

NUI Galway blocking initiatives on gender equality, says IFUT

Friday, Nov 13th, 2015

The Irish Federation of University Teachers (IFUT) has criticized NUI Galway for refusing to implement equality initiative as instructed by the Equality Tribunal and instead seeking to maintain glaring imbalances in promotion of women academics in the college.

On the anniversary (Nov 13th, 2014) of the ruling by the Equality Tribunal against NUI Galway on its treatment of the Dr. Sheehy Skeffington case, IFUT Deputy General Secretary, Joan Donegan, said that “the university, rather than learning from its mistakes, is currently gearing up to take a very hard, legalistic and confrontational attitude to other women employees who have decided to act against discrimination.”

In its ruling of last year, the Equality Tribunal ordered NUI Galway to review its “*policies and procedures in relation to promotion to senior lecturer to ensure they are in compliance with these acts with particular reference to the gender ground*” and to report back to the Tribunal on progress within a year.

“Instead NUI Galway established an internal taskforce, without consultation with staff or their unions, which has failed to engage with staff over the past year or to engage meaningfully on other discrimination cases which are now allegedly destined for High Court, Circuit Court, and Labour Court.” Joan Donegan said.

According to just released HEA stats to end 2014, NUI Galway has by far the worst record of any university for gender discrimination. While 53% of NUI Galway Lecturers are female, the figure drops to 30% for Senior Lecturers, 10% for Assistant Professors and just 14% Professors are female.

The national average at university level is that 35% of Senior Lecturers, 26% of Assistant Professors and 19% of Professor grades are occupied by women

“The HEA supports a number of initiatives to promote equality while the Irish Research Council’s *Gender Strategy & Action Plan 2013–2020: Ensuring Excellence and Maximising Creativity and Innovation in Irish Research* also promotes gender-equality research,” Joan Donegan says.

“Most universities now accept that gender equality is an ‘institutional’ not a ‘women’s’ issue and are actively working to address the problem through:

- The ‘Glass Ceiling’ initiative and the Genovate Programme in UCC
- The Integer Project at Trinity College Dublin
- The Festa Project at University of Limerick
- The Aurora scheme in UCD.

“TCD and UL have become the first Irish higher education institutions to receive awards for gender equality under a new accreditation scheme, Athena Swan,” Joan Donegan said.

“The HEA’s commitment is shown by the recent appointment of Máire Geoghegan-Quinn to chair a National Review of Gender Equality in higher education.”

“A report by this independent and expert group will be completed in June 2016 and will address gender equality and the reasons for continuing gender inequality across all grades of staff, including administrative staff.”

“The launch of initiatives will not, on its own, be sufficient. The existence of so many initiatives, however, proves there is a huge and complex problem that requires multiple measures on an ongoing basis.” Joan Donegan said.

ENDS

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