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DCU in the Community – Our Mission

DCU in the Community acts as a bridge between the university and its local community.

Our mission is "to provide educational opportunities to local people in North Dublin in order to increase participation levels and to promote equality in third level education". DCU in the Community has established itself as a leader in the area of civic engagement, promoting social regeneration through education. We strive to be an exemplar in flexible, community-based lifelong learning.

DCU in the Community recognises the individual talent of each student and offers a curriculum based on their needs and aspirations. We act as a ‘drop in centre’ for learners of all ages seeking information and advice in relation to accessing higher education options. We aim to promote sustainable community development and serve as a bridge between the resources of Dublin City University, the wider higher education system, and the local community.

2014-2015 in a Snapshot

- 150+ learners
- 180+ hours of student support and guidance
- Assistance with 30 applications to higher and further education
- 7 courses and programmes delivered on site
- 10 workshops delivered during Summer School 2015
- 70+ DCU student volunteers and service learners linked with local and national organisations
Educational Programmes

Overall, more than 150 learners participated in all courses and programmes at DCU in the Community in the academic year 2014/2015, including over 60 students who took up 113 workshop places during Summer School in July 2015.

Many of the programmes were held in partnership with local community organisations and statutory providers. The majority of our learners are mature students (over 23 years of age) from North Dublin areas with over 90% in receipt of social welfare benefits - many facing the challenge of being lone parents or long-term unemployed.

Bridge to Education

Our Bridge to Education programme is aimed at mature students and adult learners who wish to prepare to return to further and higher education. The programme is accredited at QQI Level 5.

Areas of study include communications, academic reading and writing, numeracy and computer skills for college, research and study skills, as well as ongoing guidance.

The programme is linked with DCU Campus through campus tours, guest workshops, speakers and events.

In 2014/2015 the programme was delivered twice for over 30 students.

Nearly 60% of students graduating from Bridge to Education programmes in 2014/2015 secured places in higher and further education for September 2015.

Bridge to Education is delivered jointly with Community and Family Training Agency (CAFTA).

Summer School

Held since 2011, DCU in the Community Summer School is designed to bring university and community experts together to deliver sessions and workshops for local residents of all ages.

For DCU in the Community, it is an opportunity to reach new student groups and introduce them to our activities.

In July 2015, 10 workshops were delivered in areas such as health, professional and personal development, public speaking, psychology, disabilities, mindfulness, sustainability, gardening and personal finance.

DCU in the Community would like to acknowledge and thank DCU Schools and Units, as well as our community partners, whose contribution of valuable time and expertise made it possible to facilitate such successful Summer School programmes.

Over 100 workshop places were taken up in July 2015.

Digital Media iMac

DCU in the Community strives to establish itself as a state of the art digital media hub. This interactive course is designed for learners who are interested in developing their digital media skills for personal and professional purposes.

Students gain knowledge of using iMac computers and Apple software and applications for creating and editing audio-visual materials, such as slideshows, movies and websites. The course introduces participants to the basics of working with Apple iLife package.

In 2014/2015, the programme was delivered twice for 24 learners many of whom are employees of local community groups and organisations.

Boxing Clever

Boxing Clever is a 20-week programme aimed to promote recovery and rehabilitation of marginalised and socially excluded groups through a framework of adult education, addiction awareness and education, counselling, guidance and physical activity (boxercise and boxing).

The programme is led by HSE RIS, Ballymun Local Drugs Task Force, Ballymun Youth Action Project and Urrús, and supported by DCC.

DCU in the Community has supported the delivery of the programme since 2012.

In 2014/2015, DCU in the Community supported over 20 programme participants through the provision of study skills and assignment preparation sessions and provided the venue for the QQI L4 Health-Related Fitness module.

The Boxing Clever programme won the AONTAS Star 2015 award in Leinster category.
Raising Aspirations
– Educational Guidance

DCU in the Community provides a range of pre-entry mentoring and support services for students enrolled on in-house courses as well as external clients, such as study support, educational guidance, application assistance, finance application assistance, interview preparation and more. In 2014/2015, over 180 hours of educational guidance and mentoring were delivered to mature students, Leaving Certificate students, and parents.

In 2014/2015, DCU in the Community also provided one-to-one, hands-on assistance with completing 30 further and higher education applications and a similar number of applications for student financial supports.

Campus events for community students were also organised in 2014/2015, and included campus and library tours, guest workshops and seminars as well as the Graduation Ceremony in July 2015.
Volunteering and Community Based Learning

Volunteering and community-based learning experienced further expansion and growth in 2014/2015. At DCU in the Community we realise that volunteering raises the profile of the university in the local and surrounding areas, and assists in the development of rounded graduates. In 2014/2015, over 70 DCU students volunteer and service learning placements were supported by DCU in the Community on a number of community based projects in Ballymun.

