



UNIVERSITEIT
STELLENBOSCH
UNIVERSITY

e-Matieland

SUMMER 2016 • #4

FROM THE ALUMNI OFFICE

As 2016 draws to a close, we are grateful for the many successes achieved during the year, yet also mindful of the challenges we still face.

In this issue, we celebrate Maties who continue to invest in the future of our country through philanthropic giving, thereby making a positive difference in the lives of the young leaders of tomorrow. We also salute those who have excelled across a diverse range of fields, from sport to research, innovation, technology and entrepreneurship.

We would like to say thank you to our very own Johann Aspeling, who is retiring as Registrar, for his years of outstanding loyalty, dedication and service to the Matie community.

Finally, we look forward to our 2017 Homecoming Weekend, which is scheduled for 2 to 6 March 2017 on the Stellenbosch campus. We hope to see you there.



Stellenbosch University
Alumni (Maties) and
Friends



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alumni@sun.ac.za



www.sun.ac.za/english/alumni



NEWS in short

SU honours excellence



Nokwanda Malumbete, Director at Malumbete van Niekerk Inc and LLB graduate, recently received the Exceptional Alumni award. "I would like to address the women in the room, young and old," she said.

"Please do not underestimate the weight that your presence as a woman adds to this world. To establish your presence in the world and accept your excellence in South Africa is to lay claim to a dimension of power that will assist in cementing your agency and allow you to pave the way for other women who will come after you."

Rector receives honorary degree



Prof Wim de Villiers has received an honorary degree from Coventry University in the UK. The degree Doctor of Science, honoris causa, was bestowed on him in recognition of his academic leadership and his work as doctor and researcher in medical science.

Google SA's McKend inspires students at first Careers Café

Luke McKend, a BA alumnus and Country Director of Google SA, was the first guest speaker at our newly-launched Careers Café. The Careers Café was established by the Alumni Relations Office to help current students prepare for the careers they want while providing alumni with the opportunity to connect with their alma mater by offering their time and skills to help current students become work place ready.

The first in a series of cafés to be held in faculties across the university in future, the pilot café – dubbed the Humanities Careers Café – saw Alumni Relations and the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences team up for a TedTalk-styled talk with close to 200 students in attendance.

- [Click here for photos of the event.](#)



Annual meeting of the Convocation

Members of the Convocation of Stellenbosch University are invited to a meeting of the Convocation on Thursday, 26 January 2017 at 19:00. The meeting will be held at the Paul Roos Centre, Paul Roos Gymnasium in Stellenbosch.

- For more information, please contact konvokasie@sun.ac.za.

Events

19 January 2017
Welcoming of first-years
E-mail: mjoyce@sun.ac.za
Tel: 808 4585

26 January 2017
Convocation Meeting
Web: <http://www.sun.ac.za/english/management/statutory-bodies/convocation>
E-mail: konvokasie@sun.ac.za

30 January 2017
FNB Varsity Cup
Tel: 021 808 3802

2 - 6 March 2017
Homecoming Weekend
Web: <http://www.matiesalumni.com>
E-mail: alumni@sun.ac.za
Tel: 021 808 9265

NEWS in short

Cutting edge research on obsessive compulsive disorder

An SU researcher is using a research award to investigate a new treatment method that will hopefully help to better control the symptoms of obsessive compulsive disorder (OCD).



Prof Christine Lochner, from the Faculty of Medicine and Health Sciences, recently received the Research Award for Established Researchers from the Biological Psychiatry Special Interest Group of

the South African Society of Psychiatrists. This enables her to do cutting edge research in the field of OCD.

"OCD is an inhibiting condition with a tremendous negative impact on a person's

quality of life. It has a prevalence rate of two to three percent and only about half of the people suffering from this psychiatric condition respond well to treatment," explains Lochner.

