

Building local partnerships to promote wireless mesh network technologies

A new partnership has been established between the national Department of Communications (DoC), the Meraka Institute of the CSIR and the University of Zululand (UZ), in an attempt to develop technology solutions for rural populations on the African continent. The partnership intends to promote research, and to provide teaching and access to wireless mesh network technologies. This follows a meeting between the three institutions. The meeting was hosted by the rector and vice chancellor of the university, Professor Rachel Vuyiswa Gumbi.



Seated (from left): Professor PT Sibaya and Professor Rachel Vuyiswa Gumbi of UZ with Dr Ntsibane Ntlatlapa of the Meraka Institute

Standing (from left): Thabo Leshoro, Professor Matthew Odigun and Professor Ramesh Ori of UZ, Dennis Memela (DoC), and Dr Thato Foko and Sam Skosana of the Meraka Institute

Others present at the meeting were UZ

Professor PT Sibaya (vice rector: academic affairs and research), Thabo Leshoro (communications practitioner) and Professor Odigun (head: department of computer science) as well as director of the Meraka e-Skills at the DoC, Dennis Memela. Representing the Meraka Institute were Sam Skosana (project manager) and two senior researchers, Dr Ntsibane Ntlatlapa and Dr Thato Foko.

Participants at the meeting agreed to establish a new wireless mesh network centre at UZ within the department of computer science, where level 5 training in a number of information and communications technology courses, including wireless mesh technologies, would be provided and higher certificates acquired. The centre will also provide wireless mesh training support to Further Education and Training (FET) Colleges.

The first intake of about 30 students will be financially supported by the National Youth Service of the DoC. It is expected that the students will be deployed in the rural and less developed communities as part of their training to contribute to these communities' development and empowerment.

The Meraka Institute will provide technical support to the centre. The DoC, in turn, will contribute financial support for the learners. To provide sustainability, UZ will host the centre and market available courses.