



OLLSCOIL NA GAILLIMHE  
UNIVERSITY OF GALWAY

Year in Review 2023/2024

# Impact and Innovation

J.E. Cairnes School of Business and Economics



For the Public Good

# Contents

Page 3

## A School of Business and Economics for the Public Good

Dean's Message

Page 4

## Welcome to Our New Staff

Page 5

## Key Facts and Figures

Page 7

## Mapping Matters

Launching a map of sustainable development across J.E. Cairnes School of Business and Economics



Page 8

## A Better World through Better Business

Dr Johanna Clancy

Page 11

## Meet our Study Abroad Officer

Mairead McKeon



Page 12

## A Space for All

Edel Doherty

Page 15

## Research for the Public Good

Page 17

## Probing Technology's Influence on Time

Lero and J.E. Cairnes School of Business and Economics Launch €3.5m Fellowship Programme

Page 18

## Launching Ireland's First Free Voluntary Tax Clinic

Page 19

## Research-based Training for Business Scaling Success across Europe

Prof Jonathan Levie and Prof Esther Tippmann

Page 20

## Influencing International Policy through Ocean Accounting

Prof Stephen Hynes

Page 21

## Delivering Integrated Peatlands, People and Policies for Ireland's Climate Action Plan

Prof Christine Domegan

Page 22

## HOMeAGE: Shaping a Sustainable and Inclusive Future for Older People through Innovative Research

Prof Kieran Walsh



Page 23

## Real World Impact

Prof Kate Kenny



Page 27

## Thriving or Surviving? A Global Research Alliance Pushing for Reform in Hospitality Work

Dr Deirdre Curran

Page 31

## Faculty in the Media

Prof Eoin Whelan

Page 33

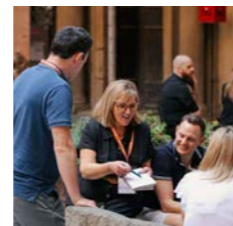
## Celebrating Diversity



Page 35

## Global Connections, Local Engagement

Galway to Miami and Back Again



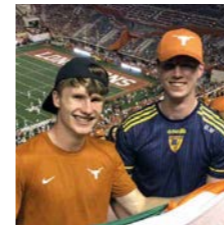
Page 39

## MSc Sustainability Leadership Students

Visit Bologna Business School

Page 41

## A Growing Network of Global Partners



Page 42

## Studying Abroad: Austin, Texas

Brian Moloney

Page 45

## Top Tips for Making the Best of University Life

Bhavya Bhatia

Page 48

## Regional Business Summit 2024

Responsible Business, at Scale

Page 51

## University of Galway and Deloitte Ireland Announce Strategic Partnership

Page 53

## Celebrating the University Alumni Award Winner for Business and Commerce

James Murphy, Lifes2good

Page 54

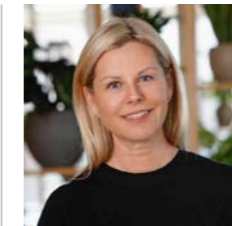
## Teaching Excellence Awards 2024



Page 55

## Meet Our Alumni

Brian Molloy



Page 59

## Meet Our Alumni

Eilíeen O'Mara, Stripe

Page 63

## Partnering with Signify Health to Create a Global Case Study for Students

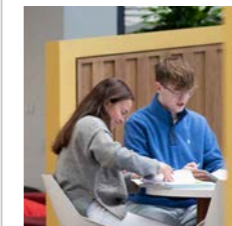
Page 64

## Thinking Beyond Event Series

Governor of the Central Bank of Ireland Shares Insights on Inflation

Page 65

## External Advisory Board



Page 67

## Biz Hub at Áras Cairnes

A Learning Hub for Tomorrow's Leaders

Page 68

## Five New Cutting-Edge Master's Programmes

Page 69

## Scholarship Awardee

Joe Gaughan's Transformative MBA Journey

Page 70

## Elevate your Career with our University of Galway MBA



Page 71

## Meet Our Alumni

Sam Murphy-Kerry, Accenture



Page 75

## Spotlight on the Innovation, Creativity and Enterprise Module

# A School of Business and Economics for the Public Good

## Dean's Message

### Dear friends of the School of Business and Economics,

I am delighted to introduce this edition of the J.E. Cairnes School of Business and Economics **Impact and Innovation: Year in Review**.

Energised by our regional edge on the west coast of Ireland, we are a globally engaged School of Business and Economics for the public good that makes a transformative impact for students, society and business. Our mission is deeply rooted in our teaching, research and influence on society and public policy.

The School is proud to hold prestigious international business school accreditations from AACSB, AMBA and EFMD as well as Athena Swan and membership of PRME. These accreditations and awards reflect our commitment to excellence, inclusivity and continuous improvement in all that we do.

A key strength of our School is our strong partnerships with business organisations and enterprises locally and globally. These collaborations enrich our students' learning experiences, providing them with unique opportunities for internships, placements and real-world projects that bridge the gap between theory and practice. Working with our External Advisory Board, we are committed to further developing collaborative partnerships with our key external stakeholders including alumni, business, industry, social and public organisations.

Since taking up the role as Dean of the School, I have been continually impressed by the achievements of our students, faculty and alumni. Our students

and alumni continue to excel, with many receiving prestigious awards and securing placements with leading national and global organisations. You can read more about some of these achievements in this Year in Review.

This past year, we celebrated several milestones, including new programme launches and significant research and impact contributions that address some of today's most pressing global challenges, such as digitalisation, sustainability and social inclusion. Our research is strongly aligned with the UN SDGs and we have world-leading research and impact in the areas of health and ageing, environment and marine, and digital responsibility.

Our vision is to make a global impact for the public good by addressing grand challenges through our teaching, research and influence on public policy. Looking ahead, we are excited about our ongoing efforts to enhance our educational offerings to empower our students to become leaders who drive positive change in society and business. Our commitment to providing an innovative learning environment is evident in our expanding portfolio of over 30 programmes, which now serve over 2,400 students from over 40 countries across Accountancy, Finance, Economics, Management, Marketing and Business Information Systems.

As we move forward, I invite you all to engage with the transformative work in our School, and I look forward to welcoming new students, faculty and collaborators to our vibrant community. If you would like to

reach out, please email us at [business@universityofgalway.ie](mailto:business@universityofgalway.ie). I would like to thank my colleagues who are instrumental in delivering our mission and without whom our achievements would not be possible.

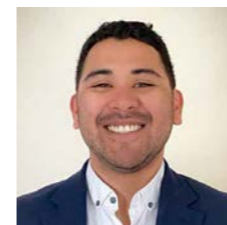


**Alma McCarthy**  
Dean, J.E. Cairnes School of Business and Economics, University of Galway



# Welcome to Our New Staff

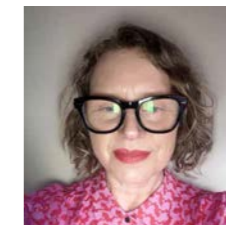
Academic Year 2023/24



**Axel Prada Conde**  
Accreditation/  
Marketing Team



**Emma Brinton**  
Programme Manager  
(ROSETTA Project)



**Dr Maria O'Brien**  
Lecturer (Accountancy  
& Finance / Law)



**Dr Sharon Coyle**  
Assistant Professor (Business  
Information Systems – BIS)



**Dr Blair Wang**  
Lecturer (BIS)



**Dr Rehman U. Mian**  
Lecturer (Accountancy  
& Finance)



**Prof Karyn Morrissey**  
Professor (Economics)



**Dr Ronan Mahon**  
Lecturer (Economics)



**Dr Deju Zhang**  
Assistant Professor  
(Management)



**Dr Féidhlim McGowan**  
Lecturer (Economics)



**Dr Mona Isazad**  
Lecturer (BIS)



**Dr Simeon Vidolov**  
Assistant Professor (BIS)



**Prof Diane Martin**  
Professor (Marketing)



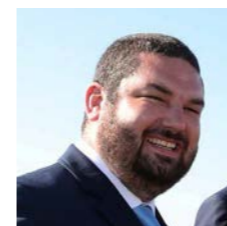
**Heather Murphy**  
Quality & Accreditation  
Manager



**Nicola Reilly**  
MBA Programme  
Administrator



**Valeria Lopez**  
Placement Officer



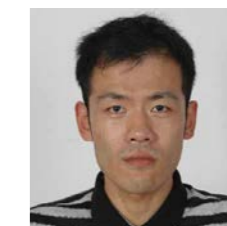
**Dr Daniel Norton**  
Lecturer (Economics)



**Dr Lilia Wasserka-Zhurakhovska**  
Lecturer (Management)



**Dr Raja Singaram**  
Lecturer (Management)



**Dr Zongyuan Li**  
Lecturer (Economics)

# Our School Key Facts and Figures



## 130+

Academic and Professional Services Staff



## 2,600+

Students



## 40+

Nationalities



## 250+

Work Placement Partners



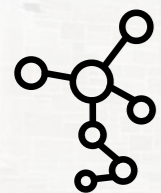
## 80+

International Partners



## 30+

Programmes



## 6

Research Centres

## €12.6m

research funding in the last six years

# Accreditations and Rankings



Ranked in the **Top 100**  
QS Europe University Rankings

**Top 2%**  
of universities in the QS World rankings

*In 2023*

University of Galway designated a national **SDG CHAMPION**

## SDG Champion

# Investment since 2021

## €3m

Invested in Academic and Professional Service Staff

## €0.5m

Invested in School Strategic Projects

## €1.5m

Invested in Research Staff

## €1.3m

Invested in Facilities for Students and Staff



## €6.3m

Total Investment



Dr Richard Manton, Prof Becky Whay, Dr David Kreps, Dr Ann O'Brien, Prof Alma McCarthy, Dr Johanna Clancy.

# Mapping Matters

## Launching a map of sustainable development across J.E. Cairnes School of Business and Economics

University Director of Sustainability Dr Richard Manton visited J.E. Cairnes School of Business and Economics on 16 September 2024 to launch a key strategic project for the School – the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) Mapping Project Website.

led by Dr Ann O'Brien and Dr David Kreps, the **SDG integration mapping project** uses existing and new processes to explore how faculty in the School integrate the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in their teaching, engagement activities and research. Profiles are searchable by SDG goal, target and keyword.

The project has developed almost 80 staff profiles using both qualitative and quantitative methods, and is mapping over 140 course modules and almost 700 publications to the SDGs. The project enabled faculty to elucidate where their work is supporting the SDGs at Target level, directly or indirectly mapped to all 17 goals and over 140 of the 169 Targets.

Also joining on the day of the launch was Interim Deputy President and Registrar Prof Becky Whay and School Dean Prof Alma McCarthy; PRME lead Dr Johanna Clancy; and projects leads Dr Ann O'Brien and Dr David Kreps. As a signatory to the UN Principles for Responsible Management Education (PRME), speakers from the J.E. Cairnes School of Business and Economics took the opportunity to share progress and reporting requirements regarding the SDGs and sustainability. Participants were invited to conclude the launch with a brainstorming session, exploring opportunities to stimulate collaboration through the showcase website, and to bring about dynamic sustainable impact.



Dr Richard Manton, Director of Sustainability at University of Galway.

Visit our SDG showcase [website](#).



# A Better World through Better Business

**Dr Johanna Clancy,**  
Lecturer in Business Enterprise,  
J.E. Cairnes School of Business and  
Economics, University of Galway

In a 1970 essay for *The New York Times*, Nobel Prize-winning economist Milton Friedman stated that "*The Social Responsibility of Business Is to Increase Its Profits.*" Fast-forward over 50 years, business is confronted with major socioeconomic, environmental and geopolitical disruptions, challenged as never before to adapt, be relevant and contribute solutions to the world's pressing issues (**AACSB Pathways**) – as well as making profits.

Compounding all the disruptions to business in the last 50 years is a solid shift in workforce priorities and values, including a desire among graduates to work for socially responsible companies. A recent UK study found that "91% of graduates want to 'make a difference' in their job" (Prospects, 2022), while some will accept lower salaries for roles that have the potential to give back to society. Indeed, many graduates are now considering their activism to be more important than their careers. This is forcing a rigorous reflection on the pastoral role of the business school for the public good, rather than simply as a training ground for future servants of power. "Business as usual" will not suffice. Responding to the changing landscape, University of Galway's J.E. Cairnes School of Business and Economics has put the public good at the heart of its mission and 2021–2025 strategic plan.



Dr Johanna Clancy, Lecturer and UN Principles for Responsible Management (PRME) Lead at J.E. Cairnes School of Business and Economics.

**To begin 'walking the talk', the School recently funded a school-wide SDG mapping strategic project by Dr David Kreps and Dr Ann O'Brien, anchoring the SDGs in the consciousness of our School and making these goals a part of every activity.**

#### Walking the Talk

At the recent keynote address of the Irish Academy of Management conference, hosted by J.E. Cairnes School of Business and Economics, Prof Martin Kitchener – Chair of the Chartered Association of Business Schools Taskforce on Business Schools and Public Good and former Dean of Cardiff Business School – stressed that business schools need to reimagine their purpose and place in the world as “public value institutions”. While there is evidence of talk–action gaps in business schools generally, J.E. Cairnes School of Business and Economics has, for some time, excelled in expanding our public good role into non-economic territory, identifying as a place-based institution in creating an ecosystem for maximising the public good.

The School is dynamically transforming efforts to address the SDGs. While the School's strategic plan spells out a specific focus on SDG 3 (*Good Health and Wellbeing*), SDG 8 (*Decent Work and Economic Growth*), SDG 9 (*Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure*), SDG 11 (*Sustainable Cities and Communities*) and SDG 16 (*Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions*), we are in fact addressing many more, including the all-encompassing SDG 17 (*Partnership for the Goals*), with many teaching, research and engagement activities cross-cutting a number of the SDGs.

So, how is the School advancing this agenda? Guided by the University's core values of respect, openness, sustainability and excellence, our strategic mission makes use of our role as a globally engaged school, “energised by our regional edge on the west coast of Ireland”, to create and scale transformative impact towards the public good. Through this mission and its strategic alignment to the SDGs, we are pledging a strong commitment to create impact in our response to the SDGs, instilled with the distinctiveness of this School and its people. In doing so, we are educating, inspiring, shaping and building the

change-making capacity of students – our future leaders.

As a signatory to the UN Principles for Responsible Management Education (PRME), a platform for advancing responsible management education in business schools globally, the School is actively integrating the SDGs across our teaching, research and engagement activities. By embracing PRME's guiding principles for SDG integration, as well as an ongoing extensive School-wide SDG mapping strategic project, concrete actions are being taken to commit to this agenda. To begin “walking the talk”, the School recently funded the SDG mapping project, led by Dr David Kreps and Dr Ann O'Brien, anchoring the SDGs in the consciousness of our School and making these goals a part of every activity.

In a recent showcase held as part of the University's SDG Week 2023, the School facilitated a forum connecting those with shared interest in the SDGs across academic disciplines, engaging staff, students and wider society. We now have evidence to demonstrate that the SDGs are providing a solid context and framework for such connection and agency. The showcased projects ([available here](#)) provide concise detail on the activities highlighted during the event and across this page.

#### Cementing SDGs into the Learning Experience

Appreciating the mindset and skillset shift necessary for a more sustainable and responsible economy, we are prioritising our teaching and learning for impact, aligned to our public good mission. Specifically, we are designing, re-designing, and in many modules, co-designing (with internal and external stakeholders) curricula, co-curricular and extra-curricular content that reflects changing societal values and the SDGs. Our MSc in Global Environmental Economics, our recently-developed MSc in Sustainability Leadership and MSc in Cybersecurity Risk

Management signify that topics such as sustainability, social responsibility and ethics are moving from bolt-on topics to integrated learning objectives across most taught modules and programmes, at both undergraduate and postgraduate levels. Other modules such as Megatrends, and Skills for Success, and initiatives like Leading Ireland's Future Together (LIFT), delivered to our undergraduates, and our community-based Tax Clinic, are serving to cement the SDGs into the DNA of our offerings. PwC partners with us to design and deliver some modules, and many other community partners, including SCCUL social enterprise, an Mheitheal Rothar and Chambers Ireland are involved in mentoring our future leaders. These examples, among many others, are addressing a myriad of SDGs, most notably SDG 4 (*Quality Education*).

#### Robust Research and Credible Solutions

In terms of research, the School boasts a robust portfolio of partnerships, centres, contributions and engaged scholars which demonstrably address societal and environmental challenges with credible solutions. In deliberately broadening participation and dissemination of our research through events and workshops, we are enhancing the societal value of our scholarship in tangible and intangible ways. While many of the SDGs are being addressed, including agendas that have a powerful influence on public policy, we have solidified our contribution towards Responsible Digitalisation and Tech for Good in particular (speaking to SDGs 3, 8, 9, 11). Featuring strongly alongside this is our research on the Environment, Marine Climate, Biodiversity and the Circular Economy (addressing SDGs 6, 7, 12, 13, 14 and 15). Add to this the impactful research in Health and Ageing, Health Economics, Decent Work and Equality and Inclusion (SDGs 1, 2, 3, 5, 8, 9, 10, 11 and 16). In essence, we are addressing all SDGs in a concerted effort across the School.

As a living laboratory for innovative, timely, responsible and actionable ideas, our Business School is working to provide a space for dialogue and co-created value via a multi-stakeholder approach. This means pursuing wider engagement beyond campus-based teaching and research. As an extended enterprise, we are engaging with local and global



communities through outreach programmes; partnerships with non-profit organisations such as Hygiene Hub, itag and COPE Galway; public engagement initiatives such as The People's Trial and student-led organisations such as ENACTUS.

In meaningfully contextualising the global challenges, our collaboration with diverse stakeholders is ensuring that the School is truly having impact for the public good. For continued impact, concrete change requires all hands on deck, where J.E. Cairnes School of Business and Economics continues to act as a steward for positive collective change.

**Dr Johanna Clancy** is a lecturer in Business Enterprise at the J.E. Cairnes School of Business and Economics, and is Lead for the School's commitment to the United Nations Principles for Responsible Management Education (PRME). In 2021, Johanna received the President's Award for Societal Impact, in recognition of her impactful external engagement, as well as her teaching and research interests, which reflect her passion for shaping the social consciousness of students.

This article was originally published in Cois Coiribe's SDG Champion Edition.

**As a living laboratory for innovative, timely, responsible and actionable ideas, our Business School is working to provide a space for dialogue and co-created value via a multi-stakeholder approach.**

## Meet Our Study Abroad Officer: Mairead McKeon



### Can you give us a glimpse into your role as Study Abroad Officer?

This is by far the best job I have had in the University – maybe even the best job I've ever had. I've been working at J.E. Cairnes School of Business and Economics for 21 years now; I started in the Faculty of Commerce on the 'faculty corridor' of the Concourse. Undergraduate education is an area where we see significant development of our students, and Study Abroad is where most of that growth takes place. I assist students while choosing the destination that is right for them, providing guidance before and during the process.

### What are some of the rewards and challenges that students encounter while abroad?

In general, our students are motivated by the whole experience and perform well abroad. Our long-standing partner in New York City informed us that our three exchange students last year outperformed their peers with above-average Honours GPA (Grade Point Average). Andrew Byrne, Fordham University, NY attested to their character, which he said was "equally admirable to their academic achievement".

Nevertheless, we do have challenges. Students struggle with issues like homesickness, culture shock and difficult workloads abroad. In the Study Abroad Office we carefully select our partner

institutions abroad so that courses match those offered here in Galway and students can get the best out of their experience. We host many invaluable information sessions, our annual Study Abroad Fair and Q&As for students.

**“95% of students finish their study-abroad reflections in the manner of, ‘I would do it again in a heartbeat.’”**

### How do you help students settle into new environments, and what is the most meaningful aspect of this work for you?

We do a pre-departure online session, and a “pre-pre-departure session” facilitated by our Office and Campus Counsellors, to familiarise students with the challenges of moving to a foreign country. For the most part, students overcome any initial cultural shock, and grow from the experience. 95% of students finish their study-abroad reflections in the manner of, “I would do it again in a heartbeat.” This is the most meaningful piece for me.

### You've had a varied career at the University of Galway. How has the University supported your career progression?

My first role in the School Office (then Faculty of Commerce) was based in the Concourse. We later moved to an office downstairs in St Anthony's – once a 'vestiary' for monks which has since been knocked down. In 2005 the Cairnes Building was completed and I once again moved to Room 355 (or “Grand Central Station” as we called it). The School Office has always been a welcoming space for staff to congregate and welcome Erasmus students also. I was encouraged to take on the role of MBA Administrator, where I sharpened up my marketing skills, moving later to the role of Programme Operations Coordinator.

The School has been extremely supportive and respectful of my needs as a mother of young children, allowing me part-time and parental

leave agreements. As soon as I saw the Study Abroad Officer role open, I knew this was the one for me. I started my career in the '90s in Brussels, where I worked with staff from across the EU and further afield in the Office of the EU. I am now sending our students to these countries under the Erasmus programme, which came out of that same Directorate General. A full circle...

### What drew you to the University, and what kind of changes have you witnessed throughout your time here?

I didn't know where the campus was when I first came to Galway in 1999. I was deep into the hospitality phase of my career, working in the Kingfisher Club coffee shop in Renmore. They offered to show my CV to someone in the University, and it turns out they were right! I have since carved my own path from the Quad, through the Concourse, to the Central North Campus.

**“The biggest change I have seen is the arrival of a more diverse, international student body to our University.”**

The biggest change I have seen is the arrival of a more diverse, international student body to our University. It is heartening to hear all the different languages as you meander through the campus, and it satisfies my ever-growing interest in all languages and cultures. As for the changes in our School, we have gone from having one Bachelor of Commerce (BComm) programme with no study abroad option to sending 230 students abroad in 2024/25 from the BComm, BComm Accounting and BSc in Business Information Systems programmes.



