Trinity Access 21
Symposium and Showcase
18th September 2015
Trinity Long Room Hub

Trinity College Dublin
Coláiste na Tríonóide, Baile Átha Cliath
The University of Dublin
Transforming Life Trajectories Together:

The Challenge of Moving from ‘Ripples of Hope’ to ‘Great Waves of Success’ in Higher Education Progression for Low Income Students

Preface

‘As a society we can acknowledge and celebrate the enormous strides in broadening access to higher education. . . . But an uncomfortable and sobering fact is that deep reservoirs of educational disadvantage, mirroring in large part economic disadvantage, are also part of the Irish higher education story.’ (Higher Education Authority, Consultation Paper on the National Plan, 2014).

Over the last few decades the numbers of students progressing to higher education has continued to expand. Although there are challenges related to ‘over-education’, which have been magnified by the global economic crisis, the evidence still points towards the lifelong benefits to individuals of gaining a degree. It provides for greater autonomy, better health, higher incomes and an enhanced capacity to contribute towards economic and social progress. Nonetheless, some socio-economic groups are still very under-represented in higher education. The Trinity Access Programmes (TAP) research report
‘Ripples of Hope’ (2013) detailed the transformational stories of thousands of TAP Trinity students and alumni and the impact they have had on their families and communities. There are now over 800 Trinity alumni and 1,000 Trinity undergraduates who entered the College via TAP. Thousands of others from our link schools have progressed to other higher education institutions nationwide. There is no doubt that there is considerable talent, motivation and creativity located in low income communities across the country and indeed globally, in similar demographic contexts. The challenge for all involved is to disturb the ‘deep reservoirs of educational disadvantage’ to which the HEA refers, turning the ‘ripple effect’ of each one of these talented young people into a ‘great wave’, so that we are certain no young person’s life chances are determined by virtue of where they are born.

One Million More – A Global Approach

On Friday 18th September 2015, Trinity Access 21 hosted a showcase and symposium in Trinity College Dublin’s Long Room Hub. The aim was to consider global challenges in accessing higher education and the evidence around what works to address these obstacles in the Irish, the UK, and the US contexts. The symposium, convened by Trinity Access 21 in partnership with US-based educational non-profit ‘College for Every Student’, included inputs from a range of distinguished guests, including Professor
Edward St John, University of Michigan; Dr Lee Elliott Major, the Sutton Trust; and Tom Boland, CEO of the Higher Education Authority. Together with its US partner, College for Every Student, Trinity College has committed to ensuring 1,000,000 more low income young people globally get to and through college by 2025. Reaching this goal requires a whole range of high-quality, creative partnerships at individual, school, community, business and post-secondary levels. This symposium builds on two global summits convened by College for Every Student and Trinity College Dublin in Essex, New York, which set out a series of practical measures we can take to reach our One Million More goal.

The Trinity Access 21 symposium convened seventy dedicated educators, policy makers, sponsors and alumni who together outlined a framework for partnerships to support low-income students in reaching their full educational potential. This framework draws on emergent models of best practice in the US, the UK, and in Ireland and highlights a concrete set of next steps for scaling existing practice across a wider range of schools, higher education institutions and communities to reach larger numbers of students.

‘The Trinity Access 21-College for Every Student approach is different because it changes the dynamic. It changes those default behaviours by changing the conversation. The clarity of the language is key to this success. Now teachers and students are talking the same language. Students and parents are clear from the outset that everybody in the school has their heart set on college. That simple truth binds the students, parents and teachers together-in agreement at last about their common purpose. This isn’t about what you can’t do or why you can’t – this is all about what you can do, what you want to do and how you can do it. . . .’ (Patricia Hayden, Principal, St Joseph’s Secondary School, Rush)
Call to Action

Symposium participants identified four strategies for developing genuine partnerships aimed at supporting greater educational access. Developed as responses to a number of key topics which recurred across keynote addresses, panels and roundtable discussions, these strategies can deepen partnership models and contribute to lasting success.

“What we’re trying to do is create a seismic change in the number of students from low income backgrounds getting to colleges like Trinity College.” Cliona Hannon, Co-Director, Trinity Access 21

1) A coordinated and localised approach

Symposium participants emphasised the necessity for companies, schools, colleges, programmes, and mentors to work together in order to address the local conditions through which the problems of global educational disadvantage manifest.

The development of national and local models should be responsive to the particular demands of the area. For example, universities and schools should be linked coherently
with local industries and with school alumni based within the community in order to harness resources more effectively to support greater impact. Programme strategies should be evidence-based, but business and public policy support is essential to ensure that what is proven to work effectively in one context can be usefully adapted, sustained and scaled in other contexts.

