



# MIC Annual Report

## Academic Year 2020-2021

## **Contents**

### **Foreword by Professor Eugene Wall, College President**

- 1. Introduction**
- 2. Governance**
- 3. External Landscape**
- 4. Campus Development**
- 5. Programmes**
- 6. Projects and Activities**
- 7. Awards and Achievements**
- 8. Development of International Work**
- 9. Conferences and Seminars**
- 10. Community Engagement and Culture**
- 11. Sports**
- 12. Graduation Numbers Academic Year 2020-2021**
- 13. Energy Usage**
- 14. Financial Overview**

## **Foreword by Professor Eugene Wall, College President**

The Academic Year 2020-2021 was one of the most challenging periods in the history of Mary Immaculate College (MIC). The unprecedented impact of the global COVID-19 pandemic required us to rapidly adapt our teaching, research, and operational activities to ensure the safety and well-being of our entire college community. Despite the immense challenges, I am incredibly proud of how our staff, students, and wider community came together to navigate these turbulent times. This year has demonstrated the resilience, dedication, and innovative spirit that are the hallmarks of MIC.

Our transition to remote learning was swift and effective, thanks to the extraordinary efforts of our academic and support staff. The launch of new programmes, such as the customised postgraduate programme for post-primary subject teachers, An Teastas Iarchéime I dTeagasc Ábharbhunaithe san Iarbhunscóil Lán-Ghaeilge agus Ghaeltachta, exemplifies our commitment to providing high-quality education that meets the evolving needs of our students and the broader society. This fully-online flexible programme not only responded to the immediate demands of the pandemic but also laid the foundation for future innovations in teaching and learning at MIC.

The pandemic also highlighted the importance of our role within the wider Higher Education sector. MIC played an active part in national discussions on how to manage the challenges presented by COVID-19, particularly through our engagement with the Department of Further & Higher Education, Research, Innovation, and Science (DFHERIS) and the Conference of Heads of Irish Colleges of Education (CHOICE).

Our contributions to these forums ensured that the unique needs of teacher education and smaller institutions like ours were taken into account in policy decisions. This engagement not only supported our internal operations but also reinforced MIC's standing as a leader in the higher education community.

While the year was dominated by the challenges of the pandemic, it was also a year of significant achievements. Our staff and students continued to excel in their academic pursuits, earning numerous awards and recognitions. The success of our students at the Psychological Society of Ireland All-Ireland Student Congress, and the recognition of our lecturers in regional teaching awards, are just a few examples of the excellence that defines MIC. Additionally, our commitment to community engagement remained strong, as evidenced by our collaboration with TG4 on the 'Cúla4 ar Scoil' and Home School Hub television programmes, which provided vital educational resources to primary school students during the lockdown.

As we reflect on the past year, it is clear that the challenges we faced have only strengthened our resolve and commitment to our mission. We have emerged from this period with a renewed sense of purpose, more connected as a community, and more confident in our ability to meet the future with resilience and innovation. I extend my deepest gratitude to our staff, students, and all members of the MIC community for their unwavering support and dedication. Together, we have not only weathered the storm but have laid a strong foundation for the continued success and growth of Mary Immaculate College.

Eugene Wall

**President of MIC, Prof Eugene Wall**

## **1. Introduction**

The Academic Year 2020-2021 began under the shadow of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, which necessitated rapid adaptations across all areas of the College's operations. From a swift transition to online learning to the implementation of stringent health and safety protocols, MIC responded with determination and creativity. This report details the strategies employed to maintain academic quality, support student and staff wellbeing, and sustain the College's financial health. It also highlights the significant achievements made during this challenging period, demonstrating MIC's commitment to its mission and values.

## **2. Governance**

### **Trustees**

The Trustees have provided overall guidance and oversight as regards the mission and ethos of the College throughout the year, ensuring that the MIC remains aligned with its founding vision and traditions. Their leadership has been instrumental in navigating challenges and seizing opportunities in an ever-evolving Higher Education landscape.

### **The Trustees for this period were as follows:**

- Most Rev. Brendan Leahy
- Dr Áine Lawlor
- Mr Richard Leonard
- Dr Marie Griffin
- Sr Frances Minahan RSM
- Sr Angela Hartigan RSM
- Most Rev. Kieran O'Reilly
- Most Rev. Raymond Browne
- Mr Seán Burke

### **The Trustees met on the following dates:**

- 14 October 2020
- 15 December 2020
- 23 February 2021

- 4 May 2021
- 6 July 2021

### ***An tÚdarás Rialaithe (MIC Governing Authority)***

The role of the Governing Authority is to provide overall academic and institutional governance oversight (both through its own proceedings and through the proceedings of its key deliberative bodies including *an Chomhairle Acadúil* (the Academic Council), the Finance & Resource Committee, the Audit & Risk Committee, the Equality Committee, and the Quality Committee. On matters of day-to-day operations, the President and the Executive Team report to the Governing Authority.

Apart from ensuring that the highest level of corporate governance obtains at MIC, the Governing Authority is responsible for setting institutional strategy and for overseeing implementation of the College’s strategic plan. Tied to this, the risk management environment is also, ultimately, the responsibility of *an tÚdarás Rialaithe*.

### **Governing Authority – Term of 2018-2024**

<b>N</b>	<b>Nomination</b>	<b>Nominating Requirement</b>	<b>Name of Incumbent 2018-2024 Term</b>
1	<i>Ex Officio</i>	Bishop of RC Diocese of Limerick	Bishop Brendan Leahy
2	Trustees	Trustee Member	Dr Áine Lawlor



3	Trustees	Trustee Member	Dr Marie Griffin
4	Trustees	Sisters of Mercy / External Trustees Nominee	Mary Considine
5	Trustees	Sisters of Mercy / External Trustees Nominee	Gerry Reeves
6	Trustees	Sisters of Mercy / External Trustees Nominee	Helen O'Donnell
7	Trustees	Sisters of Mercy / External Trustees Nominee	Maedhbh Uí Chiagháin
8	Trustees	Sisters of Mercy / External Trustees Nominee	Fachtna O'Driscoll
9	Trustees	Sisters of Mercy / External Trustees Nominee	Catherine Kelly
10	Trustees	Sisters of Mercy / External Trustees Nominee	Éamon Stack
11	Trustees	Sisters of Mercy / External Trustees Nominee	Declan Madden
12	Trustees	Sisters of Mercy / External Trustees Nominee	Sr Coirle McCarthy
13	Trustees	Sisters of Mercy / External Trustees Nominee	Conn Murray
14	Trustees	Independent Director	Judge Tom O'Donnell
15	Trustees	Alumnus	Seán McMahon

