

Dublin City University  
Ollscoil Chathair Bhaile Átha Cliath



Leading through Challenge  
University Strategy 2009-2011

Leading through Challenge 2009 - 2011

# Civic Engagement Strategy

## **Welcome**

This document presents the Civic Engagement Strategy for Dublin City University for the period 2009-2011. The strategy outlines the objectives developed via a deliberative process involving university staff and key regional stakeholders including representatives of our neighbouring communities and local public agencies.

I wish to thank the following for their active engagement in the preparation of this strategy. My colleague Deiric Ó Broin, Director of NorDubCo, played a key role in co-ordinating the DCU in the Community initiative and continues to act as the university's primary link to our neighbouring communities.

The members of the Internal Working Group met on a number of occasions and provided support, insight, advice and helped energise the process. The group consisted of a large number of representatives from schools, faculties, research units and support units. This microcosm of DCU provided vital input. Without their active involvement there would have been no strategy (See Appendix A for a list of the members). I would also like to take this opportunity to thank the members of the Eolas group at DCU for their active engagement with the process.

Finally, the strategy's external advisory panel consisted of regional stakeholders including representatives from Dublin City Council, Fingal County Council, Ballymun Partnership, Northside Partnership, Finglas-Cabra Partnership, the North Dublin Chamber of Commerce and a wide variety of community groups. The panel provided a crucial stakeholder perspective for the strategy and I look forward to consulting with them on its implementation.

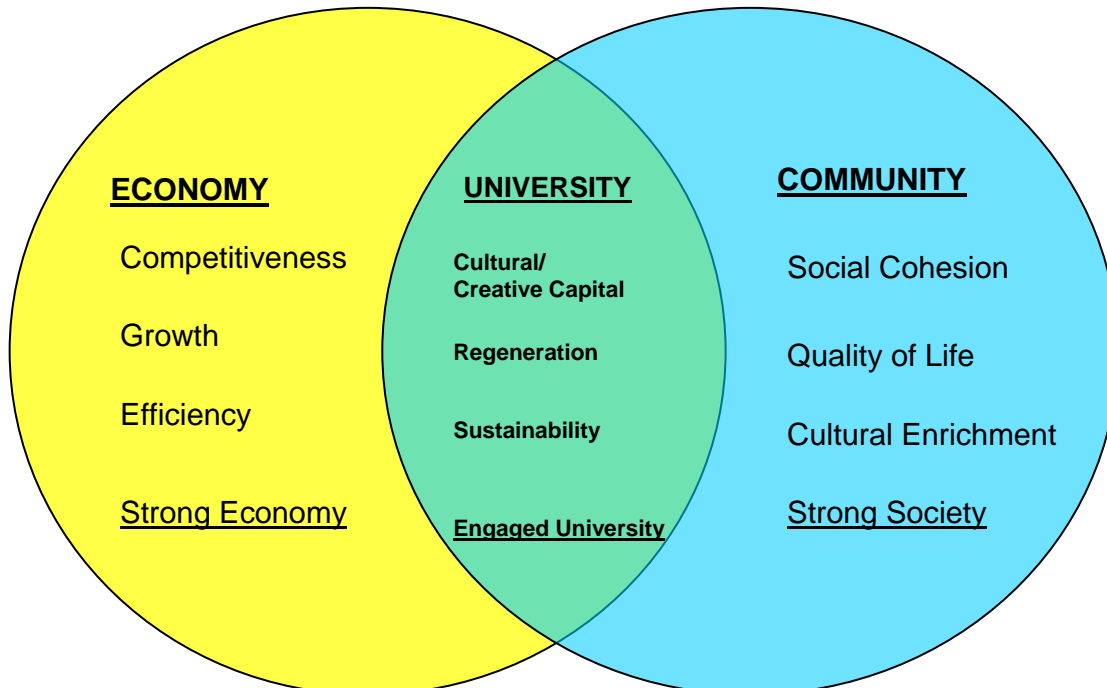
Professor Ronnie Munck  
Theme Leader for Internationalisation, Interculturalism and Social Development

## Introduction

DCU launched a Civic Engagement Strategy for the first time as part of *Leadership Through Foresight*, DCU's 2005-2008 strategy. Now, as part of the new strategic plan for 2009-11 it is imperative that this strategy be embedded across DCU and thus mainstreamed. Comparative experience teaches us that leaving civic engagement as an 'add-on' leads inevitably to its demise. The potential for DCU in terms of leading in this area is considerable, a role already acknowledged through our leading role in the HEA funded Campus Engage network.

