Politicians Clash in RTC Athlone’s 25th Anniversary Debate

Northern and Southern politicians met head to head in October in Athlone in a debate to mark the 25th anniversary of the Regional Technical College, Athlone. Appropriately for a College that is looking very much to the future, the title of the debate was ‘Ireland in the Year 2000’.

The line-up of debaters was impressive: An Tanaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs, Mr Dick Spring the Deputy Leader of Fianna Fáil, Mrs Mary O’Rourke, the Deputy Leader of the SDLP, Mr Seamus Mallon and Ulster Unionist, Mr Ken Maginnis. The chairman for the evening was Senator Maurice Manning.

Before a packed audience, all four speakers addressed the peace issue and were united in the hope that the island of Ireland would be at peace in the year 2000. However, that was the extent of their unity.

Dr David Fenton, Director of RTC Athlone, initiated proceedings and in a speech to welcome both the debaters and their audience, he reminded the audience that the College began with a mere 39 students. He explained that RTC Athlone, which now has 3,500 students, provides a vital role in educating students in the region, and that both staff and students were looking forward to 2000 and beyond.

Senator Manning, chairman of the proceedings, also indulged in some reminiscing. He quipped that Dick Spring was a long-haired youth selling beer in New York while the other three speakers were school teachers back in 1970. On a more serious note, the chairman described the College as one of the premier educational establishments in the country.

Both Northern politicians spoke at length on the peace process and their very different views brought home to their listeners the difficulties of moving the peace process forward.

Ken Maginnis stated in his vision the Republic and the North would remain separate political entities. He argued that this was the majority wish and was unlikely to change by the year 2000, but he acknowledged that there were some areas where greater cooperation between North and South would be advantageous such as environmental protection and the management of limited national resources.

In stark contrast, Seamus Mallon hoped that peoples on both sides of the border would be asked to decide on the political structures of the island in simultaneous referenda before the year 2000. He argued that if Sinn Féin and the British Government refused to budge from their present position, the peace process had reached a stalemate. He claimed that Sinn Féin was now in accordance with the terms of the Downing Street Declaration on a permanent end to violence and he also felt that in order to get both the British Government and Sinn Féin to the discussion stage the issue of giving up arms would have to be removed.

The two Southern politicians were more expansive in their vision for the year 2000, covering a broad range of topics, including Ireland’s role in the international community, EU membership, unemployment, divorce, women in society and child abuse.

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Athlone’s First Ph.D. Graduate from Department of Polymer Engineering

Dr Ashish Varma (right) made history in the College last year when he graduated with a Ph.D. in Polymer Engineering. He is pictured here with his research supervisor Dr Alan Brazier. Dr Varma studied the fracture behaviour of amorphous PET-based compounds, which was an industrially supported project. He is currently working with C.R. Bard in Galway.

Going for Gold

Receiving his gold medal for first place in Ireland in the senior stage examinations of the Department of Education in motor-car engineering subjects is Colm Burns of Derryniney, Portumna, Co. Galway. President of the Society of the Irish Motor Industry Tom Kilroy happily makes the presentation watched by Pat O’Beirne, Head of Motor Engineering Dept., RTC Athlone (left) and a proud Philomena Burns. Colm was a day-release student at RTC Athlone.

Dept. of Education News

The Dept. of Education has informed RTC Athlone that its application for recognition of the Bachelor of Business Studies for the purposes of registration as a secondary teacher in Ireland has been successful, subject to the complete course (i.e. National Certificate, Diploma and add-on Degree) being taken at Athlone.

This is a very important accreditation and reflects the quality of the College’s Degree courses. All graduates of the course providing they obtain an acceptable teacher training qualification (e.g. the Higher Diploma in Education) will satisfy the qualification requirements for registration.

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Dick Spring’s vision was threefold: Ireland at peace, Ireland in Europe and Ireland in the wider world. He pointed out that Ireland has come along way in a short space of time towards shaking off the baggage of history and that never before was the vision of entering the next century without conflict in Ireland so attainable. He hoped that in the year 2000 the Northern tragedies would serve only as a reminder of the futility of violence and not ‘an arsenal for recrimination’. ‘In the year 2000 I hope and expect to see Ireland not only at peace, but at peace with itself’ he declared.

Mary O’Rourke steered clear of what she described as generalities about peace and a strong economy. She argued that a booming economy does not always provide jobs and furthermore it does not provide a lot of other expected things. She adopted the line of people as individuals and argued that what people really need is respect, self-worth and to be treated as individuals. She spoke also about the evils of child abuse, urging all politicians to ensure that protective legislation was always in place for children.