'FeesMustFall campaign can be transformative'



The FeesMustFall campaign can be transformative if students, government and universities are willing to engage one another meaningfully so that lasting solutions can be found, Constitutional Court Judge Sisi Khampepe believes. Khampepe

delivered the 12th Annual Human Rights Lecture of the Law Faculty.

Khampepe said students, government and universities should engage each other despite their disagreements because this is what meaningful participation as a transformative process demands. She added that transformation is only a vessel of empty rhetoric without meaningful participation.

"Meaningful participation empowers individuals to constructively find mutually-beneficial solutions.

"The students' demand for a shift in education policy can only be truly transformative if we allow meaningful engagement to ensue and if we are willing to listen to the plurality of voices and attempt to do justice to them.

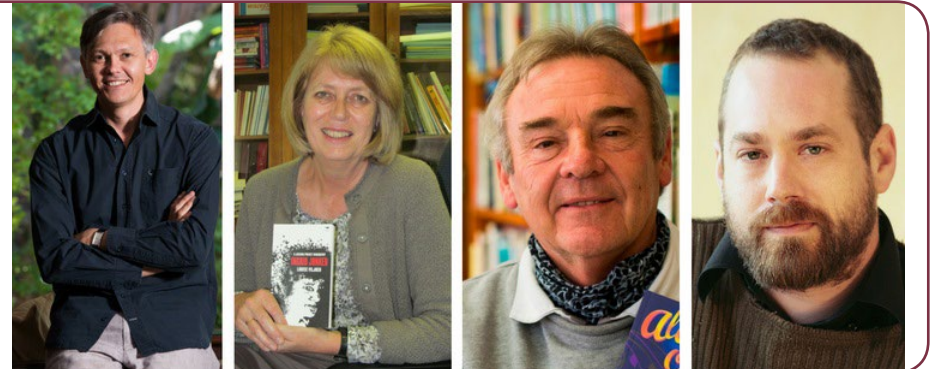
"All concerned must partake in the necessary dialogue with an intention to find lasting solutions, not solutions that may be a problem tomorrow. We must have a fervent determination to reach a resolution to the satisfaction of all stakeholders."

Academy honours SU experts

Academics of Stellenbosch University have once again been honoured by the South African Academy for Science and Art for their contributions to these fields. The recipients are Prof Stephanus

Muller from the Department of Music, Prof Louise Viljoen and Dr Willem Anker from the Department Afrikaans and Dutch, Prof Michael Samways from the Department of Conservation

Ecology and Entomology, Prof Adriaan Reinecke and Prof Sophie Reinecke from the Department of Botany and Zoology and an alumna of the University, Ms Mia van Wyk.



NEWS in short

Tonia Overmeyer appointed as Dean of Students

Stellenbosch University has welcomed a new appointment in the reconceptualised post of Dean of Students.

Ms Tonia Overmeyer, formerly acting Director of the Centre for Student Support Services at the University of the Western Cape and boasting many years of experience in the student development, governance and leadership domain in higher education, was appointed



to the position recently.

Prof Wim de Villiers said he is very excited to welcome Ms Overmeyer to the SU family. "I am confident that Stellenbosch University will benefit tremendously from her vast experience in student engagement, support and leadership development. Her appointment will contribute towards making the student voice heard."

SU alumnus is new COO of Tennis Federation



University, will start as the organisation's Chief Operating

The International Tennis Federation announced that Kelly Fairweather, an alumnus of Stellenbosch

Officer effective 1 January 2017. He will take over the reins from Juan Margets. Fairweather is currently the Chief Executive Officer of the International Hockey Federation. He received his Master's Degree in Human Movement Studies from SU in 1991, after he received his honour's degree (cum laude) in 1988.

Three talented Maties first-ever recipients of Russel Botman Bursary

Three talented Matie students' dreams of a better future through education have become a reality thanks to the Russel Botman Bursary Fund. The students are the first ever recipients of the Russel Botman Bursary and have each been awarded R85 000. They are Sandiso Sogula, a postgraduate law student; Randall van den Heever, a second-year BAccounting student and Soné Reens, a second-year BSc (Molecular Biology & Biotechnology) student.



