

Dear colleagues and students

We are already nearing the halfway mark for 2007, and the mid-year exams are just a few days away. The bitter cold of the last week or two did nothing to diminish the enthusiasm and success of the NWU:

The prestigious Absa-Beeld Economist of the Year competition for 2007 was recently won by Prof Andre Mellet of the Vaal Triangle Campus. This is an outstanding achievement, especially if one keeps in mind that most of the competitors are seasoned economists practising in the corporate sector. Prof Mellet achieved top scores in 5 of the 10 categories. Congratulations to him and the Vaal Triangle Campus.

We received a team of the Higher Education Quality Committee for a review of the Advanced Certificates in Education (ACE) – the Natural Science Certificate and the Postgraduate Certificate in Education on the Potchefstroom Campus. According to all accounts, the audit went well, and the team (coming from various universities) was impressed with the preparation done.

The NWU conferred its first honorary doctorate since the merger. Ms Renata Coetzee who has been recognised for her pioneering work in the field of indigenous food and traditional African cuisine has indeed “laid the table” for a new era at the NWU.

Perhaps the best news of the last month is that the NWU’s research outputs for 2006 have now been finalised and we have again exceeded expectations and our own targets. In terms of article equivalents (including books and conference papers), the NWU has produced 371 article equivalents for 2006, compared to the 326 for 2005. The Potchefstroom Campus contributed 331, the Mafikeng Campus 13 and the Vaal Triangle Campus 27. In addition, the NWU awarded 9821 degrees and diplomas for 2006 (2005 - 7746), including 765 master’s (2005 - 700) and 110 PhDs (2005 - 82) – with the master’s degrees and PhDs being the most in the history of the NWU. This represents excellent growth, and I want to congratulate and thank all academics who have worked hard to reach and surpass these targets.

Institutional Management approved the establishment of a NWU Centre for High Performance Computing. The CHPC is actually nothing other than expensive experimental equipment. In many disciplines it is the primary or indispensable equipment with which to do computational-intensive research, such as astrophysics, computational mechanics, bio-informatics and data mining, molecular modelling, pharmaco-epidemiological studies, and operational analyses. The NWU CHPC will be available for shared use by qualifying researchers, will be supported and maintained by Institutional IT, and will be governed by a representative body of research managers and IT professionals.

The next Council meeting is scheduled for 22 June 2007, and preparations are already underway. The 2006 Annual Report will also serve at Council and I will report on other 2006 results after that meeting. The Human Resources and Employment Equity Committee, Transformation Oversight Committee, Investment Committee, Assets Committee, the Audit Committee as well as the Finance Committee had met during the last six weeks and reports will also serve at Council.

On a personal note: My visit to the USA to deliver a paper at a conference at Yale University was successful and the contributions will be published in a book with the theme “South Africa after apartheid and beyond”, tracking the progress our country has made since 1994, and the challenges ahead. The fundraising in New York will hopefully yield results in the future.

Finally, I would like to thank all staff and students who sent good wishes with my birthday recently. It is on such a day that one realises how much goodwill there is at the NWU!

Kind regards,  
Theuns Eloff,  
Vice-Chancellor