School staff now attend a bespoke induction day, and EDI training is embedded in training for students and academic staff.

## J.E. Cairnes School of Business and Economics A Space for All

**Edel Doherty,**  
Associate Professor in Economics;  
Associate Head for Equality,  
Diversity and Inclusion, J.E.  
Cairnes School of Business and  
Economics, University of Galway

At J.E. Cairnes School of Business and Economics, priorities in equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) have been identified in consultation with our staff and students, be that through open forums or anonymised surveys. We are working to embed these in our day-to-day operations and will continue to find effective ways of funnelling feedback from our student and staff community.

### Structure

Every organisation needs a structure of accountability, and awards such as Athena Swan provide us with a clear framework to drive forward progress and ensure that we carry through on these priorities. Commitment to Athena Swan (AS) and the principles of EDI are firmly embedded within the strategies of the University, the College of Business, Public Policy and Law and J.E. Cairnes School of Business and Economics. The work of the School EDI committee is updated as a standing item on a monthly basis by the Associate Head for EDI to the Head of School and the School Executive Board.

We have seen significant tangible improvements across the board in recent years, through plans laid out in attaining the Athena Swan bronze award in 2020. Women now occupy 45% to 50% of the student population in undergraduate programmes. The number of women taking up leadership roles among our staff has also increased from 54% to 69% in the last four years, thanks to career supports and mentorship. A healthy work environment and thriving culture has been another focus for us. We are considering EDI in the School's curricula and event programmes,

focusing on diversity principles in student programmes and external thought leadership events with alumni, policy makers and industry.

We are also focusing on opportunities for mentorship and career progression among staff. A mentoring scheme is in place for all staff since 2022 at university level. For Academic and Research Staff, a bespoke School mentoring scheme is also available. Every year, staff are invited to nominate themselves to the scheme as mentees. One mentee said of the scheme, “I found the advice, experience and expertise of my mentor absolutely wonderful. The mentorship programme has helped direct and drive my ambition to work on my application for promotion.” Our School also embraces flexible working through a policy which implements flexible working arrangements and targeted support for employees returning from family leave.

**...the lived experience of our staff and students is the litmus test of our EDI ambitions and commitments.**

**School Dean,  
Prof Alma McCarthy**



85% staff report a friendly and inclusive environment



Over 2,300 students with 50:50 gender split and 40+ nationalities



Increase of women in leadership roles from 54% to 69% in four years



Staff contribute to research, policy & education on inequality in work and society



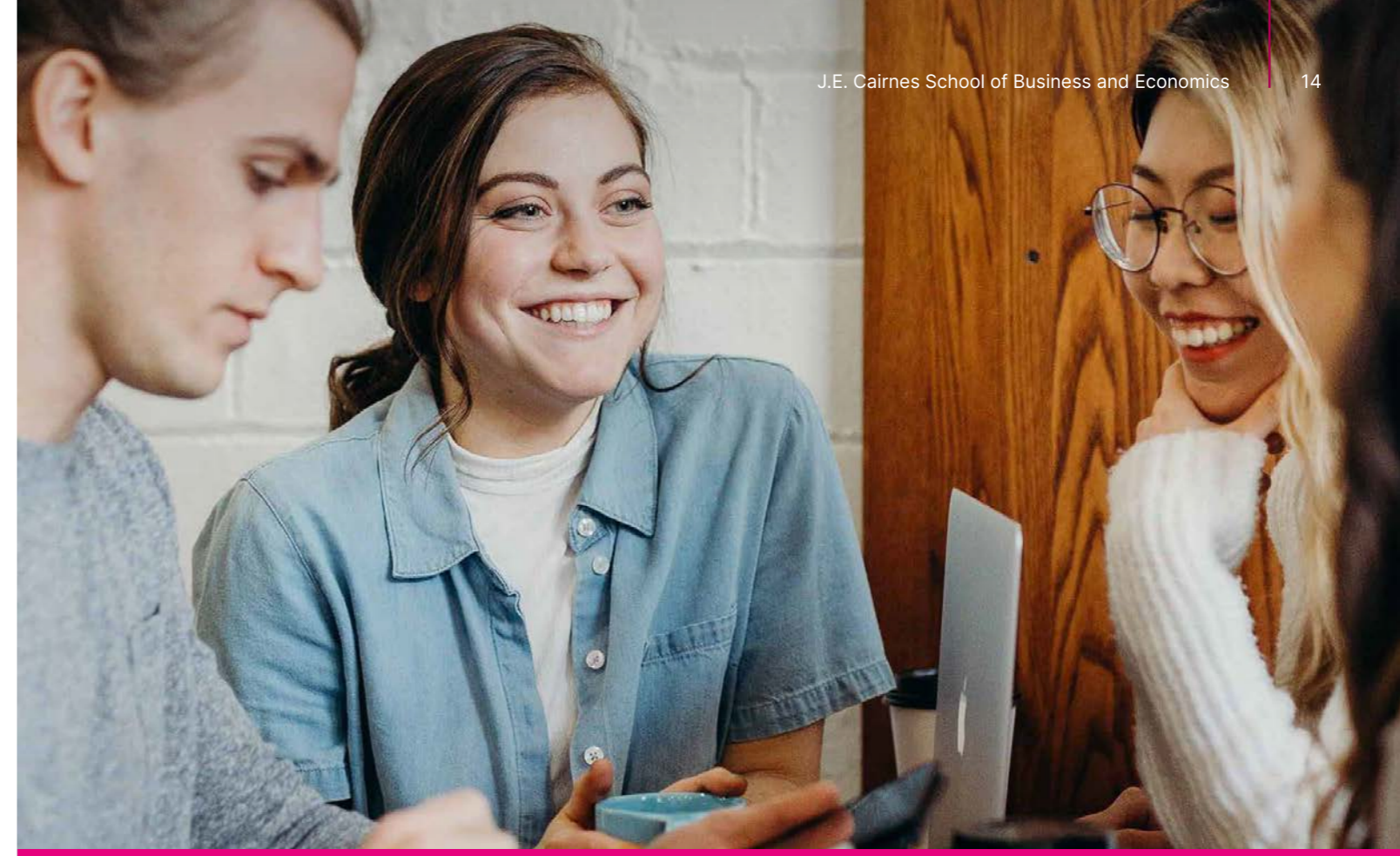
47% of our staff have caring responsibilities



71% of staff report access to career mentoring



47% of all new appointees in the last 3 years are female



#### School Dean, Prof Alma McCarthy

Of the School strategy, Prof Alma McCarthy says, "One of my most significant tasks after appointment was the development of our School strategic plan 2021–2025. EDI features strongly in our plan – both in terms of the specific strategic priorities we set out under our four strategic pillars of research and impact, teaching and learning, external engagement and internationalisation – and in terms of the enabling structures and resources to achieve our goals. Furthermore, EDI is a standing item at School Executive Board (senior management team in the School) meetings.

In developing and implementing our strategic plan, mission, vision and values, I have been acutely aware of the importance of actions over words and that the lived experience of our staff and students is the litmus test of our EDI ambitions and commitments. As we look to the future, we will build on the success and achievements of our EDI strategy and continue to work hard to further embed EDI in our actions and activities."



Event exploring the lived experiences of women in academia, hosted by the School to mark International Women's Day.

#### EDI Committee

The inaugural School EDI committee was formed in January 2021, co-chaired by academic and professional services staff members, to oversee our EDI strategy while developing a wider scope of EDI activities.

#### EDI-Focused Events

Our external engagement and thought leadership events for alumni, business leaders and policy makers also regularly focus on EDI topics and are designed to maintain a gender balance.

#### Addressing Gender Imbalances

Measures have been taken to increase gender balance in our MBA programme including a family friendly programme with no weekend classes, a policy of highlighting female voices, a female-only 30% club scholarship and female-only McGinty Scholarships in health fields. Having proven successful, these actions will now be replicated in other programmes. We are also targeting increased male participation in programmes with lower male representation.

#### Listening Lunches

Our annual "listening lunches" with international postgraduate taught students help us to understand the lived experiences of our students and identify intersectionality issues between race and gender.

#### Dean's Award for Inclusive Teaching

We have developed a flagship award that recognises staff contribution and leadership in inclusive teaching and learning practices.

#### Diversity Champions

Since 2022, first-year undergraduates participate in EDI training called "Celebrating Difference". There is also a representative body of students that acts as "Diversity Champions", identifying how to help integration and inclusion for all students.

#### LGBTQ+ Ally Training for Staff

More than 60% of teaching staff having undergone LGBTQ+ training. This is a key step in improving the inclusivity of the learning environment for LGBTQ+ students.

#### Intercultural Opportunities

We enjoy a social calendar of events that includes key cultural celebrations for our staff and student population, including Diwali and Chinese New Year.



# Research for the Public Good

At J.E. Cairnes School of Business and Economics, our research strategy is focused on generating high-quality research output and impact that seeks to identify solutions and inform decisions about the grand challenges facing business and society leaders, public policy makers and citizens.

**€12.6m**

Research funding in the last six years

**5**

Disciplines

**6**

Research Institute and Centres

## Grand Challenges

- Digitalisation
- Global and Economic Development
- Innovation, Accountability and Governance
- Health and Well-Being
- Social Inclusion and Equality
- Sustainability, Climate and Environment

## UN Sustainable Development Goals

- Good Health and Well-Being
- Decent Work and Economic Growth
- Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure
- Sustainable Communities and Cities
- Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions

## Disciplines

- Accountancy and Finance
- Business Information Systems
- Economics
- Management
- Marketing

## Research Centres

- Irish Centre for Social Gerontology (ICSG)
- Socio-Economic Marine Research Unit (SEMURU)
- Centre for Entrepreneurial Growth & Scaling (CEGS)
- Health Economics and Policy Analysis Centre (HEPAC)
- Centre for Economic Research on Inclusivity and Sustainability (CERIS)
- Lero – the Science Foundation Ireland (SFI) Research Centre for Software

## Primary Research Distinctiveness Areas

- Environment and Marine
- Health and Ageing
- Digital Responsibility

## Research Institute

- Institute of Lifecourse and Society (ILAS)

## Health and Ageing

Our School has a long and distinguished history of research and impact in the field of Health and Ageing derived from collaborative interdisciplinary research and the establishment of two School research centres: Irish Centre for Social Gerontology (ICSG) and Health Economics and Policy Analysis Centre (HEPAC).

Our School has generated a significant and continuous body of research in Health and Ageing with over 165 peer-reviewed journal articles, five edited books, 25 book chapters and 27 policy and briefing reports since 2017. Our School has excelled in attracting national and international funding, with Health and Ageing researchers securing €8.7 million in competitive national and EU research funding over the last 10 years, with €5.5 million secured since 2017.

Our School members have taken the lead in formal international initiatives and have worked in collaboration with intergovernmental and civil society organisations, such as the WHO, the UN, the UNECE and AGE Platform Europe; and national governmental agencies such as the Department of Health, the HSE (Health Service Executive) and HIQA (Health Information and Quality Authority).

Health and Ageing research in the School has generated considerable policy impact in Ireland, especially in relation to: The National Dementia Strategy; Fair Deal scheme for nursing homes; Personal Assistance programmes for people with disabilities; and evolving Home Care legislation for older people and people with disabilities.

## Areas of Impact

Health Economics; Social Gerontology; Work and Retirement; Life Course; Social Exclusion; Home Care; Residential Care; Health Technology Assessment; Health Preference Elicitation; Health Econometrics; Health Policy; MedTech; Digital and Connected Health; Social Marketing for Health.

## Environment and Marine

Our School is recognised for its research and impact in marine and natural environments. The valuation of marine ecosystem services, marine economics, ocean economy and literacy, recreational demand, sustainable consumption and decarbonisation are key topics. This research area is primarily led by the School's Socio-Economic Marine Research Unit (SEMURU) and the Centre for Economic Research on Inclusivity and Sustainability (CERIS). Publications include over 70 peer-reviewed journal articles, 20 working papers, 11 policy briefs and 16 reports over 5 years.

Our School's expertise in this area can also be seen in participation in many national and international level advisory groups, e.g., the Irish Government Marine Protected Area (MPA) Advisory Group, co-authoring the biannual *Ocean Economy Report* and the Intergovernmental Panel on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) regional assessment for the Europe and Central Asia Working Group. The School has attracted over €6 million in Environment and Marine funding over the past 5 years.

Our School's expertise in this area can also be seen in the many national and international level advisory groups that school staff have been asked to participate in recent years. These include the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government Marine Spatial Planning Advisory Group, the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government Marine Protected Area Advisory Group, the EU DG Marine Affairs Working Group on Blue Growth, the Scientific Advice Mechanism (SAM) and more.

## Areas of Impact

Marine Economics; Ocean Economy; Marine Ecosystem Services; Shipping; Ports; Fishing; Angling; Aquaculture; Recreational Demand; Non-Market Value; Restoration; Ocean Literacy; Sustainable Consumption; Social Marketing; Sustainability Leadership; Sustainability Governance; Decarbonisation and Digitalisation; Climate Change Economics & Governance; Environmental Economics; Energy Economics.

## Digital Responsibility

Our School is globally recognised for applying the disciplinary lenses of business and economics to consider a range of questions relating to the topic of digitalisation, and the future of digital business and digital society.

Our researchers have a track record in securing external competitive funding in this area, particularly through affiliations with Lero – the Science Foundation Ireland Research Centre for Software. Faculty in this area have been involved in projects that have drawn +€2.3m in direct funding and €2.1m in in-kind contributions from industry over the last 8 years. This included the largest SFI grant ever awarded to a business school at the time and funding from a variety of agencies including Horizon 2020, Horizon Europe, Science Foundation Ireland, the Irish Research Council and Enterprise Ireland.

Our School members hold prominent roles in the academic and industry global community in this area. For example, Dr David Kreps is Chair of Technical Committee 9 on ICTs and Society for the International Federation for Information Processing (IFIP) and is an elected member of the IFIP Board. Dr Anastasia Griva is an academic representative and board member at Efficient Consumer Response (ECR) Hellas, a non-profit association of leading retailers and suppliers in Greece. Dr Pierangelo Rosati is the Business Community Lead of the IEEE UK & Ireland Blockchain Group and a member of the Blockchain Ireland Education, Skills and Innovation Working Group.

## Areas of Impact

Responsible Artificial Intelligence; Time and Technology; Agile and Lean Project Management; Citizen Development; Digital Transformation; Technostress; Social Media; Future of Work; Digital and Social Media Technologies for Marketing; Digital Technologies for Social Marketing; International Strategies of Digital Business.

# Probing Technology's Influence on Time: Lero and J.E. Cairnes School of Business and Economics Launch €3.5m Fellowship Programme



L-R: Lero's Dr Martina Prendergast, SFI's Prof Philip Nolan, Prof Kieran Conboy and ROSETTA project manager Emma Brinton. Image: Martina Regan.

Lero, the Science Foundation Ireland (SFI) Research Centre for Software, launched a €3.5 million postdoctoral fellowship programme in March of this year which is set to recruit 19 world-class researchers to universities across Ireland.

The ROSETTA (Responsible Time and Tech in an Accelerated Digitised World) programme is funded by Lero, University of Galway's J.E. Cairnes School of Business and Economics and the European Commission's Marie Skłodowska Curie Actions (MSCA) COFUND scheme. Details of the project were announced at the Regional Business Summit 2024.

Led by Professor Kieran Conboy, this ambitious project will explore the relationship between technology and time. "Businesses, policy makers and regulators often highlight the great work they are doing in relation to responsible technology, and the term is used so much and so loosely it has lost a lot of its meaning. The ROSETTA fellows will have the freedom to challenge current assumptions around responsible technology,

really scrutinise to what extent these 'responsible' efforts are real and to what extent they are effective. Through their work with Lero and their international industry placements they will improve the development and use of technology as well as directly inform new policy and regulation of responsible technology at national and European level," explained Prof Conboy, Principal Investigator of ROSETTA.

The prestigious programme will see 19 ROSETTA fellows provided with the highest quality research environment and a training programme where they will critically examine the development, use and regulation of technology from a time perspective across all aspects of life from children, people with disabilities and people in the workplace, to healthcare and social inclusion for older people.

Dr Siobhan Roche, Director of Science for the Economy at Science Foundation Ireland welcomed the announcement, saying: "SFI is highly focused on developing the best research talent to deliver tangible benefits today and into the future. In

this important joint European project, the Lero SFI Research Centre will support collaboration in this cutting-edge domain, leading in the development of vital digital expertise. I congratulate the fellows, who will no doubt glean high value from their industry placements, with the potential to inform evidence-based policy making."

According to Lero Director Professor Lionel Briand, the ROSETTA programme will further augment Ireland's international software research reputation. "The ROSETTA programme is an excellent example of Lero's commitment to developing the tech leaders of the future who will not only examine software and digital technologies but also interrogate their impact on society. Ireland has the opportunity to become a world leader in regulation of technology and the work being done by Prof Conboy and his Lero colleagues in the ROSETTA programme will be a cornerstone of that," Professor Briand commented.

ROSETTA will be coordinated by J.E. Cairnes School of Business and Economics in collaboration with four other Irish universities: University College Cork, University College Dublin, University of Limerick and Trinity College Dublin. ROSETTA fellows will have the opportunity to undertake secondments at one of 20 associated partners spanning Europe and the United States.

"Digital responsibility is one of J.E. Cairnes School of Business and Economics' areas of research excellence and distinctiveness. The ROSETTA funding award is testament to the extensive digitalisation expertise of the leadership team here at University of Galway, and across the project research partners," said Professor Alma McCarthy, Dean, J.E. Cairnes School of Business and Economics, University of Galway.

ROSETTA fellows will complete a secondment at one of 20 associated partners across Europe and the US. Fellows will be recruited from the fields of business, law, computer science, medicine, biomedical engineering, education, psychology, software engineering, information systems, human-computer interaction and business.

# Launching Ireland's First Free Voluntary Tax Clinic



L-R: Ciarán Ó hÓgartaigh, Former President of University of Galway; Professor Emer Mulligan, Director of the Tax Clinic; Hildegarde Naughton, Government Chief Whip and Minister of State; Dr Maggie O'Neill, Tax Clinic Coordinator.

As the first programme of its kind in Ireland, the Tax Clinic stands as a ground-breaking endeavour – helping people from marginalised or under-represented sections of society to understand their entitlements, their tax rights and responsibilities and how to manage their own tax affairs.

The Tax Clinic began in University of Galway's J.E. Cairnes School of Business and Economics in 2020 as a pilot project for students. Government Chief Whip and Minister of State for Public Health, Wellbeing and the National Drugs Strategy Hildegarde Naughton T.D. officially launched the University of Galway Tax Clinic in November of 2023. The clinic has since expanded its services to the Greater Galway area through partnerships with two local organisations that cater to people requiring these services – COPE Galway and SCCUL Enterprises. To further expand the reach and enhance its impact, it has recently begun a collaboration with Focus Ireland.

The Tax Clinic offers clients one-to-one, confidential consultations with tax student advisors, supervised by tax professionals, where they can get tailored support. The collaborative model has allowed the Tax Clinic to identify and respond to significant unmet needs for tax education across various community groups. The clinic is designed to empower

taxation students and the people it supports, by providing personalised tax assistance and compliance guidance for people who traditionally may not have been able to access or afford it.

Hildegarde Naughton T.D. said of the project's launch: "What makes the Tax Clinic truly remarkable is its commitment to expanding beyond the University's borders and reaching out to the wider community. By partnering with local organisations, they've bridged the gap and answered the call for assistance from citizens who require these valuable services. This is a significant step towards a more informed and empowered society. Congratulations to all involved."

Former President of University of Galway, Professor Ciarán Ó hÓgartaigh, added: "The launch of the Tax Clinic underscores our University's unwavering commitment to being an institution for the public good. This initiative, which springs from our university community, offers a vital resource for students and members of marginalised communities, ensuring that no one is left behind in navigating the complexities of taxation. By harnessing the collective expertise of our faculty and students, we aim to make a tangible, positive impact on the lives of our community, both on campus and across the region. Information is power and by sharing information, we reduce 'the mystique of the technique' and give

more power to those without power. This is our role as educators and as a university for the public good."

Emer Mulligan, Director of the Tax Clinic and Personal Professor in Taxation and Finance at University of Galway, said of the clinic: "The foundation of this clinic is rooted in justice, dedicated to assisting those who are under-represented. The clinic's primary focus is on tax education, aiming to aid individuals to manage their own tax affairs and understand their tax rights and responsibilities. Our overarching goal is to educate and assist marginalised citizens with their tax compliance in a setting that is both free and confidential. The Tax Clinic's services have proven increasingly important amid financial instability for many, exacerbated by COVID-19 and rising costs of living. I am very grateful to have such an impressive group of tax students and professional advisors giving their time and expertise on a pro bono basis to make this initiative possible."

The Tax Clinic offers assistance across a range of areas, including:

- Information on tax credits, e.g., tuition fees, flat rate allowances, medical expenses, Single Parent Child Carer Credit, Home Carer Credit, rent tax credit, and others;
- Information on tax owed/due to those who have become unemployed recently;
- How people who have recently moved to Ireland can get their Irish tax affairs in order;
- How people emigrating for work can get their Irish tax affairs in order before leaving;
- Information on the tax implications of having multiple jobs.

The launch was hosted in partnership with the Galway Chamber of Commerce and University of Galway MBA Programme under the theme of *Taxpayer Rights in a Digital World: How Tax Clinics Contribute to Justice and Fairness* and included the launch of an accompanying report *Enabling Tax Literacy and Empowerment*. The event featured a keynote address by Nina E. Olson, a globally recognised expert in taxpayer rights based in the US.

Visit the Tax Clinic [website](#).

