



# Supporter Impact Report

2023/24



Iontaobhas Oideachasúil  
Educational Trust





“DCU is rising to meet the great challenges of our moment, from climate change and health, to inequality and digital transformation. To do this, and to provide the best for our students, we must commit to constant innovation and improvement.

Meeting these challenges requires investment, which, in a context of a widening funding gap, makes philanthropic support more important than ever. I would like to thank you for assisting us in this task. Thanks to your generosity and commitment, we are on the way to delivering the remarkable projects showcased in this report.”

**Professor Dáire Keogh**  
President, Dublin City University

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# A Word from Our Chair

Philanthropic giving plays a critical role in advancing DCU's mission to transform lives and societies. In this moment of geopolitical and economic uncertainty, there are potential downside risks. Yet I believe that when we work together, we can achieve remarkable impact for this generation and the next, and I would like to thank all our donors for their philanthropy to date.

The recent launch of DCU Polaris, Ireland's most advanced STEM teaching and learning facility, marks an ambitious investment in the future, and is a testament to the vision and generosity of our donors. This exciting project continues to present new opportunities for our friends and supporters to accelerate health research, spark innovation in engineering and drive excellence in education.

In 2023/24, our donors contributed to the success of a wide range of projects, advancing initiatives that enhance our student experience, further cutting-edge research and help create a better world, as envisioned in the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals. From delivering a major new programme of research in autism education to funding student scholarships that open a door for talented young people to excel, your support has been instrumental in delivering our ambitions for DCU.

The stories in this report are structured around three key pillars of DCU's vision for the future: 1) advancing research for society, 2) enhancing our engagement and 3) pioneering a transformative student experience.

We thank you once again for your support, and we are truly honoured that you are with us on this journey.

**Deirdre Hannigan**  
Chair, DCU Educational Trust

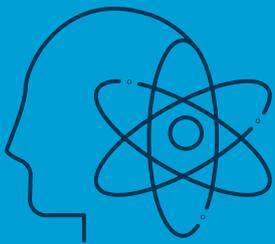


# Transforming Lives and Societies Together

In 2023/24, our supporters pledged over €4.8 million to advance projects that will deliver DCU's mission to transform lives and societies and help to achieve the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals.



The gifts made by our donors this year supported three key pillars:



Research  
for Society

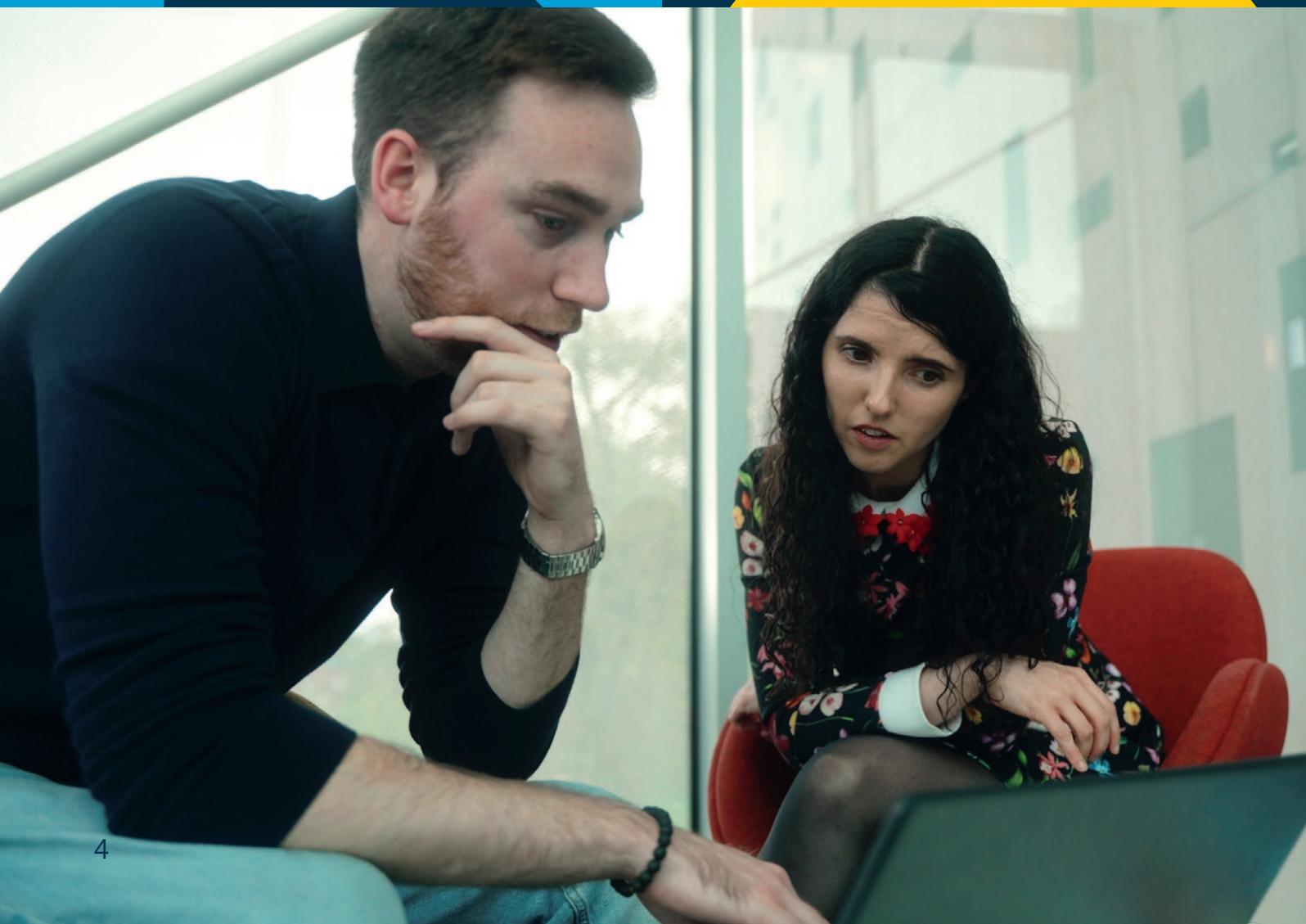


Engagement



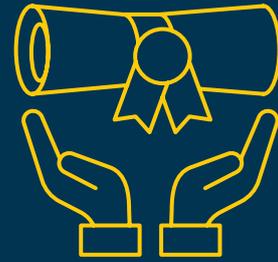
Student  
Experience

# Research for Society



# 7

PhD candidates supported by philanthropy

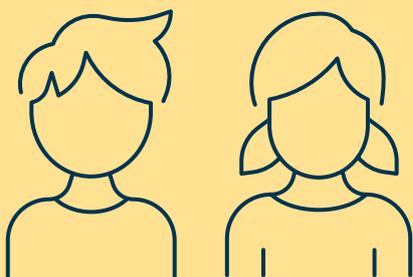
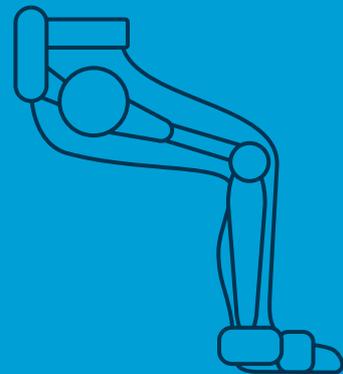


# 996,533

steps for people living with paralysis – DCU Exoskeleton Programme

# 42

researchers in the DCU Centre for Climate and Society



# 1st

paediatric exoskeleton research programme in the world

# Powering Research with Impact...

Our research develops breakthrough solutions for a brighter future – and our philanthropic partnerships enhance our ability to lead, innovate and create knowledge with real-world impact.

The vision and support of our partners enable us to expand our cutting-edge research programmes and grow our doctoral student community through PhD scholarships, supporting the next generation of talented researchers to excel. By backing DCU's research expertise in areas such as health, education and climate solutions, philanthropy is advancing our mission to transform lives and societies.



Former President of Ireland Mary Robison was keynote speaker at 'Climate Justice Across Generations'

Research for Society supported by philanthropy in 2023/24 included:

**Doctoral Research:** In 2023/24, our partners further increased the scale of our doctoral student community by supporting seven PhD candidates to pursue research in fields ranging from music to biotechnology. This year also saw the creation of a number of new PhD scholarships supported by philanthropy, including the Autism Education PhD Scholarships and the Paula and Hannah Delves Scholarship, established to support doctoral studies in the field of cancer research.

**DCU Centre for Climate and Society:** Supported by founding partner Deloitte, Ireland's first research centre dedicated to leading societal responses to the climate crisis continued its growth in 2023/24, expanding to 42 academic members and 15 PhD students. This year, the Centre was announced as co-lead of the social science platform of a major Co-Centre for Climate + Biodiversity + Water, spanning Ireland, Northern Ireland and Britain. The Centre also leads a new Horizon Europe project, RETOOL, focused on climate change and democracy. Our Centre members have been active in creating climate resources for student journalists, developing climate engagement materials for government, and delivering training for International Maritime Organization delegates on measures to reduce emissions. The Centre hosted its fourth – and largest – annual conference, 'Climate Justice Across Generations,' in April 2024, with former President of Ireland Mary Robison delivering an inspiring keynote address to over 330 attendees.

**Naughton Family Chair in STEM Education:** The Naughton Family Chair is the first in Ireland to focus on STEM (science, technology, engineering and mathematics) education at primary level and in early childhood. As Chair, Professor Hamsa Venkat has made a significant impact on education research, policy and practice, both in Ireland and internationally. In 2023/24, this included the launch of the Naughton STEM Education Scholars programme, designed to advance research initiatives in the developing world that foster equity, diversity and inclusion in STEM education. Three scholars from South Africa, Mauritius and India had the opportunity to visit DCU and collaborate with our researchers to design education interventions that could be rolled out in their home countries. Last year, the Chair also led the development of a new Masters specialism in STEM Education to support skilled, cutting-edge STEM teaching and leadership in Irish schools.

**Prometric Chair in Assessment:** At his inaugural lecture as Prometric Chair in Educational Assessment at DCU, Prof Ernesto Panadero added to the crucial debate about the role of artificial intelligence in education. A world-leading expert in educational psychology and the effects of educational assessment, Prof Panadero leads the DCU Centre for Assessment Research, Policy and Practice in Education (CARPE). CARPE was established in 2015, with philanthropic support from Prometric, to enhance research and practice in assessment across all levels of the education system, from early childhood to fourth level and beyond.

