UKZN Researchers recognised

UKZN academics inducted into academy of science

Student research uncovers genets in urban areas

Celebrating new medical doctors in the class of 2012

South Africa's recent achievements in combating the HIV epidemic

UKZN-led research raises hope for HIV/AIDS vaccine

UKZN Research Centres collaborate to celebrate World AIDS Day
UKZN academics inducted into Academy of Science

LUNGA MEMELA

THE College of Health Sciences (CHS) recently honoured top students and congratulated the class of 2012 in which new doctors achieved a 92 percent pass rate.

Opening proceedings at the annual Medical Banquet held at the International Convention Centre, Professor Richard Hiff, Dean and Head of UKZN’s School of Clinical Medicine, said: ‘It is wonderful to be able to say: “good evening colleagues” rather than “good evening students”.’

The new doctors start their internship programmes spread across the country’s hospitals next month and graduate at University-wide ceremonies in April.

Dr Abdool Faheema was named Top Final Year MBChB Student for 2012, receiving the CHS prize as well as the Dr YK Seedat prize which is also awarded to the top student. Faheema scooped the AE Kolla Prize in Paediatrics and passed her final-year examinations summa cum laude.

Incoming President of the Medical Student Representative Council (MSRC), Mr Nsizwenye Mkwanazi, said events such as the medical banquet confirmed the potential in South Africa.

The doctors were congratulated by College management and representatives from the banquet’s sponsors: Mediclinic, Lancet Laboratories, the Medical Protection Society and eThekwini Heart and Life Hospital.

Mrs Reinetjie Oosthuizen of Mediclinic said her company had continued interest and trust in the University.

Professor Rob Slotow, Deputy Vice-Chancellor and Head of CHS, said stepping out as the next generation of doctors would be an exciting opportunity and a challenge. He encouraged them to become ambassadors for UKZN and for the profession.

In his address, Hiff said: ‘As you step out into the world of clinical medicine you will not only be clinicians, you will also be leaders. You will find society looks up to you... the hope of the country rests on your shoulders.’

Celebrating new medical doctors in the class of 2012

UKZN's African Centre for Crop Improvement (ACCI) has won a Green Revolution for Africa (AGRA) award for outstanding contributions to food security in Africa.

The award was presented to ACCI Director, Professor Mark Laing, by the Chairperson of AGRA, former Secretary-General of the United Nations, Mr Koffi Annan, at a banquet in Arusha, Tanzania.

The banquet is part of AGRA's biennial conference themed: Scaling Investment and Innovation for Sustainable Agricultural Growth and Food Security.

Among the high profile delegates was Dr Jane Karuku, Mrs Melinda Gates of the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, Managing Director of the Rockefeller Foundation, Dr Gary Toennissen; President of the Rockefeller Foundation, Dr Melinda Gates of the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation; Managing Director of the Rockefeller Foundation, Dr Melinda Gates of the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation; Managing Director of the Rockefeller Foundation, Dr Melinda Gates of the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation; Managing Director of the Rockefeller Foundation, Dr Melinda Gates of the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation; Managing Director of the Rockefeller Foundation, Dr Melinda Gates of the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation; Managing Director of the Rockefeller Foundation, Dr Melinda Gates of the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation; Managing Director of the Rockefeller Foundation, Dr Melinda Gates of the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation; Managing Director of the Rockefeller Foundation, Dr Melinda Gates of the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation; 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UKZN's top researchers recognised

SITHEMBILE SHABANGU AND GREG DARAGAN

Two Pietermaritzburg-based scientists are the Top Published Researchers for 2011 at UKZN.

Professor Johannes van Staden, Head of the Research Centre for Plant Growth and Development, and Professor Colleen Downs of the School of Life Sciences, achieved the prestigious status through producing the highest number of articles published in accredited peer-reviewed journals.

The announcement was made at the Annual Research Awards and the launch of the Annual Research Report 2011 held at the Elangeni Hotel on November 29.

Van Staden, the Top Published UKZN researcher overall, had up to the end of last year authored or co-authored a total of 1 110 papers which have been published in accredited journals. For the past decade he has been in the top 0.5 percent of authors most cited worldwide.

He works in a variety of areas in Plant Sciences/Botany but specifically in the fields of plant hormones, seed germination, senescence, stress physiology, post-harvest physiology, biotechnology, and plant tissue culture, ethnobotany, secondary products and ethnomedicine.

The recipient of numerous awards and prizes in his field, van Staden is the Editor-in-Chief for the SA Journal of Botany and Plant Growth Regulation, and an Associate Editor of the Journal of Ethnopharmacology.

Downs, the Top Published Woman Researcher, has made an important contribution to understanding the relationships between the physiology, behaviour and coping with accelerated climate change; and aspects of vertebrate thermal biology, including thermoregulation, particularly of reptiles, birds and small mammals.

Of her 136 peer review published papers up to the beginning of 2012, about 45 percent relate to aspects of vertebrate ecology and conservation; about 25 percent to vertebrate dietary aspects especially frugivory and nectarivory; about 25 percent to aspects of vertebrate thermal biology including thermoregulation, behaviour coping with accelerated climate change; and about 5 percent to science education.
Predicting the future of healthcare delivery through health informatics

Maryann Francis

Having the vision to foresee and adequately prepare for world health needs dominated debate at a recent presentation in the Discipline of Public Health by the President and CEO of the American Medical Informatics Association, Dr. Kevin Fickenscher. The presentation titled: The Development of Health Informatics and its Future and how Collaborations, Synergies can be built in South Africa, pre-empted a robust discussion on the use of health informatics in the provision of healthcare delivery.

