Dublin City University
Ireland’s University of Enterprise
Strategic Plan 2012 – 2017

Transforming
Lives and Societies
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Dublin City University was established during a period of severe economic difficulty in the 1980s. Since that time, the University has embraced a proactive role in national economic development. By educating its students to the highest standards of academic excellence and encouraging further study and research, the University has played a key role in Ireland’s research revolution and has collaborated closely with enterprise to build prosperity.

This 5-year Strategy builds on that proud record. Its message is clear – Dublin City University is determined to continue making a distinct and positive contribution to the challenges and opportunities facing us in all areas and at all levels.

Through its mission to transform lives and societies through education, research and innovation, Dublin City University will make a difference and act as an agent for social, cultural and economic progress at the individual, national and international levels.

- At the level of the individual, DCU aims to enable students not only to overcome barriers of social exclusion but also to flourish in a dynamic and challenging world;
- Nationally, the University will continue to contribute strongly to economic development and recovery;
- Globally, the University’s research expertise will continue to be applied to the key challenges of today in areas such as healthcare, sustainable development and conflict resolution.

Academic Excellence in teaching and research is at the core of Dublin City University’s strength and reputation. As set out in this Strategic Plan, our first priority is to maintain and improve upon those standards.

Building on that priority over the period of this Strategic Plan, DCU can play a crucial role in the development of the Eastern Corridor, that part of our island from Liffey to Lagan. This Region can contribute significantly to economic recovery, the development of the Island Economy and consolidating peace.

DCU will also build on its research strengths in international relations and conflict resolution with the aim of capturing the lessons learned from the Irish peace process.

While fulfilling these and the other goals set out in the Strategic Plan, DCU is determined to continue its proud record of delivering balanced budgets even in the most difficult of financial circumstances.

This is an ambitious strategy. It is built on the talents and commitment of an extraordinary community at DCU, which has already seen it ranked in the top tier of young Universities across the globe.

More than ever, Ireland needs creativity and imagination and I am proud to be associated, as Chancellor, with a University which embodies both.

Senator Martin McAleese
Chancellor, Dublin City University
I am very pleased to introduce my first Strategic Plan as President of Dublin City University. I do so, however, at a time of unprecedented challenges for Higher Education both nationally and internationally. At a global level, the combination of budgetary constraints and technological developments in the delivery of education is disrupting traditional models of education. At a national level, active implementation of the Governments’ National Strategy for Higher Education to 2030 is leading to significant changes in the landscape of Higher Education and substantial reform of the system itself. Rapidly shrinking budgets combined with growing student numbers are making it increasingly difficult to maintain the quality of education that has served our graduates so well in the past. The prosperity of the past imparted a certain flexibility and safety in strategic decision-making that the current austerity has removed completely. The challenges of the present require a new creativity, a persistent innovative attitude, in order for us to succeed. Based on the track record of its staff and students, DCU is justifiably renowned for its dynamism and innovation and this gives me great confidence that we can navigate our way successfully through the current difficulties that face us. So, while this Strategic Plan is informed by the current realities, it is also infused with ambition and confidence.

Participation in the world of Higher Education is both a privilege and a responsibility. At DCU, we have always taken our responsibilities very seriously – our responsibilities to:

- our students
- our society, and
- our economy.

The title of this Plan, ‘Transforming Lives and Societies’, captures that recognition and commitment to delivering on our responsibilities. This young, dynamic University has already transformed the lives of more than 40,000 individuals through a commitment to academic excellence, constantly updated degree programmes, transformative internships and innovative approaches to teaching and learning. This is our proudest achievement to date. We will build on that achievement and prepare our students for the new realities.

We will prepare them well,

- to be adaptable and resilient in facing an uncertain and challenging future
- to challenge orthodoxy with a sound base in disciplinary knowledge and critical thinking
- to be creative and innovative in solving problems
- to shape, or even create, their own future roles.

