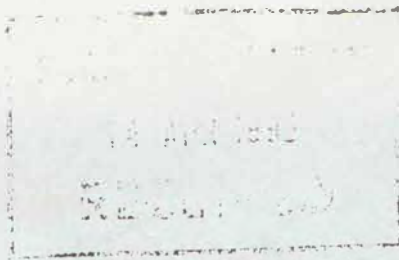




UNIVERSITY of
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13 April 1995

European Division
Department of Finance and Personnel
Arches Centre
11-13 Bloomfield Avenue
Belfast, BT5 5HD

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Dear Sir

European Union - Special Support Programme for Peace and Reconciliation

In response to your advertisement which appeared in the local press on the 16 March 1995, I enclose a copy of an outline response, submitted by the University to DENI for the March 29 conference at the Slieve Donard Hotel.

For information, I have also enclosed two papers on the proposed Springvale Campus which were recently submitted to NIHEC in response to a request for information on student access, participation and migration.

The University has been involved in planning for the Springvale Campus for the past two years. In June 1994 a feasibility study into the proposal by Management Consultants Touch Ross was published; in September 1994 the University produced a brochure *The University of Ulster at Springvale: A Peaceline Campus for the New Millennium* (copy enclosed); and in February 1995 a report for the University by economic consultants Segal Quince Wicksteed on the local economic impact of the Springvale Campus was published (copy enclosed).

The University of Ulster has a major interest in the EU Initiative and looks forward to receiving the call for applications to be submitted for proposals whenever the final programme document has been agreed.

Yours Faithfully

Professor Wallace Ewart
(Springvale Project Director)

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EUROPEAN UNION INITIATIVE - THE EDUCATION SERVICE'S CONTRIBUTION UNDER THE PROPOSED DRAFT STRUCTURE

The University of Ulster welcomes the opportunity to comment on the provisions of the European Union Draft Notice and endorses the proposals set out in the paper '*European Union Initiative - the Education Service's Contribution Under the Proposed Draft Structure*'. In the following sections the University draws attention to its existing activities and sets out broad proposals for fresh initiatives which conform to the aims of the EU draft guidelines.

1 THE UNIVERSITY IN THE COMMUNITY

1.1 Expanding access to Higher Education across the Province

In addition to the c. 19,000 students on its four existing campuses, over 2,000 students are enrolled on courses which the University of Ulster has validated/franchised and which are delivered in Colleges of Further Education. The students are involved either in access courses (the University is the sole authorised validating agency for access courses in Northern Ireland) or in HNC/HND or other sub-degree programmes. This network of activity, which extends throughout the province, has expanded rapidly in recent years and will continue to do so: it is a major means of facilitating lifelong continuing education and hence promoting social inclusion in both urban and rural Ulster.

1.2 Tutoring in Schools

Another substantial outreach activity is the Tutoring in Schools scheme whereby, voluntarily, students from all faculties work alongside pupils in a primary, secondary or special school for an agreed period of at least one semester. Besides bringing extra hands and particular skills into the classroom, these students act as role models for pupils: their presence is particularly valuable in schools situated in deprived areas, few if any of whose pupils, in present circumstances, ultimately proceed to third level. Since November 1992 some 350 students from the University have acted as tutors in schools throughout the Province. In the current second semester in 1994/95 some 155 students are working in 104 schools. The scheme is scheduled to expand, with two features of forward plans being particularly noteworthy in the present context: firstly, students on the University's courses in the FE Colleges are being brought into the scheme; and secondly, negotiations are underway for students to be placed in schools on both sides of the border with the Republic of Ireland.

1.3 Social Inclusion through Community Outreach

Since its formation in 1984 the University of Ulster has made a significant contribution to community and social development throughout Northern Ireland

in collaboration with a network of community-based partners, local authorities and training and employment agencies. The existing outreach infrastructure includes:

- educational opportunities for adults from disadvantaged backgrounds
- cross-community programmes for community organisations and leaders
- professional development for teachers, trainers and youth workers
- programmes for women
- INTERREG cross-border initiatives in deprived rural areas
- family studies courses
- community drama
- performance and drama for schools and colleges.

These outreach activities complement other University initiatives which are aimed specifically at raising educational attainment and promoting Education for Mutual Understanding, such as the Higher Education Liaison Programme in Londonderry, the Tutoring in Schools programme and the BT sponsored ACTOR project.

A Community Task Force has been formed to further develop and expand these initiatives across the Province among urban, rural and border communities. In so doing it will draw on the University's outreach experience, including the INTERREG cross-border initiatives, and our work in Belfast and Derry; and on the experience of other institutions such as the City University of New York and Miami Dade Community College.

2 KNOWLEDGE & TECHNOLOGY TRANSFER

The University of Ulster constitutes an important growth element in the regional economy. It creates direct and indirect employment, attracts inward investment, supports local companies through training, collaborative research and development, consultancy and staff exchange and contributes to community development via access and outreach programmes as already indicated. These benefits are in many ways the result of structured knowledge and technology transfer programmes, and they relate to all of the Task Force priorities.

