

Agreement will support important educational data skills work by NITheCS

The National Institute for Theoretical and Computational Sciences (NITheCS) and The Carpentries have signed a one-year agreement, according to which they will cooperate for mutual benefit.

The Carpentries is an open global community and non-profit organisation teaching the skills and perspectives to turn data into knowledge. According to Dr Angelique Trusler, African Capacity Development Manager at The Carpentries, they 'train and foster an active, inclusive, diverse community of learners and instructors that promotes and models the importance of software and data in research. As leading inclusive community teaching data and coding skills, we collaboratively develop openly-available lessons and deliver these lessons using evidence-based teaching practices,' She introduced The Carpentries during a NITheCS working breakfast and noted that the community has more than 90 member organisations in 11 countries.

The benefits for NITheCS and all its associates to work with an international organisation that builds global capacity in essential data and computational skills are clear, since it impacts the conducting of efficient, open, and reproducible research.

'In practice this will support the training programmes of NITheCS and the work of its associates and bursary holders,' says Prof Francesco Petruccione, Interim Director of NITheCS. 'We will also receive one seat on The Carpentries Member Council and become a Carpentries Member Organisation.'

According to the agreement, the parties will further the missions of both NITheCS and The Carpentries through workshops, collaborations, and educational initiatives, with the aim to enhance research computing practices. As official member organisation of The Carpentries, NITheCS will be able to self-organise an unlimited number of Carpentries workshops while the agreement is in effect. The Institute will also be entitled to six workshops coordinated by The Carpentries.

In return, The Carpentries will reserve 15 seats per year in instructor training courses for NITheCS. They will also work to coordinate local instructor training and help publicise relevant NITheCS activities such as training courses and notable scientific successes.

'We are delighted at the prospect of working with an organisation with proven benefits,' adds Prof Petruccione. 'Long-term surveys assessing outcomes such as motivation and confidence in working with data six months after respondents attended a Carpentry workshop have been overwhelmingly positive.'

The Carpentries' work in Africa included the first virtual CarpentryConnect South Africa 2021 (<https://za2021.carpentryconnect.org/>) from 6 to 17 September. Its main goal was to 'build capacity for workshops through instructor training and bring together newer and more

experienced community members to share knowledge, network, develop new skills, and develop strategies for building strong local communities around digital and computational literacy in Africa.’

The virtual event was attended by more than 120 attendees and volunteers from 28 countries worldwide, including 16 countries in Africa.

Ends

Issued by the National Institute for Theoretical and Computational Sciences (NITheCS):

www.nithecs.ac.za | 087 702 9364 | info@nithecs.ac.za

Media enquiries:

René Kotze: renekotze@sun.ac.za or

Lia Labuschagne: lia.sciencewriter@nithecs.ac.za