- **Would you like to contribute to this Fund?** The details for direct payments are: Standard Bank, account number 07 300 695 5 and branch code 05 0610. Please make sure to add the reference: Botman .

Dr Nadia Marais wins prestigious prize



Stellenbosch University alumna, Dr Nadia Marais, has been awarded the prestigious Louise and Richard Goodwin Writing

Prizes for Excellence in Theological Writing. Marais, who is also a lecturer in Systematic Theology in the Faculty of Theology won the \$1 000 prize for her essay, "Lovely, Belhar, and Mary..."

Maties athletes shine at SA Sports Awards

Stellenbosch University student Charl du Toit received yet another accolade when he was crowned Sportsman of the Year with a Disability at the recent SA Sports Awards.

His training partner and SU alumna, Ilse Hayes, was named Sportswoman of the Year with a Disability for the second year in a row while yet another member of the Stellenbosch-based training group, Dyan Buis, received the



Shield of Jove Award for his performances at the Paralympic Games.

Aspeling has walked a long road with SU



A whole generation of Matie students knows Mr Johann Aspeling as the Registrar of Stellenbosch University (SU). But the long road that he has walked with SU began as far back as his own student days in this university town, which he came to embrace with his entire being, writes Wayne Muller.

He grew up on a farm between Loxton and Victoria West in the Karoo. “There were 14 learners in my matric year. When I arrived in Stellenbosch in 1972 to study BCom, I’d been placed in Hombré residence – where the ABSA building in Plein Street stands today – because it was the only residence where my brother Peter and I could be placed together.”

He completed his final year of study in 1978 after obtaining his MCom and Higher Education Diploma. He was, among other things, primarius of Hombré for two years and treasurer and later Chairperson of the Students’ Representative Council in addition to playing for his residence in the Sauer Cup rugby team and for Maties in the first table tennis team.

“I was a Matie through and through. I met my wife, Estelle, here in 1977,” says Aspeling, who has three children – son St. Clair (married to Maryke) and daughters Mariné (married to Huibert) and Elzanne (who will be marrying Stefan in March 2017) – and four grandchildren.

Aspeling began working in the then Division of Admissions and Accommodation in 1979 in addition to teaching in the extramural division and, in 2001, succeeded Prof Serf Kritzinger as Registrar.

“SU’s Registrar is Head of the Division of Academic Administration, which is responsible for, among other things, admitting and registering students, advising them on their



programme and subject choices, compiling class and exam timetables, managing exams in conjunction with faculties, and organising graduation ceremonies,” he describes his work.

Included in this is the responsibility for managing, interpreting and revising SU’s policies, regulations and procedures, its Statute, and the Higher Education Act, as well as legal services and the institutional secretariat.

Technology, in particular, has greatly influenced the activities of the Registrar’s Division in Aspeling’s time.

“When I was appointed Registrar, cellphones were used almost exclusively only to make and receive calls. At that stage, we communicated with students only by post and even still by telegram. Students were registered by hand and they therefore had to queue for ages.”