L-R: Dr Cliona Murphy, Naughton scholar Dr Khemanand Moheput, Naughton Chair Prof Hamsa Venkat, Naughton scholars Vinay Lautre and Dr Lynn Bowie, and Dr Margaret Leahy





**DCU Changemaker Schools Network:** This network is based on the simple but powerful idea that all children can be Changemakers, with the skills and confidence to lead change in their home, school, community and society. With philanthropic support from basis.point, Rethink Ireland and a group of individual donors through Community Foundation Ireland, the network grew to 28 member schools in 2023/24. Each year, the network equips over 7,800 students with the essential skills of empathy, creativity, leadership and teamwork so they are ready to thrive in an unscripted future and to lead change in our society.

**DCU Anti-Bullying Centre:** Last year, research from DCU Anti-Bullying Centre found that 13.8% of 12- to 13-year-olds in Ireland reported experiencing offline bullying and 6.4% reported being subjected to online bullying – at least once a month. The FUSE Anti-Bullying and Online Safety Programme developed by the Centre is a vital intervention that gives students, teachers and parents the tools to tackle bullying and promote online safety. In 2024, with support from the Department of Education and Rethink Ireland, the programme reached 67,000 students in 460 primary schools and 122,000 students in 587 post-primary schools. New philanthropic support from the Equinix Foundation is now backing essential research on children’s online safety and the protection of LGBTQ+ groups, in collaboration with DCU School of Law and Government. The Centre’s experts also collaborated with Vodafone Foundation in Ireland and Childline by ISPC to develop content and features for the Tozi app, co-designed with young people to tackle bullying and promote online safety.





## Focus On: Driving Research on Autism Education & Neurodiversity

In a significant new programme of philanthropically funded research on autism education and neurodiversity, four PhD scholarships have been created through matched funding from philanthropist Paul Kerley and Bank of Ireland. These scholarships are enabling much-needed research on autism education in post-primary schools, with a focus on topics such as developing neuro-affirmative practices in mainstream schools, supporting the academic success of Autistic learners, supporting their wellbeing in schools and understanding the experience of Autistic girls in secondary schools.

Looking beyond the education system, DCU has partnered with Bank of Ireland and Accenture to carry out a separate study that will identify both barriers and enablers for neurodivergent people in the workplace. At present, less than one-in-five workers believe their company's policies and practices support neurodivergent people. Led by Dr Aoife Brennan and Dr Laura Gormley, this project is producing neuro-affirmative and inclusive guidelines that will support Irish businesses to embed inclusion in their everyday practices.

**“These PhD scholarships will build on our track record of participatory research – conducting research not just about autism, but with Autistic children, young people and adults.”**

**Prof Anne Looney**, Executive Dean of the DCU Institute of Education

**“We are taking practical steps to make our organisation one of the most neuro-inclusive in the country. Our partnership with DCU to deepen understanding and create neuro-affirmative schools and workplaces will help us to achieve this ambition in Bank of Ireland. Ultimately, we intend the research will help create practical guidelines for other Irish organisations, helping Ireland be a world leader in neuro-inclusion.”**

**Matt Elliott**, Chief People Officer at Bank of Ireland



## Focus On: DCU Exoskeleton Programme

The DCU Exoskeleton Programme enables vital research into the future of paralysis treatment, and provides a range of health benefits to service users. In 2024, we launched the world's first paediatric exoskeleton research programme for children with neuromuscular conditions, thanks to philanthropic funding through Community Foundation Ireland and the Cerebral Palsy Foundation.

The DCU Exoskeleton Programme supported 996,533 steps for people living with paralysis this year. For the first time, that support has been extended to paediatric wheelchair users, with over 100 sessions in a robotic exoskeleton suit for children delivered in summer 2024. Philanthropic support has made this research programme possible – and the studies carried out with our community of exoskeleton users will shape the future of paralysis treatment.

DCU's first paediatric research study explores parents' perceptions of robotic exoskeleton walking compared to conventional physiotherapy. In the coming year, our researchers will investigate whether regular walking in a paediatric exoskeleton suit improves gross motor skills, independence skills, and quality of life in

children with neuromuscular conditions such as cerebral palsy. These world-first studies into the efficacy of exoskeleton walking sessions for children will lead the way in developing evidence-based paediatric physiotherapy practice.

Through a further seven parallel research studies led by Dr Brendan Egan, Dr Kieran Moran and Clinical Lead Ronan Langan, the DCU Exoskeleton Programme is investigating the health impacts of exoskeleton walking sessions for adult wheelchair users, from brain and muscle physiology to improved gait and sleep. In a study exploring the impact of regular walking in an exoskeleton for our most experienced users, programme participants were found to experience a reconnection with their body and an improved physiological sense of the paralysed body.

**“When I walk in this suit, I get the physical benefits of walking for bone density and reducing muscle spasms, but there are also the mental benefits. It’s a huge boost. To be able to take a thousand steps, or hug my children standing up... I don’t get that anywhere else.”**

**Niamh McCallion**, Service User



# Focus On: Doctoral Research

Together, we can support a new generation of doctoral students to pursue research with impact. By offering scholarships that remove the personal and financial barriers that can stand in the way, we're growing our doctoral community and empowering more talented young researchers to achieve their potential.