Fickenscher is a recognized physician executive leader with extensive experience in strategic and operational development in complex healthcare organisations as well as a recognised physician executive and fellow of the American College of Physician Executives and a fellow of the American Academy of Family Physicians. Health informatics is the interdisciplinary scientific field which studies and pursues the effective use of health data, information and knowledge for scientific enquiry. This problem-solving technique is motivated by efforts to improve human health, thereby providing an alternative healthcare delivery model for the delivery of services.

Healthcare service delivery is evolving in the changing landscape and rapid technological development. Through globalisation and visualisation, virtual delivery of healthcare is now possible. Fickenscher said the United States recorded 300,000 cases of cellulitis annually. All patients were hospitalised for at least a week at a total cost to the government of about a billion dollars.

He said of the 300,000 cases hospitalised, it was found that 40 percent of the patients did not actually have cellulitis. However, due to many countries experiencing a huge shortage of dermatologists, very few emergency rooms were able to detect this at the point of contact with the patient.

Fickenscher explained that through the use of telehealth facilities, diagnosis could have been made by a dermatologist to the emergency room consultant without having to be physically present - ie using video conferencing.

Peripheral intelligence was another form of obtaining information about a patient without a physical examination. Fickenscher mentioned a Smart Band-Aid, developed in the United Kingdom, which was placed onto a patient’s chest monitoring heart rate, blood pressure and other health indicators. As well as monitoring vital signs the gadget could be tuned to pick up subtle indicators of a patient’s condition. In this way, said Fickenscher, staff could monitor a number of patients through their recovery period, without having to conduct physical examinations.

Workforce globalisation was another factor enabling the provision of healthcare service globally without having to be physically in the country. Fickenscher said he had met a physician on an aircraft recently who lived in Paris but provided radiology services to general practitioners in the United States. Much to the surprise of the audience, Fickenscher said that in the US, informatics had been included as a designated recognised specialty with board certification.

In South Africa, the Health Professions Council (HPCSA) rejected telemedicine practices saying it was in breach of their ethical policies and regulations. HPCSA spokeswoman Bertha Peters-Scheepers is on record as saying: ‘Organisations offering the services of a doctor just a call away are in breach of their patients’ rights, including the practitioner-patient relationship, patient confidentiality and informed consent. As a general rule, a healthcare practitioner is required to do a physical examination and assess a patient in order to make a diagnosis.’

Fickenscher said ethical considerations were still a challenge and so was the possibility of liability, however, if embedded in a government’s policies a guideline is provided for the usage of telehealth for appropriate cases only.

Health informatics consists of bioinformatics or biomedical informatics which are databases containing molecular and cellular information. Imaging informatics uses technology to view organs and tissue. Clinical Informatics includes detailed information on the patient or individual and public health informatics draws on information from entire populations.

African Cultural Day celebrated with pomp and pizzazz

Melissa Mungood

The Buya Africa Student Cultural Organisation (BASCO) recently held its African Cultural Parade and Heritage Celebration event at the Howard College Theatre.

The theme of the event was Usuthile Be Africa BukamaAfrica Ugcobo, a promotion of the love of African culture and its practice, African languages and the maintenance of values.

BASCO publicist, Mr Thabani Gumede, said: ‘We believe this event’s impact will help ensure the eradication of the negative attitudes of some African countries against fellow African students within the University. The African Cultural Parade saw BASCO members decked out in traditional attire as they made their way across the campus grounds and finally to the College Theatre for a festival of African traditional music, dance, poetry. It was a traditional clothing showcase and the presentation of traditional food from various African countries.

“It was a great night and everyone seemed to enjoy it. We hope to have another event like this next year,” said Gumede.

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Student research uncovers genets in urban areas

SALLY FROST

A POSTGRADUATE student in UKZN's School of Life Sciences on the Pietermaritzburg campus, Mr Craig Widdows, is doing his MSc research focused on the home range and adaptations of the large spotted genet in urban Kloof and Hillcrest.

As part of his research, Widdows is setting up radio chips on genets in the Kloof Hillcrest area. ‘What I am aiming to do is to attach a big radio chip on the Genets,’ said Widdows. ‘These chips are in no way invasive and will not harm the individuals. These will allow us to track the movements of the genets by providing activity readings every 10 minutes for a period of 10 months. This will allow us to identify how they are surviving in the urban area.’

Widdows is also setting up cameras to aid his research. ‘When the individual walks past the sensor the camera will take a picture,’ he said. ‘These cameras come with an invisible black flash so their location won’t be visible.’ In addition to sensor chips and video footage, Widdows is looking for and examining the scats of large spotted genets to determine their diet.

In an effort to use the eyes and ears of local residents, Widdows has issued residents in the Hillcrest/Kloof area with data sheets. ‘They will be able to record the genets they observe and indicate the time, habitat and behavioural observations of the animals. All this information will be included in my thesis,’ he said.

