Professor Emeritus and Senior Research Associate of the University of Wazulu-Natal, Professor Patricia Berjak, has died after a brief illness.

PHOTO: SUPPLIED

UKZN loses beloved professor Pat Berjak

ONE of the University of Wazulu-Natal’s most esteemed academics died on Monday after a brief illness. Professor Emeritus and Senior Research Associate of the University of Wazulu-Natal, Patricia Berjak, served the former University of Natal and UKZN for over 44 years and in many capacities. This included head of department, numerous university committees, governor of the University of Natal, and an expert in the research office. Many of her contributions and developments have been finalised yet.

Pat, as she was affectionately known by all, was passionate about seeds and conservation, the environment, and the environment. It was her passion drive, unswerved effort and desire to make a difference that established the reputation she had and was most respected in the field of seed biology worldwide.

Berjak always asserted that her achievements resulted from the care and commitment she and her husband, Professor Norman Berjak, put into their work. She was a mentor to many students and was vocal about the influence of the English language on society. Her areas of interest included aerography, photography, dancing, photography, donkey, cooking, an unswerving devotion to books and films, and, most of all, Norman’s companionship.

Her innovative research has been highly regarded and globally known, and her numerous accolades include being elected member of the Academy of Science of South Africa, a Fellow of the Royal Society of South Africa and the Third World Academy of Sciences.

She was also nominated, unsurpassed, as professor-elect of the University of Natal. She was an active contributor to science and continued to serve the University of Natal.

Between 2005 and 2014 she went on to reach even greater heights with a seat on the UKZN board (Silver), the highest honour granted by the president of South Africa. She was a member of the University of Natal board, the University of Wazulu-Natal board, and a recipient of a Lifetime Achievement Award. Her work on the south coast, her dedication to conservation, and her work on the south coast, have been an inspiration to many.

A memorial service is being planned for later this month in the University of Wazulu-Natal, with a service to be held at the University of Natal in 1946 as a junior lecturer. As a professor emerita, she continued to lecture and actively publish in the field of science at the University of Wazulu-Natal, until her passing on October 24.