# Research-based Training for Business Scaling Success across Europe

Prof Jonathan Levie and Prof Esther Tippmann

## Problem

Scaling a business is inherently challenging, with a high rate of unsuccessful attempts. Recognised gaps include a lack of scalability readiness, inadequate strategic planning, and insufficient knowledge of market dynamics, which often hinder businesses from scaling effectively.



## Key Stats



**8 ventures** took part in the pilot training Masterclasses

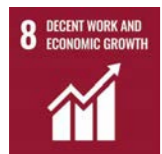


**120 scaleup advisors** trained on the three stages of business scaling



**43 scaleup advisors** from **14 countries** upskilled from advisor to coach

## SDGs Impacted



## Research

Research within the Centre for Entrepreneurial Growth & Scaling (CEGS), led by Profs Levie and Tippmann, has provided key insights into important areas in effective and successful business scaling. Building on these insights, a suite of training exercises has been created, designed to support top management teams in scaling ventures. These included exercises to assess their fitness to scale and address shortcomings, with the potential for coaching assistance to be offered as part of the training. The training package was initially piloted to teams from 8 ventures via a series of Masterclasses at the Galway Technology Centre in January to May 2020.

## Impact

Following the Galway pilot, CEGS were contacted by the European Innovation Council and SMEs Executive Agency (EISMEA) to develop a series of interventions for EISMEA-affiliated scaleup advisors across Europe as part of the European Commission's Start-up and Scale-up Initiative. In 2022 an online training session run by Levie and Tippmann was delivered to approximately 120 scaleup advisors across Europe. One year later, this was followed up with in-person training in Brussels to 43 scaleup advisors from 14 EU countries to upskill them from advisor to coach.

Thanks to University of Galway's CEGS training, EEN Scale-up advisors have now a better understanding about starting vs growing vs scaling a business. This will enable them to create new tools and services to better support start-ups and scale-ups [sic] companies across Europe.

European Innovation Council and SMEs Executive Agency Official Statement

What really helped me a lot was the coaching questions – the who, the how, the when. When I moved to the coaching, it helped me a lot not to find the solution myself [but to coach the entrepreneur to find their solution].

EISMEA in-person training participant

# Influencing International Policy through Ocean Accounting

Prof Stephen Hynes

## Problem

The sustainable management of ocean resources has been an ongoing challenge globally. Historically, policy-makers have lacked comprehensive data and frameworks to accurately measure both the market and non-market value of oceans, which has led to the underdevelopment and unsustainable management of these vital resources.



## Key Stats



SEMRU produce biennial **Ocean Economy Reports** for policy-makers



Research has had an impact **nationally** and **internationally**



SEMRU research has been **referenced in policy 108 times** between 2017 and 2022

## SDGs Impacted



## Research

The Socio-Economic Marine Research Unit (SEMRU), directed by Prof Hynes, produces biennial Ocean Economy Reports that provide policy-makers with first-order understanding of the economic significance of seas around the Irish coast. In addition, SEMRU have been at the forefront of developing advanced frameworks and methodologies that estimate the non-market benefits that societies derive from the ocean.

## Impact

SEMRU's Ocean Economy Reports have been used by the Irish government to monitor progress towards targets set in Ireland's 'Harnessing our Ocean Wealth' plan, as well as reporting by the Irish government to the EU on the Marine Strategy Framework Directive. As a member of the Marine Protected Areas Advisory Group, SEMRU co-authored a 250-page report with recommendations for government regarding expansion of the Marine Protected Areas, which were accepted in full. SEMRU have also contributed to international policy developments, including input into the annual EU Blue Economy reports and regional assessment reports on biodiversity and ecosystems for Europe and Central Asia.

[research]... led by SEMRU at University of Galway, was extremely useful in terms of providing guidance on how to go beyond just recording economic indicators of the ocean economy industries to examining how the industries might transition to more sustainable forms of operation.

Deputy Head of Economic Analysis, Markets and Impact Assessment Unit, DG MARE

SEMRU provided 'clear evidence of the underdevelopment of our marine resources, leading the government to taking an all-inclusive approach to marine policy development.'

Mark White, Manager of the Marine Development Taskforce

# Delivering Integrated Peatlands, People and Policies for Ireland's Climate Action Plan

Prof Christine Domegan

## Problem

Ireland has a high proportion of Europe's remaining peatlands. These areas are ripe for innovation to create restored and rehabilitated peatlands that can benefit the environment, habitats and the economy. While the harvesting of peatlands is damaging to the environment, restored and intact bogs store excess carbon dioxide they have removed from the atmosphere. The restoration of peatlands is therefore listed as a key action in Ireland's Climate Action Plan 2019–2024.



## Key Stats



**€27 million EU funding** for the Peatlands and People Project



Research has had an impact **nationally and internationally**



**307 workers** redeployed to deliver peatland rehabilitation

## SDGs Impacted



## Research

Prof Domegan is the systems change lead researcher for a €27 million 7.5-year EU-funded climate action grant named 'Peatlands and People' (P&P). Running from 2020 to 2027, and in collaboration with Bord na Móna (BnM), the Environmental Protection Agency, National Parks and Wildlife Services and ERINN Innovation, P&P is using a systems social marketing approach to get from fossil fuel and industrial-scale extraction on peatlands to regenerative ecosystems bursting with biodiversity, climate solutions and sustainable tourism opportunities.

## Impact

Using Ireland's Climate Action Plan, the development is ensuring that the project offers local communities new jobs and the chance to renew old peatlands for locals and tourists alike. The project has commenced the enhanced rehabilitation of 9,900 hectares of peatland, which will save a total of approximately 5 million tonnes of carbon emissions. By December 2023, between P&P and PCAS, 65 bogs equating to 20,675 hectares had been transitioned towards carbon sequestration. P&P's 'Accelerate Green' programme, managed by BnM, kicked off in 2022 with the first round of the climate-positive scaling accelerator designed to boost green innovation. Four cohorts later, 42 accelerated companies employ over 350 people, have a combined turnover of €200 million and have secured €10 million in investment.

The progress delivered and the ambition that is now achievable would not have been possible without...those working on the ground. Christine's thinking was key to the change from a piecemeal approach to integrating peatlands, people and policies with partners.

Dr John MacNamara, Bord na Móna

Our peatlands are a precious resource in terms of storing carbon, restoring biodiversity and supporting local communities in new jobs taking care of our environment.

Minister Eamon Ryan TD, DECC

# HOMeAGE: Shaping a Sustainable and Inclusive Future for Older People through Innovative Research

Prof Kieran Walsh

## Problem

As Europe's population ages, tackling the challenges of ageing in place has become more pressing than ever. The HOMeAGE project, led by Kieran Walsh, Professor of Ageing & Public Policy and Director of the Irish Centre for Social Gerontology (ICSG), University of Galway, J.E. Cairnes School of Business and Economics, seeks to address key issues surrounding housing, care, mobility and rights for older people. HOMeAGE represents a vital step towards building a more inclusive society, empowering older people to age with dignity in their homes and communities.

## Key Stats



**12 Doctoral Researchers** from 8 European countries



Focus on **Needs and Systems, Home and Belonging, Rights and Voice**



Addressing **housing, care, mobility and rights** for older people

## SDGs Impacted



## Research

Funded by the Horizon 2020 programme, the project brings together 12 Doctoral Researchers (DRs) from eight European countries, each leading research on one of three interconnected challenges: needs and systems, home and belonging, and rights and voice. HOMeAGE is committed to creating a more inclusive and responsive framework for older people to live independently within their communities, ensuring their voices are heard and their rights respected, through addressing key challenges.

### Challenge 1: Needs and Systems

HOMeAGE focuses on developing sustainable housing, care, and mobility solutions for older people, particularly in rural or underserved areas. Research explores the effects of housing system design, mobility strategies, and digital care technologies on wellbeing.

### Challenge 2: Home and Belonging

This challenge examines the social and cultural dimensions of ageing in place, seeking new ways for older adults to foster a sense of community and belonging, especially in non-traditional or transient living environments.

### Challenge 3: Rights and Voice

HOMeAGE seeks to influence policy by promoting the rights of older people to age in place. Research looks at how to ensure older people's voices are represented in policy development, particularly with respect to care needs in rural areas and the digital divide.

## Impact

HOMeAGE is focused on implementing practical solutions that will improve the lives of older Europeans, ensuring they can age in place with dignity, independence, and a strong sense of belonging. The project highlights the power of collaborative, cross-national research in driving policy change, creating a future where older people's rights are respected, and they can live safely in their communities. Professor Kieran Walsh leads the HOMeAGE project for Ireland. As a professor of Ageing & Public Policy and the director of the Irish Centre for Social Gerontology (ICSG) at the University of Galway, he brings extensive expertise to the project. Under his guidance, the University of Galway is playing a crucial role in shaping ageing policy across Europe.

The complexity of ageing in place can only be addressed through a multi-dimensional approach. HOMeAGE brings together diverse expertise to ensure older people's needs are met with dignity, rights, and community support.

Prof Kieran Walsh, University of Galway

# Real World Impact: Professor Kate Kenny

Professor of Business and Society, Kate Kenny has been researching whistleblowing in organisations for the past 10 years, across a range of sectors from the Gardaí to finance.

Working with academic and industry collaborators, as well as whistleblowers themselves, Prof Kenny investigates the professional and legal structures that deny the voices of dissenters, and those that aim to support them. Launching in 2025, her upcoming book *Regulators of Last Resort* explores familiar cases such as Amazon and Facebook to ask: what is the price that whistleblowers pay, and who can offer them support?

**Your latest book, *Regulators of Last Resort*, will be published early 2025 with Cambridge University Press. How did the book come about?**

I have been working on whistleblowing in organisations for over 10 years now. During that time, I realised something important was missing from how we think about – and how we research – whistleblowing and dissent in organisations. While all the focus is on better whistleblowing laws and internal organisation policies these days, and these are important, one thing gets overlooked. Sometimes the law fails whistleblowers – and organisations do not protect them – and then they have to go public. I wanted to focus on what happens next: especially how a whole network of skilled and supportive partners: lawyers, journalists, activists, advocates, even colleagues, come together to help whistleblowers. So, the full title is *Regulators of Last Resort: Whistleblowing, the Limits of the Law and the Power of Partnerships*<sup>1</sup>. This area hasn't yet been researched well at all – up to now. In the book, I focus on well-known cases: Amazon, Theranos, Facebook and even Ireland's ESB.

**If an individual blew the whistle on their organisation and had to leave their job as a result, what did it cost them in terms of salary foregone, legal costs to fight their case and healthcare costs? We wanted to find out.**

**You recently launched the EU Commission-funded BRIGHT project along with international colleagues – a two-year research project focused on whistleblowing capacity-building and policy.<sup>2</sup> Can you describe your role as an academic in collaborating with whistleblowers?**

In my research, I take a Social Sciences approach, and I study whistleblowing in organisations from the perspective of managers tasked with implementing speak-up and whistleblowing systems. But I also look at workers themselves who are trying to disclose wrongdoing in separate projects – along with colleagues, I have done a lot of interviews with whistleblowers in different countries and sectors. So, my research examines whistleblowing from all angles – both inside and outside the organisation. In the BRIGHT project for example, we look at legal and institutional changes, while in a former project, I researched the impact of being in the public eye for whistleblowers and their families.

This work started with a project funded by the British Academy and Leverhulme Trust several years ago that enabled me and a co-author at

University of Warwick to start looking at the impacts of whistleblowing on individuals and their families. We then received major funding from the UK Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) in 2016. For the first time ever, research was carried out to quantify the costs of whistleblowing for people who speak up. If an individual blew the whistle on their organisation and had to leave their job as a result, what did it cost them in terms of salary foregone, legal costs to fight their case and healthcare costs? We wanted to find out.

People often require mental and sometimes physical health supports because of the stress and trauma that can result from whistleblowing retaliation, including PTSD symptoms in the most extreme cases. All that costs the family money and causes stress. So, that ESRC funding enabled us to produce a report and peer-reviewed articles foregrounding the cost of whistleblowing reprisal. The research is used globally by whistleblower advocacy and advice groups.

**The research extends well beyond the University and academic publishing and has social impacts on society. So, we're proud of that and it is important for us to continue.**

The next project I was involved in was a book published by Harvard University Press in 2019. A deep dive into whistleblowing in the financial sector, looking at the obstacles and challenges, specifically in the distinct cultures of finance and banking. I



looked at the norms of that industry and drew on interviews with people at Halifax, Julius Baer, Citibank, former Irish Nationwide and other banks.

The past ten years have been a journey of examining the organisational and legal implications in a business ethics framework – while working with various partners. For the ESRC project, we worked with some of the leading whistleblowing advocacy groups in the world – including Government Accountability Project (GAP) – based in Washington, D.C. We've also partnered with whistleblowing charities in the UK and in Ireland. In that way, we're able to bring in civil society groups and legal experts who advocate for whistleblower rights. These experts feed into the questions that we ask as part of our research while helping to disseminate our findings. We also work a lot with whistleblowers themselves.

I'm programme director of the MBA here, and prominent whistleblowers who have gone on to be leaders in their fields have come in to give talks to MBA students. Examples include Professor Richard Bowen from University of Texas who was the Citigroup whistleblower, and Senator Tom Clonan from the

**My job within the BRIGHT project is to develop a pioneering framework that will enable people, when implementing whistleblowing systems or offering advice, to ensure sensitivity towards different protected characteristics such as gender, race, class and ethnicity.**

Irish Defence Forces who is – today – a leading advocate for disability rights. The social impact of the research extends well beyond the University and academic publishing. We are proud of that and it's important for us to continue.

Another research project involved Professor Wim Vandekerckhove (EDHEC Business School, France) and Professor Marianna Fotaki (University of Warwick). We researched the experience of managers in organisations with whistleblowing systems, publishing a book in 2019 with Wiley Business, *The Whistleblowing Guide: Speak-up*

*Arrangements, Challenges and Best Practices*. That research has been very impactful in terms of international organisations taking up our findings, including United Nations UNPRI, ActionAid, Transparency International Ireland and global accounting body ACCA. The research was cited by the World Bank in their annual report, the UK House of Commons debates and House of Lords.

The current BRIGHT project with the European Whistleblowing Institute flows from that, funded by the European Commission. The European Whistleblowing Institute is a civil society organisation that aims to carry out research on the impact of legal changes around whistleblowing across Europe.

My job within the BRIGHT project is to develop a pioneering framework that will enable people, when implementing whistleblowing systems or offering advice, to ensure sensitivity towards different protected characteristics such as gender, race, class and ethnicity. We will be reviewing best practice and testing the framework over the next two years. On this, I am pleased to work with Dr Taymi Milan, an anti-corruption expert from Ecuador. I am also beginning a further research project funded by Lero as

part of their SyMeCo call, that looks at whistleblowing disclosures in healthcare, and more specifically, developing systems mainly in clinical settings to help nurses and other medics safely disclose wrongdoings. Healthcare is one of the top sectors for reporting of ethics concerns. Whistleblowing helpline operators across the world will tell you that they receive the most calls from whistleblowers about issues with retaliation from the healthcare sector. So, it's important research, and we look forward to welcoming postdoctoral researcher Dr Johanna Waisak, who is joining us this month at University of Galway from University of Turku, Finland.

**Workplaces differ a lot, but a useful rule of thumb is to ask: is this a transparent workplace? Are the processes open for everyone to understand or not?**

**Each industry comes with its own vernacular; does the role of language come into this research?**

Yes, it does. You need to make time to do that research or strategically work with colleagues to develop that knowledge. I usually work with other academics that have industry knowledge. For example, Johanna our postdoctoral researcher on the SyMeCo project is a practising nurse and she has been looking at ethics in nursing and health for many years. In the banking and finance study, I was fortunate to have a fellowship with Harvard University's Edmond & Lily Safra Center for Ethics where people including Professor Malcolm Salter were working. So, I was able to put time aside to dive deep into that industry and carry out interviews.

Our research group here also extends beyond sectors to non-Western contexts – this is so critical because the literature on business ethics and whistleblowing is generally very Anglo-Saxon, and hugely limiting as a result. My PhD student Bashir Alao, an experienced compliance professional from Nigeria, studies whistleblowing in this country, for example, and his project is just the beginning in terms of the wider focus we plan for the research group.

**What stands out in your research as the key defining factors of a healthy workplace?**

I think we can all look at our environment and diagnose the health of our workplaces. Workplaces differ a lot, but a useful rule of thumb is to ask: is this a transparent workplace? Are the processes open for everyone to understand? That's an important measure. A second factor is discussability: if I have a question or something that is confusing me, do I feel I can bring it up or do I get the sense that certain important issues are taboo around here? Another is sanctions. For this you ask: if people have clearly breached our ethical guidelines, are they actively and openly sanctioned, or are they let off the hook? That creates a very strong signal in terms of ethics. The sanction piece also ties into accountability. Is it clear in my workplace who is accountable for ethical practice? If nobody seems to be accountable, that's a problem. These are some examples that I draw on. I recommend Professor Muel Kaptein's work here.

**Which countries have you focused on recently; is there something we can learn by comparing work cultures in different countries?**

The 'modern' discourse around whistleblowing emerged in the US in the 70s on the back of the Nixon era and the challenges mounted by investigative journalists and civil society actors around a lack of accountability in government. So, the idea of whistleblower insiders as part of the overall expectation of accountability to the public, by large, powerful institutions, emerged in its contemporary form in the 60s and 70s and spread in the Anglo-Saxon world for various reasons. Now, I believe almost 100 countries have whistleblower protection laws in place, with Ireland being an early pioneer in 2014. It has become more commonplace to believe that insiders are the best sources of information about an organisation's transgressions, and that we all benefit when insiders are protected to disclose those wrongdoings. That said, protections are more welcome in certain countries and sectors than others. For example, following the **Bernie Madoff Enron** fraud case and successive scandals, the US brought in whistleblower protection legislation and reward schemes for insiders in finance; the US

government had lost a lot of money by not listening to whistleblowers like Harry Markopolos, who had been speaking out for years.

In the US, finance, transport and tax are well-protected sectors while others have a way to go. Some countries show resistance to whistleblower laws, particularly those with a recent history of problems around informers to state authorities. There are so many cultural nuances. In Eastern Europe for example, given the history of oppressive Soviet regimes, whistleblowing is tied up with this idea of the 'informer' being disloyal to the group. A new EU Directive was brought in across the European Union in 2021 but we're still seeing different challenges mounted in different countries.

In Germany, there is a powerful business lobby who are actively resisting whistleblower protections. Ireland has been leading the charge; our whistleblowing protection law in 2014 was seen as one of the strongest in the world at the time. Public awareness of whistleblowing in Ireland is influenced by high-profile whistleblowing scandals, like the Gardaí scandal. And so, the idea of protections for those individuals was very politically and culturally palatable. Ireland's record is not perfect but we appear to be adopting and transposing the EU directive – although with some areas of concern here too.

**I did a podcast in January 2024 for the Parrhesia Network in London with Zelda Perkins – the first person to speak up about Harvey Weinstein. Zelda had worked under an NDA for over 10 years before finally deciding to break her contract and speak out, despite all the risks to herself.**

Pop culture also has an influence on support for whistleblowers. I look at gender and whistleblowing as one aspect. For example – it is interesting to note that we often see the narrative of a troubled and flawed female whistleblower – think of films like *The Whistleblower* or *Official Secrets*. Whereas in many films, the

male discloser is depicted as a classic hero figure that fits the mould. There has been some research carried out into these portrayals in popular culture.

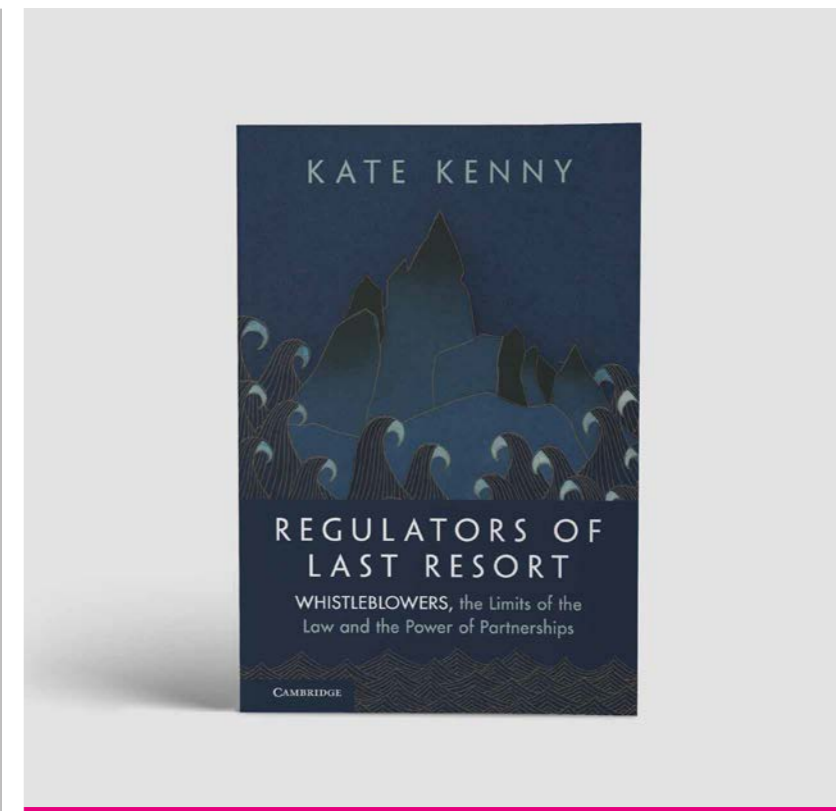
**Has the Employment Equality (Amendment) (Non-Disclosure Agreements) Bill 2021 made an impact on whistleblowers?**

That's an interesting question. I did a podcast in January 2024 for the Parrhesia Network in London with Zelda Perkins – the first person to speak up about Harvey Weinstein. Zelda had remained silent under the pressure of an illicit NDA for over 10 years, before finally deciding to break her contract and speak out, despite all the risks to herself. She gave an interview in the *Financial Times*, and that year, the *New York Times*, *New Yorker* and others published exposés on Weinstein. She is now a campaigner to stop NDAs being used in cases of sexual assault and harassment – their original purpose was for trade secrets and intellectual property protection! They have no business being used to cover up disclosures of abuse. But this is massively on the increase. We're in the era of the NDA, as employers struggle to keep things under wraps and ensure they don't get into the public domain. That is becoming tougher and tougher because of surveillance technology, leaks and social media – as well as a workforce that may be working from home, or less inclined to conform. So legal silencing contracts are brought out more and more, workers forced to sign – to contract away their rights.

