



DHET International Scholarship Sessions Spark Interest at UFS

The University of the Western Cape (UWC) hosted the 16th Southern African-Nordic Centre (SANORD) Annual Scientific Conference from 4 to 6 December. This annual conference provides a platform for the exchange of knowledge and the fostering of collaboration between institutions of higher learning in Southern Africa and those in the Nordic region. The theme of the conference was “Social and Epistemic Justice: Imagining Sustainable Futures through Agency.” Through workshops, dialogues, presentations, and partnerships, members of the delegation contributed to addressing global challenges and promoting sustainable development.

The University of the Free State (UFS) was represented by Prof Anthea Rhoda, Mrs Chevon Slambee, and Miss Seithati Ramonaheng from the Office for International Affairs. Prof Rhoda and Mrs Slambee participated in the SASUF engagements, as well as selected conference workshops and plenary sessions. Miss Ramonaheng delivered a presentation on Friday, 6 December, titled: “Rethinking the Utility of IKS and Foregrounding Indigenous Knowledge Paradigms in the South African Higher Education System.”

The presentation was extremely well received and sparked robust discussions about Western hegemony in knowledge production and the critical need to advocate for the inclusion and recognition of Indigenous Knowledge Systems (IKS). In her concluding remarks, Ramonaheng reminded delegates that higher education institutions must serve as engines of social justice, cultural preservation, and sustainable development.

The conference concluded with a tribute to Prof Brian O’Connell (BOC), one of the founding members of SANORD. SANORD remains a testament to Prof O’Connell’s vision, with its continued operations committed to upholding his legacy by advancing global collaboration and educational excellence.

The outcomes of the UFS’s participation in the conference are as follows:

- (i) to enable increased research collaboration within the SANORD network;
- (ii) to promote active participation in SASUF 2030 across all work packages; and
- (iii) to enhance the uptake of the BOC scholarships among UFS students.