

Irish Federation of University Teachers

PROCEEDINGS

OF

ANNUAL DELEGATE

CONFERENCE

2021

Cónaidhm Éireannach na Múinteoirí Ollscoile

1 OPENING

The President opened the **55th Annual Delegate Conference** of the Irish Federation of University Teachers at 11:00 on **Saturday 15 May 2021** by warmly welcoming all Delegates to the virtual platform.

2 WELCOME ADDRESS – PRESIDENT AND GENERAL SECRETARY

The President read a statement received from Niall Collins, the Minister of State, with responsibility for Skills and Further Education. This statement is attached at Appendix II.

Fraternal greetings were received from Rob Copeland (Policy Officer, UCU) and David Robinson (Executive Director, CAUT).

There were video greetings from:

- ETUCE (Susan Flocken, European Director)
- INTO (Joe McKeown, President)
- ASTI (Kieran Christie, General Secretary)
- TUI (Michael Gillespie, General Secretary, Martin Marjoram, President, and Annette Dolan, Deputy General Secretary)

The General Secretary welcomed Delegates to the 55th Annual Delegate Conference of the Irish Federation of University Teachers.

I am pleased to say that this is *the last in the series* of ADCs which you will attend, from your kitchen or your spare room!

This year, just like last year, we are keeping this meeting as short as possible with unfortunately, no guests or friends invited.

Well except for a few:

Our new Deputy General Secretary, Miriam Hamilton, is joining us today. You are very welcome Miriam.

Mike Jennings, former GS, thank you Mike for being here and supporting us as always.

And John Gallagher who is watching events as they unfold, waiting for that perfect sound bite for the media!

I am also proud and delighted to tell you that at 12:15 today our friend and fellow member of IFUT, Professor Luke O'Neill, Professor of Biochemistry in the Trinity College School of Biochemistry and Immunology will address us on the topic: "COVID-19: Update on Therapeutics and Vaccines." We are very grateful to you Luke for giving us your time, because I think every one of us is conscious of just how busy and in demand you have been over this past year.

So, as time is short and it is precious, let us begin.

3 STANDING ORDERS REPORT

The President advised Conference that the Incoming President, Anthony Harvey, had been nominated by the Executive Committee as the Chair of Standing Orders and any queries or questions in relation to Standing Orders should be addressed to him in the first instance.

The Chair of Standing Orders then addressed Conference on the Standing Orders Report or Agenda for ADC, stating that this is the second and, hopefully, last IFUT ADC to need holding digitally; that last years was very much a stripped down affair, so it is only now that we are having to confront the business of holding digital votes. We are extremely grateful to Noel Jackson, DCU member, for organising this and for running things behind the scenes today. A 'test' vote was used to demonstrate how the voting operated via the chat panel.

The Chair of Standing Orders advised that the Executive had nominated Edward Lahiff, UCC, and Michael Hinds, DCU, as Tellers. There were no other nominations.

Proposed by: Celeste Golden, RCSI
Seconded by: Emma Sokell, UCD

These nominations were agreed.

The Chair then proposed the adoption of Standing Orders report as the Agenda for ADC.

Proposed by: Des Carswell, MICL
Seconded by: Celeste Golden, RCSI

The Standing Orders Report was adopted.

4 PROCEEDINGS OF 2020 ADC

The Proceedings of the 2020 Annual Delegate Conference were tabled for approval.

Proposed by: Finian O'Shea, DCU
Seconded by: Tina Hickey, UCD

The Proceedings of ADC 2020 were adopted.

5 VIDEO ADDRESS BY SIMON HARRIS, MINISTER FOR FURTHER AND HIGHER EDUCATION, RESEARCH, INNOVATION AND SCIENCE

The President, on behalf of IFUT, expressed appreciation to the Minister for providing the video for our ADC.

6 PRESIDENTIAL ADDRESS

The Presidential Address was delivered by Angela Flynn, UCC. The text of this address is at Appendix III.

7 ANNUAL REPORT 2020/21

The President invited the General Secretary to present the Annual Report for 2020/21. The text of this speech is at Appendix IV.

The President asked the ADC to adopt the 2020/21 Annual Report.

The 2020/21 Annual Report was adopted.

8 FINANCIAL REPORT

The Financial Report for the year ended 31 December 2020 was presented to the ADC by the Vice President (Finance), Emma Sokell, UCD.

The Vice President (Finance) reporting on the Accounts focused on some of the obvious differences between 2020 and 2019. 2020 was an unusual year and this is reflected in the accounts. There was an income increase due to subscriptions. The big change in income is difference in unrealised loss gain on investment - 2019 (positive €96K), 2020 (negative €55K) - that is related not to loss in real money but in terms of accounting procedures. At the start of the pandemic some investments were turned into cash to avert risks and during the last year there has been a reinvestment of funds and these and related technicalities underpin these figures. Under Expenditure, Head Office personnel costs have increased. The Auditors

are perfectly happy with the exposure due to the change in staff profile. A surplus of income over expenditure of €55K is the summary of the year.

Proposed by: Alistair McKinstry, NUIG
Seconded by: Celeste Golden, RCSI

The report was adopted.

9 APPOINTMENT OF AUDITORS

The General Secretary advised the ADC that the Trustees had decided to reappoint Mazars as IFUT's Auditors for the coming year at their meeting in September 2020.

10 ELECTION OF TRUSTEES

The General Secretary advised that Peter Murray, MU, Finian O'Shea, DCU, and John Dunnion, UCD, had been re-nominated, as Trustees. No other nominations were received so the General Secretary declared these nominees elected.

11 SPECIAL SPEAKER – PROFESSOR LUKE O'NEILL, TCD COVID-19: Update on Therapeutics and Vaccines

The Incoming President welcomed Professor Luke O'Neill, TCD, saying that "Considering how much you are in the public eye these days, it's quite a coup for IFUT that we've managed to get you to ourselves even for just a couple of hours today. Of course, it's also a matter of pride for IFUT that we have experts such as yourself among our members: you and they and all are, as always, most welcome!"

Professor O'Neill gave a very informative presentation on COVID-19: Update on Therapeutics and Vaccines which was followed by a lively Q and A session moderated by the Incoming President.

The Incoming President thanked Professor Luke O'Neill and in closing the session said that over the past year and more IFUT as a Trade Union has been much to the fore in the very necessary task of protecting the interests of our members during the onslaught of Covid and the widespread abdication of responsibility for dealing with it on the part of our institutional managements. But of course IFUT is also a professional association for the advancement of higher education and research; it is from cohorts like ourselves that society expects the expertise for dealing with crises to appear.

12 ADDRESS BY GENERAL SECRETARY DESIGNATE

The President invited the General Secretary Designate, to address Conference. The text of this address is at Appendix V.

13 DEBATE ON MOTIONS

The President drew the attention of ADC to Rule 17 prior to tabling the motions.

Motion 1: Impact of COVID-19

This ADC affirms that through the COVID-19 crisis, we have come to recognise the centrality of education in our lives and society, not just as an instrument of economics, but as something that structures our relationships to one another, transgenerationally, transnationally and transformatively. The people who know this best are those who do the work of educating, and

those who support that work. Their experience, innovation and expertise should therefore be central to the envisioning of the future of education.

Therefore;

Conference notes:

That the Covid-19 pandemic has imposed extraordinary demands on IFUT members, including a dramatic intensification of workload, unprecedented pressure on personal and family life and unreasonable expectations in terms of availability.

Conference calls upon the Executive to lobby and campaign to ensure that:

- 1: *Our collective knowledge is recognised, and that all future-planning is based on a thorough and transparent process of consultation with our members.*
- 2: *Sufficient support is given by HEIs to staff to offer teaching and learning online through providing and funding essential equipment such as ICT and office equipment as well as technical support for home working.*
- 3: *There is a suspension of non-urgent committee work/meetings and an application of a no disadvantage policy for staff in promotions processes and in research funding.*
- 4: *That due weight is given to teaching and academic coordination in promotions processes.*
- 5: *The 'right to switch off' is recognised by HEIs and Government, so that personal and family time at evenings and weekends is protected.*
- 6: *Vulnerable staff and those looking after children and/or elderly family members while working from home are not burdened with unreasonable teaching and admin loads.*
- 7: *Adequate protection is given to research time and annual leave and that additional teaching or assessment duties are not imposed during the summer period where leave is usually taken.*
- 8: *There is no premature return to face-to-face teaching at Level 5.*

With regard to the Education Sector generally;

Conference calls for clear and on-going communication from government in relation to maintaining education during the Pandemic.

This is required not only to allow schools to be able to plan effectively for teaching and learning in different circumstances but also to ensure that students and parents continue to have confidence in the education system. Parents also need clarity to plan for childcare and work commitments.

IFUT also calls for a plan of action to address the consequences of school closures on students' learning. School closures have a major impact on children and young peoples' learning and development. Detailed consideration is urgently needed to take account of the long-term impact on students, particularly those from disadvantaged backgrounds who may be at the highest risk of long-term disengagement from education.

