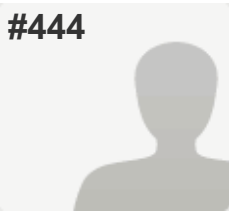


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PAGE 1: Please complete this consultation paper in respect of your area of interest and/or expertise

Q1: Name:

Dr Brendan J. Murphy (President)

Q2: Organisation:

Cork Institute of Technology (in Partnership with IT Tralee)

Q3: Email:

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Q4: 1(a) What improvements can be made within existing resources

At the outset we recognise the difficult financial circumstances of recent years and appreciate that all Government Departments have had to make some very difficult decisions. For the most part we support the various initiatives and reforms that the Department of Education and Skills has pursued in recent years. However, it is important to note that all higher education institutions in the state and Institutes of Technology in particular have been negatively impacted by the financial reductions imposed and in this context there is little or no additional capacity available to facility further improvements without additional resources.

Cork Institute of Technology (and indeed the Institute of Technology sector as a whole) provides inclusive access to educational opportunities to large numbers of learners from all sections of society and we are firmly committed to this vital part of our mission. To continue to reach greater numbers of learners we must develop accessible programme structures (e.g. modular and credit based) and flexible modes of delivery (e.g. online). A very important step that could be taken, within existing resources, to facilitate accessible structures and flexible delivery, is to modify the definition of what is a student such that the differentiation between full-time and part-time students is effectively removed. This would allow students and institutions to receive equivalent grants and funding irrespective of whether they completed their programme in full-time mode, part-time mode or a combination of the two. This would remove barriers to access and would allow individuals to initiate or continue their studies in conjunction with other aspects of their lives such as pursuing a career or caring for family.

Q5: 1(b) What improvements can be made through new provision

Respondent skipped this question

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Q6: 2. Comment on work currently being undertaken by the Department in your area of interest and/or expertise. (What are we doing well, what could we do better)?

Two areas of work currently being undertaken by the Department are of critical importance. They two areas relate to higher education funding and institutional reform as it relates to the creation of technological universities.

The issue of funding must be addressed as a matter of priority. The higher education sector (and the Institute of Technology sector in particular) is significantly underfunded and this situation has persisted for a prolonged period. One effect of this underfunding is that the quality of facilities, scientific and other equipment and other important infrastructure continue to deteriorate due to lack of maintenance and renewal which undermines the sector's ability to provide excellent education and research. In addition, the funding cuts and other measures introduced as a result of the financial crisis have had impacted on the effectiveness and morale of staff across the sector.

While we recognise the initiative of the HEA in introducing an element of performance based funding via the strategic dialogue process and the provision of significant research funding via PRTL, the Institute of Technology sector still experiences funding inequities vis a vis the traditional universities. We would like to see a level playing field in respect of funding per student (in lieu of fees) and research top slicing. In addition the Institutes are disadvantaged by the lack of a borrowing framework which denies them access to vital capital and seed funding which would allow them to develop and grow their provision and contribution.

Changes to the funding of higher education have had a significant effect on the level of funding allocated to support delivery of STEM programmes. An increasingly large portion of funding for higher education institutions is coming from the student contribution, to which the STEM weighting is not applied. The end result is a significantly greater reduction in state funding for programmes in the STEM disciplines, when compared to reductions applied to other disciplines. This is having a detrimental impact on the ability of institutions such as CIT to continue to deliver high quality science and engineering programmes.

We welcome the introduction of competitive/performance based funding in a move away from ring-fenced funding based on historical circumstances. Funding should increasingly be linked to delivery against key mission objectives.

In summary, there is an urgent need for reform of higher education funding to deliver:

- Sufficient recurrent funding with appropriate weighting for STEM programmes
- A capital investment programme for higher education
- Dedicated research funding of Institutes of Technology
- A framework to allow for borrowing by Institutes of Technology

We believe that the creation of Technological Universities is an important initiative in the ongoing development of the Irish higher education landscape. Technological Universities will be drivers of growth and development in their regions supporting employment, educational opportunity and social inclusion. We would urge the Department to prioritise this as one of the key strategic initiatives contained in the new strategy for Education and Skills 2016 to 2018 by enacting the Technological Universities Bill and providing funding to support the development of Technological Universities.

