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# Welcome from the Provost

**2020 and 2021 will go down in history as 'The Covid Years', and one of the many repercussions was that the whole College – staff and students – were so overwhelmed by the demands of transitioning to online working, teaching, learning and research that there was no *Provost's Review* to capture and celebrate the achievements of the academic year 2019/20.**

So it's with particular pleasure that I welcome back the *Review*, which also happens to be my last as Provost, since my term of office ends in July 2021. For that reason, this issue has been configured as something of a retrospective of the past decade, although it also showcases recent research successes, and introduces the college community to seven new professors. As they recount in their interviews, many of these professors started working in Trinity either just before, or shortly after, the college went into lockdown so they have yet to experience our university thronged with staff, students and visitors, and busy with events. As I write the college and the city have begun to open up, cautiously. But the delta variant is all over the news, with predictions of yet another wave. While we all look forward to life returning to the classrooms, labs, and libraries, the future is not yet certain.

To make up for missing a year, this issue showcases an increased number of research projects. Unsurprisingly, there is a Covid angle to some of these projects, either directly – see Catherine Comiskey, 'The epidemiology of Covid-19 and addiction', p.38 and David Kenny, 'Keeping track of the law in Ireland during Covid-19', p.56 – or tangentially, in 'Enabling translational nanomedicine', p.52, Adriele Prina-Mello points out that the mRNA Covid vaccines (Pfizer and Moderna) are nanovaccines and in 'Future Technologies for Communication' p.50 Rachel McDonnell looks at ways to use Augmented Reality (AR) to improve natural interaction in video conferencing, something which became particularly pertinent in this last

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year of working from home. The extent of the ‘Covid factor’ in diverse research projects is evidence of the pervasive impact of pandemic and lockdown on all aspects of our lives and also of the range of Trinity’s multidisciplinary. We are delighted and proud to place our research at the centre of improving people’s lives.

Our university mission is multifaceted and this is reflected across this *Review* with chapters on education, access, sport, innovation and entrepreneurship, the student experience, philanthropy and alumni engagement and capital development projects. Ten years is a long time so it’s amazing to read back over the stand-out initiatives of the decade: the dual degree with Columbia University, piloting Trinity Access in Oxford University’s Lady Margaret Hall, the Student Partnership Agreement, the Trinity Education Project, LaunchBox, the Trinity Business School, the philanthropic campaign *Inspiring Generations*, to name just a few.

The figures at the front of this *Review* comparing 2021 to 2013 or 2015 are revealing and should be a source of pride for all: increased staff numbers, despite a markedly stringent public funding environment; hugely increased numbers of international students; more invention disclosures, licenses, High Performance Start Ups... the figures tell a story

and it’s a story of achievement. So much has been done thanks to the outstanding efforts of staff and our really phenomenal students and alumni.

A university is of course the sum of its education and research activities but it goes deeper than that. A university is also an idea and a place. This past year we have proved that we can teach, learn and research online and that’s really important and something we want to build on for the future. But a university like Trinity cannot be entirely remote or virtual. It’s a physical place and that is showcased beautifully in two chapters here. Chapter 10, Trinity’s thriving flora and fauna looks at the plant life and wildlife that we share our space with and relates the wilding of our campus over the past decade. The photo of Burke at Front Arch surrounded by long grasses and wildflowers instead of a neatly mowed lawn is a striking image for our times: never was it more obvious, to quote the man himself, that ‘change is needed for our own conservation’. Chapter 14, Art of the new – keeping it contemporary, looks at how we adorn our physical space and recounts the addition of 200 new artworks to the college collection over this decade, including securing significant one-off funding to purchase art for student areas, including for Printing House Square, which will open shortly.

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**LEFT** – Dr David McGrath, Director of the College Health Service and his colleague Dr Clare Kelly prepare for the first onsite COVID-19 vaccinations to students and staff with very high risk medical conditions.

**TOP** – Provost Patrick Prendergast congratulates Provost-elect Prof Linda Doyle in April 2021 using COVID-19 etiquette.

**BOTTOM** – Wildflower meadows thriving on campus.



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I hope you enjoy reading these and other chapters and I hope that, like me, you come away with a renewed sense of enthusiasm for all that has been achieved and will be achieved at Trinity, and the difference this makes, not only to our students and staff, but to Dublin and Ireland and to education and research globally. It has been a huge honour – with never a dull moment – to lead this great university over the past decade. I've had the privilege of working with outstanding people who have helped bring about the many achievements described here in this *Review*. With such staff, students and alumni, Trinity can only go from strength to strength, and I wish Linda Doyle, who comes into office as Provost on August 1st, the very best with realising her ambitions for this great university.

**Dr Patrick Prendergast**  
**Provost & President**  
**1 July 2021**

