



Operations Research Society of South Africa



Category IV Recognition Award

(To an upcoming member of ORSSA
of age 35 or below for excellence
in operations research practice)

Lieschen Venter

Citation. By Michele Fisher, on behalf of the Executive Committee of ORSSA.

Lieschen Venter was born in Johannesburg on January 9th, 1985. She fell in love with the Western Cape after moving there when she was ten years old and completed all of her studies at Stellenbosch University.

She followed up a bachelor's degree in the mathematical sciences in 2006 by a bachelor of commerce honours degree in operations research in 2007. Her studies and achievements that year sparked a passion for operations research and the role of ORSSA in its advancement. Her honours year project, entitled *Optimal allocation of workers to tasks on a production line* was a finalist in ORSSA's national student competition during 2008. Lieschen was awarded a Sasol postgraduate bursary to pursue a master's degree in commerce with specialisation in operations research. She achieved this qualification based on a thesis on metaheuristics for petrochemical blending problems in 2009.

Upon graduation she joined Sasol's Decision Support Team in Secunda, Mpumalanga. While working at Sasol, she further developed her expertise in optimisation and applied new techniques such as stochastic operations modelling. Her use of system dynamics to support executive decisions in the company broke new ground and has been presented at ORSSA and INFORMS conferences. She also applied these skills in support of the wider community by building *Sim School*, a model used by Sasol's Inzalo Foundation to develop leadership skills in South African schools. Recent work on project metrics, including statistical methods for calculating contingency and escalation for cost estimation, was requested and used by senior managers in the company to monitor and improve project management.

Lieschen is passionate about teaching and using her analytical skills to make a difference. In the four years that she has worked at Sasol, she has provided insights on a range of problems from petrochemical to corporate social investment. She is a technological wizard who is up to date on the latest developments and is able to find creative solutions to information management challenges. She has also demonstrated the soft skills required to properly define problems, maintain client engagement and communicate meaningful results. Lieschen has been very proactive in developing her skills and in sharing her talents as a mentor and team member. She was selected to be a One Young World Ambassador at the Leadership Summit held in Johannesburg in 2013. Her leadership skills have also been evident within ORSSA. Lieschen has served on the Society's Executive Committee since 2012 as the Vaal Triangle Chapter Chair and she also chaired the organising committee for the Society's annual conference this year.

Because of her wide range of high-impact operations research work that has been used to support important decisions at Sasol since 2009, as well as the leading roles she has played in developing operations research within the company and in the community at large, Lieschen Venter is, on this 16th day of September 2014, duly awarded a Category IV ORSSA Recognition Award. I call on the President to confer the award.