

# Obituary – André van der Poll

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It is with great sadness that we need to inform you that Prof André van der Poll, research professor in the Graduate School of Business Leadership and formerly professor in the School of Computing at the University of South Africa, passed away in the early morning of 17 October 2025.

John Andrew (André) van der Poll was born on 28 March 1960 in Nababeep, Northern Cape, South Africa. He matriculated at Brackenfell High School in the Western Cape province, South Africa in 1977 with an average of 80%. John did a B.Sc. degree at the University of Stellenbosch from 1978 to 1980 and majored in Computer Science, Mathematics and Applied Mathematics. He enrolled for an Honours B.Sc. degree in 1981 at the same institution, which he completed the following year.

After his compulsory military service of two years, he took up a position in 1984 at the Data Processing Centre of the South African Post Office (now Telkom). He was employed first as a systems developer and later as a training officer. During his time at Telkom, he enrolled for an M.Sc. degree at Unisa (University of South Africa) and completed the degree in 1987. The title of his dissertation was “Towards the Denotational Semantics of QuadLisp’86”.

John (we used to call him André, by his middle name) was appointed as a senior lecturer in the then Department of Computer Science and Information Systems at Unisa in January 1988. He completed a PhD degree in Computer Science at Unisa in June 2000, and the title of his



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thesis was “*Automated Support for Set-Theoretic Specifications.*” During the fall term of 2000, he was a visiting professor at the University of McMaster in Hamilton, Canada. He was promoted to the position of associate professor in January 2002 and to full professor in January 2006. During his time at Unisa, he taught courses in Discrete Mathematics for Computer Science, Compiler Construction, Formal Logic, Formal Program Verification, Automated Reasoning, Formal Specification Techniques, Computer Networks, Database Systems, Software Project Management and Operating Systems.

In July 2013, he accepted a position as Professor in ICT Management at Unisa’s Graduate School of Business Leadership (SBL) where he offered modules for company executives in Business Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs). His research interests extended to include the advancement of the use of formal methods for business software development among upper management in the industry. He was the Academy for Global Business Advancement (AGBA) Vice President for South Africa, Northern region. He delivered numerous MBA/MBL students with a variety of dissertation topics in Business ICTs.

John was the lead author and co-author of more than 120 journal articles and peer-reviewed conference papers. He was the guest editor of a special edition of the Journal for Global Business Advancement (JGBA), from the Inderscience publisher. Most of his journal articles are indexed in the Web of Science (WoS), Scopus and the Directory of Open Access Journals (DOAJ). He delivered more than 24 Master of Science (MSc), Master of Business Administration (MBA), Master of Business Leadership (MBL), Doctor of Philosophy (PhD), Doctor of Business Leadership (DBL), and Doctor of Commerce (DCom) students.

His research interests were in the use of Computing formalisms in software development for, amongst other, Business ICTs. He believed that it is essential that computer systems function as expected, especially safety-critical systems that have human lives at stake. Using mathematical techniques to produce reliable software can limit problems and create highly dependable systems. Formal methods can be used to predict the behaviour and consequences of a system and assist in embedding safe, ethical principles into the algorithms of software, thus preventing malicious behaviour.

Prof van der Poll was an NRF rated researcher, category C2, and a Research Professor at Unisa’s SBL. He held a three-year NRF Competitive Program for Rated Researchers (CPRR) grant for the period 2023 to 2025.

Many of us in the South African Computing community have known him and collaborated with him over many years. He was a kind spirit who always saw the potential in other colleagues and students. He had an exceptional gift to develop postgraduate students’ research skills and nurture their critical thinking abilities. As a supervisor, he always persevered and successfully delivered many master’s and doctoral students. Above all else, he was a wonderful colleague and friend with a subtle and charming sense of humour. He was a petrolhead who loved his BMW750i 2008 and always told his friends stories about his car. We will miss him dearly. We would like to extend our condolences to his wife, Breggie, their children, Hendrik and Saretha, and family.