



University of Fort Hare
Together in Excellence

UFH NEWS

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“Today, we are not only unveiling infrastructure - but we are also unveiling hope and opportunities and aspirations of the people of Alice, the University of Fort Hare students’ community, and the future generations that will benefit from these projects.” - Minister of Higher Education, Dr Nobuhle Pamela Nkabane





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UNIVERSITY OF FORT HARE ADDED TO UNESCO WORLD HERITAGE LIST

“The inscription reminds us to be proud and remember that the institution was and remains a cradle of African leaders, a hub fostering ideas of democracy, liberation and reconciliation, and a space promoting African languages, cultures, languages, heritage and identity,”

The University of Fort Hare has attained UNESCO World Heritage status, and the institution is the first higher education institution in South Africa and the African continent to be inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage List.

This honour follows the 46th session of the UNESCO World Heritage Committee, held in New Delhi, India from July 21-31, 2024.

UFH is a legacy site and part of fourteen (14) interconnected locations spread across four provinces and seven municipalities in South Africa termed “The Human Rights, Liberation and Reconciliation: Nelson Mandela Legacy Sites.” These locations serve as sites of global significance in honour of UFH alumnus Nelson Mandela - the country and world’s most beloved statesman, activist and politician.



Nelson Mandela began studying at UFH in the early 1940s towards a BA degree, but was expelled for his involvement in a political protest. In 1991 UFH awarded him an Honorary Doctorate in Law.

According to UNESCO, the legacy sites “reflect key events linked to the long struggle against the apartheid state; Mandela’s influence in promoting understanding and forgiveness; and belief systems based on philosophies of non-racialism, Pan-Africanism and ubuntu.”

Another legacy site inscribed and connected to the University of Fort Hare is the ZK Matthews house. Professor Zachariah Keodirelang Matthews (fondly known as ZK) was one of the first graduates of the University of Fort Hare. He is also considered the architect of the freedom charter, which gave way to South Africa’s modern-day constitution. Currently the university is celebrating the centenary of his graduation which took place in 1924.

In addition to the University and ZK Matthews, other legacy sites forming part of the inscription include the Union Buildings, Constitution Hill, Liliesleaf, Sharpeville (featuring three components), Walter Sisulu Square, 16 June 1976: The Streets of Orlando West, Mqhekezweni, Waaihoek, and Ohlange.

Together, all these sites encapsulate the pivotal events and ideals central to South Africa’s liberation struggle, continuing to inspire humanity with the values of democracy, freedom and reconciliation.

UFH Vice-Chancellor and Principal, Professor Sakhela Buhlungu said the UNESCO recognition brings to light the crucial role that UFH has played in shaping the trajectory of this nation and contributing to the broader struggle for justice and equality.

“The University of Fort Hare has long been a beacon of hope and a crucible of change. Founded in 1916, this institution has been at the forefront of educational and political transformation in South Africa. It served as a pioneering institution for Black education during a time when access to higher learning was largely restricted.”

The 108-year-old university is a recipient of a prestigious Order of Baobab in 2005 and home to several historical sites that already have been proclaimed South African heritage sites under the National Heritage Resources Act in 2016. These include:

- The neoclassical **Stewart Hall** building and **Freedom Square** where the OR Tambo and Robert Sobukwe memorial walks intersect.
- The **Christian Union Building**, funded through a donation by the Young Men’s Christian Association (YMCA) of North America and Canada. It became a great hall for meetings and a space for student recreation, especially ballroom dancing (popularly known as “swayi swayi” at the time). Later on, the building became home to the theology faculty.
- The **Old Fort**, from which the University derives its present-day name. Remnants of the garrison structure provide a connection with efforts by the Xhosa Kingdom to resist colonial conquest. Linked to the fort is also a garden of remembrance where fallen British soldiers rest after defeat by the forces of Chief Jongumsobomvu Maqoma during the 1850s.
- The **HMS building** (or the Old Dining Hall), which was a key site for student activism.

“The inscription reminds us to be proud and remember that the institution was and remains a cradle of African leaders, a hub fostering ideas of democracy, liberation and reconciliation, and a space promoting African languages, cultures, languages, heritage and identity,” said Professor Buhlungu.

In an official statement, the Presidency conveyed its heartfelt gratitude to the members of the 46th session of the UNESCO World Heritage Committee for bestowing the country with the honor of having its historic and cultural sites inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage List.

The Presidency also extended its thanks to the members of the Africa Group and the African World Heritage Fund. The latter is an intergovernmental organisation established in 2006 by the African Union and UNESCO to tackle various challenges faced by African State Parties in implementing the 1972 World Heritage Convention.

The Presidency recognised the commendable efforts of the Department of Sport, Arts and Culture, whose team worked tirelessly for months to prepare the successful nomination.

Minister Nkabane unveils R130 Million Alice and UFH Water Infrastructure upgrade projects



“Today, we are not only unveiling infrastructure - but we are also unveiling hope and opportunities and aspirations of the people of Alice, the University of Fort Hare students’ community, and the future generations that will benefit from these projects.”

A momentous and joyful occasion took place in Dikeni (Alice) as Minister of Higher Education, Dr Nobuhle Pamela Nkabane, officially unveiled the R130 million Alice Water Treatment and UFH Wastewater Treatment Works Expansion Projects.

Funded by the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET), this initiative, a joint effort between the University of Fort Hare (UFH) Amatole District Municipality (ADM) and the Raymond Mhlaba Municipality (RMM) ensures access to clean, safe, and sustainable water for the UFH community and residents in surrounding communities.

The upgrades have significantly increased the capacity of these plants to address the growing demand for potable water in the area.

Minister Nkabane, who was joined by the Deputy Minister of Water and Sanitation, Mr David Mahlobo said: “Today, we are not only unveiling infrastructure – but we are also unveiling hope and opportunities and aspirations of the people of Alice, the University of Fort Hare students’ community, and the future generations that will benefit from these projects.

The formal unveiling programme took place in the heart of the community in Ntselemanzi where the Alice Water Treatment Works plant is located. In attendance were various stakeholders, such as traditional leaders, business sector representatives, and community members.

The Alice Water Treatment Works project which saw UFH as the implementation agent, ADM as the owner of the water treatment works, and Raymond Mhlaba Municipality RMM as the beneficiary of the project, has been hailed as prime examples of government’s District Development Model (DDM) in action.

The UFH Wastewater Treatment Works is owned and managed by UFH, processing sewage from both the Alice campus and the town of Alice which falls within Raymond Mhlaba.

The Minister emphasized the importance of this collaboration among the two municipalities and the University. “This project is a practical demonstration of the District Development Model. Under this model, introduced by His Excellency, President Cyril Ramaphosa, all three spheres of government coordinate and integrate development plans and budgets and mobilise the capacity and resources of government and civil society – including business, labour and community, in pursuit of inclusive growth and job creation.”

Deputy Minister Mahlobo commended the partnership between DHET and UFH and called for effective operations and maintenance of the plants. “This infrastructure must be taken care of. Those who manage these plants must be fit for purpose in terms of exposure, experience and capabilities.”

Project Highlights

Alice Water Treatment Expansion entailed upgrading the raw water inlet and flocculent channels, installation of new sedimentation basins and sand filters, chlorine dosing, sludge ponds and effluent recovery, domestic water supply, upgrades to existing reservoir and construction of a new reservoir. Which resulted in the following:

- Flow rate: increased from 75 l/second to 140 l/second
- Reservoir capacity: expanded from 11.28 MI to 17.48 MI
- Population served: current 44,259; projected 50,856 by 2050
- Local SMMEs Involved: 14
- Timeline: February 2023 to July 2024 (18 months)

The expansion of the UFH Wastewater Treatment Works involved the construction of new inlet works and splitter boxes, an upgraded biological reactor (aeration chamber), a newly built sedimentation tank, enhanced disinfection systems, and updated pipework to connect various components.

- Treatment Capacity: Increased from 2.0 MI/day to 4.5 MI/day
- Population Served: Increased from 13,600 to 38,256
- Local SMMEs Involved: 7
- Timeline: June 2023 to September 2024 (16 months)

One of the standout features of the project has been its positive impact on the local economy. Approximately 30% of the project value was allocated to local small and medium-sized enterprises (SMMEs), fostering job creation and skills development within the Alice community.

Altogether, 99 jobs were created for local labourers on both projects.

Delighted UFH Vice-Chancellor, Prof Sakhela Buhlungu, likened the project’s success to the saying “A rising tide raises all boats,” emphasizing that the project’s benefits extend beyond individual achievements to uplift the entire community.



“For us, these projects fall part of our Strategic Plan, dubbed: Towards a Decade of Renewal. This institution was facing serious challenges, and we made a bold commitment to embark on a journey of revitalization, addressing all the issues that were holding us back. We can now ensure that our students and the benefitting residents have access to clean drinking water, which is essential for their dignity.”

“Both projects were completed within budget, and we also achieved savings on both. There were minimal delays, primarily due to weather. Importantly, not a cent was misappropriated”

ADM Executive Mayor, Councillor Anele Ntsangani said the unveiling celebrates the culmination of collaborative efforts with the University which enabled an amicable solution to a longstanding water challenge. “For far too long, our historic institutions, such as Lovedale College and the University, and surrounding villages, have struggled with inadequate water supply. This symbiotic relationship between the municipality and UFH is vital to address such challenges.”

“Moving forward, we remain dedicated to fostering meaningful collaborations and driving progress for our district’s development and betterment.,” said Executive Mayor Ntsangani.

The Acting Mayor of Raymond Mhlaba Municipality, Mr Eltan Bantam said the municipality was in full support of the University’s renewal project. “As the municipality, we are prime beneficiaries given the economic spin-offs we continue to receive by virtue of our geographical location. Most importantly, the success of the implementation of the Decade of Renewal project will enhance a meaningful contribution, and boost the economic growth and development of our area.’ He echoed Executive Mayor Ntsangani’s sentiments: “We must continue to strengthen such cooperation where plans are effectively implemented and sustained for the betterment of society.”

Minister Nkabane stated the successful completion of these upgrades serves as a model that can be replicated to address similar infrastructure challenges.

“Investing in water infrastructure goes beyond providing a basic necessity, it is about empowering our communities, supporting education, and fostering economic growth. This project is a demonstration of what can be achieved when we work together towards a common goal.”



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Blazing the trail with upcoming Bachelors in Dairy Science & Technology



“So it was clear that we had all the main ingredients needed, and we just needed to put together a program that would leverage what we already had,”

South Africa’s first Bachelor’s degree focusing exclusively on dairy science and technology is set to be a crucial game changer for the University of Fort Hare (UFH) and the wider industry.

The vision for the degree programme came about through the university’s most recent strategic plan implementation, and particularly that each faculty creates a new, niche programme that speaks to the institution’s unique setting and advantages. The fact that the university is a stakeholder in a local, award-winning dairy, but wasn’t teaching abundantly on this subject, led to the idea of a BSc in Dairy Science and Technology.

This was then underscored by the fact that BSc programmes in the field of agriculture are some of the best-subscribed degrees in the Faculty of Science and Agriculture at UFH. “So it was clear that we had all the main ingredients needed, and we just needed to put together a program that would leverage what we already had,” said Prof Renuka Vithal, the Deputy Vice Chancellor for Teaching and Learning at UFH and a professor of maths education.

While other higher education institutions in the country have modules on dairy science, this degree is special in its specific and thorough focus. “It would allow us to be a trailblazer in a very important area in the Eastern Cape and the country,” Prof Vithal said.

This course is especially important because the province is the largest and arguably the best producer of milk in the country. However, it does very little of the country’s milk processing. So, producing skilled staff in this field will speak to a significant need and opportunity.

Vice-Chancellor and Principal of UFH, Prof Sakhela Buhlungu, said that the development of this degree was inspired by similar offerings internationally, such as in the Netherlands and France. “If we do it in South Africa, we’ll be the first, leading the pack,” he said.

The planned BSc is a four-year degree that allows direct access to a Master’s afterwards. The course content will build on the dairy science and technology elements already present in other programmes at UFH. It will also touch on food technology aspects to speak to the need for milk processing. The BSc

programme is also being developed to consider relevant and developing issues, such as food security. The UFH team plans to articulate this program with the surrounding agricultural colleges, to give wider access to the community.

In the fourth year, there is also a research component, which will grow that capability in the department. This research will likely stem organically from the work with the local dairy farm, and possibly feed back into its work.

The degree programme is currently under review by the Department of Higher Education and Training, before going through approval processes at other relevant bodies. It will then hopefully come into effect in the next few years.

Prof Vithal explained how they are working towards their goals while waiting on the process. “In the meantime, we have allocated funding to upgrade our farms and we are doing a major renovation and upgrading of our agricultural labs so that we’ll have all the infrastructure in place in order to support the programme,” she said.

Dr Nthabi Taole-Mjimba, Deputy Vice Chancellor of Research Partnerships and Innovation, added that there are further developments in this regard. “Currently we are trying to revamp our current research farm. It’s not in the best state, but we have started to work on it. We invested R9.7 million last year just to ensure that it becomes the state-of-the-art farm that we know.”

The recent launch and endowment of the AngloGold Ashanti Research Chair in Dairy Science and Technology at the University speaks to this wider vision. Vithal explained that once appointed, the Chair can then provide expertise in offering the programme once approved, and develop postgraduate and further research programmes.

“So, we have a long-term view on developing this as a niche area for the University of Fort Hare into the future that will provide the graduates needed to support this industry of dairy and milk production and technology in a serious way that can also be a major economic impetus to the province.”

Dr Taole-Mjimba added how the BSc will be building the foundation for further research and programmes, to ultimately have a significant impact. “You will begin to see how the pipeline will then be strengthened to ensure that we have enough capacity in the province to do the things that we want to do in strengthening research in dairy science, but also supplying the much-needed human capital in the discipline.”

