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William Murphy, Professor of Law and Chair, Commerce and Tecnology Law Graduate Program travels to Ireland

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UNH Global

William Murphy

Professor of Law and Chair, Commerce and Technology Law Graduate Program - Ireland

It is difficult to find a major U.S. corporation with extensive intellectual property assets that does not have some of those assets located in the small, picturesque Republic of Ireland. Favorable tax laws, a well educated English speaking population with strong bonds to the Irish diaspora, a common law based legal system tied to a market based economy, and the closest member country of the European Union to United States, have all contributed to the transformation of Ireland from a largely rural economy on an island on the outskirts of Europe (that even the Romans avoided) into a desired location for the international management of intellectual property assets critical for the information age economy.



(l. to r.) Attorney Foley, Professor Murphy (UNH), and Professor Friel (University of Limerick)

As my principal contact on this trip, Professor Raymond Friel, current head of the International Commercial and Economic Law Research Group at the School of Law at the University of Limerick and former head of the law school, put it in his invitation to explore greater collaboration between UNH and UL, “Ireland is essentially the capital of U.S. intellectual property management outside of America.” Information age giants such as Apple, Google, Facebook, Intel, and Microsoft,

not to mention nearly all major pharmaceutical companies, have a significant presence in Ireland and have become a critical component of the Irish economy.

UNH Law has long been a recognized¹ leader in the area of intellectual property law education so it is only natural that UNH should seek to forge and strengthen bonds with legal institutions and professionals in Ireland. Students and faculty in both countries can benefit greatly from increased collaboration and interaction. It is with this goal in mind that this particular trip to the University of Limerick was undertaken.

The University of Limerick is one of the younger major universities in Ireland and it is noted for its creative and entrepreneurial approach to higher education.² It was established in 1972 (it started as the National Institute for Higher Education, Limerick, and was renamed as the University of Limerick in 1989) and as such has a more modern and open campus compared to the older Irish universities - such as University College Cork and Trinity, which were founded in 1845 and 1592 respectively, and are located in and surrounded by their respective urban environments.

Although relatively young the University of Limerick has recently been on a roll of recognition. The Sunday Times selected the University of Limerick as the University of the Year in 2015. The University was also recently ranked in the “top 150 of Young Universities of the World” by The Times Higher Education (THE) World University Rankings.

The modern campus, with its unique student “villages,” occupies a nearly 330 acre site a few miles east of historic Limerick City in the town of Castletroy. The river Shannon flows through the University dividing it into a north campus (in Co. Clare) and south campus (in Co. Limerick). One well-known feature of the



campus is the unusual “Living Bridge” that provides easy pedestrian access between the two parts of the campus.[1] Prof. Murphy with Eddie Keane (l.), Director of Teaching and Learning in the School of Law

The University has approximately 12,000 students who are served by 1300 staff and faculty. Most of the students are enrolled in what we would call undergraduate education (they call it third level) but they offer a full range of academic programs up to doctoral and postdoctoral levels in a variety of disciplines including the Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences, Business, Medicine, Science and Engineering, and Law.

In December of 2014 I was invited to work with the International Commercial and Economic Law Research Group (known as ICEL) at the University of Limerick during the spring semester starting January 2016. During that sabbatical visit the possibility of greater inter-institutional cooperation and collaboration arose. The invitation to return in 2017 (supported by a CIEGE travel grant and the University of Limerick’s generous provision of housing) to strengthen the ties between UNH and UL resulted in this particular trip.³

The University is currently undertaking a “€224million Capital Development Plan that will consists of 12 infrastructural developments on the University’s north and south campus, construction of a new Clinical Education Research building on the site of the University Hospital Limerick, and development of a City Centre Campus including student residences and an academic building in Limerick City Centre.” As part of the plan a new modern courtroom for the law school is being constructed as part of the library expansion. This will be a trial courtroom to augment their existing appellate courtroom.

While in Limerick I met with a number of faculty, legal professionals and students. Of particular interest was the effort to develop a blended learning, transatlantic course exploring the interface of emerging technologies, law and commerce. A pair of “exchange modules” was agreed upon for development and inclusion in already existing courses at both law schools as a proof of concept. While there we had fun experimenting with using green screen video techniques for some of the planned asynchronous modules.

Already the trip has shown positive results with Professor Friel coming to Durham at the end of May to deliver a series of teaching modules in the first World Intellectual Property Summer Institute at UNH, providing a critical perspective in a number of topic areas such as international copyright and

international trademark law. In addition, Professor Friel will join with me in a joint interactive session on the legal challenges facing the open innovation paradigm.

Legal education focusing on intellectual property, technology and commerce increasingly requires an international perspective. Fortunately, the same information technology that has introduced once wondrous products that are now ubiquitous and new methods of business for coordinating worldwide manufacturing and distribution can also help lower the costs of delivering this global perspective directly from international scholars to our students. It is hoped that the ties with the Irish legal academic community strengthened during this trip will lead to creative education and research opportunities that will benefit all participants.

¹ UNH Law has been consistently ranked in the top ten law schools for intellectual property law education, and most recently has been ranked in the top five by U.S. News and World Report.

² For example, the University recently opened the first graduate entry medical school in Ireland – modeled along the U.S. model – in contrast to the normal Irish medical education system of starting medical students at the beginning of undergraduate studies. Their law program has also pioneered what they call “Law Plus” (which allows law students to supplement their legal education with electives from a wide range of subjects and disciplines), and a well regarded “Law and Accounting” program focused on the acquisition of extra skills sets from the fields of economics, taxation and mathematics. It has also pioneered a two year graduate entry LLB for students who already have a university undergraduate degree in an area other than law. This has been a help to those with science degrees who might want to use that knowledge and training in the legal sector (such as patent law).

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