Proposers: TCD, DCU, UCC, ERC Branches

Michael Hinds, DCU, proposed the motion on behalf of the DCU Branch, saying that Conference will have remarked that this motion is a long read, and it had to be. It expresses what we have learned (as workers and educators) through COVID. We have adapted as a workforce to new technologies and workload demands, we have turned our homes into recording studios and classrooms, our cars into offices. We have given seminars from McDonald's carparks. We have worked to accommodate the needs of students who are themselves scattered across the country and working in difficult, sometimes even dire, conditions. We improvised when we had to, turning virtual classrooms into communities. Sometimes we have had to use comedy to keep the spectre of tragedy at bay.

We are coming through COVID, but through it we also know more than ever about the value of our work, but also the toll it can take on our minds and bodies. There is real danger in blurring the lines between work and everything else to the extent that we have. We know what

it took to continue third-level education through COVID, and we know what we lost as well as what we learned.

As decisions are made about the future of university education, here and beyond, our experiences must be central to discussion. For this, we must have a culture based on education and the support of education, rather than a culture of management via “squeeze”. Future-planning has to be a matter of thorough and non-prejudicial consultation with those who actually educate.

We need to be resourced up to (and even better, beyond) adequacy, and we should suffer no disadvantage in promotion processes if our balance of workload altered significantly through COVID. The extraordinary pressures that many faced must be acknowledged, such as those who had parenting or caring responsibilities, especially female colleagues, or those who were bereaved.

We have kept going through this crisis, now we should be determining where we go after the crisis. DCU Branch proposes this motion to conference.

John Walsh, TCD, seconded the motion on behalf of the TCD Branch, saying that the intensification of academic work is a long-term trend, but has been dramatically reinforced due to Covid-19 as many traditional boundaries between work and home have been swept away.

The abrupt move to online working has seen an erosion of personal and family time. The pressure on time has become a toxic threat to mental and physical health. This may take the form of unreasonable demands but is equally about unreasonable expectations that academic staff will be ‘on call’ twenty four hours a day, seven days a week.

This is particularly problematic for early career academics who may feel that they cannot resist unreasonable expectations to complete work at evenings or weekends. They may suffer especially from a creeping tyranny of unlimited expectations.

The ‘right to switch off’ has to be recognised as a fundamental right for all employees following the challenges presented by Covid-19. We need the ‘right to switch off’ enshrined in college policies and ultimately in legislation. This is about fairness, wellbeing and dignity at work.

Proposed by: Michael Hinds, DCU

Seconded by: John Walsh, TCD

The Motion was carried.

Motion 2: Academic Freedom

This ADC notes:

- *The increasing incidence of threats to academic freedom, both nationally and internationally.*
- *That the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union, in explicitly guaranteeing this right, states that: “The arts and scientific research shall be free of constraint. Academic freedom shall be respected.”*
- *That in higher education institutions in Ireland there is currently an increase in pressures for academic staff to record lectures live or in advance and that this can result in an increased threat to academic freedom.*
- *That Irish HEIs have a long tradition of working in collaboration with regulatory bodies and the Higher Education Authority in offering academic programmes in professional and clinical areas.*

Therefore, this ADC calls on IFUT to:

- *Re-affirm its commitment to promote academic freedom and the autonomy of Higher Education Institutions.*

- *Oppose any interferences by third parties in the management and delivery of professional programmes, which undermine the authority of the HEIs, the regulatory bodies and the Higher Education Authority.*

Specifically, this ADC calls upon IFUT to:

Take all necessary measures to ensure that:

- lecture recording remains entirely voluntary;*
- clear guidelines are agreed with the unions regarding who has access to the recorded lectures; how they will be used, including limitations on the subsequent use and/or re-use of this material, how they will be stored, and how they will be disseminated;*
- HEIs explicitly ban the re-running of previously recorded lectures during industrial action;*
- undertakings given or operated by employees during this current national crisis are not to be used as a precedent in any subsequent industrial relations discussion or design of future work practices.*

Proposers: UCC, UCD, TCD Branches

Laurence Davis, UCC, proposed the motion not only on behalf of the UCC branch, of which he is a member, but also on behalf of our friends in the UCD and TCD branches. As this is a composite motion, he focused on that aspect of the resolution drafted by himself and his UCC branch colleague, Jacqui O’Riordan, focusing on lecture recording.

The coronavirus pandemic is impacting all aspects of higher education. In the past year, universities throughout Ireland have asked staff to record lectures live or in advance, with the aim of providing ‘hybrid’ or socially distanced teaching. There is an expectation that these lectures should be uploaded to the institution’s e-learning management system, Canvas for example. This raises important, and pressing, questions about the ownership and use of materials developed and delivered by lecturers.

While there is no doubt that these recordings can provide valuable opportunities to students who may have missed classes, as well as to vulnerable students or those with access needs, the practice of regularly recording lectures also raises serious concerns, among them:

- (1) the enabling of clandestine monitoring and evaluation of ‘teaching quality’
- (2) the possibility of previously recorded lectures being used to circumvent strike action, as happened at the University of Edinburgh in 2018
- (3) unresolved legal issues regarding intellectual property rights
- (4) significantly increased staff workloads associated with the process of digitising teaching content, without corresponding wage compensation or time allowances; this is something all teaching staff have probably experienced over the past year, including the time and training necessary to learn new e-tools, making mistakes and having to start digital lectures from scratch, the time it takes to properly render video files, and the time taken and frustration generated by technical difficulties.

Given these and many other concerns, including the many ways in which the current crisis has been used by HEIs to intensify processes of neoliberalisation and erode academic freedom, this resolution calls upon IFUT to take all necessary measures to ensure that:

- (1) lecture recording remains entirely voluntary
- (2) clear guidelines are agreed with the unions regarding who has access to the recorded lectures; how they will be used, including limitations on the subsequent use and/or re-use of this material; how they will be stored; and how they will be disseminated
- (3) HEIs explicitly ban the re-running of previously recorded lectures during industrial action
- (4) undertakings given or operated by employees during this current national crisis are not to be used as a precedent in any subsequent industrial relations discussions or design of future work practices. Thank you.

Proposed by: Laurence Davis, UCC
 Seconded by: Gobnait O’Byrne, TCD

The motion was carried.

Motion 3: Casualisation, Precarious Workers and Teaching Fellows

This ADC calls on IFUT:

- *to continue to fight to ensure that changes in the HE landscape resulting from the pandemic are not used as an opportunity to increase casualisation in the sector.*

Conference also notes that IFUT:

- *vigorously opposes the exploitation of Teaching Fellows, and other precarious workers in Trinity College which constitute 50% of the workforce.*

Conference therefore calls on IFUT:

- *To support teaching staff who often hold similar qualifications and research portfolios to permanent members of staff and yet are not paid outside the teaching term. This generates an inequitable and unethical two-tier system within the university.*
- *To support the transformation of Teaching Fellows contracts from 9-months to 12-months in order to ensure that staff can avail of their summer break to prepare teaching materials for the following academic year, submit funding applications, attend training, or study independently and keep up to date with their disciplinary fields.*
- *To protect Teaching Fellows' entitlement to pursue diversified career paths within their institution, including a promotion path leading to lectureship or research-oriented roles, and another path leading to senior teaching-oriented roles, depending on individual profiles.*

Proposers: TCD, UCD Branches

Enrica Ferrara, TCD, proposed the motion on behalf of the TCD Branch, echoed earlier sentiments expressed by the General Secretary and President, that the dangerous levels of casualisation in the university sector, with devastating effects on the livelihood and mental health of university staff, have been in the spotlight for years and even more so during the pandemic.

According to recent HEA reports, between 42% and 50% of university staff are on fixed-term contracts or casually employed. These account for about 11,000 workers, 70% of which identify as women.

In Trinity College, the trend towards regularisation of staff on long-term casual teaching contracts has caused a 40% increase in Teaching Fellows and Lecturer Registrars over the past 5 years.

While carrying out the bulk of undergraduate and postgraduate teaching, Teaching Fellows are on full-time term-time contracts. Even though their posts have been regularized, they are on new exploitative and precarious types of contract, they are let go without pay for a variable number of months over the summer, must claim jobseekers' benefits, are not entitled to paid summer holidays or any paid time to upskill or prepare their courses for the next academic year.

It is our belief that these employees are entitled to 12-month posts rather than 9, 10 or 11 month posts. This is an argument valid for Teaching Fellows in Trinity College but also more widely for precarious members of the workforce on similar hybrid contracts.

In addition, many of these staff, disproportionately women, completed postgraduate courses, PhDs and postdocs, have extensive research portfolios, dozens of peer-reviewed articles, book-length publications and yet, as Teaching Fellows, are not entitled to engage in research during contractual working hours.

While the University narrative to explain the growing trend of these contracts is that Colleges are developing academic talent at entry level, no real growth or career path are offered to casual workers and Teaching Fellows. It is our strong belief that these university teachers should be offered a chance to undertake either a teaching career path leading to senior fellowship positions or a research career path leading to professorial academic posts.

