

WOMEN IN ENGINEERING

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New scholarship promotes careers in science for women

SAWISE-HOPE Scholarship spokesperson

A NEW scholarship to promote careers in science for women was launched by two women's networks: the Association of South African Women in Science and Engineering (SAWISE) and The Hope Network.

The scholarship is unique in providing tuition fees, as well as access to a large network of female professionals who have come together to form it.

The SAWISE-HOPE Scholarship is the brainchild of Beth O'Connor and Thyla van der Merwe, both UCT alumni,

who put out a call to their network of female professionals to "do something positive" for women who are in need of a helping hand to enable them to further their honours or fourth-year level of study in the fields of science and engineering (medical fields included).

Besides contributing financially, the women professionals were also asked to give of their time to mentor and engage with the young scholarship awardee.

Beth and Thyla were overwhelmed by the response, which led to the formation of The Hope Network.

Thyla, who has a Master's degree in mathematics, works as a cryptographer and is also actively involved in SAWISE, says: "As secretary of SAWISE, I was already aware of two other scholarships that SAWISE manages for young women in science, and I thought it would be wonderful to link both SAWISE and The Hope Network."

And so the SAWISE-HOPE Scholarship was born.

Prof Anusuya Chinsamy-Turan, ex-president of SAWISE, says: "It is wonderful that successful women professionals are so keen to reach out and enable younger women to also succeed, and that they are also so generous with their time and money."

UK-based electrical engineer Beth, herself a rarity in the workforce, says: "The SAWISE-HOPE Scholarship is a way for some of us who have already had the opportunity to qualify and work in these fields to extend the opportunity to others.

"I am inspired by my friends who have come together to make this happen."

First scholarship awardee

Kirsty-Lee Garson, a student at the University of Stellenbosch, is the first recipient of the SAWISE-HOPE Scholarship.

Kirsty-Lee, an honours student in the Department of Physiological Sciences, impressed the selection committee with her outstanding academic results, and commitment to all areas of university life.

Of Kirsty-Lee, Thyla says: "She's a very talented young lady who cemented herself as top candidate right from the very start.

"Besides being a deserving recipient of the scholarship, Kirsty-Lee displays a maturity beyond her years imbued

with a deep sense of humility and generosity. This was made evident by her decision to donate half of her scholarship to another candidate given that she had obtained sufficient funds for the year."

Regarding the scholarship, and her decision to donate half of it, Kirsty-Lee says: "It's such an amazing privilege not only to receive funding, but also to be able to network with professional women in science and engineering. Having been so blessed, it wasn't a difficult decision to allow a fellow candidate to share in this exciting opportunity. I look forward to learning as much as I can from this experience, remaining involved with SAWISE and The HOPE Network, and one day extending the same kind of generosity to another young woman."

If you would like more information about this topic, contact Thyla van der Merwe on 072 377 1796 or email thehopescholarship@gmail.com

Alternatively, visit www.sawise.org.za

WELL DONE: Kirsty-Lee Garson is the first recipient of the SAWISE-HOPE Scholarship.

