

**VICE-CHANCELLOR'S DISTINGUISHED SENIOR
RESEARCH MEDAL**

17 April 2009

Mr Chancellor, I have the honour of presenting to you
Peter Vale,
Nelson Mandela Professor of Politics
in the Department of Political and International Studies,

for the award of the Vice-Chancellor's Distinguished **Senior** Research Medal.

Professor Vale is widely regarded as one of South Africa's most distinguished researchers in the social sciences, and is an international name in the specific field of South African security studies. His peers on the selection committee for this award were particularly persuaded by the national and international impact of his scholarly activities over a sustained period. His reputation is as a creative and sometimes controversial thinker, and as an intellectual who has contributed significantly to the study of Politics and International Relations in South Africa.

A measure of his international standing is the high number of research fellowships and visiting professorships he has held at a range of prominent universities in different parts of the world, and the many distinguished international journals on which he serves as an editorial board member. He is recognised through both national and international memberships and fellowships of professional associations, and was a recipient in 2004 of the prestigious Utrecht University International Medal.

To suggest that his research productivity is high would be an understatement. He has produced several edited collections, and has authored over 100 scholarly articles, book chapters, and accredited reviews. He has in addition produced several hundred opinion pieces, working papers, and articles for the popular media, which have appeared in diverse local, national, and international forums. Something that Grahamstown's Grocott's Mail can boast as having in common with the likes of the New York Times, the Chicago Tribune, and the Times of London, is that they've all published Peter Vale.

It is not so much the volume of his scholarly outputs that receives comment and commendation, but the broad scope of his material and the originality of his insights. In 2003, Professor Vale published a book entitled *Security and Politics in South Africa: the regional dimension*, for which he later received the Vice-Chancellor's Book Award at Rhodes University. This work is widely regarded as having broken new conceptual ground around the history and role of the state and state borders in Southern Africa, and has become a reference point for scholars in the field.

A hallmark of his writing is that it is simultaneously engaging and challenging, presenting complex theoretical analyses in an accessible way. As one of his referees notes, "For all the intellectual seriousness of this body of work, it is distinguished in its presentation by an attractive and persuasive geniality."

Another referee describes his work as arousing "both passionate criticism and widespread praise". While a third notes that his "scholarship has been marked by an insistence on relating 'real world' dilemmas of regional and international policy in the Southern African context to cutting edge theoretical ideas in International Studies.", and goes on to describe Professor Vale as a "superior scholar and mentor" who "had, and continues to have, a major influence on my thinking, both intellectually and ethically."

Throughout his long and distinguished career, Professor Vale has shown a particular passion for supporting and developing young and emerging researchers. He has supervised 20 MA and 12 PhD students in the areas of International Relations Theory, Diplomatic History, Sociology, Southern African Studies, Security Studies, and Foreign Policy Studies, and has co-supervised doctoral students at the universities of Utrecht, Amsterdam, and Hanover. A referee describes the work of his and colleague's graduate students at Rhodes as "of a research quality quite without peer in this country." It is a credit to Professor Vale and his colleagues that Rhodes University was recently rated in an international poll as the top South African university at which to study International Relations at the undergraduate level.

I will end with the words of a referee, who states that "Having known Peter for over 30 years, I am familiar enough with his academic record to state with confidence that there is no political scientist in South Africa more deserving of this award than Peter Vale."

Mr Chancellor, I request you to award the Vice-Chancellor's Distinguished **Senior** Research Medal to **Professor Peter Vale**.