

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

Mr Chancellor, I have the honour of presenting to you

**Martin Patrick Hill,**

Professor of Entomology

in the Department of Zoology & Entomology,

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

*Professor Hill is the leader of the group that received Vice-Chancellor's Distinguished Award for Community Engagement a few minutes ago. As far as we know, this is the first time that an individual has received two VC's awards in the same year.*

Professor Hill is widely regarded as Africa's foremost authority on the biological control of invasive aquatic weeds. His body of work continues to make influential contributions to the discipline both in South Africa and globally, notably to improving the safety and effectiveness of biocontrol.

Thanks to the direct work and national leadership of Professor Hill's group, South Africa as a country has researched and utilized more biological control agents on water weeds (in particular water hyacinth) than any other country. His expertise is widely acknowledged judging by the many invitations to attend congresses, workshops and to assist other countries with their water weed problems, particularly countries in Africa.

One reviewer put it this way: "it is not only his outstanding research record that deserves acclaim but his leadership within the biological control fraternity in South Africa and abroad. His ability to mould research from various institutions into a cooperative efficient unit is most commendable, and certainly contributed to the high level of productivity within this country."

Professor Hill was recruited to Rhodes in 2002 specifically to breath new life into a flailing entomology programme. The results of his appointment, in the words of a reviewer, have been "spectacular". Not only is the sub-department of Entomology a thriving programme of undergraduate and postgraduate activity, but Hill's research group is undoubtedly a high profile research strength of Rhodes University. This is not my opinion, Mr Chancellor, this is what objective measures like the DHET's research output audit, and Thomson Reuters InCites bibliographic benchmarking, tell us; it is what the four senior research colleagues (all of them former winners of this medal) who nominated Professor Hill for this award tell us, and it is what the National Research Foundation clearly recognised when they awarded Rhodes University a prestigious South African Research Chair in this field, based on the strength of Professor Hill's work. It says something really special about the character of this man, that he elected to attract a top scientist from the UK to take up this prestigious chair at Rhodes, rather than occupy it himself.

The growth in his research group and the influence of their work has been extraordinary by any standard. Over the last several years Prof. Hill has pioneered training courses and capacity-building programmes that have catered, in uniquely-innovative ways, for nearly 250 people from widely differing academic backgrounds. His outreach programmes have even encompassed school level learners, and his successful initiative in training and employing disabled people provides a model for what can be achieved with his brand of vision and determination.

The convenor of the Working for Water assessment committee which recently awarded Professor Hill a research grant of R20 million, describes his research as “value-for-money”, “internationally-competitive”, and “cutting-edge”.

More recently, he and his students have begun to tackle the important entomological problems associated with crop production, notably citrus, and this research is already making an international impact. His research is consequently of ecological, economic, and food security importance to the continent.

His peers on the selection committee for this award were particularly persuaded by the national and international impact of his scholarly activities over a sustained period. He has a track record of 114 papers published in peer reviewed journals, and 8 book chapters. A noted supervisor, he has trained 3 Postdoctoral fellows, and has graduated 21 Masters students and 13 doctoral candidates.

Without exception, reviewers look past the intellectual work under review to comment on the extraordinary personality of the human involved. Reviewers use words like “Energetic, engaged and good team leader” to describe the man, and “prolific” and “outstanding quality” to describe his work.

One referee, who in passing notes that Professor Hill has been “the most erudite and urbane of companions” on field trips, sums him up this way: “His scholarship in and pragmatic approach to biological control - not only of weeds, but also of arthropod pests - have placed him amongst the world’s foremost practitioners.”

Mr Chancellor, I request you to award the **2013 Vice-Chancellor’s Distinguished Senior Research Medal** to **Professor Martin Hill**.