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Grand Prix for Mizrahi

Professor Valerie Mizrahi, director of UCT's Institute of Infectious Disease and Molecular Medicine (IIDMM), has been awarded the coveted Grand Prix Christophe Mérieux Prize by the Institute de France in Paris.

The €500,000 award (over R6 million), made by the Institute's Academy of Sciences, is a highly prestigious international accolade and will be presented to Mizrahi at a ceremony in Paris on 5 June.

Paying tribute to Mizrahi's research, member of the Academy of Sciences Pascale Cossart said: "What characterises Valerie Mizrahi's work is not only her excellent research on *Mycobacterium tuberculosis* and tuberculosis, but also her very active involvement in the tuberculosis community in South Africa, on the African continent, and internationally."

The Academy of Sciences, which makes awards to the most meritorious scientists and promising research projects, also lauded Mizrahi for her special qualities in mentoring students, particularly those engaged in TB research.

"Valerie's work is characterised by an incredible ability to engage with students in research, through supervising and coaching. The way she does this is widely acknowledged," added Cossart.

In her response to the prize Mizrahi said: "For me the most gratifying part of it is that the award committee recognised my commitment to, and passion for, developing people. I've trained so many young scientists – and this award is for them."

She plans to use most of the prize money to hire senior researchers who are able to bring new skills to the laboratory that she runs with IIDMM colleague Dr Digby Warner, particularly in chemical biology and bioinformatics.

"Given the shortage of career opportunities for outstanding early-career scientists who are interested in pursuing a career in biomedical research in South Africa, I believe this would be a great investment," she said.

Mizrahi also plans to purchase laboratory equipment to provide

opportunities for students from the laboratory to travel abroad for specialised training.

The IIDMM is a centre of excellence where world-class scientists work collaboratively to tackle diseases of importance in Africa. As the largest postgraduate research institute at UCT, the IIDMM is a major training hub in Africa for biomedical, clinical and public health researchers, and currently hosts some 150 postgraduate students and 80 postdoctoral research fellows in more than 20 multi-investigator research groups.

The IIDMM has a very strong thrust in TB research, hosting the South African Tuberculosis Vaccine Initiative, the Clinical Infectious Diseases Research Initiative, the Desmond Tutu HIV Centre, and the UCT node of the DST/NRF Centre of Excellence for Biomedical TB Research.

The Institute de France consists of five academies with a rich history spanning several centuries. The Institute's Academy of Sciences was founded in 1666. ■



Accolade: IIDMM director Prof Valerie Mizrahi has been awarded the coveted Grand Prix Christophe Mérieux Prize by the Institute de France in Paris, for her TB research and her ability to mentor young researchers.

What does Africa month mean to the UCT community?



Giving expression to UCT's Afropolitan vision during Africa Month: Deputy Vice-Chancellor, Professor Thandabantu Nhlapo.

On the eve of Africa Month in May, Deputy Vice-Chancellor Professor Thandabantu Nhlapo urges members of the university community to celebrate together and to use the next four weeks to reflect on the ways in which UCT can continue to use its human, intellectual and material resources to give expression to its Afropolitan vision.

"There are good reasons for celebrating Africa Month.

Africa is the continent on which we are situated, with which we feel a sense of kinship and whose histories and problems are inseparable from ours.

As a university community, the more immediate reasons are academic and social. In pursuing our core business of teaching and learning, and research, we have the capacity to directly address the legacy of the histories mentioned above and do something tangible about the problems. But in doing so, we also have the obligation to put in some work towards improving the institutional culture of our university.

The greatest outcome of the extended Africa Month celebrations in 2012 was the overwhelmingly positive response from staff and students who said that in that period they could see themselves reflected in the mainstream culture of UCT. It did not matter whether this was in the form of the increased visibility of cultural symbols or attending a lecture on their currency or religion or home region, or hearing their language spoken; the verdict was the same.

I would like to think that this coming Africa Month

can build on the accomplishments of 2012 – when UCT succeeded in combining the scholarly with the cultural in the exuberant celebration of our African identities. Africa Month in 2013 will be about maintaining this momentum, highlighting aspects of identity that are once personal and institutional; academic and cultural.

This year will feature an expanded programme of events and activities, resulting from an increase in the scholarly work with an African focus that is conducted at UCT.

Notably, there will also be stronger student participation; in addition to a Plaza event, both the SRC and its Societies will be rolling out round-table discussions and seminars.

The year 2013 is significant because it marks the 50th anniversary of African Unity (in the form of the OAU, established in 1963, and its successor, the African Union) and gives us the opportunity to reflect on the role of these organisations in ushering in the changes and developments that many Africans are seeing today.

At its best, Africa Month should be an opportunity to flesh out the framework we call the Afropolitan vision – in many weird and wonderful ways. If we do it properly, we will be left in no doubt that we are good continental citizens in both our scholarly outputs and in our hearts. At that point it will begin to dawn on us, I hope, not only that every month can be Africa Month at UCT, but also that Afropolitanism has become embedded in our culture." ■



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news in pictures • news in pictures • news in pictures • news in pictures

1 A delegation from the Eberhard Karls Universität Tübingen visited UCT earlier this month to discuss intensifying existing collaboration between South Africa and Germany, in this the 2012/2013 German/South African Year of Science. Pictured (left to right) are Eberhard Karls Universität Tübingen's Exchange Co-ordinator, Ms Nici Sauer; UCT deputy vice-chancellor Professor Danie Visser; Universität Tübingen's Vice President: International, Prof Heinz-Dieter Assmann; UCT School of Economics' Dr Patrizio Piraino; and Acting Director of UCT's International Academic Programmes Office (IAPO), Lara Dunwell. Prof Visser and Prof Assmann agreed to continue the work between the two universities and to seek opportunities for reciprocal student exchange, as well as enhanced research collaborations. UCT and Eberhard Karls Universität Tübingen have been connected for almost 15 years, through the IAPO, which receives their students on semester study abroad.

2 Student opinion matters when it comes to maintaining UCT's high academic standards, said Vice-Chancellor Dr Max Price at a student-hosted discussion on the subject. UCT pays careful attention to maintaining the highest academic standards, continued Price, and the student voice was an important factor in measuring how well UCT is performing. The discussion kicked off the annual Academic Activism Week, between 22 and 26 April, which is organised by the university's Students' Representative Council (SRC) to raise awareness among students about issues that affect their academic well-being. The theme for 2013 was Quality Assurance at UCT. Other events included a panel discussion on the balance between teaching and research, the setting-up of the mobile SRC office on Jammie Plaza, and a book drive by activist student societies.

3 Prof Jill Farrant below a poster of herself, part of the 15th anniversary exposition on the Champs-Élysées in Paris of the 77 winners of L'Oreal-UNESCO Women in Science Award. Farrant won the African/Arab states title in 2012, one of three UCT women scientists to have done so. Other UCT Laureates are Emer Prof Jennifer Thomson (2004), and Prof Valerie Mizrahi (2000). Thomson and Farrant work in the area of plant biotechnology and molecular physiology respectively, and Mizrahi in infectious diseases. The award recognises women

whose exceptional careers in science have opened up new and sometimes revolutionary ways of improving human well-being.

