



University of Fort Hare  
*Together in Excellence*

# UFH NEWS

FEBRUARY 2023



I Chose UFH!

WAMKELEKILE  
FRESHER

#Decade of Renewal



University of Fort Hare  
*Together in Excellence*

# 2023 OFFICIAL ACADEMIC OPENING

“The fact that you are here means that you are good enough and have the intelligence to become great.”

With these words of affirmation, the University of Fort Hare’s (UFH) Vice-Chancellor, Professor Sakhela Buhlungu officially welcomed 3700 first year students to the University.

The 2023 Official Academic Opening event was held on the 13<sup>th</sup> February, on the University’s main campus in Alice, five days after the University celebrated its 107th anniversary.

In his keynote address, the VC reflected on the past year and set the tone for the current year. The 2023 week-long Orientation Programme dubbed “*Wamkelekile Fresher*” kicked-off soon after the opening ceremony.

Reflecting on the past year, the VC said: “During my time as VC, the 2022 Academic Year was one of the best. We achieved many great things such as our Finance Department obtaining a clean audit outcome - for the first time in many decades; winning the Varsity Shield Cup - a first for the University and the recognition we received from our international peers due to our excellence.”

In 2022, the University also forged several strategic partnerships such as the collaborations with the Eastern Cape Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs to conduct research into the effectiveness of Local Economic Development (LED) agencies and a partnership with the Eastern Cape Provincial Council of Churches. The institution also made its debut on the Times Higher Education ranking.

“Our academic enterprise has become stronger, credit goes to the academics and administrators and all those who are involved in ensuring that we continue being a centre of excellence.”

The VC also confidently declared the University’s financial stability saying: “When you clamp down on rogue behavior and put plugs on leakages on those holes, the kitty gets healthier. Tribute goes to the staff for carrying this place even under deadly circumstances. We lost colleagues

and friends in our path to uproot corruption. We remain resilient because we are committed to this University.” This declaration was met with resounding applause from staff and students.

Setting the tone for the current academic year, Prof Buhlungu dedicated this year to forging meaningful partnerships that will further enhance and transform the future of the University and increase placement opportunities for students.

The VC also gave a positive update on the new niche areas that the University has identified which are Animal Health, Dairy Science and Veterinary Science. “The three Deputy Vice-Chancellor and I, recently met with Minister of Agriculture, Land Reform and Rural Development, Thoko Didiza where we discussed how and what steps needed to be taken to realize these areas. The matter is now a cabinet decision. Having these new niche areas is something we always aspired to, and in the past, we were told we were not ready for this. Now we are ready.”

Prof Buhlungu also declared this year as the year of sporting excellence and posed a challenge to the Dean of Student Affairs, Lufuno Tshikudo to make use of the swimming pool to teach students swimming skills. “There is no reason why our students should not be proficient in swimming when we have a swimming pool almost as big as an Olympic size.”

He also urged the Dean to facilitate a programme that will assist student to acquire driver’s licenses. “When our students graduate, we want them to have their degree in their hand and a driver’s license in their pocket.”

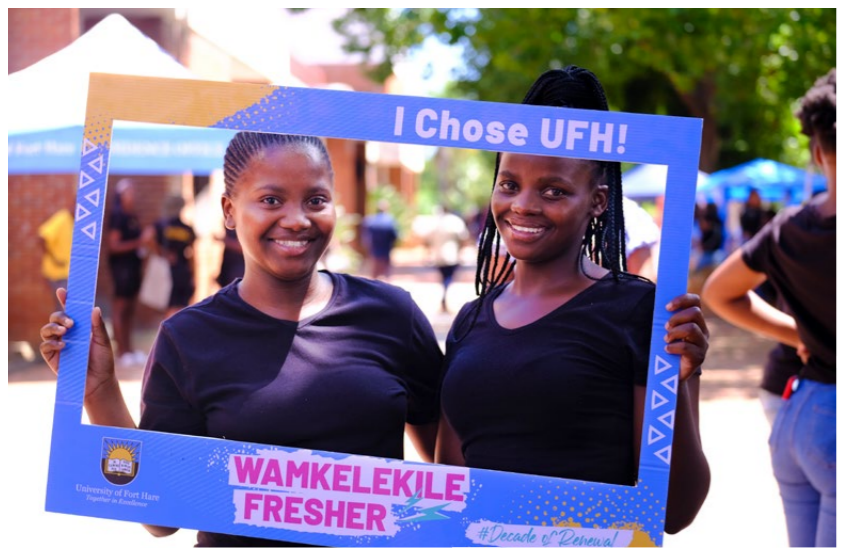
Beaming with excitement, Hlanganani Tsiletsi, one of the 2023 Fresher, said choosing Fort Hare has always been his first option. “I got two university acceptance letters and I chose UFH because this is where I want to be. This is the home of legends.”