Prof Vithal said: “Besides placing the University of Fort Hare in a leading position in developing this as a key

research niche area, and also producing graduates, this is also a very key component of producing graduates who could into the future directly support the development and growth of the dairy industry in the Eastern Cape.”

The long-term vision embraces the idea that the university could be key in growing the dairy industry in terms of processing, not just farming, and for both small-scale and large-scale farming. “The main goal is for the university to stimulate the sector in the province to then take the lead in providing the education, training and research infrastructure and the support and all the other things that are needed to establish the processing component of it.”

The university’s location means that the agricultural fields of study in particular attract a lot of local students, hence a state-of-the-art and inclusive programme would feed directly back into the area. “The University of Fort Hare would in a major way leverage its location in a rural context drawing on rural students coming from diverse settings and being able to then sustain and develop the economy, develop small and large businesses and so on into the future,” Prof Vithal said.

She said that this programme will also speak to how farming is developing internationally, especially in terms of technology used in fields like genetic analysis, farm management strategies and soil analysis. She believes that this can be particularly helpful to the province in the long run.

This programme will also fit into the university’s wider offering and complement it. For instance, a new Bachelor of Entrepreneurship is also in the approval process. “This will enable us to then provide entrepreneurship training across our Bachelor programs,” Prof Vithal said.

A key part of the plan is to eventually establish a new faculty of veterinary science, which would be only the second one in the country. Prof Vithal explained that in concept documents already submitted, this would have a particular focus on the need for livestock veterinarians in the country. “In the Eastern Cape, when companies or farms require veterinary services, they actually fly in vets.”

For now, the BSc in Dairy Science and Technology is an exciting first step towards building a stronger future for UFH and the region. Vithal has high hopes for the programme. “It just seems like it’s supposed to have been done yesterday!”

Article Published by Mail & Gaurdian



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Extending a helping hand to Amatole West Matrics through calculator provision and training

In a continued effort to enhance mathematics education and address significant gaps in calculator access and proficiency, the University of Fort Hare (UFH) conducted a training workshop on calculator use and distributed nearly 900 Casio scientific calculators to Grade 12 learners from over 60 schools in the Amatole West District.

This initiative is part of UFH's broader community engagement strategy, aiming to make a tangible impact on education in the Eastern Cape province.

First conducted in 2022, the initiative responds to troubling findings from a 2021 National Research Foundation (NRF) funded study on calculator provisioning and proficiency.

Led by UFH's Deputy Vice-Chancellor for Teaching and Learning, Professor Renuka Vithal, a Mathematics Education Professor, and Wits University's Professor Karin Brodie, the ongoing study surveyed 778 learners from 48 schools from the district in 2022 and found that:

- 75% (582) own calculators, bought either by a relative, parent, or mother.
- 25% (193) borrow calculators mostly from friends or classmates
- 0,4% (3) did not own calculators at all.

In a self-assessment, 40% of the learners stated that their proficiency in using a calculator was average and 14% said they were not very good at using a calculator.

The study further found that 50% of the learners who own calculators were better skilled in using them compared to 34% of those who borrow calculators.

Using a one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) to examine the relationship between calculator ownership and learner performance on the Grade 12 Mathematics exam, the study revealed a statistically significant difference in Gr 12 mean exam scores between groupings of calculator ownership: learners who had their own calculator achieved the highest average score, those who borrowed a calculator scored lower on average and those who did not use a calculator at all had the lowest average score.

"These findings highlighted the urgent need for improved calculator access and training," said Prof Vithal. "Our goal is to bridge this gap and provide students with the tools they need to succeed in their mathematics exams. By equipping them with scientific calculators, we aim to enhance their learning experience and ultimately improve their examination outcomes."

"The provision of these calculators will make a significant difference in the academic performance of the matriculants, aiding them in mastering essential mathematical concepts and skills,"

Among the recipients was Anga Mananga from Sakhululeka High School in KwaMaqoma (Fort Beaufort). Anga shared that, due to financial constraints, he only acquired his first scientific calculator last month.

"My mother is unemployed. Our sole income is the child social grants we receive and my grandmother's old-age pension. We finally saved enough money to buy a calculator a month ago. Before that, I had to borrow from other learners."

"This is a great initiative, and it came at the perfect time, just ahead of the trials and final exams," he said.

During the event, an intensive and interactive workshop on the use of calculators was conducted

using past exam papers, facilitated by Lauren Izaaks from Casio and Dr Odilo Ndiweni, Head of the Mathematics Department at UFH.

"The provision of these calculators will make a significant difference in the academic performance of the matriculants, aiding them in mastering essential mathematical concepts and skills," said Dr Ndiweni.

While learners were being empowered, so were their principals and heads of departments who attended a School Principals' Symposium held simultaneously in a separate venue. At the symposium, Prof Percival Mavuso, the Acting Dean of the Faculty of Education, facilitated a capacity-building workshop on Instructional Leadership, Governance, and Learner Excellence in Mathematics.

Prof Vithal presented the key findings and emphasized the importance of the study.

"The impact extends beyond mathematics performance. Calculators are required in Grade 12 national exams in 14 other subjects, including Accounting, Life Sciences, and Physical Sciences. The aim is to address the policy gap in calculator provisioning for learners," said Prof Vithal.



“WE ARE THE ONES WE HAVE BEEN WAITING FOR,” Vuyelwa Mantyi reminds UFH Arch Makgoba Lecture audience

The University hosted its 7th Archbishop Thabo Makgoba Annual Lecture. True to tradition, the lecture delivered by Ms Vuyelwa Mantyi, the Regional Director for the Amathole Region within the Department of Economic Development, Environmental Affairs, and Tourism, succeeded in fostering insightful discussions and meaningful dialogue on local economic development.

Themed “Leadership in Local Economic Development,” the lecture is jointly organized by UFH’s Faculty of Management and Commerce and the Archbishop Thabo Makgoba Development Trust.

Its core objective, as highlighted by the Arch, is “to get Africans talking to create solutions for African problems.” The Arch’s son, Nyakallo Makgoba, attended the event on behalf of his father.

Held at the Miriam Makeba Arts Centre on the East London campus, the lecture delivered by Mantyi - a seasoned professional with two decades of experience in economic and sustainable development across both the private and public sectors - came at a critical moment. Society is increasingly turning to its leaders to address persistent challenges that impede economic growth, such as high unemployment and the growing issue of extortion/protection fees.

Opening her address, Mantyi quoted a line from June Jordan’s poems inspired by South African women: “We are the ones we’ve been waiting for.”

“I am delivering this lecture during unprecedented times, a year declared the ultimate election year globally, as nearly half of the world’s population is exercising their democratic right to select leaders of their choice.”

In her lecture, Mantyi critically examined and questioned conventional notions and practices of leadership, offering a deep reflection on the microeconomic policies and geopolitical influences that shape our current context before emphasizing the roles that both individuals and leaders must play.

Turning to the role of individuals, Mantyi reminded the audience that we have the power to reimagine and transform existing systems. “The systems we live with and by were not handed down from the heavens. They were created by human beings, and we have the power to reimagine and rebuild them, leveraging our strengths,” she emphasized.

She also highlighted the importance of collaboration among academia, industry, communities, and government in driving economic growth.

Mantyi noted that the economy is fundamentally about people. “The Provincial Development Plan acknowledges that the people and institutions of the Eastern Cape must commit to accelerating inclusive economic growth, increasing youth employment, reducing spatial disparities, facilitating rural development, and developing key sectors such as the coastal corridor, agriculture, and industry. To sustainably utilize natural resources, protect the environment for future generations, foster an innovation culture, and actively participate in Africa’s transitions and global development.”

In closing, Mantyi made a compelling call to all: “We must take the mantle of leadership in the local space and utilize our natural endowments in the economy around us. We are indeed the ones we’ve been waiting for.”

“The systems we live with and by were not handed down from the heavens.

They were created by human beings, and we have the power to reimagine and rebuild them, leveraging our strengths,”



CLICK HERE TO WATCH RECORDING OF LECTURE

Health Informatics scholar's Professorial Inaugural Lecture sheds light on the role of social media in modern healthcare

"Beyond her research, Prof Liezel Cilliers is a dedicated educator and mentor. Her contributions to health informatics have established her as a key figure in this field, both nationally and internationally. Her work continues to influence and inspire advancements in the integration of technology in health."

These are the remarks by Prof Richard Shambare, Dean of the University of Fort Hare (UFH) Management & Commerce, just before calling Prof Liezel Cilliers to the podium to deliver the University's 36th Professorial Inaugural Lecture.

Held at the Miriam Makeba Arts Centre on 14 August, the lecture, titled "Navigating the Health Infodemic: The Role of Social Media in Modern Health Care," marked a significant milestone in Prof Cilliers' academic career—her ascension to the rank of full professor.

Prof Cilliers, who has been with UFH since 2012, has held numerous leadership roles, including Head of the Department of Information Systems, Deputy Dean: Research, Partnerships, and Internationalisation, Acting Dean of the Faculty of Management and Commerce, and her current role as Acting Dean of the Faculty of Health Sciences.

In her lecture, Prof Cilliers examined the critical role of social media in modern healthcare and discussed its significance as a tool for communication, particularly during crises like the COVID-19 pandemic.

"Social media has become a pivotal tool in modern healthcare, offering unparalleled opportunities for rapid communication, public engagement, and information dissemination. Risk communication strategies during pandemics, such as COVID-19, have quickly embraced this technology to adapt to changing circumstances and uncertainty, delivering messages that build trust, dispel rumors, and encourage appropriate self-protective behaviors," Prof Cilliers said.

She emphasized the importance of risk communication strategies and proposed involving additional stakeholders, such as academia and social media platforms, to combat misinformation.

"Academia can assist in addressing misinformation through the development and application of theories and interventions that consider the psychological aspects of risk perception and misinformation resistance. Social media platforms can implement technology-based interventions like fact-checking, social listening, and prebunking to mitigate misinformation."

Prof Cilliers' lecture also highlighted the need for future research into the effects of misinformation on public health, the sociocultural factors contributing to the spread of misinformation, and the effectiveness of various interventions.

Reflecting on her research over the past four years, she suggested practical implications for all stakeholders involved in health communication via social media platforms.

"Governments need to develop and implement robust policies to regulate health-related information on social media platforms. This includes mandating official health banners on websites and collaborating with social media companies to curb misinformation," she proposed.

"Academia can contribute by compiling evidence-based research to identify efficient and effective strategies for using social media in healthcare. Developing an interactive communication model where the government actively seeks public feedback or sentiment to adjust and improve health communication strategies should also be a priority. This approach helps address public concerns and reduces unjustified fears."



"Social media has become a pivotal tool in modern healthcare, offering unparalleled opportunities for rapid communication, public engagement, and information dissemination."

"These practical implications can help create a more informed and resilient public, enhance the effectiveness of health communication and mitigate the impact of misinformation during health emergencies," she concluded.

Top Sustainability Award for Student Residences at Green Campus Conference



“These awards underscore the University of Fort Hare’s ongoing commitment to ‘A Decade of Renewal’ and align perfectly with our institutional goal to ‘Improve the Quality of Student Life and Enhance Student Experience.’”

The University’s commitment to sustainability has been recognized on a prestigious platform at the 11th Green Campus Conference (GCC), where the institution’s Residence Department walked away with two awards: first place for “Most Improved Sustainability Programs in Student Residences” and second place for “Institutional Presentation Content.”

Hosted at Nelson Mandela University, the annual conference is organized by the Association of College and University Housing Officers - International Southern Africa Chapter (ACUHO-ISAC). It is the largest gathering platform where students and staff involved in campus greening and sustainability projects in Higher Education Institutions engage.

This year’s conference brought together 18 higher learning institutions from the country, all of which contributed to individual and institutional

presentations under the theme: “Promoting Sustainable Student Housing as an Enabler for Living and Learning Communities.” The programme for the gathering included paper presentations, green social impact engagements, panel discussions, and green workshops.

Representing UFH, a delegation led by Residence Manager Mr Mzi Lingela, alongside staff members Mr Odwa Qhogi and Mr Benathi Makiyela, as well as SRC Residence Officers Ms Liso Ndiki and Mr Enkosi Sobayeni, participated actively. The team also included UFH Green Campus Ambassadors Mr Sakhele Sololo and Mr Anathi Mjosi, and House Committee members Mr Yomelelani Mabaso and Mr Silindokuhle Ngalo.

Mr Lingela said: “These awards underscore the University of Fort Hare’s ongoing commitment to

‘A Decade of Renewal’ and align perfectly with our institutional goal to ‘Improve the Quality of Student Life and Enhance Student Experience.’ Some of our efforts include significant infrastructural development and sustainability initiatives, such as renovations in student residences and the implementation of water-saving infrastructure.”

The University of Fort Hare has implemented several notable sustainability initiatives across its campuses, including:

- Installation of solar panels on residence roofs for energy efficiency.
- Use of rechargeable bulbs during electricity shortages.
- Energy-saving sensor systems in kitchen stoves.
- Water recycling for gardens and field irrigation.
- Upcycling of waste materials for creative decorations.

The Dean of Student Affairs, Mr Lufuno Tshikhudo, emphasized the awards’ significance, highlighting the university’s dedication to creating a sustainable and enriching environment. “These initiatives reflect the university’s proactive approach to sustainability, promoting a greener future while enhancing the living and learning environment for its students. This recognition reaffirms our commitment to enhancing the overall student experience through sustainable practices,” he noted.

