



# EXCHANGE

Bringing you news about research, progress and development

ISSUE 025 | DECEMBER 2016



**Pg.3** *Heading for Antarctica*



**Pg.5** *ABSA funding for 'missing middle'*



**Pg. 6** *Nyokong scoops another award*

## Edutainer's big opening, for little people

### Brightening the corner where we are

**A newsletter of the Rhodes University Communications and Advancement Division celebrating our funders who are integral to the complete Rhodes experience.**

Welcome to the final issue of Exchange for 2016. In this issue we give you an update on the pioneering work our researchers are undertaking in Antarctica. Rhodes boasts the largest number of researchers heading to the white desert this season including our all-female team. We acknowledge a few recent awards, scholarships and recent contributions towards student funding.

Your continued interest and support in our institution is greatly appreciated as we strive to realise the achievement of the greater goal of free (i.e., state-subsidised) quality higher education for academically talented students who come from families of meagre means. In addition, we would like to see a plan that provides financially sustainable mechanisms to support all students in financial need.

We look forward to your continued support in 2017 and wish you all a prosperous New Year.

Earlier this year we announced the exciting news of the arrival of three edutainers to develop the Tyhilulwazi Early Childhood Development (ECD) centre in Joza, Grahamstown. The official opening of the re-vamped centre, took place on 26 October, with a visit by the former Anglican Archbishop of Canterbury Lord Rowan Williams of Oystermouth. To show their gratitude to all involved, the pre-schoolers entertained with a performance by the marching band in celebration.

Tyhilulwazi started with Lindeka Klaas and her community; She started the school in her home with 12 children. Today the school offers more than 80 pre-schoolers the

opportunity for learning. In March 2015, alumnus Mr von Christierson committed an edutainer, specially fitted as an ECD Self-Contained School to develop an Early Childhood Development Centre.

"What is great about this project is the number of people and institutions that came together to make it happen," shared Lord Rowan Williams.

The project took-off with von Christierson's commitment to Dr Mabizela to fund the first edutainer. The longer term project was jointly funded by the Watch Hill Foundation and the Zoe Carss Education Trust. Bright Kid Foundation supplied the





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hardware and installation of the preschool. Rhodes was involved in ongoing training of teachers and parents.

This was a community project involving Rhodes, Makana Municipality, teachers, parents, pupils and community members. Rhodes University's self-funded Centre for Social Development, which focuses on Early Childhood Development (ECD) was central to getting the school up and running.

"There is no better investment one can make than ensuring young people have access to life-changing quality education," said Dr Mabizela. "The little school has laid a solid foundation for education in the community."



## John Bell Scholarship

The John Bell Education Trust has pledged R25 000 per annum for five years towards scholarships for deserving students from the Departments of English and English Language and Linguistics who hope to enter the teaching profession at the conclusion of their studies.

John Bell worked as a businessman in Johannesburg for many years before retiring to Plettenberg Bay where he lived until his death in 1991. The John Bell Education Trust was established in his will and he left a bequest and established a board of trustees who continue to manage the trust. It continues to contribute to charities and scholarships whose projects are aligned with Bell's passion for English language education.

The scholarships are available for post-graduate students in the field of education whose undergraduate majors include English or English Language and Linguistics.

Two scholarships will be awarded for 2017 though the candidates have not yet been selected said Professor Di Wilmot, Dean of Education.



The 2016 PGCE FET group meeting their Grade 8 mentees from Ntsika High School for the Siyafundisana service learning course.



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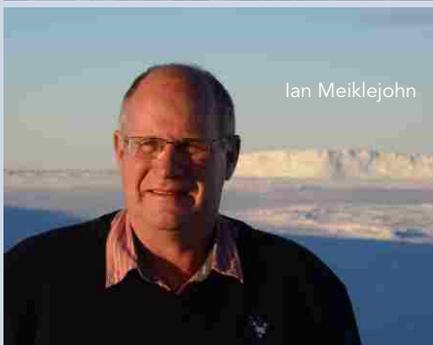
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## All-female team heads to Antarctica for pioneering study