DCU will continue to design and deliver innovative, inter-disciplinary degree programmes and research initiatives that are well-attuned to the pressing social, economic and cultural trends of 2012-17. This University has a well-established reputation for applying its research successfully to societal issues or industrial problems and opportunities. As outlined in this Plan, DCU is committed to prioritising its research agenda to address the key challenges facing humanity on a global scale as well as the major issues facing Ireland on a national scale.

This Plan includes a number of important and distinctive features:

1 It introduces the concept of a University of Enterprise for DCU. It is important to clarify the significance of this important label. It refers not only to the enterprising and innovative mindsets that we seek to instil in our students but also to our deep engagement with various forms of enterprise, including social, cultural and commercial enterprises.

2 The Strategic Plan is structured in a novel manner that seeks to reinforce the central messages of the plan. Building on foundations of Academic and Operational excellence, it is framed around four Core Principles which capture the distinctive essence of DCU: Transformation, Enterprise, Translation and Engagement. The two Foundations and four Core Principles together provide the six central elements of the Plan and inform its six Strategic Objectives.

3 In a significant departure from conventional models of strategic planning at universities, Transforming Lives and Societies will involve a process of Rolling Planning. This will result in an annual ‘review and renew’ process that will continue over the 5-year duration of the plan. The key benefit that this approach confers is that it will enable us to revise and develop our strategic objectives, where necessary, so that the plan remains agile while, at the same time, maintaining a focus on our stated Mission, Vision and Values.
DCU Profile

DCU was established as a university in 1989, nine years after its founding as the National Institute for Higher Education (NIHE, Dublin).

DCU is ranked among the top 50 young universities worldwide (QS ‘Top 50 under 50’, 2012), and was named Sunday Times ‘Irish University of Year’ twice in the last eight years.

DCU’s 11,340 students are distributed across four Faculties:
- Humanities & Social Sciences
- Science & Health
- Engineering & Computing
- DCU Business School

DCU has a diverse, multi-ethnic community:
- Almost 2,000 international students from 114 countries attend DCU.
- 30% of our undergraduate student body are non-traditional (Mature, Access, Disability, Distance Learners).

PhD student numbers at DCU have increased almost four-fold in a ten-year period to 2012. DCU has an Alumni community of over 43,000.

DCU has long-established and productive linkage agreements with three higher education institutions in its vicinity. These ‘Linked Colleges’ are St. Patrick’s College, Drumcondra, Mater Dei Institute of Education, and All Hallows College.

Teaching and Learning

Since its foundation, DCU has been renowned for its focus on providing inter-disciplinary degree programmes, whose purpose is to shape our graduates into rounded individuals who can flourish in 21st century society.

Built on decades of experience in pioneering distance education in Ireland through Oscail, along with innovations in technology-enhanced learning at DCU, the ‘DCU Online’ initiative was announced in 2011. This heralded the introduction of a ‘blended learning’ experience for all our students over the coming years.

DCU was the first Irish university to offer academic credits for the extra-curricular activities of its students, through its unique ‘Uaneen Module’.

Established in 2008 in partnership with Ballymun Regeneration Ltd., ‘DCU in the Community’ is a community-engagement and educational outreach centre located in the heart of Ballymun.

Reflecting its core belief in social inclusion and equity of access to education, DCU is proud to deliver Ireland’s most comprehensive Access Programme. This year, over 500 Access students are studying in DCU, all of them benefiting from philanthropic support and from pro-active mentoring through our DCU Access Service.

DCU welcomes 3,000 primary and secondary level students onto its campus each year to participate in the renowned Centre for Talented Youth Ireland (CTVI).

Research, Innovation and Entrepreneurship

DCU has distinctive research strengths across all of its four faculties. In addition to being the home of many research leaders of international renown, DCU leads, or plays a significant role in, large-scale, multi-institutional research initiatives in a range of multi-disciplinary areas such as Machine Translation, Biomedical Diagnostics, Sensor Web Technology, Cancer Therapeutics, Telecommunications, Bio-photonics, Political Extremism, Cloud Computing, and Procurement.

Campus Life

DCU has 95 student Clubs and Societies, leading to a vibrant experience for students. DCU is renowned both for its sporting heroes and its excellent sports facilities.

