

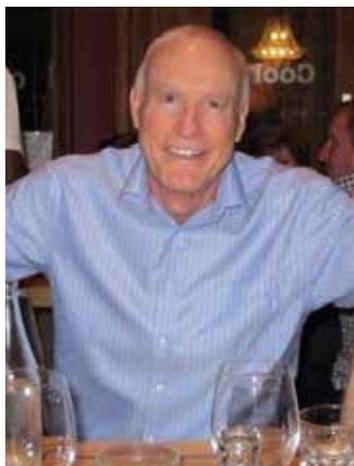


BE THE CHANGE

\*ISSUE 006 / JUNE/JULY 2015

# DONOR DIGEST

A quarterly newsletter of the Rhodes University Development Division celebrating our corporate donors who are integral to the complete Rhodes experience.



PG 1: ALUMNI GIVING

In this issue of Donor Digest we give thanks to students, staff members and alumni who give so generously towards student financial aid. No matter the size of each of these donations, this is the kind of generosity and spirit of philanthropy that leaves a lasting impression on Rhodes students. And we hope, as so sincerely and hearteningly expressed by our Rhodes Oxford Scholar for 2015, Nhlakanipho Mkhize, that these students will in turn allow other young hopefuls a chance at the academic opportunities that they themselves have been afforded. The Pearson-Young Memorial Scholarship has helped fund female Honours students undertaking exciting cancer research. The Trust will soon advertise for the next intake of candidates and it is hoped that future postgraduates will be encouraged to establish research collaborations abroad.

## ALUMNI GIVING



PG 3: MAKING AN IMPACT

Mr James McWilliams has been a generous donor to Rhodes over the years and last year pledged R500 000 divided equally over five years towards student bursaries.

McWilliams grew up in Zimbabwe, matriculating at Fort Victoria High School. He went on to graduate from Rhodes in 1979 with a Bachelor of Commerce, majoring in Economics and Mercantile Law. He was an active sportsman at Rhodes, playing cricket, squash and golf. His professional background has always been in financial markets with a special emphasis on alternative asset management. In 1982 he secured a position at UAL Merchant Bank, the first merchant bank in South Africa, and over 12 years worked his way up to the position of general manager in their securities division. In 1994 he joined Coronation Ltd and managed the first hedge fund to be listed on the JSE: Corohedge Ltd. He resigned from Coronation in 2003 but has remained a significant shareholder and continues to work as an independent fund manager.

"My donations and pledges are simply a form of giving back to Rhodes and helping students from underprivileged or disadvantaged backgrounds to achieve their dreams," said McWilliams. "I have extremely happy memories of my years at Rhodes and thoroughly enjoyed my time there. I really embraced my student

days at Rhodes, playing so much sport that sometimes the academics became secondary, which I would not recommend to any aspiring student!"

His recent donation is to fund a student from a poor township background, preferably from the Eastern Cape, to the tune of R100 000 a year over five years, including postgraduate studies if warranted. "I believe that education should be a major priority goal in the new democratic South Africa and it is my desire to help in this regard," he said. "If we get education right then South Africa has a bright future."

His previous donations to Rhodes have mainly been intended to improve sport at Rhodes and it was after an introduction to the Vice-Chancellor that he became inspired to give towards student bursaries. "Qondakele Sompondo, the Manager: Alumni Relations & Fundraising, introduced me to the Vice-Chancellor, Dr Sizwe Mabizela at an Old Rhodian function and I was so inspired by Dr Mabizela's life story that I decided to fund a student from an impoverished area to study at Rhodes."

