

Office of the Vice-President for Learning and Teaching

Dr Marian McCarthy in conversation with Jacqui Churcher, OVPLT



Dr Marian McCarthy at the University of Shanghai

Tell me about your student days at UCC?

The undergraduate student days at UCC were wonderful! It was a great privilege to be here in the 70s because it was still so compact, and classes were small and we all knew each other. I did an Arts degree- a BA. I was going to specialise in languages, so I read English, Irish and French and also took Logic

in the first year, which was a demanding combination. I adored English, I liked Irish and French too, but I decided that I would do an honours degree in English and Philosophy. This turned out to be a wonderful decision, which impacted my future career and development. English gave me a life- long love of literature and of critique, while Philosophy added to this, making me question, and introduced me to fascinating subjects like Aesthetics, Ethics and Metaphysics.

Then, as a postgraduate student, I took the Higher Diploma in Education, since I was passionate about teaching. I had only one subject for second level teaching at Leaving Cert level- English. However, because I had Irish and French in First year, I could also teach them up to Junior Cert. Overall, I had an interesting trajectory and a range of subjects to offer.

Later, as a postgraduate student and a teacher, I was providing in-service training for teachers for the new Junior cycle English and the new subject, Civic, Social and Political Education (CSPE). I was also involved subsequently in introducing the new Senior cycle English programme. I returned to UCC in 1990. I had been living in Crosshaven for 10 years and when we returned to Cork, I promised myself that I was going back to UCC. I must have been a pain in the staff room, constantly talking about what was happening in my classroom and how I'd like to change and develop it. So, I was always researching really and missed UCC greatly. When I returned, I took a two-

year Postgraduate Diploma in English and the Teaching of English (DETE). Though I already had a degree in English, I had much to learn about what was then contemporary literary criticism, which introduced me to the work of Barthes and Umberto Eco and to Semiotics, which had a profound effect on the further development of my teaching.

I went on, therefore, to take a Masters in Education by research, in Semiotics, specifically in the use of the signs of drama to teach the play text. I was conscious that students were not getting the opportunity to appreciate the real play, particularly the exam classes, and were engaging with it as if it were another novel. In short, like music, it's not music until you play it- it's just a score! My research question was about how to honour the play as a play in the everyday classroom and how Semiotics could help to bring it to life. As a result, I used several types of signs/signifiers – including the signs of the actor, the visual signs, the aural signs, as well as the textual signs of the play- to bring it to life. I had a glorious time at the back of my own classroom weekly on Fridays, watching students present a variety of signs and props from the play, putting forward their sets and posters and acting out key moments from the text. The whole experience was powerful for them and for me. It made clear how students learn in different ways and how engaging with the play can be enjoyable and insightful. Exam wise, students were highly successful, since they learned to speak in their own voice and use their own ideas and creativity.

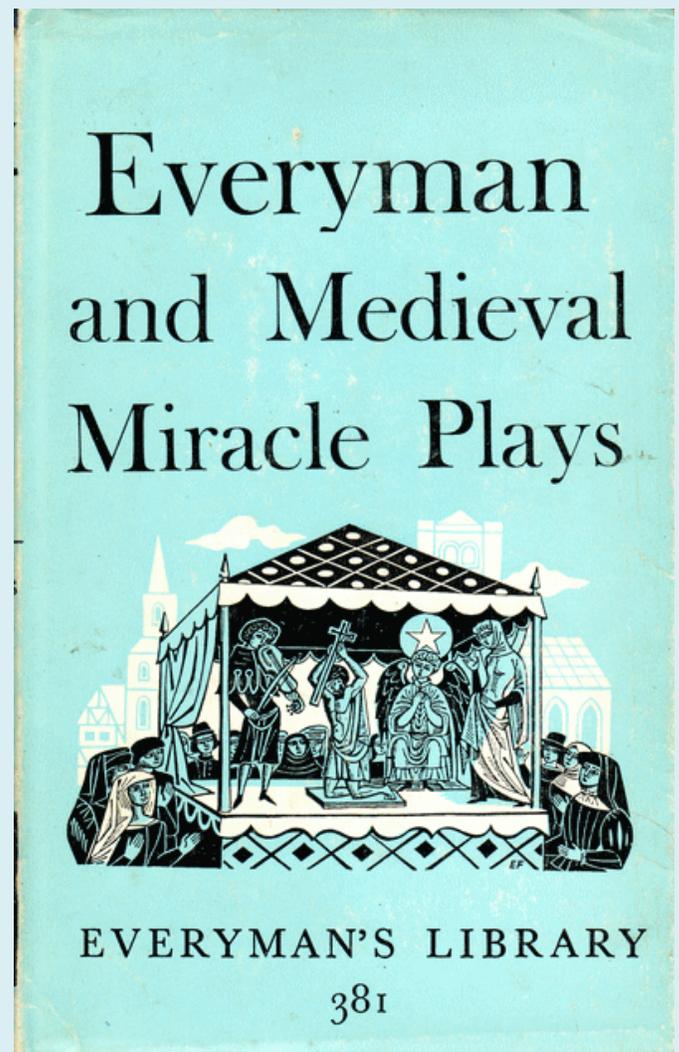
What were some of your happiest memories?

