

An Focal

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Bleak outlook for University's finances

Aoife Ní Raghallaigh
News Editor,

UNIVERSITY HEAD Prof Don Barry told students present at Class Reps' Council in week 6 that there is a "very bleak outlook for state funding of universities" during what has become an annual address to the representatives and students.

The President revealed that the University must cut its expenditure by almost €4.5 million this year to reach its target of a €1.8 million deficit – despite having budgeted for a €6.2 million deficit at the beginning of the financial year.

The budget, compiled in April 2008, was made on the assumption that the government funding would increase by 5.5 per cent, whereas in actuality it only increased by 2.5 per cent, while other funding that was expected to increase by 1 per cent actually fell by 7.5 per cent.

Facing this gloomy financial situation, Prof Barry told his audience that the University is seeking to cut its payroll costs by 5 per cent and its non-pay related expenditure by 4 per cent.

"All indications are that state funding to third level sector are to

decline," said Prof Barry.

In his address he also went on to explain that he was reviewing the University's current strategic plan with his vision of UL acting "as a key player in the economic, social and cultural life of the Shannon region".

Part of this plan is for UL to provide "an outstanding and distinct student experience". He hopes to "enhance the quality of interaction between faculty and students" and provide the best facilities so that the highest level of teaching could take place.

The President went on to explain that he would like to reform the undergraduate programme to support life long learning and to encourage students to be more versatile and adaptable.

He also hoped that students would be able to combine skills from a number of different disciplines upon graduation. He aimed to promote such learning through flexibility of access to courses so that students could complete their undergraduate learning at their own pace.

Following a question from Susan Whelan, 4th year HPSS, asking if this system would be similar to the UCD 'Horizons' system, where students can take one module per semester from any discipline, Prof Barry clarified that he would like to develop a course where a student could not graduate without having studied at least one module in maths, science, humanities, sociology etc.

A number of students raised concerns about such a system, including John Buckley, 1st year Business, who asked if such a system would result in the UL degrees being "watered-down" as they would lack in-depth knowledge in any specific field of study.

Ms Whelan also stated that this system would force students to spend four years studying a general subject before specialising at the postgraduate level.

Finally, Tighearnan Noonan, 1st year MMPT, asked if it would not be stupid to force students to take modules that they aren't interested in.

"I'm not in favour of filling heads

with knowledge that will be obsolete within five years", Prof Barry said in response.

He stated that the development of such a course would take a number of years to grow and none of the current undergraduates would be studying under such a system.

In defence of the system the President explained that in conversations with employers, their consistent criticism of Irish graduates is that they are too narrow with regard to education they have received and that they are lacking communication and reasoning skills.

He also explained that modules in subjects, such as politics, are relevant to a number of jobs.

Providing a broader undergraduate course would work as a remedy to such complaints.

Speaking on the subject of fees, Prof Barry explained that his own position regarding fees is that he will not be calling on the Government to introduce fees, but he also will not be calling on them to not introduce them.

His ideal option would be that no one should pay fees. He also believed that the Government must not deny anyone their full potential.

When questioned by SU President, Pa O'Brien, on what system would cure the €2 million budget deficit, Prof Barry answered that there is no ideal system.

In addition, he clarified that he is aware that the fees, if reintroduced, would not go directly into the University's budget, but said that students should be more concerned about the increased registration fee which he acknowledged as being fees



University President Don Barry

by another name.

Finally, the President said that although he was not in a position to argue against the reintroduction of

fees, he understood why students were taking action over the issue and their aim to make it harder for government to bring back fees.

Students to be balloted on fees

Aoife Breen
Editor

OVER 250 students mandated the Students' Union to hold a plebiscite on students' preferred alternatives to third level tuition fees at the Union General meeting held in the Jean Monnet theatre on Wednesday of week 5.

Following a motion put forward

by the Cathaoirleach of UL's Con Colbert Cumann of Fianna Fail, Derek Daly, 4th Year Business, the quorate meeting agreed with the request for the SU to ballot its members on alternatives to third level fees to present Minister for Education, Batt O'Keefe, with

students' preferred options should it be necessary to charge third level students for their education.

Mr Daly told the meeting that the poll will "gauge everyone's opinion".

"The problem is if nobody has given their opinions or options then third level fees will come in. The Minister will put in what he wants.

"It's better to go to the table and bring something rather than nothing."

Conor Payne, 3rd Year HPSS, objected to this motion on the grounds that it would be "making concessions before decisions have been made".

The motion was carried by the

meeting and the resulting plebiscite will be held in conjunction with the sabbatical officer elections on Thursday, 26 March, week 9.

There was another motion calling for the Union to ask its members if they would participate in a 24 hour shutdown of the University in conjunction with the staff.

However, this motion was not carried.

Denis Murphy, 4th Year Public Administration, was one of the objectors to the motion on the grounds that educational and welfare service provision would have an overall negative impact on students.

Other students at the meeting

echoed this sentiment raising concerns about access to the library and computer facilities for assignments and exam preparation as well as requirements for the medical and counselling services.

The issue of fees was also an item for discussion at the meeting to give SU President Pa O'Brien students' opinions to bring to the Minister at the Fianna Fáil Árd Fheis which was held the weekend after the meeting in Dublin.

Seamus Ryan, 4th Year Computer Systems, brought up the subsidiary issue of the student grant scheme.

"The government needs to revisit the student grant scheme as the current scenario is putting students

in a situation where they cannot sustain themselves."

Vivion Grisewood, 3rd Year Science Education, expressed his concern that if students were to "give an inch, [the Government would] take a mile" and argued that the Students' Union should let it be known that, "this is not the end of our protest".

A vote was taken at the meeting to gather the general sentiment of students with regards to the Union's position on fees. Attendees were asked whether they would prefer the status quo of a 'no fees' stance or the Union to look into alternatives. There was clear majority in favour of retaining the 'no fees' position.

An Focal Digest

Shorts

UL student receives highest physics honour

Ruth Long.

A UL STUDENT has received a prestigious award for his performance in Physics at Leaving Cert level. The Silver Medal for the highest level of achievement in the Physics Leaving Certificate is awarded each year by the Institute of Physics in Ireland.

This year, the medal was received UL student, James Long, a past pupil of Scoil Ide, Corbally, and the Crescent College Comprehensive, Co Limerick, where his physics teacher was Denis Higgins.

Mr Long, now studying Civil Engineering in UL, is a native of Athlunkard, Co. Clare. Mr Long also shares the award with Fionnuala Connolly from the Dominican College in Galway and Paul Fitzgerald from CBC in Cork. The medal was presented to James by Prof. D. Noel Buckley, Chair of Physics at the University of Limerick, Ireland.

The Institute of Physics is a leading international professional body and learned society with over 37,000 members, which promotes the advancement and dissemination of a knowledge of and education in the science of physics, pure and applied.

It has a world-wide membership and is a major international player in scientific publishing and electronic dissemination of physics, setting professional standards for physicists, awarding professional qualifications and promoting physics through scientific conferences, education and science policy advice.

Do you have what it takes?

In celebration of the first birthday of the Irish label 'Farrell & Brown', the company are launching a competition to find their 'New Face' for their Spring/Summer 2009 collection.

They are looking for individuals who are unique and stylish, just like Farrell & Brown, and who have a very well defined sense of style. Both guys and girls, who like to look good, without looking the same as everybody else, should get in touch with us.

The winners will become to 'faces' of our new Spring/Summer campaign, and will be the feature models in their photo shoot and marketing campaign. The finished professional photos will go a long way towards launching the career portfolio of any aspiring model, and the exposure across the country will be priceless.

As if this were not enough, each of the two models will receive €1,000 worth of brand new Spring/Summer clothing and accessories from Farrell & Brown.

To enter, please drop at least one photo, with your contact details and a short paragraph telling us why you think you should be one of our faces of 'Farrell & Brown' into any of our five stores nationwide.

Stores are located at:

No. 1 Dawson Street, Dublin 2
The Dove Hill Irish Design Center, Carrick On Suir, Co. Tipperary
The Bunratty Village Mills, Bunratty, Co. Clare
Blarney Woollen Mills, Blarney, Co. Cork
The Killarney Outlet Center, Killarney, Co. Kerry.

The deadline for entries will be Sunday, 15 March, 2009. Winners will be notified, and the Spring Summer photo Shoot will take place before the end of March, 2009.



Members of the Cadbury's Eyebrow dance-off team entertaining an audience in the SU courtyard in week 6

In Words

"There ya go...we got our degree in a day!"

SU Faculties Officer Dave Ryan commenting on the value of the training sessions during Class Reps training in Galway.

"Ok. It's time to take down the knickers. What do I do with them now?!"

SU receptionist Adele O'Carroll noting that Shag Week had ended seven days previously but the knickers washing line was still hanging above the reception desk.

"I want to remind people that it is not the policy of this government at this point in time"

Education Minister Batt O'Keefe speaks to Party members about third level tuition fees at the Ard Fheis held in Dublin over the last weekend in February.

"I don't want to see that as a headline in An Focal; that was an off-the-cuff remark."

University President Don Barry expresses his fear of the press during his address to Class Reps Council in week 6 when he remarked that if the government were to continue cutting funding to universities there may not be any tutorials next year.

"So all we need is more students?"

Third year Business class rep Gavin Kavanagh summarises the solution to the University's financial problems in week 6.

"I will do everything I can to sort that out."

Professor Barry promises Class Reps' Council that he will do his utmost to solve the issue of training and playing pitches at the University.

In Figures

24

The length of time in hours that students played trad music to raise funds to contribute towards the €50,000 bill for a heart transplant for a fellow musician.

2 degrees Celsius

The temperature rise predicted that would have the following effect:

- 2010 at least 50 million environmental refugees
- 2050 at least 150 million environmental refugees
- 80 per cent South African crops will fail
- 500 million reliant on Himalayan Glacial water for drinking will go thirsty

3 million

The number of years it has been since the earth was this warm.

□ **6.2 million**

The projected deficit of the University at the start of the financial year.

□ **2 million**

The amount by which the University must now decrease its deficit to.

5 per cent

The amount by which the University's payroll has been decreased



Some of the couples who got hitched during a 'civil union' ceremony during Equality week to highlight the injustice served against gay couples.

Students to bombard cabinet ministers

An Focal Reporter

THE STUDENTS' Union is asking all students to sign a letter to Cabinet ministers to exert pressure on the government not to reintroduce third level fees this week.

The decision to initiate a letter writing campaign targeting cabinet ministers and TDs comes about following Minister for Education Batt O'Keeffe's comments that the Government were split on the fees issue.

SU President Pa O'Brien and his colleagues believe that if they exert enough pressure on Fianna Fáil and Green Party government members they can help to influence the decision

when Batt O'Keeffe's fees proposal is brought to Cabinet in April.

"The cabinet is where the final decision will be made. From what we know, the Cabinet is anything but united on this with many members against the reintroduction of fees," said Mr O'Brien.

"If we target them and let them know that we will not support them, and even actively campaign against them, then maybe we can influence their decision."

The Union will set up in the courtyard this week and invite people to sign letters which they will address to TDs and send for free.

They hope that this campaign will exert the necessary pressure to halt the reintroduction of fees.

The student representative said, "We're already paying back door fees in the form of an increased registration charge. No system of public paid tuition fees will solve the problem in third level education, that being that the government have failed to commit to third level education and have consistently under funded it."

The SU will produce posters and will advertise the day through e-mails to students and hope to send a significant number of letters.

Gardaí on call to advise students

Sarah Mann

IF A GUY grabs you while you're dancing at Trinity Rooms, does that count as assault? What do you do if your tires have been slashed? How do you become a Garda? Students can now find the answers to these questions and anything else they've a mind to ask at the Garda Advice Clinic.

The clinic is held every Tuesday from 8 to 9 pm in the Class Reps' office in the Students' Union building. Members of the Gardaí attached to Castletroy are available to answer any questions ranging from protection of valuables to the correct procedure for getting passports.

The clinic was the idea of SU Campaigns and Services Officer Damien Cahill.

"We're looking to have more interaction with the gardaí and students...not on a negative basis," he explained. "This is a proactive step."

The idea for the clinic was conceived

last semester and put into action two weeks ago, but the clinics have yet to gain any popularity. Only one student visited the gardaí last week, according to Garda Patrick Hehir. Both Mr Cahill and the Gardaí stress that the clinics are anonymous and safe. "It's not a come-and-rat-out your friends type thing," said Mr Cahill. "Basically, we're here to help you in any way we can," Garda Eamon O'Riordan said. "We'll discuss any issue you have." Students can use the clinics to pose queries but also to report crimes or suspicious behavior in a confidential setting. "Our job in particular is run on knowledge," Garda O'Riordan stressed. "We'd like [students] to approach us."

All of the Gardaí that will be present at the clinics are attached to Castletroy, but members will rotate on attendance. However, students can make appointments to see specific Gardaí members if they wish.

Castletroy's female Gardaí are all on maternity leave at the moment, according to Garda Hehir and Garda O'Riordan, but both emphasized that "there would be a female member available if requested."

Mr Cahill is hopeful for the Gardaí Advice Clinic's future. The clinic will run until the end of exams and will return next year. If the venture proves successful enough, Cahill hopes to see the hours of the clinic extended or have the meetings expanded to a second night. Eventually, students may even be able to visit the Gardaí on campus to obtain passports or licenses.

For now though, the Gardaí are ready and waiting to take any question. Mr Cahill himself wonders, "Is anybody entitled to take my college ID off me in a night club?" Drop by the Class Reps Office on Tuesday to find out the answer and pose a question of your own. "If it only helps one person," said Mr Cahill, "it will have been a success."

Bike shop for University campus

Orla Walsh

ULSU BICYCLE scheme is set to branch out to include a shop premises with full-time hours.

SU President Pa O'Brien wants to give the bike scheme a formal place to call home, that home has been found in the old SU shop beside the Paddock restaurant.

"The shop will house the original renting scheme on a much larger scale... Better quality, better quantity and better service," said Mr O'Brien.

The shop, which will open in September, will run in the same way as the bike rental scheme, "The idea behind it is to give students an alternative to driving their cars," he added.

Michael Moore, a third year construction student is one of the driving forces behind the shop along with other ULSU staff. He was also involved in the initial running of the scheme, created by the last SU President, St. John Ó Donnabháin.

"We needed to furnish Erasmus students and foreign students with bikes on a short term basis. We couldn't buy enough," he said.

The scheme then sourced a warehouse where it could buy bikes for whole sale prices in order to rent them to students at cost.

Due to the rent of the unit, there could be an increase in bike prices, "It may mean paying an extra fiver for a bike, but that's the only levy we'll increase," said Pa.

The scheme has volunteers covering it from Monday to Thursday, 12 o'clock to two o'clock. During this time, students are welcome to bring in their bikes to be repaired.

When the shop opens, Mr O'Brien plans to be running five days a week with work available for students on a part-time basis.

As the unit will be rented, ULSU hopes to co-locate to help keep costs as low as possible.

The scheme hosts sales twice a semester and with more than 300 bikes in the system after 18 months, it's proving a success. "We've created a monster... People are coming in by the dozen," said Mr Moore.

The bike scheme sources from a local supplier called Tony O'Regan Cycles. All involved with the scheme would like to extend their thanks to Kathleen, Richie and Tony (R.I.P) for all their hard work over the last 18 months. "Without them, we wouldn't have been able to operate," said Mr Moore. Any students wishing to help in the bike scheme or shop are welcome to contact the Students' Union. Once the shop opens in September there will be more opportunities to get involved.

Students warned against illegal parking

Aoife Ní Raghallaigh

HEAD OF UL campus security, John McDonnell, and Campaigns and Services Officer, Damien Cahill, are again calling on student drivers to be more considerate when parking on campus.

A previous article in An Focal highlighted that issues surrounding increased parking in the off-campus estates, but the situation is just as bad on campus according to these men.

Mr Cahill explained that security personnel have tried to be as considerate as possible when encountering illegally parked student cars. In some situations they have even approached the Gardaí to obtain the car owner's details so the student could be contacted and have the opportunity to move their car, but have received angry rather than grateful responses from students at this.

Mr McDonnell has warned that security will have to move towards a zero tolerance policy against illegal parking on campus if the situation does not improve. The clamping and unclamping of cars also takes up valuable time, meaning that the security team are unable to complete full campus patrols as regularly as they would like. This in turn has an affect on the safety of all students.

Illegal parking is also a problem in the on campus student villages as students are leaving their cars there rather than in either of the pay car parks. This is causing difficulties for the students who live in the villages as they become blocked in by those illegally parked.

Mr Cahill explained, "The new \square 3 car park is as close to the most campus buildings as the East Gate car park, but it is never full".

He also stated that the Health Sciences car park, across the Living Bridge, is also rarely full and warned that there are also issues surrounding students parking in Milford Church, who will soon begin clamping cars also.

Limerick County Council has also appealed to students and staff to be vigilant when parking in the surrounding estates.

Triona Collins, from the Annacotty Area Office, said, "I feel strongly that persons parking in such areas are unaware of the human suffering and distress their illegal parking is causing.

The County Council has asked for students and staff to show "compassion to enable residents and, in particular, the fire brigade, ambulance and Gardaí to have free passage to these homes to provide emergency medical and other social services to the community as needed".

Ms Collins added, "You never know when you will be in need of help. On this occasion we are reaching out to you to help us help our people."

Mr Cahill also believes that students need to look at where they are driving from, as a large part of the problem could be removed if students did not drive in from nearby estates such as Elm Park and College Court.

Finally Mr Cahill asked that drivers apply common sense when parking.



24 beats in a bar

An Focal Reporter

STUDENTS FROM the Irish Academy of Music & Dance kept the beat going for 24 hours from 10pm on Thursday of week 5 until the same time on Friday night in an effort to raise much needed funds for a critical heart transplant for their friend and colleague, Luis Asturias.

The Traditional Music & Dance class organised the fundraiser with the support of UL Trad Soc to help raise money towards the \square 50,000 bill that the procedure will cost. A Spanish cardiologist has agreed to carry out the operation but as the cost still proved to be substantial, the musician's friends decided to organise fundraising events to lessen the burden.

Mr Asturias is a Spanish musician who has lived in Ireland for the last twelve years but suffers from a rare disease called amyloidosis which has descended into Multiple Myeloma, a form of blood cancer.

Special guests for the event included flutist Niall Keegan and concertina player Ernestine Healy. The session was held in the Stables club until closing time at which point it moved to the SU common room until the morning when the players returned to the Stables for the last leg of their set.

SU President Pa O'Brien said, "This was a student-led, student-organised event for a very worthy cause. The Students' Union was delighted to support it; we wish them well in future fundraising efforts."

Donations towards Luis' future care can be made by contacting organiser Roisin Ní Galloglaigh on 087 0553965 or alternatively donations can be made by visiting www.supportluis.com.

Giving time for Rag Week

Emma Hayward

WITH RAG Week fast approaching the Students' Union are recruiting volunteers to collect money at events in the weeks leading up to and including Rag Week itself. Volunteers are needed for Monday to Thursday of week 10 and the hours will be extremely flexible.

Volunteers have already been busy in the weeks leading up to Rag Week by providing bag-packing in Weeks 6 and 7 which took place in Dunnes Stores on Childers Road in Limerick. The only requirement, according to Welfare Officer Caitriona McGrattan, is that "volunteers need to be outgoing; you are asking people for money after all." She also emphasised that every little helps when it comes to volunteering, "If you have a spare hour we'll take it!"

The general attitude towards volunteering seems to be 'the more the merrier' and with Ms. McGrattan urging, "We want to get as many volunteers as possible". There will

be some rewards for those that put the effort in including a free T-shirt for every volunteer and an after party on Friday of Rag week in the Stables. Another big event will be a Flag Day in Limerick city on the Saturday, 28 March, between 10am and 6pm and again the SU are looking for a plentiful supply of volunteers to help with the collecting buckets.

ULTV will also be organising another oil-wrestling tournament to raise money during Rag Week following the success of the previous event they held in Week 3. Volunteers will again be needed to take donations during this event as well as the others.

The proceeds will be divided equally among four charities: Milford Care Centre, Limerick Red Cross, Limerick Mental Health Association and St Gabriel's Centre.

"It's all for a good cause and any effort put in will go a long way," said Ms McGrattan.

No shows blocking Medical Centre

Amy Croffey

THIS ACADEMIC year the UL Health Centre has witnessed a vast increase in the demand for on-campus health services. The rise in demand for consultations is directly linked with the recession as the UL Health Centre's services are free.

The Health Centre's initial function is to treat cases of "acute illness" for students unable to attend their own GP during the week. The health centre should not be treated as a GP service unless the student is in need of immediate care.

One of the main issues that Dr. Niall Cahill, Director of the UL Medical Centre, faces on a daily basis is students not showing up to their prearranged appointments. "We don't make the appointments

with students" Dr. Cahill stated, "they make the appointments with us and therefore they should stick to them" and explained that "if you don't cancel your appointment it costs the service". He assumed in the past "that people would have the common courtesy to cancel their appointments if necessary". However, with more students utilising the Medical Centre's services weekly, this issue is becoming a hindrance for not only the medical staff, but also other students in need of medical care. A patient not turning up is wasteful, extends waiting times for other patients and is a strain on costs. No-shows also inconvenience those individuals who need access to medical care in a timely manner.

The number for the UL Student Health Centre is 061 202 534. Caitriona McGrattan, Student Welfare Officer, appealed for students to save this number to their phone and to call it promptly if they are unable to attend their appointment, in order to be respectful of the medical needs of fellow students. This time will be reallocated to someone in need of treatment as appointments are in high demand. This in turn will allow the UL Medical Centre to best serve the needs of the large student population.

