

President's Report 2024

President's Report to the Annual General Meeting of the MBA Association of Ireland (MBAAI) Limited to be held Thursday 13th February 2025 at 6.15pm at the RDS, Dublin.

Good Evening Members, fellow Board Members and Invited guests.

It is an honour to stand before you as President of the MBA Association of Ireland. Since our foundation almost 6 decades ago, the association has evolved from a small group of graduates into a vibrant network that connects and empowers business professionals across Ireland and beyond. Our enduring commitment to leadership, innovation, and professional growth has continually evolved to create valuable opportunities for our members to connect, learn, and thrive.

As some of you might know, the MBA Association of Ireland was founded by the alumni of the first graduating MBA Class in Ireland. UCD Michael Smurfit Business School was also one of the first MBA programs in Europe. Our association is a CLG (Company Limited by Guarantee) as outlined in the Companies Act 2014 and is a Registered Charity with the Charities Regulator.

As I reflect on the last twelve months as President, I am incredibly proud but also conscious that I am only the fourth female president in the association's history. A role I have undertaken with energy, humility, respect, and determination. May I serve as a reminder to our members that the path to leadership, especially females in leadership is not always an easy one, or an obvious one, but one that is worth pursuing. It is one that is made richer by the diversity of thought, experience, and perspective that all of us bring to the table. My hope is that my term as president serves as an inspiration and a reminder that leadership comes in many forms, and I hope that we will see greater female representation on the presidential chains in the coming years.

As we look to the future, we must also recognise the progress we have made in promoting diversity and inclusivity within our association. I am privileged to be surrounded by exceptional board members.

I am extremely proud that we have achieved (though not intentionally) a 50/50 gender balance on our board, and across our team behind the association. We had less than 10% when I joined the board.

2024 has been a successful year in terms of growth as we increased the geographic reach of our association which now spans for the first time in years - the four corners across the Island of Ireland. 2024 saw the re-introduction of the Western Chapter, and Northern Chapter to complement our existing Mid-West, Southern and South-East Chapters.

We are a membership led organisation, and our board is constantly striving to unlock value for our members. We signed a strategic partnership agreement with the RDS this year, which has been instrumental in helping us continue to deliver top class International Speaker Series, while co-sharing on costs, which has been mutually beneficial to membership led

organisation. It has also increased the wealth of knowledge and experience in the rooms and led to some engaging Q&A sessions.

The Event Calendar we delivered in 2024 is a testimony not only to the efforts of Conor Horgan and Frank Dillion for the International Speaker Series, but also to our chapter directors this year including Jerry Crowley our Southern Chapter Director, Sandra Grogan our new Western Chapter Director and John Carroll our new Northern Chapter Director. While I assumed the running of all Mid-West Chapter events from Dec 2019 – Sept 2024, I was delighted to have my successor Miriam McCarthy join the board in Oct 2024 as the Mid-West Chapter director.

Our board delivered the following events in 2024:

- 2024 AGM & Michael Dwyer: an Entrepreneurial Journey, Jan 26th (RDS)
- Lessons from the Boardroom with Pat McDonagh, Feb 02nd (Mid-West Chapter)
- CUBS event with Carol Kulik, Mar 01st (Southern Chapter)
- Wendy K. Smith on “Both/And Thinking”, Mar 14th (Virtual)
- Michael Dwyer at University of Galway, Mar 21st (Western Chapter)
- Dorie Clarke on How to Be a Long-Term Thinker in a Short-Term World, May 30th (RDS)
- Is the Road to a renewable energy Island a renewable one? Jun 04th (Mid-Western Chapter)
- Annual Golf Outing at Powerscourt, Jun 07th
- Accelerate your Network: Engage, Learn & Connect July 4th (Western Chapter)
- Summer Barbecue, July 10th (Dublin, in association with PWN)
- From Metrics to Action: Sustainability event at UL, Sept 11th (Mid-Western Chapter)
- Nuala Walsh on making smarter decisions, Oct 11th (RDS)
- AI and the World of Work at Cpl, Oct 24th
- Des Dearlove: Certain Uncertainty, Oct 24th (Mid-Western Chapter)
- John Windsor on ‘Open Talent’, Nov 12th (RDS)
- The Economic and Investment Outlook with Goodbody, Nov 23rd (Virtual)
- "Lessons from a Fortune 500 leader": Caroline Hughes at University of Galway (Western Chapter)
- Navigating the NI venture capital & start-up landscape, at Queens, Dec 4th (Northern Chapter)
- “A Brand – not just for Christmas”, Dec 6th (RDS)
- ‘Leadership in Motion ‘with DELL, Jan 20th (Mid-Western Chapter)

