

RHODES UNIVERSITY
Where leaders learn

Rhodos

Special Staff Edition

March 2011

Practice as Research

Ms Juanita Finestone-Praeg's office is both business space and sanctuary, with desk and computer offset by theatrical props and mementos. The Senior Lecturer in the Drama Department and Acting Artistic Director of the renowned First Physical Theatre Company is this year's recipient of the Distinguished Teaching Award.

But the award required hard work, she says. "It's quite a process. Once nominated, you have to accept and then compile a teaching portfolio, which spans the entire *oeuvre* of your work." Initially she wondered if her schedule would allow this but is pleased it all came together.

"I learnt so much putting together that portfolio, by having to articulate and reflect on exactly what it is that I do." *Body of Questions- Teaching as Research or Towards a Democratised Performance*, was submitted. She was called for a panel interview for which, she says, she was very nervous, but which ended up as a "rich, fruitful" discussion.

Historically, she believes there is a sense that theatre has an awkward place in the academy. The perception that it is all practical work persists - something Ms Finestone-Praeg absolutely refutes. She says there is a "vibrant and rigorous scholarship and discourse" associated with theatre studies. She refers to it as "Practice-as-Research".

Physical theatre which, as a choreographer and theatre-maker is her *métier*, is an embodied discourse, both experiential and experimental. The dynamics one has with one's students, she says, are very different to those found in the Sciences. The work is exciting, challenging and provocative. It encourages curiosity and enables people to push the boundaries. The award, then, has been for her a validation of the body of work she has produced over 20 years, in collaboration with the Drama Department, with the renowned Prof Gary Gordon, and particularly in her association with the First Physical Theatre Company.

A Rhodes University alumni herself, she initially studied industrial sociology, with the intention of becoming a trade unionist. While studying drama in her final year, she realised that more could be achieved in a smaller, more intimate space. She calls it the "power of the small". Change really happens at this micro-level, she believes, and gets carried out into the wider world. "There are not many places in our society where there is that kind of agency left," she says. "The real world can be quite brutal, and this provides a safe space; I feel very privileged to be able to work in that way with students and help them to find their own voices, which they will take forward into their futures."

Her students consider themselves equally privileged for having worked with her. Alan Parker, current Company Manager of the First Physical Theatre Company, credits Ms Finestone-Praeg for significantly altering the course of his life. "I arrived at Rhodes ten years ago not intending to pursue a full-time career in the performing arts. I now find myself working as a full-time performer, choreographer and teacher and this is due in a large part to the inspiring, dedicated and invigorating learning experiences I had with Juanita Finestone-Praeg." He says her students leave Rhodes University with a "broad knowledge basis that is both embodied and experiential, paired with a willingness and a drive to push artistic boundaries and strive for artistic innovation."

Danielle Bowler agrees. "Juanita is sensitive to her students, displaying a keen and genuine interest in each one, on both an academic and personal level. She is always willing to give of her time, with a level of mutual respect and reciprocity that is not common among lecturers. She possesses a fierce intelligence and a dynamic presence, and has consequently challenged and pushed me beyond what I perceived to be my limits - and she has had a similar effect on many who come into contact with her."



"Very often the work that you are creating is also researching an aspect of theatrical production and raising theatrical questions. Practice-as-Research has become a new way of validating creative research." There is much exploration and research around this concept and Ms Finestone-Praeg is very involved in it.



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Rhodes awards recognise staff achievement

Staff members who sacrificed time with their families and put in countless hours of studying, attending lectures and doing research will be looking forward to the 2011 awards evening in mid-April when extraordinary efforts will be recognised.

According to the university's Human Resources Director, Ms Sarah Fischer, it is important to recognise and reward efforts of staff members who worked "extremely hard" to obtain a qualification while still holding down a job. This is why the University deems it important to celebrate these remarkable achievements of its staff, she added.

As the place "where leaders learn", Rhodes University promotes and encourages staff development at all levels. The University invests in the education of its staff by means of fee remissions for those studying at Rhodes; the Continuing Education Fund for staff members who choose to study at other institutions; and support for staff who want to complete a Matric or other short courses.

The University also runs two Adult Basic Education and Training (ABET) programmes, *Siyaphambili* and *Masikhule*, for staff with no formal qualifications who want to complete their

basic education from Grade one to Grade nine.

The Thomas Alty (Alty) and Vice-Chancellor's (VC's) awards contribute towards fostering and maintaining a relationship of goodwill between the University and staff, said Ms Fischer.

Annually the prestigious and highly acclaimed awards honour staff members who have completed their studies during that year. The main objective of these awards is to encourage and motivate staff to complete qualifications and also to develop their level of education further.

Alty Awards are specifically awarded to staff members who have completed a Masters or PhD degree, whereas a VC's award recognises staff members who have completed a Bachelors or Honours degree or a recognised professional qualification, Matric or NQF level 1 (grade 9) qualification.

Ms Fischer said staff spouses or partners are invited to the ceremony "as they are often the key to the success of the individual". The HOD or manager also plays a key role in facilitating the staff member's involvement in the qualification and the application for the award, she added.

The 2011 awards evening will be held on Wednesday, 13th April.

Gambiza honoured by award

Dr James Gambiza of the Department of Environmental Science turns on his high wattage grin when talking about winning the 2011 Distinguished Senior Teaching Award.

The popular scientist says he is deeply honoured. "To be recognised this way by your colleagues, after 15 years of teaching, is something special," he says.

Dr Gambiza has been at Rhodes University since October 2003. Before that he was a lecturer at the University of Zimbabwe's Department of Biological Sciences. He is, by training, an ecologist, and wrote and developed an Honours course on Ecological Modelling which he is still teaching. The course has a good take-up rate, with between three and five students taking it each year. At undergraduate level he teaches Land Degradation, Ecological Systems, Biodiversity and Ecological Monitoring. He also supervises a number of Masters and PhD students.

Teaching, he believes, is active learning, and students participation is a vital part in the process. His "secret horror" is the thought of standing up in front of a class of blank and unresponsive faces, and being expected to impart a one-way stream of facts. Instead he works with his students to "construct knowledge".

Another essential component of both Dr Gambiza's teaching and the ethos of the Department of Environmental Science is that of problem-based

learning. This involves looking at real-world problems and formulating strategies to tackle them effectively in the field. At Third Year level the Department carries out a year-long department wide practical, with an overarching theme. Students are divided into groups, each with a facilitator, and choose a particular issue. This year the project is focused on the state of the environment within the Grahamstown area and the hope is that policy makers within the Makana Municipality will take up the data produced and utilise it in their policy-making decisions.

Dr Gambiza is supervising two groups - one of which is looking at domestic energy use and the other at solid waste disposal. In the first group, data is being collected from high and low density suburbs in Grahamstown, including the University. The information will be analysed and environmental impact assessed. Solid waste disposal is a global challenge: do you recycle it, bury it or burn it? What are the environmental implications of these methods and how much information do people have about recycling?

This year-long project is a significant part of the degree requirement for third year students, and all members of the department, both students and lecturers, are involved. Prof Charlie Shackleton is looking at urban green space and biodiversity issues, Dr Sheona Shackleton is investigating challenges faced by environmental organisations in

Grahamstown, and Prof Fred Ellery is studying water-related issues and sewage disposal. Collectively, he says, the department is carrying out a complete environmental survey.

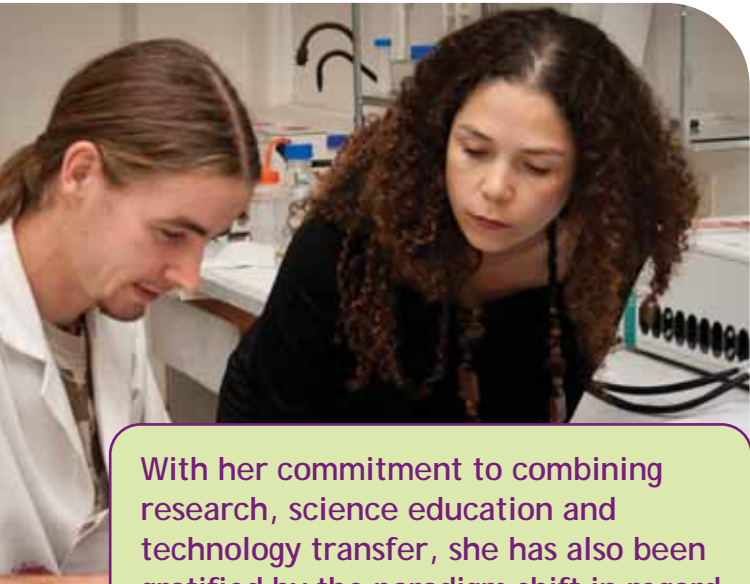
He says the process of preparing his teaching portfolio and going through panel interviews and monitored lectures was both useful and enjoyable. When the call came confirming he had won the award, he was "struck speechless" for one of the very few times in his life, before punching the air and leaping for joy.



Dr Gambiza says when he looked at the "illustrious" past recipients of the Distinguished Senior Teaching Award he felt "humbled".

Limson “immensely gratified” by award

Associate Professor in the School of Biotechnology, Janice Limson, has been awarded the Vice-Chancellor's Distinguished Research Award for 2010.



