



# NUST BRIEF

## NUST and Stellenbosch University explore areas of collaboration



A delegation from the Stellenbosch University (SU), led by Prof Wim de Villiers, the Rector and Vice-Chancellor, paid a courtesy visit to NUST last week.

The aim of the meeting was to explore further possible areas of collaboration between the

two universities.

Both parties were in agreement that strengthening relations in this regard, can provide numerous opportunities for staff and students, in areas such as research, exchange programmes and curriculum development.

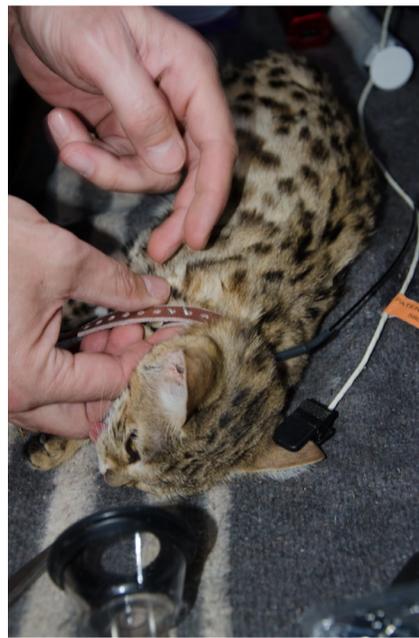


Prof Wim de Villiers, SU Rector and Vice-Chancellor (left) and Dr Eroid Naomab, NUST Vice-Chancellor (right).



A Black-footed cat being collared under sedation.

Photos: Prof Morgan Hauptfleisch



## Black-footed cat research going 'purr-fectly'

With the aim to conserve the rare Black-footed cat species, staff and students in the Faculty of Natural Resources and Spatial Sciences (FNRSS), have been conducting studies on this wild cat. Prof Morgan Hauptfleisch, an Associate Professor in the Faculty, gave an update on some of the recent findings.

With only a few authentic records existing in Namibia, the endangered Black-footed cat is a species not commonly known to locals. "The animals are rare and do not compete well against other carnivores, therefore, they are found in very small areas where predator numbers are low," emphasised Prof Hauptfleisch.

Areas mostly include private farmland, creating a precarious future for the animals, since the areas are not regarded as protected. "It was never expected that the cat could survive in such dry habitat, since other studies conducted took place on Southern African where rain was more prevalent." he said.

Other studies also showed that these cats mainly feed on smaller reptilian animals, which he also considers to be a new fact of these small-spotted cats.

Hauptfleisch works closely with two Masters

students in the FNRSS, Martina Kusters and Ndele Shipala, as well as fellow researchers from the Black-footed Cat Working Group. These nocturnal inhabitants are also known to be solitary and territorial animals, except when females care for their dependent kittens.

Being the smallest wild cat in Africa, with a head-to-body length of 35-52cm, their kittens often have a low survival rate. Additionally, many of the adult cats also succumb to a number of unnatural deaths.

"They are often mistaken for jackals or other small carnivores at night, so they are shot or even sometimes poisoned," Prof Hauptfleisch went on to explain, while urging farmers to refrain from harming the animals. Auas Motors, the Canadian Cat Protection Society and the Naples Zoo in the USA, are some of the sponsors of the project.

## Brainstorming Smart City Solutions in the Digital Era

The Faculty of Computing and Informatics (FCI), held a Hackathon last week, under the theme *Brainstorming Smart City Solutions in the Digital Era*. The main aim of the Hackathon was for participants to come up with a prototype that provides solutions to parking challenges in open spaces. MTC was the main sponsor of the event.

Fifteen (15) students were selected through Facebook and Whatsapp to enter the competition, which was held virtually.

"The idea was about promoting smart cities, where automation takes place in the ticketing, payment, as well as identification of open parking," Simon Muchinenyika, a Lecturer in the Department of Computer Science said.

Participants were required to develop a mobile-based prototype for a parking payment system.

Proposed solutions would allow drivers to make payments electronically and get various notifications on their mobile devices. Virtual solutions include a contactless electronic payment system where one can add time to a parking meter remotely, before the allocated time expires. This innovative payment system not only enhances the customer's open space parking experience, but allows them to

secure and reserve parking in the future.

"Even though we did not get our desired prototype from participants, I am particularly impressed by the courage and attempt that was made by our two finalists, Johannes Ndjalo and Gabriel Nashixwa," remarked Dr Colin Stanley, Acting Dean of the FCI.

"If I had more time, I would have finished, but I will keep working on my prototype," Bernadette Namutenya, an Honours student in the Faculty said excitedly.

Unfortunately, none of the participants' prototypes met the criteria set out during the briefing session, but the efforts of all contestants were observed and the finalists will be rewarded accordingly.

The event was also attended by representatives from PC Center, a local tech company, and a partner of the MTC-funded project.

## Welcome to campus!

#newbeginnings #nustorientation2021 #officialopening

Scores of new students descended on campus this week to attend the Orientation Ceremony. The event, hosted by the Department of Student Services, serves as a platform to introduce the students to campus life and become aware of key information relating to health, social welfare and career guidance amongst various other services on offer.

Next on the Institution's calendar, is the Official Opening Ceremony. The event will take place at 09h00, in front of the Engineering Basement, Lower Campus. During this Ceremony, students and staff will be addressed by Dr Eroid Naomab, the Vice-Chancellor and various motivational speakers. Entertainment will be provided by local musician, Sunny Boy.



Students being briefed before a campus tour.



Orientation session.