



AHECS Connect Newsletter - April 2022

"The potential within you is greater than the obstacles around you."

Last night saw the AHECS Employability Awards 2022 winners announced and what worthy winners!! Well done to all who submitted an entry. Given the challenging circumstances that Institutions faced during the pandemic and the inability to engage with students on a face-to-face level, they are a testament to the quote above.

Welcome to the April issue of Connect. We are delighted to bring you the latest updates from AHECS.

In this edition you will find details on the following:

- Employability Awards update
- Lunch n Learn series
- Biennial Conference update
- Questions and Answers feature with Dr. David Foster, Director of Career Development & Skills, University College Dublin

Best wishes

Gavin Connell & Trevor Johnston.

Employability Awards 2022

This year's submissions were of a high standard and the competition was tough. It must be positively noted that the judges' decision was made difficult by this high standard.

The participation rate and spread of institutions this year, with some institutions entering multiple submissions, is very impressive to see. There was a wide range of very refreshing, innovative, creative and variety of projects all with a strong Employability focus. The passion behind each submission came across in the writing and the judges found it very inspiring how the writers did not portray any negativity about the challenges they were facing only motivation and passion about delivering the best services, solutions and supports for their students. Engagement from the students was also very impressive.

Employability Awards Results

Congratulations to everyone who entered into this years awards. Unfortunately there could only be one winner in each category. The Awards ceremony took place last night in the Mansion House in Dublin and the winners are:

Strategic Innovation

Winner - University Of Limerick
Highly Commended - NUI Galway

Building Effective Partnerships

Winner - University College Cork

Highly Commended - Waterford Institute of Technology/Institute of Art Design & Technology/Dundalk Institute of Technology

Supporting Student and Graduate Employability

Winner - Dundalk Institute Of Technology

Highly Commended - University College Dublin

Well done all!



Lunch n Learn Series

Our very popular and successful Lunch n Learn series can be viewed on our Youtube Channel, click on the icon above. Details on the next and final session of the current series are as follows:

AHECS Lunch n Learn

Wednesday: 4th May 2022

Time: 1pm - 2pm

[Click here to join the meeting](#)

AHEAD-Creating Inclusive Environments in Education and Employment for People with Disabilities

With numbers of students with disabilities higher than they've ever been and now representing over 6% of the student population, more graduates with disabilities are preparing to enter the workforce. This workshop, facilitated by AHEAD will explore two AHEAD programmes as tools for supporting students with disabilities as they prepare to enter the graduate world of work. *GetAHEAD* provides upskilling workshops for students with disabilities to get them job ready and *WAM* is our graduate internship programme.

Biennial Conference 2022

Aftershocks and Opportunities: The Students Perspective

The AHECS Biennial Conference will be an online event this taking place on Tuesday 31st May 2022. This is the proposed DRAFT programme. *Note: this is a draft programme and subject to change.*

Booking forms have been circulated and we ask that all registrations are done through your Head of Service who will complete the booking form on behalf of all interested staff.. Please return all forms by **Friday 6th May**.

9.00 am to 9.30 am Conference opens for networking

9.30 am to 9.45 am Introduction and Welcome

Gavin Connell & Trevor Johnston (Co-Chairs AHECS)

Minister Simon Harris TD (TBC)

10.00am to 11.00 am Keynote: Bernard Jackman

Bernard Jackman is a former Irish international and Leinster player whose story of success and failure – of bouncing back – makes him an engaging and entertaining speaker who can talk with authority, ease and humour about what success looks like and how to take responsibility for, and create, your own success.

11.00 am to 11.30 am Networking

11.30 pm to 12.30 pm Keynote: Future of Careers Work and our Profession

Dr. Deirdre Hughes, DMH Associates

- 12.30 pm to 1.00 pm Cybil/AHECS Irish Research Webinar 2022
Bethany Appiah, CIBYL
The student career journey
What sectors and employers students are interested in
How they access careers information
What they need to support them
- 1.00 pm – 1.45 pm Networking & Lunch
- 1.45 pm to 2.30 pm Career Roundtable (Students)
- 2.30 pm to 3.15 pm Career Roundtable (Panel)
- 3.15 pm to 3.45 pm 2022 AHECS Graduate Market Survey
Results of the most recent AHECS Graduate Market Survey
- 3.45 pm to 4.15 pm Wrap – Up



Questions and Answers with a Careers Advisor

This is a new addition to our newsletter, David Foster from University College Dublin features this month.

Name

David Foster, Director of Career Development and Skills, University College Dublin.

Length of time and route into careers

I started as a Trainee Careers Officer in the Northern Ireland Careers Service in 1986 which included secondment to Ulster University to complete a Postgraduate Diploma in Career Guidance on full pay and with student holidays- that was nice! I then worked as a second level Careers Adviser until moving to Queen's University, Belfast in May 1994 as a Careers Adviser. At Queen's I later became a Senior Careers Adviser and Deputy Head of Careers, Employability and Skills before moving to UCD in 2009 as Director of Careers. I've been around so long I can recall part of a module on my Dip.CG covering the array of filing cabinets and storage units available for careers information and which was better for different types of careers and employer information!

What is the best piece of advice you have been given when you started in Careers?

I was lucky in having a great Senior Careers Officer when I was starting my Probationary Year. I was told to never underestimate the potential and dreams of second level students. Kathleen was humble enough to recount a time when she told someone he wouldn't be likely to become a professional footballer, but he did! I think every trainee/probationer she ever had had that drummed into them.

What has been your most exciting project you have been involved in?

That's difficult given I've been around Careers for so long and across practitioner and management roles. As a practitioner, I was the course director for a 3-day full on, Insight into Management Programme, which was challenging

for the students, the recent graduate who led teams of students and for the students themselves. The creativity of students never ceased to amaze me! As Director of Careers, lobbying for and being part of the development of UCD's first Career Development and Employability Strategy has been important for me and UCD Careers Network.

What is the best experience you have had in your role?

This is an easy one! I take my responsibility for developing my team seriously and I really get a kick out of seeing people develop, gain in confidence, even if that means they move on from Careers Network. No Director wants to lose good staff, but I'd rather lose people to advancement than have them feel underdeveloped or unable to progress. As the leader of a unit tasked with developing students personally and professionally, I think it's important to also apply those principles to the staff irrespective of role and level.

What do you love to do in your spare time?

Decades ago I loved to play tennis. I can remember brushing snow off a tennis court one bright winter's day just to get playing! Those of you who know me can tell I no longer play the game, but I still like following and watching it. I am also an Associate Editor for the British Journal for Guidance and Counselling which keeps me busy, and I enjoy reading about the culture and history of Ancient Egypt. I love Indian food and am a keen amateur cook in that regard!

What you're your favourite holiday destination?

That depends on how long I've got. For a few days, I find it hard to beat London as there's so much to do and so many places to go! I love a good beach holiday and Alicante has a great range of tapas bars and restaurants and a good beach. For scenery, the Amalfi Coastline in Italy and the stunning city of Cape Town in South Africa.

What is something you want to learn or wish you were better at?

I want to learn Spanish to be able to do more than order food and drinks! I'd also like to be a much more patient person!!

What would you love to do when you retire?

I'm not altogether sure and I find it hard to get my head around retirement being not too far off! I want to do something- maybe volunteering of some kind with the environment, wildlife and without doubt, at least splitting the year between Spain and home!



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