

# ECONOMIC AND SOCIETAL IMPACT OF **UNIVERSITY COLLEGE CORK**



# KEY HIGHLIGHTS

**€3.2 MILLION**

Generated every day  
for the economy



**>7,500**

Graduates  
annually

**€1.18 BILLION**

Total economic  
impact annually



**€6**

Return for every €1  
of state investment

**€113  
MILLION**

Investment in  
creation and  
discovery



**21%**

Student intake  
through alternative  
access pathways

UCC supports

**1 IN EVERY  
13 JOBS**

In Cork city and county



**96.5%** of UCC  
graduates employed  
or in further study 9  
months after graduation





## FOREWORD

I am proud to present this report on the economic and wider societal and cultural impact of University College Cork. I am privileged to witness daily the remarkable ways in which our institution transforms lives through the creation and dissemination of knowledge. Our University empowers individuals to grow, express their individual perspectives, and contribute to a better world.

UCC celebrates the dynamic interplay of creativity, humanities, sciences and business. This intersection fosters an environment of discovery and innovation, where students and staff discover new knowledge and, in the process, often discover themselves. Here, learning and research go beyond traditional boundaries, offering academic scholarship that values both disciplinary and interdisciplinary knowledge and its practical application. We look to the past to map our future, using our rich heritage to guide us through the challenges and opportunities of a changing world.

UCC is an economic engine locally and nationally, producing more than €1 billion in economic impact annually, supporting more than 21,000 jobs in Cork city and county, and creating a return of €6 to the Irish economy for every euro of state investment. The impact of UCC extends far beyond our campus walls.

*“By educating the workforce of tomorrow and delivering groundbreaking research and innovation, UCC makes significant societal contributions, driving progress and powering positive change.”*

Through the education of both Irish and international students - who either stay in Ireland or return to their home countries - UCC fosters future ambassadors and goodwill, benefiting both the University and Ireland as a whole.

I invite you to explore this report and discover the numerous ways in which UCC is making a difference. Our people are key to our success, and the impact described here is testament to the dedication, creativity, and hard work of our entire community. Together, we strive to secure a brighter, more inclusive, and innovative future.

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'John O'Halloran'.

Professor John O'Halloran MRIA  
**President, University College Cork**





## INTRODUCTION

University College Cork is an internationally ranked, research intensive university located in Cork city, with a rich history of education and engagement dating back to 1845. Renowned for its academic excellence and innovation, UCC's influence shapes the economy, environment and society, with reach that extends far beyond its campus walls. For nearly 180 years, UCC has provided high-quality education, developing work-ready graduates and delivering cutting-edge research that drives social growth and development locally, nationally and internationally. UCC has nurtured many leading scholars and creators from George Boole to Dr Dora Allman and Seán Ó Riada. Our commitment to excellence ensures that UCC remains at the forefront of research, education and societal impact.

UCC is one of Cork's largest employers, with 3,616 full and part time staff, and a turnover exceeding €450m. In the Academic Year 2022/2023 UCC had 24,386 registered students, with 18% of its student body coming from 126 different countries. Teaching and research are delivered across four Colleges: Business & Law; Medicine

& Health; Science, Engineering & Food Science; and Arts, Celtic Studies and Social Sciences. UCC was the first Green Flag university campus in the world and ranks 67th globally by the Times Higher Education Impact Rankings, excelling in multiple United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). UCC ranks 6th in the world for sustainability education and research by the UI GreenMetric World Rankings.

UCC's Strategic Plan 2023 – 2028: *Securing our Future*<sup>1</sup> underscores its commitment to stimulating development through education, research, innovation and engagement. UCC generates economic activity through job creation, the purchase of goods and services, and through research breakthroughs and entrepreneurial activities. Its academic programmes provide a highly talented and skilled workforce that supports economic development. Through its research and innovation, UCC extends its influence and impact by driving the generation of knowledge, fostering societal progress, and addressing global challenges. It enriches the local community through cultural initiatives and social engagement. It fosters a culture





of equality, diversity and inclusion, nurturing future leaders and innovators. Internationally recognised for its commitment to sustainability, UCC consistently pioneers initiatives addressing global challenges, leaving an indelible mark on local, national and international communities.

This study investigates the economic and societal impact of UCC, updating the 2018 *Economic and Societal Impact of University College Cork* report. The Financial Year 2021/2022 has been used as the reference year for the financial analysis. This report highlights the extensive economic, social and cultural impact of UCC, reflecting its pivotal role in the Cork region, nationally and beyond. It presents a select number of case studies as examples of the range and breadth of the impact of UCC.

