

**Irish Federation of University Teachers**

**PROCEEDINGS**

**OF**

**ANNUAL DELEGATE**

**CONFERENCE**

**2022**

**Cónaidhm Éireannach na Múinteoirí Ollscoile**

## 1. WELCOME ADDRESS of PRESIDENT and GENERAL SECRETARY

The President opened the 56<sup>th</sup> Annual Delegate Conference at 11:00 on Saturday 14 May 2022 by warmly welcoming the Minister, Professor Petö, fraternal delegates and other distinguished guests, IFUT Head Office staff present and indeed future, advisers and assistants, illustrious past Presidents and staff members of our Union, and (last but far from least), member delegates and IFUT activists, *tá fáilte romhaibh uilig ag an gComhdháil Bhliantúil seo de Chónaidhm Éireannach na Múinteoirí Ollscoile!* My name is Anthony Harvey and, as President of IFUT, I declare open the 56<sup>th</sup> Annual Delegate Conference of the Irish Federation of University Teachers. It gives me enormous pleasure to welcome everyone to this, the first in-person ADC we've been able to hold since 2019, and I'm very grateful to all who have made it their business to attend. Isn't it great to be in a position to see each other again for real, and in three dimensions? It should be a good day; but first we must begin with a few points of housekeeping ...

The General Secretary in his welcome address said it is my great pleasure and honour to welcome you all to this the 56<sup>th</sup> Annual Delegate Conference of the Irish Federation of University Teachers.

Quite naturally, I want firstly to thank all of you who are participating today as the delegates and representatives of your various Branches of IFUT. The fact that you have been honoured by your colleagues to be here and to speak and vote on their behalf means that you are discharging a hugely important task in furthering our democratic governance which is such an essential hallmark of our Union and of Trade Unions generally in our societies.

I am especially pleased to note the presence of our Minister for Further & Higher Education, Simon Harris. As almost everyone knows, IFUT has for many years been calling for the creation of just such a dedicated Ministry for this hugely important area of our national life and I am delighted to be in a position to put on the public record that the relationship between our Union and the new Department has been one characterised by mutual respect and a willingness, not only to talk truthfully to each other but also, and crucially, to listen to each other with due respect being given to our respective views, responsibilities and functions. We have, in the past week seen the fruits of the creation of this department with the Minister's announcement of the future funding plans for the sector and the establishment of the new implementation group which IFUT must be a part of. I noted with great interest the Minister's ambition to end precarious employment in the sector, an ambition shared by IFUT and one we have been working on for many years. I look forward to the Minister's attendance becoming a regular feature at our annual conferences and to building our working relationship.

We are honoured by the attendance today of guests and fraternal delegates from a range of teacher organizations and Unions including ETUCE the European Trade Union Committee for Education. Larry Flanagan, the President of ETUCE and General Secretary of EIS, Education Institution of Scotland, is in attendance today representing both. We have received several apologies from those that we have invited as Fraternal Delegates and many more apologies from Delegates, I don't propose going through this list but

suffice to say that our hopes are, in head office, that as the effects of the pandemic wain that by next year we will return to pre-pandemic levels of attendance at our conferences, or even greater numbers!

We have received many fraternal greetings from friends, some present and some not, these have all been warmly received, I don't have the opportunity to read all of them to Conference but may I just read one from our former GS and our good friend Mike Jennings.

In the course of the pandemic and since we held our last face to face conference in 2019 we have lost IFUT members and IFUT members have lost family members. The pandemic has taken the opportunity from us to acknowledge and mark the passing of these colleagues and these family members in the manner in which we would prefer. IFUT's losses include Professor Enda McDonagh and Dr Pat Burke, both former Presidents and Council and Executive members including Dr Frank Flanagan, our thoughts are with them, their families and all other colleagues who have passed since our last face to face conference in 2019.

I know that none of you will object if I extend a special welcome to our Guest of Honour, Professor Andrea Petö is an exceptional Academic who has fought for Academic Freedom under oppressive regimes of both the Soviet-style Left and, more recently, the nationalist Right. Her insights may well prove useful even in our own less extreme situations - as well as helping us to detect any larger threats in a timely fashion. Academic Freedom is a core value, an objective of our organization and we are immensely proud to have Professor Petö with us today to share with us her experiences.

IFUT has always been extremely proud of our role in advocating for, and defending Academic Freedom (indeed we remain proud of the historical fact that it was primarily as the result of the campaign waged by our Union that Ireland has the distinction of being one of very few countries internationally which enshrined Academic Freedom in national legislation). This point has been acknowledged by many and remains valid today. This Right for Academic Freedom features across several of the motions before conference today and I'm sure that it's safe to say that we all look forward to debating and discussing the motions this afternoon.

It is also very appropriate in this context that I refer to our long-standing and active support for Scholars at Risk.

Indeed, in the current circumstances it would be remiss of me not to mention the current lethal threats (and worse) being experienced not only by scholars and academics in Ukraine but also by tens of thousands of Ukrainian citizens as a result of the illegal invasion of their country by Russia and the shocking reports of war crimes being perpetrated daily in that country by Vladimir Putin's army.

You all should have a copy of the conference agenda and running order. I would ask that if you wish to make any requests or suggestions about any aspect of the conference would you please direct these to Emma Sokell, our Chair of Standing Orders, who following this Conference will be our Incoming

President to succeed Anthony on completion of his term in 12 months. I think that it would be appropriate, at this time, to acknowledge Emma's new role, having worked alongside Emma for several years I know that IFUT will benefit greatly from this development. Congratulations Emma and I, and the IFUT HO Team, really looking forward to working with you over the next few years!!!

All that remains for me to say is "please enjoy the conference", it is your conference and that of those you represent. I hope you enjoy the day (and the evening!) and that you find it rewarding and helpful to you in your work on behalf of IFUT, on behalf of your students and, indeed and importantly, on behalf of our country and society generally.

## **2. STANDING ORDERS REPORT**

The President advised Conference that the Incoming President, Emma Sokell (UCD), has 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 her in the first instance.

The Chair of Standing Orders then addressed Conference on the Standing Orders Report or Agenda for ADC, and advised Conference that there were two amendments to the Standing Orders Report which had issued to delegates. A short video is to be played between the private and public sessions after lunch. An Emergency Motion has been received, which is in order and will be taken as the first Motion.

The Chair of Standing Orders advised that the Executive had nominated Conall O Duibhir (ERC), and Kelly Fitzgerald (UCD) as Tellers. There were no other nominations and these nominations were unanimously agreed by Conference.

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

Proposed by: Edward Lahiff (UCC)  
Seconded by: Alastair McKinstry (NUIG)

The Standing Orders Report was adopted.

## **3. PROCEEDINGS OF 2021 ADC**

The Proceedings of the 2021 Annual Delegate Conference were tabled for approval.

Proposed by: Angela Flynn (UCC)  
Seconded by: Kelly Fitzgerald (UCD)

The Proceedings of ADC 2021 were adopted.

#### **4. ADDRESS BY SIMON HARRIS, MINISTER FOR FURTHER AND HIGHER EDUCATION, RESEARCH, INNOVATION AND SCIENCE**

The text of this speech is attached at Appendix II.

The President, on behalf of IFUT, thanked the Minister for his extremely generous and well-informed remarks and said the Minister could almost have passed for an IFUT member.

#### **5. PRESIDENTIAL ADDRESS**

The Presidential Address was delivered by Anthony Harvey (RIA). The text of this address is at Appendix IV.

#### **6. ANNUAL REPORT 2021/22**

The President invited the General Secretary to present the Annual Report for 2021/22. The Deputy General Secretary also addressed Conference on this item. The text of their addresses are at Appendix III.

The President asked the ADC to adopt the 2021/22 Annual Report.

The 2021/22 Annual Report was adopted unanimously.

#### **7. ADDRESS BY PROFESSOR ANDREA PETÖ**

The President invited Professor Andrea Petö to address Conference.

Professor Petö thanked IFUT for their support for the Central European University (CEU) in Hungary. The School has been discredited and moved from Hungary to Vienna at a cost of €230m. Professor Petö spoke about a new theoretical framework and strategy and structured her address on a better story and why higher education matters.

The President advised Conference that Professor Petö has put us on notice, we have been warned, we need to take seriously what she has said and act on it. It is now up to us to do something about us.

#### **8. FINANCIAL REPORT**

The Financial Report for the year ended 31 December 2021 was presented to the ADC by the Vice President-Finance, Enrica Maria Ferrara (TCD) who said it was a pleasure to be nominated Vice President-Finance. I am very privileged to be in this position and to have the help and support of my brilliant colleagues at Head Quarters who have done a great job, with the Trustees, to ensure that these accounts would be healthy and prosperous.

In fact, it is all of you, activists of IFUT branches, who first and foremost need to be commended for the current state of our accounts given that subscriptions have certainly gone up compared to 2020. I will now show you the figures in detail. I am sure the report will be self-explanatory but I will do my best to answer any questions that you may have.

If you turn all the way to page 13, you will be able to see that Subscriptions (net of refunds) increased by €31k in 2021 compared to 2020. I believe that subscriptions were up in all the Branches, with UCD (€14k) and TCD (€8k) leading the way.

On the other hand, turning to Expenditures, the increase in personnel costs relates in the main to the salary costs of one employee recruited in September 2020 (who worked as a consultant during 2020) and the recruitment of a further employee in June 2021. Additionally, pension costs increased by €13k.

However, this was balanced out by the decrease in the voice Other Expenditures (p. 14), in which costs of consultancy decreased by €30k - a consultant of IFUT was recruited as an employee in September 2020, increasing personnel costs and reducing consulting costs in 2021.

Furthermore, there is a decrease of approximately €4k in Equipment, depreciation and maintenance costs. Also, Printing costs declined by €3.9k and printing material costs (including photocopier costs) declined by €800.

For Committees and Conferences, despite most conferences and meetings being held online, there was an increase of expenditure of €10k explained by Ballot costs of €16k incurred in 2021 in relation to services provided by Snap Printing.

Finally, and this is the ultimate proof as to how healthy our accounts are, the surplus for the 2021 period is €158k, which represents an increase of €102k in the surplus compared to the corresponding nine months in 2020.

So well done to all of us! In 2022, let's keep working to increase our income through more subscriptions - a direct expression of our political strength - and let's continue to be prudent and efficient in managing our expenditure!

Proposed by: Enrica Maria Ferrara (Vice President-Finance)

Seconded by: Emma Sokell (UCD)

The report was adopted unanimously.

## **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 April 2022.

## 10. ELECTION OF TRUSTEES

The President 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 President declared these nominees elected.