**“Applying for PhD funding is very difficult with a visual impairment.**

**My scholarship gave me the support I needed to make my dream a possibility and make my mark.**

**My research is focused on disability in a choral setting. I’m exploring how choirs can support musical and social connections for people with a disability, and looking at the effect on singers’ wellbeing. I hope this research will support inclusion for so many others.”**

**Rebecca Kelly**  
Choral Studies Research Project



**“The support of the DCU Access Programme has opened up more opportunities for me in education. I was determined to pursue a career in research – and my Access PhD Scholarship gave me a life-changing opportunity to follow my ambitions and do what I love.**

**My research looks at sustainability in accounting, investigating how we can support firms to improve their biodiversity reporting. If we can better understand our impacts on the environment, we can build a more sustainable future.”**

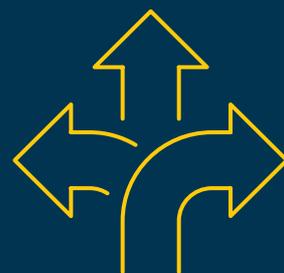
**Hannan Galeb**  
Susan and Harry Hartford  
Access PhD Scholarship

# Engagement



# 397

Access to the Workplace placements since 2019

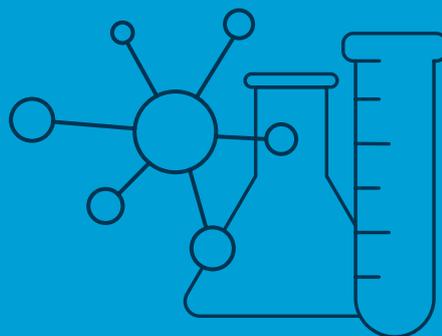


# 1.2m

learners to benefit from the STEM Teacher Internship Programme

# 8

DCU Alumni Class Champions



# 3

philanthropic leadership awards presented



## Building Transformative Partnerships...

DCU is Ireland's university of enterprise – and our focused partnerships are instrumental in advancing our impact on lives and communities. Our connections to our alumni community and industry partners help us reinforce the future skills that young people will need to excel in an unscripted future, and enable us to achieve even more for our students and for society.

### DCU Access to the Workplace

The award-winning DCU Access to the Workplace programme marked a sixth successful year of student internships in 2024. This transformative programme aims to level the playing field for student groups who experience disadvantage in the workplace following graduation. Since 2019, the programme has provided 397 high-quality summer internships for DCU Access students from socially disadvantaged backgrounds, and for neurodivergent students. This summer, over 59 partner companies offered placements to 79 DCU students.

DCU Access to the Workplace is made possible by the leading Irish companies who host our students and support Access scholarships at DCU. The programme is supported by partners LinkedIn and Rethink Ireland's Scaling Education Fund, enabling the programme's growth and development to 2025.

**“This programme is so important to our students and our society. It provides DCU students who may not have the same network and opportunities as their peers with high-quality professional internships – and it gives our partner companies the chance to benefit from the incredible talent we see in our students.”**

**Fiona Hudson**, Programme Development Lead, DCU Access to the Workplace

# STEM Teacher Internship Programme

The STEM Teacher Internship Programme (STInt) is a DCU initiative that promotes innovative learning in STEM education by supporting internship opportunities for pre-service and early career teachers.

This summer, 67 pre-service and early career interns worked as interns in 41 partner companies. Through these 12-week paid internships, teachers gained first-hand experience of the diverse range of STEM careers and opportunities available. To date, STInt has placed 310 teachers in hands-on roles in 64 of Ireland's leading companies.

These placements are only possible thanks to funding by our partners Skillnet Ireland, Science Foundation Ireland, the Department of Education and Intel, alongside the engagement of our industry partners in technology, professional services, pharma and medical devices. Thanks to our partners, STInt interns will go on to inspire a passion for STEM in future generations, potentially impacting over 1.2 million learners during their careers in Irish classrooms.

In a successful year for STInt, programme leader Dr Eilish McLoughlin was presented with the Outstanding Achievement Award at the 2023 Women in STEM Awards for her work with STInt and other STEM initiatives.

## Teachers Inspire

Teachers play a vital role in preparing future generations with the skills they need to shape our society. Teachers Inspire is an Ireland-wide initiative, supported by leading businessman and philanthropist, Dermot Desmond, that seeks to celebrate our teachers and to recognise the transformative role they play in our lives and in our communities. Teachers Inspire 2024 was curated by acclaimed author Louise O'Neill, with the campaign gathering stories of teachers who have made a difference from across the country. The four winners of Teachers Inspire for 2024 were Jill Farrell, Joe O'Driscoll, Meg Offiah and Ursula O'Mahoney.



# DCU Alumni Give Back

Our alumni community makes a significant impact at DCU through philanthropic support that funds transformative scholarships and greatly enhances our student facilities. In 2023/24, a number of initiatives also brought DCU graduates together to give back alongside their classmates.

## Class of '74

In DCU's largest ever alumni reunion, St Patrick's Class of 1974 returned to campus to celebrate their 50th Anniversary Reunion. A total of 140 alumni and class guests gathered for an afternoon of celebrations, rekindled memories, and to remember those classmates no longer with us.

In a moving gesture, the class used the occasion as an opportunity to give back to the University. Their class gift to the DCU Excellence and Opportunity Fund will support students in DCU Institute of Education to overcome socioeconomic obstacles and achieve their potential as future educators, like so many in the Class of 1974 before them.

DCU Alumni Office supports our graduates to stay connected with their classmates. For help facilitating your class reunion, contact [alumni@dcu.ie](mailto:alumni@dcu.ie).

