



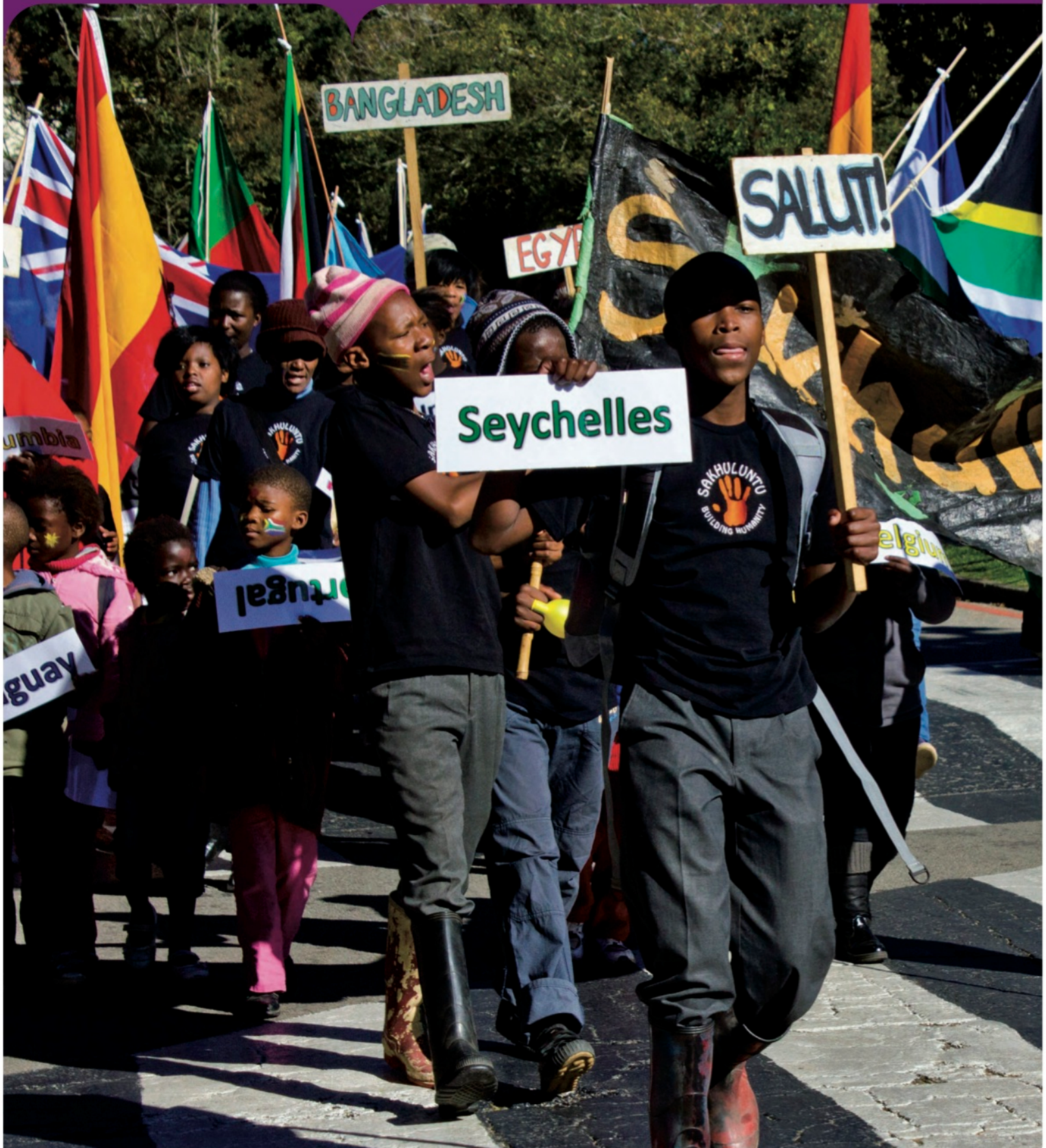
RHODES UNIVERSITY
Where leaders learn

The Rhodes University Community Newsletter

Rhodos

Rhodos Special Edition: Internationalisation

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**Rhodos
Special Edition:
Internationalisation**

