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Top honour for Aids scientist

SMITA MAHARAJ

PROFESSOR Quarraisha Abdool Karim is the first black academic in UKZN's history and the second black woman academic in South Africa to receive a prestigious A-rating for research from the National Research Foundation (NRF).

Abdool Karim, associate scientific director at the Centre for the Aids Programme of Research in South Africa (CAPRISA), received the award for her seminal scientific contributions in HIV prevention research.

Acting Chief Executive Officer of the NRF, Dr Beverley Damonse, explained that A-rated scientists were "researchers who are unequivocally recognised by their peers as leading international scholars in their field for the high quality and impact of their recent research outputs. Professor Abdool Karim's research is outstanding and she is among the finest scientists in our country".

Abdool Karim, a professor of Clinical Epidemiology at Columbia University in New York and honorary professor in Public Health at UKZN's Nelson R Mandela School of Medicine, said she was humbled by the recognition. "I have been fortunate to be part of a great team of scientists at CAPRISA. I hope this achievement will inspire many more women to pursue careers in science."

World-renowned for her scientific discoveries in HIV prevention, she has devoted the last 25 years to Aids research, providing new insights into how the HIV epidemic spreads and impacts on young women in Africa.

She led the research team in the CAPRISA 004 study that was the first to show antiretroviral drugs (tenofovir gel) could prevent sexual transmission of HIV in women.

This discovery was ranked as one of the Top 10 Scientific Breakthroughs of 2010 by *Science Magazine*. Her article in this week's *New England Journal of Medicine*, the world's most prestigious medical journal, describes her



Professor Quarraisha Abdool Karim

team's discovery that antiretrovirals can protect women from acquiring genital herpes.

Abdool Karim, a world leader in Aids research, plays an active role in guiding the global response to the HIV epidemic. She serves as an Advisor on HIV infection to several United Nations agencies, including the World Health Organisation (WHO), UNICEF and UNAIDS and is a member of the UNAIDS Scientific Expert Panel and the WHO's HIV Clinical

Guidelines Committee that sets the international standards for treating HIV infection.

She is also Scientific Advisor to the Executive Director of UNAIDS and serves on the Scientific Advisory Board of the US President's Emergency Plan for Aids Relief (PEPFAR).

Abdool Karim has published about 200 articles in medical journals, written several books and book chapters and mentored young South African scientists.

She has received numerous prizes and awards for her research and has been elected to several of the world's most prestigious science academies. In 2014, she was awarded the South African Medical Research Council's Gold Medal as well as the Science-for-Society Gold Medal for "outstanding achievement in scientific thinking to the benefit of society" by the Academy of Science in South Africa.

In 2013, she was the recipient of the African Union's Kwame Nkrumah Prize for Science and Technology and the TWAS-Lenovo Prize by The World Academy of Sciences (TWAS) "for her exceptional and distinguished contributions to HIV prevention and women's health".

In 2013, Abdool Karim received South Africa's highest honour, the Order of Mapungubwe, from President Zuma for "outstanding work in the field of HIV/ Aids and Tuberculosis Research and Health Policy Development".

She is a recipient of the Distinguished Women in Science Award from the Department of Science and Technology.

A Fellow and vice-president of the African Academy of Sciences, Fellow of the Royal Society of South Africa and a Fellow of the Academy of Science of South Africa, she is being inducted in October into the US National Academy of Medicine, considered one of the highest honours in the field of health and medicine.

Scholarship first for UKZN student

MELISSA MUNGROO

MASTERS student in Applied Ethnomusicology at UKZN, Thabile Buthelezi, is the first South African student to receive the prestigious Choreomundus: International Master in Dance Knowledge, Practice and Heritage scholarship.

Choreomundus is an Erasmus Mundus programme that investigates dance and other movement systems (ritual practices, martial arts, games and physical theatre) as intangible cultural heritage. It is offered by a consortium of four universities in Norway, France, Hungary and the UK recognised for their leadership in the development of innovative curricula for the analysis of dance.