The early days at UCC were great days and we had that rite of passage, to which I will return. I remember there were between 6 to 9 people in most of my Philosophy classes! Can you imagine the luxury of that? We had time to think and talk and, of course, we had no idea how privileged we were at the time. English class was huge, by comparison, there were something like 15 in one class and 21 in another!

But then, when it came to the Higher Diploma in Education, there might be 300 in the class! But I

enjoyed every minute of it. I loved college life. I loved studying and talking about it. I wasn't the best exam candidate, because I was always trying to write a masterpiece, instead of just answering the question, so I was much better at project and essay work outside the constraints of the exam. But the experience made me a very good teacher of exam technique afterwards.

When I first came to UCC, I was so naive, coming straight from a convent education in St Vincent's, which was an all girls' school. Luckily, I had four brothers at home, so it didn't really bother me to be in a mixed class. But it was weird to suddenly find oneself next to all that testosterone in 1972!



I have so many great stories of my time here. For our third year project in Middle English, for example, we

could either act out the drama and write about it, or we could do the more classical critique of the work. I chose to do the acting version and so I put on *Everyman*, a medieval play, directing and acting in it. I put in a prequel, I had to create my own thing, I was Eve in the Garden of Eden, miming the plucking of the apple from the tree, dressed in a leotard and tights in 1975, in G 19 of the Kane Building! I had the black leotard and pink tights from my ballet days. We put on the play for the first years and they didn't know what to make of it. I was so full of my own importance at the time and delighted with my performance, until I heard two first years whispering 'what the ... is she doing?' This taught me that my mime sequence prequel was a bit too highfalutin! What was wonderful was that Eamon O Carragáin, a great lecturer in Old and Middle English, was up at the back, smiling and enjoying the performance. I thought that was great -he would always enter into the fun of the lecture and would sing some of the medieval songs for us- he was right up at the back where the lights and equipment were and we were down on the stage owning the text! So there was some very innovative pedagogy back then also, though it wouldn't have been called that at the time. Talking of Eamon, again, we were encouraged to write in English and/or in Irish to respond to texts. So privileged were we that Eamon would sometimes hold tutorials in his own home on the writing of Michael Hartnett, for example, who was writing in English and in Irish. We had these marvellous opportunities and we thought this was all quite normal! We would also meet our lecturers for coffee if we had a problem and just chat it through. We could sit together, chatting away, and this really broke down barriers, so these were great moments indeed. I told the story on the night of my retirement party, of going down to see Colbert Kearney in his office- he's just published a lovely book called *Life by the Liffey*, by the way- to complain that I thought that *Romeo and Juliet* was flawed as a play! He was patient with me and told me not to bring the play down to the level of *The*

Riordans, which was the soap opera of the time! So, this is what I mean by a rite of passage!

I have great memories as well of being in the Library with Nora Brown, who was forever running up and down the spiral staircase which took her from what is now the Staff Common Room up into what was then the Reading Room, now the Council Room! Nora was a marvellous manager, the staff were half-afraid of her and as student help, we were on our guard. Many of us had part time jobs in the Library and mine was to sit in the Arts and Law Reading Room (in the Council Room) or one of the Medical Libraries and count the number of students there hourly. I didn't get much study done myself- I was too busy ensuring all felt welcome -which must have been a distraction - but I kept a close eye on the numbers. It was a great job - that was all we had to do; we didn't have to get students to sign out books or anything. We simply had to count those present hourly, with the purpose of noting when the Library was most in use, so that opening hours could be monitored.



Aula Maxima, UCC

I have very pleasant memories overall. There was some stress, of course, around exam time particularly, because I would try to write tomes instead of writing a simple answer! But, other than that, it was an idyllic time which was then followed by 18 years of secondary teaching, consisting of 33

classes a week, which was tough going since it was just part of the work.

But it was all so exciting, and I loved the classroom and still do. Second level colleagues used to say to me when I came here as staff in 1995, 'Don't you miss the classroom?' But I was in the classroom more than ever, since I had the privilege of helping teachers to teach. In the context of third level teaching since 1995, I have also had the opportunity to be part of classroom teaching across the four Colleges of UCC. So, the classroom is still my element.

What memories do you have of your second level teaching career?

I became the senior English teacher in an all Irish second level school, Coláiste an Phiarsaigh, in Glanmire, in 1977 and had 18 really happy years there, although it was very demanding work and included several years of night duty, since it was a boarding school. It was a new school so that was a great advantage because it meant that we were growing up with the school. There was a sense of creativity and adventure and I got the chance to shape the direction of the English Department from day 1. I also had other duties as an A post holder, directing the Christmas concert for many years. I was also the Debates Officer, training teams and travelling up and down the country. And I became Librarian in the school. Later, I was Transition Year Coordinator for many years. So, it was a very full life!



