



GMIT Review 2007/2008

A word from the President



Editor:
Regina Daly
Design & Layout:
Proactive
Printer:
Brunswick Press Ltd.

Contributors:
Dick Ahlstrom,
Irish Times,
Jo Lavelle,
Galwaynow,
Grainne McMahon,
radio, and GMIT staff

Photos:
Ros Kavanagh,
Joe Geoghegan,
Yann Photography,
Aengus McMahon,
Mike Shaughnessy,
Keith Heneghan,
Michael Conneely,
Western People,
and GMIT staff.

Our address:
Galway-Mayo Institute
of Technology (GMIT)
Dublin Road,
Galway, Rep. of Ireland,
Tel: +353 91 753161
email: acadaff@gmit.ie,
www.gmit.ie

GMIT Review 07/08
is published by the GMIT
Communications Office. We welcome
your thoughts on this publication.

Please send them by post to: Regina
Daly, GMIT, Dublin Road, Galway, or
email regina.daly@gmit.ie

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When I meet graduates of GMIT in Ireland or abroad, I always enjoy listening to their reflections on GMIT and I learn a lot from listening to their experiences. More than anything else they talk about the people they remember at GMIT and in particular those who have remained embedded in their memories as influencers.

One name crops up very often – Fanchea Caden, a lecturer in maths. Generations of students will, I know, join with me in paying tribute to her. Above all else, Fanchea sees the student first and then the discipline. She knows and remembers her students and they remember her.

They remember her passion for her job, her willingness to always hear what they had to say, her encouragement of their efforts, her focus on high standards, hard work and commitment and her capacity to have a bit of ‘craic’ with them. They remember the yellow ‘stickies’ she left on desks so that they could outline any problems they were having without calling attention to themselves. They knew that paltry excuses would get short shrift and that genuine problems would get her full attention.

I saw Fanchea meet a group of graduates a few years ago. She arrived with their class photographs taken when they were in first year. They gathered round her to look at themselves, to share tales of lives since GMIT and Fanchea wanted to know about them as people – they were never numbers on an exam sheet to her.

Great teachers are always remembered. Their genuine influence lasts a lifetime and goes far beyond the discipline they teach. Good teaching in maths should be especially valued because the discipline is the foundation of learning in many domains. A positive experience learning maths is particularly important for students in first year of third level education. Fanchea has said repeatedly that we need to pay more attention to the first year experience of students. She believes that the habits of thinking and doing developed in first year have a significant influence on third level performance.

GMIT students and staff have learned from her. We have had a chance to see what it is to have a passion for students and a passion for life lived to the full.

GMIT named Institute of Technology of the Year

GMIT was named "Sunday Times Institute of Technology of the Year 2007" during the past academic year. The prestigious award was announced in *The Sunday Times University Guide 2007*. It is the second such accolade for the Institute: GMIT won the award in 2004.

The annual *Sunday Times University Guide* assesses each third-level institution in Ireland and Britain on 25 criteria using data from each Institution, the CAO, HEA, Dept of Education and Science, and interviews with students' unions.

The Sunday newspaper stated: "A strong academic performance, high student satisfaction and enhancement of courses at the 35-year-old Galway-Mayo Institute of Technology (GMIT) won it the Sunday Times Institute of Technology of the Year Award for 2007."

"With five campuses along the western seaboard, GMIT is Ireland's most geographically dispersed third-level institution. An increasing number, 63%, of Galway-Mayo's degree students achieved a top grade, better than several universities and among the top performances of all third-level institutes in Ireland. It is introducing the republic's largest new course portfolio this year and next, which will push student numbers close to 6,000."

Chairman of GMIT Governing Body Rory O'Connor said it is a well deserved recognition. "It is a reflection of the overall quality of effort of the entire academic and administrative staff. It is also a very positive comment on the engagement of the student population and their leadership in the S.U."

GMIT President Marion Coy said: "This award recognises the quality of our students and also of our staff. It focused on the high satisfaction rate of our students which we think is very important and of which we are particularly proud."

The rankings for *The Sunday Times University League Table* are judged on criteria such as the qualification of entrance, degree results achieved, research quality, student/staff ratios, graduate unemployment levels and university dropout rates.

In addition, the institutes are judged on student satisfaction, access for non-traditional students and their role in regional, national and international development.

The 68-page third-level guide is described as "Everything you need to know about higher education".



Colleges collaborate to develop "Knowledge Region"

GMIT and NUI, Galway have formed a strategic alliance to develop Galway and surrounding areas into a recognised "Knowledge Region". Together the two colleges have secured funding of €824,000 under the Strategic Innovation Fund (SIF), which supports higher education reform.

The funding will be used to stimulate economic development, provide a greater range of services to communities, business and industry, and enable people to avail of higher education in the region.

This concerted collaborative approach to regional development will deliver greater benefits than could be achieved by implementing parallel programmes.

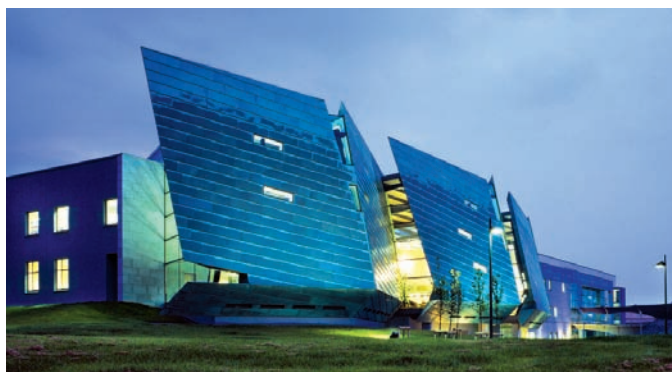
Marion Coy, President of GMIT, said: "Together we will seek to identify services we can offer, look at the expansion of our academic programmes and engage in the joint promotion of higher education in international markets which has potential in relation to the development of tourism. We will also seek to identify how we can promote the region as a centre for new business development and growth."

"Developing a knowledge region is the only way to ensure that community life will continue to thrive. This approach harks back to the 'Meitheal' and the belief that we will all be stronger and more successful when we work together and share a vision for the region."

Professor Jim Browne, President of NUI Galway, said: "The concept of a 'Knowledge Region' is an emerging phenomenon involving the interaction of governmental agencies, knowledge based enterprises and third-level institutions to combine efforts and define common agendas to the benefit of the region."

"NUI Galway and GMIT, with their history of cooperation and interaction with industry, development agencies and social and cultural organisations in the Galway area are well placed to act together as a catalyst for further development".

