

CONFERENCE REPORT

The Third Southern African Students' Psychology Conference Johannesburg, 23 to 24 June 2011

Nikki Themistocleous

Department of Psychology
University of South Africa
themini@unisa.ac.za



From the outset, I knew being involved with the planning of the 2013 Southern African Student Conference would be a very interesting and rewarding journey. And I was not disappointed!

The conference was co-hosted with our colleagues from Wits University who were as excited and willing to embark on the journey with us. The positive collaborative effort from both institutions set the path for what turned out to be a hugely successful conference. The joint meetings we held with both academics and students alike were always productive and engaging, and made the task of planning a conference so much easier, and a lot more fun! I particularly enjoyed the meetings held at the Wits Campus, the bonus being the wonderful lunches thereafter.

Although I was closely involved with several areas of the conference (pre-

conference planning and during the conference organising), the pre-conference workshops were the responsibility of myself and a colleague, Ms Catherine Govender. Together we embarked on a task to recruit qualified psychologists to present workshops. It was the first time that pre-conference workshops were included in the Student Conference, and so admittedly it was with both excitement and trepidation that we began planning. Very early on I realised that the worry was not warranted, and our slots filled up very quickly! It was so wonderful to see the willingness and excitement from professionals who took time out of their day to present their areas of interest, and engage with students in such an enriching environment. I must take this opportunity to thank and offer my appreciation to those professionals who willingly attended the conference, or presented a pre-conference workshop. These professionals did not receive any monetary compensation, nor did they earn themselves any CPD points. Their participation was driven by other factors that I would like to believe were altruistic in nature.

The preconference workshops covered a wide variety of topics, and included areas of research, clinical, counselling and industrial psychology, and publishing. With work sessions titled: *An academic, a researcher and a clinician walk into a bar*; or *Horse Play anyone? Who would not be interested?* All the sessions were extremely well attended; students participated well and were eager to engage with the presenters. It is encouraging to see how students take active roles in their learning, and who are not afraid to enter into dialogue about the complex field of psychology.

After the two days of preconference workshops, the presentations got underway. The diversity of research topics and approaches were a delight to see, and again the willingness and eagerness of students to “put themselves out there” is such a positive experience.

There is so much to write about, but in closing, reflecting on the journey from start to finish leaves me content. I thoroughly enjoyed being part of the organising committee, working collaboratively with our Wits colleagues, and engaging with students in a context of appreciation and learning.

See you in 2015!