Over 4,000 students participate in DCU’s 44 sports Clubs.

DCU students regularly win national student awards such as the Student Media Awards, Student Entrepreneur Awards and the Board of Irish College Societies (BICS) Awards.

DCU supports 160 Elite Sports Scholars in 22 degree programmes.

Established by DCU in 2002, the Helix is the largest multi-purpose arts and cultural venue in north Dublin.

The National Chamber Choir is choir-in-residence at DCU.
DCU’s achievements in the past and its ambitions for the future rely on the contributions of all those who comprise the ‘DCU Family’: our current and retired staff, our students, our alumni, our adjunct faculty, our Governing Authority members, our Trustees and all our supporters.

Our track record is based on the abilities and dedication of past and present staff that have shaped and defined the extraordinary success of DCU.

Our student body and graduates embody the strengths and values that are the essential ethos of DCU. Their creativity, their enterprise, and their impact on the world represent our greatest success.

All members of the DCU Family share a common pride in our past achievements and are active partners in delivering our future ambitions.
Transforming Lives and Societies

Collaboration is at the heart of academic progress. Communities of researchers and communities of learners are highly effective in expanding the boundaries of knowledge and understanding. DCU places a high value on collaboration and has well-established, fruitful relationships with national and international partners.

At the time of finalisation of this Strategic Plan, DCU has recently established an important new partnership and is engaged in advanced discussions with a range of Irish institutions with a view to establishing significant new relationships of varying scale. Some of these may result in fundamental governance changes, as indicated below. The rationale for these discussions is based primarily on the strategic value of the proposed relationships, although an additional dynamic is provided by the active implementation by Government of the ‘National Strategy for Higher Education’ which is encouraging consolidation and collaboration, especially on a regional basis.

Overall, DCU’s ability to deliver on its vision and objectives, as articulated in this Strategic Plan, will be enhanced considerably by the partnerships and new relationships being pursued at this time.

An overview of the nature and scale of recently established partnerships and proposed new relationships is provided as follows:

1. Relationships with Linked Colleges
DCU, St Patrick’s College, Drumcondra and Mater Dei Institute of Education have initiated a formal process aimed at establishing
1. A new Institute of Education and
2. An enhanced capacity and consolidation in Humanities and Social Sciences.
It is envisaged that this process, while respecting the identity of the individual institutions, will lead to the creation of a single University entity.

The outcome of these negotiations will, of course, be subject to the approval of the respective Governing Authorities and other relevant stakeholders. It is very clear that the positive outcome envisaged would represent a major strategic development of at least national significance and would result in a significant enhancement of DCU’s capacity to deliver excellence in education and research. It is also evident that the timeline of the process envisaged, if approved, would have a significant bearing on the implementation roadmap of the strategic objectives outlined later in this Strategic Plan.

DCU will continue to pursue a productive relationship with All Hallows College, as described by the current linkage agreement between the two institutions.

2. 3U Partnership
On June 26, 2012, An Taoiseach, Enda Kenny TD launched the 3U Partnership, a major collaborative framework involving DCU, the National University of Ireland, Maynooth and the Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland. This partnership between largely complementary institutions is driven by a strong belief in the potential of developing a pipeline of synergistic, joint initiatives over the coming years. An initial suite of such initiatives in the areas of Academic Programmes, Research, Education and Internationalisation has already been identified together with associated implementation plans. In addition to providing enhanced opportunities for academic developments across all four of DCU’s Faculties, the 3U Partnership offers significant potential to DCU in terms of collective engagement with the Regional Innovation System that is known as Ireland’s Eastern Corridor.

As highlighted later in this Plan, this region is of particular strategic importance to DCU.

