

An Focal

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Charity begins at UL

Aoife Breen
Editor

COINCIDING with the announcement of this year's line-up for Rag Week, the Welfare Working Group revealed two of the four charities who will benefit from this year's collection. While top Irish acts the Young Wolfe Tones and the Blizzards are headlining the week, Milford Hospice & Care Centre and St Gabriel's School & Centre have been the first charities to be named. All money raised during the week will be donated to the four charities selected. The working group will choose the other two in the coming weeks. Fundraising events will include bag-packing, a flag day and golf classic as well as bucket collections during the week itself. Cork group FRED and a Christy Moore tribute will kick off Rag Week '09 on Monday, 30 March in the Stables followed by 1990's DJ SASH! in the Trinity Rooms in Limerick city.

On Tuesday night Hells Bells AC/DC tribute will play in the Stables with the Young Wolfe Tones making their appearance on Wednesday night. On Thursday night, the Rag Ball will take place in the SU courtyard and will be headlined by the Blizzards. Support acts will be named in the coming weeks as they

are confirmed.

Tickets for all the events are going on sale at 9am on Tuesday, 10 February, week 3 from the Students' Union. There will also be a number of special 'Wonka' tickets which guarantee entry to all of the gigs during the week as well as a free Rag Week line-up t-shirt.

Keith Pigott of Eightball Promotions & Media, the SU entertainments providers, advised students that they should "forget about the recession for one week" and "come out and party for charity".

"We're going to forget about the recession; everyone needs to come out and spend for that week because it's all for charity"

Students' Union officers have reinforced the importance of the charity aspect of the week's activities and are encouraging students to get out and get involved in raising funds for the selected charities.

"I'd like to see the 'raising and giving' put back into Rag Week", said Caitriona McGrattan, SU Welfare Officer. "We're not asking anyone for anything more than their spare change, but if everyone on the campus gives that then it all adds up.

"In keeping with our efforts to create a sense of campus community, we'll be asking the staff of UL to get involved as well and encouraging

them to organise their own fundraising events. It's about reinforcing the idea that we are one campus, one community where we can all take pride in giving something back to the Limerick community. It'll be a week that we hope all staff and students can come together to have fun while raising much-needed money for very worthy causes. Maybe this year we'll finally manage to get Don Barry in the stocks – who knows! "We have bag-packing dates booked as well as a flag in advance of the week. Then during the week itself we're looking at making the most out of our river – duck races and homemade raft races are some ideas being floated at the moment.

"Then other activities include the usual suspects like waxing – so boys get the beards growing! We'll have people getting wet in the stocks and maybe even a wet t-shirt competition – not just for the girls, either!"

Fundraising events will begin in week 2 to build up the momentum before Rag Week itself. Anyone who is interested in getting involved is encouraged to email or call into Ms McGrattan in the Students' Union. Volunteers will also receive special limited-edition line-up t-shirts to mark their contribution to Rag Week '09.



Rag Week '09: refocusing on charity

Council decision makes for good reading (week)

An Focal Reporter



STUDENTS will no longer be forced to hand in coursework after week 12 following consistent lobbying from the Students' Union which has resulted in the University's Academic Council deciding on a policy of 'good practice' relating to the submission of coursework.

At its meeting on 10 December, Academic Council accepted the policy which stated that deadlines should not be set for after week 12 in modules that have end-of-semester exams.

Although policy was accepted as 'good practice' and is non-binding, it is expected that the majority of lecturers will abide by its guidelines

as they do the other ordinances passed by the Council.

Student representatives have campaigned for this following repeated complaints from students that their exam results had suffered as a result of late submission dates for coursework running into the week 13 reading week. Some students had even complained of deadlines during exam weeks.

SU Education Officer Eamonn Gardiner said, "This decision reached recently by the University's Academic Council will go a long way towards safeguarding the ability of students to be able to concentrate on studying for their exams and not

be forced to complete academic coursework."

He praised the decision saying, "that this is a positive indication from Academic Council regarding the University's new policies of enhancing the student experience and its effects will no doubt be felt in a positive manner as the semester goes on."

He advised students that lecturers and classes will still be able to come to their own arrangements regarding submission dates should they choose to do so and the policy applies only where there is also an end-of-semester exam.

An Focal Digest

In Brief

In a Class of their Own

Eamonn Gardiner

Class Reps are quite simply the backbone of the Students' Union. No word of a lie or an exaggeration. Without class reps not one UL student would have a representative voice when it comes to matters which concern their classes. As Education Officer I do have individual students coming to me with their individual academic problems. However it is from Class Reps that I draw the majority of my workload.

So why would anyone want to be a rep? Well it's the kind of job that appeals to people who see all this crap getting in the way of their classes getting a fair run at Education and want to try and change it. It's very easy to talk the talk and say that 'oh I wish we had more time between those essays', or 'why can't she slow down when she's lecturing, or at least leave the slides up for longer.' It takes a person who truly wants change to make it happen by approaching the lecturer and asking for a class extension on an essay, or for them to slow down in lectures or make the lecture slides available online.

These are pretty small things from a lecturer's point of view, but for a class they could mean the difference between passing and failing. For those in the class having difficulties with a subject they could mean the difference between staying in college and having to drop out.

Think about that the next time you have a go at Class Reps.

Anyone who is interested in a challenge, interested in actually making a real difference, interested in making change happen not just talk endlessly about it should get in touch with me over the next semester.

As I look at our fine University, with its great campuses and even better teachers and administrators, I can still see room for improvement for students in certain areas. Class Reps, operating at the coalface of these problems, see these areas everyday. Classes without representation see these issues and feel their education in UL suffer every week. But there is a way out. Elect a Class Rep, complain and raise the issue. Make Real Change Happen: Become a Class Rep.

Class Rep Nomination Forms can be collected from ULSU Main Reception or the Education Officer. For further information call or text (086) 0435302 or email eamonn.gardiner@ul.ie

20 years of UL

THERE are few students around campus now who will remember the announcement on 12 January 1989 by the then Minister for Education, Mary O'Rourke, that full university status was to be granted to the National Institutes of Higher Education at Limerick and Dublin but twenty years on and UL is thriving

On 12 January 1989 then Minister for Education Mary O'Rourke announced the decision to grant full university status to the National Institutes of Higher Education at Limerick and Dublin. The University of Limerick Act, passed in June 1989, established UL.



On 12 January 1989 the then Minister for Education, Mary O'Rourke, announced the decision that a University was to be established at Limerick from the National Institute of Higher Education (NIHE).

In Words

In words

"You will be successful. Do not forget us. Success equals money...and we need money."

UL Chancellor Peter Malone's parting words to the graduands during their conferring ceremonies last week.

"Bubbles is the Welfare Officer. She organises SHAG week."

Community Relations Officer Paddy Rockett simplifies Cairiona's job for international students coming through the Union during their orientation.

"Well, how's it goin'?"

President Pa O'Brien's response to Minister for Health Mary Harney as she was escorted through the Main Building before her address on the role of the state in Irish healthcare in the twenty-first century.

"How about we say Obama once lived in Elm Park? That could work."

An Focal editor Aoife Breen trying to latch on to the 'Obamania' with a front page news story.

In Figures

1.6 - 2 metres

The expected rise in the sea level by the end of the century given the latest news that Antarctica is, in fact, warming and not cooling as previously thought.

20

How old the University is this year; the decision to create a University from the NIHE at Limerick was made on 12 January 1989 and the Act established it in June of that year.

279

The number of road deaths in Ireland in 2008.

1274

The number of graduates who received their awards during the Winter Conferring Ceremonies last week.

2012

The year we're all going to just be blasted into oblivion; apparently the Apocalypse is happening in three years' time.

15,100

The amount raised during last semester's Christmas Days festivities.



20 years of UL: UL's inauguration in 1989

Quiet protest at Harney lecture



A SMALL gathering of students and SU officers engaged in a silent protest against the reintroduction of third level tuition fees on Thursday, 22 January when Minister for Health Mary Harney appeared on campus to give a lecture on the “The Role of the State in Healthcare in 21st Century Ireland” in the University Concert Hall.

Headed by a placard declaring that the reintroduction of fees would be an “unhealthy move” by the government, the students and representatives stood in the EM

corridor near the tunnel from the Main Building to the Foundation Building to meet the Minister as she was chaperoned from a reception in Plassey House.

SU President Pa O’Brien requested to speak with the Minister on the matter to present students’ concerns but was denied the opportunity by security personnel who advised him to “send an email” to her instead.

Ms Harney acknowledged the group as she passed but did not stop to discuss the issue.

Ms Harney was escorted around

campus by a number of Gardaí amidst a heightened security presence for the Minister’s visit in expectation of large-scale protests. There was limited access to the Foundation Building except for those with tickets for the lecture.

The Minister was on campus to give the inaugural lecture of the Graduate Medical School public lecture series. She saluted the University for its successful tender for the Graduate Medical School and congratulated it for its approach to teaching.

Break-ins dampen students’ return

SOME students came back to a less than welcome homecoming after the Christmas holidays with the Students’ Union becoming aware of a number of break-ins to student residences over the period.

SU officers have been made aware of a number of burglaries in the Briarfield area as well as at least one in Oaklawns.

A Garda spokesperson commented that student areas are often seen as “easy targets” as they are known to be vacated during the holiday period.

The Students’ Union has reminded students to remain vigilant and alerted them to the responsibility of ensuring that their homes are secure, particularly at weekends when many students travel home and houses are vacant.

In addition, the SU will be rolling out a weeklong safety campaign during week 2 to highlight the risks that students may find themselves in, either personally or their possessions.

Paddy Rockett, SU Community Relations Officer reminded students of the importance of students keeping an eye out for themselves and for each other and taking the time necessary to take precautions.

Gardaí advise students to make sure all windows and doors are locked as many incidents occur due to opportunists just opening an unlocked door or window.

The SU seriously advises any student who believes that they have been the victim of crime to contact the Gardaí as they cannot follow up on cases unless there is a report made.



Students fearing that they have been broken into should contact the Gardaí

UL “will play its part” in economy

UL “will play its part” in responding to the economic challenges that lie ahead, according to President Don Barry who spoke at the winter conferrings last week as almost 1300 students received their awards.

UL Chancellor Peter Malone and President Don Barry reiterated the importance of third level education and of UL’s commitment to enhancing that to ensure Ireland’s prosperity in years to come at the ceremonies at which 1274 students graduated, including 53 PhD graduates.

“In recent days the announcement of major redundancies in companies in the mid-west, such as Dell Computers and Kostal, represents a major blow to the city and to the region.

“It is incumbent upon us as a University to respond proactively to these testing times and to provide leadership and assistance. That is why, for some months past, we have been working to develop an integrated response in collaboration with regional and national partners.

“We have just launched a portal where individuals can seek guidance and help in finding a path to education, training and employment opportunities. And we are developing some specially-designed programmes that will help people cross the bridge from redundancy to a new future of fulfilling and productive employment,” said Professor Barry.

The Chancellor criticised Education Minister Batt O’Keeffe for not having produced the review of higher education in Ireland as was promised last August.

“At the conferring ceremonies last August I commended the review of Higher Education announced by Mr Batt O’Keeffe, TD, Minister for Education & Science. However, I am disappointed that we still have not seen the announcement of the task force for this review.

The third level sector in Ireland has consistently delivered for the Irish nation, providing a solid foundation for the ‘knowledge economy’ - a foundation that is all the more needed in these difficult times if we are to secure Ireland’s prosperity in future years.

But there is a serious funding crisis at Third Level due to under-investment in recent times and world-class teaching and research standards cannot be attained unless additional State financing is provided. I

believe the universities give an excellent return on investment to the Exchequer and I feel it is essential to undertake a speedy review of the €2 billion in annual support the Government provides so that what is a very real funding shortfall can be identified and addressed as a matter of national priority.”

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Worlds Debating Championships



The Worlds tournament, this year held in Cork between 27 December and 3 January, saw great performances from two UL teams. Adrian O'Higgins with Mairead De Faoite, and Maurice Cotter with Eamon Quinlan. The two teams finished on a combined score of 26 team points, a solid performance from two young teams which the Union hopes to build on at the European Championships in Newcastle this August. The competition was also attended by two judges

from the Union, Niamh O'Donovan and Emma Kerins.

Of all the teams that competed, only two of those breaking to the quarter-finals were Irish teams, one from Trinity College and one from UCD. In the end it was the Oxford A team who were crowned champions, when they beat off competition from another Oxford team, a team from Harvard in the US and another from Monash University in Australia. The motion up for debate in the final was on the

issue of abortion, while motions from earlier rounds dealt with such topics as private good ownership, the international criminal court and crimes against democracy, and arming Afghan militia to fight the Taliban.

It wasn't all serious debating over the week though, and a lot of fun was had at the social events that were organised for each night. There was the arrivals party, where competitors got to know each other, a games night, a comedy night, a New Year's

Eve Party and Irish night.

The tournament drew to a close with the Grand Final and Championship dinner on the 3rd of January. The final was held in Cork's prestigious City Hall, with the Championship Dinner and closing ceremony moving to the Silver Springs Moran Hotel, where a band and DJ, along with a steady supply of champagne, kept the delegates entertained until the early hours of Sunday morning!

Rag Week charities named

Caitriona McGrattan
Welfare Officer

Two of the four charities set to benefit from money raised during this year's Raising and Giving (RAG) week have been named; they are Milford Hospice and St Gabriel's school and centre. The remaining two charities will be chosen from a short listed group in the coming weeks.

Milford Hospice and Care Centre is located on our doorstep, next to the flag poles at the main entrance. The staff in Milford care for the sick and dying in several purpose built hospice units, an in-patient unit and nursing home. The centre also operates a day care service. There is no charge for patients to use any services provided by Milford Hospice and while they do receive some funding from the HSE, they rely heavily fundraising.

St Gabriel's school and centre also depends on the money raised through fundraising events as it is a part voluntary organisation. The organisation offers a range of services which help improve the lives of over 500 children and young adults with

disabilities. Most recently they invested in a hydrotherapy pool, which has special features including hoists to help lever children into the water, specially adapted changing rooms and controlled water and air temperatures. Unfortunately the pool came with quite a large price tag, leaving the organisation in over €1 million in debt.

Over 28 charities applied to be benefactors of RAG week '09. The undesirable job of whittling down this number to just four fell to the SU Sabbats and Welfare Working group. All 28 charities do worthwhile work in the community but unfortunately there is no possible way that every charity could benefit.

Fundraising for the four RAG week charities will begin in week two. We are hoping to raise in excess of €16,000 for the four charities during the weeks running up to and during RAG week itself, which is planned for week ten.

Ulsu Shop specials

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Hard Shop: Monday - Thursday 08:30 - 19:00
Friday 08:30 - 18:00
Saturday 11:00 - 17:00
Dromroe Shop: Monday - Thursday 08:30 - 19:00
Friday 08:30 - 18:00

Christmas cheer raises €15K



OVER €15,000 was collected from ticket sales and bucket collections during the annual Christmas Days festivities hosted by the Stables Club at the end of November.

Eight charities were presented with cheques ranging from €500 to €5000 by manager Declan Collins in a celebratory presentation in the Stables Club last Thursday evening.

This year's total of €15,100 was split between the Fr Gerry Daly Poor of Limerick Annual Food Appeal (€5000), Milford Hospice (€3000), St Gabriel's (€2000), Daughters of Charity (€2000), Oncology Day Ward (€1,600), SOFT Ireland (€500),

Irish Cancer Society (€500) and UL's campus charity society, UL Outreach (€500).

Representatives from each charity explained how the money would be used and were grateful for the contributions from UL.

Mr Collins paid tribute to the students of the University and acknowledged their generosity in contributing to the total sum.

"It's a credit to the students and to the Students' Union for the sum of money we collected this year during Christmas Days."

SU President Pa O'Brien remarked that it was "an honour" to be involved in the fundraising

events and to be able to contribute to "a number of worthwhile causes".

Now in its seventeenth year, the annual three-day event is an early campus celebration of the festive season with the specific aim of raising money for charity.

Mr Collins explained that the idea behind Christmas Days was the Stables' way of giving students an end-of-year Christmas party while also raising money for charity.

Despite the change in the academic calendar since 2007 which put exams before the Christmas break, the week 12 festivities still remain popular

Positive feedback on fresh approach

An Focal Reporter

A REPORT just published on this year's orientation programme has commended the University's new approach to the induction that incoming students receive when they begin their studies at UL and has hailed it as being one of the most comprehensive introductions provided nationwide.

In its concluding remarks, the report notes that, "the University of Limerick has the most comprehensive orientation week in the country and no other university puts more of an emphasis on the non-academic student experience".

Positive feedback consistently ranked between 80 and 90 per cent of the 433 respondents to an online survey conducted two weeks after the orientation programme, which marks an increase of between 10 and 15 percent across many sections on the 2007 induction.

The report, prepared by Aidan Healy, the University's 'Connect' co-ordinator and Martino Vacca, from the Admissions Office, expressed

positive feedback overall to orientation week 2008 which revamped the programme, introducing more social aspects to the process.

