Humanity at a crossroads

Speaking at the Vice-Chancellor's Open Lecture, Dr Ian Goldin asked: Are the world’s leading thinkers anticipating the risks and opportunities of the 21st century, or will humanity be overtaken by its own medical, technological and scientific successes?

Goldin commented: “The challenge, he said, will be to secure the future of the planet and make it a safer place for the double-digit billions that will inhabit it by 2050.”

A former vice-president of the World Bank, Goldin is the author of 12 books, including Globalisation for Development: Trade, finance, aid, migration and ideas, which has been recommended as essential reading by Nobel Prize-winning economist, Joseph Stiglitz.

Now director of Oxford University’s James Martin 21st Century School, Goldin has a unique vantage point for surveying the century’s “unusually challenging” developments in science and technology – and understanding why the world’s great thinkers and leaders have to start grappling with them.

Founded in 2005, the James Martin 21st Century School is a collaborative think-tank for tackling problems and issues that accompany stem cell therapy, genetic research and even biological engineering.

“There is a developing crisis for global governance structures such as the United Nations, the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank, G8, North Atlantic Treaty Organisation and World Trade Organisation.

“These are not institutions of the 21st century, can we transform them? How do we begin to get something new?”

Education and mass communication would play an important role in finding solutions, he said.

A collective awareness of global challenges would affect education and mass communication, providing “access to the ideas that will solve our problems”. Vice-Chancellor Dr Max Price has mooted the establishment of a South African counterpart to the Oxford school, through which local scholars can contribute to work concerning these pressing issues, and also introduce African perspectives.

Speaking at a breakfast hosted by Price, Goldin endorsed the idea, keen to get the Oxford school’s researchers thinking about the continent.

“There’s not a great awareness of Africa,” he commented.

Download a podcast of the full lecture at www.uct.ac.za/news/multimedia/.

HELEN THÉRON

I n the 21st century, humanity teeters on the edge of catastrophe, treading a narrowing line between development and disaster, said UCT alumnus Dr Ian Goldin in the Vice-Chancellor’s Open Lecture on 9 March.

Will climate change precipitate our demise? A rampant new virus? Biological warfare? Or will it be a narrowing line between development and disaster, said UCT alumnus Dr Ian Goldin in the Vice-Chancellor’s Open Lecture, titled Future Shocks and Opportunities: 21st century challenges and choices.

Additionally, there is a developing crisis for global governance structures such as the United Nations, the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank, G8, North Atlantic Treaty Organisation and World Trade Organisation.

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Thin line: Director of the James Martin 21st Century School, Dr Ian Goldin delivered the Vice-Chancellor’s Open Lecture, titled Future Shocks and Opportunities: 21st century challenges and choices.

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Young Global Leader honour for Greene

UCT graduate Adria Greene has been selected as a Young Global Leader 2009 by the World Economic Forum. She joins Young Global Leader winners such as South African Finance Minister Trevor Manuel, Mark Zuckerberg, Skype CEO Josh Silverman, Digg founder Kevin Rose, Golfer Tiger Woods, Ferrari test driver Michael Schumacher, Coldplay lead singer Chris Martin and actresses Gwyneth Paltrow and Cameron Diaz.

Leading light: Adria Greene has been selected as a Young Global Leader 2009 by the World Economic Forum

Zhang Ziyi and Jessica Biel.
Greene was selected for her start-up company, Lawpoint, an international legal process outsourcing company based in Cape Town, which has developed into a leading provider of services in English, French, German and Portuguese.

Drawn from a pool of about 5 000 candidates, the Young Global Leaders of 2009 were chosen for their professional accomplishments, commitment to society and potential to contribute to shaping the future of the world.

Established in 2004, the Forum of Young Global Leaders is a unique, multi-stakeholder community of the world’s most extraordinary leaders aged 40 years or less.

“I am humbled to be included among this year’s Young Global Leaders and grateful for the recognition of my work on behalf of Lawpoint and the entire outsourcing industry in Africa,” said Greene.

Greene previously practised law in New York and is currently an active member of a number of charitable boards and professional organisations.