4 The Mother City wore her finest on Saturday 13 April to welcome hundreds of prospective UCT students to Open Day. Pupils from schools as far afield as Grahamstown, Johannesburg and Oudtshoorn jostled for information; particularly in the Jameson Hall, where the Faculty of Science's hands-on exhibitions drew scores of interested viewers (in picture). Particularly visible were groups of pupils participating in UCT's Schools Improvement Initiative's 100Up project. Some 20 schools in Khayelitsha take part in this initiative, designed to help prepare 100 pupils from the area for possible admission to UCT in 2014.

5 More than 7 000 participants attended the annual UCT Mathematics Competition on 17 April, representing a record 164 Western Cape schools. The question papers were set by more than 200 high school mathematics teachers – one for each grade – with the assistance of 30 UCT students. The competition is the biggest of its kind in the world. All participants write the papers at the same time and place. The 30 best-performing students from each grade will be invited to join the UCT Mathematics Circle, a programme of lectures and discussions during which UCT academics introduce the young mathematicians to topics outside the school curriculum. From that pool, and after a few more selection funnels, the South African team for the International Mathematics Olympiad – a competition that will be held in South Africa (and at UCT) for the first time next year – is selected.

6 Dr Moonira Khan, executive director of UCT's Department of Student Affairs (DSA), recently graduated with a doctorate from the University of Kwazulu-Natal (UKZN). The DSA is responsible for providing support and development services for UCT's more than 24 000 students. Khan's study, in the discipline of public governance, was titled *Student Governance in Higher Education Institutions in the Western Cape, South Africa: A Case Study*. Khan says that the study has deepened her insights and critical reflections on student affairs, particularly the significance of a robust student governance environment in higher education, and the role of student leaders in contributing to the democratisation of universities.

7 Four UCT postgraduate students have been awarded the Schlumberger Foundation Faculty for the Future scholarship, a prestigious international fellowship given to women from developing countries who are currently studying abroad. The scholarship is aimed at academically excellent women in the fields of science and technology who wish to teach in their home countries on completion of their PhD programmes. Recipients are (from left), Liabo Motleleng from Lesotho (Department of Chemical Engineering), Taryn Morris from South Africa (Biological Sciences Department and a current recipient), Tsungai Jongwe from Zimbabwe (Department of Medicine) and Antonina Wasuna from Kenya (Department of Chemistry). Another recipient, Naa Dedei Tagoe from Ghana (Department of Architecture, Planning and Geomatics) is not pictured.

8 UCT will hold its annual Candlelight Memorial Ceremony on Jammie Plaza at lunchtime on 9 May, coinciding with memorials held internationally that commemorate those who have died from HIV/AIDS. Organised by the HIV/AIDS Institutional Co-ordination Unit (HAICU), the Memorial Ceremony is also used as an opportunity to create awareness about issues associated with HIV and AIDS. This year a special dance piece, choreographed by UCT alumnus Sacha Hendricks, will depict the breaking-down of the stigma surrounding HIV/AIDS. HAICU's Lucina Reddy explains that Hendricks was approached because she has choreographed work that speaks to social justice issues. In addition, first-year Fine Art students from Michaelis will exhibit art reflecting the theme of the event.

9 The national strike led by the South African Transport and Allied Workers Union affected UCT's Jammie Shuttle service last week. Reduced capacity on 24 and 25 April saw long queues at major shuttle stops around campuses as some drivers joined the strike. Some students were put out by delays, while others sympathised with the drivers, saying it was their right to air their grievances. "We do understand that it's a strike and we have no control over that; people want more wages because the cost of living is high," said Yonique Morta, a first-year BCom student. "I've been late for one or two classes, but not that many," remarked Neo Mayo, a first-year music student. ■

Pioneering development programme underpins commerce students' success

An educationally challenged background need not hamper success at university level, as has been shown by a number of UCT Education Development Unit (EDU) commerce students who have walked off with top marks in what are often believed to be the most difficult commerce courses, including financial accounting, economics and statistics.

In the past six years, students enrolled in the EDU Academic Development Programme (ADP) have often outperformed mainstream students in some key areas, achieving top honours.

Several students have achieved subject distinction in recent years; and in 2011, the top first-year commerce student in mathematics was Sakhe Mkosi, a BCom EDU undergraduate who averaged above 93% for his courses that year. Subsequently he remained on the Dean's Merit List throughout his studies at UCT, and is on track to graduate with a BCom (Chartered Accounting) degree this year.

Over the years the Commerce EDU has become recognised as one of the country's most successful academic development programmes in terms of graduation and throughput success rates for black students, says Daniel Munene, EDU's Programme Co-ordinator. The EDU falls under UCT's Centre for Higher Education Development (CHED), which is responsible for the university's academic development programmes.

Munene believes these success stories are in large part due to the unit's interventions in supporting under-prepared students, but he also pays tribute to the students' determination and hard work.

"The EDU definitely walks the walk when it comes to putting transformation into action," he says. "We in the EDU feel we have a responsibility not only to take in deserving students who demonstrate potential, but also to enable them to succeed in their degrees and graduate at the end of the day. Transformation is not just about student numbers at entry level, but also about numbers at exit level."

Built on years of academic development experience at UCT, the EDU, under the direction of Associate Professor June Pym, was conscious of these imperatives when the present model of this pioneering academic development programme was established in 2001. The programme has grown from strength to strength since then and is now considered a model of good practice in academic development circles.

While some EDU students may study for a longer period of one to two years, and have more flexibility in their choices, they do the same subjects and curriculum, write the same examinations – and obtain the same degree. The EDU focuses on the whole degree time period, and is now also incorporating postgraduate students.



Ensuring academic success: Commerce Education Development Unit (EDU) Programme Co-ordinator, Daniel Munene and Commerce EDU director, Associate Prof June Pym.

According to Munene, there used to be a perception that students who came to EDU would be getting a lesser degree to that offered to mainstream students. This perception has since been turned around completely, especially as EDU students are now excelling in many subjects.

Economics is now one of the students' most popular subjects, a result of innovative workshops that help them get to grips with the subject. In statistics lectures, students use interactive 'clickers' that electronically convey their answers to class questions. As a result, the lecturer is able gauge students' responses and demonstrate the correct answer.

In financial accounting, students use their home language to explain concepts to classmates who share the same first language.

"This not only elevates people's mother tongue, but also shows that cognitively there is no problem in understanding an accounting course in Xhosa, or Zulu, because a concept is a concept!" Munene explains.

Other interventions monitor how students cope with their studies and how they integrate into the university community.

One of the most important aspects of the EDU's work lies in creating a safe space for students, says Munene. "Aside from the extreme academic demands that students face, many also have to juggle a number of familial responsibilities. We do our best to advise and help students

where we can, to ensure a sense of trust and community."

There is a strong focus on engaging with both academic and affective factors, as well as developing graduate attributes that will make a meaningful contribution to a socially conscious South African society. This ethos of engagement has also led to a marked increase in students' involvement in extracurricular activities and leadership programmes such as the Students' Representative Council. EDU students have also started their own society, the Education Development Unit Student Society (EDUSO).

