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UP and SACI celebrate International Year of Chemistry

By Martie Meyer

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From the left: Prof Egmont Rohwer (Head: Department of Chemistry, UP), Prof Kenny Ozoemena (CSIR), Dr Chris Parkinson (CSIR), Prof Casper Schutte (UP), Dr Vinesh Maharaj (CSIR) and Dr Neil Jarvis (Necsa). Back: Dr Gerdus Kemp (Petlabs).

On 23 August 2011 the Department of Chemistry at the University of Pretoria (UP) and the South African Chemical Institute (SACI) organised a half-day symposium to celebrate the International Year of Chemistry.

The idea was to get scientists from Gauteng North region together and reflect on the past and future of Chemistry. More than 140 delegates registered for the symposium with the theme Chemistry: Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow. The main speaker was Prof Casper Schutte from the Department of Chemistry at UP who shared his view of the development of Chemistry over time and highlighted the challenges of the future. Prof Schutte was also awarded the Gold Medal of the South African Chemical Institute (SACI) at this occasion for his scientific contributions in the field of chemistry or chemical technology of outstanding merit.

Prof James Darkwa from the University of Johannesburg and the President of SACI also awarded the SACI achievement prizes, of which two were bestowed on postgraduate students from the Department of Chemistry at UP - Stephen Thompson (James Moir medal) and Dr Daniela Bezuidenhout (Sasol postgraduate medal).

Dr Daniela Bezuidenhout and Prof James Darkwa

The other guest speakers were Prof Kenneth Ozoemena (CSIR) on energy storage, Dr Neil Jarvis (Necsa) on nuclear energy and nuclear medicine, Dr Chris Parkinson (CSIR) on isolation and integration in South Africa in the field of biological active compounds, Dr Vinesh Maharaj (CSIR) on the contribution of natural product chemistry in generating commercially valuable products and Dr Gerdus Kemp (Petlabs) on the past, present and future of radiochemistry. Prof Brenda Wingfield, Deputy Dean of the Faculty of Natural and Agricultural Sciences at UP, officially opened the proceedings.

Prof James Darkwa and Stephen Thompson

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