If you are the kind of person unlikely to rise before midday, don't make a 9 a.m. appointment as one of the most over-used excuses for no-shows is, "I slept

in" or "I forgot". Thus students are also asked to make note of their appointments to save the medical staff from such overexerted phrases. One further issue that Dr. Niall Cahill outlined is that students need to keep to their specific clinic i.e. if people need a prescription for the pill they need to go to the Pill Clinic and not the General Health Clinic. These specialised clinics were established to better facilitate the student's specific medical requirements. The list of specific clinics is displayed outside the Student Health Centre which is located in the C Block, Level M of the Main Building or on their webpage www.ul.ie/medical.

Ulsu specials

Owned and operated by students for students

- Tim Horton doughnuts €0.99

- Chicken snack stick with wedges €2

- Spar apple juice - half price! €0.79

- Basset bag range...buy one get one free! €2.50

- Kellogg's Rice Crispies 400g/Honey Loops 375g/

Coco Pops 375g/ Moon & Star 350g - 2 for €3.99!

- Cadbury/M&S medium Easter eggs...3 for €9

- Natural Confectionery range - buy one get one free! €2.55

STAR BUY!

Buy any roll or sandwich from the deli,

and get a Mars bar OR apple/banana

AND Ballygowen Still 500ml for just €1 more!

Main Courtyard Shop:

Monday - Thursday 08:30 - 20:00

Friday 08:30 - 18:00

Saturday 11:00 - 17:00

Dromroe Shop:

Monday - Thursday 08:30 - 19:00

Friday 08:30 - 18:00

See Euro Crunch offers in store:

- Nutri grain cereal bar...50c

- Lyons Tea green 40 pack...€1

- Weetabix 12 pack...€1

- Spar sparkling/still 2l water ...€1

- Squeez Orange juice 1l...€1

C&S benefit from Stables extension

Jason Kennedy

AROUND €1,300 was raised for certain clubs and societies at an extended bar held in the Stables on Thursday, 19 February.

The event was the first of two extended bars organised by the Stables management to fundraise for clubs and societies.

The cost of entry was €2, and was taken by clubs and socs members outside the Stables.

Manager of the Stables, Declan Collins said that the night went “extremely well”, saying there was a great mix of people.

“There were a lot of 2nd years, 3rd years, postgrads and international students. We had no trouble whatsoever. It was a fantastic night and we were delighted with how it turned out.

“We’ve been in contact with some of the residential areas and there was no trouble in the estates as far as we can see.”

Mr Collins mentioned that they have not previously had an extended bar because the Stables had lost their

license a number of years ago.

“We thought it might be tempting fate if we went to the courts looking for an extended license with what was going on in some of the estates after the nightclubs closed. We thought that it might draw too much attention to us.

“But after that I met with Paul Lee and Damien Cahill. We decided to organise it, not only as a late bar for the Stables and for the students, to enjoy something different on campus, but also as an opportunity to do much needed fundraising for the clubs and societies on campus. Clubs and Societies Officers, Paul Lee said the event was “very well received” and that quite a few more clubs and societies will take part in the next extended license.

“Sponsorship is drying up, and with spending power down table quizzes are also naturally taking a hit, so this is quite an easy way to generate the money they need to keep going through the students’ union.

“This is a great way of keeping the life on campus and saving people taxi fares and all the other hassle. Now they can just stay here and still

support their fellow students as well.

“I really think there should be more of these to create more of an atmosphere on campus. We’ve made a specific appeal to clubs and societies to support their own, so it’s up to them to talk to their housemates and friends and to work through the grapevine to create more of a hub for students on campus.”

Mr Collins also spoke on the next extended bar, which will take place this month.

“Hopefully it’ll be run in the same way. We’ll have four or five clubs and societies collecting at the door, there’ll be a great band called Headrush playing here and the bar will be open until 2am.

“We will be particular about who gets in. If anyone tries to come in with too much drink in them, we won’t be letting them in. We just want people to come in, enjoy their pints, enjoy the band and enjoy the craic.

“If the second one runs as well as the first on did, we already have plans of implementing more at a later stage.”

Coffee with conscience

Les McCall

ON FRIDAY, 20 February, eight UL students hosted, ‘Coffee with Conscience’ an event aimed at raising money for work in Ghana. Ghana, like much of Africa, is a country struggling to find its place in the modern world. However, there is one group at UL committed to helping with the task.

These students were in Ghana last semester as part of their co-operative education programme, and have come together to try and raise money for school supplies for Ghanaian children. The students worked through “Friends of Ahotokurom,” an organization directed by UL student and native Ghanaian Mark Mantey, who put the two groups in contact.

According to David Kennedy, who was working out of Apam, Ghana last semester, “the children there have few or no books, and we are

working to raise money for textbooks as well as scholarships for bright students.”

David and another student have already collected 8,000 unused textbooks from their hometown primary schools, and along with others involved with ‘Coffee with Conscience,’ are looking to send more.

‘Coffee with Conscience’ used donations from Superquin, the Students’ Union shop, and Teach Failte, who provided the location as well as tea and coffee, to raise over €800 for the cause.

They accomplished this by selling as much tea, coffee, cake and scones as one could handle for only €2, as well as through extra donations from especially generous coffee enthusiasts. According to Caroline Young, this money will not only go towards books and scholarships, but also towards the organization “Friends of

Ahotokurom” itself, who works with a group of sisters, the Daughters of Mary and Joseph. T

his group works in Ahotokurom Ghana, and run a school for mentally challenged children, a leprosy rehabilitation center, and a care home for orphaned or troubled children, as well as help feed many in the surrounding community.

Thus, as impressive a feat as raising €800 is, more is needed. After the success of ‘Coffee with Conscience,’ this philanthropic group is looking for new ways to raise much needed funds.

Although no dates are set yet, they are looking to host a fancy dress party at the Stables, as well as a potential 80 mile cycle event.

So, be prepared to break out the dresses, and men the suits, and get ready to support a very worthy cause, as well as have loads of fun.

UL Debating Union hosts Irish Times Final

Katie Harrington



Dr Ed Walsh speaking at the Irish Times debating final

The 49th Irish Times Debating Final was hosted by the University of Limerick Debating Union for the first time since 1993 on February 20. Over 250 people were in attendance as competitors from UCD, Trinity College and Kings Inn debated the motion ‘that this house believes the partition of Ireland should remain permanent’. The event took place in the newly opened Kemmy Business School and was chaired by the founding president of the University, Dr. Ed. Walsh. The speakers covered numerous angles as they spoke on Northern Ireland’s history and politics, debating whether the issue should be left as it is now until a more concrete solution can be reached, or permanently settled now so that the scars of the past could be allowed

to heal. The judging panel for the prestigious event included former winners of the Irish Times Debating Competition, managing director of the Irish Times Eoin McVey and Prof. Paul McCutcheon University of Limerick vice-president Academic and registrar.

After lengthy deliberation the team prize was awarded to Trinity College Dublin Historical Society speakers John Gallagher and Andrea Mulligan with Jeremy Kinsella of UCD’s Literary and Historical Society taking the individual prize. The winners will embark on a three week debating tour of the United States. As the speakers and audience awaited the result, Dr. Walsh applauded the speakers for the quality of the debate, pointing to oratory as a key leadership skill. Pointing out that many former

winners include Supreme Court judge Adrian Hardiman, broadcaster Marion Finucane and comedian Dara O’Briain, while former President Mary Robinson and former Tánaiste Mary Harney have been finalists. Dr. Walsh maintained that the high standard of speakers in the final was encouraging for the country’s future.

The final was followed by a meal in the Millstream Restaurant for the finalists, the judges and organisers. A social then took place in the Sports Bar where a band and a DJ entertained the crowd for the evening.

UL Debating Union Auditor Emma Kerins thanked the Law Faculty and President’s Officer for their support, as well as the Irish Times and the competition’s convenor, former Irish Times winner Barry Glynn.

Doing the write thing

Orla Walsh

UL’S WRITING centre has moved to a permanent location in rooms C1-065 and C1-066 in the main building.

Its new home provides an administrative office as well as a dedicated space for one-on-one peer tutoring in writing.

“People feel empowered by this type of method, we teach you how to be a better writer,” revealed Writing Centre Academic Tutor, Lawrence Cleary.

Any student, undergraduate or postgraduate who would like to improve their writing skills is welcome to use this service. The writing centre is also available to staff who are interested in developing their students’ writing, or their own. Due to the new premises, students are now able to drop in during the day or if they prefer they can make an appointment online at www.ul.ie/

www.ul.ie/rwc. There is a full schedule available on this site.

The writing centre provides free one-on-one peer support in any aspect of writing or the writing process. It is not a proofreading service: “We don’t work on people’s writing, we work on people.

“We ask them about their writing, their habits, what they actually do. Then we ask them if it’s working... We help them develop strategies so they can learn to clarify their ideas,” said Lawrence.

Each tutor has proven writing abilities and is trained in peer-support. The writing centre has 16 postgraduate tutors offering one-on-one assistance in different disciplines including History, Sociology, Law and Journalism.

The student is encouraged to examine their own writing process – what they do from the time they get an assignment to when they hand it in. Tutors help them to see where they

are making mistakes in essay, report, FYP, thesis and dissertation writing. Group sessions are also available for specific purposes and students are welcome to schedule an appointment for this service.

Any postgraduate students who can demonstrate a high degree of writing competence in their particular discipline are invited to drop off a letter of application with a CV to the writing centre office.

This semester the writing centre will be offering a number of workshops. Information about the times of these workshops will be posted on the centre’s website.

The writing centre was originally set up in 2005 but officially started in autumn 2007. Since then the centre has helped approximately 400 students to improve their writing. All writing centre information is available on www.ul.ie/rwc, students wishing to avail of the service are welcome to visit this site.

“the children there have few or no books, and we are working to raise money for textbooks as well as scholarships for bright students.”

THE ECOLOGY FOUNDATION,

in association with **Siemens Ireland**, is presenting a series of lectures to Ireland's leading Universities on climate change and its implications for the future of society.

The lectures series is designed to inform and encourage undergraduate and graduate students to assess how they can play a role in meeting the challenge of tackling climate change. The lectures not only focus on the challenge of climate change, but also the positive role science, engineering, innovation and business can make by addressing it.

Lecture 3
Wednesday 18th March, Jean Monnet
Lecture Theatre, 2.30pm

Introduction by the Dean of the
Faculty of Science & Engineering,
Prof. Kieran Hodnett

The Engineering Challenge of Climate
Change - A presentation of the major
engineering challenges of climate change,
looking at the solutions that are available,
those that are in the research and
development phase and the critical bottle
necks in deploying appropriate technology.

With climate change becoming the world's number one issue both for business and government, tomorrow's graduates will need to be aware of the opportunities and risks inherent in this new paradigm. These lectures will be of distinct value to students from all disciplines.

UL Environmental Committee

UL Fianna Fáilers at Ard Fheis

Niamh O'Donovan

Eleven members of Cumann Con Colbert, the Ógra branch of Fianna Fail based in UL, travelled to Dublin on the 27 February to attend the 72nd Fianna Fail Ard Fheis held in the Citywest hotel. The delegates met with TDs and Ministers and voted in the prestigious Committee 20 elections which elect members to the party's Ard Comhairle.

They also took part in a workshop conducted by the party with regard to the contentious issue of third level fees, at which Batt O'Keefe, Minister for Education was in attendance. University of Limerick delegates conveyed to the Minister

the opposition to fees felt by the general student populous.

The workshop also entailed a debate where alternatives to fees were discussed including complete opposition to fees, means tested government sponsored loans repayment of which would be based on income after graduation. Ógra Fianna Fail members were also balloted on this issue with 54 per cent in favour of government sponsored loan.

Powerful speeches were given by senior ministers such as Noel Dempsey and Mary Hanafin, dealing with issues such as the economy,

education and health. The weekend was rounded off by a keynote address from An Taoiseach Brian Cowen. In his speech An Taoiseach spoke about the introduction of new standards for banking regulation and of the governments plans to improve the economic situation by 2013.

This was a particularly poignant Ard Fheis, as delegates were concerned with meeting their representatives at higher levels to ensure the concerns of the grassroots of the party are felt by those in power.

Need an answer?

Orla Walsh

A WISE man once said: "A problem shared is a problem halved," - the staff of An Focal and ULSU agree.

ULSU has set up an online advice column for publication in An Focal to encourage students to seek help when they need it.

"Sometimes students might have queries that they might think are 'too stupid' to ask, or they simply don't have the time or the courage to come into the SU and find out. This is just another way that might help students," said An Focal Editor, Aoife Breen.

Students with problems or questions are asked to email askULSU@gmail.com. These will then be forwarded to the correct authority on the advice. For example, educational problems will be dealt with by the Education Officer.

Emails received by askULSU will be treated with confidentiality but may be printed in An Focal with pseudonyms or anonymously.

"Any problem of yours is a problem of ours," said one An Focal writer. All questions are welcome regardless of nature, whether it is sexual, educational,

social, or even where to find the best pint in Limerick!

Problems will be dealt with as quickly as possible, replies will be sent in email form and printed with the question should it appear in the paper.

It is hoped that this less formal setting will encourage students to approach the SU for help where they usually wouldn't have done so.

The first column is due to appear in the next edition of An Focal on Tuesday, March 24. Subject to demand, the column will then become a regular item in the paper.



All different, all equal

Nicole Ní Ríordáin

EQUALITY WEEK 2009 took place on campus during week 6, to encourage equality among students.

The slogan of, "All Different, All Equal", was echoed in the events organised to try and make UL a more accepting and equal environment.

Students' Union Welfare Officer Cairíona McGrattan said, "The Students' Union aim to promote a campus in which all members of the campus community are treated equally and with respect".

Too often are certain students in UL pushed to the margins, whether because of sexual orientation, gender, age or nationality, seemed to be the message the organisers were trying to get across to the student body, and in doing so attempting to end all discrimination.

A highlight of the week was the mock wedding, which took place in the Stables Courtyard on Wednesday. The demonstration served to signify the injustice shown to homosexual partners who wish to marry. Equality Officer Aoife Finnerty acted as minister in the proceedings, which consisted of the "marrying" of several couples.

"Wednesday's event was organized to highlight the inequality that still exists for homosexual

couples and I think that's what it did.

"It was a hugely enjoyable event to coordinate and partake in and the support it received was brilliant," said Ms Finnerty.

Posters were also put up on campus by the ULSU for Equality Week, showing the common stereotypes students have to deal with, including those dealing with mature students and coloured students. "They're designed to highlight stereotypes", Aoife Finnerty said of the posters.

In a further attempt to discourage generalisations, a wall was set up during the week on which students and staff could write the stereotypes imposed upon them that annoyed them.

The act of displaying these stereotypes on campus where anyone could come across them, both in the form of posters and hand written on a wall, was a way of creating awareness about the harmful effects of stereotyping and also highlight the pure absurdity of some such preconceptions.

Equality Week 2009 served to highlight the fact that every UL student is different, and yet all have to deal with being labelled and defined by stereotypes, however everyone deserves to be treated with the same level of respect and dignity.

A sparkling weekend for LGBT

Lorraine Curham

OUT IN UL held their first ever Pride over the last weekend in February. Beginning on 26February, Sparkle's ran for three days. The opening night in Riddlers was a relaxed evening, with drinks and chit chat.

On Friday, 27 February everything went crazy. Starting at 9 in Tatler's bar in Limerick city, Out in UL stormed the normally straight venue and people came in droves to the event.

Out in UL began the night with a variety show, a few guitar and single numbers, before heading downstairs to watch Madonna Lucia, Shelia FitzPatrick (the reigning Alternative Miss Ireland), Sharon

Arseburn and Darren Shine get down and dirty. After came Déjà vu, a side-splitting performance group from Maynooth College.

Eventually DJ Jules from Cork helped everyone to dance the night away.

At Queerbash over 350 people attended the event and Out in UL raised over €1400 for charity, which will be split between Rainbow Support Services, a youth support group in Limerick city and MarriageEquality, who aim to legalise Gay Marriage in Ireland.

On 28 February, Out in UL opened a number of LGBT workshops in UL. The workshops were open to everyone and several colleges attended, including Galway, Cork and Maynooth.

Approximately 40 people attended the workshops. Included in these workshops were guest speakers from MarriageEquality, Red Ribbon (a sexual health group in Limerick city), LGBT Noise (a campaigns group for Marriage Equality), and Rainbow Youth Services.

Guest speaker Madonna Lucia, from Limerick city, also gave a workshop on Drag Queens which was very enjoyable. Guest speaker Edmund Lynch gave a workshop on his DVD, "Did anyone notice us?" Gay media 1973-93'. Finally Tonie Walsh, another guest speaker, who is one of the oldest and most respected LGBT people in Ireland-as he helped to set up such things as the GCN and Irish Queer Archive-gave a speech on

homophobia and stereotypes.

Eden, a gay club, also took place on the night of the 28th in Limerick's newly refurbished gay bar, Riddlers, which was a great way to finish off the weekend of Sparkles.

Out in UL Co-President, Lorraine Curham, said, "Sparkles' weekend was about helping the LGBT community to feel proud of who they are.

"Sometimes that can be lost along the way, being homosexual or heterosexual, and it is important to be reminded of pride in who you are.

Sparkles was about tackling homophobia and bringing the LGBT community together through understanding and acceptance and that is exactly what it achieved.

Seachtain na Gaeilge

Nicole Ní Ríordáin

FIÚ GO CHEART Seachtain na Gaeilge a bheith tábhachtach le haghaidh gach dalta ag freastal ar Ollscoil Luimigh, tá brí fhiúntach aige do ghrúpa daltaí sa chéad bhliain atá ina gconaí le chéile i gGráig Chill Mhuire. Cén fáth? Mar tá an ochtar seo mar chuid den "Scéim Conaithe Gaeilge" a chuireann an ollscoil ar fáil gach bliain. Ciallíonn é seo go bhfuil na daltaí tar eis glacadh le chonaí le chéile ar an gcampus, ag labhairt Gaeilge gach lá mar gnáththeanga an thí, agus ag déanamh iarrachta Gaeilge a spreagadh i measc daltaí eile.

'Sé an príomh-aidhm a mbíonn ag Seachtain na Gaeilge ná labhairt na Gaeilge a chuir chun cinn agus tá cónaitheoirí Teach na Gaeilge tar eis an aidhm seo a thógaint suas le díograis. I measc na eachtraí atá pleanáilte acu chun béim a chuir ar an nGaeilge labhartha i mí Márta beidh seisiún ceoil traidisiúnta, ceilí agus chomh maith beidh siad timpeall an champais ag iarraidh imoibriú le mic leann - má shroicheann tú orthu, bí cinnte go stadfaidh tú le h-aghaidh béadán! Is cuma cén caighdeán Gaeilge atá agat, 'sé an príomh rud ná iarracht a dhéanamh Gaeilge a úsáid níos coitianta.

Tosnaíonn Seachtain na Gaeilge ar an gcampus i Seachtain a 7 agus beidh an seisiún ceoil ar suil i Javas ag a naoi ar an gCéadaoin sin. Chomh maith le sin beidh an ceilí ar siúl ar an Luan ag a naoi, i Hálla Gráig Chill Mhuire.

ALTHOUGH Seachtain na Gaeilge should be an important time for every UL student, it is especially meaningful for a group of first years living in Kilmurry Village. Why? Because these eight students are participating in the "Scéim Conaithe Gaeilge" which the university offers each year, meaning that they have agreed to live together on campus,

using Irish as our everyday language, as well as encourage other students to speak Irish.

The very essence of Seachtain na Gaeilge is to promote spoken Irish and the residents of Teach na Gaeilge have taken this on board. Among what they have planned to highlight

Irish speaking in March is a traditional Irish music session, a ceilí and furthermore they will be around campus trying to engage with students - if you come across them, make sure to stop for a chat. It doesn't matter how good or bad you are, the important thing is that

an effort is made to use Irish more.

Seachtain na Gaeilge begins on campus in Week 7, and a traditional music session will be held in Javas from 9pm on Wednesday, 11 March. The ceilí will be on Monday, 9 March from 9pm to 11pm, in Kilmurry Hall.

UL student to help in Africa

Kieran Foley

EARLY ON 19 March next, while many students may still be in bed, one University of Limerick student will be on her way to help disadvantaged communities in one of the poorest areas of the world.

Niamh Lonergan, a first year Bachelor of Arts student, is travelling to South Africa as part of the Niall Mellon Township Challenge. Niamh will be part of the 500 strong group which volunteers each year to be part of the world renowned organisation.

Nineteen year old Niamh first heard about the organisation at her secondary school, Rockwell College in Co. Tipperary. "A girl in our school went on it and when she came back she spoke to different classes about it. She said that it had been such a life-changing experience, and I realised that I wanted to do something like that with my life," she said.

Niamh admits that working long days in high temperatures will be difficult, however she is undeterred from her challenge: "The fact that you're contributing to ending poverty will make it all worthwhile," she says.

One of the highlights of the Niall Mellon volunteer trip is said to be the handing over of the keys of the newly built houses to the individual families. "That will be such a rewarding experience," says Niamh. "We also get to meet children in the local schools. I'm really looking forward to that," she added.

All Niall Mellon volunteers must raise €5,000 each before they travel. "It's not that hard when you split it up," says Niamh. "I went to 40 people and asked them for €25 each. A no-uniform day was held in my old secondary school, and a coffee morning in my primary school, along with a table quiz and a fancy dress disco. I also went bag-packing with 10 others in Dunnes Stores in Clonmel," she said.

Niamh will miss one week of college, but says that she is determined to put it to good use and hopes to be even more motivated towards her college work when she returns.

This year will be historic for the Niall Mellon challenge as it is the first time that the Irish will be working with the South Africans building the houses. "It will be a really good experience for us, and them," say Niamh.

Niamh leaves Ireland on 19 March and returns on 26 March, working in the Paar township, 40 miles outside Cape Town. For more information on the Niall Mellon Township Trust, visit: www.irishtownship.com



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The University of Limerick (UL) with over 11,000 students and 1,200 staff is a young, energetic and enterprising university with a proud record of innovation in education and excellence in research and scholarship. The University of Limerick offers student services, facilities and accommodation of the highest standard in Ireland, as well as world class sporting facilities. The picturesque campus is set on 500 acres of parkland campus straddling the River Shannon. It has excellent public transport links with Limerick City, Dublin, Cork and Galway and, through Shannon airport, with the rest of the world.

