

Rhodes celebrates new prestigious SARChI Chairs

13 February 2012

The Minister of Science & Technology, Ms Naledi Pandor, this morning announced the results of the latest round of awards in the South African Research Chairs Initiative (SARChI) programme.

60 prestigious research chairs have been awarded, in open competition, across the South African university system.

Five chairs have been awarded to Rhodes University.

A key criterion for the award of a research chair is that the host university must provide a scholarly environment in which the chair and scholarship can flourish.

The five new chairs take to ten the chairs that Rhodes now holds.

The five chairs represent 8.3% of the new chairs awarded; the ten chairs make up 7% of all chairs awarded thus far.

In celebratory mood, Dr Saleem Badat, the Vice-Chancellor noted that: 'Rhodes is the smallest university in South Africa. It has only 0.8% of South Africa's university students and 1.9% of all full-time academic staff.'

He said that the winning of five new chairs and ten chairs overall 'is a testimony to Rhodes' commitment to knowledge and its outstanding track record in research.'

Dr Badat said that 'Rhodes has one of the highest proportions of staff with doctorates and is consistently among the top three universities in South Africa in terms of per capita research output.'

He paid tribute to the DVC Dr Peter Clayton, Research Director, Ms Jaine Roberts, and numerous scholars, all of whom 'put in much intellectual effort and hard work to submit outstanding proposals and, ultimately, winning proposals.'

The VC also congratulated other successful universities, and said that he was 'especially delighted at the success of UWC, as a historically disadvantaged university.'

The five new chairs at Rhodes are in 'Intellectualisation of African Languages, Multilingualism and Education;' 'Insects in Sustainable Agricultural Ecosystems;' 'Interdisciplinary Science in Land and Natural Resource Use for Sustainable Livelihoods;' 'Critical Studies in Sexualities and Reproduction: Human and Social Dynamics,' and 'Marine Natural Products Research.'

Rhodes will announce appointments to the new chairs later in the year.

The new chairs supplement current chairs in Medicinal Chemistry and Nanotechnology (Prof Tebello Nyokong); Marine Ecosystems (Prof Christopher McQuaid); Mathematics Education (Prof Marc Schafer); Numeracy (Prof Mellony Graven) and the SKA (Square Kilometre Array) chair, which will be taken up soon by Prof Oleg Smirnov.

The SARChI programme is a national knowledge and human development intervention, led by the Department of Science and Technology and managed by the National Research Foundation.

The programme was established in 2006 to strengthen scientific research leadership and capacity in South African universities. It aims to create a critical mass of world-class scholars who will train future generations of scholars and graduates to support a South African knowledge-based economy.

The 60 SARChI Research Chairs announced today were awarded on a competitive basis, through an open call for proposals across a set of specific research themes. Sixteen of the 60 chairs were reserved for research directions in the Humanities and Social Sciences.

SARChI Research Chairs are tenable for five years and renewable for two further five-year periods, giving a total life span of fifteen years. Eligibility for renewal is based on performance.

The funding per chair is R2.5 million per annum, and is intended to cover salaries, postdoctoral fellowships, postgraduate student bursaries, research operating costs, and equipment necessary for the work the Chair.