The GMIT / NUI Galway collaborative project is one of a range of proposals approved for SIF funding. GMIT was approved SIF funding worth over €4m for two further projects, both of which will be led by the Institute - "Student-Led Learning" and "Curriculum Reform", which is also a joint collaborative project with NUI Galway.



GMIT researchers and Oysterhomes join forces to create low-CO² homes



GMIT's Dr John Lohan, Principal Investigator, Andrew D'Arcy, Head of Development, Eamon Conneely, CEO Oysterhomes, Gerard MacMichael, Head of School of Engineering and Dr Tom Roche, Principal Investigator, GMIT.

GMIT School of Engineering has formed an innovative research partnership with property development company Oysterhomes Ltd to carry out research on the development of new energy efficient A-rated homes, in line with new building energy regulations.

Dr Tom Roche and Dr John Lohan, GMIT Centre for the Integration of Sustainable Energy Technologies (CiSET), will collaborate with the company over the next three years, using best practice engineering tools and methodologies, to investigate the optimum combination of insulation, structural and fabric details and renewable technologies, to achieve energy efficient homes.

New legislation stipulates a 40% improvement in energy efficiency and 31% reduction in CO² emissions for new homes.

Dr Tom Roche, Principal Investigator, GMIT Centre for the Integration of Sustainable Technologies (CiSET), said: "This research project is extremely important not just for the owners of homes in these developments but also nationally for the furthering of Ireland's mission to cut CO² and to reduce its dependence on imported fossil fuels."

"This collaboration will also greatly benefit undergraduate students in the Mechanical, Civil and Construction Engineering Departments at GMIT and other colleges, via knowledge transfer, the GMIT website, and site visits," he added.

Valuable library collection donated to GMIT

The distinguished theologian Reverend Professor Enda McDonagh, retired Professor of Moral Theology in Maynooth, has donated his personal library and papers to the Castlebar campus of GMIT.

Dr McDonagh, a native of Bekan, Co. Mayo, is a moral theologian of international standing, with a distinguished publication record at home and abroad. He has written and edited numerous collections, several dealing with the theme of political violence, and has also been involved with the cause of political recognition in Ireland, South Africa and Zimbabwe.

His library containing over 20,000 books, reflects the extent of his global interests from the problems of Latin America, the political challenge of Zimbabwe, and HIV/Aids in Africa, to his concern for the marginalized worldwide.

Professor Enda McDonagh (second front) with GMIT President Marion Coy, friends and colleagues at a conference in his honour, organised by GMIT and the Western Theological Institute.



GMIT in association with the Western Theological Institute held a very successful conference to honour Rev. Enda McDonagh, in Claremorris in October. Some 260 people attended from all over the country.

Speakers included Sister Stanislaus Kennedy, Dr. Garret FitzGerald, Ms Nuala Bourke, Ms Marion Coy, Dr. Noel Dorr, Dr. Eamon Conway for Dr. Seán Freyne, Ms Anne Harkin-Peterson, Rev. Brendan Hoban, Dr. Linda Hogan, and Rev. Patrick O'Brien.

Homag and GMIT Letterfrack forge new links

GMIT Letterfrack has teamed up with Homag UK Ltd, one of the leading manufacturers of computer-controlled wood processing equipment, in a new collaborative agreement.

Homag will install two CNC machines - a new Weeke Venture CNC and Holzma beam saw, in GMIT Letterfrack every year for the next five years. The two machines are worth over €180,000.

The agreement gives staff and students access to the most up-to-date automated equipment and software in use in the furniture industry, and further boosts the excellent network of GMIT/Industry collaborations.

Homag Managing Director Ian Brown visited the Letterfrack campus in January this year (2008) along with three senior managers of the company.

Assistant Registrar Michael Hannon, GMIT President Marion Coy, Homag MD Ian Brown and Dermot O'Donovan, Acting Head of Centre, Letterfrack. Mr Brown was presented with a wine bottle holder designed by furniture students using one of the new CNC machines.



President's Award for Teaching Excellence

Fanchea Caden



Fanchea Caden receiving the President's Award for Teaching Excellence from Marion Coy, GMIT President. The award comprises a plaque and bursary of €5,000.

Mathematics lecturer Fanchea Caden has won the inaugural President's Award for Teaching Excellence.

Fanchea currently teaches all three years of the Bachelor of Engineering in Civil Engineering in the Dublin Road campus.

She graduated from UCG with a BSc Degree and taught with Dublin VEC and at Sligo IT before joining the staff of GMIT in the early 80s.

Fanchea has developed different

teaching and learning methods and styles by using group and individual work in class, out of class assignments, class discussion and problem-solving sessions.

Commenting on her award, she said: "I am absolutely delighted and honoured. There are many committed, effective teachers in the Institute and I feel privileged to have been selected from among them."

"I love teaching and my current job, teaching Mathematics to first,

second and third year students on the Bachelor of Engineering in Civil Engineering programme is particularly rewarding.

Nationally, Mathematics is currently getting bad press. Fortunately the calibre of student opting to do Civil Engineering understands that Mathematics will be an integral part of the programme, so there is no antipathy towards it."

"I enjoy the structure, rigour and challenge of the subject but I equally

Colleague's tribute to Fanchea Caden

Mossy Farrell, Lecturer, Civil Engineering, shares his personal thoughts on Fanchea's achievements and her contribution to the college.

The acclaim from both staff and students regarding the decision to award Fanchea Caden the Director's Award for Teaching Excellence is proof positive that the judging panel made the right call. Anyone with any doubts of this should have been in the Kings Head on the night of the graduation where she and her husband, Des, were feted ceremoniously by the celebrating student party. Never was an award more deserved.

Since her arrival at Galway RTC back in the 80s Fanchea has constantly made a positive input and has continuously served as an inspiration and a driving force to staff members, young and old. Her enthusiasm from day one right up to the present is quite infectious with no sign of letting up. She has served on, and contributed to, countless committees both within and outside of the Institute and while she has always been a most helpful, good humoured and erudite work colleague her main focus, at all times, is on the student's welfare and progress - or lack of.

Her lecturing skills and quality of her delivery are widely acknowledged. When a student, asked for suggestions for improvement on the course feedback form replies "no improvements required... do you teach any other subjects?" you must be doing it right!

One of her most impressive talents is that of anticipating problems and heading them off. She would regularly identify individuals or groups of students whose commitment was beginning to waver and, together with compliant fellow lecturers would arrange that the students concerned be encouraged by all in a concerted

'pincer movement'. Currently a few Civil 2 students are enjoying the experience.