Proposed by: Anthony Harvey (President)  
Seconded by: Kelly Fitzgerald (UCD)

The President asked if there were any comments on Section 2 of the Annual Report. There were no comments.

John Dunnion (UCD) said that the presentation of the report looks very well and commended IFUT for carrying out this work.

A video of IFUT members was then shown.

## 11. DEBATE ON MOTIONS

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

### **Emergency Motion:**

*This ADC confirms its support for our Union colleagues in the UCU who are engaged in industrial action with Universities in Great Britain and Northern Ireland in relation to, among other things, pay, pensions and precarious employment. We call on the Executive of IFUT to communicate with all IFUT members to implore them to ensure they do not take on work which undermines the industrial action of the UCU members including insisting members do not accept emergency appointment work as external examiners where these appointments are created to fill the gaps caused by workers taking industrial action, and asking members not to speak at conference and seminars that are organised on days on which workers in the UCU will be on strike.*

**Proposed by: Executive Committee**

John Walsh (TCD) in proposing the motion on behalf of the Executive advised Conference that this Motion was proposed by a number of colleagues, and acknowledged MU colleagues in particular. This motion goes to the heart of Trade Unionism, solidarity to colleagues in UCU. In April the staff of 39 universities were balloted and a 74% majority voted to take strike action. Pay for academics has fallen by over one quarter since 2009. Thousands are on insecure contracts. IFUT have protections under the University Act to tenure which our UK colleagues do not have. Their pensions have been slashed by 35%, this is outrageous, we have to stand together. Their objectives are for decent pay and working conditions, to eliminate discrimination in relation to race and disability. The attitudes of Vice Chancellors in the UK is not short term, it is an attack on higher education itself, not just the work, as quality and standards cannot be maintained when frontline workers are treated in such a manner. The attitudes of the British government are appalling. There

is a need for social justice and solidarity. I would urge you all to support a well-known Trade Union principle “an injury to one is an injury to all”.

The Deputy General Secretary in seconding the Motion said: As we all are aware, our colleagues in the UCU have already been on strike in recent months with more days of action expected to take place. The UCU are engaging in industrial action in response to cuts to pensions and in response to deteriorating pay and conditions of their members throughout universities in Great Britain and Northern Ireland.

In the pension dispute, the UCU is demanding that employers revoke pension cuts and re-enter negotiations with the Union. In the pay and working conditions dispute the Union is demanding an end to pay injustice; a framework to eliminate zero-hours and other precarious contracts; and action on unmanageable workloads; as well as a pay rise.

Many IFUT members want to understand what practical support they can offer fellow Union members in the UCU. This motion will provide that clarity. However beyond our members supporting their UCU colleagues because it is the right thing to do, we understand that we need the UCU to win. The Trade Union movement has always held that an injury to one is an injury to all.

It is not always simply about fraternal support. Hostile employer victories embolden employers in other jurisdictions. Weakened Unions in one area encourages Unions in other areas to be taken on. The fight the UCU are engaged in could be our fight in a short amount of time. We want them to succeed and we need our members to ensure we do not undermine the effectiveness of their industrial action.

We have fraternal delegates present at our conference today. Larry Flanagan, ETUCE President. As well as being ETUCE President, Larry is the General Secretary of Scotland’s largest teachers’ Union. We ask our fraternal delegates to relay the support of their IFUT colleagues back to their Union colleagues engaged in this struggle. We wish you every success in the months ahead. I formally second this motion.

Alastair McKinstry (NIUIG) spoke in support of the Motion and advised that when in touch with UK colleagues they had requested that if IFUT members are approached to work as an external examiner or to attend conferences or seminars to ensure that the work is not in conflict with a UCU strike day. It is very important that UCU know they have the support of IFUT.

Oisin Creaner (DIAS) called on the Executive to ensure that in their communication to members there is clarity as to what jobs are affected and as best as possible clarity as to what the particular job is.

Proposed by: John Walsh (TCD)  
Seconded by: Miriam Hamilton (Deputy General Secretary)

The motion was carried unanimously.



## **Motion 1: Funding of Higher Education Sector**

*It is crucial that the Government prioritises investment in higher education as a public good. This ADC calls on IFUT to continue to stridently lobby for increased funding of the sector and to ensure that this funding is directed to units who are in the frontline for the delivery of teaching and research in our HEIs.*

**Proposed by: UCD Branch**

Kelly Fitzgerald (UCD) proposed the Motion on behalf of the UCD Branch saying that this conversation began this morning. This motion is to finalise or formalise the way in which the Executive Committee and Council interrogate the government's investment in education as a public good. €307m can disappear very quickly. IFUT need to ensure this funding is directed towards delivery. Is it something we add to our Agenda on a monthly basis? Where can we look and see where the money is going? The image of the ivory tower is something we have to fight. Value For Money will be thrown at us.

Emma Sokell (UCD) seconded the motion saying that we see every year that our sector is publicly funded. The frontline is the universities but there is more than that. The frontline is the people that are delivering researchers and our teachers. The funds need to go towards those to support the core work of universities.

Proposed by: Kelly Fitzgerald (UCD)  
Seconded by: Emma Sokell (UCD)

The Motion was carried unanimously.

## **Motion 2: Public Funding of Universities**

*This ADC calls on IFUT to engage with government and the HEIs on the proposed reform of the sector to ensure sufficient public funding to maintain academic standards and uphold the principles of accessibility and affordability for all; as well as structures of governance that respect the role of HEIs as autonomous public bodies, with broad representation that includes academic staff.*

**Proposed by: UCC Branch**

Jenny Butler (UCC) proposed the Motion on behalf of the UCC Branch and spoke of continuing the conversation started this morning in talking about the importance of public funding.

Michael Hinds (DCU) seconded the motion and said that like everyone here, the DCU-IFUT Branch acknowledges and welcomes what the Minister said this morning with reference to state funding of Higher Education, and what in one moment he said our sector was "owed".

That usage was significant, because it acknowledges a debt that is owed to us. The proposed funding is welcome, but should properly be viewed as a partial repayment of such a debt rather than necessarily "future funding". The money should be helpful in allowing our members to survive, but they will need more to live, and even more to thrive.

Precarity of employment, as well as the accessibility and affordability of education, rightly deserve to be central in decision-making about how that money should be spent. Equally critical here is governance, and the need for us to have a voice that is properly representative of our essential role in making Higher Education work. As our President so precisely observed earlier today, there is real danger in obsessively stuffing governing bodies with external stakeholders at the expense of our expertise, intelligence and compassion. We are the people who really make things work, and have to be heard.

Proposed by: Jenny Butler (UCC)  
Seconded by: Michael Hinds (UCD)

The Motion was carried unanimously.

### **Motion 3: HEA Bill 2022**

*This ADC calls on IFUT to continue its engagement with Minister Harris and the government on the HEA Bill of 2022, particularly relating to university governance and academic representation on governing authorities across HEIs.*

#### ***Proposed by: UCD Branch***

John Dunnion (UCD) proposed the motion on behalf of the UCD Branch. The Higher Education Authority Bill, 2022 is intended to repeal the Higher Education Authority Act, 1971, which is over 50 years old and established the Higher Education Authority, the HEA. The HEA is the statutory funding body for most third-level education institutions, including the Universities, the Technological Universities and any remaining Institutes of Technology. It also acts as an advisory body to the relevant Ministers in relation to the higher education sector. According to the 1971 Act, the general functions of the HEA are the following:

- (a) furthering the development of higher education;
- (b) assisting in the co-ordination of State investment in higher education and preparing proposals for such investment;
- (c) promoting an appreciation of the value of higher education and research;
- (d) promoting the attainment of equality of opportunity in higher education;
- (e) promoting the democratisation of the structure of higher education.

In its day-to-day operations, the intention was that the HEA dispense funds to the higher education institutions and act as a "buffer" between the Government and the Department and Ministers, on the one hand, and the various institutions on the other.

A consultation on the updating of the HEA legislation commenced in 2018, an outline of the legislative proposals for the reform was published in July 2019 and a report was produced in 2021.

One of the drivers for reform of the HEA, and, by extension, reform of the higher education sector is the document "National Strategy for Higher

Education to 2030", published by the Department of Education and Skills in 2011. In that document, it recommends that "Ireland's autonomous institutions should be held accountable for their performance to the State on behalf of Irish citizens" and in that context, "the HEA should continue to be accountable to the Minister for the funding and oversight of the sector, and a new process of strategic dialogue should be introduced to enhance accountability and performance, while respecting institutional autonomy".

The HEA Bill 2022 was published by the Government on 7 January this year. The headline purposes of the Bill are to reform the supervision and regulation of higher education institutions and modernise the regulatory role of the HEA. The Bill provides a wide-ranging governance, performance and accountability structure, to protect public investment in the sector and to make sure the system is accountable. The Bill will require strategic planning for third-level education, engagement with students, fair access and participation, lifelong learning and improving equality, diversity and inclusion in higher education. All of these can be included under the heading of "motherhood and apple pie", and most of the points are to be welcomed.

I don't think that anyone in this room would argue that our institutions of higher education should not be accountable to the State or its citizens, as we are mostly funded by taxpayers' money. However, there is a real fear that the provisions in this Bill tear away at the autonomy of those institutions. There is open reference made to a "co-governance model", where each institution would remain autonomous but which will ensure "investment the Government is making in the sector is safeguarded and there is accountability for that funding". There have been vague promises made by various Ministers and Government spokespersons of new funding models with increased monies being made available, and I think that we were all delighted to hear more definite plans in that regard from the Minister this morning. The fear among many is that any improved funding would come "with strings attached" and if, in the judgement of the HEA, an institution were failing in one or more areas deemed important by the HEA, their funding would be reduced or even withheld. In this way the role of the HEA would go beyond accountability and move into interference with institutional autonomy.

So, there are many reasons to be fearful of this new legislation and the impact it may have on the higher education sector and its institutions. However, the focus of today's motion is on university governance and academic representation on governing bodies. The legislation provides for, indeed promises, a dramatic change in the formation and composition of governing bodies and a sharp reduction in staff representation. Following the provisions of the 1997 Universities Act, in UCD, for example, there are 11 academic staff representatives and three non-academic staff representatives on the Governing Authority of 40 members. The new Bill states that a governing body would have a size of 17 members, of whom five would be internal members. While it is more than likely that there will be at least one academic member appointed, there is no guarantee of this and certainly no requirement that this happen. In contrast, it is explicitly stated that there be two student members appointed.

