

VICE-CHANCELLOR'S DISTINGUISHED RESEARCH MEDAL

Mr Chancellor, I have the honour of presenting to you
Janice Leigh Limson,
Associate Professor and Head of Biotechnology
in the Department of Biochemistry, Microbiology & Biotechnology,
for the award of the Vice-Chancellor's Distinguished Research Medal.

Professor Limson works at the interface of nanotechnology, biology and chemistry, in the field of biotechnology. Her research passion is in the design and development of biosensors. These are sensitive devices geared towards early disease detection such as cancer and malaria, the rapid identification of beneficial compounds in plants, and the monitoring of toxic environmental pollutants. Using biosensors she has also examined and identified new pathways by which the human brain protects itself from disease. Her referees describe her as “a dedicated and high achieving academic”, as having established “an excellent research publication track record” relatively early in her academic career, and as being “clearly on an upward trajectory”.

Professor Limson holds BSc (Honours) (1994) and Doctoral (1999) degrees in Chemistry from Rhodes University, and a Postgraduate Diploma in Higher Education and Teaching (2008) from Rhodes University.

The impact of her 26 journal papers and 41 peer reviewed conference papers can be measured by the citations in the scientific literature of her research. These are currently in excess of 600.

Her role in mentoring postgraduates is significant. Her research group is currently 10 strong, including a post doctoral fellow, and she has supervised or co-supervised 4 PhD and 9 MSc graduates. Mr Chancellor, she shares the stage this evening with two doctoral and four Masters graduates who were supervised by her.

Professor Limson is well known for her achievements in promoting the public understanding of science in South Africa and for encouraging women in science. She is the founder and editor-in-chief of the web based “Science in Africa” magazine, which has had an impact on the scientific development of many young minds, and for which she was awarded a National Science & Technology Forum award (2002) for an outstanding contribution to Science, Engineering & Technology in South Africa. This work has also earned her the Highway Africa “Innovative use of New Media in Africa” Journalism Award (2003), and a World Summit Award (2003).

Amongst several other awards received by Professor Limson are the 2006 Amnesty International Rhodes Women of the year award for Research. She has featured two years in a row (2009 & 2010) in the Mail and Guardian's top 200 Young South Africans to take out to lunch.

This year, Professor Limson took up the Chair of the School of Biotechnology at Rhodes where she intends driving a strong programme towards research commercialization and innovation. She currently serves on the boards of three commercial companies within South Africa's growing biotechnology sector.

Mr Chancellor, I request you to award the **2010 Vice-Chancellor's Distinguished Research Medal** to **Professor Janice Leigh Limson**.