The Ireland-U.S. Council
A Business Organization

Award for Outstanding Achievement
The Ireland-U.S. Council’s Award for Outstanding Achievement

The Ireland-U.S. Council each year presents its Award for Outstanding Achievement to an individual who has made a significant contribution to enhancing the economic relationships between the United States and Ireland. The annual Award marks notable and important achievements in building the business bonds and commercial connections between America and the Emerald Isle.

The award is the centerpiece of the Council’s Annual Dinner held at the Metropolitan Club in New York City. This year, the Council’s 54th Annual Dinner will be staged on Thursday, November 10, 2016.

The Ireland-U.S. Council was founded in 1962 by American and Irish business leaders as part of a plan to prepare for President John F. Kennedy’s important and historic visit to Ireland the following year – the first ever by a sitting U.S. President.

The Council’s principal objective is to encourage closer business links between Ireland and the United States. The Council operates a variety of scholarship and internship programs, stages lectures, seminars and hosts frequent events in Ireland and in America aimed at building communications between business, political and opinion leaders on both sides of the Atlantic. As part of its platform, the Council also supports and sponsors many initiatives in the arts. The Council is a not-for-profit corporation with headquarters in New York City and an office in Dublin.
Ms. Sybil Connolly  
**Couturier & Fashion Icon**  
Dublin, Ireland

Sybil Connolly had an important impact on Ireland’s fashion industry and its emerging presence in the American market. She was one of Ireland’s premier fashion designers during her career, starting in the 1960’s. Her clothes were sought-after by many prominent Americans, including Jacqueline Kennedy, who wore one of Ms. Connolly’s dress creations in her official White House portrait. Ms. Connolly used a large selection of Irish textiles in her designs helping many traditional textile firms in Ireland to build their sales in America.

Jack Lenor Larsen  
**Fabric Designer**  
New York, NY

An internationally-known textile and fabric designer, author and collector, Jack Lenor Larsen was an early promoter of traditional and contemporary craftsmanship in all its forms. He was a keen supporter of Irish hand-crafted, artisanal and traditional textile and furniture products.

He founded his own interior design firm in 1952 which grew in the 1970’s to include the Larsen Carpet and Furniture divisions. He designed distinctive hand-woven furnishing fabrics with random repeats in variegated, natural yarns which were popular with clients such as Marilyn Monroe.

Randolph Hearst, Jr.  
**Hearst Newspapers**  
San Francisco, CA

Randolph Hearst, Jr. worked for Hearst Newspapers for most of his life, serving as the Editor for the Group’s titles, including the *San Francisco Examiner*. He was a correspondent to the Soviet Union and earned a Pulitzer Prize in 1956 for his reporting from there. He published a series of articles on the new Ireland prior to Irish entry to Europe which were important in focusing national attention in the United States on the era-changing economic transformations the European free trade ideal presaged.

Kevin Roche  
**Partner, Roche Dinkeloo Architects**  
Hamden, CT

Dublin-born Kevin Roche is an award-winning Irish-American architect known for his creative work with glass. His notable works include the *General Foods* Building in White Plains, New York; The Oakland Museum of California; The Knights of Columbus building in New Haven, Connecticut; New York University’s *Skirball Center for the Performing Arts* and, famously, the Ford Foundation Building in New York City, which features a dramatic 12 story “jungle atrium.” Most recently he designed the National Convention Center in Dublin officially opened in September, 2010.

Stuart Schulberg, Frank McGee  
**Producers:** NBC’s Today Show

In the year that Ireland joined the European Union, *The Today Show* on NBC put Ireland’s encouraging economic story to the fore with a series of landmark business reports about the enormous and cataclysmic economic changes being wrought by free trade and membership in Europe’s, at-the-time very exclusive trading bloc. Both Stuart Schulberg as producer and Frank McGee as the reporter anchored this series that broke new ground for Ireland’s economic messaging in the United States.

Paddy McGrath  
**Chairman & CEO, Waterford Crystal**  
Waterford, Ireland

Waterford Crystal was the jewel in the crowning success story of Paddy McGrath’s business empire built during the dawn of Ireland’s age of economic renewal. Taking over the helm at the iconic crystal-ware manufacturer from his father in 1966, Paddy McGrath was emblematic of the can-do, export-oriented entrepreneurial cohort spawned in the Emerald Isle during this time. The company built its reputation on superior marketing, high-quality customer relations backed by world-class hand-crafted excellence in all its product offerings which became hugely-popular in the United States.
1976  **John D.J. Moore**  
*U.S. Ambassador to Ireland*  
*New York, NY*

John D.J. Moore served as U.S. Ambassador to Ireland from April 1969 thru June, 1975. Mr. Moore, a graduate of Yale Law School, practiced with the firm of White & Case in New York before becoming assistant corporation counsel under Mayor Fiorello H. LaGuardia.