16	Academic Staff	Academic Staff Member*	Vacant (no nominations)
17	Academic Staff	Academic Staff Member*	Vacant (no nominations)
18	Academic Staff	Academic Staff Member*	Vacant (no nominations)
19	Academic Staff	Academic Staff Member*	Vacant (no nominations)
20	Academic Staff	Academic Staff Member*	Vacant (no nominations)
21	Academic Staff	Academic Staff Member*	Vacant (no nominations)
22	Professional Staff	Professional Services Staff Member	Emma Barry
23	Professional Staff	Professional Services Staff Member	Áine Finucane
24	<i>Ex Officio</i>	College President	Prof. Eugene Wall
25	<i>Ex Officio</i>	UL President	Prof. Kerstin Mey
26	<i>Ex Officio</i>	VP Academic Affairs	Prof. Niamh Hourigan
27	<i>Ex Officio</i>	VP Administration & Finance	Michael Keane
28	<i>Ex Officio</i>	MISU President	Aisling Cusack (AY 2020- 21)
29	<i>Ex Officio</i>	MISU Vice President	Laura Charleton (AY 2020- 21)

**The Governing Authority met on the following dates:**

- 30 September 2020
- 25 November 2020

- 10 February 2021
- 31 March 2021
- 17 June 2021

### **Executive Team**

The Executive Team, comprising senior management members, met regularly during the Academic Year 2020-2021 to address strategic and operational matters, ensuring the College's smooth functioning and alignment with its strategic goals. This team is responsible for implementing the decisions of the Governing Body and in driving forward key initiatives such as Masterplan 2042, which sets out eight strategic objectives that map out a clear direction for the next stages of development across both the Limerick and Thurles campuses, and new academic offerings.

### **3. External Landscape – Notable Events**

The external landscape in 2020-2021 was dominated by the global COVID-19 pandemic, which had profound implications for higher education worldwide. MIC engaged extensively with national bodies, including the Department of Further & Higher Education, Research, Innovation, and Science (DFHERIS), to navigate these challenges. MIC's participation in the COVID-19 Steering Group, which included representatives from the HEA, Irish University Association, and other higher education institutions, was crucial in shaping the sector's response to the pandemic.

Through its active involvement in the Conference of Heads of Irish Colleges of Education (CHoICE), MIC contributed to the development of sector-wide strategies for managing academic delivery, student placements, and compliance with public health guidelines. This collaboration ensured a coordinated response across institutions, particularly in relation to the unique challenges of teacher education during the pandemic.

MIC's leadership in these forums ensured that the College's needs and concerns were effectively communicated to policymakers, resulting in more informed decisions that benefitted not only MIC but the entire Higher Education sector in Ireland.

## **4. Campus Development**

### **Library Project**

The Library Project at MIC Limerick, a cornerstone of the College's strategic vision, continued to progress despite the logistical challenges posed by the pandemic. The project is part of the broader campus development plan, aimed at enhancing the College's infrastructure to support modern learning environments. Significant milestones achieved during the year included the completion of the design phase and the commencement of preliminary works. This project is expected to greatly enhance the resources available to students and staff, providing a state-of-the-art facility that supports both physical and digital learning.

### **Masterplan 2042**

The Masterplan 2042, which outlines the long-term development strategy for the MIC campuses, was reviewed and updated to reflect the new realities imposed by the pandemic. The plan now incorporates flexibility to adapt to future disruptions, with a focus on creating a resilient and sustainable campus environment. Key elements of the Masterplan, such as the expansion of digital infrastructure and the reconfiguration of spaces to support hybrid learning models, were accelerated in response to the immediate needs of the College.

