

SEVEN FABI RESEARCHERS HONOURED AT THE UP 2019 ACADEMIC ACHIEVERS' AWARDS CEREMONY

The University of Pretoria honoured its best academics on 21 May, including seven researchers from FABI. Held annually to celebrate researchers rated by the National Research Foundation and those who contribute to research excellence at UP, 2019's Academic Achievers' Awards dinner was the first under UP's new rector's leadership. Prof. Tawana Kupe applauded the recipients' contribution to "ensuring that UP continues to illuminate the path of research excellence."

Prof. Zander Myburg was one of two researchers who received the Chancellor's Award for Research. The award is made for exceptional achievement in advancing science and promoting the interests of the University of Pretoria. Prof. Myburg leads the Forest Molecular Genetics programme at FABI and holds the chair in Forest Genomics and Biotechnology at UP. He holds a B1 rating from the NRF. His research team has embarked on an initiative to develop a Genome Diversity Atlas for commercially grown eucalypt and pine trees.

Prof. Mike Wingfield, who has retained his A1 rating, received the Vice-Chancellor's Award for Excellent Supervision. The award acknowledges excellence in supervising postgraduate students and evidence of "excellent mentorship and guidance". Prof. Wingfield supervised or co-supervised 101 doctoral students and 68 Masters' students, some of whom hold academic positions at UP and "impressive" NRF ratings. Prof. Wingfield's A1 rating recognises his inclusion in the Clavirate list of the 6000 most highly cited scientists in the world. He is also the President of IUFRO, which represents more than 15000 forest researchers worldwide.



Prof. Teresa Coutinho was awarded the Exceptional Academic Achievers award the third time. The award acknowledges senior academics who have already achieved the status of professor and have excelled in under- and postgraduate teaching and learning, research, community service and administration. Prof. Coutinho has featured in the

Thomson Reuters Science Indicators list of the top 5000 most cited scientists in the plant sciences for the past 20 years. Her research focus is on opportunistic pathogenic bacteria and she leads the Phytobacteriology group.



Director of the DST-NRF Centre of Excellence in Tree Health Biotechnology, Prof. Emma Steenkamp holds a B-rating from the NRF. She was the second recipient of the Exceptional Academics Achievers award from FABI on the night. A specialist in the systematics and evolution of microorganisms, Prof. Steenkamp's work has been cited more than 2500

times in scientific literature. She serves on the Subcommittee for Taxonomy on Rhizobium-Agrobacterium, a working group of the International Committee on Systematics of Prokaryotes.

Prof. Dave Berger, leader of the Molecular Plant-Pathogen Interactions group, received a B2 rating from the NRF. A plant biotechnologist who conducts research on crop diseases of economic importance, the aim of his research is to develop sustainable management strategies for long-term food security. He received the Special Award for Crop Science and Food Security from the National Science and Technology Forum and South 32. Dr Fahimeh Jami received a C2 rating. A senior postdoctoral research fellow at FABI, Dr Jami has an h-index of 10. Her research focuses on the characterisation of plant pathogenic fungi. Prof. Eshchar Mizrachi received a P-rating. A P-rating is awarded to a young researcher who has held the doctorate for less than five years at the time of application and is considered a future leader in their field. Prof. Mizrachi recently published several papers describing xyloplast – a new type of plastid proposed to be involved in wood formation. He received UP's Exceptional Young Researchers Award for his work with the FMG.