

Royal honour for South African Vice-Chancellor

Prof. Zeblon Vilakazi welcomed as a Fellow of the prestigious Royal Society (UK).

JOHANNESBURG, GAUTENG, SOUTH AFRICA, May 10, 2022 /EINPresswire.com/ -- The Royal Society (UK) announced today, Tuesday, 10 May 2022, that Wits Vice-Chancellor and Principal, Prof. Zeblon Vilakazi has been appointed as a Fellow of one of the world's most prestigious scientific academies.

Vilakazi joins the ranks of Robert Broom, Phillip Vallentine Tobias, Basil Schonland, Frank Nabarro, and Nobel-Prize winner Aaron Klug, all of whom are also Wits alumni. Past Fellows and Foreign Members of the Royal Society have included Isaac Newton, Charles Darwin, Albert Einstein, Dorothy Hodgkin and Stephen Hawking.

"It is an honour to welcome so many outstanding researchers from around the world into the

Fellowship of the Royal Society," says Sir Adrian Smith, President of the Royal Society, the oldest scientific academy in continuous existence in the world (started in 1660), dedicated to promoting excellence in science for the benefit of humanity, on its website. "Through their careers so far, these researchers have helped further our understanding of human disease, biodiversity loss

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and the origins of the universe. I am also pleased to see so many new Fellows working in areas likely to have a transformative impact on our society over this century, from new materials and energy technologies to synthetic biology and artificial intelligence. I look forward to seeing what great things they will achieve in the years ahead."

"I am honoured to be welcomed as a Fellow of the Royal Society," says Prof. Zeblon Vilakazi, Wits Vice-Chancellor and Principal, an internationally recognised nuclear physicist. "This is not just an



Prof. Zeblon Vilakazi

honour for me, but also for Wits University, and all those who supported me. South Africa is home to a host of incredibly talented scientists, who punch above their weight in the global knowledge arena. Whilst this Fellowship acknowledges some of my achievements, more importantly, it recognises the high calibre of science and scientists based in Africa.”

The Royal Society is a self-governing Fellowship made up of the most eminent scientists, engineers and technologists from the UK and the Commonwealth. Fellows and Foreign Members are elected for life through a peer review process on the basis of excellence in science.

There are approximately 1 700 Fellows and Foreign Members, including around 85 Nobel Laureates. Each year up to 52 Fellows and up to 10 Foreign Members are elected from a group of around 800 candidates who are proposed by the existing Fellowship.

Profile: Professor Zeblon Vilakazi

Professor Zeblon Zenzele Vilakazi is a nuclear physicist and has served as the Vice-Chancellor and Principal of Wits University since January 2021. Prior to his appointment, he served as the Deputy Vice-Chancellor for Research and Postgraduate Studies, during which time Wits’ research outputs doubled.

A Wits alumnus, Vilakazi obtained his PhD in 1998 in nuclear physics under the supervision of the late Professor J Sellschop. He was then awarded a prestigious National Research Foundation postdoctoral fellowship at the European Centre for Nuclear Research (CERN) in Geneva, Switzerland. He returned to South Africa and joined the University of Cape Town in 1999, where he was instrumental in establishing South Africa’s first experimental high-energy physics research group focusing on the development of the High-level Trigger for the CERN-ALICE experiment at the Large Hadron Collider.

Vilakazi was appointed as the Director of iThemba Labs in 2007 and then simultaneously as the Group Executive for Research and Development at the Nuclear Energy Corporation of South Africa in 2011, before joining Wits in 2014.

Professor Vilakazi served as a visiting scientist at the Atomic Energy Commission and Alternative Energy in Saclay, France, as the chairperson of the International Atomic Energy Agency's Standing Advisory Committee on Nuclear Applications from 2009 to 2011, and as a member of the International Union of Pure and Applied Physics’ Working Group for Nuclear Physics. He is currently a member of the Programme Advisory Committee for Nuclear Physics at the Joint Institute for Nuclear Research. He is also a member of the Academy of Science of South Africa.

In 2010 he was nominated by the World Economic Forum as a Young Global Leader. He has an extensive list of refereed articles in Nuclear and High Energy Physics and is a regular invitee for talks and presentations at conferences and seminars.

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