"These are tremendously positive developments. They indicate that EDU students feel part of the fabric of UCT and that they've gained more self-confidence." Munene also praises the teaching and administrative staff for building appropriate skills and support in the unit.

The unit also sees that the students are supported financially, through bursaries and other funding initiatives. Funding from several partners, including the South African Institute of Chartered Accountants, the Susan and Michael Dell Foundation, Investec, Deloitte and the Saville Foundation, has been instrumental in supporting the unit's range of work.

"We are indebted to these organisations for sharing our transformative vision and for having the confidence that we can achieve that vision," says Munene. ■

Calling content collection owners!

Do you, or does your Department, own a 'content collection'?

For the uninitiated, a content collection is any collection of useful, archival, or scholarly content in physical or digital format – such as theses, articles, photographs, business documentation, websites or web-based portals.

If you own such a collection – and there are likely to be many on our campuses – the Metadata Working Group (MWG) would like to hear from you.

Jointly managed by UCT Libraries and Information and Communication Technology Services (ICTS), the MWG was formed to implement and manage the Metadata and Information Architecture Policy, one of the Council-approved governance policies developed by UCT's Enterprise Content Management (ECM) programme.

The policy aims to ensure that all content objects generated and managed by UCT have metadata that meets international standards and is applied consistently.

Co-chaired by Libraries' Mandy Noble and ICTS's Jenny Wood, the MWG aims to implement the policy by assisting those responsible for content collections to manage and apply metadata to their collections. They explain that 'metadata' refers to the structured information provided in the records that describes objects in a collection and facilitates their retrieval.

"The addition of standardised metadata optimises the sharing of information between related initiatives and portals," says Noble. "Accurate and consistent metadata enables the content to be retrieved easily, thus making it accessible to a wider, international community."

Wood adds that in the future UCT's Open Content/Open Data policy may require content to be easily discoverable, for research reproducibility. "Adding metadata to your collection will prepare you for this next step," she said.

"However, before the MWG can help, we need to know how many content collections exist at UCT, who manages or owns these collections, and what their needs are in terms of metadata and information and communication technology (ICT) support," Wood added.

Alerting the campus community to a questionnaire that will be sent out soon, Noble and Wood requested collection owners' cooperation in completing and returning the questionnaires. If you do not receive a questionnaire, and are a collection owner, please assist the MWG by requesting a copy, by emailing jenny.wood@uct.ac.za or mandy.noble@uct.ac.za. ■

Compulsory laptops: pilot project investigates usefulness



Geared for learning: Engineering student Priyashnie Govender was the first recipient of a laptop through ICTS's Laptop Pilot Project.

Laptops became compulsory this year for four courses at UCT – in physics, chemical engineering, architecture design and theory, and law. And a UCT researcher will be tracking just how useful they are in the learning process.

The Laptop Pilot Project began in ICTS, spearheaded by Kira Chernotsky, director of the Customer Services Division. Chernotsky will investigate the merits of making a laptop a requirement for students. The project will provide students with the knowhow and tools to study and compete in the electronic age and in the globalised workplace.

All students registered for the

four selected courses were asked to bring a laptop to class, or to buy one at a reduced price through the Student Laptop Initiative. To ensure that financially constrained students were not excluded, ICTS gave 82 laptops to financial aid students, with 18 going to chemical engineering students, 37 to law, 22 to physics and five to architecture students.

These were given on the understanding that if the students drop out or change course, they'll return the machines to ICTS. They'll also be responsible for loss or damage. All going well, graduates from the courses will be able to keep the computers.

The 500 students participating

in the pilot project benefited from hands-on ICT training, and informational materials and useful software, provided on a 2GB flash drive.

The Centre for Educational Technology has assigned a researcher to the pilot to examine how teaching and learning is affected by students having laptops. She will also list the practical or infrastructural challenges presented by having so many students with laptops on campus. The pilot will be used to determine what impact a possible university-wide rollout of the programme would present.

Chernotsky, who was responsible for initiating the project and procuring funding, said: "This has been one

of the most exciting projects I've been involved in at UCT. It has the potential to be a real game-changer in terms of how teaching takes place – and in terms of how students learn. It's only once lecturers can be sure that every student in their course has a laptop (regardless of their economic situation) that they can use technology to fundamentally change the classroom experience.

"The level of enthusiasm and cooperation shown by all involved is an indication of widespread support for the pilot."

She hopes many more departments will want to roll the initiative out to their students from next year. ■

International leader at the helm of Energy Research Centre

Professor Harald Winkler's summary of his vision for UCT's Energy Research Centre could be encapsulated in only seven words, Use less energy, more efficiently, mostly renewables. The centre's new director offers a reflection on the world's energy troubles – and the factors driving climate change. A lead author of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change since 2005, Winkler has a special interest in the area.

The UCT alumnus (he has a PhD from UCT, in addition to an MSc in energy and resources from UC Berkeley, and a BA in sociology and politics from Wits) is internationally renowned for his research work in energy and climate policy. He's also taught and supervised students at postgraduate level since 2000.

The ERC is "unique" in South Africa; a multi-disciplinary academic centre producing high-quality, targeted and relevant research that will articulate precise, practical and progressive alternatives to the energy challenges of South Africa, Africa and beyond.

What will it take to imagine a different energy future? Broadly, four things, says Winkler.

Firstly, affordable access to energy is pivotal, especially in South Africa. "This is critical to alleviating poverty and inequality," adds Winkler.

Second, the fuel mix must change; South Africa is too coal-dependent. Diversity is an energy policy goal in its own right, but also critical to the third priority: Reduce greenhouse gas emissions. "Weaning the world off coal and fossil fuels will take decades," he adds. "South Africa is building two new coal-fired power stations to fill energy needs."

