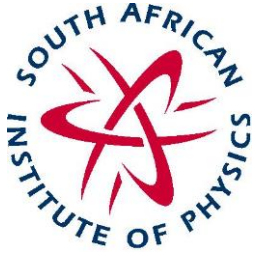


# South African Institute of Physics



NPO Registration Number: 130-172 NPO

SAQA Professional Body ID: 777

<http://www.saip.org.za/>

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29 July 2020

## RE: Report on SAIP Activities

Dear SAIP member,

Ladies and gentlemen, colleagues and friends, and our students' community, this communique comes to you at this moment when the world and the scientific enterprise are suffering from the dire consequences of the COVID19 pandemic. Under normal circumstances this status update would have been done at the SAIP Annual General Meeting (AGM) that was scheduled to take place at Annual SAIP Conference North-West University on 3 July 2019.

COVID19 has severely impacted most of our activities that require face-to-face interactions, for example, meetings, teaching, lab-work, conferences, daily work etc. The SAIP projects have also been severely affected by COVID19 hence we had to cancel activities since March 2020 to date. Investigations are currently underway to arrange ways in which the SAIP can have some level of activities such as outreach, conference, and teacher development via online platforms. For example, August is women's month, our WiPiSA team will be giving a series of talks on radio, TV and social media aimed at attracting more women and girls to study and take careers in physics. Discussions are also at an advanced stage with the Department of Basic Education officials on the possibility of offering teacher development workshops online. We have geared our office to support our activities, projects, and membership through technology such as video conferencing (Skype or Zoom) to meet remotely to maintain "social distancing".

The SAIP leadership is also working on a post COVID19 strategy which we will share with the community once it is finalised.

## President's Report

Please find attached the President's report giving a summary of activities of the institute since the last update at SAIP2019 conference. Here are some key highlights I would like to bring to your attention.

- 1) On behalf of the South African Institute of Physics (SAIP), I would like to express our profound gratitude to the Department of Science and Innovation (DSI) for continued support rendered to the physics community in the country. The Department of Science and Innovation (DSI) support has helped the SAIP to leverage additional projects focused restricted financial support for physics developmental programmes, for example, during the 2018/19 financial year various donors contributed a combined R3.5 million towards various projects and activities of the SAIP.

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### Other Council Members

Prof. E.E. van Dyk (Treasurer, NMU); Prof. M. Chithambo (President-Elect, RU); Prof. P. Woudt (Past-President, UCT); Dr. R. Nematudi (iThemba LABS); Dr. J.B. Habarulema (SANSa); Dr. Z. Katamzi-Joseph (SANSa); Dr. R. Harris (UFS); Prof. I.T. Usman (WITS); Dr. R. Erasmus (WITS)

### Physical Address

Building 33, CSIR North Gate Entrance, Meiring Naude Road, Brummeria, 0184, Pretoria, South Africa

- 2) We also express our appreciation to the Allan Gray Foundation that will be supporting the SAIP with R1 million per year for the next three years (2020/21 – 2022/23) to fund the Physics Teacher Development Project and Increase the Involvement of Women in Physics in South Africa. We, therefore, call upon those willing to join these projects to contact the SAIP office.
- 3) Several activities have taken place during the period under review, and these include teacher development, outreach and public understanding of physics, and conferences, among others.
- 4) The SAIP has been working with UK partners in a proposed **Africa-UK Physics Partnership Programme**. The Institute of Physics (IOP), the Association of Commonwealth Universities (ACU) and a network of partners are proposing an ambitious Africa-UK physics partnership programme to address the Global Challenges using the capabilities that physics can provide. This work stems from initial conversations between the UK Government’s Department for Business, Energy and the Industrial Strategy (BEIS) and the IOP. The project will include the following partner-countries: Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya, Malawi, Nigeria, Rwanda, South Africa, Tanzania, and Uganda. We hope this project will help in unlocking the potential of the African physics community through sustainable capacity building in problem-based physics training, and innovation-focused research, to empower physics in Africa to make fundamental discoveries, and significantly address global challenges. A feasibility study was completed, and we will keep the South Africa physics community updated on the progress.
- 5) The SAIP registered as a **voluntary professional body** with SAQA in 2015. The SAQA criteria for the recognition of professional bodies were subsequently changed over the years to include a condition that no voluntary professional body will be allowed to operate in an area where a **statutory professional body** exists. Due to the new requirement, and the existence of the South African Council for Natural and Scientific Professions (SACNASP), SAQA will no longer be renewing the SAIP voluntary professional body recognition which was due for renewal in 2020. Discussions and consultations are currently underway to resolve the above matter. The SAIP would, therefore, like to inform our members that while the professional body discussions are ongoing with the concerned parties, the SAIP will do the following;
  - a) suspend processing any new professional membership (Pr.Phys and PrPhysTECH)
  - b) applications for other categories i.e. student, associate, ordinary and institutional will still be processed as normal,
  - c) suspend processing any Critical Skills VISA support letters,
  - d) a letter with more details will be sent to professional members, and
  - e) while the SAIP engages relevant stakeholders in the above matter, all other activities of the SAIP will run as usual fulfilling our mission “To be the Voice of Physics in South Africa”.

### Call to Action

- 1) Please read the attached documents, (1) proposed membership fees for 2021/22, and the (2) draft audited financial statements for the year ended 31 March 2020, then send your inputs and comments if any before *the close of business Friday 7<sup>th</sup> August 2020*. If no comments are received, we will take the proposed membership fees and draft audited financial statements as accepted subject to ratification at the AGM planned for July 2021.
- 2) The call for nominations for the 2020 SAIP Gold Medal is still open please submit your nominations.

### Acknowledgements

I would like to thank all our members for coming together to provide a community of practice that supports each other and help shape physics and astronomy in South Africa. I also thank our volunteers in various

projects such as teacher development, review of conference proceedings, various conference organisers, women in physics, outreach and public understanding of physics, among others. I also want to thank the SAIP council members for providing guidance and leadership of the organisation, and last but not least, the SAIP office staff for helping with day-today operations of the institute.

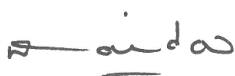
### **Closing Remarks**

In closing I would like to wish you well during these difficult times, the spread of Covid-19 can be controlled by each and every one of us by acting responsibly and following the guidelines as provided by the World Health Organisation. Please stay safe and we are looking forward to seeing you when the pandemic is behind us and we can continue with our normal routines.

For any queries, please contact, Mr. Brian Masara: [brian.masara@saip.org.za](mailto:brian.masara@saip.org.za).

Thank you and stay safe.

Yours sincerely



Professor Deena Naidoo  
President: South African Institute of Physics (SAIP)