



FACULTY OF SCIENCE

Prof Eugene Cloete

Dean of the Faculty of Science

THREE INITIATIVES OF THE FACULTY OF SCIENCE – the Centre for Invasion Biology (CIB), the Centre for Human Performance Sciences and the Centre for Complexity Studies – are among the key projects of the Overarching Strategic Plan (OSP). Measured by the praise bestowed this year on staff members who are involved in these projects, the choice of these centres as OSP projects has been spot on in order to achieve the University's strategic objectives and to ensure that the University gains increasing international acknowledgement as an academic institution of excellence.

In line with this, the work done by the director of the CIB, Prof Steven Chown, on the influence of invasive species, climate change and human interaction in the Antarctic region was honoured with the Martha T Muse Prize for Science and Policy in Antarctica. He is the first recipient of this international tribute to the value of about R750 000 from the Tinker Foundation. Furthermore, this professor in Botany and Zoology was also awarded the Gold Medal of the Zoological Society of Southern Africa.

Prof Dave Richardson, the Deputy Director: Scientific Strategy of the CIB, was a category winner in the National Science and Technology Forum (NSTF) Awards. Biochemist Prof Jannie Hofmeyr, a driving force behind the Centre for Complexity Studies, received the Havenga Prize for Biological Sciences of the *Suid-Afrikaanse Akademie vir Wetenskap en Kuns*.

However, it was not only the staff attached to our OSP centres who received recognition, but also:

- *Prof Terry Robinson (Botany and Zoology) – A2 rating by the National Research Foundation as an internationally acclaimed researcher.*
- *Dr Christine Steenkamp (Physics) – Silver Medal of the South African Institute of Physics.*
- *Dr Delia Haynes (Chemistry and Polymer Science) – Fulbright Scholarship for Postdoctoral Study.*
- *Dr André de Villiers (Chemistry and Polymer Science) – Csaba Horvath Memorial Award during the 34th International Symposium on High Performance Liquid Phase Separation and Related Techniques (HPLC 2009).*
- *Prof Florian Breuer (Mathematical Sciences) – Von Humbolt award.*

The Physiology Society of Southern Africa awarded its Wyndham Prize to a doctoral student in physiological sciences

at Stellenbosch University for the second year in succession. Uthra Rajamani was the recipient. Furthermore, the South African Society for Microbiology singled out Dr Michele de Kwaadsteniet and Wendy Stone as the country's best doctoral student and honours student respectively in microbiology.

The leadership and research of SU's academics concerned with water affairs were acknowledged in 2009 with the appointment of the University as coordinator of the NEPAD Water Centres of Excellence Initiative. This initiative, funded by the European Commission, will strengthen water research and tertiary training in Southern Africa. The Faculty endeavours to contribute to society through its teaching – at undergraduate and postgraduate level – and to ensure student success. Developments such as the continuous expansion of computer support services, and new courses and modules contribute to these objectives. Through the addition of modules such as Computer Literacy and Scientific Communication Skills the academic knowledge of our students is supported in each discipline with practical skills that help to prepare them for the labour market.

Funding received from the OSP has ensured that we could deepen our already existing, extensive initiatives relating to parallel medium instruction. Senate approved the higher admission requirements for study in our Faculty from 2010, so that our students will have a fair chance of success and are strong enough academically to graduate.

Improved examination results in 2009 show that our Faculty is on the right path with initiatives to raise students' success rate. There is genuine involvement in our first-year students, for example, through the appointment of dedicated lecturers and an extensive tutor scheme.

Our Alternative Access Model offers an extra support year in the study career of new Maties who have the ability, but do not meet the necessary admission requirements to study in our Faculty. Support for our postgraduate students includes workshops on research development and safety aspects.

In contrast to our ever-growing undergraduate student corps, our postgraduate numbers have remained constant over the past four years. Funding for and the availability of essential facilities such as larger lecture halls and sufficient laboratory space present considerable hindrances to further expand teaching and research in our Faculty.