



Communication and Marketing Department
Isebe loThungelwano neNtengiso
Kommunikasie en Bemarkingsdepartement

Private Bag X3, Rondebosch 7701, South Africa
Welgelegen House, Chapel Road Extension, Rosebank, Cape Town
Tel: +27 (0) 21 650 5427/5428/5674 Fax: +27 (0) 21 650 5628

www.uct.ac.za

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UCT to confer honorary doctorates on six remarkable individuals

The University of Cape Town (UCT) will confer honorary doctorates upon six outstanding individuals – Dr Debbie Bradshaw, Mr Lionel Davis, Ms Shirley Gunn, Professor Michael R Hayden, Professor Brian Huntley and Professor Lehlohonolo BBJ Machobane – at this year’s graduation ceremonies.

This prestigious recognition of these individuals serves as a testament to their exceptional contributions to their respective fields and to society at large, said UCT Vice-Chancellor (interim) Emeritus Professor Daya Reddy.

“Honorary doctorates hold an important place in the academic community and are bestowed upon individuals who have demonstrated exemplary achievement. These individuals serve as inspirational figures: their work and accomplishments align with UCT’s values and our vision of being an inclusive, research-intensive African university that addresses the challenges of our time through cutting-edge teaching and research.”

By conferring these honorary degrees, UCT reaffirms its commitment to recognising excellence, innovation and leadership.

“These individuals personify the highest standards of excellence and social impact, embodying the ethos of our university,” Reddy remarked.

Dr Bradshaw will be awarded with a degree of Doctor of Science (*honoris causa*). Dr Bradshaw, an esteemed biostatistician and epidemiologist, has a rich academic background and extensive research experience. She established pivotal units and led ground-breaking studies on South Africa’s health landscape.

Mr Davis will be honoured with a Doctor of Social Science (*honoris causa*). Born in District Six, Cape Town in 1936, Mr Davis endured apartheid’s injustices, serving time on Robben Island for sabotage. Despite restrictions, he taught art at the Community Arts Project, later co-founding the CAP Poster Workshop, integral to anti-apartheid activism.

Another Doctor of Social Science (*honoris causa*) degree will be awarded to **Ms Gunn**, whose involvement with the African National Congress's Umkhonto we Sizwe since the late 1970s reflects her commitment to activism. As executive director of the Human Rights Media Centre, she conducts extensive research, collaborates on projects, and liaises with stakeholders, showcasing exceptional leadership.

Professor Hayden will be awarded the degree of Doctor of Science in Medicine (*honoris causa*). The clinician-scientist, entrepreneur and humanitarian is renowned for his contributions to this area, including pioneering work in Huntington's disease. He has published over 1100 articles and mentored numerous students.

Professor Huntley will also receive the degree of Doctor of Science (*honoris causa*). His impactful career in biodiversity research spans over five decades. He spearheaded major programmes in ecosystems, fostering integrated research and management initiatives. He was appointed CEO of the South African National Biodiversity Institute (SANBI) in 1990, and his legacy includes founding the Thicket Forum and enhancing botanical gardens regionally.

Trailblazing scholar and statesman, **Professor Machobane**, will be awarded with a degree of Doctor of Social Science (*honoris causa*). He embarked on a remarkable academic journey from Lesotho to the United States, culminating in a groundbreaking PhD from the University of Edinburgh. He returned to Lesotho where he served in various educational and governmental roles, leaving an indelible mark on both fronts.

The six honorary doctorates will be awarded at our various graduation ceremonies to be held during the course of the year. Specific details of the ceremonies will follow in due course.

Reddy commented: "As members of the UCT community, we take pride in celebrating the achievements of these remarkable individuals, and draw inspiration from their endeavours. Their degrees not only honour their accomplishments, but also reflect the values and aspirations of our university."

READ MORE ABOUT THE SIX HONORARY DOCTORATE RECIPIENTS

Dr Debbie Bradshaw will be awarded with a degree of Doctor of Science (*honoris causa*). Dr Bradshaw, an esteemed biostatistician and epidemiologist, embodies UCT's values by advancing public health and societal well-being. With a rich academic background and extensive research experience, she established pivotal units and led ground-breaking studies on South Africa's health landscape. Her contributions, recognised internationally, include mentoring future experts and shaping health policy through evidence-based approaches. Tirelessly advocating for the marginalised, she fearlessly engages in dialogue with authorities to drive positive change. Her remarkable career, spanning decades, reflects a profound commitment to improving the lives of all South Africans, epitomising UCT's ethos of African identity and societal engagement.

