

Trinity Business School

RAISING THE GAME FOR TRINITY AND DUBLIN

By Bridget Hourican

The flagship new Trinity Business School is helping develop Dublin into a global innovation hub.

In 2013, Trinity announced an ambitious plan to transform its Department of Business into a full-suite, international business school catering for undergraduate, postgraduate, and executive audiences. Six years on and it's been an extraordinary journey, involving massive growth in degree programmes, a doubling of faculty, innovation across the curriculum, EQUIS accreditation, and now a state-of-the-art new building – a six-storey, €80 million, flagship Scott Tallon Walker design opening out to Pearse Street, brought in “on budget and on time” as the Provost announced at the official launch of the new School on 23 May.

This transformation was made possible through the support of donors – the global community of alumni and business leaders determined to see Trinity Business School play its part in developing Dublin into a global innovation hub to rival London, Amsterdam and Barcelona.

Provost Patrick Prendergast frames the opportunity: “Ireland is European headquarters to nine of the top ten global software companies, and nine of the top ten US technology companies – including Facebook, Twitter, and Google – and it's also headquarters to Medcare giants Pfizer and Merck. A world-class Trinity Business School is about providing an interface between the University and the innovation ecosystem on our doorstep, to help take Dublin and Ireland to the next level.”

“A sleeping giant”

Trinity was the first university in Ireland to begin teaching commerce back in 1925, but by the new millennium, the school required serious investment and needed to refocus to take things to the next level.

“A sleeping giant” is how Professor Andrew Burke described Trinity Business School when he was appointed its new Dean in 2015: “Trinity’s location is second to none: we’re in the centre of a world-class capital city, surrounded by cutting-edge firms in the financial services, technology, professional services, retail, and cultural industries. Our university is internationally renowned and our graduates do really well on the job market. Many business schools now in the international Top 50 started without those advantages.”



Patrons and friends from the Trinity Business community gather at the launch the new building

Professor Burke is adamant that investing in a world-class business school raises the game for the whole University: “The top universities all have a leading business school: MIT has Sloan, University of Pennsylvania has Wharton, Cambridge has Judge and Harvard has the Harvard Business School. High performing universities in major cities typically have leading global business schools, and that’s what I want for Trinity.”

Accreditation and accelerators: EQUIS, LaunchBox and PitchBook

Professor Burke’s first three years as Dean focused on expansion and growth in degree programmes and research and prioritising staff hire and accreditation.

Having grown by 127% over three years – making it the fastest-growing established business school in Europe – Trinity Business School (TBS) was EQUIS accredited in December 2018, placing it among the top 1% of business schools worldwide (EQUIS is a quality assessment accreditation awarded by the European Foundation for Management Development, EFMD).

Concurrent with the focus on expansion and accreditation for the Business School has been the college-wide prioritisation of innovation and entrepreneurship training for all students in all disciplines. In 2013, Trinity established a business incubation programme for undergraduates, LaunchBox, which, in its first year, entered the prestigious University Business Incubator index as a ‘Top Challenger’, placed just outside the world’s ‘Top 25’ from 800 incubator schemes assessed.

Now in its sixth year and supported by the Bank of Ireland, LaunchBox has enabled Trinity undergraduate teams from all disciplines to create 50 start-ups that have gone on to raise over €6 million. These include the social enterprise FoodCloud, as featured in *Time* magazine, which aims to close the gap between food need and food waste. Founded in 2013 by a business student and an environmental science student, FoodCloud today employs over 30 people and works with over 9,000 charitable organisations in Ireland and the UK.

LaunchBox is now located in Tangent, Trinity’s Ideas Workspace, which takes up the whole of the first floor of the new TBS building. The Tangent floor is open plan and geared towards team learning, with large tables, a ‘hangout’ zone, a coffee dock, a prototyping workshop and an ideation space. At any one time, it might bring together students from any or all of Trinity’s 24 Schools, brainstorming on their latest ideas for products, apps, or social enterprises.

“No public money was invested in the building – it’s financed from private philanthropy, the university’s own resources and some borrowing.”

