

# ARCHITECTURE IRELAND

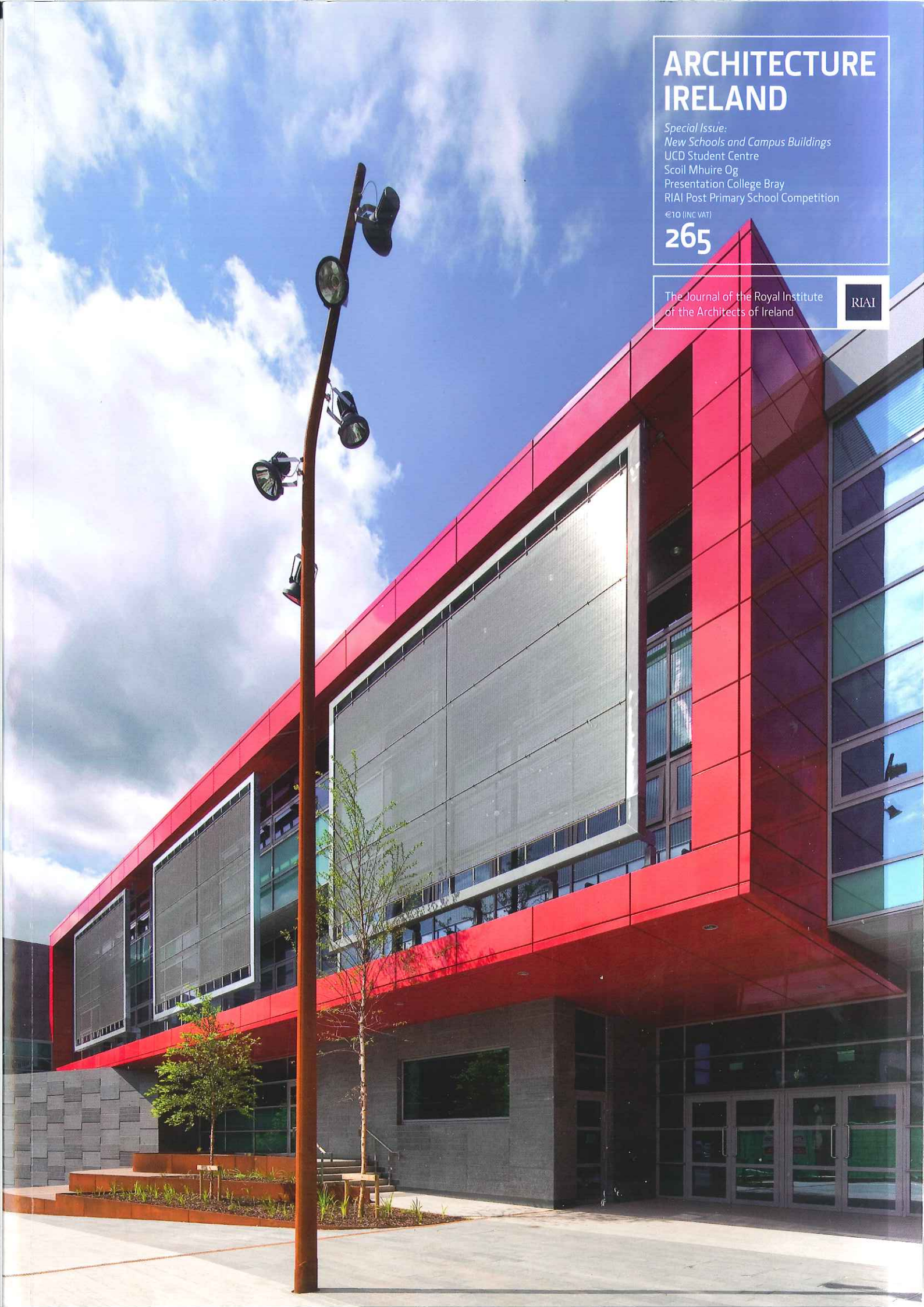
*Special Issue:*  
New Schools and Campus Buildings  
UCD Student Centre  
Scoil Mhuire Og  
Presentation College Bray  
RIAI Post Primary School Competition

€10 (inc VAT)