In addition to the speaker events, we continued our collaboration with the Professional Women’s Network (PWN) and the Institute of Management Consultants and Advisors (IMCA).

2024 saw the re-introduction of social evenings in the greater Dublin region, which has been hosted and organised by various business schools across Dublin. They have proved a great success in terms of networking among MBA students, members and recent graduates and these have gone from strength to strength. It is our hope for 2025 that we can reignite an Eastern Chapter with a view to increasing touchpoints with our members in the Eastern region. If anyone is interested in coming on board, please do not hesitate to reach out to any of our board members. I have included the chapter updates with direct emails at the bottom of this report.

(As you can see from the slide) our events programme for 2025 is again a strong one, with lots more to come.

The ongoing priority for the association is looking to drive value for our members and grow our membership base. We work closely with business schools across the island of Ireland to ensure there is awareness of the association, and look to nurture our future membership pipeline. Our board have worked extensively this year to ensure we delivered events and touch points with each class. School visits remain a pivotal touchpoint, and I would like to thank the efforts of all our board members for delivering these. A highlight of the student calendar annually is the National Strategy Prize Competition which was set to run in Nov 2024. Unfortunately, due to circumstance outside our control this had to be postponed. We are looking forward to this event on 21st Feb, 2025.

The measures we took in 2023 to mitigate membership drop-off from student, and graduate to full paying members has materialised in H2, 2024. This has seen an uplift in conversion to full fee-paying members. Although relatively low, it has proved steady. Our thanks to the continued efforts of Cathy Dawdry our Accounts Administrator, Owen Murphy our IT Director, Conor Horgan our Communications Director and Mark O'Connor our Finance Director for their hard work and efforts in maintaining this steady flow of membership.

Our board is made up of a team of volunteers who go over and beyond for the association. 2024 saw a number of our board members retire from the board including Shane Connors our Finance Director, who has been invaluable to the association in recent years. Going over and beyond when we had no accounts admin cover for several months in 2023/24. We wish Shane every success with his recent acquisition and merger of Connors Meskill. Daavid Bradley retired from the board in 2024 along with Paul O'Reilly our Southeastern Chapter Director. Both Paul and David also worked extensively on our membership database, and we are grateful for their impact on the board. I assumed the role of President from Michael Bulman, who has been an unbelievable support & mentor to me during my time on the board, especially over the last 12 months. I want to wish Michael a happy 'retirement' from the board and hoping he enjoys his spare time in 2025.

We were delighted to recruit some new board directors in 2024 including Sandra Grogan our Western Chapter director, who has delivered three fantastic events in the year. Including the excellent Speed-Networking event on the 4th of July followed by an amazing panel of guest

speakers. A format which was highly successful in terms of positive feedback from members in attendance. Alisa Timis joined the board as Membership Director and has been a fantastic addition and support to Mark O'Connor our new Finance Director. John Carroll is our new Northern Chapter Director and delivered a top-class event in QUB in December. Miriam McCarthy our new Mid-Western Chapter Director has also delivered a superb event in UL in January 2025.

Our suite of activities would not be possible without the continued 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 the lifeblood of our association and we are all indebted to him for his service. He always goes the extra mile, and we are extremely lucky to have him on board.

We wish to acknowledge a number of passings in 2024 including Tony O'Reilly, one of our lifetime honorary members of the association. We would also like to acknowledge the sudden passing of Cathy Dawdry's mother, and my mother-in-law Cassie who passed away peacefully in 2024. Ar deis de.