<sup>[1]</sup> UCC Strategic Plan 2023 – 2028: *Securing our Future*, available at: [www.ucc.ie/en/president/strategy2028](http://www.ucc.ie/en/president/strategy2028)

*“This is a well-written, accessible and clear report. The analysis and presentation have been undertaken rigorously and objectively, and reflect best practice applied in other impact studies of universities and higher education institutions in Ireland, and more broadly including the UK. The results confirm the significant and growing social and economic impacts of UCC locally, nationally and globally.”*

**Professor Mike Danson,**  
Professor Emeritus of  
Enterprise Policy, Heriot-Watt  
University and Fellow of the  
Academy of Social Sciences  
(External Reviewer)

**€3.2 MILLION**

Generated every day  
for the economy



**21,000**

Jobs supported

**€1.18 BILLION**

Total economic  
impact annually



**€6**



Return for every €1  
of state investment



**4TH OF 147**

Attractions in Cork  
(Tripadvisor)

**3RD LARGEST**

Employer in Cork



UCC supports

**1 IN EVERY 13 JOBS**

In Cork city and county







## ECONOMIC IMPACT

University College Cork, its students and staff and visitors, significantly contribute to the local and national economies through direct, indirect and induced spending, supporting local businesses and connecting Cork to the world. The direct effect is measured as the increase in the output of an industry to meet increased demand. The indirect effect arises from the increased output of suppliers and their supply chains. Resulting from these increases, the overall income within the economy also rises. The induced effect occurs when some of this income is re-spent on other products and services<sup>[2]</sup>. This analysis captures the direct, indirect, and induced economic impacts associated with expenditure by the University, staff, students, graduates and visitors as well as alumni in the first year after graduation<sup>[3]</sup>.

Economic multipliers were used to quantify the overall impact of direct (Type I), indirect (Type I) and induced (Type II) effects of university expenditures. The Type I output multiplier for a particular industry is defined as the total of all outputs from each domestic industry required to produce

one additional unit of output<sup>[4]</sup>. Type II multipliers incorporate not only the increase in demand for intermediate inputs but also induced household consumption effects, generated by changes in wage income, as endogenous elements in the multiplier process<sup>[5]</sup>. Using a Type I multiplier of 1.066<sup>[6]</sup> and Type II multiplier of 1.351<sup>[7]</sup>, and taking 2022 as a representative year, UCC generates €3.2 million every day for the Irish economy, with a total economic impact (Gross Value Added) of €1.18 billion per annum. The impact generated by this expenditure is €1.18 billion annually and the economic contribution of taxation amounts to a further €218 million each year. This accounts for the VAT contribution and social insurance contributions, as well as the payroll and social insurance contributions of UCC's staff, its graduates and its students, and the VAT paid by visitors. €1.18 billion in output is produced, while the state provides €198 million investment, representing a return of €6 to the Irish economy for every €1 of state investment (input)<sup>[8]</sup>.

UCC's turnover is €452 million per annum<sup>[9]</sup>, of which 44% (€198.5 million) is granted by the state. UCC secures the remaining 56% of the funding from non-exchequer sources. In 2022, for every €1 invested by state in UCC, the state directly received approximately €1.1 in return in the form of VAT and payroll taxes including employee contributions<sup>[10]</sup>. Based on the national average wage<sup>[11]</sup>, we analysed total jobs supported by the expenditure of UCC, its staff, students, graduates and visitors, and found that UCC supports 21,219 jobs (9,792 direct and 11,427 indirect/induced), which equates to approximately 1 in every 13 jobs in Cork city and county<sup>[12]</sup>.

With 3,616 full and part time employees, UCC is the third largest employer in Cork. The University plays an important role in the economic ecosystem and has a strong impact on the economy. It has 1,035 academic, 1,078 research and 1,503 professional staff, who earn a total of €293 million annually, including staff and pension service costs. UCC's 24,386 Irish and international students also have a positive impact on the local economy, accounting for €259.7 million in direct, indirect and induced spending annually, supporting local retail, hospitality, transport and housing. Breaking this down, the direct expenditure of 'Irish' students generates €178 million for the local economy annually, supporting 3,929 jobs. UCC also attracts international students to live in Cork and approximately 18% of UCC students come from overseas bringing additional spending power to the local economy. The direct, indirect and induced impact of the expenditure of these 'international' students generates €81.7 million and supports 1,803 jobs.

A degree from UCC brings enhanced employment and earnings benefits to graduates. This is commonly referred to as the graduate premium. The additional economic benefit to UCC graduates, compared with those who did not complete third level education, based on the starting salary of graduates, is €10,209 annually. Graduates of UCC who remain and work in Ireland create extra economic value for the economy of up to €98m in the first year after graduation, when compared with non-graduates<sup>[13]</sup>.

UCC positively impacts Cork's tourism sector, drawing in thousands of visitors each year. This includes tourists, prospective students, friends and families of students, participants in conferences, and attendees at sporting and social events hosted on campus. On a daily basis, UCC welcomes hundreds of visitors, with around 15,000 individuals taking part in organized campus tours annually. The University's open day each autumn is particularly popular, attracting over 500 prospective students in a single day for guided tours. Highlighting its appeal, UCC has received a Traveler's Choice Award and is currently ranked 4th out of 147 attractions in Cork on Tripadvisor, making it the highest-rated non-tourism-specific destination in the city. The Glucksman Gallery alone recorded over 54,000 visitors in 2023<sup>[14]</sup>. In excess of 3,500 visitors attend UCC annually to attend conferences. Based on an average spend per visitor in Ireland of €1,357, visitors to UCC spend €74.4 million annually in Cork and beyond. Assuming an average visit length to Ireland of one week means that €10.6 million is spent by visitors to UCC each year<sup>[15]</sup>.