Besides large spotted genets, other projects being undertaken by postgraduate students under the supervision of Downs include research involving serval and feral cats; bats in rural and urban environments; and birds such as the hadeda ibis, trumpeter hornbill, rose-ringed parakeet, house sparrow, black sparrow-hawk and crowned eagle expanding their range in urban environments.
South Africa's recent achievements in combating the HIV epidemic

Salim Abdool Karim, Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Research) and Director: CAPRISA, University of KwaZulu Natal and President: South African Medical Research Council

As the world commemorates the 31st World AIDS Day, we are humbled by the sad reality that almost one third of pregnant women in South Africa are infected with HIV. About 11 percent of all South Africans are estimated to be infected with HIV. Despite these sobering statistics, over the past few years South Africa has had several laudable achievements that we can rightfully be proud of, in the fight against HIV.

Firstly, political will and commitment to combating the HIV epidemic over the last few years has been very strong. Government funding for responding to the HIV epidemic, including expanding antiretroviral therapy (ART), has been ramped up. More than one million people are on ART, with more being added every year. Most recently, in June 2011, the South African National Department of Health launched a multi-billion rand expansion of antiretroviral and ART treatment services, which are being rolled out to all public health facilities across the country. This has been hailed as a major step forward in the fight against HIV in South Africa.

Secondly, the increased funding has made it possible to impact on one of the biggest obstacles to HIV prevention and treatment – knowing your HIV status. Lack of knowledge of HIV status or denial of HIV status is a consequence of discrimination and social marginalization that continues to be experienced daily by people who are the most affected by HIV. Stigma contributes substantially to reluctance to test for HIV. To address these challenges, the South African National Department of Health launched a multi-billion rand campaign in April 2010 to encourage 15 million sexually active individuals to test for HIV. This campaign, in June 2011, 14.8 million counselling sessions and 13 million tests for HIV and 11 million tuberculosis test had been completed.

Thirdly, important gains have also been achieved in the scale-up of prevention methods such as condom, circumcision and pMTCT. Male condom distribution increased 30 percent over five years, rising from 0.5 million in 2006 to 452 million in 2010. Although not on the same scale, distribution of female condoms also increased from 16 million units in 2006 to 5 million in 2010. Medical male circumcision has become a priority component of HIV prevention in South Africa. Introduced in 2007, the number of medical male circumcisions has increased 50-fold from just 5,150 in 2008 to approximately 225,000 in 2011. Evidence of a population level impact of circumcision in South Africa has recently become available from Orange Farm, where an increase in the male circumcision rate from 16 percent in 2007 to 60 percent in 2010 was associated with reductions of 56 percent in HIV prevalence and 75 percent in HIV incidence.

Community level impact is also now evident from South African pMTCT programmes. Within 10 years of initiating the country’s pMTCT programme, 95 percent of all health facilities were providing this service in 2010. South Africa is also one of four countries that have achieved more than 80 percent coverage of antiretroviral prophylaxis to prevent MTCT. More than 90 percent of women receive an HIV test during pregnancy and 87 percent of HIV-positive mothers are receiving ART treatment or prophylaxis. A national evaluation involving 10,178 infants in 572 health facilities showed that the 6-week viral transmission rate was 3.5 percent in 2010 when compared to transmission rates ranging from 20-30 percent less than 10 years ago. Early infant diagnosis uptake, however, is only 35.1 percent and represents a missed opportunity to provide AIDS treatment to infants.

Fourthly, South Africa has the largest HIV prevention trial programme in the world with about 2 million people currently estimated to be on antiretrovirals. ART services are now available in more than 2,500 approved facilities countrywide. The government is simultaneously transitioning thousands of patients from United States President’s Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR) funded treatment programmes to government services, and the success or failures of this step in ensuring sustainability of a huge external aid programme will be eagerly studied by governments and funding agencies. Although expanding access to those still in need of ART presents a challenge to the capacity of the health service, expanding access to treatment has already started to impact on AIDS mortality. The proportion of overall deaths that are AIDS-related mortality has decreased from 52.6 percent in 2006 to 43.6 percent in 2011.

A recent report from the South African Medical Research Council shows that deaths in children below the age of 5 years has decreased by 43 percent, premature deaths of adults in have decreased by 30 percent and life expectancy has increased from 45 years to 46 years. Fifthly, South African researchers continue to contribute to cutting edge HIV research of global significance. Most recently, the CAPRISA consortium of researchers showed how a unique change in the outer covering of the virus found in two HIV infected South African women enabled them to make potent antibodies which are able to kill up to 80 percent of HIV types from around the world. Until now, it was not known by which mechanism the human body is able to make broadly neutralizing antibodies. This important information about the complex relationship between these antibodies and HIV may help in the development of a future HIV vaccine. An effective HIV vaccine would provide a powerful tool to influence the course of the HIV epidemic and remains one of the most important and ambitious goals of AIDS research.

These achievements instil a basis for hope but much more needs to be done to combat AIDS in South Africa. One additional, unexplored, HIV prevention option with the potential to significantly reduce HIV acquisition in South Africa is the use of antiretroviral drugs as pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP) in high risk groups like men who have sex with women (MSM), discordant couples and in young women where mutual monogamy and condom use may be challenging options. The first antiretroviral drug, Truvada, for use as PrEP to prevent HIV acquisition was approved by the US Food and Drug Administration in July this year. The US government has released guidelines on the use of Truvada to prevent HIV in MSM and the general population. However, South Africa lags behind in adopting this new approach to HIV prevention. PrEP has a unique advantage for young women in South Africa, who currently have few options available to them to reduce their risk of acquiring HIV infection.

There is much we can be proud of as we reflect on the accomplishments in South Africa in dealing with the HIV epidemic in the post-denialist period. Much still needs to be done – treatment rollout needs to continue and much more needs to be done on prevention. We are still many years from turning the tide against HIV but South Africa is firmly on the right path in dealing with this epidemic.