I would also like to congratulate our past president Maeve O'Connell in her recent election success and wish her well in Dail Eireann. She had a fantastic director of Elections in Alacoque McMenamin another powerhouse past-president.

Finally, I would like to thank our members, especially those of you who have come to support our AGM this evening. On behalf of all the board, we look forward to continuing to serve you in 2025.

Is mise le meas,

Michelle Gallagher MBA
President - MBA Association Ireland

MBAAI Chapter Updates

MBAAI Western Chapter – 2024 Summary Report

Sandra Grogan, Western Chapter Director

A Year of Growth, Engagement, and Impact

2024 marked an exciting year for the MBA Association of Ireland (MBAAI) Western Chapter, as we launched, expanded, and delivered high-value events that strengthened our network and enriched the professional development of our members.

March: Launching the Western Chapter

Our inaugural event on March 21st at the University of Galway – J.E. Cairnes School of Business & Economics set the tone for what was to come. Michael Dwyer (founder of Pigsback.com) shared his entrepreneurial journey, offering candid insights on navigating challenges and securing investment. With Professor Jonathan Levie facilitating the discussion, attendees gained invaluable lessons in business strategy and resilience.

July: Building Connections & Leadership Insights

On July 4th, we took networking to the next level with a speed-networking session and an inspiring panel featuring Harry Hughes (Portwest CEO), Lucy Gernon (Executive Coach), and Patrick McKeown (Best-Selling Author & Breathing Instructor). This event reinforced our mission to enhance management practice through learning and connection, providing attendees with both actionable leadership insights and meaningful professional relationships.

October: Engaging in Global Business Perspectives

The Western Chapter facilitated a thought-provoking discussion with Hilary Beirne and the 2nd-year MBA class at the University of Galway. The conversation explored the declining influence of Irish America in politics and corporate boardrooms and its economic and political implications for Ireland. The discussion emphasized the importance of engaging with Ireland's global diaspora.

November: Strengthening the MBA Community & Leadership Lessons

On November 7th, the MBAAI was introduced to the 1st-year MBA students at the University of Galway, reinforcing the value of getting involved with MBAAI early. We

highlighted opportunities in networking and exclusive events, encouraging future leaders to maximize the benefits of their MBA journey.

Closing the year on a high note, Caroline Hughes delivered a compelling session on November 28th, sharing leadership lessons from her Fortune 500 experience. Her real-talk approach to resilience and leadership resonated deeply, and her book, *From Burnout to Breakthrough*, became a must-read for everyone in the room.

MBAAI Mid-West Chapter – 2024 Summary Report

Miriam McCarthy, Mid-Western Chapter Director (Nov – Present)

Michelle Gallagher Mid-Western Chapter Director (Jan-Oct 2024)

A Year of Growth, Insights, and Impact

The **Mid-West Chapter of the MBA Association of Ireland (MBAAI)** had an exceptional year in 2024, offering a **diverse range of events** that provided members with **valuable learning, networking, and leadership insights**. From thought leadership on navigating uncertain times to discussions on renewable energy and high-performance leadership, the chapter has strengthened its presence in the region, delivering high-impact experiences for professionals across industries.

Key Highlights of 2024

1. Leadership in a VUCA World

Kemmy Business School

How do leaders thrive in an unpredictable world? This question was at the heart of our event with **Des Dearlove, co-founder of Thinkers50**, who shared the latest thinking on leadership and management in a **volatile, uncertain, complex, and ambiguous (VUCA) world**. Attendees gained **new perspectives on leadership resilience and adaptability**, equipping them with strategies to navigate today's complex business landscape.

2. Business & High-Performance Sport – Lessons from Rugby Legends

Limerick Twenty Thirty DAC International Gardens

This **inaugural fundraising event for Garryowen Rugby Club** brought together business and sports leaders to explore how **lessons from high-performance sport** can translate into business success. We were privileged to hear from **Keith Wood, Martin Johnson, and mindfulness expert Dermot Whelan**, whose insights on leadership, teamwork, and resilience resonated strongly with attendees. With over **200 professionals in attendance**, this event laid the foundation for an **exciting annual tradition**.

