referenced papers in its field in recent years.

Recognising the need for targeted interventions, the team collaborated closely

with mental health organisations like Jigsaw, ReachOut Ireland, and spunout, Ireland's leading youth information and support platform. Through surveys involving over 1,300 Irish young people, the researchers developed nuanced personas of online help-seekers.

Through this work, they identified personas or distinct types of online help-seekers including information seekers looking to understand mental health concerns, connection seekers wanting to speak with others about their issues, and crisis help-seekers needing urgent mental health support.

"We presented these personas to the young people we worked with, and they explored designing online mental health resources for each persona to find help. We got some really great designs that gave us indicators of what things should look like," said Pretorius who explained that the research project then went on to develop an initial set of guidelines that were tested out in user studies.

One striking insight from the workshops they ran, Claudette notes, was the value of empathy and authenticity brought to the co-design process by the young people who took part. "I was really impressed by the efforts and creativity that they brought. When they were designing, they were

really putting themselves in the person's shoes and having that empathy for the different kinds of help seekers or even relating to parts of it themselves."

Associate Professor David Coyle, who supervised Pretorius' PhD and co-led the project, emphasises a notable finding: the need for credible, tailored mental health resources online. "Some people seek information, while others want personal connection. Some might like to speak anonymously to another person, some might like to connect via text. One of the ways you can really help people is by providing different pathways and different approaches," Coyle explained.

A further complication arises with platforms like TikTok or generative AI tools such as ChatGPT, which young people increasingly turn to for mental health information, despite their lack of validation or professional oversight.

Addressing these concerns, the team's research is directly influencing the design of legitimate mental health resources. For example, spunout, a youth information platform with over two million annual visits, is using the research findings to enhance their website's reader journeys - paths through their site tailored to different mental health needs.

Pretorius and Coyle emphasise the internet's potential as a gateway to traditional mental health services rather than a replacement. "The idea is that an online environment can provide a small positive step in the right direction, and hopefully people have a positive experience and maybe that makes them more comfortable with taking another step."

**"Someone can break down what is possibly a daunting task - like speaking to a doctor, speaking to a mental health professional - into something that's more gradual and allows you to approach it in a way that you have control and agency over."**

However, both researchers caution that effective online mental health resources must overcome critical barriers, particularly around trustworthiness and mental health literacy. They underscore the importance of resources being credible and designed to meet young people at

their own level of understanding.

Their work also highlights broader implications for mental health literacy. Many online resources portray mental health difficulties in crisis terms, leaving young people who don't see themselves reflected in extreme cases unsure if their concerns merit support.

Coyle recounts the poignant reaction from workshop participants: "I was really struck by a comment from one of the young people in our workshop; they do a search for, say, information around depression, and what they find is information about someone who's struggling with severe depression and they think, 'that's not me. I'm not struggling with severe depression. I just need a bit of help. I just need some information about how to cope with current stress in my life'."

**"What they want is something that's relatable and that connects to the appropriate level of difficulty that they're experiencing. They don't necessarily want a resource that's describing a crisis. They want something that relates to the experience they're having in their day-to-day lives."**

It's estimated that 50% of all adult mental disorders start in adolescence, and as mental health concerns escalate globally - especially among young people - the significance of this research is clear. It doesn't simply advocate for more online resources but smarter, nuanced tools that respect the diverse experiences and needs of young users.

The takeaway is clear, according to Pretorius, online help-seeking isn't just about finding information; it's about finding the right information and the right time. "I think that's one problem with mental health literacy - is that it's not really presenting a spectrum of what mental health can look like for different people at different times."

**Associate Professor Coyle and Dr Pretorius were in conversation with Marie Boran, freelance technology journalist (BSc UCD 2022, DCU MSc 2012, MSc by Research [Insight Centre for Data Analytics, NUIG] 2015).**





Pictured (l-r) are: James Higgins, final year Dairy Business student; Neil Keane, Head of Agriculture and FRS Co-op; Emily Cassells, Chair of UCD Agricultural Science Society Careers Committee; Minister Michael Healy-Rae; Prof Karina Pierce; Christopher Cahill, FBD Young Farmer of the Year 2024 and UCD Dairy Business alumnus, and Susan Maher, President of Agricultural Science Association.

## ■ UCD Agriculture, Food Science and Human Nutrition Careers Day

**The UCD Agriculture, Food Science and Human Nutrition Careers Day took place in February 2025. The annual event, organised by students for students, welcomed Michael Healy-Rae TD, Minister of State at the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine, to open this year's event.**

Careers Committee member James Higgins welcomed Professor Karina Pierce who represented the School, welcoming and thanking all the guests in attendance and introducing Minister Healy-Rae.

The Minister provided a keynote address to the final year undergraduate students with Neil Keane, Head of Agriculture at FRS Co-op, Susan Maher, President ASA and Christopher Cahill, FBD Young Farmer of the Year, all providing insightful accounts of their personal experiences and encouraging words and advice to take forward on the next stages of their journeys.

Before addressing the students, Minister Healy-Rae commented; "I really believe that our students that are here today, they're our future. They're the most important, integral thing that we have because for us to have sustainable agriculture in the future, we need people like these young people here today."

UCD alumnus, Christopher Cahill who was announced the FBD Farmer of the Year for 2024 addressed the audience on his experiences of studying Agricultural Science at UCD and this career journey since graduating. He is a Dairy Business graduate as well as completing the MSc in Sustainable Agriculture and Rural Development. Christopher is the Managing Director of Cavan Grassland Consultancy, a grass measurement and management service provider across the north midlands area. Offering some advice for the students he said: "My advice to the class of 2025 is to always remember the relationships and connections you've made here in UCD and don't be afraid to lean on them when you need to. Work hard and don't be afraid to seek opportunities because the degree and the knowledge that you have got from your time at UCD will enable you to achieve anything you set your mind to."

The UCD Agriculture, Food Science and Human Nutrition Careers Day is a long-established event and is an important opportunity for soon-to-be graduates of the various programmes to connect and network with potential future employers.

## ■ Vet School Sustainability Seminar

**What are the environmental impacts of UCD School of Veterinary Medicine's activities? What steps can be taken to address or minimise any of these? And how can future vets and vet nurses be equipped with a greater awareness of the environmental sustainability of the profession and measures that can be taken to improve it?**

These were the questions discussed at the recent 'Sustainability in the Vet School' seminar, organised by Professor Emma O'Neill.

Keynote speaker was vet Ellie West, environmental sustainability lead for the veterinary group Linnaeus UK, which has over 80 practices across England, Scotland, Wales and Ireland. Ellie spoke of her work exploring the environmental impact of veterinary practice and mitigation measures. This keynote, attended by 70 people from across the School, was followed by a talk by vet Niamh Byrne, founder of Veterinary Sustainability Network Ireland. Niamh spoke of the aims and objectives of this group and how people can get involved.

Mary Sekiya, Chief Technical Officer, UCD School of Veterinary Medicine spoke about the implementation of sustainable measures in UCD's research laboratories and has recently completed the My Green Lab

accredited professional training. She is chair of the UCD Sustainable Research Initiative, a grassroots group committed to improving sustainability in the practice of research at UCD.

Other speakers were Sandra Nicholson, an assistant professor in veterinary nursing in UCD, who reported on how to link with the UK's Vet Sustain Network; Paul Noonan, UCD Estate Services, who talked about the carbon footprint of the School; and Professor Emma O'Neill, who spoke in her capacity as co-chair of UCD Sustainability's working group on education, training and student experience.

After the talks, a group discussion took place listing 'quick wins' and gathering feedback on suggestions from Ellie West following a Q&A on best practices. The final task of the day was to stream group findings into three categories of actions for the School to stop/start/continue doing for sustainability.

UCD School of Veterinary Medicine hosts a seminar exploring sustainability.







Pictured (l-r): Noah Porter, Emma Fowler, Kilian Plapp, Eoin Curtis and Harry Alderton.

## UCD Student Team Wins Runner-up at the Data4Good Festival

**A team of five second-year BSc Computational Social Science students from UCD has secured Runner-Up for Technical Excellence at the Data4Good Festival, hosted by the Hertie School January 2025. At the three-day event, 70 students from 20 European universities gathered to network and create solutions to data challenges.**

Competing at the three-day Hackathon in Berlin, the 'Byte Me' team, consisting of Harry Alderton, Eoin Curtis, Emma Fowler, Kilian Plapp and Noah Porter, developed Knowledge Link. This online tool uses Large Language Models to make complex social data more accessible and actionable for policymakers and researchers.

The challenge posed by the Hackathon organisers was to find innovative ways to enhance public access to Wegweiser Kommune, a large dataset containing detailed demographic and economic indicators from German regions. While rich in information, this dataset can be challenging to navigate without technical expertise. Knowledge Link simplifies the process by allowing users to create easy-to-understand reports on highlights and key trends.

"Our goal was to bridge the gap between raw data and real-world decision-making," said Eoin Curtis. Emma Fowler added, "we wanted to create

a tool that policymakers, researchers, and even the general public could use without needing advanced data skills."

By leveraging AI and natural language processing, the team made the dataset more accessible, reducing the time and effort required to extract meaningful insights. Kilian Plapp explained: "There's no shortage of data, but if people can't interpret it, it's not much use. Our platform attempts to unlock valuable information stored in large datasets."

The team's achievement at the Data4Good Hackathon showcases how Computational social science can transform policymaking by making data-driven insights more accessible. Building on Knowledge Link, the group plans to develop and validate a more advanced tool for the Irish context, allowing citizens, researchers, and policymakers to extract social and political information from large-scale administrative datasets.

## 'Prototypes for Humanity' Showcase in Dubai

**A groundbreaking PhD project from UCD was selected for the prestigious 'Dubai Future Solutions – Prototypes for Humanity' exhibition, marking the first time a UCD project has been featured at this globally recognised event. The exhibition, held in November in Dubai, brought together professors and students from leading institutions worldwide to showcase innovative technologies designed to tackle pressing global challenges.**

Out of 2,700 applications from top universities such as Stanford, Oxford, Cambridge, ETH Zurich and MIT, only 100 projects were chosen for their potential to address critical global issues through rigorous academic research. Among the selected projects was 'PREVENT – Early Screening Test to Prevent Pre-Eclampsia and Save Lives', developed by Ella Fouhy, a third-year PhD student from the research group of Professor Patricia Maguire, UCD School of Biomolecular and Biomedical science. This pioneering project aims to create an early screening test for pre-eclampsia, a life-threatening condition affecting pregnant women, with the goal of improving maternal health outcomes worldwide.

"Participating in this exhibition is a fantastic opportunity to meet other graduate students from over 100 universities and showcase projects with the potential to evolve into new ventures," said Ella Fouhy.

Professor Patricia Maguire emphasised the importance of the exhibition for UCD researchers:

"Prototypes for Humanity offers a wonderful opportunity to showcase UCD's innovative talent on a global stage. It's a competition that all PhD students at UCD should consider applying to for a chance to gain international recognition and network with leading minds from diverse fields."



Ella Fouhy, a third year PhD student in the UCD Conway SPHERE Group



# Record number of trees planted during UCD Green Week 2025

**A record number of trees was planted on campus by staff and students during UCD Green Week 2025, which took place in early March. Led by UCD Estates Services staff, over 80 volunteers planted 800 trees at two sites - by Thornfield rugby pitches and behind the UCD School of Agriculture and Food Science. Ten different varieties were planted: Scots pine, hazel, birch, viburnum, alder, spindle, cherry, blackthorn, oak and willow. These two tree-planting sessions were part of 24 events organised for UCD Green Week, an annual celebration of our commitment to sustainability and environmental stewardship.**

This year's diverse programme included a keynote by Professor Jennie C Stephens, a professor of Climate Justice at Maynooth University, titled, *'On climate injustice, are universities part of the problem or can they be transformative?'* Her talk critiqued the tendency of universities to reinforce existing power structures rather than drive systemic change. She highlighted the need for higher education institutions to shift priorities - from profit-driven models to wellbeing-focused policies - and to reform teaching, research, financial structures and community engagement to better address societal and environmental challenges. The keynote was followed by a panel discussion featuring Professor Stephens, Students' Union President Miranda Bauer and Professor Tasman Crowe, UCD Vice-President for Sustainability, moderated by Dr Shane Bergin, Associate Professor in Science Education, UCD School of Education.

