Paying tribute to Prof Dewald Roode: a true scholar

Prof Dewald Roode passed away on Sunday, 27 September 2009. Prof Carina de Villiers, the current head of the Department of Informatics, pays tribute to him.

In 1988, Prof Roode was appointed to head the new Department of Informatics at the University of Pretoria, while continuing on a part-time basis with consultancy work. Within five years of starting the department, the Department of Informatics at the University of Pretoria was internationally known, and welcomed a regular stream of international visitors who contributed tremendously to the continued development of the department.

In 1995, the University's management requested Prof Roode to accept, in conjunction with his job as head of the Department of Informatics, the position as Director of Information Technology (responsible for all computer and network services across the entire University). He handled these two positions concurrently until 1998, when a new academic dispensation was established with the development of the School of Information Technology, incorporating the three academic departments of Computer Science, Informatics and Information Science. He became its first director in March 1998.

During his tenure as director of the school, he was instrumental in the development of two new degree courses – the bachelor in Information Technology (a four-year degree course) and the master's in Information Technology. A PhD (IT) was also introduced. These courses have been phenomenally successful, and achieved the objective of integrating the activities of the three constituting departments of the school.

At the end of 2001, Prof Roode decided to continue with his academic work at different universities, and to devote more time to the high-level training of individuals in the computer industry who have not had the opportunity to receive formal tertiary education. This decision meant that he had to exercise an early retirement option at the University of Pretoria.

During his retirement, he was busier than ever. Apart from his continued academic involvement with various universities, he completed a six-year term in 2007 as chair of Technical Committee 8 on Information Systems of the International Federation for Information Processing (IFIP), and was a member of the Steering Committee of IFIP's World Information Technology Forum in Lithuania in 2003 and in Botswana in 2005. In 2008, he developed and presented a series of 14 seminars on research and innovation core skills for the South African Council for Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR). Prof Roode supervised more than 30 doctoral students to completion. In 2008, he was honoured by IFIP with the highest accolade for service, the Silver Core. He also received the LEO award from the International Association of Information Systems in December 2008. The purpose of the LEO Award is to recognise truly outstanding individuals in the information systems community, both academics and practitioners, who have made exceptional contributions to research in and/or the practice of information systems.

Prof Roode was a true scholar who contributed enormously to his discipline. He will be missed by his colleagues and friends. A truly beautiful mind has passed on. We salute you, Prof Roode.