While the traditional formal enrolment procedures and welcome sessions took place on the first day of orientation for all students, the second day was revised to include a light-hearted 'survival guide' briefing from the Students' Union and additional social elements were also implemented including team games in the SU courtyard throughout the week as well as official orientation night-time events supported by the University.

Mr Healy commented on the importance of having a successful orientation.

"Orientation is incoming students' first impressions of the college and first impressions are really powerful. It can sometimes be the difference between a student staying on or dropping out so it's really important that the right message is put across

from the start.

"The change to college is stressful; many students are leaving home for the first time and are leaving behind their families, friends, girlfriend or boyfriend - they're leaving behind every support structure that they have so it's crucial that they can find their feet in the first few days at UL."

The new social aspect of orientation was introduced to allow for students to build relationships and to get to know classmates at the beginning "to prevent them from falling through the cracks".

"Anything we can do to make the transition to college a little easier is a good thing. Some students aren't as extroverted as others and many will only come out of themselves during their years at college."

The social side of orientation was to "introduce an element of fun".

Mr Healy said that there are plans to build on this year's programme for incoming students in 2009.

Irish roads took 279 lives in 2008. Will you help reduce that in 2009?

Wednesday, 4 February, 2009
UL Plaza
1.30pm

Limerick emergency services will re-enact a road traffic accident scene in the University Plaza before giving an address at 2pm on road safety in the Jean Monnet theatre (DG-016).

**Save even one life this year.
Save yours.**

ULSU in conjunction with Limerick emergency services, the Road Safety Authority & Limerick County Council

Lost?

Connect is a new service with one very simple aim - to put you in touch with other students who might be able to help! If you haven't figured your way around the 34 odd buildings in UL yet, or still want to learn more about college life, we can meet with you to give you your own personalised tour of campus and answer any questions. Sound good? Contact details are on the left!

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The crisis in Gaza: background and analysis

Sandra Quinn

Kate Nolan

The latest round of violence in the Occupied Palestinian Territories has brought the troubled Gaza Strip region to our attention once again. The Gaza Strip is a narrow tract of land, located on the Mediterranean coast between Egypt and Israel. Gaza is one of the most densely populated places on earth: measuring just 40 kilometres long and 10 kilometres wide, the area is home to over 1.5 million Palestinians. Since 27 December 2008, Israeli forces have been conducting an offensive against Hamas and their supporters in the region by land, sea and air; while Palestinian rockets continue to periodically hit Israel. The Gaza Strip is characterised by high levels of poverty, inequality and deprivation, with many families lacking access to basic amenities

such as running water or healthcare. After years of conflict, economic hardship and political upheaval, the current Israeli military operation will have the net result of increasing the suffering of the civilian population in Gaza. It is difficult to see how this incursion will assist Israel in the long-term, as this latest blow to an already impoverished population may only succeed in radicalising Gazans and increasing support for Hamas, who won the Palestinian legislative elections in January 2006.

Since June 2007, the Islamist militant group Hamas has controlled the Gaza Strip. They have been identified as a terrorist organisation and the Israeli policy of restricting movement to and from Gaza intensified following this development. Israel has aimed to isolate Hamas and bring an end to militant rocket fire.

After being branded a 'hostile entity', the blockade of the Strip resulted in severe shortages, virtually paralysing the economy. Fuel shortages and difficulties in distributing humanitarian supplies have had severe repercussions on the region's sewage treatment, waste collection, water supply and medical facilities. If the blockade has not resulted in a humanitarian emergency, as Israel has maintained, the current military offensive has certainly intensified pre-existing problems in Gaza.

The impact of the campaign has been disproportionate; at the time of writing, medical personnel have estimated Palestinian deaths in Gaza to be as high as 1,000, with almost a third of these casualties reported to be children. The Israeli government confirmed thirteen fatalities including 10 soldiers in the campaign and three civilians killed as a result

of rocket fire from Gaza. One of Israel's main concerns is the firing of short-range homemade rockets from inside the Strip, described by militants as their primary method of resistance. These rockets can reach nearby Israeli population centres, such as Sderot, less than a kilometre from Gaza's north-east corner. In the past, these have caused a handful of deaths, injuries and severe disruption for Israelis living within range. Israeli shelling and missile attacks, meanwhile, which Israel says are meant to stop the rocket fire, have killed large numbers of Gazans, including many civilians. Ongoing conflict came to a head when the six-month ceasefire between Hamas and Israel, brokered by Egypt, expired on 19 December 2008. This agreement was always fragile and far from perfect. Hamas alleged that Israel never fulfilled its commitment

to open border crossings; although the flow of goods and fuel into Gaza improved, it never reached levels enjoyed prior to the Hamas takeover in summer 2007. Israeli also had cause for complaint, pointing out that low, rocket and mortar fire from Gaza never ended. In the run-up to 19 December, both parties expressed interest in prolonging the ceasefire, albeit each on its own terms. For Israel, this implied a definitive and unconditional cessation of rocket fire and a halt weapons smuggling; for Hamas, it meant opening the crossings with Israel and Egypt. Israel's offensive began on December 27 - after the Palestinian movement's decision not to renew the six-month truce.

As military incursions into Gaza progress, Israel hopes to further undermine Hamas's position and reduce the rocket risk, while Hamas

aims to foster domestic and regional support. The Islamist movement hopes to reap political benefit from material losses. Well aware that it is no military match for Israel, it will seek to make gains from the seemingly disproportionate Israeli response to the situation because it is a movement based, at least in part, on an image of martyrdom and steadfastness. Israel, on the other hand, hopes to cripple Hamas, rid it of long-range capabilities and dispel any notions of a fight among equals. Urgent international action by actors regarded as trustworthy and credible by both sides is required to bring a halt to the escalating violence and stem the growing human and political costs. Crucially, all parties to the conflict must be involved in a dialogue before there can be any meaningful resolution to the crisis in Gaza.

When can we vote?

Luke Holmes

Daniel K Sullivan discusses the movement for Seanad reform to extend the voting rights for graduates outside the NUI and TCD.

Monday, 12 January, marked the twenty-year anniversary of the announcement by then minister for Education Mary O'Rourke that the NIHEs at Limerick and Dublin were to be awarded full university status. It was a time for reflection and a considerable degree of celebration. As part of that reflection a group, the Seanad Reform group, has been formed to make a final push to dispose of some unfinished business associated with the establishment of both institutions.

This year marks another anniversary: that of the 30th anniversary of a referendum to facilitate Seanad voting rights for those graduates from outside the NUI and TCD. In a collective effort to try and move this long overdue reform along, the Seanad Reform group is working to build public support for action on reform of the electoral process as it pertains to the six university seats. There are

in excess of 150,000 third level graduates without voting rights, that is more than the current electorate for TCD and the NUI combined. As the people affected are very much dispersed about the country and the globe we are seeking to use primarily virtual means to reach out and include as many as possible. To this end, a group has been formed on Facebook, which can be found by searching on Facebook for 'Seanad Reform'. There are roughly one hundred and fifty members signed up to date and this before it has gone public.

A variety of activities will take place over the course of the coming months between 12 January (our kick off date) and 3 August (when the referendum was signed into law 30 years ago). We intend to consult with the wider graduate and undergraduate bodies and to publish our own Bill - 2009 Seanad Electoral (Higher Education) Bill - to facilitate this process, drawing on the previous 1997 and 1998 Seanad Electoral (Higher Education) Bills. We are also taking advice on the suitability of a constitutional challenge on the state's failure to act on the wishes of the electorate as expressed in the

1979 referendum.

We also see using the upcoming local elections as a means to look for a commitment from councillors that they will only vote for Senators who had voted for the 2009 Seanad Electoral (Higher Education) Bill. We are not asking that they vote for particular candidates or against their part lines, but simply not for any of the current batch of Senators if the necessary legislation has not been enacted within the lifetime of the current Dail. Other significant dates for action along the way include July 5th when the referendum was held, and the day of local and European elections themselves when those who elect the rest of the elected Senators will be seeking a renewal of their own mandate.

The Alumni populations of UL and DCU, DIT, along with the rest of the IT sector, and St. Pat's and Mary Immaculate teacher training colleges, which previous had voting rights, will also be seeking to raise the matter with those members of the respective governing bodies with external influence on the body politic, expressing the desire of their Alumnus for this reform.



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20
09

Time to get over the January blues

Katie Harrington

Yes I know we're in a recession, and the economic outlook is gloomy, and the government are useless and the country is completely lacking in leadership. But look, it's not all bad. We're facing into a couple of years where if you're the sort of person that likes to focus on the negative, you'll have plenty to talk about, but if we continue to lambast the government, the bankers and the developers with the vigour we've been doing it so far, we'll have very little energy for anything else.

Not all the changes the Celtic Tiger brought about were positive ones; perhaps over the next few years we can regain a sense of what's important that was lost in the vale of commercialism. I know I'm not the only one who has issues with Christmas ads that begin in early November and the constant pressure to have the latest ipod, gadget or designer clothes. After the poverty of the 80s our parents were determined that we would have more,

and we did. But our generation quickly became accustomed to a world where post-Leaving Cert holidays, seventy euro hairstyles and cars at seventeen were the norm. Of course that's a generalisation, but as far as periods of Irish history go, we got lucky. In short, we were spoiled.

Now that the party is over we can sulk and whinge, or we can make lifestyle changes that will be easier on our pockets and might even broaden our minds. So many of life's pleasures are free; good conversation, reading, enjoying sports and leisure activities outdoors in our beautiful country and especially in the environment around UL. There are over sixty clubs and societies that preside over a plethora of activities for almost nothing; from political activism and debating to drama and television, from football and hurling to skydiving and ultimate frisbee. Catching up with friends doesn't have to cost money, a night in

watching DVD's (male readers may wish to substitute 'playing pro evo' here) is a cost effective way of having a laugh.

We must, amid the moaning and the fear, remember how fortunate we are. There may not be an abundance of jobs when we graduate, but consider the plight of our American counterparts who face a similar situation, but graduate college with literally tens of thousands of dollars worth of debts. We may have to travel abroad to find jobs, but don't most students want to travel after graduation anyway? We can look at it as opportunity if we choose to, and recognise that immigration today is an entirely different thing to what it was in the past. Mobile phones, the internet and relatively cheap flights have revolutionised the world of the expat; globetrotters can use a variety of means to keep in touch on a daily basis if that's what we want.

Another way to work through the

recession is to leave behind the moaning and remember that charity begins at home. No matter how dire your financial situation, there's somebody out there that could use your help. If you can't donate money, give up a couple of hours of your time. St. Vincent de Paul in town do a lot to help those most in need and Outreach UL relies on volunteers to help with the education of children in underprivileged area of the city. Giving something back gives a genuine sense of satisfaction but it is also so much more meaningful than simply complaining about how unfair life is.

The country will come through this crisis, be it in three or five or more years than that. Until then we have some fundamental choices to make in how we want to live out those years. We can stick with the quintessentially Irish attitude of whinging and complaining our way through it, blaming anyone but ourselves for this situation (you do

know we voted this government in twenty months ago), or we can step up, take it on the chin and accept that though our standard of living

is going to fall, we had amongst the highest to start with so we'll get over it. The glass is half full.

We may have to travel abroad to find jobs, but don't most students want to travel after graduation anyway?

Failing is not the end

Eamonn Gardiner

On January 22nd, spare a thought for those around you. Not everyone will be getting good news. Failing an exam is an easy thing to do. I've done it twice myself; ironically the first and last exams I ever sat as an Undergrad! The aim of this article is to hopefully inform you the reader of your options and then how best to proceed with matters if you get the unfortunate news.

The first thing to note is that there's no stigma attached to it; failing 1st year Maths isn't like failing Leaving Cert Maths. As students we all know that we're just one fail away from not getting a good Co-Op or not getting to graduate with our class (as happened to me) or not getting to go inter-railling or on the J1. So firstly and foremostly, if you have failed an exam, you should know that you're not the first and certainly won't be the last to do so.

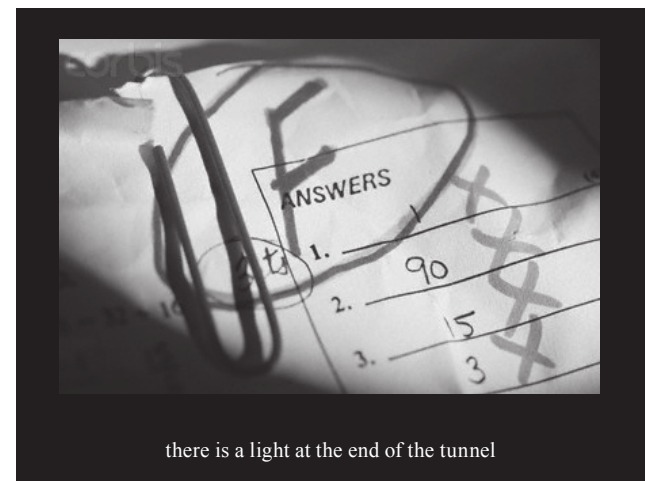
Once you've had a few minutes to get around to the idea its time to figure out what circumstances you find yourself in. What kind of fail is it? Can I carry it and continue on or do I have to repeat it? When are the repeats? What are my plans for the summer and how does this affect it? Will I still be able to go on Co-Op? The best people to talk to in this circumstance would be the Education Officer or the people in Student Academic Administration (SAA). If you come in and talk to me we can see what your circumstances are and explore your options regarding progression.

D1's and D2's are classed as compensatory fails; this means that although you failed the exam and the mark will have a negative effect on your QCA, you can still 'carry' the fail on your transcript and progress to the next semester. This is only applicable if your QCA is above 2.00 and you did not get more than two D's (your other grades 'compensate' for the D's).

What kind of fail is it?
Can I carry it and continue on or do I have to repeat it?
When are the repeats?

You can choose to voluntarily repeat compensatory fails if you wish. Unfortunately no matter how well you do in the exam, the result will be 'capped' at a C3, thus just ensuring that you can pass the module, but not improve the negative dip in your QCA.

If you have received an F grade in the exams then that is classed as an outright fail and you cannot carry it on your transcript; you must resit the exam during the summer repeats and clear the fail. Unfortunately as with compensatory fails, your grade will be capped at a C3. You cannot progress unless you clear all F grades on your student transcript. You can repeat up to four modules from two semesters in a given year. If you have received



there is a light at the end of the tunnel

an F grade in an exam you can apply for a recheck of your paper. This is done by approaching SAA within two weeks of the receipt of your results and filling out the appropriate form and by paying a €25 deposit per script. If your grade is changed then you will be refunded the deposit. Grades that are rechecked can rise as well as fall, however with an F grade you have already failed and they cannot fail you more! People occasionally do reach the D2 level on a recheck and that is worth bearing in mind.

If you have failed an exam then SAA will contact you by post regarding the repeats date. For 4th Years there is however a major problem if you fail an exam. Unfortunately, you will be unable to graduate with your class as the repeat examinations are usually held slightly before or during the Summer Conferings and the grading and exam boards would not have had a chance to submit your results to SAA. The Students' Union has long campaigned for a change to this policy; however despite our best efforts to date there has been little success. You will instead be forced to graduate (should you pass the repeat) at the Winter Confering Ceremonies in January.

If you have any questions about results or repeats or anything to do with your exams (or Education in general) then please call into my office in the Students' Union any day or time. If I'm not there, please leave me a message on the pad outside the door, email me at eamonn.gardiner@ul.ie or call me on (086) 0435302.

The true meaning of Christmas

Pat 'the Gospel' Robertson

I have often heard people speak of the 'true meaning of Christmas' and often wondered what this might be. Is it about a woman who, untouched, brought forth a baby in some rag tag stable 2000 years ago, or is it about Santa? Well, today I am going to answer that question, that age old battle of Santa and Jesus; who is more relevant?

The event we celebrate on the 25 December (Christmas) would have been a miracle in itself, being the first and only virgin birth, even if he hadn't turned out to be the founder of the great Christian religion and indeed, some might say, the son of God himself.

This saviour – the son of God – is an all encompassing force; a spirit who touches every man; who sees every move we make and feels every emotion and thought we feel. He expects us to respect simple rules to live by and love our neighbour as ourselves. He is all-loving, all-caring and all-seeing.

In fact, Christ engenders love; he is love...expect if you break a mortal

sin. In that case, he sends you to eternal damnation in the fiery depths of hell where ghastly beasts poke you with raging hot pikes and spit fire in your eyes and molest your bellybutton fluff, but remember he loves you.

Santa Claus is much the same. He visits us once a year and engenders the spirit of Christmas. He advocates giving rather than receiving. He loves all children, yet still retains the right to punish those who step out of line with the dreaded naughty list. He even makes obese people feel better as for just a few days he brings 'jolly' back into fashion. He brings joy to all children based on a story with tenuous links to the truth. But I ask you today, is this story of Santa Claus so far fetched?

I postulate to those non-believers that Santa Claus is just as probable and possible as any aspect of religion. When you weigh up the intricacies of what Santa Claus does then you realise that he is like Jesus' brother from another mother. Jesus hears your thoughts, watches everyone's actions, judges you on what you do (how dare he!).

Santa Claus on the other hand knows when you've been sleeping, he knows when you're awake, he knows when you've been bad or good, so, like, be good for goodness sake.