We no longer hear so much about universities as 'ivory towers' divorced from the real world. Today, the complaint is more about the 'corporate university' dancing to the tune of the big pharmaceuticals and other corporate players. Many commentators now refer to the phenomenon of 'academic capitalism', as learning for learning's sake gives way to the business agenda. While not wishing to deny that the contemporary university is affected by the market in many ways, we must note that it is also part of the community.

## UNIVERSITY, ECONOMY AND SOCIETY



We see in the above diagram how the engaged university is both impacted by, and contributes to, a strong economy and also to a strong, vibrant society. Certainly, both domains pull the university in sometimes conflicting directions. But we can also envisage – and maybe should seek out – the ways in which economic and social factors may act in unison, and even create synergies and a win-win situation.

The engaged university recognises that it is part of the community around it. The success of a university is very often completely intertwined with the prospects of the civic community it is a part of. A thriving university boosts the town or city it is situated in. Likewise, a dynamic city is good news for any university trying to make its mark in a global knowledge system. The productive interaction and mutual engagement between the university and the wider community are beneficial to both in so many ways.

It is now increasingly acknowledged that universities can play an important role in community development, in support of civil society, in a knowledge-based global economy, and in a socially challenged world. It can lead to enhanced human and social capital development, improved professional infrastructure and capacity-building and, more broadly, to benefits for the socio-economic, environmental and cultural dimensions of the wider community. The contribution towards the development of active citizenship is an intangible but significant addition. To generate debates on issues of significance to communities is also an area where universities can contribute directly to the quality of life.



## **Leadership through Foresight**

Under Leadership for Foresight DCU took up a civic engagement strategy for the first time. This was and is innovative and no comparable high-level strategy exists at other Irish universities. The period of Leadership through Foresight saw the successful launch of DCU in the Community with the launch of the Shangan Road educational outreach facility in association with Ballymun Regeneration Limited. It also saw an EU pilot project for DCU Science Shop - Community Knowledge Exchange. The third strand consisting of the intercultural initiative saw some work with the Students Union and cultural events. This is now to be followed through in association with the International Office.

## **Environment**

Many of the priorities we need to address over the coming year will relate to the need to maximise our income and ensure we have financial sustainability for DCU over the coming years. However, we also need to ensure that we take a more deliberate look at DCU's role in supporting key social and civic objectives in North Dublin.

DCU was the first Irish university to devise a civic engagement strategy as it had been previously in the development of an access programme. The DCU in the Community initiative is a unique and innovative partnership between Ballymun Regeneration Limited, the City of Dublin Vocational Education and ourselves. As a university we have been consistently at the cutting edge of civic engagement in all its facets.

In the current climate of national crisis our civic engagement mission will take on an even greater importance. There is now little likelihood that the state will be able to raise participation levels in higher education, as there will not be the necessary. We need to lobby hard to ensure that access is not forgotten, or rather that it just gets lip service without resources. We also need to ensure that we are imaginative in supporting our neighbouring communities and that we retain and further develop our strategic perspective in this area.

It is important to note that Ireland is facing significant fiscal challenges in funding many important public services, including higher education. Although 2008 saw governmental steps to address these issues, continued funding cutbacks are possible. In this environment it is vital that the university perseveres in its efforts to embed civic engagement as a mainstream university action and facilitate its' growth and development among staff within DCU's schools, research centres and support units.

## **Strategic Intent**

The mission statement of DCU's Civic Engagement Strategy is:

DCU's civic engagement strategy promotes inclusive and active citizenship across the university community, within a spirit of engagement with the wider society in pursuit of economic, social and cultural development.

It is the belief of the university that it is only by fulfilling the civic obligations incumbent on all great universities, that DCU will earn and continue to retain the respect and support of its neighbouring communities and other stakeholders in North Dublin. Furthermore it is recognised that it is only with the active support of the communities and stakeholders within the region that DCU can achieve the goals and objectives it aspires to.

## **Guiding Principles**

DCU is pro-active, creative, engaged and inclusive university aiming to develop a community that is stimulating, collaborative, supportive and collegial.

## **Foresight**

The Foresight Exercise has discerned two possible scenarios for future development of Ireland and the University, *Market Ascendant* and *Community Resurgent*. At present the latter, more localist scenario is materialising to some extent due to the economic downturn. We would argue that pro-active engagement with the local community is now more important than ever. The university needs to be embedded socially to allow emerge from the present economic turmoil in a stronger position. The global university also needs to be locally grounded.

