

LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT AWARD



Prof Gaye le Roux

Lifetime award for building industry's Gaye le Roux

Gaye le Roux, Professor Emeritus and former Head of the Department of Quantity Surveying at the then University of Port Elizabeth (now Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University), has spent a lifetime making her mark in what has been a predominantly male environment.

When she took up her appointment as Head of Quantity Surveying at UPE in 1983, she became the first woman worldwide to head up a tertiary Built Environment Department.

She is the first woman to receive a Lifetime Achievement Award from the Association of Schools of Construction of Southern Africa (ASOCSA), at the gala dinner of the Association's 10th Built Environment Conference, hosted in Port Elizabeth on 1st August, and themed "Towards a Renaissance".

"Being considered eligible by ASOCSA to receive this wonderful award is a deeply humbling experience and my innermost response is a question: Surely there are others far more eligible to receive this singularly special recognition? This cannot be for me! It is for all my highly-respected colleagues who have served and continue to serve our industry and achieve positive outcomes that will last beyond all our lifetimes."

Throughout her career in a traditionally male domain, Le Roux says she experienced "no gender-related hurdles whatsoever", starting at Pearson High in Port Elizabeth, when her subject choice of Maths and Science meant she was one of only two girls in a class with 38 boys, from Grades 9 to 12.

Although her dream was to become a goldsmith, Le Roux instead followed her class teacher's advice to apply for employment as an Articled Pupil in the Port Elizabeth office of Chartered Quantity Surveyors, Warren and Longworth. She completed her six years of Articles and, in 1962, successfully obtained a Certificate in Quantity Surveying, awarded by Natal University, followed by a doctorate in Construction Economics from UPE in 2004.

Her most treasured achievement was being awarded an Honorary Doctorate by NMMU in 2010, for her "unique contribution in the interests of the South African Built Environment and Quantity Surveying Professions".

Her 29-year academic career at UPE began in 1970 as a lecturer in the newly-opened departments of Architecture and Quantity Surveying. It was to be an upward spiral towards her appointment as HoD in 1983. “Those were wonderfully interesting times,” said Le Roux, describing the University’s decision to appoint her an “almost incredible, unbelievably progressive step”.

Asked about the lessons she learned as a pioneer in the field, she said: “It never seemed extraordinary at all or like ‘pioneering’. Our UPE ‘QS’ teaching team all worked together in a cohesive structure and our students were fantastic. Perhaps my personal greatest opportunity was – and still is – being able to return to so many students, the care and unbelievable support that I experienced.”

Her relationship with the University continues. Since 2012, she has presented the “Professional Legacy Programme” in NMMU’s School of the Built Environment and served as mentor to master’s and doctoral candidates in the NMMU / Construction Industry Development Board (cidb) Centre of Excellence.

Le Roux is a registered professional quantity surveyor (PrQS) and a Life Member of the Association of South African Quantity Surveyors (ASAQS).

She is the co-author of three technical text books and “Everyman’s Building Contract” and has served on numerous Boards and Councils. She was the Director of the ASAQS EduTech Centre from 1997 to 2003, Registrar of the South African Council for Planners from 2002 to 2005 and the first Registrar of the South African Council for the Quantity Surveying Profession (2007 to 2012).

She is currently a member of the Investigating Committee of the South African Council for the Architectural Profession and co-ordinator of the East Cape Master Builders’ Association’s “Graduation to Registration Programme” for candidates who are eligible for registration with one (or more) of the Built Environment Professional Councils in South Africa.

“I am driven by fear of failure on the one hand and, on the other hand, an overriding sense of gratitude – an obligation – to pass on the tremendous encouragement, support and kindness that I have always received.”