3. Partnership with Dundalk Institute of Technology (DkIT)
DCU is committed to developing a significant partnership with DkIT. The rationale for this commitment has emerged from significant dialogue between the senior representatives of DkIT and DCU over the past 18 months and is based primarily on the following:
- Successful existing collaborative activities
- Clear opportunities for further collaboration on Academic Programmes, Research and Innovation, and Regional Development
- A common presence in, and focus on, Ireland’s Eastern Corridor
- A common view of the importance of cross-border collaboration

4. Partnership with Dublin Institute for Advanced Studies (DIAS)
Based on productive cooperation in recent years and advanced dialogue in recent months, both DCU and DIAS are seeking to establish a deeper partnership. Such a partnership would be based on collaboration in the areas of Astronomy and Astrophysics, Science Communication and Outreach, and Shared Research Infrastructure.
Our Vision
By 2017, DCU will be recognised internationally as a research intensive, globally-engaged University of Enterprise that is distinguished both by the quality and impact of its graduates and its focus on the translation of knowledge into societal and economic benefit.

Our Mission
To transform lives and societies through education, research and innovation

- by developing creative, analytical, enterprising and socially-responsible citizens,
- by creating and translating knowledge to address major global challenges,
- by leading public debate and providing critical analysis on areas of societal importance, and
- by engaging with enterprise for the benefit of our students, our region and the wider economy.

Our Values
- We are committed to excellence in education, research and innovation
- We provide a student-centric, supportive learning environment
- We recognise that our achievements are built on the expertise and commitment of our staff
- We encourage social inclusion and diversity
- We are committed to making a positive impact on our local, national and global communities
- We are ethical, accountable and transparent in our operations.
We will realise our Mission, Vision and Values by implementing six high-level Strategic Objectives based on four Core Principles and two underpinning Foundations.

Our four Core Principles succinctly capture the essential messages expressed in our Mission, Vision and Values:

- Transformation
- Enterprise
- Translation
- Engagement

Our two Foundations highlight the fundamental prerequisites on which our Strategy is built:

- Academic Excellence
- Operational Excellence

Following the launch of this high-level Strategic Plan, five detailed Constituent Strategies will be developed by specialist DCU Working Groups over the coming months with a targeted completion date for each in Quarter 1, 2013.
Core Principles

Transforming Lives and Societies
At DCU we aim to transform the lives of our students by providing an excellent learning experience, combined with a particular focus on their personal development. Success for us is enabling all our students to realise their personal potential and to achieve their professional ambitions.

We believe that the primary purpose of education is to equip students for success in life – in the workplace, in civic society and in their personal lives. Today’s world, and the environment in which our graduates have to compete, is changing rapidly in many ways, including its skills requirements and its global dimension. Preparing students for success in life (and especially in the workplace) now means equipping them with a set of personal attributes to enable them to navigate the challenges and opportunities of a dynamic, globalised, digital environment and an increasingly knowledge-based workplace.

In September 2011, we began the introduction of Generation 21, a unique programme of initiatives for students that fosters the attributes that a graduate needs to be successful in the 21st Century. Integrated into all our degree programmes, Generation 21 aims to shape our students into adaptable, rounded individuals who are Creative and Enterprising, Solution-focused, Effective Communicators, Globally-aware, and Active Leaders.

This young, dynamic University has already transformed the lives of more than 40,000 individuals through a commitment to academic excellence, constantly updated degree programmes, transformative internships and innovative approaches to teaching and learning. This is our proudest achievement.

Through Ireland’s longest established and most comprehensive Access Programme, we have also broken cycles of exclusion and have helped realise the potential of many who otherwise would never have benefited from a university education.

Our particular approach to student development has made our graduates more attractive to employers, more adaptable in the face of new challenges, and better equipped for postgraduate research. In the years ahead, DCU will maintain its commitment to an excellent, rounded learning experience for its students and will develop a range of important initiatives in its role as an agent of positive transformation.

