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Georgia Southern University Launches Research Partnership with Waterford Institute of Technology

MARCH 19, 2014

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Georgia Southern University welcomed Dr. Leo Varadkar, Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport in Ireland, on Tuesday, March 18, at a reception in the Eugene M. Bishop Alumni Center to recognize the launch of the Wexford-Savannah Axis research partnership.

The partnership examines how and why so many people from the Irish county of Wexford and Southeastern Ireland immigrated to Savannah, Ga., in the 19th century, and the impact that had on Irish and American generations in both countries. The initiative is a joint research project between Waterford Institute of Technology (WIT), Georgia Southern University, the Georgia Historical Society in Savannah and the John F. Kennedy Trust, based in New Ross, Co. Wexford, Ireland.

"We warmly welcome Minister Varadkar and other Irish friends to our institution for the launch of this exciting and relevant research collaboration," said Howard Keeley, Ph.D., director of the Center for Irish Research and Teaching at Georgia Southern. "The project is a significant international public-private partnership that will add depth and nuance to our understanding of a crucial but often overlooked aspect of Irish-American identity: the experiences and traditions of the Irish in the Southern States."

Many people in the Savannah area claim Irish ancestry, and many of those can trace that ancestry to Southeastern Ireland, mostly from Wexford. After Tuesday's announcement, Minister Varadkar congratulated the team on the innovative nature of the partnership. "I am very excited by this project. There is huge potential to develop links between the southeast of Ireland and Georgia, and in particular to increase tourist traffic between these two parts of the world. We are always pleased to welcome American visitors to Ireland, and in this case it will be wonderful to welcome so many people from Savannah home."

Keeley added, "Not only will our shared inquiry uncover much about the Wexford-Savannah migration pathway, the knowledge we gain will also help us better comprehend and address the challenges faced by present-day immigrant communities, whether in the U.S., Ireland or elsewhere. In addition, we look forward to sharing the links between Southeastern Ireland and Georgia with as many as possible of the 12 million tourists that visit Savannah annually."

Dr. Richard Hayes, head of the School of Humanities at WIT, said, "We are delighted by the support the Minister has shown for this project. It is an exciting project for WIT to be involved in, not least because it involves collaboration with not only another university and an esteemed American historical society but also with the JFK Trust. We see great potential in this research as it will answer important questions about the experience of people from our region in the United States and offer insights into how immigrant communities sustain themselves in the contemporary world. Also, of course, our partnership with the JFK Trust allows us to realize the tourism potential of the link in Georgia."

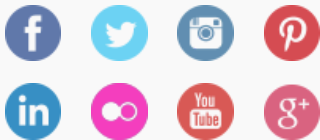


Georgia Southern University, a Carnegie Doctoral/Research University founded in 1906, offers 125 degree programs serving more than 20,500 students. Through eight colleges, the University offers bachelor's, master's and doctoral degree programs built on more than a century of academic achievement. Georgia Southern is recognized for its student-centered approach to education.

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Congratulations to #GeorgiaSouthern @GSCOSM alumnus Nick Wiley ('83) who was recently named the chief conservation officer of @DucksUnlimited ! ow.ly/BhVW30hkDJR



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