



DCU HONORARY CONFERRING CEREMONY

**CONFERRING OF HONORARY DOCTORATES ON
SEAN KELLY, BRIAN O'DRISCOLL & KATIE TAYLOR**

NOVEMBER 13, 2013

A áionna ghradamúla, a chomhleacaithe, agus a dhaoine uaisle, tá fáilte romhaibh anseo ar maidin agus ba mhaith liom mo bhuíochas a ghabháil libh go léir as ucht teacht anseo inniú chun bheith páirteach ins an searmanas tábhachtach seo.

Distinguished guests, colleagues, students and special friends, on behalf of Dublin City University, I want to welcome you all here today and to thank you for joining us for this important ceremony.

Brian & Sean, we are also delighted that your families and friends are here today.

I am sure that everyone here will understand if I express a particular warm welcome to a special guest here today – perhaps our youngest guest and certainly someone who is attending her first Honorary Conferring – Sadie O'Driscoll.

I am also delighted to welcome the many students both from DCU and from many schools in our network here to the Helix today.

Ladies & Gentlemen, today we conferred Honorary Doctorates on 3 individuals, Sean Kelly, Brian O'Driscoll and Katie Taylor. Katie's degree was conferred 'in absentia'. We would love to have had Katie with us here today but understand fully her focus on both of her bouts taking place this month – these will play a key role in her 'Road to Rio' in 2016. Her wish to avoid any disruption to her training regime at this time is

indeed a measure of the focus, dedication and commitment that we honour today. Following these forthcoming bouts, Katie has told me that she wishes to come out to DCU and celebrate her award with our students.

Ladies and gentlemen, the Doctor of Philosophy (*honoris causa*) is the highest award that this University can bestow.

The award of an Honorary Doctorate by DCU is not only a recognition of outstanding achievements in a particular field, but also a public statement of the values that this University cherishes. In fact, it is that combination of excellence and values that enables us to identify a suitable candidate to receive a DCU Honorary Degree.

At DCU we aim to transform the lives of our students by providing an excellent learning experience. As a university, our core objective is to enable all our students to realise their personal potential and to prepare them well so that they will flourish in 21st Century society – in their personal lives, in civic society and in the workplace.

In that context, sport is very important to us at DCU – we have a strong belief in the formative role that sport can play in young people’s lives (in fact for students of all ages) and this is reflected

- in our *‘sport for all strategy’*,
- 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 elite athletes – Athletes like double European cross-country champion Fionnuala Britton.

You may also wish to note – and, of course, I am not bragging here – that the last 3 All Ireland winning Gaelic Football captains have been current DCU students or recent graduates – (Bryan Cullen (2011); Michael Murphy (2012) and Stephen Cluxton (2013)).

Based on this commitment to sport at DCU, we are particularly pleased to be honouring 3 sporting heroes here today.

In its short history, DCU has not conferred many honorary doctorates.

Today, Brian, Katie & Sean join a distinguished but short list of our Honorary Graduates.

A list that includes Nobel Laureates:

- **Mother Teresa**, winner of the **Nobel Peace Prize**,
- **ETS Walton**, winner of the **Nobel Prize for Physics**,
- And our friend, the late **Seamus Heaney**, winner of the **Nobel Prize for Literature**.

A list that includes former Irish Presidents:

- **Mary Robinson &**
- **Mary McAleese**

In fact, both Mary McAleese and Dr. Martin McAleese received honorary doctorates on the same day here in the Helix in recognition of their wonderful work for the island of Ireland. Martin is currently Chancellor of DCU and both Mary & Martin would love to have been here today – but they are both currently in Boston because of Mary’s commitments at Boston College.

Martin McAleese asked me to convey his sincere disappointment at not being here today and to read out the following message to you:

‘Brian, Katie & Sean, you all have been wonderful ambassadors for Ireland. You have not only demonstrated world-class excellence in your chosen sport but you have also been beacons of hope and inspiration to our nation in challenging times.’

Conclusion:

Before I conclude, I would like to emphasise this ...

Apart from the public recognition of your outstanding achievements, Brian, Katie & Sean, today’s award conveys other important messages.

These are particularly challenging times for Ireland.

What we need most of all now (and I’m thinking especially of our students) is a regeneration in spirit, a lifting of morale.

And, in this regard, positive role models are critically important.

At a time of significant challenges to this nation, all three of you have demonstrated what can be achieved through dedication and commitment.

Through your excellence in sport and the values you display in public life, each of you both has elevated our spirits – you have provided exemplary role models for us all (and it is notable the work you both carry out for charities – Sean with Blazing Saddles & Brian with Temple St and the ISPCC).

And finally ... I think it is appropriate to finish with some words from the poem Invictus (which literally means unconquered):

Invictus

Out of the night that covers me,
Black as the Pit from pole to pole,
I thank whatever gods may be
For my unconquerable soul.

Sean & Brian, we are delighted to welcome you to the DCU family
Thank you for your unconquerable souls...

Go raibh mile maith agaibh.