

# CEILING THE GLASS THROUGH

# THROUGH THE GLASS CEILING

CAREER PROGRESSION PROGRAMME AND STRATEGY  
FOR FEMALE ACADEMICS AND RESEARCHERS



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# THROUGH THE GLASS CEILING WAS A PROGRAMME OF POSITIVE ACTION AIMED AT CAREER PROGRESSION FOR FEMALE ACADEMICS AND RESEARCHERS IN UNIVERSITY COLLEGE CORK BETWEEN 2010 AND 2012.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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## FUNDER

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## PROJECT TEAM

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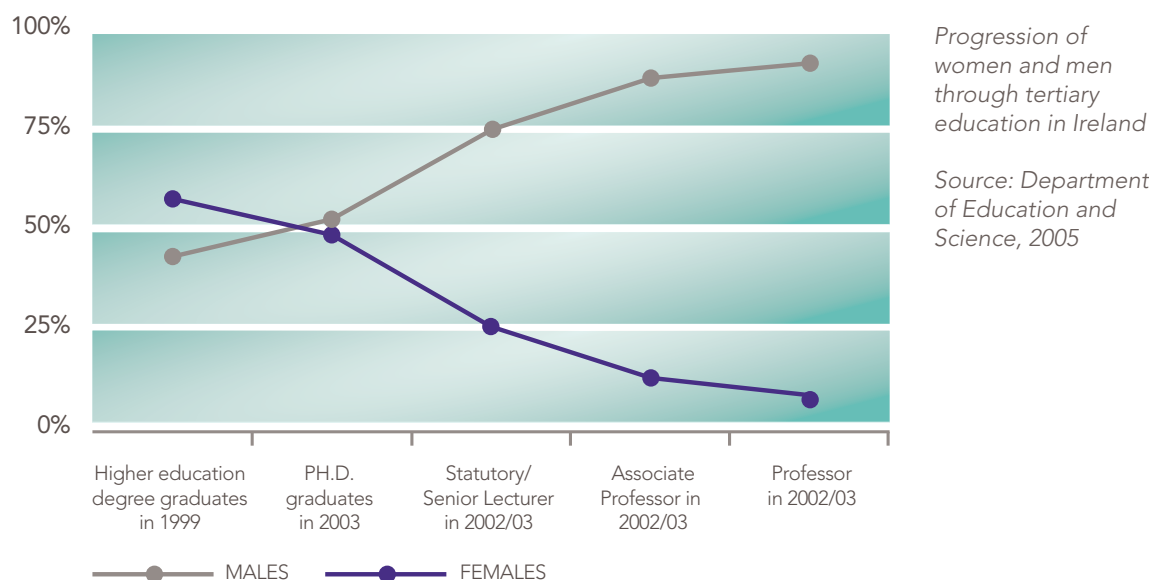
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## GENDER INEQUALITY IN THE ACADEMIC LABOUR FORCE

Existing evidence highlights the persistence of vertical and horizontal gender segregation in the academic labour force in Ireland which reflects international patterns in developed countries with an under-representation of women in senior positions and an over-representation in lower-level, part-time and insecure employment.



In 2009, Ireland had the second highest glass ceiling index for women in higher education<sup>1</sup>.

In University College Cork (UCC), females comprise 28 of 114 professors (25%), 49 of 145 Senior Lecturers (34%), 112 of 252 College Lecturers (above the bar) (44%), 105 of 208 College Lecturers (below the bar) (50%). There is clear evidence of a glass ceiling effect.

*...the popular image of "glass ceiling" depicts the phenomenon of women in high-status occupations (e.g., business, government, academia, and the military) not making it to the very top, although reaching relatively high organizational echelons. [...] A glass ceiling effect would be confirmed if only a small percentage of women, as compared to men, reaches the highest rank of full professor<sup>2</sup>.*

European attention to addressing gender inequality in the higher education and research sector has increased in recent years, driven recently by the recognition that excellence in research and innovation requires diversity and the retention of the best researchers.

