

Launch of University of Pretoria's new energy research initiative

As a research-intensive university, the University of Pretoria believes that it can make a positive contribution to the economic and social development of the country. Its research agenda is focused on a number of carefully selected themes, on which proven capacity exists within the University, and which build on the work of excellent researchers and research leaders. This has led to the establishment of a number of institutional research themes (IRTs), one of which is the IRT on Energy.



→ Celebrating the official launch of the IRT on Energy were (from left): Prof Anton Ströh (Dean: Natural and Agricultural Sciences), Prof Tinus Pretorius (Director: IRT on Energy), Prof Cheryl de la Rey (Vice-Chancellor and Principal), Malcolm Fawkes (Senior Manager: Generation Learning Faculty, Eskom) and Prof Roelf Sandenbergh (Dean: Engineering, Built Environment and Information Technology).

A study by the University's Institute for Technological Innovation found that the University was the most prolific publisher of energy research in South Africa from 1997 to 2007. This led to the establishment of the University's Institutional Research Theme on Energy (IRT on Energy).

The IRT on Energy was designed to recognise and foster excellence in research, and is aimed at enhancing multi- and transdisciplinary research that cuts across faculties to strengthen the University's reputation as one of South Africa's leading research universities. The IRT will coordinate the research being done in a number of faculties and partner institutions, which focuses on topics that are relevant to South Africa's future energy security. Such a focused and concerted research effort is necessary to ensure that the country succeeds in achieving the goals of government's Integrated Resource Plan of 2010 (IRP2010).

In order to develop an appropriate strategy for the IRT on Energy, the IRP2010 was evaluated, together

with other government energy policies and strategies. The main goal of the IRT on Energy is to concentrate on research related to electricity generation, transmission and distribution. A number of selected research subthemes include energy production (with the emphasis on clean coal, nuclear and renewable energy), energy distribution (smart grids and energy storage), energy optimisation, advanced materials, energy policy and economics, and ensuring a sustainable environment.

With the newly established IRT on Energy at the University of Pretoria, excellent opportunities have been created for the development of research capacity at postdoctoral level. Different academic departments, especially in the faculties of Engineering, Built Environment and Information Technology, and Natural and Agricultural Sciences will collaborate in the new energy research initiative. Collaborations will also be established with local and international organisations, universities and industrial partners. ➔