

Address by Jón Atli Benediktsson, Rector of the University of Iceland, on the occasion of the presentation of John Lindow with an honorary doctorate from the Faculty of Social and Human Sciences. Held in the Aula, 14 May 2018.

Dean of School, Head of Faculty, honorary doctoral candidate, ladies and gentlemen.

I would like to welcome you all to this University of Iceland ceremony for the presentation of an honorary doctorate from the Faculty of Social and Human Sciences at the School of Social Sciences. Today, we honour a long-standing friend of the University, Dr John Lindow, Professor Emeritus at the University of California Berkeley, President of the Western States Folklore Society and former Fullbright Professor in Folkloristics at the University of Iceland Faculty of Social Sciences. He is awarded an honorary doctorate for his work and contributions in the field of folkloristics and Old Norse studies, as professor Valdimar Tryggvi Hafstein will describe in more detail in just a bit.

Ever since the University of Iceland was founded in 1911, the laws on the institution have included a specific chapter granting University faculties the right to award doctorates. Doctorates may be awarded following a special examination or 'for the sake of honour', *honoris causa*, without the candidate undergoing an examination. As the name of the title suggests, an honorary doctorate is awarded to honour the candidate and dignify the University of Iceland. An honorary doctorate is also a way for the University of Iceland to

recognise exceptional contributions to the University or outstanding accomplishments in its interests. Those who receive this accolade must have achieved significant success in their career and enjoy general recognition in their field, either as scientists, cultural pioneers, spiritual or secular leaders.

The awarding of honorary doctorates has always been an active part of the University of Iceland's operations. The first to receive the title was Dr Björn M. Olsen, Rector of the University, in 1918 when he retired as a professor. Since then, around 200 individuals have been awarded an honorary doctorate from the University of Iceland, both Icelanders and international scholars and leaders. It is particularly gratifying that Professor John Lindow will now join this group.

The University of Iceland has always been fortunate enough to forge connections with international scholars in various fields and benefit from their expertise and scientific research. In our small society, in which we often feel ourselves somewhat isolated from other countries, such connections and collaboration with exceptional scholars have proved invaluable. Professor John Lindow has for many years worked tirelessly in the interests of the University of Iceland, in folkloristics and Old Norse studies, through his teaching and research in collaboration with University of Iceland scholars. Through his more than 40-year career at one of the most respected universities in the world, University of California Berkeley, he has introduced countless American students to Icelandic culture.

The University of Iceland owes a great debt of gratitude to Professor John Lindow. It therefore gives me enormous pleasure that he is here today to receive the honorary doctorate from the Faculty of Social and Human Sciences, and I extend to him my warmest welcome.

I would now like to invite Valdimar Tryggvi Hafstein, professor of folkloristics at the Faculty of Social and Human Sciences, to the podium.