

KTI celebrates collaboration between business and research

Over 200 people from across the business and research community gathered together for the Knowledge Transfer Ireland (KTI) Impact Awards at the Royal Hospital Kilmainham on Thursday evening, to recognise and celebrate the achievements of knowledge transfer professionals working in Irish Higher Education Institutes (HEIs) and publicly-funded research organisations (RPOs).

KTI helps business to benefit from access to Irish expertise and technology by making it simple to connect and engage with this research base in Ireland, thus progressing innovation, the commercialisation of research, job creation and economic prosperity. With journalist and broadcaster Richard Curran hosting the event and Minister of State for Training, Skills and Innovation John Halligan TD presenting the awards, the night recognised substantial commercial achievements across seven categories.

"The Impact Awards are about acknowledging the importance of Ireland's knowledge transfer and research commercialisation successes and the people who make them happen - the on-the-ground staff in technology transfer offices and industry liaison offices around the country," commented Dr Alison Campbell, Director of KTI.

Recent results from Enterprise Ireland's client survey show that companies that collaborate with the Irish Research system on market led projects have more than double the sales and exports than those that don't. One

such collaboration which has delivered significant impact is that between Ceramicx Ireland Ltd and Trinity College Dublin - winners of the KTI Collaborative Research Award. Ceramicx, a Cork based heat processing specialist, worked with a team of engineers from Trinity to develop a first-of-its-kind 3D infrared IR heat detector which has major implications for industry and manufacturing, reducing waste and saving on costs. The product

has assisted Ceramicx to increase sales, which have jumped by 32% since 2015 and employee numbers, which have grown by 50% since the project began 5 years ago.

The ability to innovate and adapt to market needs is key to developing opportunities and expanding any business. Licensing new technologies is one way to harness innovation and build business. For example, winners of the Licence2Market KTI

Award, Teagasc, the agriculture and food development authority, licensed new technology to Ornuu Cooperative Ltd that enabled the company to manufacture cheese in countries with a shortage of fresh milk. This led to Ornuu opening a multi-million euro cheese manufacturing plant in Saudi Arabia. With plans to extend its product range in 2017, the company has strong growth plans to fill the capacity of the plant over the next 5 years.



KTI Director Alison Campbell, guest speaker and Senior Partner at Katawave Aidan McCullen, and MC at the event journalist and broadcaster Richard Curran



Minister for Training, Skills and Innovation John Halligan TD addressing over 200 people from the business and research community at the KTI Impact Awards

Another exciting engagement between industry and academia is the consultancy project between University of Limerick and Rusal Aughinish Alumina (AAL), Europe's largest alumina refinery. The company sought the expertise of researchers at MACSI (a network of mathematical modellers and scientific computational analysts based in Ireland) in University of Limerick to develop bespoke systems for AAL that ensure the quality of the extracted products is not affected in the event of a loss of power at their plants. This project has resulted in a staggering 200% increase in the accuracy of prediction of product quality, enhancing the overall efficiency and decision-making of the plant.

The award for Spin-Out Company went to Kastus, spun out from Dublin Institute of Technology to develop technology that can be used during production processes to render any glass, ceramic or metallic surface 99.99% resistant to superbugs like MRSA, ecoli and other fungi. The company is projecting multi-million euro revenue over the next 5 years and in 2016 secured investment from

Venture Capitalist, Atlantic Bridge University Fund which has enabled the company to expand its staff. Kastus has now established offices at the new DIT Hothouse Incubator and the technology transfer office at DIT continues to act as a bridge to Kastus as they continue to develop new products for the marine sector.

The Mature Spin-out Company Award gives companies at a later stage of development the opportunity to shine. The recipients of this award were UCC and their spin-out company InfiniLED Ltd. The company, founded in 2011, creates low power micro-LED display technology. In 2016, it was acquired by Facebook-owned virtual reality company Oculus. This has led to significant inward investment in Cork and the creation of high skilled jobs in the region.

Trinity College Dublin and University College Dublin won the accolade of KTI Initiative of the Year for their leadership in establishing together the University Bridge Fund. The €60 million fund was launched in 2016 with the purpose of enabling earlier investment in science-based com-

panies, building executive teams and creating the capacity to follow the investment - all major gaps in the national ecosystem. The fund ensures that Ireland is now internationally competitive from a campus company and scaling perspective.

Finally, Paul Maguire, Senior Licensing Executive in ICT and Engineering at DIT's technology transfer office, was recognised as the Achiever of the Year. It was a highly productive year for Paul who personally supported the creation of 19 new companies for DIT and its partner Institutes of Technology, and developed over 50 new industry engagements. There was a further personal award announced on the night - the KTI Special Recognition Award - that was presented to Lorraine Kane, Office Manager at Maynooth University technology transfer office, for the role she plays both locally across the Maynooth University Technology Transfer Consortium of 4 HEIs and nationally supporting the development of the Knowledge Transfer system in Ireland.

