

Architecture welcomes new Head of Department

In order to remain a flagship member of the University of Pretoria, the Department of Architecture needs a suitably qualified and dedicated leader. Prof Chrisna du Plessis has been appointed as the new Head of the Department of Architecture. She takes the reins from Prof Roger Fisher, who was appointed as Acting Head of Department after the passing of Prof Karel Bakker on 19 November 2014.

Prof Du Plessis commenced her academic career at the University of Pretoria, where she obtained a bachelor's degree in Architecture in 1991 and a master's degree in Architecture (cum laude) in 1999. She obtained a PhD from the University of Salford in Manchester, England, in 2009. In 2010, she was awarded an honorary doctorate by the Chalmers University of Technology in Göteborg, Sweden.

After completing her first degree, Prof Du Plessis practised as a development consultant specialising in low-cost housing development and ecotourism. Between 1996 and 1998, she was employed as a part-time lecturer in the Department of Architecture at the University of Pretoria. In 1997, she joined the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR) as an urban researcher. She was promoted to senior specialist in 2000 and to principal researcher in 2005. Prof Du Plessis accepted a part-time position in the Department of Construction Economics at the University of Pretoria and was appointed full-time as an associate professor in 2011.

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scientific committees of 19 international conferences and has acted as a juror for national and international architecture competitions including the Holcim Foundation Sustainable Construction Award and the European Solar Decathlon.

In 2012, she received the Salford Alumni Achievers Award and she has been awarded the prestigious Chalmers' Jubilee Visiting Professorship for 2016. Prof Du Plessis has recently published *Designing for hope: pathways to regenerative sustainability* with Routledge and produced a documentary, *The regenerates*.

Her vision for the Department is to build on existing strengths to grow a department that is internationally recognised for producing graduates with skills that are relevant to the challenges of the 21st century. She hopes that the research emanating from this department will be instrumental in creating a resilient and regenerative built environment that will contribute to the positive development of society.

She hopes to achieve this by revising the curriculum to ensure its continued relevance to the professions, pursuing opportunities for international staff and student exchange and establishing greater research synergies and collaboration with the other departments in the School for the Built Environment and international partners. 



→ *Prof Chrisna du Plessis (left) in conversation with Prof Roger Fisher.*