Anyone who has served on a governing body will know that it is usually the staff representatives, in particular the academic staff representatives, who are the most engaged on the governing body and in meetings. They know their institution, they are committed to their institution and, in general, they are there "for the long haul", in contrast to many external members, who have only a passing involvement with the institution and who may only be on the governing body for a single session. The academic staff members provide to the governing body meetings information "from the coal-face" on the issues of concern to staff and students and the institution as a whole. They do this in addition to their normal work and, often, particularly if they are critical of university management, at a cost to their career progression and promotional prospects. Reducing the academic staff representation in this way will restrict the ability of IFUT representatives to raise issues of concern, including academic issues, staff workload, work-life balance, salaries, precarious contracts and student engagement and learning. I refer explicitly to "IFUT representatives", as many of the academic staff representatives on governing bodies are IFUT members; in UCD, for example, all five of the "Non-Professorial" staff representatives and one of the Full Professors are on the local Branch Committee.

It is crucial that IFUT continues to lobby the Government and relevant Ministers on this issue, to persuade them to remove the more pernicious aspects of the Bill, in particular interference in institutional governance, reduction of institutional autonomy and reduction in the size of governing bodies and staff representation on governing bodies, and to insist on academic staff representation on governing bodies. This call is urgent, as the Bill is steadily making its way through the legislative approvals process in the Oireachtas: colleagues, there is no time to lose.

I am happy to propose this motion and to commend it to Conference. Go raibh maith agat.

Lennon Ó'Náraigh (UCD) seconded the Motion on behalf of the UCD Branch saying that the lack of staff representation on boards is a great concern.

In exchange for modest pay increases over the decades, workers in Ireland have offered employers industrial peace. Part of this exchange involves dialogue and consultation with management. The lack of guaranteed staff representation on boards in higher education puts this consultation at risk. This puts industrial peace in jeopardy as well – in exchange for dialogue and consultation.

Interestingly, Trinity has received an opt-out in the legislation – self-government in Trinity will continue as part of the HEA reforms because this is a long-established tradition. This model of academic self-government is a model throughout the world which in the long-term produces excellent scholarship, discovery, and innovation. Examples such as Oxford and Cambridge.

The draft HEA bill is therefore a missed opportunity – if this model works so well in Trinity, it should be extended to other HE institutions. Excellence in

corporate governance in higher education should not be confined within the banks of the two canals.

Proposed by: John Dunnion (UCD)  
Seconded by: Lennon Ó'Náraigh (UCD)

The Motion was carried unanimously.

An open discussion took place on the first three motions: John Walsh (TCD) supported all 3 Motions but particularly Motion 3. TCD secured a partial opt out so that 5 senior academics would be added to Governing Body and it is positive and he would be happy to see it in all universities. The HEA appeals mechanism is not independent, there is a greater increase in their power as a regulator of the system, IFUT should push for further amendments to the Bill in the Dáil and Seanad.

Conrad Brunstrom (MU) spoke in support of all 3 Motions, particularly Motion 3, remarking that expertise is to be diluted by ignorance. Outvoted in our own houses at a decisive level of government. There is a repeated use of word reform, it has been politicised and weaponised.

John Doran (UCC) spoke of constrained management. What is not seen as a communication role is to teach. Academics act as independent voices on governing bodies. Don't separate management and academic staff. Academics are providing an effective independent voice on governing bodies.

Oisean Creaner (DIAS) spoke of the HSE recurrent theme of university governance. IFUT have representation in research bodies in the ERC and DIAS. We are all funded from similar sources. We should collaborate on wording.

The President suggested that "institutions" is the term that IFUT should use as it is not only universities that we organise in.

#### **Motion 4: Precarity**

*This ADC calls on government and the HEIs to take urgent measures to reduce the reliance on short-term and precariously employed staff and to extend the benefits of full-time permanent status to all academic staff. In addition, we call on IFUT, throughout its various structures, to support initiatives to counter precarious labour practice, such as the Precarious Employment Campaign Steering Group, and that each branch committee appoint a representative with responsibility for precarious staff.*

#### **Proposed by: UCC Branch**

Miranda Corcoran (UCC) proposed the Motion on behalf of the UCC Branch saying that precarity is one of the biggest challenges facing the university sector today. As many of you know, this is an issue that impacts universities not only in Ireland, but in the UK, the US and around the world. In 2020, a widely shared article in the online magazine *Noteworthy* estimated that the number of lecturers working on fixed-term, occasional and hourly contracts was (then) in the region of 11,000. However, precarious labour is sadly often

invisible. Precarious academics teach on our courses, attend our conferences and mark assignments alongside us. Yet, we are often unaware of the insecure, often exploitative, conditions in which they work.

It should go without saying that precarity is an immensely damaging practice. It forces individuals to work without security, often in conditions of severe financial hardship and instability. It robs students of consistency in their teachers, courses and supervisors. And it devalues the labour of academics, researchers and educators at all levels. Precarity makes all of us vulnerable.

The motion proposed by the UCC Branch calls on the Union to engage with the government – especially, the newly formed Department for Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science – as well as HEIs, in an effort to reduce short-term and casual contracts. We ask, and this is echoed in the next motion, that the Union support, to the full extent of its ability, the newly formed Precarious Employment Campaign Steering Group. We would also ask that each Branch designate a representative or convenor responsible for precarious staff. This representative would liaise with precarious staff, engage with their needs and relay their concerns to Branch and national committees, as well as to the Precarious Employment Campaign Steering Group. It is important that individual Branches, as well as IFUT as a whole, have someone to advocate for our precarious colleagues, who are amongst the most vulnerable members of our community.

As individual IFUT members we should, as President Anthony Harvey stated earlier, support our precarious colleagues and refuse to benefit from their exploitation. We need to think carefully about how we treat junior staff members and those on precarious contracts.

However, the crucial thing, at this time, is that we, as a Union, work collectively to support precarious staff.

Enrica Ferrara (TCD) seconded the motion saying that TCD had a motion last year on this issue. In TCD 41% are on precarious contracts. In December 2021 the IFUT TCD Branch carried out a survey and analysis on this survey will be done this summer. Incredibly some members are paid €21 per hour, and don't get paid for any preparation work, it is very important to remind ourselves about mental health. These are term-time employees, Teaching Fellows and Tutors are on Job Seekers Benefit during the summer. So much research is done by precarious teachers and lecturers which the General Secretary mentioned earlier. It is essential that Branches liaise with staff who are on precarious contracts.

Proposed by: Miranda Corcoran (UCC)  
Seconded by: Enrica Maria Ferrara (TCD)

The Motion was carried unanimously.

### **Motion 5: Precarious Employment Campaign Steering Group**

*That this ADC supports the foundation and work of the new Precarious Employment Campaign Steering Group to address precarity as a priority - and*

*engage with all the key stakeholders to bring about change (FHERIS/IUA, etc.).*

**Proposed by: Dr Deirdre Flynn**

**Seconded by: Dr Rosarii Griffin**

The President read the Motion and advised that the Deputy General Secretary has set up a Steering Group on this issue. An open discussion then took place on Motions 4 and 5.

Brendan Palmer (UCC) said that each and every member is a recruiter which is something that applies across the Branches. Motion 4 arose from a Motion to the 2021 ADC. It is interesting that non-members didn't know that IFUT is their representative body. Information is needed to reach out on a one to one basis. The IRSA are now a separate body and if they move far enough away IFUT won't get those members back.

The President advised that IFUT are aware of groups and that Branches should make sure to feed their findings into the Branches' Central Group and make sure your Branch is represented on the Group. It has been proven that the personal touch works in recruiting.

Conrad Brunstrom (MU) said an urgent issue in MU is management's inability to reach agreement on who IFUT represent. There is no working framework or conversation. Who they think IFUT should or can represent is being interpreted in narrow terms.

Sinead Kennedy (MU) endorsed both motions on precarious employment. The General Secretary spoke earlier of getting protected at the expense of other members. We welcome the work that IFUT is doing as really important going forward.

Jacque O'Riordan (UCC) said in terms of supporting precarious workers IFUT need to make a lot of noise about precarity, which is the norm in our sector. We need to challenge the hierarchy and the terms they use, early career Researchers are still loyal after years of precarity.

Catherine Dawson (UCC) advised that research grants are used to fill up holes and PhD students fall under every radar going, also doing precarious work that universities cannot hire people to do.

Oisin Creaner (DIAS) said that a phrase came up that specified purpose contracts are used as a coverall. There are so many of these purposes which iterate on themselves and they say they have no funding to pay. They have funding to pay for continuous iterations of part-time jobs, which are not paid as well, large multiplier. This is an important point to get through to government. In the transition from precarious to permanent employment there is a failure to recognise the experience gained already and being given an offer on the 3<sup>rd</sup> point of the scale. Often funding is not in a grant or budget, while repeatedly there is funding.

Emma Sokell (UCD) made two points - the systemic problem with research funding that needs to be addressed, and among people that are not on

precarious contracts there is a total lack of awareness that there are people being treated in this way.

Joseph Flahive (RIA) said that in the RIA and DIAS for the most part researchers move up to better themselves if wanting to research and assume lecturing is the next step up. The university system does not recognise the place of research in universities. The systems were designed in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century when research was something done after afternoon tea if there was no meeting.

Margaret Robson (DCU & TCD) spoke of the fundamental value of teaching. Research often means get your foot in the door and get grants. Our basic principle is to value research and teaching.

Brendan Palmer (UCC) said the original Athena Swan principles worked on short-term contracts. In the Irish version the short-term nature of work has been side-lined.

Enrica Ferrara (TCD) iterated to colleagues that teachers are undervalued. Researchers aren't allowed teach and teachers cannot research. Research done by teachers is not recognised. The university system divides and rules.

Proposed by: Edward Lahiff (UCC)  
Seconded by: Alastair McKinstry (NUIG)

The Motion was unanimously carried.

### **Motion 6: Remote and Flexible Working**

*We call upon this ADC to acknowledge the extraordinary commitment, dedication and flexibility displayed by our members in moving to online, blended and other working practices during times of lockdown and restriction. This ADC calls on IFUT to continue to engage at a local, sectoral and national level with employers to reach agreement on remote and flexible working, drawing on the successes and expertise gained during lockdown. Wholesale return to workplace practices must not happen without agreement, and appropriate accommodations must include the worker voice.*

***Proposed by: DCU Branch***

Miriam Ryan (DCU) proposed the Motion on behalf of the DCU Branch and said perhaps there is no need to rehearse efforts that everyone in this room and all colleagues made during recent lockdowns and closures. Many looked at teaching supervision online very quickly in less than ideal conditions. Research work and output and helping students and colleagues during very difficult times. We feel it is imperative that the dedication of our colleagues in the sector to take on the lessons of remote and flexible working conditions is taken into account. The Remote Working Bill proposal from the government is not equitable, flexibilities should not be lost now. Our input and preferences are represented at all levels so the learning from additional and creative work we put in during lockdown is kept on board. We need to work with colleagues in other grades who may not have been accommodated as well.