*... [D]espite the many years of European legislation on equal opportunities, statistics show that EU Member States still have a gender pay gap, and gender continues to be a structuring factor in the workplace, also in research. Work is organized in gendered ways, which makes it difficult for talented women to reconcile work and family; harassment, concentration of power, and the guru/acolytes model of power relations are also factors affecting women negatively<sup>3</sup>.*

<sup>1</sup> European Commission (2009) SHE Figures 2009: Statistics and Indicators on Gender Equality in Science. Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union. [http://ec.europa.eu/research/science-society/document\\_library/pdf\\_06/she\\_figures\\_2009\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/research/science-society/document_library/pdf_06/she_figures_2009_en.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> Toren, Nina and Tahlia Moore (1998) 'The academic "hurdle race": A case study', Higher Education 35: 267-283 (p.269)

<sup>3</sup> European Commission (2011) Structural change in research institutions: Enhancing excellence, gender equality and efficiency in research and innovation. Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union. [http://ec.europa.eu/research/science-society/document\\_library/pdf\\_06/structural-changes-final-report\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/research/science-society/document_library/pdf_06/structural-changes-final-report_en.pdf) (p.7)

## POBAL EQUALITY FOR WOMEN PROGRAMME

The Irish Government's *Equality for Women Measure 2010-2013* was established to address continuing inequalities in the experiences of women in the labour market, in enterprise and in decision-making. The Institute for Social Science in the 21st Century (ISS21) was awarded a grant in late 2010 to fund the *Through the Glass Ceiling* project under Strand 3: Career Development for Women in Employment. The project commenced in December 2010.

## INSTITUTE FOR SOCIAL SCIENCES IN THE 21ST CENTURY

ISS21 was established at University College Cork with the aid of funding from the Programme for Research in Third Level Institutions and it is affiliated to the Irish Social Science Platform, an all-island programme of theoretical, applied and comparative research and graduate training focused upon the core themes of Knowledge, Innovation, Society and Space, coherently linking together significant and well-established centres of social science expertise across a partnership of third-level institutions.

The Institute brings together social scientists from a broad range of disciplines to pursue research at Irish and international levels in interdisciplinary areas through a number of research clusters. The Institute has particular research strength in the area of gender studies, with research being conducted through its Family, Gender and Sexualities Cluster.

The *Through the Glass Ceiling* project was developed by ISS21 to be a positive action project that would help to empower women academics and researchers in relation to their own careers while also addressing organisational structures by developing recommendations for a Gender Equality Action Plan. It has been supported by the UCC Equality Committee throughout.

## UCC EQUALITY COMMITTEE

The UCC Equality Committee promotes and protects equality for staff and students in UCC, ensures the implementation of equality legislation within the university and makes recommendations to the University Management Team on issues relating to equality. The UCC Equality Committee has supported, and collaborated with, the *Through the Glass Ceiling* project since it began in late 2010.

This final report of the project outlines the activities undertaken through the project over Phases 1 and 2, detailing the aims and process of each activity, the reported benefits for participants and the recommendations and plans for future action.

# THROUGH THE GLASS CEILING THROUGH THE GLASS CEILING

## CAREER PROGRESSION PROGRAMME AND STRATEGY FOR FEMALE ACADEMICS AND RESEARCHERS

### Aims

- Aim 1 Develop and deliver tailored mentoring and professional development programmes aimed at the empowerment of female academics and researchers in relation to their own career paths and at the promotion of gender equality in career progression
- Aim 2 Identify and implement organisational strategies that will tackle gender inequalities and horizontal and vertical segregation as well as gendered organisational cultures
- Aim 3 Raise awareness of gender inequality, and the potential of positive action initiatives to address it, within the university and the higher education sector in Ireland

### KEY PRINCIPLES

The principles underpinning the project were reinforced in every activity and were important elements in the project's success:

#### **Positive action**

Addressing inequality requires a pro-active policy approach aimed at positive change, one which goes beyond basic compliance with anti-discrimination legislation. The project was designed in this spirit as a positive action intervention.

#### **Empowerment in relation to career**

Empowering women for their careers was a key concern: it is important that women strategically address their career ambitions, achievements and opportunities whether that is to move upwards, sideways or simply to get more from the position they are currently in. The mentoring and professional development programmes provided the space and the tools for women to do this on a long-term basis.

#### **Structural change**

Actions aimed at the empowerment of women in relation to their careers need to be complemented by actions aimed at structural and cultural change if sustainable change is to be achieved.

#### **Women sharing knowledge with other women**

The principle of women supporting other women was an important element of the project not only in recognising the importance of shared experiences and empathy but in strengthening the visibility of senior female role models for women.

#### **Leadership**

Leadership comes in many forms and it is practiced in many ways: at the personal level, informally with colleagues or officially with staff. The project encouraged leadership throughout the project and recognised that different models of leadership enrich rather than weaken an organisation and that effective leadership requires awareness of, and respect for, equality and diversity.