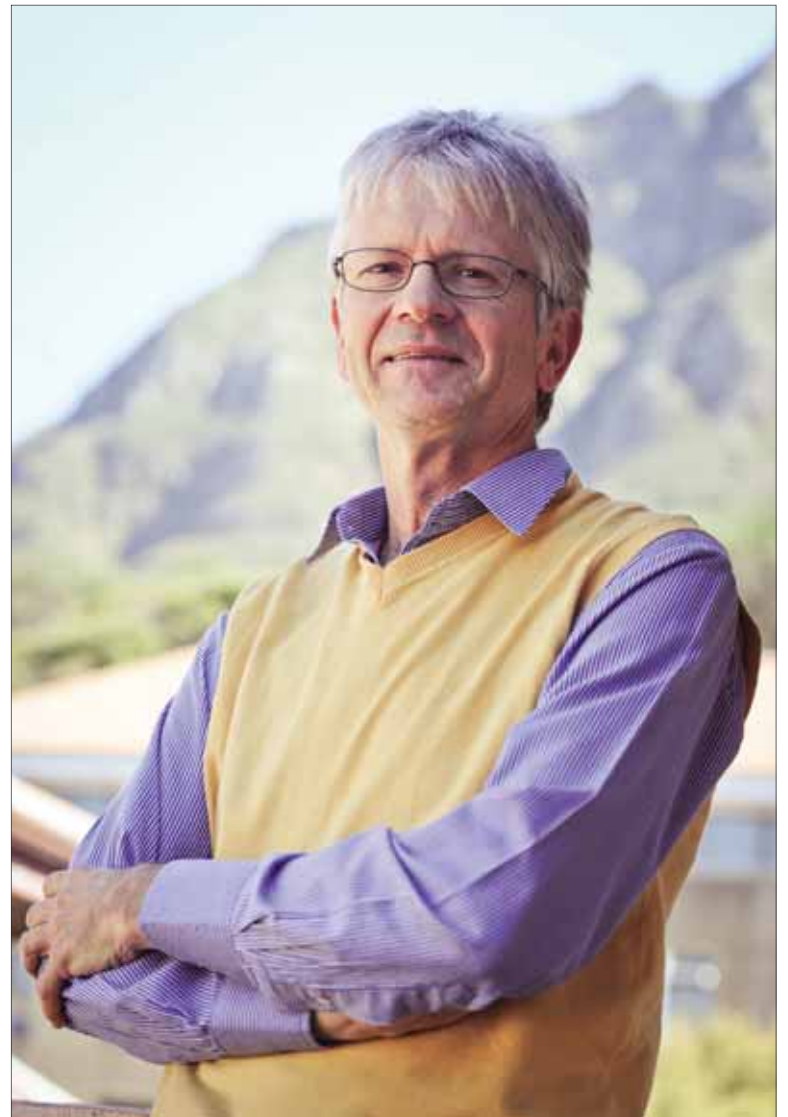
But carbon taxes are changing the way the world views fossil fuels and will grease the wheels of transition. Talking to ERC's renewable energy focus, Winkler points out that "huge amounts" of renewable energy sources are available: solar, wind, hydro-electricity, and biofuels among them. "And we have the technologies to use them and the economics of many are improving."

And this is where the fourth pillar, improving governance, fits neatly. "An independent system and market operator is a crucial reform for SA's energy sector."

Winkler's vision is that together, doing excellent research on the four broad areas will "add up to imagining a different energy future in our economy and society".

The centre plays an important role in Africa. In 2010 the ERC was selected as Africa's Regional Designated Centre in energy planning, training African energy planners and thereby providing support to African Regional Co-operative Agreement (AFRA) member states. As a result, a "good number" of African energy students are making their way south to UCT.

The centre has also begun a feasibility study on climate change mitigation plans with Latin American and African partners – and partners within UCT, like the African Centre for Cities. This is just a hint of the interdisciplinary work that's growing in the Faculty of Engineering & the Built Environment. ■



Energy future: Prof Harald Winkler, new director of the Energy Research Centre in the Faculty of Engineering & the Built Environment.

'Ultimate' botanist Skelton flies SA flag high

Last year was something of an *Lannus mirabilis* for PhD botany student Rob Skelton.

First, he flew the South African flag as part of the national Mambas team (in which he's known by the tag 'Helter') at the Ultimate world championships in Japan. As an encore, he netted the *Australian Journal of Botany's* Best Student Paper of 2012 award.

The award sets a precedent for a researcher with plans to pursue postdoctoral studies. Along this path lie many more papers.

"But it's good to get the recognition," said the plant scientist. "It helps me get my research and ideas out there."

'Out there' sums it up. This international journal is a repository of leading plant science research in Southern Hemisphere ecosystems.

Co-authored with UCT's Professor Jeremy Midgley and Associate Professor Mike Cramer, and the University of KwaZulu-Natal's Professor Steve Johnson, Skelton's winning piece came out of his MSc work on leaf pubescence in *Leucospermum*, a genus of some 50 species of evergreen flowering shrubs in the family *Proteaceae*.

Leucospermum species are common to the scrub and mountain slopes of the Cape Floristic Region – and probably best known for their 'pin-cushion' flowers. (And there's even an Australian connection: the genus

is closely related both in evolutionary terms and in appearance to the Australian genus *Banksia*.)

Their tough and leathery leaves are either glabrous (smooth) or pubescent (hairy). Initially, Skelton had wanted to show that the reason for this difference was linked to water economy, and then move on.

"The view at the time was that

increased cover, or hairiness, reduced water loss."

But his findings didn't align with the water conservation theory: surprisingly, the smooth-leaved subspecies lost less water.

He then had to develop and test alternative hypotheses for the functional significance of leaf pubescence. The silvery appearance

of hairy leaves led him to investigate whether pubescence could act as a kind of reflective layer.

"Plants can get too much light," Skelton explained. The hairiness could act as a natural sunscreen.

His results showed that pubescent leaves do reflect more light, and that this reduces light-induced damage to the leaf. He also showed that hairy

species were more common in drier, hotter environments; this led him to a link between aridity and pubescence.

"The hairy leaf is a radiation-protective trait, a way of reducing light-induced reduction in the photosynthetic capacity of a plant.

On top of that, pubescence – by increasing the reflection of light from the leaf – also cools the leaf in stressful times of little water.

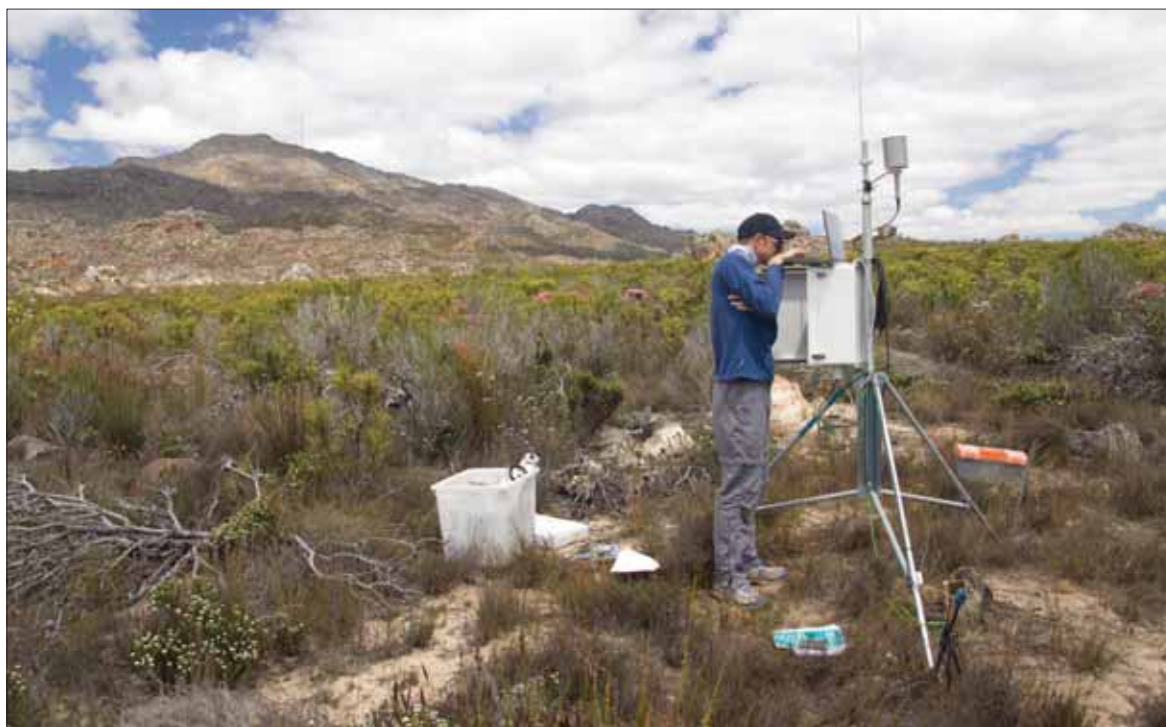
"As you move towards drier environments, plants are able to rely less on water for cooling, and use pubescence instead. So it's an adaptation to extremely dry habitats."

