

University of Pretoria joins forces with Agilent Technologies

By Prof BT Maharaj

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Prof Roelf Sandenbergh (DEAN:EBIT Faculty), Mr Steve Alves (MD: Concilium Technologies), Prof Cheryl de la Rey (Vice Chancellor and Principal), Mr Benoit Neel (VP and GM: Electronic Measurements Group-EMEA, Agilent Technologies), Prof Sunil Maharaj (HOD: EEC Eng.)

The Department of Electrical, Electronic and Computer Engineering at the University of Pretoria has partnered with internationally renowned company Agilent Technologies to develop the largest electrical engineering training laboratory in South Africa.

The inauguration of the lab was performed jointly by Prof Cheryl de la Rey, Vice-Chancellor and Principal of the University of Pretoria and Benoit Neel, Vice President and General Manager, EMG, EMEA, Agilent Technologies, on Tuesday, 4 September 2012.

The Agilent-CAEC (Computer Aided Education Centre) facility is a large undergraduate laboratory that has 144 workstations, all fitted with a DSOX2002A digital oscilloscope with a built-in function generator, a U3401A 4 1/2 digit dual display digital multi-meter, and an E3630A triple output DC power supply. It is the largest laboratory of its kind in South Africa. First and second year Engineering students across all disciplines of Engineering will perform their practicals here as part of their training in electronic circuit theory in a number of different undergraduate modules. About 2 000 undergraduate students per semester will benefit from this laboratory, mostly at first and second year level and some at third year level.

Agilent Technologies were selected to ensure that UP students benefit from being exposed to high-quality industry standard equipment from their first year. Further, the five-year technical and maintenance support that UP will receive from Concilium Technologies will enable the Department to manage an optimally functioning facility.

The U3401A digital multi-meters as well as the following educational software have been donated by Agilent:

- Advanced Design Software (ADS)
- SystemVue
- EMPro
- Vector Signal Analysis
- Wireless LAN Analysis

This software, which will operate via the UP network, will be of great benefit to senior undergraduate and postgraduate students, who will use them in their project design simulations and research. The commercial value of this software is estimated at R 15 million.

Steve Alves, Managing Director of Concilium Technologies, stated that "South Africa has a dire shortage of engineers, and Concilium Technologies are committed to the development of technical education in South Africa. We have various donor programmes for grade 11 science learners, bursaries for promising students in engineering at tertiary level, and life skills and practical work experiential training for technicians completing their studies. For budding engineers, Concilium works closely with Universities in providing lab equipment and support for undergraduates and postgraduate students."

Benoit Neel, Agilent EMEA Vice President and General Manager commented that "Agilent is honoured and proud to contribute to South African engineering community education. Students at the University of Pretoria will be trained with the best scientific test and measurement equipment

which are used in the industry around the world. With our partner Concilium, Agilent technologies will play an even bigger role in the country's development."

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