

Calling all enterprising students – total prize fund worth €65,000

The Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation, Richard Bruton TD today (Wednesday 28th October 2015) announced details of the Enterprise Ireland Student Entrepreneur Awards for 2016. The Awards, now in their 35th year, are open to all fulltime third-level students in the Republic of Ireland. Co-sponsored by Enterprise Ireland, Cruickshank Intellectual Property Attorneys, Grant Thornton and Intel, the Awards attracted submissions from over 1,200 students in 2015.

The Student Entrepreneur Awards are part of an ongoing drive aimed at tapping into the potential for students to turn entrepreneurial ideas into commercial businesses. The objective is to encourage third-level students to start their own business as a career option. With a total cash prize fund of €35,000 and expert mentoring, guidance and consultancy worth €30,000 from the blue-chip sponsors, the Awards provide a great platform for ambitious and enterprising third level students to build a viable and commercial business venture.

The 2015 winner Rob Laffan, a student from Limerick Institute of Technology, beat off stiff competition with his project 'Tippy Talk', a bespoke, robust touch-screen communication system for non-verbal children with autism. 'TippyTalk' allows the child to communicate their desires, feelings and needs to their parents through the transfer of pictures to text messages. 'TippyTalk' can also be adapted to cover other areas of non-verbal disabilities. Rob is now completing New Frontiers in LIT.

Announcing details of the Awards Minister Bruton said: "As we work towards getting back to full employment we are determined to nurture and support those who start a business in Ireland. Two thirds of all new jobs come from start-ups and we have put in place a range of measures through the Action Plan for Jobs and through the recent Budget to provide supports for entrepreneurs. Supporting measures including Reduced Capital Gains Tax, a knowledge development box of 6.25% tax and a continuation of the corporation tax break for new start-ups. Third level students represent an exciting seed bed for future business start-ups. I would encourage students from all our universities and colleges interested in starting up a new business to avail of the specialist advice and assistance on offer through these Awards, and enter this exciting and dynamic competition".

With a practical combination of cash prizes and consultancy, the Awards provide a great opportunity to turn a realistic business idea into a winning project and possibly a commercial business. The sponsors of the Awards bring their expertise to nurturing the finalists in the competition to commercialise their business by providing them with expert guidance in areas such as intellectual property, market research, finances, technology development, public relations and advertising, all aimed at supporting young entrepreneurs to develop viable businesses and create jobs.

Julie Sinnamon, CEO Enterprise Ireland, concluded: “Start-up businesses are the life blood of the indigenous economy and make a positive impact on job creation in towns and villages all over Ireland. In driving entrepreneurship, we need to play to our strengths, like the fact that Ireland has one of the youngest populations in Europe. The Enterprise Ireland Student Entrepreneur Awards provide support and encouragement, as well as practical assistance to help young entrepreneurs to move from idea to income as quickly as possible. These young entrepreneurs have the potential to be the next big Irish business success stories and we are pleased to help them onto the first rung of the business ladder”.

To enter the Awards, students are requested to submit a short video that captures their business idea and shows its commercial and export potential. If shortlisted, students will need to develop a business plan that shows the judges how viable and well researched the project is. A dedicated website, Facebook page, twitter account and pod casts support the promotion of the Awards and the subsequent winners. Executives from Enterprise Ireland will present details of the competition to all colleges and institutions between now and the **closing date for the competition, 17 March 2016.** www.studententrepreneurawards.com.

Photos will be sent to Picture Desks, and will be available on request

ENDS

For Further information contact:

Gillian Slattery, Regional Development Executive, Enterprise Ireland on 061/777027 or 087/9316103 or Gillian.slattery@enterprise-ireland.com

Paula Chase, Press Office, Enterprise Ireland on 01/7272842 or paula.chase@enterprise-ireland.com

Note to Editors re Prize Fund:

Overall winner – €10,000

Cruickshank High Achieving Merit Award – €5,000

Cash prize sponsored by Cruickshank Intellectual Property Attorneys for exceptional business idea.

Grant Thornton High Achieving Merit Award – €5,000

Cash prize sponsored by Grant Thornton for exceptional business idea.

Intel ICT Award – €5,000