

## NEWS RELEASE

### NAS inaugural Open Day shows learners how scientists can change the world



*Prof Barend Erasmus (Dean of NAS) guiding student Gayatri Gupta through the use of a microscope*

PRETORIA - “The impact of science extends far beyond the confines of our classrooms and textbooks. It has the power to transform lives, uplift communities, and shape nations' destiny.” These wise words were shared by Prof Barend Erasmus, Dean of the Faculty of Natural and Agricultural Sciences (NAS) at the University of Pretoria (UP), at the Faculty’s first Open Day with the theme, “Become a Scientist – Change the World.”

More than 600 Grade 11 and 12 learners from as far as the Free State and Limpopo Province, accompanied by their parents, attended the event to learn more about science and how the University makes STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics) education more accessible for learners.

The Dean added, “To unlock the full potential of Africa, we need more than just dreams; we need scientists - brave, curious, and relentless in their pursuit of knowledge. And that's where you, as learners, come in. Here, within the walls of our University, lies a world of opportunity waiting to be explored. From Actuarial Science to Zoology and everything in between, the possibilities are endless, and the choice is yours.”

---

Learners got to witness science in action from all 13 of our departments' exhibitions. This ranged from uncovering the mysteries of the Universe through Physics and exploring the wonders of space, time, and beyond. At Zoology and Entomology, learners and parents were informed how their diverse studies can help build a sustainable future for the African ecosystem. Research in food security, botanical medicines, and plant biodiversity conservation was showcased, and opportunities were provided to explore the wonders of the animal kingdom at Animal Science.

Learners were also treated to tours of our state-of-the-art facilities and exciting demonstrations, some of which included:

- an experiment on how to approximate the number  $\pi$
- a mobile planetarium
- learning about drones and weather forecasting apps
- trying out a 360-degree selfie photo camera
- labelling an actual cow skeleton
- an ice cream making demonstration
- a thrilling minerals and rock demonstrations at Geology
- learning how to extract DNA

Alumni and industry members in many of the sciences offered by NAS also attended the day and shared their experiences and possible career opportunities with qualifications from the Faculty. [Watch this video](#) to hear messages from these UP alumni captains of industry in STEM fields: Dr Werner Welthagen (Sasol), Dr Christoph Nieuwoudt (FNB), Dr Tobias Doyer (GrainSA), Mr Stuart Martin (ESRI SA).

The Dean encouraged learners with his final words, "Our continent, Africa, offers boundless opportunities, and we are at the forefront of harnessing its potential. But to do this, we need knowledge that transforms into action."

--- End ---

---

**Media enquiries** can be directed to Mr Sashlin Girraj - Public Relations & Events Manager

Email: [sashlin.girraj@up.ac.za](mailto:sashlin.girraj@up.ac.za) | Cell: +27(0)72 447 3784

---

## **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 its Hatfield Campus in Pretoria. This 115-year-old institution is also one of the largest producers 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 the

best 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. It has the most academic staff with PhDs (70%), NRF-rated researchers (613).

The 2024 Times Higher Education subject rankings placed UP first in South Africa in the fields of Law, Veterinary Science, Accounting and Finance; Agriculture and Forestry and Electrical and Electronic Engineering. Quacquarelli Symonds (QS) ranked the University among the top five in Africa, as part of their 2024 World University Rankings (WUR). UP was the only South African university featured in the 2023 World University Rankings for Innovation (WURI), falling within in the 101-200 range of innovative universities.

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