NOTICE ON THE ELECTIVE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING OF THE CONVOCATION EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

On the 5th of March 2025, the four (4) year term of office of the current Executive Committee of Convocation (convex) comes to an end (see s59 (1) of the Institutional Statute. In terms of s60 (2) of the Institutional Statute, members of Convocation are to be duly advised of their Annual General Meeting (AGM) at least eight (8) weeks before the date of the meeting. Therefore, members of Convocation are advised of the following:

1. Nomination and Election Process:

- a. Nomination of candidates for Convex from 27 January to 09 February 2025, namely the:
 - i. President,
 - ii. Deputy President
 - iii. Secretary and
 - iv. Three (3) additional members
- b. Elections of the Executive Committee from 17 to 19 February 2025 through online voting system to be shared later.
- c. Announcements of the election results at the elective AGM on the 22nd of February 2025.

2. Election Criteria (s58 (1):

- i. All individuals must have obtained a degree or a diploma from the University as approved by Senate and Council,
- ii. All the persons other than persons referred to in subparagraph (c), who immediately before the commencement of the current Institutional Statute were members of the Convocation of the University; and
- iii. The Vice-Chancellor, the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (s), the Executive Director (s), the Registrar, the Deans, the academic employees on the staff establishment of the University, professors' emeriti, and such other persons as Council may determine.

3. Role of Convocation (s58 (2):

The functions of Convocation are to:

- i. Advise and facilitate liaison between the University and its former members;
- ii. Create networks, including Alumni Chapters and canvas support for the strategic objectives of the University, and
- iii. Organise members of the Convocation with a view to facilitating representation of this constituency on appropriate governance structures as determined in the Statute and the Rules.

Issued by the University Registrar



Researchers call for increased water security to improve sustainable development in Eastern Cape communities



“Water, energy and food at the household level play a crucial role in the livelihoods of rural people. Therefore, addressing one resource at the expense of the other will not lead to sustainable resource management.”

Water security remains the most pressing emergency for rural communities in the Eastern Cape, researchers from the University of Fort Hare have found.

The research was done by Thulani Ningi, Dr. Amon Taruvinga, Dr. Leocadia Zhou and Dr. Saul Ngarava from the Department of Agricultural Economics and Extension and the Centre for Global Change (CGC), formerly known as the Risk and Vulnerability Science Centre, both based at the University of Fort Hare in Alice in the Eastern Cape.

“Water, energy and food at the household level play a crucial role in the livelihoods of rural people. Therefore, addressing one resource at the expense of the other will not lead to sustainable resource management.

The three resources need to be considered simultaneously at all levels to achieve resource sustainability,” the researchers wrote.

The link between water, energy and food security was first identified and described by the World Economic Forum in 2011.

Fort Hare research however showed that water security was a major issue for communities due to the long distances traveled by households to collect water. Their research focused on households in Melani and Hamburg in the Eastern Cape.

While the food insecurity situation in the Eastern Cape is well-known, very few studies have linked water and energy insecurity to providing a balanced overview of how the province’s households struggle.

Households in the two communities are big and their income limited. Unemployment is extremely high (between 88% and 90% in the two communities) Most of the households studied were headed by women.

A small percentage used agriculture as a source of income (1.4%).

The published results showed that both communities suffered from water insecurity mainly caused by low water availability and time spent towards water collection. The water quality was, however, good, clean and safe for drinking.

“Thus, the water challenges in the two communities are technical and institutional,” the researchers stated in their paper that was published in the International Journal of Sustainable Development.

They added that most of the households they surveyed, in both communities (98.6%) were energy secure and 89.4% had access to an electric stove for cooking and 40% also had access to other sources of energy like wood, paraffin and gas.

Food security was low in both communities. In Melani only 39.7% of households had enough food. About a third reported conditions that the researchers said indicated mild food insecurity, 21.3% were classified as moderately food insecure, and 5.7% severely food insecure. In the Hamburg community, the results indicated that 34.5% of households had enough food, 43.7% were mildly food insecure, 18.3% moderately food insecure, and 3.5% suffered from severe food insecurity.

While most of the households that took part in the study were energy secure the researchers found that the use of electric stoves were making it financially difficult for families.

Researchers said their findings should provide valuable policy insights as rural communities’ struggles to access water may contribute to food insecurity because the two (time for water collection and time for food preparation) compete for the household’s limited time. To balance the limited time, food selection and possible omission of meals are some of the trade-off’s households will be faced with. Thus far, addressing water security in such communities without addressing water sources that are near residents of households may fail to address the expected water-food security improvement.

“Improving water sources near residents of households may be a policy option for these communities with positive household water and food security net effects,” the researchers wrote.

They added that a relapse in energy security, on the other hand, may trigger household food insecurity through compromised food selection choices and change in cooking habits to accommodate low energy levels.

“Efforts to address energy-food security improvements in such low-income communities should therefore focus on other additional energy sources that are not expensive to avoid the income substitution effect,” the researchers remarked. They added that while the link between water, energy and food was not obvious, but rather complicated it was important to understand the factors that influence it.

Promising research to find treatment for Parkinson's Disease

The University of Fort Hare is part of an exciting new international study to find a way to prevent Parkinson's Disease.

Parkinson's disease is the second most common neurodegenerative disease in the world, affecting approximately 6.3 million people.

At this stage, experts understand that the progression of Parkinson's Disease is determined by genetics but also by environmental toxins, free radicals and oxidative stress. Oxidative stress is caused by an imbalance between free radicals and antioxidants in the body.

There is currently no successful treatment that can halt the progression of Parkinson's Disease.

In collaboration with other South African and international researchers Christopher Cupido from the Department of Botany at the University of Fort Hare in Alice, Eastern Cape is studying the possible use of one of the plants in the amaryllis family, the parasol lily, for the treatment of the disease.

This is the first study done in the world on this plant.

"Plants from this family are known for their alkaloids, which have been reported to have several beneficial biological activities including antiviral, antibacterial, antifungal, antimalarial, analgesic anti-cancer, and neuroprotective activities. Galantamine, an alkaloid (plant-substance) taken from the amaryllis has already been approved by the United States Food and Drug Administration (FDA) for the treatment of Alzheimer's disease.

The deciduous bulb plant, *Crossyne flava*, known as the Parasol Lily, grows along the West Coast of South Africa.

The scientists studying this plant have concluded after laboratory tests that alkaloids derived from this plant show a lot of promise in the treatment of Parkinson's Disease as it is a powerful antioxidant. It is already being used in traditional medicine, along with other members of the Amaryllis family to treat nervous disorders.

This, the researchers wrote in their paper, published in the journal *Molecules*, means that the parasol lily holds potential for the development of a new drug to prevent Parkinson's Disease.



"Parkinson's disease is the second most common neurodegenerative disease in the world, affecting approximately 6.3 million people."



“Skin defects are a severe health threat because they expose the body to bacteria invasion, which can be fatal. Wound healing is a complex and the dynamic process of tissue formation...”

Popular skincare ingredient also holds potential to address chronic wound problems

While Hyaluronic Acid is increasingly becoming the buzzword in anti-aging skin care, a recent literature review from Dr. Sibusiso Alven and Professor Blessing A. Aderibigbe from the University of Fort Hare's Department of Chemistry shows that scientists from around the world are also recognising its potential in wound healing.

Hyaluronic Acid is mostly written about for its powerful plumping and moisturising potential in skincare products. However, it has a few unique capabilities, being able to carry up to 1000 times its weight in water being one of them.

Its benefits were however scuppered for long as the molecules in manmade hyaluronic acid were too big to penetrate the skin's surface. But new formulations have solved this problem.

Now scientists are also looking at Hyaluronic Acid as a solution to an R20 billion problem in the United States alone - wounds that are not healing.

In a literature review, scientists from the University of Fort Hare have summarised what we know about hyaluronic acid and its ability to help heal chronic wounds.

Some known factors that contribute to chronic wounds include diabetes, prolonged bed rest, obesity, and smoking. These are wounds that do not heal in a timely and orderly manner. Very often chronic wounds would be leg ulcers or foot ulcers.

“Skin defects are a severe health threat because they expose the body to bacteria invasion, which can be fatal. Wound healing is a complex and the dynamic process of tissue formation...” the authors wrote.

They wrote that hyaluronic acid is compatible with human cells, can be chemically modified, and is non-toxic and affordable. The dressings are easy to prepare and can be loaded with bioactive ingredients.

The advantages that make hyaluronic-based scaffolds potentially suitable for wound management include high swelling capacity, good porosity, enhanced water vapour transmission rate, good water absorption, antibacterial properties, and excellent mechanical properties such as flexibility, elasticity, and stability. A wound scaffold is an engineered biomaterial supporting new tissue formation.

The authors of the paper concluded that the use of hyaluronic acid in the design of wound dressings has increased significantly in recent years, with promising therapeutic outcomes.

“However, in the design of wound dressings, specific factors are usually considered depending on the type of wound. Hyaluronic acid is one of the significant components of the extracellular matrix of the human skin and is very important in inducing the release of proinflammatory cytokines (small proteins that are crucial in controlling the growth and activity of other immune system cells and blood cells) and enhancing the clotting of blood.

Its structure also holds promise for biomedical applications such as wound dressings and drug delivery systems, the scientists concluded.

Trace DNA should be treated with caution - Fort Hare Professor

While the way crime laboratories test DNA may still improve, a law professor from the University of Fort Hare has warned that law enforcement and defence counsel should be cautious when evaluating the quality of evidence obtained in this way.

Prof. Lirieka Meintjies-Van der Walt from the Faculty of Law at the University of Fort Hare argues in a paper published in the *Journal of Juridical Science*.

She explained that typically this kind of DNA analysis is based on low amounts of genetic material found (between 100 picograms and 200 picograms in South Africa). A picogram is one trillionth of a gram.

These are then amplified through a process called Polymerase Chain Reaction to create larger samples for analysis but the reliability of this process has been questioned. It is a similar process to PCR testing that was used to test for Covid-19.

However, she points out that two risks of amplifying genetic material in this way are what experts call a stochastic effect which can make results more difficult to interpret and in some cases lead to the improper reporting of a DNA profile. Contamination is another risk.

The South African Police's reliance on DNA evidence to prove their criminal cases became clear in the past few years as the police's forensic laboratories suffered several setbacks leading to a backlog of thousands of cases. The backlog has in the meanwhile been cleared and the resumption of cases has seen notorious and serial criminals found guilty and put behind bars.

Prof. Meintjies-Van der Walt added in her paper that while standard operating laboratory protocols could prevent contamination and there are ways to detect contamination both of these would be difficult for a legal team to establish.

She said that initially, forensic scientists required large amounts of genetic material to produce a DNA profile. However, presently, investigators can retrieve DNA profiles from as little as three skin cells left behind when a criminal handles a gun, grips a steering wheel, turns a doorknob, or throws a brick.

"By merely touching a surface, a perpetrator can leave behind trace amounts of skin or epithelial cells that are invisible to the human eye. Scientists can work with these low template smaller DNA samples by usually amplifying them at least 32 times instead of 28 times, as is the case in the ordinary Polymerase Chain Reaction (PCR)," Prof. Meintjies-Van der Walt wrote.

"Nevertheless, the interpretation of trace DNA, also known as low copy number DNA, such as DNA deposited by touching an object or a person, is far more complex and problematic than that of the relatively large samples previously used," she added.

She said the complexity in analysing and interpreting trace DNA should serve as a caution to legal fact finders not to attach more weight to DNA evidence as they would to other available evidence

"The very nature of DNA transfer, as briefly noted below, is inherently complex. The lack of availability of substantial DNA samples resulting in trace evidence further complicates establishing DNA profiles."



“By merely touching a surface, a perpetrator can leave behind trace amounts of skin or epithelial cells that are invisible to the human eye”



“By promoting compassionate behavior, organizations can create environments where both managers and employees thrive, leading to greater overall success and commitment.”

Compassion in the workplace boosts managerial wellbeing and commitment

Compassion plays a crucial role in fostering individual wellbeing and commitment, yet its significance within organizational settings remains underexplored. Recent research by Dr Mari Ford, a Business Management lecturer at the University of Fort Hare (UFH), sheds light on this critical area through her study titled “Compassion, Secure Flourishing, and Organizational Commitment of Managers.”

The study, conducted for her PhD in Industrial Psychology, surveyed 390 managers across South Africa and was published in *Frontiers in Organizational Psychology*.

“We were particularly interested in managers’ experiences. They often face high levels of stress and responsibility and may need compassion from their colleagues, but their positions of power mean they are less likely to receive it,” said Ford.

The findings supported a bifactor Exploratory Structural Equation Modeling (ESEM) Model, revealed a general compassion factor alongside specific subscales: mindfulness, kindness, indifference, and common humanity.

Importantly, the research revealed that managers’ general compassion and belief in common humanity significantly correlated with their secure flourishing, although not directly with organizational commitment. Conversely, compassion experienced from others had a strong impact on both secure flourishing and organizational commitment.

Expanding on the findings, Dr Ford shared two key observations: “Firstly, giving and receiving compassion at work positively impacts managers’ wellbeing. Managers experienced increased positive emotions, reduced anxiety, stress, and anger, a greater sense of purpose, and improved social interactions as a result of compassionate interactions with colleagues. This has a twofold benefit, as their performance improves while their positive behavior leads to improvements in

the wellbeing and performance of all those who report to them.

“Secondly, receiving compassion at work significantly increased managers’ commitment to the organization. This is important because committed managers stay longer in their jobs, perform more effectively, and have higher job satisfaction. This means more successful and sustainable organizations – an imperative in our tough economic conditions.”

The study underscores the importance of integrating compassion into management development and organizational training programs. “By promoting compassionate behavior, organizations can create environments where both managers and employees thrive, leading to greater overall success and commitment,” the researchers found.