3. Renewable Energy – The Road Ahead for Ireland

Analog Catalyst, Limerick in association with APC, ADI, UL and the MBAAI.

The discussion on **Ireland's renewable energy future** was a standout event, featuring **two powerhouse panels** that tackled critical issues in energy policy, leadership, and business strategy.

Panel 1: Examined Ireland's renewable energy policy targets, featuring industry leaders from ESB, SSE Renewables, Siemens Energy, and Marine Area Regulatory Authority.

Panel 2: Focused on the implications for leadership and business strategy, with insights from Verizon Connect, Davy, Analog Devices, and Eli Lilly.

Key Takeaways: The Mid-West region has immense potential in renewable energy, but realizing this vision will require bold decisions, major infrastructure investment, and long-term planning.

A huge thank you to Atlantic Projects Company and Analog Devices, Catalyst for sponsoring this event and to all those who contributed to its success.

Our Spring event took place in January 30th with a fireside chat with Tricia Kelly, COO Failte Ventures and formerly DELL, and Sean O'Reilly, VP Dell Limerick. Hosted by newly appointed Midwest Chapter Director, Miriam McCarthy, the masterclass explored supply chain, resilience, the importance of diversity and leadership in the dynamic and rapidly changing global economy.

Looking Ahead

The MBAAI Mid-West Chapter has made tremendous progress in 2024, delivering thought-provoking discussions, high-quality networking opportunities, and valuable industry insights. Our diverse event offerings have strengthened connections across the region, bringing together business leaders, experts, and future change-makers.

As we reflect on how far we've come, we're even more excited about the road ahead. 2025 promises to build on this momentum, with more engaging events, leadership development opportunities, and regional collaborations. If you are interested in learning more about events in the mid-west, or getting involved. Please email:

Miriam.mccarthy@mbassociation.ie

MBAAI Northern Chapter Update 2024/2025

John Carroll, Northern Chapter Director

John Carroll was appointed as the Northern Chapter Director at the beginning of the 2024/25 academic year and has worked closely with Queen's University Belfast's Business School to reintroduce in-person MBAAI events in Northern Ireland. The first of these took place in December, with the Northern Chapter hosting a panel discussion at Riddel Hall on the subject of Navigating the NI Start-Up & Venture Capital Landscape.

The event was well attended and featured a diverse panel including Susan Fitzsimmons (Chief Customer Officer, AuditComply), Brian Cummings (Investment Director, Clarendon

Fund Managers), Pauline Timoney (Head of Entrepreneurship, Catalyst), Louise Long (Director of Innovation, Research and Enterprise, Department for the Economy NI), Colm McMullan (Partner, Harbinson Mulholland), and Raghu Raj Singh Thakur (Founder & CTO, Re-Vana Therapeutics). The panel addressed access to capital, the development of the start-up ecosystem, founder journeys, the role of academia in entrepreneurship, and policy impact.

The Northern Chapter is now planning its next event, scheduled for May 2025, which will focus on The Future of Work: Leadership, AI, and the Human Factor and will take place in the Isdell Courtyard at Riddel Hall. This keynote series will explore the impact of AI on industries, the evolving role of leadership, and how businesses can balance technology with human-centric innovation.

The Northern Chapter looks forward to welcoming members to further discussions and networking opportunities in the year ahead. For further information, please contact: john.carroll@mbassociation.ie

MBAAI Southern Chapter Update 2024/2025

Jerry Crowley, Southern Chapter Director

The Southern Chapter continues to deliver events in association with University Collect Cork (CUBS) and the Múster Technological University (MTU). MTU events are held late November and early December, with UCC Events held late Feb/Early March.

We are looking to expand our offering in the South by partnering with local businesses to one at least one additional event annually.

If you are interested in supporting our events, or getting involved in the Southern Chapter, please don't hesitate to contact: jerry@mbassociation.ie