

The universities on the island have indicated a willingness to collaborate in a number of areas of perceived mutual benefit, including technology assessment and evaluation; joint marketing of technology to industry; sharing expertise, best practice and training; lobbying governments, and developing joint templates for handling legal issues.

- **Regular meetings with Universities UK**

In September 2004 a delegation from the representative body of universities in Britain, Universities UK, visited Dublin to have discussions with Universities Ireland. This was the first ever 'East-West' meeting between bodies representing British and Irish universities. Issues discussed included governance, leadership and a common approach to European issues in the context of the EU's Bologna process. A second meeting will take place in London in January 2006.

- **Cross-Border Higher Education Co-operation in Ireland and Europe conference**

Universities Ireland was the principal organiser (along with the Centre for Cross Border Studies) of a May 2004 conference in County Cavan entitled 'Cross-Border Higher Education Co-operation in Ireland and Europe'. This was the fourth in a series of North-South Higher Education Conferences organised under the auspices of – and with funding from – the Irish Department of Education and Science and the Northern Ireland Department for Employment and Learning.

This conference examined examples of good practice in cross-border higher education elsewhere in Europe, notably the Oresund region of Denmark and Southern Sweden (with keynote speaker Professor Linda Nielsen, Rector of the University of Copenhagen) and the EUCOR network between French, German and Swiss universities in the Upper Rhine region. The conference was co-chaired by the former head of the Northern Ireland civil service, Sir Kenneth Bloomfield, and the former head of the Irish Department of Foreign Affairs, Mr Noel Dorr.

- **University-Business collaboration events**

In June 2005, UI organised the fifth North-South Higher Education conference (in Belfast) under the title 'Higher Education and Business: Beyond Mutual Incomprehension' (in collaboration with the Joint Business Council of IBEC and CBI Northern Ireland). The keynote speaker was Richard Lambert, former editor of the *Financial Times*, member of the Monetary Policy Committee of the Bank of England and author of the Lambert Review of Business-University Collaboration for the British Government. The conference was opened jointly by the Irish Minister for Education and Science, Ms Mary Hanafin TD, and the Northern Ireland Minister in charge of Employment and Learning, Ms Angela

Smith MP. Other speakers included QUB Vice-Chancellor, Professor Peter Gregson; NUI Maynooth President, Professor John Hughes; the founder of IONA Technologies, Dr Chris Horn; the founder of Andor Technology, Dr Hugh Cormican; the Director of Enterprise Ireland's Biotechnology Directorate, Dr Ena Prosser; and the Irish Life Group head of human resources, Mr Niall Saul.

On 31 August-1 September 2005, also in Belfast, UI organised a high-level private dinner and seminar on university-business links, which was addressed by the Director-General of the Confederation of British Industry, Sir Digby Jones, and the Director-General of the Irish Business and Employers Confederation, Mr Turlough O'Sullivan. This event, which was also organised in partnership with the Joint Business Council of IBEC-CBI, was attended by 25 university presidents, business leaders and senior officials of relevant government departments, North and South.

- **Other activities**

Universities Ireland has worked closely with InterTradeIreland (one of its funders) on a number of issues: the feasibility study into an all-island Technology Transfer and Intellectual Property service; sending an Irish universities delegation to the April 2005 high level conference in the Hague (organised by the Dutch Prime Minister's office and the US Council for Competitiveness) on 'Promoting Innovation and Competitiveness: A Transatlantic Dialogue'; and liaising with a team from CONNECT, the University of California at San Diego's successful programme to link university researchers with high technology and life science entrepreneurs, during CONNECT's May 2005 visit to Dublin and Belfast.

Following Hurricane Katrina in the US in September 2005, Universities Ireland also provided the link between four affected universities in New Orleans – Loyola, Tulane, Dillard and Xavier – and four Irish universities – Dublin City University, NUI Maynooth, University of Limerick and University College Cork – wishing to help the New Orleans students with reduced cost Study Abroad places in the spring 2006 semester.

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Universities Ireland was set up in 2003 by the university presidents on the island of Ireland to promote co-operation between the nine universities in Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland in agreed areas of mutual benefit.

UI's governing council comprises the nine university presidents, plus representatives of its three outside funders: the Irish Department of Education and Science, the Northern Ireland Department for Employment and Learning and the North/South trade and business development body InterTradelreland. Its secretariat is provided by the Centre for Cross Border Studies in Armagh. Its chairman for the 2005-2007 period is Dr Iognáid Ó Muircheartaigh, President of National University of Ireland Galway.

The members of Universities Ireland are Queen's University Belfast, the University of Ulster, University of Dublin/Trinity College Dublin, University College Dublin, University College Cork, National University of Ireland Galway, National University of Ireland Maynooth, Dublin City University and the University of Limerick.

