Diary Dates 2011

3-4 October
The Living Knowledge Science Shop network will run an ‘Autumn School’ in Dublin for those interested in establishing a Science Shop or ‘community based research’ initiative. See NAIRTL website for details.

20-23 October
The 8th annual ISSOTL conference is on “Transforming the Academy through the Theory and Practice of SOLT” and will take place in Wisconsin in late October. More on http://issotl11.indiana.edu

27 October
In preparation for the 2012 International conference on Threshold Concepts, an Autumn Symposium will be held in UCC on the same topic. Register online at www.nairtl.ie

Keynotes identified for 2012 International Conference

Two leading academics are confirmed for the 2012 International Conference on Threshold Concepts, which is NAIRTL’s 6th Annual Conference.

L-R: Patrick Carmichael, Glynn Cousin

Patrick Carmichael, Professor of Educational Research at Liverpool John Moores University, has been a Principal Investigator of a number of research projects which have applied and explored the ideas of ‘threshold concepts’ and ‘troublesome knowledge’ and more recently has focused on learning in interdisciplinary settings. Glynn Cousin, Director of the Institute for Learning Enhancement at the University of Wolverhampton, is strongly associated with the field of curriculum inquiry which is centred on threshold concept theory.

Threshold Concepts are described as ideas which are crucial to a deeper understanding and mastery of a discipline, and the 2012 conference will examine how the idea of Threshold Concepts is used in student learning within and between disciplines.

The Threshold Concepts International conference takes place every two years and the 2012 conference will be held in Trinity College Dublin from 27-29 June. This conference is the National Academy’s 6th annual conference and the deadline for submission of abstracts for this event is October 31st 2011.

Visit www.nairtl.ie/conference2012 for further details and to register.

Engaging Minds Conference

Delegates enjoying the 2011 conference

NAIRTL’s 5th annual conference took place in Galway in early June and attracted a broad representation of staff from forty-seven institutions across Ireland, UK and the US. The two day conference was organised in conjunction with the Centre for Excellence in Learning and Teaching (CELT) in NUI Galway and was focussed on student engagement in Higher Education.

Fifty-five presenters gave papers on topics such as engaging large classes, technology enhanced learning, students as co-creators of knowledge, civic engagement and social responsibility, the First Year experience and technology enhanced learning.

NAIRTL encourages and supports innovation in linking education and research. Innovation has always been a key criterion of success for grant applications and NAIRTL has contributed to a wide range of innovative educational initiatives across a broad range of discipline areas nationally.

A study on the impact of the NAIRTL Grants Initiative is currently underway and will culminate in a report to be launched later this year.

Making a Difference?

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A short presentation style known as ‘Pecha Kucha’ was also piloted at the conference. In this style presenters show 20 slides spending just 20 seconds on each slide. This approach provided ‘golden nuggets’ of information about student engagement activities happening in Ireland and the UK.

Feedback from the conference has been very positive and recordings from the conference will soon be made available on the NAIRTL and CELT websites.

Download 2010 Proceedings!

The Proceedings of the National Academy’s 4th Annual Conference on Flexible Learning are now available on the NAIRTL website, in the spirit of the conference theme, the proceedings were prepared as an e-publication, taking the form of an interactive book of abstracts that links to recorded videos, conference papers, and poster snapshots. We trust that this will be a useful resource for many higher education professionals.

NAIRTL Website Reaching International Audiences

Did you know that the NAIRTL website has had close to 100,000 visits from 156 countries/territories around the world? Our events calendar is our second most popular page so be sure to submit details of your event so far. Have you accessed our resources yet?

About NAIRTL

For details regarding any of our events or activities, please refer to our website www.nairtl.ie or contact us:

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Distillery House
North Mall, Cork
T: 021 4905644
E: nairtl@ucc.ie

NAIRTL is on facebook and twitter too.
Autumn Symposium on Threshold Concepts

University College Cork will play host to an Autumn Symposium on Threshold Concepts on October 27-29th. This is one of a series of workshops on the topic taking place across the island of Ireland to help support the participation of an Irish cohort in the 2012 International Conference (see news item over).