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On world wide display

Denise Calnan

WE ARE living in a society where privacy has become a necessity in our daily lives. The once-communal changing rooms in a leisure centre have been converted to individual cubicles. Neighbours don't casually call in to each other or watch each other's children playing on the road in the fashion that our parents' and our grandparents' generation would be used to. Passwords and codes protect every box, phone, website and music player that people own.

Yet we all happily click the buttons to display our lives in virtual form on the web for everybody to read. Somebody casually passing through my own Bebo can view an abundance of photos of me – some civilised, others not so much – can explore my network of friends, can evaluate how much I am loved, by my number of loves of course, and can criticise my taste in music.

They can see my ever-growing list of 'what I heart for life' and they can note that bad spelling, falling asleep with my iPod and waking up all tangled in earphones and lumps of butter in sandwiches are 'what grind my gears'.

They can follow a conversation with a friend through the comments posted, view my relationship status and explore on the applications what countries I've visited around the world.

Is it a bit strange how we post all this personal information up for everybody to view? I wouldn't sit down next to a stranger in a bus station or start a conversation with the person in line behind me for the public toilet and share this information so readily, so why did I write it on my Bebo, updating and deleting it throughout the years for, quite literally, the whole world to see?

There is a false sense of security involved with social networking websites. When I update my blog with the latest funny quotes or post up the photos from last Tuesday night at Molly's, I am more than likely to be sitting at my desk with the laptop or relaxing on the couch in front of Grey's Anatomy.

I am also more than likely to be on my own, because I think we can all safely admit that updating your Bebo is not the most social activity to do in a room full of people. This makes you feel like your Bebo page is a closed, personal space for you to tend and nurture.

If I was to sit at my desk uploading my photos with a large open field in front of me containing every person who will ever view these photos, I am sure that I would be slightly, if not a little bit more, freaked out.

Of course I would recognise the

familiar faces from college, the old faces from school and the few faces from work, but there would also be the anticipating faces of complete strangers staring back at me. An experience I would most certainly prefer to skip please and thank you.

Of course, social networking sites like these are only for fun, they are a source of entertainment for all, but we all know not every profile is a real person.

How many friend invitations have we all received from Bella Gabbana, the new, hot Italian exchange student who is coming to our class and whose profile picture bears an uncanny resemblance to Hayden Panettiere from Heroes? Or the new friend request where you decide to view their page first and their comments box contains an infinite list of 'Hey, who are you?'s and a cringing amount of 'Who's this?'s?

If I was to be a stalker, please note the conditional tense, of course, I would say that Bebo would be a definite source of information on my victim. All I would have to do is view his or her page a few times a week, I wouldn't even have to become a member of Bebo. If I was unlucky enough to have a victim who requested for their page to be privatised, meaning only their direct friends being able to view it, I could

just assume the personality of a vulnerable exchange student or somebody that you sparked an interesting conversation up with one night in the Trinity Rooms bathrooms and, in the rainbow-coloured world of Vladivar vodka and apple sour shots, you seriously bonded and created a new and

meaningful relationship that is sure to last forever, parting on the ever-romantic screams of, 'I'll add you on Bebo!'.

Whether for entertainment, staying in contact, meeting new friends or people-stalking, Bebo seems to be a very useful and easy-to-use social networking site for

people of all ages.

Perhaps we should take heed to a word of warning though, imagine that big field of strangers and think about it twice before we add a new friend, upload a recent photo or write a personal blog in the future.



Working against the recession

Darragh Roche

IMAGINE A university without lectures, without tutorials, without assignments and deadlines, without authorities always trying to enforce rules and regulations. Isn't it idyllic? This is a university without staff. Now imagine the consequences. We would be students without an education, without degrees, without purpose. We are in college, ultimately, to become qualified in something. This would be impossible without staff, which is something we don't often appreciate.

The battle against government cutbacks is the war we're all fighting. When I say all, I mean everyone on this campus, including the staff. We wear the colourful t-shirts, block the bridges, make the placards and march in the protests. They negotiate frantically with the government and prepare for the unthinkable: strike.

Most of us may think fondly of the idea of a strike by our lecturers. A fun day off when they march instead of us. Think a little further and the novelty will soon wear off.

Staff at this university have undergone a financial squeeze,

cutting the payroll by 5 per cent, meaning everyone has to give that little bit more.

We may well scoff at this seemingly minute figure. We should not. For any group of workers to take a pay cut is a travesty, it is a backward step in an age when everyone wants to raise their standard of living.

Have you heard a member of staff complain about conditions here? Have you noticed any change or decline in staff attitude or work? The answer is no. Despite the fact that all the staff in UL are now feeling that extra pressure, our education has not suffered. This is because of the professionalism and commitment of staff. Though they may be suffering financially just as we are, they will not allow that to interfere with the quality of this university and neither should we.

Admittedly, students and staff are natural enemies. There is no more popular subject of complaint than the excessive workload or the apparent ineptitude of a lecturer. We have whole systems to protect

students from problems with staff. In this case, however, we are all in the same boat. As we may have to pay fees, they may lose more from their salaries. If we are really committed to reversing the government's position on cutbacks and fees, we have found our natural allies in the public sector.

The recession is the greatest crisis that has faced our country in generations. The world economic system has been brought low and Ireland is suffering acutely. As our banks need re-capitalisation and the exchequer stands on the brink of bankruptcy, the government is desperately trying to find new sources of money to cover the national debt. That means charging people more money (yes, fees) and cutting back on spending (yes, public sector pay cuts).

The attack on the government launched last year against students, pensioners, middle-income families and public sector workers is an attack on the most vulnerable: the easy targets who will be forced to bear government belt-tightening.

The young and the old are seldom able to influence policy, the middle classes are not rich enough to say no to the government and public sector workers? Do not forget, they work for the government. It is far trickier to negotiate with your employer when that employer has all the mechanisms of state at its disposal.

Our future is under threat. So too is the future of the academic system itself. Educators and university administrators, the very people who make college education possible, are being threatened. Pay and recruitment will fall. Everyone has a lecturer or two they would prefer to do without but no one will be smiling when there is no staff to maintain the university.

Even through the difficulties they are now facing, the university staff has not allowed any slip, any fall back in the standard or the aims of this institution. For that they should be applauded.

Now is not the time to become divided amongst ourselves. As we fight the good fight against fees and

cutbacks we should consider the staff who have already seen their workload and effort increase despite no financial gain, and may have to again.

At the recent Students' Union

General Meeting, our president, Pa O'Brien, said that if the staff strikes, the SU will show solidarity with them. It is that solidarity which is the key to protecting our future.

“The recession is the greatest crisis that has faced our country in generations. The world economic system has been brought low and Ireland is suffering acutely”

The end is nigh: Sabbat Elections 2009

Nominations open Friday, week 7



Name: Aoife Breen
Position: Communications Officer
Why did you run for this position?
 I couldn't not have...I've been involved in the SU and in An Focal since I started in first year.
What has been the one absolute highlight of your year that you will never, ever forget?
 14 editions of a student newspaper and 6 editions of a magazine: I have the privilege of calling myself editor on each one of them and working with a fantastic team of very dedicated writers and photographers who have given up their time freely to make each one happen.
What was your absolute lowest moment?
 Before the first edition of An Focal in semester one: I just hadn't a clue what I was doing. I had all these word documents and images and I didn't know what magic word would turn them into a physical newspaper. It was traumatic putting it together. Now, I could put the paper together in my sleep. Sometimes I do.
Did you ever curse yourself for running?
 Surprisingly, no. I've joked about it, but despite all the late nights and stress, I get immense job satisfaction.
Did you achieve everything you wanted to?
 Not everything; some of the stuff I've done all right but there is still some stuff I'd like to do but there just really is a limit on what you have the time to do.
What qualities do you think someone should have running for your position?
 Stamina – because no matter how stressed or how late it is into the night, you have to keep going to meet the deadlines. It helps to be really passionate about what you're doing too because that helps you to keep in mind why you're doing it despite the pressure.
What did you learn from this year?
 The ability to just let go and to delegate to other people and to trust in them. Also, the importance of team work and how everyone in a team has a lot to contribute.
If it was this time last year, would you still run knowing all that you do now? Absolutely. It's been a hectic, rollercoaster of a year, but I've learned so much and had a great time doing it all as well.
Best thing about your job:
 Having the chance to document a year in the life of the Union; An Focal will be one of the prime resources for years to come about what happened in 2008/09 in UL.
Worst thing about your job:
 Not being able to do everything I'd like to do because of time constraints.
Top piece of advice for any potential candidate:
 Be damn sure you want this.
 Sum up each of your fellow sabbats in a sentence
Pa: Don't mess with his hair...or his Guinness.
Bubbles: She's scarily organised...you should see her Outlook mailbox, there's a folder for everything!
Eamonn: Ridiculously committed to the job.
Damien: Ah sure he's ginger, he's got enough problems...
Overall, running for a sabbat position – yay or nay? Yay all the way!



Name: Damien Cahill
Position: Campaigns & Services Officer
Why did you run for this position?
 I wanted free gig tickets, free rolls in the shop and free pints/dinners in the Stables and Scholars. I was also intrigued by the promise of constant sexual attention and basic campus stardom. By the time I found out the truth it was already too late.
What has been the one absolute highlight of your year that you will never, ever forget?
 Seeing nearly 2500 people partying hard for the Fresher's ball with the Sawcoctors last semester...a truly awesome result of work here at the Union.
What was your absolute lowest moment?
 Spending most of semester one on crutches, especially for the protests.
Did you ever curse yourself for running?
 But of course.
Did you achieve everything you wanted to?
 Almost, we're not done yet, Rag Week beckons.
What qualities do you think someone should have running for your position?
 To be honest I feel that my Business background was a big help in terms of a lot of the work I would have on a day to day basis with staffing, dealing with outside organisations and the internal running of the Union services, shop and bars. The ability to go to Plan B at a moments notice is definitely a must.
What did you learn from this year?
 Long hours are really long.
If it was this time last year, would you still run knowing all that you do now?
 Eh...does that include the Lotto numbers.
Best thing about your job:
 The constant stream of female students leaving their phone numbers on my office door, I will get to text you all, girls (wink wink). Also being regularly featured in Hello and OK magazine – although invasive and annoying – does give me some credibility when talking to people outside of chippers at 3 in the morning.
Worst thing about your job:
 Constantly having to avoid the paparazzi on a night out. They just won't stop. And girls tearing my clothes off in public and sleeping with me just because I might give them Pa O'Brien's number.
Top piece of advice for any potential candidate:
 Learn to drink at the weekends, if you do drink that is. If you don't...learn to drink!
Sum up each of your fellow sabbats in a sentence
Pa: The tallest yet among the happiest of the smurf species; likes the occasional sherry on the veranda, I believe
Bubbles: Condom controller extraordinaire.
Eamonn: This guy will have a beard when he is older.
Breenie: Definitely should have been on the Microsoft team that designed spell-check; also good with plasters!
Overall, running for a sabbat position – yay or nay? Yay, yay, yay



Name: Caitriona 'Bubbles' McGrattan
Position: Deputy President/Welfare Officer
Why did you run for this position?
 Clichéd as it sounds I genuinely wanted to give something back to the college I loved.
What has been the one absolute highlight of your year that you will never, ever forget?
 The student-parent Christmas party; anyone who was there will know how fantastic the evening was.
What was your absolute lowest moment?
 Telling the unsuccessful charities that they wouldn't be included in this week's Rag Week charities; they were all so deserving and every one of them needed the money!
Did you ever curse yourself for running?
 Yes; the late nights, shitty food habits, excessively long meetings could make anyone pessimistic
Did you achieve everything you wanted to?
 Unfortunately, no; I had great ideas coming into the job but I didn't know just how busy I would be with the everyday stuff.
What qualities do you think someone should have running for your position?
 Empathy for people (most people wouldn't believe what fellow students are carrying) and being able to listen. A love of administration would also be a plus. And in general as a sabbat I reckon you have to be a bit crazy
What did you learn from this year?
 That good friends are the best tonic in the world!
If it was this time last year, would you still run knowing all that you do now?
 I can't honestly say, ask me in four months time when out of the office
Best thing about your job:
 The people I've worked with; the students, the class reps, the union staff, staff and academics in the University, the other sabbats, the staff of the charities...the list goes on
Worst thing about your job:
 Not helping students in the way they want or expect; there are limits to what I can do to help someone and that includes abiding by the law.
Top piece of advice for any potential candidate:
 Make sure you really want it! The job is hard enough without hating it too!
Sum up each of your fellow sabbats in a sentence
Pa: Works hard and plays hard...but not necessarily in that order!
Eamonn: Eagar
Damien: The old man of our team
Breenie: a grammar fascist of the highest order but fantastic fun anyway
Overall, running for a sabbat position – yay or nay? Yay!



Name: Eamonn T. Gardiner
Position: Education Officer
Why did you run for this position?
 I ran to help people and to give something back to the Union. Hopefully I've accomplished some of that in my time as a sabbat.
What has been the one absolute highlight of your year that you will never, ever forget?
 Quorate Class Reps Council
What was your absolute lowest moment?
 Getting told Council wasn't quorate...
Did you ever curse yourself for running?
 Most evenings! But no regrets!
Did you achieve everything you wanted to?
 No, I would have like to have been elected earlier in the year and to have had a full year to work on my policies!
What qualities do you think someone should have running for your position?
 A thick skin! But seriously, you have to be able to sit in front of lecturers and administrators and be able to tell them that students need a break on assignments or projects or when they f**k up they need a second chance!
What did you learn from this year?
 I learned that you have to give a job like this your all; if you can't give it 110 per cent, if you refuse to step up to the mark and help people, then you're just wasting people's time and money and you should walk away!
If it was this time last year, would you still run knowing all that you do now? Definitely! And what's more, I'd win by a bigger margin!!
Best thing about your job:
 The buzz after a successful campaign/event!!
Worst thing about your job:
 Having a student come into you with a horror story (sh*t grants, killer fees, vengeful lecturers) and knowing that there's very little you can do to help them. That's a real low blow unfortunately.
Top piece of advice for any potential candidate:
 This is more than a job. This is a vocation; don't attempt to do it unless you have what it takes and it takes a lot. This is not for the faint hearted.
Sum up each of your fellow sabbats in a sentence
Pa: He's tall like, but not really that tall!
Bubbles: The most sympathetic person you'll ever meet; always on hand with chocolate and a shoulder to lean on!
Damien: The comedian in the group; keeps us all smiling!
Breenie: An utter perfectionist; word fascist! Exceptionally talented and a real asset.
Overall, running for a sabbat position – yay or nay? One of the most positive experiences of my life!



Name: Pa O'Brien
Position: President
Why did you run for this position?
 I thought I could carry on and improve the good work that had been already done by St. John the previous President. I admired his approach to the job. I think he did a lot for the Union he started the Bike Scheme amongst other things. I wanted to bring his ideas further and bring my own plans as well. I wanted to make progress.
What has been the one absolute highlight of your year that you will never, ever forget?
 The protesting has been great. The Limerick city protest, blocking Thomond Bridge and the Munster march; all great times. It's good to be involved in something like that. Makes you remember you have a voice.
What was your absolute lowest moment?
 Bridge-gate! I never really take anything personally but it's not nice for anybody to think you would sell them out, when I obviously wouldn't.
Did you ever curse yourself for running?
 No.
Did you achieve everything you wanted to?
 I think most of what I wanted to do has either happened or is happening.
What qualities do you think someone should have running for your position?
 You need to want to and enjoy working for others. You have to be able to put your job before any other consideration. You don't stop being an officer when you leave the office in the evening. You have to be prepared to answer questions and help people out no matter where you are or what your doing, so in that sense you definitely have to enjoy it, which I do.
What did you learn from this year?
 I learned that if everybody is happy with you then you're not doing your job! I didn't take the job to make enemies but I definitely didn't take it to make friends. In your work you're going to upset people if you're going to achieve anything. If this is for the better then you have to be prepared to do that.
If it was this time last year, would you still run knowing all that you do now?
 Of course.
Best thing about your job:
 Working for the good guys (students), I enjoy tension in meetings it makes me laugh.
Worst thing about your job:
 You can't be everywhere. I think I worked 18 days straight at one stage. You get invited to a lot of weekend stuff which is great but you have to have time to relax as well.
Top piece of advice for any potential candidate:
 In order to get elected you need a team of good friends and a hard bastard of a campaign manager. I still have nightmares about my fella, Dave the Balf, couldn't have done it without him or any of my mates though.
Sum up each of your fellow sabbats in a sentence
Caitriona: The conscience of the group; most likely to say, "From a welfare point of view!!" Great singer too!
Eamonn: Thorough and committed, I was delighted to have him on board.
Damien: Lights fires and touches men tenderly
Breenie: You said, what about me in the paper?!?
Overall, running for a sabbat position – yay or nay?

Columnists

Running on empty

Paul Carty



Raising and giving. That's right folks Rag Week is on the horizon and I wonder how many of you knew it translates to 'Raising And Giving' week. It seems to me that the charity aspect has been lost in the mire of drunkenness to a lot of students. Rag Week has become just a glorified piss up week in many respects.

With 40 arrested and 20 in hospital on the first day of Rag Week in Galway, one fears what day one of Rag here will hold in store. Cast your mind back to last year and we had Republic of Loose have to finish their set abruptly due to people shoving in the crowd. Some of you will end up in hospital. It sounds crazy to say that this early, but Limerick Regional will be the destination for quite a few people on those nights out. You've really got to feel for the staff there; I'm sure they could be doing an awful lot more than patching up drunk students.

It's the residents of Castletroy with whom most of the sympathy must rest. Rag Week inevitably carries with it more than a touch of anti-social behaviour and it is usually the innocent that suffer.

I can't imagine what it must be like for a working family trying to go about their lives during Rag week. Living in Oaklawns or Elm Park, I don't think too many will be looking forward to the Sunday night of Rag Week with people flooding through these estates to go home after the Lodge. With the result that the place looks like a hurricane crashed through it the next morning

Yet it happens every year without fail. Why? It boils down to two major things I think; the first being the excessive drinking that holds a macabre place on the mantelpiece of Irish society. With the way some people talk, one would swear it's something to be proud of. What must the many international and Erasmus students think when they encounter Rag Week? Copious drinking shrouded under the cloak of craic.

Secondly, there seems to be an increasing phenomenon of engaging in anti-social behaviour to impress peers. Quite what's so funny about ripping off car wing mirrors and aerials is lost on me. Certainly, it's the minority that take part in such despicable activities but I do believe that minority becomes more pronounced during Rag Week. It's embarrassing more than anything to think that someone in third level education would feel the need to lower themselves just to impress their mates.

Despite this, the charity aspect still has a strong footing on the foundations of Rag week. Over €20,000 was raised last year and with some help hopefully that might be surpassed this year.

Students need to rediscover this aspect of Rag Week. There are plenty of activities to take part in – that don't involve drinking. And you know what? They're probably more rewarding and fun than waking up the next morning with a sandpaper mouth and a concrete head.

Preaching from the altar of responsibility won't be a popular place to be come 30 March, but I do implore you to remember what Rag Week is about: raise and give as much as you can and do embrace the social aspect. Make it an enjoyable and memorable week.

I Spy



I Spy's guide to third level fees: What do we want, what will we get?



The hot issue at Week 5's Union General Meeting was third level tuition fees, and what a stimulating discussion it was. Egos and underhanded political jibery was endemic and you could smell the hate from each side.

At one stage I thought it was going to kick off big style in an all-out riot, some guy at the back said he saw a gun...okay, well it wasn't really like that but there was impassioned argument from both side in what was an enjoyable get together.

There was fire and brimstone on both sides of the divide. The room comprised two main argumentative political sects. Members of the Free Education for Everyone group (FEE), mainly comprised of socialist beard-strokers sat on the left of the house, ironically enough.

Those who supported surrendering the campaign to negotiate the issue to get the best system of fees for students, mainly comprised of smooth-faced Fianna Fail-ers and would-be intellectual knights in shining armour, sat on the right, also ironically enough.

At the end of the meeting the

Union was mandated to continue a simple straight up "no to fees" campaign and not engage with alternatives. This was carried by a narrow margin but means that Union policy for everyone is "No fees"

The FEE group looked to have an all-out 24 hour student strike. The thing is that if students decide on a simple strike then who actually loses. The lecturers get a day to muse and philosophise about their subject; the library staff get some peace and could then finally identify the massive amount of squally Leaving Cert students in our midst. The only people that actually lose are the on-campus bars and food outlets.

The FEE group's point on continuing the simple 'No fees' argument was that the government have already climbed down on several issues. God knows, we can shout louder than pensioners, but we don't vote as much you see; that's an issue. Yet I do think it's best to fight the good fight while we still can.

There are a few possible systems that we could face if the government decide to bring back Fees in April

and none of them are painless.

Up front fees

This can't happen. This would stop up to half of all students attending University at the outset. This would give us no chance of having the kind of educated workforce we need to bring us out of this current depression. Only an idiot would seek to bring this system in...that means with this Government, it's still in the running.

Government-backed loans

This would mean that the government would pay your fees, as they do now. They would front up the money to the University hence solving their current financial difficulties. The paying back of these loans would be linked to earning thresholds after you graduate. This means no one would be stopped coming from University due to fees and doesn't seem completely unfair.

Graduate tax

This would mean that you would pay an extra 1 or 2 percent tax throughout your lifetime. Students in general have paid for their education within five years of

graduating due to the higher tax they pay. They also contribute 70 per cent more in tax than non-graduates throughout their working life. So more tax sounds a bit shit to me.

More tax

Tax everyone in the country 1 per cent; problem solved. But how are you going to justify to a supermarket worker that they are paying for a bunch of lazy, weed-smoking, hard-drinking student bastards to sit around and watch Dr Phil all day. Well, that's what they'll say!

