

Government must address third-level funding and staffing crisis now, says IFUT

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The government must address the escalating crisis of underfunding and understaffing in our third-level colleges immediately, the Irish Federation of University Teachers (IFUT) has warned.

Mike Jennings, General Secretary of IFUT, said that the next Budget must begin to reverse a consistent government spending allocation policy whereby third-level education is increasingly being reduced to poor relation status in the education system, despite soaring student entry.

“The years 2007 to 2014 saw funding to universities slashed by 26% and other colleges 24%. Staff numbers declined by 4,500 from 2008 to 2013. At the same time student numbers at third-level surged by over 31,000 (16%) from 2008 to 2014.

“Increasing numbers of academic staff are being employed on temporary and highly insecure employment and this is undermining the ability of entire college departments to maintain the reputation and excellent standards built up over decades.

“The undermining of research in our universities must also be addressed. On the one hand the government emphasises the vital role that research and development play in the recovery of our economy and society. On the other, it is evident that research is being demoted and under-supported and lacks the policies and procedures to facilitate academics the actual time to engage in research activities,” he said.

The government cannot blandly promote a message of Ireland being the ‘best little country in the world to do business in’ while at the same time pursuing a policy that is strangling third level education and destroying the ability of colleges to deliver the graduates to service our society and economy.

“The Irish higher education sector requires significantly increased and sustained levels of investment to meet growing student demand. The forthcoming Budget is the place to begin to put things right,” Mike Jennings said.

ENDS

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