

Bláithín Nic a t-Sithigh (Sheehy)

Forógra do ról an Leas Uachtarán don Ghaeilge, AMLÉ

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About Me

My name is Bláithín Sheehy. I am from Dingle in County Kerry. I am a fluent Irish speaker, with Irish being my first language. I want to represent and be the voice of all students when it come to the Irish language. I have a degree in Irish and History from University College Cork. This year I served as the Leas Uachtarán don Ghaeilge with USI. I believe it is important to have a Students' Union that supports its students and values them and their views. After being your Leas Uachtarán don Ghaeilge this year, I wish to continue representing students Irish Language needs within USI.

Experience

Growing up in the Gaeltacht, I had a lot of opportunities to utilise my Irish, and when I started in college, I took every opportunity I got to use my Irish. This year as Leas Uachtarán don Ghaeilge, it gave me an opportunity to utilise my experience within the job.

- I speak on Nuacht TG4 and Raidió na Gaeltachta regularly.
- I did work experience with Ros na Rún and was an extra.
- I have spent my summers working as a Ceannaire in Irish college with Coláiste Chorca Dhuibhne.
- When I was in college, I was involved with the Irish societies and sat on their committees – An Chuallacht Gaelach and An Cumann Drámaíochta.
- Mentor for ‘Gníomhaí Gaeilge’ this year.
- Served as the College's Representative for the College of Arts, Celtic Studies and Social Sciences, and sat on the executive of UCC Students' Union when I was in my third year in college.
- Resident in Áras Uí Tuama, the University's Irish Language Residency Scheme for three years.
- Participated in the ‘Scéim na Scoil’ run by the Centre for Spoken Irish in UCC.

- Gave a talk on the role of the Irish language officer at Training na Cumann, organised by Conradh na Gaeilge.
- Spoke on a panel at Oireachtas na Samhna about the future of the language.
- Started 'Feachtas na bhFáinní' in conjunction with Conradh na Gaeilge this year.
- Worked with the organisers of Seachtain na Gaeilge on 'Lámhleabhar na Mac Léinn'.
- Started a 'Pop-Up Gaeltacht' campaign which is currently being run by USI.

All my experience has taught me how to tackle student problems and the skills necessary to deal with them. I have learned how to work as part of a team and listen to the needs students and how to implement changes. I believe I have the experience to continue in this role, which I intend to build on in the coming year.

Plans for the Year Ahead

Going into this role I want to set achievable and realistic goals to work towards. When my term ends, I would like to look back and be able to say I achieved what I set out to and helped every student or union that came to me with a query or a problem. If re-elected, I would like to work on the following:

- **Irish Language Classes for Officers** - A conversation that I heard a lot this year was officers looking to learn their Cúpla Focal or brush up on the Irish they already had. If re-elected, I would like to explore the avenue of having Irish classes available at a reasonable price to USI Officers first and then look at extending it out to Member Organisations.
- **Pop-Up Gaeltacht** - Following on from this campaign in Semester 2, I plan to extend the campaign, making it better, through getting feedback and looking at areas we can improve on from this semester and incorporate it into next year. I

think Pop-Up Gaeltacht's are a great way for people to use their Cúpla Focal in a social manner, without the pressure of being judged for the level of their Irish and pick up some new words and phrases as Gaeilge.

- **Liase with other minority language groups** - As Irish is seen as a minority language, I plan to do research into other minority language's and liase with other language groups, such as students unions who have a language officer e.g. NUS Wales, and share ideas on how we can support and promote our language.
- **Seachtain na Gaeilge** - Seachtain na Gaeilge is a key event which takes place each year from the 1st-17th of March. I would like to further develop USI's Seachtain na Gaeilge by working with MOs and the organisers of Seachtain na Gaeilge to develop it at third level.
- **Increase Irish Language presence on Social Media** - While USI has had Irish in social media posts where possible, it wasn't always possible due to timing restrictions and other factors. This is something I want to change and improve on. I hope to do this with the guide and support of our Irish language scheme.
- **Irish Campaign Pack** - At the beginning of my term as officer, I will put together a useful toolkit for officers, so that they can use Gaeilge or Cúpla Focal in campaigns and events throughout the year e.g. SHAG Week, exam de-stress.
- **USI's 'Scéim Teanga'**– Further develop USI's 'Scéim Teanga' by creating a comprehensive, long-term strategy for the Irish language within the union. This will include training, language promotion efforts, support for Gaeltacht regions, incentivization schemes for officers promoting the language, organizing events, and engaging in lobbying activities.
- **Advocacy for the Irish Officer Position and Role Establishment** - Following the recent establishment of the second full-time Irish Officer in local unions at Trinity College Dublin and University of Galway, I am eager to collaborate with

and offer assistance to other unions to establish similar roles. I aim to facilitate the establishment of the Irish Officer position within unions that currently lack such representation, particularly in a part-time capacity. Additionally, I intend to provide enhanced support to Irish Officers through consistent check-ins, with a particular focus on those serving in part-time capacities.

- **Supporting Irish Societies and their establishment** – Irish societies play a key role in the promotion of Irish at third level. I plan to further strengthen USI's relationship with them by working with them and supporting them throughout the year. I also want to help establish Irish societies on campuses that don't currently have an Irish society but have the demand for one.

Final statement

It would be a great honour for me to be re-elected as your Leas Uachtarán don Ghaeilge for 24/25. I wish to continue to create a safe learning environment for students through Irish, especially those who may not feel that confident in their Irish and build on the work I've done over the past year. I know talking to a fluent Irish speaker can be daunting so I would like to bring a sense of security and support for students within USI. I will also be working

with Irish language reps along with Irish Societies to ensure students feel supported and get the best possible experience that they can, while also creating an environment that provides for everyone. I am grateful to have served as your Leas Uachtarán don Ghaeilge this year and I hope to continue in the role for another year. I do believe I am the right and best experienced choice for this role.

Is fearr sinne le chéile trí Ghaeilge.