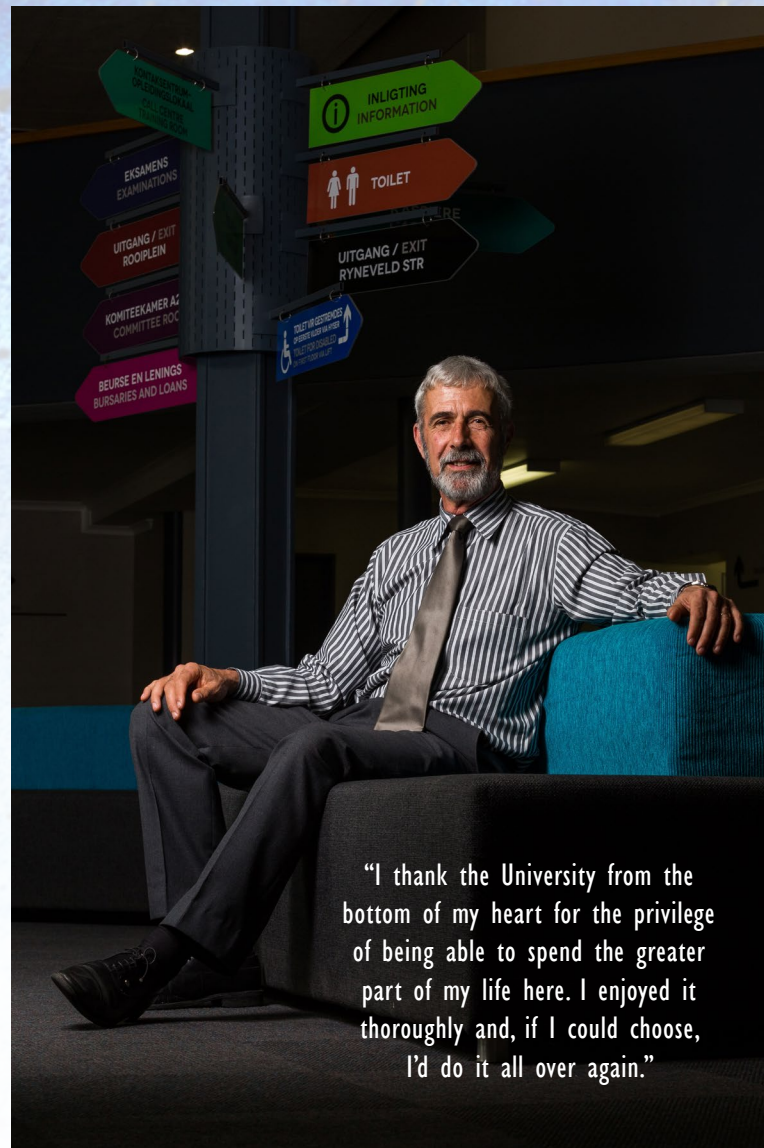
These days, e-mails, SMSes and the SU website are used to communicate with students and more than 80% of them register online.

But what about his work has he enjoyed most and what have been some of the greatest challenges?

“As member of the Rector’s Management Team, I was continuously involved in SU’s management and decision-making processes and it was satisfying for me to remain informed about the University and being closely involved – although it was sometimes of course challenging as well. Being involved with the students over the years has also been very stimulating and satisfying.

“But what I won’t miss are the more than 100 e-mails that landed in my inbox every day and often had to answer after hours,” he adds.

Aspeling has worked under six SU Rectors, for the last four as Registrar: Profs Jannie de Villiers, Mike de Vries, Andreas van Wyk, Chris Brink, Russel Botman and, currently, Wim de Villiers. He has also served under four Council Chairpersons as Registrar: Mr Desmond Smith, Drs Edwin Hertzog and Paul Cluver and Mr George Steyn.



“I thank the University from the bottom of my heart for the privilege of being able to spend the greater part of my life here. I enjoyed it thoroughly and, if I could choose, I’d do it all over again.”

As Registrar, Aspeling worked closely with the Rectors, and something of each Rector’s way of doing things has stayed with him.

“Prof Van Wyk, with his legal background, was extremely competent in managing SU. Prof Brink again always prepared thoroughly for meetings and didn’t like deviating from a planned agenda or *modus operandus*.

“Prof Botman – a theologian – was a peacemaker who, as with his HOPE project, reached out to the community. I have to mention that Prof Leopoldt van Huyssteen as Acting Rector after the passing of Prof Botman guided SU very skilfully through a very difficult period for nine months.

“Prof Wim de Villiers isn’t only exceedingly clever,” he jokes with reference to De Villiers’s nickname ‘Slim Wim’ “but I’m also experiencing him as an exceedingly able rector who is leading SU through participatory management.”