## 265

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RIAI





## UCD STUDENT CENTRE

**ARCHITECTS** - Fitzgerald Kavanagh + Partners  
Aidan Kavanagh (Managing Partner), Gerry Murphy (Design Director), John Thomson (Technical Director), Andrew Howley (Senior Project Architect), Karen Hassey, Chris Doorly, Maurice Fitzgerald, Jan Kukula, Susan Tighe, Ronan Cosgrove

**GCCC EMPLOYERS REPRESENTATIVE** - Fitzgerald Kavanagh + Partners

**CLIENT** - UCD Property Development Company

**PROJECT MANAGERS AND QUANTITY SURVEYORS** - Davis Langdon

**CIVIL / STRUCTURAL ENGINEERS AND SERVICES CONSULTANTS** - ARUP

**FIRE CONSULTANTS** - White Young Green

**ACOUSTIC CONSULTANTS** - Allegro Acoustics

**FAÇADE ENGINEERING** - Billings Design

**LANDSCAPING** - Stephen Diamond Associates

**PROJECT SUPERVISOR DESIGN PROCESS** - Atkins

**POOL CONSULTANTS** - Devin Consulting

**MAIN CONTRACTOR** - Walls Construction

**PHOTOGRAPHER** - Donal Murphy

**Project size** - 22,000m<sup>2</sup>

**Value** - €50m

**Duration** - 16 months

**Location** - UCD Campus, Dublin

*Report by Fitzgerald Kavanagh + Partners*

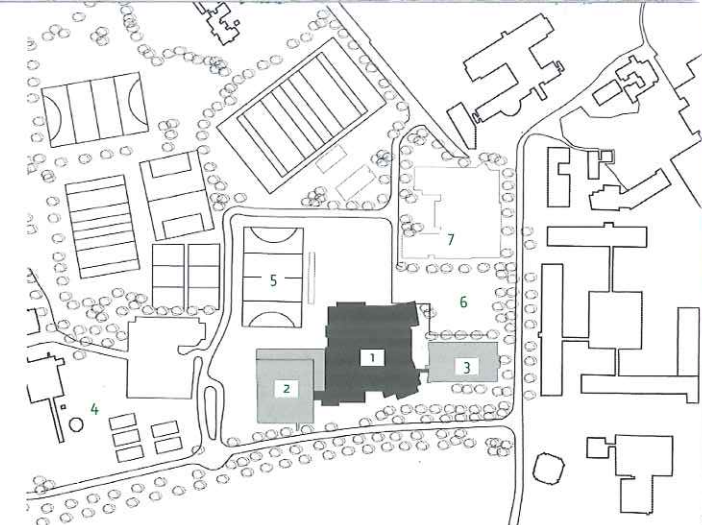
In late 2007, *The Sunday Independent* published an article in which incoming students detailed their reasons for choosing their respective universities, focusing particularly on the character and facilities of the campuses. Interviewed students summarised the UCD campus as "cold and lacking in colour". This terse but insightful article became emblematic of the architects' journey towards the development of the new UCD Student Centre.

The UCD student body has been, from the very inception of this project, the decisive design generator. This body of research became known as 'A Day in the Life' because it revealed the fascinating diurnal cycle of use, reinterpretation and reuse unique to UCD's shared spaces: how the same room hosts a very diverse range of uses during the course of a single day.

FKP revisited the original masterplan for UCD, penned in 1964 by Andrzej Wejchert. His concept would place the new Student Centre project at the centre of a complete sports precinct, surrounded on three sides by playing fields; the exact site where the 50-m swimming pool is now constructed as the heart of the new sport and leisure centre. The design team pursued a programme, which was much more than the pool / leisure facility described in the competition brief, additionally adopting the vision of sporting excellence in the original masterplan.

For the design scheme, which FKP presented in August 2008, all our research had coalesced into a building which is the new epicentre of social, creative and sporting activity in UCD. Standing on a granite-paved plaza at the intersection of existing sporting, academic and leisure facilities at the westernmost boundary of UCD, adjacent to the iconic water tower, the FKP proposal joined the neighbouring UCD Sport and Student Centres to create a combined 22,000m<sup>2</sup> destination for everyone in UCD. Construction began in earnest in November 2009, after a conclusive cycle of design development led by students, teaching staff, administrative staff and local residents.

