

IFUT calls on UCD President to desist from appealing age discrimination ruling

Friday April 27th, 2018

The Irish Federation of University Teachers (IFUT) has called on UCD President, Andrew Deeks, to withdraw his statement that the college ‘does not accept’ a highly significant age discrimination ruling against UCD by the Workplace Relations Commission.

In the case taken by IFUT regarding a Senior Lecturer promotion, the WRC ruled that the college breached Sections 6(2)(f) and 8(1)(d) of the Employment Equality Acts and issued an order for retrospective promotion and compensation.

Joan Donegan, General Secretary of IFUT, said that “at a time when discrimination, whether on age, gender or any other grounds, is being so clearly highlighted and condemned, it is inexplicable that the head of UCD should announce in his President’s Bulletin on April 25th that ‘I can assure you that we do not accept this finding.’

“In this ageism case, much of the complainant’s considerable expertise and contribution to the university was deliberately ignored and disregarded by UCD, based on a ‘five-year’ rule that dismissed work undertaken more than five years before her application for the post.

“This bluntly discriminates hugely against all staff of long-standing and especially female academics caring for children. A senior academic who gave expert opinion expressed “astonishment” to the WRC that the woman’s 20 years of contributions to UCD were insufficient to earn her promotion.

“It is particularly noteworthy that UCD refused all attempts via FOI and by Order of the WRC to provide relevant data on the selection process. This includes refusing to supply anonymised copies of applications by other applicants, as provided for under data protection legislation, except, as stated by the WRC, ‘so extensively redacted as to be useless,’ ” Joan Donegan said.

The Lecturer concerned worked as a Lecturer since 1993, received tenure in 1996, and had obtained a PhD in 2006. She unsuccessfully applied for promotion to Senior Lecturer grade in 2013 and had also unsuccessfully appealed against her rejection.

The WRC ruled that age discrimination had occurred. It instructed UCD to appoint the woman retrospectively to Senior Lecturer together with relevant pay adjustments, pension and other relevant entitlements. It also ordered a significant compensation payment.

“The WRC decision and UCD’s response shines a glaring light on the significant issues of ageism that exist in third-level education and indeed broader society. In the light of significant gender inequalities within the Irish university sector this case demonstrates how ageism interacts with gender to compound discrimination against women,” Joan Donegan said.

ENDS

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