*University College Cork is an important anchor in our city, producing over €3 million every day for the Irish economy. As one of the largest employers in Cork, UCC not only provides valuable employment opportunities but also cultivates the skilled workforce that fuels our region's growth. Their commitment to excellence in education and research significantly enhances Cork's reputation as a hub of knowledge and innovation. We are proud to have UCC as a vital partner in shaping the future economic landscape of our city and county.*

**- Rob Horgan, President, Cork Chamber**





## CASE STUDY: TELEA

**Award-winning software that links speech therapists and patients.**

Telea, founded by UCC Speech & Language Therapy graduate Clare Meskill in 2020, is a MedTech company that combines speech and language therapy with software development to provide voice therapy to individuals with Parkinson's disease. Parkinson's is the fastest growing neurodegenerative disease and

90% of people with Parkinson's experience changes to their voice. Telea's innovative digital speech therapy technology has the potential to help the 12,000 people in Ireland living with Parkinson's Disease to maintain their voice and slow down progression of the disease. Through the app patients can get access to care at home, practicing in their own time, with real-time feedback from their speech and language therapist, saving time for speech therapists and reducing waitlists for patients. Clare initially came up with the idea for Telea during her third-year work placement at UCC where she witnessed first-hand the power of intensive voice therapy on adult patients with Parkinson's Disease. Clare was accepted to UCC's IGNITE programme, where she acquired the skills and competencies required to run a start-up company. In 2022 Telea raised €700,000 in pre-seed funding from Enterprise Ireland and private investors. The Telea platform is now integrated as part of the service delivery model for speech and language therapy clinics in the NHS and HSE as well as in private hospitals in Ireland, the UK and the US.

<sup>[2]</sup>For National Multipliers the Central Statistics Office (CSO) defers to the Scottish Tables. The Scottish Government, 'Supply, Use and Input-Output Tables 2023', used here are available at <https://tinyurl.com/SG-Type-2>

<sup>[3]</sup>For the Input-Output analysis, the primary source of Higher Education multipliers was Zhang et al. (2015), available at <https://doi.org/10.1080/03075079.2015.1111324>

<sup>[4]</sup>Input-Output Methodology Guide, Version 8, The Scottish Government, 2023, available at <https://tinyurl.com/inout-Output>

<sup>[5]</sup>Hermansson et al. (2015), available at <https://doi.org/10.1080/03075079.2014.899338>

<sup>[6]</sup>Type I Higher Education multiplier from Zhang et al. (2016), available at <https://www.esr.ie/index.php/twpb/article/view/521>

<sup>[7]</sup>Type II Higher Education multiplier from Zhang et al. (2015), available at <https://doi.org/10.1080/03075079.2015.1111324>

<sup>[8]</sup>Subsequent to these multipliers being published, UCC has increased its capacity for local and regional impact in the last decade with increased emphasis on innovation and commercialisation of research. Though not quantifiable without further detailed surveying and analyses we expect that these multipliers are conservative.

<sup>[9]</sup>UCC Audited Financial Statements 2022, available at <https://tinyurl.com/UCC-Financial-Statement-2022>

<sup>[10]</sup>As this report is published in 2024, with a reference year of 2022, the total economic impact will be understated when compared with other current 2024 economic indicators, due to recent price inflation.

<sup>[11]</sup>National average earning from Central Statistics Office, available at <https://tinyurl.com/EarningsLabourCosts2022>

<sup>[12]</sup>This calculation is based on the total number of people aged 15 years and over at work in Cork city and county divided by the total number of jobs supported by UCC (including direct, indirect, and induced). The total number of jobs in Cork city and county is taken from the Central Statistics Office, available at <https://data.cso.ie/product/c2022p7>

<sup>[13]</sup>In 2022, a non-graduate on the minimum wage would have earned €20,202. After tax and social insurance contributions this would amount to €18,837. Adjusting for pension contributions and national savings rates, it means that a non-graduate would have €15,640 available for spending in the economy on an annual basis. Based on HEA data, we assume a UCC graduate would have earned €38,315. Making similar adjustments for taxes, savings etc. we estimate a graduate would have €25,849 available for spending. The difference between €25,849 and €15,640 would be the graduate premium of €10,209 annually.

<sup>[14]</sup>Annual Visitor Attractions Survey 2022. Fáilte Ireland, available at: <https://tinyurl.com/visitor-attraction-survey-2022>

<sup>[15]</sup>With 54,843 visitors to UCC's Glucksman Gallery. Total visitor spend for each trip from the CSO is €1,357. Assuming a one week trip, then one day spent at UCC represents €193.87 of spending (€1,357 / 7). This equates to €10.6 million (54,843 x €193.87) spend by visitors to UCC each year.



