

TEACHING, LEARNING AND RESEARCH



Prof Haupt, right, accepting a certificate from President of ASOCSA, Prof Kahlilu Kajimo-Shakantu

Professor Dlamini receives a silver award from the SAMRC

The South African Medical Research Council (SAMRC) acknowledged MUT's Deputy Vice-Chancellor: Research, Innovation and Engagements, Professor Zodwa Dlamini, with a Silver Award during its Scientific Merit Awards.

Together with Professor Eunice Seekoe, Dean of the Faculty of Health Sciences at the University of Fort Hare, Professor Dlamini received a silver medal for "senior scientists with a focus on capacity development under challenging circumstances".

MUT's Vice-Chancellor, Dr Enoch Duma Malaza, congratulated Professor Dlamini and said, "May you achieve even more and have a sustained professional career and contribution to health research in South Africa".

SAIMC leadership impressed by MUT



Prof Naidoo (right), with SAIMC officials

The Department of Electrical Engineering's relationship with major stakeholders is becoming stronger all the time. An inaugural visit to MUT by the Society of Automation, Instrumentation, Measurement & Control (SAIMC) has already paid dividends. On 6 September 2018, Annemarie van Coller and Johan Maartens (President and Chief Operating Officer of SAIMC respectively) saw MUT's Instrumentation Research and undergraduate laboratories and praised their high standard, which Johan said would make it easy for students to relate to industry. While discussing the Instrumentation curriculum and the Process Instrumentation 1, 2 and 3 course content, he said: "I have visited many universities but I could only identify Process and Instrumentation in the curriculum at MUT".

Ralph Naidoo, assistant professor in the Department of Electrical Engineering, said that such industry-related content would empower the students to adapt to industry standards. In a presentation to students, Annemarie highlighted the importance of joining SAIMC, a voluntary association under ECSA, whose primary objective is to promote the field of Process Automation and Control Engineering.

Engineering Research Professor puts MUT on world map

Professor Theo Haupt, Research Professor in the Faculty of Engineering, said he decided to join MUT for a particular reason - the University needed to improve its research profile. Professor Haupt has been driving that mission ever since he arrived at MUT in April 2017. Under his leadership, MUT and eThekweni Municipality co-hosted the Association of Schools of Construction of Southern Africa's (ASOCSA) 12th Built Environment Conference in Durban on 6-7 August 2018. The conference, which was attended by delegates from Southern Africa and the UK, was themed "Sustainable construction, transformation and development: emerging opportunities and challenges". "We have had to bring academics and students to discuss the main issues for Southern Africa. The conference papers presented are of a world-class standard and will attract cash from the government," said Professor Haupt, who emphasised the importance of involving students in the conference.

The conference also included Lifetime Achievement Awards, in which Professor Haupt featured strongly. He was called to the podium three times, taking an award for being co-author of the best paper; an award for the most reviewed conference paper and an award for bringing the most delegates to the conference. Professor Haupt's leadership was also recognised by eThekweni Municipality, which funds the Research Chairs at MUT, DUT and UKZN. Dr Andrew Mather, Project Executive: Coastal Policy in eThekweni Municipality, said the municipality recognised the need to assist in developing scarce skills in the municipal area, as well as at the local universities that help develop the region. Dr Mather said the municipality was pleased to be part of the conference, which was MUT's initiative.

During the same event, Professor Haupt also received a Newton Advance Fellowship from the British Academy, in partnership with the London South Bank University for the next two years. This fellowship is given to distinguished scholars and researchers in South Africa and the UK. The event also saw Professor Kahlilu Kajimo-Shakantu being elected as the new president of ASOCSA. Professor Kajimo-Shakantu is from the University of the Free State and said she intended to take ASOCSA forward.

Plant trees - they can only make our lives better



Dr Kuben Naidoo, left, led the tree planting segment of the event

On 7 September 2018, the beautiful walls of Hall 7 in the Faculty of Natural Sciences were decorated with posters bearing important environmental messages. These posters focused on two in particular: the vast amount of damage that humans are inflicting upon nature, and those parts of nature that are still 'healthy' enough to save mankind.