Over the next five years we will:

- Support the learning and personal development of our students by mainstreaming and further developing Generation 21 and introducing personal archives (e-Portfolios) for every student to record and reflect on the aptitudes developed by them.
- Continue to enhance the employability of our graduates by informing our degree programmes through regular analysis of social, economic and employer needs.
- Provide effective supports to assist students through the transition from second to third level.
- Develop more flexible progression processes to facilitate students in navigating and customising their pathways through our degree programmes.
- Develop a ‘21st Century Digital Campus’ which, coupled with the outputs of our National Centre for Digital Learning, will support pioneering, technology-enhanced learning and revolutionise the learning experience both for Campus-based Education and Distance Education.
- Continue to develop initiatives which enrich the lives of our student body. These will include enhancing our high-quality student support services, supporting a vibrant Clubs and Societies culture and deepening a symbiotic partnership with DCU Students’ Union.
- Expand and upgrade our Student Centre to broaden the range of facilities, including new Social, Cultural and Enterprise hubs.
- Maintain our commitment to widening access to education through Ireland’s most comprehensive Student Access Programme.
- Implement a new Sports Strategy that encompasses ‘Sport for All’ initiatives and the enhancement of our Sports Academies (Athletics & GAA) for elite athletes.
- Enrich the educational offerings for our postgraduate students by expanding the provision of Structured, Enterprise-Academic and International Joint programmes.
- Transform the cultural experience of DCU students and staff by developing and implementing an Arts and Culture Strategy that builds on the initial work of the Arts and Culture Group established in 2011.

Credit: Kate Murphy, DCU
Photo Competition Winner, 2012.
Strategic Objective 2: To be recognised internationally as a leading University of Enterprise

Our vision of a University of Enterprise, which sets DCU apart in the Irish Higher Education landscape, comprises two principal elements:

First, we will create an environment that encourages creativity and fosters the development of entrepreneurial and innovative thinking in our students and staff. Consequently, many of our graduates will be stimulated to create their own future and to contribute strongly to Ireland’s future prosperity.

Second, we will engage deeply with enterprise (commercial, cultural and social), both in Ireland and abroad. We will establish regular fora for dialogue with enterprise in order to inform our degree programmes and our research agenda. Furthermore, we will continue to develop deep partnerships with Enterprise that will provide mutually beneficial opportunities across a range of our activities.

Industry-academic collaboration has been a substantial and distinctive element of the DCU research profile since its establishment and this feature will be reinforced and enhanced in the years ahead.

Over the next five years we will:

- Establish a vibrant enterprise culture in the University by developing and implementing a new Entrepreneurship Strategy, including commercial, social and cultural entrepreneurship for students and staff.
- Foster the development of entrepreneurial skills in our students through a range of new initiatives including curricular and extra-curricular modules and entrepreneurial experiential learning (e.g. Student Accelerator Programme).
- Establish a Student Enterprise Hub as an incubation space for student creativity and innovation.
- Establish DCU as Ireland’s leading university for social entrepreneurship. As part of this objective, DCU will establish significant partnerships with leading organisations in this area.
- Strengthen DCU’s position as Ireland’s most enterprise-engaged university, through our research, innovation, educational, internship and secondment activities.
- Establish a number of long-term partnerships with key enterprises in areas of strategic importance for the University.
- Expand and foster the DCU system of academic-enterprise dialogue through the Enterprise Advisory Board.
- Build on the reputation of the DCU Ryan Academy for Entrepreneurship as the leading supporter of entrepreneurship and innovation in Ireland.
- Reinforce and further develop our reputation for cutting-edge enterprise-academic research collaboration.
Translation

**Strategic Objective 3:**
**To drive social and economic progress by translating knowledge into action**

All over the world, universities focus on the creation and dissemination of knowledge. DCU goes beyond this and places an additional emphasis on Translation - the effective conversion of knowledge arising from research into societal and economic benefits. This focus on translational research implies a direct engagement with issues of importance to the individual citizen, including grand challenges of global significance. The impact and outputs of such translational research can take many forms including, for example, new Government policies, new approaches in the effective delivery of healthcare, and new devices or processes exploited commercially by enterprise partners.

The realisation of this Strategic Objective requires:
- A highly research-active university community that is engaged strongly with the environment external to the university,
- An innovation culture that embraces ‘problem statements’ from various facets of society and the economy and focuses on providing solutions,
- Integration of innovation and creativity as core elements of the student learning experience,
- A research agenda that is aligned with, and prioritises, societal and economic challenges and needs, and
- Internal processes that are highly effective in converting research outputs into reality.