**24,386**  
Registered  
Students



**96.5%** of UCC  
Graduates employed  
or in further study  
9 months after  
graduation



Sector-leading  
student  
retention rates  
averaging at  
**92.7%**



**>7,500**  
**GRADUATES**  
Enter the job  
market every year



**4,378** International  
students from **126** countries





## TALENT CAPACITY BUILDING & MOBILITY IMPACT

With 24,386 registered students for the Academic Year 2022/2023, graduates of University College Cork bring enhanced skills to their employment and play a key role in the development of the Irish workforce. A skilled and educated workforce is necessary to meet the needs of the economy and society in Ireland and beyond, and UCC provides its students with the career- focussed education and integrated work placement experience that they require to become the workforce and leaders of tomorrow. More than 7,500 students graduate every year and UCC has more than 220,000 alumni around the world. In 2023, UCC conferred 3,639 undergraduate, 2,099 Master's and 182 Doctoral degrees. UCC develops highly skilled graduates, responding to local, regional and national key skills gaps with a strong ecosystem of working relationships with industry partners and work-integrated learning. UCC's Strategic Plan 2023 - 2028: Securing our Future sets out its ongoing commitment to high quality education and to widening access to higher education for underrepresented groups.

At UCC, student success is delivered through a connected curriculum and supported by attention to the development of graduate attributes beyond disciplinary knowledge to produce graduates that are effective global citizens. Not all student success activities will be captured in the economic analyses, and it is important to note that Continuing Professional Development, work-integrated learning and other activities enhance productivity locally and nationally<sup>[16]</sup>. UCC delivers over 70 undergraduate and over 220 postgraduate programmes, as well as a broad range of upskilling and continuing professional development opportunities across its four Colleges, Centre for Adult Continuing Education, Irish Management Institute and Centre for Continuing Professional Development. The education is of the highest quality, as evidenced through the most recent independent assessment of UCC by Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI) in 2023<sup>[17]</sup>. Many courses feature work-integrated-learning and more than 1,000 work placement opportunities are provided to students each year across undergraduate



and postgraduate programmes. First year retention rates in UCC are sector leading and averaging at 92.7% over the past five years, reflecting student success and wellbeing. UCC offers varied educational pathways providing inclusive and flexible learning opportunities to accommodate the diverse educational and professional development and lifelong learning needs of its community. This includes short courses and micro-credentials allowing learners to gain specific skills and knowledge in a short time frame, often with a focus on industry relevance.

With students from 126 countries around the world, the diversity of the student community and inclusive environment at UCC prepares students for global citizenship. This is reflected in the success of its students, with more than 96.5% of graduates available to progress in employment or further education within nine months (75% in employment; 18.5% in further study; 3% not available). Many UCC graduates work in sectors that meet vital socioeconomic challenges with the largest proportion of graduates, 24%, employed in the fields of human health and social work, 20% in financial insurance and real estate and 10% in scientific and technical fields.

*University College Cork has proven to be an invaluable partner for Johnson Controls Ireland, consistently delivering graduates who embody innovation, critical thinking, and adaptability. UCC's emphasis on excellence in education and industry collaboration has provided us with a steady stream of talented individuals that help us stay at the forefront of our industry. We are grateful for our partnership with UCC and look forward to continued collaboration as we shape the future of our company.*

**- Eamonn Hughes, Vice President and General Manager, Johnson Controls**

<sup>[16]</sup> See testimonial from Eamonn Hughes, Vice President and General Manager, Johnson Controls.

<sup>[17]</sup> CINNTE Institutional Review Report 2023, available at: <https://tinyurl.com/CINNTE-UCC-2023>.







## CASE STUDY: GRADUATE ATTRIBUTES PROGRAMME

**Empowering students for a dynamic future.**

The experiences of students both within and beyond the classroom play a crucial role in shaping the individuals they will become, distinguishing them as UCC graduates. UCC's

student-centric Graduate Attributes Programme focuses on the high-level qualities, skills and understandings that students acquire through their academic and extracurricular engagements at UCC. This programme enhances students' personal and professional development in a structured manner, ensuring they are well-prepared for the complexities of the modern world. This programme prepares students to live, learn and lead in a shared, co-created future and enables them to take an active role in advancing the just and sustainable evolution of our communities, our society and our economy. By emphasizing attributes such as creativity, critical thinking, effective communication, digital skills and global citizenship, UCC seeks to foster well-rounded individuals who can contribute positively to society and excel in their careers. The programme supports students to reflect on their personal growth and actively engage in activities that build their skills and competencies. It offers personalized guidance enabling students to identify and pursue their individual goals. Since its launch in September 2018, more than 14,500 students have benefited from the initiatives delivered by the programme.



**€113  
MILLION**

Investment in  
creation and  
discovery



**€10.4 MILLION**

Investment in research  
and innovation by  
industry partners



**#1**

Irish university  
for research  
impact



**#1**

Irish university  
for industry  
collaboration



**4 SPIN-OUT**

Companies  
created in 2023



**7**

Patents  
granted  
in 2023





## RESEARCH, INNOVATION AND BUSINESS IMPACT

University College Cork's research and innovation capabilities contribute greatly to the overall impact of the University. Our research community, consisting of 2,113 academic and research staff delivers research that is globally impactful, commercially viable and socially meaningful. Through partnerships with a diverse network of industry, government and academic collaborators, UCC delivers innovative solutions to global challenges through its UCC Futures programme. Launched in 2021, this initiative supports research excellence by breaking down disciplinary boundaries to deliver solutions to the world's most pressing issues. Research excellence in areas such as global health, sustainable development, nanotechnology, artificial intelligence, and humanities, improves the lives of people around the world. It also places UCC at the heart of policy development both nationally and in Europe. UCC's Strategic Plan 2023 – 2028: Securing our Future sets out a renewed focus on world-class research and a thriving innovation ecosystem, driving advancements and creating job opportunities.