Colaiste an Phiarsaigh, Glanmire, Co Cork

I loved debating and often brought my students to the 'Philosoph' meetings and competitions here at UCC. The Philosoph was in its hey-day then and a lot of my students who went on to UCC, were involved. In fact, some of them would have done battle with people like Brendan O'Connor, who now has his own show on RTE. Again, these were great years in terms of the excitement of teaching and it was a time when there was beginning to be more of a focus on student learning in the curriculum. I learned how to teach during those years, gradually realising what worked and what didn't. I loved researching and documenting the work and am proud of that M Ed thesis in the Boole library. It is in my maiden name – which is O'Connell, if you want to read the wonderful interpretations of a variety of play texts by insightful students!

Can you talk about your growing interest in Continuing Professional Development (CPD)?

One of the great opportunities that I got, which really ignited my interest in CPD, was that I was seconded out of school many times during the mid-80's and the 90's to facilitate Train the Trainers programmes in relation to the development of the new curricula and syllabi. I was involved particularly with the pilot project that introduced the new subject Civic, Social and Political Education. This emerged because of my interest in active learning

approaches, which grew particularly from my lifelong interest in the Arts in Education. I contributed to the development of the new syllabus in English at Junior and Senior Cycle also, with my great colleague in Education at the time, Dr Tom Mullins. It was a time of great change for teachers, if you swung with it. There were so many new ideas and I cherished the opportunity to work with colleagues and learn from them. That was a marvellous foundation for coming here because the idea of CPD had to be enculturated. Out there, many teachers were terribly busy and some of them were resistant to the training, but I learned to cope with that and not take it personally and to try and identify with where teachers were and with their concerns. I learned some valuable lessons then that were most helpful when I came to UCC to work with staff here.

The whole focus in the mid 1990s was on developing new syllabi to maximise active learning and engage students in their learning. When I met Prof Aine Hyland at first at UCC, as my Head of Department, I said to her that I was looking forward to the orientation for staff. She answered 'You should be - you're giving it!' So that was my Orientation! Aine and I headed into that first session with staff in 1995 and I loved every minute of it. That was the beginning of a wonderful phase of CPD for staff, between 1995 and 2000. We found ourselves spearheading CPD in two worlds, helping beginning teachers to teach at second level and, simultaneously, supporting the staff of UCC. Such work grew out of that initial orientation session. A group of colleagues approached me after the session and asked if I would continue to work with them during the year. As a result, I held sessions for them three or four times a term in the Education Department.

Later, these took place in the Microteaching room of the Education Department in the ORB. These regular, three-hour sessions, which continued for nearly five years, taught me so much and gave me time to grow into the culture of university education

and the concerns of staff. The issues of the time were those of modularisation and its effect on teaching and learning and the consequent fractured nature of the curriculum and how this might be mitigated in the classroom. Other topics related to the emergence of a diverse student population and its implications for differentiated and inclusive teaching and learning. Internationalisation and its implications for participation and assessment was another important concern. I could not have bought this experience. It was crucial to my initiation into the realities of university teaching and learning.

The mid 90's was the era of multiple intelligences and a new awareness and understanding of diversity emerged. Ireland was no longer a mono-cultural society. We had students coming from different countries and a key question was how we were going to meet their needs? There was a whole shift in culture which impacted CPD. It was no longer a case of students having to fit in with us, but rather we would have to engage them. I had 4 or 5 years of these kinds of rich discussions with colleagues from all four Colleges. You can read about this period in more detail in one of our early publications *UCC as a Learning Organisation*.

By the end of the 90's then, we had the Universities Act of 1997, which demanded that every university had its quality assurance process, the quality of Teaching and Learning being an intrinsic part of that. In turn, this led to the setting up of the Quality Promotion Unit at UCC, then led by Dr Norma Ryan. Government funding of CPD for staff was made available, which led to that glorious era between 2000 and 2006, where there was money to fund courses and introduce more innovative pedagogies and empower staff to document and develop their teaching with a view to impacting student learning.



Marian with colleagues from CIRTL and President Patrick O'Shea

Tell us more about your CPD experience in the Education Department?