Fanchea is, without doubt, the main reason that retention rates are so high in the Civil Engineering Department. As one of our external examiners put it "The pastoral care provided to the students is exceptional and very worthy of commendation".

And has all this untiring endeavour taken a toll on her personal life? Not a bit of it! Recently at the extremely enjoyable function marking the retirement of one of our esteemed colleagues, Ted Parslow, one of the lecturers made the comment - "that woman taught me many years ago in Ringsend and she's looking every bit as good today as she did all those years ago". Politically incorrect perhaps, but many people, male and female would be seriously pleased to have such a comment made about them.

Is she flawless? Not quite... Despite her renowned enthusiasm for traditional music and all things Irish she has not, at the time of going to press, as yet mastered the concertina and is currently some distance behind Breda Joyce in that regard. And her name is hard to spell!

Congratulations to Fanchea on her most well deserved award and we, in the civil engineering department, will continue to allow ourselves to bask in the reflected glory of her achievement for some time to come.

- Mossy Farrell

enjoy the interaction with the students. They energise me and I try to motivate them. I encourage an atmosphere in the class where a student finds it easy to ask questions. Provoking students to think and ask questions is the key to progress. Mathematics is about solving problems. You have to make a start be it right or wrong! If no solution is forthcoming then try another approach. Even though practice is required, mathematics is not solely about practising routines"

"Students need to know the rules of engagement right from the start-what is my responsibility and what is their responsibility.

Attitude to attendance and adherence to deadlines is paramount. Sometimes we demand too little from the students and maybe do not set high enough standards."

"Many of the qualities that are important in the delivery of education are e-words: engagement, empathy, enthusiasm, energy, empowerment."

"I regard my job as more than just teaching mathematics. The ethos of the Department is to ensure a learning environment such that the student has every opportunity to maximise his/her potential. A sense of belonging is engendered and an effective class dynamic is nurtured. I am coordinator for First Civil and I passionately believe that first year is the most important year."

"One of the best resources students have is their peer group. Group study and collaborative learning are promoted and can be very effective. In my career I have always found that students are very generous with their time and knowledge."

"We all blossom if our contribution is acknowledged so I must remember to acknowledge commitment and effort on the students' part. Unfortunately we tend to do more faultfinding than praising in this profession."

"Fanchea is, without doubt, the main reason that retention rates are so high in the Civil Engineering Department."

Profile: Dr. Barbara Burns

New Head of Centre, GMIT Castlebar

By Jo Lavelle



From encouraging the development of new programmes to overseeing the day-to-day operations of the GMIT Castlebar campus, Dr Barbara Burns' job as Head of Centre is diverse.

The Iowa native, who moved to Ireland over 20 years ago, has just completed her first year in the job. She lectured at the college for ten years prior to taking up the post, beginning as a maths and statistics lecturer and going on to

lecture in psychology, operations management and various business programmes. She also served on Institute-wide committees and the Academic Council and has considerable experience in research and industry.

Dr Burns' academic training is in psychology, international relations and epidemiology and she continues to lecture in Critical Thinking and Decision Making despite the demands of her position as Head of

Centre. Maintaining constant contact with students and staff is important, she believes.

"I think having a good relationship with the students and the staff is essential, particularly because you rely on informal contacts with people. People need to trust you and you need to be able to talk to people comfortably. Before I moved into this job, I was lecturing on 14 different programmes. So, I understand the

concerns and interests of different groups. It makes it a lot easier and a lot friendlier.”

Having an open-door policy for students and staff is very important to Dr Burns. And she enjoys the easy-going banter and the down to earth attitude that comes with student interaction.

“The students are fantastic; they’re absolutely a delight. If you want to deal with people who always have questions, who are never satisfied with the way things are and always want things to be different and better, it’s great. It’s one reason I like to keep teaching because that’s what the whole campus is all about. If the students weren’t there and if they’re not succeeding in what they want to do, then we’re out of business. And, they keep me grounded.”

Major changes have taken place within the campus in the ten years that Dr Burns has been working there, not least the fact that the college has more than doubled in size.

“Because of the excellent staff, we’ve been able to continuously update our programmes and add a number of completely new programmes. We’ve seen major changes occur in what students are looking for and major changes in the economy. We’ve gone from a very straightforward stage-based system to a much more flexible modular system, and added a range of part-time accredited programmes, delivered both on and off campus.”

The largest change, reflected in the student body and the building itself, has been the Nursing School. Over the last two years, an additional wing of the building was renovated, rejuvenating the 140-year old former asylum with state-of-the-art facilities in a bright airy atmosphere.

While much has been done in terms of developing the college and programmes, there are some changes Dr Burns says she feels

would really enhance the system as a whole.

“I’d like to see more ability for people to take part time courses to fit in with their life; part-time mature students. That’s currently controlled by the fact that the government only pays tuition if they’re full time, so it limits people who are working and people with families.”

“Mature students are brilliant, they’re absolutely dedicated. They know exactly what they want to do.”

“Mature students are brilliant, they’re absolutely dedicated. They know exactly what they want to do. It’s great for them and it’s great for the campus. There are a lot of people who would like to come back to school and pick up a qualification - but they simply don’t have the resources in terms of time or finances to fund it one module at a time.”

“I’d also like to see us work more closely with local industry, whether it be retail businesses, social services, manufacturing companies, both to allow our students a chance to get work experience but also to allow them a much better realisation of the real world and the types of opportunities that are out there. Increased work placement in programmes is one of the plans for the Institute as a whole, which is going to be a great opportunity for the students, explains Dr Burns.

Increased flexibility is something that she would also like to see more of within the system. “If you’re taking a business degree and your family owns an electronic shop, why shouldn’t you be able to do a business degree with the electives of

the electronics programme? Why shouldn’t you be able to do a programme that is half computing and half tourism, or architectural technology mixed with heritage? Why not facilitate people, tailoring the programmes to their own needs rather than having to fit into a “box”, so to speak. It’s one of the best things with a campus like this. We have the capability because of the working relationship among the staff members to offer more flexible programmes. The flexibility is also to our advantage - allowing us to offer specialised programmes that would not be viable if they had to stand alone.”

When not working, Dr Burns takes her talents to the Westport Choral Society where she is musical director and to the Kilmeena and Fahy churches where she is the choir director and organist. When she’s feeling a little more adventurous, the head of the GMIT Castlebar campus takes to the skies to get away from it all and is currently in the process of getting her flying license to fulfil a long-held dream.

CIOB recognition for construction management degrees

The Chartered Institute of Building (CIOB) and Hetac recently signed a Memorandum of Understanding, in which CIOB recognises Hetac level 8 construction programmes as fulfilling requirements for chartered membership of CIOB.