DCU has already established a strong national reputation as a university that ‘makes a difference’ through its distinctive graduates, its research profile and its innovation metrics. Over the period of this Strategic Plan we aim to enhance that reputation substantially and to deliver a stream of outputs of both national and international significance.

Over the next five years we will:
- Foster a culture of innovation in the University through encouragement, recognition of achievements, promotional criteria, and the establishment of annual President’s Awards for Innovation for both students and staff.
- Align our research agenda priorities with societal and technological challenges, as articulated in National Research Priorities, The EU Horizon 2020 programme and The UN Millennium Development Goals.
- Perform a major review of processes employed in universities renowned for innovation worldwide with a view to adopting best practices at DCU.
- Develop a new Innovation Campus which will drive a step change in innovation, knowledge exchange, engagement with enterprise, and regional economic impact.
- Secure our position as Ireland’s leading innovative university by doubling our knowledge transfer activities with enterprise and wider society via contract research, collaborative research, consultancy, and licensing activities.
- Double the number of start-up companies arising from DCU research and innovation activities.
- Become the Irish institution of choice for enterprises seeking ideas and solutions to address societal issues or economic opportunities.
- Enhance our translational research impact by developing significant partnerships with national and international institutions.
- Establish a number of translational research centres built on our distinctive research strengths and focused explicitly on addressing societal and economic issues of national and international significance. These will include the following areas: Health, Conflict Resolution, Cloud Computing, Science Policy, and Sustainability.
- Play a strong, contributory role in the recovery of the Irish Economy by establishing strategically targeted initiatives such as the DCU Centre for Family Businesses.
Engagement

Over the next five years we will:

• Foster active and inclusive citizenship in our students through encouragement and recognition of participation in extra-curricular volunteering, social entrepreneurship, inter-cultural and civic engagement activities.

• Contribute actively to initiatives supporting the enhancement and international projection of Dublin City, especially in the areas of culture, innovation and sustainability.

• Aim to be a driver of social and economic development of our locality through active partnership with local authorities, enterprise and community organisations.

• Play a strategic role with partners in addressing the education and innovation needs of our Regional Innovation System: Ireland’s Eastern Corridor.

• Establish a small, dynamic, global network of partner universities in regions prioritised in DCU’s Internationalisation Strategy. This network will include partners in Europe, India, China, North America, the Middle East and Sub-Saharan Africa.

• Establish the Ireland India Institute at DCU as the national centre for knowledge exchange on issues concerning contemporary India.

• Mainstream internationalisation into our curricula, research agenda, services and student experience. Building on high levels of EU student enrolment, we aim to double the number of non-EU students over the next five years.

• Encourage a lifetime relationship with our Alumni. In particular, we will enhance communications and engagements with our Alumni community and establish new international Alumni chapters in key locations worldwide.

• Ensure that our community and stakeholders at local, regional, national and international levels are appropriately updated and informed of our activities.

• Deepen our engagement with students of all ages outside the university through new and existing initiatives such as the Age-Friendly University, the proposed Centre for Research in Gifted Education, the Centre for Talented Youth in Ireland (CTYI) and DCU Online.

• Continue to play a key role in the promotion of the Irish language through novel degree programmes, scholarship and innovation. In particular, we will pioneer developments in the use of technology to enhance the learning and dissemination of the Irish language.

Strategic Objective 4: To foster active engagement with our stakeholders and partners regionally, nationally and globally.

Engagement is a cornerstone of DCU’s uniqueness. We are the antithesis of the ‘ivory tower’ university and, through our actions, reflect a clear commitment to the pursuit of symbiotic relationships with our city, our region and our nation across all of our core activities. Moreover, the education and research roles of universities have a significant global dimension; we are preparing graduates to flourish in an increasingly globalised world and the biggest challenges facing society are global in scale. Therefore, engagement with global issues and internationalisation of campus experiences are essential elements of progressive universities, such as DCU.

First and foremost, DCU is committed to active and positive engagement with its community, which not only includes our current staff and students but also our alumni, our retired staff, our trustees and supporters. Both DCU’s track record to date and its future successful development are highly dependent on establishing synergistic relationships across all elements of the ‘DCU family’.

