

Honorary Doctorate for Forestry Expert

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Prof Mike Wingfield

Prof Mike Wingfield, Director of the Forestry and Agricultural Biotechnology Institute (FABI) at the University of Pretoria and an internationally renowned researcher, has been selected to receive an honorary degree from the University of British Columbia.

The degree will be officially awarded at the University's graduation ceremony in November.

Among Prof Wingfield's most important contributions to forestry has been his role as advisor to more than 50 PhD students, many of whom now hold very senior positions globally. He was responsible for establishing the Tree Protection Co-operative Programme (TPCP) in 1990 in order to minimise the impact of pests and pathogens threatening commercial forestry in South Africa. This has become the largest single tree health project in the world and became the catalyst for the establishment in 1998 of the Forestry and Agricultural Biotechnology Institute (FABI; www.fabinet.up.ac.za) of which he was the founding director. FABI has rapidly gained substantial international recognition for research excellence and the postgraduate education of large numbers of students, which include many from disadvantaged backgrounds.

Prof Wingfield has published widely on the topic of tree health in more than 600 research papers and five books, and has been invited to participate in numerous prestigious presentations globally. He has served in many distinguished positions and has received numerous awards and honours for contributions to education, research and industry, both in South Africa and elsewhere in the world. Based on these contributions he has been elected as a fellow of several scientific societies, including the Royal Society of South Africa, the Academy of Sciences of South Africa, the Southern African Society for Plant Pathology and the American Phytopathological Society. He is also one of the few honorary members of the Mycological Society of America.

He has conducted research on tree pests and pathogens, in particular on their global movement, for more than thirty years. His highly-cited research in this field, conducted in many different countries of the world, has led to the discovery of some of the most important pathogens of trees grown commercially in plantations. It has also elucidated elements of the biology and global movement of many of the most important pests and pathogens of trees, substantially contributing to the creation of new management options and finding solutions to problems, which have led to reduced losses to industry. Based on his research reputation, Prof Wingfield has also been a long-term advisor of many major forestry corporations globally.