## Class Champions

Students and their families are facing ever-increasing financial challenges that can stand in the way of bright minds fulfilling their potential. In response, DCU Educational Trust launched a new collaboration with DCU's alumni community in 2024. Our Class Champions are DCU graduates who believe in sharing the life-changing opportunities of their own DCU experience with future generations, and want to inspire their classmates to join them in giving back to DCU.

We are deeply appreciative of all our alumni who have joined us in breaking down barriers and enabling talented students to excel by donating to DCU's Excellence and Opportunity Fund. To find out more about becoming a Class Champion, email Inís Fitzpatrick at [alumnigiving@dcu.ie](mailto:alumnigiving@dcu.ie).



St Patrick's  
Class of 1974



## Celebrating Our Philanthropic Partners

In February 2024, DCU Educational Trust's annual Leadership Circle Dinner brought together over 200 of our leading friends and supporters to celebrate their collective contribution to DCU's mission to transform lives and societies.

At this year's event, KPMG was announced as the winner of the DCU Corporate Leadership Award for 2023/24. For over four decades, KPMG has been a strong supporter of accounting education at DCU, and in 2022, the leading provider of professional services deepened this support through a new strategic partnership with DCU Business School. Underpinned by philanthropy, this partnership is advancing the Business School's mission to educate leaders for the global marketplace.

The Individual Leadership Award was awarded in recognition of the many anonymous donors who are a driving force behind DCU's mission to transform lives and societies. The award was accepted by Community Foundation Ireland, a philanthropic hub that supports anonymous donors to deliver equality and transform lives.

Professor Noel O'Connor, CEO of the Insight SFI Research Centre for Data Analytics, was presented with the DCU Staff Leadership Award at the event, in celebration of his philanthropic leadership and talent for building partnerships that drive innovation, research and inclusion.

# Student Experience



# 1,100

Access students enrolled at DCU

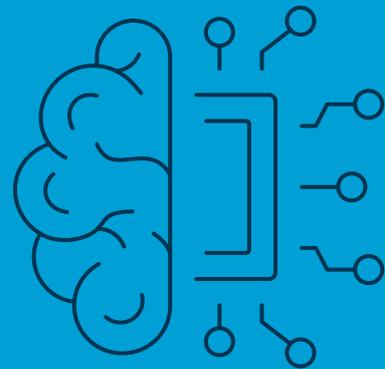


# 3,000 +

STEM students to access innovative collaborative facilities in DCU Polaris

# 49

University of Sanctuary Scholarships since 2016



# 12

DCU students and alumni at the Paris Olympics

## Opening a Door for Bright Minds to Excel...

At DCU, we are committed to delivering a transformative student experience for all. Through our innovation in teaching and learning, and our cutting-edge educational, academic and sporting facilities, we empower our students to reach their full potential and lead change for the future. This world-class university experience is constantly advanced by the generosity of our philanthropic partners, whose support furthers our programmes to widen participation in higher education and create opportunities for students to excel.



Student experience initiatives supported by philanthropy in 2023/24 included:

### **Memorial and Endowed Scholarships:**

In 2023/24, we were pleased to award 30 scholarships created in memory of some of the University's most cherished past students, staff and friends. Last year, a new memorial scholarship was created in memory of well-known Irish Times journalist, Ray Comiskey, presented to the highest placed final year student of Jazz Performance. A new scholarship was also established by DCU alumni PJ Hough and Mar Lydon in memory of their deceased family members. A further 17 students were awarded PhD scholarships, endowed scholarships and ICON scholarships, generously created by friends and supporters of the university.



L-R: University of Sanctuary students Olufunke Ollarinoye and Shepherd Machaya at their graduation

**University of Sanctuary:** Thanks to the generosity of Aircastle and Baxter Healthcare, six postgraduate students received University of Sanctuary scholarships in 2023/24. Since becoming Ireland's first University of Sanctuary in 2016, DCU has provided scholarships to 49 international protection applicants that enable them to pursue their dream of higher education in Ireland. The scholarships are part of a programme of outreach and engagement activities to foster a sense of inclusion and belonging in the DCU community.

**Access Scholarships:** Our supporters helped to provide life-changing scholarships to all 1,100 Access students enrolled at DCU in 2023/24. This scholarship support removes barriers to success for young people from socioeconomically disadvantaged backgrounds, enabling talented students to achieve even more. In over 30 years running Ireland's first and largest Access programme, we have developed a comprehensive package of personal, financial and academic supports that empower students to excel in their studies and reach their ambitions, with 98% of graduates in 2023 achieving a higher honours degree.

**Access Outreach:** With support from State Street Foundation, JP Morgan Chase Foundation and yahoo!, DCU's Access Outreach Programme continued to raise student aspirations and promote third level education as a real possibility for students living in disadvantaged north Dublin communities. Working with 24 partner schools, activities included tours to introduce younger students to campus, STEM and multimedia programmes for Transition Year students, and targeted senior cycle initiatives to engage students in university experiences that are accessible, inclusive and support college-readiness.

**Colm Delves Leadership Lab:** As one of Europe's first dedicated mixed reality classrooms, the Colm Delves Leadership Lab expands the boundaries of what is possible in teaching and learning. This state-of-the-art leadership lab was established with philanthropic support from Digicel in memory of business leader and DCU alumnus Colm Delves. This year, the lab delivered immersive virtual reality experiences to 3,263 visitors, including DCU students, industry partners, and students from local secondary schools. Through over 4,300 virtual reality hours, the lab empowered students to develop key digital and leadership skills, learning about and through virtual reality.



