



Postgrad Students' Union have a ball at the Pavilion



UL President speaks to An Focal: P24

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Referendum on USI membership approaching?

Mark Nother

STUDENT Council last week welcomed Union of Students Ireland (U.S.I.) president Joe O'Connor to their second meeting of the spring semester to advocate the case for University of Limerick Students' Union re-joining the national student representative body.

U.S.I. is the only recognised national body for students in Ireland. In the republic they have twenty-four members, the most notable absentees being U.L., U.C.D., and D.C.U. The latter are however preparing for an imminent referendum on affiliating once more. This means at present they represent roughly 80% of the student population of the Republic of Ireland, 200,000 students, on issues such as fees, grants and other issues affecting all third level institute attendees.

Since U.L.'s departure from U.S.I. in 1991 there have been numerous discussions and a referendum on the subject of re-affiliation. None of these have ever resulted in our commitment to again becoming members but with the last referendum being held in 06/07 is it time



for the students to re-evaluate that stance?

In a show of good faith, and in an attempt to showcase the best that they have to offer U.L., U.S.I. invited this year's sabbatical team to their national council in Athlone shortly before Christmas. In return President Joe O'Connor, formerly S.U. President of G.M.I.T., was invited to address student council. This showing progression on behalf of council seeing as a motion at last year's, now defunct, class rep council saw

the decision being taken to not even permit U.S.I. onto campus to make their case.

Mr. O'Connor spoke of the benefits of improved national representation for our Union, being part of the campaigns run by U.S.I. and the networking opportunities for our sabbatical officers being able to engage with their counter-parts across the country.

His pitch was met with several tough queries from council members. Cost of course was a huge issue. With an annual

membership fee of €5 per student and a projected additional cost of €2 per student, to cover travel, etc., for sabbatical officers to and from the meetings (held every 4-6 weeks) this would set the cost for U.L. at just under €100,000 per annum. The concern to students would be could the union cover this cost or rather would it come in the form of a student levy?

The balance to this cost, he offered, are the savings that U.L.S.U. will make in the terms of bulk buying of campaign materials and give-aways such as fresher packs in semester one. However as pointed out by ULSU DP/Welfare Officer Catriona Ní Dhonnchu, our costs for these types of campaign are largely offset by sponsorship, her recent Mental Health Week campaign costing in the region of only €100. In addition the point was raised would the standardised approach to campaigns taken by U.S.I. be less effective than campaigns designed for U.L. students specifically or do we gain from being part of a national campaign strategy.

The question was posed later in the meeting how much benefit do U.L. gain

NEWS

AN FOCAL EDITORIAL COMMENT

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Welcome to the return of An Focal. I hope you enjoy this edition and that you find the content both relevant and interesting. It needs to be recognised that without the help of numerous people, meeting our three week deadline would have been impossible. I want to thank them most sincerely for all of their time and effort, and I look forward to learning together with them. Don't forget that we are always looking for more contributors. If you feel you have something that would be of interest to other students or if you want to give any feedback or suggestions on how to improve An Focal, please feel free to contact us at anfocal@ul.ie.

Regards, Paul.

Limerick City of Culture 2014

Evan McNamara

IN 2012, Limerick was announced as Ireland's first City of Culture and that 2014 would be the year for the event to take place. The Gathering last year can be viewed as a great success and it showed how one event can help boost Irish morale, image and the economy.

The City of Culture board set out to establish Limerick as a hive of cultural activity but since day one, the programme has been met with criticism and setbacks. Many have argued that the six million euro budget was a lot to be given to one event and others feel it was favouritism by finance minister and Limerick native, Micheal Noonan. The yearlong programme started off on New Year's Eve with a concert, parade, fireworks and the New Year's countdown being broadcast around the country. However, it was not the New Year's fireworks that hit the headlines but rather the fireworks within the culture board.

The artistic director and programmers Karl Wallace, Jo Mangan and Maeve McGrath all resigned as the events began. Patricia Ryan's appointment as CEO and her salary drew criticism and she too resigned and Mike Fitzpatrick was later appointed as interim CEO. These early obstacles put the programme in the news for all the wrong reasons. However, despite these setbacks and criticisms, the programme can still achieve its aims of creative city, creative citizenship, collaboration, catalyst, legacy and passport to the future. There would be a mix of new and existing events and with an already vibrant sports and arts sector; things were beginning to look up for the event. The events programme seems to cover all aspects

and has something to appeal to all ages and tastes.

Riverdance celebrated its twentieth anniversary here at the UL Arena with several sold out and well received performances. Each month there appears to be something that offers the people of Limerick the chance to embrace and develop culture. Existing festivals such as Riverfest and the St. Patrick's Day celebrations are familiar sights among a host of fashion, food, film, art and history events promoting the culture and perception of Limerick City. John Spilane, the Student Communications Officer has said that several of the events will be of interest and appeal to students.

The recent flooding and storm damage has shown the power of Limerick community spirit and hopefully this will continue when the Special Olympic Ireland games come to Limerick. Looking at the calendar, a possible highlight is fast approaching. In March, Fuerza Bruta will hold its Irish premier in Limerick and according to the reviews, it's a must see. It has been described as, 'an event where worlds collide, where dreams are real and reality takes a back seat'. It most certainly promises to astonish and amaze. The Culture Board has prepared a programme of big and small events and another big event appears to be in talks to hit Limerick, costs permitting. The Royal de Luxe is described as the world's best pageantry and if things go to plan, it would be a welcome highlight and a great sight to see on the streets of Limerick.

It is clear that the Culture Board has high hopes for Limerick, its culture and perception. In recent years Limerick has had its fair share of bad press, failed promises and talk of re-invention. 2014 City of Culture has the potential to be a great year for Limerick and it is up to all of us to support the events and make Limerick the great city it deserves to be.

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Visit www.anfocal.ie to view An Focal online

Thanks to everyone who contributed to this issue.

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1. Contributors please note: All submissions to An Focal are greatly valued. If you have submitted an article which has not been published in this issue, it is very likely that your piece has been retained for publication in future issues or online. If you are concerned that your article has not been published please say so.

2. Editing: If you are unhappy with how your article appeared in An Focal, please discuss this with the Editor. A number of strict guidelines are followed in the publication of An Focal, which means some article may be altered to allow them to fit on the page and to improve readability. Email: anfocal@ul.ie to contact the Editor.

Pay It Forward Limerick



PEOPLE do good things, always have always will, people help each other every day, this however is not news, at least not for mainstream media.

Pay It Forward Limerick (PIFL) aims to put good deeds in the spotlight, give some encouragement to those who already fill their days with common decency and generosity and inspire random acts of kindness throughout. While at the same time highlight the positivity that can be engendered amongst society as a whole by helping your kinsfolk.

It's a simple premise; someone does you a good turn, you pay it forward instead of paying it back. If people continue on paying it forward, a ripple effect is created leading to exponential growth in goodwill, with the possibilities for positive change infinite.

"We can't change the big things but we can change the small things by looking out for each other, by giving each other a break," says UL counsellor, Michael O'Mahony.

He is one of the founders of PIFL and believes that we intuitively understand at a core level that we are connected; that my welfare affects yours and vice versa.

"There's things we can't do, but the bottom line is if a person was in trouble you would help them out on a personal level. What's really good about people is that if you were stuck, people would help you out," says Michael.

However, this view of the world is not often reflected in mainstream media. Crime is

considered newsworthy, altruism not so much, unless you are Bill Gates giving away your entire fortune and even then meh.

Michael and some of his friends came up with the idea a couple of years ago over lunch. "We were talking amongst ourselves saying: burn the bondholders, there's no job opportunities for young people. The place was an awful state really and then we thought, hang on we'll talk ourselves into depression, we'll drive ourselves mad," he says.

This thought gave Michael and his friends the spark of inspiration to try and do something small and simple that could all the same have far-reaching consequences. So, PIFL was born and proved a great success throughout the community starting last year and it is hoped its impact can increase each year.

Michael is of the belief that life does not have to be a zero sum game; for someone to win, another person does not have to lose. "Be conscious of the other guy sitting in the bus or on the train or sitting in the traffic and remember they're not the enemy. I might be frustrated with all that's going on and feel

powerless but the other person is not out to get me," he says.

"We can get ourselves into this space where we become very aggressive towards one another but we don't need to be doing that. We can cut each other a bit of slack, if we see someone stuck, give them a hand out."

This is not, however, an opportunity for people to brag about how wonderful they are although the positive feelings associated with helping another human being is a large part of the initiative. "It's not an ego thing, we don't want people e-mailing in saying I was brilliant, I did this. There are fabulous people doing fabulous things," Michael says.

"Most of it isn't highlighted, but what we're saying is if we can highlight it then it will encourage people to do more of it."

It is hoped that this year students can really get behind the initiative and remember any random act of kindness, no matter how small, can have a positive affect that you may not anticipate.

The ULSU welfare team and clubs and socs will be getting involved in the initiative this year so keep a look out on campus and get involved. If you want to help out with PIFL it can count towards the UL president's volunteer award, just sign up at www.ulpva.ie. You can also like the Facebook page PIFLimerick to find out what's happening and how to get involved.

Pay It Forward Limerick runs right through to St Patrick's Day but do not give up then because the positive effects can ripple forever.

Referendum on USI membership approaching?

CONTINUED FROM P1

from membership in terms of national representation. We are already represented nationally by both the university and our sabbatical team. It was pointed out by council member Sean Joyce, Departmental Rep for Sociology, that any progress made by U.S.I. automatically

benefits U.L. students as any government policy change is across the board and rarely institution specific.

In terms of pro's, it was pointed out by members, there are obvious bonuses conferred unto us through membership with U.S.I. The campaign marketing and material would free up time for our sabbatical team to focus less on the

necessity of both planning, and running, campaigns thus allowing them to spend more time on student issues within the university. This would allow them to focus on some of the smaller, in-house, but equally important issues whilst knowing that our interests were being represented at the same time by the elected members of U.S.I.

Mr. O'Connor in addition

briefly mentioned a new deal with SIPTU, that would see the student body working with Ireland's largest trade-union on issues of national importance, and the introduction of a new student deals/savings card very similar to that of the highly successful N.U.S. Card in the U.K.

More information on U.S.I. can be found at www.usi.ie



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UL to host seminars on ethics

Mark Nother

PRESIDENT of Ireland, Michael D. Higgins, has this month announced a seminar series to take place across the country throughout the year entitled 'Ethics in Public Places, Public Spaces and Public Discourses'. University of Limerick will have the pleasure of hosting four of these seminars over the next ten months.

This announcement marks the completion of one of President Higgins' goals outlined in his inauguration speech. "During my Presidency, I also intend to

hold a number of Presidency Seminars which may reflect and explore themes important to our shared life yet separate and wider than legislative demand, themes such as the restoration of trust in our institutions, the ethical connection between our economy and society, the future of a Europe built on peace, social solidarity and sustainability."

U.L.'s four seminar series will individually be aimed at different factions within Irish society i.e., local community, university students, second level students and members of the business community.

According to the website of the office of the president the seminars will be titled; 1. Being an Ethical Hero, 2. Ethics in Public Spaces, 3. Speech, Friendships and Language, 4. Professional Ethics.

Aimed at the local community, the first set of seminars will explore the ethics of political, sporting and music heroes and will include the joint UL/UCC community seminar on 'Finding Positives in Negative Times'.

The second set of seminars will be aimed at the university student population and will examine ethical advertising,

political lobbying and political advertising, the ethics of politics and the question of ethical housing and architecture.

The third seminar will bring local post-primary students on to campus to explore issues such as everyday hate speech, ethical friendships, ethics and social media and contemporary online life.

Finally, the last series of seminars will address the local professional community. Entitled 'Professional Ethics', it will explore ethical issues in the courtroom, in academia, in journalism, in healthcare, in pedagogy and in finance.

Stormont and Belfast visit for ULSU Student Council

Student Council 2013-2014

AFTER months of planning and with the support of the Ulster Bank Enablement Fund, 26 members of Student Council headed to Belfast during the Halloween week.

The main purpose of the visit was to learn about democratic structures in the Northern Ireland Assembly and for council members to get to know each other. The itinerary included a day-long visit to Stormont, the Titanic Centre, Crumlin Road Gaol and a guided political tour of Belfast City. Everyone on the trip was a representative of a different university department or a particular interest group for UL students. The trip was an overwhelming success but the highlight for everyone was the visit to the Northern Ireland Assembly in Stormont.

From the moment we drove up the world famous avenue to Stormont we were all taken in by the sheer size and position of the parliament building. The Stormont Assembly has a dedicated Education Service who provided us with an excellent guide to explain the history of Northern Ireland, Stormont and the responsibilities of the Assembly and its Committees. It was interesting for our Student Council to see how our simple Student Council governing structure compares to the Assembly. Most people in Ireland and Britain know the basic background of how the Northern Ireland Assembly (NIA) was founded. The NIA is the



devolved legislature for Northern Ireland. It is responsible for making laws on transferred matters in Northern Ireland and for scrutinising the work of Ministers and Government Departments. The Assembly committees are created using the D'Hondt system which ensures that the Assembly allocates positions of power in proportion to the number of seats each party hold on the first day it meets after an election. There is no Opposition in the Assembly. Every decision must be reached through consensus.

The history of Stormont Parliament Buildings began in 1920 with Northern Ireland Home Rule. The building was officially opened in 1932 by Edward, Prince of Wales.

The building is full of symbolism, from the 6 pillars on Greek style facade to the six flax flowers on the NIA emblem representing the six counties of Northern Ireland. The flax flower was chosen for the NIA emblem as people from all backgrounds worked in the linen industry.

The ULSU Representation Office organised use of the Stormont Senate Chamber for the afternoon. In order to have use of the Chamber an MLA must sponsor the group visit. MLA Cathal Boylan kindly sponsored our use of the Senate Chamber. Under the watchful eye of Stormont

security we debated a wide variety of topics from Horse Racing to Student Fees and Social Media. Having use of the Senate chamber, sitting around a table where everyone is given equal importance gave a whole new dynamic to the group debates. Students who normally did not like speaking in front of others or voicing their opinions did speak and did explain their stance on particular topics. Everyone respected each other and while opinions were very differing, everyone listened to what was being said. It was a very productive and enlightening afternoon. The debate on whether social media should be censored was not long. The consensus by everyone was that it is impossible to censor

anything on the internet now, BUT there does need to be effective education for secondary school students about how they manage their own social media use. Given the pace at which applications are created and immediacy people feel compelled to respond to comments, the UL Students asked is there a way that they could help educate secondary school students about what they post on the internet and the long-term consequences. Would secondary school students be more receptive to current college students rather than their teachers or parents advising them how to deal with negative internet posts? How could this be trialled? Is it already being done?

