

The Emergence of the Grattan Scholars

Personal Reflections by Professor John O'Hagan, Emeritus Professor of Economics



The Grattan Scholars programme honours the Irish statesman Henry Grattan, a celebrated graduate of Trinity

I have always believed that PhD students are essential to a successful academic department. They energise research, leading very often to a win-win situation in terms of high-quality publications; the academic supervisor providing the oversight, direction and experience to bring the intensive research work of the student to fruition.

But they provide more than this. The undergraduate programmes of many departments could not function without the teaching assistance that PhD students provide. I have such good memories of those who helped me so much with *Economy of Ireland* tutorials, including several Grattan Scholars. Yes, sometimes student evaluations gave them a much higher rating than the lecturer, but that was a 'price' worth paying!

It was the above that prompted me, when funding for PhD students was in serious doubt a decade ago, to become enthusiastically involved with the Grattan Scholars programme, wonderfully supported by Helen Murray (School External Relations Manager) and Eileen Punch (Trinity Development & Alumni Office).

There followed the Annual London Grattan lectures, the purpose of which was engaging with the many alumni located there. The high-profile speakers, the lectures set in the packed ballroom of the very fine Irish Embassy building, followed by a generous reception hosted by the ambassador, are memories I will forever cherish.

Funding for twenty Grattan Scholars followed this and other endeavours. There was the added advantage that these Scholarships could be promoted internationally and hence draw on a greater pool of talent. The arrival over the last eight years of twenty young PhD students from all over the world followed. Their role, like that of other PhD students, was, as described above, providing excellent teaching assistance and research of which the School can be very proud. Indeed, many of the Scholars have already gone on to considerable career success.

The generosity of the donors in establishing this Programme amazed me. How could people be prepared to provide such significant funding for Scholarships, 'investing' now in young people as well as in buildings. But, they did, graduates with such fond memories of Trinity going back from the 1950s to the 2000s. One particularly stands out for his exceptional generosity, namely John Pearson. Captain of the Boat Club in 1954, he kept insisting that he wanted to give 'something back' to the college and particularly to support students. There are so many other good memories from meeting the donors, including one who though recently graduated felt that she should give a substantial sum back to the college in recognition of the role that a Trinity education played in her career success. So many others felt that way also.

The name Henry Grattan has iconic status in Ireland, and especially in Trinity. Looking to the future then it might be opportune to build on the programme's success and develop the Grattan Scholars model across the wider College.



John O'Hagan has worked at Trinity since 1970 and has been Professor of Economics since 2005 (Emeritus since 2016). His research focuses on the economics of the arts, especially the migration and clustering of creative workers, and the Economy of Ireland. Professor O'Hagan continues to lecture on the European Economy.

Professor John O'Hagan

About the Grattan Scholars

Trinity's flagship social science graduate scholarship programme was established by the School in 2012 with the aim of attracting and inspiring the best and brightest postgraduate students from around the world.

The Scholars who hail from 13 countries, make a huge contribution to academic life in Trinity, as talented researchers and inspirational teachers of undergraduate students. Their research which spans issues of major global societal and economic importance such as migration, inequality, financial globalisation and international development, is more relevant than ever as society faces wide-ranging and interlinked global challenges. With graduates of the programme now pursuing careers in academia and policy-making, at leading institutions such as Oxford University, the International Monetary Fund and the Central Bank of Ireland, they are fulfilling the vision of the programme to shape thought leaders for society's future.

www.tcd.ie/ssp/grattan-scholars

The Grattan Scholars in Pictures



Inaugural Scholars Christina Kinghan (left) and Sara Mitchell (right) with Provost Dr Patrick Prendergast and their supervisors Professor Carol Newman and Professor John O'Hagan



Benefactor John Pearson with the Grattan Scholars' donor board



Katharina Bergant (third from right) receives 2018 European Capital Markets Institute (ECMI) Best Paper Award



First scholarship in philosophy awarded to Victoria Iugai – the 20th Grattan Scholar – in 2020



Sara Mitchell selected to attend the 5th Lindau Nobel Laureate Meeting on Economic Sciences



Grattan Scholars in economics, political science and sociology



Margaryta Klymak presented with 2017 Dermot McAleese Teaching Award by Dean of Graduate Studies, Professor Neville Cox