Many of the statistics in this article are from a recent paper by the author.
UKZN-led research raises hopes for HIV/AIDS vaccine

HOPES for the discovery of a vaccine against AIDS have risen substantially following research led by a Durban scientist - which shows that antibodies manufactured by some HIV-infected people have the potential to destroy 88 percent of HIV strains found throughout the world.

The AIDS study published in the journal, Nature Medicine, describes how a unique change in the outer covering of the virus found in two HIV-infected KwaZulu-Natal women produced the potent antibodies.

The team initially established that two KwaZulu-Natal women could produce the antibodies. Follow up research by NICD scientists, Dr Penny Moore and Professor Lynn Morris, revealed that a sugar, referred to as a ‘glycan’, on the surface protein cost of the virus at a specific position formed a site of vulnerability in the virus, enabling the body to mount a broadly neutralizing antibody response.

‘Understanding this elaborate game of “cat and mouse” between HIV and the immune response of the infected person has provided valuable insights into how broadly neutralizing antibodies arise,’ said Moore.

AIDS researcher, who is Head of AIDS research at NICD, said they had been surprised to discover the virus which caused infection often did not have this antibody target on its outer covering. ‘But over time, the virus was pressured by the body’s immune reaction to cover itself with the sugar that forms a point of vulnerability, and so allowed the development of antibodies that hit the weak spot.’

Abdool Karim said broadly neutralising antibodies were considered to be the key to making an AIDS vaccine. ‘This discovery provides new clues on how vaccines could be designed to elicit broadly neutralizing antibodies.’

The CAPRISA statement said highly potent forms of broadly neutralizing antibodies against HIV were identified about three years but until now it had not been known how the human body made the antibodies.

To make this discovery, the research team studied the target of some of these antibodies, a sugar that coats the surface protein of HIV, forming a site of vulnerability.

‘By tracing back the evolution of the virus that elicited these antibodies, they showed that the particular weak point was absent from the virus that first infected the KwaZulu-Natal women. However, under constant pressure from other less powerful antibodies that develop in all infected people, their HIV was forced to expose this vulnerability over time. This allowed the broadly neutralizing antibodies to develop,’ said the statement.

Analysis - performed in collaboration with scientists from the University of North Carolina and Harvard University in the United States - of a large number of other viruses from throughout the world, suggest that the vulnerability at position 332 may be present at the time of infection in about two thirds of subtype C viruses (the subtype most common in Africa).

This research was funded by the South African government’s Department of Science and Technology, the US National Institutes for Health and the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation.

The long-term follow-up studies of the women in KwaZulu-Natal were additionally funded by the South African Technology Innovation Agency as well as USAID (through CONRAD) and CDC as part of PREPARE. Followships from the Fogarty International Centre and the Wellcome Trust also played a key role in enabling the research.

UKZN Research Centres collaborate to celebrate World AIDS Day

THE Health Economics and HIV/AIDS Research Division (HEARD) in collaboration with CAPRISA, Africa Centre and the University of KwaZulu-Natal Press recently hosted Getting to Zero - Showcasing KZN Research on HIV and AIDS at the KZNSA Gallery. The event brought together over 150 people from research, education and government institutions working in the field of HIV and AIDS to discuss the latest research developments and scientific trends in prevention and treatment ahead of World AIDS Day.

The event was spearheaded by HEARD which invited partners in the field, the Centre for the AIDS Programme of Research in South Africa (CAPRISA), the Africa Centre and UKZN Press to participate in showcasing the latest HIV-related research and material.

One of the highlights was the screening of HEARD’s documentary titled: Manguzi: Raising Children in Rural South Africa, which premiered recently at the international AIDS Conference in Washington DC.

The documentary provided the audience with a personal account of the challenges faced by caregivers of children in HIV-endemic communities in South Africa. The documentary follows the world’s first large-scale qualitative study of the impacts of familial HIV and AIDS on children. Life expectancy for the Manguzi area is 45 years.

According to the documentary, 5.6 million people in South Africa live with HIV which is the largest number in the world. 2.9 million South African children have lost one or both parents to AIDS and 74 percent of households care for orphaned children.

The documentary also showcased the challenges infected people face being accepted in the community. Representatives from CAPRISA, HEARD and the Africa Centre presented work of the organisations and their current research findings.

CAPRISA’s Head of Community Programme, Ms. Janet Frohlich, told the audience about their microbicide research, including the vaginal microbicide study undertaken in 2010 - the CAPRISA 004 Tenofovir Gel Trial. The study showed that microbicides could provide women with some protection from HIV infection. CAPRISA continues to undertake research for a safe and effective microbicide that could have a profound impact on the dynamics of HIV transmission.

Dr Katharine Stott, HIV Programme Physician at the Africa Centre, said there was a provable reduction in infections but there was still a problem with HIV and TB drug resistance.

UKZN Press’s Ms Debra Prim spoke about the publisher’s range of books on HIV/AIDS. The books were showcased and on sale at the event.

HEARD’s Research Director, Dr Kay Govender, highlighted HEARD’s core research areas. He told the audience about the Young Carers Project - a multi agency collaboration between HEARD, the Universities of Cape Town and the Witwatersrand, the University of Oxford and the South African government. The project aims to inform policy and programming in order to improve the health and well-being of children and their families in South Africa.

