



Tuesday 30th April 2019

**Honorary Doctorate Conferring Ceremony
For Mícheál Ó Muircheartaigh and Joe Schmidt**

A Sheansiléir, a Airí, a ambasadóirí, a aíonna ghradamúla, a chomhleacaithe, agus a dhaoine uaisle go léir, ba mhaith liom mo bhuíochas a ghabháil libh as ucht teacht anseo inniú chun bheith páirteach ins an searmanas áthasach seo.

Chancellor, Ministers, Excellencies, Distinguished guests, colleagues and special friends, on behalf of Dublin City University, I want to welcome you and to thank you for joining us today for this important and joyous ceremony.

In particular, I'd like to welcome the families and close friends of the recipients of today's honorees on this very special day. I hope that you enjoy every moment as we celebrate the achievements of those who matter so much to you.

As you will know, Ireland does not have an official honours system. However, we in DCU have always believed that individuals with an outstanding record of excellence in their field should be honoured and recognised.

The award of an honorary doctorate not only recognises outstanding achievements, it also serves as an inspiration for our younger citizens, including our students, who aspire to excellence.

DCU celebrates its 40th birthday next year, and in the forty years of our existence, the university has not conferred many honorary doctorates. That is indeed appropriate, as the Doctor of Philosophy (honoris causa) is the highest award that this University can bestow

and it should be reserved for those candidates who cross a very high bar of excellence.

Today, Mícheál and Joe, you are in good company as you join that short, but illustrious, list of our Honorary Graduates. This is a list that includes a number of Nobel Laureates:

ETS Walton, winner of the Nobel Prize for Physics, Mother Teresa, John Hume, Muhammad Yunus each a winner of the Nobel Peace Prize, and our good friend, the late Seamus Heaney, winner of the Nobel Prize for Literature.

We have listened to the wonderful tributes to each of our honorary graduates – tributes that have captured their outstanding achievements and their contribution to national life.

Mícheál is **the** voice of our national games -- Guth na gCluichí Gaelacha. A champion, not just for sport, but also for the Irish language and for our country's older citizens.

Joe is Irish Rugby's most successful ever national head coach. He's an inspirational leader who encourages and cultivates not only excellence but also important values.

Listening to those citations, I was struck by the similarities between these two great ambassadors for sport - even if they come from different codes!

Both were raised in rural communities, albeit on opposite sides of the globe. Both began

their professional lives as teachers, deeply committed to the education and development of young people - in the classroom and on the sports field. Both have a passion for those tiny details that make all the difference - whether it's the family ancestry of any of the country's Senior Hurlers, or the minute technicalities of the rolling maul.

As Joe Schmidt once said, "a lot of coaching is just teaching and learning".

Maidir le Micheal, ní hamháin go ndearna sé tráchttaireacht ar na laethanta móra i bPáirc an Chrócaigh ach thraenáil sé cuid de na himreoirí a bhí ag imirt ar na laethanta úd sin: laochanna Chiarraí de chuid fhoireann Mick O'Dwyer a bhí lonnaithe sa phríomhchathair sna 1970idí go háirithe. Daoine de na peileadoirí ab fhearr ariamh le hiliomaid boinn Uile-Éireann acu: Jack O'Shea, Charlie Nelligan, Ger Power, Paudie Mahony agus Mick Spillane ina measc.

The award of an Honorary Doctorate by DCU is not only a recognition of outstanding qualities and achievements. It is also a public statement of the values and priorities that this University cherishes.

As with all previous recipients, today's honorees, have been chosen because they share not just DCU's commitment to excellence, but also our values.

Their work in Education finds a strong resonance in DCU, which, uniquely among Irish universities, has made the discipline of Education a priority.

We established Ireland's first Faculty of Education in 2016. The DCU Institute of Education is home to the largest concentration of education expertise on the island of Ireland - with over 120 academic faculty, and more than 4,000 students in education programmes.

Like for Joe and Micheál, Sport plays a central part in the life of DCU – in fact, many would say that Sport is synonymous with DCU.

We have a strong belief in the formative role that sport can play in young people's lives, especially in the inculcation of **important values and life-skills**. This belief is demonstrated in our efforts to provide excellent sports facilities for our students and, in particular, in our commitment to support both the academic and athletic development of our high-performance athletes.

In both rugby and GAA, our students have excelled. For example, 7 out of the last 8 captains of the winning All Ireland Senior Football teams have been DCU students or recent graduates. In Hurling, graduates Richie Hogan (Kilkenny) was winner of 2014 Hurler of the year and Seán Óg Ó'hAilpín (Cork) was hurler of the year in 2004. This latter statistic gives me the opportunity to recycle the famous Micheál Ó Muircheartaigh quote regarding Seán Óg: **'Father from Fermanagh, mother from Fiji, neither a hurling stronghold!'**

In Rugby, we are very proud of graduates Tadhg Furlong, Tadhg Beirne and Jamie Heaslip. And it's not confined simply to men!

DCU Women's Rugby teams achieved a grand slam this season, winning all five of the main intervarsity competitions - the first time this has ever been done. Our First team includes Ireland international Emma Hooban, and Ireland Sevens internationals Anna Doyle, Lucinda Kinghan, Molly McCabe and Brittany Hogan.

Our Men's team won the IRFU All Ireland Sevens Competition. Meanwhile, David Hawkshaw captained the Ireland Under 20's during their successful 6 Nations bid. This very day, David is undergoing surgery to repair

damage he sustained during the competition, and we wish him well.

Mícheál's love of Irish language and culture is reflected in our work here at DCU. Our combined school, Fiontar agus Scoil na Gaeilge, is the largest Irish language department on the island. Later this year, we will launch **SEALBHÚ**, DCU's Research Centre for the Learning and Teaching of Irish. And Mícheál's work as an advocate for older people and for healthy and active aging, finds resonance in DCU's status as the world's first Age-Friendly University.

DCU's mission is to "transform lives and societies". Joe and Mícheál, both of you have left an indelible mark on our national life. You have reminded us of the glory of sport, you have made us proud of sporting heroes, and you both have insisted on excellence with values.

As Johnny Sexton said in an interview about Joe, "When Joe Schmidt first came in as coach to Leinster, rather than winning being everything, **it was all about values** and how you act day-to-day, on and off the pitch."

Ladies and Gentlemen, it has been my great privilege today, on behalf of DCU, to confer honorary doctorates on 2 outstanding individuals.

Tá se an tábhachtach go mbronnfaí céimeanna oinigh ar laochraí mar seo, daoine den scoth – ní dócha go bhfeicfear a leithéidí arís!

Mícheál and Joe, we are very happy to honour each you but, in truth, it is we who are honoured by you and by your acceptance of this award.

We are delighted to welcome each of you into the DCU Family. Congratulations and Thank You!