Having identified that both are all-seeing and all-hearing I have to weigh up who gives me more as a religious figure. Jesus preaches love (love thy neighbour), so does Santa (be a good boy).

Santa lives in Lapland; Jesus lives in the clouds.. Jesus brings comfort, support and hope; Santa brings excitement and the hope of good presents.

Jesus' story was written and used to unite the Roman Empire some 300 years after his death in the fourth century by Emperor Constantine of Rome. Santa was brought to America by Dutch settlers, his image was provided by Coca-Cola and is used to sell presents which we scarcely need or want but we appreciatively take.

As I was explaining this to my father over Christmas, I could see his face drop much like a child being told there was no Santa. At this point,

I realised that Jesus is much like Santa – but for adults. You wait around all your life to get your present at the end: eternal life and happiness!

If you truly examine the mysteries of Jesus' story and question them on a logical basis, then you surely take away the hope and validity of loaves, fishes, lepers, resurrections, assumptions and eternal existence of pure bliss. I know what my pure bliss is and, believe me, it doesn't belong in heaven; not at all.

If you truly examine the mysteries of Santa, you do much the same, except it's the presents that get destroyed; tangible, tanglibe presents.

So which to choose? I think for now I'm going to stick with Santa. I mean like at least he lives in the EU and if ya wanna go see him you can hop on a Ryanair flight. Going to see Jesus is much tougher; you would have to dodge Israeli missiles just to see where he was born. Last time I checked you couldn't get a flight to heaven but surely Ryanair would drop you in hell and expect you to walk; that would be no fun at all.



Lisbon II - an insult to the Irish

Ciaran Lyne

Imagine the uproar if the English Football Association ordered the FA Cup Final to be replayed purely because one team with technical limitations (let's say, Wigan Athletic or Bolton Wanderers) played in a more abrasive and honest style and yet managed to defeat Arsenal, a team of suave foreign players who relied on their superior skill and flawless technique but had little real substance in nitty-gritty situations.

A replay in such circumstances would never happen. Sport is all about the effort one puts in while training, and one's luck on the day. Last June, Patricia McKenna and Declan Ganley managed the unfashionable side to victory over an apparently skilful and creative team coached by Brian Cowen and Enda Kenny. But the European Council of Ministers clearly does not take defeat lightly, and Nicolas Sarkozy's actions over the past six months have been those of a very bad loser. The Irish people have been told that their decision was wrong. We have been silenced because our damning verdict on the Council's pet project was not in keeping with the passive acceptance of other European parliaments. Sarkozy and his groupies might as well have spat on our Constitution, defecated on our statute books, urinated into our ballot boxes, when in December they

smilingly coerced Brian Cowen into promising to hold a second referendum on the Lisbon Treaty.

I reluctantly voted to accept the Treaty on June 12 last, believing it to be essential to our progression as a European state. This was despite the shambolic manner in which the Yes campaign had been conducted, with childish bickering, reprehensible ignorance of simple facts, and a lackadaisical view of serious matters being universal themes, both among the government and the main Opposition parties. Think William Gallas criticising his Arsenal teammates in his recent autobiography. Meanwhile Ganley quietly and steadily campaigned for a No vote, and whether or not his assertions about the implications of a Yes vote were true, he deserved to win because he battled hard for what he believed in, unlike Cowen's casual "ah sure, a bit o' canvassin' in the last few days will do the job" attitude to a crucial task, his first major test as Taoiseach. If Cowen was a football manager, he would have been sacked on the morning after the defeat. His lack of leadership and his ignorance of the mindset of his people cost him victory. These are unforgivable offences in the political world, yet amazingly, he continues to bluff his way through the morass of the aftermath of our No vote, hiding like a coward behind soundbites praising and affirming our sovereignty while

simultaneously undermining that same sovereignty by negotiating for a new referendum with his colleagues in Europe.

In common with the majority of the Irish people, I have always regarded the European Union with gratitude tempered by a mild cynicism, but have never been a hardened Eurosceptic. However, a new year brings a new perspective, and it is hard not to feel a sense of outrage that our democratically-expressed wishes as a nation are being duntrodden by a man who stripped his own people of their right to determine their own futures following the French rejection of the Constitutional Treaty in June 2005. It takes a certain kind of brazen cheek to patronise and insult honest, well-intentioned European citizens, and sadly for the people of France and Europe, Monsieur Sarkozy has it in spades.

The farmers pledged their support for Lisbon I, only to be shafted in last October's Budget. They will not make the same mistake again. Like many students in UL, I come from an agricultural background. I have watched my father and countless thousands of farmers like him bend over backwards not to antagonise the Department of Agriculture, so that the miserable placating pittance they receive from Europe in subsidies and entitlements might not be diminished further by having a cow



without a tag, or spreading dung on a field outside a fixed time period even when the weather is more suitable. Minor faults, but frowned on by faceless civil servants with over-busy bios, who reacted in a panicked and disproportionate fashion to the recent pigmeat crisis. The costs of farming today have escalated, but the prices farmers receive for their produce have remained stagnant, fixed by monopolies managed by men who are little short of criminals (yes, Larry Goodman, you are a nefarious villain for what you did to Irish farmers in the name of quick profits). Many will read this and say "ah the bloody farmers, grousing again." But in a few years, when it may no

longer be possible to choose Irish beef or Irish lamb or Irish butter on the supermarket shelves, then perhaps those same individuals will realise how farmers have been shafted by greedy supermarket chains and bureaucratic European guidelines and governmental indifference to their problems. We are an island nation, with superb land and rich fishing waters, yet we now import our fish and much of our meat and dairy produce. Was this what we joined the EEC for in 1973? To hell with the free market and give us back our former independence as Europe's premier food producing nation.

And give us back the right to determine for ourselves the road we want to take. Whether it was the right

or wrong thing to do, the Irish people voted No last summer, and if the Laurel and Hardy of Irish politics, Cowen and Lenihan, continue to fumble their way along in the dark with their amazingly inept solutions to the country's economic problems, they will again vote No when next they have the chance. Cowen is fast becoming Public Enemy Number One, and it remains to be seen how much longer he will survive as the most unpopular Fianna Fail Taoiseach in the country's history. Not even a Yes vote will save his party from a certain defeat in the next general election. Had he upheld the people's wishes in the face of international pressure, his position would be much safer.

Columnists

Pete's Pet Peeves

What really p*sses me off is the contemptuous and behaviour treatment by some students in this institution towards one of most natural and basic human functions – going to the toilet. This was reinforced by Bath, my colleague from last semester, when he deconstructed the process of an incident which saw a UL student pooing on the bonnet of a car.

Once I moved beyond the morbid fascination of someone excreting upon a car bonnet, I began to think of the type of person who would do such a thing. Can't we be proud of our University when it produces such fine upstanding and learned people who poo on cars because they can't handle their drink.

Whatever the excuse a wasted student may have, however, none can be made about the atrocious state that students leave the toilets in the Glucksman Library. I have seen the bathrooms in UL in worse condition than in that 'worst toilet in Scotland' from the film *Trainspotting* or Croke Park at half-time during the All-Ireland final. The Library – a symbolic centre of learning for the University – where diligent students spend hours enhancing their knowledge of a chosen subject but can't get their waste into a toilet bowl. God damn!

Having been a student in UL for quite a while now, this unintelligible and unhygienic behaviour really annoys me. There are two main of reasons for this. Firstly, the process of sitting down and taking a dump is mind-numbingly simple. Yet somehow every semester, particularly around exam time when the library is jam packed, students manage to egest on the rim, egest on the seat, even egest on the floor. What the hell? This leads me to the conclusion that it must be a deliberate act of defecation. I don't know which is worse – a young adult who still cannot follow the simple process of egesting in a toilet or a one who, for some twisted reason, deliberately egests outside the bowl.

Not only this, but for those who choose not to use the urinal, why the hell don't they lift the toilet seat before urinating? There is nothing more disgusting than going into a cubicle and see the toilet seat and floor covered in someone else's urine. I am aware that this is one of life's unsolvable questions, but if you think your urine is going to shoot out at gravity-defying angles, sit the hell down. You would think that following two decades of urinating, the ability to urinate into a relatively large opening would be child's play.

My second point is the shame of seeing the University's cleaning company having to go into these bathrooms and clean up another person's excrement. It may be an occupational hazard to clean up seven colours of faeces and vomit after a closing time in a pub, but having to clean this in a library bathroom is disgraceful.

Now, I'm not saying that a cleaner's job is supposed to be all lavender and roses, but, hell, who would like to spend their day cleaning up the waste of some ungrateful git of a student who doesn't even acknowledge their existence or importance. The cleaners in UL work damn hard to keep the library and its toilets clean, not to mention the rest of the lavatories spread across our large campus. The least they can be shown is a bit of respect.

So how should such people be dealt with? The problem here lies in the difficulty of catching the person in the act. However, I believe that students who are caught defecating bathrooms in the manner described above should be treated with zero tolerance. They should be forced to clean up their own waste; fined; put to a disciplinary committee, or, for repeat offences even suspended or expelled.

Such disgusting behaviour, however, is unfortunately indicative of student's cleanliness in general around campus. Take a look outside the SU shop or on the green outside the library on a sunny day and realise for yourselves.



I Spy's guide to, 'Where to live whilst studying in UL'



This question raises its ugly head at the end of every year when the prospect of house hunting once again appears. Anyone who's been in the college for more than a few weeks will probably have seen the good, the bad, and the ugly of Castletroy's accommodation. Anyone who has done a cold hard winter in any of the estates in a house with no heating will know that the correct accommodation is vital.

The fact that it can be much colder in your house than it is outside is something which I wouldn't have thought possible before I came to University. The spectre and challenge of waking up in a cold house, jumping out of bed into your damp clothes, not even daring to take a shower for fear of deadly hypothermia freezing your extremities off – yes, we've all been there, and if you haven't, you definitely will – is certainly not appealing.

College accommodation should be judged over a few different factors; mostly proximity to shops and off-licences, how sound the landlord appears and how attractive the girls already in the accommodation are.

In your time in UL you will meet some nice landlords, but it's the bad ones that will really stay with you. They are the ones who call unannounced, walk into the house as if they live there, give out about the slightest few cans thrown around and then ultimately take your deposit to repair the wear and tear that they're supposed pay for. Of course from a

landlord's point of view we students aren't always exemplary tenants either.

The first call you need to make when choosing accommodation is whether to live on or off campus. There are many advantages to living on campus: proximity to the University, your own private room, study space, heat and light is practically guaranteed. Yes, it is a comfortable existence on campus, but it's an existence you must pay for.

Coming in at €4,506 for Cappavilla/Drumroe/Thomond, the payment is split into two deposits – one due on arrival and the other before Christmas. If you divide by the weeks spent it comes in around €120 per week which is quite expensive in the current climate. You can get on campus in Kilmurry or Plassey though for nearly €800 cheaper so that has to be an option if you're looking to spend less.

So, why wouldn't you live on campus, bar the fact that it's costlier than living off campus? Well, the on campus accommodation is certainly not without its faults. Having lived off campus for the first three years but deciding that my studious nature would be served better in Thomond (only fooling myself) there is definitely an adjustment to make between the two.

The same stringent tenant rights you're afforded off campus are different to those in the villages. In

the beginning you sign a contract, which means village staff and security can enter your apartment "common areas" at will. Yes, that means you could be in your sitting room in a compromising position with a lovely lady and you could be callously interrupted by a big neon man from the Federales (Campus Security).

Of course, they are meant to knock before they storm in on you but this is not always the case. Many a good friend has been caught naked by PCC staff!! Never me, of course...

This privacy issue is probably the biggest instance of where off campus definitely wins. The naysayers will say that you shouldn't mind folk walking into your sitting room unless you've something to hide. I say in my own apartment I shouldn't have to hide what I would have to hide if I did have something to hide...so there.

Living off campus can be great. You have greater privacy, greater freedom, get a place in the estates from €60 to €80 a week, play louder music late into the night, have 20 lads stay in your kitchen, drink on your flat garage roof in summer, all that buzz.

Plus there are some really great places to live off campus location wise.

Elm Park is perfectly central to all places but some of the houses aren't in as good a shape as they used to be. The best for location has to be Briarfield. Close to the pubs,

club, Superquinn, Aldi and the cinema you just can't ask for more location-wise.

Groody, Curragh Birin and Brookfield have all improved location-wise with take aways and the Groody Bar making the area well liveable. As far as quality goes Groody and The Troy seem to be doing well. Word from the Union is that they've had a lot of unhappy punters in Brookfield this year, though, with students complaints not being listened to and vital maintenance not being done. One student lived without hot water for nearly all of first semester which is definitely something to be considered if choosing new lodgings

With living off campus security would be my biggest issue. Having been burgled numerous times, especially in the Cedars where they did our house three times in six months, I was just happy they didn't steal the laces out of my shoes! You really need to be vigilant. Criminals seem to be preying on the fact that we students often forget to shut windows and doors and we have seen a massive number of house break-ins in Castletroy over the past few years.

On campus of course you have the Feds to fall back on, if they show up at just the right time – like they manage to when I'm in a compromising position – then they're bound to catch the criminals!

Happy house-hunting!

Columnists

Deep Throat

Who knew a simple HomeBase plughole could hold out for so long? Especially against such corrosive materials, honestly did any of you actually have the chance to see what was in that water? Bleugh!

Anyway, we're back, and we're quite sure you're pleased, mildly surprised, or just wondering who the blazes we are. Don't ask us where we were, (it was moist and hot, with that fragrant Gunma accent we love to hear), how we got back, (the details aren't clear but Jack Bauer owes us \$346 and change) or how long we will stay (depends on just how uncomfortable it gets). Just one last piece of comment about our absence, "Here at The Throat we do our insider news dirty and grimy, Mr. Top Hat and Brandy"

So to business - The continued fallout from Gategate (calling it ThomondGate is just going to confuse the locals and calling it WindyMediaGate gives them way too much credit) has held the student body of UL enthralled over the Christmas...of course it hasn't...fact is most students don't care what the exec's personal political views are. We wouldn't care if exec members favoured the distribution of wealth on the basis of hair length or considered the excessive runniness of mascara a war crime so long as they made the buses run on time or at least could get them to run past 10pm.

Down through its history ULSU has had exec members who were members of the Democratic Socialist Party, Fine Gael, Labour, and even a few on the militant Green tendency side of things. Being a member of Fianna Fail is the least of things to be concerned about when it comes to members of the exec. Not talking to one another, trying to operate as a hive mind with complete consensus or hiding bills in drawers is what causes the real problems. You're no one in Irish student politics 'til Windy Media has attacked you. We're telling ya, Pa, next stop the Oireachtas...and if you don't have change of a twenty once we've stepped out, can do us a favour by dropping our lady friend back to Fitzwilliam sq?

As to what the future might hold for the rest of the exec members; we see re-election campaigns all round. Within the context of the current economic climate, it is hard to see a solid reason for any of the exec to be overly keen on venturing into the harsh world of grown up work. Indeed the same factors may prompt some of the other traditional hurlers on the ditch to chance their arm. Imagine that for a prospect: all five positions resulting in contested elections. And with the elections falling due right before Rag Week might we even see a revival of the less seriously natured candidates a la Bob D. Fish?

For course, Chance the Gardiner (he likes to watch), for one is almost certain to want to get a full year in the education post given how long he has coveted it. If he starts to make comparisons with Obama that could be a sure sign he has been tempted into a quick assault on the Ovaltine Office. With the general media contraction who would wish to be starting out as junior turf market reporter at the Tullamore Bugle. And just how nice is Caitriona really? We strong suspect the excessive use of illegal Hallelujahs in the morning. Is there no one to save us from the HPSS takeover of the Union, they're meant to be studying politicians not becoming them. Speaking of Chance, it is nice to see someone about the place who knows how to wear a military uniform, even if it makes An Pres nervous (show a FFer someone in elected office wearing a uniform and they start seeing Blueshirts in their sleep). We're not so sure about his desire to have massed marching manoeuvres in the courtyard, but if he places tanks on the white house lawn we want to be there to see it. Think about it for a moment; next year no UL student will have known an election when Chance wasn't a candidate for a sabbatical position.

Over at the PSA it is hard to tell if the Anschluss of the PSA by the SU is ever going to happen. And whatever happened to the rather

public assertions that 'money had walked' during the terms of previous office holders? We were warned of Senate hearings and people ended up in orange jumpsuits, yet nothing came of it. An equally public retraction wouldn't go amiss. Are there even term limits in that place?

In other electoral news, former UL heads Liam Quinn and Brian Stokes are seeking public office, in Laois and Limerick. Poor little lambs, they've no idea what is ahead of them. Still at this rate, a UL caucus at local government level might be in prospect. Imagine that people from UL being elected to real world stuff, far out man!

The good people of the college proper have been for the most part behaving themselves. The 3% cut in payroll has been partially dealt with by the inventive sleight of hand, but probably long term counterproductive step, of declining to go ahead with some already approved research projects. This works out fine for the existing permanent staff but in effect pulls up the drawbridge for news postgrads and post-docs. That said the college's deficit is no laughing matter, you might think your few grand on the credit card is going to be a problem come graduation but the college is looking at a €20 million overdraft and the person in locus parentis, the Battman, is not likely to be getting the big government cheque book

out any time soon to clear it.

