

## FABI FLAG FLIES HIGH AT SASSB CONGRESS

During the first week of July the Southern African Society for Systematic Biology (SASSB) held its 13<sup>th</sup> conference at the SANBI Education Centre at the National Botanical Gardens in Pretoria. The conference was hosted by the University of Pretoria, with Profs Fanus Venter, Emma Steenkamp and Dr Martin Coetzee of FABI serving on the organising committee.

Several FABI staff members and students from the Tree Protection Co-operative Programme (TPCP), DST-NRF Centre of Excellence in Tree Health Biotechnology (CTHB) and Seed Science research groups, made presentations at the meeting (see the list below). All participants agreed that having biologists from different fields of study together, each with their perspectives on the systematic study of organisms as diverse as bacteria, fungi, insects, spiders, fish, plants, birds and more, made for some stimulating, informative and interesting discussions.



A special exhibit was also done in the foyer of the congress venue by the Outreach Team of the CTHB. The outreach team consists of several students based in FABI, whose aim it is to create a public awareness of tree health research among school children and the general public.

## Oral presentations:

Three centuries of fungal taxonomy: from herbarium specimens to virtual species - ZW de Beer, TA Duong, M Erasmus, MJ Wingfield

How we view fungal species matters – mechanisms and practical implications - ET Steenkamp

Genome-based phenotype for the description of bacterial species: What are the challenges? - SN Venter, K Maier, M Palmer, JR Avontuur, WY Chan, ET Steenkamp

The impact of whole genome sequencing on rhizobial taxonomy - CW Beukes, SN Venter, ET Steenkamp

Genome divergence explains differences in host range and competitive abilities of closely related fungi - J Aylward, ET Steenkamp, LL Dreyer, F Roets, BD Wingfield, MJ Wingfield

Genome based metabolic and physiological separation of lineages within *Pantoea* - M Palmer, ET Steenkamp, MPA Coetzee, SN Venter

Multigene sequence data reveals that the root rot pathogen *Thielaviopsis basicola* constitutes two sister species in a new genus - WJ Nel, TA Duong, BD Wingfield, MJ Wingfield, ZW de Beer

Fungal endophytes associated with Aizoaceae plants in the Succulent Karoo - Z Pieterse, TAS Aveling, A Jacobs

Exploring the bacterial diversity in a unique plant associated niche in a biodiversity hotspot - ZR Human, SN Venter, MJ Wingfield, CJ Crous, F Roets, ZW de Beer



## Posters

Delineation of novel *Bradyrhizobium* species using a genealogical concordance perspective - JR Avontuur, ET Steenkamp, E van Zyl, CW Beukes, WY Chan, M Palmer, SN Venter

Redefining generic boundaries in the Ophiostomatales, an economically important fungal order - M Erasmus, TA Duong, MJ Wingfield, ZW de Beer

Phylogenomics provides support for generic boundaries within *Burkholderia sensu lato* - P Manyaka, M Palmer, CW Beukes, WY Chan, J Avontuur, SN Venter, ET Steenkamp