

THE SCHOOL OF LAW AT UCC- REFLECTING ON CHANGE AND OPPORTUNITY

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I am grateful to the editorship of the Cork Online Law Review (COLR) for the invitation to contribute to this, the 15th anniversary edition of this student-led journal, published under the auspices of the Law Society of University College Cork. In my capacity as Dean of the School of Law at UCC, it is timely to reflect on what we have achieved in that time and to look ahead a little to what the next few years might bring.

By any standards, it is fair to say that since the first edition of the Cork Online Law Review was launched in March 2002 by Justice Ronan Keane, the School of Law has changed greatly. The staff and student population have increased in number and mix, programmes have evolved at both undergraduate and postgraduate levels, our international reach has continued to extend outward and our graduates' careers have taken on ever more diversity. Despite the challenges of economic recession, the constants in this time have been our commitment to excellence in what we do and our ability – both staff and students - to compete with the best anywhere in the world. Among all of the uncertainty of the 21st century, what is clear is that the next decade will bring even more challenge and opportunity than the time that has gone before.

A SINCE 2002: A SNAPSHOT

The Law School has enjoyed great leadership - Professor Irene Lynch Fannon (1999-2002), Professor Maeve McDonagh (2002-2003), Professor Caroline Fennell (2003-2009) and Professor Steve Hedley (2009-2012) were Head of Department and Dean of Faculty before I become Dean in 2012. It is unusual perhaps that most of our leaders have been women and it is significant too that during that time women have made up the majority of the academic staff. In 2016, the Law School has 37 full time staff, including nine professors (Professor Caroline Fennell is now UCC's Registrar and Senior Vice President (Academic)), five Senior Lecturers, 11 Lecturers, three researchers and nine staff in managerial, administrative, clinical and technical roles. Since COLR began, the total number of registered students of the School of law has increased to 630; comprising 525 full-time and 105 part-time students; with 526 taking undergraduate programmes, 77 postgraduates and 27 PhD students. We have a large panel of adjunct or part-time staff who lecture and tutor across our programmes and currently have four Adjunct Professors including Mr Justice Frank Clarke, Supreme Court; Judge Anthony M Collins, Judge of the General Court of the European Union; Dr Vincent Power, Partner in A&L Goodbody, and Teresa Doherty, former judge of the Special Court of Sierra Leone.

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Our programmes have evolved throughout this time with some programmes being discontinued, making the way for new offerings. Thus, when COLR was first launched, our undergraduate programmes included the BCL degree and three joint honours programmes- BCL (Law and French), BCL (Law and German) and BCL (Law and Irish). Our long-standing Evening BCL programme continued to run. Shortly afterwards saw the introduction of new graduate programmes- notably the LLM (Criminal Justice) (with its innovative component of clinical experience) and the LLM (E-Law and Commercial Law). In 2003, the BCL International began to grow, building on strong relationships with US partners- Temple University in Philadelphia and Saint Louis University. Further links followed in 2005 with Charles University, Prague and the University of Oslo, and the list of prestigious partners was later expanded to include Brooklyn Law School and Montreal in North America, East China University of Political Science and Law in Shanghai and Symbiosis School of Law in Pune, India. In 2005/2006, the BCL (Clinical) degree was added to the undergraduate offerings, providing a year on work placement. January 2011 marked significant developments at postgraduate level, building on our significant reputations in the areas of human rights and children's rights with the establishment of the LLM (International Human Rights and Public Policy) and the LLM (Child and Family Law), the only degree in its kind in the UK or Ireland.

And this change continues - 2016 will see very significant change with the introduction of the new BCL (Law and Business) degree allowing students to build expertise in these areas and marking the beginning of an exciting partnership with the Cork University Business School. The BCL, BCL (Clinical) and BCL (International) degrees will continue to be offered but students will come in via a single entry point – the BCL (Pathways), choosing their degree after first year in a move designed to maximise student choice. Our BCL (Law and French) and our unique BCL (Law and Irish) programmes continue to go from strength to strength in line with our reputation for the education of versatile lawyer linguists.

