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6 May 2025

UCT world-renowned TB researcher elected to prestigious US academy



Professor Emerita Valerie Mizrahi

Photo: UCT News

The University of Cape Town's (UCT) world-renowned tuberculosis (TB) researcher and senior academic, Emerita Professor Valerie Mizrahi, has been elected as an international honorary member of the prestigious American Academy of Arts and Sciences. She was elected in the biological sciences category, under the immunology and microbiology subfield.

Mizrahi is the director of UCT's Molecular Mycobacteriology Research Unit and former director of the Institute for Infectious Disease and Molecular Medicine.

The announcement honours Professor Mizrahi's exceptional contributions to the field biological sciences. She joins an elite group of international scholars recognised for their

excellence across a broad spectrum of fields, including science and technology, the arts, humanities and public affairs.

Established in 1780, the American Academy of Arts and Sciences brings together outstanding individuals from around the world to tackle pressing global issues and promote the public good. Its members include Nobel and Pulitzer Prize winners, public intellectuals, artists and scientists.

She joins other UCT members of the academy, including former Vice-Chancellor *interim* Emeritus Professor Daya Reddy and former chair and head of the Department of Medicine Emeritus Professor Solomon (Solly) Benatar.

'Special privilege'

"It is a special privilege to be elected to an academy that includes such esteemed scholars from UCT and other institutions in South Africa, as well as scholars from across the globe who have distinguished themselves in all fields of human endeavour," Mizrahi said. "It holds very special significance, given the divisiveness, polarisation and strife that characterise our world today."

Mizrahi described a sense of overwhelming emotion – surprise, joy and, most of all, gratitude.

"I am deeply honoured and profoundly grateful to accept the invitation of membership to this prestigious academy," she said. "I have been privileged to spend my life surrounded by people who have loved, supported and accompanied me through my journey as a mother and daughter, and as a scholar and mentor."

Mizrahi expressed deep gratitude to her family for their steadfast support, patience and understanding, which enabled her to pursue her aspirations freely. She also acknowledged the vital role of her mentors, colleagues and institutional affiliations – including UCT, the University of the Witwatersrand, and the National Health Laboratory Service – for fostering an environment that supported her development as a scientist.

Nurturing new talent

"And of course, the many brilliant young people who have worked in my group over the years, this honour rightly belongs to you," she added.

She said that playing a role in nurturing a new generation of scientists contributing significantly to public health in Africa has been a source of immense pride and joy.

She now looks forward to attending the academy's induction ceremony in Boston, Massachusetts in October, and to contributing to its continued mission of excellence.

Story by Niémah Davids, UCT News

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