So what does it all mean? I Spy is against the old fees but does see the point in our Unions, like trade unions, going to the table to negotiate the best deal for us. That's how this stuff works.

For better or worse the vote at the UGM means that the people have spoken. Long live democracy. This would never have happened under the old Fascism I tell you.

When is that going to come back into fashion? The uniforms are so camp it could also go hand in hand with equality and gay marriage. Wouldn't that be nice...

Deep Throat

We've been given to wonder here at Throat Towers if things aren't quiet here at the moment. Things need a shake up. We're feeling a little poorly and were so inclined we might blame the government for that but, sure, we can't blame them for everything and, God knows, it doesn't do much good when we do.

As we write, the great university purge is underway. No, not the carting off and imprisonment of dissident lecturers who hold to radical views such as finishing lectures ten minutes before the hour. It seems that the staff members of college didn't actually make their habit to delete their email completely.

See once you deleted your mail, you then had to go to the deleted folder every once in a while and delete it again. This meant that some folks had tens thousands of emails in their deleted folder. This wasn't exactly helpful to old mail system which gave up the ghost for a few days a while back.

The staff members are also somewhat concerned about the parking habits of those in the residences at Plassey, Kilmurry, Thomond, Dromroe and Cappavilla Villages. And there are some who, quite harshly in our opinion, believe that under no circumstances should students be given priority for any type of parking. Something

about how while the children are our future they shouldn't figure quite so much in our present or something along those lines.

We love the sight of a full head of hair in the morning even if it isn't ours. And an afternoon with hundreds of fluffy heads laid out beneath us is just as good. So that this semester's UGM had proper real life quorum what with sign-in sheets and everything being used there were still over 250 people present was pure joy.

There were even motions – four in all – though one was terribly dull and involved purely practical changes to the financial calendar of the Union and one ended being withdrawn by the proposers because it was already provided for in union's internal alcohol policy that being the allowing consumption of alcohol in Union building.

Seriously, with the stress of some of the sabbatical positions, do you really thing they wouldn't allow themselves an afternoon tittle?

The big two motions were in respect of fees and as consequence there will be a referendum in conjunction with sabbatical elections in week 9 asking students their preferred alternatives to fees.

Yep, you heard us right, we're actually going to consult with the student body and ref-your-endum!

We reckon we may need some lube for that and but it should substantially up the numbers voting in week 9 and from great votes come great candidates! Or so we hope.

Speaking more directly of the sabbatical elections, nominations open Friday of week 7 and close on Friday week 8. The elections themselves are happening on Thursday, week 9. Now with the spring break – cue '50s rockabilly music and images of Florida beaches – thrown into the middle of all that we're likely to see very extending planning stages to this year's campaigns. It will be like D-day when the campaigns finally kick off.

When it comes to runners and riders, well a little birdie told me the following scoop: that the education position has given him a real itching for high office and that Chance will run for the Presidency. Up against him could be someone going by the name of Ruán Dillon McLoughlin, (surely

that's the name of someone who writes Maeve Binchy-type romances or la-la-lah folk songs) who is a fan of make and do with a keen side interest in kayaking and is the current Clubs Officer.

We would predict a keen contest being in prospect there.

There are not a lot of rumours around welfare though some are suggesting someone from first year: Mari Wilson's wee one we hear but a mere slip of a 1st year advising you on your welfare, really?

Education, with the probable elevation or departure at least by Chance, is attracting all kinds including a couple of the Aoifes, and a pair, no less, of Law and Euro heads, step forward Ms Emma Kerins who has hidden her SU interests under a bushel up to now and Ms Aoife Finnerty who was CRC head for a bit. And our own Madame Editor is rumoured be chomping at the bite to get into the position; we just can't see it though. Being editor is very

dictatorial – lots of "get me this", and "do that now" and education is too consultative and long-meeting-orientated for El Hefe.

The position of CSO is attracting those with an interest in outdoor activity (well, standing in the courtyard with a megaphone is outdoor work right enough) though whether Fergal Dempsey's health and safety leanings will have us all in helmets and reflective jackets by year's end we're not so sure.

Someone who is believed to be torn between two lovers is Dave Ryan, understood to have learned well at the feet of the past education master, Alan Higgins (speak his name with reverence!) so we suspect he is more than likely to go for education, though he too has CSO leanings. Deeply up to his proverbials in SU politics what with having been college/faculty officer for BBS and this year's Faculty Officer Representative on exec. Whichever he goes for will

put the wind up the rest of them.

As for, last but not least we have the occupancy of the Communications Office to consider. This pair of ladies have been angling for this office since Chance first offered his name on a ballot: Katie Harrington and Aoife Ni Raghallaigh. Both are New Media folks and have lurked about the paper since arriving at the college. This could be where most of the bloodshed comes. We can expect big campaigns from both and long, long days and nights of canvassing. That is going be exhausting work.

Who knows if the economic downturn and the drop of in jobs prospect will result in even more people chancing their arms and surely all this interest and activity can only benefit the SU in terms of profile and politics? Can't it?

As always UL Prevails! Contact us at thethroat@gmail.com

Postcard from UL

Notes from a German Erasmus student

Alexandra Gdanietz

A Fresh Approach

Jason Kennedy

Diary of a First Year

Is it just me, or is this continuous assessment malarkey a pile of rubbish? Well, I suppose it is better than a 100 per cent test at the end of the semester, but the constant stream of projects, assessments, tests and essays for all six of my modules is getting me down.

It may not seem much to the mature older-student type, but two 2,000-word essays due in for Rag Week? That's just bordering on insanity. Not to mention the ever-increasing threat that is shorthand. We have to be able to write 90 words a minute within the next few weeks. Think of that like having to keep up with the main evening news.

To cap it all off, my course got some devastating news over the week. We were told that we may have been able to drop one of our two electives for next year. To me, this was like Christmas came early, because every time I get a little bit better at German, the standard skyrockets once more, leaving me looking like a dumbass. The thought of dropping it was fantastic. So we were left in our naive delusion for a few weeks, then told that it ain't gonna happen and that the two modules were there for the next four years. Thank God for the wonder that is a decent night out.

In the last few weeks, I've been to clubs that I've barely even heard of in the first semester, let alone consider going to. Gone are the days of Molly's, Trinity Rooms and Icon. Nowadays it's all about Costello's, Bakers and, undoubtedly, the Lodge. One Friday, I even managed to worm my way into a formal on campus. Even better, I managed to scab a few free drink vouchers that night.

After all the meetings and time spent in the SU over the past few weeks, I somehow managed to join yet another society. I am now a bona fide member of DebU. I went to one of their debates a few weeks ago and found it brilliant. One of the speakers was saying how we could use scones to bring back the six counties. This was followed by some light refreshments in the pub. Sure why would you not want to be in with that group?

On the note of light refreshments, I was much amused by the antics of certain folk partaking in a certain ritual known as the 13 tap challenge, whereby contenders must down all the alcoholic beverages available on draught in the Stables in a certain order. Now I see why pioneers don't drink. It really is gas to have a laugh at the completely lingers.

Where can you easily go from, "God bless the pope" to "God save the queen"? Right, Belfast! Erasmus people like to travel and I am constantly improving my travel guiding skills.

So why not go to Northern Ireland, where most people either are named after kings or saints, according to our black taxi driver.

Of course, we wanted to see the political murals and the peace lines, which divided the city until today. Quite entertaining, our taxi-driver, whose hairdo looked like business-in-the-front-Harley-in-the-back, demonstrated what will happen if we would lose our way in the wrong area wearing the wrong shirt at the wrong time by doing the cut-throat-gesture almost every time we were asking him a question.

Police cars looked more like armoured cars and I got an idea of what Belfast must have been like 10 years ago. However, armoured cars did not frighten our mullet-sporting taxi driver at all; what brought him to drive as slowly as he could as we were followed by the police: "Ye see the pigs?! Let's piss them off!"

Starting every sentence with "Naye" the taxi driver took us to a Catholic church, where we said the Lord's Prayer in Swedish, Spanish, Italian, English and, well, more or less, in German, in company with a friendly priest, who originally came from Limerick.

Back in the taxi, we learned that Elton John was the only queen, who gave a shite about Diana and that there are two things we have to know about the Titanic: "The Oirish built it and the English sank it!" The Taxi Tour was great and I can only recommend this to everyone.

Back in Limerick travelling continued as I was looking forward to my very good friend from Berlin.

"I am the best guide ever!" I said, talking big when I successfully guided my friend through Galway on Saturday along with a few Erasmus people and a balloon-monkey.

Feeling totally confident of my guiding skills I promised her a great weekend for her four-day stay in Ireland by having planned a two-day trip to Kilkenny.

However, things always seem to happen when you least expect them: my guiding skills made us ending up in Limerick again after having been to Clonmel and, funnily enough, to Cork without ever having seen the banks of the river Nore, nor having tasted a real Kilkenny beer! Spending more or less eight hours in the bus can be frustrating; maybe it would not be wrong to ask the bus driver where he goes for the next time!

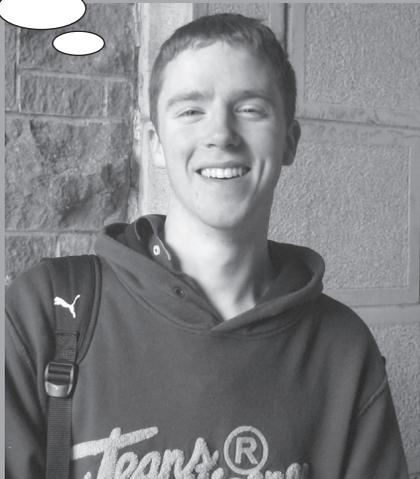
But never say die! The following morning I tried again: this time heading to the Cliffs of Moher in exchange for Sunday's bus adventure. As sure as eggs is eggs that my friend would be happy to see Ireland's most famous place, we found ourselves in a foggy cliff disaster where we hardly could see anything – at least we could hear the open sea.

So much for my guiding skills but we had our fun anyway, ill-starred. For all you may say, I definitely prefer taxis to buses. This weekend I will stay home and study: boring but true.

Student Speak

With election fever hitting the campus as the sabbat elections approach, Andrea Gallagher asks UL who they would want as the next president of the Students' Union if you could pick anyone?

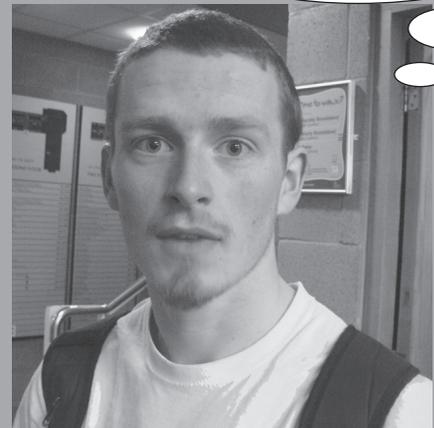
Michael Collins
1st Year Public Admin
Dave Mackey, the type of guy everyone loves!



Tom Delahunty
1st Year Public Admin
Dave Mackey – We're starting a campaign!



Ciarán McInerney
2nd Year Sport Science
Captain Planet – but Pa will do!



Sinéad Barry
1st Year Law Plus
Tighearnan



Jason Kennedy
1st Year Journalism
That would be an ecumenical matter!



Rebecca Ní Alláin
4th Year Irish and New Media
Mr Pa O'Brien!



Larissa Mirtschink
1st Year Arts
Tighearnan Noonan, the ULTV
Soc president!



Amy Flynn
1st Year Law Plus
Homer Simpson – he knows how to not get the work done more efficiently than anyone!



Editorial

An Focal

University of Limerick
Students' Union

University of Limerick, Plassey, Co Limerick

Volume XVII, Issue 11

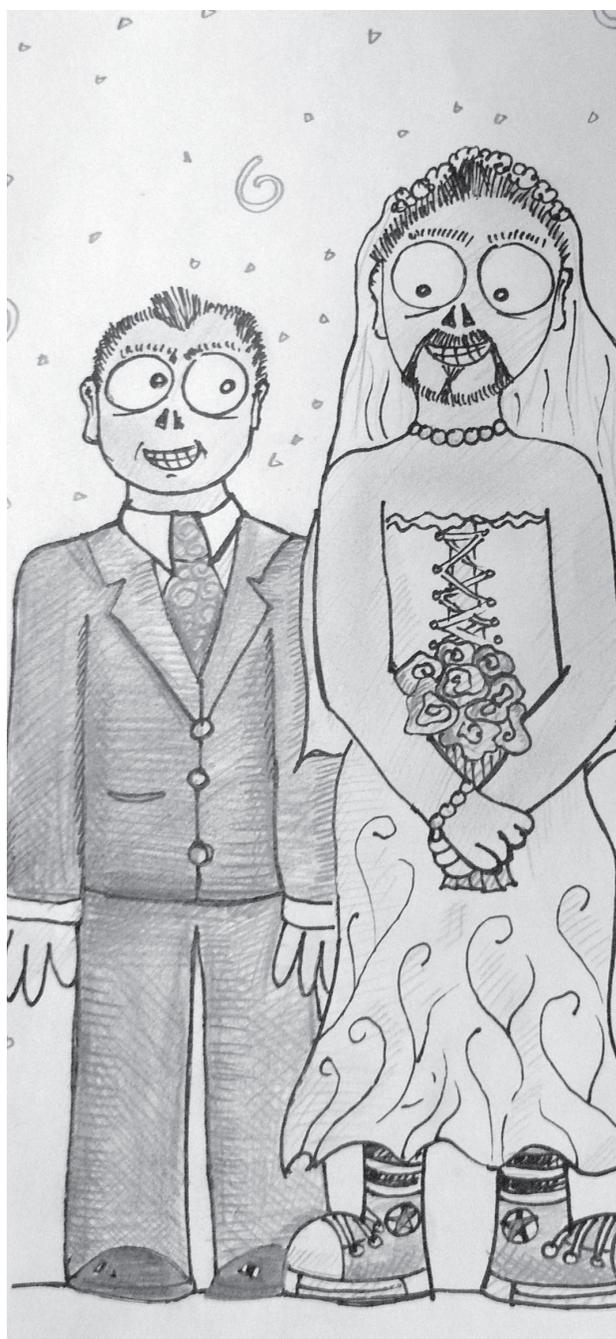
Tuesday, 10 March, 2009

Letters to the editor (Aoife Breen, 2008/09) may be sent to the above address or alternative may be emailed to editor@ulsu.ie. Please note that submission of a letter does not guarantee publication, but you never know, you may be lucky. Recycle An Focal (and all waste paper) in blue skips located at the rear of your building.



Five sabbats, 12 months, countless opportunities

It's difficult to envisage a year where you could be doing anything from blowing up 'Dolly, the sexy inflatable sheep' to shouting about fees on stage with the Blizzards to arguing why the counselling service should remain free with the University's top governing body. But that is exactly what a year as a sabbatical officer in the Students' Union entails. What many students don't know is that behind the pints and the "oh-my-god-you're-in-the-students'-union" greetings in the Stables or the Scholars, behind the partying and free entry into campus gigs, there is a lot of hard work with probably too many long hours. So, is it worth it? Definitely. Each of the five offices will open up for election on Friday, 13 March. While the date is unlucky for some, taking out a nomination form and running for election and winning a year in the SU could be the biggest challenge and biggest reward you'll ever be lucky enough to find. Beyond the superficial beliefs of what it is to be a sabbat – a paid student – and you'll see there's a whole lot more to the brief. Skills such as negotiation, team work and communication are definite; the ability to work under pressure and while your friends are all calling you for pints is also a certainty; survival...well, that's up to you. It's not an easy job; it's somewhat thankless at times and you reach the verge of a breakdown at some point. But the low points are hugely outweighed by the highs. It's good to win an argument at a university committee; it's good to see your idea being adopted and put into action for the betterment of the student community; it's good to see the crowd jumping in time with the beat of whatever band the SU has brought to UL; it's good to see someone reading the newspaper over their coffee; it's good to see someone commenting about the giant sperm walking around campus handing out free condoms; it's good to be able to answer a student's question and help him or her out in some way; it's good to be able to get up in the morning not having a clue who you might meet that day or what crazy tasks you might do or plan. This is a job for someone who is adaptable; who can jump to plan E when plans A, B, C and D have already all fallen through. This is a job for someone who can live and breathe UL for 12 months, because UL becomes your entire raison d'être. You buy your breakfast in the shop, you have your lunch in the Scholars and you socialise in the Stables. Your friends call into your office at any given moment, your 'clients' are all the students around you. This is a 24/7 job. You can't walk out of the office and leave your position or role as a political representative behind you. Because, at the end of the day, you are a politician. You have been elected to represent. You are the officer that you signed on to be when you're in the Stables or in the Lodge or in McDonald's or in Storm or in Dunnes – you are always susceptible to the screech of, "oh-my-god-you're-in-the-students'-union". If you do choose to take out a nomination form, if you choose to have 60 names petitioning for your candidacy on that form and if you choose to run for election, make sure you're doing the right choice. But you probably are. Because the prize is golden.



SU President Pa O'Brien weds Campaigns & Services Officer Damien Cahill in hopes of highlighting gay inequality and ensuring his campaigns stay well serviced.

Pa's Propaganda

NEXT WEEK is a Green Week. This will be an all-encompassing week with separate events highlighting the seriousness of the situation we're in.

In layman's terms it looks like the proverbial shit is going to hit the fan. I've written a detailed Environmental article later in the paper ('Change is now', page 20) so I'm not going to get into it here. I would say, however, that we're the generation that this will affect; we are the only ones who can try and stop this, so we are the ones who need to take action.

If you're not sure about climate change or don't understand it, now is a good time to start thinking and learning about what we're about to face in the near future. During the week we will have a bicycle sale and workshop so feel free to bring along any bike that needs to be fixed. If you are thinking of cycling instead of driving to college then this could be the week to start!

The weekend before last, I landed in Dublin to meet with Batt O'Keefe

and other young people concerned about fees. I have to say I was happy with how it went. Batt O'Keefe spoke honestly; he said he was pro-fees but that Cabinet is split.

This means that lobbying the cabinet, applying pressure and letting your local TD know that it is you who elects him, is the key to this campaign. If you have a cabinet Minister or even a Junior Minister in your constituency, call into the Students' Union and we will give you a letter to sign. Hitting the Cabinet is where we will make the pressure felt and where I think we can tip the balance in this war on fees.

The only other update I have is to complement the University on coming to the table over the pitches issue. We now have a worthwhile committee in place that will deliver a concrete plan for pitches soon.

This is a great development and the University have shown a commitment to working with the Student Clubs to get the best facilities possible for the community in UL.

All the best,



In Focus: Face to f

Hooked?

Caitriona McGrattan



WHAT IMAGES come to mind when you hear the word addict; a dishevelled looking homeless person, an emaciated heroine user, the person sitting next to you in a lecture? Why are the first two acceptable and not the last? An addiction can affect anyone at any stage over their life time; students are not immune to the afflictions of addiction. Recognising the signs and symptoms of addictions and knowing where to go to get help may be key to saving yours or someone else's life either now or in the future.

Is addiction an affliction where the body controls the mind or were the mind controls the body? According to the Collins dictionary an addiction is "an obsession, compulsion, or excessive physical dependence or psychological dependence". People can be addicted to a range of substances and behaviour; alcohol, drugs (both prescription and non-prescription), food, exercise, sex, gaming, gambling to name but a few.

On the Alcoholics Anonymous website there is a list of questions used to determine whether or not someone may have a problem with alcohol. These questions include; do you drink because you are shy with other people or to build up your

self-confidence? Does drinking cause you to have difficulty in sleeping or have you lost time from study due to drinking? Do you drink alone? Has your ambition or efficiency decreased since drinking? Have you ever been in hospital or prison because of drinking?

These questions are not intended to scaremonger but to heighten people's awareness of how easy it is to depend on alcohol and how misusing alcohol can impact on your life.

The questions above can easily be applied to the many other addictions suffered by students including gambling, food addiction and drug abuse.

Clichéd as it may sound recognising that you may have an addiction is the first step to recovery; until an addict can admit that they have no control over their consumption of alcohol or drugs, or that they cannot control their behaviour in the case of those who are addicted to gambling, sex or exercise, then there is little anyone can do to help them. When addicts acknowledge that they have difficulty with a substance or their behaviour then there are several forms of help available.

Twelve step residential

programmes are the most common means by which addicts come to terms with their addiction. These 12 step programmes are offered by treatment centres all over the country, for example the Rutland Centre in South Dublin and the Aislinn Centre in Co. Kilkenny, which specialises in rehabilitating young adults aged between 18 and 35. Other addicts may choose to attend support groups for example Alcoholics Anonymous, Narcotics Anonymous, and Sláinte. Details for the different support groups and treatment centres can be found on the HSE website.

For users who aren't yet addicted but who are concerned about their habits, treatment may consist of intervention and counselling, psychotherapy, and support groups; these services are offered and facilitated through our own counselling service here in UL. The Counselling service run daily drop-in sessions between 11-12 and 3-4pm during term time; they are located in the main building (CM 070).

If you are concerned about your own or anyone else's relationship with substances or theirs/your behaviour please do seek help, for more information please contact the welfare office or email welfare@ulsu.ie.

Food for thought

Everybody has days where they wake up, look in the mirror and think, "Oh God, I

look hideous!" But imagine feeling like that every day. Imagine being so consumed with your image and appearance that it becomes an obsession; it drives you to skip meals, to obsess about food, to scrutinise the fat and energy content in each bite, to feel self-conscious and to feel guilty for eating almost every time you do.

Everybody has days where they are upset and the best cure is a big bowl of ice cream or a bar of chocolate. But imagine being dependent on food, no matter what the emotion.

People often react to the term "food abuse" with humour or a lack of understanding but it is something that affects a significant portion of people, both here in UL and throughout the world. That includes me.

Food abuse has many forms; including disordered eating (not to

be confused with an eating disorder), emotional eating, binge eating, food restriction and food avoidance. Food abuse is not going on a diet to try to lose weight, or paying attention to ensure that your diet is healthy so you don't gain weight.