## Strategic Objectives

The Civic Engagement Strategy is based on three overarching strategic objectives:

1. To share knowledge through a sustainable university-community dialogue based on the principles of respect and equitable dialogue.
2. To strengthen the incentives and resources for educational growth and development in the wider community.
3. To become Ireland's first sustainable university, *Sustainable DCU*.

These objectives will be augmented by the following:

- a. To contribute as an economic driver to the sustainable socio-economic and environmental development of the wider community.
- b. To play an active role in the civic, social and cultural development and wellbeing of the wider community.
- c. To facilitate the introduction of widespread Community-Based Learning as a learning methodology.
- d. To develop appropriate and relevant recognition mechanisms for DCU staff for civic engagement activities.
- e. To create a single, coherent web interface for all DCU civic engagement activities.



## Strategic Objectives

### Objective 1:

**To share knowledge through a sustainable university-community dialogue based on the principle of exchange and mutual learning.**

- 1.1 Mainstream DCU Science Shop: Community Knowledge Exchange through the Research Office.

### Objective 2:

**To strengthen the incentives and resources for educational growth and development in the wider community.**

- 2.1 Build on the success of DCU in the Community's Shangan Centre and explore the potential of developing a second centre in the region.

### Objective 3:

**To become Ireland's first sustainable university, *Sustainable DCU*.**

- 3.1 Appoint a Co-ordinator of *Sustainable DCU*, develop and champion a *Sustainable DCU* initiative.

### Objective 4:

**To contribute as an economic driver to the sustainable socio-economic and environmental development of the wider Community.**

- 4.1 Develop a university science park in North Dublin

### Objective 5:

**To play an active role in the civic and cultural development and wellbeing of the wider community**

- 5.1 Improve the governance capacity of community-based organisations within North Dublin.
- 5.2 Promote intercultural and inter-faith dialogue at DCU and in the wider community in conjunction with the International Office and other units.

### Objective 6:

**To facilitate the introduction of widespread Community-Based Learning as a learning methodology.**

- 6.1 Evaluate potential of community-based learning and mainstream through Learning Innovation Unit

## **Academic Themes**

This strategy was initiated and has been led by the Theme Leader for Internationalisation, Interculturalism and Social Development. It has been a key component in the Themes strategic plan and was highly commended by the 2007 quality review of the Office of the Theme Leaders. It will continue to foster the sub theme of social development and will help embed the themes across the university given the wide appeal of the civic engagement strategy.

## **Student Experience**

Students will engage positively with civic engagement insofar as it connects with their own interests and perspectives. The intercultural campus initiative achieved some resonance with student leaders but lack of resources meant this initiative was not generalised. The current three-year plan will focus explicitly on students as global citizens. We are promoting in particular the concept of Sustainable DCU as a way of connecting with the widespread 'green' consciousness amongst the student body.

## **Staff Experience**

Staff at DCU have engaged enthusiastically with DCU in the Community as a concept and as a strategy. At present the need is to mainstream the strategy. To do that it is necessary that the funding model recognise as core business the time spent engaging with the community in recognised DCU projects such as Science Shop and the Shangan Road facility which is open to staff initiatives. The present planning round has seen a qualitative increase in staff participation that augurs well for the future.

## **Summary**

It is imperative that the DCU civic engagement strategy continues to promote the 'third leg' of core business, namely civic engagement alongside teaching and research. In this strategic period the main objective is to achieve the embedding of civic engagement across DCU to prevent the danger of it becoming an 'add-on'. This needs to be achieved in the higher level university strategy and its strategic objectives.

**Appendices:**

Appendix A: *Sustainable DCU* Implementation Plan.

Appendix B: *DCU in the Community* Implementation Plan

Appendix C: Members of the Internal Working Group and External Advisory Panel.

## Appendix A: *Sustainable DCU* Implementation Plan

DCU's place in the wider community involves an understanding of how its activities impact on the wider environment. These activities include its day-to-day operations, its infrastructural development and the daily activities of staff, students and visitors in carrying out their business. A core element of the next 2009-2011 Civic Engagement strategy is to **make DCU a sustainable environment** for students, staff and visitors and to involve all DCU citizens in this initiative. This work also dovetails with the opportunities for DCU identified in the **DCU Foresight report**, in particular the opportunities under the "Sustainable resource use for a carbon neutral world" core area.