UCC is a leading research university, and is Ireland's top university for research impact, as measured by Times Higher Education University Rankings 2023<sup>[18]</sup>. In the Financial Year 2022/2023, UCC was awarded €113 million in competitively won research and innovation funding and was the second most successful Irish higher education institution in seeking and securing investment in research and innovation. The total research income received by UCC included €81.9 million of exchequer funding and €31.4 million from non-exchequer sources including EU funding and industry partners at home and abroad. €10.4 million of this is invested by UCC's industry partners, highlighting UCC's partnership approach to industry-university collaborations. With 80 collaborative research agreements, UCC has the second highest number of research agreements with industry of Irish universities in 2023<sup>[19]</sup>. UCC is home to the Tyndall National Institute, a leading European research centre in integrated ICT (Information and Communications Technology) hardware and systems, specializing in microelectronics, photonics, and nanotechnology to drive

cutting-edge innovations. UCC has 20 European Research Council (ERC) grant awardees, ten of which were awarded since 2021 in Horizon Europe. With more than 2,500 publication outputs annually, UCC is the top Irish university for the world's Highly Cited Researchers, with 14 researchers featured in the Highly Cited Researchers 2023 list from Clarivate.

In recent years, UCC Innovation has expanded UCC's commitment to support the translation of research, creativity and intellectual property to new products and services designed to meet business and industry needs. In 2023, 45 inventions were disclosed by UCC researchers, 15 patents were filed, seven patents were granted and there were 35 licences, options and assignments. Also in 2023, four spinout companies were launched, bringing the total number of UCC spinout companies (those active on the Companies Registration Office register or its equivalent abroad) to 33 since 2000. UCC has also had seven companies acquired between 2000 and 2023, of which six of the acquiring companies still have operations related to the spinout company activity in Ireland.

UCC is focused on new venture creation and has a bespoke entrepreneurial ecosystem comprising IGNITE and Gateway UCC business incubators, providing the bridge between education, research and business. The IGNITE start-up programme supports recent graduates from UCC and other Irish universities to turn innovative ideas into successful, scalable

businesses, and has nurtured 175 start-ups ideas that have raised €27m in investments since 2011. In 2023 there were 35 graduates on the IGNITE Start-Up Incubation programme. Gateway UCC supports researcher led start-ups and spin-out companies that have created more than 450 jobs since 2012. In that time, Gateway UCC supported companies have raised over €50 million of public and private investment, supporting over 70 start-ups, contributing more than €25 million annually in salaries to the economy. In 2023 there were nine incubation companies in Gateway UCC supporting 65 jobs.

Through its graduates, UCC serves as a magnet for both foreign direct investment (FDI) and indigenous investment, significantly contributing to Cork's economic development. The expansion of FDI employment in Cork is closely correlated with the growth and success of UCC, illustrating the University's pivotal role in regional economic dynamics. UCC's creation and innovation ecosystem has been instrumental in establishing world-leading industrial clusters, particularly in the pharmaceutical sector. Six of the top ten global pharmaceutical companies have operations in Cork, benefiting from the UCC's highly skilled graduate population. Between 2017 and 2022 UCC collaborated with more than 5,000 institutions around the world. UCC's research output, with over 2,500 research publications annually, further underpins its reputation as a hub for innovation and its pride in being a research-led modern university.

<sup>[18]</sup> [www.timeshighereducation.com/world-university-rankings/2023/world-ranking](https://www.timeshighereducation.com/world-university-rankings/2023/world-ranking).

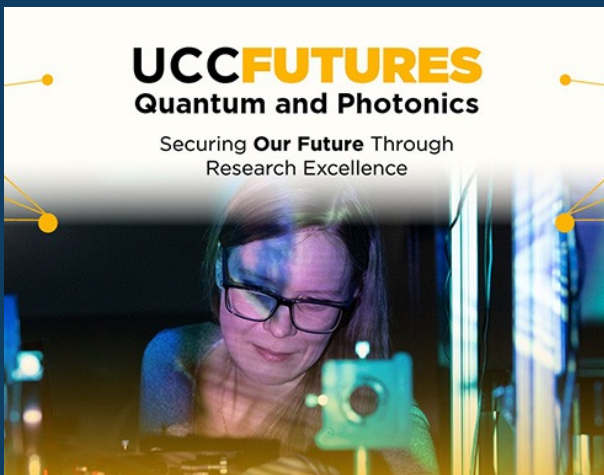
<sup>[19]</sup> Knowledge Transfer Ireland Annual Knowledge Transfer Survey 2022, available at <https://tinyurl.com/KTI-annual-survey-2023>.

