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Text of Áine Hyland's talk

A Sheansailéir/Chláraitheoir na hOllscoile, A Uachtaráin, a Phriomh Aidhmeannach, a Dhéin, a chomhleachaithe and a cháirde. Chancellor / Registrar of the National University of Ireland, President of Royal College of Surgeons of Ireland, Chief Executive, Dean of the Faculty of Medicine and Health, members of the platform party, guests, friends and graduands:

I would like to thank the President, the Chief Executive and Council of RCSI for conferring on me an Honorary Doctorate of Science of Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland. I am honoured to be included among the prestigious recipients of this award - including Ireland's former President, Mary McAleese; Fr. Michael Kelly, a world renowned for his work in Africa on HIV Aids, Lord Ara Darzi of Imperial College London and others. When I was contacted some time ago by Dr. Cathal Kelly, I was initially speechless to hear that I was included with this august group of recipients – and I am still wondering what I have done to deserve this!

I would like to congratulate all of you on your graduation today. You have been conferred with Masters degrees in Pharmacy and Science - in leadership, healthcare management, bereavement studies and other areas – jointly validated by the National University of Ireland and the RCSI. Today is a major landmark in your lives. This ceremony is the happy culmination of a demanding and rigorous course of study. Many of you undertook the onerous task of completing the masters programme while working at the same time. And in addition to studying and working, many of you also have onerous family commitments which make further significant demands on your time and energy. This required considerable organisation and time management skills, and makes your achievement even more meritorious! On your behalf, I would like to thank those who supported you during your studies, your partners, parents, families and friends and of course your teachers and mentors in RCSI!

You are privileged to receive a joint degree from two venerable institutions - the National University of Ireland and the Royal College of Surgeons of Ireland. The National University of Ireland was set up in 1908 following considerable lobbying by the Catholic population of Ireland who at that time were precluded from entering Trinity College. The Royal College of Surgeons is one of the

oldest higher education institutions on the island of Ireland, having been granted a Royal Charter in 1784. Before that, surgeons were grouped with barbers in the Barbers Surgeons Guild. RCSI flourished from the start and in 1810 it moved to its present location on St. Stephens Green. Today in addition to the College of Medicine and Health, RCSI is also home to the faculties of Anaesthetists; Radiologists: Dentistry and Nursing, and has the only higher education Institute of Leadership on this island. As well as its Dublin campuses, RCSI has campuses in Bahrain, Perdana and Dubai and delivers training in Jordan, Egypt and Saudi Arabia. RCSI's enrolment and prestige have grown exponentially in recent years and it is now recognised nationally and internationally as one of the top third level institutions in Ireland. In recent international rankings RCSI was ranked among the top 50 world universities for its international outlook and in the recent Times Higher Education university rankings, RCSI was ranked joint first in Ireland. This is tremendous achievement for a relatively small and specialised education institution – congratulations are due to all involved.

World of Change

We are living in a rapidly changing world – a world of uncertainty and volatility. The recent US Presidential elections highlight how difficult it is to predict the future – and to predict change. However, we should not think that change is a new phenomenon. Change has been a constant since civilisation began. If we focus on 1784, the year RCSI was granted its Royal Charter, and if we compare the world of 1784 with the world of today, we can see how much has changed – and how much has remained the same! 1784 was the year that the U.S. Revolutionary war ended. It was the year that Britain signed a peace agreement with the Netherlands and that Turkey signed a peace agreement with Russia. It was the year that India came under British rule. It was also the year that the first daily newspaper was published in the United States and the year that Mozart performed the premiere of his Sonata in B flat! The first balloon flights happened in 1784 – including a balloon flight by a woman. And it was the year that Nano Nagle, founder of the Presentation Order of Sisters in Ireland, and a pioneer of women's education, died.

So much has happened in the past 230 years, much of it positive, but some of it less than positive. We should never assume that the future is automatically on an upward trajectory. Things can dis-improve as well as improve. And to a large extent, the future is what we make it. The World Economic Forum has

identified 12 Global Trends (Clock) which will impact either positively or negatively on the future of the human race. These are:

- The Repercussions of the Economic Crisis
- The shift in Geopolitical Power from Europe and the US towards the BRIC countries (Brazil, Russia, India and China)
- The speed of technological change
- Climate Change
- Water and food production
- The importance of Education
- Population growth
- War terror and social unrest
- Energy dependence
- Destruction of ecosystems and biodiversity
- Health and Well-being
- Natural Disasters

Some of the above factors are unpredictable – some less so. However, we must plan for the future – even if at times the future seems unplannable!