Other Green Week highlights included a talk and panel discussion on *'Climate change in journalism'* with Sally Hayden, former Africa correspondent with The Irish Times and author of award-winning book, *My Fourth Time We Drowned*. Her talk explored the intersection of climate change and global inequality, focusing on its disproportionate impact on Africa despite the continent's low emissions. Former Green Party spokesman Aiden Corkery gave a talk titled, *'Turf, TDs and Twitter tantrums - political messaging in a Green Party government'*. He stressed the need to improve climate communication by using clear, everyday language and connecting policies to real-life benefits.

This was followed by a Q&A moderated by **UCD Young Greens** Society Auditor Manus Mac Gearailt, a third year student of social science, geography, politics and international relations. Other Green Week events included bike clinics, recycling bingo, a sustainable energy hack and tours of the Evolution Garden and Rosemount research facility.



## English Classes for Bidvest Noonan

**Fabulous energy surrounded the new volunteer collaborative initiative between the UCD School of Languages Cultures and Linguistics staff, students and colleagues from the cleaning teams from Bidvest Noonan within UCD Estates.**

Associate Professor Síofra Pierse, Melanie Pape and Lydia Capitano, UCD School of Languages, Cultures and Linguistics, launched this new voluntary scheme in close collaboration with Charlie Stone, Ryan Callan and the Supervisors Team from BidvestNoonan. Students from Modern Languages and Linguistics offer English conversation classes to 24 Portuguese-speaking cleaner learners.

Each morning from Monday to Thursday, volunteer student tutors and volunteer cleaner learners sign in and start their English conversation class. Each cleaner learner takes two classes per week. Each of the sixteen student tutor volunteers teach one class for one hour per week.

Each class has three cleaner learners in it. All of the cleaner learner colleagues work with Bidvest Noonan at UCD campus and are non-English speakers. English learners are typically qualified in a variety of different domains in their home country. However, these colleagues often currently lack the opportunity to increase their confidence in using or learning everyday conversational English. Exclusion as a result of reduced linguistic competency may lead to marginalisation and reduced social and employment opportunities. Linguistics exclusion perpetuates social inequalities and it may also impact self-confidence.

Students flocked to volunteer, many of them saying how grateful they are to the cleaners of UCD Estates for keeping UCD so pristine. The School is delighted to reach out to the UCD international community of cleaner learner colleagues to bring the School's language learning expertise and skills to them directly, and to create a closer sense of community.





# A STEP CLOSER TO LIFE-CHANGING THERAPIES FOR RARE SKIN DISEASE

**Epidermolysis Bullosa (EB) is a devastating and incurable disease that causes painful blistering and itching of the skin. It is commonly known as 'butterfly disease' because of the extreme fragility of the skin of people with the condition – as fragile as a butterfly's wing. In the most severe cases, even the slightest touch or friction can cause painful lesions and open wounds.**

Although it's a rare disease – on average 300 people in Ireland are living with EB at any given time – many of us have at least heard of it thanks to the awareness-raising and advocacy work of Debra, supported by the actor Colin Farrell and other celebrities.

But unfortunately for EB patients and their families, whose lives are profoundly impacted by the stress of chronic wound care and the threat of infection, rare diseases are often overlooked when it comes to the development of new drugs and therapies.



# A STEP CLOSER TO LIFE-CHANGING THERAPIES FOR RARE SKIN DISEASE

## Hope on the horizon

Dr Joanna Stefan's scientific curiosity led her from a PhD in molecular biology and medical sciences in the Jagiellonian University in Krakow to the University of Alabama in the United States, where she did postdoctoral research in the lab of Dr Andrzej Slominski, a world-renowned researcher in the field of dermatology. Her passion for experimental dermatology was ignited, and eventually brought her to UCD Charles Institute of Dermatology and the Sanofi Newman Fellowship in Dermatology.

Dr Stefan's pioneering research into the molecular mechanisms of recessive dystrophic epidermolysis bullosa (RDEB), one of the more severe forms of EB, has yielded a preliminary dataset that shows promise for the development of new treatments and therapies down the line.

The current therapeutic landscape for the disease is limited, as Dr Stefan explains: "The FDA recently approved two expensive therapies: a topical gel containing birch bark extract, which can cause allergic reactions, and a gene therapy with a lifetime cost of \$15–\$22 million per patient."

For context, the associated healthcare costs for RDEB patients in Ireland are €100,000 per patient per year, and most of this goes on staff costs, bandages and dressings. "There is an urgent need to improve RDEB patients' life opportunities," concludes Dr Stefan. "The average lifespan of RDEB patients is approximately 30 years, with skin cancer a leading cause of premature death."

## Exploring the regenerative potential of hair follicles

Recessive dystrophic epidermolysis bullosa is caused by mutations in the gene responsible for the production of a protein called Col7A1. Belonging to the collagen family of proteins, which play a key role in maintaining skin integrity and elasticity, impaired production of Col7A1 in

RDEB patients causes splitting of the epidermis from the deeper layers of the skin. The resultant blistering is similar to that caused by a burn. In the most severe type of the disease, this protein is completely absent.

While blistering can occur all over the body with this disease, the skin on the scalp often remains in a healthy state. With this in mind, Dr Stefan set out to investigate the potential of cells in the hair follicle – including fibroblasts and keratinocytes – as candidates for the development of a cell-based therapy for RDEB, based on their wound healing and skin maintenance properties.

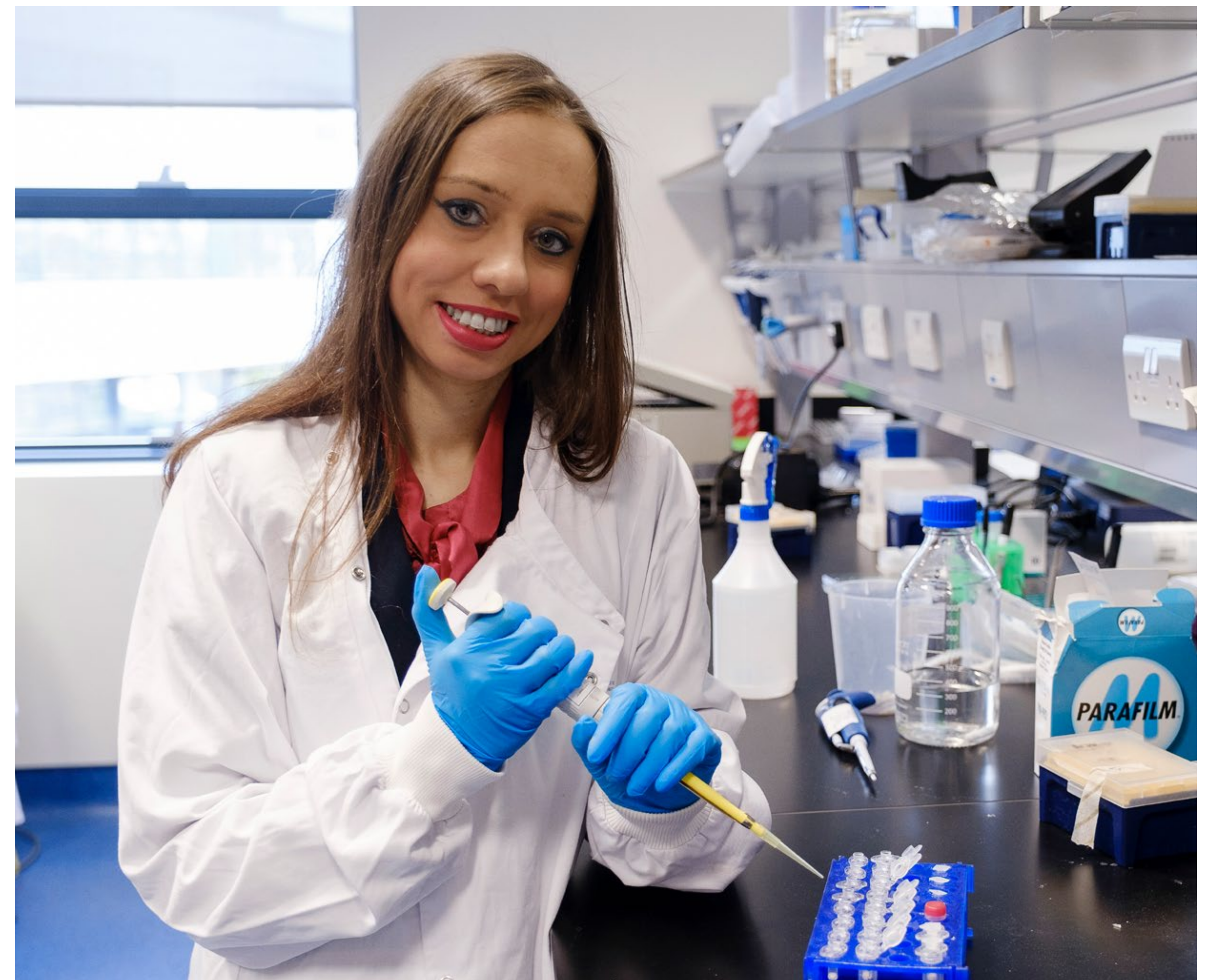
## Expanding the boundaries of research

For the first time ever globally, these cells were isolated from scalp hair follicles and scalp interfollicular skin samples from patients living with RDEB, and specifically from an Irish patient, collected at Our Lady's Children's Hospital, Crumlin, part of Children's Health Ireland, with parental consent. In addition, Dr Stefan created a cell culture model of the most severe form of the disease by knocking out the COL7A1 gene using the CRISPR-Cas9 gene-editing technology.

Scalp hair follicle dermal sheath fibroblasts and scalp interfollicular fibroblasts show promise for the development of a new cell-based therapy through which the cells would be grafted onto blistering sites, where they would heal and regenerate the skin.

Furthermore, Dr Stefan discovered that when TGFβ2 – a type of protein known as a cytokine – was administered to the cell cultures, it increased the production of the Col7A1 protein and other collagens and inhibited the disease pathway of RDEB. The findings indicate that TGFβ2 or a related peptides may be potent candidates for future drug development.

This research lays the groundwork for new drugs and therapies that could transform the lives of people living with RDEB in the future.



**"Epidermolysis bullosa is a rare genetic disorder affecting around 500,000 (or 0.00006%) of the world's population. As a result, funding to support basic and translational research for this condition is very difficult to obtain. Thus, we were very grateful that Sanofi supported Joanna's challenging and exploratory project, via the UCD Foundation Newman Fellowship scheme," Professor Tobin said. "Results so far are very encouraging indeed, and may help to unlock the regenerative power of the scalp hair follicles in these patients. We hope to continue this exciting research journey via further funding opportunities and collaboration with Dr Fiona Browne and Debra."**

## UCD Newman Fellowship Programme

The UCD Newman Fellowship Programme supports ambitious research across the sciences and humanities. These prestigious postdoctoral fellowships are awarded usually for a period of two or three years and are only made possible by the support of generous philanthropic donors and the commitment of inspirational academic mentors who are dedicated to pushing the frontiers of knowledge in their chosen discipline. Dr Joanna Stefan's research is funded by Sanofi, and she is supervised by Professor Desmond Tobin, UCD Charles Institute of Dermatology at UCD School of Medicine, and Dr Fiona Browne, Children's Health Ireland.





Pictured (l-r): Prof Jonathan McNulty, CHAS Dean of Teaching and Learning; Prof Dara Byrne, Clinical Lead, National Simulation Office, HSE; Siobhán Brereton, Director of Clinical Skills and Simulation, School of Nursing, Midwifery and Health Systems; Prof Orla Feely, UCD President; Assoc Prof Michael Connolly, Assoc Dean for Teaching and Learning, and James Hayes, School Director, School of Nursing Midwifery and Health Systems

## ■ New Clinical Skills Simulation Suite Opened for UCD Health Science students

**At a special ribbon-cutting ceremony in February, the brand new state-of-the-art Clinical Skills Simulation Suite was opened by Professor Orla Feely, UCD President in the UCD Health Sciences Centre. The launch event was well attended by faculty, staff, students and clinicians from UCD's partner healthcare providers.**

Having received funding from the UCD College of Health and Agricultural Sciences, the UCD School of Nursing, Midwifery and Health Systems announced the project last summer. The works were completed in September 2024 and thorough testing and training commenced. This was a key project led by the School under the Simulation and Clinical Skills Strategy and advised upon by a number of leading experts including Dara Byrne, the National Clinical Lead, National Simulation Office, HSE.

