

## Leaders in the Civic Engagement Movement: Ireland

Co-edited by Lorlene Hoyt and Amy Newcomb Rowe

June signals the twelfth edition of the expanded LCEM series. This issue includes background on Ireland and the national network, **Campus Engage** along with an interview with **Lorraine McIlrath**, Talloires Network Steering Committee Member and Coordinator of the Community Knowledge Initiative at the **National University of Ireland Galway (NUI)**.

### Ireland

Ireland is situated in the Atlantic Ocean and separated from Great Britain by the Irish Sea. It is also the second largest British isle, covering 27,136 square miles and bordered to the northwest by Northern Ireland. The capital city is Dublin, containing one-third of the Irish Republic's population. During the second half of the twentieth century, the presence of so many fine higher education institutions in Dublin led to the renovation or restoration of many neighborhoods that had been reduced to slums. Ireland's 26 counties have been free of British rule since 1922, which has resulted in some educational changes, including great emphasis on the Irish language, literature, customs, and history.

Seven universities, seven colleges and 14 institutes of technology, provide higher education in Ireland, including the Dublin Institute of Technology. The Higher Education Authority (HEA) is the statutory planning and development body for higher education and research in Ireland. The HEA has wide advisory powers throughout the whole education sector. In addition it is the funding authority for the universities, institutes of technology and other designated higher education institutions.<sup>1</sup>

The higher education system has been linked with the country's economic development since the 1960s with the Investment in Education Report. Since then, the sector has expanded the number of tertiary institutions available to students. Enrollments have increased steadily from early 1990s in the main state-funded institutions, with fulltime enrollments in 2013 reaching almost 165,000 students and part-time enrollments reaching over 35,000.

Reforms in higher education across many countries have sought to increase non taxable income, foster competition for international students globally and generally make institutions more accountable through performance frameworks and demonstrated contributions to the economy. In Ireland, the National Strategy for Higher Education to 2030 (published in 2011 and informally referred to as the Hunt report)<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Department of Education and Skills, Higher Education <https://www.education.ie/en/The-Education-System/Higher-Education/>

<sup>2</sup> [http://www.hea.ie/sites/default/files/national\\_strategy\\_for\\_higher\\_education\\_2030.pdf](http://www.hea.ie/sites/default/files/national_strategy_for_higher_education_2030.pdf)

and subsequent reforms – both proposed and implemented – are the manifestations of these characteristics.

## **The National University of Ireland (NUI) Galway**

The NUI Galway was founded in 1845 with only 63 students and was known as Queen's College. The university is located in the heart of Galway city widely regarded as the cultural capital of Ireland. NUI is Ireland's leading university for civic engagement along with ALIVE volunteering program, which enables students to make a meaningful contribution to the local and international community. NUI Galway is ranked in the world's top 300 universities, putting NUI Galway in the top 3% of universities in the world. The university offers a selection of cultural, sporting and social activities with over 150 student societies and sports clubs to choose from. NUI Galway has over 17,000 students including 2,000 international students from 92 countries and more than 2,400 staff members. The NUI Galway has a remarkable reputation for teaching and research excellence. The university has a strong commitment to the Irish language as well as to volunteering and community outreach which play a key role in the academic life.

## **Campus Engage**

Over the last decade there has been an increased focus on community and civic engagement in higher education in Ireland. In 2001, NUI Galway was awarded funding by Atlantic Philanthropies to establish the Community Knowledge Initiative (CKI) to create deeper relationships between the university and wider society. The Community Knowledge Initiative's (CKI) activities were viewed as “integral to the university's strategic mission and involved a fundamental examination of the role of the university in the social fabric” (CKI Proposal, 2001). The CKI promotes greater civic engagement through core academic activities, namely teaching, research and service at the levels of students, staff, courses, programs and the institution as a whole. The CKI has now been core funded by NUI Galway and is central mainstream activity at the university. At the national level, funding was awarded by the Irish Government in 2007 to a consortium of five institutions: DCU, NUI Galway, (lead partner), NUI, Maynooth, University College Dublin (UCD) and the University of Limerick (UL) to establish the national higher education network called Campus Engage.