Graduates of Hetac level 7 construction programmes can also meet the requirement upon gaining an additional 60 ECTS credits at level 8.

Level 8 graduates may now immediately apply to become Incorporated (ICIOB) members of CIOB. Thereafter they can progress to full chartered status after gaining appropriate professional experience in the workplace and passing the professional review mechanism of CIOB. For more info on CIOB see www.ciob.org

Plans for new part-time accounting programme

GMIT has entered into an agreement with the Institute of Chartered Accountants of Ireland (ICAI) to deliver the CA Proficiency 1 Professional Accounting programme at the Institute.

It was identified that students from Galway city and the adjoining regions were not being provided with a local service for this programme and GMIT was recognised as having both the technical expertise and facilities to deliver it.

The course is designed for students who have just entered into the accounting profession, having undertaken a degree in an unrelated area in college, ie arts, engineering, or students who studied business or accounting but failed to achieve an exemption from the ICAI. The course is expected to commence in October 2008 and be delivered at weekends.

Digital media students collaborate with local enterprise

GMIT students are pioneering the development of new applied digital media web sites as part of their second year studies on the BSc in Applied Digital Media and Business Applications programme.

The students are developing commercially viable sites for use by local and national medium to small businesses and are assessed on their final group project.

The web sites are developed quickly and effectively and are unique in that every aspect is developed by the students including digital images/photographs, and audio and video material using the latest technology.

GMIT Maths and Computing Department hosted a highly success-

ful Digital Media Open Day for local businesses at the Institute's Digital Media Centre at the Cluain Mhuire campus in early 2008. Visitors had a chance to see at first hand the students' work.

The B.Sc. in Applied Digital Media and Business Applications programme is pushing the boundaries of web site development and is continually updated to reflect all modern developments in information and communications technology.

For further information, contact Dr Robert J Loughnane. Tel. 091-742281 and/or email: robert.loughnane@gmit.ie. For full programme details see: www.gmit.ie/science/bsc-digital-media

Changes to curriculum reflect demand

GMIT has made a number of changes to its curriculum in the past year, introducing innovative programmes relative to the region and the economy and discontinuing programmes that are no longer in demand. The following new full-time programmes are on offer from September 2008, through the CAO:

- BB (Ordinary) in Tourism Management, Galway campus.
- BB (Ordinary) in Retail and Customer Service Management, Galway campus.
- BS (Ordinary) in Internet Technologies, Castlebar campus.

The following new post graduate programme are available by applying directly to the college:

- Higher Diploma in Technology (Education), which qualifies graduates to teach technology related subjects at second level.

- Professional Accountancy Programme in association with the Institute of Chartered Accountants of Ireland, a part-time programme which will be delivered at weekends in the Galway campus from October.

Programmes no longer on the curriculum are the BB in Hotel and Information Technology, Galway campus, and the Higher Certificate in Electronic Engineering, Castlebar campus.

Under GMIT's flexible approach to programme delivery, new pathways are being created to awards from existing programmes. See GMIT's full list of programmes at: <http://www.gmit.ie/study-at-gmit/programmes.html>

First cohort complete property studies (hons) degree



Property (hons) students are pictured with their lecturers Tom White, Head of Dept, Patricia McCann, Fiona Watson, Barry Gantly, Brian Doyle, Mary Rogers and Siobhaun Cawley.

November 2007 marked the graduation of the first cohort of students on the BSc (Hons) in Property Studies at the Dublin Road campus.

Initiated in 2003, the programme is fully accredited by the Society of Chartered Surveyors (SCS) and the Irish Auctioneers & Valuers Institute (IAVI).

As part of their degree, the students spent one year on professional placement, many of them securing employment with leading property consultancy firms before graduation.

New Research & Innovation magazine

Research and innovation activities in GMIT are outlined for the first time in a dedicated new A4 colour publication, produced by the GMIT Communication Office.

The 48-page journal contains reports, interviews, profiles, opinions and features on the wide range of GMIT research projects and collaborations.

Printed copies are available on request by e-mailing regina.daly@gmit.ie. To read the publication on-line, click on: <http://www.gmit.ie/news-events/publications/>



Castlebar students develop Mayo Peace Park website



L-R: Stephen McLaughlin, Ernie Sweeney, Cllr Eugene McCormack, Mayor of Castlebar, Dr Barbara Burns, Head of Centre GMIT, Michael Feeney, Henry Moroney.
Front Row: Mark Frain, GMIT lecturer, and GMIT students Catherine Nalley and David Coffey.

Two students at the Castlebar campus have developed a website for the new Mayo Memorial Peace Park in Castlebar.

David Coffey from Knocknacarra and Catherine Nalley from Ballindine are studying towards a B Sc (Hons) in Computer Services Management. They developed the site over four months under the supervision of their lecturer Mark Frain and with input from Mayo Peace Park Committee members.

The Park is dedicated to the memory of all those from Mayo who served and died in wars and conflicts of the past century, with the Allied and Commonwealth Forces, and Mayo-born Irish Army soldiers who served and died on UN operations

To view the site see:
www.mayomemorialpeacepark.org

Lecturer captures Clare Island in pictures

GMIT photography lecturer Jim Vaughan has captured Clare Island in new book titled *This time, this place*, a public art project commissioned by Mayo County Council.

Jim worked with the island community encouraging them to create images that reflected their own idea of life on the island.

Poet Macdara Woods also wrote an original poem *Fifteen Contacts* responding to the images and his own experience of the island.

All 140 residents of Clare Island were given a special limited edition hardback version of the book and a further limited run of paperbacks was published by Mayo County Council.

GMIT awarded Irish Aid research grant

GMIT has been successful in an application for research funding under the Programme of Strategic Co-operation between Irish Aid and Higher Education and Research Institutes.

The Institute has been granted €50,000 to carry out a study aimed at fostering and facilitating collaboration among Irish IoTs and HE sectors in Zambia, Malawi, Tanzania and Lesotho.

In particular it aims to strengthen teaching, learning and applied research capacity, and to support the development of institutional diversity in each country.

The project titled 'Building Capacity for Collaboration' will research existing capacity and needs in each of the four countries and disseminate this knowledge as a basis for developing collaborative partnerships.

For further information, contact hugh.mcbride@gmit.ie at the GMIT Castlebar campus.

Educational agreement with Saudi Arabia



Pictured at the signing of the GMIT-Saudi Gotevot agreement, L-R, back row, Conor Fahy (Enterprise Ireland) EI Regional Director for Southern Europe, Middle East and Africa; Frank O'Connor, EI International Education Service Manager; Front, Dr Saleh Al-Amr, Deputy Governor, Gotevot, and Jim Fennell, Financial Director, GMIT.

