
Philanthropy & alumni engagement

Fergal Naughton,
Chair of the Provost's Council

The launch of the Trinity Business School on 23rd May 2019 was a truly memorable occasion for all present.

This wonderful Scott, Tallon and Walker building, with entrances into the College on one side and onto Pearse Street on the other, is such a stunning addition to the college's great buildings, and with its green walls, near zero-energy, solar panels and recycled water, it's a flagship sustainable building for our times.

It's also flagship for another reason. At the launch, I recall the Provost saying that "what makes the Trinity Business School truly ground-breaking is the extent of donor support. Donors raised €20 million towards the building, a hugely generous sum which enabled us to leverage the later EIB loan. This is the template for how we will fund future strategic growth in the university." This gets across why the event was so special: the college wasn't just launching a great new building but a whole approach to driving academic excellence.

I was lucky enough to be involved with this approach from quite early on. Back in 2013 I helped organise the Trinity Global Graduate Forum, which brought together two hundred high-achieving Trinity graduates from all around the world to strategize around the college's future direction. This was during the lean austerity years, and the issue of how Trinity would continue financing great education and research was a big question, with no easy answers.

RIGHT – Marking the launch of the *Inspiring Generations* philanthropic campaign, Trinity commissioned a mural, 'The youth need to see their greatness reflected in our eyes', by artist Joe Caslin, at the Campanile in Front Square.

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The Graduate Forum proved what the Provost and many of us strongly believed – that Trinity has amazing, and amazingly dedicated, alumni who are only waiting to be asked to ‘give back’. As a graduate myself, I have such marvellous memories of my time here as an undergraduate, and as the CEO of a global business, I appreciate the calibre of graduates and research coming out of Trinity and how important this is for the country as a whole. I think I speak for many graduates when I say that we want to be part of delivering for Trinity, Ireland and the next generation of students. It’s as simple as that.

At the Forum, the Provost confidently set an ambition to build a world-class Business School. That was just the start as it became increasingly clear how excited donors and philanthropists were to be involved. In the days right before Christmas 2013 the Provost came out to my Glen Dimplex HQ at Dublin Airport, at short notice, to ask me to work with him in establishing a fundraising drive for Trinity by chairing a leadership group, and after two years of steady preparation we launched the Provost’s Council. A small group of about forty alumni and friends, its purpose is to advise the Provost on the college’s strategic direction. Our priority, from the start, was to work with the great team in Trinity Development and Alumni (TDA) to develop, launch, and succeed in a comprehensive

philanthropic campaign. We were inspired, like so many people round the world, by the example of Chuck Feeney, whose long investment in Trinity, through Atlantic Philanthropies, culminated with the funding of the Global Brain Health Institute as a joint initiative between Trinity and the University of California, San Francisco.

Inspiring Generations was publicly launched on 2nd May 2019 – the largest such campaign ever launched on the island of Ireland. It is framed around key priority projects, including the Redevelopment of the Old Library, the Trinity St James’s Cancer Institute and E3, the Engineering, Environment & Emerging Technologies Learning Foundry and Research Institute, all underpinned by the funding of student scholarships and research fellowships to bring talent to the university.

The aim with *Inspiring Generations* is to deeply engage the wider Trinity global community of alumni, friends and businesses with the university’s mission in education and research, and to connect with each other.

Speaking personally, one of the great highlights of this past decade has been my involvement with Trinity and, in truth, that’s not just for selfless reasons. It’s exhilarating to see major projects take off and to feel you had some part in shaping them. It has been wonderful to play a role in helping

LEFT – Trinity Business School entrance onto Pearse Street with its ‘living’ wall.

BELOW – Provost Prendergast, Prof Aideen Long, Prof Luke O’Neill, Minister Simon Harris, Prof Kingston Mills, and AIB CEO Colin Hunt, at the AIB COVID-19 Research Hub in Trinity.



the campaign meet its ambitious goals of raising €400 million in donations and 150,000 hours in volunteering. When we set these targets we aimed high; our confidence in Trinity’s alumni and friends has been amply justified.

Over the next few years, the priority projects of *Inspiring Generations* are going to transform the campus and beyond: the Old Library Redevelopment project got planning permission in October 2020 – I’ve seen the plans for the new Research Collections Study Centre on the ground floor and it’s going to look stunning. And work has started at the east of the campus on the Martin Naughton E3 Learning Foundry, and again this is going to be transformative: co-educating engineers, computer scientists, natural and environmental scientists, and statisticians to collaborate across the old divide of the natural and the engineered worlds to develop sustainable solutions for a liveable planet. It could hardly be more important.

It has also been exhilarating to connect with other alumni, and with Trinity professors and staff, who all feel the same way about the university as I do. We share a common obsession, which is always a great basis for friendship, and there is excitement and potential in grouping together. Instead of staying isolated in our silos, fretting about the future of the

world that our children will inherit, we get to come together in a great centre of research and educational excellence and to think about solutions to the great challenges of our time – Climate, AI, energy provision – and how to make them happen. This collegiality has been particularly striking in this past challenging year of lockdown and pandemic.

I know from TDA that alumni responded immediately and generously to the call for support to the Student Hardship Fund, helping students whose circumstances had been worsened by the pandemic, and that alumni engagement with webinars and other online events has been brilliant. This demonstrates the instinct within the Trinity community to stay in touch and support each other through crisis, while the foundational gift from AIB to establish the AIB Covid-19 Research Laboratories Hub is such a vote of confidence in the university’s exceptional health sciences research.

The Trinity campus has been closed now for a year but the giving hasn’t stopped. As we start to think about ‘building back better’ the post-pandemic world, it’s more important than ever to stay connected with each other and to support this university which is articulating such a clear vision for outstanding education and research that will help transform Ireland and the world.