Michael Hinds (DCU) seconded the motion on behalf of the DCU Branch saying sometimes you feel very naive. As we reviewed the serial disruptions and enforced re-organizations of our lives and our working practices that COVID-19 necessitated, we had hoped (maybe even assumed, and that is the really naive part) that we would have a decisive role in discussions over how we might adapt working structures to take advantage of the flexibilities that teaching through technology might afford us.

In particular, it seemed that it would be valuable for our universities to correspond meaningfully with one another and our organization. But we were naive. In our university, we were recently presented with a policy in Flexible working that set a maximum of 20% for the amount of time that someone could work from home. As far as we know, this figure is out of step with what is being proposed by other institutions. It might suit a university to argue that it is not the same as other universities, but the reality is that an opportunity exists here for a proper cross-sectoral approach and broad consultation, affecting all workers in our universities, yet it has yet to happen. Typically, we were consulted only when the draft policy was presented, and not as it was being drafted. We would like to think that this is something we can still affect, or indeed, correct.

Liz Culloten Quinn (TCD) spoke of the interesting outcome of a TCD survey and the issues faced by members Working from Home, people dealing with mental health, laptops, having a screen, the provision of equipment for home work.

Edward Lahiff (UCC) iterated what Michael Hinds (DCU) said. A draft report on remote working in line with government policy has no reference to academic work or research and is an administratively focused document. Remote working in an academic context - do we want to pin down in writing what a lot of academics already have? The debate hasn't begun. What does remote working mean for academics and researchers?

Alastair McKinstry (NUIG) advised Conference that this is a once in a lifetime opportunity to rearrange work. In 2021 in NUIG there were 12 employees in one office. There are now 21 employees attached to that office as they are working remotely. We have staff who cannot afford to move to Dublin, there was a proposal to have employees in the Dublin office 4 times a week.

Proposed by: Miriam Ryan (DCU)  
Seconded by: Michael Hinds (DCU)

The Motion was carried unanimously.

### **Motion 7: Work-Life Balance and Positive Mental Health**

*This ADC encourages IFUT to use World Mental Health Day 2022 (10/10/22) as an opportunity to promote work-life balance and positive mental health among its members and all workers in the HE sector.*

**Proposed by: UCD Branch**

Emma Sokell (UCD) proposed the motion on behalf of the UCD Branch, saying that most of us are fortunate to have a job that is interesting and varied but as it is, quite rightly, not tightly bounded, we as a Union have a responsibility to pay heed to our members and colleagues work-life balance and wellbeing.

The demands on all staff's time were increasing, even before the pandemic hit and the situation has certainly not got better. The pressure is especially intense for those on precarious contracts. For example, we heard at the UCD Branch AGM that staff on time-limited contracts felt obliged to provide recorded lectures during the pandemic, whilst more established academics did not.

We all recognise that we are in a fortunate position compared with that of scholars in other parts of the world. However, unless we "mind ourselves" we will not be in a position to organise to assist them or fight for a healthier HE sector in Ireland. Nor will we as scholars achieve our full potential if we are burnt out. Speaking personally, I did not have time to notice that World Mental Health Day last October was on the near horizon. I urge this ADC to use World Mental Health Day, 10th October 2022, as an opportunity to promote work-life balance and positive mental health among its members and all workers in the HE sector.

Kelly Fitzgerald (UCD), in seconding the motion, focused on using World Mental Health Day to achieve the same focus that International Women's day has. IFUT should focus on the issue and do something on the day, work toward a campaign and events to bring the issue into the way we live and work and start with this day in 2022.

Proposed by: Emma Sokell (UCD)  
Seconded by: Kelly Fitzgerald (UCD)

The Motion was unanimously carried.

### **Motion 8: Surrogacy Leave**

*Conference instructs the Executive Committee to negotiate the same leave provisions for parents who have children by surrogacy as to those provided to parents under the Adoptive Leave Scheme.*

#### **Proposed By: Executive Committee**

Angela Flynn (UCC) proposed the Motion on behalf of the Executive Committee. IFUT has a proud history of promoting and defending equality on behalf of our members. When we are aware of an issue persisting where members are treated less favourably than others, this is a concern to us and something we are committed to tackling.

One such issue is the situation involving leave arrangements for parents who have a child through surrogacy.

Through our involvement in the Four Teachers group within the Irish Congress of Trade Unions, IFUT had the opportunity to discuss this issue with our sister

Unions and we agreed that all four teaching Unions would raise this issue at our delegate conferences this year.

Currently a parent in Ireland who has a child through surrogacy and is not the birth mother or biological father has no right to Maternity Leave or automatic Adoption Leave, despite potentially taking care of the child from their new born days. The only leave they may avail of, with the approval of their employer, is Parental Leave which is unpaid.

The lack of legislation in relation to surrogacy in Ireland dealing with legal parentage and citizenship leads to a lack of certainty for parents. From a Union and worker point of view we are concerned that workers who need to care for, and bond with, their new-born are not afforded automatic leave entitlements to do so.

While there is legislation due dealing with other legal issues surrounding surrogacy in the Assisted Human Reproductive Bill, there are currently no plans to introduce paid surrogacy leave. A woman who qualifies for Maternity Leave is entitled to 26 weeks leave including paid maternity benefit, and in most employments a paid top up payment up to normal salary. Adoptive Leave similarly entitles an adoptive mother or father to 24 weeks paid leave. Parents who qualify for maternity leave and adoptive leave also have a right to Parental Leave. For parents of children born by way of surrogacy the only leave they may take currently is parental leave which extends to 18 weeks unpaid leave the timing of which needs to be agreed with the employer.

With the introduction of the Assisted Human Reproductive Bill, enhanced legal provision for children and parents involved in surrogacy arrangements will be created. However, this will not make a difference at a workplace level for our members now and in future if parents of children born via surrogacy do not have leave entitlements in line with other parents.

Arising from the discussion held at the Four Teachers Unions, this issue was considered by the IFUT Executive and we agreed to propose a motion to you here today which calls on IFUT to negotiate the same leave provisions for parents who have children by surrogacy as to those provided to parents under the Adoptive Leave scheme.

We ask you to support this motion which is consistent with the objectives of IFUT to safeguard and advance terms of conditions of employment. IFUT has always been a champion of equality and fairness and we believe that our members who have children through surrogacy need us to once again take a leading role in tackling the unfairness which they and their new-born children face by the lack of adequate leave arrangements. I so move this motion.

Proposed by: Angela Flynn (UCC)

Seconded by: Kelly Fitzgerald (UCD)

The Motion was carried unanimously.

## **Motion 9: Technology Assisted Learning**

*This ADC recognises the important role that technology played in ensuring continuity of teaching and learning during the pandemic. Technology for teaching and learning - in particular, lecture capture, presents enormous potential but also opens up serious unintended consequences. For this reason, this ADC calls on IFUT to engage with stakeholders at the highest level to develop a framework for technology-assisted learning, for implementation at the sectoral level.*

**Proposed by: Lennon Ó'Náraigh (UCD) & Miranda Corcoran (UCC)**

Lennon Ó'Náraigh (UCD) proposed the Motion saying that we have all seen the important role that technology has played in ensuring continuity of teaching and learning during the pandemic. Technology for teaching and learning - in particular, lecture capture, presents enormous potential, but also, potential serious unintended consequences.

On the positive side, lecture capture and other similar technologies show great potential to make third-level education more accessible to students with disabilities, or to students who commute great distances to their campus due to the accommodation crisis. But realistically, this should be done in a planned way. The Open University is a great model of delivering education in this way, they have developed this model with proper resourcing and focus over the decades. The traditional universities can't pivot to this kind of model overnight. If the universities go down this route, it needs to be planned and properly resourced, in consultation with staff.

On the negative side, we already know about the poor student engagement in online lectures, as well the overall risk to the quality of teaching and learning.

Looking ahead, these technologies pose a risk that academics will be pressured to accept a one-size-fits-all approach to teaching and learning. They could be coerced into work practices that are diametrically opposed to academic freedom. The signature pedagogies of the various academic disciplines could be erased.

There is pressure from students and colleagues on precarious contracts are more vulnerable. Young colleagues are facing unrealistic expectations from students, guidance and support are needed.

Furthermore, there are unresolved issues around copyright of recorded lectures. We must also always resist the appalling idea that academic staff can be replaced by an MP4.

For these reasons, this ADC resolves to develop a framework for technology-assisted teaching and learning, for implementation at the sectoral level, which recognizes both the potential pitfalls and the potential benefits of these technologies.

Miranda Corcoran (UCC) seconded the motion saying that on-line lecture technology widens access to students which is very valuable. However, it is open to exploitation. There are issues of academic freedom. IFUT should develop a clear and coherent framework for online lecturing.

Proposed by: Lennon Ó'Náraigh (UCD)  
Seconded by: Miranda Corcoran (UCC)

The Motion was carried unanimously.

**Motion 10: Lecture Recording**

*This ADC calls on the HEIs to engage with IFUT branches to develop a strategy on streaming and recording of lectures that fully respects the autonomy and freedom of academic staff and affirms the importance to students and lecturers of in-person teaching.*

**Proposed by: UCC Branch**

John Doran (UCC) proposed the motion on behalf of the UCC Branch saying that recording changes the nature of the class, reducing the level of interaction and spontaneity. It fundamentally degrades the quality of the live experience for those students who do attend. Recorded lectures become far more of a one-way recitation of the contents of the PowerPoint slides. This not only facilitates non-attendance (which is recognised as a danger) but actively reduces the added-value of attendance.

Recording has a chilling effect on academic freedom and free speech in relation to free classroom discussion on controversial topics. Recording also exposes lecturers to increased risk of legal exposure under Ireland's relatively draconian defamation laws, since the recordings provides tangible evidence of every utterance made in class. If unrecorded the only evidence would be hearsay which has much less evidential legal standing. If the university "expects" recording then it is reasonable that it guarantees to indemnify its staff against loss and for their legal costs in the case of actions taken or threatened resulting from statements made in class unless they are malicious. This should be written into employer policies.

Lennon Ó'Náraigh (UCD) seconded this motion because of the overlap with Motion 9, this shows that the different Branches are understanding the underlying concerns as technology and learning changes the teaching landscape in higher education.