As Aspeling now looks back over his decades of involvement with SU, he sees many highlights – too many to mention. But he does say: “The SU Campus is surely one of the loveliest in the world and I’ve seen how the gardens have been beautified and trees have been planted to enhance the Campus even more over the years. Today we’re bearing the fruits of these initiatives. And buildings aren’t only maintained but also upgraded to accommodate modern electronic teaching facilities.”

Also where teaching methods and research are concerned SU has made great progress, Aspeling believes.

He will hand over the reins at the end of December and will first go and holiday at Vleesbaai with his family. “Then I’m going to help my wife organise our daughter Elzanne’s wedding and then I’m going to the Kruger Park with friends before we start hustling and bustling on the little Karoo farm of my childhood.”

What he’s looking forward to most, however, is doing all those things with his wife that work never allowed him to do. “After that, the Lord, who has guided our lives up to this moment, will show us what will happen on the way forward,” he says.

“I thank the University from the bottom of my heart for the privilege of being able to spend the greater part of my life here. I enjoyed it thoroughly and, if I could choose, I’d do it all over again.”

Photographer: Stefan Els

How do you become an entrepreneur with an international footprint at 25?

Easy: Study BCom Management Sciences at Maties, follow a semester course in Technology and Entrepreneurship at Stanford University, team up with smart people there to develop an app to help disabled people and launch, writes Liezel Engelbrecht.

That is exactly what Stephanie Cowper did in co-founding BeSpecular, a smartphone application that connects sighted people with visually-impaired people (VIPs) to help with everyday tasks. But the process wasn't quite as simple in reality and took planning smarts and determination.

When she was in her honours year in 2014, Cowper was hungry for exposure in the technological business sphere, and applied for a course at Stanford in California. "It was over the June/July holidays, but I would still miss a month's class at SU. I had to convince my lecturers that I'd catch up, and share what I've learnt," she explains.

As part of her course, she had to come up with a mock start-up company. "Our



group knew that we wanted to use our tech skills to help people. We went through all the vulnerable groups - but it was when we started thinking about disabled people and doing research on available technology that we realised that tools in the disabled environment were still mostly hardware driven."

They then narrowed it down to helping visually-impaired people.

"I also happened to have blind friends at SU," says Cowper. It was when a friend

needed assistance in deciding on an appropriate outfit for an interview when the idea of BeSpecular started to take form.

Her group struck gold when they heard about the American Council of the Blind conference in Las Vegas as they were working on their project. After collecting air miles from their lecturers to be able to attend, they went to the conference to test their idea. At the end of the course Cowper

and teammate, Italian electronic engineer Giacomo Paremezziani, decided to grow the app further. "We developed a minimal viable product and went through an intense beta-testing phase, where we invited people to join the app to give feedback while we built the final product."

She entered the Innovus Ideas competition and won a small amount of money that allowed them to make publicity videos. The app now has beta testers in 37 countries, and

is available in 7 countries in the app-stores. "Almost 10 000 people are using it, and we plan on doubling numbers by the end of 2016." Cowper, who also has a full-time job at an IT company, recently won the Innovator Recognition Award at the MTN Women in Information Communication Technology competition and walked away with the Forbes Woman Africa - TechPreneur of the Year Award.

What else you should know

- The app uses very little data.
- If you sign up as a sighted person, you don't have to stress if you're not able to answer an incoming request.
- All users get an alert and as soon as someone answers, the VIP will close it, unless they want more opinions.
- Day-to-day uses have been help with putting together outfits, checking expiry dates and describing photos. The app is available in English and Italian, but they're busy with translation in German and Cowper is hopeful that they'll roll out in African languages.
- Visit www.bespecular.com or download the app free on the Google Play or App Store.

Alumnus invests in the future

Building a future that will lead to the best possible South Africa and making a positive change in the lives of less-privileged young leaders – these are the things that motivate alumnus Andrew le Roux.

