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The Faculty of Health Sciences  
presents

# The Inaugural Lecture of Professor Steve Thomas

29th September 2022

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# Valuing Health Care Reform: Resilience in Interesting Times

Professor Steve Thomas



Steve is the Edward Kennedy Chair of Health Policy and Management and the Director of Health Policy and Engagement for the School of Medicine. He has 27 years of international experience in health systems across four continents and is a global leader in research and policy input around health system resilience and reform, advising governments and international organisations.

Steve was born in Bradford, West Yorkshire, the eldest of three children. He attended Lightcliffe Church of England Primary School and Bradford Boys Grammar School. He went to St Peter's College, Oxford, where he gained an Economics scholarship and more importantly met his future wife, Debbie.

After his BA (1989) he did a Masters in Development Economics and then was awarded a Fellowship through the Overseas Development Institute and a two-year post in Uganda in the Ministry of Planning with responsibility for education and health projects. He then worked in Bangladesh as a health economics adviser to the government for a few years, which he loved, but decided to pivot to academia: "I think the best place to influence policy, actually, is from an academic position – when you're in government there is never enough time."

A post came up in the University of Cape Town, where he also completed his PhD on managing different stakeholders in health reform. He loved Cape Town, where he, his wife (children's author Debbie Thomas) and three daughters Emily, Ruby and Rosa were part of "a fantastic cross-cultural church in the townships".

*Inaugural lectures provide newly appointed professors with the opportunity to showcase their academic activity to the College community and members of the public. An inaugural lecture is a significant event in an academic staff member's career. At Trinity College, inaugural lectures are a ceremonial occasion, which is why academic robes are worn by the inaugural professor and the rest of the platform party.*

In 2005 he moved to Ireland to take up a lectureship in Trinity's Centre for Health Policy and Management, where he was the director from 2015 to 2021. He also served for ten years as a co-Director of the national SPHERE PhD programme which has successfully trained over 75 PhD candidates. In 2016/17 He led the Trinity team providing technical support to the Oireachtas Committee for the Future of Healthcare and its production of Sláintecare, which is now current government policy to achieve Universal Health Care in Ireland.

Steve is currently heading the RESTORE programme, a five-year Research Leader Award funded by the Health Research Board. His international team is investigating how best to enhance health system resilience, achieve Universal Health Care reform and improve staff wellbeing in Ireland and internationally. Steve's research looks at how to utilise health system shocks crises, like COVID-19 and the economic crisis, to improve system performance. His team is sharing evidence-based strategies with national policy-makers and key decision-makers in agencies such as WHO, OECD and the EU.

Most recently, Steve was a Visiting Professor at the University of Toronto at the Institute for Health Policy Management and Evaluation. He has strong links with both the North American and European Observatories for Health Policies and Systems and is a regular keynote speaker at workshops and conferences. He is also editing an Elgar Handbook on Health Systems Resilience

Steve is a long time Leeds United supporter who now dares raise his head again. In 2021, he achieved a lifetime high of gaining Irish citizenship.