



Contact: Michael Newton
Email: gaelicmichael@gmail.com
Website: <https://gaelicusa.org>

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Scottish Heritage USA Funds the Visiting Lectureship in Scottish Gaelic Studies at the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill

CHAPEL HILL, NC, August 3, 2018 – At their annual board meeting at the Grandfather Mountain Games in July 2017, Scottish Heritage USA agreed to fund the entire amount necessary to support the 2018-19 Visiting Lectureship in Scottish Gaelic Studies at the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill. GaelicUSA is proud to have enabled the creation of the first position of its kind in an American university.



Rev. Dr. Douglas Kelly, President of Scottish Heritage USA (left, shaking hands with Dr. Mary Floyd-Wilson), stated, “The Carolinas were home to the largest Gaelic-speaking communities outside of Scotland for generations and people of Highland ancestry still make up a large segment of the region’s population. Although Gaelic Studies have had some limited recognition at UNC in the past – such as under Professor Urban T. Holmes in the 1960s – this is an ideal time to foster scholarship about the Gaelic legacy of the Carolinas and North America as a whole in the academy. This donation from SHUSA fulfills its

commitment to serving the Scottish-American community by ensuring the recognition of this important cultural legacy.”

He added, on a personal note: “I was keenly aware of my Scottish Highland heritage when I was a student at UNC and had always wanted to see Gaelic taught there. Now, I may live to see that happen.”

Dr. Charles MacQuarrie, President of *Urras Gàidhlig nan Stàitean Aonaichte* / GaelicUSA, remarked, “We thank SHUSA and their redoubtable president Rev. Dr. Douglas Kelly for their commitment to enabling the study of Scottish Gaelic language and culture in the United States. We agree with Rev.

Dr. Kelly that UNC Chapel Hill is the ideal place to house such a lectureship, and hope now to be successful in justifying and funding an endowed Chair of Scottish Gaelic at UNC.”

Dr. Mary Floyd-Wilson, the new head of the Department of English and Comparative Literature (shown above, shaking hands with Rev. Dr. Douglas Kelly), has welcomed this development, saying, “We are enthusiastic about bringing a scholar and teacher to the department who can expand our knowledge of Scottish Gaelic Studies and who inspires students to pursue their own connections with this literary history.”

The funding of the Visiting Lectureship is a major step towards our ultimate goal of endowing a full Chair in Scottish Gaelic Studies. It will enable us to build confidence in our initiative with the broader community, bridging faculty and administration at the university level with the public.

In recognition of the vital support given by Scottish Heritage USA, the Visiting Lectureship will have the official title, “the SHUSA Visiting Lectureship in Scottish Gaelic Studies at UNC.”

Responses From Academic Colleagues in US and Scotland

Professor Robert Dunbar, Chair of Celtic at the University of Edinburgh, has greeted the announcement with this response: “We are greatly encouraged to see that students at North Carolina will be able to connect with an important and sadly neglected part of the heritage of the state and, indeed, of North America in general, and that desperately-needed research on the very rich legacy of new world Gaels will be facilitated.”

Professor Thomas Owen Clancy, Chair of Celtic at the University of Glasgow, added to this sentiment: “This is fantastic and unlooked for news, a real ray of hope. At a time when academic posts are shrinking in Celtic Studies generally on both sides of the Atlantic, this investment in Gaelic in UNC will make a real difference, and Chapel Hill is most certainly the right place to host this.”

Dr. Natasha Sumner, Assistant Professor of Celtic Languages & Literatures at Harvard University, has expanded on the significance of this position in the history of the field in the United States: “Scottish Gaelic, a modern Celtic language closely related to Irish and Manx, has a nearly three-century-long history on this continent. The field of North American Gaelic Studies has been strengthening since the late Harvard professor, Charles Dunn’s pioneering work with the Canadian Gaelic-speaking community in the twentieth century. However, Gaels’ cultural heritage continues to be understudied, particularly in the United States. That a Visiting Lectureship is to be established at the University of North Carolina—the state in which the first American Gaelic book was published in the eighteenth century—is welcome news indeed.”

Key Facts about the SHUSA Visiting Lectureship in Scottish Gaelic Studies

- The Lectureship position will be advertised in August 2017. The candidate will be chosen in early 2018. (Visiting Lecturers are usually “on loan” from another university.)
- The lectureship will be hosted by the department of English and Comparative Literature.
- It will consist of five courses exploring literature, identity, and folklore using Gaelic texts (in English translation), explored from a Scottish Highland perspective.
- The courses will incorporate material inclusive of history and culture, ancient and modern, and will relate to both Scotland and the North American diaspora.

GaelicUSA plans to have social events to commemorate our achievement and reach out to the wider community, in collaboration with a new Celtic-oriented student society on campus, including a public lecture (co-sponsored by UNC, SHUSA and GaelicUSA). We are also attempting to arrange an exhibit of materials related to the Scottish Gaelic immigrant settlements of the Carolinas in conjunction with UNC.

Moving The Campaign Forward Toward A Chair

GaelicUSA is *still* seeking contributions for our operating budget to enable us to function effectively as we continue to work in support of Scottish Gaelic Studies. Endowing a chair in Scottish Gaelic Studies at UNC will cost approximately \$2.5 million and much work remains to be done to that end.

We have created a [webpage to acknowledge and thank](#) those who have made a donation to our campaign.

###