Dublin is our city and we aim to be a key contributor in enhancing its position as one of the major cities of the world, especially in the areas of culture, innovation and sustainability.

DCU is also rooted proudly in its north Dublin neighbourhood. We are committed to working with community, educational, commercial and social groups in our region, clear in our responsibility and determination to play a positive role in the development of the local social and economic fabric.

Looking beyond our immediate locality, the Eastern Corridor between Dublin and Belfast is, and will continue to be for the coming decades, the fastest growing centre of population and economic activity on the island of Ireland. This corridor, stretching north from DCU, through Dundalk and across the border to Belfast offers massive potential to this island and is the Regional Innovation System on which we will focus our efforts. In partnership with stakeholders from the education, enterprise and cultural sectors, DCU will be a key force in this region and will play a pivotal role in its economic, social and cultural development.

Our campus is amongst the most internationalised and multi-cultural areas on this island, with almost 120 nationalities represented and a rich atmosphere of intercultural activities. Academic collaborations between DCU faculty and partners know no geographical or cultural boundaries. Our curricula reflect the globalised world and the global challenges for which we must prepare our students. As emphasised in our Vision statement, DCU is committed to global engagement and we will continue to enhance this core element of our activity, especially through the formation of sustainable alliances with global partners.

Active engagement with stakeholders and partners is an essential element of DCU’s identity and its success. In the years ahead we are committed to reinforcing that element by enhancing specific engagements locally, regionally, nationally and globally.

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Strategic Objective 5: To maintain academic excellence as our highest priority

The pursuit of excellence in teaching, learning, research and innovation is central to DCU’s Vision and Mission. It is the foundation upon which our student's success, our research impacts and our reputation stands. It is our first priority and takes precedence over all other activities.

Just over 23 years old as a university, DCU is in the top 4% of Universities worldwide. Few young universities around the world have achieved such a high rating so quickly. This admirable record, along with many other significant achievements to date, derives from the dedication and commitment of research-active faculty who understand the importance of excellence in teaching, regular, research-informed curriculum development and an ethos which places the highest value on research quality.

We are committed to ensuring an excellent learning environment for our students and staff. This entails a constant exploration of developments in pedagogy, learning innovation and technology-enhanced learning (TEL). DCU will actively embrace ‘the future of learning’ by pioneering research and implementation in TEL and by providing a ‘state-of-the-art’ infrastructure to support this.

The years ahead will see DCU maintain its core focus on academic excellence. We will work to ensure that, whatever the challenges imposed from the external environment, there will be no diminution in the delivery of academic excellence.

Over the next five years we will:

- Reflect the pivotal role of teaching and research in the determination of our budgetary priorities. We will also develop a Funding Diversity Strategy with a view to achieving a substantial increase in funding from non-Exchequer sources.
- Continue to develop innovative, inter-disciplinary teaching and research initiatives that are attuned to the pressing social, economic and cultural trends of the period of this plan.
- Establish a research-led Institute of Education in collaboration with our partner institutions. This Institute will integrate Initial Teacher Education and Continuous Professional Development for teachers across the full education continuum, it will also carry out pioneering research and policy development in priority areas for 21st Century education.
- Continue to pioneer developments in STEM Education through DCU’s Centre for the Advancement of Science and Mathematics Teaching and Learning (CASTEL) and collaborations with partner organisations.
- Retain and recruit academic leaders in prioritised areas of research and scholarship by implementing new policies on staff retention and strategic recruitment.
- Seek to integrate research opportunities into undergraduate degree programmes.
- Aim to double research funding from external sources and to achieve a 50% increase in the number of academic staff holding externally-funded research grants.
- Support our academic faculty in their professional development, including both teaching and research, through the provision of on-going support for learning innovation and the development of teaching skills as well as providing a broad range of research support services.
- Develop a structured, university-wide teaching enhancement framework, informed by appropriate student feedback and consistent with international best-practice.
- Deliver on ambitious research goals for all academic units in order to reinforce our reputation as a research-intensive university.
- Provide comprehensive support services to our research community in order to optimise success in national and international research funding awards.
Strategic Objective 6:
To ensure that our physical and organisational infrastructure is effective in supporting the delivery of our strategic intent

Our continuous pursuit of excellence in teaching, learning, research and innovation requires both organisational structures that are effective in facilitating this vision and appropriate physical infrastructure that supports its achievement.