*University College Cork is a vital talent and innovation engine for the Foreign Direct Investment community in Cork and beyond. UCC's collaborative approach to working with multinational companies ensures ongoing knowledge transfer between academia and industry. The University is also an important pipeline of highly skilled talent for industry, advancing Ireland's reputation as a world class location for education and academic research.*

**- IDA Ireland**







## CASE STUDY: UCC FUTURES: QUANTUM AND PHOTONICS

**Groundbreaking research to revolutionise implantable neurostimulator design.**

Researchers at Tyndall National Institute's IPIC (Irish Photonic Integration Centre) have

collaborated with Belgian-based company Synergia Medical to develop an innovative optoelectronic implantable neurostimulation platform that promises to revolutionize the treatment of several debilitating conditions, including chronic pain, Parkinson's disease, drug-resistant epilepsy, sleep apnoea and depression. This groundbreaking technology, as detailed in their recent publication in Nature, integrates full MRI safety with advanced optical sensing and communication capabilities. Unlike conventional electrical stimulation devices, this platform offers precise control and monitoring of neural activity, reducing the risk of adverse effects and enhancing therapeutic outcomes. The implant's ability to safely operate within MRI environments allows for continuous, non-invasive imaging and real-time adjustment of treatments, marking a significant leap forward in both the safety and efficacy of neurostimulation therapies. This ground-breaking development holds significant potential for improving the quality of life for patients with various neurological conditions, underscoring the critical role of interdisciplinary research in addressing complex medical challenges.



## CASE STUDY: DINGLE PENINSULA 2030

**Empowering communities to transition towards a sustainable and low carbon future.**

Established in 2018, this award winning innovative multi-partner project on the Dingle Peninsula, Co. Kerry, involves the Dingle Hub,

ESB Networks, NEWKD, and UCC's MaREI Centre for Energy, Climate and Marine. This partnership worked with the community enabling the societal changes required for a sustainable transition. Spanning energy, agriculture, marine, transport and tourism, it serves as a living laboratory demonstrating how we can all live more sustainably in the decades to come. UCC researchers used a collaborative engaged research approach to support the Dingle Peninsula community on their sustainability journey, and to share the learnings nationally and internationally. Impacts include the establishment of the West Kerry Dairy Farmers Sustainable Energy Community; a local roadmap for anaerobic digestion; an informed and involved local community; and the designation of the Peninsula as Kerry County Council's Decarbonization Zone. This project resulted in a measurable diffusion of sustainability in the local community, especially within the home energy and farming sectors, an increase in rooftop solar usage on the peninsula and policy changes supporting community-based climate action initiatives and a decrease in local carbon emissions.



**7,000**

Volunteer hours  
annually by  
students



**45**

Sports clubs and

**119**

Student-led  
societies



positively  
impacting  
student life



UCC is ranked

**#6**

in the world for  
sustainability



**GLOBAL  
SUSTAINABILITY  
INSTITUTION**  
of the year 2023



**21%**

Undergraduate  
student intake  
through alternative  
access pathways



## SOCIETAL AND CULTURAL IMPACT

University College Cork drives social change through educational access, community engagement, health and wellbeing, and global impact. Its Strategic Plan 2023 – 2028: Securing our Future sets out its commitment to collectively create a better future. UCC plays a vital role in shaping a secure, sustainable, and inclusive future for its 24,386 students<sup>[20]</sup>, 3,616 staff, and the wider community. Students contribute 7,000 hours of voluntary public service annually<sup>[21]</sup>, enriching lives and making a valuable contribution to the community.

UCC is a leader in broadening access to higher education, with over 21% of undergraduates being mature students, students with disabilities, or from non-traditional college-going backgrounds. This positively impacts inclusion, belonging and quality education for all. Many of these are first-generation university students, who benefit from Access UCC, which supports their participation in third level education with subsequent benefits to their income and wellbeing. UCC has recently introduced new pathways to apprenticeships, offering a unique blend of academic learning and practical on-the-job training.

Through its commitment to the Athena SWAN charter, UCC implements strategies to promote equal opportunities and support for all, focusing on embedding inclusive cultures in higher education. With a bronze award since 2016, and 18 department level awards it leads the sector in Ireland. UCC promotes social mobility and inclusion. The Proud Ally Student Network, Race Equality Network, University of Sanctuary status, Traveller Ally Award, and sponsorship of Cork LGBT+ Pride Festival showcase UCC's dedication to supporting marginalized communities. These initiatives ensure all community members feel welcome and supported, contributing to a more equitable society.

As the region's largest and most diverse cultural institution, UCC is woven into the fabric of the cultural identity of the city and region. UCC counts amongst its alumni some of the world's finest artists across a huge variety of artforms. Arts and culture is a core element of the experience of life at UCC for our staff, students and supporting communities. The Glucksman Gallery, which was European Art Museum in 2022, on our campus highlights UCC's role in promoting social cohesion and cultural enrichment. On-



campus concerts such as our FUAIM series, art and heritage exhibitions and poetry readings provide a huge diversity of performing arts to be experienced by students, staff and visitors. At UCC our commitment to arts and culture supports graduates with a passion for the performing arts either through professional practice or audience participation. UCC produces the Arts professionals of tomorrow through its Master's in Arts Management & Creative Producing and our dynamic creative partnerships with organisations such as Cork Opera House and Poetry Ireland demonstrate our commitment to integrating arts communities from town and gown. Our Arts & Culture Plan: Igniting UCC's Creative Potential describes our mission to harness and activate our cultural, artistic, heritage and creative assets, and champion transdisciplinary arts research and transformative models of engagement. UCC promotes the Irish language and the activities of Ionad na Gaelige Labhartha (Centre for Spoken Irish) are an example of this. Barr na gCnoc is an Irish language community project that is a wonderful example of UCC's academic excellence positively impacting on the local community.