Mr. Moore later joined W. R. Grace & Company and became an Executive Vice President at its headquarters in New York. He negotiated the aviation agreement that secured landing rights for American carriers in Ireland. He was a founder of this Council and served as the first President of the organization.

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1977  **Lord Killanin**  
*Chairman, International Olympic Committee*  
*Dublin, Ireland*

Michael Morris, 3rd Baron Killanin, was an Irish journalist, author, sports official and the sixth president of the International Olympic Committee (IOC). In the mid-1930’s he began his career as a journalist, working for the Daily Express, and the Daily Sketch and subsequently the Daily Mail.

Lord Killanin served in the British military during World War II, reaching the rank of Major. He served as president of the IOC from 1972 to 1980, taking the office just days before terrorists murdered members of the Israeli team at the Munich Olympic Village.

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1978  **Dr. Michael J. Killeen**  
*Chief Executive, IDA Ireland*  
*Dublin, Ireland*

Dr. Michael J. Killeen is largely credited with planning and establishing Ireland’s industrialization strategy as envisioned in the economic plans of Ireland’s government in the 1960’s. He was Chief Executive of Córás Tráchtála - the Irish Export Board in 1968 when the blueprint was first outlined to establish IDA Ireland, the agency that later became highly-successful in implementing an overseas industrial investment promotion strategy. He was installed as Chief Executive of the IDA in 1969 and played a leading role supporting Ireland’s entry into the European Economic Community.

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1979  **Marvin L. Traub**  
*Chairman & CEO, Bloomingdale’s, Inc.*  
*New York, NY*

In 1979, Bloomingdale’s sponsored a very successful and highly-visible nationwide promotion of products made in Ireland in conjunction with the Irish Export Board. Over 100 manufacturers of Irish products showcased and sold their wares in this two-month-long promotion in outlets throughout the United States, anchored by several floors of product displays at their flagship 59th Street Manhattan Store. Marvin Traub was CEO and President of Bloomingdale’s, Inc. for 22 years until 1992 and is renowned in America’s retail sector for his impact on merchandising and marketing.

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1980  **Dr. T.A. Ryan**  
*Chairman & CEO, GPA Group plc*  
*Shannon, Ireland*

His is a household name when it comes to air travel. Tony Ryan served as a duty manager in the Aer Lingus operations at JFK Airport in New York. It’s an ill wind that blows nobody any good - so when a couple of its Boeing 747 aircraft were not needed because of the violence in Northern Ireland, Tony got the assignment to lease them. From this he founded the successful aircraft leasing firm GPA Group, now part of U.S.-based GE Capital. He also started Ryanair, the low-cost discount carrier whose planes are ubiquitous in European airports.

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1981  **Dr. Michael W.J. Smurfit**  
*Chairman & CEO, Jefferson Smurfit Group plc*  
*Dublin, Ireland*

Michael Smurfit took control of the Jefferson Smurfit Group plc in 1977, and gradually built the company, founded by his father, into the largest paper-based packaging company in the world. He is one of Ireland’s most successful businessmen ever.

Through acquisitions in the United States, Latin America and Continental Europe, he created Ireland’s first international company and a global leader in paper-based packaging. He shaped the merger of the Smurfit Group with Kappa Packaging BV in 2005 to form the Smurfit Kappa Group – employing 42,000 employees in 33 countries.
1982
John J. Horan, Jr.
Chairman & CEO, Merck & Co.
Rahway, NJ

John Horan served as Chairman and CEO of Merck & Co. from 1976 to 1985 steering the company into becoming the largest pharmaceutical corporation in the world. He served as an officer in the U.S. Navy during World War II. He joined Merck and Co.'s legal department, quickly climbing the ranks to end up as CEO. During his tenure, the company made bellwether decisions to invest heavily in new state-of-the-art pharmaceutical production facilities in Ireland, giving a major boost to the country's standing as a viable base for American industrial investment.

