

VICE-CHANCELLOR'S DISTINGUISHED RESEARCH MEDAL

Mr Chancellor, I have the honour of presenting to you

Ferdi Botha

Associate Professor

in the Department of Economics and Economic History,

for the award of the Vice-Chancellor's Distinguished Research Medal.

Professor Botha has fast developed a national and a growing international reputation in the field of subjective well-being and quality of life studies, focused particularly on aspects of happiness, family functioning and socio-economic status. This relatively new and fast growing branch of applied microeconomics and economic sociology has benefitted from Prof Botha's quantitative skills and innovative approach, and he has become an acknowledged authority in the area with respect to South African survey data. His contributions are acknowledged as having expanded the understanding of happiness and subjective well-being, and having improved the understanding of interactions between economics, sociology and psychology.

In 2012 Prof Botha published the first paper on the economic analysis of suicidal behaviour in South Africa, and over time developed a "Good African Societies Index", also the first of its kind, that compares 45 African nations on 36 social and economic indicators.

In addition to articles in applied microeconomics focused specifically on happiness and quality of life, he has published papers on macroeconomics, financial markets, sport economics, and the art market. His publication rate has been acknowledged as very high for the discipline and for his career stage, almost three times the average for researchers in Economics. Since 2010, he has published 22 accredited journal articles, 3 book chapters, 7 articles in peer-reviewed working paper series, and has presented 13 papers at national and international conferences. His publications have appeared in high impact factor international journals such as *Social Indicators Research* and the *Journal of Happiness Studies*. He has also been invited to discuss some of his research on national radio stations such as SA FM and Radio 702.

Prof Botha has been a member of the editorial board of the *African Review of Economics and Finance* (AREF) since 2011, rising through the ranks from Assistant Editor, to Guest Editor and now an Associate Editor. He has co-edited a special edition of this journal. Recently he was also appointed as member of the editorial board of the *Journal of Happiness Studies*. He has further refereed papers for almost 30 journals.

Known for his solid mentoring of research students, he has been particularly successful at working with postgraduate students to convert their work into publications, even at honours level. He has graduated 14 Masters students to date.

One of his reviewers sums up his successful attitude and approach like this: “He is not just highly competent as an academic. He operates according to strict deadlines and expects himself, his co-authors and students to meet these also. If you don’t, you can expect daily reminders until you deliver as promised.”

Another reviewer notes that he has “been greatly impressed by (Prof Botha’s) dedication, work ethic, and determination to make his mark in academia. If there is one area in which he has been truly exceptional it has been in his research and publications.”

While a third describes him as “an exceptionally talented and prolific researcher.”

Prof Botha was recently awarded a Doctorate in Socio-Economic Sciences at the University of Antwerp, and today, at 31 years of age, is amongst the youngest recipients of a VC’s Distinguished Award at Rhodes University.

Mr Chancellor, I request you to award the **2017 Vice-Chancellor’s Distinguished Research Medal** to Professor Ferdi Botha.