By the end of our day in Stormont security were ushering us out so they could lock up and go home. I imagine they had an interesting afternoon listening to us debate all sorts compared to the normal NIA committee discussions. The entire Belfast trip was a success. Belfast is an exceptionally welcoming city, as our guide told us Belfast people might despise each other but they love visitors and are very proud of their city.

I mentioned at the start that this trip was largely sponsored by the Ulster Bank Enablement Fund. It would have been very difficult for this trip to happen without their generous support, for this we are very grateful.

 Ulster Bank

Update on your Student Council . . .

Dean Shanahan
Chairperson of Student Council

THE Student Council was introduced this academic year under the new constitution to replace the Class Reps Council of previous years. This is a huge step towards a fairer and more effective student representation structure within the Union. Any student is welcome to attend and view the proceedings that are on Tuesdays 6pm, week 2, 4, 6, 8, 10 every semester. However, only the elected Department Reps and Interest Group Councillors have a vote. You can also find out how the Council works on ULSU website. So far this semester we have had two Student Council meetings. Both have been arduous yet fruitful. Here is the latest of what is happening.

Joe O'Connor from USI addressed The Second Student

Council to outline the pros of joining the Union. Ultimately this would see a €5 hit to the pocket of every student in UL and the Council has yet to decide whether this would be worth the investment. Mark Nother, our Community Councillor, has gone into depth on this topic in his article on page one.

The Constitution that we voted to have implemented at the final UGM of last year is currently under the scrutiny of the Council's Constitutional Review Committee chaired by our Community Councillor Mark Nother. This committee is currently reviewing this document to ensure that it is practical and serves students best interests. Recommendations put forward by this Committee have already been put into effect by the Council. Here are a few . . .

* The Quorum at a UGM is now

100 down from 200.

* The Faculty Representative that sits on ULSU's board of Executive now retains their vote at Council so that their department is no longer underrepresented.

* The abolition of a Professional Placement Councillor as this post was portrayed as unnecessary by both Peter Hanrahan, our Nursing and Midwifery Department Representative and Liam Guilfoyle, our Education & Professional Studies Department Representative.

* The position of First Year Councillor has been introduced to better represent the issues that arise for our First Year Students.

* Referenda polling stations are now kept open for 28 hours to allow students enough time to get to a computer/polling station and have their say.

Our newly elected Clinical

Therapies Department Rep Denyse O'Brien brought a major issue with the work placements for Physiotherapy Students within her department to Council. Currently our VP/Academic Officer Paddy Rockett, in conjunction with the Council is looking into ways to resolve this for the students within this department.

The new Constitution is paving the way for a fairer and more effective Student Democracy within our university and the Student Council is to the fore of this. For those of you that are class reps, please ensure that you keep in contact with your Department Rep. For those of you that are currently underrepresented by not having a Department Rep. then why not put yourself forward? A union can only be as effective as its members so ensure that you are doing your part. Currently we have the following

vacancies on Council . . .

> Architecture Department Representative

> Irish World Academy of Music and Dance Department Representative

> Civil Engineering and Materials Science Department Representative

> Chemical and Environmental Science Department Representative

> Maths and Statistics Department Representative

> Physics And Energy Department Representative

> First Year Councillor

> Student Services Councillor
Please contact Liz Gabbett or Mark White in the Students Union if you are interested in getting on board. To paraphrase the great movie that is Starship Troopers "[Student Council is] doing their part. Are you? Join the [Student Council] and save the world!"

The mature student

Rachel Lyons

THE biggest adjustment when going back to college isn't the lack of a pay cheque or being able to pull a sickie without getting the sack, it's that you're old. No matter what age you are, as a mature student you're setting yourself apart from the rest of the student population. To me it's a term that belongs to lonely hearts columns or car salesmen like single white female or one careful lady owner. The thing is, it doesn't really mean anything. There is a huge amount of support for mature students like everyone else in U.L. but ultimately choosing a course and getting the most out of it is up to the individual. Writing 'mature' in your application to university isn't a magic word and from this year onwards mature students have had to apply to U.L. through the C.A.O. like everyone else.

Before I came to U.L. I had a lot of different jobs in a lot of different places (a karaoke bar and an airport to name but two) but I was always one of the youngest people at work. Age really is subjective and it only matters as much as you choose to let it. I'm sure I'll look back at this time in my life and wonder why I turned down the invitation to that U.V. party or the mystery tour. I can only speak for myself but I know the reason why I show up to all my lectures is because of all those questionable jobs I've had along the way. It's amazing how selling air conditioners during a wet Irish Summer can motivate one to further one's education. I'm really impressed by students who come straight to college after their Leaving Cert. knowing what they want to do because I certainly didn't. In some ways they have a

seven year head start on me but most of the time I see my age as an advantage. Asking everyone to decide on a career path in their teens is a bit much considering Van Gogh didn't start painting until he reached his late twenties.

U.L. is a fantastic campus with a great range of courses but I grew up in Limerick and couldn't wait to travel. As anyone from here knows, when you meet an Irish person abroad and tell them that you're from Limerick you nearly always get the same tired comments. Once you've been defending your native county to people who have never been there you start to realise how much it has to offer. I'd already been to U.L. for plenty of nights out before I was enrolled here, in a way I got all the perks of student life out of the way beforehand. But even though I've been in more fancy dress costumes in The Stables than I can remember and spent a summer living in Curragh Birin, I never felt like a student until this year.

The stereotypical mature student is a familiar sight and as was put to me when I went about writing this article, someone who we hear far too much from already. But who I am to break the tradition? Yes, some of us sit at the front of the class, ask too many questions and tend to go on....and on and on...but where would you be without us? We serve the purpose of filling those awkward silences and saving you from embarrassment when the tutorial veers towards the direction of the assigned reading on a Wednesday morning. And who hasn't broken the ice with a new friend by throwing their eyes up to heaven at yet another long drawn out comment from the mature student with the briefcase and anorak?

The Stormy Teacup

Cian Dalton

MARTINS Punculis and Ruth Crean have come up with the novel idea of opening up a cafe that doubles as a crafts and bookshop. You can sit in the Bohemian nook upstairs with your coffee for hours on end admiring the crafts and furniture made by Martins and the second hand books that you can buy courtesy of Ruth.

The two artsy friends have worked together on the Limerick craft and design project over the last two years. They both have managerial experience in the service industry and are determined to get their dream business going. The two describe themselves as nerdy, and it is these 'nerdy' things that they want under one roof. They want the cafe to be upbeat, fresh and comfortable. In my opinion, this is a must for Limerick city and with their combined skills and determination, a recipe for success. While there are many cafes and restaurants around the city that are nice for the odd cup of coffee, as well as the Starbucks in the Red Raisins area of the college, there is nowhere that is away from the hustle and bustle of everyday life; nowhere that you can sit down and read for as long as you like while the outside world passes you by. That is a very

fanciful description of a cafe, but Ruth and Martins have made it clear that this will not be your run-of-the-mill cafe overlooked by busy shoppers.

The Stormy Teacup will be located in Foxes Bow, down a little alleyway that the pair said will be lovely with some, 'tables, chairs, and some fairy lights'. As I've mentioned before, there will be a bohemian nook upstairs. This will be furnished by Martins' own furniture that he makes and up-cycles himself. There will be comfy chairs and books and art to admire. Downstairs will be where the coffee will be purchased and will double as the craft shop. In the stop motion video on their website, the pair describe themselves as 'nerdy'. While this may be the case, (for the record there is nothing wrong with being nerdy, I would also put myself in that sub-category) I would describe them more as innovative and instinctual. As there hasn't been a cafe of this variety in the city for ten years since Java's closed its doors, this is the perfect time to open a like-minded business.

Ruth and Martins both have experience in the Milk Market in Limerick city on the weekends and will be able to transfer this over to their new business. If it gets up and running, that is.

It would be a dream come true for the friends if this business endeavour could get up and running. However, they need a minimum of six thousand euro to get funding for the Stormy Teacup. They have raised some of this money of their own accord through loans and private investors, but must seek the help of the public with an interest in a cafe like this. They have set up a rewards system whereby members of the public can donate a certain amount of money and receive gifts such as a set of badges or six free cups of coffee. If anyone is generous enough to donate a thousand euro then the coffee machine that will be used in the shop will be named after that Good Samaritan.

However, if the money is not raised then the cafe will not open and the void in the craft/bookshop/cafe market will grow even more. That may be a bit melodramatic but after reading about the possible opening of The Stormy Teacup I think it would be a shame if this didn't materialise.

As it stands, there is a little over two weeks left to donate to the cause. Every little helps, and if you want to have coffee in a peaceful environment then surf the web in the direction of www.indiegogo.com/projects/the-stormy-teacup

LEFT, RIGHT, LEFT, LEFT
RIGHT, LEFT

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NEWS & FEATURES

Surprise summer adventure

Ethan O'Brien

HOW can a summer adventure in the States plan itself for you by surprise? If you are a student looking to travel for the entire summer on a low budget you might think the U.S.A. is off limits. The cost and hassle of organising such a trip seems a bit intimidating. You're either eating into your savings by travelling for three months with no income, or you do the J1 thing and get a job out there to keep you going, but then you're tied down to wherever you are working and don't get to do the travelling you went there for!

Well it can be much easier to solve this than you previously thought if you visit www.workaway.info. This is a site where anyone looking to travel can find offers of food and accommodation in return for a few hours of light work a day. Because you are not paid in money you don't need a working visa and as long as the trip is less than ninety days you don't need any visa at all thanks to the visa waiver program. I created a profile and was contacted by people from China, America, Mexico, Canada and France within the space of a couple of months, all looking for me to visit them as soon as I could.

I had been planning a trip around Europe and hadn't even



considered going to America because of the reasons mentioned above but when I got an offer from a friendly family in Virginia who were offering everything I wanted to have an exciting summer abroad, I couldn't say no. In return for a few hours of my help a day they would offer me bed and board.

The best part is that you can

travel all over America the same way because unlike a normal job where you don't know if you'll get new work if you move, on workaway you can have it all set up before you leave. It's very similar to WOOFing (working on an organic farm) except the work is more varied and can cover more locations.

Joining the site costs twenty dollars for two years but compare that to the cost of a J1 visa at over hundred euro and it's negligible.

And, of course, if you want to have even more places to stay available to you, then why not try spicing up your travel plans on the cheap with couchsurfing.org?

There's never been a better time to plan a global adventure on a small budget. All the resources and advice you need are easily available and if you need some inspiration on where to head to first then check out nomadicmatt.com to get tips from someone who is a seasoned pro at exploring the world on a student budget.

Pizza 'n Pasta

Served 4-7pm

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Should I do a Masters?

THE decision to undertake a postgraduate course is a significant one. In many ways it's like an investment decision so you have to look at the costs (investment) and the benefits (payoffs). The costs are familiar to students - fees, living expenses, travel expenses, etc. But what about the benefits?

The major payoff from undertaking a postgraduate course is that the skills, competencies and qualities you develop during your degree will enhance your CV and help you stand out in a highly competitive graduate employment job market. The course you choose allows you to either deepen your knowledge of your chosen specialism (e.g., the business studies graduate who goes on to do a masters in taxation) or broaden your knowledge into another discipline (e.g., the engineering graduate who does a masters in business management).

Just like an investment decision there are timing issues. Reasons for going straight from undergraduate to postgraduate study might be: you are accustomed to being a student and have momentum; your study skills should be well-honed and sharp; you may have few obligations; and some occupations require an advanced degree even for "entry-level" positions. On the other

hand you might like to gain some work experience before undertaking a postgraduate course for the following reasons: you can get a better handle on your career goals by working in the field for a few years; you can bring a broader world view to your studies; you have a more mature outlook on college and work; you can save for the course you want to undertake; and some courses require work experience.

The unprecedented economic downturn has made up-skilling more important than ever and consequently has added to the attraction of achieving a specialist post-graduate qualification. Many of the postgraduate courses at the Kemmy Business School allow you to specialise through optional modules and a dissertation or research project which is completed on a subject of your own choosing. This means that you have the opportunity to build a programme which reflects your own unique interests and which will prove rewarding in your future career. Additional features of Kemmy Business School postgraduate courses include credited professional development and career planning modules, international field trips, professional certification opportunities and the chance to work on live business projects as part of your course.

STUDENT SPEAK by COLLEEN BALLARD



Alan Heaslip.



Andrew Lynch.



Furgal Carey.



Jenny Cleary.



Jana Solis.



Jason Phelan.

A GAME presented online involving drinking, daring and filming dominated the media recently due to the tragic deaths of Jonny Byrne and Ross Cummins. While the connections are tentative, it has highlighted the phenomenon of neknomination. Seemingly originating in Australia for reasons of impressive male showmanship, due to social media the tentacles have spread far and wide.

It appears initially the game involved an individual being nominated to drink a beer preferably at speed while being filmed and then nominate someone else to down a pint within the next 24 hours.

According to many this is seen as a bit of a laugh and entertainment. Variety and imagination add to the appeal as do, other opinions suggest, wanting to impress and do better also referred to as peer pressure.

Videos show progression from a pint of beer to a medley of concoctions of substantial quantities, which ultimately have no guarantee of harmless fun. In response, some nominees have taken the initiative to turn a NEK into a RAK, a Random Act of Kindness.

Will this turn the tide of the fad?

It sounds positive and in a society where people wish to share their personal performances with the world is preferable to a possibly dodgy, unpredictable demise.

We went out onto campus to get your valued viewpoint – neknomination or raknomination?

Jason Phelan: Applied languages.

Raknomination. It's disrespectful that people continue to nominate after the two guys died. Have raknominations taken off?

Paul Walsh: Biomedical Engineering.

Neither. Both are kinda thick. If you want to give to charity just do it, don't need to publicise it and gain popularity.

Rory Lenihan: Business Studies.

Neknominations got bad press. Raknomination would be more important, neknominations being

Neknomination or raknomination, *what is your opinion?*

dangerous and people died. Could have been handled better with maturity.

Colin Melody: Business Studies.

What's raknomination? I've seen more neknominations, they're grand then people take it to extremes. When people mix, that's when there's a problem.

Furgal Carey: Business Studies.

Neknominations not handled well. Haven't seen raknominations, so not sure.

Jenny Cleary: Applied Languages.

