

George Mitchell Scholarship Fund

Annual Report and Audited Financial Statements 2023

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Prepared by the US-Ireland Alliance and submitted to the Minister for Education and Skills pursuant to paragraph 6 of the agreement executed on the 1st day of June 2010 and entered into between the Minister for Education and Skills of Ireland and the US-Ireland Alliance for the purpose of giving effect to the George Mitchell Scholarship Fund Acts 1998 and 2010.

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Section 1

The George J. Mitchell Scholarship Fund

Background to the George J. Mitchell Scholarship Program

In 1998, the US-Ireland Alliance (USIA) a non-partisan, non-profit organization, established the George J. Mitchell Scholarship Program, a prestigious, competitive scholarship to enable American university graduates to pursue a year of study at institutions of higher learning in Ireland and Northern Ireland. The scholarship was named in honor of Senator Mitchell's pivotal contribution to the Northern Ireland peace process.

To enable the Irish Government (IG) to contribute to this program, the George Mitchell Scholarship Fund Act, 1998, was enacted to establish a Fund to support up to twelve scholarships per year for US students to study in Ireland or Northern Ireland at certain universities and other higher education institutions. The 1998 Act also empowered the Minister for Education and Science of Ireland to enter into an agreement with persons who will manage and control the Fund.

Scholars under the Mitchell program may attend any Irish university or institute of technology, the Irish School of Ecumenics or, in Northern Ireland, a university or other institution of higher education which the Minister specifies, provided the institution and any other relevant authority consents to this and, as with the universities, waives tuition, fees, and provides housing.

The first Mitchell Scholars began their studies in Autumn 2000. Up to twelve Scholars are selected each year.

Following passage of the George Mitchell Scholarship Fund Act, 1998, an Agreement was signed between the Minister for Education & Science and the US-Ireland Alliance in March 1999 setting out, inter alia, the management and administration role of the US-Ireland Alliance in relation to the Fund. A subsequent endowment of IR£2 million was paid into the Fund in accordance with the Agreement.

George Mitchell Scholarship Fund (Amendment) Act 2010

In 2007, it was decided to increase the Irish Government's contribution to the George Mitchell Scholarship Program Fund by €20 million conditional on matching funding raised by the US-Ireland Alliance. Such matching funding must not include funding from public funds in Ireland or Northern Ireland. The purpose of the George Mitchell Scholarship Fund (Amendment) Act 2010, which was signed into law on 30 March 2010 and brought into operation on 1 June 2010, was to amend the George Mitchell Scholarship Fund Act, 1998, and to provide a legal basis for the implementation of the 2007 decision.

The main provisions of the amending Act include that the Minister shall make annual payments of up to €4 million per annum into the George Mitchell Scholarship Fund until such time as the overall limit of €20 million is reached. Payments will be made as matching funding to monies the US-Ireland Alliance fundraises.

The amending Act also provides for a new agreement with the USIA in relation to certain matters including, the maintenance of an investment account; a matching funding account; annual auditing of accounts and the USIA preparation of an annual report on the operation of the Fund; and distribution of monies in the investment and matching funding accounts if the agreement ceases to have effect. The amending Act requires the Minister to lay a copy of the relevant accounts and reports before each House of the Oireachtas as soon as possible after receiving them from the fund manager each year.

The amending Act also provides for the possibility of using excess income accruing to the matching funding account for other educational programs of the US-Ireland Alliance as approved by the USIA's Board of Directors.

At the end of 2023, the value of the (Irish Government) investment account was \$6,222,689 and the value of the (non-IG) matching account was \$2,921,305.

New Funding and Management Agreement between the Minister for Education and Skills and the US-Ireland Alliance

The Act is complemented by, and provides legal underpinning for, a detailed new funding and management agreement between the Minister for Education and Skills and the Alliance. The agreement gives effect to the provisions of the Act and provides for the putting in place of appropriate governance structures.