“\textit{It’s especially welcome when you see practice from the United States being showcased as well as Irish practice. It’s a big learning experience. Equity of access is a huge problem and we need all the talents to actually find a solution to the whole issue.}” Tom Boland, Chief Executive Office, Higher Education Authority

\textbf{2) A clear menu of partnership models}

A diversity of stakeholders made up the symposium attendees and each viewed their contributions to partnership in a unique way. In the US, where College for Every Student are engaged with 20,000 low income students per year, 95% of their ‘Scholars’ progress to post-secondary education. A group of TAP Trinity alumni who presented their experiences remarked on how they had benefitted from successful partnerships, commenting on the crucial roles that mentors played for them at pivotal moments in their career development.

The symposium called attention to the value of good partnership models, with participants discussing their experiences of collaboration in access to education initiatives. Participants emphasised the importance of partnership contributors having a solid and clear sense of the values and benefits to be derived from their engagement in
the relationship. In order to generate a great wave of change, all involved in the partnership—schools, industries, government bodies and non-profits—should have a coherent understanding of the who, what, when, where, why and how of their collective action.

**Wayne Cummins:** Wayne embarked on his Trinity journey six years ago through the Trinity Access Programmes (TAP). He embraced his time in College and participated fully in society life. Wayne recounts that his involvement with societies changed his life and impacted his career and College progression. Through his involvement and his TAP relationships, Wayne connected with an internship in Salesforce where mentoring was key for him. Through his mentor, Wayne developed both personally and professionally and went on to take a role as a junior web developer in Salesforce. Now a fulltime employee with the company, Wayne is delighted to take advantage of the civic engagement days that Salesforce encourages.

Businesses partners attending the Symposium expressed their desire to harness talent from a diverse pool of graduates and stated the need to see clearly the schools to industry pipeline and to know they will have access to that talent. Alumni remarked on the need for a wider range of professional role models and different frames of references to expand their sense of possibility around future trajectories. Schools need access to mentors through building their own alumni networks and establishing strong links with local businesses, to make high educational aspirations for all a ‘whole community commitment’.
Company spotlight: Grant Thornton

“TAP is our most effective tool for communicating and demonstrably living our values. Each year the lives of over sixty of our partners and staff are enriched through our engagement with TAP. In addition, our engagement with TAP has allowed us to distinguish ourselves internationally within Grant Thornton and the education sphere generally as making a real difference.” Patrick Burke, Grant Thornton.

Partnerships built on an investment of time and staff, as well as a monetary investment, can be some of the most long-lasting and rewarding for all involved. Business contributors spoke about the cultural impact that working with TAP has had on their own professional environment.

Company spotlight: William Fry

“Our participation in Pathways to Law has given us an invaluable insight into the benefits of making the legal profession more widely accessible, and into the positive impact programmes like Pathways can have not only on the students themselves, but also on their families, friends and communities. It also gives our team an opportunity to share their experiences with aspiring lawyers and help them take their first steps towards joining the legal profession.” Adam Synnott, William Fry
3) A plan to transform attitudes

Industry recognises, and is keen to tap into, the pools of talent within low-income communities. However, students may find it challenging to recognise and promote their talents, skills and abilities. Lee Elliot Major from The Sutton Trust identified this as the main obstacle amongst low-income, college going students in the UK, drawing on his own life story to emphasise that we should not underestimate the “narratives of oppression”. Graduates also highlighted this issue, underscoring how their experiences of working with ‘relatable’ role models and mentors had been a powerful way of showing them that they too can construct a new narrative and there are trustworthy people in all environments that will support them in doing so.

Symposium Panellists and TAP Trinity alumni, left to right: Cian McLeod, Google Ireland; Sarah Jane McCreery, Accadis International School, EIFERT Language School; Amy Martin, Nitro; Jennifer Goode LB, The Bar Council & Law Library of Ireland

Symposium participants repeatedly argued the value of programmes that specifically supported students in seeing themselves as talented and able. In particular, mentoring relationships were cited as important modes through which students developed their confidence.

