# **President’s Report to the Annual General Meeting of the MBA Association of Ireland (MBAAI) Limited to be held Thursday 25th January 2024 at 6.15pm at the RDS, Dublin.**

The MBA Association of Ireland (MBAAI) is a CLG (Company Limited by Guarantee) as outlined in the Companies Act 2014 and a Registered Charity with the Charities Regulator. It is the representative body for all MBA students and graduates living in Ireland, which aims to extend the value of the MBA qualification over a lifetime. The Association does this through;

* Organising events and activities and sharing thought leadership to keep members abreast of current management thought;
* Facilitating networking with fellow MBAs from Irish and international colleges on a business and social level;
* Enhancing the public profile of the MBA brand generally across the island of Ireland.

2023 has been a busy and successful year. We continue to see strong levels of interest from members to engage in events, which are the lifeblood of our Association. We worked hard to complete an exceptionally strong calendar for 2023. We very deliberately upped the number of blue chip events as part of a new quarterly *International Speaker Series*.  Feedback from our members tells us that it is this type of prestigious event that they want from their Association. The events delivered to members in 2023 included;

* 2022 AGM and Entrepreneur’s Evening, January 25th
* “Geopolitics and Corporate Strategy: Navigating global competition in an age of uncertainty” with Professor Thomas Lawton, March 8th - Southern Chapter
* “AI - For Better or Worse?” with Tomas Chamorro-Premuzic, March 30th
* Annual Golf Outing, May 12th
* “Prosper in a Crisis” with James Burstall, May 23rd
* “Make Work Healthy” with John Ryan, June Dublin and Limerick
* Annual BBQ, July 26th
* “Leadership Strategy and Culture” with Hugh O’Donnell, September 28th – Mid-Western Chapter
* “The Microstress Effect” with Karen Dillon, October 25th
* “Getting Along with Difficult People with Amy Gallo”, November 8th
* National Strategy Competition, November 15th
* “Economic and Investment Outlook” with Goodbody, November 29th
* “Best Business Books of 2023” with Frank Dillon, December 8th
* “MBA Mixer” with MTU and our Southern Chapter, December 11th – Southern Chapter

In addition to our own events, we continued our collaboration with the CGAI (Corporate Governance Association of Ireland), the Professional Women’s Network (PWN) and the Institute of Management Consultants and Advisors (IMCA).

An ongoing priority for the board is building upon our relationships with academic institutions and current students, with a view to building our future membership and providing for the networking needs of MBA students across the country. A real highlight of the MBA student calendar, this year’s National Strategy Prize was an intense, challenging, fiercely competitive and hugely enjoyable experience for competing teams. We had representation from all four corners of Ireland this year, with teams from Queens University Belfast, University of Galway, Dublin Business School, The South East Technical University and the inaugural team from The University of Limerick. This year’s exercise was set by renowned disruption expert Ade McCormack and teams were challenged throughout the 2.5 hours they had to prepare their solution. The team from SETU came out victorious on the day, and were worthy winners. We also had awards for best overall speaker - Srishty Panwar (Dublin Business School), commendable speaker - Dave Greaney (University of Galway) and our runner-up team was Queens University Belfast. Our thanks to Paul Reilly, South-East Chapter director who provided the amazing venue - Flutter HQ. Thanks also to former MBAAI president Alacoque McMenamin and business journalist and managing editor at Decision Magazine Frank Dillon of who had the unenviable task as judges alongside Ade McCormack. Our appreciation also to our board members who helped in the running of this event and the academic staff from the various colleges who supported the participating teams.

Beyond the annual strategy competition, our engagement with students through addressing their classes to educate them about the association and invite them to join us is ongoing, led by Conor Horgan, and has yielded a really strong response. Additionally, our chapters in the South, Mid-West and South East have continued to go from strength to strength led by Chapter Directors Michelle Gallagher, Jerry Crowley and Paul Reilly respectively and this has included some great regional events listed above. I am very pleased to say that a new Chapter Director, Sandra Grogan, has joined the board for the West and we will be looking to revitalise this Chapter in the coming year, as well as seeking to build upon the success of the team from Queens to rebuild our Northern Chapter.

During the year, we continued to see high levels of student membership (and attendance at our events) but very low sign ups to graduate membership. This is a vital area to be addressed, as new full members are so important to the ongoing development of our association. We see a slow decline in full members and need an steady influx of new members to keep our association viable. As such, in 2023 we abolished the graduate membership offering for any new student members and restructured the way that student members join the organization. Under this new approach, students will still receive a full discount during their studies, but sign up with full payment information up front and can easily and automatically transition their membership from student to full membership without having to effectively re-join the association. We believe this will drive much healthier conversion rates from student to full membership in the coming years by overcoming the issue of losing touch with students when they graduate. Even a relatively low, but steady conversion rate to full membership would greatly benefit the association long term.

From a financial perspective, we made a very deliberate decision in 2023 to invest in our event schedule and the quality of those events and consequently we ran a small cash deficit during the year. We believe this investment in the quality of our offering to members is critical and in order to fund this, as well as to address an inequity in how our members are charged their fees, we took the decision at last year’s AGM to discontinue the €30 discount for membership by direct debit. This discount was intended as a temporary incentive to encourage members to move to this more efficient payment option. The majority of members have converted to direct debit for some time now and we need to maintain our future funding at a level that supports running a strong calendar of events for our members. We expect the financial impact of this change to be realised primarily in our 2024 accounts.

The MBAAI is an association of MBAs run voluntarily by members and has no direct employees, so our volunteer’s efforts, and in particular those of our board of directors, shape our association and drive the value that we deliver to the wider membership. As such, special thanks must go to all board members who served over the last year. I would like to acknowledge the support and significant contribution of Association Secretary Ronan Neary and board member Bryan Murphy who are standing down in January. We have welcomed new board members Maria Barry, Paul Reilly and David Bradley to our team, with Maria agreeing to take on the Secretary’s role effective February 2024. As a board, we are always open to any full member who is interested in serving the association and we are grateful to all of those who have given so generously of their time and expertise to improve the association for our members. Our appreciation also to all the volunteers who work with the regional chairs and give up their time and expertise to organise events, support networking, and raise the profile of the MBAAI in Ireland. Please consider getting involved, either at chapter or board level to enhance the association for our membership.

Our activities would not be possible without the support of our sponsors Decision Magazine, The Guinness Enterprise Centre, the Royal Dublin Society and Goodbody and our supplier partners including Conor Horgan of Horgan PR & Marketing. Conor is an absolute stalwart of our association and it is with great sadness that I am reminded of the tragic loss of young Michael Horgan, Conor’s son, in the past year. Once again, I extend our deepest sympathies to Conor and his family, and indeed to any of our members and board who have lost loved ones during the year.

From a personal perspective, I stand down as Association President at our AGM this year but will remain with the board for some months while we transition to our new President Michelle Gallagher (subject to confirmation at the AGM itself). Michelle has been a very active board member for some years, and brings enormous passion, drive and integrity to the role. It has been an honour to lead the board and the Association for the last few years and I look forward to watching continued progress under Michelle’s stewardship.

Finally, and most importantly, everything we do as an association is due to the continued support of our membership and I want to take a moment to thank our members, on behalf of all of the board, for their continued support. We look forward to continuing to serve you in 2024.

**Michael Bulman MBA MICS**

President - MBA Association Ireland.