Executive Director of HEARD, Professor Alas Whiteisle, thanked the audience, the HEARD team and the participating organisations for making the project happen and for its success.
Aspiring surgeons making waves with novel studies

MARYANN FRANCIS

ASPENDING surgeons, Mr Xolani Ntombela and Ms Nqobile Manzini, have impressed medical specialists and health scientists with their inspiring and high quality research studies presented at various educational forums.

Inspired by UKZN’s ‘Living Legend’ and Head of the Department of Surgery, Professor Thandinkosi Madiba, both undergraduate students are making valuable contributions through their research towards novel studies in the local context.

Ntombela, a third year medical student, has focused his research on the pathophysiology of the Spectrum of Anal cancers in the province of KwaZulu-Natal. In July this year, Ntombela and Manzini, had the honour to present at the Surgical Research Society of Southern Africa’s Congress in Stellenbosch. Ntombela, then went on to present his study at the South African Thoracic Society and Congress in August and was the only undergraduate student to be given this honour.

At the congress, he walked away with the second prize for his poster: Again in August, he presented at the College of Health Sciences Student’s Clinical Conference and won second prize for his presentation.

Ntombela’s study was a retrospective analysis of 130 patients treated for anal cancer at the Inkosi Albert Luthuli Central Hospital from 2004. The study focused on adenocarcinomas and squamous carcinomas. During the period, 2004-2012, Ntombela reported that 13 of the patients had died.

Anal cancers affect populations with squamous carcinomas recorded as being three times as prevalent as adenocarcinomas. Ntombela’s study also found that anal margin cancers were more common than anal canal cancers. He found that the proportion of patients with anal adenocarcinoma was higher than that reported in the literature.

Problems encountered are that patients often presented at an advanced stage of the disease. The other problem is that patients are often misdiagnosed with haemorrhoids, constipation and anal warts.

From his study, Ntombela emphasized the importance of early referral of patients with bowel symptoms to a specialist unit where a biopsy will be taken.

Ntombela and Manzini’s studies are currently being prepared for publication in one of the internationally recognised, peer-reviewed surgical journals.

Ntombela completed the clinical research in anal cancers and hopes to come back to UKZN after qualifying as a medical doctor to specialize in colorectal cancer or gastrointestinal surgery.

Manzini, a final year medical student, also presented at the Surgical Research Society of Southern Africa’s Congress in Stellenbosch, at the UKZN College of Health Sciences Research Symposium and at the PEdge-College of Health Sciences Young Health Scientists Research Symposium where she won first prize for her clinical research presentation. As a result of this she represented UKZN at the Pfizer National Young Health Scientists Research Symposium in October this year.

Manzini’s study is on the Traumatic Retroperitoneal Hematoma (RPH): Factors Affecting the Outcome and is a retrospective analysis of data from the trauma database at the King Edward VIII Hospital from 1998-2004. Of the 488 patients treated for traumatic abdomen at King Edward VIII Hospital, 145 had RPH which is the accumulation of blood in the abdominal cavity behind the peritoneum.

It was found that the proportion of males presenting with RPH was 15 times higher than in females. Injuries were due to firearms (109), stabs (24) and blunt trauma (12). She also found that the kidney was the most commonly injured organ.

Whilst serving her internship next year at the Stanger Hospital, Manzini will begin her second study on colorectal cancer. She hopes to return to UKZN to specialize in cardio-thoracic surgery.

Law academics honoured for their contribution to research

THANDWE JUMBO

The School of Law recently recognised its productive researchers for accredited peer-reviewed output between 2007 and 2011.

Professor Shannon Hector was acknowledged for being the most productive researcher in that period during which he authored five books (three monographs and two collections of essays), had 14 contributions published in accredited journals, 26 chapters and revision services published in accredited books, and produced 28 non-accredited publications.

He has also continued the volume South Africa in the series: Encyclopedia of Laws: Criminal Law, and co-edited with six colleagues the 4th edition of South African Criminal Law and Procedure: Common-law Crimes.

Hector has also completed a new revision service for South African Criminal Law and Procedure: Statutory Offences which he edits. Hector said it was an honour and a privilege to follow in the footsteps of illustrious academic criminal lawyers such as Mr John Milton Pilgrim, Mr Jonathan Burchell, Mr Eton Burchell and Mr Peter Hunt.

“These scholars have had a profound impact on the development of South African criminal law, and in their respected ways they inspired me to try to do likewise,” said Hector.

“I love research and particularly enjoy doing research. I like to think that research allows me to enjoy a similar process of examining the evidence, testing hypotheses and drawing conclusions. I find that being an active researcher is also very beneficial to my teaching.”

Other staff who received awards included Professor David McQuaid Mason, the most productive honorary appointee, Professor Max du Plessis, the most productive Associate Professor; Ms Nicola Whiter-Nel, the most productive Senior Lecturer; and Ms Meda Couzens, the most productive Lecturer.

The following academics also made the list for the top 10 performers: Professor Marta Carnelley, Professor Warren Freedman, Professor Michael Kidd, Professor Manavgat Reddi, Professor Robert Williams and Professor Noel Ziol.

One of the lecturers, Mr Mike Buthelezi, received special recognition for his outstanding contribution to research in 2011. He published four articles in that year resulting in 240 productivity units.

