

## FABIANS ATTEND JOINT SAAB AND SASSB CONFERENCE

The joint 2016 conference for the South African Association of Botanists (SAAB) and the Southern African Society for Systematic Biology (SASSB) took place from 10-13 January at the University of the Free State in Bloemfontein. Five FABIans presented their work as members of SASSB: two posters by MSc students Mashudu Nxumalo ('Novel root-nodule bacteria associated with *Vachellia karroo*') and Juanita Avontuur ('The importance of phenotypic characteristics in the delineation and characterization of novel *Bradyrhizobium* species') as well as a poster by Dr Magriet Van der Nest ('Carbohydrate active enzyme (CAZyme) repertoires determine ecological strategies of the Ceratocystidaceae').



Oral presentations were made by Chrizelle Beukes (PhD) ('Investigation of the invasion strategy used by *Lotus* and *Acacia* species in South Africa') and Joey Hulbert (PhD) ('Monitoring invasive species with citizen science: an international review'). Professors Fanus Venter and Emma Steenkamp also attended the conference which had four concurrent

sessions and topics including phytochemistry, systematics, conservation biology, biotechnology, ecology, development, physiology, ethno-botany, climate change, invasive biology and pollination biology.

During this conference Prof Davis Hillis presented a plenary talk by titled 'The Tree of Life and the evolution of animal nervous systems'. Prof. Hillis is currently a Professor of Integrative Biology at the University of Texas who has published 197 manuscripts, 18 books (notably 'Molecular Systematics' together with Craig Moritz and Barbara Mable), has 53612 citations and an h-index of 67.