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Q7: 3. Are there opportunities (e.g. new areas of work) which the Department should consider when developing the 2016 - 2018 strategy which would advance the achievement of our mission, vision and objectives across the continuum of education and skills?

We outlined above our view that increased access to tertiary and higher education can only be achieved through a removal of barriers to access for the non-standard cohort of learners. This cohort includes those involved in continuing professional development (CPD), part-time learners and mature learners. International research indicates that society and the economy will benefit from assisting these individuals and groups to develop their skills and gain qualifications. The 2016 to 2018 strategy should review the various programmes already in place (e.g. Springboard) and should aim to build an over-arching strategy which seeks to remove the barriers to access, progression and ultimate success for this cohort of learners. The strategy must seek to develop and support (through policy and funding) accessible provision, flexible delivery and other routes to upskilling and qualifications such as work-based learning and recognition of prior and experiential learning.

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Q8: 4. How should success on achieving our strategies be measured.

The benefits of education are multi-faceted and many of the benefits are realised over long periods of time. However, if you accept that education is an essentially good for individuals and the broader society then the clearest measure of success is level of educational attainment across all individuals and groups within society.

Our students and graduates will live and work in an increasingly globalised environment where their qualifications and skills must be relevant and recognised across international boundaries. Therefore, it is vital that the Irish education sector at all levels achieves positive ratings in the various international indicators and ranking systems (e.g. PISA, U-Multirank).

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Q9: 5. Comment on any issues relating to the continuum of education and skills, in addition to your particular area of interest and/or expertise

Respondent skipped this question

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Q10: 6. Any other observations that you would suggest the Department should consider in the formulation of our strategy for education and skills 2016 - 2018

Respondent skipped this question

PAGE 8: A Programme for a Partnership Government - Chapter 10: Education

Q11: 1(a) Comment on the approach contained in the Programme for a Partnership Government (are we capturing the essential issues, are there additional matters we should take into account).

Respondent skipped this question

Q12: 1(b) How should progress on Prioritising Early Years be measured?

Respondent skipped this question

Q13: 1(c) What would you consider to be the priority actions and outcomes in this area?

Respondent skipped this question

PAGE 9: A Programme for a Partnership Government - Chapter 10: Education

Q14: 2(a) Comment on the approach contained in the Programme for a Partnership Government (are we capturing the essential issues, are there additional matters we should take into account).

We support the proposed approach and it is consistent with our mission and priorities as outlined above. In addition to increasing provision it is vital that the barriers to participation are targeted. Increased provision will not deliver the desired results if individuals are unable to access the programmes due to financial or personal circumstances.

Q15: 2(b) How should progress on Tackling Disadvantaged be measured?

We believe that two measures should be used to gauge success, participation (i.e. how many learners are enrolling on programmes) and attainment (i.e. how many are completing programmes).

Q16: 2(c) What would you consider to be the priority actions and outcomes in this area?

As outlined in the above section. The strategy should aim to increase opportunities/provision and facilitate access/participation. Appropriate resourcing for existing and proposed access programmes would help greatly. The initiation of a national call for targeted access programmes to help tackle disadvantage, leaning heavily on HEI's which are already engaging in collaborative efforts would provide a suitable avenue for development. The projects could be identified via collaborating Institutes or indeed designated regional clusters.

PAGE 10: A Programme for a Partnership Government - Chapter 10: Education

Q17: 3(a) Comment on the approach contained in the Programme for a Partnership Government (are we capturing the essential issues, are there additional matters we should take into account).

Respondent skipped this question

Q18: 3(b) How should progress on Diversity and Choice for Parents be measured?

Respondent skipped this question

Q19: 3(c) What would you consider to be the priority actions and outcomes in this area?