## MENTORING SCHEME

Mentoring is an internationally recognised mode of career development and has been particularly successful in supporting the career development of female staff in universities and other institutions in which they are significantly under-represented at senior levels. It is valuable as a means of:

- providing senior female role models
- enabling female academics to ground their experiences within the broader structural context of the institution and to obtain focused support and encouragement to achieve specific objectives within a wider career development plan.

*The main benefit I feel for me is that it provides me with an opportunity to get very good advice on how to improve my profile [...] and to discuss ways of improving the prospects of career progression. It is also good to get to know someone in a senior position outside of my own college. I have enjoyed the experience (Mentee).*

The Female Academics' Mentoring Scheme was established in Phase 1 of the Through the Glass Ceiling project with a very particular idea of mentoring:

- A 12-month partnership model between a senior academic mentor and a more junior female academic or researcher mentee
- Goal-oriented around the goals of the mentee for the 12-month period as part of a wider career development strategy
- The mentor's role is to be an objective 'critical friend' that will support and encourage the mentee, draw on their own experience and institutional knowledge and encourage the mentee to critically reflect on her career and progress.
- Participants are always in different departments/schools and do not already have a professional relationship.
- Mentees are never in a direct reporting relationship with mentors, and thus can benefit from advice that is not influenced by such power relationships.

## OBJECTIVE

Achievement of mentee career goals for the 12-month period while also developing greater strategic awareness, critical career skills, advice and insight from a more experienced colleague and having access to a neutral supportive space to discuss career, work and the opportunities and challenges they face.

## PARTICIPANTS

	CACSSS	BAL	MAH	SEFS
MENTEES	10	7	10	12
MENTORS	18	5	9	7

Participants in Mentoring Scheme by College affiliation<sup>4</sup>

<sup>4</sup> CACSSS: College of Arts, Celtic Studies and Social Sciences; BAL: College of Business and Law  
MAH: College of Medicine and Health; SEFS: College of Sciences, Engineering and Food Science

## MENTORING SCHEME

Mentees included a range of staff categories from Research Assistant to College Lecturer, while mentors ranged from College Lecturer to Professor. All participants received training and a mentoring handbook.

*I attended a session on Mentoring, which was excellent – it made visible the complex relationships there are around teaching/learning and research issues in the university for women and the ways in which we can intervene and inquire to make the most of our roles and of our positions in UCC. It was an eye opener to see - even in one session – how easy it is for us to be positioned within the institution (Participant).*

Mentors and mentees were required to submit information in advance to be used in the matching process. The matching was achieved by identifying an appropriate mentor for the goals of each mentee. Peer Mentoring Circles involving a group of four peers in each circle who would provide mentoring to each other were also established, following an identified need for support for senior female academic and research staff.

A total of **forty (40) mentoring matches** were made in addition to the establishment of **three (3) Peer Mentoring Circles**.

## KEY BENEFITS

Mentees gain new perspectives, a safe space to critically reflect on goals, new perspectives on their goals and increased confidence.

*The programme was a real success from my point of view. You selected a mentor for me, who turned out to be very appropriate, and with whom I could have relevant discussions. The whole process has allowed me to reflect on my career and to make slight but important changes. I am now a lot less worried, more efficient, and getting results faster (Mentee).*

Mentors gain satisfaction, strengthened networks, opportunities to reflect on shared experiences and improved understanding of concerns of other female academics.

*Training as a mentor gave me the confidence to support other staff members in their quest for academic development. I didn't expect to get anything out of being a mentor, I just wanted to provide support where it was wanted. However, working with my mentee gave me an insight into the kinds of challenges faced by some women in the university. I'm not saying I can solve the challenges but being aware of how these challenges present and how difficult they are to overcome is a very good first step (Mentor).*

## KEY LEARNING

A number of useful lessons have emerged from running this scheme:

- Many participants felt that having **female mentors for female mentees** is an immensely beneficial feature of a mentoring scheme.
- Training is important for both mentors and mentees so that they can understand the process and the roles/responsibilities.
- A key part of the training is to encourage participants to **co-define** and agree how best to engage with their specific mentoring relationship and maximise its effectiveness.
- It is important to have a representative pool of mentors to match the **disciplinary pool** of mentees, so that where possible matches can be made within the same broad College/Faculty.
- **Confidentiality** is a core principle of the scheme.
- It is important to have a **support structure** in place (Project Coordinator/Mentoring Team) throughout the scheme.
- A key aspect of the scheme was that it was underpinned by a **gender equality agenda** in its design and implementation.

# PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME

## OBJECTIVES

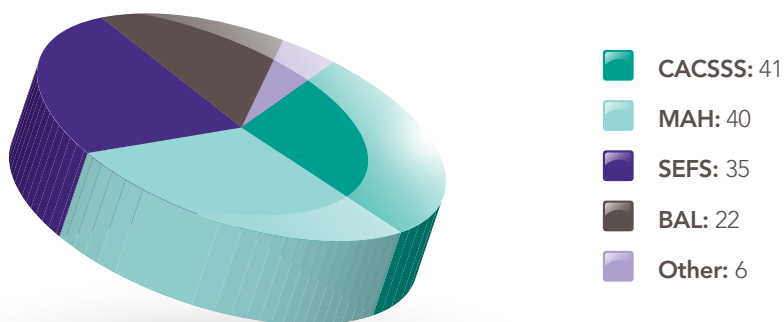
To provide female academics and researchers within UCC with:

- Space and support to strategically review and plan their careers and work
- Specific skills to support their wider career and professional development

## STRATEGIC CAREER REVIEW AND PLANNING

Two one-day career planning workshops were developed and delivered in Phase 1:

- Career Planning for Early Career Female Academics and Researchers
- Career Planning for Female Academics and Researchers in Mid-to-Late Career



Participation in Career Planning Workshops 2011 by College affiliation

**Over 90 per cent** of participants stated that participation in the one-day Career Planning workshops had a positive impact on their careers.

The workshops were facilitated by Janet Wilkinson of Three Times Consulting, a training consultant with extensive experience of working with academic audiences and with women.

*Participation in each of the workshops and programmes available through the scheme have been of great benefit to me in terms of my development as a female academic. Each of the workshops which I attended helped me enormously to focus upon the various aspects of my career which I knew very little about beforehand (Participant).*

The career planning workshops were developed as part of a nine-month programme that included two follow-up sessions (December 2011 and February 2012) with participants that covered the following topics:

- Building your Career Plan
- My and my CV
- Establishing your Professional Profile
- Social Media and my Research

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## PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME

In all, **151 women** participated in the Strategic Career Review and Planning programme.

*I find that I am usually so busy with the everyday 'doing' of academic and clinical life, that I never take time to stop and consider my own role and my own career wishes. Indeed, this was the first time in over 25 years that I had done so! (Participant)*

## SPECIFIC CAREER SKILLS PROGRAMME

The aim of the professional development programme in Phase 2 was to consolidate and supplement the strategic approaches to work and career. A number of specific skills courses were developed, inspired by feedback from the participants and from national and international best practice.

Five courses were run:

■ **Time Management for Extremely Busy Women**

A half-day workshop designed to: identify time issues in the day, identify 'smart' use of time by prioritising and learn strategies to take control of time and make it work in the most beneficial way

■ **Professional Networking for Academic Women**

A half-day workshop focusing on: review of current professional networks, understanding the value of good networking and developing strategies to manage and gain from professional networks.

■ **Promotions and Recruitment: a Q&A Panel**

A Q&A panel with three senior experienced female academics from Irish universities addressing key issues in promotions and recruitment for female academics and researchers

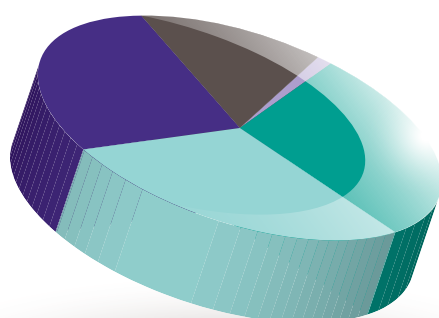
■ **Strategic Leadership for Senior Academic Women**

A half-day workshop for senior academic women in leadership positions focusing on strategic leadership skills, developing personal leadership styles and recognising the importance of equality and diversity for effective leadership

■ **Aspiring to Leadership for Academic Women**

A half-day workshop for female academics and researchers to improve their leadership skills for future leadership opportunities

In all, **97 women** participated in the Specific Career Skills programme.