Between 1995 and 2005, I was a full-time member of the Education Department, now the School of Education. I took a career break from my post at Coláiste an Phiarsaigh, on the invitation of Tom Mullins, who had asked me to take over his role in the teaching of English while he was seconded by the Department of Education and Science to write the new Leaving Certificate English syllabus. This was an incredible opportunity which changed my career trajectory and for which I am forever grateful. I loved the work. I loved the supervision of teaching practice best. I was out in everyone else's classroom, which became my own learning site. I had twenty teaching practice students in that first year, so I was up and down the county for several weeks of the year, conducting five visits to each student throughout the academic year. I was privileged to see teaching practice from Boherbue to Roscarbery, from rural to city centre schools of all types and denominations. It was a wonderful, enlightening experience and a great privilege to sit at the back of other people's classrooms and see what was going on. That's where I learned so much about what makes a good teacher and where the use of semiotics came into its own in encouraging student teachers to look for the signs of good teaching and what these had to do with learning.

Teachers would look on the supervisor as an Inspector, there to tell them what to do and to pass judgement. As a result, I spent a lot of time chatting to teachers, trying to put them at ease, and getting them to see that they could and should take responsibility for their own learning. I would begin our meeting after the lesson by asking 'How do you think that went today?' I found that more productive than me telling them how I thought it went. Involving them led to a discussion about what was working well and what wasn't. Supervisory sessions could be very stressful for students, so I always had great sympathy for them. For me, it was a glorious time to learn and a great privilege to sit in 30 or 40 different classrooms each term. I certainly learned what worked in the classroom and what didn't and I learned to detect the different dynamics in schools and different kinds and styles of principal. The experience was invaluable and had a profound effect and affect on my thinking and my approach to teaching and my relationship with my students. It also defined how I engaged with my colleagues as students when the accredited programme in teaching and learning in higher education got underway.

The routine was that I was in a variety of schools each morning and then in the afternoon I was back at UCC to lecture on a variety of modules. Meanwhile, at lunchtime, I began working with Prof Hyland, who became mentor and friend, on CPD for staff of the university. So, it was a fascinating few years seeing teaching as a continuum across second and third level and experiencing the differences between the two settings.

Was there a particular highlight you recall from your years in the Education Department?

Yes, indeed, this would have to be my involvement with the Multiple Intelligences (MI) Curriculum and Assessment project which was a huge research project won by Prof Aine Hyland to introduce the concept of multiple intelligences to schools at every

level of the education system in Ireland. I was lucky that the project started after my arrival in 1995-1996 and I was given the task of introducing MI to CSPE teachers at second and third level and of introducing it also in the context of the Arts in Education. Aine succeeded in acquiring huge funding of over a million for the project, which enabled us to go to Harvard annually for close to a decade, to be mentored and guided by our partners at Project Zero at the Harvard Graduate School of Education. After two years, I was invited to give a number of workshops and courses at the Summer School annually, which I continued to do until 2007. The MI project was highly successful in the schools here too, since Prof Hyland invited five principals from different schools annually to join us for the Harvard Summer School, thus ensuring that MI theory and practice had a chance of being encultured into the schools from the top down when the principals returned.

This project changed the direction of my research from then on and redefined how I approached active learning. I was profoundly influenced by the merits of the work at Project Zero, particularly by Teaching for Understanding (TfU) pedagogy and practice, and subsequently, by the work on the scholarship of teaching and learning at the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Learning, now on the Stanford campus. I integrated both approaches for my PhD and researched TfU approaches in both second and third level settings. TfU provides us with a robust pedagogical and disciplinary model which impacts the whole teaching and learning process, from curriculum design to classroom practice (whether face to face or virtual). I have found it to be the best model I have come across in my 42 years teaching and I now use it also to inform how I engage with Universal Design for Learning principles which have also transformed practice at every educational level in recent years.

What led to the development of the Teaching and Learning Centre?

Before Prof Hyland retired, in 2006, she seconded me full time from the School of Education to set up the Teaching and Learning centre, with my great colleague, Dr Bettie Higgs from Geology, who was already working with us for some years on our seminar series for staff. Bettie's role was to coordinate and run the Lunchtime Seminar sessions, while mine was to continue to direct and teach the Accredited Programme of Postgraduate Certificate, Diploma and Master's degree, already underway since 2004. Together Bettie and I founded and co-directed Ionad Bairre for the next decade.

Can you talk about some of the initiatives that developed over time at the Centre?

When the Accredited programme started in 2004, it took off like wildfire. This was due in no small way to the success of the Lunchtime Seminars and to the fact that staff kept coming back for more! Gradually, the need for credit arose since staff were giving of their time and upskilling but had no official CPD certification. There were at least 60 staff on the programme in that first year –which was a huge number and a great affirmation of our work to date. What kept us going was that there was always the excitement and adventure of learning and of new ways of thinking about it and of documenting it. We now have a huge focus on the portfolio method which is a marvellous way of capturing learning.

Developing a portfolio of practice needs a very fluid and flexible approach because it allows staff to create different entries about various aspects of their teaching practice, especially in the light of student learning. The golden thread binding the entries together is that each teacher is trying to understand student learning and how to design for it and ensure it. I must also acknowledge the role of Nuala Griffin in our success, now retired, but then based in the President's Office and executive assistant to Prof Hyland who by then had become Vice President of the university. Nuala was so

enthusiastic about teaching and learning and loved the work. She communicated so well and so gently with staff and was certainly instigative in retaining staff who might otherwise have dropped out of the programme due to incomplete assignments. Nuala was full of encouragement and would cajole them into submission!

