

## News

# Laboratory for Atmospheric Studies launched

The University of Pretoria (UP), with support from Eskom and Sasol, recently launched the Laboratory for Atmospheric Studies (LAS). The laboratory is based at the University of Pretoria and will be a national centre of excellence that provides infrastructure and world-class education for studies and research in the atmospheric sciences.

The launch was attended by a number of prominent academic and industrial experts from different universities in the country, including Eskom and Sasol, the South African Weather Service (SAWS), and the National Association for Clean Air (NACA), among others.

This laboratory was developed as a result of the Eskom-Sasol research collaboration in pursuit of developing scarce skills in scientific studies. This partnership will also promote data and information sharing among the companies.

At various levels the parties have collaborated on numerous research initiatives intended to address environmental issues of common interest, including ash and brine research, impacts of atmospheric emissions on ecosystems, monitoring and reporting on mercury, ambient air quality, and wet and dry deposition rates of sulphur and nitrogen compounds.

Prof Hannes Rautenbach from the Meteorology Unit at UP, said the laboratory is the first to bring experts from different fields such as meteorology and chemistry together to broaden the scope of atmospheric studies.

He said UP is ideally situated to host a focused entity for conducting research in atmospheric circulation, atmospheric processes and air quality.

“With Eskom and Sasol as partners, it is expected that the resources produced by the Laboratory for Atmospheric Studies will be utilised by both organisations and also meet the urgent regional need for skills,” he added.

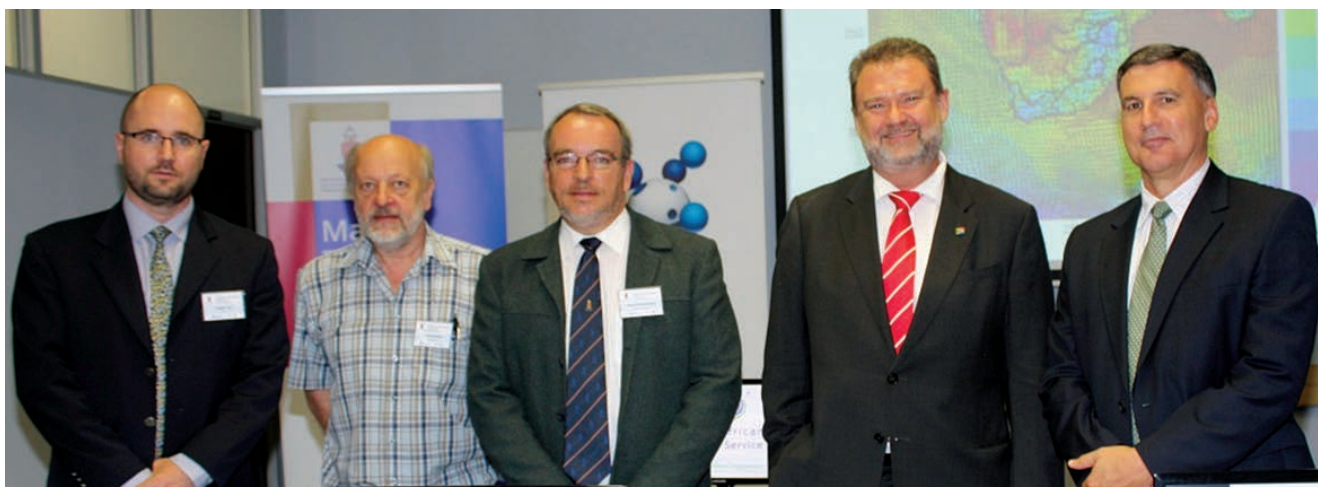
Prof Stephanie Burton, Vice-Principal for Research and Training at UP, said that collaboration with other universities, government and private sector organisations is important to the University. According to her, UP is recognised for its external, industrial partnerships.

“It is quite interesting to see the University engaging in creative activities such as this national research facility for air quality that we are launching today.”

Prof Burton said the facility will be relevant, particularly in the 21st Century, because of an ever-growing awareness of the fragile nature of the environment and our planet. She said these global issues can be addressed by means of global and collaborative responses.

“It is large consortia of research teams forming networks across the world that are able to address the problems we are faced with, especially in the field of atmospheric studies. It is very important and exciting for us that the University can play a role in a global initiative and make a difference nationally,” said Prof Burton.

The LAS is located in the University’s Geography Building. It has state-of-the-art computing facilities and can accommodate up to 20 students. It is open for use by people from all over the world thereby contributing to the ever-evolving field of atmospheric studies.



Attending the launch of LAS were (from left to right) Dr Gregor Feig (President: National Association for Clean Air); Prof Egmont Rohwer (Head: Department of Chemistry, UP); Prof Hannes Rautenbach (Meteorology Unit, UP); Dr Steve Lennon (Group Executive: Sustainability, Eskom); and Mr Rudi Heydenrich (Senior Vice-President: Research and Technology, Sasol).