His articles include: Like Pontius Pilate of old, the Constitutional Court washed its hands of my human dignity: A critical review of The Citizen 1979 (Pty) Ltd v McBride 2011 4 SA 19; (CC) 2011/2286; 665-666; The Action of Dependents Revisited In The Light of Brooks v The Minister of Safety and Security 2011 (4) SALJ 642-658, and A missed opportunity to settle the law on DNA testing in paternity disputes - YD (now M) v LB 2010/05/24; 358; SCAP (2011) 240 (019) 840-846.

The output is considered exceptional considering the requirement for a lecturer is one article a year.

The Academic Leader of Research in the School of Law, Professor Marta Carnelley, said research and the production of new knowledge was important for the University. The Law School prided itself on the contribution it made in this regard and felt that it was important to acknowledge those within the School who contributed towards that goal.

UKZN academic wins SAMS Medal for Research Excellence

SALLY FROST

PROFESSOR Jacob Banasjak of UKZN’s School of Mathematics, Statistics and Computer Science, was recently awarded the South African Mathematics Society (SAMS) medal for Research Excellence at a ceremony in Stellenbosch.

The award was presented by Professor Louis Labuschagne, President of SAMS.

Dean and Head of School for Mathematics, Statistics and Computer Science at UKZN, Professor Kesh Govinder, said: “This is a great achievement and we congratulate Jacek on his award. We are very proud of him!”

At the same ceremony UKZN postgraduate student Mr Yusuf Nonyi won the prize for the best PhD student presentation. Nonyi is a student in the Astrophysics and Cosmology Research Unit (ACRU), under the supervision of Professor Sunil Maharaj and Professor Kesh Govinder.

His paper discussed providing exact solutions to radiating and charged relativistic spheres using Lie’s group theoretic approach.

SAMS was founded in 1907 with the advancement of mathematics in South Africa as its main objective. It currently has a membership of more than 200. The society is committed to high standards of excellence in the learning, teaching and research of the discipline and strives to explore the applications of mathematics in addressing the needs of the South African society.

The society’s main activities include publication of the journal Quantiones Mathematicae and Notices of the South African Mathematical Society. SAMS also represents the interests of the South African mathematics community on national and international structures.
Creating waves in digital and wireless communication

SALLY FROST

PROFESSOR Hongjun Xu, newly inaugurated Professor in Electronic Engineering at UKZN’s School of Engineering, presented his inaugural public lecture at Howard College under the title: Detection Schemes for M-QAM Spatial Modulation.

Xu, whose research interests lie in the field of digital and wireless communications and digital systems, said future communications needed high data rate transmission, and that Multiple-input Multiple-Output (MIMO) had been considered as a technique. Spatial modulation (SM) was a new MIMO transmission scheme proposed recently.

In his talk, Xu presented detection schemes for M-QAM spatial modulation. These detection schemes included the maximum likelihood (ML) based optimal detection scheme; the suboptimal based optimal detection scheme; and simple low-complexity detection.

Xu received his BSc degree from the University of Guilin Technology, China, in 1984 and his MSc degree from the Institute of Telecontrol and Telemasure in Shijian Zhuang, China, in 1986. In 1995 he was awarded his PhD from the Beijing University of Aeronautics and Astronautics in Beijing, China.

From 1997 to 2000 he was involved in postdoctoral research at the then University of Natal and at Inha University. Over the past five years Xu has published more than 20 journal papers.

In introducing Xu, Acting Provost, Professor Deo Jaganyi, said: ‘An inaugural lecture is an important event in the life of a professor and in the life of his or her university. It gives new professors the opportunity to locate themselves publicly in relation to new developments in their discipline and to articulate their visions for the future of that discipline. I extend my warmest congratulations to Professor Xu on his promotion.’

Dean and Head of School for Engineering, Professor Crisztina Troirs, described Xu as “one of our most esteemed colleagues”.

Bollywood meets Africa at Edgewood

MELISSA MUNGKOO

ARTS and Culture students at UKZN’s Edgewood campus presented a spectacular Bollywood Meets Africa dance event in the Margaret Martin Lecture Theatre before an enthusiastic 200-strong audience.

The event opened with a prayer from the Bharatanatyam Arts and Culture dancers and then went onto an exquisite entrance by Culture dancers and then went onto an exquisite entrance by Culture dancers and then went onto an exquisite entrance by Culture dancers and then went onto an exquisite entrance by Culture dancers and then went onto an exquisite entrance by Culture dancers. The performance ended with an energetic and riveting dance fusion between the two cultures.

The Bollywood and African music was enhanced and accompanied by two African drums including the djembe.

In an attempt to promote diversity and culture, Head of the Discipline, Dr Yolisa Nompula, chose the top achieving groups in the Arts and Culture 120 module to perform for their practical examination, a fusion of Indian and African culture in the form of music and dance.

’Six students of these two cultures spent weeks working together in order to produce a flawless performance that proved to be a success on the day of presentation. Hard work, dedication and an ability to collaborate cultures is what drove these students to present a breath-taking performance,’ said Nompula.

Co-ordinator of the event, Ms Pooja Ramnath, said students enjoyed participating in the event and loved the vision, artistry, coordination, enthusiasm and the energetic presence of Dr Nompula during their training sessions. ‘I believe this event has been a lesson to all Art educators in training who should use it as a guide to promote diversity in their classrooms,’ said Ramnath.
Dusi King is PMB campus
2012 Sportsman of the year

WINNER of the 2012 Dusi Canoe Marathon and the Non-Stop Dusi, Andrew Birkett, is UKZN’s Pietermaritzburg campus Sportsman of the Year.