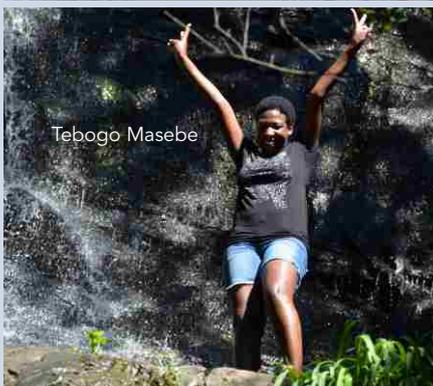
Gwynneth Matcher



Ian Meiklejohn



Sunet van Aswegen



Tebogo Masebe

### Rhodes sends two research teams (Microbiologists and Geomorphologists)

Seven researchers from Rhodes University head off to Antarctica for the annual summer relief voyage. This is the largest contingent from any South African University on this year's expedition and includes two academic staff members and five students.

Dr Gwynneth Matcher of the Department of Biochemistry and Microbiology, will be leading an all-female team to Antarctica to research Antarctic Microbial Ecology. The all-female team is an anomaly on research expeditions to Antarctica. "It wasn't planned, but it is very exciting leading an all-female team," shared Dr Matcher.

Studying Antarctic Microbial Ecology under Matcher are PhD students Karin Staebe and Sunet van Aswegen. Staebe who will be returning for her second field stint in Antarctica explains the project her team will be working on, "this is the first research study looking at both meltwater pools, at soil and at air around the South African research station and at Troll, nobody has thought about looking at these areas and we are trying to see whether Antarctica should be broken up into more biogeographical regions than we already have."

The second team from Rhodes University heading to Antarctica will be led by Prof Ian Meiklejohn, of the Geography Department, who will be making his sixth voyage to the continent. Prof Meiklejohn's team of geomorphologists includes three MSc students: Jenna Knox, Tebogo Masebe and Nicola Wilmot. It will be all three students' first visit to the continent. They are researching Landscape Processes in Antarctic Ecosystems.

The SA Agulhas II set sail on 30 November 2016 and will return on 8 February 2017. The research teams expect to reach Antarctica between 11 and 20 December, depending on the sea ice conditions. Dr Matcher will fly in on 18 December and meet her team at the Norwegian Troll Station, due to limited space on the ship.

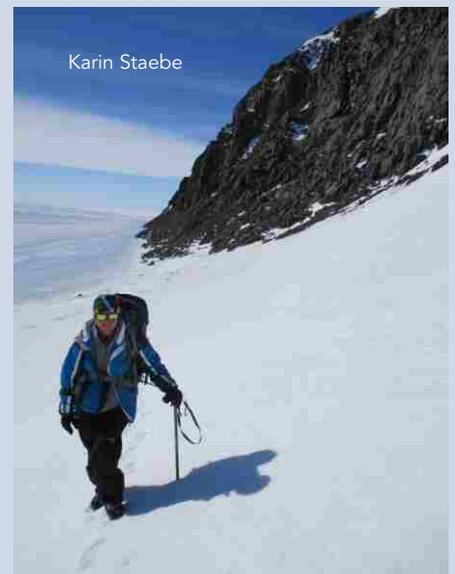
Both groups are working in the vicinity of SANAE, the South African base situated in Western Dronning Maud Land on a nunatak (a land island in a sea of ice) called Vesleskarvet (72°S, 2°W), as well as near the Norwegian Troll Station (72°S, 2½°E).



Jenna Knox



Nicola Wilmot



Karin Staebe



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## Dean of Education joins international commission

Dean of Education Professor Di Wilmot has been elected to the Steering Committee of the International Geographical Union (IGU) Commission on Geographical Education and is the only committee member from Africa. She was nominated by her peers in the field and has over thirty years of study and research in Geography Education. On the committee she joins academics from Turkey, Britain, Chile, Germany, South Korea, Sweden, Australia and China. While on the committee she hopes to improve and foster scholarly voices in geographical education in the African context.

She is extremely passionate about supporting postgraduate research into geographical education because she feels that the subject receives insufficient attention. "Geography is a Cinderella subject due to the focus on English, Maths and Science, particularly in African schools," she said. This is due to the focus by government and the education system on these subjects as primary to social development, a stance that may be shortsighted given the potential that environmental education has for improving the lives of South Africans. Wilmot feels that the subject is underrated for its capacity to teach important social and

environmental concerns to young people. "Geography education has an enormous amount to offer as a subject for sustainable development education," she said.