The disparate collection of functions – swimming pool, debating chamber, gym, seminar room, café among others – act as a city in microcosm, unified under a bird-wing glulam structure, which



**Site Plan**

- 1 New Student Centre
- 2 Wejchert Sports Centre
- 3 Student Union Building
- 4 UCD Water-Tower
- 5 National Hockey Arena
- 6 Landscaped Square
- 7 Health Sciences Building

soars outwards to embrace its newly-interconnected neighbours. Each function is expressed as a self-contained volume with its own unique spatial and material character. The resulting voids and spaces in-between make the building a navigable, corridor-less public 'playground'.

The exterior is composed primarily of monochromatic volumes with discreet shots of colour in reference to the materiality and colour of the wider campus. Inside, however, colour comes to the fore. The interior is a commensurately vibrant, playful and fun backdrop to student life, expressed through apposition of strong colours and haptically rich materials. Slips of flamed-textured limestone versus large-scale polished black granite; grit-blasted black concrete versus smooth white corian and tiling; exposed services adjacent to dropped white ceilings; white terrazzo versus electric green flooring – all these pursue the vision of vibrancy through diversity.

A sense of order is maintained through a complex set of visual rhymes, where colours are used at different scales in symmetry across a single space. Visual interconnectedness means that the most conspicuous volumes – the yellow radio pod, the red fitness studio and green changing rooms – can be used to easily orient oneself from anywhere in the Student Centre. This intuitive architectural legibility subconsciously fosters understanding and a welcome sense of ownership.

After nightfall, and the general closure of the Student Centre, the architecture re-emerges anew as a festival of colour across the public squares. Flood-lighting dematerialises the glass and steel mesh façade to bring the large coloured volumes to prominence as a fun, charged backdrop to the nightlife of the campus: evening training sessions, students leaving the Clubhouse Bar, media teams working late and other activities yet to occur.

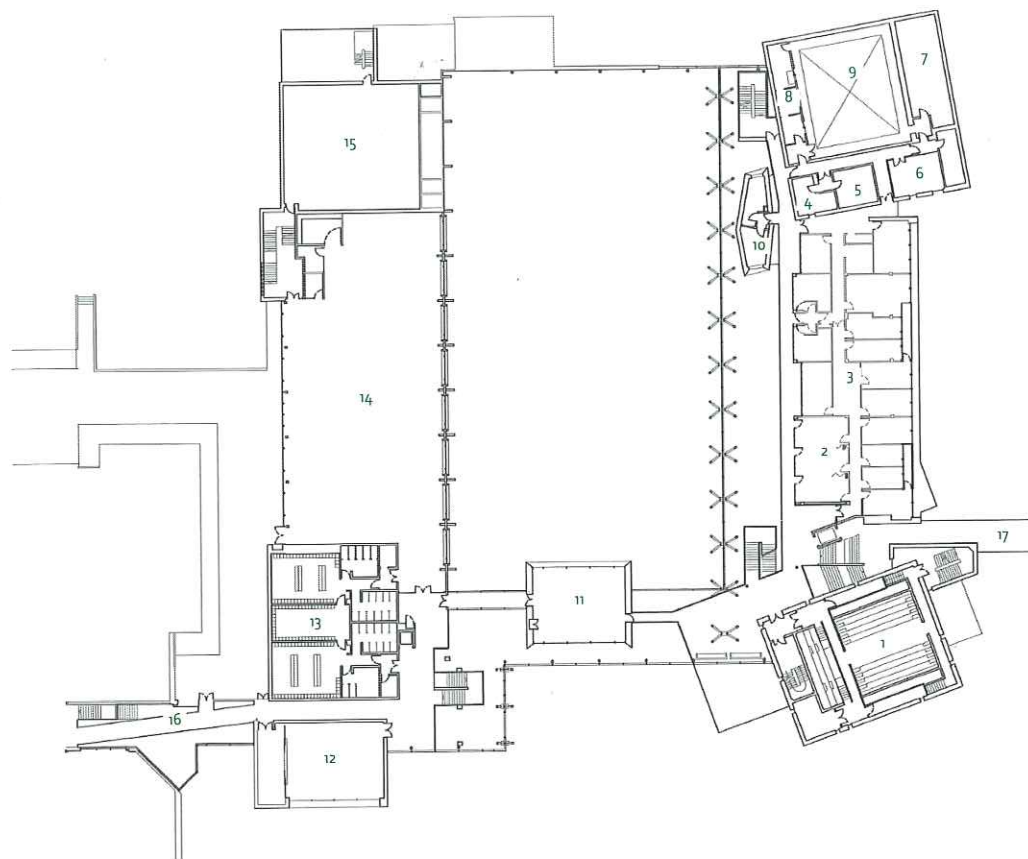
Conceived as UCD reflects on 50 years at Belfield, and plans for its future there, the Student Centre embodies this paradigm shift in the institution's history: Fitzgerald Kavanagh Partners' building is the legacy of a period of very high achievement.



