

Researchers to highlight pay and promotion discrimination

Wed. June 5th, 2013

Researchers at the UCC based Tyndall National Institute are to stage a 'Stop the Inequity' information campaign tomorrow (Thurs June 6th) at the European Commission funded 'Week of Innovative Regions in Europe (WIRE) Conference in the college. They are highlighting ongoing discrimination against research staff in the areas of pay, promotion and conditions under the Croke Park and Haddington Road Agreements.

According to the Irish Federation of University Teachers (IFUT), research and researchers are being severely undermined by an ongoing refusal of the Department of Education to resolve glaring anomalies that result in staff in the Institute earning up to one-third less than they would if employed in other UCC departments.

"As a result, established researchers are moving abroad and new graduates are being actively discouraged from taking up research. The departure from Tyndall last year of 2010 Science Foundation Ireland 'Researcher of the Year', Prof. Jean-Pierre Colinge, to Taiwan Semiconductor Corporation in Taiwan highlights the extent of the crisis.," IFUT General Secretary, Mike Jennings, said.

At the time of his departure Prof Colinge stated 'I am 100% in support of the actions to achieve parity and equality with the rest of UCC. Tyndall based UCC staff can presently only achieve second-class UCC citizenship, regardless of their very significant achievements and innovations, and this is just wrong.'

Key issues facing staff at Tyndall include:

- Research staff in senior supervising roles being paid less wages than junior doctorate temporary contract staff
- Permanent research staff pay into the public service pension but are denied access to public service pay and conditions

At the same time substantial infrastructural spending continues, including:

- €55m spent on a state-of-the-art building (which remains partly empty)
- a new €5m refurbishment programme for older buildings in 2012.

The Labour Court recently acknowledged that the researchers case was valid but that it was precluded for procedural reasons from ruling on the matter under the Croke Park Agreement.

Attempts to resolve the issue during the recent Haddington Road talks were rejected by the Department of Education. This was despite intervention of UCC President, Dr Michael Murphy, who last November wrote to the HEA highlighting that staff in Tyndall 'perform the same functions but receive different rewards' and requesting that 'any disparity could be addressed as soon as possible.'

Mike Jennings, General Secretary of IFUT, said that “there is little point in the government pretending that Ireland can become a hub for research and innovation, when research is being treated so shoddily and researchers treated as second-class citizens.

“We are demanding that the Minister and Department of Education address this issue before irreparable damage is done to Ireland’s research reputation.”

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Note to Editors:

- *UCC’s Tyndall Institute, the largest of its kind in Ireland, was established in 1983 to provide a critical mass of researchers that would support the growth and development of a smart knowledge based economy in Ireland. It is substantially funded by competitively won research income from the EU.*
- *The WIRE Conference is being held in UCC to co-incide with Ireland’s Presidency of the European Union. It will be addressed by Commissioner Maire Geoghegan-Quinn and Minister Seán Sherlock.*