

UL One Campus, One Book Launch

1 October 2014

Ladies and gentlemen

I am very pleased to have been invited to launch the 2014-15 University of Limerick “One Campus One Book.”

I should say a few words about the “One Campus, One Book “. Initiated last year, this is a University of Limerick initiative, led by the Regional Writing Centre and the Centre for Teaching and Learning, UL. The big idea underpinning “One Campus, One Book” is that all members of the campus community, students and staff alike, are encouraged to read the same book and talk to one another about that book during the course of the year, whilst enjoying the events connected with the book that will take place throughout the year.

I cannot overstate the importance of this wonderful initiative. The promotion of reading and effective writing is central to UL’s strategic commitment to delivering a broader curriculum for UL students, enhancing graduate attributes and competencies and increasing their capacity to adapt and respond to the challenges they will face in their professional careers.

At the University of Limerick we are committed in our *Graduate Attributes* statement to providing a learning environment that stimulates students to be, amongst other things, articulate. We want our students to be skilled at conveying their ideas clearly, effectively and professionally to a range of different audiences, and within different cultural frameworks and settings. Our aim is that during

their time here our students develop high level written and verbal communication skills. In this regard the importance of reading assumes centre stage.

The exciting thing about “One Campus, One Book” is that it encourages the entire campus community to engage in reading and provides it with the opportunity to discuss a book that everyone has experienced

The 2014-15 “One Campus, One Book” selection is *The Thrill of it All* by Joseph O’Connor, Frank McCourt Chair of Creative Writing at the University of Limerick. It is his latest publication (May 2014) and was nominated for the Bollinger Everyman Wodehouse Prize for comic novel of the year 2014.

Readers will have the opportunity to enjoy the many events connected with the book which will take place throughout the academic year. These include a joint reading with Christine Dwyer Hickey, an event supported by the *Limerick City of Culture 2014 Visiting Writers* initiative and the *Millstream Common Room Writers Series*, on the 13th of November 2014 and in semester two, an interview with Prof O’Connor on his writing process.

The University was absolutely delighted when Joseph O’Connor accepted the Frank McCourt Chair of Creative Writing. Prof O’Connor is an internationally acclaimed author of eight novels and two collections of short stories, as well as non-fiction work, film scripts and radio essays. He has been honoured with literary awards in Ireland, France, Italy and America. His appointment will enrich our new creative writing programme and I am confident that very soon, under his leadership, it will enjoy worldwide recognition.

And what of the book that we will read, *The Thrill of it All*?

At college in 1980's Luton, Robbie Goulding, an Irish-born teenager, meets Fran Mulvey, an orphaned Vietnamese refugee. Together they form a band. Joined by cellist Sarah-Thérèse Sherlock and her twin brother Seán on drums, The Ships in the Night set out to chase fame. But the story of this makeshift family is haunted by ghosts from the past.

Spanning 25 years, *The Thrill of it All* rewinds and fast-forwards through an evocative soundtrack of struggle and laughter. Infused with blues, ska, classic showtunes, New Wave and punk, using interviews, lyrics, memoirs and diaries, the tale stretches from suburban England to the East Village, from Thatcher-era London to the Hollywood Bowl, from the meadows of Glastonbury to a wintry Long Island, culminating in a Dublin evening in July 2012, a night that changes everything. A story of loyalties, friendship, the call of the muse, and the beguiling shimmer of teenage dreams, this is a warm-hearted, funny and deeply moving novel for anyone that's ever loved a song.

Finally, I wish to acknowledge everyone who has been involved in the "One Campus One Book" initiative. In particular, I wish to acknowledge the efforts of Aoife Lenihan, Catherine Martin and Niamh Doherty from the Regional Writing Centre as well as those of Maura Murphy of the Centre for Teaching and Leading. Most of all I wish to thank Prof Joseph O'Connor for honouring us with his presence and I am sure that we will enjoy an elevating occasion this evening.