Neknominations have stopped since the family went on the Late Late Show, people copped on when the stories came out, it had got out of hand. Haven't heard much about raknominations but sounds a good idea.

Francis Glynn: Biomedical Engineering.

Neither.

Andrew Lynch: Business Studies.

People went too far, it started off handy then

people wanted to be better than others. Haven't seen many now, looks like it's wearing off – a phase.

Maria Solis: Languages (Erasmus).

I haven't heard of it but it sounds an awful thing to do.

Conor Fitzsimons: Business Studies.

Raknominations, because people died with the neknominations.

John Burke: Mechanical Engineering.

Neither. I don't see raknominations catching on and neknominations are stupid.

Jack Shortiss: Computer Systems.

It's finished. It was a fad, it has run its course. Online fads, people take it out of hand, to the extreme and do stupid things.

Alan Heaslip: Computer Systems.

I thought it was harmless but seeing videos online it got out of hand quite quick. Don't see so many now.



Jack Shortiss.



Francis Glynn, Connor Fitzsimons, John Burke and Paul Walsh



Rory Lenihan.



Colin Melody.

INTERVIEWS by DANIEL TIGHE

“It’s a tough job . . . long hours, lots of meetings”

“NO” she said with the slight hesitation of a decision not yet fully made. “No, I won’t be running again” she states as much to convince herself as me. “A year is enough,” maybe she could help Paddy with the meaning of a sabbatical.

Emma Porter is almost certain she will only be serving one term as ULSU president and she spoke with An Focal about her time in the role and her hopes for the future of the union.

After a tumultuous few years financially for the union, mirroring the country as a whole, Emma believes the union is finally coming out the other side of their programme of fiscal rectitude, once again in parallel with the outside world.

“The figures are back in the black, we’re putting money in reserve,” says Emma. “We have a new structure; we have a board of trustees that have to sign off on the accounts on a monthly basis. There are three external members on the board; they have a human resource, financial and legal background. It’s a much better system. The accounts are presented on a monthly basis and Barry Costello our financial controller is doing a fantastic job and we haven’t had any issues.”

So prospective candidates getting giddy at the thought of an expense account can think again.

That might remove a few names from the ballot paper but the speed at which the old ways return can sometimes be alarming.

One of the main casualties due to the uncontrolled expenditure of past regimes was the full-time sabbatical officer for communications. “My issue with getting rid of the communications officer was we got rid of the position but the jobs were still there. The jobs just fell left right and centre with no one officially accountable for them which is why we had problems with An Focal last semester.

“I think it is definitely justified but we are coping without it. I would love to have a communications officer but I don’t know if it’s on the cards at the moment. We are doing well financially but I think it may be too soon to be looking at it,” she cautions.

On why she decided to run for president Emma says; “I just felt like I could make a bit of a difference and I’m really glad I did. Emma is pleased with her term so far but would encourage anyone seeking to take on her role to come and see her so she can put them in no doubt as to the task at hand. “I am happy with my year, I’ve done a huge amount of work internally, we’re doing a lot of work on policies with the new constitution, and a lot of it has been behind closed doors.”



For prospective candidates in the upcoming election, she says: “Come in and talk to me, make sure you know what you’re getting into. It’s a tough job; long hours, lots of meetings. It’s enjoyable and it’s fulfilling but it’s more work than you anticipate.

“There is a lot of things I didn’t get a chance to look at but I’m quite happy with what I’ve done and the next person in will have a bit more of a chance to get out there and do the things they want to do,” she adds.

“One of the things we ran on was fees and grants: we did a lot of work with SUSI over the summer, we got

them to come down and set up in the Student’s Union for a day and that was very helpful for a number of students.

“Communication was another area and we’ve done a lot of background work on an app which can be downloaded straight to your phone so all the information of the student’s union can be accessed on your phone.” The app has hit some difficulties but Emma hopes it will be ready for roll out in September.

Explaining the organisational structure of the university Emma says: “There is a governing authority and a number of sub committees. Myself Lily and Catriona are all on the governing authority and then we’re on a mixture of the sub committees between us.

Probed on how seriously the student body’s representatives are taken at governing authority level Emma quickly corrected herself from “very” to “quite seriously”.

“We are taken seriously when we act seriously,” she says pointedly, perhaps harking back to times when the position was seen as little more than the plaything of some campus legend.

On the perennial issue of USI membership, Emma says: “I’ve met with Joe (O’Connor), the current USI president a couple of times. We went to national council as observers to check it out. Joe is coming down to

address the council so I told him it’s down to what the council wants to do, whether they want to run a referendum.”

Asked whether she has a personal opinion on the issue, she said: “I do but I don’t want to influence council before the discussion. Asked if the students have the right to a referendum on USI membership Emma said: “They definitely have the right to a referendum,” before paradoxically stating “but it’s down to council, how they decide.”

Emma has done some research into the union’s history with the USI; ULSU separated from the national union in 1991 with the issue of re-joining an almost annual debate. On why the union left in the first place Emma says: “It was a mixture of reasons, one of them was they felt it was a stepping stone for politicians rather than representing students.” This Emma believes is still an issue in some unions around the country. “I can see it in other sabbatical officers in different unions,” she says, casually stirring the pot.

On the upcoming elections, Emma says: “I think unfortunately it is a bit of a popularity contest but I will be making a massive effort to make sure the students look into the candidates and make an educated vote. My biggest fear is for someone to come in after me and not do the job justice.”

Financial assistance is available in these tough times

CATRIONA Ni Dhonnchu, ULSU welfare officer, says financial difficulty is still the number one problem affecting students.

“The two biggest issues that come through the door are still financial and accommodation problems. Financial more so at this time of year than accommodation, students are really, really struggling. I had students come in last week who have zero euros, so I had to work out how we could help them to survive the semester.”

The university does have provisions in place for students in financial difficulty and they are worth investigating for those struggling.

“We have the hardship loan capped at €500 and a student must set up a standing order once they are approved for the loan. Students must repay the loan before they can graduate,” explains Catriona. “It’s designed for students who find themselves in unexpected financial difficulty through losing a job or a parent losing a job and maybe cannot pay the rent for a particular month. It’s designed to get you over a hump rather than as long term fix.”

“We also give out the childcare bursary that is open to all students and is for student parents who are paying for either a registered child minder or a creche facility. You can qualify for between 20% and 50% of your childcare costs.

“Then there is the student assistance fund which is distributed by the access office but I would assess all of the non-mature undergraduate applications. It’s a European fund distributed somewhat at the discretion of the university with regard to eligibility criteria. It is means tested similar to the hardship fund and there is up to €300 available for adjacent and up to €600 available for non-adjacent students. We do give out a substantial amount of assistance to students but you do have to come and meet me and we assess on a case by case basis and Father John Campion would co-assess the hardship and childcare fund.”

Asked whether these funds can sometimes be open to abuse, Catriona says: “I think it is open to abuse and I think sometimes we have to use our best judgement to establish whether someone is genuine or not but you become very fine

tuned to that and it’s great that Father John is assessing as well because it’s great to get another person’s perspective on it. If someone really needs it, it will be obvious.”

For anyone in need of financial assistance, Catriona advises: “Come in and talk and I won’t give the application form unless I feel somebody is actually going to qualify for it. And there is some flexibility



there so come in and discuss what your needs are.”

Catriona takes her role as deputy president welfare seriously and achieved her ambitious election promise of creating a welfare team to further expand the services on offer to students.

“I think I’ve actually hit a lot of my manifesto goals. One of the biggest things was establishing a welfare team, in the hopes of extending the scope of the welfare office. A lot of the things in the manifesto depended on whether I could establish a team.”

Some were sceptical of her ability to organise such a team and felt her more ambitious plans could fall flat. Happily for Catriona that is not the case as the UL student population has responded generously to the task at hand.

“At the moment we have thirty active team members; all voluntary. They’re from

a wide range of backgrounds with every year represented including postgrads and mature students. They are tackling various issues including sexual health and women’s health. They are also helping with the Pay It Forward Limerick campaign and some will be working with me on this semester’s safety campaign.

“I am hoping to create a welfare blog with their help as well. There are quite a

number of different projects going on and it’s really exciting and great to give students the opportunity to get involved in these kind of issues because obviously students are best placed to help students.”

While more can always be done to raise awareness of the services on offer, Catriona believes the welfare office is reaching out to a significant number of students in UL. “I’m not sure if everyone is aware of my office but I get a huge number of students coming in to me so it suggests that there is quite a large awareness,” she says.

“I do get students that are hugely vulnerable and they do find their way here whether it’s through counselling or the chaplaincy. The chaplaincy are super and they are able to discern whether students’ problems are of a mental health or a financial nature. They’ll direct them to me if I’m the appropriate person for them to be directed to. I’m sure there are still students

that we are missing, I don’t dispute it but we are incredibly busy and any given week I’ll have over thirty student visits.”

On whether she is able to help those who do make it through her door, Catriona says: “Sometimes I am, a lot of the time my job is very much signposting, a lot of the time I will refer to counselling, if it’s a grant issue I might liaise with SUSI or the local county council on behalf of the

student but a lot of the time I am directing them to more specialised support services but there is a lot I can do on the student’s behalf.”

Catriona, who has a mental health background, believes that to be a big advantage to anyone looking to take on the role. She would advise prospective candidates, she is not running for election again, to seek some kind of training which would help them recognise at risk students. “For incoming welfare officers it would be great if even once they have started the job to do a first responders course of some kind. It would enable them to be able to tell if someone is at risk. Hugely important, I would think.”

Like all the ULSU officers Catriona’s door is always open so if you have an issue call in. Remember it is your union and they are your representatives so see what they can do for you.

UL leads the way in postgraduate representation

POSTGRADUATE Student Union (PSU) president, Lily Carroll, believes the dedicated PSU office offers supports for postgrads other institutions are only now catching up with.

"We're one of only two colleges that do it, us and Trinity, in the other colleges they are separate anyway but it's really hard to get postgrads integrated," said Lily. "But the fact that we have a union specifically for them they do engage. Whereas in other colleges, where it's all one union, they don't maybe have the same engagement with postgrads. UCD just got their first full-time officer last year, Galway has a part time officer now; it's starting to go that way now that people see that postgrads need representation."

"The others can find it hard to get postgrads involved because they are going to the undergraduate events. We're separate, we've got our own budget and we've a lot to offer," says Lily.

One of the benefits of a separate budget is a fully stocked common room in the Stables Courtyard. If you are a postgrad call in anytime, if you are an undergrad keep walking, no microwave for you. "We have our own common area, tea coffee and green tea this year, milk and papers every day. The place is packed at lunchtime and they're back in for an afternoon tea. It's nice and vibrant and there is always something going on."

Thinking back on some of the

areas she wanted to address before being elected, she says: "I wanted to try to reach out to research students a lot more; I don't know if I have, I don't have the proof that I've done it but I do see a lot more of them engaging, getting involved in campus life. For them it's a full time job and it's nice for them to get involved. I do see a lot more of them in here and maybe some of them weren't aware of the facilities we have before I spoke to them at the beginning of the year. They know it's a hub where they can hang out."

"With the position this year I've actually done a lot more than I'd planned to do. The manifesto is one thing but it's when you get in that you realise realistically what you can do with the job. I've written a new memorandum of understanding between the PSU and ULSU. I've rewritten the constitution for the PSU which was also a little outdated and hopefully we'll get that ratified by April. They were a couple of things that hadn't been done in a while that needed doing. I didn't realise until I got in that this would be a good year to do them."

"I wanted to make more use of the common room so I got it completely cleaned up at the beginning of the year and we could see immediately a lot more people used it and they commented on it. They didn't want to use the microwave before because of the things crawling in them."

On her experience of sitting on the governing authority of UL, Lily



says: "In the first few weeks it was intimidating, you are in a room with forty very influential people within the country. One of the members is Patricia Long who is head of Disney Ireland so there are some really interesting figures on it. We meet on the last Friday of every month and at the beginning we didn't know our place but we found it very quickly and we knew why we were there; to represent students at that level."

"We are very lucky in this university they want to know what students want, they really do care about students and they look to us for those answers."

On how she got involved with student politics, she says: "I was always involved in clubs and socs and would have been involved in some other elections for the union. It passed my time to be an undergraduate sabbatical officer, I had thought about it but I never

followed through. I thought maybe it wasn't right for me at the time."

"So when it got to my postgraduate I thought well, the experience will stand to me. I wanted to bring a lot to the job. I didn't achieve everything I wanted to do," she says wistfully. Nothing another term couldn't fix but Lily is not running again meaning a clean slate for the upcoming elections for the first time in many a year.

Asked whether postgrads are a different species, she laughed: "I don't know, I suppose time, postgrad is short it's a year and a half. It's such a short space of time that they want to get into UL and they want to finish their stuff and get out again. It's a different cohort of students with a different mentality. They don't need UV parties and paint parties; they want different kinds of social events."

"We just had our PSU ball last week and 170 came to it. It was fantastic, really fantastic; we've never had that at the union before. I think it's growing and they're seeing what can be done for them. They like the odd social event but otherwise they just want somebody to make their lunch for them," she laughed.

Lily can be a busy lady with up to 3,500 postgraduate students in UL, with her role all-encompassing from welfare to academic. "You have issues with accommodation, with finance; finance is such a big one now because there is no maintenance grants for post grads anymore. A lot of different issues as well, some of the academic issues as well, issues with supervisors. It varies from student to student."

Lily feels students returning from a period away from campus life can sometimes need help readjusting to the student bubble.

"They just feel a bit lonely and a bit out of it, if people come in straight after fourth year they might have their friends, whereas if they're coming back after a couple of years it can be difficult and that was an issue in September. They just need to get back in and find their feet and seeming as it's only a year and a half they don't know how much time they have to fit into different places," she says.

Lily's door is always open for those who need her help, indeed it was opened a couple of times during the interview itself.

Paddy Rockett's parting missives

PADDY Rockett, the ULSU mainstay, is finally done with student representation after serving in sabbatical roles for the last three years.

Asked if he would be running again in the upcoming elections, he emphatically replied, "No, definitely not". After running for election in each of the last four years he couldn't help but laugh. Maybe he looked up the word sabbatical. It's now he needs one.

He lost his first election taking on incumbent President Ruan Dillon McLoughlin for the Union's top position in 2010. Paddy acknowledging the outsider's perspective on such positions said the initial reasons for running for president of the union were "massive power and ego" he says only half-jokingly. Paddy has grown up through his role representing the academic welfare of students and is glad now that he didn't succeed in that first foray into student politics.