The new agreement was formally signed on 1st June 2010 and replaces an agreement that was made on 8th March 1999. A copy of the agreement was laid before the Houses of the Oireachtas in July 2010.

US-Ireland Alliance

The George J. Mitchell Scholarship Fund is managed and controlled in the United States by the US-Ireland Alliance (USIA). Based in Washington D.C., the Alliance Board is composed of members from both Ireland and the United States. The Alliance carries out its functions in relation to the Fund in accordance with the Agreement entered into with the Minister for Education and Skills and executed on 1 June 2010.

Selection Committee Appointment

The Agreement for the Control and Management of the Fund, between the Minister for Education and Skills and the US-Ireland Alliance, sets out the procedures for the appointment of the Selection Committee. The Minister, typically via the Irish Embassy in Washington, DC, appoints a member of the committee for a three-year term. The Embassy did not select a committee member for the 2022 and 2023 selection rounds.

Mitchell Class of 2023 (Academic year 2022-2023)

Every year, Mitchell Scholars visit Belfast. In 2023, that trip occurred to coincide with the 25th anniversary of the Good Friday Agreement. Accompanied by Mitchell Scholarship Director Serena Wilson, the class met with Senator Mitchell and Monica McWilliams. They saw the unveiling of the Mitchell bust at Queen’s University Belfast and attended the QUB conference.

On Saturday, 15 April, the Scholars had lunch with Dom Bryant, QUB Professor of Political Anthropology. Dom took the group on a murals tour through Belfast to provide some historical background and political insight into the Troubles. That evening, they took in Owen McCafferty’s excellent and riveting play, “The Agreement” at the Lyric Theatre. The play depicted the personalities and demands of each side in the negotiations.

Much of Sunday, was spent with garden designer Diarmuid Gavin. They visited Hazelbank Park in the Belfast suburbs, where Diarmuid was building the garden for the coronation of King Charles. Mitchells saw the finger-like pits that will contain the mechanics used to move the plants/trees up/down and around. Diarmuid went to several countries to purchase the topiary trees and other woodies. (If you follow him on Instagram, you’ll be able to see the garden when complete.) He also took the group to the Clockwork Tower in the Antrim Castle Gardens, which is an electrical moving garden – unfortunately, the electricity was out when they were there. Next, the group headed to Giant’s Causeway, as guests of the National Trust, and spent a couple of hours hiking in the area. That evening, Glenn Patterson, author, and Director of the Seamus Heaney Centre at Queens joined the class for dinner.

The weekend was followed by attendance at the QUB conference and private meetings with Monica McWilliams and Senator Mitchell.

Serena also spent time with each Scholar individually to get feedback on their university programs, their experience with the Mitchell Scholarship program, and life on the island. Everyone is pleased with their Mitchell Scholar experience, however, more than half reported not being fully challenged in their university programs unless they went beyond what was expected by the program. Concern was raised about the impact of inflation, as well as housing availability and costs. Mitchells are provided university housing at all universities except for the

University of Galway, which gives students a stipend for housing. Due to a variety of factors, more than ever before, Scholars are finding it difficult to find housing and to make ends meet given the rise in prices.

Most of the class of 2023 remained on the island through July, to attend the 25-year Mitchell alumni reunion held in Dublin (covered in the alumni section of this report).

Class of 2023

Name of Scholar	Course of Study	US Institution	Irish Institution
Adedolapo Adedokun	Computer Science	MIT	TCD
Abigail Barton	Law	Brown University	UG
Sarah Bernt	Conflict Resolution and Reconciliation	Northeastern University	TCD, Belfast
Gilbert Guerra	Global Security & Borders	Swarthmore College	QUB
Samuel Kessler	Public Policy	University of Louisville	UCD
Aadi Kulkarni	Social Data Analytics	Cornell University	UCD
Asha-Marie Larson-Baldwin	Public History	Furman University	QUB
Naoum Fares Marayati	Global Health	Ichan School of Medicine	TCD
Swati Ravi	Space, Science & Technology	Columbia University	UCD
Alison Watkins	Writing	Temple University	UG
Rhiannon McGavin (Wilson)	Creative Writing	UCLA	TCD
Max Wragan	Neuroscience	University of Pennsylvania	TCD