Skelton's work has broader implications *vis-à-vis* climate change and encroaching aridity in the Cape Floristic Region. His current fieldwork takes him on bi-monthly excursions to camp out at a remote site near Jonaskop, among the highest peaks of the Riviersonderend Mountains ("It's pretty cold there at the moment!"), private land bordering the Cape Nature Reserve, with limited public access.

Limited is good, he says.

"We want to understand what plants are doing outside of human interest.

"We now have a finer-scale understanding picture of what variables plants are responding to. Determining which variables are important to which groups will tell us which plants will be vulnerable to climate change." ■



Out there: PhD student and botanist Rob Skelton downloading sap flow and weather data from a station at Jonaskop in the Riviersonderend Mountains. Sap flow sensors (which measure the flow of water through a plant) and meteorological sensors allow Skelton to monitor both plant functionality and weather conditions almost continuously.

June graduation call

With a special June graduation edition of *Monday Paper* planned for the end of May, we're putting out a call for leads and stories with a graduation focus. These could showcase interesting and cutting-edge research, or high achievers – or perhaps you know of a graduand who has defied enormous odds to qualify for their degree or diploma. We're also keen to get family stories: parents hooding their children, or vice versa. Please email Inam Mbombo with your ideas (Inam.Mbombo@uct.ac.za), a synopsis of your suggested story, and the contact details of the graduand/s.

Stem cells: Handle with care

While stem cell technology is a real and present key to cures for inherited disorders, the watchword is caution, said Professor Jacquie Greenberg in her inaugural lecture on 17 April.

“Stem cell prospects are the fuel of false promises. Many people want to hear they can be helped, but we must balance hype and hope.”

Greenberg, based in the Department of Clinical Laboratory Sciences, is co-head of the Faculty of Health Sciences’ new UCT Stem Cell Initiative. With a UCT career spanning over four decades, she was able to give a lecture detailing a journey along the double helix of the human genome, moving from basic science to translational genetics, to therapeutics directed at South African families with genetic conditions.

Although much of the current thinking around genetic therapeutic intervention has been saddled with the ‘baggage’ around the science and ethics of culturing embryonic stem cells, new stem cell technology has changed that.

In 2012, Japanese scientist Shinya Yamanaka won the Nobel Prize for pioneering induced pluripotent stem cells (iPSCs), using technology to turn cultured skin and other cells into iPSCs. Scientists can now take primitive human cells and develop these into any type of cell in the body, even sperm. They’re an ideal source of cells for the ‘disease-in-a-dish’ study of diseases affecting inaccessible tissues, such as the eyes and brain.

“Stem cells are cruising into clinics,” Greenberg remarked. “Patients are being treated with their own cells.”

Collaborating with researchers in Oxford and Japan, scientists from



“Should anyone be tested for a condition that is fatal and devastating to both the patient and the patient’s family?” – Prof Jacquie Greenberg at her inaugural lecture on 17 April.

the UCT Stem Cell Initiative have established the first iPSCs from South African patients suffering from the inherited neurodegenerative disease spinocerebellar ataxia type 7 (SCA7). They’re also in the process of deriving cells from patients with the neuromuscular disorder myasthenia gravis, a chronic autoimmune neuromuscular disease characterised by skeletal muscle weakness.

But geneticists working with stem cells aren’t just “tinkering with cells” said Greenberg. Although iPSCs skip the ethical brouhaha associated with embryonic stem cell research, the technology is still very new.

“What we do must be scientifically safe and ethically sound.”

Greenberg wrapped up her PhD in 1990 in UCT’s Division of Human Genetics, now part of the Department of Clinical Laboratory Sciences. The

work stimulated a lifelong interest in the late-onset neurodegenerative diseases, the inherited ataxias and Huntington’s Disease, a genetic disorder that affects muscle co-ordination and leads to cognitive decline and psychiatric problems.

Importantly, this research alerted her to the complex ethical considerations of genetic counselling – and the dilemmas of predictive testing. Typically, the onset of the disease is between the ages of 30 and 50, and there’s a 50% chance of it being passed on by mother or father to their sons or daughters.

“It’s a Sword of Damocles,” said Greenberg. “Would you, as a child, want to know? Would you need to know? Should anyone be tested for a condition that is fatal and devastating to both the patient and the patient’s family?”

It’s an area in which she’s made a significant contribution. In 1996 Greenberg became one of the first genetic counsellors to register with the Health Professions Council of South Africa. She’s also the course convenor of one of only two master’s programmes in genetic counselling in South Africa, which remains “much in demand and much needed”. Sadly, a lack of posts is resulting in the slow demise of this vital service, despite the World Health Organisation’s recommendation that there should be two genetic counsellors per million people.

Since 1990 Greenberg has worked closely with long-standing colleague Professor Raj Ramesar, head of the Division of Human Genetics, on the Retinal Degenerative Disorders screening programme. Currently, the registry has clinical and genetic muta-

tion data on a wide range of patients affected by a range of retinal degenerative disorders.

To date, this research – which is supported by Retina SA, and funders such as the Medical Research Council – has led to several advances in the identification of the genetic causes of the disease and new retinal disease genes RP17 (CAIV) and RP13 (PRPF8). These genes were originally mapped uniquely to South African families.

As a result, the affected families are receiving better genetic management and will be able to track developments – and potentially, even participate in research towards future therapies for their disorders. An offshoot of this work is the ophthalmic genetic service now offered, with four genetic counsellors trained at UCT.

Greenberg also serves on the committee of the national Department of Health team tasked with drafting regulations and guidelines for the new National Health Bill’s section on human cloning and stem cell research.

As for their future work, the UCT Stem Cell Initiative is generating stem cell lines for other conditions. These will be used for future investigation into disease modelling and possible therapeutic screening.

“We do research not for the sake of science, but for the sake of patients – and to do what we do better.”

“As excited as we are about stem cells, we need to restore balance. There are many people who hope it’s a cure for the future; and yes, it is, but the future is not yet now.”

(You can listen to the full audio recording of the lecture at <http://www.uct.ac.za/news/lectures/inaugural/2013/>, or visit the UCT Stem Cell Initiative website at <http://stemcells.uct.ac.za/>.)



International honour: Prof Karen Sliwa-Hahnle, director of UCT’s Hatter Institute for Cardiovascular Research, has been awarded the Paul Morawitz Award for her research into cardiovascular prevention, heart failure, and the pathophysiology of cardiomyopathy.

Top international award for cardiovascular researcher

Karen Sliwa-Hahnle, professor of cardiovascular research and director of UCT’s Hatter Institute for Cardiovascular Research, has been awarded a top international award for her research into cardiovascular prevention, heart failure and the pathophysiology of cardiomyopathy.