Lecture capture and lecture recording run the risk of putting staff under new pressures. Students may put staff under inappropriate pressure to provide recorded lectures. Staff may feel that to obtain good ratings from students, they must oblige and provide all manner of recordings and resources, even if they are not pedagogically appropriate. Young staff and staff on precarious contracts may feel this pressure more than well-established academics. The Trade Union is the best way in which staff can be protected from these pressures. IFUT needs to demonstrate the level that the Union protects and to develop a sectoral approach to give members the guidance and protection we require.

Proposed by: John Doran (UCC)  
Seconded by: Lennon Ó'Náraigh (UCD)

The Motion was unanimously carried.

A general discussion took place on Motions 9 and 10.

Des Carswell (MICL) said that stealth is important and would hate to see where the tool defines the job or discipline and the message that gives to students who we wish to facilitate on going on this journey. We need a strategy for the strategy. This is a long term problem, accentuated as technology moves along. IFUT need to pre-empt possible directions that may come.

Conrad Brunstrom (MU) fully supported this approach to extreme sensitivity, the powers that be may will use resounding rhetoric. We need investment in virtual platforms, why do we need affordable student housing. We need to be aware of the risks.

John Walsh (TCD) said there was a real contradiction during the pandemic that online is inferior, there was a huge health learning for students, should get back to it as quickly as possible. Now while face-to-face we should be recording the lectures. Online and hybrid teaching requires a fundamental different pedagogy. There is a huge issue of Health and Safety. How we speak at a lecture is fundamental to academic freedom.

Jenny Butler (UCC) spoke of social media, videos are shared, structured lectures can be stolen, there is copyright of images.

Oisín Creaner (DIAS) raised concern on legal issues. We need to understand the principle that if doing your job normally your employer is responsible.

### **Motion 11: Universities as Sanctuaries**

*Universities should be places of sanctuary offering a safe place for students to learn and an environment where academic freedom is respected. This ADC calls on all Irish Universities and the IUA to proactively implement structured sustainable supports that will enable the scholars and students seeking refuge in Ireland to be adequately supported, resourced, and welcomed within Irish Higher Education.*

**Proposed by: Dr Angela Flynn (UCC)**

**Seconded by: Dr Dug Cubie (UCC)**

Angela Flynn (Outgoing President and UCC) in proposing the motion said we have heard this morning from our keynote speaker Prof Andrea Pető about the impact of attacks on academic freedom. These are not ethereal, conceptual, or notional attacks but actual real and immensely damaging attacks, which have dire consequences for those on the receiving end.

IFUT is a proud supporter of Scholars at Risk or SAR. By arranging temporary academic positions at member universities and colleges, Scholars at Risk offers safety to scholars facing grave threats, so scholars' ideas are not lost and they can keep working until conditions improve and they are able to return to their home countries.

SAR also provides advisory services for scholars and hosts, campaigns for scholars who are imprisoned or silenced in their home countries, monitors attacks on higher education communities worldwide, and encourages leaders

in deploying new tools and strategies for promoting academic freedom and improving respect for university values everywhere.

SAR Europe, hosted at Maynooth University, is the European office of the global Scholars at Risk network. The European office supports and coordinates the activities of Scholars at Risk national sections and partner networks across Europe, to strengthen our collective voice and contribute to informed policymaking for the greater protection of scholars and increased respect for academic freedom worldwide.

It is so important that we are able to provide support and sanctuary to such scholars given the increasing scale and range of attacks on academic freedom around Europe and globally.

These attacks can constitute prevention or control of work practices, targeted redundancies, violent attacks, arbitrary arrests, and disappearances.

In many countries there is what has been referred to by Dr Sejal Parmar of University of Sheffield as “a shrinking space to teach”.

Academics fleeing such attacks need to be supported and facilitated in a place of safety and stability.

As the Minister referenced this morning in relation to our response to the Ukrainian crisis, there is a clear need for a structured and organised approach in our efforts. While individual universities making their own local efforts is to be commended, it must be coordinated throughout the country and must be properly resourced. This motion calls on the leadership in Higher Education in Ireland through the IUA to proactively implement structured sustainable supports that will enable scholars and students seeking refuge in Ireland to be adequately supported, resourced, and welcomed in a way that is genuine, meaningful and implementable.

I urge delegates to demonstrate support and solidarity with our colleagues seeking safety by supporting this motion.

Proposed by: Angela Flynn (UCC)

Seconded by: Dug Cubie (UCC)

The Motion was carried unanimously.

## **12. CLOSING OF CONFERENCE**

The General Secretary in his closing remarks to Conference said.

Dear Colleagues, Guests and Friends,

And so we reach the end of yet another successful Annual Delegate Conference: I would like to begin my closing remarks by thanking all of those whose efforts and skills made today not merely possible but, as I hope you will agree, successful.

I have in mind all you who have attended and especially those who have proposed motions and all of you who spoke on these.

**Standing Orders:** I want to thank also the members of the Standing Orders Committee for their work, not only today, but prior to the day in arranging the order of business, validating and scheduling motions for debate and for being available all through the day to provide guidance whenever called upon. Thanks Emma.

**Staff:** Earlier in my address proposing the annual report I named and thanked those who work for IFUT either as members of the staff team or as providers of a significant amount of additional knowledge and expertise. I reiterate that gratitude now. Our Head Office Team of Phyllis, Miriam, Fiona and Úna are inspirational colleagues for me to have the pleasure to work with. Every day they make me feel proud to be on the same team as them. I look forward to our head office team being joined by Robert McNamara in August, I know that Robert will not only fit well with those in head office but that he will be a huge asset to all of our members as he brings his wealth of experience in industrial relations, organising and employment law with him into IFUT.

This is Phyllis's last and 38<sup>th</sup> IFUT conference as a staff member and I will, as many of you will too, miss Phyllis as she retires from IFUT. Joan often referred to Phyllis as the 'Mammy' to all of us in Head Office and that describes some of what Phyllis brings to us very well, but she's so much more to all of our membership and she is irreplaceable. We will, I sincerely hope, be all able to gather together when the time comes to give Phyllis the send-off which she so richly deserves.

**Former Staff:** I especially must mention Joan Donegan and the huge efforts that she made on her watch as GS, and indeed continues to make with her work as Treasurer of ETUCE. Regrettably, Joan did not have the opportunity to address her final ADC last year directly but had to instead 'settle' for a virtual event. Delegates at last year's conference and indeed our members in general were robbed of an opportunity to give Joan the 'farewell' that she deserved and that they wanted to give. I know that our President Anthony will try to address this injustice in his closing remarks.

Just by way of a personal statement I want Conference to know that I am deeply appreciative of all that Joan has done, and continues to do for IFUT, and all that she has done for me over the years.

**Committees:** I wish to thank our Trustees, Executive, Council members, those who participate in the inter-branch meetings, and all of those representing and supporting IFUT members in each of our sections. I include all of those who served, or finished their terms, during the period of restrictions where no face to face meetings could take place. IFUT is nothing without the work of these volunteer members.

**President(s):** Our Outgoing President, Angela finished out her term during this period of remote and virtual working, indeed Anthony our current



President began his term remotely. So now I can take the opportunity to present both Angela and Anthony with their IFUT President badges.

**Hotel:** I must, as you will no doubt agree, thank too the staff of the hotel here for the smooth running and set up of the conference and indeed the fabulous lunch that we enjoyed earlier.

**Fraternal Guests:** I want to thank our fraternal delegates for honouring us today by their presence and for their support for our Union throughout the year. Indeed, I take this opportunity to also thank those Unions that supported IFUT, and me, in securing a seat on the ICTU Executive Council, a seat formerly held by Mike Jennings. I would like too, to thank Mike for the advice and support he gave me which helped me to secure this seat.

**Delegates:** Finally and especially, I want to thank all of the Delegates here today representing your Branches and our entire membership across each of our sections. I know that through the motions and with your presence you have brought the voices of each and every member to this ADC, thank you for this. I hope that you can bring our good wishes back to the members as we prepare for what's ahead of us next year.

**Finally:** I know I have already used the word "finally". (Mike Jennings used to tell me that when he said "finally" for the first time the audience knew that what he actually meant was "bear with me, it won't be too much longer now".)

But as an actual 'final' remark may I conclude by saying; This is a wonderful Union. It was made so, in the main, by unpaid representatives and elected officers such as those whom I am looking at in this hall today. It is an organization which is highly respected by other Trade Unions and also, sometimes grudgingly, though not always so, by those who sit on the opposite side of the table from us and by those who sit at the top of those tables. We have both a national and an international profile which is massively disproportionate to our size.

I am hugely proud to be in the same Union as you who are listening to me, not to mention my pride in the position I hold in the organisation.

So, and this is the final sentence! please be as proud of IFUT as you richly deserve to be. After all, it is as a result of your, often invisible, day-to-day, efforts that we are what we are.

Thank you for what you do. Thank you for listening to me.

Anthony, our President will now bring this Conference to a close.

Go raibh mile maith agaibh go léir! Safe home.

The President in closing Conference said: Dear friends, we are now in the final stretch of this ADC. But this last element is more than the usual rounding-off session that we usually have. I say that because it is now three years since IFUT last had the chance properly to thank our brilliant Head Office staff and our wonderful volunteer activists for all that they have continued to

do, day in and day out, on behalf of our members throughout the pandemic; during it they have necessarily received even less public recognition of their efforts than we are customarily able to afford them. I think, for example, of what we might call the "Long Executive", which had to hold office for eighteen months rather than the usual twelve until September 2020, and which then had to disband without any kind of send-off. I think of not one but two national Councils which only ever met virtually (three times each), but still managed to engender a productive and friendly sense of collegiality among their members. I think of our Past Presidents – many of whom I am delighted to see here today – who, far from fading away, have continued helpfully to represent our members and their cohorts on various national bodies and committees. In the teeth of Covid, all of our members have of course needed to continue all aspects of their day jobs in very much altered and often highly stressful circumstances; so I want to salute those who not only have maintained their activism on IFUT's behalf but have even taken important new initiatives for our Union that will long outlast the pandemic. In particular one may mention those involved in the informal (now monthly) online Cross-Branch discussion group, which has established itself as a valuably cohesive way of strengthening IFUT's national solidarity and of ensuring that emerging issues get addressed at the appropriate level with the minimum of delay. There is also the new Precarity group, featured in our debates today, which is working hard under Miriam Hamilton's energetic leadership to increase further our concentration on addressing the needs of the most vulnerable people in our sector. And there is of course my predecessor as President, Angela Flynn. Angela, your time in office was blighted by Covid in that you never got to preside in person at an ADC, and that was a huge shame. But throughout your two years you performed the role brilliantly anyway; and since then, as Outgoing President, you have continued to inspire me and others by your amazing ongoing levels of warmhearted activism on behalf of IFUT members and others in the community, not least in serving as our link-person to the Scholars at Risk movement by which we gained access to today's distinguished guest speaker. Typically, you also actually did something on foot of President Michael D. Higgins's call for Universities to teach modules on the importance of Academic Freedom: thanks to your initiative, UCC's on-line course has provided a model for others to follow – which I trust they will. Angela, you have also been wonderfully supportive to me as President during our overlap year now ending, and I want to thank you from the heart.