Respondent skipped this question

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Q20: 4(a) Comment on the approach contained in the Programme for a Partnership Government (are we capturing the essential issues, are there additional matters we should take into account).

Respondent skipped this question

Q21: 4(b) How should progress on Promoting Excellence and Innovation in Schools be measured?

Respondent skipped this question

Q22: 4(c) What would you consider to be the priority actions and outcomes in this area?

Respondent skipped this question

PAGE 12: A Programme for a Partnership Government - Chapter 10: Education

Q23: 5(a) Comment on the approach contained in the Programme for a Partnership Government (are we capturing the essential issues, are there additional matters we should take into account).

The provision of so-called soft skills is increasingly important in the modern globalised environment. Skills such as interpersonal communication, teamwork and multilingualism as well as creativity and entrepreneurialism are essential in the workplace and wider society. It is important that the new strategy should have a view regarding the provision of these skills.

Q24: 5(b) How should progress on Promoting Creativity and Entrepreneurial Capacity in Students be measured?

The goal should be that every higher education graduate will have acquired these skills as a formal part of their programme study.

Q25: 5(c) What would you consider to be the priority actions and outcomes in this area?

Respondent skipped this question

PAGE 13: A Programme for a Partnership Government - Chapter 10: Education

Q26: 6(a) Comment on the approach contained in the Programme for a Partnership Government (are we capturing the essential issues, are there additional matters we should take into account).

The strategy may also wish to address the use of higher education campuses and facilities for community engagement and activities.

Q27: 6(b) How should progress on Making Better use of Educational Assets within Communities be measured?

Respondent skipped this question

Q28: 6(c) What would you consider to be the priority actions and outcomes in this area?

Respondent skipped this question

PAGE 14: A Programme for a Partnership Government - Chapter 10: Education

Q29: 7(a) Comment on the approach contained in the Programme for a Partnership Government (are we capturing the essential issues, are there additional matters we should take into account).

The strategy should address participation by those with special needs in higher education. There are unique aspects of higher education (e.g. lack of formal structure, large group sizes, living away from home, the importance of social activity in the higher education experience) which present challenges for those with special needs. However, we believe that increasing numbers of individuals with special needs will seek to access higher education in the coming years and therefore the strategy should take account of this.

Q30: 7(b) How should progress on Special Needs Education be measured?

Levels of participation and attainment seem the most pertinent.

Q31: 7(c) What would you consider to be the priority actions and outcomes in this area?

Respondent skipped this question

PAGE 15: A Programme for a Partnership Government - Chapter 10: Education

Q32: 8(a) Comment on the approach contained in the Programme for a Partnership Government (are we capturing the essential issues, are there additional matters we should take into account).

We broadly support the approach in the Programme and welcome the inclusion of non-standard provision, apprenticeship and technological university designation.

The issues relating to provision for non-standard learner cohorts have been detailed elsewhere in this submission.

With respect to apprenticeship provision it is important that the role and needs of the Institutes of Technology are considered. The Institutes have played a vital role in this provision nationally over many decades. We believe this should continue for two main reasons. Firstly, training apprenticeship in a higher education environment (sometimes

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should continue for two main reasons. Firstly, training apprenticeships in a higher education environment (sometimes side by side in the same classroom) can enable and encourage those with suitable aptitude to pursue higher education. Secondly, the availability of state-of-the-art equipment and skills instruction provides our engineering students with a skillset which is of particular benefit to them in the workplace. Therefore, it is vital that the Institutes are central to the development of apprenticeship strategy going forward.

Cork Institute of Technology, in partnership with Institute of Technology Tralee, is seeking to be designated as the Munster Technological University (MTU). We have already completed three of the four stages towards designation and will be able to achieve designation in a short timeframe once certain issues have been resolved at a national level.

The mission of the MTU is to Create knowledge and enable the use of knowledge to realise positive effects for society. We believe that the creation of the MTU will have a significant effect on job creation/retention and economic growth in the region as well as benefiting the broader society in a variety of ways.