Tell me about the story of CIRTL and how it emerged and evolved?

Between 2006 and the present, CIRTL developed. We began as Ionad Bairre, which we took from the Irish version of UCC's motto 'Ionad Bairre, Scoil na Mumhan'; the place of Finbarr, the School of Munster. We were trying to make a succinct version of the College motto, which I still think is superb and of which much more should be made: Where Finbarr taught, let Munster Learn. We are the only University in the country where the words teaching and learning appear together in the one sentence in a College motto. I think that's one of the main reasons why we have the largest number of staff taking part in the programme.

We also have the longest history of teaching and learning, since, before my time, we had the first teaching development unit in the country, run by Dr Susan Sayers in the 1980s. It was based more on the traditional model of training popular in the 1980s, but we now have a more developmental model, where we are less focused on remediation and once of training sessions and more focused on investigation and continuing professional development.

This movement from 'terminal remediation to ongoing investigation', in the words of the scholarship of teaching and learning expert Randy Bass, charts the journey of teaching and learning in higher education and maps out how the story of CIRTL has developed. We are teaching teachers how to critique and research their teaching rather than trying to fix it. It's not a question of things being 'wrong' in our classrooms; teachers have different

styles and challenges. It is more a question of starting where colleagues are at and identifying what is problematic for them, in that sense of a research 'problem', and finding out how we can investigate and document this, harnessing the evidence of student learning and identifying good questions about our findings.

Ionad Bairre was highly successful and several people still refer to the Centre as Ionad Bairre, or write CIRTL, Ionad Bairre! One of the reasons we considered a change of name was because it was suggested that, outside of UCC, the term would have little meaning, internationally? I disagreed with that line of thinking as I believe that any title is culture and context bound and can be investigated for its meaning and richness. In every culture there are terms that we don't understand, so we go and find out what they mean, and that's part of the fun of coming to know. However, we had other more meaningful reasons for becoming CIRTL. The main one related to the wonderful work of the National Academy for the Integration of Research, Teaching and Learning (NAIRTL) for which Aine Hyland, had also received substantial funding. Aine had just retired by the time the funding came through, so Norma Ryan became the director of the project. It then passed to Dr Jennifer Murphy, now head of Admissions and Recruitment, as its manager. NAIRTL inspired research and discussion on all aspects of teaching and learning in higher education in at least 35 institutions throughout the country. It held a conference in a different institution annually which guaranteed participation and commitment. It was a splendid project and topped the PRTL poll for excellence.

The NAIRTL baton then passed to our own Dr Catherine O'Mahony, who took over from Jennifer when she took up a new role at UCC. So the main reason that we became CIRTL was to incorporate the NAIRTL archive and brief into UCC, since we were the main partner in the project before it handed over to the National Forum. And so we changed title from

Ionad Bairre to CIRTL and became the Centre for the Integration of Research, Teaching and Learning. The merger was highly successful, naming what we were already doing in Ionad Bairre – integrating research, teaching and learning -so there was alignment and team spirit. Catherine now holds that archive and was the manager of CIRTL until I became Vice President for Teaching and Learning. She is now the current administrative co- director of CIRTL. She brought with her huge experience of dealing with international colleagues, organising international conferences and dealing with complex grants applications and administrative processes. She possesses the complex skill set of what is now known as the third space professional, equally at home in administrative and academic worlds, conscious that the point of intersection is the realisation that we are all serving student learning in the academy.

I became full time Director of CIRTL in 2015 when Bettie retired. However, I was the only full-time member of staff in Ionad Bairre from its inception, so the challenge was always how to balance a working and a private life. To be honest, I had little balance because I didn't want to lose any of the programmes. As the only full time person there, I was teaching every Saturday in the 10 years subsequent to 2004, until the online programme was developed. Our CIRTL Fellows gave generously of their time to help out and lead sessions too. But I taught every Saturday on the Postgraduate Certificate, Diploma and Masters and worked 9 out of 12 Saturdays in every year- so it was a 6 day week! But I enjoyed it all and it gave me energy really. I loved working with the staff and having such great discussions and there was nothing else as exciting and fulfilling as this work.

I meant to say this on the night of the retirement party last December, that the highlight for me were those glorious discussions in the Common Room where staff from across the four Colleges could be heard arguing through some vital point. I remember great moments – a marvellous one, for example, between Prof Colin Bradley, Head of General

Practice, and Dr Pat Meere from Geology. Prof Bradley was making a fine job of defining the Dimensions of Disciplinary understanding necessary in his new Graduate into Medicine programme (the GEM) which he was designing at the time, when an argument about 'life and death issues' emerged. Prof Bradley took for granted that such issues belonged to Medicine, but Pat Meere wasn't long pointing out that they equally belonged to his discipline. He claimed that if he didn't detect the movement of the tectonic plates in time to avert the worst effects of an impending earthquake that there would be many more lives lost and more bodies on Prof Bradley's operating table!

