

Mutual distrust between academics and university heads 'at worst ever'

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THERE HAS never been such mutual distrust between frontline academics and senior heads of universities, the general secretary of the Irish Federation of University Teachers (IFUT) will argue today.

In an address to the federation's annual conference in Dublin, Mike Jennings will state that the split could not have come at a worse time, given the daunting challenges the sector faces, including "chronic" underfunding and a crisis of leadership.

"They simply do not treat us

with respect and, quite frankly, we have difficulty relating to people who see universities not as communities of scholars run on collegiate principles, but as major corporations run by muscular CEOs," says Mr Jennings.

"We are underfunded and underpaid. But we are also over-managed and under-led."

Education has become one of the key battle zones between those who want to contribute to society and those who merely want to profit from it, Mr Jennings argues.

There is a fundamental difference between "those who want to

expand the scope of human knowledge" and those "whose imaginations never rise above the bottom line and the marketplace, and whose crude 'loadsamoney' viewpoint sees the indicators of wealth only in bank balances, not in human wellbeing", he says.

The conference will hear calls from IFUT president Joe Brady for the neglect of the "knowledge society" as opposed to the "knowledge economy" to be addressed. Federation members are being harassed by administrators "who have little idea of the core mission of a university", he says.