



Operations Research Society of South Africa



Category I Recognition Award

(To a retired member of ORSSA
for outstanding contributions
over a long period of time)

Jakobus Stephanus Wolvaardt

Citation. By Winnie Pelser, on behalf of the Executive Committee of ORSSA.

Jakobus Stephanus Wolvaardt was born in Pretoria on 8 October 1945 and grew up in Brits where he attended both primary and high school. After compulsory military service in 1963, he studied at the University of Pretoria where he obtained an MSc (*cum laude*) in mathematical statistics with a focus on *operations research* (OR) subjects. He held various leadership positions at school and was a junior officer in the South African Army. At university he was both chairman of his residence and a member of the Students Representative Council. He was awarded dux colours in 1969.

In that same year he joined the Department of Mathematical Statistics at the University of Pretoria as a lecturer and enrolled for a course in computer science, then newly offered as a two-year major. During 1971 he completed the preparatory courses for both an MBA and a second MSc (*cum laude*) at Unisa, again focused on OR. Years later he followed up on his interest in business and economics by also completing the Advanced Management Program at Unisa's School for Business Leadership.

He joined Unisa's Department of Statistics as a senior lecturer in OR in 1972, obtained his PhD under the supervision of professor Jos Grobbelaar, was himself promoted to professor in 1980 and founded the first South African tertiary department devoted exclusively to OR in 1983. Within this new Department of Quantitative Management, a new generation of operations researchers, such as Hans Ittmann, Winnie Pelser, Thys de Vries, Robert O'Connell, Reiner Fossati, Willie Wagner and Geertien Venter, obtained their master's or doctoral degrees in OR from Unisa. Kobus himself supervised a total of six PhD students in OR to successful conclusion of their studies. Apart from research degrees, the department (now known as Decision Sciences) annually awards degrees to approximately 30 students majoring in OR.

Professor Wolvaardt was active in organised science, serving on ORSSA's executive committee for a number of years before becoming its tenth president in 1979. He was awarded the Tom Rozwadowski medal twice (in 1979 and again in 2003), and was also a member of the South African Council for Natural Science Professions, serving as its vice-president for two terms.

He consulted for a number of companies and organisations, including Armscor and Denel, BHP Billiton, Eskom, Impala Platinum, the KWV, Foodcorp, and Nestle, as well as religious denominations, state departments, a large municipality and the South African Army. Three South African universities used his services for zero-based budgeting of their support services in the late 1990s, and Unisa is still using an updated version of his multi-criteria exam timetable system after more than 30 years.

Kobus Wolvaardt has always maintained a broad field of interest spanning economics, property and farming, and since retiring from Unisa at the end of 2010, he considers himself a part-time pecan farmer, caretaker of property and consultant to his family's growing software business.

For his nurturing of a generation of operations researchers, many of whom have gone on to play significant roles in the local OR profession, his founding of the first tertiary department in South Africa devoted fully to OR, his own high-quality OR work over a long period of time, and his service to our Society, Jakobus Stephanus Wolvaardt is, on this 13th day of September 2016, duly awarded a Category I ORSSA Recognition Award. I call on the president to confer the award.