

# International Office celebrates 15 years of service to Stellenbosch University

From humble beginnings in 1993 and operating from a one room office, the International Office (IO), which offers all round support to foreign students as well as Stellenbosch students seeking study opportunities abroad, have grown to a noteworthy unit within Stellenbosch University (SU), writes Peni Dodo, a journalism student.

“From the first 14 or so exchange students in February 1994 and the always present students from Namibia we are now involved with some 2 500 degree and non-degree seeking students from more than 90 countries, contributing to diversity at our University,” says Mr Robert Kotzé, Director of the International Office.

And to celebrate 15 years of stimulating linkages, encouraging academic and student mobility and providing all round support to internationalisation activities on the Stellenbosch University campuses, the International Office (IO) held a gala event in the Endler Hall of the Konservatorium in August.

A highlight was the announcement of this year’s recipient of the Sampie Award for Internationalisation – an award that recognises the value that is placed on the contribution of individuals to the internationalisation process. “The award carries the name of well-known economist and Professor in Economics, Prof Sampie Terreblanche, for his invaluable contribution to the International Office and to internationalisation activities at Stellenbosch University, Ms Samantha Walbrugh-Parsadh, Assistant Director of the International Office, explained. “In celebrating its 15th anniversary, the International Office opted to present three awards, namely to an academic, a student and an organisation.”

The recipient in the student category was Mike Leslie, an international student who came to the University in 2003 as part of a study abroad programme – but never left! Leslie continued his studies at the University and is now enrolled for a MPhil degree. According to Mr Ben Nel, manager for student life and services, Leslie received the award for his contribution towards community development.

“Mike did not waste time to explore. He got involved in the International Students Organisation Stellenbosch (ISOS) and soon became a driving force in the community project at Ikaya Primary School, a programme that was initiated a few years earlier by international students under the auspices of ISOS. In 2007 he became the first international student (besides students from Namibia) to be elected on the Students

Representative Council of Stellenbosch University – a great achievement for an English speaking American student on a very Afrikaans speaking campus. The title of his portfolio was Community Interaction and Environmental Affairs,” he said.

The organisation which received a “Sampie Award” was the American Institute for Foreign Study (AIFS) for their ten years of association with SU. Mr Mark Simpson, Senior Vice President of AIFS accepted the award on their behalf. Close to 700 students from a wide variety of American institutions have spent a Summer School or a semester (or longer) in Stellenbosch.

The award for an academic went to Prof Fritz Hahne, former Dean of the Faculty of Science and one of the founding directors of the African



Top: Sampie awards! Here are Mr Robert Kotzé of the International Office and recipients Prof Fritz Hahne, Mr Mike Leslie, Mr Mark Simpson and Prof Sampie Terreblanche

Bottom: The International Office regularly hosts international delegations visiting the University to explore new academic collaboration or to nurture existing linkages. A delegation from Huazhong University of Science & Technology was one of several Chinese delegations visiting especially the Faculty of Engineering to explore the possible academic collaboration. Here in front of the International Office, Wilcocks Building are: Dr Xiangdong XIA, Director: Research and Development Office, Prof Shiqi LI, Deputy Director: Institute for Advanced Technology & Equipment, Prof Yong YANG, Vice-President of the University, Mr Robert Kotzé, Mr Ma XINQIANG, Board Chairman: Huagong Tech Company Ltd and Dr Quisheng CHEN, Deputy Director: International Exchange Centre.

Institute for Mathematical and Sciences (AIMS). Ms Dorothy Stevens presented this award on behalf of the IO to Hahne for his role in establishing linkages, exchanges and drawing high quality international students from Africa to US.

## Stellenbosch Family Meeting

The event was also attended by delegates to the IO’s fifth annual Stellenbosch Family Meeting (SFM) in which the IO hosts delegates from some of the international institutions that University has a partnership with. This year visitors came from amongst others, the Universities of Arizona, Hong Kong, Copenhagen, Hamburg and Namibia.

## International development agenda

In toasting the International Office, Mr Kotzé said that through the Rector’s vision of a Pedagogy of Hope “we as an institution would like to work towards making our University significantly better and significantly different in terms of the international development agenda. I believe that the International Office can make a meaningful contribution towards reaching the institution’s objectives in this regard”.

