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UCT professor appointed to head Law and Society Association's global portfolio

University of Cape Town (UCT) law expert Professor Dee Smythe – a “pioneer in the field of law and society in Africa” – has been appointed as the Law and Society Association's (LSA) inaugural coordinator of global activities (CGA).

Smythe is a professor of public law at UCT, the director of the Law faculty's Centre for Law and Society, and holds the interim National Research Foundation (NRF) South African Research Chairs Initiative (SARChI) Chair in Security and Justice.

The LSA is an international organisation that brings together scholars from across disciplines who share a common interest in the place of law in societal, political, economic and cultural life. The organisation, based in Massachusetts in the United States, is the largest sociolegal association in the world. She has been handpicked for the newly created position to build on the LSA's commitment to supporting the field of law and society across countries and geographical regions.

Commenting on her appointment, Smythe said that she considers it an opportune time to build on the work of members and scholars who have worked tirelessly to develop the field globally. “This new phase builds on that work and those relationships,” she said.

“As mundane as it sounds, I think the key achievement for the CGA will not be to come up with a fantastic idea or event. But rather to bed down a consistent and predictable programme of global cooperation and initiatives that become a regular part of what we do as an association, and that others can build upon going forward.”

During her three-year tenure as the CGA, Smythe will be responsible for advising the LSA president and trustees on all matters that directly relate to the organisation's global standing. In addition, she will also promote and encourage close relations between the LSA and other associations across the world.

“I'm especially excited to work with our members to put in place programming and activities that support capacity building and facilitate global collaborations outside of our annual meetings,” Smythe said.

She will work closely with the board of trustees and other LSA committees to implement a global collaboration programme. The initiative will provide support for sociolegal training, topical laboratories and sociolegal workshops with a particular focus on the Global South. Planning the LSA's 2022 international conference in Lisbon, which she is co-chairing alongside two of her colleagues, is also on her to-do list.



Professor Dee Smythe

Photo: Supplied

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