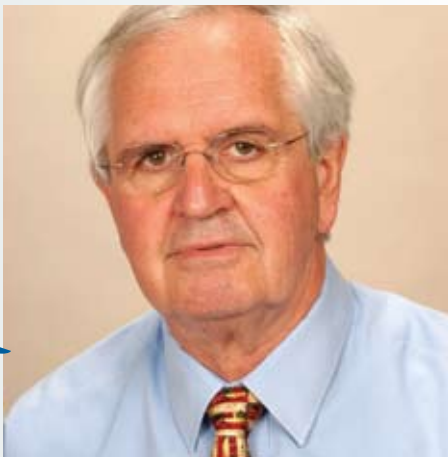




Prof Piet retires



Prof Piet Steyn, acting Senior Director: Research at Stellenbosch University (SU), has recently retired. Prof Steyn, a Matieland alumnus and former category-A researcher at the National Research Foundation (NRF), dedicated his impressive research career principally to the chemistry of mycotoxins, poisons derived from fungi. Aflatoxin, the well-known liver carcinogen, occurs in food and plays an important role in both human and animal health. He has recently completed a comprehensive overview on mycotoxins for the reference work *General and Applied Toxicology*.

After an inspiring career at the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research and the then Potchefstroom University for Christian Higher Education (now North-West University), Prof Steyn joined SU as Director: Research in 1999, where he played an important role in the establishment of the University as one of the top research-driven universities in the country. He assisted in the establishment of three of the leading Centres of Excellence at the NRF and the Department of Science and Technology and obtained a considerable number of research chairs and various large research contracts.

From 1992 to 1994 Prof Steyn was president of the International Association for Cereal Science and Technology and, from 2002 to 2003 president of the International Union of Pure and Applied Chemistry (IUPAC), making him the first person from Africa to head both these organisations. During his term as IUPAC president, he transformed the organisation from an obsolete committee-oriented body into an efficient and modern project-driven organisation.

Prof Steyn has delivered numerous papers abroad, has published 193 scientific publications and was a member of, inter alia, the Royal Chemical Society (United Kingdom), the South African Academy for Science and Art (SAASA), the Academy of Science of the Developing World (Trieste, Italy), the Royal Society of South Africa and the Academy of Science of South Africa (ASSAf), of which he was a founding member.

Prof Steyn's contribution to the practice of science has been crowned with, inter alia, the gold medal of the South African Chemical Institute, the Havenga gold medal of the SAASA, the South Africa medal (gold) of the Southern Africa Association for the Advancement of Science (one of the highest awards to a scientist in South Africa) and ASSAf's Science for Society gold medal.

MEDICAL BIOCHEMIST new Senior Director: Re- search and Innovation

Medical biochemist Dr Therina Theron has been appointed new Senior Director: Research and Innovation at Stellenbosch University (SU). Dr Theron (39) completed both her undergraduate and postgraduate studies at Stellenbosch and has had a long association with the University.

During her 10 years as postgraduate student, Dr Theron was involved in academic research at the Centre for Molecular and Cellular Biology of the Medical Research Council of South Africa and at the Department of Radiation Oncology of the Faculty of Health Sciences (FHS) at Tygerberg Hospital. Her principal focus was DNA damage and recovery and the influence of this on the cell cycle. This work resulted in nine articles in peer-evaluated international journals and in

presentations at a number of both national and international conferences.

In 2001 Dr Theron's research took her to the University of Sussex in the United Kingdom, where she worked for three years as postdoctoral partner in the field of molecular genetics and DNA damage caused by UV radiation.

In 2003 she returned to her country of birth, where she accepted a post at the Department of Research and Innovation of the University of Cape Town (UCT). Her principal responsibility as Coordinator: Strategic Research was to create niche strategic-research focus areas at UCT. She was also interim project manager for the establishment of the national Centre for High Performance Computing.

A year later she was appointed Group Manager: Strategic Research Support.

In April this year Dr Theron returned to SU as Head: Funding Opportunities and Capacity Development at the FHS. Here her responsibilities included the management of opportunities for research financing and information flow and assistance with the implementation of the Faculty's strategic research plan, as well as the implementation and support of initiatives for the development of research capacity at the Faculty.

When she heard of her appointment, Dr Theron said that it is "undoubtedly a privilege to work in a stimulating university environment. Research and innovation and the strategic planning and facilitation of thereof are my interest and passion.

I'm looking forward to an exciting and challenging period in my career and to working with a dedicated and competent team for the promotion and support of research excellence at SU."



Foto: Anton Jordaan, SFD