

## WIT marks 25 years of research degrees

The impact of research and research degrees at Waterford Institute of Technology on the south east region and Waterford city was highlighted on Thursday last.

In 1993, Waterford Regional Technical College (WRTC) conferred its first ever PhD graduate. At the time WRTC was the first Regional Technical Colleges to award PhDs. To mark the 25th year anniversary of this special occasion, the Institute hosted a celebratory event on the afternoon of Thursday, 20 December 2018 in the Chapel of WIT's College Street Campus. The event was attended by research support staff, supervisors past and present, WIT management, 60 of the 198 PhD graduates and their families.

In his speech, WIT President Willie Donnelly relayed how the year in which the institute graduated its first PhD graduate was also the year in which the government formally gave the Regional Technical College authority to engage in research and innovation.



Pictured at Waterford Institute of Technology's College Street Campus are twins Dr Alan Davy and Dr Steven Davy. Stephen is pictured with his children Jack (8), Amelia (5) and Lydia (1). Alan is pictured with his daughter Phoebe. | Photo: Patrick Browne

"Now as we look forward to the creation of the Technological University of the South East, which has been made a reality because of the dedication and commitment of the present and former staff and students of the Institute, it gives me great pleasure to use this occasion to thank you and celebrate your contribution to creating a dedicated research community and a research informed institute," Prof Donnelly said. Prof Donnelly also outlined how the institute's research capacity has had a significant impact on the local economy, especially following the closure of Waterford Crystal. "The transformation of the city to a high technology centre of excellence was realised through your vision and commitment to research and innovation," Prof Donnelly added.

The National Planning Framework 2040 clearly defines the role of Waterford in the economic, social and economic development of the South East. "The institute through its commitment to becoming one of the top 100 universities by 2030 is a clear statement of our ambition which is built on the reality of teaching, research and innovation; today is our opportunity to celebrate that," concluded Prof Donnelly. John Halligan TD, Minister of State for Training, Skills, Innovation, Research and Development stated "I am delighted to celebrate a quarter of a century of doctoral education by Waterford Institute of Technology and the Institute's long and well-recognised track record in research successes, particularly in the European arena."

"During the last ten years, WIT has accelerated its provision of PhD education, in line with its ongoing success in securing competitive research funding. Its doctoral graduates are a critical element of these research and innovation success stories and an essential pipeline of our early-stage research system. WIT should be very proud of its dedicated cohort of experts who help guide its students through the task of generating a high quality research dissertation," Minister Halligan continued.

Ruth Russell was the institute's first PhD graduate in 1993. Her love of chemistry led her to a PhD following her undergraduate degree at DIT, and led her on to a postdoc in Polymer Chemistry in Paris. Speaking at the event she said: "The 25 years of PhD graduates celebration at WIT is an opportunity for me to say thanks to WIT and in particular Dr Bernard Ryan who gave me the chance to do the PhD here, thanks for the friends and happy memories I made in Waterford and finally many

thanks to my parents who supported me over the years.”

Although many of the PhDs were initially in Science, in latter years WIT has graduated increasing numbers in Education, Humanities, Business, Engineering and Health Sciences, altogether 198 to date. One third are from WIT’s Department of Science, a quarter from the School of Business and one in five from the Department of Computing and Mathematics.