So, there were great moments like that which showed that Teaching and Learning had really blossomed at UCC –whatever name we gave it! I trace the development of the Connected Curriculum back to such discussions as staff grew to respect and tolerate each other's disciplines and learned to cooperate and work in an integrated way.

I also remember occasions down at the Glucksman Gallery, a marvellous learning site, and bringing staff there, out of their comfort zone, inviting them to explore a painting they had never seen before. This was a rich, if disconcerting, experience for many of them because it would draw them back into being students again; they were not sure what to say, nor what to think, nor how to stand, nor how to be comfortable with other people in this new setting. Many claimed that this had a knock-on effect on helping them to empathise with their own students. Participants also learned much about appreciating Art and the role of the arts in education. I remember some great learning moments and group interactions: Dr Kevin McCarthy from the School of Engineering, for example, having a discussion with Prof Tony Ryan, who was then Professor of Paediatrics. I can still see them standing in front of a painting of a bridge, and, of course, Kevin as the engineer was much more interested in the span of the bridge and the technicalities of the bridge and Tony was more interested in the aesthetics of it and

in what bridges do for us! It was fascinating, listening to them. It was also a good example of integrative learning as both brought new perspectives to understanding the bridge and to creating a new conception of and appreciation of it.

I think that part of the secret of the success of these sessions and the accredited programme related to UCC's culture of teaching and learning which developed gradually over time. As indicated earlier, UCC had the first Teaching Development Unit in the country in the 1980s and UCC's motto, 'Where Finbarr Taught, Let Munster Learn', is, therefore, in our DNA, capturing the dynamic relationship between teaching and learning. I would go so far as to say that, as a result, we have an innate interest in Teaching and Learning at UCC and staff came to our seminars, even when there was no accredited course, because they wanted to develop their teaching and their students' learning. From 2004 onwards, with the development of the accredited programme, colleagues came for 6 lunchtime sessions of 2 hours duration and three Saturday sessions of 4 hours duration per term/semester, in order to complete each module, and to learn to document and develop their teaching. To be honest, those Saturday morning sessions were the jewel in the crown. We had time to think and talk and enjoy the stories of our teaching at the end of a busy week – UCC is a very different place on a Saturday! Our current Vice President for Learning and Teaching, Prof Paul McSweeney, who took the Postgraduate Certificate in those early days, would say that there was nothing quite like the interaction and liveliness of those Saturday face- to -face sessions.



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However, as demands on colleagues' time grew and financial cutbacks impacted teaching and research workloads, we had to adapt. It was also the case that we could not have sustained the pace into the future with such few CIRTL staff. I became conscious that for sustainability and flexibility I would have to make changes. I decided to put the Postgraduate Certificate and Diploma courses fully on-line, which was a mammoth task over 3 years. If I had only known what I was letting myself in for! I ended up working regularly about 14 hours a day and through three summers-since the courses continued to run face to face while I was re-designing and CIRTL was also a busy place with other demands on my time. I think I took about 3 days holidays over those summers, but it just had to be done and it is now well worth it. I was very lucky to get the last of the IGOG funding, which supported income generating and new programmes, and to be able to draw on the support of TEL (our Technology Enhanced Learning Unit) which came on board in the form of a great instructional designer, Claire Fennell, who gave me every support. I must also mention the inspiration and encouragement of Patrick Kiely, who urged me to go online in the first place and with whom I had worked closely in CIRTL before he joined TEL.

It is also important to acknowledge my CIRTL Fellows who took a leap of faith at this time and supported the migration to the new programme. I was also reliant on the endless support and good will of Mary Clohessy, our wonderful EA, who recently retired

herself. Mary was constantly urging caution and breaks –though I paid little heed- but was most grateful for her concern and practical help. Like Nuala, Mary was the backbone of the accredited programme, liaising with staff and encouraging and following up with them.



I-r Nuala Griffin, Marian McCarthy, Mary Clohessy

The process of creating an online version of the programme was like writing a book. I used the opportunity to share all I wanted to say theoretically and to provide resources I felt would be foundational and sustain staff into the future. I also included all assessments and rubrics we had already devised and extended these to include Discussion Forums and new pedagogies that opened up to us through new technologies. And I thoroughly enjoyed making introductory videos, first in the Audio-Visual Centre and later in the Recording Studio in the Boole Library. What's wonderful now is that there is a comprehensive archive that can be used, adapted, edited or updated by Briony and James, as the new coordinators of the programme, and by the rest of the team, as they see fit. It's also exciting to see the way technology has taken the course to another level for the design team and for our staff. The great advantage now is the flexibility of the programme - one could be doing this course in the middle of the night, if that suited!