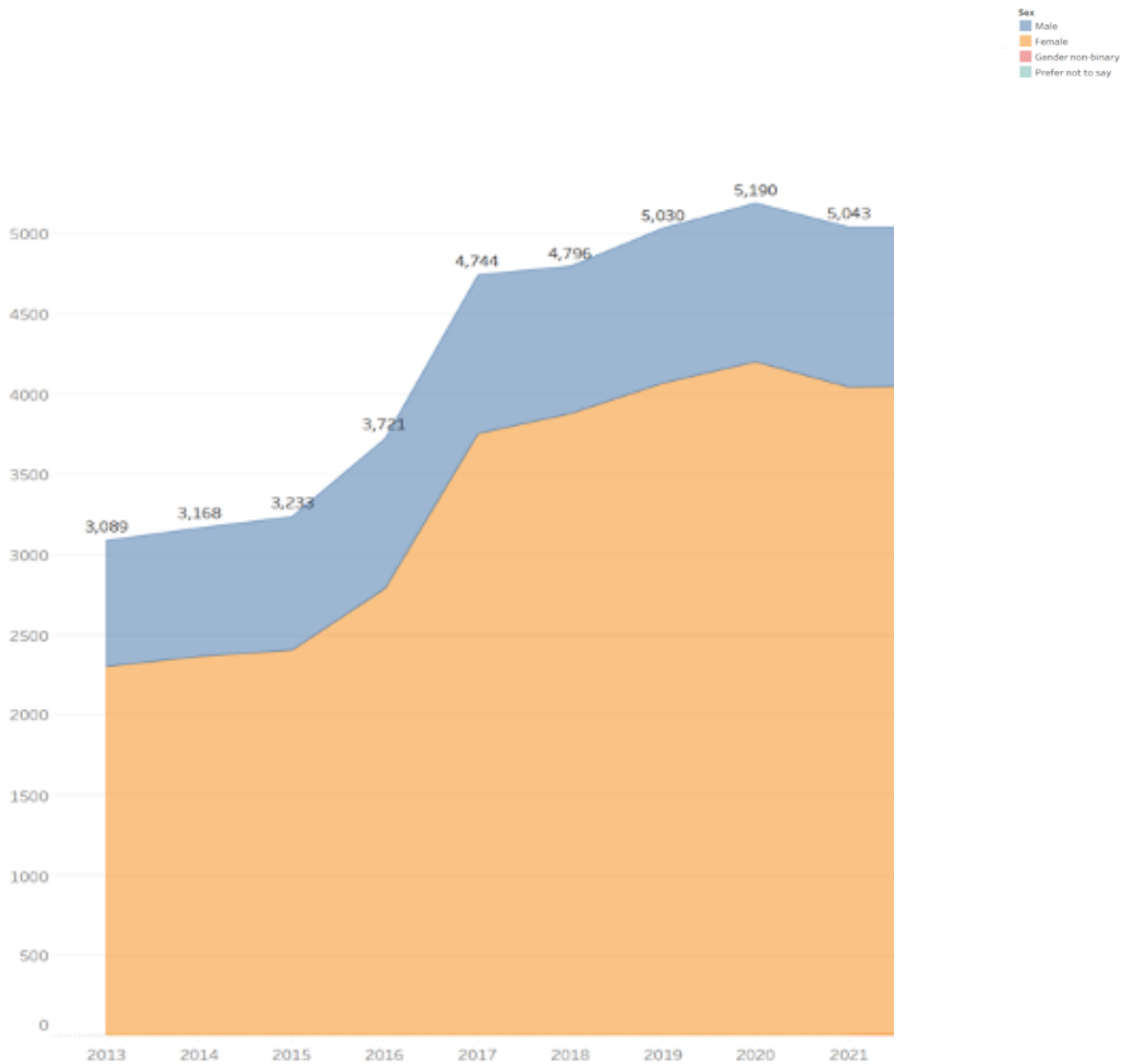
## **5. Programmes**

### **Enrolment & New Entrants**

The enrolment process for the Academic Year 2020-2021 was conducted under unprecedented pandemic conditions. Despite the challenges, MIC successfully maintained stable enrolment numbers, thanks to a robust online marketing and engagement strategy.

The College implemented a series of virtual open days and CAO talks and launched an interactive multi-media virtual campus tour, which attracted a significant number of prospective students. These events and interactive platforms provided detailed information about the College's programmes, student life, and support services, helping to reassure students and their families during a time of great uncertainty.

Enrolment Trend 2013-2021



**Source:** MIC Online Analytics System (e-OLAS) and Student Record System

The enrolment trends at Mary Immaculate College (MIC) from 2013 to 2021 show a clear story of growth, followed by a period of levelling off. From 2013 to 2016, student numbers increased gradually, moving from around 3,089 to 3,721. This steady rise suggests consistent interest in the College’s offerings during those years.

However, the period from 2016 to 2017 marks a turning point, with a sharp increase in enrolments, jumping to 4,744 students. This surge continued, peaking in 2019 at 5,190 students. The significant growth during this time likely reflects the College's expanding reputation, supported by new programmes and successful recruitment efforts.

After reaching this peak, enrolment numbers dipped slightly, stabilising around 5,030 to 5,043 between 2020 and 2021. This levelling off indicates that MIC is approaching a natural cap in its growth based on current offerings and provision, although the dip from 2020 suggests that the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic were felt in registrations.

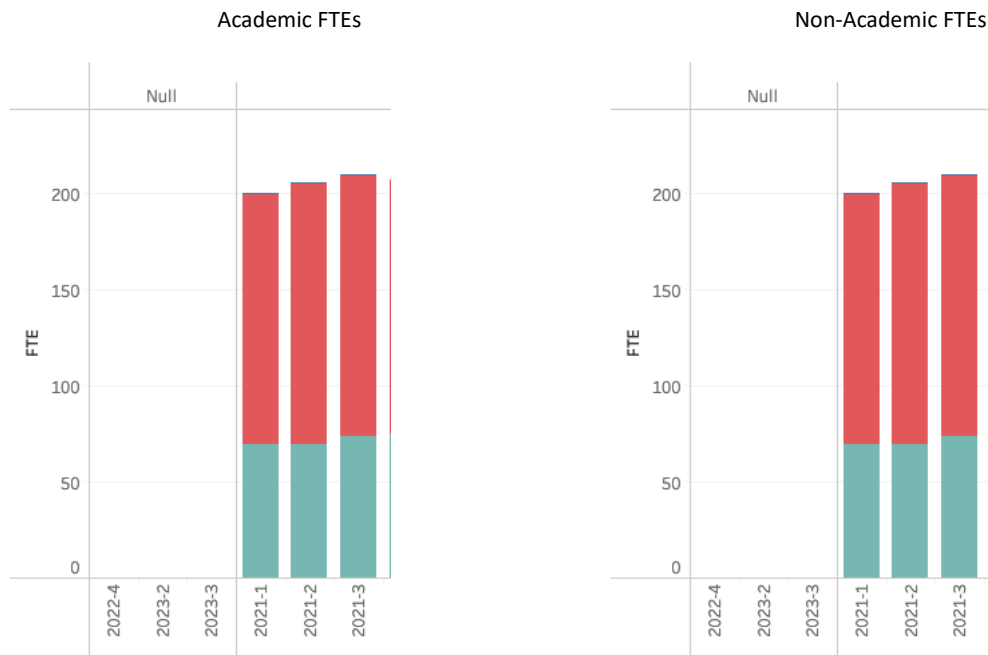
In summary, MIC experienced strong growth in student numbers over the years, especially between 2016 and 2019, before entering a period of stability. The College may now be in a phase of consolidating its growth and preparing for future challenges.

### **Admissions and Programme Diversity**

MIC continued to diversify its programme offerings in response to changing market demands and student interests. New programmes introduced during the year included the customised postgraduate programme for post-primary subject teachers, An Teastas Iarchéime I dTeagasc Ábharbhunaithe san Iarbhunscóil Lán-Ghaeilge agus Ghaeltachta. This programme is delivered entirely online, reflecting the College's commitment to flexible and accessible learning. Additionally, MIC expanded its range of elective modules, allowing students greater flexibility in tailoring their studies to their personal and professional goals.