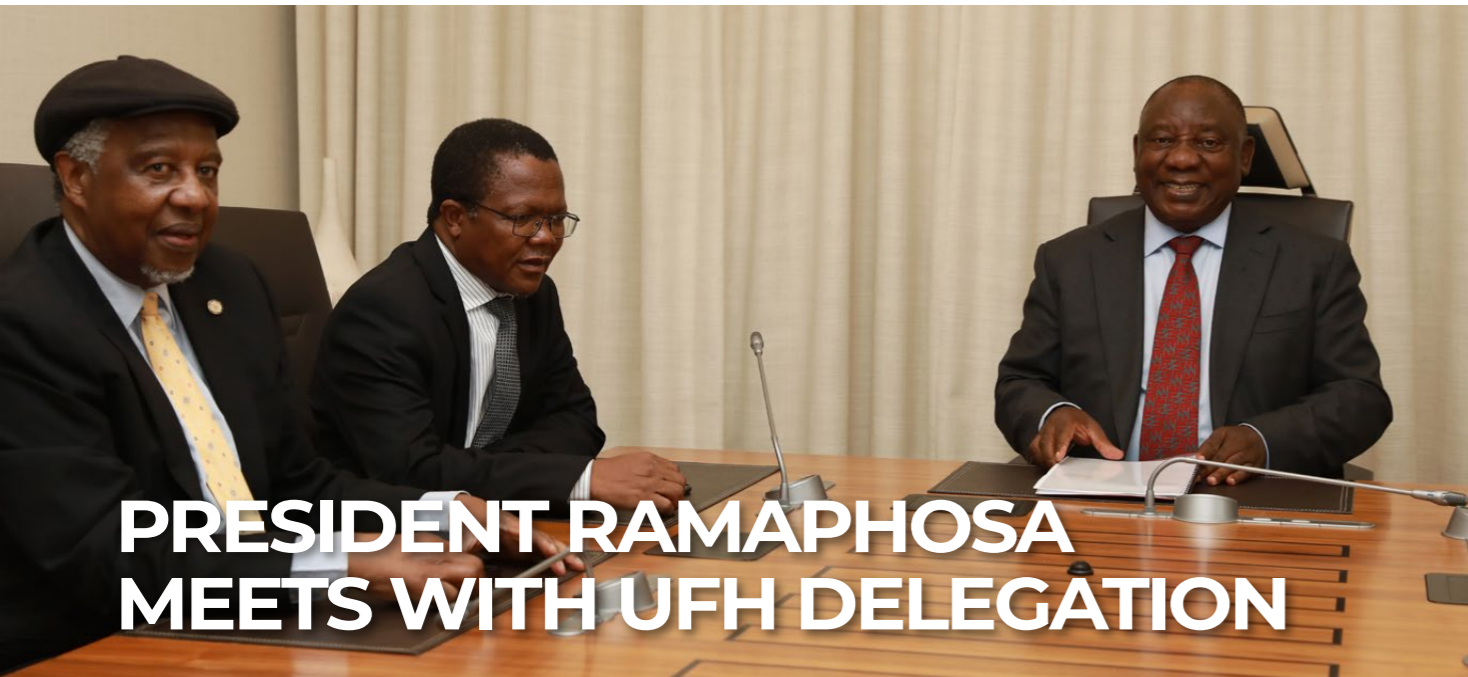
Wamkelekile Fresher!



**“When you clamp down on rogue behavior and put plugs on leakages on those holes, the kitty gets healthier. Tribute goes to the staff for carrying this place even under deadly circumstances. We lost colleagues and friends in our path to uproot corruption. We remain resilient because we are committed to this University.”**







## PRESIDENT RAMAPHOSA MEETS WITH UFH DELEGATION

**“The President has heard our concerns and said he will now meet with the relevant ministers and the security cluster to explore security measures to assist with protecting the University going forward.”**

Calls for President Cyril Ramaphosa to assist with providing protection and support to the University of Fort Hare following the killings and attempted assassinations of staff were answered when a delegation from the University met with the President.

The meeting was held in Cape Town on the 23<sup>rd</sup> of February.

The delegation from UFH was led by the Chancellor, Advocate Dumisa Ntsebeza SC; the Deputy Chair of Council, Dr Siphokazi Koyana; the Vice-Chancellor, Prof Sakhela Buhlungu; and the Deputy Vice-Chancellor for Teaching and Learning, Prof Renuka Vithal. Mr Mfundo Scott, UFH’s Acting ICT Director, was also present following cyber espionage crimes that the University recently uncovered.