Darren Fayne, TCD, in jointly proposing the motion on behalf of the TCD Branch, quoted Luke O'Neill on Postdoctoral research staff "Could not configure a worse system, becoming worse", HR Departments using specific purpose contracts as opposed to fixed-term contracts, appears to circumvent labour law, we have a lot of very concerned colleagues, there is a lot of consternation and IFUT need to deal with the issue.

In seconding the motion, Kelly Fitzgerald, UCD Branch, honoured my former colleague and her work in UCD. The impact of Cush on precarious work in UCD, still demonstrates how much work needs to be done, of postdoc researchers and their perception within UCD and IFUT will continue to combat casualisation.

Proposed by: Enrica Ferrara, TCD, Darren Fayne, TCD
Seconded by: Kelly Fitzgerald, UCD

Motion 4: Staff Well Being

This ADC recognises the huge toll that responding to the pandemic has taken on all workers in the higher education sector. There has been enormous effort made to ensure that the quality of educational opportunities provided to students in the Irish HE sector has been maintained as far as possible in difficult circumstances. Staff have gone online whilst at the same time coping with a myriad of caring responsibilities, including but not limited to children. This ADC encourages IFUT to proactively support initiatives to promote work-life balance and positive mental health among workers in the HE sectors.

This ADC calls on IFUT to work to ensure that the sustained effort by workers in the sector is properly recognised and rewarded by the HEIs and further that IFUT continues to actively support efforts to promote the well-being of workers in the sector.

Proposer: UCD Branch Committee

Emma Sokell, UCD, proposed the motion on behalf of the UCD Branch: Many today have referred to the huge impact that the pandemic has had on our working lives, and we are all well aware how resilient we have had to be.

However the lens of COVID has highlighted many problems that were already present in society.

Before the pandemic a significant majority of UCD faculty indicated in responding to a survey that they needed to work some weekends to stay on top of their workloads. It is likely this is true in all branches across Ireland. In some ways academics are our own worst enemies and treat our work as a vocation. It is critically important that work loads are sustainable and that workers in the sector do not become burnt out. This applies to all staff, although some will be more at risk than others. The UCD Branch calls on IFUT to work to ensure that the sustained effort by workers in the sector is properly recognised and rewarded by the HEIs. Further that IFUT continues to actively support efforts to promote the well-being of workers in the sector.

Kelly Fitzgerald, UCD, in seconding the motion said: So many of us have seen the image of a drowning hand and give us a high five instead of pulling us out. It is not just work-life balance, collective bargaining is very appropriate. Again all the positive wellbeing are very welcome but are not going to help bring us back to a holistic healthy state of mind and body.

Conrad Brunstrum, MU, noted that it should be restated that the only way to achieve work-life balance is not another webinar - but rather collective bargaining.

Proposed by: Emma Sokell, UCD
Seconded by: Kelly Fitzgerald, UCD

The Motion was carried.

Motion 5: Higher Education Funding

It is crucial that the Government prioritises investment in higher education as a public good, so as to guard against further erosion of the capability of the sector to provide not-for profit education. This ADC calls on IFUT to underline the importance of Government support for students in these challenging times and urges it to continue to work to create a higher education environment that is accessible to all students, regardless of their background.

This ADC calls on IFUT to continue to use whatever means available to lobby the Government for the increased funding that is urgently needed.

Proposer: UCD Branch Committee

Emma Sokell, UCD, proposed the motion on behalf of the UCD Branch: This is rather like preaching to the choir but nevertheless it remains an important motion. We hope that the Minister really will act on the funding report as he mentioned this morning. The creation of the new Department is an opportunity for IFUT to focus its continuing efforts to push for increased funding in a sector that has been chronically and systematically underfunded for many years. The numbers of students continues to rise without a commensurate increase in the numbers of staff. It is vital that IFUT continues to advocate for support of higher education as a public good, and not simply as a business. To call out two specific points:

- 1) It was extremely worrying to hear noises around increased efficiencies related to the recent Public Service Agreement. The sector was stretched thin before the pandemic hit and it has been stretched even thinner, close to breaking point, during the pandemic.
- 2) To pick up on a point made by the Minister earlier, it is important that all students have the opportunity to fulfil their potential in the third level sector, no matter what their background is and this needs resources.

The motion calls on IFUT to continue to use whatever means available to it to lobby the Government for the increased funding that is so urgently needed.

Kelly Fitzgerald, UCD, in seconding the motion, said that it is very important to have this so we don't lose sight at this point in time in the pandemic, as it will be 2-3 years before we see the impact on budgets in universities. Need to stay vigilant in terms of not only third level education but the full array of funding that arts, humanities, libraries, receive, and maintain increased funding. Importance of education as a public good not a business model.

John Walsh, TCD, thanked the UCD Branch and said we all agree and it is a really important motion, iterate in light of Minister's comments. Funding withdrawn during financial crash has never been replaced. Public Service funding fell by 40%, core funding fell by 22% per student, devastating reductions for students. That funding has never been replaced and is a huge challenge for the new Minister and the new Department.

Proposed by: Emma Sokell, UCD
Seconded by: Kelly Fitzgerald, UCD

The Motion was carried.

Motion 6: Proposed Updating of the Higher Education Authority Act

damentally and adopt an alternative approach which respects academic freedom. Conference notes that the timing of recent consultation on the terms of the proposed updating of the Higher Education Authority Act by the Department of Further and Higher Education was wholly inadequate and disrespectful to staff in the higher education sector. Conference also believes that the process and consultation paper deliberately evaded the funding crisis in higher education.

Conference condemns unreservedly any attempt to curtail university autonomy and academic freedom of the kind envisaged in the consultation paper and calls upon the Executive to lobby and campaign against the following proposals:

- *The proposal to reduce university governing bodies to 12 members which is unreasonable and will curtail representation of academic staff.*
- *The proposal for Ministerial nominees to constitute one-third (4 out of 12) of university governing bodies which would be a profoundly negative development and would allow external nominees more authority within an institution than its own staff.*
- *Proposals to give a statutory basis to performance frameworks, which are incompatible with academic freedom.*

IFUT calls upon the HEA and Department of Further and Higher Education to revise these proposals

Proposer: TCD Branch

John Walsh, TCD, proposed the motion on behalf of the TCD Branch: HEA Bill misses point in a fundamental way – we have a funding crisis; crisis in student hardship and mental health and steady increase in centralised authority and bureaucracy. And yet the Department appears to view the key challenge as governance. This is not unlike undertaking a close examination of the deckchairs on the Titanic to find out why it struck the iceberg.

It follows a rigidly corporate and commercial philosophy to create small governing bodies, dominated by university leaders and ministerial nominees. This is in line with a narrow interpretation of the Hunt report, but is contrary to international good practice – the OECD in comment on the size of governing bodies still envisaged membership of 20.

The Irish Congress of Trade Unions in its excellent submission to the consultation points out that the academic institutions with the highest reputation and most effective track record are also those which enjoy the highest level of autonomy.

Governing bodies of 12 or perhaps slightly higher in a supposed compromise will devastate staff representation and curtail if not remove completely elected staff members from Board of TCD – similar impacts on UCC and UCD. Also, completely inconsistent with statutory bodies such as Education Training Board which have a membership of over 20 and elected councils – Fingal Council has 40 members.

During debates on Universities Act, the then Minister attracted criticism for proposing a minimum of three ministerial nominees on Board that varied between 20 and 30 members. The current Minister is proposing boards of 12 with at least one third ministerial nominees and a minority of staff from each institution. Minister Bhreathnach responded to lobbying by IFUT and an effective academic lobby by ensuring that governing bodies retained an internal majority including staff and student members. Minister Harris should show similar flexibility – Government cannot on one hand praise academic staff for their commitment and dedication and on the other deny academics any influence in running of their own institutions.

There are clearly established dangers in shrinking Governing Bodies so dramatically and the risks in terms of loss of expertise are significant. For organisations as complex as HEIs, particularly the larger ones, four members of staff is a very small number of people to bring all the competencies required to the table of a Governing Body. There is no justification for a return to small governing bodies where all the power was concentrated in the hands of a few.

The new Department of Further and Higher Education is a positive development for the sector. It would be very disappointing if the first legislation promoted by the new Department discounted the role of academic staff in the governance of HEIs and imposed an unwelcome concentration of power within governing bodies.

We urge the Minister to think again and amend this scheme in the final Bill presented to the Oireachtas.

John Walsh clarified that voting on the content of this motion is crucial as the content of the motion seeks opposition to the reforms. The Minister struck encouraging notes this morning and we should lobby him.

The General Secretary commented that listening to the Minister this morning and conscious of the issues IFUT prioritised with him in relation to funding and precarity, IFUT put the changes to the HEA as one of the most significant issues to be dealt with and is concerned that he didn't speak about that, IFUT need to be vigilant, IFUT can still feed into ICTU with any concerns members have.

Conference agreed to change the title of the motion to 'Defending autonomy in the context of the HEA Bill'.

John Dunnion, UCD, seconded the motion saying that he is on governing authority in UCD, and has spoken to many colleagues about the dangers with reduced governing authorities and reduced representatives of staff and students.

Proposed by: John Walsh, TCD
Seconded by: John Dunnion, UCD

The Motion was carried.