So far I have been speaking of IFUT's volunteer activists; but among our professional staff I have already mentioned Miriam Hamilton, who since we last met has succeeded Frank Jones as our Deputy General Secretary. Talk about hitting the ground running: Miriam, your energy, focus, and willingness to take pro-active initiatives already makes it unclear how we could have managed without you. Then there is the ever-dependable, ever-helpful and wise Fiona Lee; as Assistant General Secretary, she not only keeps our Union abreast of matters in the field of Equality and makes sure that all our own documentation is in order, but has even been prepared uncomplainingly to intervene so effectively with HR departments and the like that, in at least one case, she has ended up more or less writing their policy documents for them (always with an appropriate eye, of course, to IFUT members' interests)! Then there is Una Crowley who, beginning as a member of Maynooth Branch, has joined our professional team as, effectively, our in-house barrister: a

marvellous resource for a relatively small organization like ours, and an increasingly necessary one for us to have. As for our General Secretary, Frank Jones is another team member who has already made his current role so much his own that it's hard to believe he only stepped into it within the last year. An enviable quality that Frank shares with his predecessors is the ability and willingness to switch at a moment's notice from some matter of national significance, such as the detail of a Bill passing through the Oireachtas, right down to the terms of an individual IFUT member's contract. In Frank you see the implementation of one of our Union's unspoken policies: in poaching from other Unions' staff, we only take the best! (We think we've continued that with Robert McNamara, present today, who will be joining us from Mandate in August as an additional Assistant General Secretary.) We are also most grateful to our specialist contractors and advisers.

Having said all that, this session (and indeed this ADC) should culminate in tribute to two remarkable women. The first is Phyllis Russell. Exactly because her role – for literally decades past – has been to keep IFUT functioning smoothly at all its various levels, it is all too easy to take for granted everything that we owe to her alertness, her tact, her wisdom, her attention to detail, and the sheer knowledge of our organization, its members, its finances, its social activities, its operations (and indeed its foibles) that she has built up over the years and deploys to such good effect. Every e-mail that you will have received from "admin@ifut.ie" has, on whatever topic, come from or through Phyllis. And how will Conferences like this one be hauled into existence without her? We all somewhat dread finding out! In the meantime, I will just offer a piece of personal experience. In the mid-1990s, when the employees of the Royal Irish Academy finally realized that we needed to get organized, there was the question of which Union would serve us non-administrative staff there best. I had previously been a research fellow at DIAS, where in those pre-Internet days my eye had been caught by some IFUT document on the noticeboard. I realized that this was probably the Union for us; the question was, how to go about it. So I did what you did do before there were websites: I looked up the number in the phone book (hard copy, of course), and dialled it. "Good afternoon, I.F.U.T." came the first voice I ever associated with IFUT; it was, of course, Phyllis's – the only person, as far as I know, who ever uses our initials like that; but in the interests of clarity, what could be more sensible? Just the sort of thing that Phyllis always thinks of ... By the way, she immediately went on to fix me up for an appointment with the then General Secretary, Daltun Ó Ceallaigh, and the rest is history; but the point of my anecdote is this. People now join IFUT by downloading the form from the Internet, and communicating with Head Office by e-mail. That is appropriate enough, and is efficient; but it does remove the personal aspect, and means that Phyllis's vital role may have become even more taken for granted than in previous years. It is probably old-timers like me, who have heard "I.F.U.T." pronounced on the phone, who are most aware of all that Phyllis has done for us – and after all, we are the ones who have been benefiting from it for the longest. So I am delighted to say that some plans are on foot for a gathering of some of those longest standing members – something that IFUT would have been planning to do again soon anyway – at which I hope they for their part will have an opportunity to pay their own tribute to Phyllis. In the meantime I have the honour to present her with a

Royal Irish Academy publication in token of our whole Union's esteem, and our thanks for her devoted service over so many years.

Finally, the other remarkable woman I mentioned. I hope you know who I mean: who could it be other than Joan Donegan, our most recent former General Secretary, whose retirement from IFUT was so meanly eclipsed by Covid forcing us online? Happily she is here with us today in person, and I was determined not to let the opportunity go past without offering her our most heartfelt thanks, delayed though these have necessarily been. Joan, what can I say? Well, I can begin by repeating what I said once before at an ADC; it was in 2017 when, after a gruelling slog that had lasted for nineteen years, we had just managed finally to get a fair deal for some of our members employed by the Royal Irish Academy. In an emergency motion to convey the good news, I pointed to Joan's warm personal encouragement of the people afflicted, her realism coupled with constant cheerfulness, her mild-mannered yet ruthless skill in negotiation, but above all her patience and dogged, tenacious determination, sustained year after year after year, to get an acceptable outcome for our members, no matter how great the enormous workload it placed upon herself. That was the experience of just one small Section of one Branch of IFUT and, at the time, Joan had only recently become our General Secretary designate: yet, as I've just described, she was already more than making her mark. As our actual General Secretary, Joan went on to help IFUT flourish and expand in an unprecedented fashion, but always retaining and exercising the fine qualities I've just enumerated. That can be vouched for by every single Branch of IFUT, by all of the numerous individual members whose cases she took up, and by each member of the Head Office team whose time overlapped with hers. In addition as General Secretary, Joan built upon Mike Jennings's fine legacy of enabling IFUT to punch way above our weight at the national and indeed international level – again always by means of quiet and courteous, but firm and extremely well-informed diplomacy, all of it resulting from sheer hard preparatory work on her part. It is delightful that, far from putting Union activity behind her since retiring, Joan has followed the tradition established by Mike of going on to take up a key role at European level, namely as treasurer of ETUCE, the trades union federation and official social partner for education across the whole of Europe. This well deserved elevation has by no means tempted Joan to forget her roots: she constantly shows her continuing concern for us in Ireland, and for what I believe she still thinks of as the IFUT family. Indeed, what her involvement with ETUCE is really doing is providing a wider context for Joan to exercise those wonderful and effective professional and personal qualities. I think they can be summed up as a driving concern for fairness and a deep compassion. Delegates here today won't be surprised to learn that, only last week, Joan was in Poland as part of a fact-finding and fact-sharing trades union delegation that was seeing what more could be done across Europe, in a practical way, for refugees coming from Ukraine. This is inspiring to behold, Joan, and you have our admiration for it. However, it is of course for your days among us in IFUT that this Union will most fondly remember you. Joan is not given to hyperbole, which makes one remarkable statement of hers all the more memorable. The topic of discussion was the perennial one of how to keep building up our membership, and we were searching for an appropriate recruiting slogan. Times in Higher Education were hard - when are they not? – and Joan suddenly came out with a no-nonsense suggestion:

“Do you feel you work in hell, and would you like to be in heaven? If so, join IFUT!” All I can say is, if our Union deserves that characterization at all, it is largely thanks to Joan Donegan’s enduring contribution in moulding its character after her own.

Joan, as many here know we have already privately made IFUT’s main presentation to you, as we didn’t want to keep you waiting yet longer; but today I want in addition to give you this, a book published by the Royal Irish Academy and authored by three colleagues of mine on the staff there; I assure you that each of them is a loyal member of the Academy section of IFUT!

**14 May 2022**

## APPENDIX I

Delegates (as recorded at Conference)

### Central Branch:

Anthony Harvey (RIA) *President*  
Joseph Flahive (RIA)  
Oisín Creaner (DIAS)

### DCU:

Margaret Robson  
Michael Hinds  
Miriam Ryan

### ERC:

Conall Ó Duibhir

### MICL:

Des Carswell  
Gerard Enright

### MU:

Conrad Brunstrom  
Maeve Martin  
Sinéad Kennedy

### NUIG:

Alastair McKinstry

### TCD:

Dónall MacDónaill  
Elizabeth Culleton-Quinn  
Enrica Ferrara *Vice President-Finance*  
Hugh Gibbons  
Jason Wyse  
John Walsh

### UCC:

Angela Flynn *Outgoing President*  
Brendan Palmer  
Catherine Dawson  
Edward Lahiff  
Jacqui O'Riordan  
Jenny Butler  
John Doran  
Martina Scallan  
Mike Fitzgibbon  
Miranda Corcoran

### UCD:

Emma Sokell  
Joe Brady  
John Dunnion *Trustee*  
Kelly Fitzgerald  
Lennon Ó'Náraigh  
Maureen Killeavy

## **APPENDIX II**

### **ADDRESS BY SIMON HARRIS, MINISTER FOR FURTHER AND HIGHER EDUCATION, RESEARCH, INNOVATION AND SCIENCE**

#### **Introduction**

Good morning to you all.

I want to thank your General Secretary and Executive for the invitation to be here with you today for my first IFUT conference in person. Of course, this is a momentous occasion, as I understand I am the first Minister of Further and Higher Education to attend in person.

#### **Responsiveness during Pandemic**

To start, I would like to thank the IFUT and all your members for the continued attitude towards problem solving, flexibility, and adaptiveness that you have shown these past two years.

This is not something I say lightly. The pandemic has brought out the best of our public service, particularly those in the front line, like yourselves.

In the time since I was appointed Minister for Further and Higher Education, we have together faced our biggest challenges. However, we have found innovative ways of maintaining and in many cases, improving our service delivery.

I would like to commend you also for ensuring the student remains the centre of your focus. I know you have worked hard to maintain "service as normal", and I know this has not been easy for any of you.

I am very proud of the quality of service you have provided these past two years, as you should be too.

And as you know, these past weeks and months, a new challenge has emerged for us to overcome.

As the tragedy in Ukraine continues to unfold we can see the impact it is having on life across Europe. In particular, it is disrupting the lives and education of thousands of Ukrainian children and students.

I know you are welcoming students into our universities and I thank you for that.

However, we both know that this is putting pressure on our education systems but that these are pressures that we are happy to embrace, in a spirit of solidarity with our Ukrainian neighbours at this time of crisis.

I know I can count on your continued support in doing what we can to bring a sense of normality to people traumatised and uprooted from their homes and lives.

## **Central Helpdesk Hub**

I know as educators, we can say we stand with and are happy to support our Ukrainian friends in any way we can.