"I was jack-the-lad, a bit mad and that kind of stuff. I'm really kind of glad I didn't get it because the subsequent years were very difficult for the Union. The presidential role doesn't offer a lot of time to talk to students whereas my current role as vice-president academic; face time with students is a large part of the role."

"You're the person in the gap between the student and the University; in any way shape or form, generally making academic life more bearable for students."

Paddy, obviously relaxed in his decision to leave the ULSU bubble, is not afraid to aim a rather large broadside at those he leaves behind. "At the moment the university has a lot to answer for in terms of academics, so do students (not attending classes), the retention rate in terms of first years staying on is very low and it's something the university are really scared of, but they won't publicise the problems because it ruins them on national rankings, so they are not really willing to tackle the issue on a big scale. Any good university would look at something admit it and then get everyone together to deal with it."

USI president, Joe O'Connor, in a defrosting of relations between the ULSU and the USI, was on campus last week to meet with the ULSU council. "I'm not a fan of the USI personally but what I am a fan of is offering the students the opportunity to look at USI, historically they haven't been given the opportunity to come on campus. I don't want to make the decision for thousands of students. Let them see the benefits and the drawbacks of the USI."



For many membership of the ULSU is just an unintended and sometimes unknown consequence of enrolling at the university, but Paddy believes the union offers students a whole host of services they need to investigate. "The best way to look at it is in terms of what it can offer you. I'm not saying everyone should be a class rep or in clubs and societies but it's their Union; it belongs to them."

"We offer quite a lot but I do think it is up to the individual, a really dynamic person who knows where they want to be in four years will go this is what's going to get me where I want to be. But we're not seeing a lot of that from students we're seeing a very dependant type of student."

Asked about the approachability of the union for those who are not dynamic go-getters, Paddy says with characteristic self-awareness: "I hope we are (approachable), there is a thing that the union can look like a bit of a clique or an old boy's club and because I've been elected so often it can look like its self-serving."

The hide of a rhinoceros is a prerequisite for any elected position and ULSU sabbatical officer positions are no different as Paddy found out during his own expenses scandal that could have come straight out of Dail Eireann.

"The criticism is a difficult one especially when it's incorrect. It was said that I was spending money on student taxis. We operated a safe cab initiative and it was my wages that paid for it. If you're going to be in this job you've got to have a tough skin. Once these things get onto boards or Facebook it spreads like wildfire and you've got to stay calm cool and collected because it is an assault on your character. You've just got to stand up and say it's incorrect and challenge it."

"But it was a tough time and I did crack at one stage and say I'm going to resign." The scandal was during his first year representing students as entertainments officer but Paddy came back stronger and has spent the last two years as education officer and then after a title change as vice-president academic.

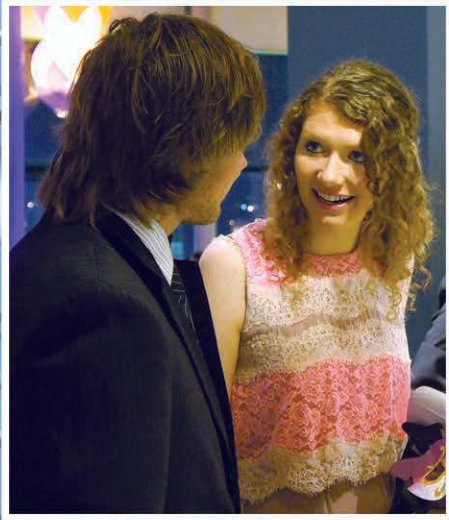
One thing Paddy feels strongly about is the role of communications officer, he says: "I'll probably be bringing the issue to council this year to re-evaluate it. Communications is how we get our message out to students. Looking at online, videos, podcasts that type of stuff, it's just something we don't have time to do. I do think a communications officer would be one of the best things we can leave behind at the end of the year."

On whether it is financially feasible to reinstate the role, he says: "Our budgets can take a little bit of a cut because we are managing and doing fairly well. There is a need so I don't think money should be an issue, it's a necessity that we have a communications officer for the survival of the radio, An Focal and much, much more."

Paddy's advice or warning, depending on your perspective, for those seeking election is: "Come in and talk to us and I don't mean this as a threat but if someone goes up there and talks absolute nonsense I will highlight that it's not going to work. This role has so many people depending on you, that bluffers won't work and believe me I was a massive bluffer." So the boy's all grown up and I believe him when he says he can spot a chancer.

So that's it Paddy's off to the real world. Oh, wait a minute he says he might be back to help teach the module he helped create. Admit it, you would have missed him.

POSTGRADUATE STUDENTS' UNION BALL: THE PAVILION CLUB



THURSDAY, February 13, in the Pavilion Club, saw 170 Postgraduate guests attend the Postgraduate Students' Union's most elegant event on the social calendar. Scrubbing up and taking a break from the books, guests enjoyed sweet cocktails and Prosecco on arrival as they indulged in the theme of the night, masquerade. Entertainment provided by local band, Jazzology and DJ Jeff Lambert kept attendees on their feet all night. The PSU team would like to extend their gratitude to all in the Pavilion for a fantastic set up, to the ENTS Team for keeping everyone on the straight and narrow and to everyone else involved for making it the night it was!



The Wolf Games . . .

MANY moons ago there was the sacred "Battle of the Clubs" which saw 3 of the biggest clubs in UL go toe to toe to see who would take home the coveted purple gnome.

This year sees "The Wolf Games" take its place as the competition to beat all competitions.

This year all Clubs and Societies will be pitted against each other for a chance to become Pride of the Pack 2014.

During this year's Charity Week (Wednesday and Thursday) there will be Dance Off's organised by Dance UL, Super Slam Dunk competitions organised by the Trampoliners and what is set to be the largest ever game of dodge-ball organised by the Kayak Club.

If you are in ANY Club or

Society you need to get involved and represent your team colours and fight for your place at the top of the Wolf Pack.

If you are just passing by on the day, hang around for a few minutes and enjoy every spectacle, because all of these events will help to push the amount fundraised this Charity Week through the roof.

Don't forget about the always entertaining Raft Race and the Nearly Naked Mile which will also be taking place. So get yourself involved in whatever way you can.

Keep your ear to the ground for more info and let's go big this Charity Week!

If you would like any more info on how to get involved or what the competition is about contact Eoin - eoinfar14@gmail.com



THE WOLF GAMES
2014

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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

ULSU plans referendum for new Death Star



By Joe Milford

ULSU has announced proposals for the construction of a new purpose-built Death Star. If built the proposed Death Star will span a diameter of 140 kilometres, encompassing state of the art facilities for you, the students, to make the most of your university experience.

The proposed Death Star will house specially-designed study spaces, purpose-built rooms for clubs and societies, a multi-purpose entertainment venue/cinema alongside, a UL Wolves-branded

death ray and living quarters for 30,000 storm troopers.

As any discerning Sith Lord will remind you, stars don't come cheap and the high costs of constructing the UL Wolves Death Star will require a student levy. Based on past estimates the annual levy is likely to come in at to come in at approximately 150 million euro per student (3,000 Galactic Moon Coins).

Though this levy may seem steep, project leader and Jedi Master Mr Han Solo wished to highlight that the proposed levy is still considerably

less than that paid by students at other universities within the Galactic Empire.

In response to Mr Solo's statement, opposition lobbyist Emperor Palpatine (B.Eng. 2016) wished to highlight that while UL's proposed levy is not the highest within the Galactic Empire, the higher levy paid by students of other universities grants the students free access to their sports facilities.

A referendum on the proposed Death Star is planned for week 9 of this semester. Pending the result of the referendum, ULSU plans to hold further referendums until the levy is voted in.

What can you do . . . ?

FIRST of all I would like to inform you that I am not a writer, I am not even sure how good my English is as my D in the Leaving Cert will tell you I am not going to be the next Shakespeare. I had no intention of ever writing an article of any sort until I witnessed something that compelled me to tell people of an experience I had.

After college on this particular day my brother and I decided to treat ourselves to a KFC. I ordered the usual and as I paid I noticed what I presume was a homeless man carrying his possessions in a Lidl bag in the line. He ordered a snack box meal which came to €4.50. As he scraped the money together I could see the look on the employees face but what could he do to help? There were a group of teenagers sitting close by. They were your typical modern teenager, Hollister clothing and smart phones. They didn't notice this man. He took his food down to the corner and ate quietly.

Now, I thought to myself, this is a person who has fallen on hard times and the world passes him by like it's not their problem. Well I for one do not want to sit back anymore and watch. What if that was you? Would you want someone to notice? We live in an unfair, unjust material world. I believe that everyone deserves somewhere to call home, somewhere they know they can go back to at night. I know we can't solve all the problems but think of how many meals could be bought for the price of a Hollister t shirt, an iPhone or the usual college students' favourite of alcohol.

I thought before I was powerless. After all, what can one person do? What can one group do? What can one community do? With Charity Week approaching, ask yourself what can you do?

Your ordinary student
Michael O'Connor



FUERZA BRUTA

UNMISSABLE!

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13TH-22ND MARCH 2014

Culture Factory, Castletroy

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2014
LIMERICK
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TRAVEL

Charmed by wonderful Paris

Amy Diviney

PARIS has not lost its charm since I've been here. Actually, you'd be more right in saying that I have fallen under its spell; I did not go back home. Or rather, I did, for Christmas . . . and then I flew right back to Paris. For another 12 weeks. Erasmus 2.0.

While I love UL, and all the people I know there, there is just something about Paris. Although my wallet is definitely suffering, I have managed to do so many cool things. From eating the most amazing food to meeting bizarre, random people, to drinking cocktails from a baby bottle in a cartoon-themed bar, I have been having a ball.

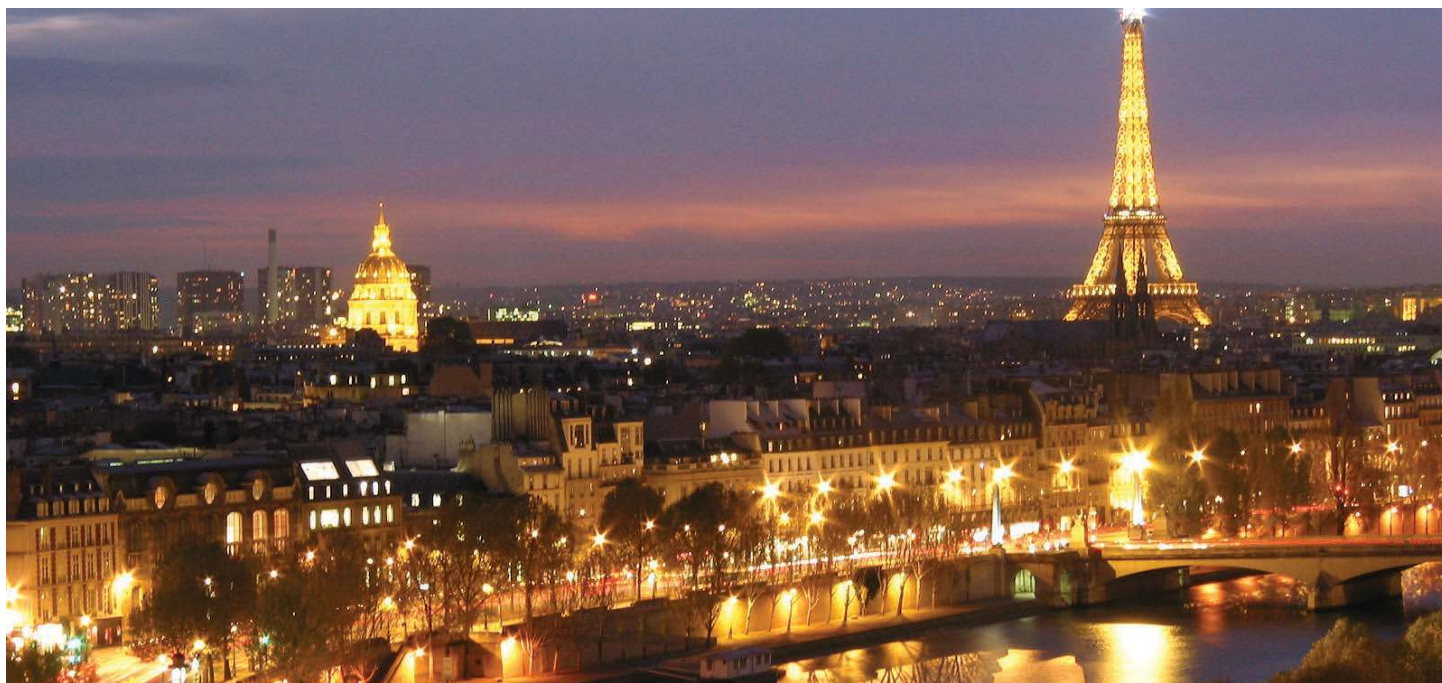
Of course it hasn't all been plain sailing, but then a semester in UL wouldn't have been either. Semester two is well under way here and I'm slowly growing to like my new classes. The lectures are less of a scary, incomprehensible, block of (French) noise now, but I'm not sure if they are actually easier, or if I have just gotten used to them.

Which in itself is progress, and a large part of why I'm here. Every time I go into a class, the lecturers (and frequently the students!) say words I have never heard before. It was definitely a baptism of fire. It's funny the differences you can see in the way the education system works here compared to at home.

I find aspects of the French one (at least in my university in Paris) a little strange. Well, in comparison to UL anyway. They usually do not provide photocopies or PowerPoints to sum up what we're there to learn and there is a much bigger emphasis on writing.

Lectures are frequently like very long dictation exercises - the lecturer speaks and I attempt to get what they say down on paper. One of my lecturers even points out where she would like us to put punctuation marks.

Classes here are generally much longer, and on Wednesdays I have 5 hours in a row



without a break across two subjects. The lecture as I know it doesn't seem to exist; instead they opt for more of a lecture/tutorial hybrid here. If you have 4 hours per week in a subject, you'll likely have them all in a row on the same day, something that took a little getting used to after a year and a half in UL, where continuity across the week is key.

All of my classes are in classrooms bar one, and for that one, we are about 60 students in an amphitheatre meant for 300 (classic French administration there!). They also offer classes at 8 am (of which I have three this semester . . .) and on Saturdays (thankfully I managed to escape that horror).

The university itself looks almost more like an American high school than a Third Level Institution. It was built when ugly architecture was fashionable (thanks, 70s!) and hasn't aged very well. Actually, the

stairwells would remind you of those more often found in multi-storey car parks . . . it's definitely not the modern yet beautiful riverside campus we enjoy here.