The purpose of Campus Engage is to establish a formal and sustainable network with the aim of increasing civic engagement and volunteering opportunities in the five partner institutions and across higher education in Ireland. Phase One of Campus Engage commenced in 2007 and the network was hosted at NUI Galway until 2013. During that time the network undertook a range of activities that sought to build momentum, discourse and practice on civic engagement and its diverse manifestations. Some of these activities included conferences and seminars, the hosting of an international scholar, publications and collection of case studies, the undertaking a national survey of civic engagement activities among 24 higher

education institutions, and the development of a seed funding initiative that supported 17 civic engagement activities, to mention a few.

Today, Campus Engage resides in a policy-friendly context. The “National Strategy of Higher Education to 2030” identifies “engaging with the wider society” as one of the three interconnected core roles of higher education, alongside the domains of research, teaching and learning. The report defines engagement broadly as “engagement with business and industry, with the civic life of the community, with public policy and practice, with artistic, cultural and sporting life and with other educational providers in the community and regions and it includes an increasing emphasis on international engagement” (Irish Department of Education and Science, 2011, p75)<sup>3</sup>.

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<sup>3</sup> The Department of Education and Skills is a department of the Government of Ireland. It is led by the Minister for Education and Skills who is assisted by one Minister of State.

**Lorraine McIlrath, Talloires Network Steering Committee Member and Coordinator of the Community Knowledge Initiative, Ireland**

By Amy Newcomb Rowe



***“If you are not telling the world what you are doing, then you are not doing it.”***

Growing up during the conflict of Northern Ireland, which began in 1969 and went on for thirty years, Lorraine became interested in peace and conflict studies at a young age. After college, she was appointed lecturer at the University of Ulster in Northern Ireland and began a long career in community engagement work. Lorraine was especially keen to collaborate with students and communities to help understand the roots of the conflict and transitions towards democracy. The gap was apparent and Lorraine set her mind to bridging the ideas of sustainable democracy in Northern Ireland and young people’s role and commitment to the principles of democracy in their communities. With hopes of never returning to the violence of the past, Lorraine skillfully employed engaged pedagogies like service learning to teach positive social change on the ground and help students see themselves as agents of that positive change.

After her time in Northern Ireland, Lorraine and her colleagues at National University of Ireland, Galway (NUI) spent the last decade creating the [Community Knowledge Initiative \(CKI\)](#), a center that promotes civic engagement through core academic activities and all levels of the university culture. The initiative was launched in 2001 and supported by a private grant from Atlantic Philanthropies in the formative years. In 2008 and after many efforts to work with local and national government, CKI was a recipient of funding from the Higher Education Authority, which helped establish the national network [Campus Engage Ireland](#) with all 24 higher education institutions in Ireland now participating as members. Today, CKI’s work includes six full-time staff, five interns, five faculty representatives from each of NUI’s five colleges, and four central programs: *Engaging People in Communities (EPIC)*, *Student Volunteering Initiative (ALIVE)*, *Interdisciplinary Service Learning*, *Youth Academy*, as well as a number of partnerships with Arts festival and EU funded civic engagement initiatives. NUI Galway was the first university in Ireland to establish a dedicated civic engagement center through CKI with other institutions in the last decade following suit. More than 50,000 students have participated in CKI programs in the last decade, with over 40 service learning modules and through volunteering and community based research pathways based on community needs.

Issues of civic life that Lorraine and her colleagues are addressing through CKI relate to

all concerns of social life from cradle to grave and underpin conceptions of lifecourse studies. Many of the problems encompass socio-economic disadvantages, out of school youth, disabilities, homelessness, and a range of services for better quality of life. With the recent recession, many community organizations have severe economic challenges, which prompts the university to respond in a very “action-oriented way.” Lorraine explains, “It’s true there are many needs in every community, which is why CKI works in areas that aim to promote principles and practices of equality and democracy.” Most recently the CKI has move to a new bespoke applied social science research institute at NUI Galway called the Institute for Lifecourse and Society.