But it is often a case of food abuse where an individual goes on a number of diets, each as unsuccessful as the last or exhibits signs of being overly preoccupied with food and body size.

I am not anorexic or bulimic but I do suffer from disordered eating. I spend a significant amount of my day thinking about avoiding food and feeling guilty about what I have eaten that day or the day before.

I don't have weighing scales in Limerick, but if I did I would probably do what I do at home, which is weigh myself repeatedly each day.

My obsession with my body shape and with my appearance means I look at my reflection every time I pass by a mirror or any other reflective surface and often dislike

what I see.

I hate photographs and I often persuade people to take pictures of me from the neck up because I hate seeing how I look from the neck down.

My confidence hinges on how I look and often I feel more confident if I haven't eaten anything in a number of hours. It is often accepted that a person is a food abuser if his/her relationship with food interferes with his/her physical or emotional well-being. That's certainly true in my case.

I am often secretive about what I eat and my behaviour is probably out of control. I wish I could stop and be relaxed around food and people eating. I wish I could feel at ease about my body and my appearance. I wish I could enjoy eating and not feel so much guilt afterwards.

I wish it didn't feel like a "good day" just because I didn't eat anything.



Name: Aoife Ni Raghallaigh

Course: 4th Year, New Media & Irish

What can't you live without?

Facebook!

Do you think you might ever become addicted to that?

I think I could get addicted to it, online games have been proven to be addictive so I guess Facebook could be too!



Name: Shane Vaughan

Course: 1st Year, HPSS

What can't you live without?

My mobile.

Do you think you might ever become addicted to that?

I am already addicted to it, I'd die without it!



Face with addictions

I'm all in

Being a mature student means more than looking older than one's classmates. Mature students have more or less shaped their lives before they re-enter education, unlike the typical student for whom third level experiences contribute greatly to the eventual make up of that person.

So, with this, mature students, as I was, are as prone to having good and bad habits permanently embedded in them. My bad habit, not that I knew it at the time was gambling.

Although not really a problem I thought, playing the occasional game of poker or betting a couple of quid every week was no problem with €600-plus coming in the form of wages every week.

However, down to minimal income and increased outgoings, thanks to the hefty cost of study, maybe this was one luxury I could not afford. Gambling was something I couldn't really do anymore...or so I thought.

Fast forward to the end of first year and between poker and horse racing I had a new income: my winnings. In one week alone I won €700 in poker, and €220 in horse racing. Happy days!

All in all I did pay my rent plus extras for semester two of first year with my takings from paddypower.com, Kilmurry Lodge poker classics and Kevin McManus bookmakers. (Coincidentally all three are still in business so I didn't actually clean them out.)

This was easy. I was making money without even trying.

Cheltenham was my Christmas two years running.

My fatal mistake was to try and make money; to try and take on the bookie.

Over the next few months I If

you take them, they kill you. Right, now that's the scaremongering out of the way I intend to give you an honest and candid version of my drug experiences at this University. I won't try and promote or deflect anyone from drugs; that's a personal choice. I will just tell you about my experiences.

The most prevalent drug in this University is cannabis. Despite media reports, cocaine is not overly popular with students due to cost and low quality. A single gram can cost between €50 and €100 and is rarely higher than 5 to 15 per cent purity. Ecstasy is quite prevalent with the house party set, retailing at between €2 and €5 per tablet; it's cheap and widely available and even socially acceptable.

So you've come to college; a time for experimentation. Sooner or later you will come across drugs and have to decide whether you wish to experiment or not. The first time I came across them was a house party. Drawn in by pounding techno music, myself and my intrepid adventurer friends knocked on the door and gained entry to the party. We were welcomed into a sitting room where there were three people dancing furiously around a centrally positioned red light bulb.

Right, I thought, not really sure what's going on here. I knew, of course, that some substance was at play, so I did feel mildly threatened. All you ever hear in the news or in the courts is, 'the drugs made me do it!'

Observing the state of play in this room, I thought drug fuelled murder or assault were not beyond the bounds of possibility. The sweaty one, I think he was their leader, approached me. I sat

The drugs made me do it

steadfast in my chair ready for a viscous assault from this wide eyed sweaty ball of energy.

"We took some pills [ecstasy], but we've none left; we'd give ye some if we had; we're really sorry."

"That's cool man, that's cool," I replied.

For the next while I watched with wonder the effects that were being had. Sweat ran, jaws swung and hugs were being dispensed liberally. Conversations generally ended curtly when one of the groups turned and said, "What the fuck was I just talking about?"

It was a fascinating look at behaviour which was alien to me. Imagine seeing a drunken person for the first time and not knowing what it was that ailed him. An eye opener to say the least.

My friends and I were wary but intrigued and began to frequent the house more regularly as they seemed to have a party on every night. About one week later we took the plunge and took our first ecstasy tablet.

It was a star shaped object that has gone down in pill history as a pill of great quality. I would love to say it was a horrible experience but it wasn't. It was wonderful. It brought me to places and emotions that were otherwise unattainable.

In many senses it was the antithesis of alcohol. It made you happy and peaceful with your ego and the worries that went with dissipating. I felt at one with my friends, we hugged, we danced, we laughed and we had conversation that would inevitably lead no where ending in exasperated comment: "What the fuck was I just talking about?"

But as is stated, what goes up must come down, and what goes up on ecstasy must come down in the form of a skag.

By the end of first year I was probably taking pills two or three nights a week. After a night on them, college wouldn't really be an option.

Paranoia, big dilated pupils, complete lack of energy, dehydration and general malaise would set in. The only thing to counter this, what could only be described as the kind of hangover you would moved away from lucky bets to try and structure my betting more; real gambling involved chance. My bets were sure things. But just like the old saying goes, you don't gamble to win, you gamble so you can gamble the next day.

I was just about treading water, championing my victories and forgetting my defeats. That was until Charles Byrnes, a local horse racing trainer, rolled out a new great hope. This horse, which shall remain anonymous, had been tried and its ideal distance had been found. He was going to cruise home to victory in Tralee; all I had to do was bet on it.

Fast forward to €500 in small bets and the stage was set for me to pay another semester's rent. The race went off, the horse held and held and held. I counted my money. The race was still on and any minute this horse was going to power to the front and I was in the money.

It didn't happen.

I felt like a bus had hit me all day. €500, how could I be so stupid? €500 handed over to the bookie just like that; a month's wages for a part time worker.

After the bus that was that day had hit me, driven over me and reversed to leave me flattened I decided that maybe earning money the hard way was much more satisfying, and safer.

I haven't really gambled since then, maybe a fiver on the Grand National for interests' sake but nothing major. As for the horse, that big, useless four-legged f***** went on to win his next four races, including a big race at a festival in Ayr, and everyone else made their money back three-times over.

The cause of, and solution to, all of life's problems

When is one more one too many? When I'm on my own I've often asked that question myself. Why did I drink so much? Why did I feel the need to push myself over the edge? Why couldn't I just have had my few pints or bottles and been a happy, silly drunk? The honest answer is I don't know.

My story is a very personal one. Its not a story about a friend or a guy I know or a girl I met in the pub/train/plane. This is me. It's not for everyone. If you don't like what read, then I'm sorry but this is what happened to me and what I did about it. You have been warned. I'm not going to call it demon drink or anything like that right. Drink is drink and it is our approach to it that determines how it affects us in the long run.

I didn't touch a drink until I got to college. I had my first drink a week after my 18th Birthday. Of course I came home polluted! Naturally the folks weren't overly

pleased at that, but over time they began to relax themselves. And over time I began to get more and more comfortable with drink. Accompanying that comfort zone was the idea that you can blame whatever you want to do on drink, that it can be the cause of and solution to all of life's problems! And yes, I do know that I'm quoting Homer Simpson. Now while there's nothing wrong with going out and having a laugh with the people in your class and getting merry and happy, there is a problem if you go out, get fu*ked drunk and act the pr*ck towards your friends. Which is what I did.

On one occasion I went out for a few drinks with my friends on a Saturday night and was planning on just having a laugh. I drank so much that I got sick in the jacks of my local. Then (apparently, as I don't remember) I went back out and started putting double vodkas into pints of Murphy's and chugging them in one go. Then (apparently)

I got sick again. I (apparently) left the bar and one of my friends asked did I want a lift home. He was afraid that given the state of me I might not be able to walk the mile or so to my house without getting myself into a fight or knocked down. What was my response? I (apparently) leaned in through the window of his car and hit his across the jaw so hard he had to go for a dental X-Ray to make sure nothing was broken.

I don't know how I got home. I remember nothing. Well that's not entirely true. I was brought home by the Gardai, on the floor of a Garda van as I had collapsed and was unable to stand by myself. My parents were forced to come out of the house at 3am to make sure that their son was still alive, pissed out of his mind on the floor of a Garda van. When I finally sobered up, my father told me quite honestly that I was a disgrace and he hoped I was proud of myself; he highlighted that I had probably spent €200+ in an attempt

to kill myself with drink. My mother cried (again).

Being brutally honest, I felt like sh*t. And I sore I wouldn't drink again. And I didn't for months. But I started again on the night of my brother's 18th. It took me a long, long time to come to terms with the fact that I had a problem with drink. I was not able to engage maturely with alcohol; my behaviour towards my friends and my parents showed me that. Being thrown out of two C&S Balls showed me that. Being an immature pr*ck showed me that. I haven't had a drink in two years now. I still use drink in cooking and baking; I make a point of putting 2 glasses of red wine into Spaghetti Bolognaise. All I would say to you, as the reader, is be careful. If you are ok with drink, then that's fine. However if you're not, I fits affecting your life and the lives of the people around you it might be time to stop and think about what you're doing.

Name: Rowan Gallagher

Course: 1st Year, Journalism

What can't you live without?

My Xbox

Do you think you might ever become addicted to that?

Yes I think the games are addictive, you barely notice time going by when your playing them!



Name: Paul Bellew

Course: Postgrad, Peace & Development Studies

What can't you live without?

My mobile.

Do you think you might ever become addicted to that?

Yes I don't know how I'd survive without out it, I ring and text my best friend Tom everyday.



The Advice Bureau

Education In Focus Labs

Eamonn Gardiner - Education Officer

If you ask a humanities student first year what a lab is, they'll more than likely look askance at you and then say it's a place where scientists do stuff. And while that stellar description is almost true, it's not quite what happens.

Labs are where students carry out practical-based learning and where they also conduct research for their Final Year Projects (FYPs). Labs are aimed to provide students with a good practical grasp of their chosen subject areas, in ways that lecturing cannot.

This is especially true for Education students who have to not only excel in being able to teach their students theory, they also have to be able to instruct the practical element. For example student teachers would take labs in metalwork, woodwork, construction etc, in order for them to be able to instruct students in practical areas themselves.

Other students, like engineering and technology students, could have labs instructing them on how to carry out practical assignments such as check Ph levels in soil/water, test the tensile strength of steel cable/concrete or determine the ideal location for building a house.

Labs run the entire gamut of educational experiences. There is no one set agenda for labs. They are similar to tutorials in some respects, yet vastly different in others!

While tutorials are designed to give the student a smaller, more close-knit learning group and the ability to improve their marks, labs on the other hand are designed to instruct students in the basics, the fundamentals of the empirical world and to show them how to properly conduct experimentation.

To that end a specific set of criteria apply to labs, which would not normally apply to tutorials. Labs are dangerous places. Accidents are caused, but they do happen. When you combine flammable liquids and gases, corrosive chemicals, naked flames and carelessness accidents are only waiting to happen.

Therefore, lab attendants and technicians are usually (and have to be) stringent in the application of rules in order to simply keep you alive. Health and Safety must be a priority for you as students.

Woodwork rooms with lathes, circular saws and chisels are incredibly dangerous places; accidents and even deliberate incidents can occur all too easily, therefore it is vital that Health and Safety rules are followed.

Labs usually commence after a short H&S lecture at the beginning. Some lectures refuse to admit people if they are late for labs and discretionary bands vary on this. This is primarily as a bulwark against accidents.

However, it is primarily for your own benefit. Even if you aren't turning up with a blinding hangover, you're still late. You will be rushing to do in 30 minutes what the class has to do in 45. That kind of haste invariably leads to mistakes. In the pressure cooker of a lab, those mistakes could be fatal.

To that end try to follow this short list of tips for Labs;

- Arrive early! Allow the time taken to travel from your house/North Campus/where you crashed the night before to where you need to be. Five minutes early is better than five minutes late!

- Read ahead; figure out what the experiment is, figure out what you're being asked to do and plan accordingly how much time you will need before you go in. Then just tip along at your own pace free from pressure.

- Bring your PPE (Personal Protective Equipment) with you. This usually includes lab glasses/goggles and a lab coat, but can include respirator, gloves, tongs (not thongs ye sick pups!) and hard hats.

- Bear in mind that if something does go wrong always follow the lab leader's instructions. If they say get out, leave immediately. If they say stand back, then stand back!

- Take notes at the time; these notes will help you write up your lab books later on and will make sure that you have your own data and are not relying on anyone else's!

Show me the money!

Treatment Benefit

What is it and how much is it?

Treatment Benefit is a scheme that may allow you to qualify for dental and/or optical benefit, contact lenses and hearing aids.

Dental benefit pays for some of the cost of different dental treatments including:

- dental examination and diagnosis
- scaling and polishing (including mild gum treatment)
- severe gum treatment
- fillings
- extractions
- dentures
- root canal therapy

You can get details of the amounts you need to pay from your dentist or from the Department of social welfare

Optical benefit pays some of the cost of optical treatments including:

- eye examination (the full cost of an eye test will be paid for by the dept but not in the case of an eye examination for visual display units (VDU), such as computers or for driving licenses)
- glasses
- replacement lenses to existing frames,
- contact lenses

Contact Lenses: If you choose contact lenses instead of glasses, the Department will pay a fixed amount and you must pay the balance. If you need contact lenses on medical grounds, the Department will pay up to half the cost, subject to a fixed maximum contribution, provided you have a doctor's recommendation.

Hearing Aids: The Department will pay up to half the cost of a hearing aid or repairs to a hearing aid, subject to a fixed maximum contribution.

Who is eligible? As always terms and conditions...

To qualify for treatment benefit you must have paid a certain number of PRSI contributions.

- If you are under 21 you must have paid 39 PRSI contributions since first starting work

- If you are aged between 21 and 24 you must have paid 39 PRSI contributions since first starting work and either paid or credited PRSI 39 contributions in the relevant tax year on which your claim is based (aka two years previously) or paid 26 PRSI contributions in both the relevant tax year and the tax year immediately before the relevant tax year

- If you aged between 25 and 65 you must have paid 260 PRSI contributions since first starting work and either and either paid or credited PRSI 39 contributions in the relevant tax year on which your claim is based (aka two years previously) or paid 26 PRSI contributions in both the relevant tax year and the tax year immediately before the relevant tax year

How, when and where to apply?

The forms needed and where to get them are listed below;

Dental benefit requires a D1 form, which is available from dental surgeries only

Optical benefit requires an O1 form, which is available from any opticians or the treatment benefit section of the social welfare department's website

Hearing Aids or Contact Lenses (on medical grounds) both require a MA1 form available either from the suppliers or the treatment benefit section of the social welfare department's website

Applications can be made at any stage and should be sent to Treatment Benefit Section

Department of Social and Family Affairs

St. Oliver Plunkett Road

Letterkenny

Co. Donegal

Let's talk about sex baby!

An Focal sex columnist Annie Glyde-Dammes

Mobile phone; Wordnet 3.0 define a mobile phone as "a hand-held mobile radiotelephone for use in an area divided into small sections, each with its own short-range transmitter/receiver". Most people think of it as a useful technological advancement, a lifesaver, an accessory or a means of keeping tabs. I think of it as both Manna from Heaven and a pain in the ass, when it comes to the world of sex.

Have you ever tried to talk dirty to somebody when they're right there, beside you, looking at you? Difficult, isn't it? Unless you're quite used to the person it can be ridiculously awkward and leave everyone concerned red-faced and feeling awkward and embarrassed. And so the advantages of mobile phones and to an extent Instant Messaging reveal themselves. Think about it, it's certainly much easier to say all the very dirty things you'd like to say to someone by text rather than to his or her face, particularly if it's the first time that the two of you have taken your relationship to this new level. You didn't have to look him/her in the eye, he/she didn't see you turn an unmerciful shade of red and if it doesn't go all that well it's much easier pretend none of it happened! Win-win situation as far I'm concerned.

But it's not just for the easily-embarrassed or those in new relationships that mobile phones can solve a host of problems, they can also be hugely helpful for those who are in a relationship that's just gone a little bit stale. Yes, when you first got together all you did was spend your time together engaged in some sort of horizontal tango but now 6 or 9 months in, it's not quite as exciting or frequent. Enter the mobile phone. Nothing makes me blush and gives me a buzz quite like getting a mischievous and dirty text (obviously from somebody I know and not a complete stranger – that's a little creepy). Getting one means I know someone is thinking about me and that somebody wants me. It also means I can break up the dullness of a day and engage in just a little fantasy, before I go visiting and engage in the real thing.

However with the good comes the bad and facing facts mobile phones can be the big-time bringers of bad. From constantly beeping and ringing during your time alone with a partner, to him or her actually answering the phone during sex because the call "was just so, so important", mobile phones are the physical manifestation of the word interruption. It's illogical; why would you spend all day texting each other in anticipation of being together, if you were just going to let your phones get in the way of actually sharing that time together? Take the advice of a girl who once had someone answer a phone-call midway through – turn the damn things off and deal with the outside world afterwards. Otherwise start looking for a virtual partner...

STIs Uncovered: Herpes

Description:

It is a virus caused by the Herpes Simplex Virus (HSV). There are two types, HSV 1 and HSV 2.

Cause:

- Direct skin-to-skin contact
- Unprotected vagina, anal or oral sex
- Unprotected rimming (mouth to anus)
- From a pregnant mother to her baby

Symptoms:

Most people who carry the virus have no symptoms. During an outbreak you may have:

- Flu-like symptoms
- Painful blisters or ulcers on your external genitals and rectum

Σ A burning sensation when you pass urine

Treatment:

Prescribed medication can reduce discomfort during an outbreak. The virus will stay in your system, so you may have further outbreaks. These outbreaks are usually less severe.

Prevention:

- Don't have sex while you or your partner(s) has an outbreak.
- Don't have intimate sexual contact
- Have safer sex – always use a new condom correctly and put it on before you have sex.

PSA Notes

Postgraduate Students' Association Annual Charity Ball

The PSA Ball was held on Friday last in the Limerick Strand Hotel. A great night was had by all and the photos will be on the webpage as soon as possible. Thanks to our sponsors Ulster Bank and the Graduate School. I would also like to thank all those who assisted in the organisation of the Ball and to those who attended. A substantial figure was raised for our two charities and the exact figure will be published as soon as we know!

PSA UGM

The PSA UGM will take place at 1pm in the PSA Common Room on Wednesday 18 March 2009 (Week 8). Should any members of the Association have any items which they would like to address at the meeting can they forward them by e-mail (emma.murphy@ul.ie) to me by 11 March 2009 at close of business.

I would really encourage you all to attend and participate in the meeting as it is your Association.

New furniture for the Common Room

As you may have noticed new furniture and other furnishings are making their way into the PSA recently. Apologies for any inconvenience and thank for your patience. Yet can I also ask that students respect the room and its contents. A swipe card system will be implemented before the end of

the semester for access to the room. As well as this, please do not remove anything from the room including milk, tea, coffee and the daily newspapers. These services are complimentary from the PSA and in recent times they have been abused, so please respect your fellow students.

PSA Elections

Finally the election for the position of President of the Postgraduate Students' Association will take place on April 30 2009. Nominations will open on Thursday 16 of April and nomination forms will be available for collection from the PSA from 9am on that date. Nominations will close on April 23 2008 at 5pm.

The regulations for Election of the President as per the constitution are as follows:

1.1 The President of the Association shall be elected by ballot by the full members of the Association, according to the provisions of Schedule I, at a special Election Convention, at a date to be decided by the Executive during the month of May.

1.2 Only Sabbatical Officer(s) of the Association, and full members of the Association who are registered for a full-time postgraduate degree in the University who have not presented themselves for election for another student sabbatical post in the calendar year of election, shall be

eligible for election to the post of President.

1.3 If the position of President becomes vacant during the year, the position shall be filled by a bye-election within twenty-one calendar days. A Special Election Convention shall be called to hold a bye-election in accordance with Schedule II to this Constitution.

1.4 Nominations will be open ten working days before the Election Convention and they will be closed five working days before the Election Convention at which the election will be held.

1.5 Nominations must be signed by twenty full members of the Association.

1.6 The method of election shall be PR/STV in accordance with Schedule I (see constitution)

1.7 The Returning Officer for the Election of President, PSA shall be nominated by the Office of the Registrar & Corporate Secretary, University of Limerick.

I will keep you updated on the elections closer to the time so keep an eye on the PSA website over the coming days; this was just your notice.

That's all from me this week!

If you have any questions, queries or comments just pop in, drop me an e-mail emma.murphy@ul.ie or give me a call 086-0435305!

Beir bua,

Emma

LIMERICK COUNTY COUNCIL

Invites applications to form panels for the recruitment of:

Temporary Lifeguards at Glin & Kiltetry Piers – Summer 2009 (5 posts)

Rate of pay: €573.36 per 39-hour week

Candidates must hold as a minimum a current Irish Water Safety Beach Lifeguard or an equivalent qualification and be not less than 17 years of age on the 1st April 2009.

Application forms and details of the above posts are available to be downloaded from www.lcc.ie/careers or from Human Resources, Limerick County Council, County Hall, Dooradoyle, Co. Limerick Tel: 061 496331

Latest date for receipt of completed application forms in the Human Resources Department is 4.00 p.m. on Thursday 19th March 2009

Limerick County Council is an equal opportunities employer.