However, looking to the future, I think that a blended approach overall would be best and more achievable on Canvas. It will be possible to incorporate a number of face -to -face sessions that can be accessible and recorded for all participants. Despite the great advantages of technology, there is nothing quite like the real presence and being in that Council room all together experiencing the cut and thrust of robust discussion and learning with peers!

What do you see as the future for teaching and learning at UCC?

I think our Academic Strategy and focus on the Connected University and the Connected Curriculum will provide impetus and direction and will steer the various priorities we have now identified, focusing on graduate attributes, on new ways of assessment and on diversity and inclusion. These priorities will inspire a more strategic online offering for our accredited programme and more staff are coming on board because they see the real need for such CPD courses. Into the future, I would also add that universal design for learning (UDL) has really taken the teaching and learning world by storm. We have to be inclusive-it's a human rights issue- and going back to the idea of multiple intelligences, UDL principles remind us that people learn in different ways. We have to honour that. And despite the fact that many of our buildings and classroom are traditionally designed, we now have a visionary focus on space and devising better learning spaces. Soon we will have our new HUB building up and running which will provide us with great opportunities into the future to make learning in the 21st century much more student friendly and more creative and engaging. In addition, teachers will, once they get their courses up and running on Canvas, become more like facilitators of learning – rather than dictators of lecture notes. There is a lot of work initially in undertaking robust and innovative curriculum design, but once you have that design infrastructure, it will be pervasive and sustainable and save valuable time.

Looking to the future, I would also say that it is great that promotion has opened up again and that staff have the opportunity to showcase the work and insights they have acquired on the accredited programme as part of their teaching portfolio. It is so important that teaching is now recognised more substantially in the promotion process to associate professor level. This is a clear indication of giving parity of esteem to teaching as well as research.

We will again have a thriving Masters programme in CIRTTL, when we get a new senior lecturer and more staff to run it. Overall, I'm really happy with how it's all worked out and CIRTTL is in such safe hands with Dr Catherine O'Mahony as its inspired administrative lead, with Dr Briony Supple and James Cronin as its visionary academic leads, with Dr Laura Lee as its stellar Research Officer and Owen Jump as its online transformer. It's turned out to be a good time for me to stand back and play a role backstage, as it were. I'm still there, one day a week, which can sometimes turn into many days, but that doesn't bother me, and I get marvellous opportunities to travel with some of our Erasmus + projects abroad, which I am still completing.

Are there other highlights from your time at UCC that you wish to mention?

I haven't mentioned about the opportunity in my last year to become Vice President for Teaching and Learning, which was a great privilege. I was honoured that Professor John O'Halloran recommended to the president that I might fill this role in an interim capacity, until the post could be filled long term. The work was demanding but so fulfilling and far reaching. It was a great experience and it gave me the opportunity to put teaching and learning upfront at every opportunity.

My year as VP flew by and I thoroughly enjoyed the experience, due in no small way to the support and masterful grasp of the role by my PA, Mary O'

Rourke. Mary has seen all but one VP (Prof Hyland) through their time in Office and could write a book on our habits and foibles! I am eternally grateful to her for steering me through the year which she did in such an understated but warm and insightful way. I must also mention the glorious view from the VP's office overlooking the President's Garden, which places OVPLT right at the centre of the University. We are still the only place in the country with a full time Vice President for Learning and Teaching and that speaks a lot about the importance of teaching and learning at UCC; once again we are back to 'Where Finbarr taught, let Munster learn'. When Learning is given VP status, we are honouring the student and honouring the important role of the teacher. We are very lucky to have our new Vice President, Professor Paul McSweeney, now in this role and making such a great job of it.



Pictured above (l-r): The Six VPs for Learning & Teaching, on the occasion of Dr Marian McCarthy's retirement in December 2018; Professor John O'Halloran Dr Marian McCarthy, Professor Grace Neville, Professor Aine Hyland, Dr Bettie Higgs, Professor Paul McSweeney.

I was delighted to see that we received a big research grant from the National Forum for the Enhancement of Learning recently, which should ensure some vibrant and innovative teaching and learning projects into the future.

We are coming into a new phase of development now with our connected curriculum and with such funding from the Forum to encourage staff to be innovative and creative in their teaching. In short, I found it a marvellous year to get the chance to put my stamp on things and to bring issues to the

Governing Body and to UMTO and UMTS. I became familiar with all the mechanics of the senior administrative processes of the University and that was a fascinating aspect of the role in itself.

I was also elected to the Governing Body of UCC twice, and still sit on the Senate of the National Universities of Ireland. So, I still have opportunities beyond CIRTl to stay up to date with policy and practice. I am looking forward to being more available now on the Education Committee of the NUI Senate, where we have some very interesting discussions on contemporary education and its challenges and on identifying and commissioning key research projects.