Mitchell Class of 2024 (Academic year 2023-2024)

In June 2023, an orientation was held for the Class of 2024 which was timed to coincide with a reception in the DC-area for alums of the program, and many university professors from the island of Ireland who were in DC for a NAFSA conference. Enterprise Ireland and the Northern Ireland Bureau also supported the event.

In September 2023, the 24th Class of Mitchell Scholars arrived on the island. They kicked off with a reception at the Royal Irish Academy in Dublin. Many friends, some new, some long-time, came out (despite that it was a miserably rainy evening) to welcome them. We were joined by former Taoiseach Bertie Ahern who first supported the program as Taoiseach 25 years ago.

Saturday was largely spent in the Liberties. The group walked to Kilmainham Goal for a tour. Then it was off to lunch on Meath Street. Trina recalled hearing Irish singer Imelda May say Fuscus is the best chipper in Dublin, so we gave it a try, and agree. Just down the street is an Argentinian bakery, Bakeology. Former Irish Ambassador Rory Montgomery had introduced this place to Trina, and it proved the excellent option for vegetarians. The afternoon was spent at the Museum of Literature Ireland on Stephens Green. Mitchells enjoyed hearing Irish writers talk about their process. Also, at MoLI was *The Holy Hour: A Requiem for Brendan Behan* -- an audio-visual installation, created by author Patrick McCabe, which “celebrates the centenary of Behan’s birth, and mourns the essential tragedy of his short life.

In September 2023, Senator Mitchell met with the class at the Shelbourne Hotel. In attendance was US-Ireland Alliance Irish board member, Joe O’Malley, Managing Partner of Hayes Solicitors.

The class also came together for Thanksgiving dinner in Dublin at the home of friends of the program, Paul Hayes and Mary Calpin. The group was also meant to visit Windmill Lane Recording Studios but, due to a riot and the Scholars’ concern for their safety, the visit was postponed until 2024.

Class of 2024

Name of Scholar	Course of Study	US Institution	Irish Institution
Vikram Balasubramian	Philosophy	University of Pennsylvania	TCD
Alexandria Bennion	Translational Oncology	Duke University	TCD
Alexander Firestine	Climate Change, Agriculture & Food Security	University of Pittsburgh	UGalway
Michael Frim	Celtic Civilisation	Harvard	UCC
Teresa Gao	Augmented & Virtual Reality	MIT	TCD
Vivek Kanpa	AI for Medicine and Medical Research	Northeastern University	UCD
Macken Keefe	Conflict Resolution & Reconciliation	Michigan State University	TCD, Belfast
Rabhya Mehrotra	Political Communication	Yale University	DCU
Alexa Mohsenzadeh	Gender, Globalisation & Rights	Emory University	UGalway
Neelesh Mupparapu	MPH	University of Maryland	UCC
Zoha Siddiqui	Conflict Transformation & Social Justice	William & Mary	QUB

Zachary Yahn	Computer Science (Negotiated Learning)	University of Virginia	UCD
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Mitchell Scholar Blogs

Each Mitchell Scholar is required to submit four blog posts per year highlighting different aspects of their experience in Ireland. Blogs posts may be found at: <http://blog.mitchellscholars.org/wordpress/>.

Overview of the Selection Process for the Mitchell Scholarship

The Mitchell Scholarship is a highly prestigious award that attracts future American leaders for a year of post-graduate study on the island of Ireland. It is commonly compared with the Rhodes Scholarship, which sends American students to Oxford University; and the Marshall Scholarship, which sends American students to universities in the United Kingdom. A [piece in the Atlantic](#) in 2021 began: “One recent fall morning at a coffee shop in Princeton, I overheard two students chatting about upcoming deadlines for the Rhodes, the Marshall, and the Mitchell—three prestigious postgraduate scholarships so coveted that they’ve become mononymous on elite campuses.”

