

# Great ideas win varsity accolades

## Inventors, innovators recognised

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**F**ROM nano technology to high-end knitwear and solving problems with space radiation, inventors and innovators at NMMU were honoured for their work last night.

The awards event celebrated inventions, patents and innovations by academics from a variety of disciplines which "create value for tomorrow".

Among the 39 inventors and innovators honoured with certificates was Dr Gary Dugmore "for his contribution as the inventor on patents related to the microalgae-to-energy project".

Dr Nicole Vorster was recognised for the development of a slow-release pesticide and Dr Percy Hlangothl for his ceramic polymer cable coating.

Others included Heinrich Williams, a paraplegic who designed "an innovative nurse call button suitable for patients who cannot use existing buttons", and Professor Werner Olivier and Margot Collett for their contribution "to the development and commercialisation of the maths and science DVD series called *Touch Tutor*".

NMMU deputy vice-chancellor for research and engagement Prof Andrew Leitch said: "We can marvel at

what innovations are taking place here." The guest speaker was Dr Kerry Faul, inaugural head of the National Intellectual Property Management Office (Nipmo).

She said intellectual property and associated rights were critical aspects to innovation as well as economic growth in technology transfer.

"If you create, you own," she said.

In terms of technology transfer, Faul said South Africa was making strides in securing innovators' and inventors' rights with amendments to

the Intellectual Property Rights (IPR) Act which came into effect in 2010.

Comparing it to the US equivalent, Faul said a significant amount of funding was available for innovators and this could yield

millions. "A total of 82 [US] institutions have reported net product sales of \$36.8-million (R514-million) with start-up companies providing work for 15 741 people," Faul said.

The director for innovation support and technology transfer at NMMU's Innovation Office, Jaci Barnett, said that, since its inception in 2007, the office had become an integral part of the university's structures.

She said innovation and technology transfer made a real impact in society and showed people were making a difference.



**TALENT RECOGNISED:** Innovation award winners include, from left, Dr Percy Hlangothl, Dr Nicole Vorster and Dr Gary Dugmore

Picture: FREDLIN ADRIAAN