

CSIR expert joins council of SA Institute of Physics

Dr Igle Gledhill, a physicist at the CSIR, has been elected to the Council of the South African Institute of Physics (SAIP).

At the CSIR, she specialises in the aeronautics of accelerating aircraft, and also uses computer models to design medicines and materials.

Gledhill - who is currently president of the South African Association for Theoretical and Applied Mechanics - together with other scientists, will help to shape the future of physics in South Africa. "It's an opportunity to contribute to the development of the science community in South Africa," says the Grahamstown-born scientist. "The state of physics is often a good indicator of the health of a nation's science base."



Dr Igle Gledhill, a physicist at the CSIR

Gledhill's specific role will be to facilitate industry liaison. "We want to ensure that students and graduates are able to see attractive career opportunities, and also that industry can open up jobs for scientists," she adds.

"Physics is the science of matter and motion, energy and force, and space and time. It's a form of insight; science offers ways of distinguishing truth from fraud and from show," she explains.

"The ability to master and use science underpins growing economies. Physics is one of the most challenging and rewarding of the sciences," says Gledhill. "Many young people have been held back in their natural wish to pursue the sciences as a career," she remarks, adding that it is important for children to see the avenues that science can open up for them. "For the country to benefit, the actors in physics need to plan to attract and retain the most imaginative scientists of the century."

This, she adds, can be achieved by triggering exciting flagship projects and creating opportunities to work with the best people locally. "The SAIP can make a difference in South Africa. It's great to be part of it," she says.

Speaking about the state of physics in South Africa, she says there is some exceptional physics research undertaken in the country and that South Africa is respected internationally in this field, and has unique contributions to make.

The SAIP annual conference will be held in July 2008.

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