Editor:
Noleen De Free

Photo Editor:
Leroy Petersen

Contributors:
Jayne Morgan
Anna-Karien Otto
Orla Quinlan

Photographers:
Sophie Smith
Adrian Frost
Judith Doubell
Desiree Schirlinger
Catherine Pennels
Paul Greenway
Sara Garrun

Designer:
Juliana Jangara

Geography world view

Geography is one of the most internationalised departments at Rhodes. Statistics shows that in a typical year, 75% of students studying for PhDs, 50% of masters and around 40% of honours students are involved in some kind of overseas academic activity - from presenting papers to undertaking complete courses at institutions abroad.

Professor Roddy Fox, the Head of the Department of Geography points us that this is not surprising. The subject deals with broad issues of space, development and landscape. Professor Fox says staff and students should be in touch with the world. However, this is not just about the nature of the discipline.

"It is a departmental mindset that we've developed over a long period. We have always wanted to expose students to the best practitioners in the field and to give them access to the latest work and thinking. We are only five staff members so we had to think creatively about how that could be done."

"For instance, we pioneered many innovative teaching methods and thanks to our collaborations we were doing video conferencing in 2002, the same year Skype was invented. The other thing we did was to network

with universities all over the world and use those partnerships to broaden and deepen our teaching and learning."

Both staff members and students in the department are extremely mobile. In the Linnaeus-Palme programme (an exchange programme run from 2002 to 2010 with a group of Swedish universities), there were 16 faculty and 48 student exchanges.

All students in the department are encouraged to consider studying abroad. Everyone who takes up the opportunity is fully supported, even when it comes to practical advice about where to stay and what to eat.

Prof Fox says department members have strong links with institutions abroad and may co-ordinate their travel so that they can accompany the student on the trip. Postgraduate students sometimes go with staff to conferences and frequently undertake fieldwork with their supervisors.

Many of the staff regularly teach abroad. Professor Fox emphasizes, "they don't just go for a week, give a lecture and leave again, they may well stay and teach whole courses". He also insists that all incoming staff fully engage with as many aspects of the department as possible. They are obliged to give lectures and seminars throughout their stay in order for students to get the full benefit of their expertise and experience. The overall amount of mobility has increased steadily over the years.





Professor Roddy Fox.

“Once you have bought into the idea of internationalisation, it develops its own momentum. The more opportunities you take, the more open up. It takes a lot of work and sometimes exchanges don’t work as they should or people aren’t what you expected. This gives you even more reason to go an extra mile in order to attain a positive outcome”.

There are certainly many benefits and they are not just to do with student experience. The department has its own magnetic susceptibility laboratory because of a joint research project undertaken with a visiting academic. In addition, the reputation of Rhodes Geography Department has been considerably enhanced by the extent of

its international exposure.

“We know where we stand because we are constantly benchmarked against the world’s best departments and we show up well. There are top universities that will always take Rhodes students because they know the quality of our students.”

Professor Fox works extensively with universities around the world including Höskolan Västland Linköping Universities in Sweden and the University of Turku Finland. He is actively involved in the Southern African Nordic Centre (SANORD) a partnership of higher education institutions in the Scandinavian countries and Southern Africa which co-ordinates many collaborations and

exchanges. He attends their conference every year and his presence gives Rhodes a voice in the decisions being made by its 40 member Universities. He believes that walking the talk of internationalisation is a fundamental part of what he does.

“Internationalisation is not something that is bolted on, it’s not part of our ‘mission statement’, it is what we do. People say to me, ‘you’re always travelling, you’re never at work’. My answer to that is that, if I wasn’t travelling, I wouldn’t be doing my job. We show our students the benefits of networking and studying abroad rather than telling them. By being out in the world we create a better department back home.”