The nature of legal education has changed significantly over the lifetime of COLR. Our teaching is now almost entirely research-led and inspired and lecturers now routinely acquire Postgraduate Certificates, Diplomas and Masters degrees in Teaching and Learning qualifications. UCC has a long standing commitment to practical legal education and skills-derived from the many visiting US law professors who have come here to teach Legal Writing- and we were among the first to integrate such tailored programmes into our undergraduate and postgraduate degrees. Making Moot Court a compulsory subject on the BCL degree was a sea-change that preceded the establishment of COLR, but it is now so widely accepted that students moot for fun in their spare time! Our great relationship with the judiciary has meant that the High Court judges visiting Cork on circuit step in every January to judge our Annual (or Gala) Moot Court, a competitive event running for decades with the proud sponsorship of a Cork legal family, now in its fifth generation under Ms Sally Donegan. This prestigious event is run in the impressive surroundings of the courthouse on Washington Street and gives students a valuable opportunity to put their advocacy skills to the test before the High Court judiciary.

Our innovation in legal education has continued apace in recent years and we have again positioned ourselves at the forefront of developments with the launch of a series of student clinics. In 2010, the School launched the Child Law Clinic, which provides student-led research services to lawyers litigating children's issues. The Clinic was launched by Marsha Levick, a graduate of Temple University and chief counsel with Juvenile Law Centre in Philadelphia, and former Dean of the Faculty and High Court Judge Mr Justice Bryan McMahon, highlighting our deep connections to the judiciary and the international community. The Clinic has worked on numerous cases in national and international courts since its establishment, and it provided support to the legal team of Louise O'Keeffe, who won her case in 2014 before the European Court of Human Rights. Other successes include litigating children's rights on corporal punishment before the European Social Rights Committee – which inter alia gave rise to the removal of the defence of reasonable chastisement from Irish law under the Children First Act 2015 – and an amicus brief and then a live appearance before the Inter America Court of Human Rights in Mexico on the subject of separated children. Different models of clinic have emerged in the School in the past number of years – the Family Law Clinic provides practical and accessible information to those seeking to navigate the family law system and the IT Law Clinic supports students to provide legal information to start-ups. The Sports Law Clinic is the newest of these models and again will involve guiding students to provide support to those involved in sports disputes and disciplinary matters.

B STUDENT ACCESS AND VOICE

In the years since COLR was launched, the School of Law has continued to demonstrate lasting commitment to providing multiple access routes to the study of law at UCC. The 2002 President's report notes that our commitment to non-traditional modes of entry to the study of law at UCC was strengthened during that year with the provision of additional places to Mature Years candidates, which are now available across all our undergraduate programmes. Our Evening Law programme has been running every alternate year for decades, and has a lasting legacy as a full degree law programme running at night giving second chance and sometimes first chance education to a diverse group of extraordinarily dedicated students. This commitment to further education is evident too in our launch in 2009 of the LLM (Practitioner), in collaboration with the Law Society. This degree provides legal professionals with tailored programme of study comprising a range of modules including self-reflecting learning opportunity.

We have always sought to support our students with our Personal Tutor system of pastoral care and in the last number of years these supports have been augmented by structured supports for students with disabilities, via the Disability Liaison Officer role. In 2012, we appointed a Student Wellbeing Officer dedicated to supporting students with health and personal issues affecting their studies, signposting them to University and other services. Our annual review of this service is testament to the high esteem in which this support is held by students.

The rate of student evaluation has increased and improved exponentially since COLR was launched in 2002 with surveys now being undertaken at module, programme, University and national levels. Concerned not just to hear the student voice but to act on it, the School of Law has promoted structures that respond directly to student views and concerns. In 2012, we introduced a Student Council to enable student representatives to meet monthly with the Dean to raise any issues of concern or information on a mutual basis. This mechanism allows students to receive direct answers to queries and is considered an effective channel of communication whereby student feedback can be sought on policy and other issues during their evolution. This helps to ensure that student voice is taken into account on matters that affect them.