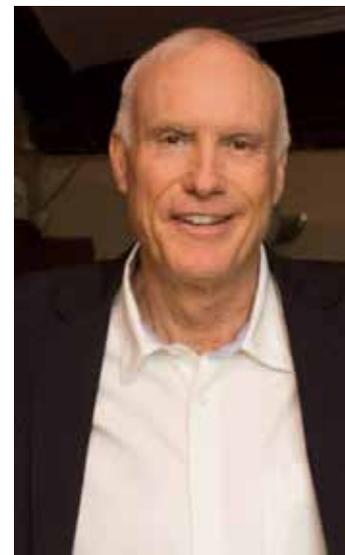
"My challenge or desire is to get more Old Rhodians to commit funds for disadvantaged students. Rhodes has a very impressive Vice-Chancellor in Dr Mabizela and his commitment to funding students himself should be an inspiration to all Old Rhodians to give back. I can only say that Rhodes has a bright future with Dr Mabizela at the helm."

Another Old Rhodian, Verushka Reddy, who has donated towards bursaries through the Annual Fund applauded the ethos of giving and helping those in need encouraged among Rhodes students. "I was deeply moved by the Give 5 fundraiser, it is a testament to the compassionate and generous (and adventurous) nature of the students at Rhodes. We need to educate more young people with such humanity and willingness to help others," she said.

"I will definitely be making more regular donations, albeit of small amounts. Thank you for reminding me of what a great institution Rhodes is!"



PG 3: FUNDING WOMEN IN CANCER RESEARCH



JAMES MCWILLIAMS



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## MAKING AN IMPACT

Nhlakanipho (Colin) Mkhize will soon be on his way to Oxford University on a Rhodes Scholarship. While waiting to leave for the UK, a part-time job at The Monument put this charismatic young scholar, dependent on funding himself, in a position to help others and he unhesitatingly decided to donate R50 of his earning each month to Give 5 and the student pocket money fund run under the auspices of the Annual Fund. Having worked incredibly hard his whole school and varsity career, depending solely on scholarships to get him where he is today, he is a fine example to his fellow students.

*“I think after being exposed to Professor Tebello Nyokong’s signature passion and resolve towards social change in research I definitely also want to go into research but make functional products in the lab that can better society,” he said. “Whether it be for cleaning water or designing new energy efficient materials, or making compounds that can help heal people.”*

Mkhize was awarded a Rhodes scholarship to study towards a DPhil in Materials Science at Oxford University after graduating with a Master of Science in Chemistry summa cum laude last year.

He hails from Imbali Township in Pietermaritzburg and his signature hard work, accompanied by inspiring teachers at Carter High, has seen him excel on scholarships since Grade 8. His university education was made possible by an Oppenheimer Memorial Trust Scholarship. In the next chapter of his academic career he will further his research in the nanotechnology and physical chemistry field.

“I am interested in looking at the toxicity of nanoparticles and that project is offered by Professor Harish Bhaskaran,” said Mkhize, whose second choice is a PhD in Physical Chemistry.

“I think after being exposed to Professor Tebello Nyokong’s signature passion and resolve towards social change in research I definitely also want to go into research but make functional products in the lab that can better society,” he said. “Whether it be for cleaning water or designing new energy efficient materials, or making compounds that can help heal people.”



Photograph courtesy of David Macgregor, the Daily Dispatch

### NHLAKANIPHO MKHIZE INDULGING HIS PASSION FOR TEACHING WITH LEARNERS AT SCIFEST.

Mkhize explains how, along with the huge financial relief that came with the scholarships he has received during his career, there have been huge sacrifices of time, especially during his high school years: “I had to really ensure that my academics were of the highest calibre, and this was done by spending a lot of time behind the books, in the library and at my desk working. To whom much is given, much is expected, so I was challenged to make use of any free time (vacations) to develop academically or in terms of my leadership skills. I applied for vacation internships at different places or was invited to participate in leadership workshops over the course of several years. All these things have contributed to me being who I am today.”