1. The new UCD Student Centre re-emerges anew at night when the interior becomes alight with colour  
2. Diverse building uses have been unified under a bird-wing glulam structure  
3/4. Colour has been used to identify key building uses such as the red fitness studio and the yellow radio pod

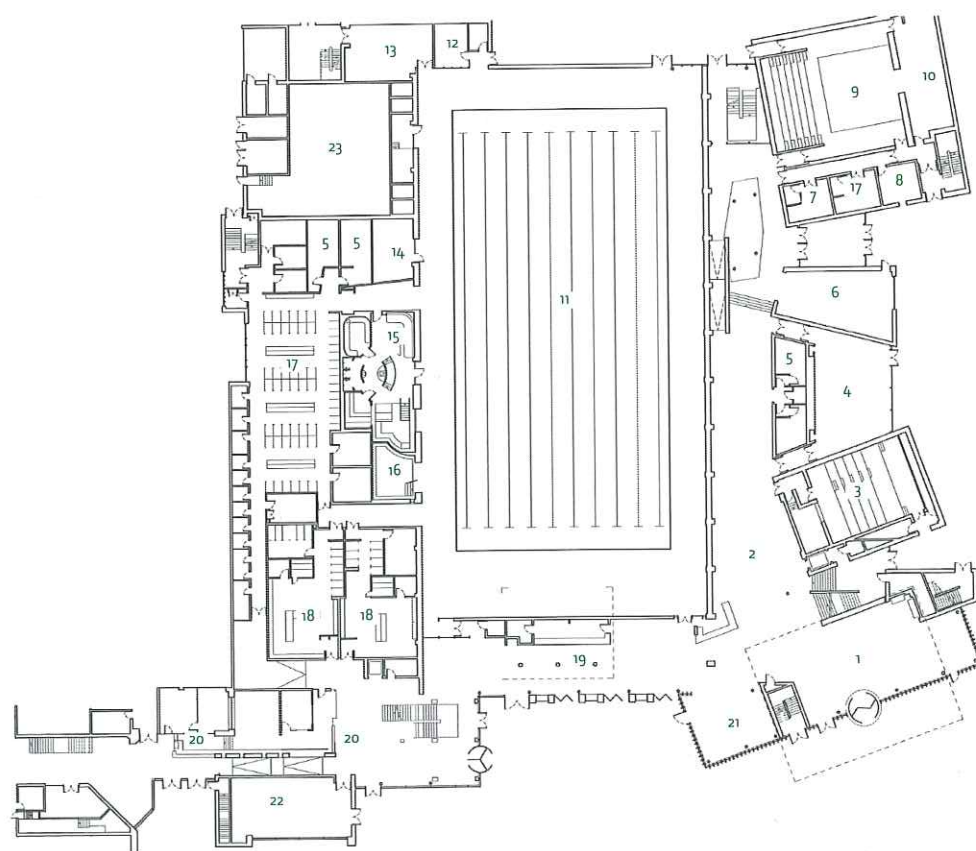
#### First floor

- 1 Debating chamber
- 2 Meeting rooms
- 3 Offices
- 4 TV office
- 5 TV studio
- 6 Newspaper office
- 7 Drama control room
- 8 Drama perimeter gantry
- 9 Radio Pod - Studio & Office
- 10 Dance Studio
- 11 Aerobics studio
- 12 Changing
- 13 Gym
- 14 Link to existing Sports Centre
- 15 Link To Existing Student Centre