The fully equipped suite, with an integrated AV system, allows for quality simulation activities, elevating our students' learning through realistic patient scenarios and real-time problem-solving. Having this exposure in addition to practice placement learning further bridges the gap between knowledge and practical skills in nursing and midwifery. In addition to this, the School installed a multipurpose simulation cave and briefing room. Using bespoke projection and lighting capabilities, students are able to instantly change the surrounding

environment - from a therapy room, to a care home, to an emergency department – allowing them to immerse themselves in a safe, realistic learning environment.

Simulation education involves a range of activities that improve the safety and effectiveness of healthcare delivery. Given the increased focus on improving quality care and patient safety, the 'sim suite' will support the delivery of education and training to enhance curriculum and promote preparedness for clinical practice with a student-centred simulation programme ensuring all undergraduate and postgraduate learners get the most out of their time with us.

Clinical Tutors Jennifer Sullivan and Michaela Schumann said: "We are very excited to see this project get off the ground. We feel confident that we speak for the entire nursing and midwifery team when we say the addition of a dedicated simulation suite will truly enhance the student journey."

The suite will be available for teaching from 2025 onwards.



Pictured (l-r): Prof Anthony Brabazon, Dean of UCD College of Business; Miranda Bauer, UCD Students' Union President; Prof Federica Pazzaglia, Director of UCD Smurfit School; Dominic O'Keeffe, Director of UCD Student Services and Facilities; and Denis Moran, Centre Manager, UCD Smurfit School.

## ■ New gym facility at UCD Smurfit School

**Conveniently located next to the UCD Smurfit Restaurant, the new gym is purpose-built to support the fitness and wellbeing needs of the School's 1,400 students, including over 250 residential students. This facility provides an accessible fitness solution, removing the need for commutes to the Belfield campus. The Smurfit Gym directly responds to feedback from a UCD Students' Union survey led by former UCDSU graduate officer Marc Matouc, highlighting on-site fitness facilities as a top priority for Carysfort students.**

"With its accessible and supportive on-site fitness environment, the Smurfit Gym will strengthen community ties and promote a holistic approach to student life at UCD Smurfit School", said Dominic O'Keeffe, Director of UCD Student Services and Facilities. "This facility not only meets fitness needs but also serves as a vital social hub where students can connect, relax, and recharge."

The new fitness facility at UCD Smurfit School underscores UCD's commitment to continually enhancing the student experience. By prioritising on-campus fitness and wellbeing resources, UCD ensures students have the comprehensive support they need to thrive both academically and personally.





Pictured (l-r) Richie Stafford, Assoc Prof Aideen Quilty, Frances Fitzgerald, Rory Carroll, Prof Niamh Moore Cherry and Assoc Prof Aoghan Mulcahy.

## ■ Celebrating 90 Years of Social Policy, Social Work and Sociology at UCD

**To celebrate 90 years of Social Policy, Social Work and Sociology in UCD, a panel discussion with some notable alumni took place in January. This celebration highlighted a proud history of interdisciplinary collaboration, research excellence and impactful education, rooted in the establishment of the Diploma in Social Science in 1934.**

The panel discussion was facilitated by Associate Professor Nessa Winston, UCD School of Social Policy, Social Work and Social Justice. Panellists included: Frances Fitzgerald, Gender Advisory Committee to G7, former MEP, Tánaiste and Minister for Children; Richie Stafford, Assistant Principal, Drugs Policy, Refugee & Inclusion Health Unit, Dept of Health, and Rory Carroll, Senior Social Worker, National Forensic Mental Health Service, HSE.

Alumni of UCD Social Policy, Sociology, and Social Work hold leadership roles across research institutions, NGOs, government, and beyond, driving change on critical issues from social protection systems to environmental sustainability. Faculty have contributed to national and international policy advancements, shaping discourse on taxation, housing, and education through organisations such as the National Economic and Social Council (NESC) and EuroHealthNet.



Ursula Byrne and James Moley (UCD Library) receiving the IFLA Green Library Award 2024 in Barcelona. Photo Credit: Alejandro García

## ■ UCD Library Green Project Wins International Award

**UCD Library gained international recognition for its commitment to sustainability when it was awarded first place in the Green Library Project Award 2024, sponsored by the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions.**

The winning project, Beyond the Lifecycle: Libraries Supporting the Circular Economy, facilitated the upcycling, recycling and rehoming of old furniture following the refurbishment projects in the UCD James Joyce Library and the UCD Veterinary Library. This ambitious project was developed by Ursula Byrne, Head of Buildings Management and carried out by the Library Furniture Recycling Team: Catherine Bodey, Thomas Lewis, Debra McCann and Séamus Murphy.

The award is given to libraries and projects that best communicate their commitment to environmental sustainability. Former Library Assistant, Catherine Bodey's excellent design work was instrumental in the project's success.

Using a combination of tools including the furniture recycling platform, WarplIt, and Facebook Marketplace, the team found

new homes for over 1,000 items including desks, chairs and office furniture. Engaging 52 different community groups including schools, community centres, churches and charities, the team diverted unwanted furniture from landfill thereby reducing the overall carbon footprint of the refurbishment projects.

A local charity commented: "I want to acknowledge and also thank you for your considered donation and to inform you that all of the items have greatly helped our services and have added some well needed storage solutions for the offices in both Day and Residential Services. Community initiatives that help other local services really show the power of community and building relationships".

Announcing the award at a ceremony in Barcelona, Harri Sahavirta, Chair of IFLA ENSULIB praised the project for its "comprehensive approach and community impact, serving as a model for libraries worldwide". He described the project as "an inspiring and exceptional work" citing several Sustainable Development Goals supported.





Pictured (l-r) are: Dr Mario Manresa, UCD School of Biomolecular and Biomedical Science; Prof Helen Roche, Director, UCD Conway Institute; Dr Carlos Matellan; and Dr Stephen Thorpe, UCD School of Medicine.

## 2024 UCD Conway Festival Gold Medal

**Dr Carlos Matellan, UCD School of Medicine, won the 2024 UCD Conway Festival Gold Medal for anti-inflammatory research that could help people with gut diseases like Crohn's disease and prevent the damage caused by too much inflammation.**

Dr Matellan is a postdoctoral fellow in the groups of Dr Mario Manresa and Dr Stephen Thorpe. His research looked at a protein called TWEAK, which can make certain cells in the gut (called fibroblasts) act in a way that makes inflammation worse. Inflammation usually occurs as a reaction to an injury or infection and affected areas can appear swollen, red, and are sometimes painful. When TWEAK interacts with fibroblasts, these cells start making signals that tell the immune system to cause more inflammation.

The research findings were published in the Journal of Immunology in June 2024. Dr Matellan was awarded the Gold Medal sponsored by Cruinn Diagnostics at the closing ceremony of the 2024 UCD Conway Festival of Research and Innovation, which took place on 2-3 October.

Professor Helen Roche, Director, UCD Conway Institute said, "I want to congratulate Carlos on winning the Festival Gold Medal for his work. It is exciting to see the potential of this protein as a therapeutic target to alleviate the symptoms of inflammation for patients living with inflammatory bowel disease".

The annual UCD Conway Festival of Research and Innovation featured research from 148 early career researchers, a panel discussion on communicating science, as well as presentations from leading scientists including Professor Samir Mitragotri, Harvard University; Professor Eileen Furlong, European Molecular Biology Laboratory; and Professor Elio Riboli, Imperial College London.



## Graduate Employment: Understanding Gen Z

**In December, the Employer Engagement and Internship team from the UCD Careers Network hosted over 25 key graduate recruiters for a breakfast briefing in the UCD University Club. Recruiters from a broad range of sectors joined the event, including representatives from the professional services, finance, law, technology and engineering industries. The breakfast provided a valuable platform for networking, insights and discussions on inclusive recruitment and student employability.**

Professor Colin Scott, UCD Registrar and Deputy President, led the welcome remarks, followed by Professor Barbara Dooley, UCD School of Psychology, who provided stakeholders with helpful insights from the "My World" youth mental health survey. Lisa Padden and Kathie Orr, UCD Access and Lifelong Learning, shared best practices for inclusive recruitment, highlighting strategies for fostering diverse and accessible hiring processes.

The event also featured a dynamic discussion led by Michelle Coen, UCD College of Arts and Humanities, where four students shared their internship experiences with leading employers

including Becton Dickinson, Mason Hayes and Curran, Microsoft and Poetry Ireland. Their perspectives offered the audience a deeper understanding of the student journey and the impact of employer engagement on career development.

"We are delighted to bring together key industry leaders to discuss the evolving landscape of graduate recruitment," said Cathy Savage, Senior Internship and Engagement Manager, UCD Careers Network. "This event underscores our commitment to strengthening employer-student connections and promoting inclusive hiring practices."



## ■ Be the Voice – involving minority communities in health research

UCD Ardmore House was the setting for an event to explore the challenges and barriers for ethnic minority communities getting involved in health research.

Twenty people living in Ireland but originally from Venezuela, Bangladesh, India, Libya, Bulgaria, Nigeria and Brazil took part in 'Be the Voice of your Community in Health Research'. Welcoming the participants, Dr Arman Rahman, UCD School of Medicine and Fellow, UCD Conway Institute, spoke about initiatives to include diverse voices in research discussions equally, and in an accessible manner. Dr Rahman also introduced his international collaborator, Professor Gayathri Devi from Duke University through an Irish Cancer Society cancer research networking award.

Dr Rahman has led the 'Invisible Spectrum' initiative in Precision Oncology Ireland with annual events since Science Week 2020 to specifically involve Bangladeshi and Arab Muslim

communities.

Elaine Quinn, UCD Conway Institute, spoke about the 'Cut from the Same Cloth' art and science project with tapestry weaver, Lorna Donlan, that has engaged 164 women and girls from minority communities led by Professor Amanda McCann, UCD School of Medicine and Chair, 'The Patient Voice in Health Research'.

Professor Gayathri Devi gave a brief overview of the US experience of developing a model to address cancer health disparities in underserved communities. Professor Yvonne O'Meara, Women's Cancer Survivorship Research Coordinator, UCD School of Medicine, spoke about the online personalised resource, 'thisisGO.ie', for women and their families impacted by a gynaecological



*Pictured (l-r) are: Elaine Quinn, UCD Conway Institute; Prof Gayathri Devi, Duke University; Dr Arman Rahman and Prof Amanda McCann, UCD School of Medicine; Anna Wedderburn, Systems Biology Ireland; and Prof Yvonne O'Meara, UCD School of Medicine.*

cancer diagnosis. The concept and materials were developed through public and patient involvement (PPI) in the initiative. Yvonne then facilitated a 'fireside chat' with three community members who spoke of their lived experience of health conditions or health inequities.

Professor Amanda McCann and Elaine Quinn co-facilitated roundtable discussions between community members and researchers from the Cancer Biology & Therapeutics laboratory at the

UCD Conway Institute to explore themes of health inequity and the challenges in being involved in PPI in research.

The outputs from the workshop will help create survey questions about health research and PPI awareness for ethnic minority communities.

The event was funded through a seed funding grant from UCD PPI Ignite Network and an Irish Cancer Society cancer research networking award to Dr Rahman (lead PI).

## ■ Obituary - Professor Dervilla Donnelly MRIA (1930-2024)

**Professor Dervilla Donnelly, who became interested in Chemistry at second level with a view to becoming a pharmacist, achieved a First-Class Honours degree in Chemistry at UCD and completed her PhD there studying the chemistry of flavonoids, a class of biologically active compounds found in plants, beginning her lifelong interest in the overlap between chemistry and biology. Following her PhD, she pursued her postdoctoral studies on the biosynthesis of organic compounds in plants at the University of California at Los Angeles, funded by the American Association of University Women.**



Dervilla returned to UCD as a lecturer in Chemistry in 1956 and quickly gained international renown in her specialist field of phytochemistry; the study of chemicals with biological activity derived from plants. For Dervilla, wood chemistry was a particular interest, and her research employed a combination of organic synthesis, structural studies, mycology and ecology, and provided excellent training for students interested in pursuing careers in the pharmaceutical industry, biotechnology or academia. She was a particularly popular supervisor for female chemists as the

Department had almost all male faculty at that time. She was an inspiring supervisor who took a great interest in her students' well-being and scientific development. In 1979, she was appointed Professor of Phytochemistry at UCD.