During his years at Rhodes he became a sub-warden at a large residence and was able to watch students from all walks of life navigate the university space. He says it best in his own words:

“When we welcomed students at the beginning of the year, some would arrive with both parents,

a car, trunks of stuff for their rooms and whatever comfort you can think of; whilst others would arrive alone with only one bag of clothing,” he explained. “Over the year, I would observe the latter group of students congregate in the common spaces in residence either to study or to relax. Upon engaging with them (individually), I would learn of how tough their situations back home were or of how their parents paid all they had for them to come to university. When I heard of the pocket money fund, I knew that I was morally obligated to give something to it, small as it may be, so that ALL students at Rhodes could at least live a more comfortable life. I pray that this small act of kindness on the part of all contributors will encourage the recipients to do their best to achieve their dreams and then in turn meaningfully contribute to their communities – and perhaps have them support more students in future.

My advice to other students making their own paths is to find balance in all that you do. Work hard, but also do not forget that you are a human being



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who needs to experience life holistically. Always maintain focus on your goal – but do not fixate on the path that you are taking to get there. Allow life to throw you some curve balls but keep going. And lastly, be happy. If you are not truly happy in what you are doing, there is very little chance of success.”

On leaving for Oxford he says he is most excited about the melting pot of cultures he will encounter at the university: “I enjoy diversity and I really hope that I will get to learn a lot about the different cultures and creeds of fellow students.” A true family man from a close-knit family, among his fears is being so far away from home for a prolonged amount of time: “Being in Grahamstown is easy because home is two hours away by plane, but Oxford is on an entirely different continent. Thankfully, technology will allow communication with my family – but it won't be the same.

Looking into the future and what might be after the DPhil, Mkhize is firm in the belief that the best impact one can make is within your own community: “I will try my best to make life a better experience for myself, my community and those I interact with.” And as for the bigger picture, he believes his career should mirror this ethos: “I hope to work for a few years in an industrial research space where I can see first hand any problems that are being faced – and then pursue an academic career where we try to solve these issues, and develop and mentor more scientists to grow our national knowledge economy. I can't wait to teach!”



## FUNDING WOMEN IN CANCER RESEARCH

In 2012 Mrs Morag Young (nee Pearson) bequeathed the proceeds of the sale of her house in London to Rhodes for the Pearson-Young Memorial Scholarship in Molecular Biology. According to her wishes, the Scholarship allocates £50 000 per year to be used to fund cancer research. This generous bequest has already benefitted several promising young postgraduate researchers working with Professor Tebello Nyokong, Distinguished Professor of Nanotechnology and Medicinal Chemistry and the DST/NRF Chair and the Director of the DST/Mintek Nanotechnology Innovation Centre. In 2014, five Honours and two Masters students studying in the Chemistry field under Professor Tebello Nyokong were awarded scholarships by Pearson Young. These included Honours students Ms J Harris, Mr B Mkhize, Ms R Openshaw, Ms Taylor and Ms C Tidbury. Masters students were Ms SC Tshangana and Mr M Managa.

In 2015 two Honours students from Dr Adrienne Edkins group secured funding: Ms T Muzenda and Ms R Dunlop.

Dr Adrienne Edkins is the Director of the Biomedical Biotechnology Research Unit (BioBRU). BioBRU is a dynamic research group with a sustained record of research productivity and collaboration, and a strong emphasis on student training and international quality research. The group's research focus is to understand the fundamental mechanisms underlying cancer development. The research aims to understand how and why cancers develop and to define novel cellular processes that can be targets for therapy. The focus of this research is therefore, firstly, on how cellular stress affects cancer biology and, secondly, the link between stem cells and cancer. Breast and colon cancer take primary focus as these are prevalent in South Africa, but work is also done in leukaemia and cancers linked to infectious agents (eg KSHV).

BioBRU is currently hosting two Pearson-Young Fellows, Ms Robyn Dunlop and Ms Trish Muzenda, who are completing their Honours degrees in Biochemistry under the supervision of Dr Edkins. “Their projects will utilise cell biology and biochemical approaches to advance our understanding of cancer biology and through this ultimately to assist us to work towards treatments for this disease,” she said.