# Focus On: DCU Polaris

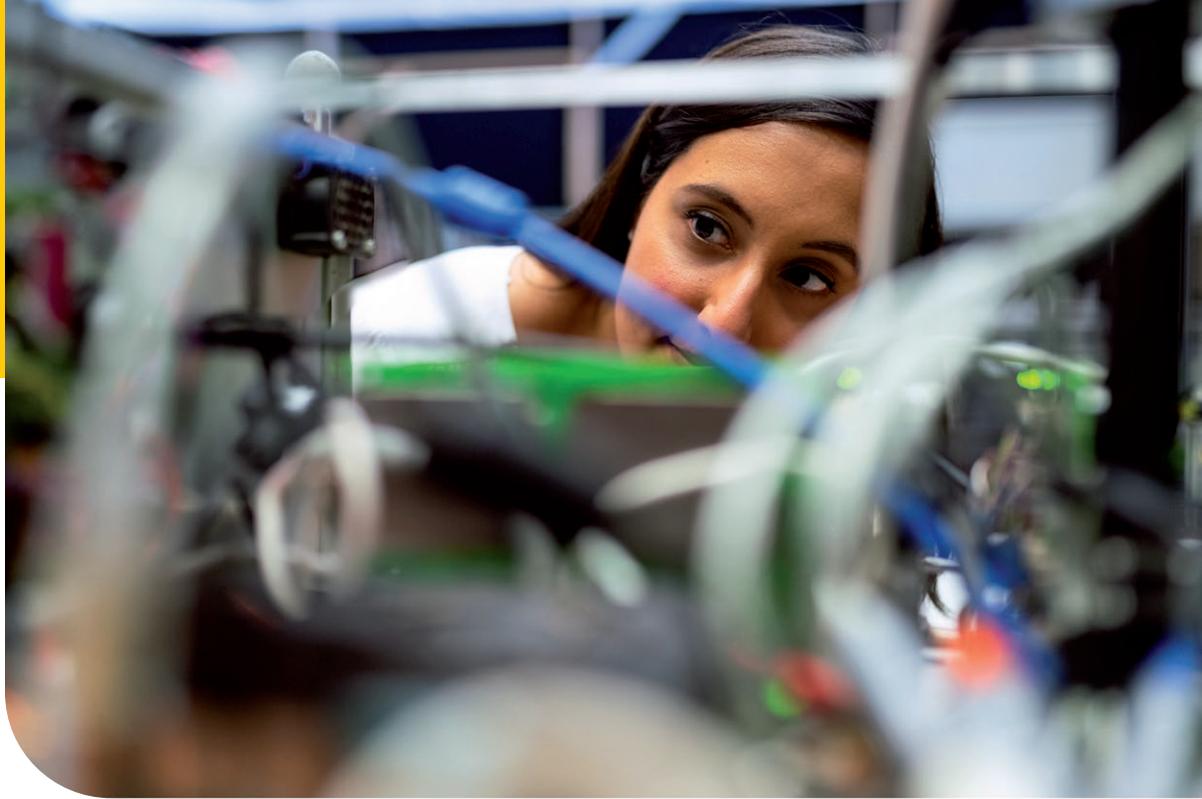
DCU Polaris will be Ireland's most advanced teaching and learning facility for STEM subjects. A guiding light for the future of education, DCU Polaris is designed to accelerate advances in how we educate, research, innovate and connect.

This transformative project will be a key focus for us in the coming year, as we seek further philanthropic support for an anticipated investment of €80 million to deliver a truly world-class facility.

With an expected 30,000 visitors a year, Polaris will be a hub of innovation and collaboration where DCU researchers, students, industry partners and community members can work together in new ways to solve society's greatest challenges.

Launched in April 2025, this new facility will help us build on our research and teaching strengths, deepening our work in children's health literacy, AI for better living, elite sports performance and industry robotics.

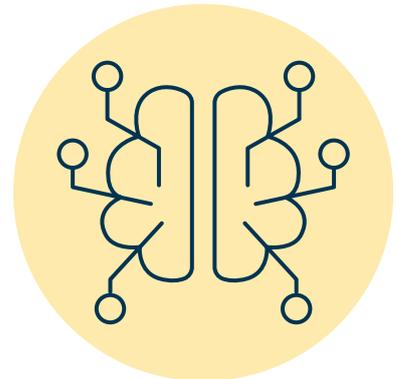




## Inside DCU Polaris

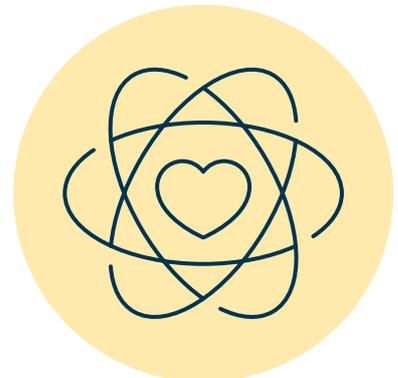
### **Industry Robotics Lab**

Supported by Intel Ireland, the Industry Robotics Lab in DCU Polaris will be a state-of-the-art space to train future engineers in the development of sustainable manufacturing systems. For the first time, students will experience the world of manufacturing and automation in an immersive environment, driven by challenge-based learning and equipped with advanced robotics.