For more details, you can read the full article in [Frontiers in Organizational Psychology by clicking here.](#)

Debt Cleared and Certificate in Hand: EC Alumni Chapter's Student Debt Fundraising Campaign Brings Relief to Graduates

The Eastern Cape Alumni Chapter celebrated the success of its Student Debt Fundraising Campaign with an event marking the handover of certificates to 130 beneficiaries.

The philanthropic initiative was launched on 29 June 2023 in response to the rising student debt that continues to challenge higher learning institutions. With generous contributions from various donors, including esteemed UFH alumni such as Ms Nolitha Fakude, Bantu Holomisa, and Dr Irvin Khoza, the Chapter raised R360,000, which was used to settle the graduates' debts in January this year.

Among the delighted recipients who attended the ceremony in East London was Ms Phelisa Mtima, a Postgraduate Diploma in Archives & Records Management graduate, who started her new job as an Archive and Records Officer on 1 August. "My employer requested that I bring a copy of my qualification on my first day. I was able to meet that requirement, thanks to this great initiative by the EC Chapter. The one thing I have learned as a beneficiary is the importance of paying it forward," said the 30-year-old from Mdantsane.

Another beneficiary, Mandilakhe Krila Kula, noted that the initiative has greatly invested in the beneficiaries' future by making it easier to apply for jobs with a certificate in hand. "The job market is highly competitive, and applying with just an academic record can be challenging and may limit employment opportunities. I am deeply grateful to benefit from this campaign. It has restored my will to give back and uplift my community."

The program included messages of support from Mr. Vuyo Tologu, Chairperson of the Eastern Cape South African Youth Council, and Mr. Zizipho Nogwaza, a social entrepreneur—both imparted words of encouragement to the Chapter's executive committee members and the graduates.

The ceremony also featured a touching message from the Student Representative Council (SRC) President, Aphelele Matinise. "The SRC extends heartfelt gratitude to the University of Fort Hare Eastern Cape alumni chapter for their generous efforts in raising funds to assist students with debts. Your contribution has made a significant difference in the lives of these graduates."

According to the Chairperson of the UFH EC Chapter, Mr. Mosuli Cwele, the decision to initiate the campaign was made during a meeting in March last year, where the Executive revised its program of action—a resolution that was officially adopted by the University Convocation. "This University remains a beacon of hope for the African child. It is imperative that we alleviate the burden of historic debt, which has become a hindrance for many graduates struggling to find jobs due to the lack of certificates. Likewise, we need to ensure that historic debt does not jeopardize the financial viability of the University," said Cwele.

Executive member Dr Nompumelelo Mawisa commended the EC Chapter for remaining steadfast in honoring the spirit of generosity.



"The job market is highly competitive, and applying with just an academic record can be challenging and may limit employment opportunities. I am deeply grateful to benefit from this campaign. It has restored my will to give back and uplift my community."

Law graduate who exudes excellence clinches three awards from NPA



“I love what I do, and when you do what you love, you tend to excel at it,”

Five years ago, as part of the final year of her LLB studies at the University of Fort Hare (UFH), Sinovuyo Sotomela assumed the role of a Prosecutor in the moot court programme—an experience that laid the foundation for her career.

Today, the 28-year-old from Butterworth in the Eastern Cape is recognised as one of the best District Prosecutors working for the National Prosecuting Authority (NPA) at the East London Magistrate’s Court. This recognition follows her receiving

not one, not two, but three awards during the NPA’s recent regional excellence awards held in East London.

The NPA honoured her with the following awards: “Most Self-Driven Performer,” highlighting her initiative and proactive approach to her work; “Team Player,” underlining her ability to collaborate effectively within her legal team; and “The Best Performer District Court,” proving her outstanding courtroom skills and legal acumen.

Sotomela obtained her degree at UFH in 2020 upon completing the LLB Extended Programme. After passing her board exams, she was selected for the NPA Aspirant Prosecutor Programme following a successful application process, which included writing an exam.

Before joining the East London Magistrate’s Court, where she handles criminal cases, Sotomela was posted at the Butterworth Cluster, dealing with maintenance matters at the Ngqamakwe Magistrate’s Court.

Reflecting on the recognition from the NPA, Sotomela’s passion for justice and dedication to her career path became evident. “I love what I do, and when you do what you love, you tend to excel at it,” she said.

She attributes the seed of her blossoming career to her time at Fort Hare, especially the moot court exercise in her final year. “I have always wanted to be a prosecutor, and when I acted out the role during the moot court, my path in the legal field was confirmed.”

Sotomela also took the opportunity to encourage law students, especially those enrolled in extended programmes, saying, “Just because you took the longer route does not mean you will not reach your destination. Also, choosing a field you are passionate about will take you further.”

BA graduate hailed for being a shining example of dedication and passion in education

Ms Sisipho Gwebushe, a University of Fort Hare BA graduate who is a professional teacher, has dedicated her life to nurturing young minds.

Born in Ntilini, a tight-knit village near Hamburg, the 29-year-old teacher’s TikTok videos have earned her praise for the love and warmth she shows her pupils.

A 2023 social media post featuring her pupils dressed in outfits reflecting their future professions went viral, with some applauding her for creating a safe space for children.

“Teaching has been a calling,” Gwebushe completed an undergraduate Bachelor of Art in Foundation degree, majoring in psychology and African linguistics, which then qualified her to teach some of the subjects.

“When I started in high school, the profession wasn’t really in my mind, but I knew what I would be doing is sharing ideas and information; anything that had to do with mastering and guiding people.”

Her curiosity for teaching came when she was doing her practicals in teaching.

“When I was doing my practicals, I fell more in love with the profession,” she said.

“I have always liked anything that will make me send and receive information, so I got a chance to do what I like.”

Gwebushe works at Masibuyisane

Combined Primary School in Peddie, where she has taught life orientation, social sciences, life skills, natural science, technology, creative arts and even isiXhosa.

“What I like most about my profession is forging a great future for these youngsters, looking beyond the challenges they are fighting in society and even their homes,” she said.

Her day-to-day job involves dealing with pupils who are longing for love, and had been exposed to crime, drugs and teenage pregnancy, among other societal ills.

She said her fuel came from knowing they would be better humans when they left her classes.

“They get really excited every time we teach them new things. You can almost feel their eagerness, and it touches my soul to see a young black child wanting to learn and better their situations back home.

“For some the school has become their safe haven.

They’ve found a home and comfort here because at home they are battling wars at a very young age. I’m teaching learners who are coming from really poor backgrounds with many challenges.”

Gwebushe said what broke her heart was seeing that some pupils were in need of basic necessities, but showed up even if it meant coming to school with torn clothes.



“What I like most about my profession is forging a great future for these youngsters, looking beyond the challenges they are fighting in society and even their homes,”

“You can sometimes tell they do not have food. We are grateful for the feeding scheme because it really helps in cases like these,” she said.

Gwebushe said one of the greatest achievements of her career was being able to teach young people that anything was possible.

“Their future is in their hands. I love the patience and passion they have. The job teaches me perseverance as well.”

Article adapted from DispatchLIVE

Outstanding Educators lauded at Vice-Chancellor’s Excellence Teaching & Learning Awards

The University of Fort Hare (UFH) hosted its annual Vice-Chancellor’s Excellence Awards in Teaching and Learning recently, and it was truly inspiring.

Organized by the UFH Teaching and Learning Centre (TLC), the event highlighted the university’s commitment to excellence and provided a platform to honour those who have made remarkable contributions to academic and pedagogical advancement, preparing students for life after graduation.

In his message of support, Vice-Chancellor Prof Sakhela Buhlungu reminded those present that: “Teaching and Learning is what makes a university. It is a core ingredient in the training of young people to become professionals in various fields of knowledge. With these awards, we honour those who have dedicated themselves to mastering this core ingredient here at Fort Hare.”

Among the highlights of the evening was the launch of the Teaching and Learning Report 2024, which features the academic strides attained by the various faculties at the University. The event also acknowledged scholars who have earned prestigious fellowships.

The awards ceremony was the crowning of the successful Teaching & Learning Week 2024 Conference, held under the theme: *AI in Teaching, Learning, and Research: Lessons Learned and Future Directions*.

Award Categories and Winners

The awards featured three categories, celebrating both developing and experienced teachers, as well as outstanding achievements in e-learning. Here are the distinguished awardees:



Developing Teacher Award Winners:

Faculty of Education: Dr Msimelelo Buyisile Nkohlh, a lecturer and Deputy Head of School, has been recognized for his innovative contributions to the Bachelor of Education Honours (Science Education) and Postgraduate Certificate in Education (PGCE) programs. With dual Master’s degrees and a recent PhD focusing on digital learning integration in agricultural curricula, Dr. Nkohlh’s commitment to curriculum development and digital learning is exemplary. His leadership extends beyond teaching, including roles on various educational committees and development programs. His belief that we learn as we teach, and we teach as we learn fosters an inclusive dynamic environment where students thrive.



Faculty of Health Sciences: Mrs Zukiswa Dasheka, a Midwifery Lecturer in the Nursing Science Department, has been honoured for her extensive involvement in curriculum development and research in midwifery. Her contributions include the development of numerous module reviews, supervision of research projects, and active participation in mental health and supportive research programs. To elucidate new knowledge to her students, Mrs Dasheka incorporates technology and practical experience into her teachings. Her dedication to enhancing midwifery education and her impactful research in infant and young child feeding has set a high standard in her field.

Faculty of Health Sciences: Dr Unati Stemela-Zali, Head of the Department of Rehabilitative Sciences, has been recognized for her extensive teaching and research in disabilities and communication pathologies. She is also lauded for her contribution to the success of the University’s recently introduced Speech-Language Pathology programme. Her leadership in teaching across multiple levels, involvement in faculty and university committees, and enthusiasm for mentoring emerging professionals highlight her significant contributions to the field.



Faculty of Management and Commerce: Dr Vusumzi Funda, Lecturer in the Department of Information Systems, was recognized for his exceptional contributions to the department. Since joining in March 2021, Dr Funda has leveraged his PhD in Informatics, specializing in Artificial Intelligence and Decision Support Systems, to excel in teaching critical modules and supervising students. His research on integrating AI in education and his active participation in academic conferences reflect his dedication to advancing the field and addressing real-world challenges. His innovative approach and commitment to student success make him a deserving recipient of this award.



Experienced Teacher Award Winners:

Faculty of Management and Commerce: Dr Palesa Makhetha-Kosi, a Senior Lecturer in Economics, has been celebrated for her leadership and contributions to the Department of Economics. Her achievements include extensive supervision of graduate students, involvement in research initiatives, and development of the Extended Curriculum Programme. Dr Makhetha-Kosi's excellence in teaching is driven by her belief that education works best when it focuses on deep learning rather than memorization. Her research and publications in economics and education further underline her commitment to academic excellence.



e-Learning Excellence Award Winners:

Faculty of Management and Commerce: Dr Mari Ford, a valued lecturer at UFH since 2013 who served as Deputy Head of the Department of Business Management from 2016 to 2021, was honored for her innovative approach to teaching. Her PhD in Industrial Psychology, focusing on compassion and self-compassion in management, complements her research interests in well-being, mindfulness, leadership, and organizational development. Her passion for teaching and learning has propelled her to explore innovative ways to enhance student engagement and foster their growth into employed, engaged citizens.



Faculty of Social Science and Humanities: Prof Marianna Oelofsen, an Associate Professor specializing in African philosophy, education, decolonization, race and gender theory, phenomenology, and feminism, received the honour for her distinguished academic career. Her contributions span multiple disciplines and include numerous publications, including articles and book chapters. She co-edited a collection titled *An African Path to a Global Future*. In advancing Teaching and Learning at UFH, Prof Oelofsen was instrumental in developing the BA Honours in Philosophy, Politics, and Law. Her research and teaching reflect her devotion to developing knowledge and discourse that aim shape future critical thinkers.



Faculty of Social Science and Humanities: Ms Ntobehle Brenda Mandlazi, the Fieldwork Coordinator in the Department of Social Work and Social Development at UFH's East London Campus, is recognized for her excellence in social work education. She holds a Master's Degree in Social Work, a Postgraduate Diploma in Higher Education and Training, and is currently pursuing a PhD. Her research interests include occupational stress, gender, and fieldwork. Ms Mandlazi's contributions to the Department of Social Development and her consistent recognition for her outstanding work highlight her commitment to enhancing fieldwork education and addressing critical social issues.

Faculty of Management and Commerce: Prof Tendai Chimucheka, Associate Professor and Deputy Head of the Department of Business Management, has been awarded for his outstanding work in e-learning and entrepreneurship. His research in small business management and strategic development, combined with his role in coordinating Entrepreneurship Development in Higher Education (EDHE) activities, reflects his commitment to integrating technology and innovative practices in education. Prof Chimucheka was awarded in absentia as he attended the 10th International Conference on Business Management Dynamics in Sun City, where he presented two research papers.



The Vice-Chancellor's Excellence Awards not only celebrate individual achievements but also reinforce the university's dedication to fostering a culture of teaching excellence. The VC and Deputy VC for Teaching and Learning, Prof Renuka Vithal commended the staff of TLC and their Director, Prof Vuyisile Nkonki for their efforts in ensuring the success of the event.

Congratulations to all the winners. Indeed, we are Together in Excellence!

In conversation with

Queer Studies Researcher Dr Bellita reflects on a transformative academic trip to Amsterdam

Dr Bellita Banda Chitsamatanga, a researcher at the UFH SARChI Chair in Sexualities, Genders, and Queer Studies, recently returned from a transformative academic journey to Amsterdam where she participated in the Introduction to Sexuality Summer School Programme, hosted by the University of Amsterdam (UvA).

The month-long programme provides a unique opportunity for scholars and students to engage deeply in interdisciplinary debates on sexuality and gender with the intent to enrich academic pursuits and advocacy efforts.

