



## **NMMU George PhD graduates - Beaming with Pride**

Dr Anton Schmidt and Dr Adele Potgieter are amongst a growing cohort of staff members from NMMU George Campus who have embraced the opportunity to further their studies at an advanced level. Both were rewarded for their dedication and hard work when PhD-degrees in the field of Science, and Business Management respectively, were conferred upon them at the respective faculty graduation sessions in Port Elizabeth during April.

### **Dr Schmidt**

Dr Schmidt's interest and grounding in nature conservation led him to research "*Bush clumps as indicators of thresholds of change in Arid Thicket mosaic piospheres*" – as his thesis is titled. "In the literature, Arid Thicket transformation by domestic meso-herbivores is purported to follow a state-and-transition model, whereby the ecosystem is initially resilient to herbivory until some threshold is crossed, where-after there is a rapid shift to a new alternative stable state" says Dr Schmidt whose study represents a first attempt to verify this hypothesis by searching for evidence of "stable ecosystem states separated by structural, functional and degradation thresholds in Pruiim-Spekboomveld", a variation of Arid Thicket found in the southern Cape of South Africa. "In general, my findings support the prediction in the literature that domestic meso-herbivore induced transformation of Arid Mosaic Thicket will follow a state-and-transition model", he concluded.

Dr Schmidt was recently assigned the portfolio of Director of the School of Natural Resource Management (Faculty of Science) at NMMU George.

### **Dr Potgieter**

The PhD (Business Management) study of Marketing Lecturer, Dr Adele Potgieter, focussed on branding variables, including personal branding, and corporate reputation. It was carried out in order to explore the influence of employer branding, employee's personal branding and corporate branding on corporate reputation.

Her thesis titled "*The influence of selected branding variables on corporate reputation*" argued that corporate reputation is one of the most valuable intangible assets of an organisation. "Organisations need to ensure that they comprehend the elements in the establishment of a corporate identity and a corporate image, and how employees influence these constructs. It became clear that an individual's associations, awareness and assessment of an organisation influence their direct and indirect experiences with an organisation resulting in the formulation of a corporate reputation" says Dr Potgieter who selected her study sample from the list of Top500 best managed companies in South Africa.

The research highlighted the importance of the relationship of an employee's personal brand in the creation, implementation and success of employer branding, corporate branding and corporate reputation. The results of the study also stress the importance of people management in an organisation, she said.

**CAPTION**

Passion for learning... A proud Prof Quinton Johnson, Campus Principal (right) with the newest doctors at the NMMU George Campus – lecturers Anton Schmidt and Adele Potgieter.