

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

Mr Chancellor, I have the honour of presenting to you

Heila Betrie Lotz-Sisitka,

Professor & SARChI Chair

in the Environmental Learning Research Centre,

Faculty of Education,

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

“Theoretically stringent and clear”, having “indisputable academic status”, “exceptional, consistent effort and intellectual rigour”, being “an important international player”, and producing work that is “the highest standard in her field”. These are the words and phrases that peer reviewers have chosen to describe Professor Lotz-Sisitka.

This is the second Vice-Chancellor's award being presented to Professor Lotz-Sisitka in this ceremony, a rare occurrence at Rhodes. Even rarer, given that this year is the first time it has happened, Professor Lotz-Sisitka will today be one of only two Rhodes academics to hold Vice-Chancellor's awards in all three pillars of the university's intellectual mission: teaching, research, and community engagement. She was the recipient of the 2008 Vice-Chancellor's Distinguished Teaching Award, and was a member of the group who received the 2014 Vice-Chancellor's Community Engagement Award.

Professor Lotz-Sisitka is widely regarded as one of Africa's foremost scholars in the field of environmental education. She regularly receives invitations from across the globe to deliver keynote addresses, and a number of seminal texts in the field of environmental education feature her work. Her contributions to extending the boundaries of new knowledge in environmental education span transformative/social learning in environmental education, critical realist analyses of environmental education research, and rethinking education in a post-sustainability paradigm. Professor Lotz-Sisitka's large body of publications witness her persistent efforts to initiate, lead and conduct research that is praxis-oriented, theory driven, and achieves both capacity and knowledge building in the policy, scholarly, and operational domains. Her writing makes it clear that she views research as something that should benefit society at the micro and macro levels, and, that one cannot compromise either the quality or ethical integrity of the research process.

Since 2001, when she was appointed as the Murray & Roberts Chair of Environmental Education at Rhodes University (Africa's first Chair in Environmental Education), she has worked tirelessly and effectively with colleagues and partners to build up the research programme at Rhodes University to what it is now, a leading international centre of environmental education research and learning. In 2007 the programme at Rhodes was recognised as a UNU (United Nations University) Centre of Expertise in Education for Sustainable Development, and in 2010 the Environmental Learning Research Centre (ELRC) was established at Rhodes University with Professor Lotz-Sisitka as its director. In 2016 she was awarded an NRF (National Research Foundation) Chair in Global Change and Social Learning Systems, under the prestigious South African Research Chair Initiative (SARChI).

A stellar thought leader and project initiator in all respects, Professor Lotz-Sisitka has been instrumental in raising a staggering R68 million in research funding and capacity building in Environmental Research at Rhodes University and across the SADC region. She has collaborated with highly regarded colleagues from across the world, and has worked closely with various United Nations agencies, and the International Social Science Council, her influence finding its way into national and international policy documents, and many institutional settings in policy and education politics and practice. Amongst the many forms of recognition that Prof Lotz-Sisitka has received for her work was a 2016 Lifetime Conservation Achiever Award from WESSA (Wildlife and Environment Society of South Africa).

Prof Lotz-Sisitka has served on 20 international scientific committees, holds journal editorships, has produced articles in a host of top scholarly journals, books and reports – her publications number more than 133 - and she has successfully supervised 57 Masters and 26 PhD theses, as well as being the founding director in 2015 of Rhodes University's Postgraduate Studies Centre which set up support structures for postgraduates across the institution.

A significant and celebrated aspect of this awardee's research approach, is the way that she has chosen to work together with and grow the next generation of researchers, demonstrating an incredible work ethic example, and commitment to the field and to her students. One of her referees sums up her mentoring this way: "Prof Lotz-Sisitka has been extravagantly generous in giving her time to develop the research capacity of postgraduate students and academics at Rhodes University, but also elsewhere in South Africa and internationally (particularly in the SADC region). (Her ...) efforts in building infrastructure, providing funding support and giving personal time to students and others so as to enhance research capacity in environmental education is unparalleled internationally. This unselfish contribution to enhance research capacity is worthy of an award on its own."

Mr Chancellor, I request you to award the **2016 Vice-Chancellor's Distinguished Senior Research Medal** to **Professor Heila Lotz-Sisitka**.