1983
Dr. T.K. Whitaker
Secretary, Department of Finance
Dublin, Ireland

Dr. T.K. Whitaker, an economist and former public servant, is credited with a pivotal role in Ireland’s economic development. Appointed secretary at the Department of Finance at the very young age of 39, he encouraged policies to end economic protectionism in Ireland. At the same time, he was a leading figure in the movement toward free trade which spurred the country's exceptional economic growth rates in later years. In 2001, an RTE program voted him “Irishman of the 20th century,” beating out such greats as Michael Collins.

1984
David Kennedy
Chief Executive, Aer Lingus plc
Dublin, Ireland

David Kennedy was Chief Executive of Aer Lingus, the then-State-owned flag carrier from 1974 to 1988 and was responsible for expanding the vital transatlantic air bridge linking Ireland to the United States. He also developed the company’s investments and ownership footprint in the U.S. hotel business purchasing the Omni Hotel chain. His career at the airline spanned 27 years – 14 of them in the top spot. He was an aviation consultant to the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development and the World Bank. He served as Deputy Governor of Bank of Ireland from 1989 to 1991.

1985
Douglas D. Danforth
Chairman & CEO
Westinghouse Electric Corporation
Pittsburgh, PA

Douglas D. Danforth served as Chairman & CEO of the giant Westinghouse Electric Corporation from 1983 to 1987. The company undertook a major and important investment project to establish a manufacturing facility in Galway producing truck refrigeration systems under its Thermo King brand subsidiary, which was acquired by Ingersoll-Rand in 1996. Today over 500 people are employed in the Galway plant and Ingersoll-Rand has moved its worldwide headquarters to Dublin, Ireland.

1986
Dr. Niall Crowley
Chairman, Allied Irish Banks Group
Dublin, Ireland

A native of Dublin, Dr. Niall Crowley was an influential figure who was at the forefront in modernizing Irish business. He occupied a very prominent position as a partner of the successful accounting firm of Stokes, Kennedy Crowley which subsequently became part of the KPMG practice. As Chairman, Allied Irish Banks Group built its substantial investment in the United States following the purchase of First Maryland Bancorp in Baltimore, MD. He helmed that decision which was a major boost to building business relations between the United States and Ireland.

1987
Edward L. Hennessy, Jr.
Chairman & CEO, Allied Signal, Inc.
Livingston, NJ

Edward L. Hennessy, Jr. served as Chairman and Chief Executive Officer of Allied-Signal Inc., a worldwide technology company from 1979 to 1991. During his years at the company, he oversaw the company’s international expansion including some important investment projects in Ireland. A former senior executive of United Technologies Corporation, he was active in philanthropic causes and was Chairman of the Board of Trustees of Fairleigh Dickinson University, his alma mater. He is a former director of the New York Stock Exchange and the New York Federal Reserve.
**Chairman & CEO**  
The New York Stock Exchange  
New York, NY

He was a former U.S. Marine who saw combat in the Korean War and returned to a career on Wall Street. He served as Chairman of the New York Stock Exchange from 1984 until 1991. His term was marked by one of the most turbulent decades ever seen until that time in the financial world. He guided the New York Stock Exchange through the frightening market crash in 1987 and served as President of this Council from 1988 to 1989.

1989  Dr. John A. Daly  
**Chairman, Shannon Development & Chairman Governing Body, University of Limerick**

Dr. John A. Daly, Chairman of Shannon Development Company, also served as Chairman of the Governing Body at the University of Limerick. A native of Corofin, County Clare he built a distinguished record of public service in Ireland. He earned a Master’s in Engineering Science and Bachelor of Laws degrees at University College Galway. He also studied under a fellowship at MIT in Boston, Massachusetts. A leader in regional economic development in Ireland, he worked vigorously and with great success to boost tourism and investment links between America and the Emerald Isle.

1990  Anthony D. Barry  
**Chairman & Chief Executive Officer**  
CRH plc, Dublin, Ireland

Tony Barry was a key figure in Ireland’s industrial development story in second half of the 20th century. A civil engineer by trade he was a graduate of University College Cork. He was Chairman of CRH plc, the construction products and building materials group and also served as a director and Chairman of Greencore plc and of the Bank of Ireland. During his tenure with CRH, the company commenced an aggressive expansion program in the United States through acquisition.