Zelda has recently been in Ireland helping to shape the debate around NDAs. We are now one of the early adopters of legislation that makes it illegal to enforce an NDA in cases of sexual harassment and sexual violence. But of course, whenever a new bill is passed, you need to wait until test cases emerge to really see how it works in practice.

**What keeps you motivated when facing barriers in your research?**

People can get stuck in their disciplinary silos in academia and focus mainly on academic publishing. I don't find that satisfying. I think it's best if academics are working with civil society and people outside the university, and using their voice to communicate what they have researched and learned, especially when it comes to challenging



misuses of power. Whistleblowing researchers are lucky in that respect. We have people from business ethics, organisational studies, law and gender studies all happily working together. We also collaborate with NGOs and whistleblower groups. It's important to have those open borders.

I came through the financial crisis in 2008 and saw the impact of the banking crisis on friends and family in terms of funding public services. The legacy of that is still around today. It annoyed me that corporates, in this case the banks, were able to do that to a country – and the good individuals working in these banks weren't able to speak up – or if they did, it was futile because of the systems in place. There is a lot of ambivalence around whistleblowing, and with the impacts of gender, tech and surveillance – it's an important topic that is ever changing. I don't think we have exhausted the questions that need to be asked. I think I will be asking them for a while.

<sup>1</sup> *Regulators of Last Resort, The Limits of the Law and the Power of Partnerships*, Cambridge University Press, Forthcoming 2025.

<sup>2</sup> BRIGHT (Building Resilience through Integrity, Good Governance, and Honesty Training) is a project led by the European

Whistleblowing Institute (EWI), alongside Professor Wim Vandekerckhove of EDHEC Business School and Professor Kate Kenny of the University of Galway, funded by the European Commission.

**Kate Kenny** is Professor of Business and Society at University of Galway. She has held research fellowships at Cambridge University's Judge Business School, and the Edmond J. Safra Lab at Harvard University. Prof Kenny's work has been published in *Organization Studies* and *Human Relations* among other journals. Recent books include *Whistleblowing: Toward a New Theory* (Harvard University Press, 2019) and *The Whistleblowing Guide: Speak Up Arrangements, Challenges and Best Practices* (Wiley, 2019).

# Thriving or Surviving? A Global Research Alliance Pushing for Reform in Hospitality Work

Dr Deirdre Curran,  
College of Business, Public Policy,  
and Law, University of Galway

Research by J.E. Cairnes School of Business and Economics at University of Galway has found that although workers in the hospitality industry are often passionate about their work, the industry is experiencing a chronic labour shortage. Poor conditions and lack of prospects are some of the key reasons. Now a new global alliance aims to tackle conditions in hospitality through educating policy makers and industry leaders about what is needed to ensure 'decent work', and Ireland is positioned to be a leader in the field.

For more than a quarter century I have been teaching young people about the employment relationship, how that relationship works, what happens if/when it goes wrong, where to look for advice or support. Over that time, I have come to know, through my students, that the employment relationship in hospitality and tourism poses unique challenges by its very nature.

#### Features of the hospitality industry

There is no doubting the importance of this industry to the Irish economy, not least as a very significant provider of jobs. CSO data for the final quarter of 2023 show that accommodation supported 50,300 jobs directly, and food and beverage service activities supported 132,800 jobs. We must also acknowledge that the industry has come under increasing pressures, **as detailed in this analysis**: 'domestic consumer spending is under some pressure; there is a shortage of accommodation [...]; the costs of doing business have increased significantly [...], particularly labour

costs and energy; labour shortages are very obvious; and the cost base is being damaged by a number of State-induced upward pressures on labour costs, which are set to be rolled out this year and in the coming years.<sup>1</sup>

The hospitality industry is overwhelmingly comprised of small, fragmented establishments, often owner-managed by people who are passionate about food/service, but not necessarily trained to manage people. In contrast, many of the larger hotels are owned/managed by business conglomerates who may not have direct experience of the sector.

Hospitality establishments are traditionally hierarchical. Activity lulls are interspersed with bouts of intense pressure, in what is a highly competitive, high-risk market. The predominantly low-paid, less-skilled, non-unionised workforce is bottom-heavy with women, migrants and transient labour.



#### Poor working conditions and breaches of employment rights

However, this industry is historically infamous for low pay and poor working conditions. Everyone I speak to about my research – from politicians to employers, customers, workers and students – knows there's truth in what the data is telling us. Many of my students work in hospitality and tourism to support their education expenses. They know what the issues are, and they have wonderfully creative solutions, if only someone would listen.

A proportion of the workforce is transient but many people would like to make a decent living from their work. Similarly to employers, workers are also subject to sharply rising costs of living including accommodation, child-care, transport, energy, etc. **Evidence suggests** that it is impossible to live on the minimum wage and yet employer representatives consistently decry any move to increase it.<sup>2</sup> The current minimum wage is €12.70 per hour, but the 'living wage', benchmarked against

the actual cost of living, currently stands at an elusive €14.80 per hour. My basic contention is this – convert hospitality jobs to 'decent jobs' and people will stay.

Regarding employment rights, too often in hospitality work the 'minimum wage' is treated as a maximum and recommendations to increase it meet with warnings of impending business closures. As a trade unionist said to me recently, if your business model relies on low pay and poor working conditions, then perhaps it is time to rethink the model.

Breaches of employment rights are common in this sector. **My 2021 research** indicates that 70% of respondents did not get their entitlement to a Sunday premium, 52% did not get their entitlement to rest breaks and 43% did not get a proper contract on commencing employment.<sup>3</sup> The law represents a **minimum standard** that all workers in Ireland are entitled to.

Workers in 'accommodation and food services' are **disproportionately represented** in the statistics for low

Everyone strives for, and I would argue is entitled to, a decent job. Scholars and organisations like the ILO have grappled to identify the elements of 'decent work', and generally agree that it includes a fair income; some degree of job security; working conditions that are psychologically and physically safe; legal protections and opportunities for voice.



Dr Deirdre Curran

pay, and consistently earn the lowest 'average hourly earnings' of all sectors.<sup>4</sup> On the job security front, **workers in 'accommodation and food'** were second highest in terms of insecure work, and second most anxious about future prospects.<sup>5</sup>

There are two primary issues regarding employment rights. Firstly, workers are often unaware of their legal rights and how to source information. Secondly, enforcement is an issue. Workers in precarious sectors such as hospitality are reluctant to raise issues of legal rights for fear of negative consequences. The primary enforcement body is the **Workplace Relations Commission (WRC)**, which can 'visit places of employment and carry out investigations on behalf of the Commission in order to ensure compliance with employment-related legislation.'<sup>6</sup> In its **2022 Annual Report**, the WRC Inspectorate reported carrying out 5,820 inspection visits, detecting over 5,700 contraventions of legislation. Inspections in 'Beverage Service Activities' revealed non-compliance of 49%, in 'Food Service Activities'

46%, and in 'Hotels' 30%. These non-compliances resulted in recovery of over €700,000 in unpaid wages.<sup>7</sup>

**The elements of decent work** According to the International Labour Organisation (ILO), '**decent work**' underpins ALL of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).<sup>8</sup> I would argue everyone is entitled to a decent job. Scholars and organisations like the ILO have grappled to identify the elements of 'decent work', and generally agree that it includes a fair income; some degree of job security; working conditions that are psychologically and physically safe; legal protections and opportunities for voice. While those ingredients may seem logical and unsurprising, my research suggests a shortfall in many aspects, for many workers.

#### Providing a voice to workers

It became clear as we emerged from the pandemic that those who left the industry did so for better working conditions, rather than because they wanted to leave per se. If the challenges of low pay, unsocial hours, lack of career progression, absence of employee voice, etc. were addressed, there would arguably be no chronic labour shortage in this sector. My research shows that hospitality workers generally really like their jobs. Because the work is often pressured and intense, workers form close, lasting bonds with co-workers, who become the hub of their social network. They love the satisfaction of delivering good service and acknowledgement from customers, whether or not in the form of a tip. They love the 'buzz' of the 'performance' that is hospitality work, and the dynamic nature of each shift.

Research also indicates that hospitality workers know what is wrong and how to make it right, but they have no voice platform. **Fewer than 7% of hospitality workers** were

members of a trade union in 2021, the lowest density of all sectors.<sup>9</sup> My research, which essentially represents the voice of workers, informed the 11 recommendations of the 2022 government report ***Working Conditions and Skills Shortages in Ireland's Tourism and Hospitality Sector***. I firmly believe that these recommendations have the capacity to transform the industry.<sup>10</sup> I was also able to use evidence-based arguments to positively influence **new legal protections around tips**.<sup>11</sup> Undoubtedly, there is a better way. We need more evidence-based discussions on what is working well and what needs to change. We need more ethical leadership from within the industry.

#### The Global Hospitality Research Alliance

An exciting recent development has been the evolution of the **Global Hospitality Research Alliance (GHRA)**. This expanding collective of scholars using "intellectual activism" to contribute to evidence-informed debate on decent work in hospitality has grown steadily out of the research I began in Ireland. This research was replicated in Scotland, Norway, New Zealand and Australia, giving us the start of a comparative database by which to learn and grow. The Alliance currently has 62 academics from 21 countries, and projects include a book and an exploration of the experience of Ukrainian refugees in hospitality work in Ireland and Scotland.

In May 2024 members of the Alliance will visit our campus for a series of research-informed events. Dr Shelagh Mooney from Auckland University of Technology will act as keynote speaker for a symposium on Mental Health and Gender Challenges in Commercial Kitchens. Dr Mooney will be joined by an expert panel, and it is hoped the event will attract a wide range of industry experts who will contribute to an emerging plan of action. In 2024 the GHRA will launch a global study of hospitality working conditions across 10 countries.

This comparative data will facilitate shared learning about what's working and what needs to change.

#### Ireland's leadership role in moving toward decent work

The labour shortages in the hospitality and tourism industry after the pandemic have proved a potential tipping point (pun intended) for hospitality work. Moreover, it is unlikely that Generations Z and Alpha will tolerate current hospitality working conditions. Clearly, change is needed. The economy will always need hospitality. While the retail industry can pivot online, human beings will always feel the need to socialise over food and drink. Why not make hospitality an industry that capitalises on worker passion, by offering decent work that can sustain long-term and rewarding careers? Improving working conditions is not a charity argument; it's a business case. Better conditions, career prospects and work-life balance, and increased employee voice, will pay dividends for employees, employers, customers and society at large. My vision for Ireland's hospitality and tourism sector is that, through the Global Alliance, it moves toward becoming a recognised global leader and an exemplar for the industry worldwide.

**Improving working conditions is not a charity argument; it's a business case. Better conditions, career prospects and work-life balance, and increased employee voice, will pay dividends for employees, employers, customers and society at large.**

#### Bibliography

- [https://www.itic.ie/wp-content/uploads/2024/03/Analysis\\_of\\_Government\\_induced\\_costs\\_on\\_tourism\\_enterprises\\_Jim-Power\\_ITIC\\_March2024.pdf](https://www.itic.ie/wp-content/uploads/2024/03/Analysis_of_Government_induced_costs_on_tourism_enterprises_Jim-Power_ITIC_March2024.pdf)
- <https://www.irishexaminer.com/news/arid-20342963.html>
- <https://www.universityofgalway.ie/media/schoolofbusinessandconomics/files/INSIDE-OUT-HOSPITALITY.pdf>
- <https://www.cso.ie/en/releasesandpublications/ep/p-elcq/earningsandlabourcostsq32023finalq42023preliminaryestimates/>
- <https://www.nerinstitute.net/sites/default/files/research/2023/JOB%20QUALITY%20IN%20IRELAND.pdf>
- [www.workplacelrelations.ie](http://www.workplacelrelations.ie)
- [https://www.workplacelrelations.ie/en/publications\\_forms/corporate\\_matters/annual\\_reports\\_reviews/annual-report-2022.pdf](https://www.workplacelrelations.ie/en/publications_forms/corporate_matters/annual_reports_reviews/annual-report-2022.pdf)
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mZpyJwepPqc>
- [https://www.smurfitschool.ie/t4media/Geary,%20J.%20and%20Belizon,%20M.%20\(2022\)%20Union%20Voice%20in%20Ireland%20.pdf](https://www.smurfitschool.ie/t4media/Geary,%20J.%20and%20Belizon,%20M.%20(2022)%20Union%20Voice%20in%20Ireland%20.pdf)
- [https://data.oireachtas.ie/ie/oireachtas/committee/dail/33/joint\\_committee\\_on\\_tourism\\_culture\\_arts\\_sport\\_and\\_media/reports/2022/2022-11-15\\_report-on-working-conditions-and-skills-shortages-in-ireland-s-tourism-and-hospitality-sector\\_en.pdf](https://data.oireachtas.ie/ie/oireachtas/committee/dail/33/joint_committee_on_tourism_culture_arts_sport_and_media/reports/2022/2022-11-15_report-on-working-conditions-and-skills-shortages-in-ireland-s-tourism-and-hospitality-sector_en.pdf)
- <https://www.irishstatutebook.ie/eli/2022/act/23/section/3/enacted/en/html>



**Dr Deirdre Curran** is a lecturer in the Management Discipline since 1997. Prior to joining University of Galway, Deirdre worked as an associate lecturer for the National College of Ireland (NCI) and as an independent management consultant. Deirdre is actively involved in researching the lived experience of hospitality workers in Ireland with a view to highlighting issues and promoting positive change. She is a founding member of the Global Hospitality Research Alliance (GHRA), a network of over 40 intellectual activists using research to provoke positive change to working conditions in hospitality and tourism.

This article was originally published in ***Cois Coiribe's Global Impact Edition***.



# Faculty in the Media: Professor Eoin Whelan

Research findings reveal link between smartphone use and reduced stress at work.

Research published by J.E. Cairnes School of Business and Economics this year revealed that using smartphones for personal purposes while at work can lead to reduced stress, as well as lower levels of conflict between work and personal life.



The study was conducted in partnership with University of Melbourne at the European branch of a global pharmaceutical company, which underwent a transformative change in its phone policy – shifting from a restrictive approach to personal phones, to open access for non-work purposes.

Led by Professor Eoin Whelan, the research highlights the potential benefits of moderate mobile phone usage in the professional setting, with no discernible impact on worker performance.

The company had originally banned personal use of phones in the 1990s for health and safety reasons, amid concerns of employees being distracted while working around dangerous chemicals. Staff had since voiced dissatisfaction with the ban and reported feeling disconnected, while senior management felt the branch was viewed as technophobic because of the ban, and that it was hampering competitiveness against other branches of the company. Prior to the study taking place, only senior management at the company could bring their personal mobile phone into the workplace.

Over the course of a year, the research tracked about 40 employees who availed of the new policy and used their personal smartphones when at work, and a similar number who maintained a self-imposed ban by leaving their phones behind them when they stepped inside the work premises.

The insights gained from the experiment were explored through qualitative interviews.

**The ground-breaking findings contribute to understanding of the interplay between technology and the sought-after work-life balance, while also offering practical insights for organisations aiming to foster a healthier and more balanced work environment.**

The study found:

- Despite fears of smartphone distraction and loss of focus, work performance did not decline when the ban was lifted;
- Work-life conflict – the perceived conflict between the demands of work and personal life – significantly declined for workers who had access to their phones compared to those who did not;
- Employees with access to phones reported being able to help with family issues during the day, helping to reduce pressure on their partner;
- Spreading personal communications throughout the day also meant employees were not overwhelmed when they turned on their phone after work.

While previous research has focused on the consequences of technology and work-related communications impacting on people outside of the workplace, this study stands out for its innovative approach in investigating the reverse scenario.

The ground-breaking findings contribute to understanding of the interplay between technology and the sought-after work-life balance, while also offering practical insights for organisations aiming to foster a healthier and more balanced work environment. The research has since been picked up on by a range of media outlets including [RTÉ News](#), [Daily Mail](#), [Silicon Republic](#), [Daily Telegraph](#), [Tech Central](#), [Independent.ie](#), [The National](#), [Morning Ireland](#) and BBC Radio Ulster.

Speaking of the findings, Professor Eoin Whelan, said, “Managers must realise the unintended consequences of forcing a smartphone ban. Preventing phones in the workplace can increase work-life conflict, which in turn has significant implications for work performance, job satisfaction, absenteeism, turnover intentions, as well as general wellbeing.”

The research noted other studies into personal use of smartphones in the workplace, with some reports suggesting employees spent an average of 56 minutes during a working day on their smartphone for non-work related tasks, and that they check their phone an average of 150 times a day.

The full paper is available to read [here](#).



# Celebrating Diversity

At J.E. Cairnes School of Business and Economics, we are proud to foster an inclusive environment that embraces diverse cultures. Our school community comes together throughout the year to take part in intercultural learning, marking key cultural events such as Diwali and Chinese New Year.



Students and staff gathered to honour Diwali, the Hindu Festival of Light. Festivities included an Indian-themed menu from Friars Restaurant, and a student showcase of traditional dances in the Cairnes Building courtyard. A fitting event for a festival that celebrates the victory of light over darkness, and knowledge over ignorance. Dr Edel Doherty, Aoibhin Keighron and Dr Emer Curtis made a concerted effort in organising this remarkable event.



In another moment of celebration, staff and students came together to mark Chinese New Year. Highlights of the event included a dragon parade, vibrant red attire and traditional foods, all contributing to a festive atmosphere. Dr Emer Curtis and the support team put in exceptional work to make this event one to remember.



# Global Connections, Local Engagement: Galway to Miami and Back Again

Known respectively as the gateway to Latin America and the European Union, Miami and Ireland have historically thrived on global partnerships and the exchange of industry insights across borders. Here, Dr Josephine Igoe, Programme Director of BComm (Global Experience) follows the trajectory of a burgeoning partnership between J.E. Cairnes School of Business and Economics and Miami's FIU College of Business, following a series of successful projects and student exchanges.

In an era of globalisation, driven by accelerated digitalisation, the importance of human capital should not be underestimated. This is exemplified in the strategic partnership between Florida International University and University of Galway in 2022. As mobility between the two universities has flourished, local engagement in both regions has proven key to an effective partnership.

Dr Josephine Igoe and Professor Sumit Kundu – Country Representatives for Ireland and the US, respectively, on the European International Business Academy (EIBA) board – first met at a conference, where an informal discussion on staff and student mobility across borders was taking place. Professor Sumit Kundu of Florida International University (FIU) was looking for a partner university in Europe to enhance student and staff mobility, education and learning. The similarities between Ireland and Miami seemed to make sense, and after laying some groundwork, the strategic partnership formed between University of Galway's J.E. Cairnes School of Business and Economics and the FIU College of Business.

## Changing Landscapes in Miami and Ireland

Miami is often described as the gateway to Latin America, and Ireland as the gateway to the European Union. According to the 2023 US Trade Census, Miami is first in the world for international cargo and international passenger travel. The city has diversified from tourism to high-technology firms and financial services at a fast pace, particularly since the pandemic, gaining a new reputation as "Wall Street South." Miami also has a strong presence in Life Sciences and logistics and since Covid, has become a talent magnet for talent from California and New York.

**In an era of globalisation, driven by accelerated digitalisation, the importance of human capital should not be underestimated.**

Ireland is long renowned for its success in attracting high-technology, multinational foreign direct investment (FDI), especially from the US. More than half of the multinationals located in Ireland are US companies, together employing over 200,000 people directly, over 150,000 indirectly, and investing about €27 billion each year in the Irish economy. Miami has experienced an increased Irish business presence in the past few years. Many longstanding Irish companies are based in Miami, with Fenergo and Waterwipes recently following suit.

**Miami is often described as the gateway to Latin America, and Ireland as the gateway to the European Union.**

**Having diplomats on the ground to build networks and create and support partnerships is evidenced in the highly successful University of Galway–FIU initiative. We have very ambitious plans for the time ahead.**

**Irish Consulate General to Miami, Sarah Kavanagh.**

## The Irish Consulate Office Opens in a Landmark Moment for Ireland and Miami

The strengthening of bilateral investment and trade between Ireland and Miami occurred alongside the opening of an Irish Consulate Office on Miami's Biscayne Boulevard in October 2022. Sarah Kavanagh, Irish Consulate General to Miami, referred to the Galway–FIU link when commenting on the new consulate office, "In opening a new Consulate General in Miami, Ireland is making a very tangible commitment to strengthening and deepening an important bilateral relationship. Having diplomats on the ground to build networks and create and support partnerships is evidenced in the highly successful University of Galway–FIU initiative. We have very ambitious plans for the time ahead."



Students outside FIU Business School, May 2024.



Ariana Schildmier and Vishnavi Reddy Kolanu from FIU College of Business.



Anna Tyther and Dr Josephine Igoe at FIU, 2022.



Delegation of International Business faculty from USA visited University of Galway's J.E. Cairnes School of Business and Economics this year, from 26 May to 1 June, a joint collaboration between CIBERS at Florida International University and Loyola Marymount University.

### Global Initiatives between Galway and FIU

Since the partnership commenced in 2022, progress has been swift, with a number of initiatives in the past 18 months, encompassing student and staff mobility, online collaborative learning initiatives, and research.

