O’DONNELL + TUOMEY
UCC Student Hub

Cork, Ireland
DESIGN: 2015-16
CONSTRUCTION: 2017-18

The New Student Hub is to be sited in within the heart of the historic University Campus. The identified site within the campus contains the existing Waste Medical Building and the adjoining area between this building and the prominent Kane Science Building. The intention is to re-establish the Waste Building’s key role within the historic university core.

The proposed Student Hub has an area of approximately 5,800 m² and extends over 5 floors. It will house a range of different facilities which have been helved down into 5 overlapping themes: Welcome Zone/Teaching and Learning Zone/Learning Zone/Success Zone/Employability Zone/Student Life/Zone.

These zones bring together the various administrative and educational schools of University Life in a new student-focused building.

SITE
The site is bounded to the east by the historic Gaunt ordered Building dating from 1949. To the west it is bounded by the imposing facade of the Kane Science Building occupying the site of the old County Gaol. To the south is the Old College Bar dating from the 1940s. An open, sloped landscape to the north extends views towards Sundays Well and the greater Lee Valley. The Waste Medi- cal Building occupies a central position within this campus setting. The site offers a great opportunity for a new focal point within the campus. It activates the campus circulation routes—"campus space"—and will become a key part of the landscape of quadrangle, courtyards, squares and landscaped spaces on campus.

PROBLEM
The current role of the Waste Building within the historic campus setting is currently undermined by a series of low-quality additions and interventions which have taken place since the completion of the main building in 1947. The most recent developments in the immediate surroundings of the building have also had a negative effect on the building’s setting. The potential amenity of the setting to the University Campus has been undermined by the prioritizing of car parking over a coherent campus landscape strategy.

Requirements for structured open space and opportunities for landscape development in the "Medical Quadrangle" and the area between the Waste and Kane Buildings have been identified in various University Masterplanning Reviews.

PROGRAM
O’Donnell Tuomey were appointed as architects for the UCC Hub project in December 2014. We have worked closely with the University Estates Department in identifying current and future needs of the University and how these needs could be accommodated within the excising new development for the Campus. Through intensive workshops with established Working and Steering Group we have been able to test and challenge current concepts and proposed ways of working in a contemporary University context in an inclusive consultation process. The project was permitted planning in June 2016.

Construction for the UCC Hub will commence in Summer 2017.

SOLUTION
Our design is carefully assembled to make a coherent whole proposal from a complex set of interdependent components. Our analyses of the context and our work with the University on the brief for the building has uniquely nurtured the design approach.

We have developed a site-specific sculptural concept for the architectural design, which was the Waste Building in its original element. The curved wall of the stone base responds to the established campus movement pattern. The delicate vertical "funicular" is tailored in height to the neighboring Quadrangle buildings, and in form to respond to lines of sight along approaching views and from key campus locations and perspectives.

The proposal is designed to embody the dynamic character of a contemporary Student University Building while respecting the particular historic context of UCC. The solidity of the historic Waste Building provides a stable anchoring element around and through which the building accommodation is woven.