Small wonder then that Le Roux and his wife, Mercia, also a Maties alumna, have been loyal supporters of Stellenbosch University's SciMathUS **bridging programme** for the past 10 years.

This bridging programme is aimed at helping students from educationally disadvantaged communities gain access to higher education and preparing them for successful tertiary study. "SciMathUS pushed all our buttons ever since we heard about it," says Le Roux, an actuary working in Johannesburg. He says the elements that drew them to SciMathUS include "the fact that education is such an urgent need in our country (and it bears fruit over such a long period), the emphasis on mathematics and science (which is also where our hearts lie), the fact that SciMathUS takes so much trouble over improving its 'technical' approach throughout and staying abreast of new trends, and the fact that we could see how the lives of highly gifted but less



privileged young leaders have been changed forever".

These two decided very early on to contribute a percentage of their bonuses. "The numbers were small to begin with but, because we pinned down the percentage, it wasn't at all difficult when the numbers increased over time. We support

a variety of organisations – but Stellenbosch University always gets the first share."

He says that, although he and his wife are able to make a financial contribution, this is not possible for everyone. "Maybe more ways should be created for people to contribute non-financially as well – as mentors of students, for example. I believe people need to experience the joy of giving rather than receiving only once for them to become addicted to it. I'd advise all those who are tired of our country or feeling down about it to attend the SciMathUS year-end function so that they can experience those stories of success and hope first-hand."

More about Andrew le Roux

He grew up in East London and matriculated from Grens High School in 1989. He chose actuarial science as his field of study because mathematics was his favourite subject. He studied with a bursary from Old Mutual and is a former Eendragter. After four years at Stellenbosch, he worked for Old Mutual in various capacities for 22 years. He has been living in Johannesburg since 2008 but still supports the Stormers and Western Province. He plays golf, collects wine and has recently completed his fifth Two Oceans marathon. He and Mercia have been married for 21 years and have three children: André (15), Suzanne (13) and Charl (9).



HOMECOMING 2017: Matieland awaits!

Stellenbosch University's inaugural Maties Homecoming Weekend for alumni in March 2016 was a huge success and we are already preparing for Homecoming 2017, complete with a range of exciting activities tailor-made for you.



Here's what we have planned:

The 2017 Homecoming and Family Weekend will take place from **2 to 6 March 2017** on the Stellenbosch campus and we'll continue our partnership with the **SU Woordfees**.

For those of you travelling from other parts of the country or internationally, be sure to make your accommodation bookings in good time as Stellenbosch is bound to be a hive of activity.

We kick off with an opening concert in collaboration with Woordfees – a host of popular South African artists and musicians (including Corlea, Jannie Moolman, Timothy Moloï, Lindiwe Bongani, and Joseph Clark, amongst others) will perform live at Coetzenburg and we have reserved a special Homecoming VIP area just for you.

Interesting faculty discussions including, for example, the Economics and Management Sciences Faculty will host a panel discussion on the state of the economy and career choices for the world of work in 2050; whilst various other

discussions and debates will be presented by the other faculties. Be sure to keep an eye out for these "Back to Class" series of faculty talks.

There'll be an opportunity for alumni to engage in sporting and recreational events over the Homecoming Weekend. These include a North vs South Golf Challenge, an early morning family fun run at Coetzenburg or a mountain bike ride.

Class reunions are also on the agenda, so come meet a current dean, previous deans, your old and new professors, and reconnect with some of your classmates that you may have lost touch with after varsity. There will also be residence reunions during the Homecoming Weekend, like Huis Ten Bosch that will be celebrating their 80th birthday.

Let other Maties know about Homecoming 2017 and follow our social media platforms and www.matiesalumni.com for regular updates and our full programme of activities.

• For more information, contact us on alumni@sun.ac.za; or tel +27 (0)21 808 9265.



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