With her commitment to combining research, science education and technology transfer, she has also been gratified by the paradigm shift in regard to community engagement which has been evident at Rhodes in recent years.

Appointed Head of Biotechnology in 2009, she was promoted to Associate Professor in 2010 and has recently taken over from Professor Greg Blatch as Chair of the School of Biotechnology. After completing her PhD in Chemistry from Rhodes University, she travelled to the United States of America on an National Research Foundation (NRF) Postdoctoral Fellowship. Shortly after her return to South Africa, and to Rhodes, she was awarded a prestigious Mellon Foundation Lectureship.

Prof Limson credits Professor Tebello Nyokong, her

former PhD supervisor, and the late Dr Winston Leukes with easing her transition into the “completely new” discipline of Biotechnology, which she describes as a hugely satisfying field with extensive social impact. “Students entering my research group come from various fields including chemistry, biochemistry, microbiology and physics. This melting pot of interests and experiences, coupled with a lack of fear in learning and applying new technologies meant that we were able to rapidly and comfortably shift into a rich area in Biotechnology,” she says.

Enter the newly coined BioSEns: Sensors, Energy and Nanomaterials Research Group. Sensors are sensitive instruments designed to measure targets such as pesticides or markers of human disease. Biofuel cells are electrochemical devices, generating electrical energy from organic substrates, catalysed by enzymes and even bacteria. Both research areas have been given a phenomenal boost by the formation of the DST/Mintek-sponsored Nanotechnology Innovation Centre here at Rhodes - which gives researchers access to state-of-the-art technology and allows them to view the nanomaterials and their interactions with the electrodes on a nanoscale.

BioSEns collaborates with Prof Tebello Nyokong in Chemistry and with Mr Richard Laubscher and Prof Keith Cowan at EBRU (Institute for Environmental Biotechnology). Collaborations further afield include researchers at the CSIR and the University of KwaZulu Natal, and British, French and American research groups.

BioSEns is not merely an academic think-tank. Innovation and product development form a core driver for their research, says Prof Limson. She has engaged with national strategy workshops in technology transfer and innovation over the past few years, creating valuable connections with university-based

technology transfer offices internationally. Her research is focused towards developing, patenting and working with industry partners, ultimately manufacturing diagnostic sensors. At the present time she sits on three biotechnology company boards in an advisory capacity - LifeAssay, Elixidyne and Makana Meadery.

In addition, on her return in 2001, she created the Science in Africa Magazine. Now in its tenth year, the magazine has won several awards including the Highway Africa Award for Innovative use of New Media in Journalism, and was judged one of the top 21 science e-zines on the web by the World Summit Award in 2003. In 2002 Prof Limson received national recognition for this work with a National Science and Technology Forum Award for “Outstanding contribution to science, engineering and technology”. The magazine continues to be a free resource showcasing science from South Africa and beyond, with subscribers in over 100 countries worldwide.

Prof Limson says she is “immensely gratified” by the Distinguished Research Award. “I firmly believe that it should really be going to my students for their dedication and inspiration.” She says there is “no better university that I would like to work at” in South Africa.

“From a purely research basis Rhodes University has the longest standing legacy of biotechnology research in the country.”

Prof Limson has been an MEC appointed trustee of the Albany Museum for the past seven years and serves on the Scifest Africa Advisory Board and on the Grahamstown Foundation Council. She was also named as one of the Mail and Guardian's Top 200 Young South Africans in 2009 and in 2010. In addition, she has, in her time, contributed to the slightly eccentric nature of Grahamstown by hand-rearing a caracal kitten who became a minor celebrity in Grahamstown.

Award “affirms” research efforts

The Distinguished Senior Research Award is a “definite affirmation” of his research efforts, says the 2010 recipient Prof Alan Hodgson.

The award, as the name suggests, is given in recognition of an extensive research career, carried out over a number of years. Prof Hodgson, of the Department of Zoology and Entomology, definitely qualifies.

Prof Hodgson's main interests lie in studies on functional morphology of marine invertebrates, although he has, he says, worked on species living in freshwater as well as deserts. He has also undertaken work on invertebrate muscle structure and sensory receptors.

His main area of research over the years has, however, been into the formation and structure of invertebrate gametes and the early events of fertilization (sperm/egg interactions). The results he has achieved from studies on gamete structure have not only contributed to an understanding of the biology of fertilization of some species, but have been used to investigate evolutionary relationships of invertebrate groups. “Sperm,” he says, “are undoubtedly the most morphologically variable and often weird cells in the animal kingdom.”

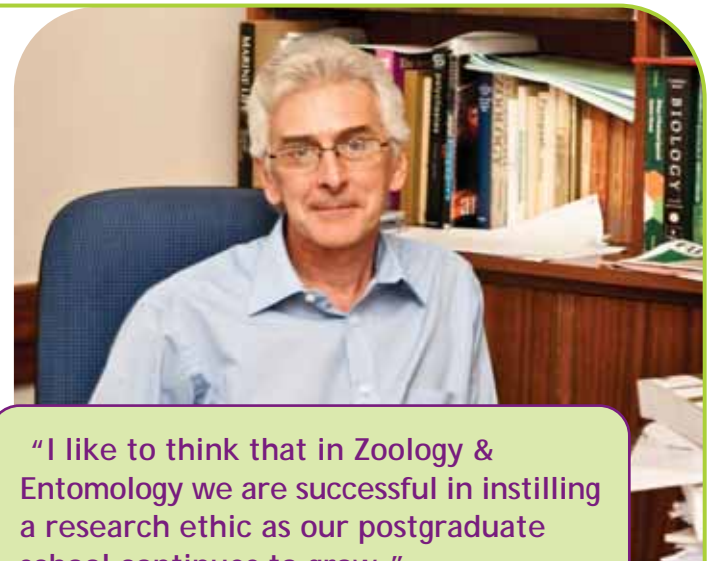
In some species males produce both fertilizing and non-fertilizing sperm called parasperm. The role of the non-fertilizing sperm in the reproductive biology

of many species is not known. Prof Hodgson intends to continue focusing his studies on gamete structure and function - especially non-fertilizing sperm - and hopes in the future to look at how ocean acidification may affect gamete viability in species that release gametes into the ocean for fertilization to occur.

While the type of research he has carried out to date does not lend itself to work by large teams, he does not, he explains, work alone. Rather he has, he says, been very fortunate over the years to have collaborated and published with leading international researchers, from Australia, Canada, Hong Kong, Israel, UK and USA as well as South Africa.

Originally from the United Kingdom, Prof Hodgson obtained an Honours degree in Marine Biology from the University of Liverpool, spending what he describes as an inspiring year at their marine biology station on the Isle of Man. A series of lectures on biomechanics of invertebrates sparked his interest in the subject, and he applied for a PhD scholarship to the University of Manchester.

Three years later, with his PhD completed, he took up an offer of a Junior Lectureship in the Zoology Department at UCT. His interest in gamete structure, however, began shortly after he arrived at Rhodes. “I felt that it was an area of study in which much could be done, yet there was a great deal of international interest. It was a good area to develop international collaborations.”



“I like to think that in Zoology & Entomology we are successful in instilling a research ethic as our postgraduate school continues to grow.”

Will the award open doors for him career-wise? He responds, dryly, that, his next career move might be retirement in several years time.

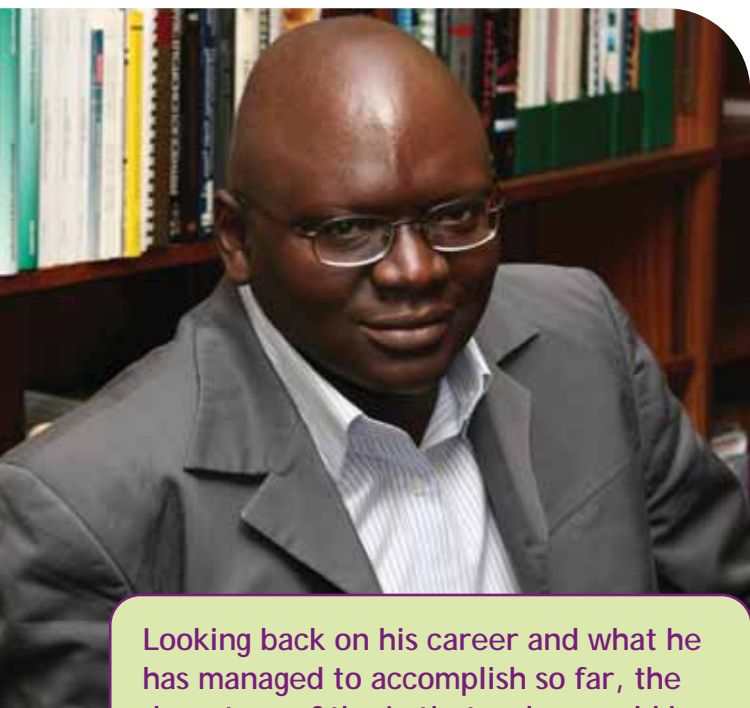
Students in the Zoology and Entomology Department are exposed to research as early as possible, through ‘hands-on’ lab classes, field trips and, at third year level, individual projects. While this becomes more difficult as undergraduate classes grow in size, he believes it is still successful.