Expect exciting new revenue streams to be explored come next autumn. Post grads cleaning car windows (with their bacteria laden hands?), more students from overseas (not with the way they spend money - have you seen how ten of them will cluster around a single pint - or the Euro exchange rate the way it is). One idea might be a new pay4seats system (I can see the nifty TV ad now, some unshaven bloke doing some Phones4U thing indicating cash then touching his rear at the end) for lectures with wrist clamps and mini-spikes in the seat area that deploy should you not pay up pronto. Sure that might appeal to some of the BDSM community on campus but most regular people will probably hand over the cash quite readily.

It will probably have slipped by most of you during the holidays but the Feast of the Annunciation of UL was celebrated on Jan 12th, ah the Intoxicated 12th. Much banqueting

and quaffing of ale was in evidence in places high and low. There was even a Farcebook event for it; if it is virtual then it must be real. Search for 'Seanad Reform' and see if we're lying. Speaking of the virtual have you had a pint in the boathouse pub yet? Just think of it another place on campus that you can legally drink alcohol in: we're not counting staff offices.

Sadly, in local news outside the gates: Dell has gone the way of Gateway. And let's face it there is no way-no how that the city isn't going to suffer because of this. One potential upside for all you selfish bunnies out there might be that rental costs should fall next year as the private rental sector takes an absolute hammering. Perhaps ULSU might think about buying a few copies of Michael Moore's Roger and Me and renting it out to the student body as preparation for the new landscape?

Still for now harmony reigns in the SU, and remember UL Prevails!

Let's talk about sex baby!

An Focal sex columnist Annie Glyde-Dammes

After watching a rather dodgy episode of a pretty popular American crime drama... let's call it D.S.I the topic of Sado-masochism (Sadism and Masochism) occurred to me and gave me the basis for this week's column. After chatting to a few people I realised that a significant amount of people have very definite opinions on it; they love or hate it. I suppose the question is... which are you - a lover or a hater?

The infliction (Sadism) and/or endurance of pain (Masochism) seem to excite even some of the most sexually timid amongst us. Sado-masochism comes in many forms; it can be as mild as biting, scratching and pulling hair harder than is comfortable and it can be as extreme as drawing blood by piercing the skin with sharp implements. While the milder forms are often more acceptable, both legally and socially, those who practice the more extreme forms of S & M can find themselves labelled and judged and as a result are keen to avoid talking about the behaviour that they find sexually satisfying.

However being interested in S & M doesn't make you any stranger or weirder than being interested in any other 'turn-on' and just because something isn't your boat doesn't mean it's not a valid sexual expression. But why does inflicting and suffering pain act as a significant turn-on for so many people? My theory is pretty simple...suffering pain distracts from the feeling of pleasure that sex is (presumably) bringing momentarily, then when the sensation of pain fades the original sensation of pleasure returns in a rush. As for the infliction of pain my theory is that the heightened feeling of sexual stimulation is derived from the reaction of one's partner to the pain; the gasping, the facial expression of shock and the vocal expression, i.e. shouting or screaming is reminiscent of an orgasm. The other reasoning that I've heard for the stimulation derived from suffering pain is related to power. It is a test of endurance and 'strength'. How much can I take from my partner? That is why in a lot of cases involving a heterosexual couple the 'sufferer' tends to be the male and the 'inflictor' tends to be the female. But hey... it's just a theory.

So with all the sexual gratification derived from S and M why don't we all engage in it? Well the simple fact of the matter is that not everyone is

into it. Not everybody enjoys feeling pain or causing pain. For some people it's all a bit too weird and certain types of S and M, depending on the result are actually against the law. As well as that S and M, particularly the reciprocal kind requires a significant amount of trust between the parties and many individuals don't feel quite ready to express themselves in that way with a partner.

On the bright side though, if you do decide that S & M is for you then a range of toys and devices are available in all sex shops and online. Just make sure no-one accidentally opens your post.

If you have any topics that you'd like to see discussed in Let's Talk About Sex Baby then feel free to email the editor with L.T.A.S.B in the subject line. And don't worry it's fully confidential.



A Fresh Approach

Jason Kennedy

Diary of a First Year

At the time of writing this little article, I'm still in little, old Tipp, and it feels strange. The Christmas lights are down, the remnants of turkey are in the bin and all that's left of the booze is a few measly party sized cans of Bulmers. Christmas is well and truly dead, yet we're only halfway through the holidays.

The strangest thing is that most of my friends from school are gone back to colleges in Athlone, Galway, Dublin, Cork and England, leaving my weekday social life lacking. Granted, most of them were greeted back to third level life with exams, so I wouldn't go swapping places. Still, they didn't have to trudge through exams at Christmas time.

My first set of exams here were a strange experience. You could say that they were just as important as the auld LC, but they were infinitely more laid back. I wouldn't have dreamed of going to the pub the night before a leaving cert exam, but it didn't cost me a thought this time around. In fairness, the less said about the 'E' word the better. I'm currently in the mode where all my confidence is gone and I'm convinced I'll be back in August, but then again, I felt that way during the leaving as well.

But I'm putting that aside until the time rolls around, after all, there's too much to look forward to in semester two. The first night back in the Lodge, ULTV trip to London and catching up with all the lads in the course. These will all be mere memories by the time this paper hits the shelves. One big difference in this semester is a new addition to our mad house. Unfortunately, our only Corkonian has left the building, moving in with some of his old friends. Filling his gap is yet another Tipperary person (giving us Tipp folk a majority in the household, just putting it out there); but the poor girl doesn't know she's in for countless Will Ferrell quotes, tea towel fights and the occasional bout of domestic abuse. God, I miss Cappavilla.

What with it being a new year, I'm making an active effort to get a bit more involved this semester. I joined four societies at the start of the year, but only actively participate in one. I'm going to try and be a bit persistent with the interviews. Last semester, I spent over an hour trying to get an interview with 'The Apprentice' winner, Brenda Shanahan. I was told I had it, but the PR folk never got back to me, just like the politicians and the bankers.

Bring on semester two!

In Focus: SUUncovered:

Sabbatical Officers



Name: Pa (Patrick) O'Brien
Age: 23
Position: President
Course Studied: History and Politics
Why did you come to UL: The educational opportunities...and the beer.
What's the best thing about your job? Helping out someone who's not getting fair treatment from the University. I also enjoy the odd social pint
What's the worst thing about your job? We work quite late, especially when there are gigs on, which is fine if I don't have a meeting at 9 the next morning. On a regular week I could have anything up to 20 meetings so I do be busy.
Favourite happy song: 'Cape Cod Kwassa Kwassa' - Vampire Weekend.

Favourite sad song: 'No Need to Argue' - Cranberries.

What annoys you? Derek Mooney.

Interesting fact about you: I was once runner up the Den Christmas card competition. My sister drew the picture, though, so I kind of cheated in a way. They're mistaken if they think I'm giving back that Den denim jacket though; no way.



Name: Caitríona 'Bubbles' McGrattan
Age: 22
Position: Deputy President/Welfare Officer
Course Studied: HPSS
Why did you come to UL: To move away from Dublin.
What's the best thing about your job? I can't pick just one; I love lots of things about my job.
What's the worst thing about your job? When I can't help students in the way they expect/hope and they go away unhappy.
Favourite happy song: At the moment I'm loving Gabriella Cilmi's version of 'Warm this winter'.
Favourite sad song: 'American Pie' - Don McLean's version.
What annoys you? People who don't say please and thank you!
Interesting fact about you: An insect stowed away from Haiti in the sole of my foot when I was in first year.



Name: Eamonn Gardiner
Age: 24
Position: Education Officer
Course Studied: HPSS and MA (Taught) History, both from UL
Why did you come to UL: The Stables and Costello's! No, seriously, I came here because I felt that this was a serious university where history was being taught well.
What's the best thing about your job? I feeling of coming home/Stables after a long hard week and saying yes, what I did this week, the calls I made, the events I organised, telling that lecturer/tutor to cop on, that made a difference for students.
What's the worst thing about your job? There are very few personally negative aspects of my job, honestly. The worst thing that I could say is that no matter how hard you try to help people, you just can't help everyone.

Favourite happy song: Get Rhythm/Johnny Cash, Folsom Prison Blues/Johnny Cash, All Shook Up/Elvis, Where the Streets Have No Name/U2, Radio Nowhere/Bruce Springsteen, Bad Moon Rising/Clearance, Jump Around/House of Pain, Clearwater Revival, I Useta Lover-N17/Saw Doctors, anything by Free Beer or the Dubliners!!
Favourite sad song: Mr Brightside/The Killers, Run/Snow Patrol, Ordinary Man/John O'Brien cover of Christy Moore, Daysleeper/REM, So Cruel/U2, Let it Be/The Beatles, Kashmir/Led Zeppelin.

What annoys you? People who refuse to engage in debate on an issue. I have no problem (well that's not entirely true) with someone who holds a view different to my own, but if they refuse to even talk to me about it then there's something wrong with their perspective. I encounter it more and more in the job unfortunately. It's like hitting a brick wall. Fortunately for students, for some strange reason I enjoy hitting walls!!

Interesting fact about you: I'm a big Sci-Fi head! Love my Battlestar Galactica, Stargate: SG1 & Atlantis, Star Trek. I also eat, breathe and live History. I'm probably not the craziest person in the SU at the moment I'd say, but I'm not far off!



Name: Damien Cahill
Age: over 21
Position: Campaigns and Services Officer
Course Studied: BBS with French
Why did you come to UL: I was coming back to college as a mature student, and got accepted to UCC Law too, but when I came here for the interview the campus blew me away!
What's the best thing about your job? Getting stuck into organising student events like protests or gigs.
What's the worst thing about your job? Meetings
Favourite happy song: Driving home for Christmas
Favourite sad song: There are sad songs???
What annoys you? People who take drugs and think it's funny...they're called customs officers
Interesting fact about you: I used to have a job where I built rubbish

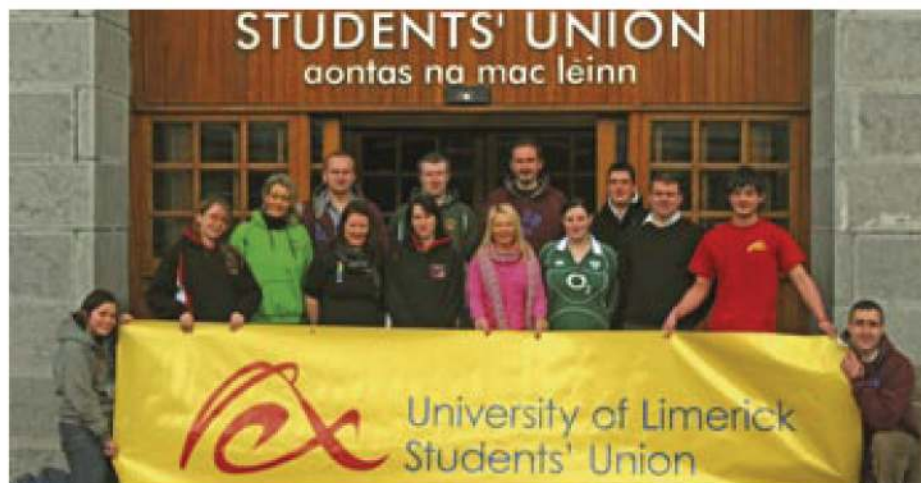
dumps...in France and Spain



Name: Aoife Breen
Age: 22
Position: Communications Officer
Course Studied: HPSS
Why did you come to UL: It had the course I wanted to do.
What's the best thing about your job? I control the propaganda! What I say is the truth! Believe it!!!
What's the worst thing about your job? The pressure putting the paper together so that it comes out on time...coffee is my new best friend!
Favourite happy song: Right now - Katy Perry's 'Hot n Cold'; in general, anything on Damien Dempsey's 'Shots' album.
Favourite sad song: It's not really a sad song as such, but it's slow... Coldplay's 'Yellow'...same goes for U2's 'With or Without You'.
What annoys you? Questionnaires. My jeans getting wet in the rain. Exceptionally bad grammar. My own impatience. Harry Potter. I'll stop

there.

Interesting fact about you: I like ketchup...with pretty much everything.



Name: Kate Gleeson

Course: 2nd Year, New Media & English

Do you know what the SU does on campus?

Off the top of my head...fees protests, campaigning for better student life like free Wednesday afternoons.

Do you think the SU is worthwhile? Yes, every university needs and SU. I'm all about the rights of the student!



Name: Sarah Kehoe

Course: 4th Year Business and French

Do you know what the SU does on campus?

Give out free water during exams and fees protests!

Do you think the SU is worthwhile? Yes, they're needed. We need somewhere to go, but they could still do more.



the Students' Union revealed

Staff



Name: Adele O'Carroll
Position in Union: Reception Manager
How long have you worked in the Union: 7 years
What's your favourite aspect of your job? Seeing students on graduation day
What's your least favourite aspect of your job? Dealing with the Mammies of Ireland who think the sun shines out of little Tommy's ****!
Who's your favourite band? Snow Patrol
Favourite film: The Pursuit of Happiness
What annoys you? Smart asses
One interesting fact about you: 40 next year



Name: Tomás Costello
Position in Union: Secretary General
How long have you worked in the Union: 18 Months
What's your favourite aspect of your job? The environment in UL as well as the variety of different issues that crop up in any given week.
What's your least favourite aspect of your job? Occasional babysitting and refereeing. During semester, the car parking.
Who's your favourite band? Greenday
Favourite film: Once Upon a Time in America
What annoys you? Stupidity
One interesting fact about you: I have only smoked one cigarette and I have never taken an alcoholic drink and I have absolutely no regrets.



Name: Róisín Monaghan
Position in Union: Administrative Secretary
How long have you worked in the Union: 16 Months
What's your favourite aspect of your job? The other staff
What's your least favourite aspect of your job? Filing
Who's your favourite band? Don't have one - I am not 16 years old.
Favourite film: True Romance
What annoys you? Bad smells - smelly smells, smelly clothes, smelly people, smelly food etc.
One interesting fact about you: I drink coffee!



Name: Paul Lee
Position in Union: Clubs & Societies Development Officer
How long have you worked in the Union: since June 1998
What's your favourite aspect of your job? The positive and good natured atmosphere that the students generate in day to day interactions
What's your least favourite aspect of your job? Not being able to attend a lot of C&S events - as the one full-time person that's very difficult to do
Who's your favourite band? Bruce Springsteen and the E-Street Band
Favourite film: The Good, the Bad and the Ugly...classic
What annoys you? The present government...boooo hiss
One interesting fact about you: U19 Munster Hurler of the Year 1989; a member of the first non-University third level institute team to win the Fitzgibbon cup in over 80 years - WRTC in 1991 and we beat UL in Limerick!

Name: James Martin
Course: 4th Year Business
Do you know what the SU does on campus? Provides facilities for people like welfare and student packs.
Do you think the SU is worthwhile? Yes, SU events couldn't happen without them - ordinary students themselves don't have the initiative to do anything.



The YOU in SU

Paddy Rockett is a 3rd Year Science Education student who was elected at the start of the year onto the SU Executive as the Community Relations Officer.

I suppose my interest in the Students' Union began on the first day of orientation week and we saw the then-Welfare Officer, Sinéad, do cool things with a cucumber...it sparked my interest straight away. It was impressed on us what an integral part the Union would play in my time here.

Most of all, the people that were on it at that time were great craic! I became a class rep for my course in first year and learned how to approach members of faculty and how to speak to and help a large class-group. At that time, the Students' Union tackled issues like poor pedestrian facilities on a busy road and car parking campaigns all of which directly affected students. In second year, I remained a class rep and saw how the Union and its exec could actively make a change in student life here in UL and that it takes a stand based on the welfare and security of all the students and mobilising a group into one voice.

This year I took up the role of Community Relations Officer, which is a non-sabbatical position on the SU executive, and deal with issues directly affecting students such as accommodation outside the campus and its security and having to come up with a response to the various complaints and stories I hear on Community Forum. This year an idea of stopping Rag Week was mentioned and we had to fight to keep it.

I also work with this year's sabbatical officers. These guys are working around the clock in each of their positions fighting for our rights. I find that this year, what with the idea of re-introducing fees, we need a team that can represent both me and every other pupil to its maximum. And we've got it!

Student representation is integral to change in this university and as someone who is very much involved in stopping something like fees coming back into fruition I am glad I am so involved in the Union and part of a team that works hard for you.

I feel we have that this year and I'm very proud working beside such people and can see myself continuing their work and bringing in a few mad ideas of my own when I run for a sabbatical position - but that's not for a while yet and there's chicken at Community Forum to eat.



Do you know that ULSU...