She rejected Ken Maginnis’s view that the family unit was held together by women and that they would have to work to protect the fabric of society in the future.

She said she would like to think there would be a choice for women in the year 2000 and that bringing up a family would be a two-person job. She commented that it was up to both men and women to strengthen the family unit in the future.

She concluded: ‘If the next century offers choices rather than constraints, possibilities rather than prejudices, excitement rather than apathy and trust rather than mistrust, then it will be a century worth living in’.
Accountancy at the College

The Department of Accountancy at the Regional Technical College, Athlone, forms part of the College’s School of Business, Management and General Studies. The Department currently has 400 full-time students.

The Certified Diploma in Accounting and Finance course is offered both on a part-time basis at the College and in-company. The most recent in-company course was provided for Abbot (Ireland) Donegal, where the results achieved by the participants were outstanding.

RTC Athlone is currently the only third level institution in the country which has students on a full-time basis up to the final examination of both the Chartered Association of Certified Accountants (ACCA) and The Chartered Institute of Management Accountants (CIMA).

These accountancy courses are a route to both an internationally recognised professional accountant qualification and a career in executive management. Each year graduates in commerce and related disciplines transfer to the College to continue their accountancy studies on a full-time basis.

Also available is the prestigious three-year full-time National Diploma in Professional Accounting which is exclusive to RTC Athlone. This course is open to Leaving Certificate students and gains significant recognition for exemption purposes from the professional accounting bodies.

Holders of the National Diploma usually avail of the exemptions and continue their studies in Athlone to obtain the CIMA or ACCA qualification after a further year/year-and-a-half of full-time study. Alternatively, Diploma holders may apply for the Bachelor of Arts in Accounting and Finance, which is obtainable after a further year of full-time study at the College.

Need further information? Contact Mr Dan O’Sullivan, head of Dept. of Accountancy at the College.

Software Engineering

The RTC Athlone is the only RTC offering an opportunity to obtain a B.Eng. (Hons) in Software Engineering without having to transfer to another institution. The route to this award commences with the National Certificate in Electronic Engineering, a two year, full-time post-Leaving Certificate course. On reaching the required standard in the National Certificate and in the subsequent one-year full-time National Diploma, the student is eligible to embark upon the final two years of full-time study leading to the Degree in Software Engineering.

RTC Athlone Accountancy
Student Wins 1st Place in World

Peter Hill (above) is literally on top of the world when it comes to financial management. Peter achieved top marks in the world for his financial management paper in the Certified Diploma in Accounting and Finance Examinations.

Peter who is employed by Bank of Ireland in Athlone attended RTC Athlone as a night student. He is pictured with ACCA President Mr John Moore (left) and Mr Dan O’Sullivan, head of Department of Accountancy, RTC Athlone.

Athlone on INTERNET

The College is now on the INTERNET enabling students, parents and schools to examine information on courses at Athlone using their own computers.

Polymer Engineering - Excellent Career Prospects

Graduates of our Polymer Engineering courses have an extremely high placement rate and occupy the highest positions in the plastics and associated healthcare industries, including managing director, works manager, process/quality control and technical development engineer. The College is the nationally designated centre for the education of engineers and technicians for the Irish Plastics industry. The focused nature of the courses provides a head start for new graduates in the employment market, while ensuring a broad engineering and business foundation necessary for career development to the highest level.

The records show high-level career opportunities in the plastics industry are achieved by up to 95% of graduates within three months of qualifying.

Minimum entry requirements: Leaving Certificate with Grade C in two Higher-level subjects and Grade D in four Ordinary-level subjects, including a language. Where Mathematics is not one of the Higher C grades, or where Pass Mathematics is taken at Leaving Certificate, a special entrance examination in Mathematics is provided at the College to be taken on either of the following dates:

- Friday, 28 June 1996
  Time: 10.00 am - 1.00 pm
- Tuesday, 27 August 1996
  Time: 2.00 pm - 5.00 pm
CAO / CAS APPLICATIONS

Application for the following courses must be made to the Central Applications Office, Tower House, Eglinton Street, Galway