Staff FTEs to Q3 2021



Source: HEA Quarterly Staff Returns / MIC Online Analytics System (e-OLAS)

### Staffing & Support Programmes

Supporting staff during the transition to remote working was a key priority for MIC. The College implemented a comprehensive professional development programme, focusing on upskilling staff in digital pedagogy and online programme delivery. This programme included workshops, webinars, and one-on-one support sessions, ensuring that all staff were equipped to meet the demands of online teaching. Additionally, the College provided access to mental health resources and established a Staff Helpline to support staff well-being during this challenging period. A dedicated COVID-19 Hub on the MIC website, updated with MIC measures, Public Health guidelines and more, was also developed to provide a central location for relevant information for staff and students.

## **Equality, Diversity, Inclusion & Interculturalism Training**

MIC made significant strides in promoting equality, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) during the 2020-2021 Academic Year. The College was awarded €28,300 under the HEA Gender Equality Enhancement Fund to develop and implement a Gender Identity Expression & Diversity Training Programme. This programme is part of MIC's broader strategy to create an inclusive and supportive environment for all members of the College community. The training programme focuses on addressing unconscious bias, promoting gender equality, and fostering inclusion for LGBTQ+ individuals. These initiatives are supported by ongoing efforts to embed EDI principles into the College's policies, practices, and curriculum.

## **Ongoing Programme Development**

MIC continued to refine and enhance its academic programmes to ensure they remained relevant and responsive to the needs of students and the wider community. This included ongoing reviews of curriculum content, assessment methods, and delivery modes, with a particular focus on integrating digital learning technologies. The College also sought to expand interdisciplinary learning opportunities, encouraging students to engage with a broad range of subjects and perspectives. These efforts are part of MIC's commitment to providing a holistic and future-focused education that prepares students for the challenges of the modern world.

The College also launched its inaugural *Framework for Doctoral Education*, which aims to facilitate consistent excellence in the quality of postgraduate education, research and training at MIC. The framework, which was developed in relation to national and European-level policy benchmarking, was launched by Niall Collins TD, Minister of State at the Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science.

In addition to ensuring excellence in the quality of postgraduate education, research and training at MIC, the framework aims to maximise the employability of doctoral graduates across a broad range of employment sectors by ensuring that the acquisition of discipline-specific knowledge is complemented by the development of research and transferrable skills.

### **Graduate Outcomes**

The employment and further study outcomes for MIC graduates remained strong despite the challenges posed by the pandemic. The College's Careers Service played a crucial role in supporting graduates as they navigated a difficult job market. MIC continued to provide targeted career support, including virtual career fairs, one-on-one career counselling, and workshops on job searching and interview skills. These efforts ensured that graduates were well-prepared to enter the workforce or pursue further studies, maintaining MIC's reputation for producing highly employable graduates.

## **6. Projects and Activities**

MIC undertook several key projects and activities during the Academic Year 2020-2021, many of which were designed to enhance the College's teaching, research, and community engagement efforts.

### **Digital Campus Sub-Group**

The Digital Campus Sub-Group was established as part of MIC's response to the COVID-19 pandemic. This group was tasked with developing a Framework of Technologies that would support the College's transition to online and hybrid learning. The group's work included evaluating and selecting digital tools that were fit for purpose, cost-effective, and capable of being integrated into existing academic governance structures. The implementation of this framework has been crucial in ensuring that MIC could deliver high-quality education in a remote environment, providing students and staff with the tools and support they needed to succeed.

### **Facilities, HR, and Health & Safety Group**

The Facilities, HR, and Health & Safety Group played a critical role in ensuring that any on-campus activities were conducted safely and in compliance with public health guidelines. This group was responsible for developing detailed return-to-work protocols, which were implemented in consultation with staff. The protocols included guidelines for maintaining physical distancing, the use of face coverings, and procedures for identifying and managing potential COVID-19 cases on campus. The group also worked to ensure that staff and students had safe access to campus facilities, including the Library, which operated a click-and-collect service throughout the year.

## **COVID-19 Hub**

The creation and development by MIC's Strategic Communications and Marketing Office of a dedicated COVID-19 Hub, housed on the College website, meant the very latest information in relation to how the College operated throughout the year was available to staff, students and external parties.

Divided into various categories including Students, Staff, Visitors, Virtual Campus Tour, COVID-19 Student Charter, Medical Centre, COVID-19 Tracker App and Educational Resources it provided an invaluable repository of information for the entire MIC community.

## **7. Awards and Achievements**

The Academic Year 2020-2021 saw numerous awards and achievements by MIC staff and students, reflecting the College's continued excellence in teaching, research, and community engagement.

### **Notable Publications and Achievements by Faculty**

The 2020-2021 Academic Year at Mary Immaculate College was marked by significant scholarly contributions from our faculty, who continued to excel in research and publication despite the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic. The following is an overview of some of the most notable achievements and publications by our esteemed faculty during this period:

#### **Publications**

##### **'Are Ye Going Up Town? Shops and Shopping in Limerick'**

One of the most significant publications of the year was the book *Are Ye Going Up Town? Shops and Shopping in Limerick*, co-authored by Dr Helene Bradley Davies, Dr Maura Cronin, and Dr Ursula Callaghan. This book, which was published in collaboration with Limerick City and County Council, explores the history of retail in Limerick over four centuries. It maps the changes in the heart of Limerick City and documents how its people experienced and valued the city's shops. The publication is a product of an innovative partnership that drew on diverse historical sources such as maps, business records, photographs, and recorded interviews to provide a comprehensive narrative of Limerick's evolving commercial landscape. This work not only enriches our understanding of Limerick's social and economic

history but also serves as a vital resource for future research in urban studies and local history.

### **Contributions to Theology and Religious Studies**

The Department of Theology and Religious Studies at MIC made significant contributions to academic scholarship, particularly in the areas of New Testament Studies and Catholic Education.

Notably, two faculty members, Phil and Marian Mortell, successfully defended their PhD dissertations, marking a first for MIC with both achieving this milestone in New Testament Studies. Phil Mortell's dissertation, titled *"A Socio-rhetorical Investigation of Paul's Theology of Suffering in 1 Corinthians,"* provided a deep analysis of Pauline theology and its implications for understanding suffering in the early Christian context. Marian Mortell's dissertation, titled *"'Do you see this woman?' (Luke 7:44): A Narrative Study of the Women Associated with Jesus' Ministry in Luke's Gospel,"* offered a critical exploration of the roles and representations of women in the Gospel of Luke. These works contribute significantly to the ongoing scholarly dialogue in biblical studies and have been recognized for their rigorous research and original insights.