The objectives of this symposium are to provide the theoretical background underpinning the idea of Threshold Concepts, to highlight the ways these can be used to advance student learning within and between disciplines, and to share examples of teaching that enable learners to gain a deeper understanding and mastery of their discipline.

Professor Ray Land, a pioneer of the idea of Threshold Concepts and leading expert in the field, will provide background information on the idea of Threshold Concepts in accordance with his fellow 2012 Conference Steering Committee members.

The Symposium will also include a workshop looking at ways students can be encouraged to grasp Threshold Concepts, representing twenty-five higher education institutions in the Republic of Ireland and featuring collaborations with other public sector boards, research institutes, hospitals, private sector industry and HEIs in nine countries including Australia, Belgium, England, Israel, Kosovo, Northern Ireland, Scotland, Sweden, and USA. The selection process is now underway and final decisions will be made at a selection committee meeting to be held in August.

The National Academy, to date, has disbursed more than 150 grants to projects that have served to enhance the third and fourth level experience. The outputs of these projects include communities of practice, course materials, interactive software, education programmes, workshop resource materials, websites, handbooks, e-learning courses, public lectures, conference papers, training programmes, seminars, journal papers, etc. Further details on successful projects are detailed on the NAIRTL website.

National Academy Launches CAPE Initiative

The National Strategy for Higher Education to 2030 emphasises that the same professional standards requiring continuing professional development in professions such as medicine, dentistry, law and engineering should be expected of higher education teachers. Echoing the European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance, the strategy suggests that teaching staff should be given opportunities to develop and extend their teaching capacity and should be encouraged to value their skills.

In response to the strategy, NAIRTL has launched the Continuing Academic Practice Education (CAPE) initiative. The CAPE initiative is a potential mechanism to formally record and recognise the continuing professional development activities of higher education professionals as credits in academic practice.

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California Higher Education Coordinating Committee (CHECC) 40TH ANNIVERSARY

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Supervisor Support

A seminar focused on the Supervisor Support curriculum developed by a NAIRTL working group was held in April. Presenters from six HEIs - Cork Institute of Technology, NUI Galway, Trinity College Dublin, University College Cork, University College Dublin, and Waterford Institute of Technology - spoke about the support mechanisms they have put in place for supervisors in their respective HEIs.

Supervisors interested in the results of this event are invited to attend or send a representative. Further information is available at www.nairtl.ie/cape.

National Academy invites applications for the 2011 Grants Initiative: Embedding Best Practice

In gratitude of the NAIRTL’s support for theembeddings of Threshold Concepts in the UCC experience, the National Academy invites applications for the 2011 Grants Initiative: Embedding Best Practice (see news item over).

The challenge posed by the National Academy’s Grants Initiative is to embed best practices into standard practice. This year the National Academy invited applications from existing communities/networks of practice for financial support for research activities and projects under specified thematic areas, which have been identified as priority areas in the National Strategy for Higher Education to 2030.

We received close to 80 applications for the 2011 Grants Initiative from communities/networks of practice representing twenty-five higher education institutions in the Republic of Ireland and featuring collaborations with other public sector boards, research institutes, hospitals, private sector industry and HEIs in nine countries including Australia, Belgium, England, Israel, Kosovo, Northern Ireland, Scotland, Sweden, and USA.

The National Academy, to date, has disbursed more than 150 grants to projects that have served to enhance the third and fourth level experience. The outputs of these projects include communities of practice, course materials, interactive software, education programmes, workshop resource materials, websites, handbooks, e-learning courses, public lectures, conference papers, training programmes, seminars, journal papers, etc. Further details on successful projects are detailed on the NAIRTL website.

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Feedback from the conference has been very positive and recordings from the conference will soon be made available on the NAIRTL and CELT websites.

Entering Minds Conference

The Living Knowledge Science Shop Network hold a workshop on Engagement and threshold concepts in Galway as part of the ISSOTL conference. The workshop was held on the 23rd of October 2011 and discussed the Learning in an Interdisciplinary setting. This workshop also discussed the idea of threshold concepts and how they can be used to develop teaching and learning in interdisciplinary settings. The workshop was a great success and a lot of information was shared.

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