First and foremost, however, we recognise that our most important asset is our staff. All our achievements are built on the expertise and commitment of our staff. We shall continue to focus on hiring and retaining excellent staff and on providing professional development opportunities for all our employees. We shall carry out a comprehensive examination of our operational processes and maintain a policy of supporting Quality Promotion and Quality Enhancement. We will be transparent and accountable in all our operations, which will continue to be built on foundations of good governance and budgetary sustainability.

Despite the difficult funding environment, we shall endeavour to invest in campus facilities with a view to enhancing the overall student experience both in terms of the learning environment and the availability of cultural, innovation and sporting opportunities. In particular, we shall focus on the development of a ‘21st Century Digital Campus’, which will provide a state-of-the-art IT infrastructure and support pioneering, technology-enhanced learning for both campus-based and ‘Distance’ learners. Such developments will be central to a new Campus Development Plan, which will provide a vision and a roadmap for the development of the DCU Campus footprint. Campus developments will embrace principles of environmental sustainability and we will continue to set ambitious targets in terms of the energy efficiency of our operations.

Building on national economic prosperity for much of the period, the past decade has seen substantial development in the scale and quality of the physical infrastructure of the DCU campus and associated services to our student community. The next five years will clearly provide a much more challenging environment in terms of funding and student-staff ratios. We are committed to the strategic development of the University in order to support our vision, and this commitment will require a focus on funding diversity from a range of sources. In particular, through the DCU Educational Trust, we will establish a Campaign for Dublin City University in order to maximise philanthropic support for the delivery of our ambitious vision for education, research and innovation.

Over the next five years we will:

• Aim to provide the DCU community with the best possible education and research environment, including learning spaces, library, and laboratories.

• Maintain best practice of corporate governance including the implementation and constant review of risk management, quality promotion, health and safety, and internal audit systems.

• Continue to promote principles of equality and to embrace diversity.

• Develop and implement a comprehensive Environmental Sustainability Strategy. We will seek to reduce energy consumption on campus by 3% per annum and use the University campus as a test-bed for energy reduction and clean technologies.

• Continue to support the professional development of all our staff through mentoring, training initiatives, development opportunities, and career support.

• Embrace policies that support Quality Improvement and Quality Promotion in all our operations.

• Establish a comprehensive Campus Development Plan, which will include the development of a state-of-the-art ‘Digital Campus’ in order to provide cutting edge IT infrastructure and an optimal digital learning environment for our students.

• Collaborate with local enterprise and service providers to provide increased public transport links between the University and the Greater Dublin and Eastern Corridor regions.

• Establish a Campaign for Dublin City University through the DCU Educational Trust in order to support the delivery of our strategic vision.
In a significant departure from conventional models of strategic planning at universities, this new DCU Strategic Plan will involve a process of Rolling Planning.

A rolling approach to planning provides DCU with an opportunity to be flexible and responsive to the dynamic national and global environment. Our strategic planning process will involve continuous assessment of DCU’s progress towards its goals, while simultaneously taking account of changes in the environment in which it operates.

Through a range of internal and external analysis tools, DCU will perform an annual review and critical evaluation of the delivery, impact and relevance of its current strategic initiatives. This review will include a detailed analysis of Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) that characterise our ambitious targets. Where appropriate, these KPIs will be benchmarked regularly against both national and international comparators.

The rolling planning system will enable us to revise and develop our strategic objectives, where necessary, while maintaining a focus on our stated strategic mission, vision and values. The annual ‘Review and Renew’ process will continue over the 5-year duration of this plan, as highlighted in the diagram opposite. This approach will enable DCU to be responsive to emerging opportunities, and alert to risks and uncertainty in our environment, especially in the funding context.
Transforming Lives and Societies

The DCU Experience