All materials are submitted online by applicants. The online application process allows for US-Ireland Alliance staff to electronically share applications with the Readers Committee and the Final Selection Committee members. Readers rank their top 20 applicants, which helps the USIA select the semi-finalists who are then interviewed online.

The application includes a video interview hosted by Modern Hire, which is embedded directly into our application for easy viewing.

All undergraduate applicants are required to obtain and submit an institutional endorsement from their home university. The institutional endorsement process helps with quality control and to limit the number of applicants from any one school. We do not require institutional endorsements from graduate students or professional candidates. Detailed information about the process may be found on [our website](#).

Recruitment

Post-COVID, we conducted our recruitment efforts online. Because the Mitchell is now so well known amongst potential applicants, we have focused our recruitment efforts on increasing awareness with new academic advisers across the US.

In July 2023, Serena Wilson, Director of the Mitchell Scholarship Program, travelled to New Orleans to participate in the NAFA (National Association of Fellowship Advisers) conference which brings together university fellowship advisers from the across the US with directors of national prestigious scholarships.

Serena invited the other scholarship heads to meet for an informal meeting to discuss issues we may have in common. Among the issues discussed were the impact of the Supreme Court decision on affirmative action and the impact of ChatGBT on selection processes. The affirmative action issue is applicable to those foundations in the public realm, such as Knight-Hennessey (Public university Stanford) and Boren/Fulbright (Government funded). This doesn't apply to the Mitchell Scholarship. So far, there is not great concern with ChatGBT's ability to draft an essay that would be sufficiently unique for a personal statement. There is some concern that recommenders will use ChatGBT to fire off the massive set of recommendations that professors are asked to provide during scholarship season. ChatGBT recommendations may be somewhat harder to recognize.

Serena also participated in a "fireside chat" which was an opportunity to present to new and veteran fellowship advisors interested in the Mitchell Scholarship program. Moderating was Mitchell Scholar alum Rebecca Blustein (2001/Maynooth), who now advises UCLA applicants for prestigious scholarships. Serena reminded advisors that the final interviews would again be conducted via Zoom for 2023. Some advisors noted that finalists saw a trade-off in losing the opportunity to network with other finalists versus making a trip to Washington for the interview. We'll continually reassess this.

There was also a session on the use of video interviews in the applications process. The panel included Serena and representatives of the Schwarzman, Luce, and Knight-Hennessey scholarship programs. We were the first (by at least 6 years) to adopt a video in our application process. We are the only one using the video to ask spontaneous questions of applicants, rather than have applicants prepare a video in response to a prompt. Other panel members expressed interest in moving more toward the video process used by the Mitchell and we offered to introduce them to the Irish-founded company that provides this service for the Mitchell.

While in New Orleans for the NAFA conference, Mitchell Director Serena Wilson was able to meet with alum James May (2019/UCC).

In 2023, in the selection round for the Class of 2025, there was an increase of applicants in the number of applications by 9% on the previous year. (The number of Rhodes applicants decreased over the previous year and the number of Marshall applicants increased by about the same percentage as the Mitchell.) It is worth noting that there is a growing number of prestigious scholarships to other countries, and we would not be surprised if all programs see some sort of decline in overall applications given the increasing opportunities.

The online application for the 2024-2025 academic year competition launched in March 2023 and closed in September 2023.

Change in Mitchell Scholarship final interview stage

After COVID forced us, for the previous two selection rounds, to hold final interviews for the Mitchell Scholarship online, we decided to continue with online interviews going forward.