In Autumn 2022, Dr Igoe spent a sabbatical at the FIU Department of International Business. During this time FIU hosted their first undergraduate University of Galway student, Anna Tyther, while Professor David Wernick from FIU spent a sabbatical in University of Galway in Spring 2023. FIU students attending the Master's in International Business Programme (MIB) visited University of Galway in Spring 2023, engaging locally with business academics and attending seminars and company visits with the local MedTech sector.

The exchanges continued into 2024, with Galway students on the MSc International Management attending FIU on a study trip in 2023 and 2024. Students engaged with local academics, industry experts and government advisors, gaining insights into Miami as an innovation hub and major logistics centre.

In the words of Isabelle Norris, Class Rep for the MSc International Management 2024, "As an Irish student experiencing the US for the first time, coming to Miami is not your typical US experience... Miami is unique, with 70% of its population speaking Spanish and 60% of university students being Hispanic... It is clear why Miami is known as the gateway for Latin America."

**Collaboration Across the Atlantic**  
A key part of the partnership is FIU's Undergraduate Research Associate Programme. This programme has seen two FIU undergraduates attend Galway in August 2022 and hundreds of students on the Bachelor of Commerce programme participate in a Collaborative Online International Learning (COIL) project. The COIL project enhances international learning through engagement with students of different cultures, with different experiences across different time zones. Dr Wendy Guess, an FIU COIL ambassador, visited University of Galway in April 2023 to deliver a seminar on COIL initiatives.

Further enhancing the partnership and global linkages, J.E. Cairnes School of Business and Economics hosted 17 US Professors in May 2024 from institutions such as University of Washington, University of North Carolina and FIU. This group engaged locally with the School and with US and Irish multinationals and attended talks hosted by the IDA and Enterprise Ireland. As mediators of culture, trade and knowledge, gateway regions like Miami and Galway thrive on collaboration. This series of initiatives marks the start of a dynamic partnership, the fruits of which we can expect to see for years to come.

**Further enhancing the partnership and global linkages, J.E. Cairnes School of Business and Economics hosted 17 US Professors in May 2024 from institutions such as University of Washington, University of North Carolina and FIU.**



Marking the Inaugural St Patrick's Day celebrations in Miami at the Danielson Gallery, Biltmore Hotel on 12 March, 2022. Those pictured include Consul General to Miami, Sarah Kavanagh; Professor of International Business at Florida International University, Prof Sumit Kundu; Minister of State and Chief Whip, Hildegard Naughton; BComm Global Student on Study Abroad at Florida International University, Anna Tyther; and Oisín O'Connor.

**Dr Josephine Igoe** is Programme Director of BComm (Global Experience) and a Lecturer at J.E. Cairnes School of Business and Economics, University of Galway. Josephine teaches and researches in the area of International Business. Josephine has led international student study trips to Hong Kong and Miami USA. Josephine has also participated in Collaborative Online International Learning (COIL) with FIU and Symbiosis Centre for Management Studies (SCMS) in India. Josephine's research focuses on foreign-owned multinationals in Ireland and their relationship to headquarters.

This article was originally published in [Cois Coiribe's Global Impact Edition](#).

# MSc Sustainability Leadership Students

## Visit Bologna Business School

Our MSc Sustainability Leadership students embarked on an exciting journey to Bologna Business School in April of this year. This enriching experience immersed the students in a sustainable business environment, offering opportunities to visit innovative local companies in Bologna who are leading the charge in the sustainability transition. Throughout the experience, students engaged with industry thought leaders, gaining invaluable insights into the sustainability landscape, and collaborated with ambitious peers from the Master's in Sustainability Transition Management at BBS.



**B**ologna Business School is the international business school of the University of Bologna, the oldest university in the world. Their mission is to shape a new generation of business leaders, capable of driving international growth and digital transformation, with a view to sustainability.

Our students were captivated by the Villa Guastavillani campus at BBS, a 16th-century residence, nestled in one of Italy's most dynamic economic regions. The experience was further enriched by an inspiring lecture on Urban Transition from Professor Valentina Gianfrate of the Department of Architecture at the University of Bologna.

Our students then ventured to the **Fondazione Innovazione Urbana (FIU) Lab**, a groundbreaking hub for urban regeneration. This multidisciplinary centre is committed to building the cities of the future through research, development and collaboration among local governments, universities, businesses and citizens. Students also took time to participate in an engaging session on Agricultural Transition, delivered by Professor Francesco Orsini from the Department of Agriculture and Food Sciences at the University of Bologna.



The afternoon brought visits to **Eta Beta** and **Salus Space**, where our students learned about social inclusion and sustainability initiatives. Eta Beta is a social cooperative providing therapeutic and rehabilitative programmes and work placements for disadvantaged individuals, focusing on handicraft, artistic and agricultural activities. Meanwhile, Salus Space is dedicated to creating environments for sustainable collaboration, merging social inclusion for migrants and refugees with a vision of intercultural welfare and active citizenship.

Overall, the visit to Bologna Business School not only enriched our students' understanding of sustainability practices but also strengthened international collaborations. Insights gained from industry leaders and vibrant peer discussions have ignited a passion among our students for driving sustainable change in their future careers.

Learn more about our [MSc Sustainability Leadership programme](#).



# A Growing Network of Global Partners

As a key strategic goal for the College, internationalisation has been at the forefront of School activities in 2024, led by the College's Vice Dean of Internationalisation Dr Murray Scott and the School's Associate Head for Internationalisation Dr Emer Curtis.

Dr Scott says of the strategy, "We have developed a clear global partnership strategy that will create an excellent network of partners in diverse locations with the ambition of building our reputation and prestige internationally."

The School has made significant progress in growing our network of international partners through campus visits, events centered around intercultural learning and new opportunities in research and student recruitment. Dr Scott adds, "Our network of global partners will support and grow our research capability in distinctive areas of competence. Additionally, it will facilitate the development of sustainable pipelines of diverse and high-quality international students into our programmes and also offer our students and staff the opportunity to work and study in prestige global locations."

Through a focus on 'internationalising at home,' the strategy aims to foster the development of students as global citizens through developments in the curriculum and using technology to support digital connections.

**90+**  
International  
Partner Universities

#### New Partnership Agreements

New international partnership agreements for student exchange programmes have been established with several prestigious institutions over the last year, including:

- Université Paris Dauphine
- NEOMA Business School, Rouen
- Audencia Business School, Nantes
- Uppsala University – Enlight Network, Sweden
- Sejong University – AACSB, South Korea
- McGill University (EQUIS) – Desautels Faculty of Management, Montreal

#### New Double Degree Agreements

- TBS Education, Barcelona Campus
- Montpellier Business School

## Studying Abroad: Austin, Texas

Brian Moloney, Bachelor of Commerce (Global Experience) Student, reflects on a year spent studying abroad at St Edward's University in Austin, Texas, USA.

#### Studies

Studying at St Edwards contributed to my academic growth in many ways. I was very close to my professors and there were small class sizes; I loved that. One of my professors even offered me an internship at the beginning of the second semester which was a great opportunity that I could not have imagined before I came to Austin.

I did two Psychology classes over the course of the year, and these were interesting and refreshing having only studied business subjects back home. I definitely feel they helped my growth as a student and as a person also. In the first semester I even did an acting class, which got me out of my comfort zone, made me more confident and improved my presentation skills. It was really enjoyable, and I would definitely recommend it.

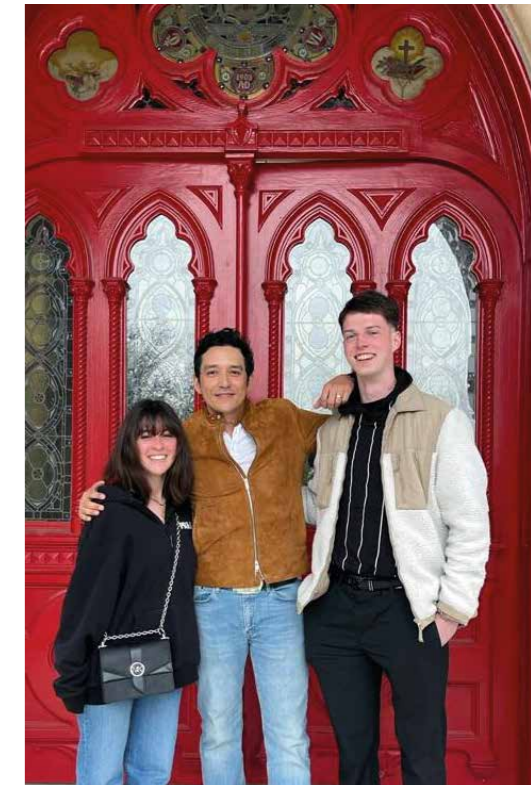
#### Sport

I played soccer for the university club team in the first semester, and I made a lot of friends from all over the world. I had teammates from Colombia, Rwanda, Japan, Honduras, Mexico and many different states across the US. Looking back, I think I was the only European on the team. It was fantastic though, and I am delighted to be able to call them friends.

I was lucky enough to go to a Dallas Cowboys NFL game and a UT college football game. Both were amazing but for atmosphere alone, I preferred college football. There's nothing like it anywhere else in the world; it was fantastic.



I had teammates from Colombia, Rwanda, Japan, Honduras, Mexico and many different states across the US.



### Travel

I would recommend visiting other places in America. For Spring Break, my friends and I drove to San Diego in California, which took around 20 hours, stopping in Phoenix along the way. In the car on the way to San Diego, I travelled with two friends from the US, one from France and one from Chile. Wherever I looked, I was accompanied by our own little United Nations. I got to visit New York a couple of times in between travelling from Ireland to Austin and that was unreal to say the least. I went to Miami and that was a great experience also. I would particularly recommend going to Little Havana, and Miami beach of course.

A friend from UL and I got cheap flights with Spirit to Cancun, Mexico on a Friday and flew there on the Sunday and I must admit in terms of impulse decisions I do not think I have made many better. The three days I spent there were unbelievable, particularly getting to drive a golf cart around La Isla De Mujeres, going to a nightclub called Coco Bongo and visiting one of the seven wonders of the world, Chichen Itza.

**In the second semester, I did a 10-hour drive with my friends to New Orleans for Mardi Gras, and that was just incredible. The atmosphere around the city was electric.**

**Some days when I am in the library, writing one of my final-year projects, I think of the memories from my year abroad.**

In the second semester, I did a 10-hour drive with my friends to New Orleans for Mardi Gras, and that was just incredible. The atmosphere around the city was electric. I don't think there is an experience like it anywhere else in the world. Mardi Gras was a bucket list thing for me, and I will be going back whenever I can. I did a lot of amazing things during my year in the US, but Mardi Gras in New Orleans, and visiting Cancun were the stand outs.

I travelled around Arizona with my parents last May, at the end of my year of study, and the landscapes were out of this world. I would say Sedona might just be the most beautiful place on the planet. That's without even mentioning the awe-inspiring Grand Canyon.

### Recommendations for Future Global Experience Students

My biggest recommendation would be to take risks, in terms of travel, experiences, classes, everything! Getting out of my comfort zone was what made my time so amazing. Funnily enough, I am also now in a long-distance relationship with a French woman I met while I was in Texas. I am even going back to Austin to visit soon, which I think proves better than anything just how much I loved my experience.

Looking back, I am so grateful for all that I got to do and all the people I met. Some days when I am in the library, writing one of my final-year projects, I think of the memories from my year abroad, of the places I visited, and it just makes me so excited for the future. It also makes me a little jealous of the students who are heading off on their study abroad this year. If you are thinking about choosing St Edwards, and the city of Austin for your own study abroad experience, just do it! You will be glad you did.

Words and images courtesy of Brian Moloney, Bachelor of Commerce (Global Experience) Student. [Learn more about the Commerce \(Global Experience\) programme.](#)



# Thinking of Pursuing a Master's at University of Galway?

Read my top tips for making the best of university life...

**Bhavya Bhatia,**  
International Student Ambassador,  
MSc Digital Marketing Student

If someone were to ask me, "what's the most life-changing decision I've ever made?" I would, without a doubt, say that it was the leap to pursue my Master's at the University of Galway. Shifting countries and jumping into this adventure alone might sound daunting, but trust me, it's a rollercoaster ride you will cherish forever.

**Leaving behind your support systems back home can be tough but it's also an opportunity to build a new home away from home, to find your tribe and craft the life you've always dreamed about.**

Leaving behind your support systems back home can be tough but it's also an opportunity to build a new home away from home, to find your tribe and craft the life you've always dreamed about.

After soaking up a fantastic year here at the University of Galway, I have gathered some insider tips for those interested in pursuing the Master's Digital Marketing programme. Think of these little nuggets of wisdom as compass points to help guide you through the maze of campus life.



## 1.

### **Orientation Week: The Ultimate Icebreaker**

Imagine a week where the only agenda is to have fun, meet new people and soak in the excitement of starting this new chapter. That's Orientation Week for you! Karaoke nights, speed-friending sessions, movie screenings – you name it. If I were you, I wouldn't miss out on a single event. Leave your inhibitions at home and dive into the activities. Trust me; nobody's judging. We're all in the same boat, ready to make lifelong connections and memories.



## 2.

### **Socs Fair: Where Passions Meet**

The SocsBox, responsible for all societies here at the University, organises a carnival of sorts called the Socs Fair, to help you find groups dedicated to your interests and hobbies. From photography clubs to musical groups, there is something for everyone. Join as many societies as you can, follow them on Instagram for updates and consider taking up committee positions. Personally, I took on the role of Social Media and Comms Manager for SwiftieSoc – because who wouldn't want to spread the love and music of Taylor Swift across campus? Best job ever.



## 3.

### **ALIVE Fair: Giving Back, Making a Difference**

ALIVE, the volunteering hub at the University, brings you a plethora of charities and organisations in need of student volunteers. Volunteering is all about making meaningful connections and standing up for causes close to your heart. Whether you're spending time at the Teddy Bear Hospital or cheering on runners at Parkrun, every hour counts. Plus, it looks great on your CV. So, don't be shy to sign up and associate yourself with causes that matter to you.



## 4.

**Embrace Your Course**

Your university journey is not only about socialising; it's also about academic growth. Being actively involved in your course can enhance your learning experience tenfold. Consider volunteering as the Class Representative (CR). This role keeps you engaged with your classmates and professors, while giving you a platform to voice student concerns and suggestions. Moreover, don't underestimate the power of collaboration. Group projects are opportunities to learn from various perspectives, polish your teamwork skills and build lasting friendships. When the textbooks start to feel overwhelming, remember to take breaks with your classmates. Grab a cup of coffee or unwind at SULT: these moments of bonding are invaluable for your academic and personal growth.

Words and images courtesy of International Student Ambassador and MSc Digital Marketing student, Bhavya Bhatia.

Learn more about the [MSc Digital Marketing programme](#).

Volunteering is all about making meaningful connections and standing up for causes close to your heart. Whether you're spending time at the Teddy Bear Hospital or cheering on runners at Parkrun, every hour counts.

## 5.

**Become a Student Ambassador**

If you're looking to make a meaningful contribution to your university while earning some extra cash, becoming a Student Ambassador is the way to go. Many university offices offer ambassadorship opportunities, allowing you to represent the University and engage with prospective students, alumni and the community. Whether guiding campus tours, assisting with events or sharing university experiences on social media, being a Student Ambassador is a rewarding experience and a fantastic addition to your resume. Keep an eye out for application openings and seize the chance to showcase your passion for your university while gaining valuable skills.

## 6.

**Society Events: All the Fun, Games and Colour**

Society events are the heart and soul of our University. They can add so much colour and excitement to your academic journey. These events offer a brilliant opportunity to connect with like-minded individuals, explore new interests and simply have a great time. Even if you're not officially part of a society, don't hesitate to attend. Whether a 'sip and paint' session with Artsoc or a festive Diwali celebration with Indiasoc, these events provide a welcome break from your studies and a chance to immerse yourself in university life. So, mark your calendar, grab your friends, and get ready to make unforgettable memories.

**In the end, my number one piece of advice is simple: put yourself out there.**

Ask questions, share ideas and watch yourself grow. Everyone here is approachable and welcoming – so, don't hold back. There are plenty of opportunities that will help you become the best version of yourself, but only if you put in the active effort to grab them!

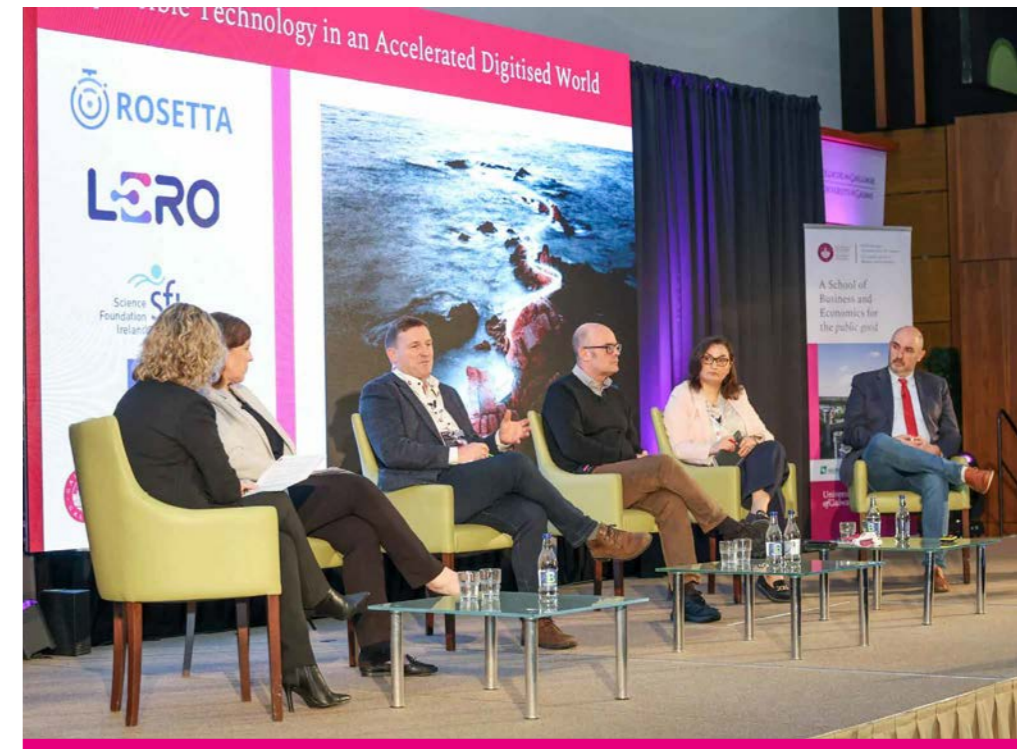


# Regional Business Summit 2024: Responsible Business, at Scale

J.E. Cairnes School of Business and Economics, in collaboration with itag, Galway Chamber and Data 2 Sustain, welcomed over 300 business leaders and policy makers to the University's Regional Business Summit (RBS) 2024 this year to discuss the global challenges facing business today.

How can we support the region, and more broadly Europe, to produce companies that can compete with the likes of Google on the global stage? How can we re-evaluate 'business as usual' in line with UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)? And how can we match the speed of accelerating technological demands in a responsible manner? Multinational and indigenous companies joined heads with academics in responding to these questions with practical, research-informed insights. University alum Irial Finan returned to his alma mater on 22 March to launch the Summit with a keynote address, reflecting on an extensive career and the changing landscape of global business.

**Watch on YouTube**



Panel conversation and launch of ROSETTA fellowship project. Pictured (L-R): Mary Ann Fleming (PennEngineering), David Silke (Centripetal), Ian Brannigan (Western Development Commission), Sharon Walsh (Fidelity Investments), Dr Anastasia Griva and Dr Kieran Conboy (ROSETTA).

**Sustainability has gone from a 'nice to have' to a 'need to have' for companies, be they small, medium or global. A summit like today's helps raise awareness.**

Barry Gavin, Adjunct Lecturer, J.E. Cairnes School of Business and Economics



L-R: Dr Féidhlim McGowan, Irial Finan, Dr Majella Giblin, Cllr. Eddie Hoare, Prof Ciarán Ó hÓgartaigh, Prof Alma McCarthy, Prof Geraint Howells, Prof John McHale.



Sinéad O'Connell (Computer Troubleshooters) and Anne Pears (Galway Chamber).



L-R: Meadhbh McNutt, Mairead Ledwith, Sandra Brennan, Axel Prada, Louise Monahan, Adrian Larkin, Emma Goode, Sarah Mullholland and Sharon Allman.



J.E. Cairnes School of Business and Economics launches a new MSc in Management and Sustainability. Pictured (L-R): Dr Rachel Hilliard, Senior Lecturer & Programme Director and Prof Esther Tippmann, Head of Discipline, Management.

### The Future of Finance

A new future for business and finance cannot be delivered without the industry leaders of tomorrow; and the University's commitment to this future is clear with the launch of two new academic programmes. Dr Féidhlim McGowan introduced a new MSc in FinTech during a panel on sustainable finance, featuring Deloitte, Skyspecs and Banking & Payments Federation of Ireland. This new programme represents a leap in financial education, marrying FinTech with sustainable procedures to prepare graduates for a new world of finance and ESG.

Barry Gavin, Adjunct Lecturer, said of the panel discussion, "Sustainability has gone from a 'nice to have' to a 'need to have' for companies, be they small, medium or global.

A summit like today's helps raise awareness. And the networking, which is an integral part of it – allows people to share ideas, knowledge and learnings – because a lot of people are trying to figure things out as [they] go."