- Represents the interests of over 12,000 students on campus...that includes you!
- Has 34 clubs and 24 societies on campus
- Along with the Postgraduate Student Association (PSA), supported Clubs and Societies with over €600,000 in funding this year
- Gives out condoms for free from the Welfare office
- Provides free financial advice
- Has a webpage at www.ulsu.ie
- Produces a fortnightly newspaper, An Focal, and a monthly magazine, Pulse...for free!
- Organises all Rag Week events as well as most of the other ents on campus during the year
- Provides a free evening bus service called the Nitelink to get you home safely
- Maintains the Class Rep system to look after your academic interests
- Has a second hand bookshop...check out www.bookshop.ul.ie
- Sells Bus Éireann tickets and student travel cards from the reception
- Has cheaper photocopying than the library
- Organises regular bike sales on campus
- Offers free legal advice to all students
- Has a common room for you to relax in and a games room with eight pool tables
- Offers laminating and faxing services from the reception
- Has a phone credit top-up machine in the foyer

Name: Conor Dolphin
Course: 4th Year Law & Accounting
Do you know what the SU does on campus? Organise ents and they have cheap photocopying!
Do you think the SU is worthwhile? Yes, it gives people a chance at minor politics and a voice for the students.



Student Speak

With all this talk of the SU doing this and the SU doing that, Andrea Gallagher asks UL what they think the Students' Union officers are really up to in their cosy offices...

Mattie Brennan, 4th Year PE
I haven't got the time to think about things like that. I'm working really hard on my FYP... First Year Pulling.



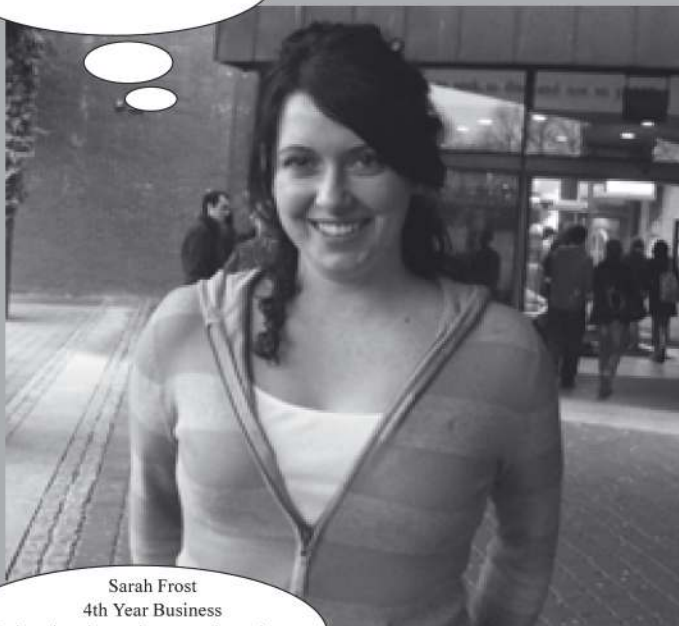
Keith Kenna
4th Year Metal Work Teaching
Well, with the economy the way it is, they're probably trying to think of ways to cut costs. They should cut funding for fake clubs like camogie or women's football!



Ciaran Fitzpatrick
4th Year Woodwork teaching
Sitting at their computers all day eating sweets and stalking people on Bebo...well, that's what I'd do.



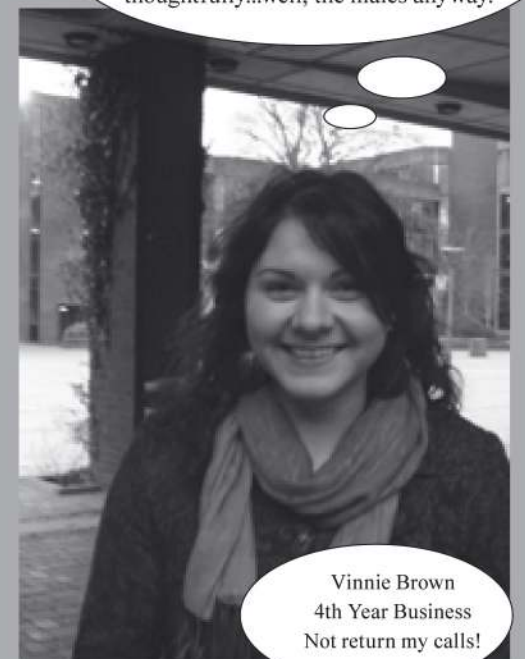
Emma Dunne
4th Year Business
Watching porn and eating jelly babies



Briana McCorey
4th Year Business
The office dance - off!



Yvonne Harty
4th Year Business
They sit down rubbing their beards thoughtfully...well, the males anyway.



Sarah Frost
4th Year Business
Enhancing the student experience here at UL making it an ideal environment to learn, grow and play!



Vinnie Brown
4th Year Business
Not return my calls!



Editorial

An Focal

University of Limerick
Students' Union

University of Limerick, Plassey, Co Limerick
Volume XVII, Issue 8
Tuesday, 27 January, 2009

Letters to the editor (Aoife Breen, 2008/09) may be sent to the above address or alternative may be emailed to editor@ulsu.ie. Please note that submission of a letter does not guarantee publication, but you never know, you may be lucky. Recycle An Focal (and all waste paper) in blue skips located at the rear of your building



One campus, one community

As the fifteen weeks of the semester lie stretched out in front of all returning students, it is the last time that many of you will embark on this journey, with the end of your UL sprint coming closer. Sometimes it is difficult to envisage life beyond the East Gate or the flag poles, but it does exist. And even now, in the midst of an increasingly obvious economic recession, life will continue on after your final exam in May. It may not be the most promising time to graduate, but your four years that you spent studying, learning, partying, Lodging and TV-watching at UL will stand to you. In particular, your co-operative education placement will be an invaluable asset locked into your CV. With just fifteen weeks separating you from 'the real world', don't forget to look up from your FYP on occasion and see the life project that you have been working on since orientation week. The spring semester at UL is always more pleasant: as the days gradually become longer and the chance of it not raining becomes slightly more realistic, the campus opens up its full glory. UL is privileged over other third level institutions in having everything located on the one campus; on one grounds – and even that has changed greatly since you enrolled here as a doe-eyed fresher. The Engineering Research building, the Millstream complex, the Health Sciences building; the Boathouse, Cappavilla Village, the Kemmy Business School, the Irish Chamber Orchestra – all of these have only been constructed while you were here. And you can be sure that, long after you leave, UL will continue to expand and stretch. But for as long as its

graduate number increases, it won't be just physical buildings that help UL to grow, it will also be the ever-increasing number of alumni who have that common shared memory of the riverside campus. As the glowing memories of sitting on the green in front of the library long into fiery sunset evenings or sitting exams in EGO-10 or slipping late into a lecture at the back of the Jean Monnet act as a commonality for alumni, then UL will never cease to grow. In August, many of you will come back one last time in your finery and will be awarded your degree over the secular mace of UL with the motto of UL, 'eagna chun gnímh' (wisdom in action) giving you your final piece of guidance before setting out.

With fifteen weeks of college still left, however, there is time to put that motto into practice yet. As you approach your last Rag Week, and will undoubtedly plan to spend the week enjoying your dying student right to party, perhaps consider actually getting involved in it this year and get nine weeks out of the build-up instead of just one. Lend your action to raising money for charity and then relish in your moment when the total count is announced for the final figure raised. Make your last Rag Week really one to remember. Don't walk away from UL having never taken the opportunity to take pride in the UL community. Take pride in the linking memories that you will share with every other person who graduates this year. Take pride in being a UL graduate, in being from that one campus with one community. You have fifteen weeks left with that community. Be a part of it.



One campus, one community (photo by Eoin Stephenson)

Pa's Propaganda

The most common question I get asked by students is "what do you actually do?" In this An Focal we are trying to tell you what the Students Union role is and what it actually does for you. My role in the Union is overseeing the strategic direction we take, overseeing Union finances and being Chief Spokesperson.

I usually have about 4 meetings a day, some of the important ones last 3-4 hours but they usually serve tea and sandwiches at those so it's not so bad. My role at those committees and meetings is to best represent you and your best interests. I'm also there to keep the University on its toes and to always remind them that it's the students who are the most important aspect of a University.

Administrative work is a huge part of the job and one that people wouldn't see as much as being in The Stables or Scholars, just so ye know I'm not dossing!

I know that this semester is gonna be great. We have Rag Week all booked and ready and we are gonna put on some savage day time activities including a "Drag Lovely Girls Competition", Raft Race on the Shannon, and hopefully we'll be getting some Bumper Cars which is the only drink driving to be done during Rag Week!. Remember our primary focus is to raise money for Charity while having the craic, so if there are any ideas you have bring

them to us and we'll be happy to help out and get involved.

We still have some issues this semester that we need to get sorted. Remember we will all be paying €1,500 in September in registration and this will rise if we don't keep lobbying and letting the government know that we can't afford to pay this.

The university is still without a plan for quality pitches which do our University and our talented sports teams' justice. Hopefully the University will see the irony and the silliness of "Ireland's Sporting Campus" not having adequate facilities for its own students.

We also hope to have a system of Anonymous Marking introduced for the next academic year and we are going to open a Bike Shop on campus where we can serve the needs of the students better and more efficiently.

These are just a couple of things I will be working on throughout the semester so if you have any issues don't be afraid to call into me for a chat. It should be a busy semester but don't forget to relax and enjoy yourself, especially you 4th years because it's the real world after this, and that's not looking too appealing right now,

Have a good one,
Pa



Student Safety

Safety Advice for Students on campus

- If you are assaulted, help is available to you 24 hours a day. In any case involving sexual attack, you may feel dirty, but you should NOT wash, change your clothes or clean up the immediate vicinity until after you have talked to the Garda, you may unwittingly destroy essential evidence. Many crimes of rape, sexual attack are not reported and most rapists will continue their assaults until caught.
- Avoid situations which will necessitate you travelling alone at nighttime. There is safety in numbers. If however, you must travel on your own, plan your journey to limit your exposure to risk of assault, robbery or theft, by scheduling your journey to coincide with bus and train times etc. Use a taxi if no other transport is available.

Security at your Residence

- Ensure your apartment and house doors are locked at all times. When vacating your apartment, check to ensure that all windows are locked.
- Never give your apartment keys to anyone else and do not leave your keys where others could have access to them.
- Before you admit any callers to your apartment, ensure you are satisfied with their identity - ask for identification if in doubt.
- Inform a trusted neighbour if you are going away.
- Ensure that you do not have obvious signs of a vacant apartment - curtains drawn during daylight hours etc.
- Ensure that all your property is marked with your own personal identification code. Items of value should be securely locked away.

Personal Security

- When travelling on foot, use busy routes and well-lit walkways - avoid isolated and darkened areas.
- Inform another trusted party of your intended destination, mode of transport and expected arrival time.
- Walk facing traffic so that vehicles cannot approach you from behind without you being aware of their presence.
- Do not display obvious valuables on your person - jewellery, handbags, etc unless completely necessary.
- Carry only the amount of cash that you require - credit cards, bank pass books should be kept securely out of sight and not in hip pockets.
- If you think you are being followed, go to the nearest place where there are people, even a private house and ring the Gardai.

Vehicle Security

- Do not leave valuables in your vehicle. If this is necessary, secure them out of sight in the boot.
- Do not leave personal documents - driving licences, insurance certificates etc in your vehicle.
- Consider having the registration number etched onto the windows of your vehicle and on valuable car components.
- When parking your vehicle, take care to avoid isolated or darkened areas. Use a well-lit street or thoroughfare at nighttime.
- Consider fitting a good quality car alarm and/or immobiliser. A hardened steel chain and close shackle padlock fitted to the steering wheel is a visible and effective deterrent.
- Do not pick up hitchhikers.

Security of your bicycle

- When you purchase a bicycle, you should insist on obtaining a receipt showing the name and address of the seller/trader, together with the make, model, colour and frame number of your machine. Retain this receipt for future reference.
- Secure your bicycle while unattended by using a good quality-locking device.
- Leave your bicycle in an area, which is supervised, or in an area where it can be in view of passers-by.
- Take a photograph of your bicycle and engrave on the frame your own personal identifying number.

Top five tips for staying safe while out and about...

5. Keep your mobile phone charged and in credit

You never know just when you'll need to make that all important phone call to get help, to report an accident or to get home so be prepared by making sure there is credit on your phone and that there is plenty of battery left.

4. Don't have music playing too loudly in your ears

I-pod, Creative Zen or a good old fashioned Walkman whatever your music system of choice is it's always a good idea to keep the music at a level that you can still hear what's going on around you; cars have horns and the emergency services have sirens for a reason you know! If there is music blaring in your ears you may not hear the warning signs

3. Be safe, be seen

Especially for the cyclists amongst us the more visible you are the better, whether that means putting more lights and light reflectors on your

bike or wearing a high-vis vest the more visible you are and the safer you'll be!

2. Don't walk home alone after dark

With the extended Nightlink service and the new Safe Cab service there is no excuse for walking home from college in the dark! Details of both services are available from the SU Campaigns and Services Officer, damien.cahill@ul.ie.

1. Let someone know where you're at and what time (roughly) you'll be back

If you're lucky they'll have the kettle on or the dinner ready for you but by letting friends and housemates know what time you'll be home by at least there will be someone who'll know there is something up if you're not home in your leaba by midnight if you said you'd be home at six. Likewise plague your housemates with texts and phone calls of concern if they're late home.

ULSU Nitelink - Timetable for Academic Year 2008/09

Route A 19:00, 20:30, 22:00,

- Stop 1: Dromroe Village
- Stop 2: Thomand Village
- Stop 3: Cappavilla Village
- Stop 4: Plassey Village
- Stop 5: College Court
- Stop 6: Groody Student Village
- Stop 7: Courtyard Student Village
- Stop 8: Brookfield Hall
- Stop 9: Parkview Hall
- Stop 10: Park Mews (Kielys)

Returns to UL via Flag Pole Entrance

Route B 19:45, 21:15, 22:45,

- Stop 1: Kilmurry Village
- Stop 2: Elm Park
- Stop 3: Oaklawns
- Stop 4: Kilmurry Lodge
- Stop 5: Brierfield (Back of the Estate)
- Stop 6: Woodhaven
- Stop 7: Annacotty (Synotts)
- Stop 8: Spar (Dublin Road Bus Stop)
- Stop 9: Courtyard/Brookfield Roundabout

Returns to UL via East Gate entrance

Route C 23.30 Only

RouteA+B Stops on Request

Drop off only

Student Safety

Is there a safer route home?

Caitríona McGrattan,
SU Welfare Officer, investigates.

There are 1,440 minutes in each day and just of eight of these could make a huge difference in your life. Eight minutes is the amount of time it takes, strolling at an average pace, to walk from the Hurlers junction on the Dublin Road to the Cedars in Briarfield without taking the shortcut through the alley located next to the Jewish graveyard. These eight minutes could prevent you from becoming a victim of physical and/or sexual assault; numerous UL students and other Castletroy residents have been attacked in this alley way over the years and most recently in the last semester. Ask yourself is this shortcut, which only saves eight minutes after all, really worth the risk?

The gap between the Schumann building and College Court has been hailed as a shortcut for many years, unfortunately its reputation as a crime hotspot is not so well known. Like the Jewish alleyway next to the Dublin Road, the gap that leads into the back of College Court is not a

safe route home, especially after dark. Muggings, assaults and sexual attacks have all been carried out on students in this area. The alternative to taking such a big risk is to walk for just twenty-one minutes out the main UL gate with the flagpoles and into the estate via the well-light paths of College Court.

Shortcuts through dark, unsafe alleyways and gaps may only take a couple of minutes to pass through but on any given day those couple of minutes could change your life forever! An average of forty minutes per week if you live in Briarfield and just over an hour and a half if you live in College Court is this too much time to spare for safety?

This year the Nightlink service has been extended to include the houses in the rear of the Briarfield estate and the stop for College Court allows students to take a well light route home. And with the introduction of the Safe Cab service even students who find themselves stuck after a night out or an all-nighter in the library have no excuses for walking home alone after dark.

Reporting Crime

To be the victim of any crime can be a harrowing experience. The incident itself can be very upsetting for persons, no matter how minor the crime may be. What many find as the next most distressing or exhausting experience is the actual reporting of the crime. Without going into too much detail for specific crimes I would just like to use this article to go through your general procedure for reporting of crimes and what the victim can expect. When you are the victim of a crime you should report it immediately to your local Garda Station. Here in U.L. we are covered by Henry Street Garda Station in Town. Their number is (061) 212400, but of course 999 or 112 always works. When you report a crime to the Garda Station they should in all cases endeavour to send a member of the Gardai out to visit you. Depending on the seriousness of the crime this can be a response time of anything from minutes to perhaps 24 hours. If there is a long delay then be patient, there may be limited resources working and of course the Gardai have to prioritise calls. However if no one has called to you within 24 hours (obviously less depending on the gravity of the crime) and you do wish them to do so the best thing to do is contact the Garda Station again by telephone or perhaps call in to the station if you can. The next step is always the best way to report a crime. You will have to make a statement. Always be aware that when you are making a statement that this is an official document that will if need be form part of an investigation file which may or may not end up in court, and your statement is your evidence. Make sure that you include everything you need to say in the statement and it will be read over to you by the Garda taking it before you sign it. It might be a good idea to just write out your own notes on what happened if there will be a delay between the incident and actually giving the statement, that way if you are nervous then you still have the main points of information. The statement can be made at the Garda station, or anyplace that you choose, either your home or at college if you wish. From there it is up to the Gardai to continue the investigation if necessary, but they should keep in contact with you. Feel free to ring the Garda you deal with to check in, which is why it is important to get their name and contact details. Finally, the Gardai will probably give you the details of the Crime Victims Helpline, an agency which helps people who have been victims of crime. Their details are available on www.crimevictimshelpline.ie or you can contact them on 1850 211 407. Look out for more information during ULSU Student Safety Week, and stay safe.