It's strange to be in a centre that is much smaller now, with no green space to speak of, and only one café! Long gone is the agonising choice to be made between having lunch at the Stables or Scholars, and Starbucks is a trek of a ten-minute walk away (the horror!). Here you are fighting with all the other students for a seat in their inadequately sized (but pleasant) cafeteria. You would think, therefore, that I had hardly a positive word to say of it. However, I'm not sure that these things are negatives; they're just different.

I suppose the point of Erasmus is to have parties and make amazing life long friends open your mind and see how things are done elsewhere, and maybe even bring some of these ideas back home with you.

It's not just France's system that I'm getting a glimpse of though, but those represented by my fellow Erasmus students too: Spain, Germany . . . even the other Irish students who are not from UL have a different viewpoint to me.

Plus, I'm in Paris! The city of love and lights, where the Christmas Markets stretched the length of the Champs-Élysées, and the smell of freshly baked bread from the Boulangerie follows you down the street each morning. Where on any given day you can have a drink in a typically French café-bar, see a Pixar exhibition, attend a jazz night or poetry reading, watch a rugby match or even go celebrity stalking spotting.

So I reneged on returning to Ireland for Semester Two, and now you all know why: despite the battles I must face in the University, much like Anastasia, Paris holds the key to my heart (for now at least).

From Australia to Limerick – why the hell . . . ?

Jake Watson

“WHY the hell would you want to come to Limerick from Australia?” I have met countless Irish people since arriving here, and the amounts who have not asked me this would probably fit in my shower.

Well, to clear it up for you, I am actually here under orders from your government as a deterrent. Apparently they realised that an inordinate number of Irish people are heading for Australian shores, and while we adore having you come to our country so we can laugh at English backpackers together, your political fat cats decided they want Irish people to stay in Ireland. So, they sent me as a shining beacon of why you absolutely shouldn't come to Australia.

Poor, self-deprecating jokes aside, I don't know that I can answer your question. Why did I come to Limerick? I probably should have thought about that more before I came to Limerick. Truthfully, I wanted to study in Dublin; I went there for about a week last year while backpacking and couldn't get the town off my mind. But my university do not send students on exchange to

Dublin-my only Irish option was the University of Limerick. And by God I'm glad it was.

Do you realise what you have here, Limerickians? (Limerickites?



Limeriquai? I don't know.) This place is amazing. Not only is it bigger than my university in Melbourne, it is bigger than the suburb in which I live. Which I suppose has its downsides, and when, during my first week, I got lost in the main building for three days lacking food, water and a sense of direction I probably would have cursed this institution and all it stood for.

But now that I once again have access to basic resources and the outside world, it is incredibly hard not to love this place. You have pubs, a bunch of

restaurants, a billion rugby fields, and a boat house necessitated by the fact you have a massive river going right through the middle of you and



your desire to put boats on it. My university has not a single one of those things, and certainly not a river, despite my constant suggestions to the administration.

Do you know what else you have that I do not have in Melbourne? Thousands of Irish people. And there is nothing wrong with any place in which there are thousands of Irish people. I like you guys. I enjoy that you like to drink as much as I do. I love what you do with your language-every time something is grand, or someone

had great craic, or someone seemingly randomly adds the word “sure” or “like” to the end of a sentence, I just get all giddy.



A somewhat significant problem I have encountered thus far in my residency here is the complete and utter bemusement I feel when I remember that I am technically here to study. Technically, I am proud to say I have missed but four (or maybe seven) lectures, only a couple of tutorials, and I am even on the Sulis site for most of my classes. Given the circumstances I think that is actually quite impressive.

My deepest apologies for this part, but I feel I should quickly voice some grievances I feel toward your university, your town

and your country. For starters, are there any beef sausages to be found in this country? Or beef sausage rolls? Do they exist? I feel like I'm taking crazy pills. There is so much pork. I mean, I'm not mad-I just want to know what's going on. Also, supermarkets do not give you bags, so I have to bring my own. I actually think this is great, to be honest, except that I keep forgetting to bring them. So actually scratch that one, I'm just an idiot.

But let us get back to your original question. Why would I want to leave Australia in the summertime, with our sun and warmth? Well, when I got on the plane in Melbourne to fly to Dublin, it was 43 degrees. When I landed in Dublin, it was 3 degrees. But you can always put on more jackets, and I was prepared for the blistering cold and perpetual damp-there are only so many layers one can remove when the mercury goes up.

So, let me say: I came to this town on a hunch and a good memory of Dublin, with no list of better reasons to be here. But now that I am here, my list of reasons to stay gets longer every day.

KEMMY BUSINESS SCHOOL BALL: STRAND HOTEL



CHARITY WEEK



CHARITY WEEK SCHEDULE

Monday:			
12:00	ULFM 24Hour Broadcast Begins	ULSU Comms Office	
12:00	Live DJ	Stables Courtyard	
12:00 - 16:00	Rodeo Penis (Yes, Penis!)	Stables Courtyard	
12:00 - 16:00	Bubble Zorbs!		
	Tug Of War	SU Courtyard	
	Giant Twister		
13:00	Raft Race (In Association With UL Kayak Club)	The Beach By Kilmurry / The Living Bridge	
13:30	Crème Egg Eating Competition	Stables Courtyard	
13:45	Egg & Spoon Obstacle Race	Stables Courtyard	
14:15	Blackcurrent Funnel Drinking Competition	Stables Courtyard	
14:30	Shave Or Dye	Stables Courtyard	
14:45	Cucumber Eating Competition	Stables Courtyard	
15:15	Hula Hoops Competition	Stables Courtyard	
15:45	Yard of Lime Competition	Stables Courtyard	
15:30	Leg Waxing!	Stables Courtyard	
15:30	Live DJ	The Stables Club	
16:00	Boat Race	Scholars Club	
16:00	Kissing Competition	The Stables Club	
16:30	Blind Date	The Stables Club	
17:00	Grinding Competition	The Stables Club	
17:00	Christy Moore Tribute	Stables Courtyard	
17:30	Fruity Games	The Stables Club	
18:00	Live DJ	The Stables Club	
21:30	Beer Club / Acoustic Jam Session	Scholars Club	
21:30	ABC PaintGlow Party (Anything But Clothes)	The Stables Club	

Tuesday:			
12:00	Live DJ	Stables Courtyard	
12:00	ULFM 24Hour Broadcast Ends	ULSU Comms Office	
12:00 - 16:00	Spin SouthWest Outside Broadcast Vodafone On Campus Giveaway Velcro Wall Dunk Tank Sumo Suits Battle Arena	SU Courtyard	Dunk your friends or the Union Officers!!
12:00	Live DJ	Stables Courtyard	
14:00	Barry Sinclair Hypnotist	Stables Courtyard	
14:30	Sex Quiz	Scholar's Club	
14:30	Nearly Naked Mile (In Association With UL RAG Soc)	SU Courtyard	
15:30	Cocktail Stick Bean Eating	Stables Courtyard	
16:00	Helium Karaoke Limbo Dance Competition Creme Egg Competition	Scholars Club Stables Courtyard Inside Stables	
16:30	Straw Pea Pass Silly Video Dance Competition	Stables Courtyard Inside Stables	
17:00	Nose Pea Push Competition	Inside Stables	
18:00	Live DJ	Inside Stables	
23:00	Sandro Silva Live	Crush 87 Nightclub	

Wednesday:

12:00 - 15:00	C&S Olympics	SU Courtyard	
	The Big Sex Quiz	The Scholars	
14:00	Panty hose Golf	Stables Courtyard	
14:30	Mankini Challenge	Scholars Club	
14:45	Toilet Paper Mummy	Stables Courtyard	
15:00	Got You Pegged	Stables Courtyard	Using Pegs to Reshape A Face
15:30	Blind Spoon Pass Live DJ	Stables Courtyard The Stables Club	
16:00	Ceiling Twister Arm Wrestling Kissing Race	Scholars Club Stables Courtyard The Stables Club	
16:15	Dance Off	Stables Courtyard	
16:30	Fruity Games Blind Chat-Up	Stables Courtyard The Stables Club	
17:00	Balloon Hug	The Stables Club	
17:30	Bubble Blowing Competition	The Stables Club	
21:00	Keywest	The Stables Club	Free Entry Up to 21:30, €2 Entry afterwards.
21:00 - Late	UL Fest	Main Stage Scholar's Stage Stables' Courtyard Stables' Stage	

Thursday:

12:00 - 15:00	C&S Olympics	SU Courtyard	
12:00 - 16:00	Playstation Promotion	SU Common Room	Trial the new Playstation 4, and enter for your chance to win your very own PS4!! 1 in 100 Chance!!
13:45	Fruit Croquet	Stables Courtyard	
14:30	Sausage-Fest Shaving Games	Scholars Club Stables Courtyard	
15:00	Mr. & Mrs. Game	Stables Courtyard	
15:30	Giant T-Shirt	Stables Courtyard	
16:00	Statues (Game) Cracker Eating Competition	Scholars Club Stables Courtyard	
16:30	Lolly Licking	Stables Courtyard	
17:00	Air Flying Comp	Stables Courtyard	
20:30 - 23:00	Le Galaxie Live!!	SU Courtyard	
23:00 - 02:30	Super Thursdays Charity Week Blowout Party!	Crush 87	

Friday:

21:00	TGIF - Red Cup Party	The Stables Club	
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Thursday Week 7
13th March:

18:30	Fuerza Bruta! Exclusive UL Preview Show	The Culture Factory (Old Dell Factory)	Tickets Normally €28. We have negotiated €10 Tickets, with portion going to Charity
20:00 - 22:00	Fuerza Bruta Afterparty 1 Feat. Leading Armies	The Culture Factory (Old Dell Factory)	
22:30 - 02:30	Fuerza Bruta Afterparty 2	Crush 87	Buses Provided to Nightclub

Your chosen charities . . . now let's get fundraising

Catriona Ní Dhonnchú: Deputy President/Welfare Officer

ULSU received over 30 nominations for Charity Week 2014. Many of these nominations came from within our student body, whereas others came from the charity organisations themselves. As Welfare Officer, I had to shortlist 12 charities for the final vote at a meeting of the Student Union Executive. When shortlisting, I strived for a mix of international, national and local charities that focused on a range of issues – education, healthcare, disabilities, housing; and that supported all people from children to the elderly. The four selected charities are highlighted below.

ST. GABRIEL'S SCHOOL & CENTRE

St. Gabriel's School & Centre for children with multiple disabilities is located in Dooradoyle. It is a non-profit organisation and registered charity (CHY 5548) dedicated to providing education and a range of essential health-related treatments and interventions to children and teenagers with multiple disabilities.

St. Gabriel's School & Centre

Our vision reflects our values

Each child is treated on the basis of their own individual needs and receives high quality therapies to help them achieve their potential and to enjoy their life in a dignified and supportive manner. As a non-profit organisation, St. Gabriel's faces a number of challenges to ensure financial survival and at the same time deliver services. Not being a National organisation the capacity to generate financial resources is limited to the support base within the Limerick region. St. Gabriel's arranges annual fundraising events including benefit nights, golf classics, etc., to generate support and goodwill.

HEART CHILDREN IRELAND

This organisation was set up in 1990 to help and support the families of children born with CHD. It is a completely voluntary group and so it depends on fundraising and donations from individuals and businesses. Over the years, Heart Children Ireland has purchased lifesaving equipment for

the cardiac unit at Our Lady's Children's Hospital in Crumlin, as well as having purchased the first EMCO machine for the intensive care unit at this hospital. This machine saves approximately five young heart babies every week. On top of this, Heart Children Ireland has provided a dedicated clinic room for the Young Adult Congenital Unit at the Mater Hospital to facilitate teenagers transferring from Crumlin. This project costs roughly €50k and is still an ongoing project.



ORDER OF MALTA

The Charity operates out of Davis Street, Limerick, and is headed up by Tony O'Mara. It is a local charity, that of course has a national, and international presence, but on a day to day



ORDER OF MALTA
IRELAND

level, it helps build and develop relationships within the local community, and in the local area. Some of its main areas are:

- 1: Taking care of the first aid needs at local events e.g. horse riding, motor cross, and other sports events.
- 2: Building up a cadet force of youth, who are taught first aid and leadership skills, and can progress into the seniors.
- 3: The seniors can train up to become Emergency Medical

Technicians who are allowed to administer drugs such as Entenox – a combination of oxygen and nitrogen, on scene to casualties.

A €1500 charity donation could fund a basic level ECG monitor for the Order of Malta. This would be the Limerick branch's first ever ECG monitor and something that is badly needed.

ACQUIRED BRAIN INJURY IRELAND

Approximately 10,000 people in Ireland suffer from an acquired brain injury and specialised services are extremely limited. Acquired Brain Injury (ABI) Ireland is a non-profit,



partially government funded organisation which caters for the needs of people who have an acquired brain injury. They offer an individualised service to members of the community across Limerick city and county. They also have a residential service for clients who require 24 hour care. It was established in the year 2000, formerly known as the Peter Bradley Foundation. At the moment, ABI Ireland offers services such as psychology, community rehabilitation, family support services/social work and assisted residential living.

NOW, GET FUNDRAISING!

5 big . . . 5 small with Professor Don Barry

CONTINUED FROM THE BACK PAGE

consultants in our medical school and our local health service then we are competing in an international market. There is no easy answer to that.

5. In terms of the Union itself, ULSU has not been a part of USI since 1991. The last review of our membership took place in 06/07, as you began to take office. Do you feel there is a benefit to students in joining, in terms of national representation, or do you think that ULSU and you yourself do enough to represent us nationally already?

Well I'm reluctant to comment on this issue because I presume that any decision concerning ULSU and USI will require a referendum of the student body. But I do think that it's important to review that relationship every now and again to see what's in the best interest of ULSU and I presume in that situation a lot of consideration would have to be given to the public line that is being pursued by USI and whether that aligns with what ULSU do and think. There is no point in being associated with a national union unless they are in sync with your own views and I would presume that that is the central argument that will be played out during the course of a student referendum on this issue.

My own view on this issue is that ULSU does a tremendous job in representing the students of the University of Limerick both internally and externally in the broader community and I would hope that that would continue regardless of any decisions taken in regard to affiliation with USI.

6. Thank you very much for that, and now for some more light hearted conversation. A book everyone should read and a movie everyone should watch? And why?

Well let's start with the book question.