Promoting a sustainable DCU is similar to the work of the university's Health and Safety, Freedom of Information and Quality Promotion Units. It is important that the *Sustainable DCU* three-year project be carried out in conjunction with these offices as well as with the Estates Office and the Students' Union. **Joined up thinking** and action are essential to the success of this project.

It is envisaged that the work will involve the following sub projects over the next three years, which are subject to change as time goes on:

- a. The adoption of a **sustainable development policy** to incorporate four key principles:
  - To minimise the environmental impact of the university's activities on the environment by adopting a continuous improvement policy
  - To be socially acceptable, equitable and inclusive
  - To be economically realistic and fair
  - To ensure the policy is based on proven science and technology

Most Irish universities have already adopted an environmental policy, with Queen's University Belfast aspiring to achieve accreditation to ISO14001.

- b. The appointment of **a champion for Sustainable DCU** who will drive the policy and subsequent actions in cooperation with the Estates office and the Students' Union.
- c. To move the university towards the adoption of a recognised **Environmental Management System (EMS)**. Consideration could be given towards adapting the principles of *An Taisce's* Green-Schools scheme. If successful, DCU would become the first university in Ireland to achieve this award. This scheme can also be used as a stepping stone towards the achievement of the more ambitious ISO14001, if considered desirable in the longer term. The adoption of an EMS involves:
  - d. In practical terms it includes the following actions:
    - The setting up on an environmental committee
    - An environmental review
    - The setting of goals and achievable targets
    - Monitoring and review
    - Integration into courses, and lifestyles of university citizens.

- e. The **environmental review** is a major task, similar to the undertaking of a Peer Review under the university's quality promotions initiative and would involve:
  - Assessing the environmental legislation and regulatory requirements relevant to the operations within the University
  - Identifying and evaluating all significant environmental impacts resulting from the activities within the University.
  - Conducting a SWOT analysis of current practice - the Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats
  - Making recommendations on how the University can improve its environmental performance

An environmental audit was carried out in 2001 and this could be used as a basis for the more detailed review.

- f. Organisation of **environmental awareness workshops** for staff/students on a faculty/school/unit basis. This will be similar to what was organised by the Health and Safety and Freedom of Information offices in the past.
- g. Development of separate **policies for the individual elements of sustainable development** including waste, energy, water, transport, purchasing and environmental awareness.
- h. The setting up of a **web site dedicated to Sustainable DCU**, which will be a one stop shop to create a profile for all sustainable development related activities at DCU. In most universities that have environmental web pages, the links are from the buildings and estates offices. While this is important, it is equally important that the web pages can stand alone and are an integral part of the Civic Engagement portal. Some work has already been done in this area by a student on an Intra placement in the Theme Leaders office during 2008 and the web site could be live early in 2009.
- i. To work with Global Action Plan (Ireland) in delivering their **Environmental Action Teams** and philosophy to the DCU community. GAP is already working with the Ballymun community and have much expertise in promoting sustainable practices among communities. The sessions could be carried out for an hour a week over eight weeks to interested sections of DCU including the Student's Union.

**Notes:**

- The overall approach to developing a *Sustainable DCU* will be similar to that adopted by the Health and Safety and Freedom of Information offices and therefore collaboration with the Eolas Group will be very important to the success of this programme.
- An Intra student is starting to work on the *Sustainable DCU* theme in April 2009, which will help to progress the initiative.
- A budget should be made available for the initiative. While some projects require time rather than resources (the development of an environmental and other

policies, the holding of environmental awareness workshops), other projects will require some funding money (e.g. the hiring of GAP Ireland to deliver the Environmental Action Teams programme, implementation of recommendations arising from the Environmental review etc)

## **Appendix B: DCU in the Community Implementation Plan**

DCU launched a Civic Engagement Strategy for the first time as part of Leadership through Foresight. Now, as part of the new strategic plan for 2009-11 it is imperative that this strategy be embedded across DCU and thus mainstreamed. Comparative experience teaches us that leaving civic engagement as an 'add-on' leads inevitably to its demise. The potential for DCU in terms of leading in this area is considerable, a role already acknowledged through our leading role in the HEA funded Campus Engage network. This work has hitherto been jointly driven by OTL and LIU but now it has taken on significant proportions so its future management needs to be discussed. DCU's Centre at Shangan Road, built and funded in collaboration with Ballymun Regeneration Limited, is in the heart of the local community and is thus ideally placed to reach out to the local residents of north Dublin as a resource for extra mural and lifelong learning provision, in collaboration with local organizations, agencies and DCU Schools and Research Centres. The planning of the DCU Centre reflects the recommendations of the National Development Plan (2007-2013), which included the following development needs as priorities:

- Increased participation and improved access to Third level education
- Greater flexibility of course offerings to meet diverse student population needs in a lifelong learning context

The Higher Education Authority's Strategic Plan 2008-2010 (p23) reflects the same issue about responding to the needs of the non-traditional & mature student: "In higher education, lifelong learning has particular meaning for adults who have few or no advanced qualifications and who wish to reengage with the educational system". The H.E.A. notes in their Strategic Plan (p23), 'the scale of higher education graduates that Ireland requires for achieving OECD front rank graduation levels and further social and economic progress cannot be sourced from the school leaving population alone. There is a need for a significant and sustained increase in the numbers of mature students in order to upskill our adult population'.

Our Centre ensures delivery of programmes to meet the needs of prospective students by flexible scheduling and student support services on site. DCU in the Community Centre's plan of work represents a coherent strategy for lifelong learning & active citizenship by initiating innovative solutions for civic engagement, developing the knowledge economy and local sustainable development. The following activities are part of our 2009 plan of work:

- Initiate a lifelong learning community based adult education programme for DCU – all potential income generating sources with the contribution of DCU faculty/staff support:
  - Offer Taster courses for mature students in Business Studies, Humanities and Languages
  - Collaborate with the CDVEC to offer FETAC training and development for students who are returning to education
  - Conduct preparation for college programmes



- Provide innovative science programmes after-school for disadvantaged youth in partnership with ACCESS and CTYI – as part of the lifelong learning remit of higher education in Ireland
- Facilitate workshops/seminars for DCU distance education students (OSCAIL) to give them opportunities for face to face meetings
  - BDI – facilitate their outreach educational science programming
  - Student Recruitment:
  - Aid local students with the CAO application process and
  - Provide workshops on how to apply for financial assistance
  - Provide career planning advice for prospective students
  - Cooperate with NORDUBCO for economic development initiatives with the Shangan Centre as a key facility and resource for workshops, seminars and network meetings
  - Provide educational services which supports capacity building and social inclusion
  - Use innovative multiple intelligence methodologies to retain students in the educational process and follow progression paths to Third Level study

It is the ambition of the staff of DCU in the Community Centre that DCU will be the leader in Ireland in University outreach initiatives and innovation.

Moving into the future it is possible to envisage the Shangan Road element of DCU's civic engagement strategy becoming part of a Higher Education Institute or similar embracing OSCAIL and the LIU. This would provide a flexible and innovative outreach approach for DCU's learning mission. It would provide critical mass and it will help achieve a stronger funding base through judicious and inventive combination of efforts. The research element of DCU in the Community, namely DCU Science Shop: Community Knowledge Exchange is currently discussing a mainstreaming strategy with OVPLI which can be seen as parallel to the strategy proposed here for the community learning element of civic engagement.

## **Appendix C: Members of the Internal Working Group and External Advisory Panel**

### Members of the Internal Advisory Panel

- 1 Morag Munro
- 2 Ciaran Dunne
- 3 Sylvia Schroeder
- 4 Trudy Corrigan
- 5 Julia Anne Ennis
- 6 Una Redmond
- 7 Joe Jones
- 8 Jean Berry
- 9 Des McGuinness
- 10 Pdraig Murphy
- 11 Emma O'Brien
- 12 Theo Lynn
- 13 Emer Ni Bhraidaigh
- 14 Ita Tobin
- 15 Barbara McConalogue
- 16 Cathy McLoughlin
- 17 Don Niall
- 18 Sarah Ingle
- 19 Carmel Mulcahy
- 20 Sean Marlow
- 21 Anne Morrissey
- 22 Ger Lardner
- 23 Caitriona Fitzgerald
- 24 Cara Greene
- 25 Siobhan Dunne
- 26 Debbie Ging
- 27 Nial McClave
- 28 Declan Raftery
- 29 Jean Hughes
- 30 Deiric Ó Broin
- 31 Ronnie Munck

## Members of the External Advisory Panel

- 1 Marian Vickers (Northside Partnership)
- 2 Michael Bowe (Finglas-Cabra Partnership)
- 3 Declan Dunne (Ballymun Partnership)
- 4 Ann Marie Farrelly (Fingal County Council)
- 5 George Curran (Fingal County Council)
- 6 John Egan (Dublin City Council)
- 7 Mary Taylor (Dublin City Council)
- 8 Cllr. Julia Carmichael (Dublin City Council)
- 9 Cllr. Anne Devitt (Fingal County Council)