**Various perspectives weighed into the panel on digital responsibility, from Western Development Commission, PennEngineering and Centripetal Europe (the company with the largest collection of threat intelligence in the world).**

### Scrutinising Responsible Tech Efforts

A €3.5m fellowship programme, ROSETTA<sup>1</sup>, will take a broad approach to digital responsibility, recruiting 19 top researchers to delve into ethical business practices in technology.<sup>2</sup> The fellowship will support researchers to challenge assumptions around responsible tech, and in the words of Principal Investigator Prof Kieran Conboy, "scrutinise to what extent these 'responsible' efforts are real and [...] effective."

Various perspectives weighed into a panel on digital responsibility, from Western Development Commission, PennEngineering and Centripetal Europe (the company with the largest collection of threat intelligence in the world). Commenting on the discussion, ROSETTA supervisor and Assistant Prof Anastasia Griva said, "We've managed to challenge current assumptions around AI, analytics and cybersecurity, and we've learned a lot from our panellists."

### Scaling at the Edge of Europe

With our strategic location at the edge of Europe, the West of Ireland also has a vital role to play in closing Europe's scale-up gap. Following a brief introduction to the Centre for Entrepreneurial Growth & Scaling (CEGS), panellists from business, support agencies and academia debated the critical ingredients for successful business scaling.

Panellist Leo McAdams of Enterprise Ireland said, "There is a huge amount of support, including funding support, [involved in] making sure that Europe is coming out with the next Googles and the next life sciences companies – that we have more European companies that are global leaders. What I think is great here in the University is the work that has been going on in the area of scaling. The Centre for Entrepreneurial Growth & Scaling is a fantastic initiative; it is something that we really need to move the dial on the scaling agenda."

Summing up the spirit of collaboration on the day, Elaine Murphy of Signify Health praised the School and Centre for "bringing the likes of Enterprise Ireland and the IDA on stage together, shoulder-to-shoulder, to show that we have huge cross correlations and opportunities for the future growth and development of both multinational and indigenous [companies]. It's fantastic [...] to see the energy, the passion, the drive and the thought leadership in the room."

The Regional Business Summit is an annual event facilitated by J.E. Cairnes School of Business and Economics, University of Galway, as part of "Thinking Beyond: An Event Series for the Public Good."

**It's fantastic [...] to see the energy, the passion, the drive and the thought leadership in the room.**

**Elaine Murphy, VP & Site Lead, Ireland Operations, Signify Health**

Click to learn more about [ROSETTA](#), [MSc FinTech](#), [MSc Management and Sustainability](#).

<sup>1</sup> ROSETTA: Responsible Time and Tech in an Accelerated Digitised World.

<sup>2</sup> The ROSETTA project is led by J.E. Cairnes School of Business and Economics, and funded by Lero, Science Foundation Ireland Research Centre for Software and the EU Marie Curie COFUND scheme.



L-R: Barry Gavin (J.E. Cairnes School of Business and Economics), Louise O'Mahony (Banking & Payments Federation of Ireland), Cian Twomey (J.E. Cairnes School of Business and Economics), Caitlín Flanagan (Deloitte) and John Harney (SkySpecs).

# University of Galway and Deloitte Ireland Announce Strategic Partnership

Deloitte empowers students at J.E. Cairnes School of Business and Economics as future leaders by celebrating academic excellence and mentorship, and sharing professional expertise.

University of Galway and Deloitte Ireland unveiled a new five-year strategic partnership in February this year, which sees Deloitte commit €550,000 to create opportunities for students to benefit from the company's professional expertise, leadership and future career opportunities.

Watch on  
YouTube

The partnership builds on the longstanding ties between Deloitte and J.E. Cairnes School of Business and Economics at the University, which date back to the establishment of the BComm (Global Experience) degree. It also cements Deloitte's commitment to supporting education and academic excellence in the Connacht region.

In this new partnership, Deloitte will celebrate academic excellence across Bachelor of Commerce programmes by supporting Global Scholars, who study abroad as part of their degree, and by providing tailored mentorship and travel bursaries.

**The partnership will see a dedicated collaboration hub within the Biz Hub at J.E. Cairnes School of Business and Economics.**

A scholarship has also been created, led by Deloitte employees and designed to empower students in their learning and career development, while a bespoke Deloitte business challenge and internship programme is also being established.

The partnership will see a dedicated collaboration hub within the Biz Hub at J.E. Cairnes School of Business and Economics, which is designed to foster creativity and innovation, encourage collaboration and promote excellence in teamwork.

Commenting on the partnership, Harry Goddard, CEO, Deloitte Ireland, said: "Investing in tomorrow's leaders is critical for us at Deloitte. This partnership will develop the talent required to address the complex challenges faced by industries and institutions across the world. It will help to empower and prepare our future leaders for the future world of work."

Professor Ciarán Ó hÓgartaigh, President of University of Galway, said: "One of our core values at University of Galway is excellence and the partnership that we are announcing with Deloitte today speaks to that. It is a shining example of leadership in action, where those who have gone before

our students are creating more opportunities for them to excel and achieve."

Professor Alma McCarthy, Dean of the J.E. Cairnes School of Business and Economics, said: "This Deloitte partnership centrally aligns with both our School mission, to make a transformative impact for our students, and our core values of openness and excellence. The new multi-dimensional partnership provides our students with excellent real-world learning experiences, scholarships and supports for international study which will set our students apart."

Sinead Gogan, Chief Human Resources Officer at Deloitte Ireland, said: "As the largest professional services firm globally, we understand the importance of growth through international experience and early access to the work environment alongside academic learning. Our collaboration will offer high-performing University of Galway students an exceptional opportunity to connect with leading Deloitte professionals and alumni."

Announcing the University of Galway and Deloitte five-year strategic partnership were Conor Sweeney, fourth year BComm student; Professor Ciarán Ó hÓgartaigh, President of University



of Galway; Harry Goddard, CEO, Deloitte Ireland; Maoiliosa Walsh, fourth year BComm student; and Professor Alma McCarthy, Dean of the J.E. Cairnes School of Business and Economics. Credit – Mike Shaughnessy.

Click here for more information on the [Bachelor of Commerce \(Global Experience\)](#).

**Deloitte.**

# Celebrating the University Alumni Award Winner for Business and Commerce

Sponsored by Bank of Ireland

**James Murphy,**  
CEO, Lifes2good

Founder and CEO of Lifes2good James Murphy was born in Galway and attended St Jarlath's College in Tuam, graduated from the University with a Bachelor of Commerce, and qualified as a Chartered Accountant in 1986.

Watch on  
YouTube

James then moved to Brussels where he worked for Coopers & Lybrand (currently Price Waterhouse Coopers) and spent five years working between Belgium and Luxembourg. Returning to Ireland in 1991, he joined BMR-Slenderstone where, as part of the management team he built a successful brand and business, before embarking on his own venture in 1997, to start up Lifes2good.

Under James' leadership, Lifes2good has grown from a small distribution company in the west of Ireland to a global enterprise. He championed a marketing model comprising of direct sales to consumers through database and internet marketing in addition to selling into pharmacy chains and health stores. James made the company's first acquisition in the UK in 2003. In 2007 he acquired the Viviscal brand when this business had a turnover of €700k. The company continued to grow with further expansion throughout Europe and the US.

The Lifes2good business expanded worldwide with offices in Ireland, UK, USA, Canada, Australia, and Portugal. The Viviscal business grew to €50m turnover in 2016 and in January 2017, Lifes2good

successfully sold the Viviscal brand to the US Conglomerate, Church & Dwight, for €150m.

James Murphy, along with his wife Maria Murphy, holds a position on the Board of the Lifes2good Foundation. This foundation invests in organisations with the potential to create positive change in people's lives. Initially, the emphasis was on supporting initiatives that empower and educate women and children. Their current focus has shifted towards addressing climate change and environmental issues.

The Alumni Awards celebrate outstanding individuals among the University's 131,000 alumni, recognising their remarkable accomplishments across various fields on both local and global scales.

Initiated in 2000, the programme boasts an impressive roll call of 141 outstanding graduates who have gone on to honour their alma mater including the President of Ireland, Michael D. Higgins; Ireland's first female Attorney General, Máire Whelan; Irish Olympians Olive Loughnane and Paul Hession; actors Marie Mullen and Nicola Coughlan; Irish rugby international Ciarán Fitzgerald; RTÉ broadcaster Seán O'Rourke and many more.



L-R: Dr Aidan Thomson, Senior Lecturer in Music; Dr Johanna Clancy, Assistant Professor in Business Enterprise; Prof Ciarán Ó hÓgartaigh, Former President of University of Galway; Dr Michael Lang, Associate Professor in Business Information Systems.

## Teaching Excellence Awards 2024

In April of this year, we celebrated the winners of the 2024 College Awards for Teaching Excellence at the College of Business, Public Policy, and Law: Dr Michael Lang, Mairéad Hogan, and Dr Johanna Clancy.

These distinguished educators have demonstrated exceptional dedication to teaching, making significant contributions to the academic and personal development of their students. Each recipient has been awarded a Teaching Development Grant worth €750 in recognition of their outstanding efforts. The prestigious university-wide President's Award for Teaching Excellence was also presented to Dr Michael Lang, an educator from J.E. Cairnes School of Business and Economics. This award recognises Dr Lang's practical, student-centred approach to teaching and his ability to adapt to student feedback and performance. These educators inspire us all to strive for greatness in education; learn more about their work below.

**Dr Michael Lang** is an Associate Professor in Business Information Systems who has significantly contributed to the growth of the discipline and has been recognised for his excellence in teaching and research, including two President's Awards for Teaching Excellence.

**Ms Mairéad Hogan** is a Lecturer in Business Information Systems with a background in software engineering and a focus on User Experience Design and Interactive Systems Design, who contributes extensively as a reviewer for prestigious journals and conferences.

**Dr Johanna Clancy** is a Lecturer in Business Enterprise known for her innovative teaching methods in (social) entrepreneurship and responsible management, and for her leadership in integrating industry and community involvement into her modules.

# Meet Our Alumni: Brian Molloy

Brian Molloy,  
Head of Transformation at  
the Irish Defence Forces

Having worked for over 30 years in the private sector, MBA graduate Brian Molloy joined the Department of Social Protection in 2019, where he delivered large-scale transformation across a number of Department services.

Now as Head of Transformation at the Irish Defence Forces, Brian is driving what has been called the “biggest organisational reimagining in the history of the State,” in line with the Government-approved High Level Action Plan. An advocate for increased support for female participation in sport and a strong supporter of the move towards integration of the three Gaelic Games Associations, Molloy was appointed as the first male Uachtarán (President) of the Camogie Association in 2024.

**You are currently driving a structural transformation in the Irish Defence Forces which has been described as the “biggest organisational reimagining in the history of the State.” What are your main priorities as you lead this change?**

The role of Head of Transformation came out of the Report of the Commission on Defence Forces (CODF), and the priorities are mostly set out in that report. The report was released in 2022, shortly before the Russian invasion of Ukraine, identifying the need for significant transformation across the Defence Forces. They identified five pillars of change – Strategic HR and cultural change, joint capability development, new command & control and joint structures, reformed and restructured services, and the revitalisation of the reserves. In July of that year, the government then produced their High Level Action Plan. In that, they outlined a commitment to move to ‘Level of Ambition 2’ (LOA 2) by 2028. It is a shift in how we position the Defence Forces and in elevating our ambitions.

**My appointment was the first of its kind in terms of a senior civilian being hired reporting directly to the Chief of Staff of the Irish Defence Forces.**

The High Level Action Plan split the 130 CODF recommendations (including sub-recommendations) into 105 that were accepted and 25 that were going to be reverted back to Government or would need further evaluation before proceeding. The report identified the need to bring in an external civilian Head of Transformation to lead the transformation. My appointment was the first of its kind in terms of a senior civilian being hired reporting directly to the Chief of Staff of the Irish Defence Forces.

In 2023, the Independent Review Group (IRG) on the Defence Forces produced a report in the wake of serious allegations and questions about inappropriate behaviour, particularly towards women. After that, the Tánaiste outlined his wish to have a strategic framework which would bring together the recommendations of the Commission and the IRG report and all other plans relating to the transformation of the Defence Forces. I have said previously that although my title is Head of Transformation it could really be “transformations” plural – as we are simultaneously implementing cultural, organisational, digital and structural transformations across the Defence Forces. There is a huge amount of change happening, but the initial priority as stated by

Tánaiste Micheál Martin is cultural transformation.

We have unfortunately had high-profile issues of inappropriate and unacceptable behaviours – especially towards female members of the forces. Significant work has and is being done to ensure that the Culture of the Defence Forces is one where it is clear that any such behaviours will not be tolerated. New training programmes have been implemented to ensure that there is unambiguous understanding of the standards required of all our members. New structures and processes are being implemented to ensure that where inappropriate behavior does occur, any victim of inappropriate behaviour can have absolute confidence that it will be immediately and properly investigated and that it will not be tolerated.

**It was a steep, almost vertical, learning curve... I have to say, military personnel at all levels have been hugely welcoming of me and of the transformation programme.**

Each of the 130 recommendations from the Report of the Commission on Defence Forces has a start and completion date set out in the Detailed Implementation Plan. Ultimately, I will not transform the Defence Forces as an individual; the actual transformation comes from within and across the Defence Forces and will be driven by the members of



the Defence Forces at all levels. My team ensures that there is a framework and support in place to enable that transformation – to ensure that deadlines are met, and reports submitted. I oversee the Programme Management function, and the reporting structures around that are fed into the independently chaired Implementation Oversight Group and also feed into the quarterly Strategic Framework monitoring structures. We have made some substantial progress already and will be publishing an update on the plan by the end of the year.

**This new role is a huge undertaking in terms of embedding yourself within the military culture and vernacular as a civilian. What kind of challenges have you faced so far, and what has surprised you most about the organisation?**

My lack of military background was obviously a challenge but there are also advantages to that. I didn't have any preconceived notions as to what should or shouldn't be happening; it was a steep, almost vertical, learning curve. I have done

that a few times in my career, so I am relatively good at assimilating a lot of information and getting my head around how an organisation works and where I can add value. When I got the job, people asked me: “How are you going to be welcomed as a civilian leader?” I have to say, military personnel at all levels were hugely welcoming of me and the programme. I have encountered no resistance or reluctance to engage.

It's a very regulated environment that we're operating within. There's a strong legislative underpinning that governs what happens in the Defence Forces. So, a lot of thought and engagement goes into the implementation of any changes. The biggest surprise for me was the breadth of all that happens within the Defence Forces. There is a huge array of different roles across and within the Services. You have soldiers, air crews and sailors, but you also have electricians, mechanics, chefs, engineers, logisticians, HR, PR marketing, communications, IT and cybersecurity. As part of the military

**The Defence Forces have relationships across the academic world and the vast majority of the training offered to personnel across all levels is academically structured.**

education process, Senior Non-Commissioned Officers are Degree qualified and Senior Officers are qualified with a Master's Degree. Many personnel pursue further studies themselves. The Defence Forces have relationships across the academic world and the vast majority of the training offered to personnel is academically structured. We have a long-established relationship with the University of Galway and a very significant number of our personnel are former graduates.

Personnel also have free access to state-of-the-art gyms. With my Camogie Association hat on, this offers a fantastic opportunity in terms of career opportunities for camogie players.



Fitness and health are core parts of a career in the Defence Forces. There is a requirement for a certain level of physical fitness, and part of the job is to retain and improve that level of fitness. With your average job, a camogie player is trying to find time outside of work to spend in the gym, which is challenging and costly. In the Defence Forces, the time and equipment are made available to you as part of your job. And there are physical trainers there to guide you. In addition, there is also access to unmatched health support benefits including free semi-private healthcare for all serving personnel, free dental care, free physiotherapy service and free pharmacy.

Recruitment and Retention of personnel is certainly a challenge that has been covered extensively in the media and one we know we have to continue to tackle. We have seen notable success in terms of attracting new personnel. You can join as a general service recruit at 18 years of age, carry out 24 weeks of training and earn a salary of just over €40,000 p.a. Very few careers offer that income plus full pension, healthcare and dental care, gym facilities, accommodation and dining. The package of benefits is not to be understated, particularly in the current environment. The cadet competition for the fast-track Officer recruitment programme was significantly oversubscribed recently. We also have several thousand applications for the rolling General Service recruitment programme.

**...people may not be aware of just how well we compare on the international stage; but members of the Irish Defence Forces regularly win international military competitions.**

On the retention front we have made some notable positive changes to the terms and conditions of existing personnel – on the pay & conditions front as well as well as in areas like infrastructure, equipment, family friendly policies etc. We also recently saw changes to the Mandatory Retirement Ages which will be of benefit to retaining our personnel.

Promotion prospects are partly built around education and training. We have made those programmes easier to access. Remote working models don't always work in the Defence Forces. You can't go out on a patrol ship or carry out a mission from home. There are, however, components including training programmes that can be attended remotely or on a hybrid basis. We're trying to make the Defence Forces a more welcoming, modern workplace that meets the demands of today's society and particularly, a more attractive place for women and men to join and to build a career.

In terms of equipment, we have a huge capability development plan in process which will help ensure we transform to a modern fit-for-purpose Defence Force capable of meeting the challenges of today and the future.

We are well recognised for our peacekeeping overseas and the full extent of the resilience, leadership and professionalism of our overseas personnel at all levels and ranks has been particularly evident over recent months. However, people may not be aware of just how well we compare on the international stage; members of the Irish Defence Forces regularly win international military competitions. Our Irish Snipers, Combat Medics and Reconnaissance teams in particular have had great success in recent years against the best in the world. An Irish Defence Forces team recently won the prestigious annual military competition "Exercise Arduous Serpent" run by the British Army, an international competition which tests medical unit capabilities and performance under pressure. A

good reflection of how highly regarded our personnel are in the international context was evidenced by our Chief of Staff Lieutenant General Seán Clancy being recently elected as incoming head of the European Union Military Committee (EUMC).

One further area where the Defence Forces has received recognition is in the area of large-scale drug interdiction. One example of this took place recently, where a record amount of drugs were halted while in transit. That was a hugely complex and dangerous operation, and the entire operation was completed in rough seas by a multi-agency team including Army, Navy and Air Corp personnel.

**If you go to any national school in the country, children are learning about our culture – our history, our language, our dance. They're not always learning about camogie. Camogie is recognised by UNESCO but it's not part of our cultural curriculum, and it should be.**

**You were recently appointed as the first male Uachtarán of the Camogie Association. What is your vision for women's sports in Ireland, particularly as concerns have been expressed by female players around equality and sexism in the GAA?**

The funding and sponsorship of female sports in Ireland has improved immensely in recent years but still lags behind where it should be. I am a huge advocate for the expansion of supports for female participation in Sport and for the integration of Gaelic football, hurling, camogie and ladies' football under one organisational structure. At the moment, we have one structure for men's sports (GAA), and then there are two separate organisations for ladies' sports (LGFA and Camogie Association). From my perspective, as soon as we move towards an integrated model across the Gaelic Games family, the better. There will be challenges along the way but I remain firmly of the view that the sooner we combine, the better able we will be to collectively meet those challenges. The GAA and the Camogie Association have a very close and positive relationship, and I have had very positive engagement with the GAA leadership over recent

months and years – in my experience we are very much aligned on the importance of female participation in Gaelic Games and I have also found that they are very much committed to the integration process. To use that time-honoured phrase, "Ní neart go cur le chéile", which means that there is no strength without unity.

One of the areas that I do get frustrated about is the recognition and positioning of camogie in Ireland. UNESCO has recognised the unique cultural contribution made by

**I am a huge advocate of the simple principle that every girl in every national school in the country should be provided with access to camogie.**

camogie and hurling, including the sport in the 'Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity'. They have recognised it as a fundamental part of our culture. If you go to any national school in the country, children are learning about our culture – our history, our language, our dance. They are not always learning about camogie. I am a huge advocate of the simple principle that every girl in every national school in the country should be provided with access to camogie. They should be given the opportunity to play our national sport.

When Ciara Mageean won gold in the 1,500m final at European Championships, she was caught between two British athletes at the last bend, but she saw a gap and she burst through. In the interview immediately after her gold-winning performance, she said, "I didn't grow up playing camogie to get boxed in." I am a strong supporter of allowing and indeed encouraging children to play multiple sports. In my experience children thrive on playing multiple sports.

**When you first started the MBA course at J.E. Cairnes School of Business and Economics, did you foresee yourself in a role like this? Did the programme prepare you for the challenges of managing a project of this scale?**

My background was not particularly academic – I finished my Leaving Cert on a Thursday and started a job in a bank the following Monday. I got that job based on an interview and predicted Leaving Cert results. I then worked with several financial service

firms, before moving to Galway in 2006 to work for HC Financial. The 2008 financial crisis had a significant impact on the firm, and I give great credit to my employer HC Financial who sponsored me to do the MBA at University of Galway at that time.

I did the MBA for a couple of reasons. One was to expand my skillset and knowledge. The other reason was more personal; as I mentioned, I had never gone to college. I had worked my way up from the bottom and had been operating at senior management level for several years at that stage and had participated in lots of Management/Talent development programmes, but there was always an academic qualifications gap there in my mind. The MBA gave me a huge amount of self-confidence and self-belief because I was among a class of really intelligent people, highly educated people, and I was performing well. I did the Diploma in Management and the MBA, and I got a 1:1 in both. That experience and achievement gave me a great boost and provided me with an academic framework in terms of strategic management, planning and critical thinking that I have used since.

The MBA gave me the confidence to say that I wanted to do something different. Within HC I set up a business consulting division and worked as an interim CEO and interim COO with a number of clients. In 2019, I decided to radically change direction and after 30+ years in the Private Sector, I was appointed as Principal Officer in the Department of Social Protection. This gave me a fantastic opportunity to really test myself and to leverage the learnings from my MBA. On appointment as Principal Officer, I oversaw a large operational area including the largest disability schemes in the country, 200+ staff and an annual budget of about 2.2 billion. Without the MBA, and the skillset and confidence that it offered, I don't think I would have had the confidence to take on that level of change in career. But I did and was successful and it then led to my being appointed Chief Appeals Officer in the Department of Social Protection and from there I was appointed to my current role as Head of Transformation for the Irish Defence Forces.