C PHD PROGRAMME

If one area of activity is to be associated with our progress in the last 15 years it is our PhD programme. Not only have we increased the number of students from Ireland and around the world pursuing doctoral studies in the School of Law, we have had great success supporting our students to attract competitive scholarships from bodies like the Irish Research Council, the National University of Ireland and the Department of Children and Youth Affairs. Having a dynamic PhD community has greatly enriched the environment in the School and deepened our scholarly profile. In addition, many graduates of the programme have gone onto academic careers in all the law schools of Ireland, in the UK (eg Edinburgh, Liverpool, Kent, Birmingham, King's College London) and in Australia and Canada. If the success of our activity is that younger scholars want to enter academia, to follow in our footsteps, then we have truly made it- all within the short lifetime of COLR.

D OUR SCHOLARSHIP

Perhaps hidden from view- to the student body at least- is the extraordinary scholarship and engagement work undertaken by academics within the School. Although this has always been the case, recent years have seen our research reach the global stage. This has also been independently verified- in 2009 and again in 2015, when an independent panel of international academics established that the School of Law is home to leading scholars at a range of areas where law interfaces with society. Our research clusters around areas like Corporate and Banking and IT Law; Environmental, Marine and Maritime Law; Human Rights; Child and Family Law and Medical and Health Law, with special expertise in several aspects of private law, constitutional law and EU. Staff publish monographs (often the leading texts), publish in edited collections and peer-reviewed international journals; they conduct funded research, often awarded by competitive tender, and are invited to present their work in international fora. Many examples exist of UCC School of Law research having a significant impact. For example, our work is frequently cited in Oireachtas Debates, in national and international judgments, and media commentary. It has prompted and informed law reform in a range of areas and it continues to influence how services are delivered and designed. Our work has been cited with approval by national courts in Ireland, the UK and other jurisdictions and has been singled out as leading scholarship within various fields. Staff contribution is eagerly sought by national and international bodies alike, showing all the hallmarks of a law school with a genuinely international profile. Some of the

evidence of this excellence- and that of our students- is evident in the 15 editions of COLR. Staff members supported the journal from the outset by publishing their work (see Dr Conor O'Mahony's piece in the first edition!) and many of our students, including many of those who have since gone on to academic positions, published their work in the journal. The significant editorial work associated with COLR has been generously supported by academic staff of the School throughout its history and although we are very proud to be associated with it, COLR is first and foremost a student journal. Just as the Law Society has gone from strength to strength, professionalising its events and supporting students through extracurricular activity, COLR has continued to develop and evolve. The awarding of prizes, the publication of papers in the Irish, French and German languages, the introduction of letters along with guest posts and invited features have all helped to create the journal's unique Cork identity. The generosity of those- frequently senior judiciary- who have given their time to launch the journal is a clear acknowledgement of the important role of student scholarship. It is timely to remember Mr Justice Hardiman, RIP, of the Supreme Court who launched the journal two years ago when he used the opportunity to engage in some extra-judicial commentary in an indication of how seriously he took the journal.

E TO THE FUTURE

As both COLR and the School of Law continue to flourish, it is important to reflect on the challenges of our changing environment. Our history as a faculty since the very establishment of Queen's College (now UCC) in 1845 demonstrates that we are capable of adapting to new circumstances. Since 2002, we have welcomed many new colleagues- Dr Maria Cahill, Dr Sean O'Conaill and more recently Dr Patrick O'Callaghan and Dr Dug Cubie- and we have said farewell to valued and very popular colleagues whose names live long in the memories of our graduates- these include Professor Brian Carroll, Professor David Gwynn Morgan (now Emeritus), Professor Shane Kilcommmins, Tim Murphy and Frank Martin. The evolution of our programmes and our scholarship, the constant innovation in teaching and the dynamism of our approach to external engagement mean that we are well placed to sustain the excellent reputation hard earned by the School. Our relationships with our international partners, our alumni, the legal professions and a range of statutory and non-governmental bodies and international organisations keep us tuned into trends as they emerge and the associated needs of society as a whole. A School prepared to listen is, in our view, already ahead of the next opportunity or challenge as we have constantly shown. The extent to which our well-rounded graduates have developed new career opportunities- from the professions and the judiciary, to media and politics, to policy roles, international diplomacy and beyond- shows that they are versatile too, using the formal education, learning work placement and study abroad experiences and the range of skills acquired as the building blocks on which to base their career development. What we look forward to is an even closer relationship with our students and our alumni, with an understanding that our success is really their success, and vice versa.