SAFETY CAMPAIGN

2009 CHECKLIST

before you leave the house like a crazy fool!

- 1) Are all windows and doors locked?
- 2) Are all expensive items stored away and not on show in the window?
- 3) Leave lights on automatic timers.
- 4) Burglars like to work quickly, so try to slow down their path into and around the house. You can accomplish this with:
 - window locks
 - deadbolt locks.
- 7) Don't hide your keys on your property.
- 8) A nosy neighbour is a burglar's worst enemy. Get to know your neighbours as these are the people that might spot something out of the ordinary
- 9) Don't leave jewellery or any other expensive items around for these people to see.
- 10) Go through each room and write down a list of possessions, including serial numbers. Take pictures of your valuables and keep them in a safe place or with a friend or relative. This will help in the event of a burglary.
- 11) Is exterior lighting installed and operational?
- 12) Are your blinds angled to show lights, but not all of your stuff?
- 13) Are timed lights inside and out operational?
- 14) Are sliding glass doors adequately secured?
- 15) Are garage doors secured and kept locked?
- 16) Are locks easily accessible by breaking a window?

RAG Week 09 & Semester 2 Ents

Intro

Hey you guys! Welcome back to all of you, and we hope you all had a crackin' Christmas and holiday season. Semester two has arrived and ulents are here to make sure you have a blast. In true ulents style, we'll be working away to bring you music, madness, comedy, craziness and all round entertainment to keep you going right up to the sunny summer months.

Whether this is your first year in college, your first year in UL or your last year of studying ever, Rag Week is one week that definitely stands out as the best fun you're likely to have all year. The idea behind it is to Raise A Grand and to get out there and enjoy the college experience at its best.

During the year we've brought you the likes Oktoberfest...remember that big stage in the courtyard...and Halloweek...Dirty Sanchez antics and the Halloween ball...these were mini Rag Weeks, just to give you a taste of what's going to land upon you this 30 March – yes, people, batten down the hatches and brace yourselves, it's Rag Week 2009! Festival fever usually hits everyone in May; we say why wait until summer to enjoy what you could enjoy earlier. Yep, this year's Rag

Week is going for that funky festival feel, turning the campus into a 'site' to be seen and enjoyed. Keep your eyes peeled in the next few issues for that all-important line up, check out our Rag Week Bebo page and mark Monday, 30 March to Thursday, 2 April, in your diaries as days you'll definitely be joining us on campus!

Ticket Sales

Tickets will go on sale in week 3 on Tuesday, 10 February. The line-up is looking as follows:

Mon 30 Mar

- Christy Moore tribute and FRED in The Stables @ □12

- SASH! In Trinity Rooms @ □12

- Monday combo tickets @ □20

Tues 31 Mar

- Hells Bells AC/DC Tribute in The Stables @ □12

Wed 1 Apr

- The Young Wolfe Tones in The Stables @ □12

Thurs 2 Apr

- The Rag ball headlined by the Blizzards in SU courtyard @ €20 Wonka tickets priced at □45 and these golden treats gain you access to all the Rag Week gigs running from Monday 29th to Thursday 2nd and a free line-up t-shirt!

Merchandise

Ah, hoodies, sure where would Rag Week be without them – a hood in case it rains, a souvenir to cherish and defence against the arctic weather conditions...anyone remember last year's rag week climate?!

Then again, it's so cold right now, hell may actually freeze over, the stars, in turn, will align and we might get 15 glorious minutes of sunshine. To celebrate this possibility, and in keeping with the festival theme, limited edition festival line-up t-shirts will also be available. And for those generous souls who volunteer to help out for the week, we also have special limited edition in-up t-shirts for them.

Acts

Christy Moore tribute – black is the colour, and all that jazz...he kicked off the first semester in style and is back to help kick off Rag Week 2009.

FRED – they played a blinder on the big stage for the Freshers' Ball back in September, and these UL legends just keep getting better and better.

SASH! – remember, 'Encore une fois'?! And all the other songs we didn't even remember we

remembered! For anyone who remembers the 90s, a night not to be missed! Exclamation point!

Hells Bells AC/DC tribute – AC/DC...it's all in the name! These guys played Oxegen last year, are set to play it again this year, and are a live sensation not to be missed!

The Young Wolfe Tones – coming back to Ireland after their tour of the States, these guys make you want to order nothing but Guinness, change your ring tone to Amhrán na bhFiann and realise that, despite the country's economic state, it's great craic to be Irish.

The Rag Ball – to end the week in style, one of the biggest bands of the moment, the Blizzards will take to the big stage in the courtyard. With support from a whole heap of people which we'll fill you in on very soon.

Semester 2

We'll be keeping you updated throughout the year on up and coming events, heck we might even throw up a few competitions for tickets on our bebo page...if you haven't joined yet, we're www.bebo.com/ulents - the best friend you'll make all year! And as always, if you want to

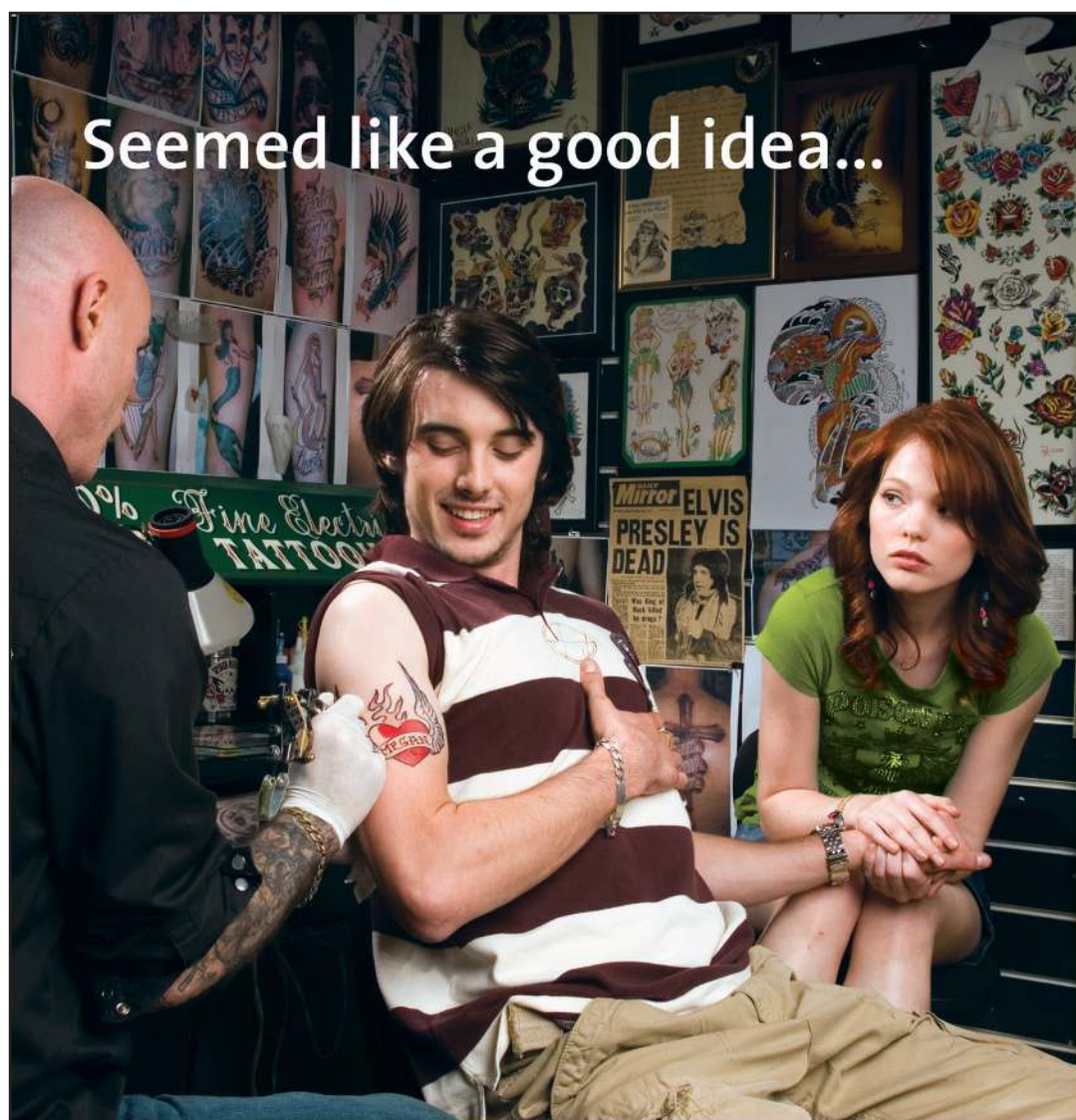


organise a class party, be it in Limerick, Cork or Galway, our office is upstairs in the SU - call in any afternoon and we'll fix you up!

To start it all off, it's **Republic of Loose** in the Stables on Thursday Week 3 and keep an eye out for the

one and only **Andrew Maxwell** from the Panel who will be joining us for a Monnet gig very, very soon!! It's going to be a good year...let's get ready to rumble!

Cya soon,
Regina and Keith
ULents



Seemed like a good idea...

...here's a better one

Student Account

from Ulster Bank Limerick

Talk to Mike Moran, Sinead Barry or Pat Egan our Customer Advisors at Ulster Bank University of Limerick or call 061 216260 for more information.

 Ulster Bank

The Advice Bureau

Damo's Piece

Welcome back to semester 2 guys, congrats to the classes who have handed up their FYP and best of luck to those still to even start. Just said I'd write a few words on what my office has been up to and the plans we've made for this semester. Campaigns wise, week one is an easy one. Try and highlight what the union is and does for the students of UL. I've no doubt in my mind but there are people out there who think we are perhaps a bunch of tree hugging, spread the love mini Taoiseach's!! Personally, I don't really go out of my way to save small animals, couldn't really find an emotional bone in my body (although I have strummed a few James Blunt numbers just to get a woman into bed) and I'm not from Offaly so tune in to find out that the students union is more than just a building with a few people inside it. Week 2 we'll look at student safety from road safety to just looking after your stuff in the library. Week 3 will be Shagadelic with sexual health awareness being the key message for all you dirty dirty people out there. Remember you can be dirty dirty without catching anything; just



ask Pa "I love the Clare Countryside" O'Brien, the SU Prez. On week 4 we are hoping to mobilise those of you that are pissed off at unpaid placements or just a general shafting at the hands of the University and indeed the Country you're not happy, so watch this space teachers, nurses, physio's et al. On week 5 the Students Union General meeting will be held...so come along and have your say. The rest of the semester is mapped out but I won't go into too much more detail except to add that we are having RAG week on week 10, the bands

are booked but I'm sworn to secrecy cos Bono doesn't want it getting out yet!! By the way keep a look out for me and my colleagues in our new union colours coming up to you in the next few weeks at random to find out what's wrong or right about UL, and indeed how you think we should be working for you. Other than that I've been pretty busy with the day to day stuff that wears ya down when ya didn't even know it was coming. That's my piece for the moment, but remember my door is always open.

PSA Notes

Emma Murphy

Happy New Year Everybody and welcome back. I hope you had a nice break. It has been a busy period here at the PSA over Christmas and we have a lot more to look forward to in the coming weeks.

Firstly, the Annual Postgraduate Students' Association Charity Ball will take place on March 6th in the Castletroy Park Hotel. Tickets are available from the PSA Centre and from the Students' Union reception, priced at €30. Tickets are limited so buy early to avoid disappointment.

Events this semester are going to be fortnightly and will vary throughout the semester. We will be kicking off this semester with a DJ session in the common room in conjunction with our usual Postgrad Friday night in the Stables. This will be the Friday of week 2. Other events which will take place are Band Night,

another DJ night, a night in a venue off campus and a BBQ evening at the end of the semester. For further details keep an eye out for posters for these gigs around the campus and also via your student email.

The PSA UGM will take place at 1pm on Wednesday of week 5. As always it is really important that we have a quorate meeting so that decisions concerning you can be made. The UGM will take place in the PSA centre and all are welcome to attend. If you have anything which you would like to raise at the meeting you can forward your query to me by 4pm on Wednesday of Week 4.

The closing date for applications for the postgraduate childcare fund is Friday of Week 3. Applications are available from my office and from the reception in the Students Union. Applications must be completed fully and must be submitted with all required documentation or they will not be processed.



Applications for the Babysitters forum are also available from the PSA and SU. The database will be updated and circulated to all staff and the local community for the coming semester at the end of week 2.

If you have any queries in relation to exam and assignment results or anything academic you can contact me. Also a note if you don't use your student email and want to be updated on up and coming notices and events be sure to send me an alternative address so I can add you to the mailing list.

So that's all for this edition; should you need to contact me you can do so at emma.murphy@ul.ie or at 086-0435305.

Have a good fortnight!
Emma



STIs Uncovered Syphilis

Description:

It is a bacterial infection.

Effects:

- You can pass it on to your sexual partner(s).
- You can pass it on to your baby during pregnancy.

Cause:

- Intimate genital contact.
- Unprotected vaginal, anal or oral sex.
- Unprotected rimming (mouth to anus contact).
- Kissing an infected person.
- From an infected pregnant mother to her baby.

Symptoms:

There are three stages to the infection and the symptoms are the same for men and women.

Stage 1 – Primary infection

Incubation period: 9 to 90 days
Symptoms: Usually appear around three weeks after exposure as a painless ulcer (similar to a cold sore) in the genital, anal or mouth area.



Stage 2 – Secondary infection

Incubation period: 6 weeks to 6 months
Symptoms: Red spotty rash develops, typically on the palms of your hands and the soles of your feet, but it may also appear elsewhere on your body.

Stage 3 – Tertiary syphilis

Incubation period: Can happen months or years after initial infection
Symptoms: Rare, but there is a possibility of long-term damage to

your heart and brain.

Treatment:

- Antibiotics – for you and your partner.
- Follow-up blood tests to make sure the infection is cleared.

Prevention:

Don't have intimate sexual contact. Or Have safer sex – always use a new condom correctly and put it on before you have sex.

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UL Student Membership

Term - now only €105
12 months - only €258

Ireland's Sporting Campus

Sport

UL GAA season starts on a high

Tomás McCarthy

In the early pre season tournaments both the UL football and hurling teams have impressed and emerged with some notable victories. On January 4 the hurlers began their Waterford Crystal League campaign against Limerick at Claughaun. In the first half both sides were rusty with Limerick leading 0-10 to 1-6 at the break. John Greene scored UL's goal after 20 minutes after being set up by Dylan Hayden. Seamus Hickey was outstanding in midfield in the second half against his native county. Niall Moran and David Breen though were in fine scoring form at the other end as Limerick led 0-15 to 1-8 with nine minutes. Then UL keeper James Dempsey made a great save and suddenly the tide turned. Substitutes Michael Gleeson and

Donagh Stack contributed greatly as UL racked up 1-6 without reply to win on a scoreline of 2-14 to 0-16. Ger Cunningham's men ruined Justin McCarthy's first day out with a fine display of intelligent hurling. Next day out Cork IT were the opposition in Newtownshandrum. The poor conditions led to a scrappy encounter. James Heffernan saw red for UL as did Greg Leahy for CIT. The Cork side led 0-6 to 0-5 at half time. Ryan Clifford who finished up with 1-6 fired a second half penalty to put UL's backs against the wall. Brian Carroll though proved to be the match winner for UL firing over eight points in all in a battling second half performance. He was helped out also by Sean Ryan, Tom Stapleton and Kieran Joyce. UL won by three points 0-14 to 1-8. The footballers also began their campaign against Limerick on

January 4. This McGrath Cup tie was held in Foynes and Limerick got off to a flyer. Maurice Carrig got a goal inside four minutes to give the intercounty side an ideal start. UL responded with three points from Paddy Byrne and a goal from Stephen Lonergan. The students led 1-6 to 1-2 at half time. UL failed to score for 23 minutes in the second half as Ian Ryan brought the game level 1-6 apiece. However late scores from Johnny Buckley, Kevin O'Brien and Enda Varley ensured a 1-9 to 1-7 victory. Cian O'Neill's men went on to face WIT in the quarter finals on January 13. UL lived up to their favourites tag with a convincing 3-11 to 1-6 win in Newtownshandrum. At the time of going to print both UL teams were preparing for semi final ties in the Waterford Crystal and McGrath Cups.

Hurlers face tricky Fitzgibbon test

Tomás McCarthy

UL were paired in a testing group for the Fitzgibbon Cup which commences this week. The hurlers were pitted against 2008 winners WIT as well as DIT who were quarter finalists last time out.

