Editor's Introduction[*]

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Welcome to this issue of AISHE-J, the open-access journal of scholarly research into teaching and learning of the All Ireland Society for Higher Education (AISHE).

AISHE is a professional society whose goal is to bring together and support people who are concerned to advance higher education on the island of Ireland. It promotes the professional recognition and enhancement of teaching and learning in higher education through a range of activities including seminars, conferences, publications, and the provision of online community forums and services.

This issue commences with an invited article from Paul Kleiman, based on his 2010 AISHE Conference keynote address. Kleiman considers the effect of the current economic crisis on higher education and highlights the opportunities this situation presents to "grab the creative, transformational bull by the horns and start developing, building and nurturing the people, systems and environment that help to really sustain a creative ecosystem in higher education."

The four research papers in this issue showcase creative solutions to a range of teaching and learning issues in higher education. In response to calls by government and employers for graduates with well developed generic skills, Dempsey et al. present a case study of an undergraduate module taken by Business and Engineering students which employs an internet-based Wiki to facilitate collaboration between small multicultural, interdisciplinary student groups. In the second paper, Rani et al. explore student nurses' perceptions of the clinical environment in a specialist forensic setting. The factors which influence students' perceptions should be of interest and relevance to readers involved in professional education programmes across a range of disciplines. The efficacy of experiential learning through simulation is examined by Daly & Higgins. The particular focus of their paper is the use of simulation in legal education; however, Daly & Higgins's findings have implications for teaching and learning practice beyond their own discipline. The final research paper in this issue, from Noel Carroll, is an evaluation of the use of asynchronous, online communication tools including email, discussion boards and weblogs to support students' learning in Irish

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institutes of technology. The findings of this evaluation and the author's recommendations should be of interest to individual teachers across the higher education sector wishing to make best use of their time in communicating effectively with increasingly large classes as well as academic managers with responsibility for allocation of funds to support teaching and learning.

Two new sections are introduced in this issue, namely *Letters* and *Project Reports*. Letters to AISHE-J may be brief reports of original research or responses to and commentaries on previously published AISHE-J articles. Our first letter, from Miguel DeArce falls into the second category. DeArce's letter is a robust account of cultural and practical barriers to the successful integration of e-learning in a traditional university. I would urge readers to consider this letter in the context of Kleiman's article, particularly in relation to his thoughts about the need to build and nurture systems and environment that enable individuals to respond creatively to the increasingly complex challenges of teaching in higher education.

The Project Reports section seeks to highlight and disseminate the activities of educational projects which have demonstrably significant applications for teaching and learning within academic disciplines or across the higher education sector. Our first project report from the Irish Mathematics Support Network (Mac an Bhaird et al.) provides an overview of the Network's establishment and subsequent development as well as a summary of key activities to further mathematics support for the wide range of students studying mathematics in Irish universities and institutes of technology.

As this is my last issue as Editor, I would like to take this opportunity to thank all those who make AISHE-J possible: the Editorial Committee; the reviewers; Barry McMullin and Linda King for nurturing each issue to publication and of course many thanks to those who submit articles and to those who read them.

I will be succeeded as Editor by the out-going President of AISHE, Saranne Magennis, who brings to the role a wealth of professional experience in higher education. I wish Saranne and AISHE-J every success.

Articles in this Issue (AISHE-J, Vol. 3, No 2, Autumn 2011)

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