In the past, we interviewed semi-finalists online and then we interviewed the 20 finalists in person, in Washington, D.C., on the weekend just before Thanksgiving. From the finalist interview, we selected 12 Mitchell Scholarship recipients. Scheduling remained the same in 2023, however, the selection committee came together in one room in Washington, D.C. to conduct the interviews with the finalists, who were on Zoom.

The only thing “lost” by doing it this way is the reception for finalists which was usually held at the residence of the Irish Ambassador the night before interviews.

We took the decision to continue interviews online after conferring with several Scholars who went through the online interviews, as well as with alums and academic advisers.

We believe the online interviews create a more level playing field in several ways. It takes away the stress and strain for those farthest away who previously had to fly into D.C. (and out again within 48 hours). That’s especially tough on anyone who is overseas. We find the reception to be of minimum value in our decision-making and it is naturally skewed toward the privileged and/or those who attend universities where applicants are trained with mock receptions.

There are additional benefits that, while they didn’t drive our decision, are just bonuses. Environmentally, we are reducing, overall, the number of flights/trains necessary. That also results in cost savings, mainly for the US universities as they typically pay for their students to travel to interviews for this process and others.

If for any reason we feel this isn’t working, we can always reverse this in future. Our decision was welcomed by university fellowship advisers.

Among prestigious scholarships, the Mitchell has often been at the forefront of change. Our lean structure allows us to more easily adapt and pivot. We were the first to add a videotape Q&A to our process, the first to give applicants other options (such as sharing their resumes), and the first to announce a continuation of the virtual interview process.

Selection of the Mitchell Class of 2025

USIA staff read all completed applications and distributed the most competitive 60 applications to the Readers Committee, a group largely consisting of Mitchell Scholars from previous classes. We utilized their rankings to select 40 semi-finalists who were then interviewed via Zoom in late October. Twenty finalists were invited to interview with the Final Selection Committee.

In November 2023, we announced the 12 members of the Class of 2025. Drake University, Bryn Mawr College, and Tulane University had their first ever Mitchell Scholarship recipients.

Members of the selection committee included **Don Bishop**, a college admissions expert with 45 years of experience (he recently retired as head of undergraduate enrolment at the University of Notre Dame); **Ryan Hanley**, a Mitchell Scholar alum and CEO of Equilibrium Energy; **Orla Keane**, Deputy Ambassador, Embassy of Ireland in Washington, DC; **Jennifer Lambert**, a Mitchell Scholar alum and Office Director for the Office of Research in the Bureau of Global Public Affairs at the Department of State; **Katie McMahon**, a global entrepreneur and technology executive who has been at the leading edge of AI and natural language understanding technologies over the past twenty years; and **Harry McNamara**, a Mitchell Scholar alum, lecturer at Princeton, and the co-founder of c16 Biosciences.

Newly Selected Scholars for 2024-2025 Academic Year (Mitchell Class of 2025)

Name of Scholar	Course of Study	US Institution	Irish Institution
Tyler Bartolome	Biotechnology	Drake U	UCC
Sam Bisno	History	Princeton	QUB
Anika Cho	Electrical & Electronic Engineering	U Alabama	UCC
Anna Clark	Smart & Sustainable Cities	Stanford	TCD
Owen Emerson	Music & Media Technologies	U Alabama	TCD
Thomas Hagan	Peace & Conflict Studies	U Chicago	UU
Christopher Kuo	Journalism	Duke	U Limerick
Lisa Maslovskaya	Documentary Practice	U Oklahoma	DCU
Chloe Nguyen	Digital Policy	Duke	UCD
Isabel Plakas	Addiction Recovery	Bryn Mahr	TCD
Kiera Sky Torpie	Creative Writing	Tulane	QUB
Coleman Yorke	Global Mental Health	Columbia	TCD

The Monetary Value of the Scholarships

Mitchell Scholars receive a flat monthly stipend of \$1250. Each Scholar is also provided a round-trip air ticket between the United States and Ireland/Northern Ireland and other in-kind benefits such as two tickets to the Abbey and readers' tickets from the Royal Irish Academy. The Scholars also receive student passes from the National Trust (UK) and an OPW card (Ireland) that allows them to visit Heritage sites free of charge. The steep increase due to inflation and other pressures on housing in Ireland caused us to provide Mitchell Scholars in Galway with additional resources to cover their housing costs.

