

Women build each other up in new UCC campaign

University College Cork has developed a new campaign for International Women's Day (March 8), in which women put forward other women to highlight their achievements.

The *Celebrating Inspiring Women of UCC* campaign fits with the [#BalanceforBetter](#) theme for International Women's Day this year, which encourages people around the world to take action towards accelerating gender balance.

Developed by UCC's Media Office, the campaign features portraits by Cork-based photographer Clare Keogh, accompanied by quotes from 11 women on why they admire the women they have turned the spotlight on.

The campaign will be rolled out on the [@universitycollegecork account](#) on Instagram this Friday.

"Celebrating women's achievements is one way to help forge a more gender-balanced world. The campaign recognises the significance of women building each other up and bringing powerful stories of incredible role models across the University to light," said Lynne Nolan, Media & PR Officer, UCC.

"Empowered women jump at the opportunity to celebrate other women's achievements and are excited to see them move forward."

The women featured also serve as amazing role models in their fields, from science to the arts.

"Sarah Kelleher is a PhD student in History of Art, and along with UCC graduate Dr Rachel Warriner, she founded the curatorial practice Pluck Projects. Sarah is an imaginative and considered thinker whose presentations as part of the Glucksman's public programme have delighted our participants with their wit, warmth and erudition," comments Fiona Kearney, Director of the Glucksman.

On first-year Biological and Chemical Sciences student Temitope Akinlade Y, Olive Byrne, UCC's Head of Access and Participation, reflects on how this "motivated and determined young lady who always has a warm smile on her face" has fulfilled her dream of studying at university.

Women Who Are Changing the World

Neuroscientists Dr Sarah Nicolas and Dr Stefanie Grabrucker are researching how new neurons grow in the brain, how they are influenced by lifestyle and age, and how they might be targeted to improve memory.

Sarah is carrying out exciting new research on how lifestyle influences such as exercise and diet impact upon memory through changes in the immune system and gut, while Stefanie's goal is to research how an inflammatory signature in the blood and in the gut of Alzheimer's disease patients may be potentially used as a biomarker for disease stage and prognosis.

Dr Yvonne Nolan, Senior Lecturer in UCC's Department of Anatomy and Neuroscience, who nominated them, said she has been "inspired by these two ambitious and generous women who have embraced their projects wholeheartedly, and who offer support and guidance to junior members of my research team.

"On International Women's Day, they bring to mind a famous quote by former US first lady Michelle Obama: 'Just try new things. Don't be afraid. Step out of your comfort zones and soar, all right?'"

The power of the role model

Palaeobiologist Dr Maria McNamara is pictured with PhD students Tiffany Slater and Valentina Rossi, who are “doing research in two of the most high-profile, challenging and controversial areas in palaeontology – preservation of fossil feathers and melanin” and whom describes as “ideal role models for young women considering careers in science.”

“My message to women everywhere is this: Believe in yourself. Cultivate a positive outlook. Seek out mentors – both male and female. With hard work and passion, you can achieve anything.”

Dr Samantha Dockray, Lecturer in the School of Applied Psychology, recalls how Dr Sharon Lambert re-joined academia after many years working in services with vulnerable populations, including young Cork teens with substance use difficulties.

“She is inspiring to me, and our students and other researchers for being an agent of transformation by introducing the idea of trauma-informed service design.

“In the three years I have known Sharon, I have seen her doing ride-alongs with ambulances, up in a helicopter with the Army, sitting in an intake centre with someone who has just been made homeless, designing research which quickly changes people's lives - and she does it all as a straight shooter, optimistic 'can-do' person who is a leader and really showcases the principle I hold dear - applying our research directly to the challenges people may experience.”

Deirdre Madden, Assistive Technology Outreach Coordinator in the Disability Support Service at UCC, is described by Dr Máire Leane, Senior Lecturer in Social Policy and Chair of the Autism Friendly University Project as “one of the most skilful, impactful and inspiring educators I know.”

“She has expert knowledge of assistive technologies, which she deploys with powerful enthusiasm and good humour, creating new learning opportunities for second level students with disabilities.”

On selecting Maria Kirrane, Sustainability Officer for UCC, Dr Mary C Murphy, Lecturer, Department of Government and Politics, UCC said: "It might not seem obvious that there would be a connection between a political scientist and UCC's Sustainability Officer, but the beauty of working in a place like University College Cork is that there is a space for these kinds of rich relationships to develop.

“Environmental sustainability is the defining public policy issue of our time. I’m lucky to know and work with a woman who is actively, passionately and effectively making a difference.”

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