ULSU Nitelink - Timetable for Academic Year 2008/09

Route A 19:00, 20:30, 22:00,

Stop 1: Dromroe Village
 Stop 2: Thomand Village
 Stop 3: Cappavilla Village
 Stop 4: Plassey Village
 Stop 5: College Court
 Stop 6: Groody Student Village
 Stop 7: Courtyard Student Village
 Stop 8: Brookfield Hall
 Stop 9: Parkview Hall
 Stop 10: Park Mews (Kielys)
 Returns to UL via Flag Pole Entrance

Route B 19:45, 21:15, 22:45,

Stop 1: Kilmurry Village
 Stop 2: Elm Park
 Stop 3: Oaklawns
 Stop 4: Kilmurry Lodge
 Stop 5: Brierfield (Back of the Estate)
 Stop 6: Woodhaven
 Stop 7: Annacotty (Synotts)
 Stop 8: Spar (Dublin Road Bus Stop)
 Stop 9: Courtyard/Brookfield Roundabout

Returns to UL via East Gate entrance

Route C 23.30 Only

Route A+B Stops on Request
 Drop off only

Caught on Camera

In the Stables before the Law Ball



Out & About: Ents

Rag Week 2009: Update

Planning is at very advanced stages and we're pretty much ready to rock'n'roll so it's now up to you. Get into the SU buy your tickets, pick up your sponsorship cards and be part of Rag Week 2009. Read on for news on gigs and daytime activities and for details on sponsorship cards etc for the various events.

Event Update

We've added an extra gig to the line up and it's a doozy...

The Japanese Pop Stars

On Wednesday night at Trinity Rooms we have the Japanese Popstars with their full live show. The JPS are one of the hottest acts in the UK at the moment and funnily enough they're quite big in Japan despite hailing from Derry.

They are about to embark on a European tour with the Prodigy and this is their only live Irish show before they go on that tour.

The Japanese Popstars are riding a wave of great live gigs, major festival bookings, and media praise off the back of their amazing energy driven live shows and their critically acclaimed debut album *We Just Are*.

Native to Northern Ireland (any fetishists expecting cute Japanese girls can leave now), and consisting of Declan McLaughlin aka Decky Hedrock, Gary Curran, and Gareth Donoghue. The Japanese Popstars are signed to bespoke indie label, Gung-Ho Recordings (Gus Gus, Zoo Brazil) in the UK, and Beatink in Japan (home of Underworld, Aphex Twin, Cinematic Orchestra).

The Japanese Popstars only parallel with rock music is that they'd built up a sizable live following before releasing their first major single - some might even say cultish, judging by the amount of clips on Youtube. Their gigs are typically raucous affairs, with an energy that crackles with each beat, chord, and keyboard stab.

However, let's get one thing straight about the music - The Japanese Popstars aren't indie rave, or any other sub-sub-sub genre, theirs is big room, cool as f**k electronic music built for festivals and stadiums. They're not dance kids aping indie kids, nor are they indie kids dropping synths and calling themselves 'ravers'.

Over the past eight months the band have remix the likes Beyonce, the Ting Tings, Shinichi Osawa, Pete Tong, the Music and Groove Armada, as well as taking their energy-fuelled live show to many major clubs and festivals around the world!

Wednesday Rag Week 10.30pm Trinity Rooms 10euro



The Japanese Pop Stars

Andrew Stanley - Free Gig

Rag Week is all about having a laugh...so here's Andrew Stanley. Andrew is one half of the Monkey Boy crew who brought you the cult TV hot of 2008, *I Dare Ya*. He's the Irish half of the outfit and is winging our way on the Tuesday of Rag Week for an afternoon slot in the Stables courtyard.

As well as the massive success of his debut TV show he has spent the year traveling the world putting in appearances at Montreal, Melbourne, Adelaide, Edinburgh and, of course, Kilkenny comedy festivals.

Whether it's performing as Resident MC in numerous clubs around the country, one of which is the legendary Comedy Cellar in Dublin, or as a quality act in his own right, Andrew is always high energy and quick witted enough to keep audiences thoroughly entertained.

God knows he'll have to be at the top of his game to deal with a bunch of drunken UL students in the middle of Rag Week, although chances are you'll all still be hungover...maybe he'll have it easy!!!

Tickets

There are tickets left for all events. The Blizzards and the Wolfe Tones are selling quickly and if you're going to one of those gigs then buy sooner rather than later. All other tickets are selling well and we would expect them to sell out in advance of the week itself. So again buy sooner rather than later.

You can buy two tickets for all gigs on one UL ID. There is no problem buying tickets for non-UL students as long as you are able to sign them in on the night.

Volunteers

We need as many people as possible to get involved this year. We need your help organizing events. We need your help shaking buckets. We need your help full stop.

So if you have any spare time over the next four weeks and in rag week itself then let us know. Talk to Damien or Bubbles in the SU and they will stick you on the schedule.

In return for your help you get the special limited edition volunteer t-shirt, some free tickets depending on just how much work you do! And an invite to the Rag Week Wrap up party with free drink, free food, free, free free on the Friday night at the end of it all!

So it's not a bad deal and you get to feel all good about yourself 'cos you did it all for charity...

Charity Events

Sponsorship Cards are now available for

- The Raft Race
- The Great Race
- Sponsored Shave
- Gunge Tank

And a whole host of other events; grab yours.

Full details of the Great Race event are available in Rag Week Pulse and on www.bebo.com/ulents

Bungee Jump

The bungee jump has been abandoned due to a lack of interest...It's a big event that needs at least 70 people collecting and jumping and we only had interest from 20-30 people so rather than go ahead hope for the best and make a loss we decided to concentrate our efforts on making the other events work...Sorry to anyone who had their heart set on doing it but if jumping from a height is something that appeals to you...join SKYDIVE UL.

Pulse

Make sure you pick up a copy of the Rag Pulse it's a magazine entirely dedicated to rag Week, the full schedule, event details and everything you would want to know about the week itself is there for your perusal...It'll be out later this week, pick up your special edition copy from one of the many places around the campus.



Andrew Stanley

THE ECOLOGY FOUNDATION,

in association with **Siemens Ireland**, is presenting a series of lectures to Ireland's leading Universities on climate change and its implications for the future of society.

The lectures series is designed to inform and encourage undergraduate and graduate students to assess how they can play a role in meeting the challenge of tackling climate change. The lectures not only focus on the challenge of climate change, but also the positive role science, engineering, innovation and business can make by addressing it.

Lecture 4
Wednesday 25th March, Jean Monnet
Lecture Theatre, 2.30pm

Introduction by Vice President Academic & Registrar Prof. Paul McCutcheon

Climate Change and the Psychology of Risk and Response - A lecture on what can be learned about attitudes to climate change, looking at the inertia on facing the challenge and drawing insights from psychology, evolutionary psychology and game theory.

With climate change becoming the world's number one issue both for business and government, tomorrow's graduates will need to be aware of the opportunities and risks inherent in this new paradigm. These lectures will be of distinct value to students from all disciplines.

UL Environmental Committee

Change is now

Pa O'Brien

I've spent the last few years of my life trying to inform people about the position we are in, environmentally. My mother has barred me from speaking about the environment at delicate social occasions such as weddings and wakes. She claims that scaring people with stories of what might happen in the worst case scenario does nothing but unnecessarily worry them.

My mother recently bought property in an area that's five metres under sea level. I told her that it was the biggest waste of money conceivable to me. She may as well have spent it on fizzy cola bottles.

It's tough at times to distinguish fact from fiction, possibility from inevitability, and scaremongering from forewarning. But let me make this clear, there is no debate about climate change. Not one scientist in the world today contests the fact that climate change is upon us.

The only people to debate this have been people on George Bush's payroll where vested oil interests have coloured the debate and what made many Americans ignorant to the threat. The only item for debate now is the severity, the time span, whether society as we know it will survive.

So what does Climate change mean to you?

The over production of green house gasses like Carbon Dioxide causes Climate change. A good proportion of this comes from the burning of fossil fuels. Other big offenders are meat production (over 20 per cent of emissions) and the simple fact that 6.5 billion of us breathe out every second. Fossil Fuels are the most visible aspect of climate change because we are so dependant on oil. Oil is everything. Everything around you is brought to you by oil. The food in your supermarket, the clothes you wear, the clean water you drink, and the technology you use.

In the United States they drink 29 Billion bottles of water are consumed each year which uses 17 million barrels of oil in their production. Everything operates from the burning of stored carbon or energy in fossil fuels. If we continue to burn these fossil fuels we will damage

our eco system further and further beyond repair.

Our society is built on borrowed energy, the stored carbon of dead plants and animals which comprise fossil fuels. When a society is built and sustained on a finite energy source, the end of that source brings with it major issues.

Ireland's population boomed pre-1845. The boom was built on a cheap and plentiful energy source: the potato. The potato allowed bigger families on less land and artificially brought our population to a number that was unsustainable. When the potato failed we all know what happened: people died.

We will soon face, if we are to survive as a species, the end of oil. We need to make sure we have in place something to replace it. Something sustainable, but this needs to happen now or people will die at an unprecedented level.

What affects are already here and what will we soon see?

We have already started to see the fallout with 25 million environmental refugees already homeless. By 2050 there will be at least 150 million. If we were to stop all production of carbon dioxide now the damage we have done already will cause our temperature to continually rise until 2100.

So we are at a point now where we need to react if we are to have any chance.

The lowest estimate of warming would see a 2 degree Celsius rise in temperature in the next 50 years. This would cause 80 per cent of the crops in South Africa to fail and the 500 million dependant on Himalayan glacial melt water to go thirsty.

The Pentagon Report on climate change states that, "once again warfare would define human life... the impact would be greater than two World Wars and the Great Depression put together". This is not science fiction; it is occurring and when the Pentagon have already plans in place for resource wars then you have to take notice.

What can you do?

Small changes make a big difference. A strong campaign and public voice is what influences politicians, most

of whom are so ignorant to the threat that they are a danger to us all. I mentioned bottled water above and how much oil it takes to produce the bottles we all drink.

For every litre of water you get in a bottle the production has used 250ml of oil to get it to you. The thing is that 40 per cent of bottled water comes from municipal water supplies...tap water.

We recently tested all the water on campus and found that, in every case, the bottled water had a higher percentage of nitrates. In layman's terms, there was more contamination from human waste. Bottled water is no healthier than tap.

This is a recent change I have tried to make. If I do need to buy a bottle I keep it and fill it up the next time. I used bottled water because it's a simple everyday example of something that affects climate unbeknownst to us. We need to stop consuming energy. We need to recycle. When you recycle a plastic bottle you aren't just saving that bottle but all the energy needed to produce the next one.

We need to be conscious of light and heat and waste. These are all small things but will make a big difference.

The degree rise cited above is the lower estimate of what will occur. If we don't stop and don't adjust now, it could be warmer by 6 degrees Celsius by 2100. This is unthinkable and would surely signal death, destruction and eventually the end of the human species.

The planet, alas, will go on, as it has after the last five major extinctions.

On campus we need to get out of our cars for unnecessary journeys. We need to only use flight when needed.

But most of all we need to stop and think about everything we do and what effect it has. Most of all we need to look at how much energy we use.

Our parents consumed energy and damaged the earth under a veil of ignorance; we have no such excuse and we will be judged on those terms.

If you want to know more from professionals in this area come along to the Siemens series of lectures which are on campus this month. They're not to be missed.



Sport

Fitzgibbon semis beckon for rampant UL

Tomás McCarthy

UL 4-11
St Pats 0-5

UL CRUISED into the Fitzgibbon Cup semi-finals with a devastating performance against St Pats Drumcondra on 25 February at Newtownshandrum. It was all too easy for Ger Cunningham's men as they blew away a dismal Pats effort. From start to finish UL were by far the hungrier side. Crucially for St Pats their two big stars James Cha Fitzpatrick and Richie Hogan never had any influence on the game. Every UL man worked hard for each other and they played a wonderfully neat short passing game that was a delight to watch. The

backs were rock solid throughout and once the forwards caught fire in the second half Pats had no response.

The first half was a physical free ridden affair. There was a sharp cold breeze blowing across the field but the pitch conditions were ideal. Referee Kevin Walsh was keen to stamp his authority early in the game. Cha Fitzpatrick was moved into full forward from the start but he was virtually non-existent. Tom Stapleton opened UL's account with a long range free. Richie Hogan threatened early on but couldn't find the scores to inspire Pats. UL's half back line led by Stapleton was completely dominant and led to plenty of chances for the forwards. Seamus Hickey and two Brian Carroll points had the favourites

in control. On 16 minutes Richie Hogan fired St Pats solitary first half score from a free. UL should have been further ahead in the half with the forwards shooting nine wides. John Greene had the best score after catching a puck out and rifling over a monster point from distance. UL held a 0-6 to 0-1 interval advantage but it should have been so much more.

In the second period UL were clinical as they put the Dublin outfit to the sword. In an eight minute period early in the second half the game was put to bed with four green flags. It all started in the 33rd minute when Brian Carroll goaled. Michael Gleeson's delivery broke in the square to the Offaly man who pulled to the net.

Within a minute, Carroll found the

net again with an exquisite goal. Matthew Ruth found himself in the right corner near the sideline and he fired over a brilliant ball to Carroll in the centre who rattled the net.

At this stage the game was truly over but UL weren't finished yet. On 37 minutes the hard working Ryan O'Dwyer drove through the Pats defence passed to Matt Ruth who had his effort blocked but John Greene was on hand to flick the ball home. Ruth himself then got goal number four on 41 minutes when he finished off after Carroll had his hat-trick attempt denied.

The only thing remaining for the crowd to talk about at this stage was the margin of victory. Ger Cunningham put on his full compliment of substitutes as his

side continued to pick off the points. Ryan O'Dwyer, substitute David Burke and Carroll were all on the mark from play.

Pats did respond with a couple of Hogan frees and a fine Mark Bergin score but it was never going to be good enough. The only disappointing aspect from a UL point of view was the fifteen wides that they amassed during the sixty minutes.

This was a complete team display led by the likes of McCarthy, Stapleton and Walsh in the backline all the way through to Brian Carroll in the forwards. In the end the man of the match vote went to Tom Stapleton for an inspirational performance from centre half back. This victory meant UL qualified for the Fitzgibbon weekend hosted by Trinity College which was due

to take place in early March.

UL: P McCormack, B Fox, K Joyce, M Verney, J B McCarthy, T Stapleton (0-1 1f), M Walsh, S Hickey (0-1), M Gleeson, N O Murchu, R O'Dwyer (0-1), J Greene (1-1), B Carroll (2-4 1f), M Ruth (1-1), A Egan (0-1).

Subs: D Burke (47) for Hickey, L Ryan (47) for McCarthy, K Lannigan (47) for Fox, S O'Brien (51) for Walsh, S Ryan (51) for O'Dwyer.

St Pats: M Murphy, J Byrne, E Bogan, A Murphy, M Kelly, S Campion, N Tennyson, D Fogarty, J Fitzpatrick, M Bergin (0-1), R Hogan (0-2 2f), S Sheanon (0-1), B Timmons, C Henry, D Nolan.

Subs: S Folan (39) for Henry, D Whelan (47) for Murphy, S Scallan (47) for Timmons.

LIT marooned on Colour's day

UL 31
LIT 13

LIT WERE left red faced after the boys in maroon from UL produced a performance which made the visitors green with envy on colours day at the UL Bowl. All puns aside it was solid performance from UL which eventually put away a dogged but disappointing LIT.

The hosts came out of the blocks fast. UL showed some good hands and nice back play in the opening minutes. They were ahead on 7 minutes after scrum half Killian Kennedy found a small gap to touch down. UL were putting together some fine moves with Vivion Grisewood on the wing looking threatening.

Despite this pressure the points failed to materialise.

LIT, playing with the wind, found a path back into the game. Two penalty opportunities were taken with great aplomb while Kennedy missed a simple kick for UL. This gave LIT a 6-5 interval lead which they hardly deserved on the balance of play.

At the start of the second period

Kennedy missed his third kick of the day but UL took the lead nonetheless on 48 minutes. This time Gary Walsh was the try scorer and Vivion Grisewood converted to make it 12-6. There was more to follow nine minutes later. Peter Boland touched down in the corner as it appeared that UL were about to run away with victory.

Another conversion from Grisewood left the hosts 19-6 in front.

Again LIT refused to lie down and great work from their pack yielded a penalty try on 65 minutes. It was game on again but not for long. Harry De Stackpoole made a great break minutes later that resulted in UL's fourth try that was unconverted. It took a fantastic tackle by Finbarr Aherne to deny the away side once again getting back into the contest for a break away try.

The danger was averted, though, as UL sealed victory late on. Sean McKeown scored a try with literally the last play of the game which Grisewood converted.

An eighteen point margin of victory might have flattered UL but nonetheless it was a merited win.



Head to head - UL rugby club in the scrum with LIT at the annual Colour's match (photo by Huw Thomas)

The first half of this game was most enjoyable but thereafter the pace died and the game petered out in some respects. UL though were full

value for their win and had some note worthy displays throughout the field with the eventual man of the match vote going to Vivion

Grisewood. Credit is due to the management team of Eamon Heavey, Mike Storey and Thomas Healy.

UL were presented with the O'Brien trophy after the game. This trophy honours Andrew and John O'Brien who died tragically ten years ago.

Club

O'Connor Cup campaign off to a perfect start

Eoin King

UL 2-16
NUI Maynooth 0-7

THE PATTERN for this game was set within a minute of the throw-in. A few seconds of possession for Maynooth before UL asserted control and then a goal by Eimear Considine. 52 seconds. In retrospect, the game was over.

Unfortunately for Maynooth, they had to suffer the next hour of

football that came their way. In their first outing in the O'Connor Cup, the UL ladies demonstrated a lot more of the positive in their gameplay than the opposite. Considine would only score one more point in the game but her incisive runs at the soft centre of the Maynooth defence created numerous chances which the likes of Gillian O'Connor, Shona Curran and Niamh Carrol profited from.

In fairness, Maynooth maintained respectability for about 15 minutes,

trailing by one goal. Each team had three points at that stage. Maynooth had the same total by half time. UL, on the other hand, were out of reach.

The back line of O'Dwyer, Connolly and Jordan proved stingy in giving up scores for the rest of the game. Most impressively, however, was the work rate of the front six, who hassled and harried to such an extent that the opposing back line were seemingly drained of any energy to defend effectively.

Fiona Leavy was the beneficiary, winning the balls that broke in midfield and providing wonderful balls for either of the corner forwards at various times. The script in the second half was similar. Considine was playmaker, O'Connor and Carroll converters.

Orlagh Heavy got the score of the day 7 minutes in, receiving the ball after a rapid counter attack and close to the bank let swing with the outside of her right boot. It was 2-10 to 0-3 at that point. More scores

inevitably came their way, yet the tally of wides was disappointing, albeit not overly so.

It was total domination and there was no letting up.

Laoise O'Driscoll, merely accustomed to the routine of kickouts, made two brilliant saves with five minutes to go. That confirmed the strength from 1 to 15. In terms of laying down a marker, it bodes well for the next game against NUIG.

UL: L O'Driscoll, A O'Dwyer,

N Connolly, R Jordan, J Mulligan, G O'Flynn, A Leonard, E Enright, F Leavy (0-2), F Rochford (0-2), E Considine (1-1), O Heavy (0-1), G O'Connor (0-4,1f), S Curran (1-02), N Carroll (0-4) Subs: A Hutchings for Enright (14 mins), M Stack for Jordan (45 mins), E Cooney for Leonard (48 mins), E Ryan for Carroll (52 mins), D Hallissey for Rochford, K Coakley for Connolly (55 mins)

Some consolation from Collingwood Cup

Tomás McCarthy

THE UL soccer team travelled to Cork in week five with high hopes of bringing back the Collingwood Cup. Their impressive league form suggested that cup glory was a realistic goal for the team. In the end they were knocked out by the eventual winners UCD in the quarter finals and had to settle for the secondary trophy, the Farquhar Cup.

UL began their Collingwood Cup campaign with a first round game against Queen's University Belfast on 24 February. They should have been a goal to the good after only a minute. Martin Deady earned the spot kick but he fluffed his lines as he struck the penalty over the bar. UL were in control but were constantly denied by Queen's keeper Peter Mallett. Paul Cummins was incredibly denied on three occasions by the in form Mallett.

UL eventually got the breakthrough on 40 minutes with their second penalty of the afternoon. This time Stephen Goggins was fouled as Paul Walsh dispatched the penalty to put UL deservedly in the lead. Queen's improved in the second period but never seriously threatened to score. Cummins and Darren Harrington had UL's best chances of the half but in the end a 1-0 victory was a result.

This sent them through to face UCD the next day. The game was crucial as both sides were highly fancied before the tournament. UL endured a nightmare start as UCD struck early. Eoin Roche was the goalscorer and it things got worse coming up to half time. Robbie Creevy added the second as UL were faced with a huge uphill task. UL's goal when came proved too little too late. For the second day in a row Paul Walsh found

the net from the penalty spot but UCD progressed to the semi finals.

The loss to UCD placed UL in the Farquhar Cup. The semi final game was against Ulster University Coleraine at The Farm. It was to prove an easy outing for UL running out 5-1 winners. Martin Deady netted twice while Brian Cleary, Paul Walsh and Nigel Stanley were also on the score sheet.

Early on Friday morning UL faced UCC in the final of the Farquhar. Goals courtesy of Brian Cleary and Gavin Roche ensured a 2-0 win and made up in a small way for missing out on the Collingwood.

UL will be disappointed after the Collingwood week but they could still look forward to a league final joust with Letterkenny IT.

UL hold out for one point victory

Fiona Reidy

UL 0-11
Sligo IT 1-7

UL SENIOR B footballers were in quarter final action on Thursday of week 5 against Sligo IT. This was truly a game of two halves with UL dominating in the first half and barely holding off the Westerners rebellion in the second half.

