

## **Speech by An Taoiseach, Leo Varadkar T.D., at the TU Dublin Launch**

Ministers, ladies and gentlemen, good afternoon.

I'm delighted to be here this afternoon to mark the designation of TU Dublin as the first technological university in the country.

This represents a new departure in Irish higher education as we open up a new frontier in the educational lifecycle of our students.

The creation of technological universities is a recognition and validation of the quality of the technological education provided in Ireland over many decades. It is also a statement about the ambitions of the sector for the future.

This is an historic day for the three institutes – DIT, Institute of Technology Blanchardstown, and Institute of Technology Tallaght - your students and staff, and for the future of higher education in Ireland.

I want to congratulate Dr Mary Meaney and her team and all of the people across all three institutes who worked hard to make this Ireland's first technological university.

The leadership of the three Presidents also proved decisive in getting this done so quickly. The legislation was passed earlier this year. I want to acknowledge the work of Thomas Stone (ITT), Dr. Diarmuid O'Callaghan (ITB) and Professor Brian Norton (DIT) as well as Dr. Tom Collins, the chairman of the three governing bodies. This is a proud day for you all.

As Dublin's fourth university, with a footprint across Dublin West, North, South and the City Centre, you are uniquely placed to serve the whole of Dublin and the surrounding areas where we are experiencing huge population growth.

TU Dublin combines the collective experiences, capabilities, passion and resources of the three partner institutions to create something exciting and new. It is nothing less than a new student-centred learning environment, developed on three fully serviced physical campuses. It is very much more than the sum of its parts.

It is my hope that this new Technological University will be the home for critical and free enquiry, informed intellectual discourse and robust public debate.

Serving the needs of the wider society, TU Dublin will have the largest engagement with industry and community of any university, and it will do so while respecting the diversity of our values, beliefs and traditions.

Promoting an entrepreneurial ethos, TU Dublin will provide accessible opportunities to those who are economically or socially disadvantaged.

There are a lot of people who seek to divide us as a nation. Dublin versus the rest, East Coast versus the West Coast, Rural versus Urban, Old versus Young.

While divisions exist, I believe they are much less than those who stoke than believe.

I believe that Ireland should be one nation.

Making higher education accessible to all is the best way to make Ireland a country of equal opportunities. Already, there are more people from non-traditional backgrounds attending higher education than ever before and I want that to increase. Ireland's first technological university builds on a strong culture of diversity and inclusivity that currently exists in the three institutions. It will be the only university in Ireland offering programmes from Level 6 to Level 10, from apprenticeships to doctorates.

In Project Ireland 2040, our ambitious ten-year plan to invest €116 billion in public infrastructure, we made the expansion and consolidation of Higher Education facilities a national objective. It is our belief that this will contribute to wider economic development across the country.

Technological universities are central to delivering on this vision and will stimulate a more balanced growth of population and employment across Ireland.

The ambition is simple: to drive regional development and provide more opportunities for individuals, enterprise and the community.

By creating institutions of scale and strength, multi-campus technological universities will bring greater social and economic benefits in two important ways:

- First, by your breakthroughs in research and innovation; and creating new jobs and spinning off new businesses,
- Second, through your delivery of a broad range of high quality education and training.

I am confident the creation of a Technological University in an area, with a specific mandate for promoting regional development, will have a transformative effect on the communities around it.

For one thing, they will make the areas in which they are located more attractive places to work, live, study, set up a business and raise a family.

And I suppose, that leads me to my only regret. That we are not yet ready to make a similar announcement on a TU for the South-East. Ireland's only region without a University. I strongly encourage Waterford IT and Carlow IT to redouble their efforts and get it done as soon as possible. Government is waiting to sign off as soon as you meet the criteria for redesignation.

Today, is a milestone in Irish Education.

It marks the next stage in the evolution of the technology educational cycle in Ireland, confirming to an international audience what we have always known to be true in Ireland about the value of a technological education.

Shakespeare believed that sometimes ambition was so 'light and airy' it was 'merely the shadow of a dream'. Ambitions needed to be turned into reality.

Today you have done exactly that.

I look forward to seeing you grow and develop in the years ahead.

Thank you.