The science day of fun

School children cheered, whistled and applauded at the Spine Road High School’s sports hall in Mitchell’s Plain – but not because their sports team was winning a tournament.

The buzz was inspired by a scientist who had just turned a cocktail of chemicals into a cola drink, all part of UCT’s outreach Science Day on 4 March.

About 1 700 learners from 20 schools in Mitchell’s Plain and Khayelitsha made their way to the outreach showcase of interactive exhibitions, hands-on workshops and presentations.

These were presented by a score of departments from the Faculty of Science, as well as external organisations such as the Thembisa Labs, the MTN Science Centre, Iziko Museums, the South African Weather Service, the Western Cape Blood Transfusion Service and the Kirstenbosch Botanical Gardens.

The idea is to take science to the community and expose learners to careers in the field, says the faculty’s Katherine Thomson.

“We want to get them actively involved in science and show them that science can be fun.”

Vuurwill is the latest volume of poetry by Professor Joan Hambridge of the School of Languages and Literature. This is her 21st volume. Hambridge has also published five novels and a book on postmodernism.

Sheer beauty: Adria Greene

The partnership, signed (in the picture) by Professor Max Ayogu, dean of the faculty, and Dennis McLeay, head of professional development content at the CFA, will allow UCT students to both complete the Bachelor of Science in Finance and prepare for the CFA programme at the same time.

That puts them on the front foot when entering the industry. UCT is one of just three South African institutions that are among the CFA’s 78 programme partners in the world.

What should you do to free teach your children about religion?"

Dr Daniel J. Dennett is an American philosopher and University Professor at Tufts University, where he is also co-Director of the Center for Cognitive Studies. He is an eminent philosopher who has made important contributions to the philosophers of mind, science and biology. He is the author of numerous influential books including Evolution, Religion, Consciousness Explained, and Darwin’s Dangerous Idea. Dennett’s most recent book, Breaking the Chain: A Neurophilosophical Inquiry, is arguably the most sophisticated of the recent flurry of books criticizing theism and religion.

Date: Tuesday 31 March 2009
Venue: Leslie Lecture Theatre 2A
Note: Seating will NOT be reserved and will be on a first-come-first-served basis.
HELEN THÉRON

Walter Baets, Professor in Complexity, Knowledge and Innovation at Euromed Marseille, Ecole de Management, in France, will head the Graduate School of Business from 1 July, pending the allocation of a work permit.

He succeeds Professor Frank Horwitz, who has been appointed director of the Cranfield School of Management in the UK.

In the interim, the acting director of the GSB is Associate Professor Tom Ryan.

Belgian-born Baets is associate dean for research and social responsibility and MBA director at Ecole de Management, a top-ranked European Quality Improvement System-accredited business school.

While director of the school’s graduate programmes (2003-2006), he designed and implemented an innovative pedagogical approach that translated a more holistic view on management into course design.

With 1 600 students and an operating budget of €7 million, the school catapaulted into the country’s top 10 business schools.

Asked what had drawn him to the southern tip of Africa, Baets said he’d been excited to find a business school with values that mirrored his own, and one that focused on systemic practices and action learning.

“I’ve found the school I wanted to create! It exists in this kind of business school based on the paradigm of emergent economies. It’s a precious gift,” Baets said.

South Africa “is a remarkable country with an amazing journey”, he said.

“If we’re talking uncertainty and complexity, there’s lots of experience in this country. There’s also more to be learnt from an emerging economy. There’s more life and potential than in the old economies of Europe and North America.”

After completing his MSc in operations research and econometrics at the University of Antwerp, Baets obtained his PhD in industrial and business studies at Warwick Business School in the UK.

The multilingual Baets (he speaks Dutch, French, English and some German and Spanish) is the author of numerous journal articles and more than 10 books.

“HIV testing is fast and free”

Testing (VCT on-wheels) service was initiated by the Student Wellness and Disability Services as part of its wider VCT programme. The mobile unit moved from campus to campus from 1200 to 1600 daily.

“The fully-equipped mobile clinic, which cost about R300 000, was made possible by a grant from the Higher Education HIV/AIDS Programme (HEAIDS), an initiative of the Department of Education to develop and strengthen the capacity of higher education institutions to respond to the country’s HIV/AIDS pandemic. The ongoing service will be funded by the university, and it is expected to be a permanent feature.”

