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Cónaidhm Éireannach na Múinteoirí Ollscoile

Irish Federation of University Teachers

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28 July 2008

Letters Page,
Irish Times,
D'Olier Street,
Dublin 2.

A chara,

UNIVERSITY CUTS

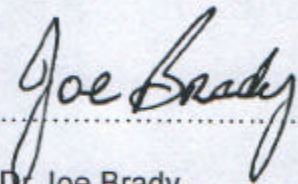
The fact that slashed core funding has generated a crisis for the universities may be front page material for your readers but it comes as no surprise to those of us working in the sector. Last week's news that, despite earlier assurances, the third level sector would not escape the government cuts was greeted with incomprehension although, on reflection, this treatment is par for the course. For years, those of us working in the universities have had to endure large doses of double-talk.

We have been told of the importance of the knowledge economy and the knowledge society and how universities were key to delivering both when the reality was the nobody in government was really interested in the knowledge society – the part about access, opportunity, lifelong learning, flexible education. We have heard about how important it was that Irish universities be world class and how they were being resourced to meet that need. The reality, as pointed out clearly by the President of UCD and the Provost of TCD some months ago, is that core funding per student – the money that we need to educate – has been decreasing ever since 'free fees' were introduced. These cuts have deepened since Minister Dempsey's time in the Department of Education and Science with the result that the universities are now in debt, serious debt. There is a deeply engrained belief among our funders that we can work miracles and that blood can, indeed, be drawn from a turnip.

My members have worked hard, against the odds, to transform the educational experience at third level in the past few years. The transformation was dramatic, traumatic and the dust is still settling but we were looking forward to being able to offer

the kind of educational experience that our students deserve. Now we face this being set to naught at a stroke by short-sighted and ill-considered 'policies'. The impact on morale is bound to be huge and the damage incalculable. Does anybody in the Department of Education and Science care?

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Joe Brady". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned above a horizontal dotted line.

Dr Joe Brady,
President.