UL looked the dominant side from the very beginning, with Pat McCarthy scoring a point in the first 30 seconds after Sligo over carried from the throw in.

Enda Lyons was next on the scoreboard three minutes later for UL slotting over a fine point from a free twenty five meters out. UL were dominant at every position on the pitch and despite Sligo's efforts to play the ball to their forwards UL were always first to the ball. They started putting well worked passages of play from the back line

all the way to the full forwards who more often than not got the score.

Points from Kevin O'Sullivan, Enda Lyons, Kevin Day and Ciaran Griffith ensued and Sligo didn't respond with a score until the 25th minute of the first half when they got a well earned point. They soon got another and things were looking up for them.

UL, however, did not rest on their laurels and applied even more pressure on the Sligo defence, when Lyons fought his way through a wall of defenders it looked certain it would be a goal for his hard work. The ball hit the woodwork and rebounded out to a fast-reacting Day who took the point.

Sligo even from the kick outs failed to get the ball to their men and Lyons who intercepted one of these stray restarts, duly slotted the ball over the bar.

Sligo were playing poor football

and anytime they had real scoring opportunities they kicked the ball wide something which cost them the game in the end.

The final point of the half came from Kieran Fitzgerald who powered through numerous defenders showing both speed and strength to get the score.

The half time score was UL 0-9 Sligo IT 0-2. UL looked to be in driving seat, their midfield was dominant and supplied clean fast ball to the forwards at every opportunity. There were glimpses of what Sligo could do in the first half when they got the phases of playing going they posed a threat but never capitalised on this in the opening half.

In the second half Sligo came out the hungrier team and they fought and chased down every thing. This work rate paid off and they were first to score after ten minutes

and UL had no response. Sligo began winning ball in midfield and hence built up more phases which resulted in scores. Sligo scored 5 points in the second half before UL responded with points from Fitzgerald and Stephen O'Connor.

UL made numerous substitutions with Lyons and Day being among those taken off. Sligo were last to score scoring a superb goal after UL lost possession in midfield. UL were forced to defend for dear life in the dying minutes of the game but just about held out the Sligo IT challenge.

The home side were lucky to escape with a one point victory after a dismal second half performance. Best for UL were Enda Lyons, Kieran Fitzgerald, Kevin O'Sullivan and Steven O'Connor.

Camogie collapse in Shield final

Tomás McCarthy

THE UL camogie team lost out in the Ashbourne shield final to NUIG on Sunday 22 February in Cork. It was truly a game they should have won.

The day before the UL girls defeated UUJ while NUIG overcame the challenge of the Garda College. The first half saw UL taking the initiative as they worked up a nine point lead at the interval. The goals from Edel Maher and Maire O'Neill set up UL nicely for the second period leading 2-7 to 0-4. NUIG didn't give up though and staged a miraculous turnaround. Inspired by Lorraine Ryan who fired 1-8 UL were unable to stem the tide and it was Ryan who found the winner in the dying minutes.

NUIG had edged it 1-14 to 2-10.

After the game there were certain question marks raised over the team selection. UL made three changes for the final from the semi final only the day previous. The omission of Niamh Mulcahy was particularly puzzling giving her fine scoring form in the semi final.

Waterford IT won the Ashbourne Cup defeating UCD in the final. WIT beat UL at the quarter final stage which relegated them to the Shield competition. After the three in a row success from 2004 to 2006 the camogie team is in transition. Most of the players that were part of that team have now graduated so it might take a while for UL to be back in the big time.

On a positive note UL had two representatives on the Ashbourne All-Star team. Goalkeeper Joanne Nolan and corner forward Cora Hennessy were both rewarded for their efforts during the competition.

UL Softball move closer to another

UL'S SOFTBALL club have moved one step closer to claiming their fourth national title in a row after a dominant display at the UCD leg of the Irish Softball Intersvarsities. Having won all of their games prior to the abandonment of the previous leg in Waterford, UL were already on ahead of UCD at the start of play in Dublin.

The club's first team, the 55's, eased into the weekend with a 26-4 win over UCD B before facing the UL alumni team, the Ori-ginals, in what was undoubtedly the game of the tournament.

Trailing 13-2 half way through the second inning, the 55's put up a stern defensive display to claw their way back into contention and clinched the game 17-16 with a run in the very last inning. Runs were plentiful for the 55's, scoring a total of 124 runs in their 7 games.

Having defeated the Ori-ginals, UCD A and UCD B twice each, the 55's faced the Ori-ginals a third time, on this occasion to decide the cup winners for the weekend. The 55's winning streak was finally ended by the Ori-ginals who claimed the cup with a 13-4 win.

Despite losing the final, the 55's will still be firm favourites to retain their title when the final leg of the intersvarsities is held here in UL on March 28th and 29th.

With 7 wins and no losses so far in the league, the 55's are practically out of reach of all the other contenders and will only require a couple of wins playing at home at the end of March to secure the Irish Softball IV title for a fourth successive year.



23A UL softballers are pitching closer to another title

UL water polo team narrowly miss out on national title

THE UL women's water polo team narrowly failed to win the national intersvarsity title at NUI Galway last weekend. The team lost in an exciting final by one goal going down 5-4 to Trinity College. UL's goals in the final were scored by Nicky Beirne, Ciara Ryan (captain) and Grace Doyle who was making her first appearance in the intersvarsity championships only playing water polo since last September when she started in first year.

As usual the solid defence of Lisa Waldron in goals, Aoife Sexton, Catherine Long and Sarah Power presented a formidable barrier to keep out the experienced Trinity attack that had rampaged through the qualifying rounds and semi finals. UL got stronger as the game progressed and hit the post and cross bar twice but could not find the last goal needed to bring the game to extra time

Hopes were high for the UL team after a steady improvement at the intersvarsities over the past few years and a promising season in division 2 of the national league this year. However after losing to Trinity College 6-1 in the first game of the group stages the team needed to dig deep even to reach the knockout stages but turned things round with a stunning 18-2 defeat of the hosts NUI Galway to reach the semi finals. Sub goalie 'Taytos' Geraghty faced down the Galway forwards in a confident display in her senior debut.

UL faced a confident UCC team in the semi final. Cork were full of confidence after beating UL in the league last week, but were not prepared for the desire and team work of the UL team with Limerick progressing through to the final on a 9-6 scoreline. As usual for UL it was a solid team performance with senior players combining well

with new comers to see off the 'old enemy'.

Team coach Phil Mudge was delighted with the performance of the team, although disappointed not to come back to Limerick with the trophy.

"This is a team full of leaders," said Mr Mudge, "After the set back in the opening rounds the girls needed every ounce of character to come back like they did. Our captain Ciara always leads from the front but on Saturday every member of the team played with character and determination. If the game had lasted five more minutes we would have pulled back the final goal we needed, Trinity were getting tired and were no match for our stronger and more confident forward line."

The UL men played first with confidence after playing fantastically in league matches the weekend before beating UCC

10-4 and Blackrock from Galway 10-4 as well.

Their first match was a thrilling encounter against Trinity College, which ended with Trinity snatching a last minute goal to tie the game at 8-8. Cian O'Sullivan and Dave Kelly, who played a large role in UL's goal tally, played great games. Solid in defence were Aaron Desmond and Ted Vickey.

Their next game in the group stages was against a very strong UCD team who struggled to put goals behind keeper Danny O'Hare who had a fantastic tournament. The final score was 9-8 in UCD's favour, with UL having played their best game ever. Darren McHugh and Shane Ryan played cracking games, as did John McCall and Eoin O'Sullivan. This unfortunate loss meant that UL just missed out on playing DIT in the semi finals.

Bohs lose on home turf

Conor McGrath

UL BOHEMIANS suffered another critical defeat on home turf last weekend. Old Belvedere recorded only their fifth victory this season in a 13-6 defeat of Bohs at Annacotty. Bohs were comprehensively beaten at the breakdown and at the scrum for the duration of the match and it swung the match in Belvedere's favour. Belvedere's defence was miserly all afternoon and two penalties from Aidan McNulty and Fergal Lawlor were the only points scored by the home team.

Bohs had the lion's share of possession but the D4 outfit had too much up their sleeve. This narrow loss has left a severe dent in Bohs playoff aspirations. They have now slipped to eighth in the table with a

game in hand over their rivals.

Upcoming games against Terenure at home and UCD at Belfield must be won if their season is to count for something.

On the other hand, the U20s are in flying form. They beat Buccaneers at home last weekend which has increased their chances of defending their All Ireland crown. Who would bet against them with the form they have shown all season.

On another note, Ireland Women lost to the England Women 13-29 at Templeville Road. It was Joy Neville's first loss as captain of the Irish Women's team. Let's hope that it is the only Irish Grand slam opportunity lost this season.

Club

Double vision for ladies rugby

Tomás McCarthy & Fiona Reidy

UL 19
UCC 5

UL LADIES had just too much for UCC in this top of the table clash at the UL Bowl on 20 February. It was by no means a perfect performance but UL showed the required application and hunger in the second half to overpower the Rebel ladies.

The early stages didn't always go in the home side's favour with UCC making the better start. UCC went over for a try after a UL error in the middle of the field but they failed to convert. It took UL until near of the half to respond.

Aisling Hutchings made the decisive break to score a crucial try in the corner. Fly half Anna Caplice didn't add the conversion to leave the sides level at 5 points apiece at the interval.

The second half saw UL dominate the territory and possession stakes. This pressure resulted in a try for Danielle Ryan. After a couple of passes across the back line Jo O'Meara played a beautiful one handed pass to Ryan who dodged

past two UCC players before running in under the posts. Anna Caplice added the extra two points as UL remained in control for the rest of the half. UCC rarely threatened but UL just couldn't put them away. Handling errors and turnovers meant that the home side didn't seal the win until late on. After UCC failed to clear their lines UL pounced as Ryan set up Hutchings for her second try of the game. Caplice again found the range from the conversion. UL piled on some late pressure in search of the bonus point but these efforts came up short. In the end UL could be pleased to run out fourteen point winners at full time.

In the end UL's superior back play proved to be difference on the day. There was a fluidity to the back line that UCC couldn't match. UL's best performers at the Bowl were Danielle Ryan, Rosie Flanagan and Aisling Hutchings. This win sees UL take top spot in Division 1.

Confidence is high in the camp and there is serious talk of a league and cup double. UCC will be back however, no doubt about that as will the Guards to have a say in the destination of the two pieces of silverware.

OPC IV a 'challenge'

Aoife Breen

OVER 100 students from all over Ireland were overwhelmed by the intervarsity competitions held by UL's Outdoor Pursuits from Friday, 20 February until Sunday, 22 February.

UCD walked away with the winning title at the end of a "tough" weekend according to Club PRO, Fergal Dempsey.

"Competitors complimented us by saying it was one of the most challenging IVs that they had ever been to. I'd like to say a special word to all members of the OPC who stepped up to the challenge of running this national event. It was great, some craic!"

Students from all over Ireland came to Limerick and were put up in Jury's Hotel in the city centre with shuttle buses operating between the city and the University.

Competitors from Jordanstown, Queens, Dublin, Galway and Cork came to Limerick for the competition.

Rock climbing legend Steve McClure opened the IV on the Friday evening in the Scholars' Club speaking about his career and influences.

Those present also engaged in an original spout of 'table climbing' which, according to Mr Dempsey, involved "climbing underneath the big table [in the Scholars]."

"It's fair tough, like, you have to swing across underneath the table without hitting the ground. We're hoping to bring it back as a Rag Week event!"

The rock climbing competition on the Saturday began the main event of the weekend continuing on into Sunday afternoon.

"We'd like to thank Ulster Bank for their support. Also, Curtin Executive Travel for a very professional and efficient service throughout the weekend. Corman McKenna in the Scholars for everything over the weekend. Hugh O'Brien and ULTV for covering the events so well. Floyd Soul and Wolf for providing a great set on Saturday in Trinity Rooms."

Domino effect brings kayakers crashing through the waters

IT WAS that time of year again when UL kayak club packed up the trailer and headed for the annual intervarsities competition. This year the destination was Dublin with UCD Kayak Club as our hosts.

Although the Limerick polo team gained automatic entry to the second round of the competition on Friday, 20 February, in Kilcock, Co Kildare, following a no-show from their first round competitors, the UCC team proved too challenging and put an end to ULKC's polo competition.

NUI Maynooth eventually walked away with the overall title from the polo competition.

The following morning, competitors went to Salmon Leap Canoe Club in Leixlip, Co Kildare for the long distance race. ULKC was well represented in this competition with competitors from first to fourth year taking part in the 5km race in all classes including general plastic, high performance, touring doubles and canadian doubles.

The next event was the down river race which was held at Castletown House, Co. Kildare. Again the college was well represented in all classes and all competitors did well.

The Saturday night of kayaking IVs is traditionally a strict 'fancy dress' dress code and always promises to provide some amusement. This party proved to be no different. The Saturday night party was held in the student centre bar on the UCD campus with UL represented as 'human dominoes'.

The final day's events, Sunday 22 February, were held out in a playboating

spot called Sluice in Lucan, Co Kildare. The first competition of the day was slalom, where the competitors had to pass through a series of upriver and downriver 'gates' in the fastest time possible without hitting off any of them.

Ireland's Eoin Rheinisch, who came fourth in the Beijing Olympics in the single slalom was there on the day to show competitors how it is done and give some helpful advice.

The last competition of the weekend was the freestyle rodeo. This is where the competitors use short kayaks and do tricks like backflips and loops in order to gain points from the judges.

ULKC performed well in both competitions with one of our first years taking third in the men's sport category in the freestyle competition.

The club congratulates all its members, especially the first years and paid thanks to all the people behind the organisational aspects of the weekend.

NUIG Kayak Club will be hosting the IVs next year in Galway.

UL Kayak Club are still recruiting new members. Pool sessions are on Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday nights from 9.45pm to 10.45pm in the Arena pool.

The next trip is Sligo in Week 7, when the club will head west for sun, sea and surf! Visit www.ulkayak.com for more information.



The ULKC Domino Team for 2009

Frisbees hold UL under siege

VALENTINE'S WEEKEND 2009 saw UL host 20 teams from Ireland and Europe for the second annual Ultimate Frisbee tournament. The tournament, known as the Siege of Limerick, is organised by the University's own team, the UL Ninjas. It is one of only two major outdoor ultimate tournaments in Ireland. With players arriving on Friday evening, the perfect ultimate Frisbee weather – light wind and no rain – on Saturday set up the stage for the competition.

The initial games saw teams fighting to get to the top of their respective groups in an attempt to get into the top 8 places and be in with a shot for the trophy.

UL performed well in their group and placed second, only losing to group winner DIT in a close game including a 4 point comeback by the home team. The international pick-up team, Billy-No-Mates, won their group despite having to play iron-man with no available subs. Between games, teams warmed down and relaxed to good music and food from a BBQ.

As with all ultimate Frisbee tournaments, the Saturday night party was a costumed affair with the theme of 'Freaks and Geeks' and was held at the Kilmurry Lodge. The few regular Saturday night patrons were somewhat bemused to be swamped by over 200 nerds, goths and the

just-plain-weird.

Sunday had teams looking for wins in order to move up the scoreboard and place high. UL defeated DCU but were outmatched by experienced Dutch team NUTS and defeated in the Plate quarter-finals. The final was a hard-fought showdown between Dublin club team, Johnny Chimpo, and UK side, Accrington Stanley. Both sides demonstrated a fluid offence and strong defence and the teams traded points until Johnny Chimpo clawed ahead to finish the game with 14 points to 11. This marked Johnny Chimpo's second win at the Siege and only time will tell if they can take the trophy for three years in a row.

Cheltenham - What Are The Chances?

John Condren

Those of you who like a flutter will no doubt know that the Cheltenham Festival takes place this week (Week 7). Here, I present to you my five top tips as steeplechasing's annual Olympics kicks off on Tuesday 10 March. Retribution for subsequent loss of earnings will be frowned upon – I didn't force ye to place the damn bets!

Friday - The Gold Cup (Neptune Collonges)

This stocky grey French-bred eight-year-old, trained by Paul Nicholls, will never have a better chance of winning the Gold Cup. He currently disputes third favouritism with Mouse Morris' 2006 winner War of Attrition, behind 2007 champion Kauto Star and

current title-holder, the brilliant Cork-bred Denman. Due to heart trouble, the latter has run only once since his victory and was heavily beaten. The question marks linger over Kauto Star after his failure to adapt to the race conditions last March – he only narrowly clung on for second place over Neptune Collonges. Kauto won the King George on Boxing Day in scintillating fashion but Cheltenham is a tougher course than Kempton. On paper the race is set to be one of the best renewals ever, with no fewer than three defending champions, but I can see Neptune Collonges (probably to be ridden by Christian Williams) surprising them all with a powerful run up that famous hill, continuing on from his solid if unspectacular victory in the Irish Hennessy Gold Cup on

15 February. You could try the winner of the Welsh Grand National, Jim Dreaper's Notre Pere, as an each-way bet. Perhaps it would be better not to bet at all as the race is on Friday, 13 March!

Tuesday - The Champion Hurdle (Osana)

The showpiece on the opening day could well be won by David Pipe's impressive and under-rated Osana, second last year. It is hard to see past Nicky Henderson's brilliant Binocular but there are doubts over his stamina. Harchibald, Brave Inca and Hardy Eustace are simply too old while current Champion Hurdler Katchit has struggled to recapture his excellent form of last season. The 2007 winner, Sublimity, has a lot of improving to do to

regain his crown. Another of Henderson's runners, the mare Chomba Womba (got to love the name), might be worth an each-way punt if she runs.

Wednesday - The Queen Mother Champion Chase (Master Minded)

This is an effective no-brainer. A phenomenal winner of this two-mile race by 19 lengths last year as a five-year-old, Master Minded is officially the best chaser currently in training and in Ruby Walsh has one of the most skilful jockeys around to guide him. Businessman Clive Smith owns this horse and Kauto Star, and when both horses are retired he should simply give up owning racehorses because he will probably never enjoy such luck as an owner again. Actually

guys don't even bother having a bet in this race unless it's on Colm Murphy's Big Zeb for an each-way place.

Tuesday - The Supreme Novices Hurdle (Cousin Vinny). Willie Mullins is Ireland's top National Hunt trainer and this young star, named after a Mafia movie, looks every inch a Champion Hurdler of the future. Irish horses have a terrific record in this the first race of the Festival and things should be no different this year. I like the look of Red Moloney (another great gangster name) as a dangerous outsider.

Thursday - The Ryanair Chase (Voy Por Ustedes)

Alan King's 2007 Queen Mother Champion Chase winner has been taken out of that race (presumably out of

fear of Master Minded, who humiliated King's horse last year) and stepped up in trip to take advantage of the dearth of top quality two-and-a-half-mile chasers. He answered quibbles about his stamina by winning the Betfair Ascot Chase by 14 lengths in February and seems a natural over this distance. Robert 'Choc' Thornton will again have the ride. Charlie Egerton's Hobbs Hill and Nigel Twiston-Davies' Irish-bred Imperial Commander have good chances of upsetting the odds.

Also, a few pints of well-conditioned stout while watching the races in the Hurlers or Sports Bar never go astray – pity the Festival doesn't coincide with Rag Week this year!

England - is where it's at

Liam Toghler

IT'S A debate that crops up time and time again. Which league can truly claim to be the best in world football? Depending on the observer and their views on how the game should be played, the answer will vary between England, Spain and Italy. The answer may change over time, as I believe it has. There is no right or wrong answer to this ageless question but right now I would consider the Premier League to rule the roost.

"That's the problem with the Premiership, Bill. You're playing Ragball Rovers every week!" These were the words of Eamon Dunphy earlier in the decade. Whatever the failings of those clubs attempting to stave off relegation to the Coca-Cola Championships, the overall standard of English top flight football is higher than what Serie A or La Liga has to offer. This is reflected in the attendances at league games in the three countries. Premier League

gates rarely drop below 20,000 while many of the smaller fish in its Italian and Spanish equivalents will struggle to draw half of that figure.

At the start of the Champions League each year, about eight clubs are considered to be in with a serious chance of lifting the trophy. Four of these are English. I don't think you need reminding which four I am referring to here.

The first knockout rounds of this year's competition showed that Barcelona and Inter Milan, firm leaders of La Liga and Serie A respectively, appear highly vulnerable when not pitted against the likes of Sporting Gijon, Numancia, Reggina and Lecce. It is no coincidence that each of the Premier League's leading quartet has played in the Champions League final at least once since 2005. The smart odds are on English representation at the Rome decider on 27 May.

Even with the dominance of the Premier League's 'Big Four', those

at the next tier are also very strong sides. Geographical misfortune has denied Everton, Tottenham and Aston Villa the chance of appearing in the Champions League in recent seasons.

Even teams such as Blackburn and Manchester City are much stronger than the majority of Spain and Italy's top ten. After all, you don't see Arabian sugar daddies investing billions in Fiorentina and Valencia, now do you?

While some commentators have justifiably bemoaned the plethora of Premier League imports, the stature of the game in England has grown immeasurably in the last few years.

Ten years ago there wasn't a single Brazilian in the Premiership. Now the five-time world champions could conceivably field a team comprising entirely of English-based players. As big leagues go the Premier League is the biggest of them all.

Punching above their weight

Neil Treacy

"Accrington Stanley... Who are they?"

ACCRINGTON MAY not be a million miles from the San Siro, but there were times on that Tuesday night when the distance seemed far greater. As Man United tried in vain to carve out an opening against Inter Milan, a smaller yet just as important battle was taking place in the heart of the English North West. Accrington Stanley entertained Luton Town in front of just 1,033 spectators in a League 2 relegation six pointer at the Fraser Eagle Stadium. The score line, just as it was at the San Siro, was 0-0

Scottish commentating legend Archie McPherson once described football in as beautiful a way as I can imagine. He said: "Queens Park against Forfar, it doesn't get more romantic than that". This quote is what draws me to Accrington. They are a club steeped in tradition, a founding member of the Football League, and their arrival back after a forty year exile is one of the most romantic stories in football, a reason it's known as "The Beautiful Game".

