

## Greeting to Staff by Professor Daire Keogh, President, DCU

16 July, 2020

When I was appointed to this job, I never thought it would be like this on Day 1. I'd much prefer if we were in The Helix and we could see each other face to face, but that is not to be. I know that you are Zoomed out, but I didn't want this week to go by without checking in, without saying hello, and to express to you how honoured and humbled I am to have been chosen as President of Dublin City University.

But first, I'd like to pay tribute to Brian and to thank him for his extraordinary leadership of the university for the past 10 years. He's been a great friend to me and to all of the university. He has expended every ounce of his energy in keeping us safe and leading us on in that time. I wish himself and Catherine every happiness and success as they move on to their next great adventure.

Nothing prepared us for the experience of Covid: the isolation, the disruption and what we call 'lockdown.' But they say that trials are sent to test us and in a crisis situation we can either buckle or blossom. I think most of us bent, but it is fair to say that the crisis showed DCU at its very best. From the get-go, we put our students at the centre and we put the safety of our people first. We responded with remarkable agility and our ability to move all that we do online overnight was extraordinary.

The students have been very appreciative of all that you have done, but I am hugely grateful for the sacrifices that you made to make this happen. It hasn't been easy working from home, particularly for people with caring duties, and I'm hugely appreciative of that.

The great Dubliner, Oscar Wilde, once said, 'When it rains, look for rainbows'. Throughout the crisis, our colleagues at DCU put our best foot forward in all kinds of ways. I'm thinking of the way our colleagues here in the NRF stepped up immediately to support the frontline workers. The way in which our people in DCU iForm in Engineering worked to produce PPE. I'm thinking of the DCU Covid-19 Research and Innovation Hub and the engagement with real challenges and the new problems that we faced on a daily basis. I'm thinking of the teaching and learning that went on all the time. I'm thinking of the actions of the DCU Educational Trust, stepping up an appeal immediately to support student hardship. I'm thinking of the vitality of our colleagues in the Virtual Open Day, who sold the dream of DCU to prospective students.

But most importantly, I'm thinking of those quiet little moments of care, those unseen acts of kindness that kept people safe. One instance, that I've heard from a number of people, is of one colleague who hosted a virtual coffee morning every day throughout the lockdown. People felt the way in which that kept them connected in their isolation and sane throughout the crisis.

Nobody knows how long this crisis will last, but through our Scenario Planning we've done all that we can to give next year a shape. We know it will begin, we know it will end, and

we're working to put the middle together. Our priority is to keep you safe and sound, and to deliver the very best for our students - students who expect the year to be safe and great. We will give them the very best educational experience they deserve.

This will be my priority for the coming year, and there are things that we can do to help us through. One of the hardest parts of the Covid crisis was the sense of isolation, so I would like to nurture a sense of community through the One DCU / Our DCU programme to give us a sense of belonging and a feeling of being at home here in the university, all together. I'd also like to enhance our people focus and to look at the ways we support each other and to enable each other to thrive. Through the quality of our student experience and the excellence of our research, we will extend our positive influence on Irish life. But to do that, we will have to make choices, and we will need to focus on the important things, the things that matter.

At DCU, we have excellent principles, which will be our compass in the Covid fog. But more than that we have exceptional people, and I look forward to supporting you in my new role. I would like to thank you once more for all you have done in this crisis. When it lifts, and it will lift, I look forward to celebrating with you in The Helix. We will have an occasion, a great occasion, where we can celebrate together. But in the interim, please use this quiet time to take a break, to rest and relax, to recharge and enjoy the company of your family and friends.

Thank you!