The Paul Morawitz Award is the highest annual award for exceptional cardiovascular research for people from German-speaking countries (Austria, Switzerland and Germany), and can be given to scientists, cardiologists, cardiothoracic surgeons or paediatric cardiologists.

The award’s laudation notes that Sliwa-Hahnle studied as a physician in Berlin, Germany, and subsequently worked at the University of the Witwatersrand.

“In 2010 she was appointed as professor of cardiovascular research and the director of the Hatter Institute for Cardiovascular Research in Africa, at the prestigious University of Cape Town, South Africa,” the laudation says, adding that, “due to her scientific excellence and international success, she made German cardiology internationally visible.”

Sliwa-Hahnle said cardiovascular research was performed at a very high

standard in Germany, with a huge funding volume and many innovations over the past 100 years. “It is a great honour to receive this very prestigious award.”

During her years in cardiovascular research, Sliwa-Hahnle established a theme of projects called the Heart of Soweto Studies, which are recognised worldwide. The projects investigate the prevalence, presentation and management of cardiac disease in an urban African population.

“These studies on more than 8 000 patients highlighted the high prevalence of hypertension, obesity and cardiac disease in Africa, and have resulted in more than 20 publications so far. They have also been used to train eight post-graduate students, mainly physicians, who did their doctoral theses and PhD projects using aspects of these studies,” said Sliwa-Hahnle.

She recently expanded the project to include other African countries such as Mozambique, Nigeria, Tanzania, Kenya and Sudan, and has also designed a number of innovative research programmes and has leveraged funding for several major research projects – not only in South Africa and the rest of Africa, but also internationally.

Sliwa-Hahnle’s research on the physiology, clinical outcome and

therapy of peripartum cardiomyopathy, a disease affecting women post-delivery, resulted in the establishment of the Peripartum Cardiomyopathy Working Group, which she chairs.

This group has leveraged funding for a 1 000-patient international registry on PPCM, and the project is expected not only to improve knowledge of this disease (which occurs in 1 in 1 000 South African women), and – ultimately – patient outcomes, but also to further enhance UCT’s international reputation as a centre for leading medical research.

Her special focus on heart disease in pregnant women also addresses the World Health Organisation’s Millennium Goal 5: to reduce maternal and child mortality.

“I see myself as a mentor for young academics struggling to lead a balanced life which incorporates clinical work, enjoying research, having a partner and children and finding some time for themselves,” says Sliwa-Hahnle.

“The award is important for strategic planning, as we have just submitted an application for a large German-African collaborating group. Hopefully, having received the Paul Morawitz Award will increase our chances of success.”

A DAY IN THE LIFE OF DR CORINNE LANDON, PRINCIPAL MEDICAL OFFICER

MP: What is an average day like for you?

Most days are unpredictable, due to the nature of a medical practice. However, I usually arrive in the morning and check my emails to see if there is anything urgent that needs my immediate attention. I then consult for most of the morning, and attend to my administrative matters in the afternoon. However, most days are not average, as there is often an urgent medical matter to be resolved, and pathology results and ill patients to be followed up.

MP: What does your job entail?

As a clinician, my priority is to provide medical and educational interventions to UCT students as well as to manage the team of doctors and clinical nurse practitioners. I sit on committees such as HAPI (HIV & AIDS Policy Implementation Group) and the Readmission Review Committee of the Science Faculty, and advise UCT staff and faculty members on medical issues that may impact on students, such as swine flu, post-exposure prophylaxis, needlestick policy, sexual assault, and psychiatric emergencies, to name just a few. Faculty staff and other UCT staff contact me requesting advice on matters such as medical certificates, deferred exams and the management of ill students.

MP: What are the biggest challenges?

I would say trying to balance the administrative load and my clinical responsibilities. As a health professional I would prefer to spend more time consulting, but an important part of my job is also to provide administrative support and medical advice and guidance to the executives.

MP: The best bits?

One of the highlights is working in a multi-disciplinary team. We have a wonderful, dedicated staff at the Health Service. I am privileged to work with clinical nurse practitioners, medical officers, psychologists and social workers who are experienced professionals. The clinical nurse practitioners are the backbone of the service, providing comprehensive medical care to most of the students, and ensuring the smooth running of the service by ordering and maintenance of the necessary stock. The clinical nurse practitioners refer to the medical officers and psychologists only if after fully assessing the patient, they decide that it is not within their scope of practice to manage the patient.

The practice also couldn't function without our dedicated reception and administrative staff.

Of course, interacting with our students is always the highlight of my day – especially when, even as they face so many challenges, they can be encouraged to focus on achieving their goals. I often get emails from students who have



To the rescue: Dr Corinne Landon, Principal Medical Officer, Student Wellness Service.

graduated from university, keeping me updated on their achievements and the work they are doing – even their recent marriages and children.

MP: Any stand-out experiences you've had?

I can clearly remember the outbreak of the H1N1 flu epidemic in August 2009. One of the UCT students who had travelled to Johannesburg became infected with H1N1, and the entire university community was on high alert.

I was involved in developing

medical protocols for the university, and with my dedicated team set up procedures for the health team at Student Wellness (hotline and triage system), to deal with concerned parents, staff and students. As expected, despite stringent hygiene protocols, the health team staff also became infected – including me.

The combined effort from the health team, UCT's executives, Communication and Marketing, as well as Human Resources, meant that the anxiety about H1N1 could be contained.

MP: The worst bits?

I don't have any worst bits, but if you had to ask my family they would probably say that I worry too much – I think maybe it's just 'caring'. It is difficult for any health professional to 'turn off' when they leave the office. Students keep me awake at night while I wonder if I might have missed a diagnosis, or if their condition may have deteriorated during the night. I usually contact them first thing in the morning, to put my mind at ease and to ensure that their medical condition has stabilised. ■

UCT institute supports foster child grant campaign

UCT's Children's Institute, the University of Pretoria's Centre for Child Law, Legal Aid SA and the Black Sash say that the country's foster care system is failing to assist family members caring for orphaned children.

This is not a new problem; it's been occurring since 2002, when the numbers of orphans applying for foster care started to grow rapidly due to the HIV/AIDS pandemic.

Besides failing orphans, the system is also failing abused and neglected children who desperately need the services of the overwhelmed social workers and children's courts, said a recent statement issued by the four organisations.

Black Sash Regional manager Thandiwe Zulu said: "Courts are not the appropriate place for grandparents and siblings caring for orphans. It is a fact that the foster-care system fails these relatives and that overwhelmed social workers are unable to deliver services for many children in real need of protection. We believe that a non-court-based system is long overdue, and must be implemented to provide much-needed, appropriate income support for kinship carers."

These civil society organisations and many others at the coalface, such as Childline and Child Welfare, have been calling for reform for over ten years, as they have witnessed how the system is unable

to cope with the demand. Originally designed to accommodate 50 000 children, the foster care system is responsible for the welfare of 500 000 children, explained Children's Institute programme manager Paula Proudlock.

Among other factors, the overwhelming caseloads and overcrowded court rolls created enormous backlogs, resulting in the lapse of over 110 000 foster care orders – cutting financial aid to as many children.