UCC's commitment to a sustainable future is evident through green initiatives and international networks. UCC was the world's first Green Flag campus and was recognised as Global Sustainability Institution of the Year by the International Green Gown Awards in 2023. UCC is ranked 6th in the world for sustainability in the UI GreenMetric World University Ranking. UCC

became a plastic-free campus in January 2023, which has led to a significant reduction in single-use plastics and a notable decrease in its overall environmental footprint. This initiative is part of a broader strategy to embed sustainable practices across all aspects of campus life, engaging students, staff, and visitors in these efforts. The 2023 Sustainability & Climate Action Plan<sup>[22]</sup> is a cornerstone of UCC's climate strategy, setting ambitious targets for carbon neutrality and outlining a pathway to achieve a 50% reduction in carbon emissions by 2030. Participation in the United Nations Climate Change (COP) Conference and the launch of the all-island Sustainable Development Solutions Network Ireland, with Queen's University Belfast, highlight UCC's leadership in environmental sustainability.

UCC has a proud sporting tradition dating back to the founding of the first University Rugby Club in 1872, with the iconic skull and crossbones being introduced in 1880. UCC supports students' participation in sports at all levels, including elite performance, and has seen many athletes compete and win medals in the Olympic Games since 1952. These include a number of Quercus Scholars who are supported by UCC's Talented Students Programme. Since its launch in 2014 this programme has supported over 150 students promoting individual excellence and creating a dynamic and impactful community that contributes to the University's academic, cultural and social environment. Today UCC has 45 sports clubs with local, national, and international



athletes, including world champions and Olympic medallists. UCC also has 119 student-led interest societies, offering diverse opportunities for personal growth, social engagement and community involvement.

UCC maintains close ties with its local community and has implemented a bespoke neighbourhood support initiative working to create a safe, secure

and harmonious environment for our students and residents. Students engage positively in the local community, experiencing life-wide learning opportunities. UCC offers educational resources, public lectures, art exhibitions, and cultural events that are accessible to locals, ensuring that the community benefits from the presence of the University.

*“The Glucksman brings communities and artists together, to explore, visualise and express their thoughts and opinions on important societal issues. This way visual art becomes a powerful tool of expression. The Glucksman prioritises its role as a civic institution that enables creative agency among diverse communities.”*

- European Museum Academy for the Art Museum Award judges

## CASE STUDY: CORK FOLKLORE PROJECT

### Recording and sharing the memories of Cork.

The Cork Folklore Project at the Department of Folklore and Ethnology works to preserve the culture and folklore of Cork. This community-based project has been collecting, archiving, and sharing the memories, stories, tradition, and folklore of Cork since 1996. It covers a range of subjects such as working life, leisure, social change, health, childhood, and everyday life. It records lived experiences that shape the cultural history of Cork and uses innovative dissemination strategies to promote public engagement with these archives to animate our understanding of both our past and our future. Recently, this project collaborated with other archives of tradition to shine light on our experience of the Covid crisis and vaccination. It has made a significant contribution to the social, cultural and intellectual wellbeing of Cork over the last quarter of a century, having



recorded over 1,000 hours of recordings and produced multiple publications, outreach programmes and community initiatives.

<sup>[20]</sup>It is generally recognised that international alumni returning to their home countries will foster goodwill to Ireland and Cork generating further impacts.

<sup>[21]</sup>Making a Difference. A Research Report on Student Volunteering in UCC, 201, available at <https://tinyurl.com/Making-a-Difference-2018>.

<sup>[22]</sup>UCC Sustainability & Climate Action Plan 2023 – 2028, available at [www.ucc.ie/en/sustainability-climate-action/action-plan](http://www.ucc.ie/en/sustainability-climate-action/action-plan).



## EXAMPLES OF IMPACT ACROSS THE UN SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

The mission of University College Cork is to create and sustain an inclusive environment and culture to enable transformative research and learning for the enrichment of society and stewardship of our planet. UCC is true to its mission. On a daily basis, UCC is making a real impact on the economy, society and the world around us. Nowhere is that more evident than in UCC's continued advancement of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals.

UCC is recognised as one of the top universities in the world for global impact and is currently ranked 67th in the world for its contribution to the UN SDGs by the Times Higher Education University Impact Rankings 2024. UCC stands out in five particular SDGs, for which it is placed in the top 30 globally. Elsewhere, UCC is ranked 6th in the world by UI GreenMetric, which is a separate independent assessment of universities' commitment to sustainability. The examples below showcase UCC's commitment to addressing the world's most pressing challenges, from food security and sustainability to advancing peace and social stability. Together with UCC's emphasis on social responsibility and community engagement, these accolades underpin UCC's efforts towards advancing the UN SDGs locally and globally.