**What advice would you give to current MBA students about effective leadership in today's world of work?**

What you learn from the MBA programme is that leadership is not about telling people what to do. Leadership is about creating an environment which enables your team to deliver. That stood to me in the Department of Social Protection and opened the door to this role of Head of Transformation.

Use the skills that you learn on the programme. Use the contacts that you make on the programme. Be confident in your own knowledge but always be prepared to learn more. The MBA is not necessarily the end; keep learning and up-skilling. Be open to listening to and engaging with people that have a completely different background to you.

Wherever you are and whoever you are engaging with, listen and learn. There will always be opportunities to develop. And finally – don't be afraid to take a chance and do something completely different. Life is for living and opportunities are there to be taken. As John A. Shedd said, "A ship in a harbor is safe, but that's not what ships are built for."

**...as Principal Officer, I oversaw a large operational area including the largest disability schemes in the country, 200+ staff and an annual budget of about 2.2 billion. Without the MBA, and the skillset and confidence that it offered, I don't think I would have had the confidence to take on that level of change...**

# Meet Our Alumni: Eileen O'Mara, Stripe

Eileen O'Mara,  
Chief Revenue Officer, Stripe

In the fast-evolving landscape of financial technology, few embody the spirit of leadership and innovation like University of Galway alumna, Eileen O'Mara. As chief revenue officer at Stripe, Eileen leads a global team that helps millions of companies – from the world's largest enterprises to the most ambitious startups – use Stripe to accept payments, grow revenue and accelerate new business opportunities.

Prior to joining Stripe, Eileen held a number of roles at Salesforce, including International CMO and head of commercial revenue for APAC & EMEA, leading large teams across diverse markets. O'Mara was recently awarded The Ireland Funds Distinguished Leadership Award 2024, celebrating her professional achievements and Stripe's dedication to supporting DEIS schools in Ireland and promoting access to higher education.

**Stripe's value has steadily risen in recent years. Can you share some of the challenges and successes that you have seen in your role as Chief Revenue Officer?**

At Stripe, many of the challenges we encounter are relayed back through feedback from our users. Some companies may defer to customers, but we see the end user as the number one stakeholder that we serve. As Chief Revenue Officer, I spend most of my time with users, understanding their business pains, understanding their goals and strategies for growth, and what revenue needs to be in place to support that growth.

Our mission at Stripe is to grow the GDP of the internet. It's an interesting mission because clearly, there is no GDP of the internet; but in our view, the internet is just coming into its own. In the earlier stages of

**Two thirds of the Forbes 'AI 50' companies are now powered by Stripe.**

the internet's evolution, advertising and eyeballs were the crux of how commerce was driven. Now that has evolved to business value exchange – B2B (business to business), B2C (business to consumer), B2B2C (two companies partnering to offer services to consumers) and everything in between. We like to ensure that we are meeting user demands; that includes everything from older, traditional customers like Ford Motors and huge organisations like Amazon, all the way to AI companies. Two thirds of the *Forbes* 50 AI companies are now powered by Stripe.

We're seeing innovators within large enterprise organisations that are trying to digitalise because they don't want the company to be disrupted. Then, there are of course new markets emerging around new technology. We're delighted to work with companies at both ends of the spectrum. The GDP of the internet should be for your upstarts and startups as much as your larger companies.

The movement of money is getting more complex, and the ability to run a business, to grow a business, is largely dependent on

how you monetise your product. If you can't take the payment and monetise your product, your business model is going to be under threat. The regulatory systems for specific markets can vary depending on what country you're based in. We're trying to extract that complexity for users.

**You have a buzzing office environment here. How do you maintain a strong working culture in a global organisation of this scale?**

You know the saying, "Culture eats strategy for breakfast."<sup>1</sup> We recognise the importance of culture to the success of our users, and to the success of Stripe. So, we are very intentional in how we think about culture. We have anchored the way we guide people on the culture we want to build at Stripe through a set of operating principles. As you come into the office, you will see our operating principles all over the walls. You will see them in print, but you will also see them in everything we do.

As I mentioned, users are our number one principle. Our second is about being meticulous in your craft. We want to build and engage our users in an experience that is rooted in craft. We may be in this crazy digital world, but that doesn't mean that we can't facilitate a beautiful experience where people are excited to use our products.



**We don't expect people to take themselves too seriously. We are doing serious things, but equally, we want a culture built on a foundation of respect and integrity, where people can share feedback and support each other.**

We also have a set of principles about how people show up to work, and being exothermic is one of those principles. We want people to be curious. You will never hear complaints about a colleague asking too many questions here; that's encouraged. We don't expect people to take themselves too seriously. We are doing serious things, but equally, we want a culture built on a foundation of respect and integrity, where people can share feedback and support each other. So, interviews and performance reviews are oriented around these principles. They play a big role in our approach to building and scaling.

**How have recent fintech innovations, such as AI and advanced analytics, been integrated into Stripe's revenue-generation strategies, and what impact have they had on driving growth and efficiency?**

We are obviously supporting a lot of AI platforms at Stripe; it's important to us that we are the preferred choice for users in that marketplace, and for companies looking to scale their business. Stripe's whole business model has always integrated machine learning. As AI and machine learning evolves, we continue to leverage that technology. People aren't always aware of the presence of machine learning in their everyday lives. To give an example, Uber is on Stripe. If you're abroad, in Japan, let's say, and you order an Uber, we're going to serve you up a payment method tailored to an Irish person in Japan. Our machine learning allows for an optimised checkout suite with the most suitable payment method and user experience.

**Our network of users is so expansive now, so there is so much data to pull from when training these models to outsmart fraudsters.**

Equally, when you think about how many fraudsters are out in the world and the number of merchants and consumers on our networks. We draw a lot of insights and predictions into our models through machine learning. If we see a fraudster in New York for example, and they show up on a merchant's system in London, we can recognise them as a security risk. That capability is really on the back of AI technologies. Our network of users is so expansive now, so there is so much data to pull from when training these models to outsmart fraudsters. We have built machine learning into our products for a long time and will continue to evaluate those tools as they evolve.

**Looking ahead, what do you believe will be the next major innovations in fintech, and how is Stripe positioning itself to lead in these areas?**

I only wish I had a crystal ball. I do think that we are seeing a wave of embedded finance in fintech now, specifically around SaaS platforms (Software as a Service, i.e. software applications accessed online, and not downloaded). Not so long ago, the only people that could offer financing were typically institutions, banks, etc. Now we are asking: how can we support companies and merchants to really embed finance into their offerings?

SaaS platforms offer vertical solutions or horizontal solutions to a market. They are creating these amazing solutions while also creating economic advantages for their customers. To give an example, platforms that serve restaurants can now offer restaurants short-term loans for things like renovations. The digital transaction history provides credibility that the merchant can pay back the loan. To embed capital within a platform like that – that would not have been possible in the past, and it is powered by the advent of new technologies.

Another point that comes to mind is that companies are really challenged by agile models. If you think of the media sector, we fuel a lot of media subscriptions models like SiriusXM in the US, Le Monde in France, or the Nikkei in Japan. You get used to paying subscriptions in a particular way but now, AI companies are developing new products. And they're thinking, "Maybe this service needs to be charged per query." So, we have built a whole technology suite under our billing subscriptions are going to be applicable to every corner of the industry, and very disruptive because we have grown up with the monthly subscription model.

**I still see a huge confidence gap within women, not because they're short on capabilities or skills but because they struggle to believe in themselves and back themselves.**

**What are some of the most memorable highlights of your career to date?**

You often see people jumping around in different industries but I have spent 25 years working in tech. Looking back, that was the best decision I could have made for my career development. I graduated from University of Galway (then UCG) in 1997 and a lot has happened in technology since then. In Galway at that time, most of us didn't have a mobile phone. So, I have lived and breathed through this industry that is rapidly changing and evolving. For me, that has been the most exciting thing to watch.

And fundamentally, on a day-to-day basis, I just love working with people in teams. I've had the opportunity to mentor and coach so many people, particularly women, which is important to me. That has been a real highlight and continues to be an area where I feel a sense of responsibility: to ensure there are role models for women in tech and help women to navigate their journey in the industry. I am much richer and fuller for that experience.

**You were recently awarded The Ireland Funds Distinguished Leadership Award at the San Francisco Gala Dinner. What does this award mean to you, and what advice would you give to women striving to be leaders in their careers?**

I felt so privileged and grateful to receive this award. I really didn't see that recognition as my own; I was carrying the award for all the women in Ireland that have committed to advancing a career in tech at a global level. I take that recognition very seriously. It means a tonne to me to be able to represent a whole cohort of different women at different stages in their careers.

I still see a huge confidence gap within women, not because they're short on capabilities or skills but because they struggle to believe in themselves and back themselves. I want to spend more time figuring out how I can work with people in my network to challenge that gap. Women often encounter tough decisions in their careers, and without a sounding board or someone they can go to for advice, those moments can be difficult. We still have a lot of work to do, and I certainly feel responsible for playing a part in that change.

**A lot of our graduates are similarly looking for advice as they approach an important moment in their careers. Which key traits do you look for when hiring graduates?**

The graduates we see here are so amazing and talented. Of course, we look for all of the competencies that you would expect as part of the graduate programme, but we are also looking to see if this person would enjoy working here. Can they see a long-term career here, and contribute a differentiated value to the role? Fundamentally, it comes down to the question: do they demonstrate the principles that are important to us, not even in terms of skills but as a person? Are they curious to learn more? Will they give feedback when they look around; are they going to be proud to work here? Are they going to get obsessed with these complex problems and get energy from solving them, without getting overwhelmed?

I would also always advise students to try to inform themselves as much as possible on what's happening in that industry or company. Particularly for women, we are not always as good at the networking part but it's important to



reach out. Find someone in the company that you're interested in, send them a note on LinkedIn and push yourself to learn a little more. Make sure that it's the right decision for you, wherever you land, because your first graduate job is a formative moment.

**Galway is outstanding in that everyone there has a bit of attitude and will debate things in a rigorous way. That sense of cognitive diversity really helped me [...] as I entered the workplace. I think I learned a lot of that in university.**

The power of alumni is very special. I travel around the world in my job and other University of Galway graduates frequently pop up in unexpected places – Singapore, Tokyo. The shared experience is a real door opener and an easy, trust-based conversation. That is something that I cherish. I think we

should encourage those connections because it builds a lovely community. I have such fond, amazing memories of my time in Galway, and I would certainly never trade those times.

Galway is such a special place, and the University provides a great foundation. Sometimes people don't know or acknowledge that Galway is full of diverse thinkers as well as people from diverse backgrounds. Galway is outstanding in that everyone there has a bit of attitude and will debate things in a rigorous way. That sense of cognitive diversity really helped me to challenge ideas in an appropriate way as I entered the workplace. I learned a lot of that in university.

<sup>1</sup>Famously stated by management consultant and writer, Peter Drucker.



# Partnering with Signify Health to Create a Global Case Study for Students

A case study examining the business strategy behind Signify Health's decision to open its first overseas hub in Galway is to become part of the syllabus for students based in third-level institutions around the globe.

The US healthcare technology firm first announced the opening of its technology centre at Bonham Quay in the centre of Galway city in March last year. Signify Health is a healthcare services company using advanced technology and data analytics to enable value-based care in the US healthcare market.

Some 80 people in technology innovation roles have already been recruited in Galway and recruitment is continuing. The tech team in Galway is creating tech solutions for some of the biggest challenges in the US healthcare system.

The case study, developed by the J.E. Cairnes School of Business and Economics in collaboration with Signify Health, offers students a unique insight into the company's motivations for looking abroad to scale up operations, the key factors informing the choice to move to Galway, and the different management structures considered for the company's first overseas hub.

The study allows students to critically analyse Signify Health's strategy and present ideas for how they might have scaled and structured the company's R&D operations differently. The Signify Health team provided key details for the case study, including how Ireland compared with international competitors like India, Germany, United Kingdom, and Poland in terms of GDP, digital skills, enrolment in third-level education, and average salary.

The study also reveals how the availability of talent in Galway's existing ecosystem of MedTech and healthcare industries superseded management concerns that Ireland's housing and health crises would inhibit growth at Signify Health.



Other advantages enjoyed by Galway as outlined in the case study include its cultural and geographic proximity to the US, strong links between business and academia, and the advocacy of Chief Technical Officer Josh Builder, who had previous experience setting up a similar operation in the city.

The study has been well received by students after being piloted at University of Galway and WU Vienna. The authors and Signify Health are hopeful that the case study's publication with Ivey Publishing, a leader in publishing business case studies with a reach of more than 25,000 faculty and staff in more than 160 countries, will lead to it being taught to many high-level students across the globe.

Signify Health VP and Site Lead Ireland Operations Elaine Murphy says of the partnership, "Signify Health was delighted to partner with University of Galway on this study. Our new premises on Bonham Quay in Galway represents Signify Health's first foray outside the US. We feel students will benefit from this unique

insight into our internal process... It's powerful for students to study something that has had such an impact on their local economy, rather than a remote event which they struggle to envision from a textbook. The success of the study has attracted attention from WU Vienna, where it was trialled earlier this year. That is a very positive development. We look forward to seeing how it will be received there and to continuing to build on the strength of the HealthTech industry's relationship with academia here in Ireland."

Professor of Strategy, Leadership and Change, University of Galway, Esther Tippman, added, "We are proud to have worked with Signify on the creation of this case study for our business syllabus. This document represents a huge opportunity for students at the J.E. Cairnes School of Business and Economics at University of Galway – and indeed for students from across the globe – to critically analyse the key considerations in Signify's decision to set up in Galway, and offer their views on what Signify Health could have done differently."

# Thinking Beyond: Thought Leadership Event Series

Governor of the Central Bank of Ireland Shares Insights on Inflation

J.E. Cairnes School of Business and Economics was delighted to welcome Gabriel Makhlof, Governor of the Central Bank of Ireland, who delivered an address focusing on inflation and the labour market as part of the university's *Thinking Beyond* series. Taking place in the University's Quadrangle Building, the event provided an invaluable opportunity for students and attendees to engage with critical economic issues facing Ireland.

Governor Makhlof shared valuable insights into the causes of high inflation in Ireland and what it means for monetary policy. A Q&A session followed with Alan Ahearne, Professor of Economics and Advisor to the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs Micheál Martin.

Gabriel Makhlof was appointed Governor of the Central Bank of Ireland in 2019. He is currently Chair of the Central Bank Commission, a member of the Governing Council of the European Central Bank and the European Systemic Risk Board, and Ireland's Alternate Governor at the International Monetary Fund.

Professor Ahearne emphasised the current state of the Irish economy. "The Irish economy is operating at full employment, with the unemployment rate having dropped to record lows and many businesses reporting shortages of labour," he said. "Against this backdrop, I very much look forward to the Governor's perspective on how developments in the labour market might affect the outlook for inflation, the cost of living and the future path of interest rates."



Governor Makhlof addressed the students and said he welcomed the opportunity to visit University of Galway as part of the University's *Thinking Beyond* series adding, "If I were to sum up post-pandemic labour market dynamics in one word, it would be resilient. The slowdown in growth this year has yet to show up in employment levels, with wage growth continuing to be strong, reflecting the combined effects of a tight labour market and catch up to inflation."

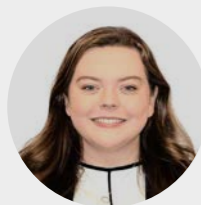
School Dean Prof Alma McCarthy, expressed her delight at hosting Governor Makhlof as part of the series. "We are delighted to host Governor Makhlof as part of our *Thinking Beyond* event series in the School. The series features insights from thought leaders on current issues impacting business and society across a broad array of industries and sectors."

Learn more about our [Thinking Beyond Events](#)

# External Advisory Board

The purpose of the External Advisory Board of J.E. Cairnes School of Business and Economics is to offer the Head of School and School Executive Board independent external guidance and advice, actively supporting the delivery of the School's mission and strategy. The External Advisory Board comprises regional, national and international members in many fields and from varied sectors. Our current

Board has 20 Board members, 15 of whom are from the business community and five of whom come from third sector, public and policy organisations. 33% of the Board are located internationally in the US, Dubai, Hong Kong, the UK, India and Denmark. We are excited to welcome medtech professional Edel Browne to the Board this year, and we look forward to the energy and insights that she will bring to the School.



**Edel Browne**

Programme Manager,  
Tympany Medical  
Galway, Ireland



**Gerry Kilcommins**

Former Vice President, Medtronic  
Interventional Vascular & Structural  
Heart Global Operations Network,  
Medtronic  
Galway, Ireland



**Richie O'Brien**

Head of HR Business Partnering  
– UAE & Turkey, Property Finder  
Dubai, UAE



**Nakul Sharma**

Director, EMEA & APAC,  
Blueground for Business  
London, UK



**Liz Canavan**

Assistant Secretary General,  
Department of the Taoiseach  
Dublin, Ireland



**Tara McCarthy**

Global Vice President of ESG,  
Alltech  
Dublin, Ireland



**Anne O'Riordan**

Group Director of Digital,  
Jardine Matheson  
Hong Kong, SAR



**Julie Sinnamon**

Council/Board Member, Climate  
Change Advisory Council; Social  
Entrepreneurs Ireland  
Dublin, Ireland



**Richard Chambers**

Partner, Goldman Sachs  
New York, USA



**Danny McCoy**

CEO, Ibec  
Dublin, Ireland



**Orleigh Quinn**

Independent Non-Executive  
Director & Former Secretary  
General, Department of Enterprise,  
Trade and Employment  
Dublin, Ireland



**Margot Slattery**

Global Head of Diversity and  
Inclusion and Belonging, ISS A/S  
at ISS A/S CDir  
Denmark



**Irial Finan**

Board of Directors, Smurfit Kappa  
New York, USA



**Anne Marie McKiernan**

Director of Financial Operations,  
Central Bank of Ireland  
Dublin, Ireland



**Brenda Romero**

CEO and Game Director,  
Romero Games Ltd  
Galway, Ireland



**Michael Smyth**

CEO, COPE Galway  
Galway, Ireland



**Deepak Kumar Jain**

Senior Manager in Software  
Engineering at NetApp  
Clare, Ireland



**Tomás Ó Síocháin**

CEO | Príomhfheidhmeannach at  
Údarás na Gaeltachta  
Galway, Ireland



**Suzanne Ryan**

MD, Blue Bird Care Ireland,  
Home Instead  
Galway, Ireland



**Sharon Walsh**

Senior Vice President,  
Technology, Fidelity Investments  
Galway, Ireland



# Biz Hub at Áras Cairnes

## A Learning Hub for Tomorrow's Leaders

In September 2023, the School unveiled a dynamic new study space for students, the Biz Hub at Áras Cairnes.

Located within the Dr Joe Higgins Research Room on the second floor of Áras Cairnes, the Biz Hub is a centre for study and innovation which facilitates student creativity, teamwork and independent study. Open to students across the university, the space also invites collaboration across disciplines.

This colourful learning space features movable meeting room pods, meeting tables, soft lounge furnishings, co-working zones, presentation areas and foldable seating for open events and public talks. Students also enjoy access to kitchen facilities and presentation technologies including multiple charging points and display screens.

The space also features the Deloitte Zone, a new dedicated events and collaboration hub within the space, designed to foster creative innovation.



MSc Sustainability Leadership  
MSc Management and Sustainability  
MSc Fintech (Economics and Financial Technology)  
MSc Cybersecurity Risk Management  
MSc Entrepreneurship and Venture Management

# Five New Cutting-Edge Master's Programmes

Discover five new innovative Master's programmes at J.E. Cairnes School of Business and Economics, designed to equip our future leaders with specialised knowledge and skills.

The MSc in Management and Sustainability programme aims to shape tomorrow's leaders, graduates capable of driving positive change and promoting responsible business practices. This programme provides a comprehensive management education with a strong emphasis on global business sustainability. Graduates will develop critical thinking, problem-solving and analytical skills to prepare for a range of management roles, integrating sustainable principles along the way.

The School also offers an MSc in Sustainability Leadership, a two-year, part-time programme offering flexible learning suitable for working professionals. This programme equips students with the skills to drive sustainable business transformation. The interdisciplinary curriculum covers the impact of sustainability on organisations and includes weekly online evening classes, immersive in-person blocks and an international study trip to Bologna Business School. The programme also features strong industry integration through guest speakers, site visits, case studies and applied sustainability projects.

The third programme to launch this year was the MSc in Fintech (Economics and Financial Technology). Placed at the intersection of finance, economics and technology, this pioneering programme is designed for graduates of business, economics, finance, computer science and engineering with an economics background. Leveraging Galway's strong presence in finance and analytics, the curriculum blends

theoretical and applied subjects. Key areas of study include economic theory, econometrics and the integration of finance, technology, data science and the economic impact of financial technology.

Another course launched during the 23/24 academic year delves into an area of major growth and interest – the MSc in Cybersecurity Risk Management. Designed for those pursuing a career in IT security within consultancy, strategic, business or management contexts, this specialist qualification enables graduates to analyse and manage cybersecurity threats and vulnerabilities. The curriculum covers assessing cybersecurity postures, implementing solutions, testing and improving defence mechanisms, and formulating business continuity and disaster recovery plans. Graduates will also be able to develop cybersecurity and data protection policies for organisations.

A brand-new MSc in Entrepreneurship and Venture Management will launch in September 2025, equipping students with the specialised skills and knowledge required to manage ventures from startup to harvest.

These programmes reflect J.E. Cairnes School of Business and Economics' dedication to addressing contemporary challenges through advanced education and practical expertise.

Learn more about our postgraduate taught programmes [here](#).



