

Global Innovator in Online Interactive Education to represent Ireland at Ashoka Globalizer Summit in Stockholm

A new initiative that brings together social entrepreneurs and international business leaders to globalise social innovations

Dublin, 18th March 2011 – **Mike Feerick**, the Galway-based founder and CEO of ALISON – hailed as the next global leader in online interactive education will join leading business figures from the around the world next week at an event aimed at matching social innovations with the resources needed to rapidly achieve global scale.

The Ashoka Globalizer Summit will take place in Stockholm from March 26-28, 2011.

ALISON is a leading global source for online education – offering free interactive multimedia education on everything from computer courses to English classes, opening up employment training and up-skilling opportunity for its users. Over 150 courses at ALISON can be accessed for free at any time.

Over half a million registered learners around the world use the ALISON free learning service – many in the Developing World. Fast growing markets include India, Yemen and the Philippines where ALISON has many tens of thousands of learners. The company particularly targets its free services at those in the marginalised sectors of society including the unemployed, low-skilled, low-waged, elderly, and immigrants. The company's IT Skills modules include courses developed by Microsoft; much of its English language courseware was developed in partnership with the British Council.

In the UK, trade unions and the public library system have adopted ALISON, attracting over 180,000 registered users. In the US the Department of Labor has integrated ALISON services in 18 States. In June 2011, ALISON workplace training will be integrated across the state of California, America's largest state by population. ALISON has over 50,000 registered learners in Ireland, the most popular courses being free courses on Touch Typing, Microsoft Office, Health & Safety and basic science education.

Last year, ALISON was named one of four international winners of the UNESCO 'ICT Innovation in Education' Awards.

Mike Feerick's stated ambition is to reach hundreds of millions of people through what he believes can become the 'Google of interactive online education'.

"In the US, the cost of community college education accounts for 49% of the poorest families' total income – a rise of 40% in ten years. ALISON's free courses are designed to provide education, workplace training and up-skilling opportunity to these families and others who cannot afford to pay for it. ALISON now has the capability to address the lack of low-cost education platforms in a profound and rapid way, creating economic, social and cultural opportunities for tens of millions of people around the world", says Feerick, a serial internet services entrepreneur and Harvard graduate.

Together with international investors, Feerick has funded the development of the ALISON free learning platform since its launch in 2007, investing €2m in total to date. Prior to setting up ALISON in 2007, he was the founder and owner YAC.com, a successful unified messaging telecoms company, which raised \$12m in 2000 and was sold to J2.com, a NASDAQ-listed multinational in 2007.

The Ashoka Globalizer Summit – Stockholm

At the Globalizer Summit from March 26-28, Ashoka will bring Mike Feerick, representing Ireland, and 14 other international social entrepreneurs together with leading entrepreneurial minds from around the

world for in-depth conversations about the strategies, tools and connections they need to scale the impact of their innovations. Among the panelists will be entrepreneur **Anousheh Ansari**, the Iranian-born founder of Prodea Systems and the world's first female private space explorer (Iran, US), and **Peter Goldmark**, former CEO of the Rockefeller Foundation and the International Herald Tribune, and member of the US Council of Foreign Relations.

About Ashoka

Ashoka is the world's leading network of social entrepreneurs – extraordinary changemakers, who find new solutions for social problems such as **Muhammad Yunus**, who pioneered the microfinance sector. Founded by Bill Drayton in 1980, Ashoka supports social entrepreneurs with stipends, professional support, and access to its large network of global peers. Ashoka has to date elected and supported nearly 3,000 social entrepreneurs in 70 countries. For more information, see www.ashoka.org.

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