

## MEDIA RELEASE

### UP academic wins NSTF-Water Research Commission Award at ‘Science Oscars’

PRETORIA – University of Pretoria (UP) academic Professor Evans Chirwa walked away with the NSTF-Water Research Commission (WRC) Award during the 24<sup>th</sup> National Science and Technology Forum in partnership with South32 (NSTF-South32) Awards on Thursday evening (21 July 2022).

Prof Chirwa, a professor and the Rand Water Research Chair: Water Utilisation in the Department of Chemical Engineering at UP, was awarded for his work on ‘the introduction into South Africa of the use of biological analogues in advanced water treatment and water recovery with applications in metal-halide heterogeneous photocatalysis’.

The finalists and awardees were honoured, announced, and celebrated at the Awards gala dinners held in Johannesburg and Cape Town simultaneously, and via live broadcast on the NSTF YouTube channel. It is an honour to be nominated, an achievement to reach the finals and an exceptional milestone of excellence to be a winner. The awards’ theme for this year was ‘Basic Sciences for Sustainable Development’, in line with the international theme for 2022 proclaimed by the United Nations: International Year of Basic Sciences for Sustainable Development.

Reacting to his win, Prof Chirwa said just being nominated for the award alone had been an honour. “Being nominated for this award by the University of Pretoria was the greatest recognition I’d received since I joined the University. My research group and I, based on the University’s South Campus, are overjoyed by this achievement. My postgraduate students work very hard every day; they are the true winners of this honour. My family supported and encouraged me through the process, and I thank them from the bottom of my heart for the love and support,” Prof Chirwa said.

UP Vice-Chancellor and Principal Professor Tawana Kupe, who attended the Johannesburg gala dinner in support of UP’s nine finalists, expressed his pride in Prof Chirwa’s achievement.

“We are very proud that Professor Chirwa won an award at the NSTF Awards this evening. The depth, excellence and quality of his research and the fact that he’s training a generation of students who will do the same level and quality of research and, most importantly, the impact and difference that his research makes to society makes us truly proud of him. We wish him well, and may he go on to attain even greater success,” Prof Kupe said.

Prof Chirwa said that he celebrates all the nominees and finalists. “I salute all nominees and finalists and colleagues who have been an inspiration throughout my professional career. We only excel because we work in a community of the brilliant minds in this region. We share information, we collaborate, we co-supervise postgrads,... to bring the best of each other. Thank you very much everyone for your support.”

He added that his plans are to continue working hard. “We are still working on new projects for water treatments, the research group is growing. We hope that by next year we’ll have doubled our graduates,” he said.

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The NSTF Awards are the largest, most comprehensive, and sought-after national awards of their kind in the country. They were established in 1998 to recognise outstanding contributions to science, engineering, and technology (SET) and innovation by SET-related professionals, teams, and organisations in South Africa. This includes scientists, engineers, innovators, science communicators, engineering capacity developers and organisational managers/leaders, as well as data and research managers.

Speaking at the awards ceremony, NSTF Chairperson Professor Ali Dhansay used his welcoming address to congratulate winners and finalists.

“Congratulations to the awards winners and finalists. Thank you for your superb contributions to SET here in South Africa. Thank you also to the nominees and the host institutions for nurturing practitioners in SET,” Prof Dhansay said.

Buti Manamela, Deputy Minister of the Department of Higher Education, Science, and Innovation, which is one of the sponsors of the NSTF-South32 awards, praised the awards and the NSTF for the work they do focusing on the youth and community outreach projects.

“I am particularly pleased by the emphasis on young people and community outreach in the various awards categories. Since its inception, the NSTF has been doing important work as a unified voice for the science, engineering, technology, and innovation community in our country. The NSTF has also been a key participant in the evolution of our department,” Manamela said.

He added that platforms like the NSTF-South32 Awards are important in recognising the impact of members of the science community.

“It does not require a science degree to appreciate the danger of having a scientific community that believes that science must not actively concern itself with the well-being of, or sustainability of human life. We need more socially conscious scientists and innovators. I believe that platforms such as the NSTF Awards are useful in helping us identify and support such scientists and innovators,” he said.

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Caption: Academic Professor Evans Chirwa

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## **About the University of Pretoria**

The University of Pretoria (UP) is one of the largest contact and residential universities in South Africa, with its administration offices located on the Hatfield Campus, Pretoria. This 114-year-old institution is also the largest producer of research in South Africa.

Spread over seven campuses, it has nine faculties and a business school, the Gordon Institute of Business Science (GIBS). It is the only University in the country with a Faculty of Veterinary Science, which is ranked top in Africa. UP has 120 academic departments and 92 centres and institutes, accommodating more than 56 000 students and offering about 1 100 study programmes.

UP is one of the top five universities in South Africa, according to the 2019-2020 rankings by the Center for World University Rankings. The QS World University Rankings also placed UP among the top 100 universities worldwide in three fields of study (veterinary science, theology and law), and UP is in the top 1% in eight

fields of study (agricultural sciences, clinical medicine, engineering, environment/ecology, immunology, microbiology, plant and animal sciences and social sciences), according to the Web of Science Essential Indicators.

For more information, go to [www.up.ac.za](http://www.up.ac.za)