University of Pretoria collaborates with the Department of Communications

By Sanku Tsunke

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Prof Cheryl de la Rey: UP's Vice-Chancellor and Principal, and Mr Alfred Mashishi: Chief Director of Special

Projects at Department of Communications, after the signing of the Memorandum of Agreement.

The Vice-Chancellor and Principal of the University of Pretoria (UP), Prof Cheryl de la Rey, has officially formalised the University□s collaboration with the Department of Communications (DoC). This follows the signing of the Memorandum of Agreement with the Director-General of the Department of Communications (DoC), Ms Rosey Sekese, in December 2011.

The collaboration aims to further develop the objectives of the African Network for Information Ethics (ANIE) amongst the African academics and policy makers on the application of ethical reasoning to e-government, and also to promote academic research in the field of Information Ethics.

It was through this collaboration that the African Centre of Excellence for Informatics Ethics (ACEIE) was established at UP, with funding received from the DoC. The ACEIE coordinates activities in the field of research and training in Information Ethics in Africa in partnership with other stakeholders, which include ANIE, UNESCO, University of Wisconsin (USA) and The Cappuro-Fiek Foundation (Europe). It also advises the South African Government and, if required, inter-governmental structures in Africa.

The ACEIE will provide training and research to support the following objectives:

- **Development of Information Societies:** to create awareness of the importance of information in different communities and amongst responsible persons and information practitioners.
- **Education in Information Ethics:** to develop a short course to enhance ethical reasoning amongst information practitioners.
- **Community development activities:** to promote the effective and ethical use of information in different communities.
- **Knowledge distribution:** to ensure the development of the information ethics teaching curriculum amongst the 12 African universities participating in the teaching of Information Ethics.
- **Internalisation of Information Ethics policies and practices:** to promote key proposals and research, as agreed, concerning research in the field of information ethics and its application within African and international and inter-governmental organisations such as the African Union and UNESCO.

Prof De la Rey expressed the University's appreciation for the opportunity to further collaborate with the DoC, and also of the various other partnership projects in which they are currently engaged. This, she said, is "a demonstration of the University's commitment to taking responsibility for building South Africa and developing its democracy, and also for improving the country's systems to ensure better service delivery".

Mr Alfred Mashishi, Chief Director of Special Projects at the DoC, speaking on behalf of Department's Director-General, said that it is his department's responsibility to ensure that society does not lag behind regarding issues relating to information technology, and that partnering with the University of Pretoria will ensure that this objective is realised.

He continued: "We realise that information ethics has progressed internationally and that it is important for us to contribute and take a lead in matters relating to IT, communication and information ethics. We also cherish the cooperation between the DoC and UP, which will hopefully assist us in going beyond the borders of the African region."

Mr Jaco du Toit: Communication and Information Advisor to UNESCO, Prof Cheryl de la Rey: UP's Vice-Chancellor and Principal, and Mr Alfred Mashishi: Chief Director of Special Projects at Department of Communications, after the signing of the Memorandum of Agreement.

Prof Roelf Sandenberg, the Dean of the Faculty of Engineering, Built Environment & IT, Prof Cheryl de la Rey: UP's Vice-Chancellor and Principal, Mr Alfred Mashishi: Chief Director of Special Projects at Department of Communications, and Mr Coetzee Bester: The Director for African Centre of Excellence for Informatics Ethics.

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