Program Budget & Fundraising

Our ongoing challenge remains determining whether the Mitchell Scholarship Program is viable for the long term. While the Mitchell is a prestigious, highly competitive scholarship for American post-graduates, unlike most such prestigious scholarships, we did not start with an endowment from a wealthy individual. In addition to the annual DFHERIS contribution of \$485,000, we continue to seek other sources of funding. In 2023, Sam Dennigan, founder of Strong Roots, contributed significant support for a scholarship. Numerous other individuals, including alums also contributed to the program.

The annual budget of the Mitchell Scholarship Program is around \$1 million when the substantial amounts of in-kind contributions are included.

The program costs include the administration of a nationwide competition in the United States, which includes the expense of the annual selection committee interview process, the online application and all associated technology and website costs.

US program activities include a program orientation. Activities in Ireland include a September reception and group activities, a Thanksgiving gathering, commencement weekend and an annual mid-year visit by the Mitchell Scholarship Director to Ireland and Northern Ireland to assess the current Scholars' progress, visit the host universities in Ireland, and lead the visit to Northern Ireland with the Mitchell Scholars.

Other expenses of the program include alumni events, as well as administrative expenses such as office, equipment, insurances, legal services, supplies, and salaries and benefits of the USIA staff. Each year, there is an increase in the number of alumni that the program serves. A strong alumni program is crucial for maintaining the long-term connection of the Mitchells to the island.

Unfortunately, DFHERIS has been unwilling to entertain an increase tied to inflation. We continue to be tasked with doing more with less which is not sustainable.

While the program has gone from strength to strength, we have spoken repeatedly of the need to endow the program so that it may go on in perpetuity. Trina has written about the pressing issue of [securing an endowment](#) for the program, and spent a large part of 2023 raising this with Irish officials, warning that the program may be paused. The Alliance felt that the 25th anniversary of the Good Friday Agreement, which occurred in 2023, was the perfect time for either the Irish or US Governments to commit the funds necessary for the endowment. Trina also raised this concern in various interviews (shared with all in our mass emails). In 2022 and early 2023, these included an interview with [BBC](#), with [EdSurge](#), and a requested piece Trina wrote for the publication, *Irish Lives Remembered*. (In 2024, the Alliance announced a pause in future selections – this will be discussed in the 2024 report.)

Second to our own funding concerns, our second largest concern has always been the

decline of Irish and Northern Ireland universities in global rankings. If we are to continue to attract the very best of future American leaders, it is crucial that the universities on the island are internationally competitive and provide a challenging and high-quality educational programming. The universities on the island have always been, and continue to be, great partners for the Mitchell Scholarship program. We hope that they will also be able to obtain the funding that is required for their important work.

Strengthening Partnerships with Universities on the Island

Each year, after we conclude our selection process, we send a list of applicants who authorized the Alliance to share their names and information with universities on the island. This information allows the universities to reach out to these students for recruitment purposes. We also provide the resumés of applicants, at their request, with corporate supporters who may be seeking to recruit talented recent university graduates. Given that an applicant has a less than five percent chance of winning a Mitchell Scholarship, we want to provide them with other opportunities. In December, we were able to share more than 200 resumés of interested applicants with the universities on the island. These efforts, along with the profile of the Mitchell Scholarship program in the US, have resulted in the universities acquiring fee-paying students.

In 2023, Trina reached out to all new universities on the island to ascertain which might like to participate in the Mitchell Scholarship program in the future. SETU expressed an interest but pausing the program obviously means a pause in that as well. If selection resumes, we will revisit this with SETU.

