



**Cónaidhm Éireannach na Múinteoirí Ollscoile
Irish Federation of University Teachers**

PRESS RELEASE

**Respect for the stakeholders in the
higher education sector will be
reciprocated,
IFUT General Secretary tells Minister
Coughlan**

24 April 2010

A little respect for the stakeholders in the higher education sector and the avoidance of 'stunts' and 'cheap fixes' will go a long way and will be reciprocated, the General Secretary of the Irish Federation of University Teachers, Mike Jennings, told newly-appointed Minister for Education, Mary Coughlan, at the 2010 IFUT Annual Delegate Conference today (Saturday, 24 April 2010).

"If there are issues in higher education that Minister Coughlan is concerned about and does not understand, she should come to us", said the General Secretary. "Who is better able to speak knowledgeably about an issue such as Grade Inflation: the people who work in the system, or the CEOs of two multi-national companies? Above all, the Minister should remember the first duty in the hippocratic oath: "first, do no harm"."

Discussing the current national situation, Mike Jennings stressed that no national sense of common purpose exists. He said the economy has been mismanaged into a spectacular collapse and that many of the most objectionable aspects of the 'transformation agenda' for higher education will not result in any significant financial savings.

"For those of us who work at the service of the public good there is a constant belittlement of what we are, who we are and what we do. Making do with income cuts of between 17% and 20% is not easy. Most academics do not begin to earn salaries until five to seven years later than their peer group due to the length of time it takes to get qualified."

"It is not just the loss of income imposed by a discriminating pension levy, by increases in taxes and by reductions in salary. Threats to our employment contracts, asking us to sign up - sight unseen - to a Higher Education Review Body Report which has not yet even been written and attempts to make us spend endless wasted hours counting and accounting for every minute of our days, are not based on the need to spend money more wisely. They are petty, ideological-inspired attacks on the whole fabric of a higher education system which some of our controllers have never understood and never valued."

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