### **The GRACE Project**

Mary Immaculate College was awarded €950,000 to enable a new generation of Catholic educators at the College to connect with top-level experts in Catholic education in the USA, Australia and the UK.

The funding has been awarded as part of the Global Researchers in Catholic Education (G.R.A.C.E) Project, an international research-based partnership between MIC

Limerick, Boston College in the United States, the University of Notre Dame in Australia, and St Mary's University in London, which is funded by the Presentation Sisters in Ireland, the All Hallows Trust and the Irish Jesuit Province.

The allocation of funding will allow MIC to award six scholarships to researchers in Catholic education, as well as five bursaries to postgraduate students studying on the MA in Christian Leadership in Education at MIC. A full-time three-year postdoctoral researcher position is also being offered as part of this project.

Founded and led by Professor Eamonn Conway, Head of the Department of Theology and Religious Studies at MIC, along with Dr Eugene Duffy, lecturer in the Department of Theology and Religious Studies, and Dr Daniel O'Connell, lecturer in the Department of Learning, Society, and Religious Education, the G.R.A.C.E Project provides an opportunity for scholars of Catholic education and theology to affirm, study, collaborate and respond meaningfully to the challenges that Catholic educators face globally.

### **MIC researcher awarded multi-national funding for innovative research into online communications**

MIC Applied Linguistics researcher, Dr Anne O'Keeffe, was awarded significant funding to investigate whether the sudden shift to virtual communications in the workplace has impacted how we communicate. The funding, which totals €637,000, comes under the UK-Ireland Collaboration in the Digital Humanities research grants, with €270,000 awarded by the Irish Research Council (IRC) and a further £390,000 from the British based Arts & Humanities Research Council (AHRC).



The project will first examine workplace communications and online interactions to determine the effectiveness of different forms of interaction and identify potential barriers to effective communication. The research not only aims to identify the success or failure of communication but also what causes it to succeed or fail, including both verbal and non-verbal cues such as pitch, facial expression, accompanying gesture or humour. This will mean investigating possible barriers such as age, gender and ethnicity.

### **STEM Education Lecturers awarded prestigious statistics award**

Two Mary Immaculate College lecturers were awarded a prestigious award for their work in the field of statistics.

Dr Aisling Leavy, Head of Department of STEM Education and Dr Mairead Hourigan, Lecturer in STEM Education at MIC were the winners of the 2020 Peter Holmes prize, awarded by the *Teaching Statistics* journal in honour of its founding editor. The award celebrates an article published in the journal in the given year and aims to highlight excellence in motivating practical classroom activity.

Dr Leavy and Dr Hourigan's winning article, "*Using integrated STEM as a stimulus to develop elementary students' statistical literacy*" presents a classroom-ready activity arising from teacher collaboration across STEM areas and uses statistical investigation learning with creative engineering design and scientific approaches.

### **PhD Successes Across Disciplines**

MIC faculty and students achieved remarkable success in doctoral research across various disciplines. In the Department of Geography, Margaret Browne successfully defended her PhD thesis titled 'Mediterranean Sea Surface Temperatures and Planktonic Foraminifera

Palaeoecology During Short-Term Climate Oscillations of the Late Pleistocene'. Her research, supervised by Dr Angela Cloke-Hayes, provides critical insights into climate change and its historical impacts on marine environments. Similarly, in the Department of Drama & Theatre Studies, Aideen Wylde defended her PhD thesis titled 'Disrupting Perceptions of Jewish and Minority Identity in Ireland Through Theatre'. This research, which included the staging of her play *Here Shall We Rest*, explores the intersection of theatre and social identity, contributing to contemporary debates on cultural representation and minority experiences in Ireland.

### **Additional Publications and Research Achievements**

Throughout the year, MIC faculty continued to contribute to a wide range of academic publications, covering topics from education and social sciences to the arts and humanities. These publications not only reflect the diverse research interests of our faculty but also enhance MIC's reputation as a centre of academic excellence. Faculty members have published articles in leading journals, contributed chapters to edited volumes, and presented their research at national and international conferences, ensuring that MIC remains at the forefront of academic discourse.

### **New Report from MIC Reveals the Reality of Human Trafficking in Ireland**

A report from researchers at MIC examined the true scale of human trafficking on the island of Ireland, illustrating that there are substantially more victims of human trafficking in Ireland than are officially recorded with the authorities. Data collated for the Human Trafficking and Exploitation Project on the Island of Ireland (HTEPII), led by MIC, has shown that the number of adults and children trafficked onto the island of Ireland between 2014

and 2019 is at least 38% higher in the Republic of Ireland and 20% higher in Northern Ireland. The HTEPII project led by a team of MIC researchers, including principal investigators, Professor Michael Breen and Professor Michael Healy, and principal researcher, Dr Amy Healy, was supported by a Project Executive Board chaired by Kevin Hyland OBE with input from senior personnel in An Garda Síochána, the Police Service of Northern Ireland, the Irish Department of Justice, and the Department of Justice in Northern Ireland, as well as other experts in the field. This has been officially recorded by authorities north and south.

### **MIC Launches its Framework for Doctoral Education**

MIC launched its inaugural Framework for Doctoral Education, which aims to facilitate consistent excellence in the quality of postgraduate education, research and training at MIC. The framework, which was developed in relation to national and European-level policy benchmarking, was launched by Niall Collins TD, Minister of State at the Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science.

## **8. Development of International Work**

Despite the limitations imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic, MIC continued to strengthen its international partnerships and engage in global academic networks. The College adapted to the new realities by shifting its focus to virtual exchanges and online collaborations, ensuring that international engagement remained a key component of its mission.

### **Virtual International Student Recruitment**

MIC's international student recruitment efforts were transitioned online, with a series of virtual events aimed at prospective students from around the world. These events included virtual open days, webinars, and one-on-one consultations, providing prospective students with detailed information about MIC's programmes, support services, and campus life. The shift to online recruitment allowed MIC to maintain its international presence and continue attracting students from diverse backgrounds.