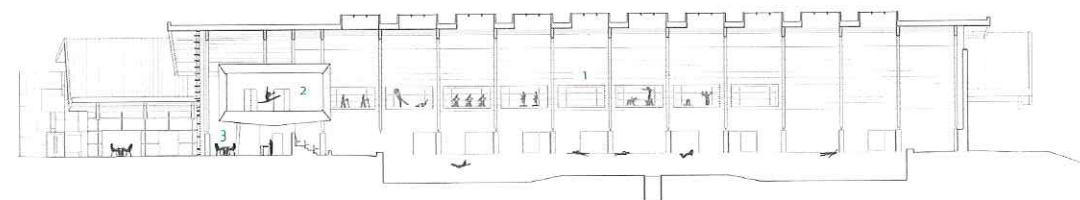
#### Ground floor

- 1 Entrance Lobby
- 2 Gallery walk - Public Street
- 3 Cinema / Multimedia
- 4 Seminar Room
- 5 Toilets
- 6 Shop
- 7 Changing room
- 8 Green Room
- 9 Drama Theatre
- 10 Scene Dock
- 11 50 meter Swimming Pool
- 12 Life Guard Office/First Aid
- 13 Equipment Store
- 14 Wet Classroom
- 15 Teppidarium / Spa
- 16 Children's Pool
- 17 Changing village
- 18 Members Changing
- 19 Café
- 20 Fitness Reception Desk
- 21 Shop
- 22 Office



