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DKANE 15/01/2018 REPRO FREE Dr Helen McGuirk, Head of the CIT Hincks Centre for Entrepreneurship. Picture Darragh Kane

INSPIRING INCLUSIVE, SUSTAINABLE AND INNOVATIVE ENTREPRENEURSHIP, INSIGHTS WITH HELEN MCGUIRK

SIMON COCKING × FEBRUARY 28, 2020

INTERVIEWS

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Interesting interview with Dr. Helen McGuirk, Head of Hincks Centre for Entrepreneurship Excellence, School of Business, Cork Institute of Technology

What is your own background briefly?

I have always been involved in entrepreneurial activities at different stages of my working life, as a restaurateur in Dublin and West Cork.

As far back as my time in Macquarie Bank in Sydney to my work with the island development co-operative on Cape Clear, West Cork, innovation and developing new ideas have been central to my work. And so, heading up the Hincks Centre for Entrepreneurship at Cork Institute of Technology seems a good match!

What do you do in your current role?

Inclusive, sustainable and innovative entrepreneurship education and research is the foundation of all my work at the Hincks since my appointment in January 2018. But turning to 2019 at the Hincks Centre; we co-designed and delivered training programmes in universities in Vietnam and South Africa, collaborated with education and industry partners across Europe, from Sweden, Finland and UK to Turkey, Greece and Spain and many in between.

Closer to home in Cork city, the Hincks Centre designed and currently delivering a community training programme to eight towns in the region. In-house, we set up and support a new peer-to-peer community of practice for entrepreneurship educators and researchers and we ran the very successful annual Enterprise Camp for second level in August and the annual APPrentice competition during CITs Innovation Week.

My role as Head of the Hincks allows me to work with the most amazing team, with researchers from different departments across CIT, visiting researchers and educators from USA, South Africa and Germany, and that was only in the past 12 months. We have won many awards, including the Asia Matters award for the 'Best Educational Project' for our work in the Central Highlands region of Vietnam.

This Irish Aid, co-funded project, provides funding for CIT educators to design and deliver cutting-edge entrepreneurship programme to University students in DaNang, Kontom and many other cities in the region.

My Ph.D. was based on the economics of innovation and specifically on the impact of human capital on innovation in small firms. Like most research, the topic has shaped most of my work. From the, 'why', 'where' and 'when' type questions to the 'so what' questions on how our research and training impacts on our students' education, entrepreneurship and public policy. That's a lifetime of curiosity, and the value and joy of applied research.

What does CIT aim to do?

CIT aims to empower individuals and enrich society through innovative use of knowledge. We provide student-centred, career-focused education and research for the benefit of the students and the broader society in the region and beyond. Hincks' research and project outputs tie firmly with this mission, preparing students for a portfolio career. It might not be today or tomorrow or next year students start their own business but hopefully, with the knowledge they gain from their time in CIT, it is a career option they can consider sometime.

What are your sources of inspiration?

I get great insights into new thinking from my work as a reviewer for top academic journals as well as attending conferences. Listening to podcasts is my go to driving companion, as I drive to and from work, on my walks around the beautiful Cape Clear Island. (The HBR IDEACAST, Inside Social Innovation and Social Entrepreneurship & Innovation to name but a few.)

Silver SMEs
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Our 6th newsletter will soon be out, with:

- ◆ #SMEs opportunities for dependent #ageing
- ◆ #AgeFriendly cities in County Cork
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Any particular projects you'd like to cover in more detail?

A project which may be of interest to the tech sector in developing goods/services for this ever-increasing sector:

The European funded SilverSMEs project.

SilverSMEs aims to improve the implementation of Regional Policies for SMEs competitiveness by taking better advantage of opportunities derived from the Silver Economy.

Importantly, by supporting the development of new SMEs in the Silver Economy, an intrinsic objective is to generate services and goods that will contribute to improve the quality of life within an ageing society, in particular in rural or remote EU areas.

Contact, hinckscentre@cit.ie or Dr Aisling ConwayLenihan for more details on the SilverSMEs project. Aisling.conway@cit.ie

<https://hincks.cit.ie/index.cfm/page/silversmes>

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More information on the Hincks Centre for Entrepreneurship Excellence see our webpage <https://hincks.cit.ie/>

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Live Music with young local band COMPLEX
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- Marguerite O'Sullivan**
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