Certificate Courses

AL001 BUSSTUD National Certificate in Business Studies
AL003 OFFSYS National Certificate in Office Information Systems
AL006 SOC National Certificate in Applied Social Studies in Social Care
AL007 FRNT National Certificate in Front Office Administration
AL008 CERTHOT National Certificate in Hotel and Catering Supervision
AL009 PLAS National Certificate in Engineering (Plastics Engineering)
AL010 MECH National Certificate in Engineering (Mechanical Engineering)
AL012 ELEC National Certificate in Engineering (Electronic Engineering)
AL013 CIV National Certificate in Engineering (Civil Engineering)
AL015 CONST National Certificate in Construction Studies
AL016 SCI National Certificate in Science
(Applied Biology/ Chemistry with Computing)

Diploma Courses

AL014 MIN National Diploma in Engineering (Mineral Engineering)
AL018 DIPHOT National Diploma in Hotel and Catering Management
AL019 PROFACC National Diploma in Professional Accounting
AL020 GRAPH National Diploma in Design (Communications)

Degree Courses

AL030 POLY Bachelor of Engineering Hons (Polymer Engineering)

Off-Campus Courses

AL002 CBUSSTUD National Certificate in Business Studies
Cavan College of Further Studies, Cavan
AL004 COFFSYS National Certificate in Office Information Systems
Cavan College of Further Studies, Cavan
AL005 DOFFSYS National Certificate in Office Information Systems
Greendale College of Further Education, Kilbarrack, Dublin 5
AL021 CONST National Certificate in Construction Studies
Greendale College of Further Education, Kilbarrack, Dublin 5

*Generalised Diagram
NON-CAO / CAS APPLICATIONS

Application for the following courses must be made directly to the Admissions Office, Regional Technical College, Athlone.

- National Certificate in Technology (Maintenance Technology)
- National Certificate in Hotel and Catering Supervision
- National Diploma in Engineering (Plastics)
- National Diploma in Engineering (Manufacturing Processes)
- National Diploma in Engineering (Electronics and Information Technology)
- National Diploma in Engineering (Highway/Traffic Engineering)
- National Diploma in Engineering (Construction/Civil Works)
- National Diploma in Business Studies in Management Finance
- National Diploma in Business Studies in Information Technology
- National Diploma in Business Studies in Marketing and Languages
- National Diploma in Business Studies in Management Studies
- National Diploma in Applied Social Studies in Social Care
- Chartered Association of Certified Accountants - Modules C,D,E and F
- Chartered Institute of Management Accountants - Stages 2, 3, and 4
- Institute of Certified Public Accountants - Formation II, Professional I and II
- Continuation Course for Accounting Technicians
- National Diploma in Science (Analytical Chemistry)
- National Diploma in Science (Toxicology)
- Graduate Diploma in Computing
- B.Sc. Hons (Toxicology)
- B.Sc. Hons (Applied Chemistry)
- Bachelor of Arts in Accounting and Finance
- Bachelor of Business Studies
- Bachelor of Business Studies in Tourism and Hospitality Management
- B.Eng Hons (Software Engineering)

* Applicants who have worked or are working for over a year in the hotel and catering industry. All other applicants for this course should apply through CAO/CAS.
Degree/Professional Courses in Athlone

The College currently has a range of Degree/Professional courses on offer. These are:

Bachelor of Business Studies
Bachelor of Business Studies in Tourism and Hospitality Management
Bachelor of Arts in Accounting and Finance
Bachelor of Science (Hons) Toxicology
Bachelor of Science (Hons) Applied Chemistry
Bachelor of Engineering (Hons) Software Engineering
Bachelor of Engineering (Hons) Polymer Engineering
Bachelor of Arts in Health Care Management (part-time)
Bachelor of Arts in Public Management (part-time)
Bachelor of Business Studies (part-time)
Chartered Association of Certified Accountants Modules C, D, E, F
Chartered Institute of Management Accountants Stages 1, 2, 3, 4
Institute of Certified Public Accountants - Formation 11, Professional 1 & 11

The first five degrees referred to above are offered on the basis of one year's full-time study after the necessary standard has been reached in the relevant National Diploma.

The Bachelor of Engineering (Hons) Software Engineering is based on two years study post-National Diploma.

The Bachelor of Engineering Hons, Polymer Engineering is a four-year complete degree course.

The Health Care Management Degree consists of two years of part-time study following the successful completion of the National Certificate in Business Studies in Healthcare Management at Merit level. This National Certificate is obtainable after two years of part-time study at the College.

The full-time degree courses are not listed in the CAO/CAS joint handbook (with the exception of B. Eng. Hons Polymer Engineering), as the Leaving Certificate student applies for either the appropriate National Certificate or National Diploma in the first instance. When considering courses and subsequent career options, students can benefit from knowing that a degree qualification is obtainable without having to leave the Regional Technical College Athlone.

Forensic Science as a Career

Forensic science is the scientific investigation of materials and items associated with crime. It is a very important and rewarding job and the College is proud that one of its National Certificate in Chemistry graduates is now a senior scientist in the drugs section of the Forensic Laboratory.

The Forensic Laboratory of the Dept. of Justice is based in the Garda Headquarters at Dublin's Phoenix Park and it employs about 40 people. The Forensic Laboratory assists the Gardaí in scientifically analysing evidence. There are three sections, drugs & toxicology, biology and chemistry. The drugs & toxicology section scientifically examines all drug seizures and many drug-related or suspicious deaths. The biology section deals with assaults and murders and any case involving body fluids, DNA evidence and fibre evidence. The chemistry section deals with all other crimes including burglaries, armed robberies and explosives.

There are three types of career in the Forensic Laboratory: laboratory technician level, scientist level and administration. Technicians need a minimum of a National Certificate in Science and two years experience, but National Diploma students are more likely to be accepted. Scientists require an honours degree and three years relevant experience. There are good prospects of internal promotion from technician to scientist provided the technician obtains an honours degree.

There are no qualifications in forensic science supplied by Irish colleges but RTC Athlone runs both a diploma and a B.Sc. (Hons) course in toxicology. For further information contact Dr. Sean Reidy, School of Science, RTC Athlone (and a former scientist at the Forensic Science Laboratory, Dublin).

Toxicology Unit News

Antoinette Sweeney has been awarded the Irish Society of Toxicology Biotrin scholarship. She will make a presentation to the Irish Society of Toxicology at the AGM in Beaumont Hospital.

Yvonne McGarry has been awarded a Ph.D. Degree in biochemistry by Trinity College, Dublin for research into cancer medicine carried out in the School of Science at RTC Athlone.

Rachel Cantwell recently completed the bench work for the M.Sc. Degree, working on a project concerned with the development of techniques of growing skin cells in culture, creating vitro-skin models and measuring cell communication in these systems. During her time in Athlone Rachel presented work at meetings of the Irish Society of Toxicology, Biochemical Society and the Environmental Mutagen Society in the UK and Ireland. She is now employed in Biotrin International in Dublin.
Research and Development in the College

The College has an enviable reputation in the areas of applied research going back to the early '80s. Research and Development is now seen as an integral part of College activities and provides the necessary underpinning to degree-course provision and curriculum development in areas of advanced technology.

R&D funding has not been forthcoming at levels commensurate with either College or industry needs. As a result of recommendations of the government-established Science Technology and Innovation Advisory Committee, it is expected that greater resources will be available to industry for R&D with a view to enhancing technological competitiveness and stimulating innovation.

Ireland’s future prosperity is dependent on a quantum increase in the level of innovation in our enterprises. Most enterprises in Ireland lack the capacity to execute in-house R&D and as a result must rely on external agencies such as RTCs and universities to carry out their research projects.

The College has traditionally relied on Forbairt to fund its applied research projects. Typically Forbairt provides 75% of the funding with the industry partner responsible for the remainder.

In 1995 the College’s board of governors introduced a research fund aimed principally at academic staff in the College.

A further funding route for Research and Development in the College is the EU’s Fourth Framework Programme which requires colleges, Irish companies and research institutes to cooperate with partners in other EU countries in research and technological development.

Research projects currently in progress at the College include:

- Dr C. Hallahan and Ms Y. McGarry: Monoclonal antibodies in diagnosis and treatment of cancer
- Dr G. Taggart: Coatings technology for lenses
- Dr G. Taggart and Dr E. McCullagh: Complexation studies of drugs
- Dr D. Fallon: A study of cystic fibrosis transmembrane conductance
- Dr P. Walsh: The establishment of a new blood-testing facility with an emphasis on early diagnosis and complementary medicine treatment
- Dr N. Morris: Separation and synthesis of enantiomers
- Mr A. Fogarty: Environmental pollution and control
- Dr J. Murphy: Non-essentialism in the philosophy of science, with special reference to the work of Karl Popper and W.V. Quine
- Dr P. Tomkinc: The development of a method for the isolation and purification of bovine spermatogenic stem cells
- Dr E. Ambikainajah: Speech coding and speaker verification techniques
- M. D. Boyle: Computer modelling of electro-thermal drug delivery
- Mr P. Blackie: The utilisation of scrap polystyrene and scrap thermoplastic Elastomers
- Mr P. Blackie and Mr B. Dolan: The influence of Structural morphology on fatigue behaviour in rubber modified high impact polystyrene
- Dr G. Taggart and Mr J. Hopkins: Process control of multi-cavity moulds
- Mr H. Joyce and Mr J. Cusack: Socio-economic baseline study of the midlands