1991  Alan McCarthy  
**Chief Executive, Irish Trade Board**  
Dublin, Ireland

There is no question that the engine for Ireland’s economic renewal in the latter part of the 20th century was export-led growth. The Irish Trade Board played a vital role in boosting those overseas export sales from Ireland. Alan McCarthy, an alumnus of the famous Blackrock College, and his colleagues at the Board operated a vital market intelligence, advisory and promotional resource network with offices in more than 20 countries to help business in Ireland build those exports around the world, including to the U.S. market.

1992  Robert Luciano  
**Chairman & Chief Executive Officer**  
Schering-Plough Corporation, Wayne, NJ

Bob Luciano is a native of New York City and graduated from the University of Michigan Law School. He served as Chairman & CEO of Schering-Plough Corporation from 1982 to 1996. During this time he guided the company’s plans in building a major pharmaceuticals manufacturing plant in Tipperary in Ireland and has since expanded its presence at other locations in the Emerald Isle. Bob Luciano saw the wealth of opportunities available in Ireland and was a major contributor in building improved business relations between Ireland and the United States.

1993  William F. Farley, Jr.  
**Chairman & Chief Executive Officer**  
Fruit of the Loom, Inc.

A shrewd businessmen and a savvy entrepreneur, Bill Farley bought Fruit of the Loom in the mid-80’s and oversaw the transformation of the brand into a household name. During his tenure at the company, Fruit of the Loom accomplished a remarkable feat in nearly quintupling sales from $500 million to $2.5 billion. He made Ireland an integral part of the transformation of his company into an international powerhouse including building a significant manufacturing presence there, principally in County Donegal.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Company</th>
<th>Location</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1994</td>
<td>William C. Steere, Jr.</td>
<td>Chairman, President &amp; CEO</td>
<td>Pfizer, Inc.</td>
<td>New York, NY</td>
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<td>1995</td>
<td>William J. Flynn</td>
<td>Chairman &amp; CEO</td>
<td>Mutual of America</td>
<td>New York, NY</td>
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<td>1996</td>
<td>Denis Brosnan</td>
<td>Chairman &amp; CEO</td>
<td>Kerry Group plc</td>
<td>Tralee, County Kerry, Ireland</td>
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<tr>
<td>1997</td>
<td>Daniel P. Tully</td>
<td>Chairman &amp; CEO</td>
<td>Merrill Lynch &amp; Co., Inc.</td>
<td>New York, NY</td>
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<td>1998</td>
<td>Donal J. Geaney</td>
<td>Chairman &amp; CEO</td>
<td>Elan Corporation plc</td>
<td>Dublin, Ireland</td>
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<tr>
<td>1999</td>
<td>Raymond V. Gilmartin</td>
<td>Chairman &amp; CEO</td>
<td>Merck &amp; Company</td>
<td>Whitehouse Station, NJ</td>
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</table>
**2000**

**Bernie Cahill**  
*Executive Chairman, Aer Lingus plc*  
*Dublin, Ireland*

Bernie Cahill rose to the top of the European food industry when he served as Chief Executive of the giant U.K.-based Express Dairies. He served Executive Chairman at Aer Lingus from 1991. He ushered in a new era for the airline, at that time a State-owned national flag carrier, focusing on operational efficiencies, superior service, excellent marketing and tight financial controls. During his tenure, the Aer Lingus component in the vital air bridge connecting Ireland and the United States was strengthened and expanded, building its U.S. routes and revenues to record levels.

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**2001**  

**An Taoiseach, Bertie Ahern, TD**  
*Prime Minister of Ireland*  
*Dublin, Ireland*

Bertie Ahern served as Ireland’s Taoiseach (Prime Minister) from 1997 to 2008 - the longest-serving apart from the New York-born Eamon de Valera. He was an accountant by training but a politician by trade. He played a crucial role in developing the Peace Process in Northern Ireland, particularly involving the United States more deeply in seeking solutions with the United Kingdom. He was a consistent champion of private sector-led economic growth, and was especially encouraging to American industrial investment projects in Ireland.

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**2002**  

**Arthur F. Ryan**  
*Chairman & CEO*  
*Prudential Financial, Inc.*  
*New York, NY*

Art Ryan served as Chairman & CEO of Prudential Financial from 1994 to 2007, being the first person in that role to be selected from outside the company. He brought the company public with a listing on the New York Stock Exchange. He is a second-generation Irish American with roots in Tipperary and a graduate of Providence College, where he served as a trustee. During his tenure at Prudential Financial, he established a major company operation in Letterkenny, County Donegal.

