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Making island history at UPEI

UNESCO chair in island studies and sustainability will be co-held by James Randall and Godfrey Baldacchino

A new UNESCO chair in island studies and sustainability has been named at the University of Prince Edward Island.

The chair will be co-held by James Randall, a geographer and co-ordinator of UPEI's master of arts in island studies (MAIS) program, and Godfrey Baldacchino, a professor of sociology at the University of Malta and an island studies teaching fellow at UPEI.

"The UNESCO chair is a singular achievement for the university, particularly for the program in island studies," said Robert Gilmour, vice-president academic and research at UPEI.

"The chair formalizes and reinforces the combined efforts of our former Canada Research chair, Baldacchino, and the current co-ordinator of UPEI's MAIS program, Randall, and, as such, significantly enhances the international impact of one of the university's signature initiatives."

The UNESCO chair in island studies will work to establish and expand academic and research programs on small island developing states and sub-national island jurisdictions.

It will operate from the premise these areas are innovative, entrepreneurial and connected, not vulnerable, lacking and isolated.

The chair is one of 700 UNESCO chairs around the world and is the first in Atlantic Canada.

"The relevance of islands to our world at the moment is unparalleled. From political turmoil in the South China Sea, to the impacts of climate change, to refugee movements through Europe, to the role of offshore



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James Randall, left, and Godfrey Baldacchino are the co-holders of the new UNESCO chair in island studies and sustainability.

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financial centres, stories about islands and islanders seem to be in the news every day," said Randall.

"This chair brings together the people and the organizations doing island studies research and learning in order to help us solve some of the great challenges facing our world."

The principal long-term mission of the chair of island studies and sustainability is to contribute to the sustainable development of small island developing states — a UNESCO priority — and to extend this

priority to sub-national island jurisdictions.

The chair proposes to harness the insights and experience of island studies scholars, students, governments and organizations worldwide, many of which the co-chair-holders, the Institute of Island Studies, and partners and supporters have already established.

"UPEI has made huge investments in island studies over almost four decades and has developed a world-class and world-renowned reputation and expertise as a result. Most island studies roads lead to, or pass through, Charlottetown," said Baldacchino.

"The UNESCO chair is a natural transition which now allows us to take the game to the next level, whether in public engagement, cutting edge scholarship or research funding."