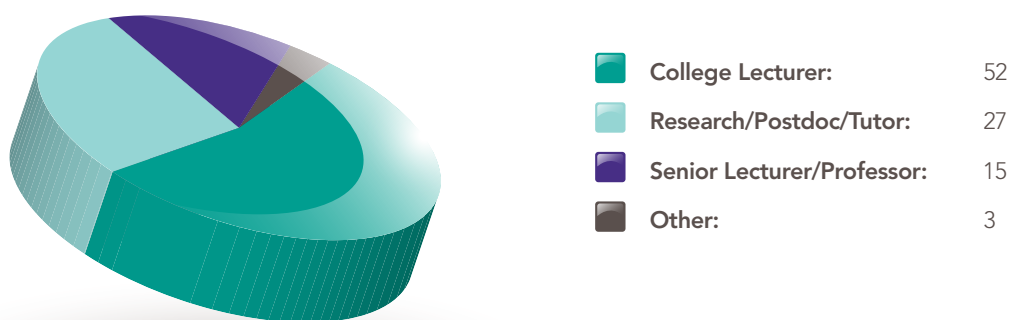
■ College of Science, Engineering and Food Science:	28
■ College of Medicine and Health:	27
■ College of Arts, Celtic Studies and Social Sciences:	27
■ College of Business and Law:	14
■ Other:	1

Participation in Specific Career Skills programme by College affiliation

Participation in the programmes have had a big impact on me both personally and professionally. They have given me clear vision of my career pathway and what skills I have and what I need to acquire. It has also brought to my attention, that women academics working in different departments across the university are struggling with the same issues (Participant)

All courses were developed in a targeted manner with facilitators who were very familiar with academia but also aware of the particular experiences of women in academia.

*They proved very valuable in two ways. Firstly, it was very reassuring to have the opportunity to hear from professional colleagues in a safe confidential place about the commonalities of challenges that are faced in academic life by females. I think there was great peer learning because of this. Secondly, the specific relevance of the subject matter contained within the curricula of the workshops and the practical element meant that the skills learned were directly transferable to the workplace. Many thanks for including me in this very valuable project (Participant).*



Participation in Specific Career Skills programme by staff category

## KEY LEARNING

- The impact of providing professional development courses that are tailored to academic women is high. This is achieved by having a facilitator familiar with, and a programme shaped by, an understanding of the particular context of academia and the particular experiences of, and challenges for, women within that.
- It is useful to recognise diversity in the needs of women at different career stages when running professional development programmes.
- Time management, career planning, professional networking, leadership, professional profile and representation are key areas for female academics and researchers' professional development, as identified by participants themselves.
- Running courses as part of a package or programme increases the possibilities of sustainable networks developing out of the programmes.
- A key aspect of the scheme was that it was underpinned by a gender equality agenda in its design and implementation.

*Overall it has improved my mindset about my career and what I want to achieve personally. [The facilitators] were such positive people with such knowledge. They were inspirational (Participant).*

# GENDER EQUALITY ACTION PLAN RECOMMENDATIONS

A key aim of the project was to identify and implement organisational strategies to tackle gender inequalities and horizontal and vertical segregation as well as gendered organisational cultures.

A review of international literature, research and gender equality action plans and strategies was completed in Phase 1 of the project. This involved mapping the gendered landscapes of higher education institutions (HEIs) and also, identifying strengths and weaknesses of strategies developed to address gender inequality and encourage strong equality in HEIs. This review directly informed the development of the mentoring scheme, the career development scheme and the drafting of Gender Equality Action Plan Recommendations.

Drawing on this review as well as the feedback from project participants, provisional Gender Equality Action Plan Recommendations were produced.

The Gender Equality Action Plan Recommendations can be viewed as a **development strategy** to benefit the university and its academic staff by having a focused outcome-driven agenda that will foster the creation of a collegial, fair and enjoyable work experience which will boost the productivity of female academics and researchers and contribute to a rich intellectual environment and enhanced work/life balance for all staff.

The GEAPR adopts a thematic format, identifying five Action Areas and distinguishing within each Action Area between recommendations for immediate action and more long-term strategic goals.

## ACTION AREAS:

1. Commit to gender equality as a development strategy for the university
2. Recognise and continue good HR and public relations practice
3. Challenge inequality with appropriate measures
4. Support workers with family/caring responsibilities and their managers
5. Develop a positive action programme to enhance careers and contribution to the university community

Following a consultation process with a diverse range of stakeholders from across the university, a revised and refined set of GEAP Recommendations has been produced for presentation to the Equality Committee which has responsibility for promoting equality in employment and opportunity for staff of UCC and for making recommendations to the University Management Team on all matters relating to equality.