To ensure that we support the Higher Education sector in meeting this challenge, as you know, I have tasked a panel of experts with creating a central helpdesk hub for Ukrainian students who want to continue their studies in Ireland.

I am delighted that the National Student and Researcher Helpdesk is now live and running very effectively and that it is already going a long way to meeting the needs of third-level students and researchers arriving from Ukraine. Recognising the impact of trauma, Staff are receiving specific training support to help them engage with people fleeing from the war zone.

I know with the full support of your members and of the wider community across our universities, our Ukrainian friends will feel welcome and will start to build towards a brighter future.

## **Research - Impact 2030**

I'd like to talk more about how we can contribute towards a better future for Ireland, specifically about the core topic of research. Government policy is clear about the need to advance significant ambitions for Ireland to become a world leader in research and innovation. Research and innovation will be fundamental to addressing key economic and social challenges like climate change, digitalisation and public health.

Creating our Future offered a unique perspective by reaching out to all corners of society and harnessing the public's creative juices in terms of where research should go next.

My Cabinet colleagues and I and our respective Departments will now use that insight to help inform actions under our remits.

Research lies at the very core of academic life. Further access to high quality early stage research can be the entry point to a career in academia and can support bright academic leaders of the future in the first stages of their careers.

The Programme for Government commits to creating better opportunities through education and research to ensure that Ireland is a global leader in research and innovation across the arts, humanities, social sciences and STEM.

I was delighted to see Ireland achieving €1.2 billion in competitive funding from Horizon 2020 to date, out of an ambitious target of €1.25 billion.

Ireland is also doing very well in the international rankings and we have your members to thank for that. The Global Innovation Index places Ireland first for knowledge diffusion, fifth for knowledge absorption and tenth for knowledge impact. And it is very evident that individual



academics and researchers and members of IFUT play a key part in the achievement of these rankings.

Going forward, *Impact 2030* will replace *Innovation 2020* as Ireland's national research and innovation strategy setting a new vision for Ireland's R&I system that we can all get behind and contribute to.

Our new strategy will have ambitious national strategic goals and it will need continued collaboration and engagement from ambitious, dynamic academics and researchers.

This new strategy will provide a clear foundation, enabling researchers in Ireland to realise their full potential.

The strategy recognises that only a small number will remain in academia, and so there is a need to promote engagement, collaboration and mobility into industry and the public sector for our next generation researchers. This approach will ensure that researchers enjoy a diversity of attractive career paths through the promotion of transferable skills development and career advice.

For those who do remain in academia, the new strategy will support their career progression through better clarity and consistency in funding programmes and funding availability.

This approach will ensure that our current students and future researchers will benefit from a consistent research student experience and clearer career path, grounded first in the National Framework for Doctoral Education. Our next generation researchers deserve no less.

### **Future Funding**

And of course, to support this bright future, we need to address funding needs now. That is why I was delighted to launch *Funding the Future* last week – As you know, I launched this new landmark policy in response to a report from the European Commission which noted that “the financial sustainability of the Irish higher education system is at risk.” We need to take action to protect the future of our Higher Education System.

### **And we have.**

“Funding our Future” will close the funding gap of €307m through a multi-funded model comprising a mix of Exchequer investment, employer contributions through the National Training Fund and student contributions.

As you know I have committed that student contributions will be reviewed annually in advance of the estimates process.

Working with my Cabinet colleague in D/PER, I plan to prioritise this review with the intention of reducing the scale of the student contribution and the reliance on student contributions over time. I think you'll agree that this is important at a time of increasing cost-of-living concerns.

This €307m will improve the quality of outcomes and will strengthen the responsiveness of the sector. Our international reputation and rankings will be enhanced; we have recently been identified as a “strong innovator” in the European Innovation Scoreboard. With your continued input and innovation, we will continue to make strides.

This funding will underpin reform of the sector. It will help in the provision of the skills and talent we need for our future public services by creating better alignment between the HE sector and workforce planning for key public services, like for our health system.

It will create an enhanced system and will present a more comprehensive range of choices to learners, researchers and innovators. Encouraging all to seek out opportunities to develop in ways best suited to their talents, helping them to achieve their greatest potential.

As you know, I recently introduced changes to the CAO portal. For the first time - the portal now includes information on higher education, further education and training, and on apprenticeships. This is an important step – a visible communication for students, their parents, and their teachers, of the breadth of options available in the post-secondary space.

Furthermore, this system will be characterised by clear pathways for learners, and an expansive qualification framework aligned to current and future knowledge and skills needs. Supplementing the Programme for Government commitment on apprenticeships and the National Skills Strategy 2025.

I believe that a more unified approach across the further and higher education and research sectors can lead to more joined up opportunities.

We must meet the different needs of individual learners throughout their working and personal lives.

We need greater collaboration and more unified regional systems.

We need to provide more choice - a more extensive range of possible pathways, all equally valued.

Removing barriers to progression will facilitate lifelong learning and develop diversity of talent.

In terms of moving to a more integrated and balanced approach, I accept that more work is needed.

And that pathways across and between sectors require some further development.

I believe I have the unique opportunity, as the first Minister of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science, to progress this more unified approach.

To this end, my Department is currently working on a new policy approach to bring the complementary strands of higher education, further education and research closer together.

I intend to bring greater detail on this to Government in the coming weeks.

I also propose to undertake an open process of consultation and engagement, and - as key stakeholders - I very much look forward to hearing your views

The world of living and working, the world of teaching, learning and research has changed dramatically in the last few years. And of course we can expect more change to come. And I look forward to working with learners, with staff, with institutions and with all stakeholders so that - together - we can create a new more integrated approach to tertiary education in Ireland.

### **Cost as a barrier; Equity of access**

We are all acutely aware of the impact of recent big increases in the cost of living. I know students and staff alike are feeling the pinch as it seems the cost of life's essentials are going up and up.

For students, cost can often be a significant barrier to tertiary education. I want to address this barrier and improve student supports.

In this area I will consider the extension of supports to enable more flexible forms of learning including blended, online or part-time learning. Because I know that this style of additional flexibilities can open up possibilities and make a huge difference for individual students. I will also be considering a simplification of the student grant regime.

Of course, while we need to ensure working conditions in third level attract and retain the best talent, we also need to make sure we are attracting and retaining talented students from across all areas of society.

This funding package will help with this by enhancing student participation on under-presented groups. A lot has been achieved over the lifetime of the third National Access Plan, however I accept that there is still work to be done.

Increasing equity, diversity and increased access and participation for students and groups who are currently underrepresented in Higher Education is an ongoing objective of mine and of my Department.

As you know, the Third National Plan for Equity of Access to Higher Education, or NAP as it is known, ended in December 2021.

My vision is that the student body entering, participating in, and completing higher education at all levels reflects the diversity and social mix of Ireland's population.

I believe access to education should be available to individuals independent of their socio-economic background, ethnicity, gender, geographical location, disability or other circumstances.

Even though significant progress has been made in supporting learners to access higher education during the previous National Access Plan (2015-2021), we know that gaps still exist when it comes to equity of access, participation and success in higher education. This is where we will focus our attention.

The new National Access Plan will set out the Department's and the HEA's ambitions for achieving a more inclusive and diverse student population in higher education.

The development of the next National Access Plan is at an advanced stage. Colleagues in my Department are currently working on a Memo for Government and I am looking forward to publishing the new Plan in the coming months.

This new Plan will be more student centred, have a strong focus on pathways and will have an increased focus on student success.

A key priority of mine and one that I am extremely passionate about, is supporting students with an intellectual disability in participating in and successfully completing higher education and how we can strengthen these supports.

This has the potential to be transformational for people with intellectual disabilities and open the doors of third level education to all and I look forward to sharing more details on this with you shortly.

### **Building Momentum**

I'd like to turn now to the issue of pay. I've already spoken about the cost of living increases and my cabinet colleagues and I are looking at ways to reduce their impact.

The Government acknowledges that current price pressures present particular challenges and are a source of concern for all public service workers.

As you know, the Building Momentum agreement provided that members' pay increase by 2% by the beginning of October this year.

I also wish to acknowledge the patience you demonstrated while you awaited the issue of February's Pay Circular recently, I can assure you - it did not go unnoticed.

As you know, new talks are now due to commence in the next few months to agree a successor to 'Building Momentum'. This will lead to a new National Agreement to underpin pay for public servants beyond the end of this year. And I trust this will go some way to addressing the cost of living increases we are all seeing in every aspect of life at the moment.

My Department is also in the process of establishing the Higher Education Sector Oversight Group, as required under 'Building Momentum'. This is a new development and a "first" for the higher education sector, and I know it is welcomed by your Executive.

The Oversight Group will be chaired by the WRC.

This is a great opportunity for Unions. All six Unions which represent the HE sector will have a voice at the table, along with all the employer representatives, and the Department.

And it will be an effective forum to help resolve disputes pertinent to higher education. This will be an important step forward - another key measure to help ensure that all voices are heard, as well as ensuring that the industrial relations mechanisms for the higher education sector are fit for purpose.

### **Conclusion**

As I conclude today, I hope that I have whetted your appetite for what will be an exciting year for Tertiary Education and Research and Innovation in Ireland. I look forward to working with you to achieve these developments in the sector. I would like to thank you once again for your kind invite to address you all today. I hope you enjoy the rest of your Congress.

Go raibh míle maith agaibh.

## **APPENDIX III SPEECH BY FRANK JONES (GENERAL SECRETARY)**

Dear President, Friends, colleagues and guests,

I am very pleased to present the Annual Report of the Irish Federation of University Teachers for the year 2021/2022.

You will not be surprised to learn that I am extremely proud as General Secretary to have this honour and duty. However, I do think that it is only proper that I should remind you that I have been in this post for just a little over eight months now. I say this in no way to indicate any desire on my part to distance myself in any manner from the report. The truth is in the opposite interpretation, which is that after such a brief time in my current role I feel almost a sense of embarrassment to be given this honour when it is self-evident that so much of the credit for the many achievements and successes we have secured and which are detailed in the report were clearly brought about by the fantastic work done by those that I work alongside every day, our members and activists and fellow staff members. Much of what is contained within the report is work that has continued following the retirement of my immediate predecessor, Joan Donegan, and indeed, as Joan herself has always generously acknowledged, by those who preceded her in this office.

This year the Annual Report is presented in three Sections as you can see laid out in the Annual Report Booklet. These sections are:

- 1: The Industrial Report which is an overview of the work that Head Office has engaged in on a daily basis.
- 2: Committee work and the work that IFUT is engaged in outside of that directly involving members and Branches.
- 3: The Motions adopted at last year's Annual Delegate Conference and the actions taken on foot of these.

