

Professor scoops two national awards

Heike Winschiers-Theophilus, a professor in the Faculty of Computing and Informatics, has achieved the singular honour of being adjudged the National Scientist of the Year 2016 and Researcher of the Year 2016 by the National Commission on Research, Science and Technology (NCRST).

Prof Winschiers-Theophilus received the coveted titles at the annual National Research, Science, Technology, Engineering and Innovation Awards Ceremony which is hosted in recognition of individuals who have made immense contributions to the country's development. The Awards Ceremony marked the conclusion of the NCRST Month of Science which showcased various activities centred on science, technology and innovation throughout September. Shortly after receiving the award, she said: "I am extremely honoured to have received these two national awards in recognition of my scientific research work. I now feel even more encouraged to pursue research and technology development activities, striving for the highest socio-economic impact at national level."

Winschiers-Theophilus has been involved in Namibia's education sector since 1994. The first priority at that time was to develop a national workforce in the Information Communication Technology sector by developing suitable curricula and capacity building of graduates. "Over the last years my focus has been on

technology design and research with indigenous and marginalised communities, with the aim of promoting socio-economic improvements," she said.

Besides her world-renowned work with indigenous communities, she has recently expanded her focus on marginalised Namibian youth. "One of my major concerns is the lack of opportunities for under-qualified Namibian youth to prosper within an extremely unequal and harsh national economy. Thus I have established a number of research and community outreach projects under the umbrella of technology design for social change with Namibian marginalised youth," she added.

Dr Anna Matros-Goreses, Director: Project Services Unit at NUST, said she is extremely proud to have such exemplary staff members as part of the Institution, while the Dean of the Faculty of Informatics and Computing, Dr Anicia Peters, said: "Prof Winschiers-Theophilus is already an internationally renowned researcher, so it is wonderful to see that she finally receives these accolades at home as well."



Prof Winschiers-Theophilus receiving one of her awards from Willy Mertens, Senior Financial Manager of Debmarine Namibia.

Housing project for Keetmanshoop

Representatives from five Finnish and Namibian partners recently signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) in Windhoek that will initiate a pilot housing programme at Keetmanshoop.

The partners have formed a consortium known as 'Smart Community' which aims to devise solutions for holistic community development projects by responding to the challenges of rapid urbanisation in Namibia. It promotes local economic and social development and value creation in an environmentally, socially and culturally sustainable way.

Smart Community addresses a wide range of issues from service provision, community building and employment creation to housing. The development process that has been set in motion by the signing of the MoU will commence with a survey among residents, service providers, officials, policy makers and the business fraternity at Keetmanshoop to determine the town's housing needs.

The consortium consists of Lithon Developers and its four Finnish partners that represent expertise in the fields of architecture, town planning, engineering, construction and health and social services. The research partners include NUST, University of Tampere and VVT Technical Research Centre of Finland Ltd. Funding for

the research is provided by the partners in collaboration with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Finland and the Finnish Funding Agency for Innovation (Tekes).

Gabriel Freyer, Chairperson of the Management Committee of the Keetmanshoop Municipal Council, welcomed the initiative during a brief signing ceremony and said his Council values the importance of Private Public Partnerships that deliver essential infrastructure. He said the Council has always encouraged investors to tap into the opportunities presented by Keetmanshoop.

"We are pleased and excited by this new concept that has been introduced to us by the Finnish-Namibian Smart Community Consortium. We believe that agreements such as this will go a long way towards alleviating the need for housing. What is even more spectacular about the proposed concept is that it encompasses holistic community development as well as the provision of affordable housing," Freyer said. He assured the Consortium that the Council would fulfil its promise of providing the necessary land for development.



Learners tackled some of the science projects as a group during the Science and Technology Innovation Festival in Ongwediva.

Festival cultivates interest in Science

Hundreds of learners and youth visited the NUST stand at the Science and Technology Innovation (STI) Festival held in Ongwediva recently. Themed "Love Pulses, Science: The Pulse of Innovation," the event was organised by the National Commission on Research, Science and Technology (NCRST).

The emphasis of the annual festival is on innovation and creativity, applied sciences and technology, with the main aim of promoting science and technology to the public, especially the youth. The festival also serves as a platform to change the attitude of the youth toward the engineering, science and technology fields that learners tend to perceive as being uninteresting and complicated.

Representatives from the USA's National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA), the Goabeb Research and Training Centre, Namibia Business Innovation Institute (NBII), the Faculties of Computing and Informatics, Engineering, Health and Applied Sciences as well as the Design Lab worked together to ensure the event's

success. Learners were educated through science quizzes, videos and interactive talks while NBII offered workshops on creating innovative business ideas, the importance of social media and market research.

Hasekiel Johannes, an NBII Innovation Marketplace Officer, said he was impressed with the overall response of the learners. "Giving an opportunity to learners to attend workshops is an excellent way of informal learning," he said. Johannes added that the event was an eye-opening experience to all stakeholders involved.

Science remains one of the subjects with the lowest pass rate amongst learners and this festival is one of the efforts that are being made to remedy the situation.



The partners to the agreement shake hands after the signing: Seated, are Anne Saloranta, Ambassador of Finland, and Tjama Tjivikua. At the back are Desmond Basson, CEO of the Keetmanshoop Municipality; Inkeri Ruuskanen from the Tampere University in Finland; Gabriel Freyer, Chairperson of the Keetmanshoop Municipal Council Management Committee and Timo Philander, Finnish Honorary Consul of Namibia in Finland.