## RAISING AWARENESS

An important aim of the project was to raise awareness of gender inequality, and the potential of positive action initiatives to address it, within the university and the higher education sector in Ireland, and to ensure insofar as possible the long-term sustainability and wide impact of the project actions.

*I hear a number of my colleagues raving about the Through the Glass Ceiling Project and have benefited much even from their account of, and documentation of, sessions [...] (Participant).*

## PROJECT LAUNCH

An event to launch the project and build awareness of the issue of gender inequality in universities was organised and held in UCC in December 2010. The project was officially launched by Professor Michael Murphy, President of UCC. Professor Pat O'Connor (University of Limerick) presented her recent research findings on gender and higher education management in Ireland at the event.

## LE CHÉILE – UCC EQUALITY NEWSLETTER

*Le Chéile: UCC Equality News*, a quarterly equality newsletter, was established in Phase 1 of the project in collaboration with the UCC Equality Committee. The aim of the initiative was to produce an interactive engaging equality newsletter for UCC staff and students to build awareness about the relevance of equality issues for everyone.

## COLLABORATION AND DISSEMINATION

### National

A key element of Phase 2 of the project was dissemination of project learning to and strategic collaboration with other Irish universities. A summary of the actions and outcomes to date of the project was presented to the Network of Equality Officers of the Irish Universities Association in June 2011. The Project Coordinator has visited the six universities in Ireland and met with Equality Officers and human resources staff to disseminate project learning. Guideline documents on career development and mentoring for female academics and researchers will also be made available post-project.

In the final phase of the project, *Through the Glass Ceiling* initiated a process of strategic collaboration involving staff from all Irish universities and other relevant stakeholders in the Irish higher education sector with the aim of producing a set of Strategic Recommendations for Gender Equality in Career Development for academic and research staff. Participants have been involved in a process of sharing best practice and identifying sectoral priorities. There is great potential for wide-ranging and long-term impact to be achieved in this area through national-level collaboration and these shared efforts will continue after the project with the development of a collaborative higher education network for gender equality.

### International

The project team has also established an international consortium of university partners with interests in implementing innovative actions to tackle gender inequality in research in Europe. The international consortium includes partners with diverse experiences of implementing gender equality initiatives, namely Bradford University, Lulea University, Ankara University, University of Naples, Trnava University and University of Madrid. The consortium, led by Bradford University, made a successful bid to the European Commission for Seventh Framework Programme (FP7) funding for its GENOVATE project, a four-year programme of action aimed at promoting gender equality in research and innovation. It is hoped that the project will run from 2013 to 2017.

## THROUGH THE GLASS CEILING

## KEY HIGHLIGHTS KEY HIGHLIGHTS

- A total of 219 female academics and researchers in UCC, from postdoctoral to Professorial levels, participated in *Through the Glass Ceiling* during its 18-month period.
- The evaluation indicates that the project has had a significant impact on staff morale, productivity and wellbeing.

*I feel inspired, motivated and enthusiastic. My attitude has changed with regard to the limits I put on myself. I need to work on the barriers that I put up for myself career-wise. I feel like setting goals for myself, including deadlines for reaching these goals (Participant).*

*Made me more positive - got me to think about the joy that I get from my job and my achievements (Participant).*

*I haven't been this motivated since I first qualified 10 years ago (Participant)*

- A set of Gender Equality Action Plan Recommendations has been produced for presentation to the university's Equality Committee.

## RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE FUTURE

- The value of mentoring is being recognised through new mentoring initiatives in many different spheres of life. The *Through the Glass Ceiling* project provides further evidence of its potential contribution to the academic work environment and also highlights the specific need for female-to-female mentoring in particular contexts.
- A Professional Development programme, with reference to the particular contexts of female academics and researchers, and underpinned by an equality framework, should be incorporated into the university's structures, with input from key stakeholders including both academic and administrative staff in its planning and development
- The university should engage with the Gender Equality Action Plan Recommendations in working towards an outcome-driven agenda for the creation of an equal, inclusive and collegial working environment for UCC and other universities.
- It is vital that the university has robust and practical equality structures and personnel dedicated to championing the cause of equality.
- Collaboration and consultation with a diversity of stakeholders within the institution and across the sector is extremely valuable in developing and implementing actions to improve gender equality and fairness.