The chief organiser of the event, Dr Devandren Nadasan of the Nature Conservation department, indicated that the main reason for hosting the event was to remind students that nature was central to human existence. He reported that this initiative promoted student involvement and gave students the opportunity to provide a long-lasting and sustainable impact by planting their legacy at MUT.

The event brought together experts on a wide range of subjects, including the environment, invasive species, urban forestry, climate change and conservation diversity. The opening address by the Head of the Department of Nature Conservation, Professor Peter Small, relayed his passion for nature and the importance of the so-called 'green giants'. Professor Small said he had planted a tree in Mbombela, Mpumalanga 35 years ago and visits it every time he is in the area. He appealed to the students to commit to a lifetime of environmental stewardship.

The keynote address was rendered by Professor Roger Coopooosamy who emphasised the importance of Arbour Day, and what could be done to alleviate the effects of human beings on the environment. Natania Botha from the Wildlife and Environment Society of South Africa (WESSA) shared the organisation's passion for the environment, including its conservation, improvement, preservation, pollution control and plant and animal diversity. There were also presentations by postgraduate students from the department. Alongside the Arbour Day celebration, an art competition was held to raise awareness of nature amongst students and the broader community. The winner was Mzolisi Zulu, a second-year student. Mzolisi created his artwork to inspire people to appreciate and realise our connectivity with the natural world. Other winners were Monica Ndlovu, Zabileon Lemena and Luyanda Cele. Monica indicated that winning a prize awoke in her a desire to be the agent of change. Luyanda said everybody needed take part in the preservation of the environment. She thought that the valuable contribution provided by trees was often overlooked.

Guest speakers included Bheka Nxele and Bongani Zungu (an MUT alumnus) from the Environmental Planning and Climate Protection Department of eThekweni Municipality, as well as Zodwa Msweli, an Environmental Education Officer from eThekweni Municipality. The event ended with a tree-planting ceremony overseen by Dr Kuben Naidoo from the department.

Grant enables Professor Msomi to build capacity in science and mathematics

A passion for mathematics and science propelled Professor Alfred Msomi, acting dean in the Faculty of Natural Sciences, to continue the faculty's legacy by spearheading science outreach to marginalised communities through National Science Week. National Science Week is a countrywide celebration of science that involves various stakeholders in various science-based activities. The initiative falls under the umbrella of SAASTA which receives its funding from the national Department of Science and Technology (DST).

Professor Msomi led a multi-disciplinary team to the Ulundi district municipality in Zululand in response to the 2018 theme, "Deepening Our Democracy through Science". Said Professor Msomi: "Our purpose as MUT was to engage a variety of communities who could play a pivotal role in enhancing a passion for education and more importantly, a love for STEM subjects, which are perceived as being difficult by teachers and learners alike. The audience comprised Zululand district high school learners, teachers, subject advisors, principals and circuit managers."

"For this year we have identified three activities. The first activity involved holding workshops for school mathematics, science and chemistry educators of Ulundi district. These were held at the municipal hall (old legislature) on 30 and 31 July and covered challenging topics in the identified subjects. The second activity was a two-day career exhibition (1 and 2 August) by MUT staff in the STEM disciplines, also at the municipal hall. The third activity involved an exhibition by the Technology Station in Chemicals (TSC) where the production of various chemical products and the role of the TSC in the economic upliftment of SMMEs was clarified. On 4 August, a workshop was held to reflect on the events of the week," he added.



Prof Msomi

This initiative will go a long way towards instilling a love for science and enabling our communities to reflect on what democracy has made possible for them. As far back as 2014, Minister Naledi Pandor (Minister of Science and Technology at the time), commented, "The new democratic South Africa inherited a school and university system that was exclusive and tailored to serve a small, white elite. It had to be transformed into a school and university system that was inclusive and tailored to serve the majority of South Africans" (Mail & Guardian, 12 February 2015).

MUT congratulates the Faculty of Natural Sciences for a sustained effort in ensuring that science is not seen as a subject to be tackled only by the elite. This is Professor Msomi's forte; it is not just a National Science Week pastime, but empowerment in science and mathematics is in his genes.