Motion 7: Free Universal Child Care Provision

The pandemic has highlighted the negative effects that can occur when access to essential services and facilities is impeded, either through cost or because of restricted availability.

IFUT believes that universally available, high-quality all-day childcare provision would be of major benefit to society.

In particular, this will be of benefit to women who are disproportionately disadvantaged by the difficulties experienced when trying to access such provision. (IFUT notes, however, that the availability of childcare must be without prejudice to the rights of parents/guardians to access relevant forms of leave and support in order to provide care for their child(ren) in a manner that suits their own families.)

IFUT will campaign with others for the introduction of universally available, high-quality childcare provision (including after school care) for all children whose parents/guardians wish to avail of it, funded through central taxation and free at the point of use.

Proposer: ERC Branch Committee

Caitríona Fitzgerald, ERC, proposed the motion on behalf of the ERC Branch saying that the ERC Branch members call on the IFUT to campaign with others for the introduction of a high quality childcare provision (including after school care) by the state through progressive taxation which is free at the point of use for *all* parents/guardians who wish to avail of it.

Families are faced with the added burden of a 'second' mortgage in the form of childcare costs whilst juggling full-time employment. In addition, families also rely on extended family members including siblings and grandparents to fill in the care gaps between crèche and school times. Recent GUI Research shows that 21st century grandparents play a key supporting role in caring for their children's children. Whilst this is an opportunity for children to build positive and loving relationships with grandparents, it can however place a burden on grandparents who are unable to cope with the care of young children.

Furthermore, women continue to be unequally effected by the current lack of a universal provision of childcare as they still occupy the 'primary' caring role. Again, research shows the effects this has on women's career pathways and progression as they often have to take longer career breaks to care for their children. Fathers also miss out on the opportunity to spend more time caring for their children as the same cultural expectation is not there for them to be either facilitated or encouraged to be 'stay-at-home' dads. The availability of childcare, however, must be without prejudice to the rights of parents/guardians to access relevant forms of leave and support to provide care for their child(ren) in a way that suits their own particular familial needs.

The pandemic has highlighted the tremendous strain and pressure the lack of universal childcare provision is placing on families *and* extended families. Indeed, COVID-19 draws a sharp focus on the negative effects that can occur when access to essential services and facilities is impeded, either through cost or because of restricted availability.

If employers want employees' minds to be focused on their jobs, it is also in their interests to campaign for universal childcare provision, after all, employers are also parents, so it's a win-win for everyone. Furthermore, Nordic countries such as Sweden have proved it is possible to fund a universal childcare provision through progressive taxation – so, why can't we do the same?

This motion is one example of what we can do to make our society a more equitable one for us all. The pandemic has brought us to a crossroads. Which road are we now going to take to make sure that we create an equitable, caring and progressive society that looks after the interests and needs of *all* citizens and not just the 1% at the top?

Thank you for your attention.

Des Carswell, MICL, advised delegates that early career researchers who are educators need to be very mindful of the importance of the connection with early childhood curricula.

Proposed by: Caitriona Fitzgerald, ERC
Seconded by: Conall O Duibhir, ERC

The Motion was carried.

Motion 8: Research Staff

Research staff, alongside lecturing staff on fixed/precarious/casual contracts, are vulnerable members of our community and face particular issues with respect to employment insecurity.

We therefore propose that IFUT should pursue every initiative to recruit researcher staff to its ranks and to secure a professional career structure within the higher education sector.

Proposer: UCC Branch

Brendan Palmer, UCC, proposed the motion on behalf of the UCC Branch, firstly acknowledging the great support the General Secretary has shown the research community during her time with IFUT and we wish her the best of luck in her next adventure.

This motion hones in on a number of themes that have emerged throughout today's ADC. In October 2011, UCC Governing Body approved a first version of the HR drafted Research Career Framework. This document was written without researcher input and did little to reassure researchers of the career path that lay ahead. Quite the opposite in fact, with regular surveys of research staff highlighting this fact. Indeed, it devoted a greater word count describing how researchers can be moved on from the university, than it did describing mechanisms in which they might be retained.

The diminution of the title PhD was evident, where staff at post-doctoral level were identified as “trainees” in the original document.

To the eternal credit of IFUT, a Memorandum of Understanding was signed between the union and the Irish Research Staff Association within 6 months. The agreement is geared to ensure more effective representation for researchers on pay and conditions and to protect the rights of individual researchers.

It is my contention that the original Research Career Framework was as a direct result of, and guided by, government funding cutbacks following the financial crash of 2008 and changes in employment law. It was about career progression, BUT career progression out of academia. In the intervening years IFUT has successfully represented many individual researchers. Today, almost a decade later, we need to move beyond representing the individual.

Fast forward a decade and we are on the cusp of another financial crisis facing academia. It is unsurprising therefore that the Irish Universities Association saw fit to publish their own version of a national Researcher Career Framework last November. It is a typically empty, ill-conceived shell of a document. More page space is again devoted to describing termination processes than any real attempt at putting in place a serious career structure for researchers. Again, no researcher input was sought in the creation of this document and IFUT were only informed immediately prior to its release on the IUA website. This cannot be allowed to become the de facto approach by universities.

To many researchers, and indeed all fixed term and casual academic staff, the benefits of union membership may not be immediately apparent.

Union visibility among this group is low and we need to become more proactive in our recruitment strategy. This motion seeks to build upon local initiatives already underway and move towards a coordinated national recruitment campaign.

In the UCC branch we have already started down this road by focusing on three key targets

- Developing materials
- Direct engagement
- Increasing visibility of the union on our campuses

I was delighted to hear UCU’s message of support when the conference opened, as they have a range of resources already in place which I hope, should the motion be accepted, will form a platform from which, we can ourselves build.

Researchers feature prominently in this motion given recent actions by the IUA, but adoption of this motion will ultimately feed synergistically towards other fixed term and casual staff groupings, that now form the backbone of our Higher Education Institutions. We need to recognise that the institutions in which we work, are undergoing significant changes in employment practices. Researchers are no longer recruited and retained like they once were. Lecturing staff are no longer recruited and retained like they once were. The embedding of these practices in the early stages of a career in academia have significant potential downstream consequences.

To conclude, I was struck recently by a 3-part series that appeared on the Noteworthy news website. Through Freedom of Information requests, the piece revealed that we have now reached a point where an average of over 11,200 lecturers are working on a temporary or casual basis. I remarked at last year’s ADC that if there was ever any doubt of the need for workers to be part of a union, then Covid-19 pandemic illustrated why this was the case. If ever there were a time to kick start a recruitment drive looking to attract the most vulnerable members of our community to our union, then it is now. UCC proposes this motion to the ADC.

Sinead Kennedy, MU, thanked Brendan and seconded the motion on behalf of the MU Branch. MU delighted to second this motion as it speaks very much to the themes we have being

speaking of today, neo-liberal strategies of universities, looking forward to a lifetime of casualisation and precarity. In MU, very central to various strategic plans is the increase of PhD students and as individuals and schools, we are under huge pressure to recruit significant numbers of PhD students, which presents a huge ethical problem as we can offer them very little – student debt and facing into a lifetime of precarity and casualisation and that is the career path they are facing. Very much welcome this motion that IFUT would specifically look at the issue of researchers and welcome the changes to membership fees that will make IFUT more accessible to low paid and precarious staff.

John Walsh, TCD, strongly supported the motion as a tribute to work for individual researchers and thanked the General Secretary for all her work. Career frameworks are nonsense, absolute fiction, designed to undermine the position of researchers and casual employment. Treatment of researchers is an absolute disgrace. We have arrived at a point where I personally would not recommend anyone to this route as it is not a viable path for a career.

Lawrence White, RIA, as a retired member of staff who worked for 18 years as a Researcher, endorsed this motion and took the opportunity to commend the General Secretary for what she has done for research staff.

Proposed by: Brendan Palmer, UCC
Seconded by: Sinéad Kennedy, MU

The Motion was carried.

Motion 9: Payment for Marking of Examinations

In light of the restoration of similar allowances across the public sector, this motion calls on the IFUT leadership to seek the restoration of the 25 per cent reduction to payments for the marking of examinations which was introduced during the financial crisis. If necessary the 1% sectoral bargaining fund in the latest pay agreement should be used for this purpose.

*Proposer: David Humphreys, Accounting and Finance, UCC
Secunder: Ray Donnelly, Accounting and Finance, UCC*

David Humphreys, UCC, proposing the motion:

- Motion concerns the reduction in payments received by College Lecturers for the marking of examinations.

Specifically:

- **The motion calls on the IFUT executive to, as a matter of priority, seek the restoration of the 25% cut to the payments received by College Lecturers which was levied during the financial crisis.**

Context of the motion:

- The payments received by College Lecturers for marking examinations were reduced by 25% as part of the Haddington Road Pay Agreement.
- **This reduction was part of a sectoral agreement specific to the educational sector.**
- **Cuts to allowances in other areas of the public service were generally lower in percentage terms (averaging 5%-10%).**

Effect of cut in payments:

- **These cuts have had a particularly disproportionate effect on younger/early career stage academics. These academics typically have larger teaching loads, so the monetary loss is more significant.** Additionally, such academics are typically on lower base salaries. Consequently, the cumulative effect can be significant.

