

Growing Africa's future water leaders

The African water sector faces many challenges and inspirational leaders are required to pick up the torch of effective water management into the future.

One institution aiming to grow this leadership is the International WaterCentre (IWC) Water Research Node at Monash South Africa.

While there are experienced people working at the coalface of the African water sector already, they are in short supply and overworked. More skilled young people are required to pick up the slack, reports Dr Dirk Roux, Director of the IWC Water Research Node. According to Dr Roux, these leaders require a depth and breadth of knowledge to direct sustainable use, effective management and wise governance of water resources. "They need to be humble enough to serve, yet have the vision and energy to inspire people to treat water resources like the finite and most precious resources that they are."

The IWC Water Research Node was set up at Monash South Africa to help create these water leaders.

INTEGRATED WATER MANAGEMENT

Integrated water management is a holistic approach to water management. It considers the whole water cycle and takes into account the socio-economic, political and environmental factors affecting water challenges, in order to achieve sound, sustainable solutions for water and water-related problems. Understanding the interconnectedness of water in human and natural systems, and the need to take a much bigger perspective than just the single-issue approach, are vital if effective solutions are to be found.

Social, cultural and environmental factors must be taken into consideration. Water practitioners



Current students at Monash SA's International WaterCentre Water Research Node, Liezl Craig and Karin Breytenbach.

need to develop creative and critical thinking skills to solve the complexity of problems Africa is now faced with and to manage water projects in a holistic way.

IWC WATER RESEARCH NODE

The IWC Water Research Node uses integrated water management as a critical theme to make both a practical and theoretical contribution to an inter- and transdisciplinary understanding of water management in Africa. The Node is a collaborative partnership between Monash University and the International WaterCentre – a joint venture of four Australian universities.

The Node was set up to address some of the key water resource management challenges of contemporary Africa through research, education and community engagement. Its flagship educational offering is the two-year research intensive degree, Master of Philosophy in Integrated Water Management.

Because the Water Research Node is a small unit a lot of emphasis

is placed on working with other research organisations, universities and implementation agencies in South and Southern Africa.

FINDING SOLUTIONS FOR THE FUTURE

"If you want to make a difference in the African context," says Liezl Craig, one of the current students, "water management is the field to enter. There are numerous challenges and a severe lack of champions to address them."

The water leaders envisioned by the Water Research Node will have the skills to initiate dialogues between professions, peoples, cultures and countries. They will understand the specialty areas involved in water – engineering, law, politics, agriculture, etc. – and be able to communicate and work between them. They will create diverse teams and develop partnerships with and between professionals, communities and governments and play leadership roles in the critical interface between science and management of water resources. □