



**PRESIDENT'S REPORT
TO THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING
OF THE SOUTH AFRICAN INSTITUTE OF PHYSICS
6 JULY 2007**

1. Introduction

The period from July 2006 until June 2007 was a year of consolidation and significant progress, with several projects and initiatives coming to fruition.

2. Council

The members of the outgoing Council, elected in July in 2005 were:

Harm Moraal	- President	Simon Connell
Nithaya Chetty	- President-Elect	Diane Grayson
Japie Engelbrecht	- Treasurer	Dieter Heiss
Attie Combrinck	- Student Member	Peter Martinez
Jaynie Padayachee	- Secretary	Edmund Zingu
Erich Rohwer	- Specialist Group Liaison	

The Executive Committee consisted of the President, President-Elect, Treasurer and Secretary. Three meetings were held during the year; 20 October 2006 at the University of Pretoria; 2 March 2007 at the University of the Witwatersrand (with the conference organisers); and 2 July 2007 (during the present conference at Wits).

3. Membership

On 12 June 2007 the SAIP membership was:

By Category	2007	2006	By Specialist Area	
Honorary	11	12	Applied & Industrial Physics	48
Emeritus	33	28	Astrophysics	97
Ordinary	273	258	Education	27
Associate	16	18	Lasers, Optics & Spectroscopy	49
Student	205	173	Nuclear, Radiation & Particle Physics	64
Retired	4	6	Plasma Physics	9
Institutional	3	3	Solar-Terrestrial & Space Physics	21
Honorary Institutional	1	1	Condensed Matter & Materials Science	156
			Theoretical Physics	26
Total Members	547	499	General	8

Since 2002 ordinary membership has decreased with 6% from 290, but student members have increased with 420%. The decrease in ordinary members is partly due to the fact that members who are two years in arrears with their subscriptions are removed from the membership list, having been given a final reminder earlier in the year. The increase in student membership to about 1/3 of the total justifies the change in the constitution to provide for a Student Member on Council.

4. Finances

The Treasurer, Japie Engelbrecht, will report on the financial state of the Institute. The increased membership fees by a stable number of fee-paying members and various cost- saving measures have contributed to a positive bank balance. Council is actively working to designate and spend this money for strategically important initiatives, in particular for its newly established office (see item 8).

5. International Liaison

The interests of the South African physics community in the affairs of the International Union of Pure and Applied Physics (IUPAP) are represented by the National Liaison Committee for IUPAP. As from 2005 this Committee consists of the Council of the SAIP. This newly-constituted committee met for the first time on 20 October 2006.

6. Women in Physics in South Africa (WiPiSA)

Since 2005 the Department of Science and Technology sponsors an initiative for Women in Physics in South Africa (WiPiSA) with Mmantsae Diale of the University of Pretoria as the co-ordinator. This activity continued with several meetings, data gathering for a baseline study, and a workshop on how to incorporate evaluation into one's proposals. Individual projects at the University of Stellenbosch, North-West University (Mafikeng campus), Univen, NMMU and Wits Planetarium were supported financially.

7. Annual Conference

The 51st annual conference was hosted by the University of the Western Cape in collaboration with iThembaLabs, the South African Astronomical Observatory and the Hermanus Magnetic Observatory. This very successful event included a plenary session an panel discussion on information technology and physics, as well as a series of winter schools.

On behalf of the SAIP we record our sincere appreciation to the members of the organising committee for their tremendous efforts to host this successful conference.

8. SAIP Office

The most significant development of the year is that, with funding from the Department of Science and Technology, we are now proceeding to establish the SAIP Office from September 2007. It will be housed in the new DST building and staffed by an executive officer and an assistant. Funding for subsequent years will be based on the SAIP showing the capability to generate a significant fraction of the cost from other sources.

This office will become our face to the world, in an environment where important decisions about the future of science and technology are made. We foresee that this exciting development will make a large contribution to the coordinated marketing of our subject, outreach into society, co-operation in Africa, and a stronger engagement with educational and industrial matters that affect the health of physics.

9. Education

Secondary education of physics remains a cornerstone of the success of our profession. A second workshop to acquaint university lecturers with the new FET curriculum was held on 8 and 9 February 2007. It was funded by DST and organised and facilitated by Prof. D. Grayson. Thirty people attended, including four representatives from DST, plus the universities of Stellenbosch, Pretoria, Witwatersrand, Zululand, Fort Hare, Limpopo, KwaZulu-Natal, Johannesburg, Venda, North-West, Nelson Mandela Metropolitan, Cape Town and Free State, and the Durban and Tshwane Universities of Technology. The focus was on the details of the Physics part of the curriculum, and the group is currently preparing an outline of what should be covered in a course for teachers, as well as a sample of a few pages of curriculum materials that would be suitable for such a course, to be presented at the current conference.

10. Meeting with NRF President

The Council executive met with Prof. Mzamo Mangaliso, the new president of the NRF on 1 December 2006 to introduce the SAIP to him, to describe what we do, and hear his vision for the development of science and technology. He emphasized the importance of standard "small" science alongside our current macro-projects, an elaborated that we will have to learn better how to conduct our work as an academic enterprise. The lack of sufficiently large bursaries and the fragmentation of funding were identified as critical shortcomings that the NRF is working on.

11. History of Physics

Prof. P.R. de Kock of the University of Stellenbosch was appointed by Council to write a history of the development of physics in South Africa, focusing on the last 50 years, and from the perspective of the SAIP's role in this development. He will be assisted by Dr. C.A. Engelbrecht of the University of Johannesburg. An application for funding of R 110 000 was submitted on 30 April to the NRF focus area: Distinct South African Research Opportunities: Cultural Heritage and Identity Formation.

12. Donation

Prof. C.B. van Wyk, founder and second president of the SAIP donated an amount of R 50 000 to the SAIP with the wish that this be used for the promotion of quality in physics at the highest level, without being prescriptive. Council keeps this money in a trust fund and is considering the options.

13. Website

I remind all members of the SAIP website at <http://www.saip.org.za> which was set up and is maintained by Secretary Padayachee, and where one can find an extended version of the activities of the Institute, and almost all of the background for the items in this report, including the minutes of our meetings. There is also room on the website for physics departments to advertise their offerings. I encourage you to use this facility to market your department.

14. Perspective

In April 2007 a report-back letter was written to the International Panel that investigated the status and future of physics in South Africa three years ago. This letter detailed how, apart from their strategic support, the DST and NRF invested R 2,16 M in physics marketing/awareness/development projects that are directly administered by the SAIP. In addition to this, the National Institute of Theoretical Physics was established. With the much larger investments in strategically important macro-projects, we experience the current state of physics as healthy. The overriding concern, however, remains the dearth of suitably qualified physicists, and we therefore recognise that all our efforts must continue to concentrate on recruiting, educating and retaining them.

15. Acknowledgements

I express my sincere appreciation for the support of all Council members in their respective portfolios, in particular the visionary role of President-Elect Chetty. The business of the SAIP could only be conducted successfully with the responsible financial management of Treasurer Engelbrecht and the dynamic administration of Secretary Padayachee. We are indebted to them for their dedication.

It was a privilege and an honour to serve as president during this term in which several projects of the SAIP came to fruition.



Harm Moraal
President - 6 July 2007