In attendance from the President’s Office were Roshene Singh, Chief of Staff and the President’s spokesperson Vincent Magwenya.

Also present was the Minister of Higher Education and Training, Dr Blade Nzimande, accompanied by his Director-General and Advisor.

The engagement with the President

came after the VC openly called on the Presidency for support and protection following incidents of murders and attempted murders against some senior managers at the University, including Prof Vithal. In May last year, Mr Petrus Roets (UFH Head of Fleet) was gunned down in daylight.

In January, the country was shocked by the brazen assassination attempt on the life of Prof Buhlungu that resulted in the death of his protector, Mboneli Vesele.

Prof Vithal said the UFH delegation was very humbled by the genuine and sincere interest shown by the

President during the engagement.

“The President understood the issues we are facing. This includes acts of violence, intimidation, and smear campaigns in the wake of our clean-up operation and renewal programme to restore the dignity of this historical University and root out corruption.”

The VC said the engagement was positive and hopeful. “The President has heard our concerns and said he will now meet with the relevant ministers and the security cluster to explore security measures to assist with protecting the University going forward.”



## Council Concludes Successful Two-Day Workshop



**“As we journey towards the future, I am filled with confidence when I look at the gifts, skills, and intellectual capacity that we have in council”**

The University of Fort Hare (UFH) Council plays a crucial role in exercising general oversight over the institution and its affairs. To ensure this role continues to be carried out diligently, council members met over two days (28<sup>th</sup> February and 1<sup>st</sup> March) and held a successful workshop.

During the meeting, the members engaged in open-ended robust discussions on progressive issues such as leading a changing university, university autonomy and accountability.

The members also assessed their performance by completing a Department of Higher Education Training (DHET) scorecard and the Chief Financial Officer, Mr Charles Matumba gave a presentation on financial sustainability.

According to the Chairperson of Council, Bishop Ivan Abrahams, the engagement was a great success.

“There was a lot of positive energy from Council Members as we looked at the kind of leadership needed for a university to thrive at this time. One of the biggest debates was on the issue of accountability

and autonomy, what it means, especially in light of the events that transpired in the past few months.”

“I am positive that we are on an even keel in terms of achieving our vision and mission. As we journey towards the future, I am filled with confidence when I look at the gifts, skills, and intellectual capacity that we have in council,” said Bishop Abrahams.

Installed in 2020, the current council oversaw the development of the new strategic plan, *Towards a Decade of Renewal, 2022-2026* -a programme that has already delivered significant outcomes. This includes the University receiving a historic clean audit opinion for the 2021 financial year and the approval of 25 policies in the last two years. These policies include a whistleblowing policy and a fraud prevention policy, as well as critical finance policies and academic policies.

Summarizing the outcomes of the workshop, Vice-Chancellor Prof Sakhela Buhlungu said different opinions were expressed and addressed, however, convergence was reached on a lot of the fundamental issues.

“In the midst of the tragedies and challenges we have endured, this workshop has shown us that, while we are in the process of healing the momentum of Renewal has not stopped,” said the VC.



# Nations declare their support for UFH during National Prayer Service

Clerics, politicians, business and civic organization leaders heeded to a clarion call made by the Eastern Cape Provincial Council of Churches (SACC: EC) and assembled on the University of Fort Hare's Alice campus on the 12<sup>th</sup> of February 2023, to pray for the University during a National Prayer Service.

The call by the Council's provincial leader, Reverend Lulama Ntshingwa comes after assassination attempts against some senior managers at the University, including the Vice-Chancellor, Prof Sakhela Buhlungu; the assassination of Mr Petrus Roets (UFH Head of Transport) in May last year; the assassination of Mr Mboneli Vesele (Vice-Chancellor's Protector) last month and an incident where a staff member was found bound and gagged at his residence.

The purpose of the service was to pray for the protection and the safety of Prof Buhlungu and his management in their quest to uproot corruption and promote clean governance at UFH and to pray for the safety of those who are targeted and their loved ones.

Among the dignitaries that graced the event was the former President of Botswana, Dr Ian Khama who is the son of Sir Seretse Khama - one of our esteemed alumni; Ambassador Bridgette Motsepe the daughter of ABC Motsepe who is also an esteemed alumnus of the University; Dr Frank Chikane, South African civil servant, writer and cleric and; Bishop Paul Verryn who is the Minister of the Methodist Church of Southern Africa.

Also joining the service and declaring their support for UFH was UDM Leader, General Bantu Holomisa; the Deputy Speaker of the Eastern Cape Legislature, Mr Mlibo Qoboshiyane; Mayor of Raymond Mlaba Municipality, Councillor Nomhle Sango and the Deputy General-Secretary of the SACC, Reverend Mzwandile Molo.

