

FACULTY OF AGRISCIENCES

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During 2010, the Faculty of Agrisciences continued to improve its repositioning within the context of higher education. The staff and student profile diversified further; at the same time the objective of performance and quality was kept clearly in sight. Student numbers continued to grow in both the undergraduate and postgraduate disciplines, and the success rate of undergraduate students and the percentage of postgraduate students remained high. The Faculty is confident that student growth can be maintained, and an active recruitment programme has been implemented to ensure sustained growth. Staff members in the Faculty were encouraged to take part in personal and career development programmes to improve productivity and add value to their departments and the Faculty.

Agrisciences is committed to the University's HOPE Project and took part actively when on 14 April 2010 this was internally launched as the Journey of Hope. The following four themes in which it will play an active role were identified: eradicating poverty and related conditions; promoting human dignity and health; promoting peace and security; and promoting a sustainable environment and a competitive industry. As part of the University's HOPE Project and in response to calls from government, The Standard Bank Centre for Agribusiness Leadership and Mentorship Development was officially launched on 28 April 2010. Prof Johan van Rooyen was appointed Director and has made significant progress in establishing and running the Centre. The Centre conducted three workshops with the citrus, deciduous fruit and agribusiness sectors, and completed a workshop with the Limpopo Agriculture Business Academy that will provide approximately 300 suitable individuals for the mentorship programme. The short course programme was piloted with Grain SA in Bloemfontein and refined to improve the course offering. Two leadership sessions were conducted to discuss land reform, a burning issue to the agricultural sector in South Africa. The Faculty also has 29 other projects that link up directly with the objectives of the HOPE Project.

The construction project at the JH Neethling Building to improve the research facilities for Viticulture and Oenology was completed and the construction of a new building at the Department of Food Sciences started. Both these building upgrades will increase the research output and teaching ability within the Faculty and ensure sustainable student growth within these specific disciplines. Service modules were created to ensure that students are better integrated into the Faculty from their first year, and this will increase the

opportunities for transdisciplinary teaching and research in the Faculty. Realignment with the Higher Education Qualifications Framework objectives is expected further to increase student numbers, which in turn will help ensure our financial sustainability.

The Faculty's third-stream funding continued to grow, resulting in increased research for and delivery to the agricultural sector as a whole. Research publications and conference attendance by members of the Faculty remained satisfactory, and new mechanisms to improve the publication rate were identified.

The research objectives and operations of the University's experimental farms were reassessed in preparation for a drive towards sustainable agricultural practices. Farming practices are to adhere to principles of economic and environmental sustainability, and the research farms are to be made available to departments in other faculties for realising their research objectives. Alternative energy and ecologically sustainable practices are receiving progressively more attention with a view to larger contributions in this area in future. Across the board, the Faculty is involving students in related practices so that they will be better equipped to help restore the planet to sustainability.

Staff and students continue to excel in various fields. These honours enhance the reputation of the Faculty and the University as centres of excellence for leadership and research development:

- *Prof ASM Karaan, Dean, was appointed to the National Planning Commission.*
- *Prof Monique Zaahl of the Department of Genetics was awarded the order of Mapungubwe by the President for her research on iron-related diseases.*
- *Mr Jan Greyling, a student in the Department of Agricultural Economics, was elected Chair of the Students' Representative Council.*
- *Ms Jeanne de Waal, a PhD student in the Department of Conservation Ecology and Entomology, received the Green Talents international award for sustainable agriculture.*

The Faculty of Agrisciences remains committed to the objectives of Stellenbosch University and the agricultural sector and constantly seeks to improve its teaching, research and community interaction.