What has happened since these cuts were levied?

- There have been a number of successive public sector pay agreements which have restored both pay and allowances across the public sector.
- **It is worth noting that many professions in the public sector have had their allowances fully restored.**
- **Therefore, the continued absence of a restoration of the allowance for marking examinations would appear to be a significant anomaly in public sector pay.**

What should happen next?

- The 1% Sectoral Bargaining Fund which is part of the latest public sector pay deal is an ideal opportunity to seek the restoration of this allowance in full.
- **The IFUT executive should prioritise this matter in any negotiations.**

Félim O'hAdhmaill, UCC, seconded the motion and said this affects more than academics and lecturing staff. This is a cut to low paid workers and we should be asking for it to be restored.

John Doran, UCC, supported the motion and advised of the background to the cut which came from the Haddington Road Agreement and cuts across the board. It is important to note examinations only applies to college lecturers and part-time staff. However, all staff are paid for correcting included in their staff, pointed it was in fact pay. College Lecturers, in the lead up to the cuts, had received far smaller increases than professors and senior lecturers, the cut imposed a wider differential between Ls and SLs and professors. They are now getting the full cut unwound – got forgotten as part of the employers. IFUT to prioritise this for the lower paid and younger membership who have high volumes of teaching.

Proposed by: David Humphreys, UCC

Seconded by: Félim O'hAdhmaill

The Motion was carried.

Motion 10: Bullying and Harassment in the Workplace

This ADC proposes that Bullying and Harassment in the Workplace must be acknowledged by employers as a matter of real crisis, rather than a short-term cause célèbre, and that institutionalised abuses of power come not only from failures of policy and practice, but an absence of protection for those attempting to call out such abuse. We call on our employers to put in place robust measures to ensure such protection, complemented by a regular systemic review of cases that arise to support improvements in policy and practice.

Proposer: DCU Branch

Michael Hinds, DCU, proposed the motion on behalf of the DCU Branch, saying that Congress must know that it is devastating to be a victim of bullying and/or harassment. The injury can take many forms. There are consequences for mental health and physical well-being, there are profound implications for an individual's ability to progress and prosper, both at work and socially. Fundamentally, victims are deprived of a basic right, which is to live your life without being subject to intimidation. Victims also lose the ability to trust, because too often they are not believed, or initially asked if they are somehow mistaken. We know that there is now more apparent awareness than ever before about the damage that workplace harassment and bullying can do, and welcome that there is now a proliferation of policies and ever-evolving mechanisms designed to address the problem. This should signify meaningful change, but only if workers feel protected in practice. Above all, they have to trust that HEIs will not take the self-protective option of pre-emptively calling the claim into question, or of sympathising but expressing helplessness, or just hoping that the problem will disappear. They need to know that complaints will be recorded and investigated without prejudice. Instead of hypothesising about what is or isn't bullying, this motion asks that we deal in reality. This problem exists, let's admit that it exists. DCU Branch proposes this motion to conference.

Sinead Kennedy, MU, seconded the motion on behalf of the MU Branch, stating that in the last couple of years the global Me2 movement, sexual harassment in society, within workplaces, universities have not had the best track record of taking these issues seriously. A report issued last year on assaults on students which sexual harassment units did not even investigate. This is a cultural and societal issue – very concrete strategies are implemented at a university level. Great insights these are not just about individual cases, there are structural issues. Structures in place which contain these issues. One of the great themes is

the issue of casualisation and precarity which makes coming forward to talk about these issues so much more difficult if you are precariously employed.

Proposed by: Michael Hinds, DCU
Seconded by: Sinead Kenney, MU

The Motion was carried.

14 CLOSING OF CONFERENCE

The President thanked everyone for attending and for their patience with this unusual online Conference, an ADC like no other, during very challenging and very difficult times. At this time solidarity is exactly what is needed. IFUT demonstrate a super example for all of us, our colleagues and students.

The President before handing over to our Incoming President iterated her absolute pleasure and privilege to work with Joan, thanked everyone in Head Office who worked very hard to get this ADC up and running, particularly the Assistant General Secretary (FL). Thanked Noel Jackson, DCU, for handling everything behind the scenes, and Enrica Maria Ferrara, TCD, for tweeting.

The Incoming President then addressed Conference:

Colleagues and friends, the person you have just heard speaking, Angela Flynn, is an exceptional individual. It is a great shame that more than the latter half of her presidency of IFUT has taken place under the shadow of Covid, so she has been deprived of the ability to interact with us all in person, as she does so well. However, I think everyone will agree that over the last year she has more than overcome this obstacle. She has taken in her stride the need to switch to digital, and has certainly fulfilled the demanding task of presiding over our fine organisation in that way while at the same time doing her day-job at UCC, participating in worthwhile initiatives across the Unions in Cork and elsewhere, and being very active politically. Also, we shouldn't forget the stints that she has put in at the hospital, as a front-line volunteer! Apart from her energy, what links all these things is Angela's altruism: she has done all of them for the good of others.

So, gee, thanks, Angela; you have given me an impossible act to follow as President! And it looks even more formidable when I look back to your wonderful predecessor Aidan Seery, and the fine succession of IFUT Presidents that went before him. Not for nothing do I consider it a tremendous honour to have been chosen to be the next in this line, and I'm very grateful to the membership for putting their confidence in me in this way; all I can say is, I will try to live up to it.

So, I will be following Angela. And if she has set the bar high, how about the bar that our excellent General Secretary Designate Frank Jones will have to try to clear when he takes over from Joan Donegan in the next few months! Angela has already, and appropriately, paid tribute to Joan for the enormous debt that we owe her; for the fact is that, ever since Joan joined the IFUT staff, every branch or individual member who has been helped by her with their problems – in other words, all of us – will have been struck by her warm personal encouragement of the people afflicted; by her realism coupled with constant cheerfulness; by her mild-mannered yet ruthless skill in negotiation; and above for all by her patience and dogged, tenacious determination, sustained year after year after year when necessary, to get an acceptable outcome for us, no matter how great the enormous workload it placed upon herself. I trust we'll have a chance to express our deep gratitude properly and in person some time later this year, but I did want to say at least that much now. So, thank you, Joan, thank you, Angela; thank you everyone!

The General Secretary congratulated and welcomed Anthony Harvey as the new President of IFUT. She stated that Frank will have a wonderful advisor and supporter by his side.

The General Secretary thanked Angela Flynn for her term as President. She said that it was so unfortunate that the President's term of office coincided almost in its entirety with the Pandemic. She said that she firmly believed that the European and World-wide education Trade Union movement was deprived of the very valuable contributions she would have made

to all the events and conferences. Angela has been an excellent chair, colleague and good friend. She said that she hoped their friendship would continue into the future.

The General Secretary thanked everyone for their kind tributes today, e-mails, cards and gifts. She said that she was very touched.

The General Secretary stated that as she hands over the torch to Frank she wishes him well. He has a wonderful team, in Phyllis, Fiona and Una. Miriam is joining a very special family. The hand-over of work will commence in June. The General Secretary confirmed that she will continue to take hearings and finish some case work. She said that she starts her role in earnest working in ETUCE in July and will take annual leave in August. She said that she hopes to start a new career in September working as a Mediator.

The General Secretary said that today was a very special day for her as it marks the end of her career with IFUT. She said that it has been an honour and a privilege to work with this great organisation and in the Trade Union movement generally.

She paid thanks to, Angela Flynn our now outgoing President. What a wonderful chair today! A Natural! Anthony Harvey (Chair of Standing Orders), she thanked him for his professionalism and organisational skills. The General Secretary thanked the Executive and Council members, Trustees, Tellers, Branch Committees, past and present. She thanked John Gallagher (Media Consultant), Seán Couch (Financial Consultant), Dave Murphy (webmaster), Mike Jennings (support in report writing), she thanked the Tweeter, Enrica Ferrara, TCD.

Also, thanks were given to the guest speaker, Luke O'Neill, who gave a very enjoyable and interesting presentation. And thanks were also paid to Noel Jackson for all his hard work behind the scenes in the running of the conference on line today. The GS thanked the Delegates for coming to the ADC on a Saturday, supporting their Branches and this wonderful organisation.

And finally she paid tribute to the membership of IFUT. Thank You!

The conference then concluded.

