**Chancellor, Vice-Chancellor, honoured guests, my good colleagues, graduands, families, friends…**

I have today the honour and privilege in delivering this citation which marks a historic moment in the history of this great institution. Today, 8th December 2016, Queen’s University Belfast is to bestow its Regius Chair in Electronics and Computer Engineering on my colleague Professor John McCanny, from the Faculty of Engineering and Physical Sciences, as its first incumbent.

Regius Chairs are part of our history. One thousand years ago, as Europe emerged from the dark ages, having suffered war and plague, enlightened and ambitious rulers sought to bring better times for themselves and their people. Science and learning that had once been common in ancient Greece and the Middle East had been forgotten, but these emerging kingdoms began to really understand the relationship between knowledge and power, and how this was important for their health, wealth, and spirituality. So, we saw the creation of the first universities in the 11th century as places of learning for the people.

In what became the United Kingdom we followed suit, with a number of universities and colleges throughout the land. They were venerated places of learning and independent thinking, a source of innovative ideas, and progenitors of critical thinkers and leaders.

These qualities, and opportunities, were noted by successive monarchs and in 1497 King Kames IV established the first Regius Chair at Aberdeen in the field of medicine, perhaps with some thought on the ability of this emerging profession to tackle the plagues and diseases which periodically swept through the kingdom. Thus, this, and subsequent Regius Chairs, are with Royal Patronage, or directly made by Royal Appointment, and so are rare, and very prestigious.

Between 1900 and 2000 only two such appointments were made. They carry with them a sense of history, a sense of honour, and bestowed upon minds who seek new knowledge and truths, hence they also carry a sense of the future.

How then does this relate to our world today? Well, at the time of that first Regius Chair, late 1400s, the pencil was just invented, and printing presses were in their infancy, with the production of the famous Guttenberg Bible in 1450, the first book in English “Recuyell of the Historyes of Troye” appeared in 1475. There were less than 1 million manuscripts in the world at that time. With printing, by the 18th century there were over 1 billion books.

Books have been a great way to communicate ideas, but in real time, like a battlefield or at sea, it was a little different. In 1520 Magellan, in his famous voyage to the Far East, used flags to signal between ships, and even cannon fire when visibility was low. Fast forward now through five centuries of ever increasing developments like Morse code, the telegraph and the telephone. Morse code being the new theory and system that enabled the telegraph to happen.

In our own lifetime, the pace has been astounding, e-mail and the internet only came to be in the 1990s, and yet now, they are ubiquitous. Our learning, our photographs and memories, our banking, all exist in this medium. For some a pervasive, brilliant enabling tool, and for others and invasive, frightening and disabling phenomenon, which needs to be contained and controlled. The volume of information today is equivalent to trillions of books. Our history in a nutshell.

But what of our future, and how do we deal with such a volume of information? Now is the time for an innovator, a critical thinker, a creative genius, in the mould of that first generation as recognised by James IV in 1497.

Today, honoured guests, we have such a thinker. John McCanny was born in Ballymoney in June 1952. Educated in Dalriada Grammar School, he studied Physics in Manchester graduating in 1973, and becoming a supporter of Manchester United, at just the wrong time, when Denis Law, one of his heroes sent United to Division two with that infamous backheel just a year later.

Although John likes football, and supports Ulster and Ireland in Rugby, and indeed plays a little golf at Clandeboye golf club, his real passion is his work. His achievements in that work have been outstanding, with honours and accolades that mark those achievements.

He is an international authority on special purpose electronic systems in computer engineering and cryptography. He has published 5 research books, 360 peer reviewed research papers and holds over 20 patents. Like the Morse code and telegraph system, John develops ideas and theory, which he then turns into real inventions for us to use.

He was responsible, within Queen’s University, for developing the vision that led to the creation of the Northern Ireland Science Park and its flagship centre in Electronics, Computing and Information Technology, for which he is currently Director. In 2002 the Science Park was built on the deserted site that was once the proud centre of our global ship building industry.

Today 160 high technology companies are located there, employing over 2,500 people, and once again, Belfast, through the influence of John’s work, leads the world in innovation.

He also led the initiative that in Centre for Secure Information Technology (C-SIT as we call it), which now has over 90 people and is the UK’s largest Innovation and Knowledge Centre for Cybersecurity. To date CSIT has helped create over 1000 further jobs in the area of cybersecurity, creating, from scratch, a new industry sector in Northern Ireland.

So what do they do there? Data encryption, network security systems, wireless security systems and intelligent surveillance technology, and they are developing innovative solutions to a number of modern problems, including the protection of our mobile phone networks, and the creation of secure ‘corridors’ for the seamless and rapid transit of people, thus, making our passage through airports much easier.

His team are also creating novel and powerful computer processors, capable of detecting and filtering computer viruses to protect information like our financial records; the notion of viruses perhaps harking back to those medieval plagues in the time of James IV. In his quieter, less busy moments, he has co-founded two successful high technology companies Amphion Semiconductor Ltd. and Audio Processing Technology Ltd.

Clearly, he couldn’t have done this alone, and John has always had the support of his family. His wife Maureen, son Damian and his wife Fiona, and his daughter Kathryn. They are all here today to join this celebration, along with his sisters Oonagh and Noreen and their husbands Mark and Maurice.

In addition to John’s creative and innovative genius, he has a quality of leadership, collegiality and friendship, and this has enabled him to bring such a high quality team together to make the dream a reality.

His accolades for these successes are many: a Fellow of the Royal Society, the Royal Academy of Engineering, and the Royal Irish Academy to name a few.

His honours and awards include a CBE, the Faraday medal and the Royal Irish Academy’s Cunningham medal - its highest honour. And bringing us around to Royal honours again, CSIT was awarded a 2015 Queen’s Anniversary Prize for Higher and Further Education.

We have come a long way from signalling to each other with flags and cannons, and in Professor McCanny, we at Queen’s, and indeed the United Kingdom, have someone worthy to carry the title of Regius Professor. In 2016 Her Majesty, Queen Elizabeth the Second, bestowed the first Regius Chair to Queen’s. A great honour to Queen’s, to Northern Ireland, and also to John.

As this is such a historic occasion I would beg your indulgence to allow me to read the Royal Warrant in full, as few of us will ever hear such in our lifetime: