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Luis Cisternas

Conference in Chile centers on innovation

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A New Product Development conference in the chemical field attracted students, academics, and practitioners this past October 5-7, 2006, in Antofagasta, Chile. The title of the conference was the International Conference in Innovation and Chemical Agent Development and Bioproducts (Curso Internacional en Innovación y Desarrollo de Productos Químicos y Bioproductos).

Approximately 60 business practitioners, academics, and students attended the International Conference in Innovation and Chemical Agent Development and Bioproducts held in Antofagasta, Chile, October 5-7, 2006. The purpose of the conference was to develop a national competency in innovation for Chile's scientific community of chemical agent and bioproduct professionals. NPDP certification review training was provided by Strategy 2 Market, a Chicago area-based consulting and training firm focused on New Product Development strategy. Many of the attendees were keenly interested in PDMA membership and the New Product Development Professional (NPDP) certification. They will become the first NPDP certified professionals in Chile.

Conference attendees included doctoral students and professors from various universities in Chile, including the University of Antofagasta, University of Concepcion, Catholic University of the North, Pontifical Catholic University of Chile, and the University of Chile. Representatives from the Economic Development and Innovation Department of the Government of Chile were

present, as well as representatives from various corporations in the chemical agent and bioproduct industries, including Avance Biotechnologies, Time Ltda., QUIBORAX, BiosChile, Redoxi Ltda., and SQM.

The conference was jointly sponsored by the Government of Chile, the World Bank, and the University of Antofagasta. A limited number of scholarships were available for doctoral students interested in participating.

The Conference on innovation

Historically, the wealth of the northern region of Chile has been derived from the mining and processing of such natural resources as salt peter and copper, but now the region aims to transition its industries from merely mining and processing natural resources to producing innovative new products. This mission requires development of new capabilities, as well as developing a mindset and infrastructure for open innovation utilizing the research capabilities of universities, such as the University of Antofagasta, and the commercialization capabilities of public and private companies.

The conference was developed and led by Luis Cisternas, Titular Professor, of the University of Antofagasta. He received his Ph.D. from

the University of Wisconsin-Madison (1994) in Chemical Engineering and is the Northern Chile area coordinator for product innovation and development for the chemical agent and bioproduct industries. He had a number of objectives in mind for this conference. They included building a national competency in innovation for Chile's scientific community of chemical agent and bioproduct professionals; developing closer relationships between universities and public sector companies that wish to build innovation capabilities in chemical agents and bioproducts; forming a national group of experts on innovation in the chemical agent and bioproduct industries, and transitioning Chile's chemical agent and bioproduct industries from a processing framework to a New Product Development framework.

The event started with a one and a half day session on Innovation and New Product Development conducted by Mary Drotar and Kathy Morrissey, both principals with Strategy 2 Market, Inc. This session, which was simultaneously translated from English to Spanish, leveraged and expanded the NPDP preparatory curriculum. The following modules were covered: strategy, portfolio management, New Product Development processes, market research, tools and metrics, and teams and organizations. The teams and organizations segment included an overview of how to organize for innovation with corporate and government venture capital models. The session also included a comprehensive overview of innovation, covering sources and types of innovation, innovation strategies, and current and best practices in innovation.

The second half of the conference covered chemical and bioproducts innovation in Chile, with presentations and examples by academics, business practitioners, and government representatives

Antofagasta

Antofagasta, a wealthy port town and the home town of the sponsor the University of Antofagasta is one of the richest cities in Chile due to its copper mines that produce 40 percent of the Gross Geographic National Product. (Chile is one of the largest producers of copper in the world with 5,320,500 tons recorded in 2005.) Antofagasta is located in the El Norte Grande, the northernmost region of Chile, containing the Atacama Desert, the Andes mountains, volcanoes, and hot springs.

Attendees gave very positive feedback on the event and felt that the PDMA NPDP curriculum was very informative. We expect to see several new NPDP professionals in Chile very soon.

By Kathy Morrissey, NPDP is a Principal in Strategy 2 Market, Inc. and Luis Cisternas, Ph.D., is a Titular Professor, Universidad de Antofagasta.

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