



**Cónaidhm Éireannach na Múinteoirí Ollscoile
Irish Federation of University Teachers**

PRESS RELEASE

**Europe's most efficient system of
university education is being ruined,
IFUT President tells 2010 Annual
Conference**

24 April 2010

The Irish University system has always had to struggle and was never properly funded, even during the years of the Celtic Tiger, the President of the Irish Federation of University Teachers, Hugh Gibbons, said in his address to the 2010 IFUT Annual Delegate Conference today (Saturday, 24 April 2010). Now the Irish University system is being ruined by the Government embargo and moratorium on appointments, the blocks on promotion and cuts in institutions' core grants.

"In spite of underfunding, the Irish University system is a successful university system. The Heads of the Irish Universities regularly report that the Irish University system is about half the cost per student as an equivalent UK University. In Ireland today we have few or no saints and, due to the Government and its consultants, we will have few or no Scholars either", the IFUT President said.

Quoting a recent EU Report, Hugh Gibbons pointed out that Ireland is at the top of the 'efficiency' league table and stressed that:

- Irish graduates are the most highly employable in Europe;
- Irish universities have the highest graduation rate in Europe;
- Ireland has the highest percentage of graduates in Europe;
- Universities in Ireland, Finland and Sweden are given the highest 'excellence' rating by academics in other EU countries.

"The Universities are being ruined by the Government embargo and moratorium. Posts in Universities remain vacant as the Government refuses to allow their filling; as a result departments are struggling to maintain their courses. The promotions systems in the Universities has been put in abeyance and staff who hear the good

news that they have been promoted then hear the bad news that they will not be paid their new salary. For staff who take on extra responsibilities, like being Head of Department, the allowances have been withdrawn. Who would want to take on extra responsibilities in this situation?"

The IFUT President commented that, in the early 1990s, the Department of Finance was very reluctant to fund University research, even though the Universities were constantly lobbying for such funding. At that time the Department considered that funding University research would be only a subsidy to big companies and that, if companies wanted Universities to do research for them, the companies should pay for it themselves. "That attitude should be put in place now, by adding a small levy to the corporate tax. This levy could be ring-fenced for education, since some of the corporations are very concerned about our underfunded education system."

Hugh Gibbons concluded by stressing the breadth and variety of University research and the narrowness of the Department of Finance interest. "Universities carry out all kinds of research: research that is socially useful, that investigates the fundamental properties of nature, research into mathematics, into our history, languages, culture, education and even economics. The only research the Department of Finance is interested in, is research that would give rise to a commercial return and this mostly relates to Science and Engineering."

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