Being 50 years old implies that you may have either grown up or just old. You may just exist or you may be living and thriving.

From humble beginnings in 1961 to its half century in 2011, there is no doubt that the Department of Mining Engineering at the University of Pretoria has grown up, and has embraced and identified with the opportunities presented in a democratic South Africa. It is also obvious that there is a clear understanding of the challenges faced in a fiercely competitive world, and that changes have been and are continually being undertaken to keep abreast with changing technologies in education and mining. The department is thriving in these trying times and has found innovative ways of resolving funding and skills shortages.

Instrumental in all of this, however, are the faces who have made and who are making it happen. We honour the Founding Members, the Heads of Department, the Lecturers, Administrative staff, the Students, and the Alumni who have and are tirelessly serving our educational institution, society, and the mining industry. It is your passion and endeavours that spearhead the growth and development that places our Alma Mater at the forefront.

As President of the Mining Alumni Society of the University of Pretoria, and on behalf of the MASUP Management Committee and all the Mining Alumni, it is my honour and privilege to congratulate the staff of the Department of Mining Engineering and specifically Prof. R.C.W. Webber-Youngman, on ‘1961–2011 Celebrating 50 years of Excellence in Mining Engineering Education’.

Ronny, we are proud of you and your team and wish you the best of luck in your tireless endeavours to create a learning environment in which students can excel and are equipped to contribute maximally in building a better mining industry, and hence a better future for all South Africans.

We acknowledge that there is no substitute for education.

R.C.W. Webber-Youngman
Head of the Department of Mining Engineering

Spotlight (continued)

The introduction of discussion rooms has created a real multimedia interactive academic environment for our students. We are also the only engineering department with an employee doing instructional design of all our mining lecture material on a full-time basis, sponsored annually by SACMA. The main goal is to have all the mining modules instructionally designed and ready for the ECSA accreditation visit in September 2012. We will be the only mining department in the world that I am aware of that will offer instructionally designed material for all our mining-related subjects, including non-technical skills (soft skills) as part and parcel of every mining module in the fourth year of studies. In this way we enhance the learning experience for all our students.

We upgraded our computer facilities and now have our own mining IT Lab for use by our students. We are one of only a few engineering departments that have an active bulk SMS system available to communicate with our students. We have one of the most active student societies, the Tuks Mining Society which has its own developed student website on campus.

I want to congratulate and thank all who have helped in developing this Department to the next level of academic excellence. We do, however, have some challenges which we are dealing with, but with the quality of staff that we now have on board, I believe we can take care of any challenge. Key issues in developing good-quality mining engineers are discipline (including time management guidelines), passion and enthusiasm for the discipline, and coachability. Primarily, we have to ensure that the standard (quality) of the programme that we offer is not compromised in any way. This is what Tuks Mining stands for! We owe it to our alumni and the future generation of mining engineers that will be educated in this Department.

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R.C.W. Webber-Youngman
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We are South African, We are Tukkies and We are Mining Alumni!

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M. Conradie
President of the Mining Alumni Society of the University of Pretoria