

## **SSPC director Professor Kieran Hodnett steps down after ten years**

*Bernal Institute Chairs Professor Michael Zaworotko and Professor Gavin Walker take over as co-directors of SSPC*



*Professor Gavin Walker and Professor Michael Zaworotko, new co-directors of Synthesis and Solid State Pharmaceutical Centre (SSPC), the Science Foundation Ireland (SFI) funded centre. Image: True Media*

A global hub of pharmaceutical process innovation and advanced manufacturing has appointed two University of Limerick professors as its co-directors.

Synthesis and Solid State Pharmaceutical Centre (SSPC), the Science Foundation Ireland (SFI) funded centre based at UL, has appointed Professor Michael Zaworotko and Professor Gavin Walker as co-directors of the organisation.

Professor Zaworotko joined UL in 2013 as the Bernal Chair of Crystal Engineering. He is among the world's top 20 research chemists\* and secured the first award under the relaunched Science Foundation Ireland (SFI) Research Professor programme. His research interests focus on designing crystal structures that can be used in the pharmaceutical and energy industries.

Commenting on his appointment Professor Zaworotko said, “Taking up this position and working with the SSPC to make strategic collaboration a top priority will help to potentially push the frontiers of knowledge. We are looking forward to “going global” by delivering results through national and international partnerships with industry to enable innovation throughout all areas of SSPC”.

Professor Gavin Walker is Bernal Chair of Pharmaceutical Powder Engineering and a principal investigator in the SFI Investigators Programme at UL and the SSPC Spokes Project, MOMEnTUM. His expertise is in pharmaceutical process engineering and modelling of particulate systems. Recently, Professor Walker’s Process Engineering Lab, based in the Bernal Institute at UL, is the largest process engineering group in Ireland, won three prestigious prizes at The Irish Laboratory Awards 2017.

Professor Walker said, “It will be a privilege to lead the SSPC, which is now an internationally recognised Centre of Excellence. The SSPC is particularly committed to breaking down traditional boundaries across academia and promoting new research and I am looking forward to pioneering further partnerships in the future”.

The co-directorship marks a new departure for the world-leading SFI centre as Professor Kieran Hodnett stands down as the first director of SSPC after 10 years. The centre, established as a first large-scale, multi-partner research collaboration, now boasts a critical mass of world-class people and established global presence.

The SSPC transcends company and academic boundaries and is the largest research collaboration in Ireland, and one of the largest globally, within the pharmaceutical area. The role of the SSPC is to link experienced scientists and engineers in academia and the pharmaceutical industry, to address critical research challenges.

**Ends**

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**Notes to the Editor:**

**About the Synthesis and Solid State Pharmaceutical Centre (SSPC)**

The Synthesis and Solid State Pharmaceutical Centre (SSPC) is a global hub of pharmaceutical process innovation and advanced manufacturing, funded by Science Foundation Ireland through its Research Centres programme and the pharmaceutical industry. The centre, based at University of Limerick, is a unique collaboration between 22 industry partners, nine research-performing organisations and 12 international academic collaborators. The SSPC comprises over 150 active researchers and has funding of more than €40 million for six years from mid-2013. This large research collaboration has particular skills in active pharmaceutical ingredient (API) synthesis, purification and crystallisation.

\*Professor Michael Zaworotko has published more than 390 peer-reviewed papers, review articles and patents that have been cited >35,000 times. In 2011, **Thomson-Reuters** listed him as the 20th highest impact chemist since 2000 and in 2014, 2015 and 2016 he was listed as a highly-cited researcher, also by Thomson Reuters.