He pays tribute to the Department and says he considers himself fortunate to work in an environment in which people have always worked extremely hard and where they are supportive of one another. “You get carried along by the enthusiasm of others,” he says. “Research is what makes academia exciting and rewarding.”

“I came to Physics somewhat unintentionally”

Did Professor Makaiko Chithambo choose Physics or did it choose him? “I came to Physics somewhat unintentionally,” he says. This may be true, but Prof Chithambo is now the new Head of the Department of Physics and Electronics at Rhodes University.

Initially, at Secondary School, he was more interested in studying Latin. “I loved Latin so much that even when our teacher left in the middle of the term I, together with other students, decided we would teach ourselves the subject and sit the Government examinations the following year.” Their Headmaster had talked them out of this plan and he was forced to change his career plans.



Looking back on his career and what he has managed to accomplish so far, the departure of the Latin teacher could be described as a blessing in disguise for Prof Chithambo and the Physics community. After switching to Physics at Secondary School, he never looked back.

The subject he found most appealing was Physical Science. He found the application of the laws of Physics using Mathematics as a tool particularly attractive. “It was then that I decided this was what I wanted to do for a living,” said Prof Chithambo.

Being the recipient of the Vice-Chancellor’s Research Award in 2006 is one of the highlights of his career, he says. It was awarded to him for his research and as well as his contribution to publishing papers in scientific journals. He finds it very gratifying to publish key papers in his research field, he adds.

In 2010 a new challenge awaited him when he was asked by his colleagues to lead the Department. He felt honoured to have been given the opportunity, and grabbed the challenge with both hands. Recent retirements and other changes meant the Department went through a transition in outlook and ethos. “The circumstances have offered us an opportunity to build on the strength of tradition and forge a new identity for the Physics Department. It’s challenging but worthwhile to be Head at a time like this,” he added.

In December 2010, Prof Chithambo organised a Departmental review meeting to discuss vision and mission and strategise on how to achieve Departmental objectives.

“We needed to formulate vision and mission statements because we are in a state of flux. We needed to carry out introspection on where we are in our teaching and research activities and where we ideally need to be. I

see the vision as a guide for the Head of Department and as such it enables me to better to understand the implications of our long and short term plans. I also felt that our mission should be consistent with and reflect current Departmental strengths,” he explained.

The Departmental vision statement was revised to reflect this. He said the vision statement previously placed emphasis on applied physics, and considered teaching theoretical physics to be inconsistent with its objectives. “The current circumstances required the Department to change tack and cover the whole spectrum of applied and theoretical physics, something which was not reflected in the old vision statement,” he added.

The Departmental revised vision statement reads: *We aspire to be a research-intensive Department that also places emphasis on effective teaching. We aim to improve and modernise our teaching*

methods, to reduce the drop-out rates at first year, to increase the number of postgraduate students resident at Rhodes University, and to increase our publications and research outputs.

The Department intends on increasing its postgraduate students resident at Rhodes by putting more effort into attracting students from outside the University’ into postgraduate programmes. It also intends on addressing the reasons for attrition, particularly at first and third year level. “We will encourage and assist members of staff who are involved in research to succeed. The Departmental administration will also take into account and be sensitive to the needs of researchers when setting policies that are likely to affect every member of staff,” said Prof Chithambo.

Although serendipity played a role in Prof Chithambo’s interest in Physics, the Department looks set to reach new heights under his leadership.

Strategic Plan maps out future for Chemistry Department

One of Rhodes University’s oldest departments is mapping a new way forward with a vital strategic plan.

Professor Nelson Torto, who took the reins as Head of Department in 2010, believes a strategic plan is imperative to systematically move the department forward.

“I felt that there was a need to have a platform which joins everyone together so that when we are addressing aspects that make us the excellent department that we are, we can do them with common beliefs and common values.”

The three aspects he says are important to the department are people (students, staff, visitors, collaborators, sponsors), focused quality (of programs, research, teaching, graduates, community engagement) and the need to continuously improve in all pursuits.

The Chemistry Department is one of the oldest at Rhodes University and has a history of quality, excellence and top-notch academic staff. Established in 1904, the first Head of Department was Dr George Cory, later knighted for his contribution to South African historical research and after whom the Cory Library is named.

Dr J.L.B Smith, who achieved distinction in his association with the discovery of the coelacanth, taught in the department for over twenty years. The department had the honour of awarding Rhodes University’s first MSc degree in 1924, the first PhD degree, in 1938, and the first DSc degree, in 1993.

More recently, through internationally acclaimed scientist Professor Tebello Nyokong, the Chemistry Department became one of the first in the country to host a Research Chair under the auspices of the South African Research Chair Initiative (SARChI). It also hosts a national research facility, the DST/MINTEK Nanotechnology Innovation Centre (NIC) for Sensors. Prof Nyokong has won several prestigious awards for her groundbreaking work in harnessing light for cancer therapy.

To this end, after a day of deliberations by both academic and support staff, a set of four strategic goals was drawn up. The strategic goals for 2011 – 2016 can be summarised as follows:

Motivation for Structured Growth

This goal looks at factors such as space and infrastructure, staff development and professional as well as social responsibility.

Enhance the profile of the department

The achievement of this goal will result from effective communication with stakeholders through internal and external publicity, the website, community engagement, science festivals, seminars and conferences.

Enhance teaching and learning activities

The following activities have been earmarked as aiding the achievement of this goal: the overhauling of curricula at all levels; the enhancement of teaching capacity and career counselling.

Improved research capacity and training

The department is looking to increase Honours enrolment, formalise internship programmes for third years, introduce defence of the PhD thesis, upgrade teaching equipment, apply for all available funding, mentor young researchers and increase bilateral research with other universities in the drive to achieve this goal.

The department has produced a special brochure that outlines these goals. In addition it looks at the resources and facilities available to students and staff and describes the Department’s community engagement initiatives.



Prof Torto believes a strategic plan was the best way to continue this pattern of excellence for which the department has become renowned. A strategic plan allows staff to evaluate the present situation and realistically map the way forward.

Making the numbers add up

Prof Mellony Graven surrounds herself with colour in her office and is someone who has a great love for the arts and creativity. Not perhaps your stereotypical mathematician or the person you would expect to find occupying the Numeracy Chair at Rhodes University.



“Teachers moved from a position of ‘If I don’t know something I have to hide it’ to realising that ‘as a professional, I am a lifelong learner’.” Many of them went on to further their studies and take on leader educator roles.

But there can be no doubt about her academic and research credentials - she is widely published and cited in national and international accredited journals. These credentials and her passion for making a difference are the reason she and Rhodes University won the bid to host this Chair as part of the South African Numeracy and Literacy Chair Initiative. They

competed successfully against other much larger South African universities. The University of the Witwatersrand is the only other university that will be hosting a Chair in numeracy education at primary school level.

Having obtained a BSc(Ed) and an Honours degree in Maths Education at Wits, Prof Graven taught for a year at St Barnabas College in Johannesburg. She then took up the Cambridge Livingstone Trust Scholarship for an MPhil degree focussing on Maths Education at Cambridge University. After a further year of teaching back in South Africa, she returned to Wits University as a research and development officer in RADMASTE - an NGO attached to Wits. She then enrolled for a PhD in Mathematics Education under the supervision of Prof Jill Adler. Prof Graven attributes much of her success as a maths educator and researcher to Prof Adler and Prof Paul Laridon, who she says gave her a strong sense of professional identity and the role that she could play in maths education in this country.

While fully aware of the rigours and demands of academia, Prof Graven is equally conscious of the need to improve numeracy education in our schools at the basic level, and is very excited about the stipulation that 50% of the work of this Chair must focus on development. This means that her team will be engaging with in-service teachers and learners in a range of schools in the broader Grahamstown area, in order to co-create knowledge and sustainable solutions for the teaching of numeracy. Her experience of working with teachers in Soweto and Eldorado Park showed her what was possible if you worked alongside teachers over an extended period of time.

“Teacher development ignited as opposed to teacher development delivered” is therefore a key philosophical underpinning of Prof Graven’s vision for the work of this Chair. She believes that teachers have a lot to offer in terms of experience on the ground, coping strategies and research opportunities, and that it is

essential to collaborate with teachers as equal partners in meeting the Chair’s aims of searching for sustainable solutions to the challenges of numeracy education.

“We will not start from a point of deficit. Teachers have the critical advantage of classroom experience - they are key partners.” It is for this reason that she has called the teacher component of the chair the Numeracy Inquiry Community of Leader Educators. She says that although teachers have been heavily criticised, and the educational landscape is one fraught with challenges, most teachers care deeply about their pupils and there is an openness and willingness for things to be different. “Within crisis there is opportunity and it is this opportunity that needs to be our focus,” she believes.

Prof Graven has assembled a project team that will work closely with other relevant actors such as Prof Marc Schafer’s Chair in Senior Phase Maths Education, RUMEP and the Education Department. She is also hoping that the Chair will attract postgraduate students into this area and grow their research team. Other planned initiatives include developing the resource centre as a hub for teachers, funding teachers to attend conferences and present papers, special events for learners (such as math relays and math bonanzas) and mathematical road shows for schools in neighbouring areas.

