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UCT's A-rated researchers tally the highest in SA

The University of Cape Town (UCT) shone at this year's National Research Foundation (NRF) awards, with 31 researchers awarded A-ratings in 2022 in what is the highest of any university in South Africa, while six UCT researchers won awards in three categories.

"It is recognition like this that demonstrates that our researchers and research support community are key in securing and retaining our position as the [top university in South Africa and on the continent](#)," said UCT Deputy Vice-Chancellor: Research and Internationalisation, Professor Sue Harrison.

Every year, the NRF celebrates South African research at its annual awards ceremony. Nominated by their peers and research institutions, awardees are recognised in a variety of categories.

UCT's Professor Rajend Meshrie (Department of African Studies & Linguistics) received the Hamilton Naki Award to honour the many ways in which he navigated challenges and hardships to deliver an incredibly high standard of research. Professor Meshrie is also one of UCT's A-rated researchers.

Associate Professor Amir Patel (Department of Electrical Engineering), who uses the locomotion of animals to inspire his robotics; and Dr Wade Petersen (Department of Chemistry), who focuses on the development of new bio-actives, were both awarded the Research Excellence Award for Emerging Researchers for their outstanding research performance.

Jessica Fell (Department of Civil Engineering), Nkosiyomzi Haile Matutu (Department of Psychology) and Athi Welsh (Department of Chemistry) – all final-year PhD students – were handed the Research Excellence Award for Next Generation Researchers to celebrate their outstanding academic performances.

"What is striking about this year's cohort of NRF awardees is that their research has incredible value outside the realm of academia. [When I read](#) about the focus of their research, it is evident that these are South African researchers with their focus very much on the benefit for South Africa – local knowledge to address local challenges – through

research that is cutting edge at home and globally. This brings our Vision 2030 strategy for UCT to life,” said Harrison.

Both Professor Linda-Gail Bekker (Desmond Tutu HIV Centre) and Professor Tommie Meyer (Department of Computer Science) improved their ratings to an A, while Emeritus Professor Dirk van Zyl Smit (Centre for Criminology) also achieved a new A-rating. The late Professor Timothy Egan (Department of Chemistry) was also awarded an A-rating posthumously.

Additionally, several researchers retained their A ratings, including Professor Anusuya Chinsamy-Turan (Department of Biological Sciences), Professor Valerie Mizrahi (Institute of Infectious Disease and Molecular Medicine), Professor Gerald Nurick (Department of Mechanical Engineering) and Emeritus Professor David Chidester (Department for the Study of Religions).

Professor Jess Auerbach (Graduate School of Business) was also awarded a P-rating within one month of joining UCT as a result of support from her previous institution, North-West University.

ENDS

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