Dervilla was a leader in promoting the benefits of international collaborations across synthetic chemistry, spectroscopic/analytical chemistry and biology. She often served as a visiting scientist in Stockholm and Gif-sur-Yvette in France. Her main collaborators in Gif-sur-Yvette were Professor Sir Derek Barton, Nobel Laureate in Chemistry (1969), and Professor Judith Polonsky. She developed one of Europe's first academic research networks in the late 1970s.

Dervilla's skills and commitment to European research were recognised by her election as Chairperson of the European Science Research Councils in 1985, Vice-President and Member of the Executive Council of the European Science Foundation 1990-1997 and Vice-President and Member of the European Science and Technology Assembly in 1994.

Dervilla had a long and fruitful association

with the Royal Dublin Society and became its first woman President serving from 1989-1992. She was appointed by the then Taoiseach as Chairperson of the Custom House Docks Development Authority from 1991 to 1997. Her time there proved highly successful, returning over €400 million annually to the exchequer.

Dervilla received numerous awards and honours for her outstanding work and contributions, include the Boyle-Higgins Medal of the Institute of Chemistry of Ireland in 1999, the UCD Charter Day medal in 2000, for her many contributions to the country and to UCD. She was the first woman to receive the Royal Irish Academy's highest honour, The Cunningham Medal. The award recognises "outstanding contributions to scholarship and the objectives of the Academy" and it is the Academy's premier award dating back to 1796.

She will be remembered as a remarkable scientist, researcher and person who instilled an extremely high standard of scientific rigour and integrity in all those she encountered over the course of her career, that will remain with them throughout their scientific endeavours.





Dr Ronald Halim and Prof Kate Robson Brown.

## UCD leading on Sustainable Aviation Fuels using microalgae

**UCD School of Biosystems and Food Engineering is leading a €4 million EU project aiming to use microalgae to upcycle digestate and CO<sub>2</sub> from anaerobic digestion into Sustainable Aviation Fuels. The SusAlgaeFuel project will be undertaken by three universities, one research organisation, and five SMEs across five countries: Ireland, Germany, Spain, Portugal and the UK.**

The SusAlgaeFuel project officially launched with a two-day meeting held at UCD in October 2024. Dr Ronald Halim, the project coordinator, hosted the consortium of partners at UCD. The event was inaugurated by Professor Kate Robson Brown, UCD Vice-President for Research, Innovation and Impact, who welcomed the attendees during the official launch ceremony.

Co-funded by the EU, the SusAlgaeFuel

project focuses on advancing innovative processes for producing cost-competitive and sustainable aviation fuel from microalgae. This initiative combines approaches such as direct carbon capture, nutrient recovery and next-generation purification technologies.

Air travel remains a significant contributor to greenhouse gas emissions, and algae-based biofuels present a promising solution to reduce the aviation sector's environmental footprint. Microalgae have the potential to generate large amounts of lipids, which can be converted into bio-kerosene. Compared to conventional jet fuels, algae-based fuels could reduce CO<sub>2</sub> emissions by up to 70%.

Ultimately, the goal of SusAlgaeFuel is "to cultivate microalgae using digestate and CO<sub>2</sub> emissions from anaerobic digestion and to convert this microalgal biomass into sustainable

aviation fuel at a scalable level", emphasises Dr Halim in his speech at the launch.

Professor Robson Brown also highlighted the significance of UCD's role in coordinating this high-impact project, stating: "SusAlgaeFuel brings together leading technology providers in microalgal cultivation and AI-driven sensor technology, alongside experts in biomass processing and aviation fuel synthesis. This collaboration reflects our shared commitment to developing climate-friendly biofuels and will result in the construction of a pilot-scale microalgal facility at Ireland's largest biomethane producer, BIA Energy".

The SusAlgaeFuel project started in May 2024 and will run for 48 months. The EU is providing co-funding of up to €3.47 million for the project. At UCD, the project will be carried out by the UCD Algae Group, jointly based at UCD School of Biosystems and Food Engineering, UCD Conway Institute, and BiOrbic Bioeconomy Research Centre. For further updates and information on SusAlgaeFuel, visit the project website.

## Heartstopper ar fáil i nGaeilge

**Tá Heartstopper ar fáil i nGaeilge anois. Bhí an oiread sin de thóir ar an aistriúchán Gaeilge a rinne Eoin McEvoy ó Scoil na Gaeilge, an Léinn Cheiltigh agus an Bhéaloidis UCD ar an úrscéal grafach LADTA+ sin gurbh éigean do na foilsitheoirí, Futa Fata, an dara cló a eagrú laistigh de shé mhí tar éis a chéadfhoilsiú, éacht nach beag i gcás leabhar Gaeilge.**

Scéal é Heartstopper faoi Charlie agus Nick, beirt ghasúr a dhéanann cairdeas nuair a chuirtear ina suí in aice a chéile ar scoil iad agus a thiteann i ngrá le chéile diaidh ar ndiaidh i gcaitheamh an scéil. Tá an leabhar ar fáil i nGaeilge anois agus is é an chéad leabhar Gaeilge le haghaidh déagóirí riamh é a phléann go sonrach le téama LADTA+.

Ainmníodh an t-aistriúchán Gaeilge le hEoin McEvoy i measc na leabhar ar an ngearrliosta le haghaidh Ghradam de Bhaldráithe san fhómhar agus tá sé ag obair ar an dara dréacht den chéad leabhar eile sa tsraith i láthair na huaire. Foilseofar Heartstopper 2 faoi dheireadh 2025.

Heartstopper is now available in Irish. The LGBTQ+ graphic novel for teenagers, translated to Irish by Eoin McEvoy, UCD School of Irish, Celtic Studies and Folklore, was snapped up by readers so quickly that the publishers, Futa Fata, had to organise the second print run within six months of the initial publication date.

Heartstopper is a story about Charlie and Nick, two boys who become friends after being seated next to each other in school and who gradually fall in love with each other in the course of the story. The Irish translation of this book is the first Irish-language book for teenagers that deals explicitly with LGBTQ+ themes.

The translation by Eoin McEvoy was shortlisted for the national translation award Gradam de Bhaldráithe in the autumn and McEvoy is currently working on the second draft of his translation of the next book in the series. Heartstopper 2 will be published in 2025.





## ■ *Spinaria* at the UCD Classical Museum

This spring UCD Classical Museum presents *Spinaria*, an exhibition of work by internationally acclaimed artist Zsuzsanna Ardó. This follows on from the UCD School of Classic's last trimester's successful *Text/Textiles* exhibition, a collaboration between Dr Eireann Lorsung, UCD School of English, Drama, Film and the National College of Art and Design. Both exhibitions continue the School's aim to host works that explore the multifaceted connections between archaeology, artefacts, the Classical past and contemporary life. *Text/Textiles* engaged with the parallel processes of making languages and making textiles, or weaving sense in the world. *Spinaria* is a series of prints inspired by a famous Hellenistic sculpture of a youth pulling a thorn from his foot – *Spinario*. Ardó's work instigates a metamorphosis from ancient to modern that sees stone replaced by diaphanous paper and a youthful boy changed into a mature contemplative woman who invites her audience to ruminate on the fragility of our modern world.

Central to Ardo's visual art and poetry more generally is the theme of climate change, expressed in her international collaborative project 'PlanetWoman'. This venture invites composers from around the globe to compose original music that reinvents Ardó's poems as choral ensembles. To launch the *Spinaria* exhibition, a concert of two works born of the 'PlanetWoman project' – *In the Library of Ephesus* and *Eve meets Adam* – was performed in the Classical Museum on 30 January. Both pieces were created by Irish composer and Aosdána member, Siobhán Cleary, and performed by the award-winning choir, Cantando, under the direction of Orla Barry.

Especially relevant for the Classical Museum was *In the Library of Ephesus*, a modern interpretation of the earliest known piece of musical notation in the world. The original inscribed Seikilos Epitaph was discovered near the famous Library of Celsus in modern-day Turkey. Ardó's piece came to UCD fresh from its world première in Rome a few weeks earlier. Listening to the ancient sounds reimagined and performed amidst artefacts and under the gaze of *Spinaria* made for a memorable evening.

## ■ UCD Archives digitisation project ensures preservation of important revolutionary archive

The papers of General Richard Mulcahy (1886–1971), former Chief of Staff of the IRA and government minister, have been digitised as part of a Decade of Centenaries project led by UCD Archives and supported by UCD's Strategic and Major Initiatives Scheme, the Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media, and the Irish Research Council.

The project, which involved cataloguing and digitising over 95,000 files, ensures one of the most significant archives of Irish revolutionary history is preserved for future generations. Following a quality control process, images will be made available, in tranches, in the UCD Archives reading room this year.

Professor Orla Feely, UCD President officially launched the digitised papers at an event held in the UCD James Joyce Library in January. Addressing an audience of historians, archivists, and the Mulcahy family, Professor Feely acknowledged the importance of UCD's collections.

"At UCD, we take immense pride in our world-class cultural heritage collections, and digitisation plays a vital role in enhancing accessibility and fostering innovative ways for audiences to

engage with these invaluable resources."

Professor Diarmaid Ferriter paid tribute to Mulcahy's "pioneering decision" to deposit his papers in UCD, paving the way for leading politicians from both sides of the treaty to do the same.

"The digitisation of Mulcahy's papers is a landmark and democratic development, ensuring the widest of access, and it places UCD, once again, at the forefront of the preservation and promotion of our heritage by devising new ways to maximise exposure to and appreciation of an evidenced based research that does justice to the complexity and richness of our history".

University Librarian, Dr Sandra Collins said that the project "reflects our mission to make UCD's cultural heritage collections more accessible." Welcoming guests to the newly renovated section of the library, Dr Collins shared plans for further developments. "This is an exciting time for UCD Library as we plan to redevelop the James Joyce Library and launch a new Cultural Heritage Centre, which will both preserve and open up our exceptional collections for more scholarship, learning, creativity and public engagement."



Pictured (l-r) are: Dr Sandra Collins, Prof Orla Feely, Richard Mulcahy, Kate Manning, and Niamh Jordan. (Photo credit: Mark Stedman)

The new centre will facilitate the co-location of three major heritage repositories, UCD Special Collections, the National Folklore Collection, and UCD Archives which houses the Mulcahy Papers among many other outstanding collections of private papers and institutional archives.



## ■ UCD Partners with Intel to Upskill Engineers

**Last autumn, UCD collaborated with Intel to address a critical skills gap in AI Manufacturing and Data Analytics, upskilling over 50 Intel engineers through a tailored program designed and delivered by the UCD Advance Centre.**

The programme, created in collaboration with three UCD Schools - Mathematics and Statistics, Mechanical and Materials Engineering, and Computer Science - offered a multidisciplinary approach to learning. Engineers participated in three twelve-week micro-credential courses: *Data Programming in Python*, *Data Science with Python and Industrial Data Analytics*. This combination of data programming, analytics and engineering expertise provided participants with the skills needed to excel in their roles.

A workshop was held at Intel's facility in January, led by the UCD Innovation Academy. Participants were encouraged to apply their newly acquired knowledge to real-world problems, which showcased the practical relevance of the program.

The courses, offered in an online format, included live lectures, weekly quizzes and discussion forums, providing a structured and interactive learning experience. The Advance Centre, established under the Human Capital Initiative (HCI) by HEA Pillar 3, played a pivotal role in designing and delivering this customised program for Intel.

Looking ahead, UCD and Intel aim to build on the success of this collaboration by exploring additional accredited modules and micro-credentials to continue addressing the evolving needs of Intel's engineering workforce.