Thirty years ago, Accrington Stanley was merely a punch line in a milk ad, today they are punching above their weight in The Football League. In 2006, forty years after Accrington went out of business, they returned triumphantly to the Football League, as one of the game's most romantic stories.

Their story begins back in 1999, after the appointment of John Coleman as manager, who is still in charge today. By 2003, they had two more promotions to their name and were only one promotion away from a coveted place in the Football League.

It was in that season that they provided one of the great FA Cup shocks, as the then part-timers beat Second Division Huddersfield Town 1-0, the winner arriving in stoppage time courtesy of a thirty yard volley from Danny Gouck, a player who relished more sandwiches than opportunities in his spell with Stanley.

Two seasons later they reclaimed their place in the Football League, after winning the Nationwide Conference in emphatic fashion.

Well into their third season back in the Football League, Stanley

have been finding the going tough but are still holding their own in the lower half of Coca-Cola League 2.

With attendances at the Fraser Eagle Stadium threatening to fall below four figures, and transfers being restricted to emergency loan signings from neighbouring clubs, many would say that the club are overachieving simply by avoiding the drop. I always find it interesting how only 22 miles of roadway separate Accrington from Manchester, now one of the wealthiest cities in the footballing world.

But even that small 30 minute trip cannot mask the difference in fortunes as while United fight for trophies week in, week out, Accrington are fighting for their very existence.

So for the sake of romance, and for the sake of football, let us all pay attention to Jeff Stelling as he reads out the scores on a Saturday evening. No longer should a true football fan think, "Accrington Stanley...Who are they?", for while their future may not be bright, they are the traditional football romance.

Club

UL Sports Round-Up

Tomás McCarthy

Fresher Hurling

UL emerged victorious from their Ulster Bank Fresher B Hurling Championship semi final clash against NUIG on February 16. A big crowd gathered on pitch one to see UL control an average game of hurling for the most part. UL led 1-6 to 0-2 at half time but the Galway side narrowed the gap to five points in the second period. There was no need for panic though as the home side coasted to an eventual 4-12 to 1-8 win.

Plassey 10K

This year's Plassey 10K race will take place on Saturday March 21. For more details email 2009plassey10k@gmail.com.

Hockey

On February 22 UL suffered a 2-1 away defeat to UCC in Division One of the Munster League.

Ladies Soccer

The UL ladies soccer team continued their pursuit of the league title with a 2-0 win over UCC on February 27.

OPC

The Outdoor Pursuits Club are heading on a very exciting Easter trip to Spain in April. Costa Blanca is the destination for some serious climbing and some serious fun!

An Focal Five A Side

If you think that your five a side team can take on the An Focal sports team email mossy.mccarthy@gmail.com Anyone up to the challenge?

Pool & Darts Club IV

Captain of "A" team David Flynn said that all teams played well with some great individual performances. The standard of play throughout the overall competition was greater this year than previous.

With 42 teams participating, nearly every collage and university north and south of the boarder were represented.

Unfortunately, this year was not UL's year but this has made the players hungrier for next year.

Every member of the Pool and Darts club has the chance to represent UL at these intersvarsities next year.

To make these teams players are requested to attend our weekly tournament on Wednesday nights from 6.45pm in the Students'

Union. there is also cash prizes given out on the night for finalists.

The club will also present a trophy at the end of the semester to the player that has the most ranking points gained from the weekly tournaments.

Darts is also run in the sports bar on a Tuesday night weekly at 7.15 with cash prizes given out for the winner.

Everyone welcome to attend both competitions.

The club would like to thank the Students Union and Neasa O'Donnell from the Sports Department for all their help and encouragement.

UL sailors in 'Wet Dream' event

Six UL sailors took off to Lake Burghfield, near Reading in the UK, over St Valentine's weekend to participate in a racing event with other teams. On Sunday, 15 February, with 15 knots of wind, the club members rigged the boats quickly hoping to get a lot of races in.

The racing started off with two round robins in which they faced teams Cardiff, Exeter and Oxford. The club won four out of five races which secured them a place in the gold fleet semi final. We raced Warwick in the semi final which proved challenging. It was best out of three, With UL, 'Team Ireland', winning the first and Warwick winning the second, it was all hands on for the final race. Unfortunately Warwick beat UL by half a boat length on the finish line, leaving UL to finish in 3rd place overall.



UL sailors in Reading

The Rumour Mill

Conor McGrath

Gossip never sleeps, definitely not around UL anyway! Rumours are abound in the season of a possible Grand Slam.

UL Ladies rugby team have been in the press recently – all for the right reasons of course! Well, a source tells me that things got messy after a night of the Lodge. All that can be said is that the team fought the law and, surprisingly, the team won! I'd say that the team unity is only stronger after that.

There seems to be a sort of drinking culture around UL that would only make Alex Ferguson cringe. Several prominent members of a UL sports team were spotted in the Stables, partaking in a 13 tap challenge. I suppose they defeated the old enemy recently, so all may be forgiven.

On a completely different matter, Tony Browne was spotted recently. One

UL student informed me that he saw Mr Browne was helped into the Milford Care Centre. Davy Fitz might have another problem on his hands. The Pool club have caused a bit of uproar recently. The lack of chalk and pool cues in the pool room, have left some members distraught and raging with fury. On leading member stated categorically that "we'll sort them out upstairs". Could he be referring to an attack on high placed SU members? A few pints might pluck up his courage.

A possible Irish rugby team appearance at RAG Week has also been mooted around the UL folk recently. It would be a week after a possible Grand Slam but would the D4 heads be safe from an egging? As with most rumours, only time will tell...

Who Are Ya?

The Basics

Name: Lisa Falvey
Age: 20
Course: Applied Languages
Club: UL handball
County: Kerry
Nickname: Falvey
Sporting Heroes: Mohammed Ali
Biggest sporting achievement: Winning the collegiate title.
What's the best thing about UL Handball? The craic and weekends away.
And the worst? The drive home after weekends away!
Favourites
Favourite food: Chocolate
Favourite song: Single Ladies by Beyonce
Favourite movie: Rocky
Favourite number: 4

Take Your Pick

The Lodge or Trinity Rooms?

Compiled by Tomás McCarthy

Lodge

Dunphy or Giles?

Dunphy

O'Connell or O'Gara? O'Gara**Cup o' tay or cappuccino?**

Cup o tay

Chips or spuds?

Chips

Friends or Home & Away?

Friends

Four To Finish

Describe yourself in three words?

Mad, sporty and blond

Who's going to win the Premier League? Liverpool hopefully!**What's the best chat-up line you've ever heard?** A fella went up to me one night and said "Have you got a plaster? I'm bleeding" I says "Why? What happened?" and he goes "I fell for you".**What are you going to be when you grow up?** A teacher

Comments

All comments good or bad can be sent to mossy.mccarthy@gmail.com or

Check out the bebo page

www.bebo.com/anfocalsport

Top 10 teenagers in the Premier League

Liam Togher

1. Theo Walcott (Arsenal)
2. Gareth Bale (Tottenham)
3. Rafael da Silva (Manchester Utd)
4. Aaron Ramsey (Arsenal)
5. Giovanni dos Santos (Tottenham)
6. Freddie Sears (West Ham)
7. David Ngog (Liverpool)
8. Danny Welbeck (Manchester Utd)
9. Dan Gosling (Everton)
10. Nathan Delfouneso (Aston Villa)

Just for fun

The Score

Liam Togher

United in reverse gear

What is with Man Utd players behind the steering wheel? If it's not Cristiano Ronaldo ploughing his gleaming new Ferrari into the wall of a tunnel, it's Carlos Tevez getting nabbed without a licence on hand. Maybe next season the club will scrap the medical and make new signings pass their driving test instead!

Look who's come crawling back

With Tottenham going back to the future three times over in the January transfer window, here's a mad guess at the team which will line out on the first day of next season – Robinson, Chimbonda, Naybet, Edman, Stalteri, Davies, Tainio, Mendes, Malbranque, Defoe, Keane. And perhaps they might spring Goran Bunjevcevic, Dimitar Berbatov and Edgar Davids from the bench.

Saints going to hell

Is it really only six years since Southampton were FA Cup finalists and establishing themselves among the top 10 clubs in the top flight? The Saints now lie second from bottom of the Championship with one home win in the league all season.

There's only one man who can save them now...Matt Le Tissier!

Do it! Be champions!

All of us here at An Focal Sport simply love 'Special 1 TV', which follows the Saturday evening footy on Setanta Sports. The five-minute comedy show, with brilliant impressions from Gift Grub genius Mario Rosenstock, is back in a new guise, with Jose the Special One, Sven and Wayne the Boy Wonder still featuring. Tha's brilliant, tha is!

No middle ground

We've had Arsenal going a season unbeaten in 2003-04 and Derby managing just one league win last year. The La Liga table at mid-February shows that Sporting Gijon, after 22 matches, have yet to draw. So what if they've lost 6-1 (at home), 6-0 and 7-0 earlier in the campaign? We have admiration for anyone who simply doesn't do goalless games.

A tale of what could have been

A little bit of browsing Wikipedia can lead you to discover some amazing little-known facts. For some unknown reason I found myself reading about Greek-born Czech Republic striker Michal Papadopulos, who had a trial with Arsenal as an 18-year-old in 2003? Remember him, Gunners

Magic Numbers

John Condren

8 Number of career tries the legendary Brian O'Driscoll has now scored against Les Bleus. What a man. Yes, I'm from Leinster, so what?

10,000 Fans who turned up at the rally in Cork city centre to cheer for the dearly beloved 2008 hurling squad on Saturday 7 February. Why mourn for a team clearly past its sell-by date? Move on, the party's over, and they'll all be retired some day anyway.

1 Only one player has scored in every single Premier League season since its inauguration in 1992-93. You've probably already guessed that it's Ryan Giggs.

23 Number of lengths by which last year's Cheltenham Gold Cup winner Denman was beaten on his reappearance at Kempton on 7 February. Fear not ye ante-post backers, 'twas only a warm-up.

15 Golfing whizzkid Rory McIlroy's position in the latest world rankings. It won't be long before he's number 1, say I. And before you point it out I know nothing about golf.

A Sports Writers Diary

Tomás McCarthy

31 Jan

What a match in Croker. Stephen O'Neill once again proves he is one of the best forwards in the country. Mulligan's goal celebration to the Hill was also the stuff of legend.

1 Feb

Togher gloats after Liverpool's win over Chelsea. "His armband proved he was a red Torres Torres! You'll never walk alone it said Torres Torres!...."

2 Feb

The pool tournament in the Stables barely gets 16 people to take part. A few bar staff were given late call ups to make up the numbers!

3 Feb

"Mayo for Sam" "Mayo for Liam" some of the random quotations from El Lodginton. UCD take on UL in a blizzard on pitch one in the Fresher 2 football. The sports editor watches for 10 minutes then goes for cover.

4 Feb

A-boy Daniel Gosling! One of my housemates says it's only a game. Yeah right! The Sigerson match is called off.

5 Feb

UL emerge victorious in the Fitzgibbon game in Newtownshandrum. I defeat a classmate 2-1 in probably the worst game of pool seen in the UL games room. ITV apologise for playing an ad while Dan Gosling was scoring Everton's winner. An absolute shambles!

6 Feb

Very early start for the Harding Cup quarter final: 11 o'clock – pure madness. Despite the glorious sunshine, the sports editor requires a hat, scarf and gloves to keep warm. Martin Deady is outstanding in a 2-0 victory.

7 Feb

Fantastic game at Croker as Ireland beat France 30-21 much to my surprise. Torres saves lucky Liverpool again!

8 Feb

A depleted Waterford side go down to Tipperary at a very mucky Walsh Park. UL are edged out by UUI in the Harding Cup at the Bowl.

9 Feb

McGrath breaks the news of Scolari's sacking just after a lecture in the Foundation Building. Now that's journalism!

10 Feb

Another entertaining sports writers meeting is complete and John Condren is hungry for carrot cake!

11 Feb

Down in the Stables for Ireland – Georgia. Trapp may not be a good general but he sure is lucky! Photographer Hugh O'Brien makes a mad dash sprint from the SU to the rugby pitches, all for the sake of An Focal. Myself, Hugh and McGrath come up with headlines for the UL v Garda rugby game. 'UL Lays Down The Law' and 'UL Beat Pigs' narrowly missed out.

12 Feb

UCD get the better of UL in a crazy Sigerson game.

13 Feb

Unlucky for some. I've another An Focal to finish off as my email inbox is jammed to the gills.

Give It A Lash Quiz 1

Eoin King tests your sporting knowledge



1. Where will the 2010 Ryder Cup be held?
2. How many players make up an Australian rules football team?
3. Who holds the record for the fastest tennis serve?
4. Which English football team were the first to have an all-seater stadium?
5. How many tries did the winger Denis Hickie score for Ireland?
6. Second to Kerry, which county has the most football All-Stars?
7. Who is the manager of the Tipperary senior hurling team?
8. In which sport would you see a 'jerk'?
9. Who were the first international soccer team to win the World Cup in their own country?
10. From which football club did Manchester United buy Roy Keane?

Quotes Of The Edition

Tomás McCarthy

"Sure camogie isn't a real sport at all"

John Condren lets his thoughts be known when discussing an upcoming UL camogie game.

"Liverpool were like riding him."

Fiona Reidy gives us an interesting view on the Robbie Keane transfer to Spurs.

"Have you nothing better to be doing?"

Editor Aoife Breen is none too impressed when McCarthy asks for euros for the pool table.

"Stop being casual and start being more clinical."

UL fresher soccer boss Martin Hayes giving some concise analysis to his players during the Harding Cup.

"I'd love to know what training regime that ref is on."

A supporter at the Harding Cup spots a rather out of shape referee.

"I'm off to get some carrot cake."

John Condren makes a second appearance. He was a rather hungry man following another gruelling sports writers' meeting.

*"You f**kin Jewish c**t."*

A rather unusual insult to the match official during the Ireland v Georgia in the Stables.

"We are not going to win this game"

McCarthy bangs the table assuredly as he says these words at half time of Ireland v Georgia. Sometimes right, sometimes wrong!

Answers to Sports Quiz

- | | |
|--------------------------|-----------------------|
| 1. Celtic Manor, Wales | 2. 18 |
| 3. Andy Roddick (150mph) | 4. Coventry City |
| 5. 29 | 6. Dublin |
| 7. Liam Sheedy | 8. Weightlifting |
| 9. Uruguay | 10. Nottingham Forest |

Under the Spotlight

UL Judo Club dominate medal table at Intervarsities

UL Judo Club proved they were one of the best college clubs in the country by winning a host of awards at the 2009 Judo Intervarsities in NUI Maynooth last weekend. The team's winnings from the weekend consisted of 5 Gold, 2 Silver, 2 Bronze, a player of the day award and first place in the ladies team event. The team of 8 along competed against over 150 other competitors from third level institutions across the country fighting against competitors from beginners to black belts.

The day got underway with the team events both male and female. The male team got off to a flying start beating the IT Tralee team 4-1 but unfortunately lost to Trinity College's B team in the Quarter Final. The Ladies team however consisting of Laura O Mahoney, Emma Phelan and Mags Foran came out on top of a group of 5 teams after beating IT Tralee and University of Ulster to win the female team event outright.

The good record didn't stop there for the girls as Laura a brown belt in Judo won a Gold medal in the Upper Kyu Event after winning all of her 4

fights and was unlucky to lose the final of the 57kg category to a black belt from France and had to settle for Silver.

Mags also took a Gold medal in the 63kg category after having to fight all of her opponents twice after the first round ended as a draw, despite this Mags fought extremely well and beat all of her opponents to take gold. Mags also won herself a Silver medal in the Lower Kyu category after losing in a great fight to her fellow team mate Emma.

Emma who went on to win the Lower Kyu category outright after defeating 4 other fighters also took a Bronze medal in the 57kg category. She lost in the semi-final to the same girls who beat Laura in the final after a great fight lasting over 2 minutes, which was a great achievement for a beginner fighting a black belt.

The men's team also won a collection of medals in the individual categories, first up were Kevin O Sullivan and Milosz Wojcik in the Middle Kyu category. Kevin won his first 2 fights but was then beaten in the Quarter Final. Milosz progressed to the final

of that category after a number of dazzling displays but was beaten by an opponent much heavier and stronger than him and took Silver. Milosz's day didn't end there and after picking up an injury to his ribs which hampered his ability to fight properly had to settle for a Bronze medal after losing to the eventual winner in the semi-final of the 73kg.

Kevin also fought again and reached the fight for Bronze medal in the 100kg category. In an enthralling encounter Kevin who was ahead by a number of scores throughout the fight and dominated throughout got thrown with 10 seconds to go, losing out on his Bronze medal.

Dymtry Tairov also secured a medal after his superb displays in the Lower Kyu category. Dymtry who is an expert at BJJ and MMA showed his skills by defeating 3 opponents on his way to winning the Bronze medal.

Mark Fairman also fought in the Lower Kyu but was unfortunate not to win his first fight against a fighter considerably bigger than him. Mark put his BJJ skills to use in the further

73kg and open weight categories winning two fights by submitting his opponents through arm locks and strangles. Unfortunately Mark had to settle for no medal but can be proud of his attempts in his first Judo competition.

J.T. Deenihan who coaches the club won two Gold medals in the 81kg and Open weight category. J.T. won 4 fights on the way to fight his brother in the 81kg category and won the final throwing his brother for Ippon. He also

took Gold in the Open weight category against competitors up to 120kg and won all 5 of his fights in the process. J.T. was also awarded Player of The Day at the awards ceremony that evening as judged by the referees and competition organisers.

The weekend was a massive success for the team and their coach on the day William Power. The good news didn't stop at the competition however as UL Judo Club's application to host next years Judo Intervarsities was successful

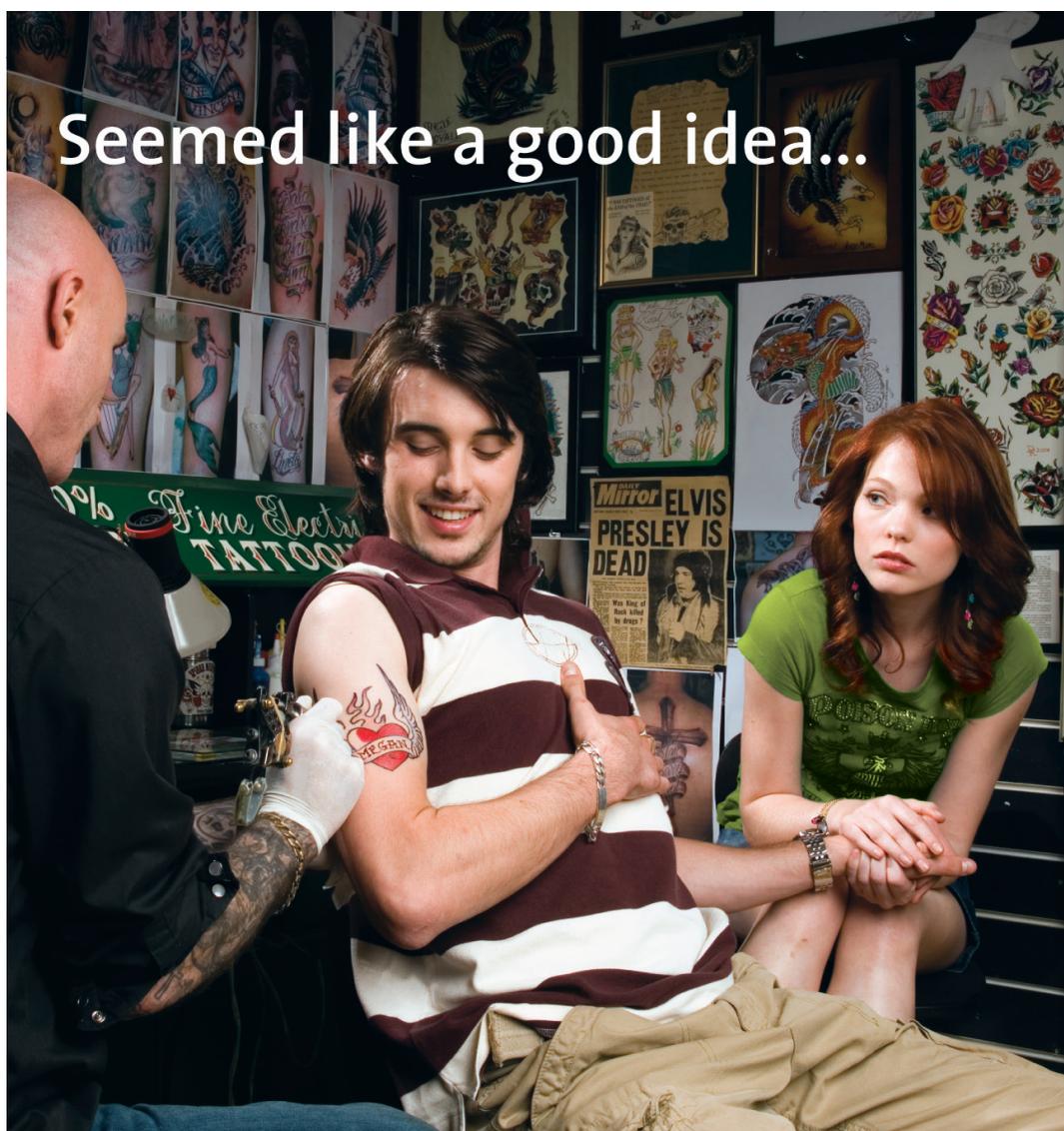
at the captains meeting on the weekend. This means that UL will play host to some of the finest Judo fighters in Ireland at the same time next year.

UL Judo Club train on Mondays and Thursdays from 6 to 7:30 both days. More info for the club can be got from e-mailing uljudoclub@gmail.com.

You can also check out their website at www.skynet.ie/~judo where there are videos of the fights and pictures from the weekend.



UL Judo Club



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