15 May 2021

APPENDIX I

Delegates (as recorded at Conference)

Central Branch:

Anthony Harvey (RIA)
Larry White (RIA)

DCU:

Finian O'Shea (Trustee)
Margaret Robson
Michael Hinds
Noel Jackson

ERC:

Caitríona Fitzgerald
Conall Ó Duibhir

MICL:

Des Carswell
Darach Sanfey

MU:

Conrad Brunstrom
Máire Ní Mhórdha
Marie Cullen
Peter Murray (Trustee)
Philipp Rosemann
Sinéad Kennedy

NUIG:

Liam Morrison
Alastair McKinstry

RCSI:

Ben Ryan
Celeste Golden
Judith Harmey

TCD:

Andrew Loxley
Darren Fayne
Dónall MacDónaill
Elizabeth Culleton-Quinn
Enrica Ferrara
Gobnait Byrne
Joanne Kenney
John Walsh
Mary Sharp
Paula Hicks

UCC:

Amin Isaloo Sharif
Angela Flynn
Brendan Palmer
David Humphreys
Edward Lahiff
Félim O'hAdhmaill
Jacqui O'Riordan
Jenny Butler
James Cuffe
John Doran
Laurence Davis
Michael Delargey
Mike Fitzgibbon
Miranda Corcoran
Noreen Byrne
Rosarii Griffin
Stephen O'Brien

UCD:

Emma Sokell
Joe Brady
John Dunnion (Trustee)
Kelly Fitzgerald
Russell Higgs
Tina Hickey

APPENDIX II

GREETINGS FROM NIALL COLLINS, MINISTER OF STATE , Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science with responsibility for Skills and Further Education

Introduction

Good afternoon to you all and thank you for the invitation to address your conference.

I am delighted with the chance to acknowledge and thank your members, especially the lecturers, researchers and professional staff, for the hard work and commitment you have shown during the COVID-19 pandemic. In ensuring that the further and higher education system continued apace, you have been at the forefront of putting the learner first and this is to be highly commended. As a former LIT lecturer I understand particularly the complexities that involved, the difficulties you encountered and overcame, and I thank you sincerely for your dedication.

I want to take this opportunity to especially acknowledge and thank Professor Luke O'Neill for his sense of confidence and positivity during these times. I would also like to pay particular thanks to your outgoing General Secretary, Joan Donegan for her unfailing dedication and perseverance in her role, I wish you well in your retirement. I would also like to welcome your new Incoming General Secretary Frank Jones who I understand will take up the mantle from Joan in September.

Conclusion

I am aware I have only had the opportunity to speak very briefly but before I conclude, I wanted to say that I am grateful for the engagement shown by your members in working with this new Department. I am delighted, as Minister of State for Skills and Further Education, to say that my Department has exciting plans and is developing a series of initiatives to ensure our workforce has the right skills to ensure we are positioned to take advantage of economic and social development opportunities in the aftermath of the pandemic.

I look forward to working with you and your members in the future and I hope you enjoy the rest of your conference.

APPENDIX III

IFUT PRESIDENTIAL ADDRESS 2021 DR ANGELA FLYNN, UCC

The centrality of security to academic freedom

IFUT Colleagues and friends, it is my absolute pleasure to address you today at this our annual delegates' conference 2021. It is with VERY mixed feelings I am talking to you today as the end of this conference marks the end of my term as President of IFUT. It has been an absolute privilege to work on behalf of IFUT members over the last two years. I have been very fortunate to have had the opportunity to work with our superbly dedicated head office staff and with a committed national executive committee, but more on them later.

These last 15 months have been quite extraordinary times. The COVID19 Pandemic has had an incredible impact on our sector. In my address to our last ADC in September 2020 which I titled "Pivoted and Pivotal", I spoke to you of the incredible efforts our members had gone to in order to continue teaching, assessment, and research throughout the most difficult and stressful conditions that many of us have ever known. I also pointed out the centrality of our Higher Education sector to finding the solutions to the COVID19 pandemic, to working on researching best practices, and to providing the evidence base for the actions and interventions that ameliorated our responses to the situation, reducing the spread of the virus, and ultimately saving lives.

Later this morning you will hear from Professor Luke O'Neill who, among many others across a multiplicity of scientific disciplines, has contributed crucial work towards a better and deeper understanding of COVID19 with the result of improved adherence to public health guidelines, safer working conditions, and evidence-based decision-making around the critical defence of vaccinations. His work, and the work of all the scientists, public health experts, and health professionals could not be done but for the dedication and ingenuity of our third level education sector. As graduates of our Higher Education sector nurses, midwives, doctors, physiotherapists, radiographers, technicians, and clinical support staff have depended on the existence of robust and well supported third level education in order to study, learn and research. They were supported in their studies by expert subject librarians and often casually employed tutors who guided them to graduation.

As I was planning this speech over the last while I wondered on which topics I should focus. There are of course the old favourites that feature as recurring themes in our conferences over the years: Casualisation and precarious work in Higher Education, Adequate funding of Higher Education, Academic Freedom, valuing researchers, Gender Equality in Higher Education, Workload issues, and Neoliberal managerialism in the university. The list goes on. Conference each of these topics could, yet again, make an appearance in any of our speeches today or at any union conference within our sector internationally. Rather than these issues being eclipsed by COVID19, they have in fact been **amplified** by it.

Casualisation

We have warned for a long time about the debilitating impact of casualisation as the Cush report from 2016 illustrated. Despite its recommendations, we know that our universities continue to have an excessive reliance on fixed term and part-time employment. IFUT has led the charge on challenging these practices and has singularly made incredible progress in improving this situation, achieving CIDs for many of our colleagues. Universities often point to their limited budgets and restricted head counts as impeding their abilities to offer more secure employment. This point, and the fact that precarity is part of the bigger picture of the commodification of education and research, brings us neatly to the core issue of funding of Higher Education.

Funding

IFUT and other bodies have long campaigned for robust publicly funded higher education and I was glad to hear the Minister refer in his video address earlier to the long-awaited final report on the future funding of the sector. The importance of this cannot be overstated. As our

former President Dr Aidan Seery has noted previously, Higher Education is a key element in establishing a critical and informed democracy. Conference, this is not just a concern for those of us who work in the Higher Education sector. We know that a critically informed society is an important instrument in countering the rise of radical right-wing intolerance and bigotry. Here in Ireland and internationally we continue to see increasing numbers of people join the ranks of anti-intellectual, conspiracy followers who often make no effort to hide their anti-migrant, anti-LGBT sentiments, targeting the vulnerable and marginalised sectors of society.

Commodification

We know also that without adequate state funding, Higher Education moves further and further out of reach of whole sections of society. Without adequate funding universities and higher education become increasingly commodified, contributing to an increasingly neo-liberalised sector which threatens academic freedoms. In the neoliberal world *choice* and *individual responsibility* are emphasised, the state's responsibility is negated and, in many cases, disappears entirely. Those most vulnerable are left at the mercy of the vagaries of the market, revealing the inequities of our provisions and marginalising a growing proportion of society. We can see how this has worked in the areas of health and housing. Those of us in the trade union movement have a crucial role to play in recognising this process, monitoring it, calling it out, lobbying against this, and, most importantly, voting for Parties who offer alternatives to a marketised neoliberal society.

Academic Freedom

I mentioned Academic Freedom, and Conference, remember our union is unique in that it has the promotion and protection of academic freedom in its objects. While the protection of AF in the Irish Universities Act 1997 is comprehensive: [*"A member of the academic staff of a university shall have the freedom, within the law, in his or her teaching, research and any other activities, either in or outside the university, to question and test received wisdom, to put forward new ideas and to state controversial or unpopular opinions and shall not be disadvantaged or subject to less favourable treatment by the university for the exercise of that freedom"*], we cannot afford to let down our guard on this as we know that Academic Freedom is threatened in many places, some more close to home than others.

In the UK for example, Senior management at the University of Liverpool intend to make 32 academic staff members in the Faculty of Health and Life Sciences redundant as part of a restructuring exercise titled 'Project SHAPE'. It has targeted a percentage of its teaching and research staff for *collective* underperformance on the basis that they have not met research income targets. Represented by the UCU, staff members were never informed that they had to meet those targets: they were imposed post-hoc. This is a practice that is known as 'rank and yank' and is so reviled that employers such as Amazon have stopped using it. The UCU believes that this is the first time 'rank and yank' has been used for mass redundancy in any European University. Conference, I hope you will join me in sending a message of solidarity to our colleagues in the UCU in Liverpool as they engage in their industrial action in order to try and prevent the threatened redundancies.

SAR/Academic Freedom

Academics face even grimmer threats in other parts of the world. Through our International networks we support campaigns for the freedom of scholars in Myanmar, in Zimbabwe, in Iraq and many other countries. I am a representative of UCC on the Scholars at Risk Ireland committee. Scholars at Risk protects scholars suffering grave threats to their lives, liberty, and well-being by arranging temporary research and teaching positions at institutions in the network as well as by providing advisory and referral services. By arranging temporary academic positions at member universities and colleges, Scholars at Risk offers **safety** to scholars facing these grave threats, so their ideas are not lost, and they can keep working until conditions improve and they are able to return to their home countries. IFUT are working closely with SAR Ireland and we are in the very early stages of establishing a process in which we may be able to contribute to supporting scholars at risk coming to Ireland for safety.

To give you an example of the risks our colleagues in other countries face, you may have heard of Prof. Ilham Tohti, a scholar of economics and public intellectual, who recently spent

his 50th birthday in a Chinese prison having been sentenced to life in prison in September 2014.

Officials accused him of using his lectures to incite violence, of plotting to overthrow the current government of the People's Republic of China and of participating in separatism activities. Professor Tohti is a scholar of economics at the Central Minzu University in Beijing and an advocate for the rights of China's Uyghur minority group.