The MTU will be a different type of university characterised by:

- Entrepreneurial organisational culture;
- Innovative and flexible provision of education, research and other services;
- Responsiveness and regional impact.

The MTU will have:

- 17000 students;
- Over 1600 staff;
- Two main locations and six sites across Cork and Kerry.

The MTU will deliver significant benefits for students, graduates and staff:

- Students will be afforded a broader range of educational opportunities;
- The range and quality of services and supports available to students will be enriched;
- Graduates will have greater options nationally and internationally for further study and research collaboration;
- MTU graduates will experience enhanced employability both in Ireland and internationally;
- The staff of the MTU will experience better and more career opportunities;
- Staff will have the opportunity within their career to focus or specialise in each of education, research and engagement. In particular research and innovation opportunities will be enhanced;
- Staff mobility will be facilitated by the MTU including greater opportunities to work with enterprises and enhanced opportunities for international exchange with HEIs abroad.

Regional importance and impact of the MTU:

The South West region is the most significant region outside Dublin in terms of:

- Population;
- Contribution to GDP;
- National leader for significant economic clusters.

We believe that it is essential that this region has a Technological University in order to help provide the economic and social capital necessary for the continued development of the region. The MTU will:

- Contribute an additional €50m per annum to the regional economy;
 - Deliver 13.21% more economic activity than two individual IoTs.
 - Make the region more desirable as a destination to study, live and do business in from both a national and international perspective through:
 - Provision of required skills and competencies to a variety of learners (e.g. school leavers, mature students and CPD learners) via varied and flexible modes of delivery;
 - Engaging in leading-edge research and innovation in cooperation with enterprise and social partners in the region;
 - Supporting enterprise development and growth with a particular focus on indigenous start-up and SME enterprises;
 - Operating with an over-arching culture of responsiveness which is focused on recognising the requirements of stakeholders and delivering on those requirements;
 - Partnering with community and social groups to facilitate initiatives aimed at delivering benefits and social capital within the region.
-

Q33: 8(b) How should progress on Meeting the Skills Needs of the Future be measured?

For Higher Education Institutions a suitable measure of their contribution might be the number of programmes and graduates in areas identified as key needs for economic development and job retention/creation. However, it might be more meaningful to develop a process for assessing the degree to which the knowledge, skills and competencies of graduates align with the requirements of the workplace. Any such process would involve close cooperation between the HEIs, enterprise, representative groups (e.g. IBEC, ISME), and regional bodies (regional skills for a, regional offices of IDA and Enterprise Ireland, etc).

Q34: 8(c) What would you consider to be the priority actions and outcomes in this area?

In order to facilitate the creation of technological universities it is vital that the Department of Education and Skills act in a timely manner to address the two key issues. Firstly, it will not be possible to create Technological Universities without enabling legislation. It is essential that the legislation is enacted in the coming months in order to bring necessary clarity to all involved.

Separate from the legislation (but related) is the issue of industrial action by the Teachers Union of Ireland(TUI). Many of their concerns require negotiation at a national level. A significant issue is the mandatory requirement for merger. The concern seems to be based on the belief that the merger is an exercise in rationalisation and downsizing. We do not believe that this is the rationale for merger as part of the broader higher education reforms. Instead we believe that in order to achieve its mission goals and deliver the considerable benefits, it is vital that the MTU is not merely located in the region but instead is distributed across the region. Through the merger of IT Tralee and CIT we can create a truly regional university which will be highly responsive to stakeholder needs due to its proximity to those stakeholders. The multi-campus structure of the MTU will bring additional opportunities and benefits over a single-site institution. These include:

- Providing enhanced educational opportunities to greater numbers of learners at or near where they live and/or work;
- Proximity to enterprise and other stakeholders which facilitates cooperation and leads to greater synergies and outcomes;
- Being situated in community they serve results in first-hand experience (and therefore a greater understanding) of the needs of stakeholders.

It is essential that the Department and HEA (in cooperation with the various institutions and other stakeholders) address these concerns and outline the positive outcomes and benefits which mergers will bring.