WIT were impressive champions last year. In an unforgettable final they overcame LIT 1-29 to 1-24 after two periods of extra time. However WIT were patchy in the league campaign before Christmas. After two wins and one loss in the group stages they were defeated in the knock out phase. Last year's captain Kevin Moran has graduated so he will be a big loss along with Shane O'Sullivan and TJ Reid. Goalkeeper Adrian Power, Conor Cooney, Martin Dunne as well as sharp shooter Ray McLoughney will still be available though. WIT will be expected to qualify from this group. Last Spring they defeated UL 0-11 to 0-6 in a poor encounter and they will also be UL's first opponents this time

around. DIT are something of an unknown quantity. They are sure to have a number of Dublin intercounty players and are capable of providing a surprise on any given day. They will be relying on Dublin's Kevin O'Reilly and Peter Kelly as well as Kilkenny's Willie O'Dwyer. In 2007 they qualified for the last four only to be beaten by NUIG. Last year they got to the quarter finals where they fell to WIT. UL's away match to DIT is likely to be a critical one. DIT are underdogs in this company but don't expect them to go down without a fight.

Let's look at UL for a while. Their league form was impressive as it has been for the last few years. They were unlucky to finish up on the wrong end of a 1-9 to 1-8 scoreline against UCC in the final. The management will realise that while the league is important it's the Fitzgibbon that's the big one. In recent times UL have been blistering in the league only to fall down in the spring. UL's display against WIT last February was most disappointing and cost them a quarter final spot. On paper they should at least get second spot in this group. With players of the calibre of Michael Verney, Seamus Hickey and Brian Carroll to name a few it is hard

to see them not qualifying. While UL have great individual talent can they gel together as a unit? As proven by WIT it's teamwork that matters the most in Fitzgibbon. It's a quality that UL must produce if they are to go far in this competition. In the recent Waterford Crystal competition they showed plenty of skilful hurling which was an encouraging sign. The game against Limerick was particularly impressive. Throughout the second half UL employed a short, running game that was a joy to watch. It is clearly a style Ger Cunningham has been working on with the team and it certainly worked on that day in Claughaun. Players like Hickey, John Greene as well as Michael Gleeson and Ryan O'Dwyer were outstanding that day. The team showed they have the potential to be serious Fitzgibbon contenders but must maintain a consistency of performance to reach the final stages at Trinity College.

The action commences on February 5 with a mouth watering tussle with WIT on pitch one. It should be a fascinating battle because you only have two games in the group stage and an early defeat is costly. A repeat of last year's dramatic action will be most welcome.

UL ladies soccer in winning form

Richard O'Brien

University of Limerick accepted their second Futsal Cup title in three years. 108 players participated in this year's Futsal Intervarsities, hosted by University of Limerick on Sunday, 23 November. Conceding only three goals in their six group matches, IT Sligo A team emerged top of Group 1. With UL A team only one point behind, their only defeat of the group stages at the hands of the Sligo girls. Belfast Metropolitan College undefeated topped Group 2 and it was the UL B team that completed the line up for the Cup semi finals. In the Semis, Sligo IT A slotted 3 past a UL B team that had only conceded one goal through all the group stages. UL A proved too strong for Belfast Metropolitan, winning 3 - 1 to end the Belfast girls unbeaten run. Having defeated their opponents in the group stages, Sligo IT A were favorites going into the Cup Final. From the kick off it was clear the UL girls had learned from their group stage match and a free flowing final of some quality football was on display. It was a solid all round effort from the UL A team that won the Cup, Lorna O'Connell and Lynsey McKey slotting two goals past what seemed an impenetrable Sligo goal. They also managed to frustrate the Sligo IT attack that had previously succeeded to score in every game up to the final game. This is the first silverware for the UL women's soccer team, and the only piece which managed to evade UL last year. UL will be hoping it is the first of many this season.

UL record facile victories over NUIG and the Guards

UL 12-0 NUIG

NUIG, having trouble fielding a women's soccer team this year, travelled to UL with just ten players. They would have preferred to give a walkover but this would suspend them from partaking in the Intervarsities in March. They were required, therefore, to field against an almost full strength UL team. UL won't have learned very much from this game, but it did give some of the players a chance to move up the scoring charts, Lynsey McKey netting 5 in this game. Other scorers were: Jenny Downey, Richard O'Brien, Emer Flatley, Jenny Critchley, Emer Flatley and Sarah Considine.



UL 9-0 Garda College

The Garda College have become one of UL's more difficult opponents in recent years, so this comprehensive result may surprise many. It certainly didn't look like it was going to be such a straight forward affair in the opening 15 minutes, when the Garda College controlled all of the possession. The UL defence, stood firm, and with Siobhan O'Sullivan on top form, the Garda College failed to create any real chances, that would trouble UL keeper Laoise O'Driscoll. Full back Lorna O'Connell began to press forward as UL slowly settled and began to play the quick passing football which they've displayed all year. Twenty-five minutes in, Jenny Critchley broke the deadlock as she rounded the keeper and slotted coolly into the empty goal. It didn't take long for Lynsey McKey, now the league's top scorer to add a second. The first half scoring was rounded off by Niamh Mulcahy, who benefitted from a clever dummy by McKey to make it 3-0 to UL. UL ran riot in the second half scoring six, including two fantastic Jenny Critchley efforts, securing her hat-trick as well as a second half hat-trick from Niamh Mulcahy, taking her total for the day to four. Captain Kacey O'Driscoll rounded off the scoring for the afternoon.

UL are now top of the WSCAI table with 21 points from seven games. UCD are just three points behind however, meaning that UL will need to keep up their winning ways in the final three group games, the first of which is a tough encounter away to Sligo at the beginning of February. For now, the management team of Mike Considine and Sean Hehir are happy with the excellent start UL have made to the season and with winning the WSCAI Futsal Intervarsities Cup.

Lifesaving winners in Belfast



Nicky Beirne and Peter Shone

UL sent a strong 20 man team to the Swimming and Lifesaving Intervarsities at the end of November in Belfast. With over 280 competitors from 12 Colleges competing in this event, competition was tough as to who would be crowned the top Irish University. The competition was of the highest standard we have seen in an event like this in a long time. UL fielded

their strongest team in a few years and had strong hopes to do very well this year. The swimming section of the competition took place on Friday where UL managed to have all swimmers reaching at least one final. Particular applaud goes to Kyle Merritt winning Gold in the 50 Backstroke and Silver in the 100 Backstroke and Dave Kelly striking Gold in the 50 Butterfly event. Aoife Sexton kept up her high standards by grasping a silver medal in the 100 IM event, Grace

Doyle managing a Silver medal in a nail biting 100 Breaststroke race and stealing the bronze medal position in the 200m IM event and Catherine Long winning a bronze in the 50 Butterfly event. Both men's and women's Medley Relay teams managed bronze after fighting off stiff competition from DCU, UCC and QUB. Sadly, UL were outdone in the Freestyle Relays, with both teams coming in fourth. These outstanding results put UL third in the Swimming

Events. Saturday's events focused on the lifesaving section of this competition where UL shone above all other colleges. Fantastic individual performances coming from the men's section of the lifesaving competition with John McCall winning the 100m Manikin Carry event Peter Shone coming in second and Eoin O'Sullivan coming in third place, completing the 1-2-3 for UL. This feat was repeated in the 50m manikin carry event by Cian O'Sullivan, Peter

Shone and John McCall respectively.

In the women's section, we had another outstanding performance came from Grace Doyle who won her third individual medal of the weekend after coming second in the 100m Manikin Carry event, while Nicky Beirne achieved a personal best in the 50m manikin carry event to steal a gold medal and Ciara Ryan following closely behind to win bronze in the same event.

Both UL men's and women's relay teams proved to be unbeaten after winning gold in all four relay events, including the 4x25 manikin carry relay, 4x50 Obstacle relay, 4x50 canbuoy relay and the 4x12m Line throw relay. These performances combined to put UL ahead of all other colleges to be crowned Lifesaving Varsity Champions for 2008/09. well done to all who competed and helped to bring home the silver plates this year!

Freshers blow UL Bohs - a tale of two seasons

Conor McGrath

Inconsistent is the only word which can describe UL Bohs season so far. This is due to the team's lack of form in recent weeks and their central position in the AIB League table.

UL Bohs were looking to flush the disappointment of December 08 out of their system with a much needed confidence – boosting win over Buccaneers in Athlone. However, Buccaneers had other ideas and the

Bohs suffered a 31-13 defeat. This was a particularly harsh loss as the Bohs were only 14-13 down at half time, thanks to points from Tommy O'Donnell and Ian McNulty. The tide changed in the second half and the introduction of Connacht's Daniel O'Riordan and Conor O'Loughlin put an Atlantic Ocean between the teams. The management and the players will obviously look back on this defeat with a substantial amount of regret as they missed out on place in the last eight of the AIB Cup and a genuine opportunity for silverware.

Unfortunately, their league position isn't too great either. The Bohs are currently languishing in 11th position and they are ten points behind the leaders, Clontarf. Recent defeats to Cork Con and St Marys have not helped their cause and they have a lot of work to do to rescue their patchy season. Fortunately, they will be playing many higher placed teams in the coming weeks and with a bit of Munster luck they

could climb into unforeseen territory. The UL Bohs second team only know how to win these days. Their rich vein of form continued against Cashel in the Munster Junior Cup at Annacotty earlier this month. The Bohs emerged victorious in a 17-15 win. An important try by Paul Grennell and 12 points by Aidan McNulty set up an impressive win. The Bohs also withstood a 12 point Cashel fightback in the second half to scrape the win.

The UL Women's team have been giving the Men a run for their Recession earned money all season. They are currently unbeaten in the league and are comfortably on top of the table with 10 points to spare. Shades of Arsene Wenger's Arsenal in 04? The Womens team are also proud to announce that Joy Neville has been named as Captain of the Irish Womens team. This probably tops her proud record of being the first Irish woman to score an Irish try in a championship match. Congratulations Joy!

Exciting season ahead for ladies rugby

Fiona Reidy

Semester 2 promises to be an action packed one for the UL Ladies Rugby team. There will be a total of five league matches in eight weeks, a possible appearance in the league final, and the pinnacle of this team's year: The Intervarsities. This is a two day event being held this year in UCC during week 10. UL have crucial home games this semester, which will determine if they get to the League final. UL are under no illusions regarding the challenges they face to regain the league title once more. These home games are Wednesday week 3 against the Garda College with a 2pm KO, Wednesday of week 4 against UCC and Wednesday of week 8 against NUIG.

There are two away games in week 2 and week 6 against NUIG and the Garda College. The latter game has the possibility of being the most crucial game of the season.

UL Ladies Rugby in it's ten years of existence have won the league 6 times but undoubtedly their greatest achievement is winning the Intervarsity title a staggering 9 times in a row. Last year being the only year they did not win it, losing to a well coached Garda team in the final. UL have learned valuable lessons in that painful loss and are unwilling to settle for second best this year.

This year the UL team has a good blend of experience and inexperience

a combination which has seen some of the new talented players shine amongst players who have been present in the team for a few years. This mix has worked well in games in semester one and will definitely benefit the team in crucial encounters during this semester.

We always stress that new players are more than welcome as it is new players that contribute to the team's success every year. If you would like more information about UL Ladies Rugby, training times and other information do not hesitate to contact us. E-mail: ulladiesrugby@hotmail.com. Or phone Fiona Reidy 086-1023841 or Kelly Aherne 086-1044041.

Comment

O'Gara living on borrowed time

John Condreny

Be honest now. How many of you, even the most patriotic Munster fans among you, can truthfully put hand on heart and swear on the Holy Book that Ronan O'Gara is the greatest, or even the second greatest, fly-half in world rugby?

I should hope that there are very few among you who can answer in the affirmative. For there is increasing uncertainty that O'Gara's place on next summer's Lions tour is guaranteed, while he retains the number 10 shirt for his country merely due to an appalling dearth of quality in the fly-half position.

Do not misunderstand me; Ronan O'Gara is a very good player. His place-kicking is among the best in the world and, when in form and playing behind a strong pack with go-forward ball, he controls games with ease. He has played many great games for Ireland: against England and South Africa in 2004 and Australia in 2006, for example. But I am sick to the back teeth of the blinkered Irish assumption that, Dan Carter aside, he is the best, most creative, most tactically astute

of world number 10s. The truth is he is not.

Great players shine on the biggest stage and the Heineken Cup, for all its passionate thrills, is nowhere near as icily competitive or technically brilliant as the Tri-Nations, where Carter, Australia's Matt Giteau and to a lesser extent South Africa's Butch James continue to set the standard.

When England were capable of regularly beating all three of the southern hemisphere superpowers in those oh-so-distant days, Jonny Wilkinson showed the world how to play at 10. Watch a video of his superb try against New Zealand in 2001, and try to point out a similar example of individual craft exhibited by O'Gara. The Newcastle man may be past his very best, but he retains an aura of quiet authority and commanding leadership that saw a limited English side reach the World Cup final last autumn.

O'Gara has never displayed that. He was only handed the captaincy of Ireland last March due to doubts over Paul O'Connell's ability to last the full 80 minutes against the English at Twickenham. And he

cracked under the pressure and was eclipsed by a debutant who will shine in years to come (one Daniel J. Cipriani).

His defenders will absolve O'Gara from blame for his performances at last year's World Cup, blaming lurid falsehoods printed by the media for affecting his concentration and preparation. But O'Gara had been playing particularly badly for Ireland all year, before the stories were ever published. The Irish media's tendency to jump on misperforming stars manifested itself in distasteful fashion last September, but that does not excuse O'Gara's dreadful international form since 2006.

The Corkman will continue as fly-half for the Six Nations, as Paddy Wallace is no better than a late substitute in landslide victories and the likes of Ian Humphreys, Ian Keatley and Jonny Sexton, all yet to make their international debuts, will not be thrown in at the deep end by Declan Kidney.

But he may well be wearing the green shirt again on Ireland's summer tour. He has been leapfrogged in the international

stakes, and in this writer's humble opinion, on present form (which is unlikely to change significantly), Stephen Jones will start the Lions' Tests against the Springboks. His Welsh compatriot James Hook will be on the bench, and Cipriani (Ian McGeechan's protégé at Wasps) will travel to South Africa as the third number 10.

Scotland's Chris Paterson would also be a wise selection choice, given that his goalkicking statistics under pressure are formidable and that he can cover wing, fullback and fly-half. O'Gara's forte is his tactical kicking, but if the Lions' management adopt that as a consistent tactic they will lose the series.

Victor Matfield and Bakkies Botha are two of the best line-out operators in world rugby, and the Lions locks will not win much ball from them off the top. Hence, players such as Jones, Hook and Cipriani who use speed of thought, sleight of hand and angle of pass to forge opportunities for their outside backs will be invaluable on this tour.

O'Gara has travelled on two Lions' tours, and has played in a

Test for perhaps fifteen minutes as a substitute. The players selected for Test squads ahead of him – Wilkinson, Jones, Jenkins – all exhibit (or exhibited in the latter's case) maturity, leadership, humility and common sense in addition to their duties as the team's fulcrum. O'Gara loses his cool, concedes

stupid penalties, backchats to the referee and sulks at perceived injustices when things are against his team. Not the traits of a top professional. He must improve dramatically in the spring, or he risks being left at home in June and seeing his international career peter into mediocrity.



Ronan O'Gara

Galway for Liam & Harrington for the Masters

Conor McGrath looks ahead to 2009

This year is going to be one of the best years in recent times. Somehow, that does not sound right! That sentence does seem out of place and out of context with recent economic developments in this country. However, I am obviously referring to the upcoming sporting year and what a year in prospect: a Lions tour, a very interesting Six Nations, an actual title race in the Premier League, World Cup qualifying year and a fascinating GAA season are only a taster of what's to come in the next 11 months. Who cares about 'The Recession'?

First up is the Heineken Cup. Munster and Leinster have a bit of work to do away from home against the likes of Montauban and London Wasps. I can easily see both teams qualifying for the latter stages and finishing top of their respective groups. Munster have every chance of defending their title, if they qualify. Who should they fear?

On the other hand, it's now or never for Leinster. A rematch in Croke Park in the semi would be a nailed on classic, but Munster are the masters of knockout rugby.

The Six Nations will be a different kettle of fish altogether. Ireland have a favourable draw with France and England at home in the month of February. However, Wales away will be a tough and close battle. Scotland and Italy away should be forgone conclusions. I think that Wales will beat us in Cardiff, but France will take it. France at home will be tough, but

we'll finish as runners up. I dearly hope I am wrong.

The Lions tour in South Africa will round off the rugby season in style. It's a toss up between Ryan Jones and BOD for the captaincy, but the D4 Gods will shine on the mighty one. I think Bryan Habana will run riot in a 2-1 series win for the Springboks. O'Driscoll will probably get injured again.

Football always has a big year thanks to heavy promotion from the satellite corporations. This term should be no different. The Premier League looks set to be a brawl between the old rivals, Liverpool and Man Utd. Bias may be questioned but United to edge it.

April will be the critical month. Aston Villa will hopefully take fourth place and knock Wenger off his perch. I definitely cannot see Man City winning the UEFA Cup or Tottenham for that matter! Liverpool will trounce Real Madrid and Manchester United should beat a vastly overrated Inter Milan team. I am hoping for a Barcelona v United final. Gut instinct tells me that Barcelona will be full of fiestas in late May.