“Looking at the data, the VCT unit is still in its trial phase,” says Dr Ian Mackintosh, director of Student Wellness and Disability Services. “It will be available for four hours every day during the first term, but this could be tweaked, depending on the demand.”

The VCT unit is staffed by a professional nurse, outsourced from Quinhealth, who offers both testing and counselling. Test results are available in 10 minutes, and appointments are not necessary.

Student Wellness also operates a drop-in VCT service in the Sports Centre on Upper Campus from 10h00 to 15h00 from Monday to Thursday.

HELEN THÉRON

Flemish expert in chaos and innovation is new GSB director

Helen Théron

Schools going green

UCT project that teaches high school learners how to ‘live green’ is being implemented in eight schools by the Cape Town Municipality.

Still in its pilot phase, the Green Change Room Audit Project is the brainchild of Pavs Pillay of the university’s Marine Research Institute (MA- RE), in partnership with the African Agency for Science and Technology Advancement in the project.

The project is aimed at making learners aware that the environment is not something “out there”, but their immediate living space, explains Pillay.

“Learners need to be informed how climate change will affect their immediate lifestyles, which will hopefully create awareness that results in behaviour changes towards green and global living.”

The Green Audit toolkit comprises a learner’s information and activities booklet, an educator’s guide, and “smart living” activity sheets. The toolkit focuses on sustainable living explored through themes such as water, waste, energy and biodiversity. Learners are taught how to audit their schools and to calculate its carbon footprint.

“We want kids to see the impact they’re making on the environment in their everyday activities,” says Pillay.

In the project, advantaged and disadvantaged schools are paired, so that learners and educators from different backgrounds have the opportunity to learn from each other.

Pillay outlined the project at the recent South African Science Communication Conference in February in Mat- rand, where, she reports, it was very well received.

“I have been inundated with requests for the toolkit,” she says.

Pillay hopes to involve the South African Agency for Science and Technology in the project when it extends its reach beyond the Western Cape.

Flemish expert in chaos and innovation is new GSB director

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Go green: Pavs Pillay’s Green Change Room Audit Project is meeting with great success in local schools.

Exploring racism: Mwenya Kabwe won the Fleur de Cap award.

Kabwé takes the Fleur de Cap

Kabwe takes the Fleur de Cap award.

He has three children, one of whom is the current Miss Netherlands.

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Exploring racism: Mwenya Kabwe won the Fleur de Cap award.

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For the personal touch
UCT to award four honorary degrees in 2009

UCT will award four honorary degrees at graduation ceremonies this year, to honour people who have distinguished themselves in professional or social spheres.

The recipients are educationalist Richard Dudley, cosmologist Emeritus Professor George Ellis, health economist Professor Gavin Mooney, and astronomer Emeritus Professor Brian Warner.

Richard Dudley will be awarded an honorary doctorate in education.

An alumnus of UCT, Dudley’s teaching career at Livingstone High in Cape Town over 39 years is widely recognized as the foundation upon which hundreds of former pupils built success in a wide range of professional and academic fields, here and internationally.

He was the primary force behind Livingstone High becoming one of the foremost high schools in the city and country and, significantly, one of the most important feeder schools to UCT.

By providing an alternative to the curricula of the Coloured Affairs Department, Dudley and his colleagues went well beyond what was required by the syllabus.

It was this philosophy that ensured that Dudley never became principal, even though he was eminently qualified for the job. He was banned in 1961, along with 200 other teachers, but was allowed to continue teaching.

Prof George Ellis will receive an honorary Doctor of Science degree.

An alumnus, Ellis is one of South Africa’s most distinguished scholars.

His output over a period of more than 40 years includes well over 350 articles or chapters in books, and 12 books spanning disciplines as diverse as cosmology, complexity, neural development and the brain, science policy, and the relationship between science and religion.

In 2004 he was awarded the Templeton Prize, the largest monetary award made to an individual, for his contributions towards a better understanding of the relationship between science and spirituality.