What are your future plans?

I do like to finish projects I started, so I spent the past week in Palestine for the last meeting of our TAP project, which is about assessment practice, in particular for large classes in Palestine. It's wonderful to be able to see these projects through and I will continue to do that until all the projects I started are finished. I'll also be involved in one or two new projects starting in 2020; one in the Ukraine, for example, where my long-time friend and colleague, Dr Declan Kennedy, and I will represent CIRTl in promoting Learning Outcomes. I am also doing a lot of work on Universal Design for learning, with my colleague Dr Brian Butler, who works in the Disability Support Service and who is also a CIRTl Fellow. We have become great friends over the years. We are going to Canada in the next few weeks, specifically to Royal Roads University on Vancouver Island, to give a few papers there on UDL and to participate in a panel discussion about a book in which we have a chapter about transforming higher education through UDL.

I am then going on to the International Conference on the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (ISSOTL) in Atlanta, Georgia where we'll have lots of discussions about civic engagement, civil rights,

gender equity and so on. I hope to be joined there by my close friend and colleague, Dr Jacinta McKeon, once her teaching duties for the week in question are complete.

So, I have plenty of opportunity to be involved and to impact the development of teaching and learning at home and abroad and in great local and international company! I am also looking forward to visiting Queen Mary University in London in December, for the launch of a Handbook on Teaching and Learning in Higher Education, in which I have a chapter on the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning.



Receiving Lifetime Contribution for Teaching Excellence Award from Professor Patrick O'Shea

Any concluding remarks?

I don't miss the endless emails and having to respond to them- I never learned how to write the short email, I'd always have to give a fulsome answer, which took a lot of time. But I do miss the cut and thrust of some of the meetings, though there were so many meetings! Now I have more time to think creatively about teaching and learning and the part it can play in advancing the mission of the university and defining student learning and citizenship into the future.

Suddenly 1954 has become 2019 and I find myself 65 years young! I haven't really settled into retirement yet, you couldn't really call it retirement, it's more about 're-wiring' than 'retiring' as it were! I seem currently wired to the moon, however, but very gradually I will get there, and it will start to sink in that I am now retired and have more time. Our president says that retirement is a 20th century concept – so I am certainly living up to that idea! There is still so much to do and so many interesting projects and it's nice to be able to answer some of those and give something back. I'm involved in one or two other projects too. For example, IT Sligo have asked me to contribute to their online programme, an hour or two in Semester 1 on Teaching for Understanding. And I am working with AHEAD, which focuses on providing access for all third level students, as a member of its board of directors and am involved in contributing to its UDL Digital Badge. Through AHEAD, Dell have asked me to give a lecture on Neurodiversity at their Cork headquarters in Ovens and are interested in developing a programme for staff based on UDL principles.

There's always something to do, and I like to keep my feet on the ground and to keep busy and to give back something to education. So, I'm also on the Board of Management of the North Monastery Secondary school, and on the Board of Feis Mathew as well, which meets just once or twice a year. It's great to see young people being involved in the Arts

and developing their talent through creative competition and feedback. I've always been interested in the Arts and I was very lucky in my own school days that I had wonderful opportunities to be involved, in the school choir, for example, though I was dismissed for singing out of tune! I also had an interest in reciting poetry in English and Irish and loved drama and the chance to act. A real passion for me growing up was dance and mime. From the age of 6, I pursued a full Ballet training up to senior level and was also very interested in mime. I got measles when I was 4, which pitched on my right ear, and I thought if I go deaf completely, I'll be able to mime everything- this was my initial view of it! I loved mime as a language because it was about facial expression and gesture and body language and a different way of talking -it spoke so loudly in different ways! And that's why I loved Ballet as well; it was a different way of communicating, with your body rather than with your mouth, although I never seemed to lose the ability to speak with my mouth either! I went on at secondary level and in my college years to specialise more in drama and took several diplomas in drama and theatre and in the teaching of drama. I ran a drama school in Crosshaven for a decade, building on my experience and practice and directed several plays locally and nationally during this time. I hope one day to return to directing when I get a chance to slow down!

I have enjoyed my life at UCC and will continue to do so, hopefully, in a different guise for some time to come. I am deeply grateful to the many colleagues who have supported me along the way and wish them all well. I continue to meet many of them around campus and have developed life-long friendships with some of my CIRTL and School of Education colleagues. My life-long school friend, Dr Anna Ridgway, worked with me in Education and was also a huge help and support to me when I was devising the original face to face programme.

We ran the Resource Centre together in Education and she was the CIRTL fellow responsible for devising

all the accredited programme instructional rubrics with me. Anna has now also retired. I hope to have more time now for developing such friendships into the future and for visits to the theatre and to museums at home and abroad.

Finally, can I thank you so much Jacqui for giving me the opportunity to reflect and to discuss my life at UCC – I have very much enjoyed this trip down memory lane!