### **DCU LifeLab**

DCU Polaris will be home to a purpose-built space for DCU LifeLab, a co-designed intervention to improve the health knowledge, choices and behaviour of young people. Already a successful collaboration with schools, a generous philanthropic gift from the Sunflower Charitable Foundation will accelerate the programme's growth in Polaris. In addition to supporting youth health, LifeLab has also been designed to excite students to explore STEM courses and careers.



# Focus On: DCU Sport

In September 2024, professional services firm Azets Ireland was announced as the new sponsor of DCU Sport.

Azets Ireland will be the main shirt sponsor across DCU sport teams, a three-year sponsorship which will further our programme of sport scholarships, athlete coaching and specialist equipment for clubs. In 2023/24, the work of DCU Sport was also supported by Ballymore, Fidelity Investments and Decathlon, promoting student physical activity and empowering student athletes to excel.

Last year, DCU Sport advanced the holistic development of 227 elite athletes, supporting talented young people to successfully balance their academic and sporting commitments. Our athlete-led development provides scholarship, performance, academic and personal supports, tailored to the individual needs of the athlete, across a range of sports including Gaelic football, athletics, hurling, camogie, basketball and rugby.

**“We are delighted to become the main sponsor of DCU Sport. At Azets, our purpose is to improve the lives of our colleagues, clients and communities in a sustainable way and we see this partnership as an ideal manifestation of that purpose during this fast growth phase for the firm. It is a privilege for us to be given the opportunity to be associated with the high-performing teams and students in DCU, and we look forward to deepening the relationship going forward.”**

**Neil Hughes**  
CEO, Azets Ireland



# 12



## DCU students and alumni at the Paris Olympics



# 2024

## O'Connor Cup



# 2024

## Brendan Johnston Cup



# 227

student athletes supported to excel

# 40+

active sport clubs

DCU currently has more than 40 sport clubs across a range of disciplines, catering to all students from casual players to elite level athletes. At the 2024 Paris Olympics, DCU was proud to have two current students and 10 alumni representing Team Ireland in rugby 7s, boxing, swimming and athletics.

Other sporting highlights included winning the O'Connor Cup, the top women's collegiate Gaelic football competition, taking home the 2024 SSI Brendan Johnston Cup in men's rugby, and achieving athletics gold at the Irish University Athletics Association Championships.

**"At DCU, we pride ourselves on the promotion of sport and physical activity as an integral part of the student experience as well as supporting the outstanding performances of our dual-career athletes."**

**James Galvin**  
Director of Sport, DCU

# Focus On: DCU Excellence and Opportunity - Caitlin's Story



Support from the DCU Access Programme helped Caitlin pursue her dream of becoming a teacher. Now, she wants to inspire other young people from her area to reach their potential. In 2023/24, 1,100 students like Caitlin were supported by the DCU Access Programme.

"I grew up in a busy home in Ballymun where I was the third youngest of seven. My dream was to be a teacher, and I knew that meant going to college. However, it was only when my older brother started in DCU that I began to imagine myself in university. Seeing him go to college just down the road made me think that university was a possibility for me too. I used to pass DCU on the bus and think, I want to get off at this stop and go in.

In school, we had visits from the DCU Access Outreach Programme, who spoke to us about university and how to apply. Although we're the first generation of the family to go to university, my brother's experience with the DCU Access Programme and his belief in me made me realise that I could do this. My twin sister and I started university the same year, so we were worried about the financial side of things. Without Access and the Student Universal Support Ireland (SUSI) grant we would have faced a lot more barriers.

The support of the DCU Access Programme means a lot. It's incredible to have someone you can go to with any of your problems, and financial supports like lunch vouchers and the scholarship are really helpful.

I'm in my final year now, studying Religious Education and History. I think it's my own enjoyment of learning that makes me want to teach, because you're sharing that with your students. I hope that next year, I'll be working as a secondary school teacher in the same area I grew up in.

**"When I was in school, none of our teachers sounded like me or came from areas like mine."**

I want the students I teach to see that college could be for them, and I want to make school a positive place to be. Access has changed my life – and I hope I can pass that on to other young people like me."

# Focus On:

## Art in Our Community

Art plays a significant role in the learning, enjoyment, and wellbeing of our community. Its influence can be felt throughout the University, most markedly in the impact of the DCU Art Collection and DCU Arts Bursaries.



### DCU Art Collection

In 2024, a newly commissioned work by renowned artist Richard Hearn, *Nexus*, was unveiled in DCU. The piece hangs in the 1838 dining room in Albert College on the University's Glasnevin campus, and was commissioned with a generous gift from John and Jean Saunders.

Albert College, the oldest building on DCU's Glasnevin campus, boasts a rich heritage dating back to 1838. *Nexus* is a monumental diptych, and radiates from the heart of this important space, symbolising the University's agricultural roots and its journey to becoming a leading institution for knowledge and research. Hearn's piece serves as a powerful tribute to the enduring legacy and future aspirations of DCU, and a window to a new perspective for students, staff and visitors.

### DCU Arts Bursary Awards

Zsofi Fustos is among the nine talented students to receive a DCU Arts Bursary Award for 2023/24. Awarded by DCU's Office of Student Life, with philanthropic support from DCU Educational Trust, the Arts Bursary promotes excellence in arts and culture at DCU by supporting creative students to pursue their talents. To date, over 100 students have received grants from the scheme to support their growth as visual artists, photographers and musicians.

"When I moved to Ireland from Hungary, I couldn't bring my paints and easels with me. Everything was too heavy. The Arts Bursary was a chance for me to purchase paints and canvas and get back to painting. I had really missed it.