In a Q&A interview with UFHNews, Dr Bellita shared her experiences from the programme, the key activities she engaged in, and the valuable insights she gained from exploring complex narratives around sexuality and gender to envisioning practical applications for her findings at UFH.

Q: Can you give us a brief background on how this trip came about?

A: I am fortunate to work with Professor zethu Matebeni, a trailblazer in queer scholarship, advocacy, and activism, who is also the SARChI Chair in Sexualities, Genders, and Queer Studies at UFH. Prof Matebeni values academic freedom and supports emerging queer scholars. When she saw the call from the University of Amsterdam (UvA) for their Introduction to Sexuality Summer School Programme, she encouraged me to apply. This recommendation opened the door for me to attend the programme in the Netherlands.

Q: Kindly tell us about the objective of this programme and how it impacted your work?

A: The programme aims to provide an interdisciplinary introduction to important debates around sexuality and gender from a sociological perspective. It explores how human sexuality and gender shape and

intersect with our lives both within and outside of educational settings.

For me as an emerging scholar, this opportunity was invaluable for advancing my academic career, advocacy, and activism in higher education and beyond.

Q: What were some key activities during your stay?

A: It was an intensive experience involving extensive reading, debates, and engagement with experts in the fields of sexuality and gender diversity. Key activities included knowledge-sharing platforms, networking opportunities, and capacity-building sessions on queer perspectives and human rights.

We visited museums, monuments, and clubs, and engaged with queer activists, advocates, and policymakers. I also accessed valuable archives at UvA, which were closely aligned with the course content on queer advocacy and activism. UvA Pride's research network, which connects academics researching queer topics, was particularly inspiring. I believe such an initiative could greatly benefit our university by promoting a more inclusive and equitable climate.

Q: Can you elaborate on the discussions or narratives that have emerged from this academic journey?

A: The discussions covered a wide range of disciplines, including law, health, human rights, and sociology. It was a month of intense reading and questioning, addressing the historical, cultural, political, and economic dimensions of sexual norms and behaviors.

The diverse guest lecturers provided lived experiences that enriched our understanding of sexuality and its intersections with power, class, race, gender, ethnicity, and geography.

Despite being the only representative from Africa, I found commonalities in how societal norms marginalize individuals across different regions. This highlighted the need to focus on growing the queer movement to advocate for sexual empowerment and social justice.

Q: What do you hope to have imparted during your stay?

A: Although there has been significant progress in research on the social and cultural dimensions of sexuality and gender, several important questions remain unaddressed, particularly in the global South. My time in Amsterdam allowed me to facilitate discussions and workshops on LGBTQ-inclusive curricula in higher education in South Africa. We also discussed ongoing projects at the SARChI Chair under Prof Matebeni's leadership.

Q: Please tell us more about the insights gained from this academic trip?

A: During my stay, I gained insights into urgent and ongoing social and human rights conflicts affecting

the queer population. Expanding my understanding of sexuality and gender from an interdisciplinary perspective was a key goal of this trip.

Q: How do you intend to use the knowledge and experience gained for the benefit of society?

A: Earlier this year, I attended the Summer School in Queer Masculinities hosted by UFH and Ruhr-University Bochum in Germany. The timing of the UvA visit was perfect for deepening my knowledge and skills. In August 2024, Professor Matebeni and I will launch our research report, "Breaking Barriers: Towards a Queer Inclusive University." The insights from both summer schools and our research will inform the development and implementation of SexEducation workshops and training at UFH.

My goal is to foster a teaching and learning environment that is truly inclusive, diverse, and equitable for all individuals.



Speech Therapy part-time lecturer earns cum laude for Master's study exploring views of children with autism spectrum disorders and caregivers

Ms Samantha Gay, a speech therapist and part-time lecturer in the Department of Rehabilitative Sciences, has recently been awarded a Master's degree in Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC) with Cum Laude from the University of Pretoria.

Her Master's study, titled "Participation of children with autism spectrum disorder: Comparing the perspectives of children and their caregivers," aimed to explore the perceptions of children with Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD) and their caregivers regarding the children's participation in home, social, and community activities.

The findings revealed both agreement and significant differences between the perspectives of children and caregivers, highlighting the importance of considering the voices of children with ASD in future participation studies.

Ms Gay's achievement is not only a demonstration of her hard work but also of her unwavering dedication to improving the lives of individuals with communication challenges and participating in research.

"For me, this Master's degree signifies more than just an academic achievement; it is a stepping stone towards a future where research and practice in speech therapy are closely aligned. As a novice academic and clinician, I am eager to share my knowledge and passion for AAC with my students, fostering a new generation of researchers and clinicians who are equipped to bridge the gap between research and practice," she underscored.

Growing up in Cape Town, Ms Gay completed her undergraduate studies in Speech and Language Therapy at Stellenbosch University in 2018. Her journey into the world of AAC began during her community service at a tertiary hospital in East London, where she fell in love with the city and its people.

"Working predominantly with children on the autism spectrum disorders (ASD), my passion for AAC was ignited. This experience led me to pursue a Master's degree in AAC, driven by my desire to make a meaningful impact on the lives of those with limited communication abilities, aiming to increase their participation within their home, school and community settings."

AAC refers to a range of methods used to supplement or replace speech or writing for individuals with significant communication difficulties. These methods include picture exchange communication systems, speech-generating devices, and sign language, among others. Her dedication to AAC stems from my belief in the right to communication for all individuals, regardless of their ability to speak.

With the Master's degree in hand, Ms Gay is well-prepared to take the next steps in her career.

"I look forward to gaining more experience in lecturing, conducting research, and publishing within the academic field while working towards a doctorate degree. Additionally, my goal is to remain an active clinician, implementing the knowledge I have gained through my studies and future research to enhance the lives of those I serve," she said.

The UFH Department of Rehabilitative Sciences is proud of Ms Gay's outstanding achievement and excitedly awaits the integration of her AAC expertise on the various teaching and research platforms with the students.

"For me, this Master's degree signifies more than just an academic achievement; it is a stepping stone towards a future where research and practice in speech therapy are closely aligned."

Best Oral Presentation Award at global Kinanthropometry conference for Prof van Gent

Prof Maya van Gent, an Associate Professor at the University of Fort Hare's (UFH) Human Movement Science Department, has been awarded the Best Oral Presentation Award at the International Society for the Advancement of Kinanthropometry (ISAK) 2024 XVII World Conference on Kinanthropometry held at St Mary's University Twickenham London recently.

The well-deserved accolade recognizes Prof Maya's groundbreaking research on body composition methods and their impact on predicting non-communicable disease (NCD) risk among adolescents.

Themed: "Theory to Practice", the conference provided a platform for attendees to share their research and practical experiences, collaborate with like-minded colleagues, and learn about the latest developments in the field of anthropometry.

Prof van Gent's paper, titled "Body Composition Methods for Predicting Non-Communicable Diseases Risk in Adolescents," delves into evaluating the efficacy of various body composition metrics. The research was part of a larger initiative funded by the MRC Research Capacity Development grants, which aimed to address physical and psychological risk factors for NCDs among Eastern Cape adolescents.

In an interview with UFH News, Prof van Gent explained the focus of her research: "Our primary goal was to design and implement a physical activity and psychoeducational intervention to reduce NCD risk factors among adolescents. The study involved a detailed situational analysis, development of tailored interventions, and a thorough evaluation of their effectiveness."

According to her, a critical insight from the research highlighted at the conference was the relative inadequacy of Body Mass Index (BMI) in predicting NCD risk compared to skinfold measurements. "We found that skinfold measurements, which directly assess adiposity, provide a more accurate risk indication than BMI. This challenges the traditional

reliance on BMI and advocates for more precise body composition assessment methods."

Prof van Gent's passion for kinanthropometry, the study of human body size and composition in relation to health and sports, stems from her deep-rooted curiosity about the human body. She is currently one of only three internationally accredited Level 3 ISAK anthropometrists in South Africa, a credential that allows her to impart knowledge and train others in the field.

"Receiving this award was a complete surprise and a profound honour. The positive feedback from conference attendees reaffirmed the relevance of our research and its broader contributions to the field."

Looking ahead, Prof van Gent and her team are expanding their research to address the health impacts of sedentary behavior and are working on projects aimed at improving the holistic health of university students and staff. "Sedentary behavior, often referred to as 'the new smoking,' is an area with much to explore. We're excited about our collaborations and the potential for new findings that can inform effective health strategies," she added.

Prof van Gent also offered advice to aspiring researchers, emphasizing the importance of aligning with relevant conferences and engaging with academic networks. "Selecting the right conference and being part of academic organizations can significantly enhance research visibility and collaboration opportunities," she advised.

This prestigious award highlights Prof van Gent's exceptional contributions to kinanthropometry and also elevates the University of Fort Hare's reputation in advancing research that promotes healthier populations. Her success serves as an inspiration for the academic community and reaffirms the university's commitment to producing impactful research.



"Receiving this award was a complete surprise and a profound honour. The positive feedback from conference attendees reaffirmed the relevance of our research and its broader contributions to the field."

From Keiskammahoek to the United States, PhD student gains valuable global insights on Water-Energy-Food Nexus



“I gained valuable insights into water quality management and effective livestock practices that can be adapted to South Africa’s context”

Thulani Ningi, a final-year PhD student in Agricultural Economics and Extension at the University of Fort Hare (UFH), recently returned from an impactful two-week academic trip to the United States of America (USA).

His participation in the Collaborative Learning School (CLS) workshop, part of the SustainFood project funded by the National Science Foundation’s Accelerating Research through International Network-to-Network Collaborations (AccelNet) programme, marks a significant milestone in his research on the water-energy-food (WEF) nexus.

The 30-year-old hails from Keiskammahoek, a small town located less than 50km from the University’s main campus in Alice. His research focuses on the WEF nexus in the Amathole District, examining the trade-offs and synergies that affect household livelihood resilience amidst challenges like resource scarcity, economic growth, and climate variability.

“My PhD work aims to identify gaps in understanding the WEF nexus at the household level,” Ningi explained. “I’m particularly interested in how these trade-offs and synergies impact resilience.”

The CLS workshop, which took place in June, included a preparatory online phase followed by an intensive in-person segment in the US.

“The objective of the CLS was to expand our understanding of the WEF nexus and engage in mutual learning with other scholars and facilitators. This was an opportunity to explore innovative solutions to food security challenges using the WEF nexus approach,” he explained.

The trip began with a highly competitive application process. “I was fortunate enough to be selected for this prestigious workshop, which allowed me to collaborate with early career researchers, local stakeholders, and policymakers,” Ningi noted.

The workshop’s focus was on the Chesapeake Bay watershed, a critical area for studying the WEF

nexus due to its complex environmental and resource challenges.

During the first week, Ningi’s group concentrated on livestock and water quality issues. “Our team worked on solutions like creating buffer zones between livestock and water bodies, implementing regular water quality monitoring, and establishing wetlands for effluent treatment,” he said. These solutions aimed to mitigate the impacts of livestock on water quality and promote sustainable practices.

The second week involved presenting policy recommendations to representatives at the Pennsylvania State Capitol and exploring the Chesapeake Bay’s environmental issues. “The discussions with policymakers were enlightening. We explored the larger challenges facing the Chesapeake Bay and tested the solutions developed during the workshop,” Ningi recounted. The week also included visits to an oyster farm and a wastewater treatment plant, offering practical insights into water management practices.

According to him, the CLS workshop was not just about learning; it was a platform for significant discourse. “We discussed a range of topics, from soil health and the use of drones for data collection to biogas technology and waste management,” Ningi said. His group’s focus on livestock and water quality highlighted the need for sustainable management practices and education.

Among the highlights of the trip, Ningi observed innovative practices used by American farmers, such as converting food waste into energy. “This practice could be beneficial if adopted in South Africa. It demonstrated the potential of applying local solutions to global challenges. The trip highlighted the importance of collaborative research, bridging academia, government, and the private sector.”

“I gained valuable insights into water quality management and effective livestock practices that can be adapted to South Africa’s context,” he said. The knowledge acquired will aid him in applying analytical methodologies to explore resource management and food value chains more effectively.

Looking ahead, Ningi plans to integrate these methodologies into his research to enhance the depth and impact of his work on the WEF nexus. “The skills and knowledge gained will help me think critically about interconnected systems and improve decision-making in complex environments,” he said.

Human Movement Science PhD student Sesethu Ncanywa visits Hasselt University in Belgium



Human Movement Science PhD student Sesethu Ncanywa recently visited Hasselt University in Belgium. Her trip aimed to align her research proposal with the institution's research focus and to acquire proficiency in a data collection platform, including hands-on training. The trip also aimed to form collaborative connections with the research team and her primary supervisor.

Sesethu Ncanywa, a friend of Human Movement Science, says her field delves into how the human body functions during physical activity and is the foundation for sports and exercise for health and well-being. She excitedly explains that her field covers a wide range of topics, including anatomy, physiology, biomechanics, sports management, motor learning, research methods, nutrition, injury prevention, clinical exercise physiology, sports psychology, and sports and exercise physiology. She is particularly interested in the impact of interrupting sedentary behavior on the health of office workers in academic settings. Even though there's been a growing emphasis on physical activity, many office workers still spend substantial amounts of time sitting, which can have negative health consequences.

The trip was made possible through VLIR-UOS Mobility Scholarships under Hasselt University and the HMS Department in our institution. A collaboration is being formed, and an MoU is being signed between the two institutions. The trip also helped her engage with the research team to understand the institutional expectations of how the human body functions during physical activity.

Sesethu said her stay at Hasselt University lasted for two weeks, during which time she met her co-supervisor, the rest of the team, and other PhD students. She also assisted with data collection on current research projects, learned about new equipment, and participated in research group meetings.