GMIT delivered its first specialised education programme to 20 nationals from the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia during the past year, as part of a new agreement with the Saudi General Organisation for Technical Education and Vocational Training (Gotevot) and four other Irish colleges.

The group of third-level teachers completed an eight week programme

at the Dublin Road campus. Modules included intensive English, Computing and Electronic Technology.

Gotevot delegates first visited Ireland in December 2006, at the invitation of Enterprise Ireland (EI). Links were further developed during the EI Gulf Trade Mission in January 2007, led by then Taoiseach Bertie Ahern.

Nanchang students conferred



Nanchang students with GMIT President Marion Coy (centre), after the 2007 conferring ceremony in the Radisson Hotel.

Six students from Nanchang University (NCU) in China graduated with a Bachelor of Business (Hons) during the 2007 conferring ceremonies.

They were the first to benefit from the co-operation agreement between

NCU and GMIT whereby those successful in their studies obtain a degree from both institutions.

GMIT: Contributor to the knowledge economy

Interview: Dr. Des Foley, Head of School of Science

By Dick Ahlstrom, *Irish Times*



All of the institutes of technology exert a powerful local influence on the regions where they exist, but this is particularly true of Galway-Mayo Institute of Technology (GMIT). It maintains not one but five campuses, with a spread that reaches from Galway city to Castlebar.

More than half of GMIT's student body comes from the two counties, so having two campuses in Galway city and one each in Letterfrack, Castlebar

and Mountbellew gets the Institution seen and understood by the people leaving nearby.

"It is a more costly enterprise to run than having one campus, but in terms of serving the region and having a real presence five campuses have a high impact in their locality," says Dr Des Foley, Head of School of Science at GMIT.

"It is very important to nurture our identity, especially as the institutes of technology are still rela-

tively young. In a small centre, the presence of an institute is a real boost for these towns," he believes.

It also affords GMIT an opportunity to specialise. Letterfrack, for example, has established a national reputation as a centre for the study of furniture design. Its Castlebar campus is a base for the Institute's nursing school adjacent to the general hospital, so the impact is immediately applicable on a local basis.

"However, I don't think we always

get the credit for operating a diffuse model in terms of funding and running a number of campuses doesn't come cheap".

Dr Foley has an interesting perspective on GMIT and its future, coming to it from Elan Corporation in 2003 initially as head of strategic planning. It has given him a very clear idea of where GMIT stands and where it is heading in the years to come.

"The IoT sector is in a state of flux at the moment, with changes coming as a result of Government policy related to the development of a knowledge economy. It means the old core remit of providing technicians and technical staff is now evolving towards greater research activity and even stronger collaborative links with industry," Dr Foley suggests.

"The nature of learning is changing very quickly," he says. The notion that learning means having to be contained within four walls and bound to a clock is going.

"I don't think that we can automatically make an argument that delivering 30 hours of class contact a week is twice as good as 15 hours. We have to refine our ideas about how people learn especially in the age of the 'digital student'."

The sector is also coming under pressure to play a more central role in the creation of a knowledge economy by helping to provide the educated personnel that will drive the paradigm forward. "All of the national policy documents are pointing to a greater role for the IoTs for involvement in research and for stronger linkages with enterprise," Dr Foley says.

The IoTs increasingly are being asked to become involved "in real collaborative research with tangible benefits for enterprise". They are going to have to change to deliver this however, he believes. The institutes are going to have to continuously improve their standing in research

and overturn the traditional view of the sector being involved primarily in delivering certificates and diplomas. In effect this means boosting the collective reputation of the IoT sector by building on its strengths.

"The institutes are going to have to continuously improve their standing in research and overturn the traditional view of the sector being involved primarily in delivering certificates and diplomas."

"I think there is a job of work to be done there which is only starting," he suggests. Yet building on what is already there gives the sector particular advantages that are unlikely to be matched in the university sector, he believes. GMIT's strategic plan points towards the development of these latent strengths, particularly in the area of skills transfer and continuing education.

"Being able to transfer new skills to GMIT graduates is central," Dr Foley says. Students leaving third level are expected to have expertise in their principal areas of study, say physics or chemistry, but now employers are looking for a much wider set of skills.

"When I left university with my PhD the first thing I had to do in my new job was look at departmental accounts which meant nothing to me. It was straight into a multidisciplinary environment," he says.

An early research project involved the design of an electronically-controlled transdermal patch. The collaborators were designers from Swatch Watch who had "a

completely different view to what an engineer or chemist would have seen".

GMIT is attempting to build this much wider skill set into its educational programmes. Having skills in team working and problem solving provide them with something extra when reaching the jobs market, Dr Foley says. He strongly believes that absorbing these skills must be done in a realistic context, not necessarily by taking modules on team building or report writing but by doing placements in real companies.

"We are doing work placements more and more," he states. "Over half of our programmes have a work placement element. The students are crying out for it and the companies are crying out for it."

These changes feed directly into the development of a knowledge economy, both by giving students a more hands-on education when in third level and then delivering the graduates who will enter the knowledge economy.

"We are producing graduates that have come through very practical programmes and our research profile is also growing all the time," Dr Foley says. GMIT and the IoT sector also have a central role to play in skills enhancement, given their strong grounding in the practical and the realities of the workplace. Dr Foley believes the sector could deliver "professional PhD" type programmes based on collaboration with other elements of the third level sector.

"We could be doing a lot more about workforce development," he says. GMIT is already involved in this, at undergraduate and post-graduate level. "There are a lot of people working today who will still be in the workforce in 20 years time. At some stage, they will need to upskill."

"I think we still have to serve the traditional IoT cohort and technical education," he adds. But this does

not preclude the sector from moving into the skills transfer and in-service training areas that would grow from the close associations the IoTs already maintain with industry. "I think we could do that type of work very, very well and be a major contributor to the knowledge economy," he concludes.

Top awards for professional cookery students



Back row, l-r: TJ Kenny (Gold), Bernard Tracy (Silver), Yun Lin Xu (Gold), He Bin (Gold), Kai Puis (Gold). Front row, l-r: Amaya Fernandez (Bronze), Avril O'Connor (Gold), Ashling Vaughan (Gold) and Niamh Larken (Bronze). [Missing from the picture is Sam Mulholland who won Gold, Silver and Bronze medals.]

First and second year Professional Cookery students, based at the Dublin Road campus, Galway, between them won seven Gold medals, two Silver, three Bronze and three Certificates of Merit at the Panel of Chefs North West Catering Exhibition this year.