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I do not believe that I could start this address without referring to the very same topic which has dominated (and in many cases, blighted) our lives and our work for the past two years and more.

The Covid Pandemic has been the single most significant and disruptive event ever to hit Ireland's Higher Education system in the lifetime of every one of us. To go into detail would take up more time than all of the content of our Annual Reports over a number of years. It would also be a painful exercise for many of us.

Nevertheless, it simply can never be said too often or too forthrightly that, without the herculean efforts and commitment of IFUT members throughout all sections and institutions Ireland's system of higher education and research would have suffered such a setback that it would be the work of decades to repair the damage done.

### **IFUT Membership & Finances:**

Considering all of the challenges we have faced as a Union it is quite remarkable that IFUT's membership numbers have grown year-on-year yet again. The credit for this growth must go to the members and branches of our Union whose hard work and dedication to the welfare of their colleagues and of the system of Higher Education in general, have shone like a beacon attracting more and more members to our Union.

### **A brief overview of our work over the past year:**

Unfortunately, it is not only good news which recurs year after year in our system. We continue to struggle mightily under the burden of one of the poorest levels of funding of comparable systems of Higher Education anywhere in the world. Our shamefully high student:teacher ratio (23.4:1) is just one inevitable result of this woefully inadequate funding.

I have already today referred to the positive use we are making of the opportunities presented by the creation of a full Ministry for our sector. We are going to engage in real sectoral and social dialogue as the Education Oversight Group for the 'new' department is finally being formed. Additionally, Congress now has a Higher and Further Education Group of Unions ... with a lot of work ahead of it. We intend to be amongst its most active members. I mentioned too in my opening address the need for IFUT to be represented on any and all working groups involved in industrial relations or employee relations work in our sector as the challenges facing those that we represent are unique to IFUT and not fully understood by all of the players across the Higher and Further Education Sector.

As is obvious from the Annual Report, IFUT continues to take a very high number of individual issues to the WRC and to the Labour Court. It has been said about the Adjudication Services of the WRC that it operates, on occasion with regard to decisions, "like a clown's pocket", you don't know what's going to come out of it next! We are hopeful, from discussions with the ICTU, that the WRC is now making serious efforts to address the inconsistencies in approaches and outputs that we have witnessed in recent years. The fact that IFUT has secured a much-prized seat on the Executive Committee of Congress will strengthen our voice and influence in these, and indeed, in all national-level talks and negotiations.

It is a measure of our success in exploiting the 'Cush' agreement between IFUT and the IUA to the maximum, that there have been very few cases of late because, more and more, the employers have begun to prefer resolving legitimate cases locally. However, the struggle continues with far too many 'student facing staff' not being correctly categorized as lecturers and indeed it is the case that some employers have developed means of circumventing the recommendations of Cush by categorizing Lecturers as something else.

The struggle to secure certainty of employment for Researchers continues. It was a pleasure to present to the Joint Oireachtas Committee of Further and Higher Education on the subject of future funding alongside IFUT Member and Irish Research Staff Association member Dr Andrew Allen earlier this year. Let us be hopeful that the points that we jointly raised

fell on attentive ears. The challenges facing early career academics remain real and addressing these challenges remains core to the work of IFUT.

Our efforts to influence the HEA legislation as it moves through the Houses of the Oireachtas continue. In the past year we have appeared before the Joint Oireachtas Committees on three occasions discussing the HEA legislation, Future Funding of Higher Education and Leaving Certificate reform. It's inevitable that, as the new Department develops, our appearances before this Committee will become more frequent.

Equality remains firmly very high on our agenda of priorities. Many here will be aware that in recent years we have taken some very difficult and complicated equality cases through procedures. However, that said, we know there are many inequalities remaining within our sector that need to be challenged.

The current Public Sector Agreement 'Building Momentum' draws to a close at the end of this year and the task of securing terms for a successor, that will be acceptable to those that we represent, is immense. Engagement is ongoing currently between the Officers of the Public Services Committee of Congress and the Department for Public Expenditure and Reform DPER. This engagement follows a call from the ICTU side to invoke the provision to review the terms of the agreement "where the underlying assumptions of the agreement need to be revisited." We are all watching these talks with interest as we feed into the Officers with input from our membership. We won't be accepting pay cuts, in real terms, over the course of the next agreement as inflation reaches figures that many in our membership have never before witnessed. I look forward to the challenge ahead with the support of our membership.

### **Responding to the war in Ukraine:**

Every one of us has been shocked and saddened by the savagery we see every night being inflicted on the people of Ukraine. We feel helpless and wish we could do something positive in response to what we are witnessing. IFUT as an institution shares those sentiments.

Thankfully, our Union's finances are in a healthy state. These funds are the members' funds to be used to support the members and others for whom we feel some responsibility. As a Union we believe that these include those displaced and affected by the war in Ukraine. Therefore, we urge IFUT members to contribute the equivalent of one hour's pay to the ICTU fund raising drive while IFUT will make representations to the employers across our sector to match these contributions. We in Head Office will, of course, do the same with contributions from our staff social fund and, in addition to this, all of the funds secured from sponsors to today's conference will be passed on to this fund too.

### **A word of well-deserved praise and gratitude:**

Apart from my hard-working colleagues employed in IFUT's Head Office there are many, many other people without whose efforts we could not function effectively.



So, on my own behalf and also on behalf of the whole organisation I would like to thank John Gallagher for all his media and political work, Sean Couch for assisting us with financial matters and for the support that he provides to members directly with pension issues, Dave Murphy (who regrettably can't be here today) for his work keeping our website up to date and developing our social media profile, Paddy Cole for his work developing our communication strategy and indeed for taking on the role today as our 'Official Tweeter' for this conference, Mike Jennings for his continued support in ensuring that the messages that we put out are 'on point' and for his continued work in TASC, NUIG, Trade Union Friends of Palestine and elsewhere in ensuring that IFUT's voice is heard in circles that we may not generally or easily have access to. It's regrettable, as many here will agree, that Mike can't attend today.

I want to thank all my predecessors for ensuring that IFUT is in a good state as I begin my period as General Secretary and as I move my first Annual Report. I need to mention the fantastic support given to us in head office by our President, Anthony, our Executive Committee, our Council, Trustees, our Branches and every Activist and member that has made this Annual Report possible.

I want now to introduce Miriam Hamilton, IFUT's Deputy General Secretary to conclude the proposal of the 2021/2022 Annual Report to the Conference.

Thank you and thank you for listening to me

### **SPEECH BY MIRIAM HAMILTON (DEPUTY GENERAL SECRETARY)**

Our Annual Report not only reports on our collective activity for the past year, but sets the stage for us to build on our successes in the year ahead. In our report we have described how we have set out to improve our approach to communications with our members and publicly, to increase and improve the image of IFUT so that our members' gain the benefit of our enhanced reputation and image thereby increasing our effectiveness as a Union.

We have formed a Communications Group who will work with Paddy Cole to develop a Communications Strategy. The first benefit of this work is in your hand today as we have printed our ADC booklets for the first time. Paddy is also present today ensuring our ADC is communicated to our membership and other interested observers through social media.

After ADC we will focus our efforts on other aspects of our communications including the website, our newsletter, and our physical communications on campus including posters and leaflets.

We will after lunch show a video which was prepared for today and in this video I hope you will see how our communications materials will be developed over time. We want a professional, quality production deserving of our membership, featuring our membership. We want to show IFUT as

a vibrant, inclusive, active and representative organisation and we will therefore increasingly call on our members and activists to do your Sunday best and speak on our behalf.

One of the main reasons for needing to put the members to the front of our communications strategy and image is to assist us to grow. We know that the more members we have, the more representative we are, the more effective and powerful we are. No Union can win by relying on a convincing and well researched argument alone. We need to be strong. We want IFUT to be as well organised in every campus as we can be.

Members join a Union which reflects their needs and priorities with members who are like them. Librarians will join IFUT if they see, either at Branch level or across the sector, that IFUT understands and pursues their issues. Researchers will join IFUT if they see that IFUT is the means by which their issues can be addressed. Lecturers on fixed-term contracts will join IFUT if they speak with a member who successfully got a CID on foot of representation from IFUT. Any academic concerned with growing pressure and limitations on academic freedom will join IFUT if they see the Branch or the Union nationally highlight this as a core objective of our work. We have formed the IFUT Precarious Employment Campaign Steering Group this year and have a wonderful spread of members on the committee bringing many different perspectives to the discussion on how best we can work to respond to the growing precarity so many members, and potential members experience. We understand that the casualisation of the workforce through the utilisation of precarious employment practices is a threat to all of our membership, their security and to the quality of the institutions themselves whose shoddy employment practices are a threat to quality education, quality research and academic freedom itself.

By next ADC we hopefully will be able to report on the initial actions of this Committee and encourage all Branches to ensure that any keen activists who want to work with us on this issue do so as we truly are stronger when we work together.

Later this month IFUT representatives from several Branches will also attend a joint training course for workplace representatives with their SIPTU counterparts. This course will cover topics including negotiations, organising and individual representation. It will also provide an opportunity for branch activists across two Unions working in Higher Education to learn from each other and build alliances and contacts. We hope this is a success and is something which can feature each year in the IFUT calendar.

Last month we confirmed that IFUT had reached a nice round figure of 2,700 members. This is the highest number of members ever in IFUT but we want it to grow even further next year. This year, our colleagues in UCC developed a tailor made organising plan for the year to target and recruit new members. We will aim to learn what worked and what didn't work in their organising efforts and to use that learning to develop a wider organising plan.

It is of course not just precariously employed staff who need to get active and campaign through IFUT. Be it higher education funding, changes proposed in the Higher Education Bill, issues of promotion, academic nomenclature, staffing levels or any other issues of importance to our members, we want to be as effective as we can in delivering positive outcomes for our members. To do this we need to continue to grow IFUT as the Union of choice for academic staff including lecturers, researchers, library staff, tutors, admin and other grades.

Research shows that the largest number of non-Union members across the Public and Civil Service are among the cohorts who joined the service since 2010. Simultaneously research referenced in the Annual Report shows that young workers are more positively disposed towards Union membership than they are commonly given credit for. Unions therefore have a problem, and IFUT is no exception, that if we are not relevant to younger workers, we will not retain our current membership density levels in the years to come. We need to organise among the un-organised so that we can continue to deliver upon the objectives of IFUT, to continue to deliver upon the work we all do, work which is detailed in the Annual Report, work which contributes to the quality of higher education and research in Ireland.

We move the adoption of this Annual Report.

Thank you.