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UCT PhD scholar becomes only fifth African in prestigious CAS Future Leaders Programme



UCT PhD candidate Athi Welsh.

A University of Cape Town (UCT) PhD scholar, Athi Welsh, has been selected in the prestigious CAS [Future Leaders Programme](#), making him only the fifth African to attain this honour.

He is part of the 35 participants for 2024 in the CAS programme, a division of the [American Chemical Society](#) (ACS) that specialises in scientific knowledge management.

Welsh is among the exceptional early-career scientists selected from a large pool of global candidates who applied for a spot in the programme known as one of the best leadership learning experiences in the world of science.

“Being the fifth person on the African continent to be selected as a CAS future leader, the selection is truly humbling and equally exciting. To be selected for such a prestigious

programme represents a significant validation of my abilities, potential, and leadership qualities. This selection indicates that my achievements and contributions to the field have been recognised and acknowledged. It will represent a significant milestone in my academic journey, signalling not only recognition of my past achievements but also opening doors to new possibilities and opportunities for future success,” explained Welsh.

The 28-year-old Mthatha-born recently completed his PhD in bioorganometallic chemistry under the supervision of Professor Gregory Smith and Professor Sharon Prince, which is currently under examination. He is a postdoctoral research fellow in the Prince Cancer Laboratory in the Department of Human Biology.

CAS Future Leaders Programme director Peter Carlton said: “CAS Future Leaders offers early-career scientists the opportunity to participate in leadership and storytelling seminars, learn from industry thought leaders how to present their ideas in an impactful manner, engage in scientific discourse, and develop connections with peer scientists from around the world.”

The 2024 selectees are a diverse group, hailing from 13 countries, working at 33 graduate or post-doctoral programs, and specialising in scientific disciplines that span computer-aided drug design, atmospheric/environmental chemistry, sustainable polymers, and cancer diagnostics.

Participants in the programme, which will take place in August, will also get a behind-the-scenes look into how CAS connects the world’s science. They will present their research at ACS Fall 2024 in Denver, Colorado, and receive a three-year ACS membership as well.

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