



The US Witsie

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witsfund.org

How Curiosity Saved this Cat: The life story of an out-of-the-box thinker and maverick



Dr David Fine

Many times called “not in his right mind”, Dr David Fine (Wits BSc Hons Chemistry, 1964) has over 107 patents for his discoveries in combustion, carcinogenic nitrosamines, beer and Scotch, explosives, airport security, refillable plastic bottles, buried land mines, ICBM silos and the treatment of pulmonary hypertension.

The successful Boston-based innovator and entrepreneur has made a generous donation of \$3,000,000 which will be used to establish the Angela and David Fine Chair in Innovation at Wits University. Join us online for the next in the Wits Fund Indaba series and hear how Dr Fine’s curiosity has always been the saving of him.

The Zoom webinar will be hosted by Wits Fund Chair, and Chairman of the Board and CEO of Henry Schein, Inc., a Fortune 500® company, Mr Stanley Bergman. Moderating the evening will be Prof Hazel Sive, the Dean of the College of Science, and Professor of Biology at Northeastern University, Boston. She is a research pioneer, award-winning educator and innovator in the higher education space, and a member of the Wits Fund board.

Join us online on July 28th at 8pm ET to hear details about his life and career
RSVP to nooshin.erfani-ghadimi@wits.ac.za



It’s complicated ... but let’s talk about #Gender

In the 13th issue of Curios.ty, themed: #Gender, Wits University features research across the gender spectrum that aims to ensure a more equitable and tolerant society, including:

1. **Beyond the binary** (Page 8): “We need to see transgender people in our courts, at the police station, in the clinics, that is how we start to change society”.
2. **The politics of a woman’s body** (Page 12): The backsliding of women’s rights happening right now should be the clarion call that gender rights are still everybody’s business.

Alumnus spotlight

Tal Gilbert: My Wits Legacy - Innovation and Social Purpose



Mr Tal Gilbert, Wits Fund Board member

My journey with Wits started well before I was a student. My mother (now retired) was a professor of Sociology and a member of staff for 4 decades. My father graduated from Wits as an electrical engineer and then spent his career in developing cutting-edge technologies, including some of the first desktop computers in South Africa. Whether it was spending afternoons after school in my mother's office in Senate House or visits to the planetarium with my father, I was drawn to the unusual combination of science and innovation, alongside deeply rooted social activism that has always been so evident at Wits.

I studied Statistics and Actuarial Science at Wits and then completed an M.Phil in Development Studies at the University of Oxford, finding that my time at Wits had prepared me very well for my further graduate studies.

In 2004, I joined Discovery in London as the second employee of a venture to launch a brand new health insurer in the UK. Led by its founders, Wits alumni Adrian Gore and Barry Swartzberg, Discovery had achieved significant success as a disrupter in the health and life insurance markets in South Africa. The approach was a novel one which was gaining interest internationally: to focus on keeping people healthy rather than just paying claims. That UK venture, now under the Vitality brand, has subsequently grown to become one of the largest health and life insurers in the UK.

Since then, I have been fortunate to represent Discovery and Vitality in various innovation and leadership roles across international markets, working in London, Hong Kong, New York, and most recently in Chicago, in many cases along with other dedicated Wits alumni.

As someone who has now spent a large part of my career in taking innovations from South Africa to other parts of the globe I have a deep appreciation of how the unique environment in SA, as exemplified by Wits, has given rise to such a distinguished group of alumni. Necessity truly is the mother of invention – solving complex social and economic problems with limited resources pushes people to come up with ideas that are not always intuitive. Wits is a fantastic incubator for that sort of thinking. That's an important part of what I've taken with me in my career and what I hope that future generations of Wits alumni get to experience and draw from.

Hazel Sive Named Fellow of American Association for the Advancement of Science



Congratulations to Prof Hazel Sive (a member of the Wits Fund board), who was recently named a fellow of the American Association for the Advancement of Science, "a lifetime honor awarded to scholars for their exceptional contributions and leadership in their scientific fields."

Prof Sive, who is the the Dean of the College of Science, and Professor of Biology at Northeastern University, Boston, received the recognition for fundamental discoveries advancing our understanding of early embryonic development, particularly the development of the nervous system in vertebrates, and for her leadership in teaching, mentoring, and diversity in higher education.

Dr. Sive's groundbreaking research focuses on neurodevelopmental disorders, as well as fundamental processes underlying brain and craniofacial development.

Read more here:

<https://news.northeastern.edu/2022/01/27/aaas-fellowship-awards/>