He holds the Star of South Africa, the award of the National Science and Technology Forum for outstanding contributions over a lifetime in science, engineering and technology, the Mapungubwe Award (Silver), and honorary degrees from three universities.

Prof Gavin Mooney will receive an honorary Doctor of Social Science degree.

Mooney has been active in the field of health economics since the early 1970s. He has made an exceptional contribution to scholarship and the discipline of health economics, both internationally and at UCT.

He was at the forefront of the development of techniques for applying economic theory and principles to the health sector, challenging the prevailing orthodoxy of prioritising efficiency over equity considerations in health care decision-making.

Mooney is regarded as one of the leading health economics educators in the world and has taught on postgraduate programmes in nearly 30 countries.

Prof Brian Warner will receive an honorary Doctor of Science degree.

In a career spanning some 50 years, his scientific output has been prodigious, including over 400 scientific papers and 12 books, of which at least one - on cataclysmic variable stars - is considered definitive in its field.

The citations to his work are vast, and include some of his very early papers on lunar phenomena and astronomical seeing. During his five years at the University of Texas, he worked with Edward Nather to publish the first accurate light curve of a visible pulsar, that found in the Crab Nebula.

That same type of observation - high-speed photometry - found its mark in recording the rapid variations of stars we now term 'cataclysmic variables', where matter streaming from one star builds up around its compact companion.

He is respected as an academic historian, and before retirement served on various bodies that integrate science with society.

Staff and students urged to sign on to switch off

Climate change is one of the most serious problems facing our world today. On Saturday, 28 March, at 20h30, millions of people worldwide will switch off their lights to make a statement of concern about the future of our planet as part of Earth Hour, an event led by the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF).

UCT has pledged to support Earth Hour, and Vice-Chancellor Dr Max Price has called on all staff and students to take part in this historic event.

“Each signature will make a difference,” says John Critien, executive director of Properties & Services. “By signing up, it shows that UCT staff and students form part of a global community, and are as concerned about global warming as citizens of other nations.”

Most UCT lights will be switched off as well, except in those areas where lights must remain on for security reasons.

Earth Hour got its start just two years ago, and is now the largest event of its kind in the world. Last year, more than 50 million people participated. The lights went out at the Empire State Building, the Golden Gate Bridge, the Sydney Opera House and the Coliseum in Rome, to name just a few.

Even Google’s homepage was blacked out for the day.

This year, Earth Hour will be even bigger — already 500 cities in over 74 countries have agreed to take part. This includes Cape Town, Johannesburg, London, Paris, Rio de Janeiro, Sydney, Tokyo, and Sandton in Johannesburg.

Every name will be part of a larger petition of an expected one billion names that will be sent to government leaders at the end of the year to put pressure on world leaders to pass legislation on climate change.

Think about how many people will sign on for an hour on 28 March at 20h30.

How to sign on

It’s great that you’d switch your lights off on 28 March, but don’t forget to sign up for the global petition. It’s simple.

• Visit www.earthhour.org.za (with two h’s in the middle).

• Click on any of the ‘Sign Up’ links scattered around the homepage. (They all work – we tried them.)

• Fill in the box that appears – it takes less than a minute, depending on typing skills (we timed it).

• Voila, you’ve added your voice to those of millions of concerned citizens around the planet.

Discount offered to UCT Students on presentation of a student card.

(Valid until 31 March 2009 & 27 July – 21 August 2009)
Earliest evidence of modern foot anatomy and gait

MYOLISI GOPHE

For the past 11 years, UCT archaeologist Dr David Braun has braved soaring temperatures and spent many days off-road, travelling through deserts and boulder fields, while conducting research in Northern Kenya.

His efforts paid dividends recently when his team of international scientists revealed new evidence – the story made the cover of the 27 February edition of the journal Science – that one of our human ancestors, early Homo erectus, had essentially modern foot anatomy and function.

Fossil footprints provide the only direct evidence of a bipedal gait, but are very rare in the geological record.

A lecturer in the Archaeology Department, Braun was part of an international team whose discovery of a nearly 1.5-million-year-old footprint has made international headlines.

They found the footprints in 2005, and it took three years of “painstaking” excavation and analysis to determine that they were, in fact, human prints, and that they were the oldest evidence of modern human gait.