She elaborated that one of the most stimulating discussions she had was about current research trends. Hearing the perspectives of individuals from different research backgrounds helped her rethink her own research.

Sesethu said the experience of traveling abroad was exciting, and the highlight was visiting the research facility, which had advanced equipment; she found that exposure particularly inspiring and valuable.

Sesethu explained that she learned a great deal from the research team, particularly her supervisor, who opened her eyes to new ways of conceptualizing research and approaching certain research challenges. She went on to say that the experience has also increased her confidence, expanded her professional network, and encouraged her to delve deeper into the research field.

Sesethu said she is very excited about the knowledge and experiences she gained from this trip and believes it will directly contribute to her doctoral research. She plans to incorporate the new perspectives gained, collaborate with researchers from Hasselt University, and further her involvement in improving the health of our communities at large.

UFH Mooters placed 14th in the World!



UFH Law students, Mr Ntlantla Valtein from Mdantsane and Ms Lilly Kuhle Mbengo from Komani have done us proud after clinching 14th position at the 16th Nelson Mandela World Human Rights Moot Court Competition held in Geneva, Switzerland in July. Fort Hare was among 24 universities globally and the only South African institution whose team managed to advance to the final stage of this prestigious global competition.

Congratulations you two!

[Read the background story here.](#)

Commemoration of Nelson Mandela Month through literature



“We have the best constitution in the country, ushered in by the iconic Nelson Mandela. Why, then, do we still face paradoxes in human rights such as gender-based violence, murder, fraud, and corruption?”

This thought-provoking question, posed by University of Fort Hare (UFH) Vice-Chancellor Prof Sakhela Buhlungu, encouraged thoughtful reflections from the audience and set the tone of the Student Lecture on Constitutional Rights Awareness held in commemoration of the late statesman and alumnus of UFH, Nelson Mandela.

Hosted by the Department of Justice and Constitutional Development in collaboration with the UFH Faculty of Law, the event took place on Friday, 19 July 2024, at the East London campus. The engagement, themed “Promoting the Culture of Human Rights – Nelson Mandela the Advocate for Human Rights,” provided a platform for meaningful conversations among attendees, including diverse stakeholders in the legal and justice system.

The dialogue series, a key initiative in the Department of Justice’s efforts to promote constitutional rights awareness and mark three decades of democracy, aimed to deepen students’ understanding of the Constitution and foster a culture of human rights and equality championed by Nelson Mandela.

Speakers included representatives from the South African Human Rights Commission, the Commission for Gender Equality, and the National Youth Development Agency (NYDA), who shared insights on their roles in facilitating access to quality higher education.

“As we forge ahead on the path that Nelson Mandela started, let us be active, informed, and engaged citizens who participate in determining the future direction of our country.”

Dr Eileen Carter, the Eastern Cape Provincial Manager for the South African Human Rights Commission and an alumna of the faculty, stressed the importance of the actualization of human rights. “Human rights cannot remain at an abstract level; they must be actualized and played out in real life,” she said.

Gender Equality Commissioner Leanashia Van Der Merwe spoke at length on gender equality issues, while Ms Yandisa Jubase gave an interesting presentation on behalf of the NYDA, outlining their contributions to educational access.

The program also featured Mr Aphelele Matinise, President of the Student Representative Council (SRC), who provided valuable student perspectives and highlighted the importance of accountability. “There are rights and there are responsibilities, and they cannot be separated.”

Speaking on behalf of the Department, Mr Andrew Witbooi, Director of Legal Administration and Advocacy in the Eastern Cape, encouraged the audience to uphold the legacy and values of Nelson Mandela. “As we forge ahead on the path that Nelson Mandela started, let us be active, informed, and engaged citizens who participate in determining the future direction of our country.”

A vibrant Question and Answer session facilitated by Prof Partick Osode allowed for an interactive exchange of ideas between students and stakeholders, reinforcing the dialogue’s goal of empowering students as future leaders and active citizens.

Ms Zisile Alizwa, an LLM student at Fort Hare, expressed heartfelt gratitude to all participants and organizers for ensuring the event was a success. “Tata Mandela’s roots are edged at this institution; it was quite fitting that Fort Hare played an integral role in celebrating his legacy,” she said.

The event concluded with a renewed sense of commitment among attendees to uphold Mandela’s legacy through continued advocacy for human rights, education, and equality in South Africa.



Bridging the Gap Between Academia, Industry, and Policy: UFH and GIBS Collaboration yields Progressive Strides

A dynamic partnership between the University of Fort Hare (UFH) and the Gordon Institute of Business Science (GIBS) is making strides in bridging the gap between academia, industry, and policy.

On 2 July, the two institutions hosted a successful policy engagement evening at the Phyllis Ntantala Collaborative Library on UFH's East London Campus.

The event brought together representatives from key stakeholders such as the Buffalo City Metro Development Agency (BCMDA), the Eastern Cape Socio-Economic Consultative Council (ECSECC), the Black Management Forum (BMF), and the Eastern Cape Development Corporation (ECD), who shared their insights on advancing research and capacity development to influence policymaking decisions in the Eastern Cape and beyond.

Hosted in collaboration with ECSECC and BCMDA, the engagement evening marked the culmination of a Research Capacity Development Workshop facilitated by internationally acclaimed business research methods scholar, Prof. Mark Saunders from Birmingham University Business School in the UK.

The comprehensive two-day workshop began at UFH's Alice Campus on 1 July and concluded at the East London campus on 2 July. It aimed to enhance research proficiency and capacity not only within UFH but also across the Eastern Cape and beyond, influencing effective policymaking decisions.

Alongside Prof Motshedisi Mathibe from GIBS, Prof Saunders facilitated engaging sessions focused on his innovative "research onion" methodology, which guides the development of research methodologies.

"The primary objective was collaborative learning over these two days," emphasized Prof Saunders.

Day one featured lively discussions and role-playing exercises, encouraging participation from scholars representing universities such as Midlands State University, Makerere University Business School,

University of Gondar, and Great Zimbabwe University, exploring diverse research supervision scenarios. The hybrid format allowed for open dialogue on research methodologies and supervision best practices.

On day two, the engagement focused on two main topics: 1. Advanced methodological issues in supervision, and 2. Building your career: Developing your research agenda and writing for specialist journals.

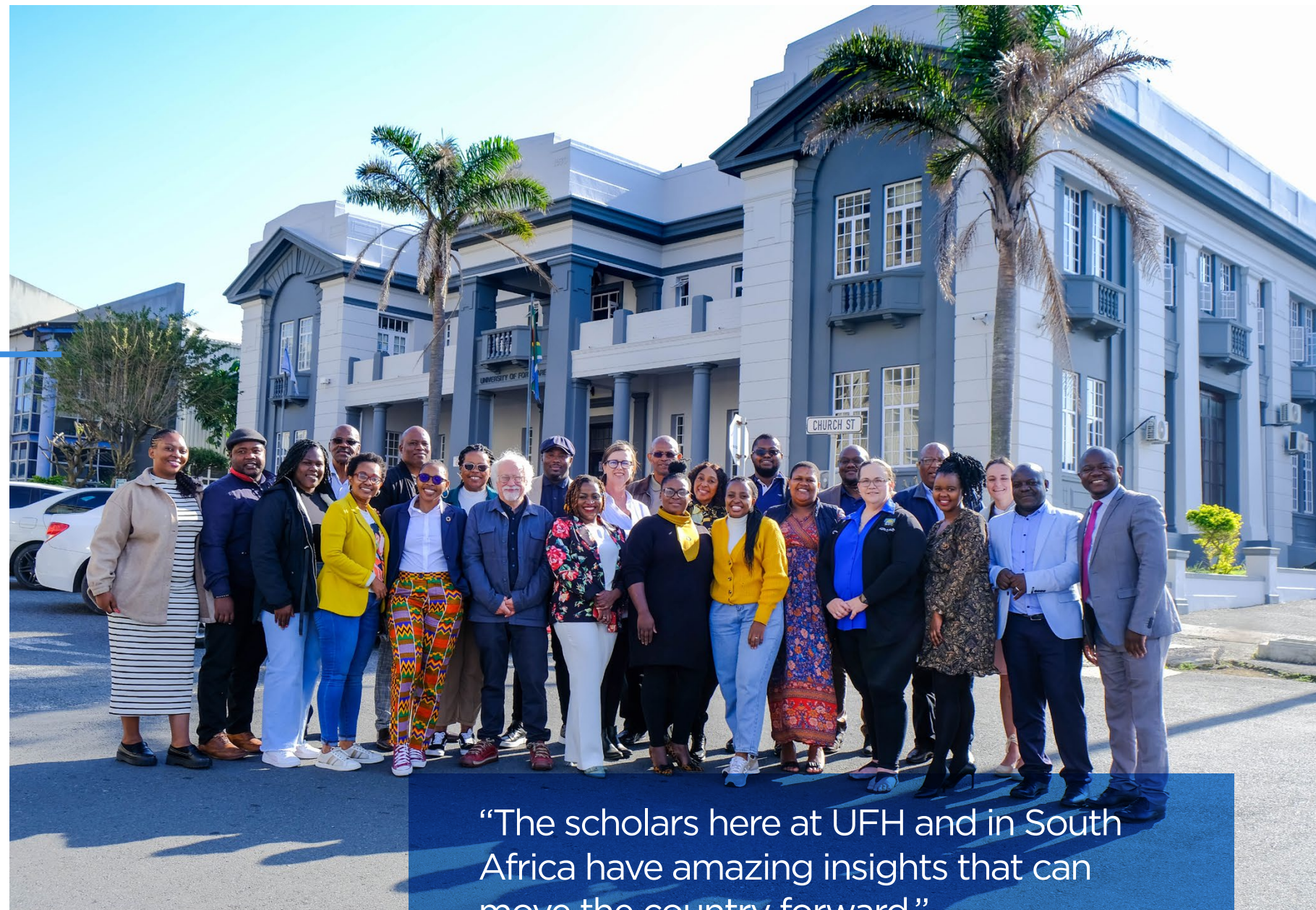
At the culminating event, Prof Saunders delivered a keynote address titled "Bridging the Chasm Between Academia, Industry, and Policy: How Can We Talk With, Rather Than Over, Each Other?" In it, he brought new perspectives with each layer of his talk.

"Bridging the chasm is not simple. Relevant research is pointless without rigor. We need responsible research and scholarship that is engaged, recognizes each other's needs, and has trust as an essential lubricant," underscored Prof Saunders.

He also highlighted the importance of better managing change to bridge the chasm through building impactful relationships, recognizing good practices, addressing pressing research questions of interest, and offering suggestions for improvement.

"There is a need for teaching and research that connects the rich resources of the university to our most pressing social, civic, and ethical problems," he stated.

Commenting on the role of academia in the newly formed Government of National Unity (GNU), Prof Saunders said the GNU has opened massive opportunities for scholars at UFH and other universities in the country to translate their insights practically.



"The scholars here at UFH and in South Africa have amazing insights that can move the country forward."

"The scholars here at UFH and in South Africa have amazing insights that can move the country forward." He also shared insights about trust and integrity as enablers of advancing engaged scholarship.

The engagement concluded with responses from the participating stakeholders.

Mr Papama Mngandi from BMF said, "It is important that the university, in this exercise, goes beyond scholarly research to produce applied academic output. This ensures that applied research findings are easily accessible to us as practitioners and industries."

"What is missing in our country, from a thought leadership perspective, is evidence-based decision-making. Such platforms create opportunities to

enhance the role of academia. There is also an opportunity to involve those outside academia in the knowledge-making process to transform our society," Mngandi added.

Dr Juliet Townes, Head of the UFH Business Management Department, remarked that the two-day engagement was a journey of self-discovery as an academic.

"The engagement highlighted that, as academics, we also need space to learn, study, and self-reflect. Learning from an international expert such as Prof Saunders was inspirational. Engaging and sharing ideas with academics from other faculties and external stakeholders was informative, helping us position our research to be useful to businesses and industries."

Prof Lesley Green links Noni Jabavu's legacy to modern challenges

In a compelling and thought-provoking lecture delivered at the University of Fort Hare (UFH), Prof Lesley Green, Professor of Anthropology and co-founder of the Environmental Humanities South at the University of Cape Town connected the legacy of Noni Jabavu with present-day challenges in environmental governance.

Her address, part of the esteemed Noni Jabavu Lecture Series at UFH, focused on the dire need for a new approach to environmental impact assessments, especially in light of failed projects in Mozambique's Cabo Delgado region.

Inaugurated in June 2022, the lecture series forms part of an initiative led by Prof Neil Roos, the Dean of the Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities, to reevaluate, invigorate, and rejuvenate the disciplines of social sciences and humanities at Fort Hare.

Titled, *Humans are not Homo Economicus: On the failed environmental and societal impact assessments and of Cabo Delgado's offshore gas projects, Mozambique*, Prof Green began her lecture by honoring Noni Jabavu, a South African writer and journalist, who was one of the first African women to pursue a successful literary career and the first black South African woman to publish books of autobiography.

"It is an honour to speak in honour of Noni Jabavu, at Fort Hare, and the Eastern Cape, which she loved. A writer and a traveller with an eye for contrasts and contradictions, Noni Jabavu embodied the capacity to connect worlds with the fellow-feeling that characterises ubuntu. The journeys she took, between the Eastern Cape, Europe and East Africa, were journeys of connection, humanity, and dignity even in the time of Verwoerd."

"Can you imagine a world where these connections are possible, now? Her big picture of humanity, habitability, villages is an inspiration: a big picture that we need now, as neoliberalism crumbles globally."

Reflecting on Jabavu's era, Green highlighted the contrast between the historical struggles for Pan-

"It is an honour to speak in honour of Noni Jabavu, at Fort Hare, and the Eastern Cape, which she loved. A writer and a traveller with an eye for contrasts and contradictions, Noni Jabavu embodied the capacity to connect worlds with the fellow-feeling that characterises ubuntu."