Mr Lionel Davis will be honoured with a Doctor of Social Science (*honoris causa*). Born in District Six, Cape Town in 1936, Mr Davis endured apartheid's injustices, serving time on Robben Island for sabotage. Despite restrictions, he taught art at the Community Arts Project, later co-founding the CAP Poster Workshop, integral to anti-apartheid activism. He studied at Rorke's Drift and UCT; and went on to become a respected artist whose work has been celebrated nationally and internationally. Recognised with a Lifetime Achievement Award by the Arts and Culture Trust, Davis merges art with activism, preserving District Six and Robben Island's history. A mentor and advocate for human rights, he inspires generations. The honorary degree to be awarded to Davis aligns with UCT's values, honouring his indelible impact on South African society.

Ms Shirley Gunn will be awarded the degree of Doctor of Social Science (*honoris causa*). A graduate of UCT, Ms Gunn epitomises dedication to social justice and transformative work, closely aligned with the university's values. Her involvement with the African National Congress's Umkhonto we Sizwe since the late 1970s reflects her commitment to activism. Despite detention during apartheid, she has tirelessly advocated for marginalised groups' rights, focusing on empowerment and human rights protection. Her efforts extend globally, aiding vulnerable populations in post-conflict regions. As executive director of the Human Rights Media Centre, she conducts extensive research, collaborates on projects, and liaises with stakeholders, showcasing exceptional leadership. Ms Gunn's impactful endeavours exemplify UCT's principles of selflessness and active citizenship.

Professor Michael R Hayden will be awarded the degree of Doctor of Science in Medicine (*honoris causa*). Professor Hayden, also a UCT alumnus, excels as a clinician-scientist, entrepreneur and humanitarian, inspiring colleagues globally. Having graduated with first class honours in MBChB in 1975 and later obtaining his PhD from UCT, he pursued research in medical genetics abroad, notably at Harvard Medical School. He is renowned for his contributions to this area, including pioneering work in Huntington's disease. He has published over 1100 articles and mentored numerous students. His leadership in translational research has led to breakthroughs in neurodegenerative diseases. He co-founded successful biotech companies, earning accolades such as the Prix Galien. Professor Hayden's humanitarian efforts include endowments in global health and mental health, exemplifying his commitment to societal betterment.

Professor Brian Huntley will receive the degree of Doctor of Science (*honoris causa*). Professor Huntley's impactful career in biodiversity research spans over five decades, beginning in Angola as a government ecologist. He spearheaded major programmes in ecosystems, fostering integrated research and management initiatives. He was appointed CEO of the South African National Biodiversity Institute (SANBI) in 1990, and his legacy includes founding the Thicket Forum and enhancing botanical gardens regionally. Leveraging post-apartheid opportunities, he secured funding for SANBI, significantly advancing conservation biology. His leadership led to the establishment of SABONET, promoting cooperation among African botanists. Professor Huntley's scientific contributions, including numerous publications and infrastructure enhancements at SANBI, have earned global

recognition. His transformative efforts extend to national park establishment and cultural initiatives, leaving an enduring impact on biodiversity conservation and research.

Professor Lehlohonolo BBJ Machobane will be awarded with a degree of Doctor of Social Science (*honoris causa*). He is a trailblazing scholar and statesman who embarked on a remarkable academic journey from Lesotho to the United States, culminating in a groundbreaking PhD from the University of Edinburgh. He returned to Lesotho where he served in various educational and governmental roles, leaving an indelible mark on both fronts. Proficient in African and Basotho history, his seminal work, "Government and Change in Lesotho, 1800–1966," remains pivotal in understanding the nation's political evolution. Beyond academia, he spearheaded educational reforms as Minister of Education and engaged in international forums. His contributions extend to cultural preservation and community development, earning him acclaim as a multifaceted leader and scholar revered across Southern Africa.

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Issued by: UCT Communication and Marketing Department

Elijah Moholola

Spokesperson
Communication and Marketing Department
University of Cape Town
Rondebosch
Tel: 021 650 5674
Cell: 083 981 7770
Email: elijah.moholola@uct.ac.za
Website: www.uct.ac.za