



Prof Tawana Kupe and Prof Namrita Lall.

University of Pretoria honours its top-rated researchers

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The University of Pretoria (UP) has honoured its top researchers in various categories.

Three A-rated researchers, 25 B-rated, 74 C-rated and 17 Y-rated researchers were recognised at a virtual annual academic achievers' awards ceremony.

The awards were hosted online due to the Covid pandemic and are aimed at acknowledging the work of UP's academics, who ensure that their research helps to solve "real-life problems" and have a transformative impact on South African and global society.

UP spokesperson Primarashni Gower said the university celebrated 141 winners across nine categories, including 119 academics who were acknowledged for being included on the list of the National Research Foundation (NRF)-rated scholars or for the outstanding work they had done over the past year.

Gower said among the notable award winners of the evening were the recipient of the chancellor award: research, awarded in recognition of exceptional achievement in the field of research aimed at the advancement of science, and the associated promotion of the interests of the University of Pretoria.

Receiving the award for her pioneering work in fungal genomics in South Africa, Professor Brenda Wingfield, said she was accepting the chancellor's award with humility and pride.

"This award recognises more than just one person, but also my collaborators, colleagues and students. They have contributed hugely to the research and outputs that I have achieved over a lifetime. This award also recognises excellence.

"Excellence is not achieved easily, or rapidly. In contrast,

excellence requires a lifetime of investment and of focus in doing the very best that one can do," she said.

Department of Plant and Soil Sciences Professor Namrita Lall bagged the vice-chancellor's award for excellent supervision award which is given in recognition of the contribution of members of academic staff who excel as supervisors of postgraduate research students.

The award is made on the grounds of exceptional performance measured in terms of the students' academic achievement.

Lall said: "I am so honoured to have my work recognised in this way by the University of Pretoria.

"Many hours went into students' supervision, and it means so much to me that the work that I am so passionate about

also resonates with others. This accomplishment is not something that I did alone, and many others deserve to share this award.

This award is a result of the collective efforts of many of my collaborators, friends, students, and funders.

"I, therefore, want to share this recognition with you and thank you all for all the support you have given me."

UP vice-chancellor and principal Professor Tawana Kupe said he had noted the successes that the university has enjoyed, despite the pandemic creating continued global uncertainty.

"This is the second consecutive year that this awards ceremony is taking place in a hybrid mode as Covid-19 is still a feature in our lives."

South African epidemiologist and A-rated researcher Professor Quarraisha Abdool Karim also reflected on the past 18 months and the impact of Covid-19.

"We've also seen the importance of science in society," she said.


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Prof Namrita Lall