

Leading academic institutions work with industry leader MSD to ensure Cork employees are ready for the knowledge economy

Brinny, Cork, Sept 2nd, 2011: Global Healthcare leader MSD, in association with the National Institute for Bioprocessing Research and Training (NIBRT), has formed a partnership with Institute of Technology, Sligo to provide a ground breaking educational training programme for the workforce at their Brinny plant in West Cork.

The Continuing Education Programme in Brinny is part of MSD's commitment to supporting science education and research in Ireland as it takes a central role in the country's future as a knowledge-based economy.

John Howell, General Manager, MSD in Brinny said "Transformation is a key driver in securing the future of our business in Ireland and investing in the education of our employees is paramount to the success of this transformation process. At MSD in Brinny we continue to be committed to developing talent and enabling our people to enhance their skills so that we are in a position to attract further investment to Ireland. The support of Government to industry in these initiatives is key to the future success of the life sciences sector in Ireland".

The courses available include; a Higher Certificate in Science, a Bachelor of Science in Pharmaceutical Science, a Bachelor of Science in Biopharmaceutical Science and a Masters in Biopharmaceutical Science.

All of the courses, which are delivered primarily through online learning, have been designed to cater for the particular needs of adult learners and the programmes are designed, developed and delivered by a NIBRT/IT Sligo team of experienced trainers with a wide range of industry experience. MSD hope to register up to 60 people for the programme this year with the aim of starting another rotation in 2012.

IT Sligo's Head of School of Science, Dr Jeremy Bird, said "IT Sligo's online learning delivery method provides a platform which has the potential to be applied widely in industry. Our online courses provide such a degree of flexibility that it is possible for workers and students to take our courses from anywhere in the world. This flexibility is crucial in the workplace at the moment, because it provides companies and employees with the opportunity to update their skills without leaving the workplace, allowing them to maintain their competitiveness. Our close links with NIBRT enable us to jointly offer a programme of a high academic standard, while being very focused towards the industry's educational requirements".

Prof Ian Marison, Director of NIBRT expressed the importance of such training programmes for the Irish pharmaceutical industry and how NIBRT can bring together important partners from across Ireland, including this one with IT Sligo, to provide tailored, fully accredited training programmes to suit industry's needs now and in a developing, very competitive industrial environment. "MSD has taken a great initiative in providing their workforce with programmes which allow everyone, from operators to senior management, to develop their skills and careers. This plays a pivotal role in promoting the knowledge-based economy within Ireland. NIBRT fully supports this initiative and will work closely with MSD to achieve a high calibre programme which will benefit the company and enhance Ireland's reputation as being at the forefront of the (bio)pharmaceutical industry" said Prof Marison.

The Continuing Education Programme is fully funded by MSD in conjunction with the IDA, so there is no financial cost to employees. The company plans to roll out similar education initiatives in conjunction with NIBRT to employees at several of the other 7 MSD sites in Ireland in the coming months.

-ENDS-

Notes to Editor

Today's MSD is a global healthcare leader working to help the world be well. Following the completion of Merck & Co., Inc's merger with Schering-Plough Corporation the company is known as MSD worldwide, except in the United States and Canada where we are Merck. Through our prescription medicines, vaccines, biologic therapies, and consumer care and animal health products, we work with customers and operate in more than 140 countries to deliver innovative health solutions. We also demonstrate our commitment to increasing access to healthcare through far-reaching policies, programs and partnerships. For more information, visit www.msd.ie.

MSD in Ireland

MSD employs 2,300 people directly in Ireland through its operations at sites in Carlow, Cork, Dublin, Tipperary and Wicklow.

In the last five decades the company has invested over €2.2bn in Ireland. MSD is one of Ireland's leading exporters and contributes significantly towards making the pharmaceutical industry the country's leading export sector. MSD is a member of Guaranteed Irish and manufactures or packages many of its leading products for the world market in Ireland.

IT Sligo

Institute of Technology, Sligo is the largest higher level education institution in the North West with more than 6,000 students and almost 600 staff. Its School of Science is the second largest in the Institute of Technology Sector, after Dublin Institute of Technology. IT Sligo is a recognised national leader in online education and has worked closely on staff training with a wide range of leading multinational companies such as Coca Cola, Masonite International, Abbott Ireland and Baxter. Most recently it won the 'Best in eLearning' category in the 2011 Digital Media Awards. A team of students from IT Sligo took first place in the global final of the Microsoft Imagine Cup, the world's leading student technology competition, earlier this summer. For more information see www.itsligo.ie

NIBRT

The National Institute for Bioprocessing Research and Training (NIBRT) is a global centre of excellence for training and research in bioprocessing. NIBRT is located in a new, world class facility in Dublin, Ireland. This facility is purpose built to closely replicate a modern bioprocessing plant with state of the art equipment.

NIBRT is based on an innovative collaboration between University College Dublin, Trinity College Dublin, Dublin City University and the Institute of Technology, Sligo. NIBRT was primarily funded by the Government of Ireland through Ireland's inward investment promotion agency, IDA Ireland (Industrial Development Agency), which is responsible for the attraction and development of foreign investment in Ireland. NIBRT offers a quality training and research experience not previously possible anywhere in the world.

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