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**Citation by Professor Áine Hyland for Richard (Dick) Langford
on the occasion of his conferring with an Honorary Doctorate by UCC
8th June 2018**

Richard (Dick) Langford was born in Waterford in 1941. He received his secondary education at De la Salle College Waterford and his university education in University College Galway where he was awarded a B. Comm. with First Class honours in 1961, followed in 1962 by a First Class Honours BA in Sociology, Political Science and Economics. The following year he worked as a part-time assistant (tutor) in the Commerce Faculty in UCG – and one of his students during that year was the now President of Ireland, Michael D. Higgins. In 1964, he was awarded An Teastas i dTeagasc na Gaeilge, a qualification which was at that time required for a teaching position in vocational schools.

In 1963, Dick was appointed by Co. Offaly VEC as a teacher in Birr Vocational School, and in 1965, he was appointed Principal of that school, at the very young age of 24. At around the same time he was fortunate to meet Nuala Byrne, also a teacher in Birr Vocational School - Dick and Nuala got married in 1967. As the saying goes, behind every successful man there is an amazing woman and Nuala has certainly been that amazing woman - a rock of support to Dick in all his subsequent endeavours. Dick and Nuala celebrated their 50th wedding anniversary last year, surrounded by their four children, Joseph, Deirdre, Conor and Richard (jnr.) – who are here today with their partners to mark this auspicious occasion - as well as their nine grandchildren.

The 1960s were a decade of significant development and excitement in Irish education. During the first 40 years of the Irish Free State, successive Ministers for Education had taken a laissez-faire approach to educational development, and it was not until the late 1950s and the early 1960s, that a succession of reports transformed the nation's view of education. The appointment of Lemass as Taoiseach and of T.K Whitaker as Secretary of the Department of Finance and the publication of the First and Second Programmes for Economic Expansion were a major catalyst for change in the economic situation of the country. The Investment in Education report in 1965 highlighted the need for new policies and action to address serious shortfalls in the Irish education

system. The report showed that one-third of our young people left school before or at the end of primary education. Only 44% completed junior cycle post-primary education; 20% sat the Leaving Cert. and fewer than 5% went on to third level. The findings of the report galvanised the State into action. The educational reforms which were introduced within the next few years included the introduction of free post-primary education and of free transport to post-primary schools; the revision of the curriculum of vocational schools and the introduction of the common intermediate certificate; the extension of access to higher education and the establishment of the first Regional Technical Colleges.

Dick Langford was a pioneer of educational change during this period. In 1966, Birr Vocational School (of which he was principal) was one of the first vocational schools in the country to introduce the common intermediate certificate. In 1970, before he was 40 years of age, he was appointed founding Principal of Waterford RTC, one of the first five RTCs in the country. (Waterford RTC is now Waterford Institute of Technology, with aspirations to become one of the first Technological Universities). In 1974 Dick was appointed Chief Executive Officer of the City of Waterford Vocational Education Committee (which at that time also had responsibility for the RTC) and six years later he was appointed CEO of Cork City VEC – a post he held until his retirement in 2005.

During his years as CEO, Dick's leadership of Cork VEC and of the vocational sector nationally was legendary. Cork VEC was renowned for its innovative response to a variety of new challenges which were emerging in education. As well as enhancing the provision of post-primary education in the city, Cork VEC was one of the first VECs to formalise further education. The three FE colleges, Cork College of Commerce, Coláiste Stiofáin Naofa and St. John's - are a major legacy from Dick's period as CEO. There were significant developments in the areas of adult, community and youth services during the same period. The School of Music was greatly expanded; Back to Education initiatives and VTOS programmes were introduced; education in the Prison Service and Community Education services were all expanded. The now very successful Cork Lifelong Learning Festival was introduced during Dick's term of office – a festival that has gone from strength to strength since and has involved a wide range of education providers in Cork, including UCC.

Dick was also very influential on the national education scene. As early as 1969 his potential was recognised when he was appointed by Minister Brian Lenihan as a member of (and researcher) for the first Committee on Adult Education. This was a seminal report which recommended far-reaching changes in the organisation and funding of adult education, some of which have yet to be implemented 50 years later! Dick was subsequently appointed to the National Council for Educational Awards for a seven-year term in the 1970s and again for a four-year term in the 1990s. He was appointed as a member of the first Governing Body of NIHE Limerick (now UL) from 1975 to 1980 and to the Council of ANCO (afterwards FÁS) for almost a decade from 1979 to 1988. He was a member of the Higher Education Authority from 1980 to 1985 – a very significant period in the expansion of higher education.

He chaired a succession of Public Bodies throughout the 1990s and the noughties. He was chair of the Board of Teastas from 1995 to 1998; of the (very influential) National Qualifications Authority from 2000 to 2006; and of the State Examinations Commission from 2006 to 2015. From 2006 to 2012, he also chaired the Education Finance Board which was responsible for the disbursement of €10 million Euros for educational and related purposes to former Residents of Certain Residential Institutions for Children. Most recently, from 2014 to 2017, Dick chaired the Governing Body of Waterford Institute of Technology.

As one might imagine, many of these boards had their own tensions and problems and Dick was the ideal person to smooth out the problems and provide solutions. He was also politically astute in the broadest sense – an astuteness referred to by Ed Walsh in his book about the early years of NIHE Limerick - “Upstart”, in relation to advice given by Dick about difficulties which had arisen with the NUI in 1976 about the academic validation of NIHE courses. At that stage Dick was still only 35 years of age – and his political acumen and sound advice was availed of by many educational colleagues and policy makers (including myself) in subsequent years.

Dick's contribution to Irish education at local and national level has been enormous. His generosity and willingness to contribute on a pro bono basis to so many public bodies and to give so much of his time to the public good has been extraordinary and rarely matched. Ireland does not have a system of honours to recognise such commitment and I hope that the award by UCC of this honorary doctorate goes some way to mark our appreciation of Dick's contribution to education. This recognition has been a long time coming but is all the more significant because of that. We salute Dick and thank him for all he has done for Irish education for over half a century. In awarding Dick this honorary degree we also recognise Nuala's unwavering support and back-up for over half a century. We wish both of them many more years of happiness and enjoyment with their extended family.