

Pearse Lyons

Thomas Pearse Lyons was born in Dundalk, Co. Louth in 1944. He graduated from University College, Dublin with a First Class Honours degree in Biochemistry, and followed that with a M.Sc. in Brewing Science and a Ph.D. in Biochemistry from the University of Birmingham, UK. He worked in Harp Lager as a student and Irish Distillers as a graduate, but, before long, he was striking out on his own. He established Alltech in his garage in Kentucky in October 1980 and by Christmas was turning a profit. Under his leadership, Alltech grew rapidly into a global leader in animal nutrition and health products. Today it employs almost 3,500 people globally, with offices in 85 countries and business in a total of 128 countries. Having started with only confidence, hope, great ideas, and capital of \$10,000, Alltech now has annual sales of over \$1 billion. The company has innovative research programmes relating, in particular, to animal nutritional products based on yeast, organic trace minerals and algae-based products.

In spite of the global reach of Alltech, Dr. Lyons has always remained loyal to his Irish roots. Alltech's European R&D Headquarters, in Dunboyne, Co.Meath, is a model for Irish industry with state-of-the-art laboratories and equipment. It employs a significant number of full-time research scientists working on cutting-edge projects with industrial applications. Alltech also sponsors research in the University sector, in particular postgraduate students studying for PhDs, and Alltech's support has launched many young scientists on successful career paths.

In 2011, Dr. Lyons received the Commonwealth of Kentucky's first ever Legacy Award. In 2012, he was named Business Person of the Year by *Business and Finance*, he was honoured as one of Irish America's Business 100 and received the prestigious Ireland-U.S. Council Award for Outstanding Achievement. In 2013, he was once again listed in Irish America's Business 100 and was selected to receive the Commander's Award for Public Service, a rarely presented official U.S. Army medal. Among many other honours, he was also awarded the prestigious Royal Dublin Society's gold medal for Industry and Commerce and the Henry Clay medallion.

Dr. Lyons and Alltech have a proud record of sponsorship of

- Sport (for example, the Alltech-FEI World Equestrian Games)
- The Arts (including the annual Alltech Vocal Scholarship competition) and
- Education (for example, the Alltech Sustainable Haiti Project, which funds two primary schools in Haiti).

Dr. Lyons' success with Alltech is built around his vision of the multiple practical applications, in animal nutritional and healthcare products, of the yeast cell that has

been a friend to man in baking and alcohol manufacture for millennia. His genius was in identifying innovative uses for this simple cell. In addition to exploiting the role of yeast in new animal nutritional products, Dr. Lyons has not neglected more traditional uses of the organism.

Brewing and Distilling run in the Lyons family, and Dr. Lyons has established the Alltech Lexington Brewing and Distilling Company, producing a range of award-winning beers and spirits, including Pearse Lyons Reserve malt whiskey. In 2012, Alltech partnered with Ireland's Carlow brewing Company to begin distilling its first genuine Irish whiskey.

Dr. Lyons' lifetime has coincided with a revolution in our knowledge of life processes and the development of the new science of biotechnology. It is hard to realize that we understand the nature of the genetic material, DNA, and of the genetic code only since the 1950s; but progress building on that discovery has been extremely rapid. Since the 1980s we can make, in any quantity we need, proteins that are made in nature in only tiny amounts, and we can also now make new genes and new proteins and change the genetic composition of animals and plants. Dr. Lyons and his team in Alltech were quick to see and exploit the potential of these developments, and to apply them to new products. In this context, it is particularly appropriate that DCU is honouring Dr Lyons, as this University was the first in Ireland, and among the first globally, to recognize biotechnology as a distinct discipline and to award an undergraduate Honours Degree in Biotechnology.

In parallel with his industrial successes, Dr. Lyons has remained active in research, and has authored numerous books and scientific research papers, and he sits on the Editorial Boards of several scientific journals.

Pearse and his wife Deirdre have two children, Mark and Aoife, and all four are involved in Alltech as it moves to even greater success.

At a recent ceremony, where he received yet another award, Dr. Lyons stated: "The first order of business in entrepreneurship is don't get it right, get it going. Pursue your goals with ferocity, but be agile and in control. Let your passion drive you forward to your goals." Pearse Lyons is an exemplary role model for Irish university graduates. He has demonstrated that someone from a small country like Ireland can make a global impact if they have ability, energy, and vision and are prepared to work hard. It may help that he is reputed to rise before 4am before a daily run that would challenge a 20-year old!

Dr. Lyons has exhibited excellence in all his endeavours, as a scientist, as an entrepreneur, and as a global business leader. He is truly a worthy recipient of DCU's highest honour.

A Uachtaráin, I ask you to confer on Dr. Pearse Lyons the degree of Doctor of Philosophy (*honoris causa*).