Specific components of the University's strategy in this context include the Teaching Company activity, the Science Shop (joint with QUB), the EU supported STRIDE centres now nearing the end of their initial funding, the work of the Northern Ireland Small Business Institute, 'marketing of innovation' initiatives, professional development and consultancy. The University fosters such collaboration in urban, rural and cross-border situations. Recent relevant developments include the Seagate plant in Derry and ABC Laboratories at Coleraine and the establishment of cross-border research and development partnerships in biotechnology and sensor technology. Frequently, participation

in European research partnerships, such as those within Framework, results in the provision of facilities and the development of expertise which directly assist local industry, including SMEs, in their pursuit of competitiveness. The telecommunications infrastructure now in place facilitates distance learning and training, and collaborative R&D (for example in the north west and involving the University of Ulster at Magee).

The track record is good, but much remains to be done, notably to engage SMEs and community enterprise more fully in the challenge of achieving international competitiveness and quality standards. Too few SMEs utilise and exploit appropriate technology. The University of Ulster wishes to contribute directly to the enhancement of SME and community enterprise performance through extension of its existing programmes for knowledge and technology transfer, and by the greater involvement of further education colleges, district councils and community groups in practical partnerships to deliver both social inclusion and wealth creation.

3 THE SPRINGVALE CAMPUS

In their feasibility study into the University's proposal to develop a new inner-urban campus at Springvale in North/West Belfast, Management Consultants, Touche Ross, concluded that

'A new campus for Springvale offers the potential to support three major, and different policy aims - as a site to accommodate part of the University's strategy for expansion in response to growing demands for higher education; as a focus for economic and community regeneration in a deprived inner city area; and as a bold measure to cut across the sectarian divide in perhaps the most sensitive area of Belfast.'

Working with a network of partners in government, industry, education and training and community agencies, the University of Ulster at Springvale would contribute significantly, in a number of ways (for example through social and community harmonisation; and through economic, urban and environmental regeneration) to realising the aims of the EU's initiative for peace and reconciliation in one of the most economically, socially and environmentally depressed inner urban areas in Western Europe.

3.1 Higher Education

As part of its overall development plan, the University of Ulster, through its Springvale campus, will be able to provide much needed additional student places, for which there is an urgent and growing demand in Northern Ireland. Currently some 40% of NI domiciled full-time undergraduate students leave to study elsewhere, and increasingly many, especially from lower socio-economic groups, do so reluctantly and in the face of growing financial hardship. Further,

of those who leave, only 15% or so return. This represents a severe loss of a highly talented workforce capable of contributing significantly to the economic, social and cultural regeneration of the Province as a whole.

3.2 Employment

In their study, Touche Ross estimated that the campus would provide some 1,450 full-time equivalent jobs (including construction jobs) in the Greater Belfast area. Economic consultants, Segal Quince Wicksteed were subsequently engaged by the University to investigate the potential employment impact of the campus in the immediate Springvale area. Their findings indicate that, initially, some 230 of direct and indirect jobs may go to local residents and a further 200 jobs may go to local workers during the construction of the campus.

The University will work with local training agencies, community groups and other educational providers to identify what training steps might be taken over the next few years to equip local residents to compete for the jobs which become available.

3.3 Investment and Employment through Knowledge Transfer

The University has already established a strong network of collaborative links with industry, government bodies, enterprise agencies and health and community services groups in North/West Belfast. The presence of a university campus in the immediate area would increase the opportunities for knowledge transfer through collaborative programmes for research and development, technology and information transfer, consultancy services, management development and training and access to technical and information services. This would particularly benefit embryonic businesses and SMEs. The University's Teaching Company Schemes would also be extended to Springvale.

3.4 Economic Development

The presence of a university has a very positive effect in attracting technologically based firms to an area, with obvious spin-offs of job creation and economic diversification. The proposed Springvale Campus has already influenced one firm's decision to locate in the area. Fujitsu quoted proximity to the proposed campus as one of the reasons for locating in the Springvale Business Park, stating:

'The University's role as a partner in economic regeneration schemes is central to our desire to be part of the revitalisation of the Springvale region. Universities are unique centres of specialist knowledge and technical facilities and help provide highly skilled workforces.'

3.5 Social and Environmental Enrichment

The campus would contribute to the social and environmental enhancement of the area by working in partnership with the community and other agencies to develop educational services, social, cultural and recreational facilities which would be accessible to the community; by developing high quality, attractive buildings and extensive landscaping on a derelict tract of land; and by adding to the life of the community and providing a focus around which attractive private retail outlets would develop

3.6 Community Outreach

The University already has a well-established outreach programme in the North/West Belfast area which would be developed further by the presence of the Springvale Campus in the immediate locality. In particular, our Community Task Force has identified a number of initiatives to enhance personal development and help to improve all levels of education and promote lifelong learning; to offer support facilities to pupils, parents and teachers; and to provide remedial or accelerated programmes to those who need them including families, parents, women and, in particular, those who have been involved in or affected by the 'Troubles' over the past twenty-five years

4 COMMENT

In summary, the University of Ulster can contribute significantly towards the realisation of the aims of the EU initiative. By building upon and extending its existing initiatives the University will

- facilitate lifelong education
- promote social inclusion in both urban and rural Ulster
- enhance business competitiveness and community enterprise through knowledge and technology transfer
- support the creation of new networks of schools and of training organisations on a cross-community basis
- establish and enhance links with local, cross-border and overseas partners
- develop computer-mediated teaching/learning programmes
- widen access to distance open learning
- contribute to the regeneration of inner-city Belfast.

16 March 1995