**End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture**

**UCC is 20th in the world for impact on Zero Hunger**

The European [Zero Hidden Hunger](#) project, led by the School of Food & Nutritional Sciences, has received significant funding to support pioneering research into tackling micronutrient deficiency in Europe over the next four years, serving to improve public health and ensure that no one is left behind.



**Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable**

**UCC is 30th in the world for impact on Sustainable Cities and Communities**

Engaging with communities in a real and meaningful manner, the School of Applied Social Studies has a strategic partnership with Comhdháil Oileáin na hÉireann to support the sustainable development and social and economic viability of 16 Irish Islands. More

broadly, UCC collaborates with other higher education institutions in counties Cork and Kerry to improve mobility options for staff and students and to advance sustainable transport initiatives across the southwest region.



### Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns

#### UCC is 26th in the world for impact on Responsible Consumption and Production

Displaying sectoral leadership in sustainability advancement, in January 2023, UCC introduced a ban on single-use plastic from its operations throughout on-campus dining, shops and vending machines. In its first year more than 1 million cups were diverted from landfill. This action supports UCC's goal to be a zero waste campus by 2030, and a carbon neutral campus by 2049, just two of many sector leading targets in its [Sustainability and Climate Action Plan](#).



### Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development

#### UCC is 29th in the world for impact on Life Below Water

In 2023, the Marine Geoscience group at UCC, in collaboration with the Marine Institute, produced the first high-resolution [Irish Shelf Seabed Geomorphological Map](#) of the entire Irish continental shelf. This groundbreaking research is pivotal for informed decision-making in national offshore activities and management of Ireland's marine environment. The map will support sustainable practices in sectors such as renewable energy and telecommunications cables, ensuring the conservation and sustainable use of marine resources.



### Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels

#### UCC is 16th in the world for impact on Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions

UCC promotes academic freedom, supports displaced scholars and provides opportunities for refugees and asylum seekers to access education. UCC is an active member of the Irish [Scholars at Risk](#) network, offering academic positions and providing safety to scholars facing threats. Since 2018 UCC has been designated a [University of Sanctuary](#), and operates a scholarship scheme that has supported over 150 students to pursue their studies at UCC.

*“University College Cork has been vital to the growth and success of QT Technologies Ireland Ltd. (Qualcomm Ireland) in Cork and Ireland. Working with UCC for the past 10+ years has been a great collaboration with many successes and wins along the way. UCC has contributed to the resource growth at Qualcomm Ireland, producing top class students at Degree, Master's and PhD level. They have interned with us and continued as full-time employees. To date, 12% of all Qualcomm Ireland staff are UCC graduates, which speaks for itself. Our existing relationship means we have close collaborations and relationships with UCC faculty, for which we are very grateful and appreciative. The time and effort UCC have given us over the years has been hugely impactful to our growth and development. In turn, working so closely together has allowed Qualcomm Ireland to interact with faculty and students which continues to be a source of sustainability for us. ”*

- Paul Kelleher, Vice President, Engineering, Qualcomm





Helen O'Keefe (ESB), John Carlton (Shannon Foynes Port Company), Ronan O'Flynn (ESB), Dr. Jimmy Murphy (MaREI/UCC)

## CASE STUDY:

**Research driving Ireland's transition to a decarbonised energy sector.**

UCC has a long history of achieving significant impact in the evolution of electricity generation in Ireland. Sir Robert Kane, UCC's first President and a renowned chemist, produced a seminal analysis of hydropower, which underpinned the Government decision in the 1920s to invest 20% of GDP to develop the Shannon Scheme at Ardnacrusha, which in turn led to the establishment of the Electricity Supply Board (ESB), which brought electricity to the nation over the following decades.

Fast forwarding to current times, UCC's impact on Ireland's energy transition continues. A robust analysis of the evolution of Ireland's energy system undertaken by Professor Brian Ó Gallachóir, Dr Paul Deane and UCC's MaREI Centre has underpinned ESB's ambition to achieve zero carbon emissions by 2040. *Driven to Make a Difference: Net Zero by 2040* outlines ESB's commitment to achieving net-zero emissions through the deployment of innovative energy

technologies that provide reliable zero-carbon energy aligned with the UN Sustainable Development Goals.

Through UCC's leadership in offshore wind energy and hydrogen research, collaborative research with ESB is driving innovations that will enhance their capacity and competitiveness in these areas well into the future. As reflected in a specific case study in *Powering Prosperity Ireland's Offshore Wind Industrial Strategy*, this has included key partnerships in projects developing a blueprint for offshore wind energy development in Ireland, and on the activation of new markets for hydrogen generated from offshore wind energy. It has furthermore involved collaboration between UCC, ESB, and Shannon Foynes Port Company on the Wet-Storage project, which will enable the industry to gain a deeper understanding of the requirements for essential facilities for the temporary offshore storage of floating offshore wind turbines.



*“MaREI’s work has been a key input to our strategy. Based on our experience, we believe the team have made a valuable contribution to national debate and policy development founded on rigorous research.”*

- ESB

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