H&C students win IHI Management Game



Irene Burke, Sara Gilligan, Aine O'Neill, (Captain), Andi Qerama, and Belinda Sibalda.

Hotel & Catering Management students, winners of the Irish Hospitality Institute (IHI) Business Management Game (2008), for the second year in a row.

The annual competition, which is held in association with Champagne Taittinger and Fáilte Ireland, attracts

student hospitality managers from third level colleges all over Ireland.

The GMIT team was tutored by Gerry O'Neill and Deirdre McMahon. Deirdre Burke, who coached last year's winning team, also provided support and coaching advice.

Bronze medal for professional cookery student



Student Amaya Fernandez and her coach, lecturer Noel Loughnane.

Amaya Fernandez, a second year Professional Cookery student, won a Bronze Medal at the finals of this year's Knorr Student Chef of the year Competition.

Amaya competed against eight other finalists representing catering colleges around the country. This is

the twelfth year of the competition which is renowned as an important opportunity to showcase students' culinary skills.

Amaya's tutor is Johnny Carroll and her coach for this competition was Noel Loughnane.

Bar Management students represent Ireland at international competition



Marie Sexton and Paul Harkin.

Two GMIT Hospitality students represented Ireland at the finals of the prestigious International Francoli Cup Cocktail-making competition in Italy in March.

Marie Sexton from Cork city and Paul Harkin from Ballyliffin, Co. Donegal, both students on the Bachelor of Business in Bar Management pro-

gramme at GMIT's Dublin Road campus, were selected as finalists in the event which attracted over 400 entries from catering colleges across Europe.

They were the only Irish representatives in the international event. The two students were accompanied to the finals by their coach/lecturer in Licensed Trade Studies Elizabeth Fox.

Science students runners up in Eurachem Final



L-R: Chemistry lecturer Kathleen Lough, Patrick Ryan and Mtwakazi Nilala.

For the fourth time in five years, GMIT science students have finished in the top two places in a prestigious national competition open to all universities and institutes of technology in the State.

Patrick Ryan and Mtwakazi Nilala came second in the Irish Eurachem Analytical Measurement Competition. The two second year students are studying towards a BSc in Chemical & Pharmaceutical Science.

Engineering students retain CIOB title



L-R: Gavin Lawless, Keith Gallagher, Donal Dowd and Tomás Cawley, with their lecturer/coach John Hanahoe.

Final year Construction Management (Hons) students have won the Chartered Institute of Building (CIOB) Student Challenge for the second year in a row. The event was held in Limerick IT in March.

The students had to devise and analyse project proposals for a residential village for international students on a site in Limerick.

Top design awards for Letterfrack students



Conor Trawinski (first place) and Cian Kilfeather (second) with their winning entries in the Habitat Design Awards 2008.

Second year BSc in Furniture Design and Manufacture student Conor Trawinski has been awarded first prize in the Habitat/House and Home Student Design Awards.

In a competition that has seen GMIT Letterfrack perform consistently well over the years, fourth year student Cian Kilfeather, BSc in Furniture Technology, came second place. Another fourth year Furniture Technology (Design) student, Andrew Kirrane, was also short listed in the top 12 of the competition. All students are featuring in House and Home magazine. Conor's winning entry was a chair solution designed for use in a crèche.

"When I started designing the MultiPooch I wanted to create something that was unusual, fun and enticing, but most of all I wanted to create something that was functional. The chair was designed for people of different heights and ages. Versatility without moving parts was my aim. To start with it was a rather abstract shape, but as it progressed it started to resemble a dog more and more. Several sketches later and the MultiPooch came to life. I realised that the waste material generated by the pooch was enough to make smaller chair... The MultiPup was born."



Fergus Gahan (right), who came second in TG4's Comórtas Ceirde Craftsman of the Year Competition, pictured with Dermot O'Donovan, Acting Head of Centre, GMIT Letterfrack, and his winning design.

Meanwhile, Fergus Gahan, a fourth year Furniture Technology (Design) student, came second in TG4's Comórtas Ceirde Craftsman of the Year Competition beating off stiff competition from top design students from third level universities and ITs. GMIT Letterfrack featured on the series which finished in March.



Students design new podium for President McAleese

A selection of students involved in the design of the new podium.



Third year design students on the BSc in Furniture Technology at GMIT Letterfrack are designing a podium for future use by President McAleese in Áras an Uachtaráin.

Following a visit to Áras an Uachtaráin with lecturer Anthony Clare, 15 students created design

concepts and a full scale model of their podium design, one of which will be chosen for presidential addresses.

The students travelled to Áras an Uachtaráin to present the finished pieces to the President.

Students in National Skills Competition in Cabinetmaking

Five students and one graduate have been selected for the finals National Skills Competition in Cabinetmaking for 2008.

Lecturer Anthony Clare, co-ordinator of the competition says, "this is an outstanding achievement considering only eight people are in the final. It demonstrates the level of skill and competence attained by students at this Institute"

Last year GMIT Letterfrack student PJ Murphy won the competition and went on to represent Ireland at the World Skill Competition in Japan.

The six finalists are: Sean Costello, Shane Griffin, Ian McDermott, Daniel McNamara, Stephen Richardson, Daniel Wright.

Construction student wins inter-campus design award



L-R: Construction student Jonathan O'Brien (winner), Mark Green, Amicus Technology (sponsor) and Gerard MacMichael, Head of School of Engineering.

Student Jonathan O'Brien, Roscam, winner of the GMIT Autodesk Intercampus Design Competition, sponsored by Amicus Technology and CADCO. Jonathan won a laptop com-

puter for designing and illustrating a studio complex with an environmental design aspect using AutoDesk Software.

Castlebar innovation awards reveal bright ideas



L-R: Brian Mulhern, GMIT (judge), Brian O'Malley, EI (judge) Paul Wuensch, David Coffey, Kathie Nally, Wayne Murphy, Daniel Kealy and Michael Byrne, Peter Walsh and Ciara McHugh, AIB (judge).

The Innovation in Business Centre (iIBC) at GMIT Castlebar held its second Student Innovation Awards this year. The event aims to promote entrepreneurship and creative thinking among students and graduates of the Institute.

Joint first were Wayne Murphy, for his project "Tonnta", Ireland's first surfing magazine, and Michael Byrne and Daniel Kealy for their project "Ocean Heritage Adventure"; second

place, Peter Walsh, for his project "Sprice", a Spaghetti / Rice measuring device; third, Kathie Nally and David Coffey, for their project Katco, back-up and recovery and storage facilities; and fourth, Paul Wuensch, for his project "Energising Floor", a floor that produces its own energy through movement. For further information, contact Maria Staunton, Manager iIBC, Tel: 094-90-43198.