One area in which Lorraine has seen the greatest accomplishments is establishing good relationships with local and national government. “We made sure the Irish government received copies of every article, journal and book we produced. Because it was so new, many people were new to the civic and social dimensions of higher education,” she explains. “Even though we were funded by philanthropy, we didn’t know if funding would continue so I was very keen to work closely with government to make known the importance of this work and the positive impact it can have on students, academics and community.” To become mainstream, civic engagement in Ireland needed a policy underpinning and in 2012 the National Strategy for Higher Education, locally referred to as the Hunt Report, named civic engagement as one of three core pillars of the higher education sector along with teaching and learning and research.

Lorraine advises others in the civic engagement movement to develop good working relationship with government and policy makers and believes that they are both “champions and allies”. Continuing to reflect on the development of the movement in Ireland, Lorraine describes a few lessons learned. “At the outset perhaps, we should have been more formal in our approach by creating a board of directors and assigned different roles to individuals with different influences rather than take a more organic approach,” she explains. However, she notes, “that this is easy to say in hindsight! Campus Engage is viewed most positively by the sector in Ireland and its recent mainstreaming in the Irish Universities Association (IUA) has been crucial in the development of the platform to one that is fully inclusive and representative of all institutions in the sector.” Lorraine also advises that we must continue to embed a scholarly underpinning to the work of civic engagement to gain scholarly legitimacy and produce new knowledge in a growing academic field.

Recently appointed to the Talloires Network Steering Committee, Lorraine is contributing to depth of experience from Ireland as well as participating in several important global initiatives. In 2012, CKI led a [National Survey in Ireland](#) to learn about the status of civic engagement at 24 schools. In 2014, Campus Engage convened Irish university presidents and signed a 10-point charter for civic engagement, which commits the leadership to ensure an ethos and practice of civic engagement at their universities. A series of indicators are being built under each of the 10 points as a measurement to articulate and quantify the projects at each university. Additionally, Lorraine is co-lead on a pilot project with the University of Massachusetts, Boston to

qualify six Irish universities in the [Carnegie Classification on Community Engagement](#), the first of its kind outside the U.S. Also in 2014, upon receiving the EU Erasmus Plus funding, Lorraine and her colleagues, working closely with Autonomous University in Madrid, are establishing an EU platform for service learning, called Europe Engage<sup>4</sup> bringing together 12 universities across Europe to build indicators of best practices, an online learning community and network for sharing pedagogies and research.

The future is bright and very active in Lorraine's eyes. Thinking five or ten years down the road, Lorraine sees such structures and networks like CKI, Campus Engage and Europe Engage as normal aspects of university life. "Civic engagement activities will no longer be considered as 'add-ons' but part of university fabric and community life, with knowledge co-creation as a fundamental experience of tertiary education," she explains. Lorraine also advocates for ethical assessing and quality review processes of civic engagement in order to create appropriate infrastructures. Finding the most useful tools and understanding the social impact beyond simply counting numbers is an important aspect of the movement.

Describing her work as cartographer, Lorraine's aspiration to see dedicated personnel working in civic engagement, who have senior positions as well, is an important maturation step for university civic engagement. NUI Galway's current President, Professor Jim Brown, has been very supportive of CKI by bringing attention and encouraging faculties to be involved. "There should be more vice presidents and top leaders for this work, please," says Lorraine, "and additional support for teaching faculty for promotion and tenure." Many institutions, in Lorraine's opinion, are facing missed opportunities because they are not capturing narratives and stories from the students and communities.