Aside from our obligation to call for his release and to lobby through groups like SAR, the story of Prof Tohti is closer to us than you might think. A number of **Irish Universities** were, up until recently, advancing plans to establish strong connections with Minzu University, plans that are now stopped thanks to the concerns raised and the pressures applied by academics and staff in Irish universities like UCC and UCD. Letters were written and signed and published in the newspapers. **This could not have been achieved in an Irish University context that did not have the security of a strong ethos of academic freedom.**

Closer to home, in England, proposed changes to legislation regarding 'free speech' were outlined in the Queen's Speech a few days ago. The UCU General Secretary Jo Grady has responded pointing out "There are serious threats to freedom of speech and academic freedom on campus, but they come from the government and university managers, not staff and students. Widespread precarious employment strips academics of the ability to speak and research freely and curtails chances for career development".

Canada

The interference of outside bodies in the hiring of academics is a final threat to academic freedom which I want to mention today. This was illustrated in a current case in the University of Toronto Faculty of Law. During the process of appointing a new Director, a major donor raised concerns about a selected candidate's research and advocacy concerning human rights in Israel and Palestine. The hiring was terminated; a decision widely thought to be politically motivated. Following a request for assistance from the Canadian Association of University Teachers (who have censured the administration of the U of Toronto), IFUT have sent a message of solidarity in which our General Secretary has stated that the academic in question's "...cause is our cause and CAUT's fight for her is our fight too". This type of interunion solidarity is more important than ever.

This brings us to my last point. I think it is important to acknowledge the current terrible situation in Palestine. In 2014 IFUT ADC passed a motion regarding Higher Education Rights in Palestine which committed the Executive to work with other international unions to provide practical support for trade unions representing Palestinian academics in vindicating that right. In the light of recent escalation of violence in Palestine, Education International, of which IFUT is an active member has called on the international community to respect the right of all children and adults to safe and secure learning and teaching environments where students can develop and learn, and teachers work in freedom and security. I hope that genuine efforts are made to achieve a peaceful and just solution so that schools can be respected as safe sanctuaries. Our thoughts are with our academic and teaching colleagues in the region facing this violence and uncertainty in their lives.

Colleagues, I want to finish up by acknowledging our superb IFUT head office staff. We have been in very safe hands through these recent very challenging times with Joan, Frank, Fiona, Una, and Phyllis keeping the show on the road. We have been exceptionally privileged to have such an incredible team whose work has ensured that IFUT continues to punch well above its weight.

When meeting regularly at our national executive I have always been struck by the passion from each of the volunteer branch representatives whose commitment to IFUT and to the defence of their professions, in such difficult times, must be applauded. My sincere thanks to all of you.

But the final word must go to acknowledging the imminent departure of our General Secretary, Joan Donegan. While we have no doubt that we are in good hands with Frank at

the helm, who will be ably assisted by our incoming DGS Miriam Hamilton, we know that Joan's retirement will be a loss to IFUT.

Joan I really want to say what an absolute pleasure it has been working with you and how much I have valued our friendship, as well as the open and honest way we have always worked together. It has been great to work with such a strong and able female trade union leader, and to have witnessed you in action on cases as you have skilfully managed difficult interactions (and difficult people!) with absolute poise and patience. It is a great loss to IFUT that you are retiring but, having said that, you are absolutely and completely deserving of more restful time for yourself, especially given the degree of constant energy we all know you put into your work. I wish you all the very best for a long and healthy retirement.

Thank you delegates, I hope you enjoy our 55th Annual Delegates' Conference.

APPENDIX IV

SPEECH BY JOAN DONEGAN, GENERAL SECRETARY

Dear Friends and Colleagues,

Early in my address to last year's on-line ADC when introducing the Annual Report, I said; "This is an annual conference like no other".

It was hardly an original line but it was an irrefutable statement of the truth.

Throughout my remarks there was also an un-mistakeable sub-theme and an unspoken sub-text.

It was "let us fervently hope that there is never another one like it!"

Unfortunately, such a dream has not come true for us, or for the millions of people all over the world, who wished for it so passionately.

While we can, and do, accept that thousands, perhaps hundreds of thousands of people have suffered much more than we have, still it remains the case, that we will say goodbye to this "new normal" with an intensity such as we have rarely experienced, throughout most of our working lives.

There is no doubt, as a result of what I have just expressed that most of us are almost afraid to recognise and accept, the signs now emerging that things are improving, and that perhaps, just perhaps, we may be on the verge of returning to some semblance of our previous "normal".

The famous "green shoots" have been much talked about. And I look forward very much to hearing more on this good news from Professor Luke O'Neill who will speak to us shortly.

But, if this is to be the case, it requires that we should continue to be hyper-vigilant that the changes which have been thrust upon us and the sacrifices and concessions which we have been forced to make, in order to serve our students and our society, will not simply be pocketed and taken for granted as part of the post-pandemic order of things.

While I have no doubt that many important statements will be made in the course of our meeting today, I feel certain that no one statement will be as necessary, as important and as enthusiastically supported than when I say quite clearly; that the members of IFUT insist that no university management and no Minister must believe, that we will tolerate, for one minute longer than absolutely necessary, the continuation of the kind of hardship that we have endured over the past 14 dreadful months.

You, the members of IFUT, do not need me to itemise and list the impositions we have co-operated with, in the interest of our students, and for the continuing provision of our national system of Higher Education.

We have allowed our private homes to become the venue, for the lectures and tutorials which we have continued to provide. Many of us have done this while simultaneously trying to home-school our children.

We have had to hide and suppress the stresses and anxieties we were coping with because we did not want to make life even more stressful for the students who we knew looked to us for leadership and optimism.

Regrettable also is the reality that the worst aspects of these outcomes are being suffered by those who have always been first in line for set-backs; That is, female and early-career teachers and academics, especially those with children.

While it is probably still too early to see the full extent of such negative impacts, there is already strong evidence of the gender and age-related aspect of these ill effects.

For instance, while, overall, journal submissions have increased since the pandemic hit us, the proportion authored by women (and particularly, those solely authored by women) has fallen noticeably.

There is also more evidence of psychological stress and emotional exhaustion.

And all the indications are that these differences will become more pronounced over time.

These factors will, inevitably, contribute to a loss of expertise and diversity from the public realm.

There will also be considerable negative consequences for career advancement.

In surveying “a year in the life” of IFUT, even a year so unique as this one just passed, it is normal and helpful to identify high points and low points.

If we speak of “high points” it is impossible to do so without recalling the sense of pride which we in leadership positions in the union, have felt time and time again because of the resilience and the commitment shown by our members.

In particular we commend our Researchers and the work which is being carried out across a broad range of areas which is informing our understanding of, and response to, the pandemic.

On an institutional level one of the highs was to see the big improvement in the recognition given to us as essential partners around the national, Higher Education, table.

This recognition has been long over-due and, in fairness, it has been growing steadily over the years.

It has been well-earned and well deserved.

It is a result of the thoughtful and constructive approach which our union has displayed for many years when dealing with issues, challenges and difficulties in Ireland’s system of Higher Education.

The voice of Academics, Researchers, Library staff and Senior Professionals in Higher Education has always been a crucial and indispensable one.

It is gratifying that this reality is being grasped more, and by more, as time goes by.

The opportunities for hearing our views and perspectives have increased significantly by the very welcome decision to establish a separate and stand-alone Department for Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science.

This was a prime demand of IFUT before the last general election.

The establishment of a process of co-operation has now emerged, as evidenced by our joint work at national level with ICTU and other third-level unions in discussions with the new Minister and Department *for Further and Higher Education*.

So far, we have enjoyed good relations with Minister Simon Harris, and, in so far as it is in our gift, we see this positive relationship continuing.

But the pre-conditions for this are simple.

We will always speak honestly and constructively.

We will always provide evidence for our positions and beliefs, and we will always respect the voices and the rights of those who share, in different ways, our commitment to Higher Education.

All we expect in return that our voice is listened to with openness, that our views are treated with respect and that our needs and entitlements are afforded the same priority as any others who are, like us, indispensable to the future well-being of Higher Education.

And so, almost with a sense of inevitability and some considerable disappointment and frustration, we are forced to move on to name and identify the “low point” of the past year.

It is even more sad to state that this year’s low point is the very exact same low point, of every year, for too many of past years; it is the continuing and disgraceful levels of precariousness which is blighting the working life of far too many of our colleagues, friends and fellow members of this Federation.

These include the extreme difficulties we continue to face dealing with the rights of precariously employed lecturers and researchers, the increasing demands on full-time staff, the feeling that, from the fall-out of the 2008 Recession to the demands of Covid, the sacrifices and commitment of our members often goes unacknowledged.

A strong memory from my time in IFUT is that higher education was allowed to become an education orphan, in the years following 2008.

It suffered seriously and excessively from state funding starvation, a policy pursued by successive governments.

And we still have the challenge, of gross underfunding, the uncertainty of what budgetary policies will be pursued by government after the pandemic and an alarming drift towards viewing students as customers and higher education as a business that should deliver a profitable product.