The research team uncovered two distinct sedimentary layers in a single outcrop at Ileret to reveal footprints preserved in fine-grained mud. These surfaces have been dated precisely via inter-bedded volcanic ash layers, and were scanned by the team to create three-dimensional digital elevation models of the prints, accurate to within a fraction of a millimetre.

The fossil prints show characteristics typical of prints made by modern humans, including a big toe in line with the other toes, a large and robust heel, a pronounced medial longitudinal arch, and short toes.

“The footprints are a unique snapshot in time, and represent one of the very few instances where we can actually see evidence of the foot morphology of our direct ancestor, Homo erectus,” explained Braun.

“We have really fantastic evidence of Homo erectus’ skeleton, but unfortunately we don’t have any evidence of their foot morphology because up until now we haven’t found any Homo erectus foot bones.

“The footprints tell us that ancient humans 1.5 million years ago had a foot morphology much like ours, therefore they must have walked in a very similar fashion to us.”

Previously, archaeologists had found footprints in Tanzania that were 3.6 million years old, and it appears that over the course of human evolution, foot morphology has changed significantly to allow for more efficient walking.

Digging deep: Dr David Braun of UCT’s Dept of Archaeology is part of an international team whose discovery of a 1.5-million-year-old footprint has made international headlines.

Lyne Smi

The importance of knowledge sharing and networks as vehicles for sustainable development was emphasised at the launch of the first regional African Sustainable Urban Development Network (SUD-Net) in Cape Town on 18 February.

As Professor Edgar Pieterse, director of UCT’s African Centre for Cities, commented, “Making networks work requires a subtle alchemy of science and art.” If the commitment and enthusiasm shown by the nearly 50 delegates from 10 African countries at the three-day workshop are an indication of a successful network, then it would seem that the magic is already at work.

Guest speaker Andrew Boraine, of the SA Cities Network and Cape Town Partnership, was excited by the promise of SUD-Net.

“The urban question is still very under-recognised, particularly in Africa,” he said. “In our own country, when we point out that most of the poor live in urban areas, people still get up and ask about rural and agricultural development.

“There are still a lot of myths about urban areas. The emphasis on rural development means that cities are often seen as problems rather than solutions,” he said.

According to Boraine, one of the problems was that the relatively high average wealth of cities masks the huge problem areas of urban poverty and unemployment.

“So the national policy tends to see cities as cash cows rather than as places needing investment,” he said.

“We want to support initiatives that use a multi-sectoral approach to give people a platform to fulfil their dreams,” said Thomas Mety, lead urban specialist for the Swedish donor agency SIDA, one of the hosts of the workshop. “We’ve noticed that many dreams are urban, but in Africa we haven’t found many institutions that can work with that knowledge about the strength and relevance of cities.”

Picture by: Bruce Sutherland, City of Cape Town
**Calls for nominations**

T he Centre for Higher Education Development (CHED) is calling on UCT students and staff to nominate a secondary-school teacher who in their opinion deserves recognition for years of dedicated teaching to students from traditionally disadvantaged backgrounds.

Stella Clark was a language development lecturer in CHED’s Academic Development Programme from 1996 until her death in March 2009. Her family and friends established the Stella Clark Teachers’ Award to honour many years of dedicated service to teaching students from educationally disadvantaged schools in the Western Cape and at UCT.

The successful teacher will receive a monetary award of R5 000, and will be expected to give a talk at an award ceremony. The school will receive R1 000 towards educational resources. The UCT staff member or student who nominates the successful teacher will receive an iPod or R500 cash equivalent. The closing date for nominations is 31 March. Nominations must be sent to Kathy Erasmus, CHED, Hlanganani Administration, UCT. For further details, see notices at uct.ac.za.

Students and academic staff are invited to submit nominations for Distinguished Teacher Awards in 2009. All members of staff who teach students are eligible for the award. Nominations must consist of a detailed statement making the case for the award. Where possible, evidence of excellence in teaching over a number of years should be included as well as some detail about the nominee’s approach to teaching; for example whether the teacher’s strengths lie in lecturing to large classes, in laboratory teaching, in formal teaching activities outside the classroom, in some innovative teaching technique, and so on.