"I am truly honoured to receive such a prestigious scholarship," said Buthelezi. "For me it means that my hard work ethic is being recognised not only nationally but internationally, and I hope the award opens doors for other students like me," she said.

She was initially encouraged to apply by her supervisor and UKZN Lecturer, Dr Patricia Opondo. "A colleague of mine, Professor Egil Bakka from the Norwegian University of Science and Technology, asked me to nominate a deserving student to participate in this upcoming cycle of the Choreomundus programme," said Opondo.

"They wanted to have one or two participants from South Africa this year. I did not hesitate to nominate Thabile as she has stood out in the UKZN African Music and Dance (AMD) programme for four years including choreographing pieces for the AMD touring ensemble.

Ikusasa Lethu. I believe she will excel in this programme."

Buthelezi said: "Being awarded this scholarship will assist me by teaching me the methodologies needed to preserve our culture and heritage."

Buthelezi will be taught ethnochoreological research methodologies that she will apply to her research and also share those concepts and ideas when she returns to South Africa in 2017, both at university level and at the National Arts and Culture level.

"I will not only become a better performer but I will have relevant knowledge that I would be able to share in the future for the better of our creative economy," she said.

Buthelezi has already departed for Norway on a three-week orientation programme before spending 12 months in France, six months in Hungary and six months in London where she will graduate at the Roehampton University in June 2017.

Her advice to other performing arts students is: "You are never too far from your dreams, the only thing keeping you away from them is sitting and waiting for something to happen when you could create your own opportunities or other alternative ways of reaching those dreams."

* Buthelezi, who has been performing for more than 10 years, started her career at the Kwa-Mashu Community Advancement Project (K-CAP) in 2000. She has travelled abroad as part of international cultural exchange programmes and is involved in various activities in the performing arts sector.



Thabile Buthelezi

Law academic elected to Judicial Services Commission

HAZEL LANGA

ASSOCIATE Professor in the UKZN School of Law, Professor Nomthandazo Ntlama, has been elected by the Society of Law Teachers of Southern Africa (SLTSA) as its representative on the Judicial Services Commission (JSC) of South Africa.

She was elected at its annual conference which was hosted by Varsity College, Durban from July 6-8.

The JSC is a constitutional body established in terms of section 178 of the Constitution to deal with, among other issues, the appointment of judges in South Africa.

During her six-year term,

Ntlama will attend to all matters of the JSC including participating in interviews of judges, disciplinary hearings, legal action instituted by or against the JSC as well as providing reports about the functioning of the institution.

As a representative of the SLTSA she has to ensure the voice of the society is heard in the JSC and that the institution has meaningful representation in the prestigious body.

Commenting on her role, Ntlama said: "This role is of great significance considering South Africa's maturing democracy and especially for the transformation of the

judiciary which had long been compromised by the pre-democratic dispensation that led to the lack of public confidence in it.

"I am very privileged to have been elected to represent the society and I am grateful for the confidence being shown in me to perform this responsibility," added Ntlama.

Over the years UKZN's Law academics have contributed meaningfully in various professional bodies locally and abroad. Ntlama's appointment follows that of the dean and head of the School of Law, Professor Managay Reddi, as the president of the South African Law Deans Association and

that of the college dean of research, Professor Marita Carmelley, who was appointed by President Zuma to serve on the South African Law Reform Commission.

Ntlama is a board member of UKZN's School of Law, a member of the Verloren van Thermaat and Indigenous Law Centre and served on a "think tank" for traditional leaders while at UNISA.

At the conference of the SLTSA Ntlama also presented a thought-provoking research paper entitled: "The Law of Privilege and the Economic Freedom Fighters in South Africa's National Assembly: The Aftermath of the May 7, 2014 National Elections".



Professor Nomthandazo Ntlama



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