It is also a massive year for Irish soccer. Italy and Bulgaria will be tricky opponents. The dreaming will finally stop in Croke against Bulgaria in March. If we don't get at least three points against the Bulgarians, I don't think we'll qualify. Stephen Ireland won't bother with us either, unless we beat Italy 6-0 etc. Bohemians will also retain the League of Ireland.

The GAA year will be a fascinating one. Recent history states that Tyrone usually take at least two seasons to regroup after Sam Maguire has visited Omagh. Kerry will be there as usual, the Dubs will be written and talked about all Summer, and Galway will find it hard to mount a serious challenge. I can only see Kerry regaining it.

The Hurling season looks to be over before it begins. Kilkenny are the definition of greatness and are unquestionably the team of the decade. Change could be on the horizon though. Galway need, and will have, more games thanks to the revered Leinster hurling championship. Tipp will retain Munster. I'm going to stick my head out and go for Galway to spring a surprise on the Cats. Someone has to say they're not going to win it again!

Padraig Harrington has a massive year ahead of him. He is going for third successive major at the Masters tournament in April. The Tiger will be lurking, though, and his form will be impossible to predict due to his injury. Woods will take the US Open at Bethpage due to the length of the course. Harrington will be there at the British Open as always, but I reckon he could win The Masters Tournament.

I could write the whole sports section based on my predictions, but the Sports Editor won't let me do that. I know I'll be wrong on many counts but that is the greatest aspect of sport, it's mostly guesswork. Let the good times roll!

Why do I say these things?

Liam Toghher

A little over three months ago BBC presenter Jonathan Ross, along with comedian Russell Brand, was vilified worldwide for making slanderous comments to the granddaughter of former Fawley Towers star Andrew Sachs. The name of Ross' autobiography? It's called 'Why Do I Say These Things?' It's a question that Liverpool manager Rafael Benitez might ask himself if the Reds do not win the Premier League this season.

The Spaniard hit the headlines earlier this month when he publicly opined that Sir Alex Ferguson received preferential treatment from the FA in terms of refereeing decisions and the sequence of league fixtures. What made the comments even more noteworthy was the sheer volume of research Benitez undertook prior to the infamous press conference. He treated journalists to a number of "facts" about various controversial incidents such as the Javier Mascherano fiasco at Old Trafford last season while also stating that the fixtures computer threw up more favourable games for United than Liverpool in relation to European matches.

He could not have done more to help the champions' cause if he toggled out in a Man United jersey and scored in every game for Ferguson's team until the end of the season. The legendary Scot must have been dying with gleeful laughter as he sat at home and watched Benitez talk himself into a bigger hole than the one in the ozone layer. As if this wasn't pleasure enough for Ferguson and the Red Devils, Liverpool drew 0-0 with Stoke the next day and barely deserved their point. Fast forward another 24 hours and United were humiliating Chelsea. If Man U fans didn't get anything for Christmas, they only had to wait another couple of weeks for this hugely worthwhile present.

Benitez must learn that entering mind games with a manager who has been in a title run-in practically every year since the mid-1980s is more suicidal than any kamikaze pilot's mission. He may have won La Liga twice at the helm of Valencia but that matters little in the Premier League. Before he goes public with a well-researched diatribe about his competitors he should concentrate solely on getting his own house in order. Do you think Alex Ferguson would sacrifice time spent on Manchester United to whine about title rivals? Rafael Benitez may well have got his hands on the league trophy, enveloped it in red and black wrapping paper and mailed it directly to Old Trafford.

The Score

Liam Togher

Play To Your Strengths

He might be the world footballer of the year but Cristiano Ronaldo is unlikely to enjoy such a status at motor racing. The Portuguese showboat merchant slammed his brand new Ferrari into the wall of a Manchester tunnel earlier this month. Someone get him some L-plates sharpish!

Hair Play

The Premier League really is a motley catalogue of hairstyles nowadays, what with Marouane Fellaini's afro, the Andy Carroll cornrows and Djibril Cisse with his colour-a-week Mohawk. What next, Lucas with plaits? Keep an eye out!

A Word From Our Sponsors

West Ham began the season wearing the logo of XL Airways on their kit but when the company went out of business their place on the claret and blue was taken by player numbers within a white box. Now the jerseys advertise betting firm SBO Bet. You wouldn't see that many sponsors on Formula 1 cars!

I'm After Your Job, Pal!

In addition to his duties at the heart of Liverpool's defence, Jamie Carragher recently appeared as a pundit on Sky Sports. Even on his debut showing he talked more sense than regular 'analyst' Jamie Redknapp. You'd think with the amount of people losing their jobs that Sky could announce at least one layoff in this department.

We're Here Too, You Know

Such are the injuries and suspensions at Bolton that manager Gary Megson named just four players on the bench for the trip to Arsenal, three less than the allowed number of subs. How galling must it be for the Trotters' academy members that this rare door of opportunity is closed to them.

F**k me, That Was Quick

The world's fastest sending off in organised football took place in the non-league in England a few weeks ago when a red card was flashed after all of three seconds. It was still one second short of the dismissal of a Sunday League player who greeted the referee's whistle for kick off by saying "F**k me, that was loud!"

Magic Numbers

Tomás McCarthy

10 The admission price in euros for the UL v Limerick hurling match a few weeks ago. A bit steep if you ask me.

4 The number of goals Stephen Ireland has scored in his international career to date. Will he be able to add to that tally?

30 million The reported amount of money that Man United will have to cough up in order to keep Carlos Tevez. United fans might have to settle for Danny Welbeck!

30 Cork hurlers still on strike but they are still training away. Will they still be training away come the summer?

31 Years that Emile Heskey has graced this planet. He's probably been booed on the terraces for half of those.

220,000 Pounds worth of Ferrari left on the scrapheap after Ronaldo tested out the barriers near Manchester airport. The barriers were fine by the way.

1 Yellow card and you're off. At least that what the GAA is saying to players at the moment.

A Sports Writers Diary

Tomás McCarthy

Jan 3

"Southampton will beat Man United tomorrow you read it here first". Liam Togher makes possibly the worst prediction in the history of predictions on his bebo page.

Jan 4

Good day for UL GAA. Wins for both the hurlers and the footballers against Limerick. The new rules get a luke warm reception. Man United much to Togher's surprise defeat Southampton. I watch the game in Smyth's which is unreal for live sport with six tv screens and even a few behind the bar itself! Togher suggests that we start a campaign called "Bring Back Anthony Stokes". Anthony who?

Jan 5

Diarmuid O'Flynn in the Irish Examiner describes the UL hurling team as a "motley crew" in his match report. Generally it's a positive endorsement of the team. Fitzgibbon anyone?

Jan 6

Stephen Ireland is back in the Ireland squad. Ryan Tubridy laughs when he is asked on the Lucy Kennedy Show if he fancies any Irish sports women. An Focal Sport has no comment to make on the matter.

Jan 7

Stephen Ireland is not back in the Ireland squad.

Jan 8

Send out an email to the sports writers looking (ie begging) for articles. It's not easy folks trust me. Ronaldo crashes his Ferrari into a barrier near Manchester airport. Apparently he wanted the wall to be moved back ten yards!

Jan 9

McGrath doesn't like Stephen Ireland apparently. Suddenly realise that I've left out a Man City midfielder out of the diary. I knew I forgot something. Benitez hits back at Alex Ferguson in a bizarre press conference. Let the mind games begin!

Jan 10

Togher goes for a mad 55-1 accumulator which doesn't work out. Don't go betting kids. Liverpool unsurprisingly slip up against Stoke. John Giles describes Sir Alex Ferguson's behaviour as "despicable". Big Dan Shanahan is spotted doing a bit of shopping.

Jan 11

The UL hurlers continue their fine form with a 0-14 to 1-8 victory over CIT in the Crystal League quarter finals. Brian Carroll is top scorer with eight points. Man United hammer Chelsea as Fergie puts Benitez under pressure. I watch a rain sodden McKenna Cup game on TG4 as Donegal beat Fermanagh and the new rules get more confusing.

Jan 12

Didier Drogha is described as a "thundering disgrace" on Newstalk by Paddy Mulligan. Couldn't have said it better myself! The first article of the year arrives at my desk. Hurrah! And no I don't have a desk.

Jan 13

Dublin footballer Diarmuid Connolly is sent home from the team holiday in La Manga. Expect a few extra laps when the boys return Diarmuid! UL hammer WIT 3-11 to 1-6 in the McGrath Cup.

Jan 14

Spotted this result in a youth's league game Clashmore 11 Cappoquin 6. Game of the century or a really bad typing error!

Jan 15

The legend that is Kevin Kilbane moves to Hull City after falling out of favour at Wigan.

Jan 16

£150 million for Kaka? Sure that's only small change for Manchester City!

Jan 26

Back in UL!! Plenty of rugby, soccer, GAA, skydiving action to come! Last one to The Lodge is a rotten egg!

Give It A Lash Quiz 1

Tomás McCarthy tests your sporting knowledge



1. Arsenal striker Nicklas Bendtner hails from which country?
2. Who won the hurler of the year award in 1997?
3. John Higgins is famous for playing which sport?
4. In what year did Liverpool last win the Champions League?
5. Who did Munster defeat in last year's Heineken Cup final?
6. Which GAA referee released an autobiography entitled "Final Whistle"?
7. Name the Championship side that are nicknamed The Hornets.
8. Gary McAllister was recently sacked by which League One outfit?
9. Darren Cave currently plays his rugby with which Irish province?
10. Where will this year's Irish Open golf tournament take place?

Top Ten - Outhalves In The World

John Condren

1. Dan Carter
2. Matt Giteau
3. Stephen Jones
4. Jonny Wilkinson
5. James Hook
6. Felipe Contepomi
7. Ronan O'Gara
8. Dan Cipriani
9. Butch James
10. Juan Martin Hernandez

Classic George Hamilton Quotes

"Kevin Moran...oldest man on the pitch today..35 years of age...of course the referee could possibly be older than that...and technically he's on the pitch too...then again his linesmen could be even older than him...but are they technically 'on' the pitch."

"That should be no problem for the defence - OH NOOOO!!"

"I might be tempting fate but I can't see the Poles scoring...OH NOOO they just have!!!"

"The Baggio brothers, of course, are not related."

"The seeds of doubt that were sown at the weekend against Egypt have been doused by a dose of Jack Charlton's almighty weedkiller."

"If that's offside, I'm a Chinaman."

"The ESB sponsored Georgia special Olympics team will be in Dublin this year and maybe they will reflect on the night Ireland came to Tbilisi and provided more than power"

"You sir are an idiot"

"Red sky at night good day tomorrow"

"We're into the second moment of stoppage time of which there isn't one"

"The midfield are like a chef...trying to prise open a stubborn oyster to get at the fleshy meat inside"

"The nation holds its breath.....YES WE'RE THERE!!"

Answers to Sports Quiz

1. Denmark
2. Jamesie O'Connor
3. Snooker
4. 2005
5. Toulouse
6. Paddy Russell
7. Watford
8. Leeds United
9. Ulster
10. Baltray Co Louth

Under the Spotlight

Dancing around campus

Elenor Fields

Well guys if you haven't heard of us yet, you have now! We're one of the latest clubs on campus, the UL Dance Club! This club has been set up by a bunch of first years, all studying one of the university's newest courses BA Voice and Dance, and yes, it is a real course! I know, who would think a bunch of freshers could do it! The club was started up last semester and, boy, did we have some fun!

We started off by doing the usual advertising: posters and flyers round campus, blah, blah, blah, who hasn't done it before right?

Then the committee decided, let's really get their attention! Let's show what this club is really all about, dance! So, we held a dance showcase in November in the PAC in the basement of the Foundation Building. This showcase, choreographed by committee president, Jenny Brown and Barry Burke aka "Bazzy B" displayed all the forms of dance we currently do

in the club: ballet, tap, hip-hop, street, salsa, break-dancing and jazz and was performed by some of the teachers themselves amongst many other talented dancers from around campus. We received a great turn out and thanks to everyone who turned up and to the dancers who put all the hard work into it! We hope to have another one in April so keep an eye out!

We currently have 150 members in total...and we want more! All members are taking a range of different classes which run different evenings of the week, and we warmly welcome anyone who wants to join. From my own personal experience you don't have to have any dance experience whatsoever, so don't let that turn you off. Come and watch a class or two if you want to see what we get up to. It's always a good laugh.

Last semester we ran classes of the following styles: street dance, hip-hop, break dancing, salsa, ballet and jazz. (Note: you don't have to take every single dance class – you

just pick the style(s) you want to learn and take those classes.) We hope to keep these classes running next semester depending on numbers in each class. One of our aims is to introduce more and more styles of dance so if you have any suggestions of dance you'd like to take up, let us know and we'll see what we can do! Am I selling it to you yet?

U'L Dance gives all students a chance to explore and learn different ranges of dance at their own level and all our teachers are highly skilled dancers! It's also a place to make new friends, meet new people etc...there's always a great buzz at classes and everyone seems to talk to everyone!

You get the opportunity to learn amateur and professional choreography and have the opportunity to take part in regular open performances both on and off campus!

Speaking of which, we currently have a group of dancers rehearsing for the annual University Intervarsity which this year will



UL Dance members Rachel Shiel (vice President), Mauli, Antonio, Jenny Brown (President)

be held up in DCU. So, as you can tell the club is off to a flying start! Best of luck to all the dancers competing in March.

Check out our Bebo page, <ULD4> or search for "U'L Dance". It is regularly updated with videos

and class timetables so leave a comment and we'll get back to you! Or if you want to contact our President, Jenny, feel free to call her on (085) 7335302 and she'll answer any questions you have. We want lots of new members

this semester...we want you! Don't be shy. To all of you non-dancers like myself, I give you the words of Barack Obama, "Yes we can!"

So there you have it! We're dancing circles round campus! Step up and join!

Have your say with DebU

The Debating Union is one of UL's newer societies having only been in existence 15 years, but this doesn't stop it being a thriving union always attracting new members, not to mention having a social scene to rival that of any other club or society.

The main focus of the DebU is to send speakers to various national and international competitions held throughout the year. These competitions are always a lot of fun, as, of course, are the nights out that follow! In order to compete, and to do it well, the union has a Speaker Development Officer whose job it is to offer help and guidance to the members at weekly speaker development classes, so even complete novices can learn the art of debating and improve on the skills they already have.

Along with this, the union also invites in guest speakers to help with speaker development like Rhydian Morgan, renowned debating coach. If debating interests you but speaking isn't really your thing, the union members can become judges who also represent the union and the university at all the various competitions. As well as the speaker

development class, the DebU hosts weekly in-house debates where different members of the union speak and judge on topics as varied as American politics, dying for your country, the media and nuclear energy to name but a few. Many of these debates are held in conjunction with other departments from the university like the History department and the Politics department.

Last semester was a busy one for the DebU, seeing many of its members speaking and judging all over Ireland and the UK. While this was going on, the in-house debates were also taking place such as the US Election debate with the Politics department which was guest-chaired by Prime Time's Mark Little and the Patriotism debate with the History department chaired by Padraic Lenihan.

The first inter-varsity competition of the year attended by members of the DebU was held in UCC. This was followed by the Munster Colours debate held in UL itself and attracting top debaters from the province. Next came the trials for the Worlds Debating competition. Those qualifying for Worlds competed in the Oxford and Cambridge

Universities competitions, two of the most prestigious competitions in the UK. After this UL, along with UCD, Trinity and NUIG, played host to the early rounds of the esteemed Irish Times Competition and had more success with no less than six speakers progressing through to the quarter finals, (Maurice Cotter, Niamh O' Donovan, Erica Mackey, and first years, Stephen Egan, Grace O' Malley and Cathal McCabe). Maurice Cotter then progressed to the semi finals as an individual, which is due to be held in Galway on 30 January. Finally, the semester drew to a close with speakers and judges making a trip to Dublin for UCD's annual competition.

Over the January break the four UL speakers who had qualified competed in the World's competition, this year held in Cork, along with two judges from the union. Here they did the university proud, finishing up on a combined score of 26 team points.

Next semester promises to be just as action packed with plans to compete in Trinity, NUIG, Glasgow, Manchester and Wales, not to mention playing host to a number of national and international

universities when the union holds its own annual competition in early March. This UL competition will have Doug Cochran (St. Andrew's) and Tony Murphy (UCC) as its chief adjudicators. As for in-house, there is to be a debate commemorating the 15th anniversary of the Rwandan Genocide early on in the semester in conjunction with the Irish Peace Institute, followed by another debate on the contentious issue of nuclear energy. The year will finish up with the European Championships, this year to be held in Newcastle, where the union hopes to build on the successes of recent years and on the great performances of the previous semester.

Finally, to end what was a fantastic semester for debating at UL, and to add to what promises to be an even better one, it has been announced that UL will host the final of the Irish Times Competition. Events don't come more prestigious than this competition which has become the highlight of the Irish debating calendar and is to be held in the university during the spring semester. This is a fantastic coup for the union and the university and will attract some of the finest debating talent



Kyle Murray of the UL Politics Department speaking at the American Election debate held last semester (photo by Yann Ryan)

from all over the country.

The DebU will hold a recruitment drive in week 1 in the main canteen from anyone wishing to join up, and

anyone looking for more information should email the union at uldebu@gmail.com