*Lorraine McIlrath is the co-founder and PI of [Campus Engage](#), a national network to support civic engagement in higher education in Ireland and a regional partner of the Talloires Network. McIlrath, with more than 15 years experience in service learning and university social responsibility and a graduate degree in conflict resolution, has previously worked with the Citizenship Foundation, UNESCO Center, the British Council and the Higher Education Consortium for Urban Affairs (HECUA). She was the principle investigator in the EU Tempus Funded Project called [Tawasol](#) to support universities in Jordan and Lebanon. McIlrath has published on the broad theme of civic engagement and higher education in books and journals and is co-editor of the recently published *Mapping Civic Engagement within Higher Education in Ireland* [All Ireland Society for Higher Education (AISHE) and Campus Engage 2009] and codirected and co-authored*

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<sup>4</sup> Universities in the Europe Engage partnership: Autonomous University Madrid, Spain (Lead Partner); National University of Ireland, Galway, Ireland (Co-Directing Partner); University of Zagreb, Croatia; University of Helsinki, Finland; University Duisburg-Essen, Germany; IMC Institute of Applied Sciences Krems, Austria; Erasmus University, Netherlands; ISPA University Institute, Portugal; Vytautas Magnus University, Lithuania; University of Bologna, Italy; University of Brighton, England; Ghent University, Belgium.

*a national survey of civic engagement within higher education in Ireland (Campus Engage 2011). Her most recent book entitled Higher Education and Community-Based Research – Creating a Global Vision was published by Palgrave Macmillan in 2014. She is peer reviewer on a number of higher education journals and has reviewed a number of university civic engagement awards including the MacJannet Prize for Global Citizenship.*

Learn more about CKI [here](#) and watch a video [here](#), filmed during the 2012 Engagement Australia Next Steps conference, in which McIlrath was the keynote speaker.



*Irish university leaders pose with the Minister for Education and Skills at the Campus Engage Charter on Civic and Community Engagement.*

**Lorraine McIlrath, miembro del comité directivo de la Red Talloires y  
Coordinadora de la Iniciativa para el Conocimiento Comunitario, Irlanda**

Por Amy Newcomb Rowe



***“A menos que le estés diciendo al mundo lo que estas haciendo, no lo estas haciendo”***

Creciendo durante el conflicto de Irlanda del Norte, que comenzó en 1969 y continuó durante treinta años, Lorraine se interesó por los estudios para la paz desde joven. Después de la universidad, fue nombrada profesora en la Universidad de Ulster en Irlanda del Norte y comenzó una larga carrera en el compromiso cívico. Lorraine estaba muy dispuesta a colaborar con los estudiantes y las comunidades para ayudarles a entender las raíces del conflicto y la transición hacia la democracia en Irlanda. La brecha era evidente y Lorraine se enfocó a cerrar esta brecha entre democracia sostenible en Irlanda del Norte, el papel que tienen los jóvenes en la sociedad y el compromiso con los principios de la democracia en sus comunidades. Con la esperanza de no volver a la violencia del pasado, Lorraine aplica la pedagogía activa como el aprendizaje-servicio para lograr un cambio social positivo y ayudar a los estudiantes para que se vean a sí mismos como agentes de cambio.

Después de su tiempo en el norte de Irlanda, Lorraine y sus colegas de la Universidad Nacional de Irlanda, Galway (NUI) pasaron la última década creando la Iniciativa para el Conocimiento Comunitario (CKI), un centro que promueve la participación ciudadana a través de actividades académicas principales y en toda la universidad. La iniciativa fue lanzada en 2001 y apoyada por una beca privada de Atlantic Philanthropies. En 2008 y después de muchos intentos para trabajar con el gobierno local y nacional, CKI fue un beneficiario de fondos del Ministerio de Educación Superior, que ayudó a establecer el La Red Nacional Campus Engage Irlanda con 24 instituciones de educación superior en Irlanda ahora como miembros. Hoy en día, el trabajo de CKI incluye seis personas, cinco estudiantes, cinco profesores representantes de las cinco facultades de NUI, y cuatro programas centrales: La gente participa en Comunidades (EPIC), Iniciativa Voluntariado Estudiantil Voluntariado (VIVA), Servicio de Aprendizaje Interdisciplinario, así como una serie de alianzas con festival de arte y iniciativas para el compromiso cívico financiados por la UE. Universidad Nacional de Irlanda fue la primera universidad en Irlanda de establecer un centro de compromiso cívico dedicado a través CKI con otras instituciones en la última década haciendo lo mismo. Más de 50.000 alumnos han participado en los programas de CKI en la última década, con más de 40 módulos de aprendizaje servicio y de voluntariado y de la comunidad basados en las necesidades de la comunidad.