Trinity graduates are notably entrepreneurial. For the past five years, Trinity has been placed the number one university in Europe for educating entrepreneurs, according to private equity and venture capital-focused research firm PitchBook, whose independent survey looks at undergraduate alumni who go on to found companies that receive first-round venture capital funding. The new TBS building, housing Tangent and LaunchBox, is reinforcing this strength, bringing synergy to the University’s innovation and entrepreneurship activities and building links to industry in the Dublin region.

Philanthropy

The entrance to Trinity Business School displays the names of 15 ‘founding patrons’ and inside the atrium, the names of 45 further donors are elegantly mounted on panels of grey and white. This captures the role that philanthropy played in the new building: of the €80 million cost, a quarter – €20 million – came from donations which in turn leveraged loan finance from the EIB. The Provost elaborates: “No public money was invested in the building – it’s financed from private philanthropy, the university’s own resources and some borrowing.”

The transformative role of philanthropy in TBS is a game-changer and a milestone for the whole University.

A showcase of 21st century design

Plant-life is the first thing that strikes you about the new Trinity Business School. A tapestry of green blooms at the Pearse Street entrance – 6,720 plants belonging to seven different species, selected to thrive in a north-eastern aspect, makes this the largest ‘living wall’ in Dublin. At the School’s south-facing campus entrance (formerly the site of



Taoiseach Leo Varadkar with Business students Marie-Louise O’Callaghan, Dina Abu-Rahme & Henry Adedeji, joined by Chair of the Trinity Business School Advisory board, Sean Melly, Provost Patrick Prendergast & Dean Professor Andrew Burke



Attendees of the Global Business and Tech Forum networking in the Luce Foyer

Luce Sports Hall) 13 'brise-soleil' screens are planted with sun-loving plants – including geranium, winter heathers and rosemary. The screens reduce heat gain within the building by deflecting sunlight.

Inside, the first cohort of business students to be educated in the new building are greeted by a huge light-filled atrium, with impressive art, including a large geometric painting by Richard Gorman, himself a graduate of the Business School. The students mill upstairs to the lecture theatres, seminar rooms, research centre, undergrad trading room and prototyping workshop unless there's a conference on, or a prominent guest lecture, in which case they walk a few steps down to the A&K Dargan Theatre which has stadium seating for 600 people, making it the largest auditorium on campus, overtaking the Public Theatre in Front Square.

The new building fulfils the remit to continue the regeneration of Pearse Street that started with the launch of the Naughton Institute and Science Gallery in 2007 and 2008, and to be a showcase of 21st century design in the way that the Berkeley Library showcased mid-century Brutalism. As well as the 'green walls', its sustainable features include low energy ventilation systems, motion and time-controlled LED-based lighting, photovoltaic rooftop panels offsetting 35 tonnes of carbon per annum, and lavatory water provided by recycled rainwater.

The health and wellbeing of staff and students has also been prioritised: all workspaces have natural light and good quality air. High-standard acoustic design reduces noise distractions and staff have the option of site-stand desks, rather than sit-down, to help them stay active and fit.

Grand Canal Innovation District

The choice of location for the new Business School was primarily about repurposing the Luce Hall site and continuing the regeneration of Pearse Street, but it may prove to have been particularly apt and prescient.

In July 2018, Trinity, UCD and DCU signed a memorandum with government and stakeholders (IDA, Enterprise Ireland, Dublin City Council) of their intention to build an innovation district at Grand Canal Dock, modelled on districts in London, Barcelona, Rotterdam and Boston.

At the signing, An Taoiseach, Leo Varadkar, said that "the plan to further develop Silicon Docks as an innovation district, involving the collaboration of business, government and the university sector, speaks eloquently to our vision of making Ireland the tech capital of Europe and our plans to ensure that the jobs of the future are created first here in Ireland."

TBS is one of the lynchpins that will support the Grand Canal Innovation District, or GCID. The distance between TBS and GCID is a short seven-minute walk up Pearse Street – very helpful for the future innovators and job creators currently brainstorming in Tangent.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Bridget Hourican is a freelance journalist, historian and writer whose work has appeared in *The Irish Times*, *IMAGE*, *Sunday Independent* and *The Sunday Times*.