With a demanding career and a young family -she is married to Prof Harry Dugmore of the Journalism Department and has two young daughters, Lila and Ruby - there isn’t much leisure time. But she enjoys doing creative projects and dancing with her children. Above all she loves reading to them.

As far as Grahamstown is concerned, she says they love it here. “We are busier than we ever were in Johannesburg. It’s impossible not to be busy, passionate and involved in a town that centres around education as its core business.”

Many Disciplines make light work in water policy implementation

Professor Tally Palmer’s is departing on a month long trip to the United States and South America but makes time to speak about her plans for the Institute of Water Research (IWR), and her recent appointment as Director of the Unilever Centre for Environmental Water Quality (UCEWQ).

One of the main goals of the IWR is to involve itself with water resource management in South Africa, says Prof Palmer. The intention is that the work done by researchers in the Institute will be taken up and used by a range of water resource managers, users and policy-makers - particularly within the Department of Water Affairs.

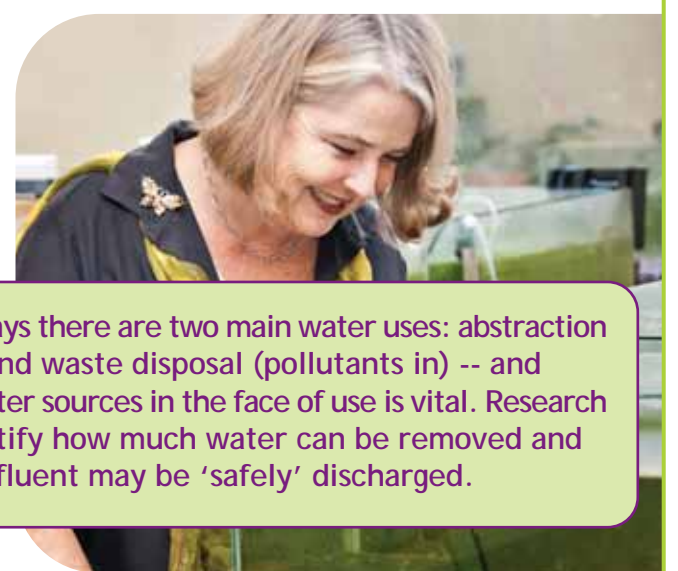
In the late 1990’s the idea behind the founding of the Institute was to integrate two research units, focused on hydrology and ecology. A water quality focus was added later when the Institute received funding from Unilever and the partnership between industry and research was developed.

IWR hydrologists specialise in water quantity, or flow modelling, and the Centre’s researchers focus on issues related to water quality. The two are intimately linked as flow provides for dilution of wastes.

The Centre generates information on the health of rivers, wetlands, and estuaries based on three kinds of information - the kinds of organisms present, the chemistry of the water, and the responses of organisms to specific chemical concentrations. However, Prof Palmer warns, there can be hitches in the translation of knowledge to decision-making and management, as we have limited water expertise in South Africa.

In 2005 Prof Palmer moved to Australia to take on the role of Professor of Water Resources and Director of the Institute for Water and Environmental Resources Management at the University of Technology in Sydney. The experience she gained there clarified a new way of thinking and working for her. With a team consisting of 25 engineers and scientists, and in collaboration with the Institute for Sustainable Futures (engineers, economists and social scientists), she led efforts to conduct research across discipline boundaries.

At the time Prof Palmer became deeply interested in trans-disciplinary research - which includes wide-ranging discipline perspectives and includes the role of values in decision-making. She is now focused on the ways that trans-disciplinary approaches can assist in finding ways to breach barriers to policy implementation. This is currently critical in South Africa - where the visionary water policy and law



Prof Palmer says there are two main water uses: abstraction (water out) and waste disposal (pollutants in) -- and protecting water sources in the face of use is vital. Research helps to identify how much water can be removed and how much effluent may be ‘safely’ discharged.

has proved difficult to implement, she says.

She returned to South Africa in 2009 as Executive Director of Applied Research and Innovation for the National Research Foundation (NRF). During her time there she worked to establish a programme called the Akili Complexity and Integration Initiative, drawing in researchers across an enormous assortment of disciplines who were interested in a range of concepts, including social learning, trans-disciplinarity, resilience, complexity and social-ecological systems.

The NRF’s loss is Rhodes University’s gain.

“Motivated by dark energy”

Was it gravity that pulled Dr Julien Larena to Rhodes? Probably not, but the Senior Lecturer in the Department of Mathematics (Pure & Applied), has settled in and seems at home in his new environment.

With Masters degrees in both theoretical physics and applied mathematics, and research interests in theoretical cosmology and general relativity, the small office in the Maths Department seems to expand into a cosmic void of vast proportions, with vaguely glimpsed clusters of galaxies many light years away.

Dr Larena joined Rhodes in January 2011 from the University of Cape Town, where he spent three years doing postdoctoral research. His PhD, completed in Paris in 2007.



Dr Larena's research looks at applying the theory of gravity to very large scales, and in that way attempting to describe the dynamics of our universe, and the way structures (such as galaxies and clusters of galaxies) form within it. Clusters are mostly found at the nodes of filaments, distributed in big two dimensional sheets. Cosmologists think that these have their roots in the very early universe, so, as he explains, not only do they need to study these

very large scales but also their temporal evolution.

A further challenge to the standard model of cosmology arose fairly recently when observers of supernovas noticed that they appeared fainter than expected. It has been hypothesised that the theory of gravity is not valid on very large scales, accounting for the observed effect. As the properties of regular matter do not explain this phenomenon, one theory postulates a new type of matter, known as dark energy. Dark energy is exotic in that it does not shrink under the influence of its own gravity. On the contrary, it tends to 'anti-gravitate'. Dr Larena has pursued this area of interest since his PhD, and has worked on various projects concerned with it.

Another area he is currently pursuing is also motivated by dark energy. This model, termed Back Reaction, suggests that the geometry of the universe may be more complicated than initially thought. The standard model supposes that on very large scales the universe is similar at all points. However in the late-time universe, structures such as galaxies (of which there are many) are highly non-homogenous. The model suggests that these structures could back react on the dynamics of the large-scale and produce the non-trivial dynamics of the Universe observed.

No doubt, to the disappointment of some of his students, Dr Larena will not be lecturing on these research interests: instead the undergraduate courses he will be teaching are more concerned with basic Mathematics and he is currently preparing a semester's worth of complex analysis coursework. He is also offering an Honours course on broad cosmology, and will this year be supervising a student undertaking a joint Honours degree between the Mathematics and Physics Department. He is co-supervising both a Masters student and a PhD student with UCT academics.

As Dr Larena's wife is from East London, this move has, in many ways, felt like coming home. While they have found accommodation here to be low on choice and high in price, they agreed that the move to Grahamstown, with its safer and more relaxed lifestyle, has been a good one.

Both his PhD and postdoctoral research focus on the theory of gravity, and how it acts on very large scales. Most of the theory of gravity we use today, he says, is related to general relativity, which dates back to the early 20th century. There are challenges to this theory - the biggest one being whether it applies at the quantum level.

Grahamstown dream comes true for Medved

Dr Joey Medved has joined the Rhodes University Department of Physics and Electronics as a Senior Lecturer, fulfilling a desire, shared by his South African wife, to return to the rainbow nation.

He is no stranger to South Africa, having been a Visiting Graduate Student at UCT in 2000 and, later, a post-doctoral researcher at the University of the Witwatersrand. After his time in Gauteng he made the move to Korea, taking on a role as Visiting Assistant Professor at the University of Seoul.

After three years in this position, Dr Medved took a post as Assistant Professor at prestigious think-tank KIAS, also in Korea, and it was while he was working there that he came for an interview at Rhodes University.

He was "blown away" by the town. Having known nothing of Grahamstown or Rhodes University before, it was, he says, "just the nicest place I could imagine to live in". After almost four years in the giant metropolis of Seoul - which with its overcrowded streets, pollution and noise was the very antithesis of what he has always wanted - Grahamstown resuscitated his dream of living in a small college town. Both he and wife knew, he says, that if the interview with Rhodes was successful, they would be packing their bags for South Africa.

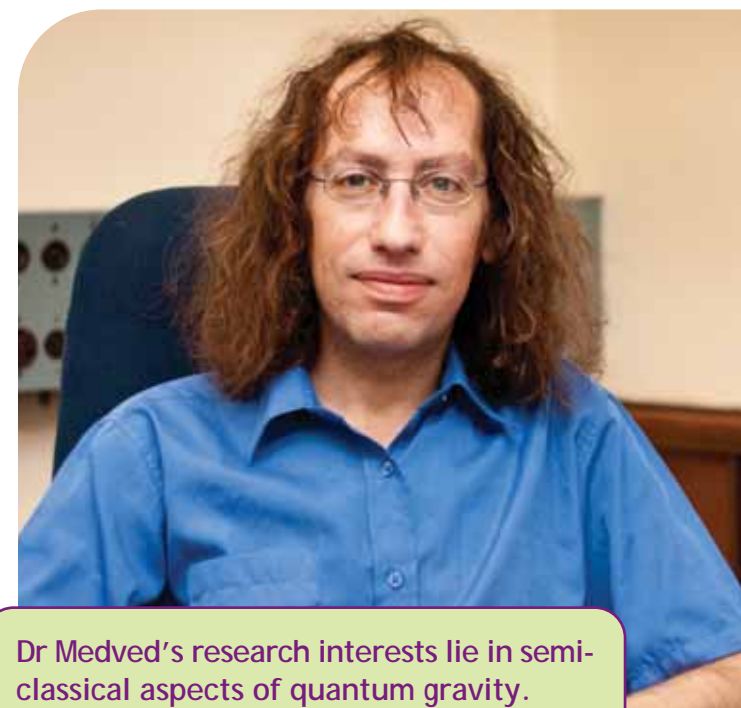
In 2011 he will be lecturing the third year electro-

magnetism course as well as Honours modules on quantum mechanics and general relativity. At some point in the year he will be lecturing to first-year students, and confides that he is finding that prospect a little daunting. After all, as he says, he works with quantum mechanics every day. Getting back to the very basics might throw him a little.