Las cuestiones de la vida cívica que Lorraine y sus colegas están abordando a través de CKI afectan la vida social. Muchos de los problemas abarcan desventajas socioeconómicas, jóvenes fuera de escuela, las discapacidades, la falta de vivienda, y una gama de servicios para una mejor calidad de vida. Con la reciente recesión, muchas organizaciones de la comunidad tienen problemas económicos, que posiciona la universidad a que responda de una manera muy "orientada a la acción". Lorraine explica: "Es cierto que hay muchas necesidades en cada comunidad, razón por la cual CKI trabaja en áreas con el objetivo de promover los principios y prácticas de la igualdad y la democracia". Más recientemente, la CKI tiene nueva medida aplicada con el instituto de investigación en ciencias sociales en la Universidad Nacional de Irlanda llamado el Instituto de Vida y Sociedad.

Un área en la que Lorraine ha visto los mayores logros es el establecimiento de buenas relaciones con el gobierno local y nacional. "Nos aseguramos de que el gobierno irlandés recibiera copias de cada artículo, la revista y el libro que produjimos. Debido a que era tan nuevo, era la primera vez que muchas personas estaban siendo expuestas a las diferentes dimensiones cívicas y sociales de la educación superior ", explica. "A pesar de que fueron financiados por sector filantrópico, no sabíamos si la financiación seguiría por eso es que yo estaba muy interesada en trabajar en colaboración con el gobierno para dar a conocer la importancia de este trabajo y el impacto positivo que puede tener en los estudiantes, académicos y la comunidad". Para poder convertirse en la corriente principal, el compromiso cívico en Irlanda necesitaba un apoyo político y en 2012 la Estrategia Nacional para la Educación Superior, localmente conocido como el Reporte Hunt (Hunt Report), nombro el compromiso cívico como uno de los tres pilares fundamentales de la educación superior, junto con la docencia, el aprendizaje y la investigación.

Lorraine aconseja a los demás en el movimiento para el compromiso cívico que desarrollen buenas relaciones de trabajo con los personas del gobierno y de la política, y cree que ambos son "campeones y aliados". Continuando a reflexionar sobre el desarrollo del movimiento en Irlanda, Lorraine describe algunas lecciones aprendidas. "Al principio tal vez, deberíamos haber sido más formal en nuestro enfoque mediante la creación de un consejo de administración y asignar roles diferentes a los individuos con diferentes influencias en lugar de adoptar un enfoque más orgánico", explica. Sin embargo, señala, "es fácil decirlo retrospectivamente! Campus Engage es visto más positivamente por el sector en Irlanda y su reciente incorporación en la Asociación de Universidades Irlandesas (AIU) ha sido crucial en el desarrollo de la plataforma a una que es totalmente inclusiva y representativa de todas las instituciones del sector". Lorraine aconseja también que debemos seguir inculcando lo académico en el labor del compromiso cívico para obtener mas legitimidad académica y producir nuevos conocimientos en un campo académico en crecimiento.