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**2003**  

**Patrick G. Ryan**  
*Chairman & CEO, Aon Corporation*  
*Chicago, IL*

Patrick G. Ryan founded Aon Corporation and built it into one of the largest insurance operations in the world. He made Ireland an integral element in the development of the company’s business, establishing reinsurance and risk management operations in Dublin’s International Financial Services Centre. He also guided the company’s substantial acquisitions strategy buying many Irish-based companies operating in Aon’s sector. He named the company using the Gaelic word for the number “one”.

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**2004**  

**Dr. Peter Sutherland**  
*Chairman – BP & Chairman - Goldman Sachs International*  
*London, England*

Dr. Peter Sutherland was appointed Chairman of BP in 1997 and Chairman of Goldman Sachs International in 1995. Prior to this he was the founding Director-General of the World Trade Organization. He was the Attorney General of Ireland from 1981 to 1984 and later served as a Commissioner of the European Union, based in Brussels, where he had responsibility for competition policy driving deregulation of the airlines and more competitive air travel in Europe. University College Dublin’s law school will be renamed in 2012 to the Sutherland School of Law in his honor.

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**2005**

**Thomas Coughlin**  
*Vice-Chairman & COO*  
*Wal-Mart Stores, Inc., Bentonville, AR*

Thomas M. Coughlin, a second-generation Irish-American from Cleveland, Ohio worked his way through college in Ohio Steel Mills and joined Wal-Mart Stores, Inc. when the company was in its infancy. He rose through the ranks to become Vice-Chairman of the world’s largest retailer. In his position at the company, Mr. Coughlin offered opportunities to many Irish companies to sell products into their vast network based always on high-quality and keen pricing. He also arranged placement of some of the company’s financial instruments through the International Financial Services Center in Dublin.
2006

Sir Anthony O’Reilly
Chairman & CEO, Independent News & Media, Dublin, Ireland

Tony O’Reilly was a towering figure in international business. He made a huge contribution to building business links between America and Ireland. As Chairman & CEO of H.J. Heinz Co., he was the first Irishman to lead a Fortune 500 company. He was a consistent champion of Ireland's push for modernization, liberalization and rapid economic growth. A native Dubliner, he is a graduate of University College Dublin. He developed the still-successful Kerrygold brand in his time as CEO of the Irish Dairy Board and amassed a controlling stake in Independent News & Media, an international media and communications group.

2007

Philip Lynch
Chief Executive, One51 plc
Dublin, Ireland

A native of Innishannon, County Cork, Philip Lynch served as Chief Executive of One51 plc, a leading energy and waste infrastructure company and one of the most dynamic in the 'green' sector with a capital value of $1.5 billion in 2007. He had earlier served as Group Managing Director of the IAWS, a major Irish-based international food and agribusiness group. He built annual revenues from $85 million to $2 billion and engineered a series of U.S. acquisitions, including the $350 million purchase of Otis Spunkmeyer Holdings, a leading U.S. specialty-baked goods company.

2008

Paddy Kelly
Chief Executive, Redquartz Developments, Dublin, Ireland

Paddy Kelly’s privately-held family investment corporation was involved in over $2 billion in development projects in the United States. His Redquartz Developments was a principal investor in structuring RQB Partners, the Ireland-based consortium that purchased and expanded the TPC Sawgrass Marriott in Ponte Vedra Beach, Florida. In Sarasota, Florida he started a major redevelopment project in the city’s waterfront area. In addition, his business deals have seen a major expansion of U.S. hospitality franchises entering Ireland including Choice Hotels, Clarion Hotels, Quality Hotels and Comfort Inns.

2009

William C. Weldon
Chairman & CEO, Johnson & Johnson
New Brunswick, NJ

William C. Weldon is Chairman and CEO of Johnson & Johnson, one of the great healthcare products brand companies in the world. J & J was an early and important industrial investor in Ireland. A native of Brooklyn, New York, he has spent his entire career with Johnson & Johnson - he joined the company in 1971 – the year he graduated in Biology from Quinnipiac University. The company employs 2,200 people at six manufacturing facilities and three marketing operations in Ireland, representing a capital investment to date of $1.8 billion.

2010

Jeffery A. Smisek
Chairman, President & Chief Executive Officer, United Airlines.