The announcement was made at the 50th annual sports banquet held at the Victoria Country Club at which five full blues and 16 half blues were awarded.

Award winners were selected by the University’s sports executive and sports officers.

The banquet featured a panel comprising former national and provincial sports representatives: South African rower, Mr Doug Gouw; South African hockey player, Ms Janet Edwards; Natal rugby player, Mr Jimmy Mallett; and South African soccer player, Mr Steven Ngubane, who have each had a significant affiliation to the University through coaching, playing or administration.

The sports personalities provided insightful stories of their experiences during their time at UKZN.

From 2013 onwards, UKZN campuses will have a combined event to honour and celebrate the achievements of the university’s sportsmen and sportswomen.

Full blues were awarded to Darren Berriman (canoe polo); Andrew Birkett (canoeing), Robin James (hockey), Damian Kimfley (hockey) and Mick Gouweloois (squash).

UKZN staff publish book on education leadership, management and governance

MELISSA MUNGOO

EDUCATIONAL Leadership, Management and Policy (ELMP) staff members in the School of Education have published a book titled: Education Leadership, Management and Governance in South Africa.

This book, launched recently on the Edgewood campus, is a result of three years of collaboration between ELMP staff, postgraduate students and international scholars based in Higher Education Institutions.

The publication was edited by UKZN’s Professor Vitalis Chikoko and Professor Kenneth M Jorgensen of Aalborg University in Denmark.


According to one of the contributors, Dr Insha Naicker, the book will be useful to people in a variety of fields, including teachers, school managers, education officials, students, academics and researchers.

The book seeks to contribute knowledge to South Africa’s transformation agenda in terms of how education is led, managed and governed. It also examines how diversity can be promoted and celebrated in South African schools, he said.

The book is published by Nova Science publishers Inc. and is available from Adams Booksellers.

The book, which costs around R1 680, can also be bought directly from Mr Cedric Sissing (phone: 011 261 2320).

UKZN student wins prize at Ornithological Congress in Tanzania

SALLY FROST

A GROUP of eight postgraduate students from UKZN’s School of Life Sciences recently attended the Pan African Ornithological Congress (PAOC) held in Arusha, Tanzania, with one winning a prestigious award.

Competing against 160 other presenters from across Africa, PhD candidate, Ms Tiwonge Mzumara, received the prize for the best student oral presentation with her talk which re-assessed the conservation status of Malawi’s “endangered” yellow-throated apalis. In addition there were 61 poster presentations.

PAOC is held every four years and is one of only a few Pan African conferences dedicated to taxonomy.

The conference gives opportunities for those working on birds in Africa to meet and get an overview of current research and discuss possible important future areas of research.

UKZN’s Professor Colleen Downs was Scientific Chair for the PAOC and organised collection of the abstracts and the programme.

The Conference highlighted that with a world human population of more than seven billion, there was increasing pressure on the environment with land transformation for urban sprawl, agriculture and biofuels continuing at high rates. The effects of accelerated climate change further exacerbate the situation.

Despite this there was a need to maximise biodiversity and sustain ecosystem function.

Many of the presentations dealt with the effects of changing ecosystems, including savannah, forests and wetlands, and the effects of accelerated climate change on bird diversity and persistence in Africa. Highlighted were the effects on the migration of avian species, and raptors and also the effects of changing land use and urban environments on bird diversity and survival.

There were also discussions on bird responses to ecosystem changes; monitoring change in bird populations and habitats in Africa; crane responses to ecosystem changes; human-wildlife conflict; African birds and climatic change; ethno-ornithology; drivers of change: climate versus habitat; drivers of change - a landscape approach to bird conservation; wetlands and waterbirds in a changing environment; continent-wide raptor conservation; conserving birds and biodiversity across landscapes in Africa; owls, weavers, and life on the move.

Downs commented that with technological advances - particularly in global positioning system telemetry - the movement, spatial use and presence of birds in Africa were advancing and this was highlighted at the congress. In addition, the involvement of the general public in bird monitoring was discussed.

‘It was a great opportunity for UKZN students to showcase their work and to interact with researchers from around the world,’ said Downs. ‘We thank the organisers, and look forward to the next PAOC in four years’ time.’
BOOKFOLLOWS

PHD THESIS

Mr Darryl Earl David with his newly published book: A Platteland Pilgrimage.

Another book on the shelves for an author

MELISSA MUNGROO

UKZN’s Afrikaans Language lecturer Mr Darryl Earl David recently published A Platteland Pilgrimage which follows his reader on a journey to many of the forgotten churches of South Africa. It is a pilgrimage to small town South Africa, and in most cases to the genesis of these towns because most churches in the platteland were the very cornerstones around which communities developed,’ said David.

‘On the pages of this book, you will discover towns and hamlets like Howick, Wilmersburg, Vosburg, Indeni, Merewether and almost 100 others!’

Two years ago, David and his co-author Mr Mervyn Dennis, produced 101 Country Churches of SA. Out of that book sprang the realization that they had left out so many lovely churches and this led to the latest book. ‘In many ways the book also pays homage to the great architects of yesteryear. To stand before these churches but who now live in big cities.

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asked how he felt about the book being published, David smiled and said, ‘It’s like the day your child was born. You can’t help but look at it (your child) every minute of the day. You want to touch it all the time. And it brings a smile to your face whenever you look at it. ‘Three more books are in the pipeline for David.

