



Honoring the Achievers at the 138th Commencement of
Worcester Polytechnic Institute, U.S.A.

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Dr. Dennis Berkey (President of WPI, second from left), flanked by honorees Dr. Tjama Tjivikua (educator), Ms. Marian Heard (community leader), and Dr. Curtis Carlson (innovator).

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All three honorees received the Doctor of Science (Honoris Causa) in recognition of for their outstanding achievements on 20 May 2006.

DR. TJAMA TJIVIKUA RECEIVES AN HONORARY DOCTORATE

On 20 May 2006, Dr. Tjama Tjivikua, Rector of the Polytechnic of Namibia, received the Doctor of Science (*Honoris Causa*) from Worcester Polytechnic Institute (WPI), Massachusetts, U.S.A. *The honorary doctorate is in recognition for his distinguished academic and administrative career, his public service, and his abiding dedication to education.*

Dr. Tjivikua entered the coveted, prestigious list of noted honorees at the annual commencement (graduation) events across the U.S., a nation of 300 million inhabitants. He was honored at the 138th Commencement alongside two prominent Americans: **Mrs. Marian Heard**, a tireless champion of children and youth, *for her lifelong support of society's most vulnerable and powerless members, and for never losing sight of their fundamental value to the nation's future;* and **Dr. Curtis Carlson** (a WPI graduate of 1967) who is one of the leading forces in technological innovation in the modern world, *for his relentless passion for innovation, and for creating customer value in ways that literally have changed the world.*

Established in 1865, WPI is the third oldest university of engineering and science (*a university of science and technology or technological university*). WPI is a private university which currently has 200 faculty and enrolls about 2 900 students from 70 countries. Its curriculum offers students broad-based, well-rounded preparation for careers or graduate and professional education in a wide range of fields. WPI also offers a unique project-enriched undergraduate curriculum, part of which is completed at project centres across the globe, including one in Namibia.

In a country of more than 3 000 accredited universities, WPI has been ranked as 55th overall among the 248 national universities listed in the 2005 "*Best Colleges in America.*" "*In the National Survey of Student Engagement, WPI is ranked first out of 33 doctoral-intensive universities for student-faculty interactions,*" a highlight reads.

WPI and the Polytechnic of Namibia have been partners since 2002, under a memorandum of agreement which, amongst other things, allows WPI students to spend seven weeks engaged in different projects with Namibian communities. Projects completed so far include research in underground water management, cheetah conservation, promotion of tourism in the City of Windhoek, design of energy-efficient housing, and marketing of Namibian fish in the U.S. Such projects add great value to the education of students from a completely different culture and perspective (*developed country*) and the advancement of communities (*in developing and developed countries*).

This is similar to what the Polytechnic of Namibia's students engage in during their studies, thus – the two institutions enrich society by bringing academe to the community. The Polytechnic of Namibia and WPI have a strong, broad partnership and share resources in other ways.

Tjama Tjivikua was born on 27 July 1958 at Otjomupanda, Otjozondjupa Region, Namibia. He is one of 12 children born to a teacher and nurse. He grew up in the then Ovitoto Reserve, and started primary school in 1967 at St. Barnabas in the Old Location, Windhoek. At the conclusion of the forced removal project of blacks from Old Location he attended school in Katutura (1968-1969), then moved to Otjinene Primary School (1970-1973) where he completed Standard 6 (Grade 8), then to Okakarara Secondary School (1974-75), and finally to Augustineum Secondary School (1976-1978). Upon completion of high school, Tjivikua worked at the main branch of Barclays Bank in Windhoek.

Soon thereafter, Tjivikua left for the U.S.A. where he undertook his university education. He studied Chemistry at Rockland Community College (1979-1980) and then Lincoln University (1980-1983), where he graduated *cum laude* (B.A. with many awards and honors). He pursued graduate studies at the University of Lowell (now University of Massachusetts, Lowell) (M.S., 1983-1985), then University of Pittsburgh (Ph.D., 1985-1990). He completed his thesis on molecular recognition in organic chemistry at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (1989-1990). His scientific work received wide international coverage in scientific journals and other magazines.

Dr. Tjivikua worked as a teaching assistant and researcher while a student, and taught at Lincoln University, Pennsylvania as Assistant Professor of Chemistry (1990-1995) before returning to assume the post of Founding Rector at the Polytechnic of Namibia in October 1995, where he has now served for nearly 11 years.

Over the years, the Polytechnic of Namibia emerged from a position of inferiority to prominence in the Namibian society. Its land holdings have tripled while its infrastructure has undergone major improvements, including a modern technological framework, a new library, engineering building and hotel school. Its staffing has improved immensely and the number of qualifications grew by three-fold, as has enrolment, presently at 7 000.

Significant growth has also been witnessed in diverse disciplines relevant to Namibia's development such as business, management, engineering, information technology, and natural resources. The curriculum is now geared toward creating graduate qualifications (Master and Doctorate); the qualifications are recognized far afield.

The institution has been at the forefront of technological development and interactive learning (integrating project-based, practical, in-service learning into the curriculum) in Namibia's higher education. The Polytechnic also has a respectable network of national and international partnerships, and is considered a *technological university*.

Tjama Tjivikua is first in his family to graduate at all degree levels, and in Namibia, (probably) the first doctorate in pure (natural) science, one of the few second-generation doctorates, and one of first doctoral honorees at his age.

Dr. Tjivikua has remained a dedicated educator and citizen and advocate of productivity, efficiency, academic excellence, technology, entrepreneurship and innovation. He continues to serve on national bodies such as the National Planning Commission, and several national trusts dedicated to the advancement of society. Amongst the many honours he has earned is *Outstanding Young Man of America* in 1985.

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