



Communication and Marketing Department
Isebe loThungelwano neNtengiso
Kommunikasie en Bemarkingsdepartement

Private Bag X3, Rondebosch 7701, South Africa
Welgelegen House, Chapel Road Extension, Rosebank, Cape Town
Tel: +27 (0) 21 650 5427/5428/5674 Fax: +27 (0) 21 650 5628

www.uct.ac.za

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UCT marine scientist awarded prestigious Prince Albert I Grand Medal



Prof Lynne Shannon receives the Prince Albert I Grand Medal for Ocean Science award in the Science Category from His Serene Highness The Sovereign Prince of Monaco, Prince Albert II at the Oceanographic Institute Award Ceremony in Paris.

Photo: Supplied

The University of Cape Town's (UCT) [Professor Lynne Shannon](#) has made history by being awarded the 2025 Prince Albert I Grand Medal for Ocean Science, a globally acclaimed

honour recognising exceptional contributions to marine research. The award was presented at a ceremony held at the [Oceanographic Institute](#) in Paris on 8 December 2025.

Professor Shannon, deputy director of the [Marine and Antarctic Research Centre for Innovation and Sustainability \(MARIS\)](#) and a research professor in UCT's [Department of Biological Sciences](#), becomes the first person from South Africa – and the entire Global South – to receive this esteemed international award. Her recognition places South Africa firmly on the global stage of marine excellence.

The medal recognises a highly qualified researcher in oceanography for lifetime achievement, groundbreaking discovery, or a significant body of work. Shannon was honoured for her pioneering contributions to marine ecosystem dynamics, ecosystem-based fisheries management, and climate–ocean interactions – work that has shaped global policies and scientific understanding.

"I feel absolutely delighted and immensely humbled to have been awarded such prestigious recognition of my life's work. This reflects the incredible national and especially international networks of collaborative science that I've been honoured to be a part of. The award comes with a huge responsibility for me to take on new initiatives and follow new research directions that have been building for a while, and now will be all the more possible given such incredible support behind me," said Shannon.

To address the polycrisis in the ocean, Shannon said that it will require visionary thinking and action where humans are seen as part of nature and not separately, and where diverse knowledge systems and perspectives are brought together in complementary and constructive ways.

"I'm working on transformation of ocean-related decision-making by exploring and establishing linkages between law, governance, conservation, fisheries science, alternative knowledge systems, and the arts – a proposed shift from purely natural sciences to other disciplines and ways of engaging society that provides promising new options to reinvent and recharge ecosystem-based ocean management. It is an incredible honour receiving this award. I hope that with this prestigious award, doors will be opened for us here in South Africa to lead this ground-breaking research," she said.

The prizegiving ceremony forms part of a 65-year tradition that recognises exceptional contributors to ocean knowledge and stewardship. Since 1948, the Institute's awards have honoured iconic figures including Jacques-Yves Cousteau (1981), Leonardo DiCaprio (2015), Erik Orsenna (2016) and Dame Ellen MacArthur (2018) in the Mediation category; and science luminaries such as Shubha Sathyendranath (2013), Prof Daniel Pauly (2016) and Prof Lisa Ann Levin (2019) in the Science category.

The award is a testament to the strength and innovation of South African marine science. Shannon's work has contributed to improved fisheries policies, strengthened climate adaptation strategies, and supported equitable marine resource management across the continent.

Shannon's global recognition reinforces UCT's commitment to world-leading research that shapes societies and ecosystems.

"This is the very first time anyone from the Global South – and particularly South Africa – has received this prestigious award. On behalf of UCT, we congratulate Professor Shannon

on her incredible achievement and contribution to not only the institution but to global ocean science as a whole. We are proud to be associated with a prestigious marine scientist like her,” said UCT-MARIS director, Professor Marcello Vichi.

During her interview at the ceremony in Paris, Shannon reflected on:

- Collaboration as a foundation of scientific progress, emphasising that her work was made possible through decades of partnership with African and international research teams.
- The importance of supporting young scientists, particularly women and researchers from underrepresented regions, stressing that mentorship and access remain essential to transforming global science.
- Her passion for ecosystem-based management, noting its urgent relevance for climate-affected communities and fisheries.
- Her belief in the Global South’s rising leadership, expressing hope that this award would inspire more recognition of African scientific excellence.

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Issued by: UCT Communication and Marketing Department

Ridovhona Mbulaheni

Media Liaison and Monitoring Officer
Communication and Marketing Department
University of Cape Town
Rondebosch
Tel: (021) 650 2333
Cell: (064) 905 3807
Email: ridovhona.mbulaheni@uct.ac.za
Website: www.uct.ac.za