Alumni Outreach and Support

The Alliance continues to support Mitchell Scholar alumni. We are always pleased to promote Scholars' accomplishments and publicize their work to support them. Most of this news is distributed via mass emails, Twitter, Instagram and LinkedIn.

A critical mass of Mitchell Scholars are emerging in Baltimore. Kesav Mohan (MS alum Class of 2005 and advisory board member) and Trina had dinner with them in Baltimore in January. It was great to see Sarah David (Class of 2008) and her husband, Glenn Gordon; Scot Miller (Class of 2008); Stephen Sechler (Class of 2016); John Velasco (Class of 2007); Aaron Rabinowitz (Class of 2006) and his wife Karen; John Kiess (Class of 2004); and new Mitchell Scholar, Alex Firestine (Class of 2024).

In March 2023, about 30 people gathered at the home of US-Ireland Alliance Advisory Board member, Una Fox, for a talk with Class of 2001 Mitchell Scholar, Winnie Li, about her latest book *Complicit*. Also present were Mitchell Scholars Erin Breeze (Class of 2001) and Arthur Chan (Class of 2008), members of our Cultur Club and other friends.

In March, when DFHERIS Minister Simon Harris visited San Francisco, Trina Vargo and several Mitchell Scholars were included in a reception at the Consul General's home. The theme

of the evening was education. In addition, during a visit to the California state legislature, the Minister met Mitchell alum Matt Haney, now a member of the legislature.

Two Mitchell Scholar alums, Kesav Mohan and Seena Perumal Carrington are members of our advisory board. Numerous alums serve on our selection committees. In 2023, around 75% of our alums made a financial contribution to the Alliance. (The most successful US university at securing alumni giving is Princeton which, in comparison, has less than 50% of their alums giving back.)

Mitchell alums formed a committee to plan and organize a summer reunion in 2023, the year that marked the 25th anniversary of the Good Friday Agreement, the US-Ireland Alliance and the George J. Mitchell Scholarship program. Many alums returned to Dublin, several with families in tow, to attend. We welcomed 200 guests to the EPIC, Dublin's Irish Emigration Museum.

Mitchell Scholars in attendance talked about the importance of the opportunity in their lives. Cassie Farrelly, Class of 2003, spoke of the "power and impact of this program" thanks to the community of scholars she joined, and the ongoing partnerships with Irish organizations it yielded. Farrelly, who did an MPhil in Irish Theater and Film at Trinity College Dublin, served on board of the Origin Theater company in New York City, a performance company focused on producing work by contemporary Irish playwrights and collaborating with Irish theater companies. For nearly a decade she worked for the UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office, where she partnered with the Northern Ireland Bureau on various initiatives. She is currently working to support development of Susan Ryan's Dublin-based novel, *The King of Lavender Square*, for possible television adaptation.

Sasha Seymore, Class of 2016, studied Conflict Transformation and Social Justice at Queen's University Belfast. Seymore spoke of the "unique opportunity" he had "to learn about conflict in the classroom while also spending time with people who had lived through it themselves." He spoke of "the radical hospitality" of the people of Belfast. Seymore is the founder of Learn to Win, a technology company that builds training software for companies ranging from professional athletic teams, to F500 companies like Novartis and AbbVie, to the US Department of Defense. He said that he wouldn't have been able to build his company to where it is today without the help of the Mitchell Scholarship community.

Matt Cortland, Class of 2015, studied Digital Media at the Dublin Institute of Technology (now the Technological University Dublin). He credited his Mitchell year, and his work experience in Dublin, as the place where he began to learn "some of the foundational skills and experiences that have formed the basis of my company and my ability to lead it as CEO." Cortland is the founder of The Cauldron pubs with locations in London, New York City, Philadelphia, Edinburgh, Brighton, and Chicago. He operated a pop-up pub in Dublin to validate the market, where he employed over 50 people, and he said he hopes to come back to Dublin soon with another pub. He noted that, "the Mitchell provides the foundation for an understanding of Ireland in a way that then makes it possible to then re-invest back into the economy."