I've produced three paintings of human figures with my bursary so far, and I'm really happy with them. They portray realistic human forms that give way to more free-flowing portrayals of the figure in flowers or swabs of paint. I'm finding a style I want to paint in and discovering the kind of artist I want to be."

## Focus On: Autism-Friendly University

We are always working to make DCU an even friendlier campus for Autistic staff and students. One of our initiatives to support our Autistic community is a new Quiet Space on our Glasnevin campus, developed with support from UCB Community Health Fund and Codex Office Solutions.

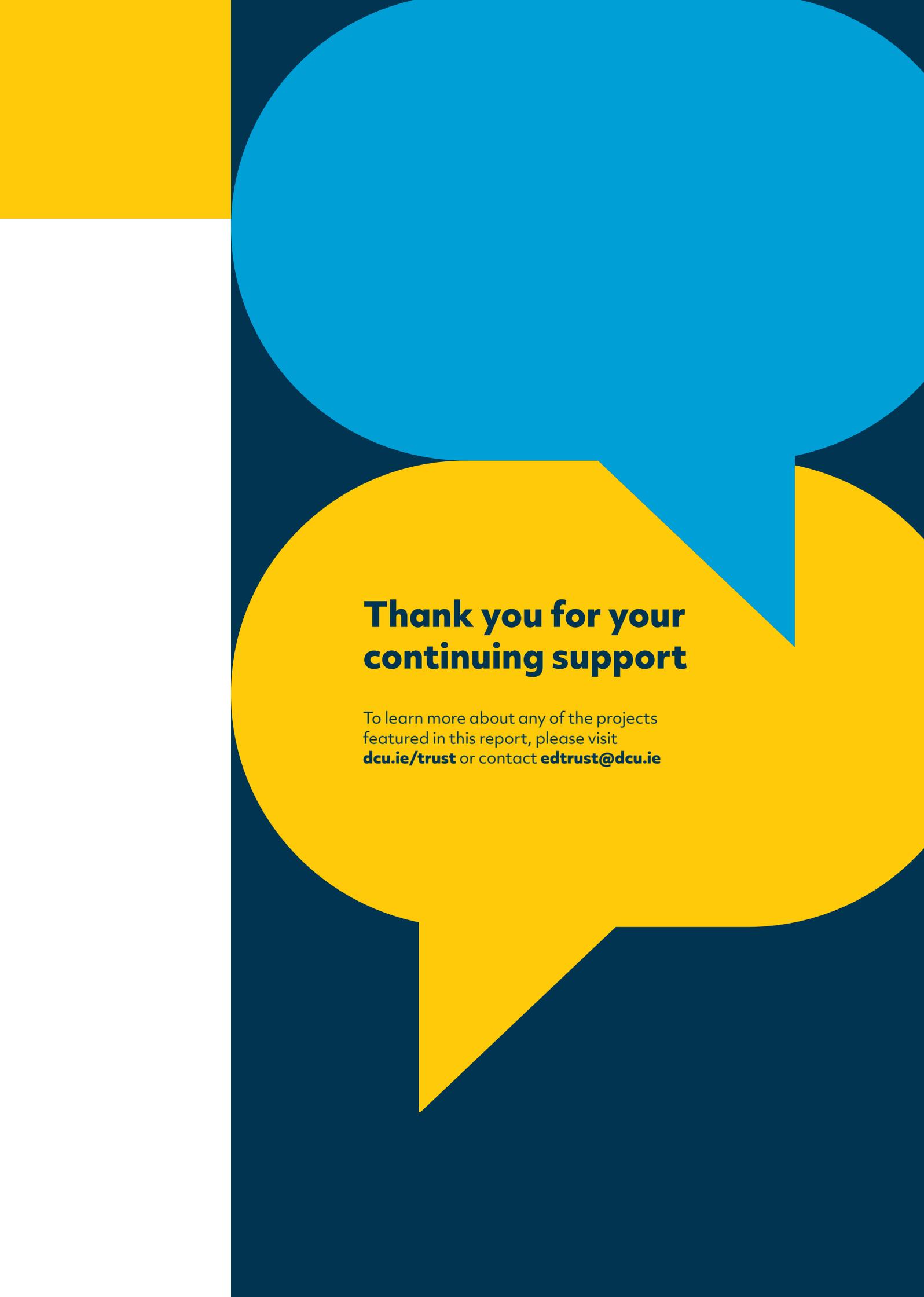
When students from DCU's Autistic community completed a sensory audit of the campus, findings showed a need for quiet, sensory-friendly spaces. The process of designing an autism-friendly campus began with the creation of the DCU Autism Friendly Design Guide.

The development of the Quiet Space was led by the guide's recommendations around acoustics, touch, wayfinding and lighting. Design features include enclosed booths with individual lighting control, sound-absorbing panelling, graduated physical partitions, soft finishes, and muted colours. Surveys show that the Quiet Space is a success with students, and planning for a second space is now underway.

**“Quiet spaces are beneficial for everyone, but essential for many. Environmental factors like lighting, sound, smell and touch can be overwhelming, overloading the senses and causing stress, exhaustion and anxiety for autistic students and staff. This new space is designed to work as an escape hatch – a place to recover and recharge for our entire community of students and staff.”**

**Fiona Earley**, DCU Autism Friendly University Coordinator





## **Thank you for your continuing support**

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