However, his approach to research is to attempt to learn as much as possible about the quantum level without committing to any one particular theory. The way to discover things using this approach, he explains, is to investigate black holes, which, almost uniquely, combine the principles of gravity, thermodynamics and quantum theory. Having these three under one umbrella, so to speak, allows a search for consistencies and inconsistencies, and these then allow physicists to argue what quantum gravity should be, or should look like.

Another approach is to use the Holographic Principle, which states that there are limits to the amount of information that can be stored in certain regions of space. Therefore, says Dr Medved, if you look at quantum field theory on its own, you might think that the amount of information that can be stored is proportional to volume, but that is not, in fact, true, due to the influence of gravity.

While most current theories, whether black hole physics or Holographic Principle, have a large basis in String Theory, Dr Medved does not, he says firmly, do string theory calculations. A lot of his research involves taking the basic ideas of string theory and seeing how



Dr Medved's research interests lie in semi-classical aspects of quantum gravity. Quantum gravity, he explains, is the field which is trying to draw quantum field theory and the theory of gravity into one, unified theory.

far they can be pushed without committing to actual string theory calculations. What, he asks, can we take from the process which may remain true even if string theory is at some stage disproved?

Perhaps he will find some answers to these complex questions during his time at Rhodes.

Bringing global experience to Rhodes

Few people could be more qualified to occupy the new position of Director of the International Office than Ms Orla Quinlan. Of Irish nationality, married to a South African, she has worked in a large number of different countries, including some of the world's most conflicted areas.



Ms Quinlan brings with her a great deal of management expertise as well as experience of working in the global village with many different cultures.

Recently based in Oxford, as Head of the Programme Funding Division for Oxfam, Ms Quinlan led an extensive network of staff, located across 70 countries in the developing world, to raise targets of GBP150 million for Oxfam's advocacy, development and humanitarian programmes.

The mother of two has co-ordinated Oxfam's funding relief effort for the tsunami-hit South East Asia region, helped set up emergency camps in Burundi for refugees fleeing war-torn Rwanda, worked with severely disadvantaged women in Bangladesh, and modelled innovative in-service training and education delivery within a schooling system in Cambodia.

Her first development job was as an Education Programme Manager in Bangladesh for Concern, an Irish NGO working with the world's poorest

people to transform their lives. She describes this as a formative experience; life there is very intense and the people inspiring in their resilience. But she says she was also profoundly affected by what she experienced in Burundi and post-tsunami Aceh, Indonesia.

Although often involved in emergency relief situations, it is gender, diversity and education that seem to be recurring themes in Ms Quinlan's work. Much of her early work was focused on developing and strengthening women's groups; she also had a spell with the Gender Equity Task Team in the mid-90 and later published educational materials in South Africa.

It was the London School of Economics (LSE) that brought Ms Quinlan and husband Prof Robbie van Niekerk together from different parts of the globe. She was awarded a grant by her organisation to do a Masters in Social Policy and Planning in Developing Countries, while he was awarded the LSE Students Union anti-apartheid scholarship to do a Masters in Sociology that same year. After this, they had to conduct their relationship on a long-distance basis for some time, until they could finally settle in Cape Town for a few years from 1994 to 1997.

Then it was off to Oxford for Prof van Niekerk to take up the opportunity to do his Doctorate at Oxford University, and Ms Quinlan began her career with Oxfam. Starting out as the Regional Funding Co-ordinator for Latin America, she later became the Africa Team Manager and then the Humanitarian Funding Manager before landing the job as the Head of an expanding Programme Funding Department.

Ms Quinlan has some very clear ideas of the role that the International Office at Rhodes could and should play. She feels it is important that the University prepare its students to work and provide leadership in the international arena, and equally, that students of all nationalities and cultures should feel at home on our campus. "It's about finding ways of bringing the world into Rhodes and projecting Rhodes University and what it can offer outwards," she says. Having negotiated situations of landmines, renegade soldiers and extreme patriarchy there seems little doubt that she will achieve this.

At present, she is getting to know Grahamstown, finding a home and settling her children into their respective primary schools.

But already she thinks that they will enjoy it here, and that the children will lead the way in meeting people and discovering what to do and where to go in their spare time as a family. It is this extraordinary capacity to "think globally, act locally" that will no doubt put the Rhodes International Office firmly on the map.

SA's linguistic diversity lures Feizollahi

The linguistic diversity of South Africa, with its eleven official languages, lured Californian Dr Zhaleh Feizollahi to Rhodes University where she now lectures in the English Language and Linguistics Department.

With a Californian mother and a Persian father, she fits perfectly in to the heterogeneous Californian culture, she says. South Africa's multi-racial and multi-ethnic mix is very similar to what she is used to in her home State, she says.



She is spending the first term getting up to speed, she says, crediting her "very understanding Head of Department" for ensuring that she has the time to get accustomed to both the style of teaching here and the many different South African accents.

Prior to her move across the Atlantic, Dr Feizollahi was living just South of San Francisco, in the world-renowned Silicon Valley. Meeting a South African in Norway, where she spent time studying the Norwegian language and collecting data for her dissertation, piqued her interest in South Africa and its linguistic diversity. Dr Feizollahi completed her PHD through Georgetown University in Washington DC.

Dr Feizollahi's particular area of expertise is Phonetics and Phonology, which is concerned with speech, sound and the rules of pronunciation. She is interested in dialects and the subtle differences between them. She also has an interest in anything related to computational linguistics, which she explored while doing contract work for Microsoft on spoken dialogue systems.

Her interest in language originated when her parents placed her in a Spanish immersion programme. Having had a Mexican babysitter prior to this, she grew up speaking Spanish as easily as English, and majored in Language Studies at the University of California, Santa Cruz. With a fondness for the technical nitty-gritty of language, she chose to specialise in Linguistics.

While at Georgetown she studied some Farsi (Persian), and applied for a scholarship to continue. The scholarship did not cover Persian, but did cover Turkish, and - as she has a grandfather who is Azeri Persian (which is a Turkic language), it seemed a good step to take. She studied Turkish for a few years and spent a summer in Turkey.

There are times when she feels very at home here in Grahamstown. "The department has been wonderful," she says, "and I feel like I've known everyone for years." She feels comfortable with the casual culture but has found the transition from a large urban area to a small town somewhat daunting. As a keen musician - she plays the violin - and is used to travelling long distances to play with various groups and at events. "You can play music every night of the week in the San Francisco area," she says, slightly wistfully.

However, there are some differences of which she is strongly approving. An example is the Rhodes University tradition of taking tea breaks, and using the time to discuss issues and items of interest with colleagues.

Moving from science to social development

The career path leading Ms Vera Adams to her new post as Director of the Centre for Social Development (CSD) has taken some interesting turns since its inception in the Natural Sciences.



Starting out with a BSc degree from the University of the Western Cape and Honours in Zoology, she went on to complete a Masters degree in Microbiology at the University of Stellenbosch. Ms Adams was then employed by the Medical Research Council as a scientist from 1997 to 2007, focusing on intestinal parasites in the disadvantaged communities of the Western Cape.

"I definitely moved out of my comfort zone," she says. However, she is enjoying being more "in touch" with communities and young children, and helping to contribute to early childhood development in a holistic way.

In 2008, Ms Adams took up the post as Director of SciFest Africa in Grahamstown at the same time that her husband, Mr Roger Adams, became the Head of Sports Administration at Rhodes. Moving into the sphere of non-profit organisations meant building up experience of fundraising and liaising with donors – an excellent preparation for her current position.

From her interaction with schools and school pupils, she says she began to develop an interest in the educational landscape, and wanted to get involved in addressing the lack of support and resources at schools. Together with this was the growing realisation that many educational interventions are started too late and need to be done during the early years of development. Nevertheless, Ms Adams admits that a fair degree of emotional turmoil preceded her decision to apply for the post at the CSD, as it would mean moving out of a field she knows.

She highlights four challenges faced by the CSD. She says there is a need to contribute to the objectives of the University, more specifically through research output which means creating a culture of research and writing amongst the CSD staff - who in the past have had a more practical/training focus.

Secondly, as a self-funding institute attached to Rhodes, there is always the challenge of fundraising and making the organisation financially sustainable. Thirdly, there is a "fast-growing demand" for training in Early Childhood Development (ECD) and

this creates pressure on the organisation's physical resources and staff capacity, as well as the dilemma of demand versus standards. Lastly, there is the challenge of keeping the work integrated and holistic, and needing to grow the Community Development component in order to allow for this.