Make A Difference

In his address to you earlier, the Chief Executive, Dr Cathal Kelly, exhorted you to "Make A Difference". I wholeheartedly endorse his words – and I also endorse the emphasis that RCSI places on leadership in all its academic programmes. We all have the potential to be leaders in our professions– whether or not we are formally recognised as such. Many of you are already in senior positions – and are aware of the rewards and challenges that leadership brings. As leaders, we must have Vision and act with Integrity. We must be compassionate and caring. We must also be good listeners and listen with empathy. As the Greek philosopher Epictetus once said: "We have two ears and one mouth so that we can listen twice as much as we speak". This is particularly important in healthcare professions where we have so much to learn from our patients. We must be supportive and encouraging of our colleagues: To quote Christine Lagarde: "Leadership is about encouraging people. It's about stimulating them. It's about enabling them to achieve what they can achieve and can do that with a purpose".

And when we talk about working with and encouraging people, respect for others must be paramount. Last week, in her congratulatory speech to Donald

Trump, Angela Merkel referred to the values which Germany shares with the people of the US – "values of democracy, freedom, respect for law, and respect for people regardless of their origin, colour of skin, religion, gender, sexual orientation or political opinions". These are values that we must cherish and as leaders, we must live these values and make them visible.

The tons of media print that have been devoted to analysing the results of the US election have suggested all kinds of reasons for the defeat of Hilary Clinton and the success of Donald Trump. What is clear is that the outcome was not generally envisaged – neither by political pundits, nor by the media generally, nor by professional pollsters. Nobody is infallible – neither in the world of politics or media or the professions. Just because a point of view is widely held does not mean it is necessarily correct. To quote the philosopher Karl Popper:

"If our civilisation is to survive, we must break with the habit of deference to great men. Great men may make great mistakes …… some of the greatest leaders of the past supported the perennial attack on freedom and reason…

Ten days ago, when I started to prepare this talk, I was confident that the so-called "highest glass ceiling in the world" was about to be shattered. I was among the many millions of interested observers throughout the world who expected that the new President of the United States would be a woman. Unfortunately, this has not turned out to be the case, and the results of the US Presidential election have caused us to reflect on our assumptions about democracy, on the role of education for the democratic process and on people's perceptions and expectations of leadership.

While the defeat of Hilary Clinton may well be seen as a set-back for women who aspire to leadership positions, we must try and see the situation in perspective. Two of the most powerful political leaders in Europe are women, Angela Merkel and Teresa May. There have been and continue to be many impressive women in the world – we can think of Marie Curie, Florence Nightingale, Countess Markeveick, Indira Gandhi, Benazir Bhutto, founders of female religious congregations such as Catherine McAuley, Nano Nagle and Mother Teresa as well as young contemporary heroines such as Malal Yousafzai.

We must remember that It is less than 100 years ago that women were legally recognised on these islands. In 2018, we will mark the centenary of the granting of the parliamentary vote to Irish and British women over the age of

30. 2019 will be the centenary of the passing of the Sex Disqualification (Removal) act – when the professions, many of which had been closed to women until then, were opened to women. As a result of the act, women could enter the civil service, become solicitors, barristers and judges as well as serving on juries, which they had been precluded from doing until then.

Shortly afterwards, Ireland became an independent nation, but instead of building on the emancipations which had been granted under British Rule, by the mid-1930s, women, especially married women, were again relegated to a subordinate position. The marriage ban on women in the Irish public service which was introduced in the mid 1930s, and sanctified by Article 41.2 of the 1937 Constitution, lasted until Ireland joined the European Common Market in 1973. I was a victim of that marriage ban. I had entered the Irish civil service in 1959, but had to stop working when I got married in 1965 – and I did not re-enter the workforce until more than a decade later.

The marriage ban undoubtedly left its mark and was a barrier in Ireland for many years for women who aspired to leadership. The situation is improving - albeit slowly. The corporate world is beginning to realise the benefits that gender diversity in senior management teams and boards brings, but this awareness has not always filtered through to the political world, or to the professions or academia. Although there is now a greater proportion of women in the Dáil than ever before, fewer than one in four of our TDs are women. In many of the professions in Ireland, including healthcare professions, women dominate the lower ranks, but they are outnumbered by men at senior levels. In universities, while the overall proportion of women in academic positions is more or less equal to the proportion of men, there are far fewer women in senior positions than men. Almost uniquely in world terms, there has never been a President of an Irish university. However, RCSI broke this mould in 2010 when Eilis McGovern was elected President of RCSI, becoming the first female president of RCSI in its then 226 year history – a landmark for higher education and for a major professional body.

Let me finish my congratulating all of you again – and by thanking RCSI for bestowing the honorary doctorate on me - and I wish you all the best in your professional and personal lives in the years to come.

Go raibh mile maith agaibh go léir.