Recientemente fue nombrada como miembro del Comité Directivo de la Red Talloires, Lorraine está contribuyendo con la amplia experiencia de Irlanda, así como participando en varias iniciativas mundiales importantes. En 2012, CKI encabezó una Encuesta Nacional de Irlanda para aprender sobre el estado de la participación cívica

en 24 escuelas. En 2014, Campus Engage convocó a presidentes de universidades irlandesas y firmó una carta de 10 puntos para el compromiso cívico, que compromete a los líderes a garantizar la práctica y los valores del compromiso cívico en sus universidades. Una serie de indicadores están siendo creados para cada uno de los 10 puntos como manera de articular y cuantificar los proyectos en cada universidad. Además, Lorraine es co-líder en un proyecto piloto con la Universidad de Massachusetts, Boston para calificar seis universidades irlandesas en la [Clasificación Carnegie sobre el Compromiso con la Comunidad](#), la primera de su tipo fuera de los EE.UU. En el 2014 también, al recibir beca de la UE Erasmus Plus, Lorraine y sus colegas en colaboración con la Universidad Autónoma de Madrid, están estableciendo de una plataforma de la UE para el aprendizaje-servicio, llamado Europa se Compromete<sup>1</sup> (Europe Engage por sus siglas en ingles) que reúne a 12 universidades de Europa para crear indicadores de mejores prácticas, una comunidad de aprendizaje en línea y una red de intercambio de pedagogías y investigación .

El futuro es brillante y activo según Lorraine. Ella ve este tipo de estructuras y redes como la CKI, Campus Engage y Europa Engage como algo normal de la vida universitaria en cinco o diez años. "Las actividades relacionadas con el compromiso cívico ya no serán consideradas como algo "adicional", sino como parte integral de la universidad y la vida comunitaria, con la co-creación de conocimientos como una experiencia fundamental de la educación superior". Lorraine también aboga por la evaluación de éticas y revisión de la calidad de los métodos usados para el compromiso cívico con el fin de crear los mejores métodos adecuados. Encontrando las herramientas más útiles y comprender el impacto social más allá de los números es un aspecto importante del movimiento.

Describiendo su trabajo como cartógrafa, la aspiración de Lorraine le gustaría ver el cuerpo docente dedicado al compromiso cívico, especialmente los que tienen altos cargos, es un paso importante para la evolución del compromiso cívico universitario. El Presidente de la Universidad Nacional de Irlanda, el profesor Jim Brown, ha sido un gran apoyo para la CKI. "Debería haber más vicepresidentes y líderes universitarios haciendo este tipo de trabajo, por favor", dice Lorraine, "y apoyo adicional para el cuerpo docente para la promoción y la tenencia". Muchas instituciones, según Lorraine, pierden muchas oportunidades, ya que no están captando las historias y experiencias de los estudiantes y las comunidades.

*Lorraine McIlrath es la co-fundadora y investigadora principal Campus Engage, una red nacional de apoyo para el compromiso cívico en la educación superior en Irlanda y un socio regional de la Red Talloires. McIlrath, tiene más de 15 años de experiencia en el aprendizaje-servicio y responsabilidad social universitaria y un título de posgrado en resolución de conflictos, ha trabajado anteriormente con la Fundación de Ciudadanía de la UNESCO, el Concilio Británico y el Consorcio de la Educación Superior de Asuntos Urbanos (HECUA). Ella era el investigadora principal en el Proyecto fundado por UE Tempus llamado Tawasol para apoyar a las universidades en Jordania y en Líbano. McIlrath ha publicado artículos relacionados con el compromiso cívico y la*

*educación superior en libros y revistas y es editora de la reciente publicación de Mapeo del Compromiso Cívico dentro de la educación superior en Irlanda [Toda la Sociedad Irlanda para la Educación Superior (AISHE) y Campus Engage 2009] y codirigió y fue coautor de un estudio nacional de compromiso cívico en la educación superior en Irlanda (Campus Engage 2011). Su más reciente libro titulado Educación Superior e Investigación basada en la comunidad - Creando una Visión Global fue publicado por Palgrave Macmillan en 2014. Ella es evaluadora de varias revistas de educación superior y ha sido jurado de varios premios universitarios de compromiso cívico entre ellos el Premio MacJannet para la Ciudadanía Global.*

Aprende mas sobre la CKI [aquí](#), y ve un video del 2012 [aquí](#), filmado durante la conferencia: Sigüientes Pasos, Engagement Australia en el 2012, donde Lorraine McIlrath fue orador principal.



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