‘The first book flows out of my work in founding the first iSizulu museum in South Africa at UKZN. But my publishers have sworn me to secrecy. Secondly, publishers Human and Rousseau have given me the go-ahead for a book on the Karoo as seen through the eyes of writers. And thirdly, my Dad actually gave me the idea for a book on churches with a truly unique slant.”

David hopes the third book will take SA by storm and take Church Tourism to a much wider audience. ‘I just hope I can complete it while my Dad is still around. He turns 80 in 2014 so I would like the book to be out by then.”

A Platteland Pilgrimage sells for R250 and can be purchased from David via email: david@iakzn.ac.za or cowboys2@iol.co.za
The UKZN Griot
Of Big and Little Griots

KEYAN G TOMASELLI

Y Griot column is spawning a number of little Griots. These are single interventions penned by folks associated with UKZN. Here is one (edited) example. In response to the indomitable HR summarily giving its staff an extra Women's Day (WD1) off during a Working Day (WD2) while imposing TRS migrations on the rest of us, Manfred Hellberg, professor emeritus and esteemed member of the Academy of Science, wrote:

Dear Prof Meyerowitz,
As someone who has been at the University for almost 47 years, it was a novelty to me that a major support sector would close down totally on a working day, in lieu thereof. That led to significant numbers of staff taking one day's leave, and the results were evident in the ease with which parking could be found on campus. I therefore decided that that scenario was highly unlikely. I then wondered whether this action sets a precedent for commemorating different such public holidays, by closing down, within a year, in commemoration of Women's Day, of course. My thoughts then rambled on - what of other sectors of the University, such as Finance, RMS, the academics, etc. - would they, too, all wish to close for a day in August, in commemoration of Women's Day, of course. Suddenly, I realised that possibly HR had hit on a very important point, that the rest of us in the University had missed entirely. Should we not in fact be commemorating ALL the public holidays that crop up during the University's core business time, viz., term-time? ... I am thus very grateful to HR for drawing attention to the role of women, by commemorating Women's Day, albeit belatedly. But, is it a good idea if within the University, we only have HR commemorating Women's Day, and we ignore all other public holidays? ... These include ... Human Rights, the Family, Freedom, the Workers, the Youth, and Heritage. The matter of Reconciliation falls outside term time, and might thus possibly be ignored. If we ignore such public holidays in not commemorating them adequately, would the University not stand accused of ignoring these other important areas of our society?

I think that the answer lies in having different parts of the University taking responsibility for commemorating different such public holidays, by closing down. We probably have a sufficient number of sectors to cover all of the public holidays. That sounds like a great idea to me, which would, I believe, be welcomed by all.

Oops, possibly not necessarily by everyone: one is not quite sure how the students might react! Nonetheless, could the Executive possibly consider this proposal for implementation in future years?

***

South Africa already has the most public holidays in the world. A few more could not hurt and may, in fact, be desirable, given that HR wants to cunningly include the end of the year break in our annual leave allocation, thus reducing it by five days. Perhaps HR is ensuring that it at least grants itself extra days by means of this kind of one plus one stealth, one working day for each of a growing number of public holidays each year (WD1 + WD2 = WDn) that the rest of us won't notice! Many will be too busy at work wondering why their salaries are again delayed, their letters unanswered, and whether or not new appointments have been 'captured' by the system. Soon, HR will be allocating itself 23 extra holidays, an extra month over the month already statutorily allocated to public holidays, not including annual leave - less of course the five days between Christmas and New Year. By my reckoning that's totals 67 days of leave of one kind or another not including weekends. Not bad if this extra leave is part of the TRS migration. Count me in for the post-Christmas period - no one will be here anyway.

Since HR is a law unto itself, the cannon fodder who do come to work during WD2 might ask whether: a) all HR personnel celebrating an additional Women's Day (WD2) applied for one day's annual leave; b) any constituted institution in the University is hereby empowered to close for a day off as a result of the public holiday statute is no longer determining to celebrate any day they like - 'the fortification of feline female feral cats' day' would be a good one - after all, these furry four-legged purring citizens of UKZN huddle under my car in the TB Davis parking lot when it is raining; and c) whether the scores of employees whose monthly wages are sometimes lost, and the many new and re-appointments stuck or captured but not processed by the inebriated system, will understand that their ‘capturing’ is again delayed for a good cause. The unpaid being dragged off to debtor courts will surely understand that their predicament is well intentioned.

I look forward to my correspondents sending me the little Griots that they have penned, even if not sent. We will start in true African democratic vein a network of Griots/imbongis and, like the West African griots of old, we will travel from campus to campus, town to town, and residence to residence, praising as is our wont and, indeed, our cultural mandate, the foibles of the King of HR.

Keyan G Tomasselli is Director of The Centre for Communication, Media and Society. His griot columns are now being studied by some UKZN students as a new African art form.

Disclaimers: The views expressed in this column are the author’s own.

Winners of the IsiZulu-English writing competition announced

The winners for each category were Ms Khehiwe Mhizhe (far right) for her winning Essay, Mr Thandani Mabaso (second from left) for winning the Poetry category and Sihle Mdluli (front) for the Short Story category. Here they are with University of KwaZulu-Natal Vice-Chancellor Prof Jos de Carteret, and University of KwaZulu-Natal Media and Society Programme Director, Prof Keyan G Tomaselli.

Judges for the competition were (from left) Professor Zippy Nhlalo, Dr Gcina Hlophe, Dr Gugulethu Mbizuko, Dr Nakanjani Sibuya.