

Curwyn Mapaling



Feedback Report: SAAIR 2018 Conference Scholarship

My name is Curwyn Mapaling and I am an Academic Advisor at the Nelson Mandela University. I was awarded one of the Southern African Association for Institutional Research (SAAIR) Conference Scholarships to attend the 25th SAAIR Conference in Durban, which was hosted in 2018 by the Durban University of Technology (DUT). The theme, “*Re-imagining our universities: the role and impact of institutional research in times of disruption*” was apt given the current post #FeesMustFall (FMF) context in higher education South Africa.

I am grateful to the SAAIR Executive Committee for the opportunity and the freedom to, as the theme suggests, re-imagine our universities. Through the conference, I witnessed a more diverse voice leading the charge of our South African research portfolios, with a specific mirror on the Institutional Research (IR) portfolio. Most certainly - in the years to come - SAAIR will continue to improve and inform evidence base decision making in the Southern African higher education sector.

During the conference, the institutional researchers presented a refreshing and conscious rejection of the “silo research approach and mentality” that is often demonstrated by researchers. It is through this intention that IR practitioners might be encouraged to actively contribute towards bridging the gap between what is known and what has been (repeatedly) done at other institutions and/or in other contexts. This approach extended an invitation for institutional researchers to collaboratively participate in the crafting and answering of pivotal research questions that will enhance the higher education experience for all.

The conference highlighted SAAIR’s commitment to creating productive spaces for researchers to - on a personal and professional level - explore mentorship opportunities that encourage the transfer of knowledge, experience and passion.

Congratulations to Dr. Elizabeth (Liz) Archer on being elected as the President of the SAAIR Executive Committee; I wish her and the team a most fruitful term of office.
