The 5th Annual Staff Development Conference

By: Anton M. Pillay (CAD)

On the 23 and 24th of August the Centre for Academic Development (CAD) held their annual Staff Development Conference at the Bon Hotel Vereeniging. At the pre-conference on the 23rd Detken Scheepers from the University of Pretoria and Prof Nico Baird from Wits University facilitated workshops on improving teaching and learning via the use of technology. Detken Scheepers who is the Head of the e-Learning programme at the Department of Education Innovation at UP explained to the audience the best way to take advantage of e-Learning in order to make teaching more simple as well making the often dreaded administrative side of teaching more straightforward. Prof Baird, who is the Deputy Director of the Centre for Learning Teaching and Development and Head of eLearning at Wits facilitated an in depth discussion on the essentials of student learning. Prof Baird indicated that there was a need to return to the ancient ways of teaching where the core purpose was a transfer of knowledge from teacher to student.

On the 24th, the 5th annual In-House Staff Development Conference took place with keynote presentations by Prof Dzvimbo (DVC: Academic VUT) and Prof Paul Prinsloo (UNISA) Prof Dzvimbo encouraged the audience to achieve their academic degrees and deliberated on the need for a new discourse on an African based epistemology. Prof Prinsloo, a Research Professor in Open and Distance Learning (ODL) at the College of Economic and Management Sciences (UNISA) silenced the audience with his through provoking descriptions of the current transformation phenomenon occurring in Higher Education. Both Prof Dzimbo and Prof Prinsloo provoked the audience on many occasions leading to a lively and robust debate.

In the afternoon 20 authors from different departments presented theirs papers with topics ranging from supply chain management, decolonization of the curriculum, and enhancing the learning experience. At the end of the event, prizes were awarded to the best papers. The CAD hopes that the VUT community will begin preparing their papers for next year's conference.