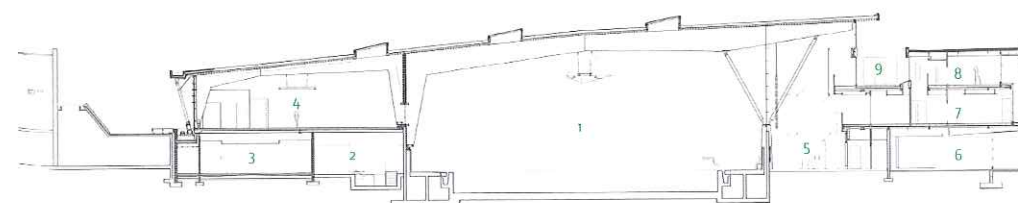
#### Long Section

- 1 Swimming Pool
- 2 Dance Pod - Studio
- 3 Café



#### Cross Section

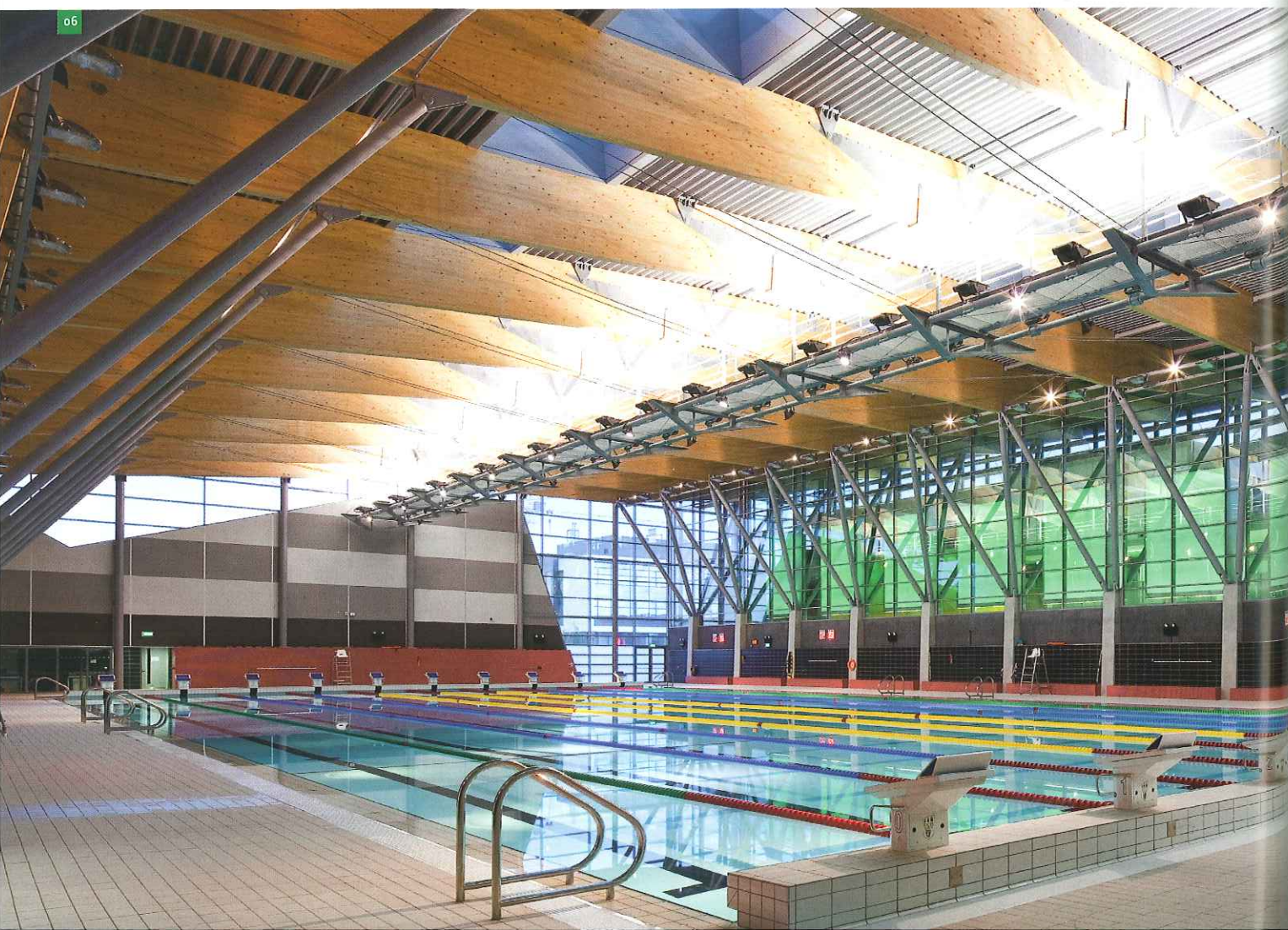
- 1 Swimming Pool
- 2 Teppidarium / Spa
- 3 Changing Village
- 4 Gym
- 5 Gallery Walk - Public Street
- 6 Seminar Room
- 7 Student Rooms
- 8 Medical Suite
- 9 External Courtyard



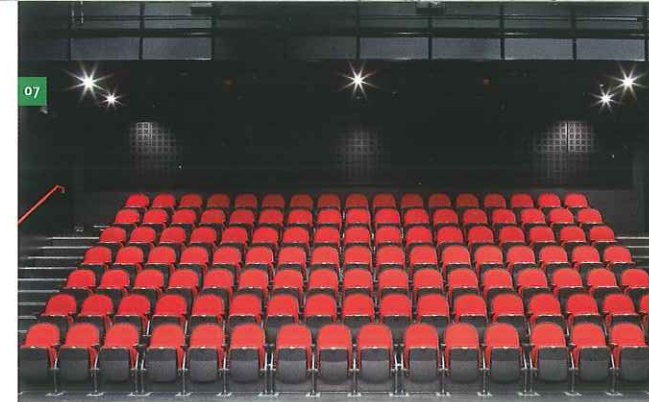




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5. The exterior is composed of monochromatic volumes with discreet shots of colour  
6. The swimming pool is the central hub of the sports complex  
7/8. The theatre and debating chamber



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## COMMENT

*James Mary O'Connor, Principal in Moore Ruble Yudell Architects, reflects on campus design in the US and Ireland*

The opening of the extraordinary UCD Student Centre designed by Fitzgerald Kavanagh + Partners is a momentous occasion in the recent story of the UCD Belfield campus. As a fellow architect and Principal at the firm of Moore Ruble Yudell Architects & Planners, I am delighted to add my enthusiastic voice to the celebration of this remarkable architectural achievement.

