

## **VICE-CHANCELLOR'S DISTINGUISHED SENIOR RESEARCH MEDAL**

Mr Chancellor, I have the honour of presenting to you  
Charles Michael Shackleton,  
Professor & SARChI Chair  
in the Department of Environmental Science,

for the award of the Vice-Chancellor's Distinguished Senior Research Medal.

"A clear thinker who is able to quickly cut to the heart of matters", "an inspiration to many young academics", "an extraordinarily productive academic", and "unique and refreshing". These are the phrases that peer reviewers have chosen to describe Professor Shackleton.

This recipient is perhaps best known for his work on non-timber forest products (NTFPs) and livelihoods. His detailed empirical work is exemplary in its holistic, methodologically rigorous, and impact-oriented approach. He has demonstrated the vital role played by NTFPs in rural livelihoods and the way in which non-timber forest trade provides opportunities for poor and marginalised communities. His body of work in this area has made influential contributions to "making an economic case" for NTFPs, and the conservation and sustainable use of these oft neglected resources, both in South Africa and globally.

His peers on the selection committee for this award were particularly persuaded by the national and international impact of his scholarly activities over a sustained period. In the past 13 years, the Environmental Science Department has been one of the fastest growing departments at Rhodes University, and Professor Shackleton's intellectual leadership and direct research outputs have contributed substantially to this success. During this time he has supervised 8 PhD students, 32 masters students, and over 45 honour's students, with a current group of 9 PhDs and 14 Masters. The significance here is not only in the number of postgraduate students that Prof Shackleton has supervised, but also in the diversity of topics. Apart from his leading work in NTFPs, he has contributed to a wide range of studies, including issues such as the impacts of HIV/AIDS on use of biodiversity, urban greening and sustainability. His ability to cover and integrate the multi-faceted dimensions of environmental research has made it possible for his research to straddle disciplines within the social and natural sciences and with colleagues with many other departments at Rhodes.

Professor Shackleton's publication record is nothing short of remarkable, comprising both high calibre and high impact outputs - over 190 peer reviewed articles, seven books (the most recent of which came out yesterday), and over 35 book chapters. Many of the papers are in high ranking international journals such as PLOS ONE, Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society B, , Land Use Policy, Biological Invasions, Ecological Economics, making his work known and respected across the world. Another indicator of the rigour and quality of his research is that his publications have been cited more than 4000 times by other researchers.

His international profile has led to collaborations with researchers from around the world, and attracted research funding from a range of international funding

organisations (based in Australia, Germany, the Netherlands, the United Kingdom, Canada, and India).

Beyond formal journal papers and books, Professor Shackleton has written in popular forums to make his research results publicly accessible, and useful in policy making.

In 2013 Prof Shackleton was awarded the prestigious NRF SARChI Chair in *Interdisciplinary Science in Land & Natural Resource Use for Sustainable Livelihoods*, enabling him to devote his working time to research and postgraduate students.

He has nevertheless maintained the approach that his research is not only for academic purposes, but should make a difference in society and the natural world. Examples of his active contributions to civil society are as an adviser to the National Strategy for Sustainable Development, Chair of the Technical Liaison Committee of the Albany Working for Water Programme, member of the International Advisory Committee for the multinational research project on Sustainable Adaptive Strategies of Rural Communities, and the WWF technical advisory group on resource co-management for the Wild Coast.

One of Professor Shackleton's referees notes that "In the field of sustainable livelihoods, he is probably currently the top researcher in South Africa"

Another describes how "He encourages other staff, he assists with writing of funding proposals, actively promotes a culture of research excellence and collaboration and constantly seeks strategies to assist colleagues to develop their own research programmes and profiles."

A third says that "His powers of logic and consistency in thinking are finely honed, which allows him to focus on what is relevant and academically defensible. As a result, he is incredibly efficient in progressing towards goals."

And my personal favourite comment from a referee: "Charlie certainly fits the rigorous standing that characterises Rhodes University's scholars as well as Rhodes University's outstanding image as a serious academic institution."

Mr Chancellor, I request you to award the **2014 Vice-Chancellor's Distinguished Senior Research Medal to Professor Charlie Shackleton.**