Not able to completely divorce her first love, Ms Adams is chairing the Makana Science Alliance, a grouping made up of several interested parties who run Science programmes in schools. They are also currently working on a proposal for a possible Science Centre. She has also been able to keep up her interest in health issues through a collaboration with the Pharmacy Department that has seen Deworming Manuals distributed to a number of schools and preschools. She is hoping to introduce a stronger health component into the Community Development work of the CSD.

Ms Adams is currently completing her B.Ed(Hons) through the Rhodes Education Department and says they have been very flexible in accommodating her situation of not being an in-service teacher. Aside from spending time on her studies and assignments, she likes to relax with her family (husband Roger and children Neo and Emily, aged 9 and 6) and keep fit through regular exercise.

This year, the CSD celebrates 30 years of its existence and a proud track record in the ECD field. This is a great foundation to build on, but Ms Adams will also bring her unique set of skills to bear and inaugurate a new season in the life of the organisation.

One of country's "most influential" women heads up Rhodes Community Engagement

Di Hornby, 2010 winner of CEO Magazine's prestigious "Most Influential Woman in Business and Government" award in the Welfare and Social Development category is now at the helm of Community Engagement at Rhodes University.

Rhodes seems to hold an irresistible pull for Ms Hornby. Having started her studies in the Rhodes Education Department in 1980, she returned to work at the Centre for Social Development (CSD) during the 90s, later taking up the post as Director from 2000 to 2006. Now she is back.

The phases in-between were taken up with raising a family, running a farm school project in the Post Retief area, being a facilitator for the Primary Science Programme and running an Early Childhood Development (ECD) programme for the Network of Eastern Cape Training Agencies (NECTA). Somehow, she also squeezed in a Masters degree in Community Development from the University of Fort Hare.

Her decision to leave her work with the "mamas" of the many communities she worked with and move to the university environment was not an easy one. But Ms Hornby feels she can bring many of those lessons about engaging with communities to bear in a more strategic way, on a larger stage, at Rhodes.

Her most recent work with the rural women of the Fort Brown area, during her stint with the Angus Gillis Foundation, has re-enforced her understanding of

community development and the dynamics of poor communities. The "strength, resilience and creativity" of the women she worked with has convinced her that communities need to be seen as "partners", who bring assets to the table, rather than as "passive recipients with a long list of needs".

She brings with her the experience of working with most of the local NGOs and communities in various capacities at some or other time, as well as with many NGOs provincially and nationally. She is a firm believer in building relationships and partnerships in order to facilitate real lasting development. "You can use resources optimally through partnerships and demand less of the resource base - it's about bringing people together and creating synergies," she says - and this is where she sees the Rhodes Community Engagement office playing a vital role.

At the same time she cautions that community engagement is too broad. "In time we will need to select focus areas so that we can make a meaningful impact rather than spread ourselves too thinly."

She has spent her first few weeks in office talking to a wide range of people within the University to ascertain the nature and scope of current community engagement activities, and ensuring that the Student Volunteer Programme functions optimally. Future plans include strengthening the service learning aspect and hosting a joint conference with UFH in November. As Director of Community Engagement,

she has been very encouraged by the political will and buy-in from the University's top echelons, and believes this has caused a shift in perceptions of the role that community engagement plays.

Leadership development is something that Ms Hornby is passionate about. "We've got to grow relevant leadership in schools and universities that is transformative, ethical and moral - not just produce students that can walk into jobs." She believes community engagement is a critical vehicle for growing that kind of leadership, as it enhances those skills that make students better citizens. "Community engagement offers learning spaces outside of the University; it offers opportunities to engage with people from a range of different communities." And of course the process is reciprocal: "Development is for everybody - not just poor people."

Ms Hornby also plays a significant role in other community bodies in Grahamstown. She was the Chair of the Grahamstown Foundation and is now a member of its Executive Committee. She is also Vice-Chair of the Kingswood College Council.



At the same time she cautions that community engagement is too broad. "In time we will need to select focus areas so that we can make a meaningful impact rather than spread ourselves too thinly."

Structuring for Success

The new structure of the University's Human Resources Division is seen as key to positioning its services to staff and management.



As the architect of the new structure, Ms Robertson says that one team consisting of two people can now meet all HR needs while three specialists will be responsible for the strategic work related to the HR processes.

"It has taken over 18 months for this structure to come to fruition, from conceptualisation to implementation," says Director of Human Resources, Ms Sarah Fischer.

The latest structure is as a direct result of feedback received at the Human Resources (HR) Dialogue in January 2009. The HR Dialogue was a gathering of relevant stakeholders and "critical friends", who according to Ms Fischer, were "individuals able to reflect critically yet constructively on people issues at Rhodes University."

A key message at the Dialogue was that "people management is a shared responsibility of management, human resources and staff and that a partnership is needed between these parties", she says.

"The Dialogue also focused on current strengths, opportunities and concerns relating to the HR Division's activities where these critical friends provided input."

Two key concerns emerged, says Ms Fischer. The frustration of not knowing where to go in HR to be assisted with specific queries and a desire to have the HR staff more fully understand departmental and section needs and to be responsive to these needs.

"Within the HR Division itself, there was dissatisfaction with the old structure consisting of the 'silos' of recruitment and selection, training and development, HR administration and Industrial Relations."

Problems included poor back-up in some areas when staff were away, the lack of an even spread of work-load with concerning levels of pressure in certain areas and the Director being too involved in operational matters. The Division had also experienced difficulties in recruiting specialists for these "silos" when the trend within the HR field was towards Generalists.

Following the Dialogue, the Director asked Ms Sue Robertson, the Organisational Development Manager to look at restructuring possibilities within the Division.

Both internal staff and senior University management approved the proposals that emerged.

The new structure provides for a team of Generalists, each responsible for particular areas of Rhodes and a range of HR activities.

As the architect of the new structure, Ms Robertson says that one team consisting of two people can now meet all HR needs while three specialists will be responsible for the strategic work related to the HR processes.

Key to the new structure was a new HR information system (HRIS) which was rolled-out in 2010.

"This new HRIS has seen many of the activities previously done in Salaries move to HR and, as a result, two of the Salaries Section staff, Cindy Jeggels and Sethu Kom, also joined HR at the time of moving to the new system," says Ms Robertson. Key to this transition has been the input of the Data Management Unit, most notably Natalie Ripley and Lynne Angus, as well as the Salaries staff, particularly, Melanie Hendricks.

Being able to move from the old to the new structure required the dedication and commitment of the permanent staff and a host of temporary staff. "At one stage, we almost had more temporary staff than permanent staff," laughs Ms Fischer. "We could not have done it without people just

hanging in there. It was very, very tough as we moved from the one system to another and, by the end of last year, most of us were very tired."

Five new staff members from diverse HR backgrounds joined the team and extensive training took place for the transition to the new structure. "It was during this time that there had to be a hiatus of our service delivery. HR is appreciative of the patience demonstrated during this period," says Ms Fischer.

Another exciting development has been the re-engineering of the Division's office space and the move to an open plan office for the generalists. "Helen Averbuch did a superb job in providing the necessary conceptualisation and creativity and managing this project from start to finish," says Ms Fischer. The new arrangement has freed up office space for other divisions and created space for three committee rooms.