I have a favourite author called Phillip Roth and I think everyone should read at least one of his books and I am confident that should they read one they would want to read them all. Perhaps to get people started I would recommend a book called American Pastoral that he wrote some time in the last ten years. I have read all his books and I think anyone that hasn't experienced Phillip Roth is missing out on a great pleasure.

I read a lot more books than I do films I guess but my favourite film of all time is Scent of a Woman with Al Pacino in it, but I have no idea why it's my favourite. It's just a fantastic movie. In terms of a movie you might learn something from I think the Godfather Trilogy is something worth watching. They are fantastic movies in their own right but I think they have a lot of lessons about the complexities of managing the people around you. There's some really interesting politics, albeit with a small p, that show the problems that can arise with people trying to work together.

7. If you could have dinner with three people, dead or living, who would they be and why?

Well Philip Roth would be one of them as I have never met him and he's one of my favourite writers.

I have had dinner once with Bill Clinton and I would like to have dinner with him again at any time as he is an extraordinarily interesting man.

I think the other person I would like to have dinner with is Mary O'Rourke who was a real fine Minister of Education and has a really articulate way of expressing views that can be provocative and revealing on other prominent figures in Irish politics and I'd like to be in a position where I could learn what she knows about the recent politics in Ireland.

8. Are you a rugby, soccer or G.A.A.

man?

Well I'm from North Cork so I'm really a hurling man although in my role as president I try and portray myself as a rugby man seeing as this is Limerick.

Maybe we'll touch on that one so. What are your own personal views on the six nations so far this year? Do you think we have a chance of doing the Grand Slam?

I think we actually have a very good chance of doing the Grand Slam, unfortunately we're in the position where every second year we have to face England and France away from home and this is one of those years, but we've got off to a hell of a good start and although we are going to Twickenham and going to Paris this year we have a hell of a better chance than we did this time two years ago or indeed four years ago, the other time we went to these venues. I think we have a much better chance when England and France have to come to Dublin but I think we have played really well in the first two matches, especially against Wales and if we can replicate that performance against England in the next match we'll have a good chance of winning the Grand Slam.

So you'll predict an Irish win on Saturday?

I think that England are favourites but I think Ireland have a decent chance of winning that match especially considering if we win we'll have an Irish Triple Crown. Going to Paris is a different kettle of fish altogether.

9. Biscuit or cake? What is your ideal snack?

Biscuit. I'd say I'm one of the major consumers of Yorkie bars in Ireland, whereby Yorkie bar I mean the one with raisin and biscuit in it. Do you know the ones I mean?

Aye, the one in the purple wrapper?

Harder to get these days, you don't see them around as much...

It's because I've them all bought (laughs), I buy them in bulk.

10. Before I get to the last question I just want to take the opportunity to say thank you very much for the time, it's a huge boost that we've got back on track with the paper and to kick off with such a high profile interview. Is there anything you would personally like to say to the students that we have not covered here?

Well can I first say that I am delighted that An Focal will be back in action, I have arranged that I get a copy as soon as it's printed. I prefer getting the print copy as opposed to the online copy, I'm of that age.

What I really want to say to the students is something I say to a lot of people, it is about the positivity that comes out of the student body in UL and I notice it in particular at graduations where I spend a lot of time meeting the students that have just graduated and their parents. The parents are of the same generation as I am and they have been in the last couple of years, depressed about the current state of the country where as the students come up to me and are full of enthusiasm about the future be it in Ireland or anywhere in the world, and they have a tremendous love for UL and the campus in particular. So the defining characteristic about the students of UL, for me, is the positivity. I haven't come across the same level of enthusiasm towards the institution in any other university that I've worked in and I hope that continues. UL students also have a concern for the reputation of the university, and of Limerick, that is exemplary.

Perfect, well unless you have anything else thank you very much!

Thank you.

CHARITY WEEK

IMPORTANT INFORMATION FOR CHARITY WEEK!!!!

An Garda Síochána

Drinking in a public place:

This notice is to remind you that it is an offence to drink in a public place under local Bye-laws this includes:

- Having possession of a can or bottle containing alcohol with an intention of consuming same.

Bye Laws make provision for Gardaí or other authorised persons to issue on the spot fines of €75 to those found drinking in public open spaces.

Littering:

Under Litter Act, 1997:

No person shall deposit any substance or object so as to create litter in a public place or in any place that is visible to any extent from a public place. Failure to keep your property free of litter can result in a fine or prosecution by your local authority.

Leaving or throwing litter in a public place is an offence that can be subject to an on-the-spot fine of €150 or a maximum fine of €3,000 if you are convicted of a litter offence in the District Court.

You can be issued with an on-the-spot fine by a litter warden local authority or by a member of the Gardaí .

Parking:

Any vehicle illegally parked will be issued with a fixed charge ticket. This includes any vehicle that is parked without displaying a relevant parking permit:

- Parking near or on pedestrian crossings.
- On double yellow lines.
- Any vehicle deemed to be causing an obstruction.
- Parking on Grass margins.

Noise levels:

Under the Environmental Protection



A €75 FINE MAKES YOUR HANGOVER 100 TIMES WORSE

Gardaí can and will issue on-the-spot fines . . !

**Don't make the hangover worse
DON'T DRINK IN PUBLIC**

Agency Act, 1992 (Sec. 108): Noise such as that coming from other homes, that is continuous, repeated, loud and occurring at such times and of such duration that it

affects the quality of life of the person(s) in the vicinity.

The maximum fine for conviction on breach of noise regulations is €3,000 or

12 months in prison or both.

A ZERO TOLERANCE POLICY WILL BE ADOPTED FOR ANYONE IN BREACH OF ANY OF THE ABOVE.

HOUSE PARTY CONS

AS Charity Week approaches students are asked by the Community Liaison Committee, in conjunction with the community Gardaí , to be aware of a number of issues concerned with hosting house parties during the week's festivities.

During their meeting in academic week three the Community Liaison Committee have requested we publish a short article concerned with the potential dangers and general downsides to hosting a house party during Charity Week.

The committee is made up of representatives of local residents associations, Gardaí , the university and ULSU. They meet on a monthly basis to discuss any issues arising in the local community that concern students.

While it is expected students will enjoy their Charity Week the committee would hope that they do so in a fashion that does not impact negatively on themselves or the community. As such they ask you to be aware of the following:

Noise

College Court, Elm Park, etc., are not exclusive student estates like the campus villages and as a result have a number of private residents as well as students. These residents would please ask you to be mindful of this case when throwing parties as a house within hearing distance may be the home of young children or adults whom have to be up early the next morning for school or work. I know Electric Picnic is cancelled but your house isn't a good replacement.

Loss of Control

Unfortunately there are a number of well



documented examples of what started out as a small house-party swelling to a size that is uncontrollable for the hosts.

Nobody wants a Project X style situation to arise. Gardaí recommend the closing of front doors and windows to decrease the chances of people just walking in off the street.

Damage

Charity Week is expensive enough as it is; nobody needs to have to pay their landlord for repairs to the house or even to be landed

with a Garda fine.

Whether you know all your guests or not it can be a case in either situation that smashing your kitchen table for the Halloween style bonfire in your garden is a great idea. Not so much when you're eating Pot noodles off the floor for the rest of the semester.

The Cleaning

Presumably you're not Kim or indeed Aggie and you don't get a slightly creepy pleasure out of putting your house back

together the morning after when it resembles a shanty in the favela. I don't even need to elaborate on this . . .

'Pranks'

Whether they result in your cutlery being frozen in a basin of water in your freezer or finding out after your morning tea that someone had pissed in your kettle the night before, nobody actually enjoys being pranked, especially when hungover. We've all heard the story of the poo in the bottom of the butter tub. Just no . . .

The Grid

Exclusive communication for Clubs and Societies

EMAIL US YOUR CLUB OR SOCIETY DETAILS AND THIS SPOT COULD BE YOURS . . .

email: anfocal@ul.ie

UL Surf Club

Training and upcoming trip to Castlegregory Co. Kerry. The Surf club has officially resumed Pilates on Mondays at 9pm, taught by Jason Walshe at the Arena. Afterwards we have a pool session to teach beginner surfers proper paddle technique (and have some fun!) The UL Surf club is also planning a surf trip to Castlegregory on Saturday 1st of March (week 5 weekend). All members of the surf club are welcome to join us for some craic, a few surf sessions (beginners welcome!) and also the chance to visit a beautiful part of the country.

UL Poker Society

UL Poker Society is back in full swing this semester with our weekly tournament at the Sports Bar at 6.15 on Wednesday nights. The best way to keep up with all the action is to join our Facebook page UL Poker.

Krav Maga

The training venue is a PESS building (Old Sports Building), on UL Campus. Everyone is invited for a 1st trial training. Training Times: Mondays 8:15pm - 10:00pm Wednesdays: 7:00pm - 9:00pm Please join us at: <https://www.facebook.com/ul.k.maga> Or email us at: ulkravmaga@gmail.com

Outdoor Pursuits Club

Climbing Wall open this week. Monday, Tuesday, Thursday 1900-2200 Club Run this Wednesday 1800 Meet at Climbing Wall Caving enquiries, contact cavingopc@gmail.com Sign up for beginner orienteers at climbing wall. Website: www.ulopc.ie Facebook: www.facebook.com/ULOPC

ULKC

Training: Pool Tuesday Wednesday Thursday 9:30pm - 10:30pm Social: Meet up every Tuesday at scholars before pool - 8:30 pm Events Kayaking Intervarsities - 21st to 23rd February Club trip to Bandon Co. Cork - St. Patrick's Weekend

UL Ninjas

Ladies Training - Tuesday 18:00-20:00 Hockey Astro Beginner Training - Wednesday 20:00-22:00 Hockey Astro 22/23rd February - Mixed Outdoor IV's - UCC 1/2nd March - The Siege of Limerick - UL North Campus 22nd March - Women's IV's - Trinity College 22nd March - Developmental IV's - Trinity College Contact us at ultimatefrisbee@gmail.com



UL TRAMPOLINE & GYMNASTICS CLUB

Semester 2 Training
Starting week 3 in PESS
Tues: 7:00 - 10:00pm
Thurs: 7:00 - 8:30pm

INTERNATIONAL SOCIETY

TIME is flying! It's already week 4 so here's an update on what the International Society has been up to recently. Our most recent trip to Cork attracted a huge number of students ready to discover Blarney Castle and kiss the Blarney stone. After some time in Cork city, the trip ended very late in the evening when the bus came back to Limerick, filled with wonderful memories from the day.

As most of you already know, last week we held our annual event called International Week. It is a week dedicated to celebrating the diversity and all of the cultures that we are lucky to have here in UL. On Monday, we turned a lecture hall into a movie theatre and screened the must-watch film for all Erasmus and study abroad students: Pot Luck, also known by some as l'Auberge Espagnole. Many people have suffered following the flooding in the Limerick area, therefore this year; the money raised at the pub quiz in the Pavilion on Tuesday was donated to those close to us who need it most.

The weather did not spare us on Wednesday night and it thwarted our plans for the best and the biggest day of International Week which is the International Food Fair. Unfortunately it's not possible to describe how great it was but we can always imagine how great it would have been had the weather been a little bit more generous.

The Food Fair is an opportunity for all the students to try dishes from many different countries, all for free! The food is made by members of the International Society and everybody's welcome to participate. Let's move on before you get too hungry... Thankfully, all of our other events went ahead according to the plan. On Thursday, we held an International Dance workshop, with Ethiopian, Cuban and Brazilian rhythms. There's nothing better to finish off a week than a TGIF Party in The Stables. Friday nights with the International Society have by now become a tradition, for Irish as well as International students. Weekend trips are also an intrinsic part of the International Society's agenda. On Saturday we set off on a journey to Killarney and the ring of Kerry, you can find more information about it in the issues to come! Don't forget to like us on Facebook and follow us on Twitter, you wouldn't like to miss out on any of our events!

Monika Gaciarz,
International Society PRO officer

Puppies, chocolate and Mental Health Awareness

David Tierney,
Public Relations Officer

THE Psychology Society has had adorable puppies visit UL to promote happiness and we plan on bringing them again during study week. We've had a happiness boosting talk and free chocolate and bananas to chemically boost people's moods. Look forward to a lot more chocolate because we have a fondue set. We showed people cartoons to promote nostalgia and general happiness. Our Psychology ball went magnificently. The food was gorgeous and everyone was stunning in their finery. Massive thanks must go to the Lobster Johnson band, DJ and pianist for their amazing

performances.

We've BIG plans this semester so look forward to posters advertising events. We're working with Literary Society and drama groups to create mental health performances. We plan to help out 'Acquired Brain Injury (ABI) Ireland' for brain awareness week. There's now an 'Interactive Research Discussion' group starting up for students. This involves picking and discussing unusual but fun or useful research paper each month (and these events will have chocolate and bananas because your mental health is important to us). For example, some psychology papers we're thinking of discussing are about dead fish and brain scanning or what

creativity has to do with Lady Gaga and Van Gogh's ear. It's fun and participating looks great on your CV. Email us for more info: psychsocul@gmail.com or check out our Facebook page: <http://tinyurl.com/p38d2k5>

What I really love about the society is that we help each other out. If anyone ever has a query, or needs help recruiting participants, people can ask on Facebook page and someone nearly always comes to the rescue. Of course, the Psychology Society is for everyone, not just Psychology students. There's always a really friendly atmosphere so everyone is always welcome to join the fun.

Going downhill fast

LOOKING back after an excellent trip to the new Downhill trails at Rostrevor over the Christmas break, it's been an action packed first half to the year for MBUL.

The semester's first dose of the adrenalin-fuelled weekend excitement was hosted once again by the Cooley and Mourne Mountains back in October. The large variation in trail types there meant there really was something for everyone to get stuck into. We loaded the bikes and gear into the Sprinter and left UL late on Friday afternoon and travelled straight on to Carlingford.

Saturday morning dawned fresh and crisp; the van was reloaded with the bikes and gear and we set off to the first trails. We drove 14km west of Carlingford to the broadcast masts atop Black Mountain, approximately 440 metres above sea level. From here we began the days spin, with the route returning to Carlingford by traversing across the Cooleys.

There were plenty of heart pumping descents mixed with lung emptying climbs over technical single track, mountain top trails and even the occasional bog and stream. The final glorious sweeping descent that brought the group back into Carlingford town was played out in a fox hunt style, with the hunter (Daniel Kedney) starting last and catching everyone on the way down. With 28km

covered on the bikes and 850 metres of climbing beneath us, some well-earned spaghetti Bolognese was the order of the evening.