Creators of Answering the Curlew's Call Comic: Assoc Prof Tom Curran, UCD School of Biosystems and Food Engineering; Assoc Prof Máire Nic an Bhaird and Dr Laoise Ní Chléirigh, both of Maynooth University; and Assoc Prof Barry McMahon, UCD School of Agriculture and Food Science.

## ■ BioBeo-BiOrbic Bioeconomy Education Workshop

**From tackling the problem of biodiversity loss to exploring groundbreaking ways to communicate complex research, the BioBeo Horizon Europe Project and BiOrbic, Research Ireland Centre for Bioeconomy, held a transdisciplinary bioeconomy education workshop in the UCD Global Lounge in February. The event showcased a new comic "Answering the Curlew's Call" about the curlew's decline, blending heavy material and a hopeful tone; a board game about chocolate that unpacks life cycle assessment in a deliciously interactive way; and VR/AR technologies which transported participants to the Amazon rainforest.**

John Bell, Director Healthy Planet, DG Research & Innovation at the European Commission, and Adjunct Full Professor, UCD School of Politics and International Relations, provided a powerful opening address, emphasising the essential nature of education and the need to provide hope for future generations.

Mary Colwell, founder of Curlew Action (UK), who launched the new comic, was inspiring on the importance of our precious curlew and how we must support protection. The comic was created by BioBeo project leader,

Associate Professor Tom Curran, UCD School of Biosystems and Food Engineering; Associate Professor Barry McMahon, UCD School of Agriculture and Food Science; and Dr Laoise Ní Chléirigh and Associate Professor Máire Nic an Bhaird, both of Maynooth University. Nathan T Wright illustrated the publication.

The comic can be downloaded from UCD Research Repository in English and Irish, and an animated video version is available on YouTube. It is also being promoted in schools by the Breeding Waders EIP-Agri project, a €25 million nationwide project, co-funded by the National

Parks and Wildlife Service and the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine. In addition, UCD and Maynooth University students are working across modules in engineering and education to transform the story into a puppet show by creating puppets and the show frame from recycled biological materials. A video of the puppet show will be presented at the final BioBeo project event in Brussels and at the UCD Festival.

Janine Kennedy, Irish Farmers Journal and UCD Earth Institute journalist-in-residence, expertly chaired a panel of diverse speakers. Associate Professor Máire Nic an Bhaird, Professor Patrick Paul Walsh, UCD School of Politics and International Relations, Matthew Halpin, Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine, and Fangting Bai, PhD Student, UCD School of Biosystems and Food Engineering, all provided an engaging discussion on how to move the bioeconomy forward and improve environmental sustainability for all.





Some members of the BikeHood Team (l-r): Dr Vinayak Malaghan, Darragh Redmond and Assoc Prof Gavin McArdle.

## ■ BikeHood: Transforming Urban Mobility Through Community-Driven Innovation

**BikeHood is an innovative project designed to nudge citizens towards active travel and address urban challenges such as traffic congestion, air quality and noise pollution.**

Guided by the principles of the 15-minute City and Superblocks, and merging state-of-the-art technology with meaningful community participation, BikeHood aims to create a dynamic link between top-down policy initiatives and community-driven ideas, paving the way for greener, more efficient urban mobility solutions that have the potential to transform cities for generations to come.

At the heart of BikeHood is a state-of-the-art digital twin - a virtual replica of the urban environment that harnesses AI algorithms and IoT sensors to capture real-time data on traffic flows, air quality and noise levels. BikeHood empowers communities to imagine and propose active travel improvements. Residents can use the digital twin interactive platform to design and test ideas such as dedicated bike lanes and other active

travel initiatives, observing how these changes could impact urban conditions before any real-world modifications are made.

This tool offers immediate, data-driven feedback, allowing community members to refine their proposals based on simulated impacts on traffic congestion and air quality. Proposals can be shared directly with local authorities, creating a transparent dialogue that integrates community insights into urban planning. The process not only fosters innovation but also ensures that potential infrastructure changes are grounded in measurable benefits.

Bikehood is funded by the Research Ireland National Challenge Fund and led by Professor Francesco Pilla, UCD School of Architecture, Planning and Environmental Policy, alongside Associate Professor Gavin McArdle, UCD School of Computer Science. The initiative also benefits from the expertise of Mary Bartzi, Safe Routes to School (SRTS) Programme Coordinator at the National Transport Authority, who plays a pivotal role shaping the project's active travel strategies.

## ■ Ireland US Alumni Emerging Leader Award



Dr John Gilmore, Asst Prof, UCD School of Nursing, Midwifery and Health Systems.

**Dr John Gilmore, UCD School of Nursing Midwifery and Health Systems, has been recognised for his outstanding contributions to healthcare and social justice with the prestigious Ireland US Alumni Emerging Leader Award. The award, presented by US Embassy Chief of Mission Michael Clausen, highlighted Dr Gilmore's dedication to making healthcare fairer and more accessible to all, particularly for LGBTQ+ communities and other marginalised groups.**

Introducing Dr Gilmore at the ceremony, Dr Rita Melia, Vice President of the Ireland United States Alumni Association (IUSA), praised his tireless efforts to drive positive change. She acknowledged his significant work in fostering collaborations with scholars, clinicians and community leaders across the United States and beyond, promoting a culture of mutual respect, learning, and understanding.

In his acceptance speech, Dr Gilmore reflected on key advancements in LGBTQ+ health in the US, highlighting how his Fulbright exchange in 2023 has enabled him to integrate innovative healthcare strategies into his work in Ireland. "For generations, LGBTQ+ people have looked to the USA for leadership in issues of LGBTQ+ health, activism and community. It's now time for Ireland to be a leader." He issued a powerful call to action for fellow Irish US alumni, urging them to leverage their networks to promote human rights, particularly for LGBTQ+ individuals, migrants, and the reproductive rights of women, which he noted are increasingly under threat in the US.

Dr Gilmore, a Fulbright HRB Health Impact Award alumnus, travelled to the University of California, San Francisco, and Columbia University, New York in 2023 to explore various models of LGBTQ+ healthcare. His research and collaborations have strengthened international ties and paved the way for impactful reforms in healthcare accessibility and inclusion.

The Ireland United States Alumni Association (IUSA) is a network of alumni from US State Department exchange programmes, including the Fulbright Scholarships, International Visitor Leadership Programme, J1, and the Washington Ireland Programme. The organisation fosters cross-border collaboration and knowledge-sharing to drive meaningful social and political change.



## UCD in the Community Volunteering Awards Ceremony 2024

The 2023/24 UCD in the Community Volunteering Awards ceremony took place in the UCD Global Lounge in November 2024.

90 students were awarded certificates for volunteering, bringing positive social change to people, place and in particular, UCD.

Volunteering activities honoured included UCD-based activities, like the UCD Saint Vincent De Paul Society, UCD Festival, UCD Peer Mentors, UCD Medical Society, UCDSU, UCD Triathlon Club, UCD Badminton Club, UCD Caving and Potholing Club, UCD Chinese Society, The College Tribune, UCD Formula Student, UCD Karate Club, UCD Karate Club, UCD Volunteer Overseas, UCD LGBTQ+ society, UCD Hope Fest, UCD Alumni



Prof Jason Last with some of the UCD volunteer awardees.

Volunteering, UCD Musical Society, UCD Relay for Life and University Observer, to name just a few.

Outside UCD, students contributed to community organisations including: Aphasia Ireland, Aware, Barretstown, 50808 - Text About It, Bodywhys, Donnybrook Scouts, Dun Laoghaire Rathdown Volunteer Centre, Foodcloud, Irish Hospice Foundation, Kinia, Niteline, Order of Malta and Oxfam Ireland.

The Awards were officially launched by Professor Jason Last, UCD Dean of Students. Professor Last congratulated and thanked the

volunteers for their contributions and spoke about the impact of volunteering on society and how student volunteers deliver an average annual economic value of €28.4 million to civic society.

Guest speaker UCD Alumna Janice Lau spoke about her experience volunteering with various societies during her time as a UCD student. Janice continues to volunteer now she is in full-time employment and spoke about how her volunteering provided people in need with hope, and “what seemed impossible at one point is possible with the help of one person, one coach,

one dentist, or one organisation”. Janice advised the students to “find your passion, explore your interests, go out and continue to volunteer your time”.

Bronze Awardee Balika Kannan, Msc. Human Computer Interaction; Silver Awardee Kundanika Khanna, Medicine, Year 2; and Gold Awardees Esra Benfayed, Medicine, Year 2, and Soffiyah Adewoyin, Radiography, Year 2; all spoke about their personal volunteering experiences, before certificates were presented to all the awardees in each category.

## UCD and FBD Announce €14 Million Investment in Agricultural Research and Education at Lyons Farm

**UCD and FBD have announced a major investment in new agricultural research and education facilities at UCD Lyons Farm. FBD Holdings plc and FBD Trust CLG have pledged a philanthropic contribution of €6 million in support of the facility and UCD is providing €8 million bringing the combined investment in UCD Lyons Farm to €14 million. Construction of the new centre is due to commence in 2025. The ‘UCD FBD Agricultural Science Centre’ will enhance UCD’s ability to deliver both teaching and research to the highest international standards and will be a focal point for all users. It will provide a centre where researchers, students, innovators and industry experts can collaborate on projects aimed at addressing the most pressing challenges facing modern farming and agriculture.**

Commenting on the new facilities, Professor Orla Feely, UCD President said: “This partnership with FBD exemplifies UCD’s commitment to fostering collaboration and innovation for the betterment of farming, agriculture generally, the food industry and the environment. With FBD’s generous support and collaboration, we will

enhance our ability to enquire, investigate, educate and solve the agriculture problems of the future, and drive positive change for generations to come.”

Michael Berkery, Chairman of FBD Trust said: “This FBD investment underscores the company’s commitment to supporting Ireland’s farming communities, agriculture as a whole and the food



Pictured (l-r) are: Liam Herlihy, FBD Group Chair; Tomás Ó Midheach, FBD CEO; Prof Karina Pierce, Director of External Relations, School of Agriculture and Food Science; Charlie McConalogue TD, Former Minister for Agriculture; Prof Orla Feely, UCD President; Prof Alexander Evans, Chair of the UCD Lyons Management Committee; and Michael Berkery, Chairman of FBD Trust CLG.

industry. This investment in agricultural education and research is vital to meet the environmental challenges facing the sector and to continuously improve the competitiveness of Irish farmers and the food industry in global markets. The important teaching and research to be carried out at Lyons Farm aligns with the objectives of FBD Trust to advance the interests of farm families and the farming sector in Ireland.”

Tomas Ó Midheach, CEO of FBD Holdings plc echoed these sentiments, stating:

“We are delighted to join forces with UCD in this important initiative that will foster innovation research and education in the agricultural sector. Together with UCD we are dedicated to nurturing the next generation of agricultural scientists who are poised to make a lasting impact on a sustainable future.





*Pictured (l-r) are members of the Output Sports team: Dr Darragh Whelan, COO and co-founder; Dr Martin O'Reilly, CEO and co-founder; Julian Eberle, CTO and co-founder; and Elizabeth Kinsella-Kent, Senior Sports Scientist.*

## Output Sports Closes \$4.8 Million Funding Round

**Output Sports, a UCD sports technology spin-out company, focused on making elite-level sports science simple and scalable, has closed a \$4.8 million (€4.47 million) pre-A funding round.**

The investment round brings in new support from, athlete-led, Apex Capital, European deep tech investor Uni.Fund, and Dopamine Sports. The financing also includes existing investors Elkstone, Atlantic Bridge and Enterprise Ireland and a number of angel investors. This new

capital will be used to accelerate US expansion and hiring across sales, marketing, product development, data science and customer support.

Output Sports, headquartered at NovaUCD, with offices also in Boston, was co-founded in 2020 by Dr Martin O'Reilly, Dr Darragh Whelan, Julian Eberle and Professor Brian Caulfield, as a spin-out from the UCD School of Public Health, Physiotherapy and Sports Science and the Insight Research Ireland Centre for Data Analytics hosted by UCD.

Output Sports currently provides more than 800 sports organisations, including over half of all English Premier League clubs, with the insights needed to make more informed, data-backed decisions to improve athletic performance.