Her academic interests include the possibility for climate change education in secondary schooling. In 2012 she was invited to contribute to the further development of the Climate Change in the Classroom project, which is a UNESCO programme aimed at improving climate change education at secondary education level. She piloted the course at Rhodes University that year and gave feedback on the UNESCO project. The course aims to bring climate change out of a field of purely scientific study in secondary education and to consider it in the study of ethics, social sciences, politics and economics.

Part of the work of the IGU Commission on Geographical Education is to improve communication between scholars in the field of geographical education across the world and to foster scholarship on the subject. The Committee is committed to increasing awareness of geographical education as a means to promote informed citizenries around the globe.





# EXCHANGE

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## Rhodes student receives CSIRO/SKA SA summer vacation scholarship



Rhodes University BSc (hons) student Katherine James was one of two people to be selected to receive the CSIRO/SKA SA summer vacation scholarship. The programme will be hosted at the CSIRO in Mansfield, Sydney, Australia over the summer period. Katherine James will arrive in late November, returning to South Africa in February 2017. Tokiso Motoai from Bloemfontein is the other student who has been chosen to join the programme. Application for this scholarship was open to all final year (3rd year or honours) students on the SKA SA bursary program, who are registered at a South African university. This includes students from the SKA Africa partner countries who are studying in South Africa. This is the first year these scholarships are available, one for a science student and one for an engineering student. However, both students who have been chosen are science students.

Kat will be supervised by Australian Professor Ray Norris on a project titled "Using machine learning to get science from the Australian Square Kilometre Array Pathfinder (ASKAP)". There will be emphasis on using machine learning to classify and cross-identify objects in radio images. This is necessary since the amount of data that will be collected by the SKA will far exceed the ability of humans to process it by hand. The ASKAP telescope is the Australian equivalent of MeerKAT, since the SKA project is shared between them and South Africa.

"I am really looking forward to meeting some of the Australian students who will also be participating in the program, as well as picking up some machine learning, as it is a field that is gaining huge momentum in the science world at present. I look forward to making friends, learning lots and the experience as a whole," shared Katherine.

## Rhodes secures R2 million from ABSA to empower missing middle students

On 27 October 2016, Barclays Africa Group Ltd/ABSA announced their increase of financial support to universities. Rhodes University has been allocated a generous R2 million towards financing students in the 'missing middle'. ABSA's increased funding nationally towards student financial aid includes an additional R57 million towards university tuition fees for 1450 more students in need of financial aid, R210 million to be invested in 2017, covering 3 000 university students across Africa and investments in basic education and skills training to continue as planned.

The ABSA donation will support students who are 'too rich' to qualify for government support, but 'too poor' to afford tuition fees and qualify for commercial loans.

In 2016, Rhodes University topped up NSFAS for undergraduate students by R35 887 million and post-graduate students by R3 million. The post-graduate amount has increased from approximately R600 000 three years ago. Out of

the central budget Rhodes University honours merit awards despite zero fee increases, a sum of R2 166 million for Hons, MSc and PhD students who obtained 1st class passes.

There are a number of other programmes via funds from the University central budget funding a further R2 million and from investments of a further R10 million to postgraduate students. In total just under R19 million from Rhodes is spent on Postgraduate funding. This is separate from external support such as the NRF and other donors with whom we work. There is a similar system in place for undergraduate students.

To date 25 students have been assisted through the Oppidan Feeding Scheme which was introduced earlier this year. "We welcome the financial support that ABSA is providing and thank them for heeding the call of universities and students for increased financial support. It cannot be and it should not be that an academically talented young person should be deprived of an opportunity to acquire higher education," shared Dr Mabizela.



# EXCHANGE

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## Rhodes Research Group scoops another award



Prof Nyokong's Nanotechnology Research Group have been recognised as the most productive research group (for 2015) by the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR) together with the National Laser Centre. The group were celebrated as the most productive research group in terms of

number and quality of publications and for the number of PhD students graduating.

The Award ceremony took place in Stellenbosch on 15 November where Dr John Mack received the awards on behalf of the group.