Year after year, we in Head Office have reported on the amount of work which we are forced to do to try to achieve basic levels of fairness and respect for members often stuck in an insecure role for years and years and then more years.

We have reported with a mixture of pride and deep frustration that IFUT as a trade union, does more work in the pursuit of security of employment, than any other Irish union relative to our respective numbers.

The pride comes from our hard work and the welcome victories which we often secure. But the frustration arises, from the sense that no matter how hard, and no matter how effectively we work, the circumstances giving rise to the exploitation we tackle seem, if you will pardon the pandemic-related pun, to mutate to cause even more hardship, for the researchers and lecturers affected.

My report to you opened and now comes to a conclusion with a reference to the pandemic.

Perhaps that is fitting.

But there is just one more item which I must touch upon before I conclude.

I refer, of course, to the fact that this is the last time I will deliver the General Secretary's report to an IFUT Annual Delegate Conference.

Maybe it is for the best that I am speaking to you, my friends, through the medium of screens and cameras.

I admit that it is an emotional occasion for me.

I have loved working for this wonderful trade union from the first day I started in 2012 in a part-time capacity as Deputy General Secretary.

I am immensely proud of this organization and the tremendous and well-deserved reputation it has for hard-work and delivery of good outcomes.

It is the most member-driven union I know.

The mutual respect that exists between the individual member and the elected officers who serve them, and all of those employed (my team!), is something that you should always cherish as much as I do and always will.

So, all I will say is, "a huge thank you to one and all"

And, as I am required to do in this space at every ADC, to say,

"I commend this report for your endorsement".

Go raibh mile maith agaibh go léir.

APPENDIX V

ADDRESS BY FRANK JONES, GENERAL SECRETARY DESIGNATE

Colleagues, I want to thank conference for allowing me to address you in what has actually been quite a short year since the last ADC although it doesn't seem like it to most of us here. Much has happened within the Higher Education Sector, within IFUT and on a personal front too in the period since our last ADC. I addressed our last Conference as Deputy General Secretary and I am honoured to address today's as General Secretary Designate. I greatly appreciate all of those, many who are here, that have made this possible for me. I especially want to thank the sub-group of the Executive Committee for Appointments which included our President and our Incoming President, the entire Executive Committee, Council and my Head Office Colleagues, Phyllis, Fiona, Una and Joan for all the support that they have given, and continue to give me, that allow me to take on this role, I am truly blessed among women! I look forward to addressing next year's conference as General Secretary.

We truly are at a vital crossroads for the future of higher education. The past year has seen challenges and demands on our members that could not have even been imagined just 18 months ago.

COVID-19 brings a crisis that continues to seriously impact on the entire higher education community - staff, students and university management alike.

It is a tribute to the dedication, commitment and work of IFUT members, among others, that we did not let the situation beat us. Courses were delivered, student supports provided and exams successfully completed.

We have all seen from the fraternal greetings that our relationships with SIPTU and the other education unions, under the Congress umbrella, and far beyond, are flourishing as a result. Our engagement with Minister Harris and the new Department is working well ensuring that the voice of IFUT and the concerns of our members, in all grades, be they full-time, part-time or precarious, are at the top table at all times. The Minister in his earlier clip has shown that he's aware of our, your agenda, and his willingness to work with us on the 'mountain of work' ahead.

The next academic year will bring a mix of existing, new and most likely, unanticipated challenges. This pandemic has made the world of 'unknown unknowns' almost normal.

The Minister, while recognising that we bring the voice of University Academics to the table, may not always, or indeed be willing to deliver for us, there are other interests being listened to too, the challenge attached to remaining relevant is enormous.

CAO Applications are up 9% on last year to 84,000, this growth is set to continue over the next 8 to 10 years according to CSO data on the demographic bubble. Several reports commissioned by the Government, and available for many years, show the 3rd level student population will grow by 25% between 2019 and 2029. While we hear the Minister speak of increased funding we all know that spending per student is down and the student:lecturer ratio is way out of line with where it needs to be. We're acutely aware too that places in medicine, dentistry and engineering have 'Maxed out' creating "tensions between the Government and universities over the funding of third-level places generally" as reported in the Irish Times this week. It seems to me that it's a great pity that the Departments that commissioned the reports and financed the CSO research failed to act on the information and outputs that emerged.

I was pleased to hear the Minister refer to the Cassels Report, and to confirm our understanding that there will be developments on this during the Summer, we're already working with the Education Futures group, our President has been a very active member of this group, to ensure that we are ready to respond to whatever position the Department develops. We have kept this Report live on the agenda for the past 5 years.

The challenges for early career academics/researchers and other grades entering into the university sector continue to mount. It was fantastic to hear our Guest Speaker Professor Luke articulate his views before lunch about the plight of early career and Postdoc Researchers, he stated **“you couldn’t configure a worse system”**, I can’t argue with that statement. The Cush Report, as referred to by Minister Harris, earlier resulted in an agreement between the IUA and IFUT that we’re proud of, however this hasn’t addressed all the CID concerns for all IFUT members but is something that we can build on in coming years, we will continue to try to broaden the scope of the recommendations contained within the report.

Regrettably, as with the challenges our Researcher members face the IUA remain true to their position that they are ‘not a centralised negotiating body’, but that they are a ‘representative body for universities’. This causes IFUT a huge difficulty as the ‘representative body’ develops policy but doesn’t engage with those that must work under this policy, we have no recourse to the Workplace Relations Commission or other such IR fora when we find ourselves in disagreement with the IUA. There have been some developments within the IUA in the past week, we’ll watch as these develop.

IFUT have put much effort into developing the ICTU Education Group, which essentially has been operating as the ICTU Higher Education Group as much of what is being sought in terms of sectoral engagement already exists for those in the primary and secondary education sector. The ICTU Education group now meets fortnightly.

The time has come that there is a need for University management to speak with one voice on some matters. This is in no way an effort to undermine the university autonomy that we in IFUT respect and hold in such high esteem. No, the need for the employers to have ‘a centralised negotiating body’ is to ensure that there is a uniform approach across the university sector to address certain matters of importance beyond those that are clearly covered under the freedoms that the universities are expected to enjoy. It has become increasingly obvious in the past year that the different approaches being taken by each of the universities in response to COVID-19 coupled with the employers’ developing interpretation of the scope of the ‘Cush’ Recommendations and by the development of a Research Career Framework document without any consideration for input from the employees’ organisations demonstrated that there is at a minimum a requirement for a forum where sectoral disputes can be advanced, sectorally. It pleased me greatly to hear Minister Harris acknowledge this morning that he recognises IFUT’s position with regard to this need. He may have to act on this if the employers fall short.

We need to ensure that the emergency ways of working, that stretched us to the limit during Covid, are not imposed more permanently or that they do not seep in as the ‘new normal’, we all agree with the Minister when he said ‘Normal wasn’t that great’. We received all of the expected assurances in March and April of last year that our cooperation wouldn’t set new norms, it wasn’t too surprising to us, or to our ICTU colleagues, that the employers’ side weren’t willing to waste the pandemic without attempting to enshrine some of these ‘concessions’ into the terms of ‘Reform agenda’ under the current Building Momentum Public Sector Agreement. This approach was forcefully opposed by the ICTU Education group.

The future of sectoral bargaining in a post Covid world needs close attention. Pay, conditions and a continually deteriorating lecturer-to-student ratio will have to be addressed now that we are emerging from the cocoon of Covid. This is the work ahead for our Branch Committees and the Head Office team.

As we watch the demographic bubble expand we need to ensure that the contracts of employment that we negotiate for our members are sufficiently robust to withstand the challenges that will be visited upon those post holders as the student numbers on the other side of this bubble reduce as the bubble itself contracts.

The key to this is organising and organising has always been a key to IFUT's future and future success.

It is our duty as a union to reach out to recruit those that are being systematically drawn into vulnerable employment arrangements and to fight for their interests. This will be a continuing and increasing priority in the immediate years ahead.

We need to show these new entrants that their future is with IFUT and that our power as a trade union is dependent on them. Every Branch has always had a focus on organising and developing the IFUT presence for no other reason than understanding that increasing union numbers contributes to a greater union voice within the employment and across the sector. This focus needs to continue and we need to pay attention to any impediments that there may be for newer recruits to access IFUT.

Changes are being introduced to how union subscriptions are calculated, making the cost of joining IFUT more reasonable for lower-paid members, this will greatly enable participation in our work by even the most precariously employed and lowest paid.

We continue to develop Representative and Committee training for all of our Activists.

In addition to the changes to the subscriptions and the training initiatives I must mention that the wealth of organising experience, in addition to her industrial experience, that our incoming Deputy General Secretary, Miriam Hamilton, will bring to all of us in Head Office and to each of the Branch Committees will ensure that IFUT retains its' place as the 'go to' union for Academics in the University Sector.

Finally

As we begin discussions and debates on motions I want to conclude by restating my gratitude for being allowed to address conference and to all of you here who have supported the decision to appoint me as General Secretary on Joan's departure later this year. I know that I speak for a much wider group than the head office staff when I say that Joan will be sorely missed. So, let's now debate these motions and form policy for the next 12 months, thanks Delegates.