

## **FABIANS TAKE PART IN VARIOUS ACTIVITIES DURING UP'S ANTI-DISCRIMINATION AND SOCIAL JUSTICE WEEK**

The University of Pretoria observed Anti-Discrimination and Social Justice Week from 30 September to 4 October. FABI hosted the first in a series of events organised by the Faculty of Natural and Agricultural Sciences in recognition of this campaign. Professor Catherine Sole of the Department of Zoology and Entomology led the discussion on gender bias in the science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) field at the Monday morning meeting on 30 September. Staff and students from the Department of Biochemistry, Genetics and Microbiology, the Department of Plant and Soil Sciences and the Department of Zoology and Entomology attended the talk chaired by Prof Sanushka Naidoo. Professor Naidoo, Dr Nicky Creux and Prof Eshchar Mizrahi are members of the Women in STEM Committee.



Prof Sole discussed various factors that “push” women out of careers in STEM. She argued that women in the field constantly felt they had to prove themselves to their colleagues and they had fewer opportunities for advancement at institutions with a sexist organisation culture. Prof Sole also highlighted that the competence of women in the field was often questioned after they had children. She argued that accepting gender bias exists was crucial to addressing it as well as questioning prevailing stereotypes against women in STEM and calling out sexist statements.

The Department of Biochemistry, Genetics and Microbiology (BGM) hosted a discussion on sexual harassment on 3 October. Deputy Director of the Centre for Sexualities, AIDS and Gender at UP, Pierre Brouard led the discussion. This focused on what constitutes sexual harassment and recourse for those affected at UP. Mr Brouard alerted participants to UP's

policy on sexual harassment and where victims can go for help. Dr Chrizelle Beukes, Dr Vuyiswa Bushula-Njah, Vinolia Danki, Dr Steven Hussey, Khomotso Maredi, Prof Lucy Moleleki, Prof Zander Myburg and Namhla Tshisela took part in the discussion.

Dr Nicky Creux chaired a discussion on 4 October hosted by the Department of Plant and Soil Sciences on indigenous knowledge and social justice. Two traditional healers who use medicinal plants in their work highlighted the need for researchers and companies that benefit from indigenous knowledge to “plough back” to these communities. Traditional Doctor Lulama Masinga criticised pharmaceutical companies that harvest indigenous and endangered plants indiscriminately, leaving the land “dry”. Traditional Doctor Ephraim Mabena said communities, as custodians of indigenous knowledge, should benefit through the exchange of information with researchers as well as economically from the products derived from their knowledge.

UP observes Anti-Discrimination and Social Justice Week every year to keep issues of discrimination based on race, sex, sexual orientation and disability in the spotlight and to promote an environment free of prejudice.