Universities Ireland has undertaken work in the following areas:

- **Research project on harmonising regulations, awarding joint degrees and developing joint credit transfer arrangements between universities on the island of Ireland**

The 74-page final report of this research project, by Lewis Purser, formerly of the European University Association, was approved by the UI council in September 2005. It proposes 11 action points, including:

- a working group to examine the feasibility of establishing inter-institutional, all-island graduate schools in key areas (e.g. bioengineering, nutrition, human rights law)
- a joint catalogue of postgraduate opportunities in all nine universities for use in marketing such opportunities abroad
- the creation of mechanisms to encourage greater North-South partnership arrangements in European programmes such as Erasmus Mundus
- a consultative process to develop common institutional guidelines on the collaborative provision of modules, programmes and degrees
- a working group to examine the feasibility of joint validation procedures between universities wishing to set up collaborative programmes
- a seminar to examine the feasibility of awarding joint degrees between universities across the island (drawing on the recent agreement reached

between University of Ulster and the Higher Education and Training Awards Council).

- **Symposium on e-learning as a strategic imperative for universities in Ireland**

This event was held in Dublin City University in November 2004. It was addressed by two leading authorities on e-learning in education: Dr Andy DiPaolo of Stanford University in the USA and Professor Diana Laurillard of the Department for Education and Skills in the UK. A follow-up UI working group is endeavouring to identify a common module to be delivered by e-learning which all the universities might incorporate flexibly into their core courses. One proposal is for an introductory module on health informatics which might be fitted into postgraduate and continuous professional development courses delivered to doctors, nurses, biomedical engineers and other professionals.



The North-South Master's scholarship awards at the Hilton Hotel in Belfast, 1 September 2005. From left to right: Professor John Hegarty, Provost of Trinity College Dublin, Neal O'Grady (scholarship winner), Dr Iognáid Ó Muircheartaigh, Chairman of Universities Ireland and President of NUI Galway, Stephanie Switzer (scholarship winner), Professor Peter Gregson, Vice-Chancellor, Queen's University Belfast

- **North-South Master's Scholarships**

In July 2005 UI offered two scholarships to students undertaking a cross-border Master's course or a Master's course requiring re-location to the other Irish jurisdiction. These annual scholarships are worth 20,000 euros (£13,600) each: one goes to a Northern student wishing to study at a Southern university, and one to a Southern student wishing to study in the North. The winning candidates for 2005-2006 were Stephanie Switzer from Bangor, Co Down, a Queen's graduate taking a Master's in Commercial Law course at UCD, and Neal O'Grady, a TCD

graduate (and professional fire-fighter) taking an MSc in Fire Safety Engineering at University of Ulster.

- **Delegation to explore enhanced co-operation between Irish universities, North and South, and universities in Africa**

A seminar was held in Trinity College Dublin in March 2005 to discuss the state of Irish university co-operation with countries and higher education institutions in Eastern and Southern Africa (where most of Ireland's priority aid recipient countries are situated), and to explore how that co-operation might be enhanced by the universities North and South working more closely together.

After further discussions between university representatives and the Development Co-operation Ireland (DCI) division of the Irish Department of Foreign Affairs, it was decided to send a small delegation from Universities Ireland to Uganda and Ethiopia to explore the potential for greater higher education co-operation with those countries. The delegation will visit Uganda and Ethiopia for two weeks in late November and early December 2005. DCI is providing free flights and the Irish embassies in Kampala and Addis Ababa are organising their programme. DCI has welcomed this initiative as timely in that it wishes to build a new relationship with the Irish HE sector, North and South.

The delegation consists of Professor Áine Hyland, Vice-President of University College Cork; Professor Jane Grimson, Head of the Computer Science Department and former Vice-Provost of Trinity College Dublin; Dr Peadar Cremin, President of Mary Immaculate College, linked to the University of Limerick; Mr Norman Bennett, Director of Finance at Queen's University Belfast; and Mr Andy Pollak, Secretary of Universities Ireland, who will act as secretary to the delegation. They will hold talks with education and health ministry officials, and visit universities, colleges of education and hospitals. On their return they will report back to the Universities Ireland Council and a reconvened meeting of the interested seminar group.

- **Feasibility Study into the establishment of an all-island Intellectual Property and Technology Transfer Service**

This study, commissioned in partnership with InterTradelreland and the Conference of Heads of Irish Universities (now the Irish Universities Association – the body which represents the seven universities in the Republic of Ireland), was initiated in June 2005. It is being carried out by a team from Heriot-Watt University in Edinburgh. A draft report will be presented to the project steering group in November 2005.