Jeff Smisek is CEO of the world’s largest airline United Airlines - the newly-merged parent of Continental Airlines, which has been crucial in sustaining and building connections between America and Ireland for many years. It is the only carrier to offer direct non-stop air service between three points in Ireland and the United States – linking Dublin, Belfast and Shannon with Newark, N.J. The company has 10 hubs, 700 jetliners, annual revenue of $30 billion and 144 million passengers. He graduated from Princeton University in economics and Harvard Law School.

2011

Kieran McGowan
Chairman, CRH plc
Dublin, Ireland

Kieran McGowan is one of Ireland’s best-known business figures. He is chairman of CRH plc, its largest company which has made substantial investments in the U.S. construction materials industry. He was Chief Executive of Ireland’s Industrial Development Agency from 1990 thru 1998 when many bellwether investment projects were won for Ireland against the stiffest international competition. He is a board member of Elan Corporation plc and was President of the Irish Management Institute. He has also chaired the Governing Authority at University College Dublin, Ireland’s largest university.
2012

Dr. T. Pearse Lyons
Founder & President
Alltech, Inc. Lexington, KY

A native of Dundalk, County Louth in Ireland, Dr. Lyons founded the global animal health company Alltech, Inc. in 1980 and has built the enterprise which now employs more than 2,800 people and conducts business in 128 countries throughout the world. The company has annual sales of approximately $1 billion. Dr. Lyons holds several natural science degrees. He received his bachelor’s degree from University College Dublin, Ireland and obtained his master’s and doctoral degrees at the University of Birmingham, England. He later worked as a biochemist for Irish Distillers before founding Alltech.

2013

Thomas J. Moran
Chairman, President & CEO
Mutual of America, New York, NY

During Tom Moran’s more than three decades of service, Mutual of America has grown from a small retirement association to a highly-rated life insurance company with over $13 billion in assets. In addition to his long-time and distinguished service on the Board of the Ireland-U.S. Council, Mr. Moran also serves on the Boards of Aer Lingus, the Smurfit Graduate School of Business at University College Dublin, Thirteen WNET, the National Committee on American Foreign Policy and the Irish Hunger Memorial in New York City. Mr. Moran is a graduate of Manhattan College. He and his wife Joan reside in New York.

2014

Gerald C. Crotty
President, Weichert Enterprise, LLC
New York, NY

Gerald C. Crotty is President of Weichert Enterprise, LLC, a U.S.-based private equity investment firm, since 2001. Mr. Crotty is also Chairman & CEO of Mayo Renewable Power. From 1991 to 1998, he held various executive positions with ITT Corporation and its affiliates, including Chairman, President and Chief Executive Officer of ITT Information Services Inc. with operations in Ireland as part of its global business. He is a graduate of Fordham University and serves on that institution’s Board of Trustees. He is also a graduate of New York Law School and is Vice Chairman of its Board of Trustees.

2015

Siobhán Talbot
Group Managing Director
Glanbia plc

Glanbia plc is one of Ireland’s most successful companies. It is a global performance nutrition and ingredients group with operations in 34 countries, a 2015 stock market capitalization of $6 billion, sales of $4 billion and 5,800 employees. Its products distributed in over 130 countries. The company has major cheese production and other food processing facilities in Idaho, New Mexico and in California. Its origins are in the Irish co-operative movement that evolved over the last century. Siobhán Talbot joined Glanbia in 1992 and has been Group Managing Director since November 2013. Ms. Talbot is a Chartered Accountant by profession, and graduated from University College Dublin with a degree in Commerce.

2016

Willie Walsh
Chief Executive
International Airlines Group

Willie Walsh, Chief Executive Officer of International Airlines Group (IAG) throughout his successful career has been a superb manager of strategic change in an industry where change has become a byword. In September 2015, IAG which includes British Airways and Spanish airline Iberia, purchased Aer Lingus in a $1.8 billion takeover as part of its plans to use Aer Lingus to expand its transatlantic services via Dublin. Willie Walsh was born in Dublin, Ireland and attended his local secondary school Ardscoil Rís. At age 17 he joined Aer Lingus as a cadet pilot in 1979. He earned a Master’s degree in management and business administration from Trinity College Dublin during his pilot years, while advancing to become a Boeing 737 captain. He joined the management ranks at Aer Lingus serving in various positions and in October 2001 was appointed CEO at a time when the airline was in financial difficulty. He reconfigured Aer Lingus as a low-cost airline. His turnaround recipe worked and company operating profits rebounded.