

SU to represent Africa in Global Alliance of Universities on Climate

Based on its research performance and capacity, Stellenbosch University (SU) has recently been invited to represent Africa in the Global Alliance of Universities on Climate (GAUC) which held its inaugural executive meeting in Beijing, China, late last month.



Prof Hester Klopper, deputy vice-chancellor: strategy and internationalisation represented SU at the inaugural executive meeting of the Global Alliance of Universities on Climate (GAUC) in Beijing.

The Global Alliance of Universities on Climate (GAUC) was formed earlier this year in Davos, Switzerland – during the annual meeting of the World Economic Forum - with the goal of collaborating on promoting measures to support the United Nations conventions on climate change and Sustainable Development Goals.

The founding alliance partners are: Australian National University; University of California, Berkeley; University of Cambridge; Imperial College London; London School of Economics and Political Science; Massachusetts Institute of Technology; University of Tokyo, and Tsinghua University. The additional four members invited to be part of GAUC is Stellenbosch University, Federal University of Rio de Janeiro, Indian Institute of Science, and Sciences Po – these 12 Universities will now form GAUC.

Prof Hester Klopper, deputy vice-chancellor, strategy and internationalisation, who represented SU at the inaugural meeting of GAUC, says the institution is endowed with the knowledge and expertise across a multitude of disciplines and SU's work on climate and sustainability, as well as its Campus Green Initiatives will be a major asset to the alliance.

Advancing climate change solutions

The mission of the Global Alliance of Universities on Climate is to advance climate change solutions through research, education, and public outreach, and to partner with industry, non-profit and government organisations to promote rapid implementation from local to global scales. GAUC will pursue this mission by promoting exchange and cooperation among member universities and providing leadership of global higher education efforts addressing climate change.

Through joint research GAUC will encourage and strengthen bilateral or multilateral cooperative research among members on key scientific, technological and economic policy issues related to climate change so as to promote scientific awareness, technological innovation and policy development accordingly. GAUC will encourage research on climate change solutions that address global sustainable development goals and reduce impacts on the world's most vulnerable populations.

A key component of the alliance's mission is talent cultivation: GAUC will encourage and strengthen the cooperation between the members of the alliance to cultivate various talents in the field of climate change, and organise and carry out joint learning projects, student exchanges, course sharing, joint programmes, innovation and entrepreneurship, and other related endeavours.

GAUC aims to promote campus action by implementing green and carbon-neutral initiatives, share experiences and best practices, and promote the carbon-neutral transformation of the university in its management, operations and finances.

Focus on public engagement

The alliance will furthermore focus on public engagement by providing leadership to the global higher education community, promoting active participation in efforts to address climate change through research, education, and public service, working together with industry, civil society and related organisations. GAUC aims to enhance public awareness and strive to build consensus for the transformation to a global and local carbon-neutral society.

In the broader societal context GAUC will promote rapid implementation of technological and policy solutions that will reduce emissions of greenhouse gases and reduce the negative impacts of climate change on society.

Tsinghua University, the current host of GAUC, ranked number one among universities in China and renowned for the leading work of its Institute on Climate Change, is currently entering into a bilateral agreement with Stellenbosch University that will pave the way for more extensive co-operation between the two institutions.

Prof De Villiers expressed his deepest appreciation to Dr Tsakani Ngomane, deputy director-general: climate change and sustainable development, and council member of SU, who played a cardinal role in supporting SU's admittance to GAUC based on SU's research record and capabilities.

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