In 2024, Output Sport's technology captured 30 million measurements from athletes around the globe, and it also played a pivotal role in multiple medal-winning performances at the 2024 Olympic Games including Daniel Wiffen's record-breaking gold in swimming for Ireland and China's Zheng Qinwen's historic tennis gold.

## Association for Business Psychology Workforce Experience Awards

**UCD Careers Network at UCD Smurfit School won the award in the Excellence in Learning & Development category at the Association for Business Psychology Workforce Experience Awards in London.**

The award-winning entry was Making the LEAP: Using business psychology to develop the employability of a Financial Times Top 100 Global MBA class in an evidenced-based, experiential, for-credit module.

"This award represents the power of a partnership approach, when the Academic Programme and Careers Network work together to support the employability development of UCD students," said Louise Campbell, Head of Smurfit School Careers Network. "The opportunity now is to broaden this approach as part of the transformational learning and development pillar of the UCD Smurfit School strategy."

"Embedding employability in the curriculum and developing career education approaches that enhance and develop employability attributes in our students and graduates is at the heart of the UCD Career Development and Employability Strategy," said Dr David Foster, UCD Director of Careers, Employability and Skills. "This award highlights the potential of this success."

The purpose of the Association for Business Psychology Awards is to celebrate excellence in business psychology and offer a unique and distinctive platform for the celebration of excellence in business psychology.

Whilst many awards programmes exist in the field of Human Resources generally, and in various psychological disciplines, the ABP Awards focus on demonstrating how applying an understanding of the science of human behaviour can impact workforce experience and deliver commercial and practical value to organisations.





*Pictured (l-r) are: Prof Finbar Mulligan, UCD School of Veterinary Medicine; Ronan Smith, CEO of Bimeda AMEA; Asst Prof Emmet Kelly, Animal Clinical Studies; Prof Rory Breathnach, Head of UCD School of Veterinary Medicine; Vincent McNally, Bimeda EVP for Global R&D; Donal Tierney, Bimeda Chairman; Pat Jennings, Sterimol CEO; Prof Mark Crowe, Animal Husbandry; Jonathan Tierney, Crosscare CEO; and Asst Prof Luke O'Grady, Bovine Health Management.*

## Visit to UCD Bimeda Herd Health Hub

**In February, members of Bimeda's Board and senior leadership visited the UCD Bimeda Herd Health Hub at UCD Lyons Farm. Supported by a philanthropic donation from Bimeda as well as funding from Enterprise Ireland and UCD, the Hub was launched in October 2023 as a national facility for dairy herd health education, research, and consultancy.**

UCD Lyons Farm is a critical resource for UCD School of Agriculture and Food Science and UCD School of Veterinary Medicine. The co-location of the Herd Health Hub and the farm supports the delivery of state-of-the-art training to undergraduate and postgraduate students and provides an unrivalled environment for education and research.

The Bimeda team was welcomed by Professor Rory Breathnach, Head of UCD School of Veterinary Medicine, and his team. He said, "We are proud to collaborate with Bimeda through

the UCD Bimeda Herd Health Hub, which plays a crucial role in advancing veterinary education and research. This partnership provides invaluable hands-on learning experiences for our students and supports innovation in animal health, addressing critical global challenges like climate change and animal welfare."

Vincent McNally, Bimeda's EVP for Global R&D, highlighted the Hub's role in delivering world-class teaching and fostering global leaders in herd health. "It was great to visit the Herd Health Hub now that it is fully operational and learn about how the facility is being utilised to deliver world-class teaching, as well as being a centre for important research and innovation," he said. "Bimeda's support for the facility is a clear indication of our continued commitment to supporting learning, research and innovation to optimise animal health, wellbeing and productivity. We were also interested to learn about research projects at the Hub and reflect on future opportunities for collaboration."

## Researcher of the Year 2024 (IRC Legacy) Awards

**The Researcher of the Year (IRC legacy) Awards were announced in January by Research Ireland. In August 2024, the Irish Research Council (IRC) amalgamated with Science Foundation Ireland (SFI) to become Taighde Éireann – Research Ireland, the new national funding agency for research and innovation in Ireland.**

The awards celebrated the very best of IRC-funded researchers deemed to have made highly significant and valuable contributions to knowledge, society, culture and innovation, selected by an independent expert panel chaired by Professor Emerita Áine Hyland.

Professor Alistair Nichol, UCD School of Medicine; Dr Stefan Müller, UCD School of Politics and International Relations, and Professor William Gallagher, UCD School of Biomolecular and Biomedical Science and UCD Conway Institute were Highly Commended.

PhD candidate Savannah Devine was awarded the Jane Grimson Medal of Excellence as the highest ranked STEM candidate. Savannah is a PhD candidate supervised by Associate Professor Eoghan Holohan and Associate Professor Claire Harnett, UCD School of Earth Sciences. Her PhD focuses on improving numerical models of the collapse dynamics of caldera volcanoes, in order to understand how their collapse influences the generation of earthquakes and progress of eruptions.

Research Ally prizes were made to mark the crucial role played by higher education personnel in supporting the academic research community across all career levels. Postgraduate students, postdoctoral fellows, academic and research-active staff were

invited to nominate the mentors, supervisors, research officers and technical support staff who have supported their work and careers and improved the Irish research ecosystem. The 2024 awards saw 67 Research Allies recognised by for their contribution to supporting research in Ireland. UCD awardees were:

- Associate Professor Grainne O'Donoghue, PhD Supervisor, UCD School of Public Health, Physiotherapy and Sports Science
- Associate Professor Krishna Vadlamannati, Supervisor and Director, UCD PhD Programme in Global Human Development, UCD School of Politics and International Relations
- Máire Coyle, Talent Research Programme Manager (including ERC), UCD Research and Innovation
- Assistant Professor Abdollah Malekjafarian, Mentor, UCD School of Civil Engineering
- Associate Professor Madhusanka Liyanage, PhD Supervisor and Director of Graduate Research, UCD School of Computer Science
- Deirdre Norris, ERC Research Project Manager, UCD Sutherland School of Law.



*PhD Candidate Savannah Devine, with the Jane Grimson Medal of Excellence.*

Professor Kate Robson Brown, UCD Vice-President for Research, Innovation and Impact, said: "We are immensely proud of the excellence, dedication and talent exhibited every year by UCD's research community, both our academics at every career stage and our highly skilled and committed research support staff. I'd like to offer my sincere congratulations to all who were recognised in the 2024 Researcher of the Year (IRC Legacy) Awards and all of the Research Allies who support the University's research and contribute hugely to its success."





Pictured (l-r): Wexford General Hospital Maternity Unit Staff, Marta Bustamante Medina, Sarah Hayden, UCD Stage 4 BSc Midwifery Students, Dr Mary Curtin and Dr Paula Cornally, Assistant Professors Midwifery, UCD School of Nursing, Midwifery and Health Systems.

## ■ Tackling the Cost of Living Crisis for Midwifery Students

**January 2025 saw the commencement of two midwifery internship practice placements at Wexford Maternity unit. All midwifery students at UCD historically completed their internship in the National Maternity Hospital. Through collaborative efforts between the UCD School of Nursing, Midwifery and Health Systems and Wexford Maternity unit, two midwifery interns are now afforded the opportunity to complete their 36-week internship locally.**

The internship pilot, which has future potential to extend to other regional hospitals in the locality, expands student midwife allocations and provides the opportunity to increase student midwife numbers, resulting in more midwives qualifying across Dublin and South-East. Discussions surrounding the pilot commenced late 2023 with Wexford Maternity's Clinical Placement Coordinator,

Laura Egan and the UCD link lecturer Dr Mary Curtin. This exciting initiative was formally agreed by The Director of Midwifery and the Senior Management Team in the UCD School of Nursing, Midwifery and Health Systems in 2024. Preparatory work for the commencement of the internship was undertaken throughout 2024 to ensure the placement met the standards and requirements of the Nursing and Midwifery Board of Ireland.

The two internship placements have resulted in two student midwives, Sarah Hayden and Marta Bustamante Medina, who reside in the locality being able to live with their families. In today's cost of living and housing crisis, this has had a significant positive impact as they can avoid costly fees associated with commuting and/or renting. It is hoped this initiative will further support UCD to increase undergraduate midwifery student places.



Back row pictured (l-r) are: Eamonn Galvin, KnowCarbon; Vikas Jain, Tashka Technology Solutions; Joe Fernandez, ALPACA; Richard Cooke, La Casa Care; Howard Kingston, Frontier AI and Johnny Dunne, Customs Window Technologies. Front row pictured (l-r) are: Liana-Anca Tomescu, SonnyLabs.ai; Dr John Lonsdale, CEO, CeADAR; Marina Donohoe, Head of Research and Innovation, Enterprise Ireland; Prof Kate Robson Brown, UCD Vice-President for Research, Innovation and Impact; Gavin O'Duffy; Vox Medical; Brian Murphy, Customs Window Technologies and Yuxin Wang, GoMappED.

## ■ Start-Ups Complete Inaugural AI Ecosystem Accelerator Programme at NovaUCD

**Eleven start-ups completed UCD's inaugural AI Ecosystem Accelerator Programme. The focus of this six-month programme, delivered by NovaUCD in partnership with CeADAR, Ireland's Centre for AI, was to support entrepreneurs who are developing disruptive AI solutions for a global market.**

The AI Ecosystem Accelerator programme was designed to provide participants with a wide range of resources, from commercial workshops and personalised one-on-one sessions to hot desk space at NovaUCD and technical support from CeADAR.

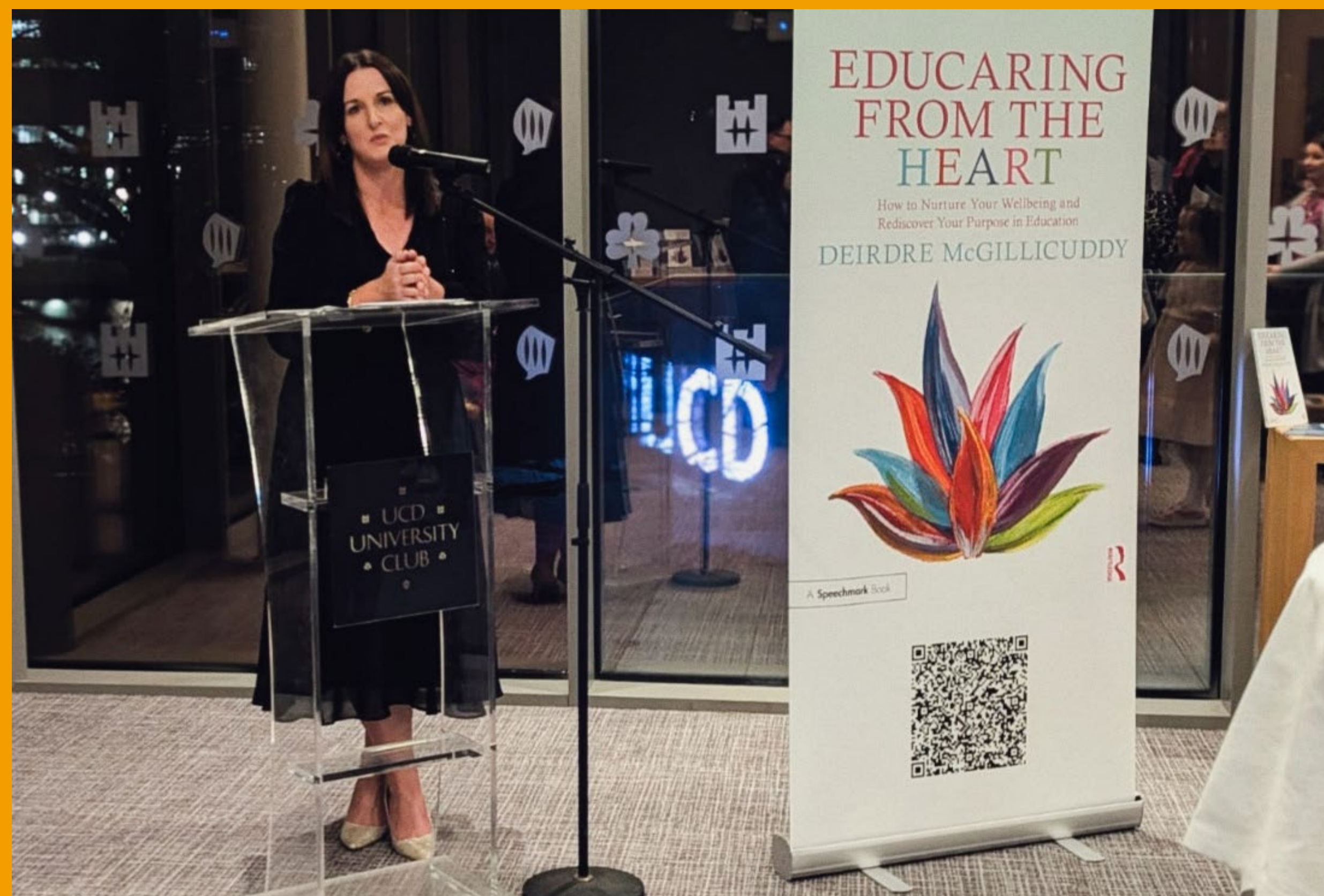
Speaking at the concluding event of the programme, Professor Kate Robson Brown, UCD Vice-President for Research, Innovation and Impact said: "The inaugural AI Ecosystem

Programme is the result of dedicated work by the NovaUCD and CeADAR teams, whose expertise and commitment have driven its success supported with funding from the European Digital Innovation Hubs and Enterprise Ireland."

