

Higher Education as builder of Hope to be deliberated

The constructive and critical role that African institutions of higher education can play in the continent's development will be deliberated at an international conference to be held at Spier outside Stellenbosch from 13-16 April 2014.



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Themed Science for Society: Higher Education as builder of Hope, the 7th AC21 International Forum 2014 is hosted by Stellenbosch University (SU) and will take place at Spier outside Stellenbosch from 13-16 April 2014.

The AC21 International Forum is the annual meeting of members of the Academic Consortium for the 21st Century (AC21). This year's forum will host more than 70 delegates from 17 countries. Established in 2002, AC21 is a network comprising educational, research and industrial organisations from Australia, China, France, Germany, Indonesia, Japan, Lao Peoples Democratic Republic, South Africa, Thailand and the United States.

"Higher education institutions in Africa face an unprecedented opportunity to play a constructive and critical role in Africa's development. After decades of decay Africa is now the fastest growing continent. This is mirrored in science: Africa's research output grew 22% faster than the overall world rate between 2005 and 2010.

However, much still needs to be done to ensure that Africa's universities play the key knowledge role in society that universities in other regions are occupying," says Robert Kotze, senior director of the Postgraduate and International Office at SU and host of the conference.

"The Forum will also be attended by 8 of SU's partner institutions in Africa and the International Forum will provide AC21 member institutions with a sound platform to explore how international knowledge coalitions can focus on sustainable human development in conversation with our African partners.

Sub-themes of the conference include:

- Higher Education and Community Development: Curriculum for Society (e.g. service learning)

- Knowledge coalitions and sustainable development
- Competitive Industry: Higher education, research and innovation
- Internationalisation:
 - Building bridges between communities through academic mobility
 - Creating networks for training the next generation of academics

Keynote speakers include:

- Prof Dr Hans-Jochen Schiewer, Rector of the University of Freiburg in Germany ("Global Challenges need transnational answers: The University of Freiburg's Approach towards sustainability"); - Mon 14 Apr 09:00
- Prof Russel Botman, SU Rector and Vice-Chancellor; "The long road to development: Walking together in higher education" - Mon 14 Apr 09:00
- Prof Pascale Quester, Deputy Vice-Chancellor and Vice-President (academic), University of Adelaide; "Co-creation and the Adelaide Learning Hub" - Mon 14 Apr 14:00.
- Ghaleeb Jeppie, Chief Director: International Relations at the Department of Higher Education and Training; "Towards an Internationalisation Strategy in South African Higher Education & Training" - Tue 15 Apr 09:00
- Prof Arnold van Zyl, Rector TU Chemnitz in Germany ("The Role of Universities in the Innovation Chain"). - Tue 15 Apr 12:00

Delegates will also visit the University's Ukwanda Rural Clinical School in Worcester on Wednesday 16 Apr (departing at 09:00). Ukwanda trains health professionals in rural and other underserved areas specifically to improve recruitment and retention; and it strengthens health care by delivering graduates who are socially responsive to the South African context and the rural community. The initiative serves as an example on how universities can be active in the community.

For more, go to www.sun.ac.za/ac21

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