### **Erasmus+ and B Ed - International Programmes**

MIC's participation in the Erasmus+ programme continued, with adjustments made to accommodate travel restrictions. The College facilitated virtual exchanges, allowing students to engage in international learning experiences despite the inability to travel. Additionally, the B Ed - International programme was adapted to include online components, ensuring that students could continue to benefit from global perspectives in their education.

### **Latin America Engagement**

MIC maintained its focus on expanding its presence in Latin America, a key region for the College's international strategy. The College engaged with partners in the region to explore

opportunities for collaboration in areas such as teacher education, language studies, and cultural exchange. These efforts are part of MIC's broader strategy to diversify its international partnerships and create opportunities for students and staff to engage with new and emerging markets.

## **9. Conferences and Seminars**

MIC hosted and participated in a wide range of conferences and seminars during the 2020-2021 Academic Year, many of which were conducted online due to the pandemic. These events provided valuable opportunities for staff and students to engage with the latest research and developments in their fields, despite the challenges of remote working.

### **2021 Association of Catholic Colleges and Universities (ACCU) Annual Meeting**

MIC was actively involved in the 2021 ACCU Annual Meeting, which took place virtually. This event brought together Catholic universities from around the world to discuss issues related to the mission and identity of Catholic higher education. MIC's participation in this meeting highlights its ongoing commitment to engaging with global academic and religious communities, contributing to the broader discourse on the role of Catholic education in the modern world.

### **International Federation of Catholic Universities (IFCU) Seminar**

MIC also participated in the IFCU Seminar, which focused on strengthening the Catholic mission in higher education. The seminar featured discussions on current experiments and innovations in Catholic education, providing MIC with valuable insights and opportunities to share its experiences with other institutions.

### **Research Seminars and Webinars**

MIC hosted several research seminars and webinars throughout the year, providing a platform for staff and students to share their research findings and engage in scholarly discussions. These events covered a wide range of topics, including theology, education, social sciences, and the arts, reflecting the diversity of research activities at MIC.

## **10. Community Engagement and Culture**

MIC's commitment to community engagement remained steadfast during the 2020-2021 Academic Year, with a focus on adapting outreach programmes to the new realities imposed by the pandemic. Many of the College's community initiatives, which traditionally involved in-person interaction, were successfully transitioned to online formats, ensuring that they could continue to provide valuable support and resources.

### **Online Tutoring and Educational Support**

The College's community outreach programmes, including tutoring and mentoring services, were adapted for online delivery. These programmes, which are designed to support local schools and community groups, continued to provide crucial educational assistance during a time when many students were struggling with the challenges of remote learning. MIC's staff and students played an active role in these initiatives, offering their time and expertise to help bridge the educational gaps exacerbated by the pandemic.

### **Cúla4 ar Scoil & Home School Hub**

One of the standout initiatives of the year was MIC's collaboration with TG4 and RTÉ on vital educational programming.

With TG4, 'Cúla4 ar Scoil' was aimed at Gaeltacht and Gaelscoileanna primary school students, was broadcast daily on TG4 during the school closures caused by the pandemic. MIC provided support to the programme's teachers and producers, ensuring that the lessons were aligned with the primary curriculum and accessible to all students. This initiative demonstrated MIC's commitment to supporting education and promoting the Irish

language, even in challenging circumstances. Dr Conchúr Ó Brolcháin, lecturer in the Department of Language and Literacy Education at MIC, lent his expertise to the educational programme while graduates, Orla Ní Fhinneadha, Joe Ó hEachtairn and Mícheál Ó Dubhghaill appeared on the show.

As schools around the country remained closed due to the third wave of the COVID-19 pandemic, MIC once again teamed up with RTÉ to support families and children in continuing their learning during this time for a second series of Home School Hub.

Professional Master of Education (PME) graduate, Ray Cuddihy, was one of the presenters and MIC staff including Dean of Education, Prof. Emer Ring, advised on programme content adapted to children's unique learning environments at this time and ensure that a focus was maintained on adopting a universal pedagogy designed to support all children's participation.

### **Cultural Events and Initiatives**

MIC continued to promote Irish culture and heritage through a variety of online events and initiatives. These included virtual workshops, lectures, and performances, which were made accessible to both the MIC community and the wider public. The College also supported the work of local artists and cultural organisations, helping to sustain the cultural life of the region during a difficult year.

### **Bridge Back to School**

A particularly notable project was the MIC-led 'Bridge Back to School' initiative, developed in partnership with AsIAm, the Autism Awareness Charity, and SuperValu. This initiative provided resources and support to help children with autism transition back to school



following the disruptions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. The project received widespread praise for its impact, with the toolkit being distributed to thousands of families across Ireland.

### **Community Outreach Programmes**

MIC's community outreach programmes adapted to the new realities of the pandemic, with many activities moving online. These programmes, which include tutoring, mentoring, and educational support services, continued to provide valuable resources to local schools and community groups. The College's commitment to social responsibility and community engagement remained strong, even as it faced the challenges of remote delivery.

### **Promoting the Irish Language**

The promotion of the Irish language remains a cornerstone of MIC's cultural mission. During the Academic Year 2020-2021, the College continued to support the use of Irish through its academic programmes, cultural events, and community outreach activities.

### **Irish Language Programmes and Events**

MIC offered a range of programmes and events aimed at promoting the Irish language, including virtual classes, workshops, and cultural celebrations. These initiatives were designed to support both fluent speakers and those learning the language, fostering a vibrant Irish language community within the College and beyond. The success of the 'Cúla4 ar Scoil' programme, in particular, highlighted the College's leadership in promoting Irish language education during a critical time.

### **Collaboration with Irish Language Organisations**

The College also maintained strong relationships with Irish language organisations, collaborating on projects that promote the use of Irish in educational and cultural contexts. These partnerships are central to MIC's strategy for supporting the revitalisation of the Irish language and ensuring its continued relevance in contemporary society.

### **Public Health Initiatives**

MIC also played a role in public health education, using its platforms to disseminate important information about COVID-19 safety measures and vaccination. The College's communication efforts were aligned with national public health campaigns, helping to ensure that accurate and timely information reached the local community.