Athlone Student Wins IMI Student of the Year

Fending off competition from around 400 other students nation-wide, Noreen Anghely, who is a student at RTC Athlone and an employee of Elan Athlone, has won the Student of the Year in the Irish Management Institute Certificate in Supervisory Management. In addition to a cash prize of £200, Noreen has been awarded a place on the first year of the IMI’s BA Degree in Management.

Erasmus Programme Welcomes Spanish Engineers

Under the auspices of the Erasmus programme, RTC Athlone supervised a number of engineering projects carried out by overseas students. Among these students were Jose Folgado Moreno (left) and Miguel Castello Suay pictured above with their supervisor, Marcus O’Rahilly (centre), lecturer in software engineering at the College. Jose and Miguel are students at the Escuela Universitaria De Ingenieria in Valencia, Spain.
Staff Development

James McNamara (above) who qualified as a project manager from Trinity College Dublin last year. He joined RTC Athlone in 1992 as a lecturer in quantity surveying and was accepted as a Professional Associate of the Society of Chartered Surveyors in 1993. James intends to continue further studies for a Diploma in Arbitration in the near future.

Former RTC Athlone Student Tops Class in UCD

James Cunningham (above) from Timoleague, Bandon, Co. Cork did his former Alma Mater, RTC Athlone, proud when he achieved a 1st class honours degree in the Master of Business Studies Degree programme at the Michael Smurfit Graduate School of Business at University College, Dublin. James entered RTC Athlone in 1990 and graduated in 1994 with a Bachelor of Business Studies Degree. He then transferred to UCD to commence the Master's programme where he specialised in strategic management and planning.

RTC Athlone - The Sporting College

Camogie Team - Winners of Inter-College Purcell Cup 1995
Back row (left to right) Brid Cooney, Patricia Moloney, Sandra Greville, Yvonne Healy, Olive Costello, Dympna Whyte, Patricia Martin, Olivia Cullen, Dympna Maher. Front row Imelda Daly, Orla Hogan, Geraldine Ryan, Carol Dillon, Margaret Larkin, Fiona Ryan, Ann Broderick.

RTC Athlone is one of the leading higher education institutes in the provision of sport and recreation programmes. The recreation and physical education programme contains a wide range of competitive activities and non-competitive activities. Different interests and levels of ability are catered for to ensure maximum participation.

There are close to 65 sporting clubs and societies in the College including team games such as Gaelic football and other activities such as orienteering, canoeing, golf, swimming, aerobics, weight training and table tennis.

Sporting facilities in the College include floodlit training pitches, playing pitches, tennis courts and a multi-purpose hall for indoor basketball, tennis, hockey and soccer. The hall accommodates four badminton courts, two volleyball courts, a fitness room, a viewing gallery, shower and changing facilities. Students may also avail of Athlone UDC swimming pool located two kilometres from the College. Local sporting facilities and amenities are also available to students by arrangement.

Sports clubs in the College have staff members and coaches who take responsibility for running and managing College teams and clubs. Their skills, expertise, concern and involvement make a significant contribution to the successes achieved by Athlone students.

Engineering Researchers

Pictured above are recent postgraduate research students who carried out work in electronic engineering at the College under the supervision of Dr E. Ambikairajah, head of School of Engineering (left to right): Fergal O'Malley, Derek Kierman, Brian McDonagh, Michelle Lynch and Dr Ambikairajah.

Dr Ambikairajah and his postgraduate researchers have published over 25 research papers at both national and international conferences and in journals since research work at the College began in 1987. Dr Ambikairajah has also been a visiting Research Fellow to British Telecom Research Laboratories in Ipswich for the past seven years and has engaged in collaborative research work with the University of East Anglia since 1990. Most recently Dr Ambikairajah and Mr McDonagh published a research paper at an International Speech Science and Technology conference in Perth, Australia in 1994.