Such nominations are to reach the Office of the Registrar: Senate Office, Room 143.1, Bremner Building, by Friday 17 April (marked “Confidential”, for the attention of Mr D Devel). Please note that it is not necessary to provide all the supporting documents by the deadline for nominations.

For further details, see notices at uct.ac.za.
RCT cuts it close

In the end, the UCT Ikey Tigers got off lightly. Despite the lion’s share of possession in the first half and healthy leads halfway through the second, the side scraped through with a 23-20 win over Free State University’s Shimlas in their FNB Varsity Cup clash at UCT on Monday, 9 March. But UCT was spared a few bashes by Shimlas, who missed a couple of easy kicks that would have swung the scoreline in their favour. Randomly ahead by 18-7 and the clock ticking, a Shimlas penalty and a try brought the Free State students, at 18-15, to within a whisker of UCT. Fullback Therow Petersen then touched down for UCT - after a telling break from nimble-footed winger Marcello Sampson - to put some daylight between them and the visitors again at 23-15.

But yet another Shimlas try at the death reduced the deficit to just three at 23-20. Luckily for UCT, the referee called it a day as yet another Shimlas kick flew past the posts.

UCT head coach John Dobson was not amused. “I feel particularly bad for our fans that, for the majority of the second half and even when we had all the ball and play in the first half, we served up that rubbish,” he said in a no-missing-of-words interview with varsityuc.co.za.

Despite the lapses, UCT, now in second place on the log, still well on course for a home semi-final. To secure that berth, however, they will have to best North West University’s Pukke in their final round-robin clash in Pof Chapel on 16 March.

Hot on the heels: UCT’s Marcello Sampson makes a baseline for the Shimlas tryline, but flyhalf Jaco Coëlyn has other ideas.

Hockey stars

Though the outdoor hockey season is still a month off, a number of UCT players have nonetheless impressed selectors enough with their form in 2009 and the 2009 start-of-season indoor tournament to earn themselves spots in the Western Province under-21 sides. Imogen Holland, Jessica Kew, Miaela Paterson, Keran Robertson and Nicola Walters have received call-ups to the A squad. In turn, Ashleigh Cormins, Janet Moyle, Michelle O’Connor and Taryn Smith were named for the B squad.

Last month, players from the UCT Rugby Football Club (UCTRFC) exchanged their boots for spades and hardhats to build houses in Mfuleni, one of the Mother City’s most impoverished suburbs. Part of a team-building and community-outreach project, the 50 students braved the heat to dig 12 trenches, paint four houses (inside and out), and finish the house that has given Petrus Plaatjies, who has lived in a shack since 1989, a place to call home.

Students playing for Umbudo, the UCTRFC’s development team, also participated. The work contributed to the Niall Mellon Townships Initiative, which has built houses in poor communities for a number of years.

The building expedition was coordinated by Barry O’Mahoney, the club executive responsible for outreach and transformation. (O’Mahoney was also first-team coach for a number of years.)

In 2006, club members helped build houses in Netreg. Now they plan to coach township teams for the Vuka tournament, which aims to establish rugby-playing culture in over 50 suburbs.

A squad. In turn, Ashleigh Cormins, Janet Moyle, Michelle O’Connor and Taryn Smith were named for the B squad.

Student honoured in Denmark

An international conference in Denmark in December proved to be an eventful one for Muay Koloko of UCT’s ju-ju club. In addition to taking part in demonstrations and presentations at the All Japan Ju-Jitsu International Federation (AJJIF) meeting, Koloko was also named a life member of the federation. With only South Africa and, since 2008, Mauritius representing Africa on the AJJIF, it’s more than likely that Koloko is the first representative from the continent to be so honoured. The meeting, which Koloko attended with UCT’s senior instructor Nigel Sessions, aimed to combine the various schools of ju-ju under one umbrella body. “Part of the beauty of the event was seeing all the similarities and differences in what we do,” he says. In 2008, Koloko became only the country’s 26th Shodan (the first in a series of black belts) in the discipline, the first African to achieve the ranking.