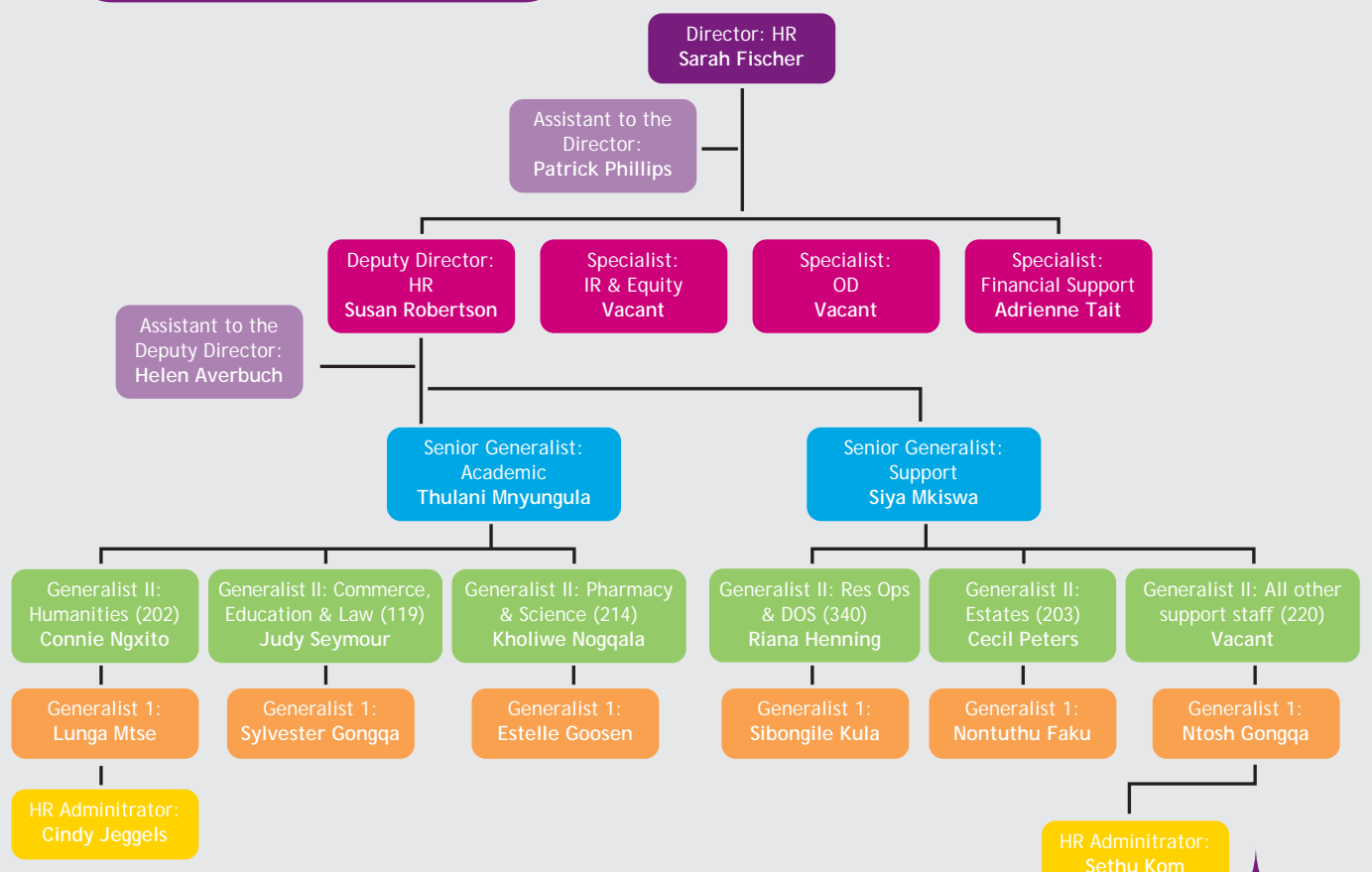
But this not an end to HR's rebirth.

"The HR Division is now poised for the next level of its development," says Ms Fischer.

"We need to start more work around making sure that, as an institution, we offer our staff an employment partnership of choice. This involves looking at how we position ourselves as an employer; why people want to work at Rhodes and stay with us and work towards meeting those needs. HR's role is to facilitate these explorations and, together with management, staff and the unions, find our way forward."

(For more information, go to the HR website and look for "HR structure" at: <http://www.ru.ac.za/humanresources>)

New HR Structure



Trade Unions play a vital role at Rhodes

The relationship between trade unions and university administrations or management can be a volatile one. But unions provide staff with a forum in which to make their voices heard as well as a communication channel between its members and management.

Human Resources Director, Ms Sarah Fischer says unions are “key stakeholders” at universities but cautions that they should not be the only channels of communication. Discussions and negotiations with unions should never replace communication and relationships between HR and staff, she adds.

The National Education, Health and Allied Workers’ Union (Nehawu) and the National Tertiary Education Union (NTEU) both have a powerful presence at Rhodes University. Nehawu represents Grade 1- 5 staff members, while NTEU’s collective is drawn from the higher grades, including academic staff. Both unions are active and participate in a range of interactions with HR and management.

Up until a few years ago meetings between Nehawu and Rhodes management were infrequent, but now occur on a monthly basis, says Ms Fischer. The Director of Residential Operations, Dr Iain L’Ange, and the Director of Estates, Mr Les Reynolds, both sit in on these meetings, and this leads to a speedier resolution of issues.

HR and NTEU also now meet on a regular monthly basis to discuss pertinent issues, which Ms Fischer says has proved extremely productive.

“At the end of the day HR and the Unions have very similar interests,” says Ms Fischer.



The National Education, Health and Allied Workers’ Union (Nehawu) and the National Tertiary Education Union (NTEU) both have a powerful presence at Rhodes University. Nehawu represents Grade 1- 5 staff members, while NTEU’s collective is drawn from the higher grades, including academic staff. Both unions are active and participate in a range of interactions with HR and management.

“They both want the best for their staff. Of course, management has a slighter wider mandate in that they have to balance staff interests with the institution’s interests as well as balance the interests of different collectives of staff. By and large the unions accept this wider mandate, and there is an understanding of the inter-dependence of the two. I think we have a good team of union officials on both sides,” she adds.

Full time Nehawu shop steward Mr Sam Mzangwa agrees. He says that the monthly meetings with HR and senior management have led to a greatly improved relationship and mutual respect between the parties. This, he says, is a result of learning to accommodate each other, to agree and disagree, and to trust one another.

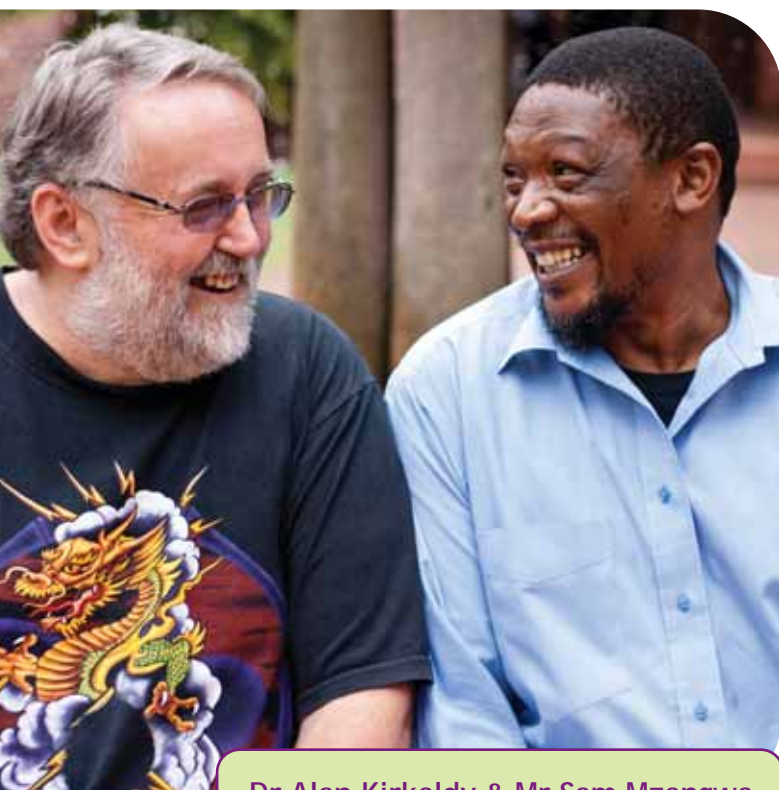
“Membership in our collective is imperative,” he says. “We have learned that organised workers are strong workers. Organised workers know their rights and what’s expected of them in the workplace.”

Co-Chairperson (Academic) of NTEU’s Branch Executive Committee Dr Alan Kirkaldy, expresses much the same sentiments with regard to the relationship NTEU has with the University. “On the whole we have quite a good working relationship, and most of the time we trust each other. We share with HR a keen sense that we don’t want to cripple the University,” he adds.

NTEU Co- Chairperson (General Staff), Mr Ryno van Rooyen, adds that HR is very open to hearing the union’s comment and asks for input on many different matters. Often, he says, the NTEU executive, which consists of nine people - both staff and academics - can work with HR on an issue and present a proposal, rather than a problem, to their collective.

Dr Kirkaldy says the difference between Rhodes and other institutions he has worked for is that the union trusts the bona fides of management.

“We might not agree with them, and our interpretations may differ, but at least we believe their interpretation is an honest one,” concluded Dr Kirkaldy.



Dr Alan Kirkaldy & Mr Sam Mzangwa



Mr Ryno van Rooyen

All roads lead back to Rhodes

The new structure of Rhodes University's Human Resources is attracting former staff back to this division where they now see an enhanced role for themselves and a clear career path.

Mr Thulani Mnyungula returned in October last year after an 11-year journey along other career paths. He is now filling the role of Senior Human Resources (HR) Generalist: Academic Operations at Rhodes. Born and bred in Grahamstown, he is also an alumni of the University, having achieved a BsocSc towards the end of the 1990s.

He gained his honours in Organisational Psychology and Labour Relations from the University of Port Elizabeth, now the Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University (NMMU), before returning home to take up a position as an HR (Development) Assistant within the development office of the Rhodes University HR Division.

He was one of the first graduate interns in the internship programme. His contract, which was for one year, was renewed for a further year and he then spent two years with the University as a permanent member of staff.

Midway through 2005 he sought pastures new in the search for both personal and professional growth. At the time the HR Department's structures did not easily allow achievement of the progress he was seeking, he says. An opportunity to work at PPC Cement as an HR officer saw him leaving Grahamstown and moving again to Port Elizabeth. Eighteen months later he was transferred within PPC to the mining town of Brits in North-West Province before moving to Gauteng and taking up a role in the company's sales and marketing operation as HR Manager of the East Rand branch.



He was one of the first graduate interns in the internship programme. His contract, which was for one year, was renewed for a further year and he then spent two years with the University as a permanent member of staff.