In November 2014, DCU in the Community linked DCU students from the Raising and Giving (RAG) Society and Food Society with Trinity Comprehensive School and local Supervalu, to set up a social project called ‘Ballymunch’. Ballymunch is a cookery class that aims to encourage the parents of students in a local school to cook healthy, low-budget meals and to equip them with the basic skills to do so. This is a mutually beneficial social project; the DCU student volunteers who assist in the classes also gain new skills.

In 2015, DCU in the Community helped students from SVP and RAG society set up the ‘Adopt a Grandparent’ social project, which involves students visiting elderly people in St. Pappin’s Nursing Home and residential homes in the Ballymun area. The aim of this project is to reduce the isolation of older people in the community through weekly visitations and for students to learn from the life experiences of the people they visit.

In April 2015, with the support of DCU Students’ Union, DCU in the Community conducted a survey of DCU student volunteers. The survey included questions on academic details, motivations for volunteering, barriers to volunteering and creating an enabling volunteering structure and framework at DCU. The survey results will be published in December 2015.

DCU in the Community were also involved in co-organising the DCU Volunteer Expo held in October 2014, with 60 community, charity and voluntary organisations in attendance to promote engagement opportunities for university students. Over 1,500 visitors attended the Expo. DCU in the Community has also been maintaining the DCU Volunteering Facebook and Twitter accounts.

At the national level, DCU in the Community, on behalf of DCU, jointly with University of Limerick and NUI Galway, is leading a Campus Engage Volunteering and Student-Led Engagement Working Group. The Group’s main project – a national student volunteering management system studentvolunteer.ie – will be launched in December 2015. This national database will enable higher education students an easier access to volunteering opportunities leading to increased uptake of such, and will support higher education staff involved in management of volunteering activities at their institutions.
Civic Engagement

DCU President’s Awards for Engagement
The President, Professor Brian Mac Craith, announced the winners at the President’s Award for Engagement 2015 ceremony held in the Helix on 28th April.

- **Student Category**
  - Steven Conlon DCUSU Returning Officer (in collaboration with Dr Mark Glynn, Teaching Enhancement Unit)
  - DCU Students’ Union E-Voting

- **Staff Category**
  - The ComputeTY Team
    - Dr Jennifer Foster, Gary Conway and Christine Stears (School of Computing)

- **Special Merit Award (Staff)**
  - Deirdre Corby, Richard Jackson, Therese Danaher and Liz Hartnett (School of Nursing and Human Sciences)
    - Service Improvement with Cooperative Learning

- **Special Merit Award (Student)**
  - Disability and Learning Support Service Volunteer Team on the “Addressing the Double Disadvantage” Programme (DCU Access Office)

DCU in the Community Graduation
Ita Tobin, Head of DCU Access Service, presented four groups of community learners with their certificates at the graduation ceremony in July 2015, hosted by DCU Library.

Civic Engagement Forum
DCU in the Community staff are active members of the university’s Civic Engagement Forum, chaired by Dr Deiric O’Broin (NorDubCo). Members of the forum include representatives from schools, faculties and administrative units, as well as DCU Student Union, who act as champions of civic engagement in their respective units and university-wide.

DCU Links
Throughout 2014/2015, DCU in the Community continued to work with DCU faculties, schools and administrative units in the field of service learning, volunteer and research placements, as well as increasing the university’s community outreach activities and projects.

Campus Engage
DCU Office of Civic Engagement and DCU in the Community continue to work on Campus Engage Steering Committee and Campus Engage Volunteering and Student-Led Engagement Working Group

Research Publications
The DCU in the Community Papers series addresses issues of concern to the community where a research perspective can be translated into practical action. It seeks to engage with critical thinking- from wherever it might emerge - and promote empowerment through research. In 2014/2015 the following papers have been published:

- The Value of Civic Engagement in Higher Education: An Irish Case Study (Ronnie Munck, Ursula Kelly, Joanna Ozarowska)
- Community Safety in Ballymun. Shangan, Coultry and Whiteacre Crescent (Laura Martins de Carvalho and Ailbhe Garvey) Student Volunteering in the Community – Results and Prospects research paper will be published in December 2015.
Our Team

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Community Employment, Internships and Work Experience

Samantha Henry (CAFTA Ltd.) – receptionist/administrator (August 2014 – August 2015)
Kim Mulready (CAFTA Ltd.) – receptionist/administrator (August 2015 – present)
Tracy Smith (NorDubCo) – QQI administrator (April 2015 – present)
Sanjay Shende (Job Bridge) – Website and IT Support Officer (August 2014 – February 2015)
Janet Nolan (DCU BSc Education & Training) – teaching practice and study support