On Sunday morning we drove to Castlewellan, north of the Mourne. The trail centre there offered us a wide variety of rocky delights with numerous drop-offs and jumps to shred into. The slightly shorter spin was concluded with a session on the superb purpose built pump track of the trail centre.

Thankfully, the weather remained remarkably dry and pleasant for the entire weekend. We arrived back in UL on Sunday evening tired, but the smiles all round were a good mark of the overwhelming success of the weekend on the trails. Our following trip to the Wicklow Mountains and the steep technical and flowing descents of Djouce and Balinastoe was such good fun that we'll be returning there this semester in mid-March!

We also have a number of Uplift days planned for this semester where we'll be working on improving our Downhill skills in advance of our summer training trip to Les Gets in the French Alps!

To join in the fun, head on over to our forum at mbul.skynet.ie and check out the "Cycles" board for the latest info on our activities.

UL POKER

UL Poker Society is back in full swing this semester with our weekly tournament at the Sports Bar at 6.15 on Wednesday nights. The best way to keep up with all the action is to join our Facebook page "UL Poker".

This year the College Union of Poker Societies is organising the Irish Student Open in association with D4 Events and LS Events powered by BoylePoker. This amazing event will take place in the Regency Hotel Dublin on the Sunday the 16th March. A massive 150 students are expected to attend the event and with BoylePoker adding 4 IPO Killarney tickets (worth €230 a piece) to the prize pool who wouldn't? The tournament is a €60 freezeout, but don't worry you could qualify on BoylePoker for as little as €10! Or finish in the top 2 of any of UL Poker Society's weekly games and you'll play the ISO for FREE. There will be side events on the day for those not so fortunate in the main event. The society will be organising transport and accommodation for a reasonable price for all interested members. If you're interested talk to us on Wednesday night or follow our Facebook for more details.

Aidan Quinlan, PRO UL Poker Society.



UL NINJAS

THE UL Ninjas travelled down to Mixed Indoor Intervarsities, which were held in the Mardyke Arena, in Cork on the 18th of January. UL 1 and UL 2 were in separate groups, and with our first team expected to be in contention at the end of the day, expectations were high.

UL1 started their campaign against an experienced Trinity outfit, and with UL having defeated them in both the Open and Ladies Divisions at their respective Indoor competitions, they started as favourites. However, the team's lack of match practise showed, and it took a score in the last 10 seconds to tie the game at 8-8.

Their second game against DIT was a much more one sided contest. Knowing that they needed to rack up a big score, UL played clinical and quick offense, resulting in 12-3 victory. Their final game in the group was against an inexperienced UCC3 side, whom they overcame with a relatively easy 14-2 win.

UL2 started their campaign against the very experienced Pickup team. Despite the Pickup team's ineligibility, they showed no signs of laziness, forcing UL2 to grind out an 8-6 victory. A tight game against UCC2 followed, with both teams trading points all the way. Despite the evenness of the game, UCC2 ran out 10-6 winners, meaning that UL2 had to defeat UCC1 to stand a chance of getting into the semi finals. A tired and injury hit UL 2 fell to a 14-3 loss to a powerful UCC1 team, a result which did not flatter the very strong UCC team.

UL1 therefore progressed to the semi finals to play UCC1, whereas UL 2 dropped into the plate bracket and faced UCC 3. UL1 versus UCC1 was a tight game the whole way. Both teams were playing fast offence and tight, intense defence, forcing each other to throw the disc away. A small break away from UCC near the end of the game resulted in a 12-9 loss for UL, and they would face off against UCC2 in the 3rd/4th place playoff. UL2 meanwhile defeated UCC3 11-4 to progress to the plate final where they would face off against DIT.

Playing their fifth games of the day, both of the UL teams were starting to suffer from fatigue and injuries. Despite this, UL1 comfortably defeated UCC2 to secure 3rd place, while UL2 claimed the plate by defeating DIT.

Congratulations and thanks to UCC who not only hosted the tournament, but also emerged victorious. Hopefully we get our revenge at Mixed Outdoor IVs.

An evening with Father Purcell

ON 4 February, the Fan Forum Society kicked off the new semester with our SoUL Week event, and perhaps our most exciting to date - a group interview and Q&A session with acclaimed actor Ben Keaton, best known as the oblivious Father Austin Purcell in our favourite sitcom, *Father Ted*.

A major setback occurred when our other guest, Rynagh O'Grady (who played Mary O'Leary in the show) pulled out at the last minute because of illness; however, any concerns were quickly assuaged when Ben took the floor in EGO-10. After getting into the spirit of things with an impromptu performance of "My Lovely Horse" and a competition to see who could perform the best Father Ted character impersonations, we got down to business.

As it turns out, Ben originally auditioned for the role of Father Liam Finnegan, the dancing priest. The writers, impressed by his knack for comedy, instead asked him to read for the role of Father Purcell, the interminably self-absorbed priest who talks to walls. Ben's first reading was more droning, so he was asked to speed up his voice for pacing reasons, but aside from this he largely found his own take on the character. The actor thinks the funniest aspect of Purcell is his constant stare into the void, and

failure to make eye contact with his victims - Purcell thinks his rambling stories of boilers and envelopes are so fascinating that nothing but his own voice seems to register for him. While Ben adhered strictly to the written dialogue, he also got a chance to show off his improvisation skills for the unscripted, fourth wall-breaking credits scene, where the audience is drawn even deeper into Purcell's psychosis.

Remembering Ben for his Father Ted character, many of our attendees were surprised at the richness of his career, both onscreen and off. An accomplished improvisational comedian, Ben won the prestigious Perrier Comedy Award in 1986. He had a stint on *Emmerdale*, and played a lead role in *Casualty* for three years, but remarked that these larger parts are all but forgotten - when he gets recognised, it's almost always for Purcell, even though it's been nearly two decades since he played the role.

Strangest of all, he also wrote an episode of *Balamory*, allowing us to ask him that perennial question: "What is the story in *Balamory*?" When we inquired if he had a dream role, he surprised us by saying that he'd already achieved his greatest acting goal - portraying Cyrano de Bergerac at the Royal Exchange Theatre in Manchester, 2006.

Most recently, he played a corrupt, libidinous priest in the hilariously terrible horror film *Love Bite* - its Father Purcell gone wrong.

Nowadays Ben teaches secondary students the basics of acting and filmmaking at the Lincoln Film and Television School, which he also founded.

The weather meant we couldn't use the Stables courtyard as originally planned, but this turned out to be a blessing in disguise - EGO-10 was a much calmer and more intimate venue, allowing for a relaxed and conversation back-and-forth between Ben and the audience. Towards the end of the interview, Ben even started to ask the crowd questions, eager to understand the monolithic cultural significance Father Ted had on our generation, who were lucky enough to grow up with it.

He also treated us to a reading of two of Purcell's monologues, a brief recording of which can be seen on the SoUL Week Facebook page. The interview lasted well over two hours, after which we took Ben to Scholars for a few pints, now with a surprisingly deep appreciation for a minor Father Ted character.

The night was a tremendous success, and we look forward to organising similar events in the future.

Gerard O'Mahony, PRO

Get your stuff performed and creative writing competition

David Tierney,
Public Relations Officer

LITERARY Society is flourishing as always. We've had guest speakers, Harry Potter Table Quiz, book shopping, Dublin Book Festival trips, lock-in gaming nights and the usual weekly events. For creative writing night we've had Voodoo fairy tales, unorthodox relationships, dream-goblins and more.

People are welcome to come any time between 6

and 9pm every Thursday in Room 2 in the Student Union. I always make sure to bring chocolate and sweets so make sure to check it out. This semester we have a creative writing competition so get your poems and short stories ready. We're also working the Psychology Society on a wonderful project. Some of our creative writing prompts will be mental health related information provided by the Psychology Society. We can use these

to create performance pieces that will be performed by drama groups (hopefully internationally). Not only will we get to see our creations come to life but we'll be helping to spread awareness about important issues.

Book Banter night is still going strong. We pick various topics (e.g. 'Books that influenced you' or 'Fantastic Plot Twists'). It's on every Wednesday at 7pm in SG18 (Schumann building). Afterwards we

head out to the White House poetry pub in town for free finger food and poetry. The society pays for a taxi back home because we care. If anyone wants to contact us, or isn't getting emails, make sure to let us know through our Facebook Page: <http://tinyurl.com/pwltwo9> or email us at ullitsoc@hotmail.com

We're a friendly bunch and the society is open to anyone so make sure to check us out.

OPC Kilimanjaro-Elbrus Expedition 2014

Keith Young

THE University of Limerick Outdoor Pursuits Club is proud to announce its forthcoming expedition for the summer of 2014. Eight members will be attempting to climb two of the seven summits (highest mountains on each continent) over a three week long expedition. This will see the team first travel to Tanzania in Africa to climb Mount Kilimanjaro, standing at 5895m. They will then immediately travel to the Caucasus region of the Russian Federation to climb Mount Elbrus, standing at 5642m which is taken as Europe's highest mountain.

The OPC, running its five separate activities (rock climbing, orienteering, caving, hiking and mountain climbing) always seeks develop its

members skills so that expeditions such as this can be undertaken. The clubs ambitions to climb the seven summits began in 2003 when a small team from the club travelled to Argentina and climbed Aconcagua. Standing at 6960m it is the highest mountain in South America.

Climbing Kilimanjaro will involve a 9 day trek with a local guide from Tanzania. No groups are allowed to climb the mountain without the assistance of a qualified guide and as such the team will be taking this as a preparation climb before they climb Mount Elbrus in Russia.

Climbing at these altitudes becomes difficult and dangerous due to the lower concentration of oxygen in the air, which can result in what is commonly known as altitude sickness. Climbing Kilimanjaro with the



assistance of a guide will allow the team to experience their own reactions to altitude in a more controlled environment prior to climbing Mount Elbrus independently. Elbrus itself will present its own unique challenges. While it sits at a lower altitude it can experience temperatures as low as -25

degrees Celsius on the summit and involves careful navigation to avoid crevasses on the climb up the mountain.

As such the team chosen will be undergoing constant training in the lead up to the expedition to ensure that they are at their peak in physical fitness and technical skill.

The team itself is made up of members with up to 7 years experience in the club - Tomás Breathnach, Fearghal Fitzgibbon, Davis Gould-Duff, Conor McCarthy, Conor McNelis, David O'Connell, Oragh Scanlon and Keith Young.

The committee and team would like to thank Ulster Bank for the support received thus far through the Enablement Fund, without which none of this would be possible.

However the club still needs to continue with its fundraising

efforts and over the course of the next few months the club will be holding a variety of fundraising events to help towards the costs of the expedition. So if you see anything advertised or happening that takes your interest feel free to pop along and help support the team.

For anyone who feels this type of adventure may appeal to them, the club is constantly taking in new members.

With trips almost every weekend, a climbing wall on campus and four international trips a year, ranging from caving, to rock climbing to mountain climbing, if you feel the need for adventure, this club really is for you. You can visit the UL Wolves Clubs & Societies website to find out more information about the club and to make contact.

Getting wet in Wales

THE 2014 second semester got off to an early and exciting start for the University of Limerick Kayak Club with our annual trip to Wales taking place. On Friday the 17th of January Members departed on the ferry with a van full of kayaks to experience the white-water and adventure that the Welsh landscape had to offer.

The group arrived into the fabled "Jesse James Bunkhouse" (referred to as "The Crunkhouse" for the remainder of the trip) early on Friday afternoon. Lack of daylight meant they had to wait until Saturday to get on the water. So what better way to spend the evening, than to sit around a fire and tell embarrassing stories. From kicking nuns because they robbed your crayons, to throwing scissors at school teachers, it seems the members of ULKC have had all too many run ins with those in authority...

For the first time in years we were blessed with good water levels and a whole range of different difficulties of rivers that suited every standard of paddler. We paddled the usual runs such as the Dee and Tryweryn but the purchase of a map and a river guidebook resulted in us finding some real gems such as the Ceirw, Llugwy and the highlight of the trip, Aberglasyn Gorge. We tried our best to make the most of every day. This meant leaving the bunkhouse some days even before sunrise in order to run 2 rivers in the same day and staying up until all hours listening to guitar and harmonica sessions from our talented musicians.

The level of progression of the members' skills was immense over the trip. Safety, leadership and paddling skills improved massively over the week without having to sacrifice even an ounce of the fun that ULKC trips are famed for.

Again for the second semester we have another jam-packed schedule. Kicking off we will be preparing and training for the Kayak Inter-varsities competition taking place in Dublin. UL Kayak club will be fighting for a fifth victory in a row. The intervarsities competition pits college clubs from all over Ireland against each other in many different categories of kayaking including White-water racing, Long Distance racing, Kayak Polo and Freestyle kayaking. This is always a great weekend to meet, party and compete



with cool people from all over Ireland. During the second semester there are plenty of weekly river trips and weekends away for sea kayaking or white water.

The Alps trip is UL Kayak clubs flagship trip and it happens every summer. Just after your summer exams are over and you're looking for something to de-stress, ULKC head away for a three-week trip to Italy and Slovenia. We head way up to the beautiful Alps and take in the sweet rivers and white-water paddling that is on offer. Sunshine, cool alpine water and great

friends, what more could you want on a top class adventure. It has always been a "trip to remember" for all our members that decide to go!

If you are interested in trying any discipline of kayaking for yourself, drop down to the UL Arena Pool from 9:45pm-10:45pm on Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday; or contact us at ulkayak@gmail.com. All skill levels catered for from complete beginner to the more advanced. Membership fee for UL students is €5 and this covers use of the

equipment, insurance and most day river trips.

For more information and all our latest news please visit our website at <http://kayak.csn.ul.ie/> Or follow us on TWITTER; <https://twitter.com/ulkayak> and FACEBOOK; <https://www.facebook.com/universityoflimerickkayakclub> for all our latest updates. If you would like to contact the club please contact us at the following EMAIL; ulkayak@gmail.com

By Gavin Sheehan, Eoin Farrell and Mí cheál Howard

SPORT

Windsurfing . . . have you ever wondered?

HAVE you ever wondered what it would be like to be in the middle of a bay surrounded by some of the most amazing mountains in Ireland? Have you ever wondered how it would feel to glide across the water at a speed 30 knots (50 KPH) or more? Or have you ever wondered how you could make some of the best friends you'll ever meet? There's only one way for you to experience this. Join the UL Windsurfing Club. As a club, we give you the opportunity to try a thrilling new sport with top quality gear and professional instruction, as well as a chance to travel to the best windsurfing spots in Ireland and abroad.