She added, "The solutions, innovations and partnerships developed by the participants on the inaugural programme hold the potential to make a meaningful impact, thereby further strengthening Ireland's position as a leader in AI and technology. I would like to congratulate them all on what they have achieved during the last six months. Their dedication, resilience and ambition has set an inspiring standard for future programme participants, and we are excited to support them as they continue to grow in Ireland and beyond".



# Books



The cover of the book was painted by Dr McGillicuddy's husband, Mick Wallace. The lotus flower symbolises strength, resilience and rebirth. A lotus flower was chosen as it typically grows in murky waters and represents beauty arising from the dark.

## Wellbeing in Education

**Dr Deirdre McGillicuddy, UCD School of Education, launched her new book *Educaring from the Heart – how to nurture your wellbeing and rediscover your purpose in education*. The book was launched by Dr Niall Muldoon, Ombudsman for Children.**

Dr McGillicuddy, a former primary school teacher, wrote this book as a result of her own experience with burnout. She is passionate about wellbeing and ensuring that we look after those most important in our education system - our students, educators and the wider school community.

A thriving education system is so important to making sure we have a thriving society. Educator wellbeing is one of the biggest factors

in ensuring student wellbeing and academic engagement in school. Relationships are key to nurturing wellbeing between educators and students. Burnout in education is on the increase, yet little has been done to provide educators with the opportunity to support their own wellbeing. This book presents ways in which educator and student wellbeing can be brought into everyday classroom interaction. Inviting readers on a journey of self-reflection, *Educaring from the Heart* offers an approach to education which places care, empathy and compassion at the core of the educator's role.

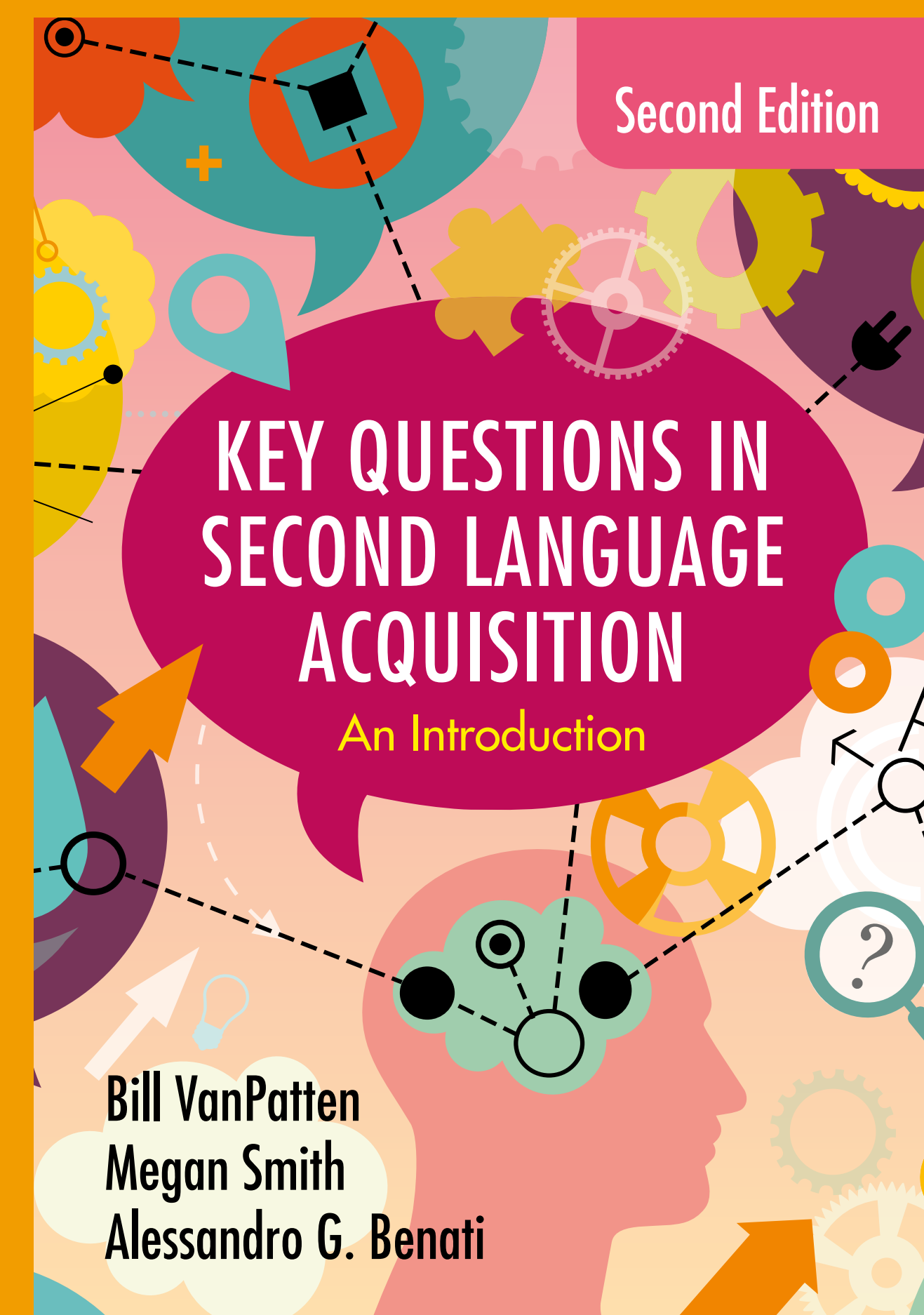
*Educaring from the Heart* can be purchased online from Routledge and other online book retailers. You can find further information on Dr McGillicuddy's work on the [UCD website](#). You can see a preview of Deirdre's book on her [YouTube channel](#).

## Book Launch - Key Questions in Second Language Acquisition

A two-day symposium was organised by the [UCD Psycholinguistic Lab](#), which considered the main findings from second language research in order to effectively influence three main areas of contemporary language teaching: vocabulary; language tasks; and grammar.

During the [The Back to Basics: Principles in Contemporary Language Teaching According to Science](#) symposium a strong connection was made between the need for innovation in second language teaching and the need for teachers to develop some knowledge about the nature of language and how acquisition happens. Language teachers, curriculum and material developers must move from a belief-based teaching approach to a fact-based teaching approach to connect knowledge and evidence with innovation.

A new book on [Second Language Acquisition](#) was launched at the Symposium. In this text, the reader is introduced to the basic questions driving the field of second language acquisition research. Professor Alessandro Benati, Head of the UCD School of Education, is one of the co-authors of the book. Professor Benati is a scholar in the field of second language acquisition research. His ground-breaking research on processing instruction has been recently driven by the use of new online measurements (e.g. eye tracking, self-paced reading). He is co-editor of the Cambridge University Press Series Elements in Second Language Acquisition, a member of REF, and an Honorary full Professor at The University of Hong Kong, University of York (SJ), University of Macquarie and University of Anaheim in the US.



"Exploring the Key Questions in Second Language Acquisition – A Comprehensive Introduction" by VanPatten, Smith, & Benati.



## Commerce Student Entrepreneurs Unveil New Mentorship Platform

Two UCD undergraduate commerce students, Oisín Mallon and Oisín Walsh have unveiled StepAhead, a new mentorship platform set to transform the way individuals connect with experienced mentors for career guidance and support. Rather than relying on traditional career counsellors or outdated advice, StepAhead offers mentees, such as secondary school students, college-goers, and recent graduates, access to relatable, real-world insights from those who are a step ahead of them in their career path.

Last December, StepAhead was one of only ten projects from around the world selected to pitch at the Red Bull Basement 2024 World Final in Tokyo, Japan. This competition, which

attracted over 110,000 applications, champions student innovators who are tackling real-world problems with fresh ideas and creative solutions.



*Pictured are Oisín Walsh and Oisín Mallon, StepAhead, at the Red Bull Basement 2024 World Final in Tokyo, Japan. (Credit: Jason Halayko / Red Bull Content Pool).*

In 2024, Oisín Mallon completed the one-year Mont Kavanagh Enterprise Internship Scholarship at NovaUCD through the UCD Lochlann Quinn School of Business during which he worked with Binarii Labs and Giyst.



*Pictured are the winners of the Best Presenter Award for oral talk and poster Julia Mroczkowska, Miguel Barbosa Fleming, Jack Fitzgerald and Grace O'Driscoll being presented with their prize by Dr Alison Reynolds, Associate Dean for Research, Innovation and Impact.*



## Twelve UCD students awarded prestigious Naughton Foundation Scholarships

**Twelve students that chose UCD to further their education have been named recipients of the prestigious Naughton Foundation Scholarship.**

Supporting academic and innovative excellence in Irish students, the Naughton Foundation Scholarship guarantees each awardee €24,000 over the course of their degree – providing funding for each year of their undergraduate programme.

This year's awards were presented by the founding patrons of the Naughton Foundation,

Dr Martin Naughton and his wife Carmel, who were joined by then Taoiseach, Simon Harris TD.

The twelve UCD awardees are part of 37 exceptional Irish students awarded the third level scholarships in the areas of engineering, science, technology and maths. Each prize winner's former secondary school is also awarded €1,000 towards their science facilities.

The UCD Naughton Foundation Scholars are: Alex Gilcreest, Loreto College, Cavan, Engineering; Daria Kolomiychuk, Errigal College, Donegal,

Biomedical Health and Life Sciences; Sharon Dolphin, Yeats College, Galway, Biomedical Health and Life Sciences; Vishal Tutte, Maynooth Post Primary School, Kildare, Computer Science; Sarah Daly, Scoil Chríost Rí, Portlaoise, Laois, Science; Ella McNulty, Scoil Chríost Rí, Portlaoise, Laois, Biomedical Health and Life Sciences; Eoghan Durkan, St Muredach's College, Ballina, Mayo, Science; Theo Staunton, St Patrick's Classical School, Meath, Engineering; Anna Curry, Sacred Heart School Tullamore, Offaly, Computer Science; Ciara Ó Conalláin, Ursuline College, Sligo, Engineering; Aimee McMahon, Presentation Secondary School Thurles, Tipperary, Science; and Sophia Martin, Gaelcholáiste na Mara, Wicklow, Engineering.

## Undergraduate Research Day 2024

**The UCD School of Veterinary Medicine held its inaugural Undergraduate Research Day in November. Led by Dr Sourav Bhattacharjee, from the School's Veterinary Biosciences Section, this initiative showcased the diverse research projects undertaken by undergraduate students.**

Research projects on a wide variety of topics, from microscopy to farm animals, were presented. The students demonstrated their data through presentations and posters. Students then spoke to the adjudication panel consisting of Dr Alison Reynolds and David Kilroy from the School and Dr Mícheál Casey from the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine (DAFM). Following on from this, Dr Casey gave a short talk on the upcoming opportunities for summer placements in DAFM available next year.