In 2011, after being approached by Childline and Child Welfare for help with the lapsing grants, the Centre for Child Law approached the High Court to avoid the looming crash of the foster care system. A court order was granted that temporarily alleviated the pressure on the foster care system by 'deeming' foster child orders not to have lapsed and placing a temporary moratorium on further lapsing. "This provided time for the department to introduce the necessary reform," added Proudlock.

Research by the Children's Institute shows that there are now over one million orphans living with relatives in poverty; yet in 2011, only 460 000 were receiving the Foster Child Grant (FCG), worth R800 per child per month.

The remaining orphans are either getting the much lower Child Support Grant (CSG) of R290 per child per month, or nothing at all,



explained Katharine Hall, senior researcher at the Children's Institute.

"It has taken the Department of Social Development over 10 years to reach these 460 000 orphans with an FCG. And there is every sign that the system cannot accommodate more children. Already we have seen that grants are lapsing because the system cannot keep up with the numbers. This leaves the majority of orphans without adequate social assistance," said Hall.

Proudlock added: "In September 2012 the department announced its intention to introduce reform aimed at providing a grant that relatives could access directly via application to SASSA. This would cut out

the need for a social worker report and a court inquiry, and ensure all orphans could be reached with a grant quickly.

In November 2012 we attended a consultative workshop with the Department, where they gave further details on the proposal to be implemented as an 'Extended Child Support Grant', which would give relatives caring for orphans a larger CSG than is standard. If this proposal could be finalised and implemented in 2013, we would see great benefits for orphans, child-headed households and abused children."

The question of foster child grants is also receiving attention from the country's courts. On 12

April 2013 the South Gauteng High Court ruled that a Kagiso grandmother qualified to be a foster parent for her three orphaned grandchildren.

"This South Gauteng judgement helps solve one of the challenges that have been preventing access to the foster child grant for grandparents," said Proudlock. "The judgment will bind all magistrates in Gauteng and be of persuasive value to magistrates in other provinces.

"However, the judgment does not provide a solution to the backlogs in the foster care system that are caused by the mismatch between the numbers in need and the capacity of social workers and courts to keep up." Prof Ann Skelton of the Centre for Child Law at the University of Pretoria concurs: "Unfortunately the judgment does not solve the systemic problems that still exist, and may in all likelihood add to the pressure on the foster care system, as it opens the doors for more people to be placed on an already stretched system."

Prof Skelton also warns that "another lapsing crisis is imminent, as all foster care orders deemed to have been extended for two years by the original court order of 2011 will expire on 22 June 2013. If these orders lapse, then the South African Social Assistance Agency will discontinue payment of the foster child grants, and we will face the same crisis we did in 2011". ■

EVENTS
 **UCT INAUGURAL LECTURES**

Professor Sandie Thomson, Division of Gastroenterology, Department of Medicine, Faculty of Health Sciences Topic: 'Gastroenterology: Awakening the Dormant Rolls Royce'. When: Wednesday, 8 May 2013 at 17h30. Where: Student Learning Centre Lecture Theatre, Anatomy Building, Faculty of Health Sciences, Admission: Free, Guests to be seated by 17h15

The Environmental and Geographical Science Department

Speaker: Anna Taylor. Topic: "Engaging in 'mode 2' knowledge production as an early career researcher: benefits and challenges". When: Thursday 2 May, 13.00-14.00. Where: Studio 5 in the EGS building

VACANT POSTS

EXECUTIVE AND ACADEMIC POSTS:

Senior Lecturer/Lecturer/ Associate Professor/Professor, Michaelis School of Fine Art, Faculty of Humanities, Closing date: 30 April 2013

Senior Lecturer/Associate Professor, Department of Mathematics & Applied Mathematics, Faculty of Science, Closing date: 30 April 2013

Senior Lecturer (Teaching only), Department of Physics, Faculty of Science, Closing date: 10 May 2013

Senior Lecturer/Lecturer (X2), School of Architecture, Planning & Geomatics, Faculty of Engineering & The Built Environment, Closing date: 10 May 2013

Dean, Centre for Higher Education Development, Closing date for nominations: 10 May 2013. Closing date for applications: 24 May 2013

Senior Lecturer/Lecturer, Department of Computer Science, Faculty of Science, Closing date: 31 May 2013

Director: Percy FitzPatrick Institute of Ornithology, Department of Biological Sciences, Faculty of Science, Closing date: 14 June 2013

Professor & Head of Department, Department of Mathematics & Applied Mathematics, Faculty of Science, Closing date: 30 June 2013

RESEARCH, PROFESSIONAL, ADMINISTRATIVE AND SUPPORT POSTS (PASS)

Administrative Assistant, Maintenance, Properties & Services Department, Closing date: 29 April 2013

Research Officer, Department of Psychiatry & Mental Health, Faculty of Health Sciences, Closing date: 30 April 2013

Laboratory Technologist, Division of Immunology, Department of Clinical Laboratory Sciences, Faculty of Health Sciences, Closing date: 30 April 2013

Front Office Purchasing Consultant, Customer Service Division, ICTS, Closing date: 30 April 2013

Assistant Finance Manager, Baxter Theatre Centre, Closing date: 3 May 2013

Field Site Laboratory Manager, SATVI, IIDMM, Faculty of Health

Sciences, Closing date: 3 May 2013

Section Manager: Special Collections & Archives, UCT Libraries, Closing date: 6 May 2013

Deputy Director: Client Liaison Services, UCT Libraries, Closing date: 19 May 2013

Deputy Director: Technical Services, UCT Libraries, Closing date: 19 May 2013

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Yoga Class: Fridays 12h45 - 13h45

EGS Dept - Upper Campus R60 per class contact: Sharon Adams x2873

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Students bring literacy to life

Each Monday and Wednesday afternoon during UCT term-time, volunteers from SHAWCO travel to Walter Tekka Primary School in Nyanga as part of the Little Moon project. Little Moon, or Nyangana, is an initiative of the student-run non-governmental organisation that helps to foster a literary culture among grade 1, 2 and 3 pupils in the impoverished area.

First established as a pilot project, but now a permanent fixture on SHAWCO Education's roster, Nyangana is currently in its third year of operation. Volunteers use drama, storytelling, songs, games, reading and "any other methods that spark the interests of these 90 young children to bring literacy to life for them", says Julia Norrish, the Little Moon project leader for 2013.

Much of the interaction takes place in the pupils' mother tongue, isiXhosa.

"We believe that the incorporation of mother-tongue education



A love of reading: Two young pupils share the joy of reading with a SHAWCO volunteer, as part of the Little Moon project. On 16 May, the committee and SHAWCO Education will host a 'packaging' event with Stop Hunger Now, at which 360 meal-bags for the pupils will be prepared.

is key when wanting to inspire young children to learn," says Norrish.

"One of the things we strongly believe in at Little Moon is that productive learning cannot happen

on an empty stomach," Norrish adds.

Little Moon provides warm meals for the children before every session, which are sourced at a relatively low cost from

hunger-relief organisation Stop Hunger Now.