The club is based in the southwest of the country, in the small, idyllic Kerry town, Castlegregory. Castlegregory is home to ex-pro windsurfer Jamie Knox who runs a watersports school and shop. Jamie, as most members will tell you, has a unique and entertaining method of teaching, and you can expect to hear him shouting "stick your bum in" down his megaphone at you while you're gliding across the crystal clear waters of Sandy Bay. There's no doubt that he'll have you ready to race in no time.

As a club we form what we like to call a family. We take any chance we can get to gather everyone together be it, family dinner night, movie night or even Pancake Tuesday! We encourage all our members to attend our fundraisers which include our infamous UV party in Costellos, our pyjama and beach parties in the Lodge or our Bar Boot Sale on campus. If we put all of



this alongside the always unforgettable weekend of fun at Intervarsities, you'll see that being a windsurfer is just as fun off the water as on.

Most of our training takes place every couple of weekends down in Castlegregory. It all starts Saturday morning when we whizz by the SU in

the UL Wolves bus, pick everyone up and venture down to Kerry. We get two solid days of windsurfing in, all to be back in Limerick Sunday evening. The trip usually costs between €25 and €35 which includes your food, accommodation, transport, gear and tuition for the weekend. The hostel we

stay in is located over Fitzmaurice's bar, so after a long day of windsurfing you can kick back and relax with a hearty dinner and a nice cold beverage.

There are two big events in our calendar every year, the first being a foreign trip in January. This winter we went to Tarifa, Spain and there's already talk of holding a second foreign trip in the summer. The foreign trip gives us the opportunity to train even when it's too cold in Ireland to hold a sail in your hands! The Irish Windsurfing Intervarsities is the other big event in our calendar, where the windsurfing clubs from all the universities in Ireland gather for one big competition. It is a weekend full of fun and you will most certainly meet some very interesting characters! This year UL are hosting the Intervarsities so we can ensure you that it will be the best one yet. (P.S. We're aiming to become champions for the sixth year in a row!).

So there's a brief summary of what life as a UL windsurfer has to offer. We welcome everyone, whether you've windsurfed before or whether you've never been in the sea before to come and join us. Our membership only costs €5 and we guarantee you'll be hooked on the sport on your first try. You won't find a better chance to learn how to windsurf anywhere else in the world. You can contact us on Facebook if you type ULWC into the search bar, by email at: ulwc.committee@gmail.com, or you can get our committee's contact details on the touch screens in the Students Union.

UL Krav Maga

KRAV Maga derived from a Hebrew word for contact combat and it is a self-defense system developed by Imi Lichtenfeld for the Israeli army and later adapted within the wide public. Recently all the members of IDF (Israeli Defense Forces) are trained in Krav Maga.

Encompassing the most effective elements from various martial arts and with a strong emphasis on natural body movements, Krav Maga is suitable for both genders and all levels of fitness and ability. Krav Maga training addresses the need for one to be able to defend from both a standing attack and a ground attack, taking into account use of weapons and multiple attackers.

UL Krav Maga is now running for the sixth year since its founding in 2008 by Darren Simring, who has recently become one of the co-trainers. The club is always growing in its

popularity, not only within students from UL and other Universities, but also wide public from Limerick city. The club has approximately fifty active members. Our aim as a club is for each person to enjoy the trainings, learn new ways of how to defend themselves and their loved ones and to give them confidence never experienced before. One will improve their cardio, flexibility and strength.

The UL KM club has organised its first Regional Grading in November 2013. Grading was conducted by Eddie Gavin, an Expert level Krav Maga Instructor from Dublin.

Also Eddie is a Director of IKMF (International Krav Maga Federation) in Ireland, and we as affiliates of IKMF, were proud to have him down in Limerick grading all of the club members. All of the IKMF clubs and affiliates in Munster region such as UL Krav Maga Club, Response

KM and Krav Maga Cork were attending the grading. We accommodated more than 40 students grading that day with a 100% pass grade, which means the high standard of preparation from all the above mentioned clubs, since each grading is taken very seriously.

We are preparing another regional grading in UL for March 2014 which will be joined with a seminar with a high ranked Krav Maga representative from Israel. This will be a memorable event, such as every big event attended by an Instructor from Israel.

Another event we would like to organize is a Women's Self Defence Seminar, which will be focused on the ladies defence techniques and awareness.

We will specify the dates later on during the semester and will be posting all the news on our Facebook page.





UL Ladies Rugby looking to defend All-Ireland league and intervarsity titles

Mollie O'Donnell
PRO for UL Ladies Rugby

ON behalf of UL Ladies Rugby I would like to welcome our new head coach, Mike McCarthy and also wish Gillian Bourke, our departing coach, the best of luck in her future endeavours and many thanks for her years of hard work and dedication with the club.

Gill will be taking to the field this weekend, representing the Irish Women's Rugby team who play England in Twickenham as part of their Six Nations campaign. The introduction of a new coach for ULLR accurately reflects the transition phase that the club is presently experiencing. Over ten of our first-team players graduated at the end of last season, leaving a large gap to be filled.

Successful recruitment early in semester one saw many new girls joining the club and getting their first taste of ladies' rugby. The first semester is usually quieter than the spring semester for ULLR. We participated in a ten-a-side blitz at Cork Institute of

Technology and played three league games.

The blitz in CIT was a great opportunity for our new players to get a taste of the action. Even with large squad rotation UL finished top of the table on the day, only losing one game. The early league games proved testing for our young squad but there has been huge improvements made over the course of the semester.

First up was an away game to Carlow IT. It was a close game, evenly contested by both teams. Unfortunately an intercept try for the home side, late in the second half, proved to be the difference between the two sides.

Next up was NUI Galway at home, a huge game for ULLR considering the last encounter between the two sides was last year's scintillating league final, where UL just edged out the victory. Great attacking play and determination from the home team saw UL defend their unbeaten home record.

The last outing of the semester was away to UCC, a team also experiencing a transition phase. A wobbly first half performance from UL meant the score was too close

for comfort at half-time. However a solid second-half performance allowed UL to pull away and clinch an important bonus point, setting the stage for the second semester.

The second semester is usually seen as the business end of the season, when the league final and intervarsities are contested. ULLR will be defending both titles and are back training as hard as ever ready for the tough season ahead.

The first game of the semester was home to Carlow IT. It was a tough encounter for both teams but UL prevailed, finishing with a 22-14 victory. Next on the agenda is a home league game against UCC, which will take place at 5pm on the 4G pitches in UL. All support would be greatly appreciated!

ULLR are always looking for new members; prior experience is not necessary! If you are interested please email ulwolves@gmail.com or message our Facebook page "UL Ladies Rugby".

We train on Mondays and Thursdays from 6-7pm on the north campus 4G pitch.

THE ROAD TO CHELTENHAM BEGINS RIGHT HERE AT THE UNIVERSITY . . .

THIS February will see the Irish horse racing fraternity converge in Limerick where the UL Horse Racing Society will host the second annual Cheltenham Preview Night on Thursday 27th. The event will be held at the Strand Hotel with an 8pm start. The stellar panel consists of jockeys Patrick Mullins and Bryan Cooper, Richie McLernon, Irish Field Journalist Kevin Blake and MC Kevin O'Ryan from At the Races.

The event which is the highlight of the society's calendar was well attended last year and is anticipated to be one of the largest Munster Cheltenham Preview Nights of 2014. The well-chosen panel will give their expert analysis on the key Irish and English contenders and will provide some useful insights. After conquering Prestbury Park last year and recently being named Giggenstown's retained rider, panelist Bryan Cooper is set to be especially popular amongst the punters. Likewise, Patrick Mullins will provide an equally useful insight to the strong Willie Mullins contingent, the Clouten trainer bidding to retain his 2013 title of Top Festival Trainer.

Cork jockey Richie McLernon will be making the trip home across the Irish Sea to join our stellar panel, giving the inside track on the Jonjo O'Neill stable stars and his opinion on the English contenders of 2014.

Sponsors Paddy Power Bookmakers will give each panelist a €100 charity bet for a selection of their choice, with any winnings going to the society's chosen charity – the Injured Jockeys Fund. Paddy Power Bookmakers commented: "We look forward to Cheltenham the same way Santa looks

forward to Christmas – it's hard work but great fun . . . hopefully we can pick up some festival winners at the UL Racing Society Preview Night on the 27th and enjoy a good night out." Society chairperson Niamh McNamara added: "Last year was a great success with over 200 attending on the night. We have a great panel lined up this year, so we're really looking forward to it".

This year has been particularly busy for the up and coming society, who was involved in the Charity Fundraising for Limerick jockey JT McNamara, attending the race day and the gala ball. A corporate box set the scene at the Munster National, where society members availed of a complimentary lunch and a meet and greet with National Hunt Ambassador Davy Russell. A virtual race-night and social in the stables club at the end of November wrapped up a busy semester, with special guests jockey Danny Mullins and MC Ger Hannon overseeing proceedings, although it was Cheltenham winning jockey Adrian Heskin, who took home the big prize on the night.

Tickets for the Cheltenham preview night are priced at €15 and include a €5 free bet, wine reception, a copy of the Racing Post and Free into Limerick races on St Patrick's weekend. A student discount is available and tickets will be on sale before the event or by contacting any committee member.

Contact Niamh McNamara chairperson, tel: 0863985475 Email: niamh.mcnamara@limerickraces.ie or Sharon Burke, secretary on tel: 0863210037. Ticket will also be on sale on the Limerick Racecourse website www.limerickraces.ie



5 big . . . 5 small

with Professor Don Barry
University of Limerick President

Mark Nother

WELCOME TO the new and, hopefully improved, An Focal. This interview with Prof. Don Barry kicks off our new interview series with a well-known personality connected to the University. The premise is simple; we have a short interview during which we ask five 'big' serious questions, and five 'small' casual questions. Enjoy!

1. An issue that arises every year is the library. Where do we currently stand now that U.L. has possession of both the building plans and the European Investment Bank loan?

Well where we stand at the minute is we are awaiting a government decision to release the €20 million that they have committed to the building of the library. The advantage of the EIB loan is that the government could release that money over a period of time rather than all at once. But it's important to emphasise that the EIB capital is a loan and at the moment we have no way off paying back the capital of €20million that we would have to borrow to make the library happen. So until such time that the government makes a move on that we are stuck and it's creating a lot of problems within the university that we are communicating to government and if the time scale of this is not improved upon we will have to continue looking at ways to provide, in particular, study space that fits the students needs.

2. The biggest issue for students is fees. Do you see an alternative to current proposals? That is, but not exclusively, the introduction of half/full fees or the establishment of a government backed student loan system like that in place in the U.K.

I think that this is an extraordinary problem in the sense that high quality third level education costs money. The dilemma we face in Ireland is the taxpayer can't afford it, the students can't afford it and the parents of the students can't afford it. As such the whole country is struggling to find a way to continue supplying the high quality of third level education that still exists. So in an ideal world I think that third level education should be treated in such a way that secondary and primary education is, that is to say it is paid for by the tax payer. In the current situation I think that fees exist. The student contribution is a fee, it's going to go to €3,000 a year and that's a fee in terms of the pressure it puts on students and I think that some sort of a balance is going to have to be found in the contribution that the tax payer makes for



education and the contribution that the user, that is the students, have to pay for the education they receive, and that's a very difficult balancing act. I think there is merit in the government exploring a government backed loan scheme for students. That's not an ideal situation as students will then graduate with an outstanding loan that they would have to pay back over their working career. So I think this is a very complex situation and I unfortunately don't have any silver bullet to fix the state of the country.

3. What was your dream and vision for U.L. when you first started and how have the recession and subsequent cutbacks hampered that vision?

Well I think my original vision doesn't differ very much from what became my first strategic plan for the university. So I spent a lot of time in my first couple of years talking about the importance of the university delivering a high quality student experience. As such that ended up featuring as the first goal of our strategic plan. I also was committed to trying to improve the research performance of the

university and continuing the university's contribution to the local region. I also had a particular interest in advancing the university's international reputation across teaching, research and contribution.

The recession has, naturally enough hampered all of those, in the sense that less money is available to spend than we first thought we'd have when I first started out as President. I think that the thing known as the Bernal project has gone some way towards helping us to make progress on the research front by virtue of the investment of Atlantic Philanthropies in making that happen. But I think that if we had had more money we would have done a lot more about enhancing the student experience. And I think that I meet class council each year, and each year I ask how have the cut backs impacted your life as a student so I know the difference the cutbacks have made in terms of student facilities such as the library and other student services, tutorial sizes in particular, and the general falling below the standards that the

university would aspire to in the delivery of those services to students. I regret that but I think it's important for everyone in the institution to acknowledge that the funding from government has declined progressively since I became President and that we are statutorily bound not to run a deficit. I sometimes feel as though the Celtic Tiger died the day I became President and it's been trying to balance the books along with other strategic priorities that has been a major challenge for me and the entire campus community to put up with it.

That would be your biggest challenge you might say since you took office?

Oh, absolutely, my biggest challenge, I didn't expect that I would be spending as much time trying to balance budgets as I have done and trying to make decisions about which aspect of the student experience would have to suffer in order for us to balance our books. I think and I've said this at the student council that I think we've done our level best to maintain the quality of the student experience but it has suffered in ways that the students at the council have indicated to me and naturally I take no joy in that and regret it and we continue to minimise ways that this affects the most important people in the university and that is the students.

4. There are roughly one hundred Higher Education employees in Ireland earning €200,000+ a year. Considering the current government stance that the state cannot continue to fund higher education at current levels, do you believe it's fair on students to have to pay fees when there are staffs earning these types of salaries?

That's a pretty hard question to answer. Well the first thing I want to say is that the only employees of the University of Limerick earning over €200,000 a year are joint appointments with the H.S.E. and are consultants in the local health service and nobody else in the University of Limerick is paid more than €200,000. I think that one of the things I have been following with interest around medical consultancy is the change in pay structure around health consultants and that the HSE are unable to fill many of the consultant posts that are currently vacant and that is something we really need to think about. And this isn't a very popular thing to say I suppose. The easy thing to say is we should cut these salaries so the students don't have to pay fees but at the same time we need to try and attract the best people into our health service and what always amazes me is people don't complain about the salaries paid to the likes of Wayne Rooney or Robin van Persie because they know if you want the best people you have to compete in terms of salary. And unfortunately the same must be said for the positions in the University of Limerick that if we want the best