In addition to Ireland's Department of Further and Higher Education and the alums, Hackman Capital, Strong Roots, IBEC, and Alison supported the event. During the evening, Trina also thanked the families of the late Michael Corrigan (Malibu, CA) and Richard O'Sullivan (Dublin), long-time supporters and friends of the program.

Among the Mitchell Scholars in attendance were alumni committee members Carie Windham Page, Christopher Kilner, Amanda Wetzel, Mark Tosso and Seena Perumal Carrington. Many representatives of the universities in Ireland and Northern Ireland were on hand, including David Fitzpatrick, the President of Technological University Dublin, and Orla Feeney, the new president of University College Dublin. US-Ireland Alliance board members Sean O'Sullivan, Kesav Mohan, and Joe O'Malley were present, as were former Irish Ambassadors Rory Montgomery and Brendan Scannell. Martin Mansergh and Liz O'Donnell, both important figures in the Northern Ireland peace process attend. Also present were Caroline Keeling, Oliver Fegan, Ciara Heslin, Mervyn Greene, and Denis MacCarthy. Artists enjoying the evening included Amanda Adewole, Creative Director of Black and Irish; Kurtis Wade, lead singer of VNXI; actors and writers Tara Flynn, Carl Austin, and Julia Kelly; producers Steve McCormack and Catherine Tiernan. And the family of Paul Hayes and Mary Calpin, who annually host Thanksgiving dinner for the Scholars, got to catch up with the many they've come to know over the years.

Trina noted that "these Scholars are evidence of the power, the purpose, the promise, and the possibility of how we can build the US-Ireland relationship by introducing, and keeping connected to this island, future American leaders."

The Oscar Wilde Awards

The Alliance also involves several Mitchell Scholars in our annual Oscar Wilde Awards in Los Angeles. Those who are in the film/entertainment space are invited. This provides guests the opportunity to meet Mitchell Scholars and to learn about the program. 2023 was a big year for the Irish in film with several Irish actors nominated for Academy Awards. Minister Catherine Martin attended the Oscar Wilde Awards to present an award to *THE QUIET GIRL*, the first Irish language film ever nominated for an Academy Award.

We honored Eve Hewson as our "Wilde Card" (an actress to watch). She was the star of the John Carney film, *FLORA AND SON*. We then partnered with Apple TV to give Mitchell alums the opportunity to see a special screening of the film in Massachusetts in September.

We also screened the documentary about Sinead O'Connor, *Nothing Compares*, in Los Angeles and in New York. Mitchell alums were invited to and attended these screenings.

Alumni events are important not only for the alums but for raising the profile of Ireland with those who attend our events.

Appendix 1

Annual Written Declaration by Fund Manager in respect of the George Mitchell Scholarship Fund

I, the undersigned, in accordance with the George Mitchell Scholarship Acts 1998 and 2010 and paragraphs 6(4) and 7(2) of the Agreement dated 1st June 2010 between the US-Ireland Alliance and the Department of Education and Skills (Ireland), hereby declare on behalf of the US-Ireland Alliance that

- a) in accordance with paragraph 6 (4) of the Agreement, the Alliance has ensured that all payments from the investment and matching funding accounts in (insert the relevant year) have been used for the purposes of the Fund as specified under paragraphs 1(2) and 1(3) of the Agreement and are not being used to cross-subsidise any of the Alliance's other activities and
- b) in accordance with paragraph 7 (2) of the Agreement, the Alliance has ensured that in 2013 the monies withdrawn from the Fund for the purposes specified in paragraph 1(2) of the Agreement have been drawn in equal amounts from the investment account and the matching funding account.

Signed



Title President

Date April 28, 2024