The ideals and values of our own practice, Moore Ruble Yudell, are most fully evident in the depth and breadth of our work for college and university campuses. Moore Ruble Yudell is internationally recognised for a strong and varied practice in campus architecture and planning. In Ireland, we take great pride in our current role as the Master Planner, Design Architect, and Design Team Leader on the Grangegorman Urban Quarter Master Plan for the Health Service Executive (HSE), Dublin Institute of Technology (DIT) and the Local Community in North Central Dublin. This project is at present being implemented, following the international design competition held in 2007 and the completion of the Master Plan design process in 2009.

In our extensive experience on planning and architectural projects at academic institutions, we have found that the ultimate test of campus buildings is how well they 'fit', relate to and affect the existing campus fabric at multiple scales—not only the immediate surrounding buildings around the site, but the entire campus as a whole—in order to create a strong sense of place and an inclusive sense of community. Based on these criteria, the new UCD Student Centre facility is an unequivocal success, forming a vibrant social, sports and creative 'campus heart' for the benefit of students at UCD.

Moore Ruble Yudell's other recent campus work in North America is exemplified by

our award-winning Steger Student Life Centre at the University of Cincinnati, Ohio, the Sloan School of Management at Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), and the Student Community Center at the University of California, Berkeley, which provides a rich, diverse mix of activities and program elements very similar to the UCD Student Centre project. Our design approach emphasises a commitment to the creation of campus places that celebrate and inspire human habitation and participation, seeking design solutions that are unique responses to their context, culture, and the aspirations of their communities.

In this regard, it was a pleasure and honour for me to be invited as a participant on the UCD Gateway Project Competition jury panel assembled by President Hugh Brady in 2006. During the process of this competition at the highest level, I was delighted to meet and get to know Aidan Kavanagh. FKP (in association with Behnisch Architekten, Stuttgart) were the only Irish architectural firm included in a shortlist of five comprising the international firms of Zaha Hadid, Michael Hopkins, Ingenhoven and Snøhetta invited to prepare design proposals. During the design and jury process, the FKP team clearly demonstrated a thorough understanding of Hugh Brady's vision and aspirations for the Belfield Campus. FKP was advanced to the short-list of 3 finalist teams, after an impressive presentation and interview during which Aidan Kavanagh's passion for the UCD Belfield campus was most apparent.

In 2008, I had the pleasure to meet Aidan again at the opening of the Arup Design & Research Headquarters in Dublin Docklands – an elegant project also designed by FKP. In the same year, our relationship with Aidan and FKP was further strengthened when FKP with the UCD Estates team travelled to Cincinnati

University in Ohio, USA on a visit to experience the establishment of the iconic

'Signature Architects' precinct of new buildings in the centre of the campus, as part of FKP's development work at project commencement with UCD on the Student Centre design. Cincinnati University's dynamic ensemble of new projects by internationally known designers includes the Steger Student Life Centre by Moore Ruble Yudell, the Campus Recreation Centre by Morphosis, the Richard Lindner Athletic Centre by Bernard Tschumi, the College Conservatory of Music by Pei Cobb Freed & Partners, the Aronoff Centre for Design and Art by Peter Eisenman, and the Vontz Centre for Molecular Studies by Frank Gehry. Among these projects, two in particular – Moore Ruble Yudell's Steger Student Life Centre and Morphosis's Campus Recreation Centre, anchoring a newly-created 'Main Street' pedestrian spine through the heart of the University of Cincinnati campus – were seen by the participants to define an attractive centrepiece of campus life which became a Belfield project ideal, now brilliantly delivered by FKP with the new UCD Student Centre.

With the opening of this remarkable facility, FKP have met and exceeded the challenge of providing 11,000m<sup>2</sup> of student-identified needs by completing an outstanding ensemble of facilities – seamlessly connecting the existing Student Centre and the 1980 RIAI Triennial Gold Medal-winning A&D Weichert-designed 1964 Sports Centre. Creating a compelling new focus for student life at UCD with an engaging combination of scale, colour and fun, the completion of the UCD Student Learning Leisure & Sport Complex is a unique achievement. It is a spectacular, inclusive building that is most worthy of becoming a multi award-winning facility for UCD.

This is an extract from *A Day in the Life* by Fitzgerald Kavanagh + Partners. (There is now a free kindle version of this book available for download from Amazon)