# Scholarship Awardee Joe Gaughan's Transformative MBA Journey

At the University of Galway, our MBA programme is renowned for its commitment to transformative leadership, business for society and creative edge.



Designed to offer a comprehensive and integrated learning experience, our MBA curriculum not only equips students with practical business skills but also fosters self-discovery, personal growth and leadership excellence. Central to this is our focus on connecting students with regional, national and international business enterprises, providing an environment rich in shared learning and career advancement opportunities.

One of the most exciting aspects of our MBA programme is the Colm Feeney MBA Scholarship. This prestigious award supports high-calibre applicants by offering them a full scholarship to join our MBA programme and access to dedicated one-to-one mentorship from a business leader. Awarded to a new recipient each year, the scholarship underscores our commitment to nurturing exceptional talent and providing invaluable support throughout their studies.

This year, we are thrilled to feature Joe Gaughan, the latest recipient of the prestigious scholarship. Joe's journey is a compelling testament to the transformative power of our MBA programme and the impact of the scholarship. "Having been recently awarded the Colm Feeney MBA Scholarship, I have felt an enormous sense of pride and gratitude towards both the university and the Feeney family," Joe shares. Joe sees this opportunity as a significant boost to his educational journey and career

**The MBA will help me become a more well-rounded leader and give me a strong understanding of how best to overcome some of the most difficult situations.**

trajectory. He is now looking forward to immersing himself in a vibrant environment, surrounded by top-class facilities and a network of talented peers.

One of the highlights of Joe's scholarship is the one-to-one mentorship. "Having the privilege of one-to-one mentorship is something I'm extremely excited about," Joe notes. "I look forward to developing a relationship with my mentor, and I believe having that support will have a hugely positive influence on my experience with the programme."

Joe's commitment to personal and professional development aligns seamlessly with the core values of the University of Galway's MBA programme. "This MBA programme provides an amazing opportunity to progress my knowledge and understanding of business," he states. As a Galwegian, Joe is particularly appreciative of having access to such a prestigious institution right on his doorstep. He acknowledges the exceptional quality of the faculty and resources at the University of Galway. "They are people at the top of their field for good reason, and I look forward to meeting them all," Joe adds.

Through the MBA experience, Joe hopes to hone his communication skills, which he views as foundational to business success. "Strong communication will aid me in every aspect of my future career, personally and professionally," he explains. Joe also values the practical elements of the MBA programme, such as case studies and projects, for their ability to offer real-world insights and practical applications. "I find that practical projects are often one of the most effective ways you can learn," he says.

**Having the privilege of one-to-one mentorship is something I'm extremely excited about.**

Networking is another important aspect of a career in business. Joe is excited about connecting with peers from diverse industries and learning from their experiences. "I'm excited to network with everyone, to be honest. There is so much to learn from each industry, and gaining insight into each of them will benefit my future career," Joe says, highlighting a particular interest in finance and the role of technology within hospitality.

The MBA is designed to produce tomorrow's industry leaders, with a focus on strategic planning and decision-making. "The MBA will help me to become a more well-rounded leader and give me a strong understanding of how best to overcome difficult situations," he adds. Embarking on this transformative journey, Joe joins a network of talented students and graduates. "Without a doubt, this MBA programme will develop integral leadership skills that I will carry with me into both my personal and professional life," he concludes, fully embracing the opportunities that lie ahead.

Joe Gaughan's story embodies the essence of the University of Galway's MBA programme and the lasting benefits of the Colm Feeney MBA Scholarship. While the MBA journey is only the beginning, the tools and experiences that Joe gains will stand to him throughout his career.

# Elevate Your Career with Our University of Galway MBA

The University of Galway MBA is a prestigious, AMBA-accredited, two-year, part-time programme designed for ambitious professionals who want to fast-track their careers while applying their learning in real-time. This flexible, industry-focused programme allows you to integrate cutting-edge academic theory with practical business strategies from day one, all while continuing your professional journey.

This MBA offers a world-class, academically rigorous education, seamlessly blending real-world business challenges with global insights. The programme is carefully crafted to provide a high return on investment, empowering you with the leadership, vision, and tools needed to accelerate your career. Whether you're aiming for senior leadership, entrepreneurship, or a career pivot, the University of Galway MBA will position you for unparalleled success.

## What Sets the University of Galway MBA Apart?

Our MBA programme is distinguished by a unique blend of academic excellence, global learning opportunities, and a strong focus on developing leadership for the future. We focus on three key pillars that set us apart from other business schools:

- **Business for Society:** Learn to balance business objectives with a strong sense of social responsibility.
- **Creative Edge:** Gain innovative thinking and entrepreneurial spirit that will help you thrive in any business environment.
- **Transformational Leadership:** Develop the leadership skills needed to inspire and drive change in your organisation and beyond.

The programme is designed to provide a comprehensive, integrated learning experience, led by experienced faculty members who are passionate about teaching and mentoring.

## Key Programme Features:

- **2-Year, Part-Time Format** (delivered over 21 months): Perfect for professionals looking to balance their studies with work.
- **Hybrid Block Release Structure:** Flexible, face-to-face learning combined with online modules, giving you the freedom to continue working while studying.



- **International Leadership Gateway** at Fordham University, New York: Experience global business perspectives and networking at one of the world's top universities.
- **Executive Coaching and MBA Masterclasses:** Benefit from personalised coaching and insights from industry leaders.
- **Industry-Specific Learning:** The MBA is tailored to professionals from diverse sectors such as Pharma, Healthcare, Hospitality, Marketing, Finance, Education, IT, Consulting, and more.

## A Proven Track Record of Success

The University of Galway MBA is built on a foundation of success, with graduates making significant strides across a range of industries, from pharma and healthcare to consulting and technology. Our alumni network spans the globe, creating a supportive community that extends your career possibilities.

## Colm Feeney MBA Scholarship

In partnership with the Feeney family, the University of Galway is proud to announce the Colm Feeney MBA Scholarship in honour of the late Colm Feeney, founder of SSL Logistics (now Rhenus Logistics) and a dedicated mentor to Galway's small business community. This scholarship, offered annually, is aimed at individuals working in small businesses or social organisations with fewer than 100 employees, helping to nurture regional leadership and growth.

The Colm Feeney MBA Scholarship not only provides financial support but also includes mentorship from a senior business leader, helping recipients grow both professionally and personally throughout their MBA journey.

Learn More about the [University of Galway MBA](#).

# Meet Our Alumni: Sam Murphy-Kerry, Accenture

Sam Murphy-Kerry,  
North America Director,  
Sustainability Studio, Accenture Song

J.E. Cairnes School of Business and Economics graduate and business strategy leader Sam Murphy-Kerry is the North America Director at the Sustainability Studio at Accenture Song, the tech-powered creative group of Accenture. Accenture Song's Sustainability Studio is dedicated to making sustainability relevant and actionable for everyone. As the business world increasingly faces pressing calls for sustainable action, creativity and strategy have never been more important. Here, Sam explains why sustainability and growth, by definition, "ought to go hand in hand".

## Take us through a day as a Director at Accenture with the remit of embedding sustainability into Accenture's client work.

My role is within Accenture Song's Sustainability Studio. In my role, I am responsible for business and offering development and client relationship management, meaning I am constantly working with colleagues, clients and partners across a wide range of challenges, opportunities and geographies.

This year, I've mostly been focusing on energy and transportation decarbonisation. I have been working closely with a global energy player looking to understand consumer motivations and behaviours around electric vehicle (EV) purchasing and charging.

I led a team of designers, engineers and commercial strategists in identifying systemic and behavioural barriers to the adoption of electric vehicles. Based on these insights, we defined new products and services to help our client scale EV adoption and grow their own market share of EU charging volume, all powered by renewable energy.

Outside of large-scale programmes such as this, I am constantly working with colleagues, experts and partners to guide our clients in embedding sustainability into their core business. On many of my projects, I am constantly pitching, prototyping and customer testing – all critical skills I developed during my time at University of Galway.

**According to our latest data with the United Nations, executives still believe that tackling climate change is a top priority, recognising that it is critical to business resilience. With only 15% of SDGs on track for 2030, never has the world needed the blend of creativity and strategy more than today.**

## Many business leaders see the importance of sustainability. Is sustainability compatible with growth? How does Accenture support businesses to bridge that gap?

To be sustainable is to provide for the needs of the present without compromising the needs of the future. By definition, sustainability and growth ought to go hand in hand. Unfortunately, the path to connecting these two perceived tension points is not always clear. Those of us who work in sustainability every day are constantly challenged to demonstrate creativity and strategic understanding of our clients' business models in order to help leaders do well while doing good.

The Accenture – [UN Global Compact Private Sector SDG Stocktake](#) shows that we are off track in our pursuit of the 2030 goals, but executives still believe that tackling climate change is a top priority and is critical to business resilience. With only 15% of the SDGs on track for 2030, never has the world needed the blend of creativity and strategy more than today.

At Accenture, we support clients in bridging this gap across energy transition, regulation and data, supply chain, procurement, responsible leadership and design. My team is the designated sustainable growth engine, tasked with influencing culture, pioneering new sustainable business models and activating people. Last year, we completed a study on people's relationship with sustainability titled [Our Human Moment](#), and our findings were eye-opening. Our core finding was in order to make the world more sustainable, we must focus on making sustainability more human, not on making humans more sustainable.

We have also had the good fortune to partner with the United Nations Global Compact for many years, working hand in hand with them to equip companies with the insights, assets and tools they need to meet the Global Goals. In September of this year, the UN Global Compact launched [Forward Faster](#), a global initiative to help get the world back on track to meet the 2030 goals. Accenture Song's Sustainability Studio was the creative partner supporting this initiative.

Through this initiative and others, we are putting our money where our mouth is, committing to and delivering on aggressive net zero targets for our own operations and hiring sustainability experts across the globe to advise our clients in setting and delivering ambitious sustainability goals.



The digital transformation of education continues to accelerate at rapid pace. We see universities using digital technologies to connect and improve student experiences. How can companies such as Accenture assist universities in overcoming the challenges of navigating both virtual and on-campus student experiences?

Honestly, I don't think any organisation – education, government or corporation – has comprehensively solved this challenge. From my perspective, I am convinced that the on-campus experience is impossible to replicate no matter how effective or immersive our technology becomes. Maybe I am old-school in that viewpoint, but at the most basic human level, I believe we thrive off chance encounters, the diversity of perspectives and the sheer energy of campus life. The best way I think companies like Accenture can assist is by sharing what we have learned from our own 700,000+ person organisation and helping you implement solutions that have worked for us. Some learnings we have are:

- For straightforward skill building (like say, coding) or knowledge dissemination (like facts and figures about an industry), in-person and virtual learning experiences get about the same results.
- If you need to build interpersonal skills that benefit from face-to-face practice (like sales training), or if you have an objective to build community, or you just want a morale bump, face-to-face is better.
- What doesn't really work are hybrid courses, where you have a "main classroom" with most people in attendance, and others virtually dialling in. The virtual people always seem to have a less-than experience so it is typically better to organise two separate sessions.

**My classes in accounting, economics, strategy and product management provided me with the knowledge and skills I needed to succeed in the corporate world.**

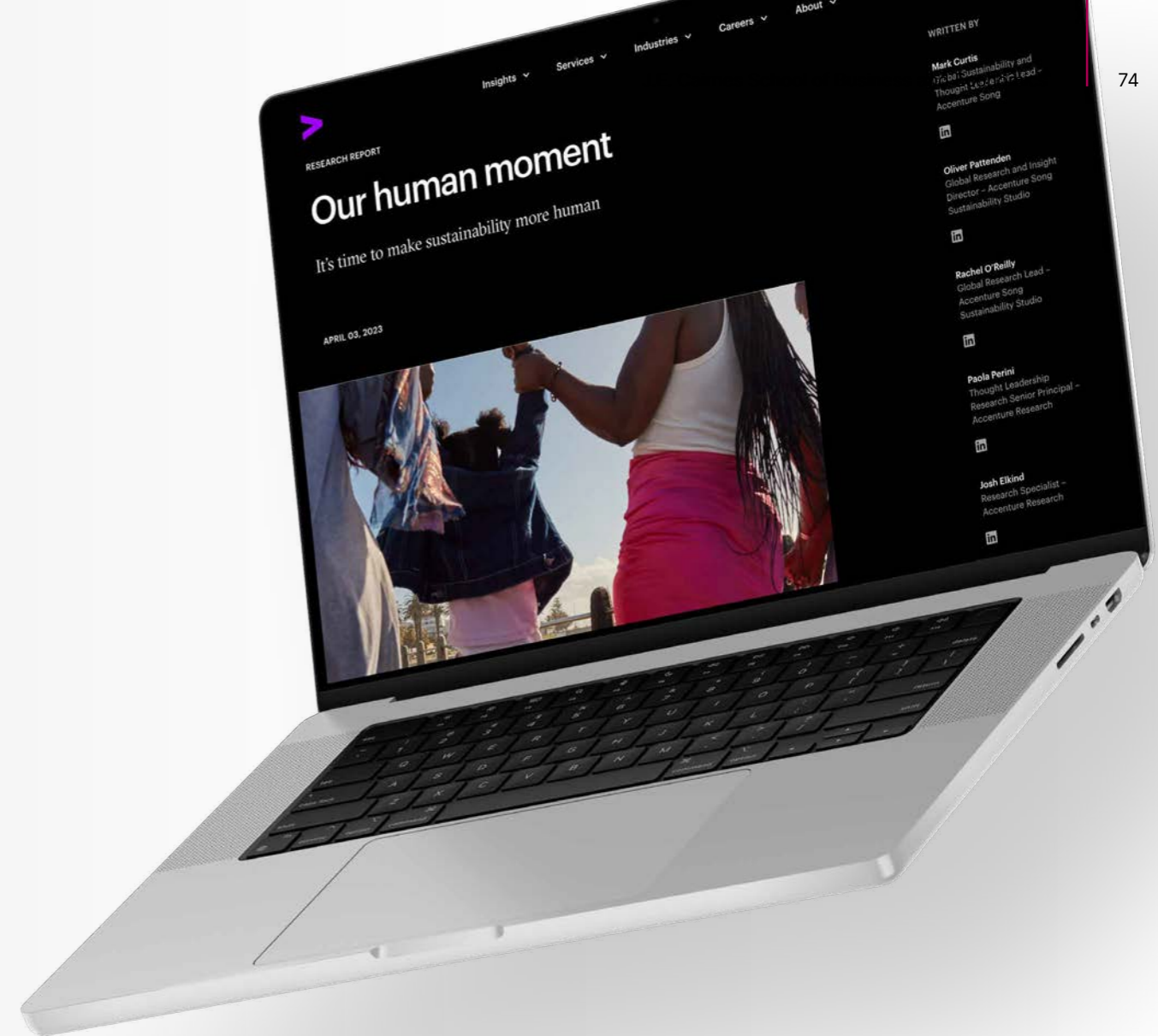
**How did your experience as a student at University of Galway help you along in your career path, and can you recall your most memorable moment?**

Looking back, it's clear to me that I've always been a little bit unorthodox, balancing the security of the proven path with some more eclectic tendencies!

My course, Commerce and French, was relatively unique in the Irish system, combining a traditional BComm at University of Galway with the added value of a foreign language, offering graduates international experience. Our French Language Lecturer, Ruadhán Cooke, played a vital role in shaping the young adult I would become. He had a generosity of spirit with our small class whilst channelling his competitive rowing spirit to serve as a pacesetter for all of us. I had a small but close group of friends who all harboured ambitious career goals but equally wanted to make the most of our time together. I will always cherish the fond memories I have spending time with friends at the college bar and café, and the Kingfisher Fitness Club.

My classes in accounting, economics, strategy and product management provided me with the knowledge and skills I needed to succeed in the corporate world. It's difficult to choose a single memorable moment; however, three in particular stand out:

- For any graduate of University of Galway living in Corrib Village in first year, emerging from the parochial environments of our home towns to a place where you can live, study and play with so many kindred spirits is a special phase. The friends I made there are still some of my closest today.
- At age 16, I set my sights on University of Galway's Commerce with French course. In my third year, I had the privilege of studying as an Erasmus student in Strasbourg, where I made friends from all corners of the globe, vastly improved my French language skills and gained invaluable exposure to the workings of the European Parliament in Brussels and Strasbourg.
- Lastly, in final year, I was lucky enough to be guided by a wonderful lecturer, Michael Campion, who introduced me to the world of corporate innovation in a practical class called Innovation, Creativity and Enterprise. Three friends and I won a yearlong competition where we developed a new product called Clever Clubs that sought to forge stronger bonds between parents and young children through the form of a smart teddy bear. This course taught me the art of pitching, prototyping and customer testing – all core parts of my work today.



**What advice would you offer current students at University of Galway?**

Keep the faith and keep putting one foot in front of the other. In the current economic environment, it can be tempting to revert to the tried and tested. Choose a path after university that gives you the options you need to make your mark in the world.

I'm a big believer in the power of creativity, perseverance and humility, whatever your field. Whether you're a biomedical engineer developing devices to improve health outcomes, a civil engineer developing sustainable new materials, a commerce student scaling sustainable business models, a lawyer shaping business-friendly environmental policy or a data scientist unlocking new insights to influence human behaviour for the better – each of you will play a pivotal role in safeguarding our planet for generations to come.

The older I get, the more I realise that small, consistent acts carried out through collaboration are the most powerful drivers of change. Translate

this sentiment into your own context and you'll be just fine. And don't sweat the small stuff! Embrace the circuitous nature of a modern career.

**The older I get, the more I realise that small, consistent acts carried out through collaboration are the most powerful drivers of change.**

**Sam Murphy-Kerry**

Based in the US as the North America Director of Accenture Song's Sustainability Studio, Sam Murphy-Kerry is an innovative sustainability and business strategy leader with a proven track record in driving sustainable models and client innovation. Skilled in team management, cross-functional collaboration, and industry-first projects, Sam is passionate about leveraging his expertise to contribute to organisations seeking to advance sustainability and strategic growth initiatives across various sectors.

This article was originally published in [Cois Coiribe's SDG Champion Edition](#).

# Spotlight on the Innovation, Creativity and Enterprise Module

In an era where sustainable development and social consciousness are paramount, the University of Galway's J.E. Cairnes School of Business and Economics is leading the way with its Innovation, Creativity and Enterprise (ICE) module.

Designed for final-year BComm, BIS, and HDip in Business Studies students, this module is a cornerstone of our curriculum, embodying our commitment to nurturing responsible business leaders. Under the guidance of Dr Johanna Clancy and Michael Campion, students embark on a transformative journey that blends academic rigor with real-world impact.

## An Experiential Learning Approach

ICE is a dynamic, team-based module that challenges students to set up hypothetical social businesses addressing one or more of the United Nations 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Each team of five students (totalling 95 teams) spends the semester developing a commercially viable social enterprise, a process that integrates sustainable development into our curriculum and fosters a deep sense of social responsibility.

## From Ideation to Presentation

Throughout the semester, teams receive guidance from external mentors from the local business community during weekly online workshops. This mentorship is invaluable, providing students with industry insights and practical advice as they refine their business ideas. The semester culminates in a competitive showcase where the 'best four' projects, selected from the initial 95, present their proposals to a panel of esteemed judges.

## The Grand Finale

The final event is a highlight of the academic year. Each of the four finalist teams presents their business idea for 10 minutes, followed by a five-minute Q&A session. This year's distinguished judging panel included Mayor of Galway Cllr Eddie Hoare (a BComm alumnus), Florita Dolly from PwC (our module sponsor) and Richard Manton, the University's inaugural Director of Sustainability. The winners of the 2023/24 academic year received €2,000 in prize money per group from PwC, with three runners-up teams each receiving €1,000 per group. The winners also secured a place on University of Galway's Start100 summer enterprise incubator, with an additional €4,000 available upon completion. Start100 is a six-week co-curricular programme designed to help student teams validate and de-risk their ideas, with weekly mentorship from industry specialists and access to a community of innovators and entrepreneurs.

## Celebrating Student Innovation

This year's winning project, Bygone Eire, offered a circular economy solution that repurposes construction waste materials through sustainable partnerships. The runners-up included Glan & Glas, which produces sustainable workwear for the hospitality industry; Bogland Warriors, dedicated to restoring peatlands to combat climate change; and EcoEire, which aims to reduce recycling contamination and enhance corporate ESG reporting.



## A Strategic Partnership for Future Success

The module is a key component of the University of Galway's strategic partnership with PwC Ireland. This collaboration aims to develop students' innovation and entrepreneurial talents through the Bachelor of Commerce Skills Pathway, which includes three modules: Skills for Success, Skills for Business, and Innovation, Creativity and Enterprise. PwC, as one of the world's leading professional services firms and largest graduate recruiters, brings a wealth of business expertise and insights, preparing our students for successful careers both in Ireland and internationally.

The Innovation, Creativity and Enterprise module exemplifies University of Galway's dedication to equipping students with the skills and knowledge to drive sustainable change.



OLLSCOIL NA  
GAILLIMHE  
UNIVERSITY  
OF GALWAY



## How to *engage* with us.

- Internships
- Partnerships & Collaborations
- Student Prizes & Awards
- Guest Talks & Masterclasses
- Scholarships
- Summer Schools

Stay connected with us for the latest updates, insights, and enjoyable content that showcases our School, events, programmes, alumni success, student stories, and our vibrant community.

Contact us at [business@universityofgalway.ie](mailto:business@universityofgalway.ie)

## Follow us

- @uniofgalwaycairnes
- @galwaycairnes
- University of Galway – J.E. Cairnes School of Business and Economics
- @universityofgalwaycairnes
- linkedin.com/school/cairnes/
- @CairnesUniversityofGalway



OLLSCOIL NA GAILLIMHÉ  
UNIVERSITY OF GALWAY

For the Public Good