Participation by the College on the Midwest Together Interagency Group also allowed coordination of key COVID-19 messaging at a local level. The group, which continues to collaborate, involves councils, higher education institutes, Garda and other relevant agency representatives in the Limerick, Clare, and Tipperary regions.

## **11. Sports**

The COVID-19 pandemic had a significant impact on sports activities at MIC, with many competitions and events postponed or cancelled. However, the College remained committed to supporting its student athletes and promoting physical well-being.

### **Adaptations to Training and Competition**

To comply with public health guidelines, MIC implemented several adaptations to its sports programmes. These included socially distanced training sessions, virtual fitness classes, and modified competition schedules. The College also provided resources and support to help student athletes maintain their physical fitness and mental well-being during the periods of restricted activity.

### **Achievements in Sports**

Despite the challenges, MIC student athletes continued to achieve success in their respective sports. The College celebrated several individual and team accomplishments, reflecting the dedication and resilience of its athletes. MIC's sports programmes remained an important part of student life, providing opportunities for personal development and community building.

## **12. Graduation Numbers for Academic Year 2020-2021**

MIC successfully adapted its graduation ceremonies to an online format in response to the restrictions imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic. These virtual 'Ceremonies of Recognition' allowed students to celebrate their achievements with their families and friends, while ensuring that everyone remained safe.

Students from across 31 counties throughout Ireland, as well international students from Brazil, Mexico, Morocco, Poland, India, China and the United States, graduated from almost 40 different undergraduate and postgraduate programmes, including 19 graduates who were conferred with doctoral awards. Over 150 graduates and current students of the College also received awards and scholarships in recognition of their academic and sporting achievements.

### **Graduation Statistics**

The 2020-2021 Academic Year saw a strong cohort of graduates across all programmes. Despite the challenges of the pandemic, MIC maintained high standards of academic excellence, with a significant number of graduates achieving first-class honours and distinctions. The College's continued focus on quality education and student support was reflected in the success of its graduates.

### **13. Energy Usage**

As part of its commitment to sustainability, MIC continued to monitor and manage its energy usage during the 2020-2021 Academic Year. The College implemented several initiatives aimed at reducing its carbon footprint and promoting environmental responsibility.

#### **Energy Efficiency Initiatives**

MIC introduced a range of energy efficiency measures across its campuses, including the installation of energy-efficient lighting, the optimization of heating and cooling systems, and the promotion of sustainable practices among staff and students. These initiatives contributed to a reduction in the College's overall energy consumption, supporting its long-term sustainability goals.

#### **Sustainability Education and Awareness**

The College also focused on raising awareness of sustainability issues among its community. This included the integration of sustainability topics into the curriculum, the promotion of environmentally friendly practices, and the organization of events and campaigns aimed at encouraging responsible energy use. MIC's commitment to sustainability is reflected in its ongoing efforts to reduce its environmental impact and educate future generations about the importance of environmental stewardship.

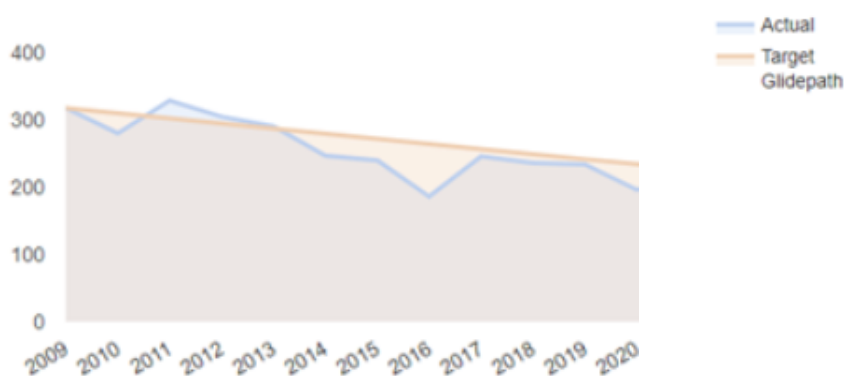
#### **Analysis of Energy Consumption Metric**

The metric used to measure MIC energy usage (EnPI – combined Energy Performance Indicators) is a unit that combines a measure of electricity usage as measured over treated

unit floor area, thermal gas usage, kilowatt hours consumed by students per year, and kilowatt hours consumed by staff per year. From 2009 to 2019, Mary Immaculate College’s combined energy consumption metric showed a consistent effort to manage and reduce energy use, with the metric generally trending downward over the decade. Initially, energy consumption fluctuated between 200 and 300 units, reflecting a concerted effort to reduce usage despite growing campus demands. Compared to the 2009 baseline, energy consumption by 2019 had decreased by approximately 15-20%, indicating steady progress in energy efficiency over the years.

The year 2020, however, marked a significant rate of reduction. During this year, energy consumption dropped by more than 20% compared to the average levels seen 2016 alone. This decline was largely due to the COVID-19 pandemic, which significantly reduced on-campus activity and, consequently, energy demand.

*MIC EnPI Performance 2009 - 2020*



**Source:** MIC EnPI Dashboard

EnPI data for 2020 suggests that while Mary Immaculate College had been steadily reducing its energy consumption before the end of the year, the pandemic provided an extraordinary circumstance that accelerated this reduction. The drop in 2020 highlights the potential for substantial energy savings under different operational conditions, revealing that significant reductions are achievable.

This data also illustrates that Mary Immaculate College has made consistent progress in reducing energy consumption over the decade, achieving a notable drop of around 20% from the 2009 baseline by 2019. The significant reduction in 2020, while driven by exceptional circumstances, underscores the potential for even greater savings. By maintaining the efficiencies gained during this period, the college is well-positioned to continue its trajectory towards meeting our ambitious 2030 energy goals.

## **14. Financial Overview**

In summary, Mary Immaculate College managed to navigate the financial challenges of the pandemic successfully, thanks in large part to increased state support. The College's ability to generate a surplus and improve its overall financial position during such a turbulent time is a testament to its resilience and the effectiveness of the support it received. While some income streams did take a hit, the overall financial picture is one of stability and cautious optimism.

