

## AWARDS, HONOURS AND ACHIEVEMENTS

- The Bill Venter Literary Prize (with Jan Malherbe & Derek McNamara) (1993), for the book, *An Introduction to the Uniform Geometrical Theory of Diffraction* (1990)
- The Presidential Award (P-rating) from the National Research Foundation for research excellence (1992)
- Best PhD dissertation from the Ohio State University, ElectroScience Laboratory (1987)

## DEFINING MOMENT

He has enjoyed a defining journey in the company of his wife, Michèle Oliver, a highly regarded expert on constitutional and international law. “She is a continuing source of wisdom, energy and support.”

## WHAT PEOPLE MIGHT NOT KNOW

Although his entire career and mind-set has had a distinct future focus, he really enjoys reading history and visiting historical sites. He is always mindful that “those who do not learn from history will be condemned to repeat it.”

## TRANSFORMING A UNIVERSITY FOR A BETTER FUTURE

Calie Pistorius practically grew up on the campus of the University of Pretoria (UP) as he often went to his father's office there at weekends. Years later, he would also become an academic, and in 2001 at the age of 41 he was appointed as the institution's Vice-Chancellor and Principal. Eight years later he also became the Vice-Chancellor of the University of Hull.

Like his father (a former Vice-Rector of UP) and grandfather before him, he was christened Carl Wilhelm Irene, but goes by the nickname of Calie. Born on 9 August 1958, Pistorius matriculated from Menlo Park High School in Pretoria in 1975.

“I like conceptualising something new and then participating in its development up to the point when it works,” Pistorius explains his decision to pursue studies in electronic engineering – first a BSc Engineering from UP in 1979 and then an Honours degree in 1981, both received *cum laude*.

After a short period in industry as a design engineer, he returned to work at the consulting company Laboratory for Advanced Engineering located on the UP campus and led by Professor Louis van Biljon. In 1982, Pistorius went to study at the University of California at Los Angeles, but transferred to the Ohio State University at the urging of another mentor, Professor Jan Malherbe. There, he received a Master's degree (1984) and a PhD (1986). Upon returning as an associate professor to the UP Department of Electronic and Computer Engineering in 1987, he joined Professor Malherbe's research group in electromagnetics and continued to consult for the Laboratory for Advanced Engineering.

At the age of 31 Pistorius became the head of the Department of Electronics and Computer Engineering at UP. One of his first tasks was to merge the department with the Department of Electrical Engineering and the Carl and Emily Fuchs Institute for Microelectronics. “I had to learn a lot at great speed,” he recalls.

Despite his management duties, Pistorius was keen to further his research. He decided to focus on the management of technological innovation and took a year's sabbatical from mid-1993 to mid-1994 at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), where he obtained a master's degree in the management of technology. There he met another of his mentors, Professor Jim Utterback, with whom he still publishes widely. He later became an alumnus of Harvard Business School, having completed the Advanced Management Programme in 2003.

Months after returning from MIT, Pistorius became founding Director of UP's new Institute for Technological Innovation. In 1998 he was appointed as the institution's Director of Information Technology, and in 2000 as Dean of the Faculty of Engineering, the Built Environment and Information Technology.

## SERVING AS VICE-CHANCELLOR

While serving as Vice-Chancellor and Principal of UP, he also became chair of the National Advisory Council on Innovation in South Africa, the statutory body advising the Minister of Science and Technology.



At that time, UP was already South Africa's largest residential university. Its institutional transformation process continued as did its pursuit of international academic excellence. Professor Wiseman Nkhuhlu, a former chair of the NEPAD steering committee, became UP's first black Chancellor, and Futhi Mtoba the first black Chair of the Council. A challenge was the integration of the Mamelodi campus of the former Vista University into UP – a move called for by then Minister of Education, Kader Asmal.

After Pistorius was appointed for a second term as Vice-Chancellor in 2005, Asmal noted in a letter to him: "Your re-appointment is a tribute to the care you have taken to renew the university's role in a changing South Africa. Transformation, as the cliché has it, is a process, not an event ... Obviously, there will be criticism at the rate of change, but you will be able to deal with this with the fortitude, sensitivity and courage you have displayed up to now."

When his second term was nearing its end, Pistorius was recruited to lead the University of Hull in England. A gesture upon his arrival in September 2009 touched him deeply: "On my first day in office, I looked out of my second storey office window and saw that a gardener had arranged flowers and plants in the shape of the South African flag to welcome me," he remembers.

By the time he stepped down as Hull's Vice-Chancellor in January 2017 to start consulting, many building refurbishment projects and new buildings had been completed at the university, along with organisational and academic

restructuring processes and an information technology overhaul. Pistorius rates the reopening of the renovated Brynmor Jones Library as a particularly proud moment. Several cross-disciplinary institutes in, among others, maritime science and creative and cultural research, were established under his watch. And he had even found the time to be a Liveryman of the Worshipful Company of Engineers.

## NEW ENDEAVOURS

After 15 years serving as Vice-Chancellor, he has taken on new challenges. His consulting firm DeltaHedron – based in the United Kingdom – focuses on the strategic impact, opportunities and risks presented by emerging technologies. Pistorius also served as a director of Sentamu Academy Learning Trust and is an Extraordinary Professor in industrial engineering at Stellenbosch University (SU).

"Universities play an important role in society – in advancing knowledge, but particularly in inspiring and equipping their students to contribute proactively towards creating a better future, rather than merely participating as spectators in a world given to them by others." That is why he is a registered chartered engineer in the United Kingdom, Member of the Academy of Science of South Africa (ASSAf), Fellow of the Institute of Engineering and Technology, the Royal Society of South Africa, the South African Academy of Engineers and the South African Institute of Electrical Engineers.



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# Legends of South African Science II

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