Mr Mnyungula held this role for three years. But by now his family was expanding and with the birth of their children arose a concern that they should get to know and spend time with their extended families here in Grahamstown. The fast-paced life of Johannesburg did not allow for a reasonable work-life balance and a move back to the Eastern Cape seemed to be the only sensible solution, he says.

Having heard of the new structure within HR at the University, he found himself eager to play a part in it and to make his own contribution to change and growth, he says. He believes the barriers to professional growth no longer applied, and the option of furthering his studies in the future is now also a possibility.

He is pleased with how his team has pulled together, says Mr Mnyungula. The team meet with him once a week and are communicating and working well together.

Mr Mnyungula is also a member of the staff football team, and would like to join the Toastmasters at some point. His new role is living up to expectations - the environment is both challenging and stimulating, he adds.

Posters introducing the Academic Operations team will soon be seen on campus, and a new system of colour-coding makes it easy to see at a glance which team member can best assist with your query.

Growing your own timber with the Mellon Foundation

Rhodes University's Mellon Foundation Programme for Accelerated Development was established in 2002, following a grant in 2001 by the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation. Also known as the "grow your own timber" initiative, it is specifically designed to increase the diversity of academic staff and to accelerate the academic careers of individuals from formerly disadvantaged groups.

The Programme funds three-year contract posts. Candidates must be postgraduate students from any South African university, who show promise in their chosen academic disciplines and who are committed to pursuing a career in the university environment. The programme is designed to grow capacity within academic institutions.

Human Resources sends an annual message to all Deans and Heads of Departments reminding them that they may motivate for the placement of a Mellon post within their department. When deciding where to place the available posts a

number of factors are taken into account. These include the retirement of an academic staff member, upcoming vacancies in the department, or a shortage of suitable candidates within the discipline, which limits recruitment possibilities. If the current staff composition of the department not be representative in terms of the Employment Equity Act, consideration will be given to placing a Mellon candidate.

The Vice-Chancellor, Faculty Deans, Dean of Teaching and Learning and CHERTL staff, determine placements. Currently Dr Lynn Quinn and Dr Jo-Anne Vorster are co-managing the programme. Only South African nationals are considered for appointment to Mellon posts. Where there is an equal contest between two candidates for a single post in a department, consideration will be given to the demographic profile of the department and the need for diversity. As the success of this Programme is regarded as critical to the long-term equity plans of the University it is important to maximize the likelihood of the Mellon appointees being considered for permanent positions at the end of their contracts. Integral to the success of the programme is the mentor system, whereby the chosen mentor helps with the drawing up of a development plan and monitors the progress of the staff member towards meeting these objectives.

Mellon Foundation appointees in development posts have the same employment status as any other contract member of staff, and are eligible for the same benefits, including access to available transit housing and payment of reasonable relocation expenses. In addition, if the appointee join the permanent staff at the end of their three year contract, they will not need to serve a further probationary period, and will begin to accrue academic leave retrospectively from the first day of their employment on the contract post.

Approximately 20 lecturers have, to date, been appointed as 'Mellon' lecturers, and the success of the initiative can be seen in the increased capacity and diversity within the University. Past Mellon appointees who are now permanently employed include Dr Rosa Klein from Chemistry, Ms Joy Owen from Anthropology, Dr Janice Limson from Biotechnology - winner of the Distinguished Research Award for 2010 - and Dr Sandile Khamanga from Pharmacy.

Individuals who are currently in the programme include Ms Nomusa Makhubu from Fine Art, Ms Natalie Donaldson from Psychology, Dr Unathi Heshula from Zoology, Ms Sharlene Ramlall from the Law Department and Ms Caroline Kene from Information Systems. Ms Vashna Jagarnath from History is a Mellon lecturer, as is Mr Yusuff Motara from Computer Science.

Driving efficient and effective HR at Rhodes

Mr Siyabulela “Siya” Mkiswa sees his role as driving the provision of effective and efficient Human Resources (HR) services at Rhodes.



He joined the HR Division in September last year as a Senior HR Generalist of Support Operations and is responsible for all the support sections and divisions at the University, including the Vice Chancellor’s office, the Registrar, the Research Office, Communications and Marketing, Dean of Students, Residential Operations, Estates, HR, IT, Finance, the Library and Community Engagement.

Mr Mkiswa was keen to join the higher education sector. In the long run he wants to further his studies and believes Rhodes to be a good institution to achieve this.

But he does not do this alone. He manages a team and ensures that whatever they do is in line with HR policies and internal processes.

Born in Rwantzana, a village near Lady Frere in the former Transkei, Mr Mkiswa holds a BTech in Human Resource Management from the Cape Peninsula University of Technology.

He began his career in 2004 as an HR Clerk in the Western Cape Provincial Government. In 2006 he joined the South African Social Security Agency (SASSA), working for them as an HR practitioner for eighteen months. During this time he was promoted to an Assistant Manager: HR. Looking to move back to the Eastern Cape - to be closer to his home and parents - he accepted a role of HR Business Partner with the South African Revenue Service (SARS) in Port Elizabeth in 2009.

But Mr Mkiswa was keen to join the higher education sector. In the long run he wants to further his studies and believes Rhodes to be a good institution to achieve this. In fact, he confides, he has an interest in the MBA programme, but intends to wait until he is more firmly established in his role in the HR Division.

The new HR structure introduced in November last year divides the HR Division into two operational teams -- Academic and Support Operations -- in order to ensure that sufficient time is spent by the HR Generalists providing effective HR support in each division. In addition to his role as a Senior HR Generalist, he is currently fulfilling the role of IR Specialist, and will continue to do so until the position is filled.

Mr Mkiswa says he has a “very supportive” team and good working relations with the business unit managers. Although Grahamstown is a lot smaller than Cape Town, he feels at home here, having grown up in small, rural Lady Frere. He says he has a short commute to work, and enjoys jogging in the mornings to keep fit.

He has joined the Health Suite and is also interested in participating in the informal staff soccer team. Other than that he is a rugby man, and an avid Blue Bulls supporter. During his free time he enjoys mingling with colleagues, although, as the father of an eight-month old son, he is still, as he puts it “working the night shift”. He is married, and his wife is currently temping at Rhodes. He is, he says, happy to be here, and is looking forward to continuing to live and work in Grahamstown.

Rhodes Business School welcomes new staff

The Rhodes Business School, fresh from its re-branding process at the end of last year, has three new people on board.

Mr Kevin Rafferty, Mr Macdonald Kanyangale, and Mr Jos Welman have joined the dynamic team headed by the School’s director Professor Owen Skae.

Mr Rafferty is moving from Information Systems and one of his key tasks will be to assume the marketing function at the Business School. Mr Kanyangale, a current student, is finishing up his PhD and will be taking on responsibility for the research thrust. Mr Welman is responsible for the Postgraduate Diploma in Enterprise Management (PDEM), after its migration from the Department of Management at the beginning of 2011.

Prof Skae said he was delighted with the new appointments. Mr Rafferty comes from a systems background but also has an interest in leadership and is carrying out research in that area. He brings a mix of skills to the table.

Mr Kanyangale has worked as a Marketing Manager with Air Malawi and spent time working for British American Tobacco. He has also filled roles at various NGOs. Last year he worked with Prof Skae on the development of a project designed to benefit local entrepreneurs, in partnership with Makana Municipality and the National Arts Festival. Mr Welman was responsible for the Centre for Entrepreneurship.

The 2011 strategic plan for the Rhodes Business School was formulated last year. The pre-eminent goal is to complete the process of international accreditation, says Prof Skae. The School is now at the point of submitting a self-audit. An on-site visit

by accrediting body, the UK-Based Association of MBA’s, is the next and final step in the process.

The second goal is to ensure that the theme of sustainability is fully mainstreamed through all teaching and training activities occurring at the School, he says.

“Our view is that sustainability is not a stand-alone subject. It should be fully assimilated in all the subjects that we teach, and our goal is to abide by that. My colleague Leticia Greyling is driving this process very well.”

Another challenge addressed in the strategic plan is that of the constraints inherent in the physical space occupied by the School. Their goal is to move into a building where the environment itself is sustainable, utilising solar energy, recycling grey water and making use of natural lighting. In this way the Rhodes Business School will be able to “walk the talk” of sustainability, says Prof Skae. The School is in the process of putting together proposals to take to possible funders who share this vision.

An ongoing goal is to continue to work towards making a worthwhile contribution to the socio-economic development of the Eastern Cape through community engagement projects, he adds.

Lastly, the strategic plan is about raising the profile of the School. The name change to Rhodes Business School was a vital move in this process. This is no longer shortened to an acronym but is used in full at all times.

Rhodes University has an outstanding reputation and the Business School wanted to make it very clear that they are an integral part of the University. “We are very proud of our association with our parent



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institution, whilst also grateful to Investec for the support offered in the Schools’ first ten years, which has allowed us to move forward proudly under our new name,” says Prof Skae.

Ms Imogen Mkhize, Old Rhodian and Harvard graduate, has assumed the helm of the School’s board of Advisors. She sits on the University’s Board of Governors, and on the boards of a number of prominent companies.

Prof Dave Sewry will chair the Board of Management, to which Prof Skae also reports, from mid year when Prof Arthur Webb steps down.