Marketing award for business student

L-R: Carmel Brennan, Head of Dept. Business
GMIT, Maeve O'Malley Hewlett-Packard Galway
Limited, Roger Sweeney, Irish Water Safety,
GMIT student Marie Horkan, winner,
and Patrick Brennan,
Chairman Marketing Institute West Region.



Marie Horkan, a third year student in the Bachelor of Business in Marketing, has won a Marketing Institute of Ireland Western Region award.

Marie designed a creative campaign for Irish Water Safety which included a song to make school

children aware of the importance of learning how to swim. She was presented with a Hewlett-Packard iPAQ Pocket PC and given the opportunity to help implement her campaign in Irish Water Safety.

Lucrative commissions for textile artists

L-R: Caroline Ryan (back row, 2nd left),
Gerri O'Brien (front row, 1st left) from Galway,
and Carolyn Walsh, (front row, 2nd from right).



Four textile artists from the Cluain Mhuire campus received lucrative commissions at the prestigious Knit & Stitch Show in the RDS Dublin. Carolyn Walsh from Kerry was commissioned by an Irish businessman based in Holland to produce interior designs for a public premises.

Caroline Ryan from Kilkenny had her work snapped up by a leading Irish architect - she recently under-

took a commission to work on the ecclesiastical digitally printed design for the Diocese of Orsary. Gerri O'Brien from Newcastle, Galway, was successful in the sales of her textile artwork to Dublin art collectors and Gillian Gott (Meath) was hugely received by textile Dutch artist Tilleke Schwarz. Lecturer Jackie King says it's a great start to their careers.

Foghlaimoirí na Bliana - BA i nGnó agus Cumarsáid



Kevin McDonagh, Léachtóir, Tomás Ó Ceallaigh, Léachtóir. Chun tosaigh: Rónán Mac Gearailt, Comhordaitheoir an Chláir BA i nGnó agus Cumarsáid, Bríd Nic Dhonncha, Carna, Mairéad Peircín, Leitir Mealláin, Gráinne Feeney, Maigh Cuilinn agus Caitlín Ní Ghábháin, Léachtóir (as láthair Séamus Mac Donnacha, An Cheathrú Rua).
Grianghraf: Mike Shaughnessy

Bronnadh Scoláireachtaí an Iontrála BA i nGnó agus Cumarsáid



Rónán Mac Gearailt, Comhordaitheoir an Chláir BA i nGnó agus Cumarsáid, Marion Coy, Stiúrthóir GMTI, Mairéad Ní Chathmhaoil, An Spidéal, Bridie Nic Dhonnacha, Leitir Mealláin, Niamh Ní Shúilleabháin, Camus, Micheál Ó Dubháin, Leitir Móir agus Caoimhín Ó Flaithimhín, Údarás na Gaeltachta.
Grianghraf: Mike Shaughnessy

Academic Scholarships

Academic scholarships were awarded to first year students this academic year (2007/8) who received the highest points in their Leaving Certificate. The students are studying various programmes in each of GMIT's five Schools and campuses.



GMIT Business student Eimear O'Malley from Cloonkeely, Ower, Headford.



GMIT Art & Design student Lisa McConville from Prospect, Dunmore.



GMIT Film & Television student Aisling Ni Fhrighil from Gortahork, Letterkenny.



GMIT Hotel & Catering student Padraig Bellew from Woodlawn, Ballinasloe,



GMIT Computer & Electronics Systems student Stephen O'Donovan from Fairhill, Cork.



GMIT Medical Science student Karen McWalter of Milltown, Tuam.



GMIT Outdoor Education & Leisure student Maire McLoughlin of Achill Sound, Co Mayo.



GMIT Outdoor Education student Megan Winters from Cleaboy Road, Waterford.



GMIT Furniture Design & Manufacture student Darren McGarrigle from Lifford, Co Donegal.



GMIT Nursing student Sarah Blagrove from Lavally, Tuam.

Sports Awards 2007/2008



GMIT SU Incoming President Patrick Bonner, Paul McGrath, Victoria Stephens, achievement award recipient (rowing), Marion Coy, President GMIT. Victoria represented GMIT in this year's intervarsities, capturing the women's Single Scull Title. Victoria has qualified for the World Student Games, which take place in Belgrade in September (08). She will also represent Ireland at the Home Regatta, Wales, in July.



GMIT Ladies Gaelic Football Team

Sports Awards 2007/2008



GMIT Fitzgibbon Cup Hurling team



GMIT Letterfrack Hurling Team

Sports Awards 2007/2008



GMIT Archery Club



GMIT Men's Soccer Team

Two senior appointments at Castlebar



Michael Gill, Head of Dept of Business and Technology, Castlebar campus, and Dr Barbara Burns, Head of Centre, GMIT Castlebar.

Dr Barbara Burns has been appointed Head of Centre and Michael Gill Head of Department of Business and Technology at GMIT Castlebar.

Dr. Burns has been a lecturer in Business at Castlebar for ten years and has served on government and university advisory groups. She is a past international director of the Society of Manufacturing Engineers and prior to joining GMIT, worked as a consultant in research, project management, manufacturing and industry. She succeeds Dr Katie Sweeney, who is CEO of Co Mayo VEC.

Michael Gill holds a Bachelor of Commerce from NUI, Galway and a Postgraduate Diploma in Professional Accounting from the Michael Smurfit Business School. Mr. Gill as a Chartered Accountant with Pricewaterhouse Coopers and worked for a time as a taxation manager in KPMG, Galway. He joined GMIT in Sept 1998 as a lecturer in finance and in 2003 was appointed Acting Head of Department in Hotel & Catering Management.

Head of Hotel & Catering Management Dept



Cáit Noone

Cáit Noone has been appointed Head of Dept of Hotel & Catering Management. Ms. Noone spent 16 years working in the education sector overseas and returned to Ireland in 2005.

She set up and was appointed Dean of the first International Hotel Management College in Shanghai with the Chinese government partner Jin Jiang International. She worked for Les Roches Switzerland, a leading international Swiss hotel school, as

Academic Manager, and taught in that sector from 1992. She holds a BA in Post Compulsory Education and an MBA from University of Colorado.

GMIT President appointed to influential career guidance group

GMIT President Marion Coy has been appointed to the Management Committee of the National Centre for Guidance in Education (NCGE).

The agency provides support for primary school teachers, second and third-level education guidance practitioners, and those working in Youthreach and with adults in education.

