

SAAIR 2019 CONFERENCE REPORT

SAAIR Scholar 2019

ABSTRACT

Feedback report of the South Africa Association of Institutional Research (SAAIR) Scholars on the SAAIR Conference 2019.

Abdulbaqi Badru

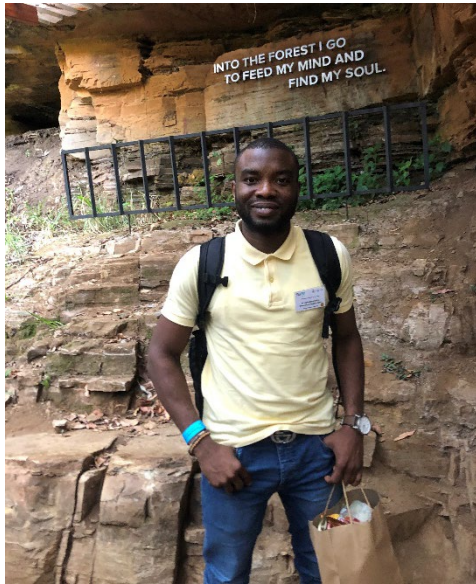
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ABDULBAQI EYITAYO BADRU

Scholarship Recipient of SAAIR Conference 2019

Report on My Experience at the Saair Conference 2019: TUT Mbombela (Nelspruit) Campus



I am Abdulbaqi Eyitayo Badru. I work as a Technology Support Practitioner to the DVC Teaching and Learning Division at the University of KwaZulu-Natal. I am involved in the development of IT strategies for the Division, which comprises of the University Teaching and Learning Office, the University Language Planning and Development Office, and the Quality Promotion and Assurance Office. I am currently registered for a Ph.D. degree in the school of Information Systems and Technology at UKZN. My research area is around data analytics and higher education.

I am honoured to have been awarded the SAAIR 2019 conference scholarship, a fully funded grants to attend the SAAIR 2019 conference. My experience at the conference is multi-faceted, with good memories, that started with my journey to Umphalanga. My journey to the conference kick-off with my first flight in a small plane. Getting to the airport, in Umphalanga, I was well welcomed by the TUT team and transported to the hotel (Stay Easy). SAAIR administrator, Mrs Carin Strydom, with very sweet personality welcomed and met with all the scholars. The hotel services were top notch.

Pre-conference Workshop

On Monday, 4 November 2019, I attended the pre-conference workshop on “The value, power, and promise of data mining techniques”. The workshop was informative and engaging. The presenter, Ms. Elizabeth Booi, was detailed in her presentation. Her presentation covered the definition and types of data and data mining processes and techniques. The practical session of the workshop was technical and hands-on. I learnt a lot from the workshop. However, the activities and information we were required to engage in and absorb were too much for a one day workshop. I strongly suggest that the workshop be extended to a two-days going forward.

The Conference Presentations



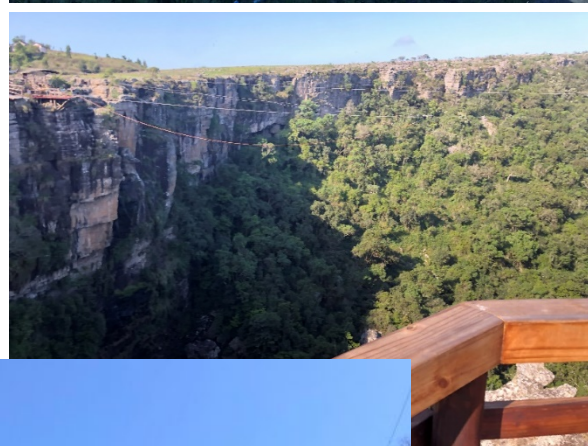
The conference was from 5 – 7 November 2019. I attended all the three keynote presentations. The presenters were very articulate and engaging. The one that stood out for me was the presentation by Prof Sid Nair on Re-engineering the DNA of Institutional Research. It was a thought-provoking session. Prof Sid probed the current higher education and then highlighted some of the changes that must be considered in the conversation on “rethinking higher education”.

I attended other break-away sessions during the conference. All the presentations were informative and eye-opening. The break-away sessions that stood out for me was that of Ms Carla Kroon from the University of Stellenbosch on “tracking information in the student life cycle at Stellenbosch University”. This is because the life-cycle approach she used when tracking student information is similar to the approach I am planning to use in my PhD studies.

Social Engagements

I had a good time seeing new places, and at the same time networking with institutional research experts and scholars. The most informative part of my engagements were the casual discussions I had with other delegates on my PhD research area. I was on the team that visited the Graskop Gorge Lift. It was an amazing experience. I went on the zip lining across the valley, which was breathe taking but a very beautiful view. We also visited God’s window, a very nice position to view the city.

The Cocktail and Gala dinner events were relaxing and a good avenue to network and enjoy the evening.



The AGM and Award Presentation

I attended the AGM with other colleagues. I was honoured to stand alongside other scholars from other universities as the lucky ones that benefited from the SAAIR scholarship programme. I got to know more about the SAAIR and their partners during the AGM.



Conclusion

In summary, the conference was a huge success. I was highly impressed by the time consciousness and organisation of the conference. There were student assistants that helped delegates navigate their ways, and the food was okay. I will love to do this again.



Thank You SAAIR