Building capacity to enable students to develop this confidence, and to recognise and name their talents, is key to supporting them in becoming career ready.
Cian MacLeod: Cian grew up in Balbriggan, Co. Dublin and attended the local primary and secondary school, Balbriggan Community College which became linked with the Trinity Access Programmes (TAP) during his time there. Like many students from schools that TAP work with, working in the corporate sector was never top of Cian’s list growing up. Students tend to focus on careers they are familiar with: teaching, research, health sciences and non-profit work among the top choices. In first year of university, in association with TAP, Cian joined the first year of the Google mentoring program which provided mentors with insights into careers and life in a large multinational. This mentor relationship opened his mind to other possibilities once he graduated. Later in his university journey, he joined a similar program run by Salesforce and also participated on insight days with companies such as SIG trading, broadening his knowledge of company cultures. Cian had been given the best possible transition from an educational environment to his current role in Google by these mentoring programs.

“Students need access to employers and real situations where they can be who they are, be authentic, and be accepted.” Grace Edge, Irish Universities Association

Sarahjane McCreery: Sarahjane grew up in two Dublin areas that would be considered socio-economically disadvantaged. She recognised a natural drive in herself and dreamt of going to college despite having few in front of her that had paved the way. The Trinity Access Programmes opened doors for Sarahjane, providing her with supports to achieve her goal: a BA in Psychology. Through TAP, Sarahjane gained an internship with Grant Thornton, and later with Warth and Klein Grant Thornton in Germany, before working with an organisation providing support for US military families. She has recently embarked on a Masters in the psychology of business. Higher education has changed her life and the life of her family. Her father now has a degree in humanities and is pursuing a Masters in psychoanalytical psychotherapy. Her family no longer live in a council house and are now homeowners. Higher education has brought an end to the disadvantage Sarahjane’s family experienced and her family’s future generations will all view a future in higher education as an inevitable option, if that is what they wish.
4) Meeting the Challenge to Change

Trinity Access 21 Project Champion, Lord David Puttnam, highlighted the scale of change we are going to see in global education and employment over the coming decade: “In ten years’ time, there will be jobs we cannot even imagine right now.” Lord Puttnam called for a transformation of the education system to meet this challenge. He noted that the education system needs to be flexible, engaging, personalised and above all supportive of continuous teacher development. Lord Puttnam emphasised that “a country that fails to value its teachers, fails to value its future”.

“We need to tap into the idealism of young people and ask them to think critically about the society they want to live in”. Lord David Puttnam, Trinity Access 21 Project Patron

Rick Dalton remarked on the power of the group convened for the Symposium citing the extraordinary educators prepared to meet the challenges of change, energised teachers committed to the best outcome for each and every one of their students, employers reconsidering their recruitment processes, diversity strategies and their values to incorporate action to engage talented, low income students and, finally, policy makers and practitioners, whose job it is to develop workable strategies and ensure that they can be effectively organised and implemented.

“Education is so much more than education. It’s opportunity, it’s the economy, it’s our society. And Ireland is riding a wave. And it really does take everyone.” Rick Dalton, Director, College for Every Student

Ensuring low income students are career ready and confident requires forward thinking and a willingness to re-shape some existing structures. But the evidence from both Trinity Access 21’s and College for Every Student’s work is testimony to the real, intergenerational benefits that are possible, transforming families and providing employers with highly motivated, talented young people who offer a diversity of perspectives.
About Trinity Access 21

Trinity Access 21 (TA21), a flagship initiative of Trinity College Dublin, aims to be a catalyst for social transformation, by supporting people to reach their full educational potential through innovation, research and advocacy. TA21 was established in 2014 with support from Google Ireland and is a collaboration between the Trinity Access Programmes (TAP) [www.tcd.ie/Trinity_Access](http://www.tcd.ie/Trinity_Access), Bridge21 ([www.bridge21.ie](http://www.bridge21.ie)), the School of Computer Science & Statistics and the School of Education and College for Every Student, a US-based, educational non-profit organisation.

TA21 aims to address educational disadvantage and to develop and disseminate engaging, innovative, educational models that are grounded in research. It also aims to make a scalable, sustainable contribution to models that enhance the quality of the second level teaching and learning experience and the range of access routes available to enter higher education. Through a focused intervention aimed at increasing social, cultural and human capital and enhancing 21st Century teaching practice, TA21 is building a model that tackles educational disadvantage through strengthening ‘college going cultures’ in schools with lower than average higher education progression rates and supporting teachers to introduce new models of technology-mediated collaborative learning into the Irish classroom.
Symposium Speakers

Cliona Hannon, Director, Trinity Access Programmes; Co-Director, Trinity Access 21, Trinity College Dublin