The GMIT President also recently took over as Chairperson of Institutes of Technology Ireland (IOTI), a position she holds until January 2009.

Her three priorities for the year are: to develop new career and personal development opportunities for students; ensure that Institutes of Technology are key players in the implementation of the National Development Plan especially in the areas of workforce development, increased participation rates and indigenous economic development; and ensure the voice of the Institutes is to the forefront in the development of national higher education policy.



GMIT President Marion Coy

Commercial Services Manager

John Kennedy has been appointed GMIT Commercial Services Manager, a new position in the GMIT Development Office. He will oversee commercial activities, consolidate and grow current revenue streams and identify and develop future growth potential.

Current areas include: technology transfer, intellectual property, spin-outs and incubation, commercial catering, adult education, and strategic partnerships with industry. Income from these activities will further support GMIT's pivotal role in education, research and regional development.

Mr Kennedy has a PhD in Marine Zoology from NUI Galway and an MBA from the Open University. He worked with Bord Iascaigh Mhara in Dublin as a Senior Resource Development Officer and in recent years in Germany in venture capital and at PwC. He was manager of PwC Global Incentive Services Unit and set up its Location Services International Unit. Before joining GMIT he worked in NUI Galway as programme manager of the Regenerative Medicine Institute (REMEDI).



John Kennedy

Student counsellor

Pauline Clancy joined GMIT Dublin Road in the past year, bringing to two the number of counsellors available to students at the campus. She has a range of experience having worked in the voluntary sector, community settings, psychiatric units and private practice in Britain, working with individuals and groups.

Ms. Clancy trained as a Psychoanalytic Psychotherapist, and holds a degree in Social Science and MSc in

Computing. She returned to Ireland from London in December 2007, to work for the first time in the third-level education sector.



Pauline Clancy

Head of Creative Arts, Cluain Mhuire



Dr Suzanne O'Shea

Dr Suzanne O'Shea has been appointed Head of Creative Arts at the GMIT Cluain Mhuire campus. From Cork, she graduated with a Doctorate in Fine Art & Aesthetics from UU Belfast in 1997, and received the Vice-Chancellor's Research Award for her PhD. She lectured at LIT for ten years, also running the Critical & Contextual Studies Dept for five years.

Dr. O'Shea has been a guest lecturer at UCC, UU, UL, Queens University Belfast and Goldsmith's

College University of London and has published poetry, art criticism and art catalogues since the early 1990s. She was Director of the Vangard Fine Art Gallery in Cork and continues to advise corporate clients. She also acted as an independent arts consultant on a number of projects, most notably the Integrated Artworks Project at the Royal Belfast Hospital for Sick Children.

Film lecturer elected to Aosdána



Vivienne Dick

Film & TV lecturer Vivienne Dick has been elected to Aosdána, an association of people in Ireland who have achieved distinction in the arts. Vivienne has been lecturing at GMIT's Cluain Mhuire campus since 1999. Between 1977 - 1982 she lived in New York, part of a group of filmmakers whose affiliation to the music and aesthetic of punk became known as 'New Wave'. Working mainly on Super 8, her films from this period feature many musicians from the NY punk movement.

Ms. Dick returned to Ireland in 1982 and went on to London in 1985, where she was a member of The London Filmmakers Coop for many

years and produced a number of films in 16mm, and in video. She graduated from the University of the Arts, London, with an MA in Independent Film and Video.

Aosdána was created in 1981 on the initiative of a group of writers and with support from the Arts Council of Ireland. Membership, which is by invitation from current members, is limited to 250 individuals. On her election to the prestigious group, she said: "This is a fantastic honour for me and for GMIT. Film as an art form has not often been recognised and I'm very pleased that perception is changing".

Retirements

Sixteen staff retired from GMIT Dublin Road campus during the past academic year, following service ranging from ten to 39 years.

Ann Bree, Lecturer,
School of Humanities.

Katie Collins,
Administration, Library.

Teresa Corbally,
Cleaning staff, B & E Dept.

Mary Feely,
Catering/Canteen.

Jean Fox,
Cleaning staff, B & E Dept.

Dr Elizabeth Gosling,
Lecturer, School of Science.

Teresa Kane,
Administration, Library.

Dr Myles Keogh,
Lecturer, School of Science.

Sean McEllin,
Lecturer, School of Engineering.

Rita O'Connor,
Cleaning staff, B & E Dept.

Damien O'Neill Fitzsimons,
Lecturer, School of Hotel & Catering.

Ted Parslow,
Lecturer, Dept Maths & Computing,

School of Science.

Tony Quinlan,
former registrar, former Head of School of Engineering/, former lecturer, Mechanical Engineering.

Paul Scannell,
Lecturer, School of Hotel & Catering (IT).

Dr Malachy Thompson,
former Head of Learning & Teaching, former Head of School of Science.

Nora Walsh,
Cleaning staff, B & E Dept.

GMIT in both Sigerson and Fitzgibbon semis for first time

By Mike Geoghegan



GMIT's chances of a unique Sigerson and Fitzgibbon double came unstuck at the semi-final stage in both competitions this year. While disappointing, this still represented the college's best showing ever in their participation in these competitions. Indeed it was the first time that either the football or hurling side had reached the penultimate stages.

Draws with the Garda College and UCC were enough to see the hurlers through to the group stages and set-up a clash with CIT in the quarter-final. Strong and focused and playing controlled hurling, GMIT overcame the Cork side in a compelling game qualifying for the weekend stage. GMIT came up just short to LIT in a thrilling semi-final played in Cork on 29th Feb with the highlight being a stirring second half comeback by the Galway boys. Final score: 3-10 to 2-10.

The hurling side included inter-county stars Ger Mahon and Kenneth Burke from Galway, Clare sharpshooter Mark Flaherty, Offaly pair Cathal Horan and Ciaran Flannery and current All-star Andrew O'Shaughnessy from Limerick.

In Football, GMIT defeated Waterford IT and UL to qualify for the semi-final which was to be played in Carlow on 6th March. Their opponent's participation – the Garda College – was embroiled in controversy which saw the game delayed until this week (156th Apr) when GMIT lost out to an injury time goal in extra time. Final score: 2-13 to 1-15.

Players to watch out for from the football side are last year's Galway All-Ireland winning captain Paul Conroy and Donal Vaughan, Aidan Campbell and Tom Cunniffe, leading members of the Mayo U21 side.

Galway - Mayo Institute of Technology (GMIT)
Dublin Road, Galway, Rep of Ireland.

Tel: +353 91 753161

Fax: +353 91 751107

email: info@gmit.ie

website: www.gmit.ie