

# **‘31,000 more university students into 5,000 less teachers doesn’t go!’**

## **- IFUT tells Minister for Education**

*Friday May 5<sup>th</sup>, 2017*

Minister for Education, Richard Bruton, must immediately address the rapidly deteriorating funding and staffing situation at third-level to avoid a further worsening of pressure on staff and students alike, Mike Jennings, General Secretary of the Irish Federation of University Teachers, said at the 2017 Annual Delegate Conference of IFUT in Dublin, Sat, May 6<sup>th</sup>.

Mike Jennings said that with talks between Government and Public Sector Trade Unions to negotiate a new National Public Service Pay and Conditions Agreement due to commence within days, the Minister for Education must urgently up his game.

Addressing the crisis in third-level must be a priority - the shocking stats show the extent of the crisis, he warned:

- Staff numbers in our universities declined by 4,500 between 2008 and 2013, with no improvement since.
- State funding of universities was slashed by 26% during this same period while student numbers surged by over 31,000 and continue to soar but state
- 72% of Irish academics experienced a decline in their working conditions between 2007 and 2014.
- 100% suffered a decline in salaries.

While some commentators worry about a looming ‘Winter of Discontent’, universities have already suffered nearly a decade of discontent and decline.

“IFUT has been seeking a meeting with the Minister for Education and Skills for many months now, a request impolitely ignored. So at the risk of being accused of ‘megaphone diplomacy, I publicly ask Minister Bruton:

- How can he seek congratulations for hiring more teachers at primary and secondary level while expecting university teachers to lecture 31,000 more students with 5,000 less staff?
- Having cut over €200m. from universities did he really believe that giving a paltry €36.5m in the last Budget would provoke anything other than derision, it is akin to applying a wet sponge to the lips of a man dying of thirst.”

The Minister is an intelligent man. He must know that 31,000 more university students into 5,000 less teachers doesn’t go!

“I only hope that he, and his Cabinet colleague, Paschal Donohoe, have the courage and wisdom to act in support of our universities before it is too late,” Mike Jennings said.

ENDS

**For further information on this media release, please contact:**

*John Gallagher, John Gallagher Consulting. Tel. 087 9369888*

*Mike Jennings, General Secretary, IFUT. Tel. 087 6776747.*