She explained the aims of their research: “Ms Dunlop is studying the link between cancerous characteristics and a stem cell factor known as Oct4. Oct4 is the master transcription factor required for stem cell pluripotency. It is also found to be present in some cancers, although its function in these contexts is poorly defined. Ms Dunlop is studying whether introducing Oct4 into a normal



MS ROBYN DUNLOP, DR ADRIENNE EDKINS AND MS TRISH MUZENDA IN THE BIOBRU LABS.

### ABOUT DR EDKINS:

Dr Edkins is a Senior Lecturer in Biochemistry and Director of the Biomedical Biotechnology Research Unit. She holds a Y1 rating from the National Research Foundation and has a strong track record in postgraduate student training and research publications in the area of molecular and cellular biology of cancer. She is an alumnus of both Rhodes University (undergraduate and MSc degrees in Biochemistry) and Glasgow University (PhD degree in Molecular and Cell Biology on the prestigious Wellcome Trust Programme 2003 - 2008). Dr Edkins has existing cancer related collaborations with academics at Glasgow University which include Prof William Cushley (former PhD advisor), Prof Richard Codgell, Emeritus Prof Brad Ozanne, Dr Sharon Kelly and Dr Gillian Borland. She still regularly visits Glasgow University and will continue to grow her research and connections there.

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cell is sufficient to give that cell cancer like qualities."

"Ms Muzenda is studying the function of a protein called HOP which is known to be important in cancer cell biology. Previous research in BioBRU has shown that depletion of levels of HOP in cancer cells can reverse cancer characteristics and therefore HOP is considered a promising drug target. HOP is interesting in that it localises to both the nucleus and cytoplasm of cells. However, the mechanism by which this happens and the consequence to the cancer cell remains poorly defined. Ms Muzenda will attempt to identify the specific determinants that determine whether HOP is exported from the nucleus to the cytoplasm and the consequence of this for the ability of the cancer cell to deal with stress."

The Pearson-Young Trust will soon advertise for the new intake of candidates and hope to attract candidates from further afield to undertake postgraduate research at Rhodes, including the funding of Masters and PhDs. Dr Edkins, who is an alumnus of both Rhodes and Glasgow University, where she has a strong network of research collaborators, will play an important role in providing opportunities for future recipients of the scholarship to undertake collaborative research abroad.

*"Their projects will utilise cell biology and biochemical approaches to advance our understanding of cancer biology and through this ultimately to assist us to work towards treatments for this disease."*



**DR ADRIENNE EDKINS IN DISCUSSION WITH ROBYN DUNLOP AND TRISH MUZENDA, THE TWO PEARON-YOUNG SCHOLARSHIP HOLDERS UNDERTAKING CANCER RELATED RESEARCH AT BIOBRU**

## ABOUT THE SCHOLARSHIP

The Pearson-Young Scholarships are administered through the Pearson-Young Memorial Trust. Up to eight scholarships per annum are offered to support postgraduate students, who have earned a first degree at any South African university, to study full time towards an honours degree at Rhodes University in the sciences or allied disciplines, with particular preference for those studies which further the prevention, cure and treatment of cancer.

Initially focussed on the honours degree level, candidates wishing to continue with masters or doctoral degrees have also been considered. Black and women candidates are particularly encouraged to apply, preference is also be given to candidates who demonstrate financial need and disadvantaged social origins.

Candidates are assessed particularly on their academic record, on their track record of leadership and involvement in projects and organisations related to common good, and on their ability to articulate their intended area of study and interest in cancer related studies and their future career goals.

The Pearson-Young Scholarships are tenable only at Rhodes University.



## Strategic thinking & product development

Kerry Peter  
\* WORD WEAVER

Design Ardour  
ART, DESIGN & IMAGES BY ROBYN OOSTHUYSEN

At Design Ardour and Kerry Peter Word Weaver we are both independent professionals who believe in the power of creative collaboration. Uniting our skills and experience we add value to the products we offer our clients.

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