

NEWS RELEASE

UP honours top scholars at annual Academic Achievers' Awards



Prof Francis Peterson delivering his keynote address at the Academic Achievers' Awards

PRETORIA - The University of Pretoria (UP) celebrated its top academics at the 24th annual Academic Achievers' Awards, held on Tuesday, 5 November 2024. This much-anticipated event acknowledges the work of UP staff members whose research centres on addressing society's most pressing problems and has a positive impact, both locally and globally.

This year, 114 winners were honoured across six categories, including 96 academics who were recognised for being on the list of National Research Foundation (NRF)-rated scholars for their outstanding work over the past year. One A-rated researcher, 11 B-rated researchers, 70 C-rated researchers and 14 Y-rated researchers were acknowledged.

UP Vice-Chancellor and Principal Professor Francis Petersen congratulated the researchers who received awards.

"Your dedication and ground-breaking work ensure that UP is widely recognised for the solutions you provide through your research outputs," he said. "Your efforts and achievements will ensure our continued success as

we leverage our reputation as a research-intensive university to build bridges into Africa and across continents in search of solutions to complex local and global challenges.”

The recipients of the Exceptional Academic Achiever Award were [Professors Jacek Banasiak](#), [Armanda Bastos](#), [Namrita Lall](#), [Nelishia Pillay](#) and [Frans Viljoen](#). This award goes to senior academics who have already achieved the status of professor, are regarded highly by their peers, and have consistently excelled in the areas of under- and postgraduate teaching and learning, research, community service and administration over a significant period.

In light of UP’s strategic goals to achieve academic excellence, international competitiveness and local relevance, the award for Exceptional Young Researcher goes to young achievers in the field of research. This year’s recipients included [Dr Chimere Anabanti](#), [Dr Abe Kasonga](#), [Dr Samkelo Malgas](#), [Prof Vukosi Marivate](#), [Prof Adrino Mazenda](#), [Prof Kgomotso Mokoala](#) and [Dr Chijioke Okorie](#).

The Teaching Excellence Award is awarded for best practice in teaching and for demonstrating a significant impact on student learning and innovation. This year’s two recipients were [Dr Calayde Davey](#), a senior lecturer in UP’s Department of Architecture, and senior lecturer [Dr Carel Oosthuizen](#) of the Department of Zoology and Entomology. Dr Davey leads the Urban Strategy Studio and the Hatfield Digital Twin City Initiative, and teaches students how to integrate academic learning with professional practice in transdisciplinary settings. Dr Oosthuizen has contributed substantially to curriculum development, and fostered a dynamic classroom environment that inspires students to engage deeply with course material.

[The Conversation Africa](#) publication gives higher education institutions an opportunity to share their research outputs with fellow academics across the globe and with civil society. UP confers awards under *The Conversation Africa* Science Communication Awards category, and this year, recognised [Dr Colleta Gandidzanwa](#), a lecturer in the Department of Agricultural Economics, Extension and Rural Development, for being the UP author with the most-read article. [Gwen Ansell](#) and [Prof Daniel Bradlow](#) were acknowledged for having published the most articles out of all UP authors.

UP’s Department of Consumer and Food Sciences received the *RE.SEARCH* Magazine Award, which is given to a department or faculty for consistently communicating their research by being published in UP publication *RE.SEARCH* magazine during the preceding academic year. This accomplishment has been motivated by the department’s strong drive to create impact by placing the consumer’s well-being at the heart of all the research it conducts.

Chairperson of the UP Council Ben Kruger summarised the significance of the work being produced across the board.

“As we celebrate our academic achievers, I am reminded of our scholars’ vital role in shaping the future. Their passion for discovery inspires us all and reinforces the University’s reputation for excellence on a global scale.”

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>> [Download the Academic Achievers' Awards publication](#)

>> [Download some pictures from the night](#)

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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 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