A team of students, Julia Mroczkowska, Miguel Barbosa Fleming, Jack Fitzgerald and Grace O'Driscoll, supervised by Dr Locksley Messam, won the Best Presenter Award for oral talk and poster. Theresa Benny, supervised by Dr Michaela Davis, and Ciara McDermott, supervised by Dr Annetta Zintl, shared the Best Poster Award.



# UCD Celebrates 2024/25 Graduate Sports Scholars

UCD celebrated the induction of the 2024/25 Graduate Sports Scholars with a ceremony in November. This prestigious event honoured exceptional student-athletes from across the University who have excelled in both their sporting disciplines and academic pursuits.

The Graduate Sports Scholarship (GSS) programme at UCD supports athletes competing at the highest levels, both nationally and internationally, while pursuing postgraduate studies. It embodies a commitment to balancing athletic and academic excellence, providing a supportive environment for student-athletes to thrive in both areas.

This year's GSS program recognised athletes across a range of sports, including GAA, Athletics, Rugby, Soccer and Rowing. The initiative highlights UCD's dedication to fostering an environment where athletic excellence and academic achievement go hand in hand.

The ceremony celebrated the achievements of the scholars, acknowledging their dedication to academics and sports, as well as the contributions of individual UCD Schools that sponsor the scholarships.



Back row (l-r): Paul Flood, UCD Rowing Club, MSc Materials Science & Eng, Sponsored by the UCD College of Engineering and Architecture; Daire Lynch, UCD Rowing Club, Graduate Entry Medicine, Sponsored by the UCD School of Medicine; Dach Murray, UCD Rowing Club, Radiography, Sponsored by UCD School of Medicine; Cian O' Cathasaigh, UCD GAA Club, MSc Engineering & Business, Sponsored by UCD College of Engineering and Architecture; Niall Comerford, UCD Men's Rugby Club, MSc Aviation Finance, Sponsored by UCD Smurfit Graduate Business School; Jack Nevin, UCD GAA Club, MSc Systems Engineering, Sponsored by UCD College of Engineering and Architecture; Killian Roche, UCD GAA Club, Professional Masters Education, Sponsored by UCD School of Education; Malachy Stone, UCD GAA Club, MSc Food Business Strategy, Sponsored by UCD Smurfit Graduate Business School; Ryan O'Toole, UCD GAA Club, MSc Mathematics & Science, Sponsored by UCD College of Science; Ogiehor Osasere, UCD Soccer Club, MSc Biopharmaceutical Engineering, Sponsored by UCD College of Engineering and Architecture. Front row (l-r): Eoin Ryan, UCD GAA Club, MSc Engineering, Sponsored by UCD College of Engineering and Architecture; Tim Corkery, UCD Men's Rugby Club, MSc Energy Systems Engineering, Sponsored by UCD College of Engineering and Architecture; Molly Hourihan, UCD Athletics Club, MSc Sports Management, Sponsored by UCD School of Physiotherapy, Public Health and Sports Science; Emma Kelly, UCD Women's Rugby Club, MSc Biomedical Engineering, Sponsored by UCD College of Engineering and Architecture; Lucy Dunne, UCD GAA Club, Professional Masters Education, Sponsored by UCD School of Education; Daire Cregg, UCD GAA Club, MSc Project Management, Sponsored by UCD Smurfit Graduate Business School; James Moran, UCD GAA Club, MSc Aviation Finance, Sponsored by UCD Smurfit Graduate Business School. Missing from the photo: Adam Verdon, UCD Soccer Club, away competing on behalf of UCD, MSc Digital Marketing, Sponsored by UCD Smurfit Graduate Business School.

School representatives, including Associate Professor Cormac McCarthy, UCD School of Medicine; Associate Professor Dr Ro Aitken, Director of Student Support, UCD School of Education; Associate Professor Patrick Orr, Associate Dean of Science; and Associate Professor James Matthews, UCD School of Public Health, Physiotherapy and Sports Science, were present to honour their scholars.

Scholarship benefits include a 50% reduction in tuition fees, academic mentoring and support, access to top-tier performance gyms, elite sporting facilities, professional strength and conditioning coaching, and tailored nutritional guidance. Scholars also graduate with a qualification from Ireland's leading university, further enhancing their future prospects.

# Bridges & Bytes Podcast Launched

UCD College of Engineering and Architecture launched their podcast 'Bridges & Bytes' with the first season on 'The Student Voice on AI & Assessment' in the Autumn of 2024. This student-driven podcast takes a deep dive into the evolving role of artificial intelligence (AI) in academic assessments, providing a unique and much-needed student perspective on the future of education.

In a time when AI is reshaping industries, including education, this series offers listeners a fresh, candid, and thought-provoking look at how AI is influencing assessments in universities and schools. The season consists of six episodes, each dedicated to a different type of assessment: lab reports, individual assignments, group projects, closed-book exams, reflective assignments and online assessments. The season concludes with a special review episode that reflects on key themes and insights.

The podcast was created entirely by students. As part of a highly competitive process, student teams were selected to research, script and host each episode. Participants developed



podcasting skills, hands-on experience in content creation and podcast production. These students were not only tasked with exploring AI and assessment from a theoretical standpoint but were also encouraged to gather viewpoints from across the academic and professional spectrum. They interviewed a diverse range of voices, such as academics, librarians, industry experts, and fellow students, creating episodes rich with contrasting views, debates, and candid admissions. Each episode offers a well-rounded discussion on the future of assessment in the age of AI.

Throughout the episodes, listeners will hear frank discussions about how students are currently using AI, as well as their suggestions on how educators can adapt their teaching methods and assessment strategies in response. Whether it's the stress of closed-book exams in sweltering halls, or the lingering questions about online assessments during the pandemic, this series offers real, relatable experiences that will resonate with anyone who has been part of an academic environment.

Follow the podcast on Spotify, Apple, or wherever you get your podcasts!





UCD Athletes Bori Akinola and Sive O'Toole with UCD Athletics Sprint Coach Adam McMullen.

## UCD Athletics

A number of UCD Athletes, both current students and alumni, have been named on the Athletics Ireland National Relay Programme for 2025. In the 100m, UCD Athletes Bori Akinola, Darragh Murphy (Men's U23), Luke Timlin (Men's U20), Sarah Lavin (Women's Senior) and Aisling Kelly (Women's U23) have been named. In the 400m, Hugo Magee has been named for the Men's Senior, while Joe Doody and David Bosch join them on the Men's Senior as well as on the U23s. In the 400m Women's, Renee Crotty has been named for the U23s, and Hollie Kilroe for the U20s.

UCD Athletes have also set a number of new personal and national records this semester. Sarah Healy set a new Irish Indoor 3000m record at the New Balance Grand Prix in Boston in February, with a time of 08:35.19. At the EAP Indoor Invitational in Glasgow Ellie Hartnett and Mary Horgan ran season's best times of 02:08 and 02:10 respectively in the Women's 800m, while Lana Sutton ran a personal best at the England Athletics Indoor Championships with a time of 08:24, in addition to winning the Women's long jump event.

Finally, at the IUAA Indoors, UCD finished in the top five overall for both the Men's and Women's events, taking home first place in the finals for the following events: Sorcha McAllister in the Women's 3000m with a time of 09:53.96, Jonas Stafford in the Men's 1500m with a time of 03:50.72, Renee Crotty in the Women's 800m with a time of 02:15.37, Molly Hourihan in the Women's 200m with a time of 00:24.42, Bori Akinola in the Men's 60m with a time of 00:06.64, and Sive O'Toole in the Women's 60m with a time of 00:07.51.



## In Memory of Gerry Horkan

**In November, UCD Sport learned of the passing of Gerry Horkan, a beloved figure at UCD and a true pillar of the University. As a student, Gerry served as Vice-President and Secretary of the Students' Representative Council, the precursor to the current Students' Union, but his leadership extended beyond the academic, as he captained both the UCD Soccer Club and UCD Badminton Club.**

Gerry continued to be instrumental to student life at UCD long after his graduation, becoming the first Chairperson of the President's Residences Committee, a position he held for over a decade. His commitment to student affairs was also reflected in his role as a founding member of the Student Consultative Forum, now known as the Student Activities Committee.

A passionate advocate for students, Gerry's influence also extended into volunteer work. He was a central figure in the UCD Soccer Club, serving as President until his passing, having previously held the role of Chairman for 32 years. His leadership in the UCD Athletic Union Council, where he was Honorary Secretary for 26 years and President from 2009-2018, further solidified his role as a key figure in student sport at UCD.

Gerry's lifelong dedication to UCD, both as a student and later as a key administrative and volunteer leader both in sport and student life, left an indelible mark on thousands of students, and he leaves a legacy that will be remembered fondly by many.

## UCD Clubs Winter Training Camps

**In January, UCD Mountaineering headed to the snowy peaks of Scotland to take part in specialised winter skills training. The club will set off again in March to the Eryri National Park in North Wales for their next hiking expedition.**

UCD Snow Sports also braved the cold in January with their annual winter ski trip. This year, the club hit the 2,300m high slopes of Val Thorens, France, for a week of skiing, snowboarding and socialising.

Meanwhile, the UCD Boat Clubs took to the much warmer waters of Seville, Spain, for their annual training camp. Members of the men and women's novice and senior squads took part in a series of training sessions both on and off the water, in preparation for the upcoming racing season.







## Refreshers Day

UCD Sport had nine clubs in attendance at the 2025 Clubs and Societies Refresher's Day. Committee members from the UCD Sailing, Karate, Equestrian, Ultimate Frisbee, Lacrosse, Trampoline, Fencing, Olympic Handball and TaeKwonDo clubs were in attendance, taking the opportunity to chat to new potential members and promote their clubs. Overall, UCD Sport saw over 400 new members join during Refreshers.

## UCD Boat Club Documentary

**UCD Boat Club have released a documentary tracing the story of the 'Animals' crew and their historic 1974 win at the Ladies' Challenge Plate.**

The UCD crew were the first Irish team to win the race at the Henley Royal Regatta in almost 100 years, and the first Irish team to win since the event had been opened to all academic institutions in 1967. Developed by head coach Niall Farrell, the documentary features interviews with the crew members and their coaches, and retells the events leading up to what has become known as one of UCD's greatest sporting successes. The full documentary can be found on the UCD Boat Club's YouTube channel.

## UCD Club Updates and Wins

**UCD Women's Rugby successfully defended the Kay Bowen Cup, bringing their total number of wins to three since the intervarsity cup's inception in 2012, and tying the club for the most wins with DCU and the University of Galway.**

UCD AFC are the winners of the Harding Cup for the third year in a row after a 2-1 win against Maynooth University at the end of January.

UCD Tennis Club made a clean sweep at the annual Tennis Intervarsities, with the Men's first team taking home the cup for the third year in a row, while the Women's first team reclaimed the title from Trinity.

UCD GAA have enjoyed some major successes so far this year, winning the Men's Intermediate Football Championship Final 1-18 to 1-10 against ATU Sligo. While it wasn't to be on the day, the Sigerson Cup team made it all the way to the finals, while the Freshers A team took the Billings Cup at home with a close extra time win over DCU. In Handball, six UCD students took part in the ICHA 40x20 singles tournament in Belfast at the start of February, with Daniel Farrelly taking home the prize in the Men's A Final.

UCD Archery hosted their annual Colours event against Trinity, securing the overall win for 2025 and taking home fourteen medals in total. Gold medals were awarded to Ciara Cowap, Melina Collins, Carl McCaffery, Craig Moore, and Katy Moran for individual events, and to Craig Moore, Ciara Douglas and Clodagh Parkinson in the Barebow Team event.

17 members of the UCD Swim Team took part in the Irish National Winter Championships, with 29 personal best times achieved. Medals were awarded to Cormac Donnellan, Jena MacDougald, John Mulhall and David O'Loughlin in the individual events, while two relay teams also made the podium, with UCD taking the gold in the 4x50 Mixed Medley Relay and bronze in the 4x50 Women's Free Relay.

UCD Fencing have taken part in ten national and international competitive events since the beginning of the academic year, including members travelling to Belgium to take part in the Flemish Open, and twice the club travelled up to Derry to take part in the Derry Open and the Northern Ireland Open. The club also hosted their own competitive event, the Belfield Sabre, in November. So far, the club has taken home over 35 medals in a mixture of both individual and team events, including the Sabre, Epée, and Foil events.