Rick Dalton, Director, College for Every Student

Sue Duke, Head of Public Policy, LinkedIn

Lord David Putnam, Trinity Access 21 Project Patron

Professor Edward St John, University of Michigan

Tom Boland, Chief Executive Officer, Higher Education Authority

Dr Lee Elliot Major, Chief Executive, Sutton Trust

Professor Linda Hogan, Vice-Provost & Chief Academic Officer, Trinity College Dublin

Professor Anne O’Gara, Marino Institute of Education
Symposium Participants:

Tom Austin, Salesforce
Pat Burke, Grant Thornton
Patricia Byrne, IADT Dun Laoghaire
Clive Byrne, The National Association of Principals and Deputy Principals
Clodagh Byrne, Trinity College Dublin, Trinity Access Programmes-Trinity Access 21
Simone Cameron-Coen, Trinity College Dublin
Joe Carroll, Trinity College Dublin
Michelle Chandler, Ballinteer Community School
Orla Christle, Higher Education Authority
Claire Conneely, Google Ireland
James Crook
Wayne Cummins, Salesforce
Karen Dalton, College for Every Student
Enda Daly, Ernst & Young
Colm Downes, ITT Dublin
Grace Edge, Irish Universities Association
Sandra Fay, St Mark’s Community School
Paul Fitzgerald, Coláiste Bríde
Riona Fitzgerald, DIT
Kevin Forkan, Higher Education Authority
Carol Gallagher, NUI Galway
Garry Gannon, Dublin City Council
Tony Gaynor, Department of Education and Skills
Carina Girvan, Cardiff University
Jennifer Goode LB, The Bar Council & Law Library of Ireland
Sarah Grimson, Trinity College Dublin, Trinity Access Programmes-Trinity Access 21
Liam Guidera, Mason Hayes & Curran
Patricia Hayden, St Joseph’s Secondary School Rush
Marie-Jan Buckley, Balbriggan Community College
Lisa Keane, Trinity College Dublin, Trinity Access Programmes-Trinity Access 21
Laura-Ann Lambert, Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland
Rebecca Lauder, Nitro
Sarah Lawn, Mason Hayes & Curran
Treasa Leahy, Mercy Secondary School, Inchicore
Carmen Leon, Trinity College Dublin, Trinity Foundation
Tara Lillywhite, Ernst & Young
Symposium Participants:

Vanessa Lorenz, Magnitude Foundation
Gemma Lynch, NUI Maynooth
Fionnuala MacAonghusa, TUSLA
Hugo MacNeill, Goldman Sachs
Ann Mannion, Balbriggan Community College
Oonagh McCaul, Marian College
Sarahjane McCreery, Accadis International School, Eifert Language School
Linda McGlone, IT Sligo
Grainne McInerney, Trinity College Dublin, Trinity Access Programmes-Trinity Access 21
Carron McKinney, TA21 Mentor
Cian McLeod, Google Ireland
Betty McLoughlin, Institute of Guidance Counsellors
Finola McTeeran, National College of Art & Design
Amy Martin, Nitro
Mairéad Minnock, Marino Institute of Education
Arlene Murphy, Marian College
Jenny Murphy, University College Dublin
Sandra Murray, Moyle Park College
Daragh Nealon, St Joseph’s Secondary School Rush
Orla O’Connor, Arthur Cox
Diarmaid O’Dowd, Moyle Park College
Ian O’Herlihy, Mason Hayes & Curran
Michelle O’Kelly, Mercy Secondary School, Inchicore
Katriona O’Sullivan, Trinity College Dublin, Trinity Access Programmes-Trinity Access 21
Kathleen O’Toole-Brennan, Trinity College Dublin, Trinity Access Programmes-TA21
Sinead Pentony, Trinity College Dublin
Eileen Punch, Trinity College Dublin, Trinity Foundation
Lewis Purser, Irish Universities Association
Elaine Reynolds, Trinity College Dublin, Trinity Access Programmes-Trinity Access 21
Joseph Roche, Trinity College Dublin
Ian Roller, Dublin Institute of Technology
Emmet Sheridan, Balbriggan Community College
Patricia Slevin, Marino Institute of Education
Ronan Smith, Trinity College Dublin, Trinity Access Programmes-Trinity Access 21
Susie Spratt, Magnitude Foundation
Brendan Tangney, Trinity College Dublin, Bridge21-Trinity Access 21
Conor Walsh, Perrigo
David Went, The Irish Times Limited, Trinity Foundation
Aisling White, Nitro
A Trinity Access 21 Video

Many thanks to our current programme partners:

College For Every Student

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And to the event sponsors:

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MAGNITUDE

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