**Citation: Beric Skews**

Over the past five decades, the South African academic community has been honoured to embrace within its ranks one of the most illustrious and prolific scientists of his time in the field of aeronautical engineering.

Professor Skews, currently the Director of the Flow Research Unit at Wits, which he founded, is a renowned researcher, scientist and engineer who holds honorary doctorates from several universities, and who has dedicated the most part of his life to Wits. He has mentored many staff members and postgraduate students at Wits.

An Honorary Fellow of the Royal Aeronautical Society, Professor Skews has achieved what is described as “the world’s highest distinction for aerospace achievement, awarded only for the most outstanding contributions to the aerospace profession”. He is one of only 85 professionals, out of a membership of over 21 000 to be honoured in this manner for his contribution towards establishing the aeronautical engineering degree at Wits in the 1960s. The Wits aeronautical engineering degree to this day remains the only internationally recognised formal degree in this field in South Africa. We acknowledge him for his outstanding efforts in this regard.

A fellow of several learned societies, Professor Skews is a Member of the Academy of Science of South Africa and a Senior Member of the American Institute of Aeronautics and Astronautics. He has also served as the President of the Southern Africa Division of the Royal Aeronautical Society, and the South African Institution of Aeronautical Engineers, amongst others.

There is no doubt that Professor Skews is one of the global leaders in his field of research.

In 1987, he achieved an “A-rating” from the National Research Foundation (NRF) which acknowledges him as an international research leader in his field, an achievement that he continues to hold to this day. Professor Skews was awarded the NRF President’s award in both 2007 and 2012.

His work was recognised in a two-page editorial in the prestigious journal Nature, in which he was commended for his work on the aerodynamic autorotation of bodies. His international status is well demonstrated by the fact that he is a research manuscript reviewer for 32 significant international journals and an editor of three international journals.

A distinguished, respected leader in the academy, Professor Skews’ accolades are too many to mention, so only a few are highlighted. In September 2012 the Japan High-Speed Imaging Society awarded him a Gold Medal at the 30th International Congress on High-Speed Imaging and Photonics for his contributions to high-speed imaging. In the same year, he received the Rem Soloukhin Gold Hands Silver Award and Medal in recognition of his outstanding contributions to the field of flow visualisation.

His expertise is in demand internationally and Professor Skews has lectured around the world including in Taiwan, China, Japan, South Africa, Australia and the USA. He received an Honorary Fellowship to the Society of Shock Wave Research in India in 2005.

In 2009, the South African Institute of Mechanical Engineering requested that he deliver the John Orr Lecture where he was also awarded a Gold Medal in light of his remarkable expertise. At the time, he was only the second South African to receive this honour.

He received honorary membership to the South African Association for Theoretical and Applied Mechanics in 2004, again one of only two honorary members at the time to receive this accolade.

Born in Piet Retief in 1936, Professor Skews moved to Johannesburg where he completed his BSc in Mechanical Engineering in 1958, followed by an MSc in Engineering in 1961 and a PhD in 1967 at Wits. He has dedicated his career to the study of shock and expansion waves, gas dynamics and flow visualization.

His professional career began in 1959 as a Junior Lecturer in Mechanical Engineering at Wits University. Since then, he has held positions as an Associate Professor at McMaster University in Canada, as a Professor of Aeronautical Engineering and Head of the School of Mechanical Engineering at Wits and as Visiting Professor at Tohoku University in Japan. He has also held a Rector’s Fellowship at the University of New South Wales in Australia.

A “Witsie” through and through, Professor Beric Skews has led an illustrious academic career at Wits spanning over five decades, aside from a seven-year stint at Eskom in the early 1980s.

Since his formal retirement, he has held a special post-retirement research position in the School of Mechanical, Industrial and Aeronautical Engineering at Wits, where he continues to share his specialist knowledge with staff, students and researchers.

He is registered as both a Professional Engineer with the Engineering Council of South Africa and as a Chartered Engineer with the Engineering Council in the United Kingdom.

It is with great distinction and pride that we acknowledge Professor Skews, one of our own, for the immense contribution that he has made to the academy through teaching and research, but also through sharing and giving of his incredible self – his knowledge and his proficiency – for the benefit of our generation and of those to come.

There is no doubt that Professor Skews has made, and continues to make extraordinary contributions to science and engineering. In recognition of this, Professor Beric Skews is awarded an honorary doctorate degree from the University of the Witwatersrand.