On 16 May, the Little Moon committee and SHAWCO Education will host a 'packaging' event with Stop Hunger Now at which 360 meal-bags (each meal-bag feeds six children) for the pupils will be prepared. Norrish is appealing to the UCT community to lend a hand on the day.

"We are calling on volunteers from UCT to help us not only in packing the food, but also in raising funds to pay for the food," says Norrish. "Just R10 covers the cost of one meal-bag, and we welcome passers-by to donate this on the day."

Little Moon aims to raise R5 400, which will cover food costs until the end of 2013.

Interested parties can contact the Little Moon project via email: littlemoon.edu@shawco.org. Alternatively, donors are welcome to visit the SHAWCO office on Level 5 of the Steve Biko Building on UCT's Upper Campus. ■

Preview of Africa Month

Africa Month at UCT sees a wide range of activities, from basketball to books, and from Sotho dance to fascinating debates.

- Africa Month kicks off on 1 May with the All-Africa Basketball Tournament, appropriately titled 'Africa United'.
- On 2 May the Africa Day Plaza Event showcases African food, stalls, music, dance, poetry and art. First-year students from Michaelis School of Fine Art construct 'Unibags' symbolising their perceptions of African identity and reflecting the 'Uni-queeness' of being African.
- Short scholarly presentations, Sotho dance, Township Jazz and tastes of Africa culminate in 'Youth in Africa – on stage and in research' on 8 May.
- UCT Libraries celebrate the restoration of the JW Jagger Library on 10 May, with some of the highlights including an online exhibition of maps of Africa, poster displays, manuscripts and archives, and an online display of the Land Act of 1913.
- 11 May brings with it music and dance, from countries across the continent, at the Baxter Concert Hall. This concert features Mozambican Chopi xylophone virtuoso Venancio Zango, who is a South African College of Music (SACM) artist-in-residence for the first semester.
- The University of Toronto's Prof Alexie Tcheyuap presents a seminar on his book, *Post-Nationalist African Cinemas* (2011), on 13 May, followed by his lecture on 'African Child Soldiers' on 14 May.
- 17 May sees a masterclass with filmmaker Akin Omotoso, the Nigerian-born South African actor, writer and director, who shares his local and international experiences in the film industry.
- The Centre for Higher Education Development (CHED) seminar on 'Addressing the (In)Visibility of African Research', presented by the Scholarly Communications in Africa Programme, will give insights into the rise of the internet and information and communication technologies in African universities, and the various challenges faced in the race to participate.
- 23 May sees a round-table discussion on Afropolitan Research opportunities and constraints, with an equally exciting DVC Prof T Nhlapo-hosted panel discussion to follow on 24 May, titled 'The Big African Debate'.
- Various staff and student events and series take place over the month, including the IAPO Africa Regional Cup tournament, in which staff face-off in Bola and Volleyball on 17 May, as well as the Annual Candlelight Memorial Ceremony on 9 May, which will call on participants to break down the barriers of HIV stigma on the continent. CHED offers 'Languages for Life and Learning' from 13 May, and the English Department presents the 'Africa, Reading and Humanities' discussion series from 7 May onwards. ■

International squash and inter-varsity excitement

UCT's squash courts will host some of the big names in world squash during the Keith Grainger Memorial UCT Squash Open from 28 April to 4 May.

The tournament is held in honour of late UCT student and talented squash player Keith Grainger, who succumbed to cancer in 2001, during his third year at UCT. Grainger, whose leg was amputated before he arrived at university, was deeply involved with UCT squash before his passing, as both player and organiser.

This year's instalment – the eighth so far – is registered as part of a US\$5 000 series (about R45 600) of events in South Africa on the men's Professional Squash Association (PSA) and Women's Squash Association (WSA) tours.

"The UCT Squash Club has encouraged the local community to get involved and support the event on and off the court," says Kerr Rogers, sports co-ordinator at UCT. "Spectators will be guaranteed plenty of drama on the court, with SA's best players matching their skills against players ranked among the top 100 in the world."

These players include alumna Siyoli Waters (South Africa), ranked 41st in the world (ladies), and Shaun le Roux (South Africa), ranked 54th in the world and second in SA.

The finals of both the women's and men's events will take place on 4 May.

"All donations received will be handed over to the Cancer Association of South Africa at the prize-giving on 4 May," added Rogers.

This week also sees the revived intervarsity sporting bonanza between UCT and arch-rivals Stellenbosch University taking place for the second year in a row. The Ikeys and Maties will cross swords in 27 sporting codes from 3 to 5 May at UCT.

Chess, table tennis, netball and hockey are among the codes that take to their 'fields' on 3 May, while the next day begins with a cycling time trial inside Jameson Hall. The yacht clubs take to the seas at Milnerton Aquatic Club, while Ikey TaekwonDokas will be looking to get one up on their Matie opponents on the martial arts mat, before a 4x100m relay lights up the UCT A Rugby Field.

The final day of the annual event sees the athletics clubs competing in a 10km race, the golfers 'getting their McIlroy on' at the Westlake Golf Club, and a surfing meet between UCT, US and the Cape Peninsula University of Technology surfers, depending on the weather. ■



Get the message: Sixth-year medical student and president of SHAWCO Health Saadiq Moolla's Mobile Xhosa site provides medical translations for students and healthcare practitioners via cell-phone. The School of Languages and Literatures

Mobile Xhosa translator helps the medicine go down

It's a common problem healthcare practitioners face in a multilingual society: how to translate medical questions and ailments in another language accurately enough to provide correct diagnosis and treatment.

And it's one sixth-year medical student and president of SHAWCO Health Saadiq Moolla faced head-on when treating isiXhosa-speaking patients at SHAWCO's mobile clinics.

His Mobile Xhosa website/mobisite is a technologically innovative and neat solution. The site provides free English/isiXhosa translations, via cellphone, for commonly-used medical phrases. Access is via a URL, and once on the site, users can search according to groups of commonly-asked phrases such as 'presenting problem', 'heart', 'respiratory' or 'social'. It also has a dictionary.

The idea came to Moolla two years ago, when the need for medical translations became apparent during his volunteer work at SHAWCO clinics. It was also fuelled by an interest in web design and communications developed as a schoolboy at Rondebosch Boys' High School.

"Language proficiency is part of our medical training. We learn Afrikaans and isiXhosa through the Department of African Languages in the School of Languages and Literatures, which teach us the basic skills needed to communicate with patients."

But many students like Moolla struggled

with isiXhosa.

"So I built the site as an aid for myself, a handy reference on my phone. It helps so much to be able to explain to a patient that you will be taking blood, for example, so that they understand what you're doing and why. It reduces anxiety and improves the quality of care."

In fourth year he showed the site to one of his tutors, who encouraged Moolla to develop it. This he did with the help of the African languages and literatures team, who became instrumental in the site's development. It's still a work in progress. The department provides new translations on an ongoing basis – and Moolla keeps discovering new phrases he has trouble communicating!

He'd also had a first-hand 'lost in translation' experience when he visited a doctor during a trip to Egypt.

"They spoke only Arabic. I didn't get the proper treatment – or reassurances. In South Africa, patients experience this in their own country."

He'd like to include sound bites to help students with pronunciation, and he'd like to see the site expand to include other vernacular languages.

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