

Pan-African Profile Awards for science, technology journalism launched

The 2014 Pan-African Profile Awards for science and technology journalism have been launched, and this year there is an emphasis on bringing in the public and working with journalism departments at universities to improve science and technology journalism skills.



The awards wish journalists to be recognised for quality science and technology journalism, but they also want to raise public awareness about the science and technology innovations and developments taking place and the role that journalists play in telling these stories.

Distilling complex stories

"Journalists play a vital role in distilling complex science, technology and engineering into a language that business, government and the public can understand," said Clifford Klaas, executive director Siemens Southern Africa, which started and supports the awards.

Siemens has introduced a new skills development programme to the 2014 Profile Awards. "We don't want to only recognise established journalists. In 2014, we will also be working with South African universities to help develop journalists' skills in science and technology reporting."

By 2030, South Africa is targeting a three-fold increase in people starting careers in science and technology, according to the National Development Plan. The NDP forecasts 450,000 students studying science and maths at university by 2030.

Siemens is initially partnering with four major universities in South Africa for the first year of the Profile Awards' training and development programme. Journalism students will be invited to specialist master classes aimed at equipping them to identify and produce quality science and technology stories.

Student Awards

A student arm of the Profile Awards has also been introduced. The 2014 Student Profile Awards are open to journalism

students from across Africa, with five student journalists in line to be 2014 Student Profile Award winners.

The Department of Science and Technology (DST) supports the Profile Awards. Minister Naledi Pandor said that recognising working journalists and training student journalists would raise awareness about SA science and technology and its role in South Africa's growth. "We rely on journalists to explain how science and technology are an engine for economic growth and a vital factor in building a knowledge-based economy.

"This is important for people in the world of work, and for parents and teachers in helping to encourage learners with an interest in science and technology to take it further."

Public nominations

In addition to entries from working journalists, the 2014 Profile Awards also allows nominations of journalists by their peers, government, business or the public.

"The public engagement programme of the 2014 Profile Awards is crucial to raise awareness about the role of science and technology in our society and economy," concludes Klaas.

For more information, go to www.profileawards.co.za.

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