Africanism and freedom and the current global context of extreme inequality and neoliberal dominance.

"We are past the eras she lived through – the World War 2, and the time of Verwoerd. We are past the era of the 1960s and 1970s where African leaders like Cabral, Nkrumah, Sankara, Nyerere, Lumumba, Cesaire ushered in a vision of freedom and Pan Africanism. All that Nyerere and Nkrumah warned about – neocolonialism – is with us."

In her address, Prof Green drew a stark picture of modern economic disparities, citing recent reports that reveal billionaires' wealth has surged by USD 38 trillion since the COVID-19 pandemic began—a figure that dwarfs the total debt of lower and middle-income countries.

She urged the audience to envision a world where the wealthy are taxed to repay colonial debts and where Southern African nations are freed from economic subservience. She argued that this vision is

the responsibility of those privileged to work within academic institutions.

The core of Green's lecture addressed the failures of current environmental governance practices. She criticized the persistence of outdated disciplinary frameworks that fail to address the complexities of modern environmental issues. Specifically, Green pointed to the environmental impact assessments for the offshore gas projects in Cabo Delgado, Mozambique, which have been marred by inadequacies and negative consequences for local communities.

She proposed a transformative approach to environmental science, advocating for a metadisciplinary framework that integrates emerging transdisciplinary insights. She emphasized the need for a critical zones approach, one that focuses on habitability and empowers local communities to reclaim their knowledge and assert their values in environmental governance.

The lecture also highlighted the ongoing crisis in Cabo Delgado, where over a hundred thousand people have been displaced this year alone due to the impacts of oil and gas exploitation. Green criticized the disconnect between environmental devastation and fragmented mitigation efforts, where corporate interests merge with governance and military power, creating a complex and often exploitative situation for local populations.

In closing, Prof Green called for a collaborative effort among environmental philosophers and academics to revamp the way universities approach environmental issues. She urged a return to a big picture perspective that encompasses the struggles over nature and knowledge, advocating for a unified and more effective approach to environmental governance.

Prof Green's lecture not only honoured Noni Jabavu's legacy but also illuminated the pressing need for a reformed, holistic approach to environmental and social justice issues in today's interconnected world.



UFH and ETDP SETA partner to bring much-needed financial relief to unfunded Education students



Prof Sakhela Buhlungu recently affixed his signature on a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the University and the Education, Training and Development Practice (ETDP) Sector Education and Training Authority (SETA), sealing a shared commitment to support unfunded Education students by alleviating their financial burdens while undertaking their school experience.

The partnership was formalized on Mandela Day, 18 July 2024, with the signing of award letters by the 72 future educators followed by an induction programme held at the VC's boardroom on the Alice campus.

Amounting to R288 000, the allocated funding forms part of the Training Authority's Teaching Practice programme. Each beneficiary will receive a stipend of R2000 for two months while undertaking the school experience.

Commenting on the significance of the moment, the VC who started his illustrious career in education as a teacher in 1983, shared his journey from being a bursary recipient himself to becoming an advocate for education.

"This gesture matters deeply to us. There is an element of reciprocity, when someone helps you, you must plough back. I hope these future teachers present today will be motivated by this gesture and will become competent and ethical educators that future generations can rely on."

Prof Mzuyanda Mavuso, the acting Dean for Education emphasized the University's commitment to nurturing future teachers. "Education transforms lives and it's a great honour for us to invest in the future of education, especially on Mandela Day, a UFH alumnus whose belief in the transformative power of education continues to inspire."

Inducting the students into the programme, Mr Thobile Mona, the Provincial Skills Advisor for ETDP SETA, highlighted the broader impact of the initiative. "In addition to ensuring that financial constraints do not hinder passionate students from pursuing their dreams of becoming educators, a skills development committee will be established to monitor the implementation and report on the programme to ensure the beneficiaries become competent educators."

Among the beneficiaries is Anda Gxokwana, a 23-year-old third-year student specializing in Senior Phase and Further Education and Training (FET). Hailing from Gqebera, Anda who is currently conducting his school experience at Motherwell High School, his alma mater, expressed immense relief at receiving financial assistance.

"Being unfunded is challenging. This support is an answered prayer for me and my family. As the eldest of three children and with one parent as the sole breadwinner, this stipend will make a significant difference."

Chuma Njenjani and Sisikelelwe Nkohla, both final-year students, expressed gratitude on behalf of their peers. "This funding is not just about monetary support, it's about belief in our potential to make a difference as educators," Chuma remarked. Sisikelelwe added, "We pledge to uphold the ethics of our profession and strive for excellence."



Yet another powerful public lecture in honour of Ntantala and Mabele

The third installment of the annual Phyllis Ntantala and Prudence Mabele Joint Public Lecture, co-hosted by the University of Fort Hare (UFH) and Nelson Mandela University (NMU), continued the series' tradition of amplifying African women's voices and celebrating their extraordinary contributions, courage, and unwavering commitment to justice.

Launched in 2022, this lecture series serves a dual purpose. Firstly, it honours the profound intellectual contributions of Ntantala and Mabele, two influential women from different generations who championed justice for women, children, and marginalized groups. Secondly, it seeks to weave together women's voices to inform the feminist futures, thus countering the pervasive erasures of women's historic contributions to building our society today.

The lecture series is co-convened by Prof Zethu Matebeni, SARCHI Chair in Sexualities, Genders, and Queer Studies at UFH; Prof Babalwa Magoqwana, interim director of the Centre for Women and Gender Studies at NMU; and Prof Pumla Gqola, SARCHI Chair in African Feminist Imagination at NMU.

The inaugural lecture, delivered by Dr Mamphela Ramphele and Lebogang Ramafoko and titled "Let's Hear Them Speak," took place at NMU. The second lecture, "Speaking Truth to Power," featured Dr Stella Nyanzi and Sibongile Ndashe.

This year's lecture, themed "Black Feminist Work(s)," held at NMU on 25 July was presented by Nana Darkoa Sekyiamah, a distinguished feminist writer and blogger from Ghana, and Keketso Moeti, a prominent civic activist based in South Africa.

SPOTLIGHTING GBV DURING WOMEN'S MONTH



“Consent is a line drawn in the sand for you and not by you. There is absolutely no excuse for overstepping that line,”

As we entered August, a month set aside to honour women of the past, present, and future, the University of Fort Hare (UFH) hosted a critical dialogue aimed at tackling Gender-Based Violence (GBV) – a widespread phenomenon that continues to plague the women of today.

Organized by the UFH Gender-Based Violence Prevention Unit (GBV PU), in collaboration with the UFH Centre for Leadership Ethics in Africa (CLEA), the dialogue focused on a crucial topic: Sexual Consent: Myths, Facts, and Legal Realities.

Speakers included Dr. Sheena Swemmer from the Centre for Applied Legal Studies (CALs) at the University of the Witwatersrand, who provided a comprehensive overview of a recent Supreme Court of Appeal judgment relevant to sexual consent, and Dr. Lindsay Kelland, a feminist philosopher based in the Allan Gray Centre for Leadership Ethics at Rhodes University. She shared a compelling account of her experiences and efforts in the fight against GBV.

The event drew a large number of students across the University's three campuses who actively participated in the discussion held on the Alice campus.

Outlining the event's purpose, CLEA Director Dr. Chris Alsobrook highlighted the significance of informed dialogue to educate the public on consent, starting with debunking the myths and providing the facts and legal realities of sexual consent in relationships.

“The dialogue is premised on the fact that there is a lot of confusion and misreading when it comes to sexual consent. Even renowned and educated advocates get it wrong. So where does it leave ordinary people like us? How are we supposed to know exactly what consent really means? Hence, we decided to have this dialogue for people to get informed and express their opinions and hopefully get clear ground on what consent really means,” said Dr. Alsobrook.

Setting the tone, the discussion commenced with frank opening remarks from UFH Vice-Chancellor Professor Sakhela Buhlungu. “Consent is at the core of everything. It is a basic element of humanity. No is no, and yes is yes, and everyone knows that. In almost all instances, we often ask a person for their consent, and it is understood very clearly. Why is it that, when it comes to sexual consent, there is a lack of understanding?”

The VC, whose office deals with the appeals of reported cases of GBV at UFH, said: “At the heart of consent is the issue of power. Because one has the power, they think they have consent.”

“Consent is a line drawn in the sand for you and not by you. There is absolutely no excuse for overstepping that line,” the VC asserted.

In her presentation, Dr. Swemmer, who is a human rights lawyer, drew from the cases she has been involved in at the Supreme Court of Appeal to shed light on the legal intricacies and evolving jurisprudence surrounding consent, offering valuable insights into how the legal system addresses and interprets these issues.

Dr. Kelland's personal narrative and activism highlighted the urgent need for continued advocacy and support for survivors, as well as the role of communities in effecting change.

The presentations were followed by a dialogue session dubbed “Campus Conversation: Let's Talk About Sexual Consent!” The interactive panel discussion allowed participants to engage in open and robust conversations, ask questions, and reflect on the complex issues surrounding sexual consent.

The event saw three students, Zandile Ndlovu, Siphokazi Tima, and Sikhulule Bukani, walk away with cash prizes as the winners of a consent creative work competition that took place leading up to the day. The prizes were presented by the VC, Dr. Alsobrook, and the Director of the UFH GBV PU, Ms. Nonhlanhla Sibanda Moyo.

At the end of the programme, it was evident that significant progress had been made in challenging misconceptions, providing factual information, and clarifying legal definitions related to sexual consent.

In closing, the UFH GBV PU Investigating Officer, Advocate Palesa Mpapa reiterated the importance of such conversations throughout Women's Month and beyond in reclaiming a safer UFH.

Zoology and Entomology Researchers showcase groundbreaking studies at Global Primatology Congress



A team of University of Fort Hare (UFH) representatives was among over 150 researchers and experts in primatology from around the world who had descended on Potchefstroom for the 3rd Annual African Primatological Society Congress.

The congress is hosted in conjunction with the 19th Annual Meeting of the Primate Ecology and Genetics Group - South African Primatological Society at North-West University from 25 - 28 September.

The UFH team led by Dr Curswan Andrews, Lecturer in the Department of Zoology and Entomology, comprises three postgraduate students, Me-kuthi Gogela, Siyahluma Mngoma and Alungile Zwezwe who showcased their research in primate health and conservation at the global gathering.

The theme of the conference, Integration of Research and Conservation in African Primates, aims to provide a platform for sharing knowledge, experience and to promote primate research and improve the conservation of African primates by encouraging

greater involvement and leadership of African primatologists.

“This conference provides a unique opportunity to exchange ideas and collaborate with leading experts. The feedback we received was invaluable, and we are excited to continue our work in this area,” said the postgrad students.

The programme also featured workshops that aimed to improve knowledge of the advances, constraints, and future perspectives of Primatology in the different regions of Africa (Western Africa, Eastern Africa, Northern Africa, Southern Africa, Central Africa, and Madagascar) with a focus on the implementation of primate conservation action plans.

The conference focused on action plans for Africa’s most endangered platforms, paving the way for government and community-led initiatives to address the existing and emerging threats to primates.

Additionally, the panel discussions, and networking opportunities, provided for future collaborations.

Music Department to hit even higher notes with grand new Music Tech Lab



“The facility is designed to cater to a wide range of musical genres and technical skills, from composing and arranging to recording and mixing.”

The Music Department is set to reach even greater heights with the acquisition of its first-ever state-of-the-art Music Technology Lab. The cutting-edge facility promises to revolutionize music education and production at the 108-year-old University, marking a significant leap forward for both students and the Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities.

The lab, features the latest in music production software, high-quality audio equipment, and advanced digital interfaces designed to enhance learning, creativity, and professional development not only in music but also in film, radio, and the archive industry.

“We are thrilled to introduce this new Music Tech Lab, which will provide our students access to cutting-edge tools and technology they need to excel in the modern music industry. This facility is not just a space for practice; it’s a hub for innovation and collaboration, where students can experiment, create, and develop their skills,” said Ndumiso Mtshali, Head of the Music Department at UFH.

The lab also affords an opportunity to further enhance the Department located at the Miriam Makeba Centre for the Performing Arts on the East London campus, which went from having 13 students for its first intake in 2012 to now having 168 students majoring in various genres such as African Music, Jazz and Western Music.

Music Tech Production Lecturer, Mr Gary Ndlovu said the lab is equipped with an array of sophisticated tools that will support various aspects of music production, ultimately responding to the industry’s needs for more skilled music producers.

“The facility is designed to cater to a wide range of musical genres and technical skills, from composing and arranging to recording and mixing. It also widens pathways and opportunities not just in the field of music but also film, radio, and the archives industry.”

“The acquisition of the lab aligns with the university’s broader strategy to enhance its offerings to provide students with practical and hands-on experience to enable them to venture into entrepreneurship. It further aligns intending to strengthen community engagement as the lab’s impact will extend beyond the university community and see students collaborating with artists from surrounding communities to produce music.”

Even more excited about the newly acquired facility are the students. Bongumusa Nxumalo, a final year who majors in voice and music tech production said she was looking forward to the hours she will spend in the lab honing her skills. “It is an exciting and ideal space. We look forward to maximizing what this lab offers in enhancing our production.”

Nazo Bavuma, a third-year Music student said the lab was a big gain for the Department and the students. “I can assure you that more music hits can be expected from the Department.

Unlocking the Microbial World: A Celebration of International Microorganism Day



On September 17, 2024, the Alice campus became the vibrant hub of scientific exploration as it hosted the inaugural International Microorganism Day. The event, organized by the Department of Biochemistry and Microbiology in collaboration with the South African Medical Research Council's Microbial Water Quality Monitoring Centre, aimed to enlighten grade 12 learners about the vital role microorganisms play in our lives and the environment.