### **Income Overview**

The College's income grew from €50.97 million in 2020 to €54.96 million in 2021. This is a positive sign, especially considering the disruptions caused by the pandemic. A key factor behind this growth was an increase in State Grants, which went up by about €2.64 million, from €14.21 million in 2020 to €16.85 million in 2021. This boost likely reflects the government's effort to support educational institutions during the pandemic.



**Statement of Comprehensive Income**  
**Year ended 31 August 2021**

		Year ended 31 August 2021 €'000	Year ended 31 August 2020 €'000
<b>Income</b>	<b>Note</b>		
State Grants	3	16,853	14,212
Other Programme Grants	4	2,021	414
Academic fees	5	25,205	23,631
Research and Self-Funded Programmes	6	3,571	3,852
Other income	7	776	1,620
Interest and Investment income	8	28	24
Deferred funding for pensions	22	<u>6,502</u>	<u>7,220</u>
<b>Total income</b>		<b>54,956</b>	<b>50,973</b>
Amortisation of state capital grants	18	<u>1,413</u>	<u>1,429</u>
		<b><u>56,369</u></b>	<b><u>52,402</u></b>
<b>Expenditure</b>			
Staff costs	9	28,398	26,682
Other operating expenses	10	12,916	12,031
Depreciation	12	1,835	1,835
Pension cost	22	<u>9,142</u>	<u>9,519</u>
<b>Total expenditure</b>		<b><u>52,291</u></b>	<b><u>50,067</u></b>
<b>Surplus for the year</b>		<b>4,078</b>	<b>2,335</b>
Actuarial gain/ (loss) in respect of pension schemes	22	(29,395)	7,163
Movement on pension receivable	22	29,395	(7,163)
Gain on Investment	13	<u>515</u>	<u>150</u>
<b>Total comprehensive income for the year</b>		<b><u>4,593</u></b>	<b><u>2,485</u></b>
<b>Represented by:</b>			
Unrestricted Reserve		4,275	3,004
Restricted St Patrick's Reserve	25	<u>318</u>	<u>(519)</u>
<b>Total comprehensive income for the year</b>		<b><u>4,593</u></b>	<b><u>2,485</u></b>

All items of income and expenditure relate to continuing activities.

The financial statements on pages 23-53 were approved by the Governing Body on the 16<sup>th</sup> February, 2022 and were signed on its behalf by:



**Bishop Brendan Leahy**  
**Cathaoirleach**

**Date: 24<sup>th</sup> June, 2022**



**Mr. Michael Keane**  
**Vice-President Administration & Finance**

**Date: 24<sup>th</sup> June, 2022**

Another significant contributor to the income increase was the surge in Other Programme Grants, which jumped from a modest €414,000 in 2020 to €2.02 million in 2021. This massive rise suggests that the college received special funding, possibly tied to pandemic relief efforts, to support specific educational and research programmes.

However, not all income streams fared as well. For instance, Other Income saw a sharp decline, dropping by more than half from €1.62 million in 2020 to €776,000 in 2021.

### **Expenditure Analysis**

On the expenditure side, the College saw some increases, particularly in areas that are likely connected to the challenges of operating during a pandemic. Staff costs, for example, increased by €1.72 million, rising from €26.68 million in 2020 to €28.40 million in 2021. This could be due to a range of factors, including the need for additional staffing to support remote learning, adjustments in pay, or even the costs of implementing new health and safety measures.

Similarly, Other Operating Expenses also rose, increasing by €885,000 to reach €12.92 million in 2021. These expenses covered a broad spectrum of pandemic-related needs, from enhanced sanitation to technology upgrades necessary for online education.

Interestingly, Pension Costs saw a slight decrease. Depreciation costs, which reflect the wear and tear on the College's assets, remained stable.

Despite the pressures of the pandemic, the College ended the year with a surplus of €4.08 million, a notable improvement from the €2.34 million surplus in 2020. This increase indicates that the College not only managed to cover its costs but also had funds left over, which is a positive sign of financial resilience.

Looking at the broader picture, the College's Total Comprehensive Income for the year—which includes adjustments for pension schemes and investment gains—also saw a healthy increase, rising from €2.49 million in 2020 to €4.59 million in 2021.

## **The Role of Temporary State Support**

One of the key takeaways from this financial statement is the critical role that temporary state support played in keeping the College on stable financial footing during the pandemic.

The substantial increases in State Grants and Other Programme Grants provided much-needed resources that helped offset potential shortfalls in other areas.

This extra funding was helpful both in terms of maintaining the College's operations and adapting to the new challenges brought by the pandemic - such as shifting to remote learning and ensuring the safety of students and staff -as well as providing critical resources for the College to pass onto students in the form of learning supports (such as laptops for student unable to afford such items).

## **Budget & Future Planning**

The College developed a conservative budget for the 2020-2021 Academic Year, incorporating contingency plans to address the uncertainties posed by the pandemic. This budget prioritised the continuation of academic programmes, student support services, and essential operations, while also allowing for flexibility in response to changing circumstances. Looking ahead, MIC's financial planning will focus on ensuring long-term sustainability, with a particular emphasis on diversifying income streams and managing costs.

## **Capital Investments**

Despite the financial pressures, MIC continued to invest in critical infrastructure projects, including the ongoing Library Project and the implementation of digital learning technologies. These investments are aligned with the College's strategic goals and will

provide long-term benefits to the MIC community. The careful management of capital investments ensured that these projects could proceed without compromising the College's financial stability.

### **Cost Management and Efficiency Initiatives**

MIC implemented several cost management and efficiency initiatives during the year, aimed at reducing operating costs and improving financial performance. These initiatives included the renegotiation of supplier contracts, the consolidation of administrative functions, and the introduction of energy-saving measures. The College also explored opportunities for increasing operational efficiency, with a focus on streamlining processes and leveraging technology to reduce costs.

### **Fundraising and External Funding**

Fundraising efforts were intensified during the 2020-2021 Academic Year, with a particular focus on securing external funding to support the College's mission. MIC successfully attracted several grants and donations, including funding from the HEA Gender Equality Enhancement Fund. These funds were critical in supporting the College's initiatives in areas such as gender equality, digital learning, and campus development.