Dr. Nontongana, the Deputy Director of the Centre, opened the event with a sense of pride, noting that this was the first time in history that such a day was being celebrated in South Africa. "Today marks a significant milestone in our understanding and appreciation of microorganisms," she stated, setting the tone for a day filled with knowledge and discovery.

The keynote address was delivered by the esteemed Prof. Al Okoh, the Director of the Microbial Water Quality Monitoring Centre. His presentation, titled "Unlocking the Microbial World," captivated the audience of 58 top science learners selected from five local schools: Imingcangathelo, Jabavu, Nzululwazi, Phandulwazi, and Enkwenkwezini. Prof. Okoh emphasized the importance of microorganisms in various ecosystems and their essential roles in processes such as decomposition, nutrient cycling, and even human health.

As the morning unfolded, the learners engaged in a series of presentations from 9:30 am to 12:30 pm, where they absorbed knowledge about microbial

diversity and its implications for water quality and environmental sustainability. The atmosphere buzzed with excitement and curiosity, as students eagerly participated in discussions and asked insightful questions.

In the afternoon, the event transitioned into a series of interactive activities designed to reinforce the morning's lessons. The learners enjoyed board games, group experiments, and quizzes that challenged their understanding of microbiology in a fun and engaging manner. Laughter and camaraderie filled the gymnasium as students collaborated, competed, and learned from one another.

The event concluded with a sense of accomplishment and inspiration, leaving the young participants eager to explore the microbial world further. The day not only celebrated microorganisms but also ignited a passion for science among the learners, fostering a new generation of scientists who would carry the torch of knowledge into the future.

Reflecting on the success of the event, Dr. Nontongana remarked, "We have sown the seeds of curiosity today. It is our hope that these learners will continue to explore the wonders of microbiology and understand its significance in our lives." The first International Microorganism Day was indeed a remarkable achievement, paving the way for future celebrations and a deeper appreciation of the unseen world that surrounds us.

Music Department making waves on international conference stages

The Music Department continues to make its mark on the global stage with a remarkable showing at prestigious international conferences.

Recently, a team of graduates who are currently pursuing their master's degrees and lecturer, Mr Thembela Vokwana showcased their research at the International Library of African Music (ILAM) conference held at Rhodes University.

ILAM is a research institution devoted to the study of music and oral arts in Africa and is one of the world's great repositories of African music. The event marked the 70th anniversary of the library and paid tribute to its founder, Andrew Tracey.

This appearance follows the group's successful presentation at the South African Society for Research in Music (SASRIM) conference held at Wits University in July where the HOD, Mr Ndumiso Mtshali also presented his work.

The topics presented at the ILAM conference delved into various aspects of African music, its history, and its contemporary relevance.

Amanda Phetheni presented a comparative study of the musical traditions (umfahlo wendlavini) of the amaXesibe and amaMpondo communities.

Nomonde Makamba's topic titled: 'Le bollo La Basadi': Basotho Women's Initiation Music, shed light on the significant role of women's initiation music in Basotho culture, emphasizing its importance in



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cultural rites and the preservation of traditions.

Through his presentation, 'Lo ngumhlaba Wethu' - This is our Land: Place, Memory and Dispossession in Selected Compositions, Mr Vokwana examined how place, memory, and dispossession are articulated in the works of renowned composers, Reuben Caluza and James Khumalo.

Yonela Kese's presentation titled: The Voice of Hugh Masekela: Analysing Stimela and Khawuleza explored the powerful musical narratives within Hugh Masekela's works, focusing on his influential pieces "Stimela" and "Khawuleza."

While Mohau Mogale discussed the reconstruction of Tswana indigenous art song and choral composition.

Mr Vokwana said the department's participation at these two conferences highlights its ongoing efforts to contribute to the global discourse on African music and to honour the legacies of those who played meaningful roles in preserving the history of African music.

"These conferences not only provide a valuable opportunity for students and the faculty to share their research but also strengthen UFH's position as a leading institution in the field of music studies."

HONOURING WOMEN CHAMPIONS FOR SPORTING EXCELLENCE

The University of Fort Hare paid tribute to their women champions for the sporting excellence they have demonstrated over the last year. The Women's Champion Sports Award was held in the new student center on the Alice campus on 16 July. The excitement began before the official glitz and glamour event in the afternoon, with a morning parade of the two championship teams and their respective trophies.

Both teams, escorted by Vice-Chancellor Prof. Buhlungu and Dean of Students Lufuno Tshikhudo, jogged in high spirits, singing songs around the

Alice campus ring road. This created a joyous experience for many students, some of whom were returning to campus after the semester break. The celebratory parade was greeted with whistles and car horns, acknowledging the success of both teams.

The awards, the brainchild of the Vice-Chancellor's office, aimed to celebrate the university women's rugby team, the Baby Blues, for their spirited performance as they conquered the FNB Varsity Cup earlier this year. The other team celebrated was the ladies' football team, the Baby Wolves,

who were honored following their promotion to the top flight of women's football, the Hollywood Bets League, after being crowned Sasol Super League champions in 2023.

The glitz and glamour off the field saw the ladies looking beautiful as they arrived in their evening dresses and high heels, walking the red carpet to receive certificates of excellence in the presence of UFH management, sports commentators, administrators, and former players.

Former Banyana Banyana star and current SABC TV football analyst, Simphiwe Dlodlu, urged the girls to use their backgrounds to turn their lives around positively and remain true to themselves. Dlodlu emphasized, "Your parents know what they desire for you, but you should realize that you are on your own against everyone else." She reminded them that they are student-athletes and that academics should always come first, saying, "They will back you for life."

"We are here to stay," said a determined Siphokazi Njani, Deputy President of Border Women's Rugby, referring to the challenges of being a woman in South Africa. She continued, "There will be no rugby for you without you." UFH's success in rugby indicates that players will remain with the province.

Asavela Sigadi, a former Baby Blues player who has put blood, sweat, and tears into her rugby career, said, "During our time, we didn't manage to achieve what you have as we didn't take it so seriously, which we regret. But you have made it for us. We are so proud because you have delivered for the University of Fort Hare and the community."

Vice-Chancellor Prof. Buhlungu expressed confidence that the Varsity Cup is not going anywhere as the girls are determined to defend it. However, the VC expects three more national trophies before or by the end of his term.



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INTRODUCING THE NEWLY ELECTED STAFF SPORTS EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE



“UFH sports have been on the rise over the past three years. Trophies have been coming from both students and staff.”

The ethos of championship resonates throughout the University of Fort Hare, encompassing both student and staff sports. The newly elected Staff Sports Executive Committee recently took the opportunity to introduce themselves to the Vice-Chancellor, Professor Sakhela Buhlungu, and presented the trophies they won in both USSA and SAUSSA games last summer.

This year, staff sports will be competing in USSA’s tournament in Limpopo, while SAUSSA will be held in Zimbabwe. According to the Chair of Staff Sports, Mr Kwanele Tshapu, “We felt a need for this as we cannot do without your support, advice, and blessings.”

The Vice-Chancellor remarked, “UFH sports have been on the rise over the past three years. Trophies have been coming from both students and staff.” This achievement has occurred without high-performance facilities or proper sporting infrastructure, but rather through “big hearts, love of sport, and a positive winning attitude.” He suggested the need for staff recognition and awards beyond academics, a staff indaba to discuss sporting matters broadly, staff weekends to promote wellness and greater centrality of sports and collegiality among staff members. “Going into the future, I will always remember UFH for its sporting greatness,” said the VC.

Fort Hare staff sports have grown significantly over the past few years, expanding from a membership of fewer than 40 to over 350 members currently. This membership reflects the demographics of the institution, as revealed by the Chair. “The University of Fort Hare sports teams also receive support from individuals outside the university, who travel with the team to show their support. Everywhere we go, people we compete against are attracted to our regalia, and it’s now visible across the participating countries,” said Tshapu.

In their last SAUSSA outing, the team achieved first place in basketball, netball, tug of war, and pool, with tennis finishing in third place.

The new executive members are: Kwanele Tshapu, Chair (also the National Treasurer of SAUSSA); Vuyo Makalima, Vice Chairperson; Thompo Tshivhase, PRO; Zimasa Dubeni, Deputy Secretary; Luyanda Peter, Coordinator; Phumza Qederwana, General Secretary; and Mandisa Mlilo, Treasurer.

We wish them all the best!

RUGBY SUPREMO REALISES PROTEAS DREAM... IN BODYBUILDING

University of Fort Hare rugby administrator extraordinaire Mhlali Rodolo was capped by her country at the IFBB SA National Bodybuilding Championships in Durban.

It had been an honour the 32-year-old was hardly able to believe herself, having only become involved in the sport two years ago.

Rodolo received her Proteas blazer for managing the national junior girls' team at the World Bodybuilding & Fitness Championships and Congress in Spain last year.

It was decided that the 2024 champs would be the perfect platform to award national colours to those who represented the republic in Barcelona.

At Fort Hare, Rodolo has overseen as many as seven sporting codes at any given time, having initially made her mark as an outstanding rugby administrator.

"It is a special moment for me to become a Proteas representative," the sports officer said.

"This is something I have been working towards, but I never thought I would receive this accolade for bodybuilding. For me it's always been rugby, rugby, rugby."

In 2021, her endeavours in the oval-ball game earned her a spot on the University Sports South Africa (USSA) executive committee.

However, her foray into bodybuilding came by chance – in 2022. She was asked to sit in on an event taking place at the same venue in Johannesburg where the karate championships, in which she was involved, were being held.

Before she knew it, she was asked to take up the role of interim chair for USSA bodybuilding with the directive to help build its profile. This paved the way for her selection as a manager for Team SA.

"In Spain, I had the opportunity to deal with the

athletes behind the scenes, making sure they received everything they needed and making sure their names were on the right lists," she said.

"It was a nice experience to see people from different countries."

The 38-member national team performed admirably, bringing in several medals and trophies across the bodybuilding and fitness genres.

On her return from Barcelona, Rodolo immediately set about the task of restoring bodybuilding to its former glory at Fort Hare.

Her first job was to employ a coach and in former UFH student and double national bodybuilding champion Chris Nguta she found an absolute gem.

Next came the call for athletes to join the programme.

Finally, she drew on her extensive experience to make sure the students' requirements were met for clothing, supplements and other essentials.

"If you give students what they need, they will show you flames," she said.

And, on fire they were, ratcheting up the medal count at the USSAs in North West despite many members having no previous experience of competitive bodybuilding.

By her own admission, Rodolo believed that she had been able to do the individual codes on her duty roster more justice after giving up three – leaving her with rugby, athletics and bodybuilding.

"Because I have had more time, it has been easier for me to revive bodybuilding. I really want this code to succeed."

She quipped that she had even put on more weight thanks to not having to oversee so many sports.

"Imagine!"



"This is something I have been working towards, but I never thought I would receive this accolade for bodybuilding. For me it's always been rugby, rugby, rugby."



“They saw the work we have done at Fort Hare and our male and female teams making history in Varsity rugby competitions. If we hadn’t produced these results, I don’t believe I would have been nominated.”

NEW PRESIDENT MAFU AIMS TO PLUG GAPS IN BORDER WOMEN’S RUGBY

The election of Aluta Mafu as president of Border Women’s Rugby is just reward for years of hard work put into elevating the game at the University of Fort Hare.

The 29-year-old rugby club administrator and men’s rugby team manager, who sat on the varsity’s SRC during her student days, has been instrumental in the institution’s on-field success since taking up the role in 2021.

Earlier this year the Baby Blues claimed their maiden Varsity Cup title while the men’s team also created history in 2022 when they became the first Eastern Cape tertiary institution to win the FNB Varsity Shield.

These achievements would not have been possible without Mafu’s considerable organisational powers that ensured the players had everything they needed to perform.

Behind the scenes, she works tirelessly equipping them with kit, arranging travel and accommodation as they criss-cross the country and giving them the necessary support on the road.

What stands out about her appointment as president of the women’s game in the region is that it is her first foray into Border’s rugby structures.

“I was nominated and there was a meeting to discuss the credentials of the nominees. It was put to a vote and the conclusion was that I was the perfect woman for the job,” she explained.

“They saw the work we have done at Fort Hare and our male and female teams making history in Varsity rugby competitions. If we hadn’t produced these results, I don’t believe I would have been nominated.”

She was officially appointed on July 13 and her ascension to the presidency automatically makes her a member of the Border Rugby Union.

Mafu graduated from Fort Hare with a Bachelor of Education and Agriculture in 2020 and took up her role as administrator a year later.

She said her degree had helped her in that many of the philosophies found in education applied to administration, making it easier to work with people.

Her job requires her to think on her feet, as there are often cases when the men’s and women’s teams are playing at the same time but in different parts of the country.

With the Border Women’s Rugby position now also on her plate, her schedule will be even more frenetic. But she is not worried.

“Managing rugby doesn’t change. Even if I went overseas it wouldn’t change. I know how to manage my time and employ the principles I know.

“Even when I am not there in person, I can make sure players have what they need. I will bring the same thing to Border.

“It’s not like I am managing another code – rugby is who I am.”

While Mafu has not yet met with the new provincial executive, she has already given a lot of thought to what she wants to bring to the table.

Her first goal is to make women’s rugby in the province stronger at age-group and senior level; to the point that it is on a par with the men’s game.

“I want to change the narrative,” she explained.

“Our senior ladies’ team are doing well. We just lost to the Bulls Daisies in the semifinals [of the SA Rugby Women’s Premier Division].

But it is about making sure they had a large pool of players and depth.

“We need to make sure that when players go from U16 to U18, the next step is U20. There should not be gaps in-between. This is something I would like to address.”



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