Delivering the keynote address, Dr Khama, a former commander of the Botswana Defence Force said he always longed to set foot on the UFH soil where his father studied and was happy that his wish was granted during the occasion to pray for the University of Fort Hare.

"As much as we are happy to be here, we are aware of the challenges the VC and this University have been facing and wish to thank SACC: EC for inviting us to this service. It is shocking and totally unacceptable that the VC and the University have been subjected to acts of criminality that seek to murder, harass and intimidate the University community, no one should endure what you have endured as an institution of learning."

Addressing the VC, Dr Khama said: "Your determination to continue your vision and mission, undeterred in attaining a corrupt-free environment is commendable. It serves as an inspiration to all of us."

Rev. Chikane strongly condemned the perpetrators of criminal and rogue activities at the University. "We cannot allow ourselves to be taken over by criminals."

Rev Chikane encouraged the VC to remain steadfast in his quest. "Do not waver in this Decade of Renewal. What is happening here is what is happening in this country, we cannot have a situation where we extract from the government without adding value - we are heading for a failed state, and we must say No!"

Pledging his message of support, General Holomisa said: "We were shocked to learn about the attempt on the VC's life and saddened by Mr Vesele's tragic loss of life and we offer our condolences to his family, friends and the greater community of Fort Hare. There is a general lack of rule of law in this country - the criminal justice system is absent. There seems to be a mafia state that resembles an underworld that is dedicating the direction of this country - this must be stopped. Thank you to the SACC: EC for calling us here to say no to this underworld way of doing things."

"I would like to thank Prof Buhlungu for promoting the ethics of good governance at this institution. We cannot allow a situation where this historical university is used as a ferry point to obtain academic qualifications without writing examinations, this corrupt culture must be investigated," said General Holomisa.

Bishop Verryn said the struggle against corruption should become a new mantra to all universities, especially the kind of corruption that is hidden in the dark. "In this prayer meeting, I want to ask God for two things: firstly, the safety of this University so that it continues to be an instrument of light. We pray that the perpetrators of this nonsense are exposed. Secondly, I pray to God to knock on the doors of the plotters in the wee hours of the morning and call them to account."

Qoboshiyane and Councillor Sango shared the same sentiments as they expressed their support for the VC and the University.

Qoboshiyane urged the VC to surge forward knowing the route ahead is no plain sailing and that it was full of detractors. "We thank you for the courage to save this 107-year-old University with 16 500 students on board. We stand by you, without fear."

The UFH Student Representative Council President, Siphokazi Mbalo also pronounced the students' unwavering support for the VC and his management by strongly expressing their stance against corruption. "The people who are destroying this University do not have the best interest of the University at heart, it is up to us to make that call and say NO to corruption," said Mbalo.



# R130-MILLION WATER INFRASTRUCTURE PROJECT GETS UNDERWAY

**“This project is not for certain individuals, it is for the benefit of the 10 000 students on campus and the communities that surround the University. This is a classic case of a rising tide that will raise all boats,”**

The University of Fort Hare and Alice multi-million-rand water infrastructure project site has been handed over to contractors – signaling the start of work on this significant development that will end erratic water supply to the University’s main campus and communities in the small town of Alice.

The water treatment works project that was handed over on the 15<sup>th</sup> of February, is one of two developments funded by the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET) to the tune of R130-million, the second project entails the upgrading of the wastewater treatment works.

Critical to this project is the collaboration between UFH as the implementation agent, Amathole District Municipality as the owner of the water treatment works, and Raymond Mhlaba Municipality as the beneficiary of the project. The process is facilitated by the University in conjunction with Raymond Mhlaba Municipality following the signing of a memorandum of understanding.

The work to be carried out by the contractor, Mpumalanga Construction (PTY) entails extensive upgrades on the treatment plant, the reservoir, and the reticulation/ piping system. The current capacity of the water treatment works is between 70 and 80 litres per second and once the upgrade work is complete the capacity will increase to 140 litres per second.

## The scope of work is as follows:

1. Flocculent channels to be increased from 30 metres to 95 metres
2. Two new sedimentation basins to be constructed in addition to the three existing basins.
3. Two additional sand filters to be installed in addition to the three existing sand filters.
4. Chlorine dosing to be upgraded following hailstorm damage.
5. Existing sludge ponds to be cleaned.
6. Existing building to be renovated, including a canteen area for the staff.
7. A new 5MI reservoir will be constructed adjacent to the existing reservoir and the old reservoir to be refurbished.
8. A new pipeline will be installed from treatment works to the reservoirs.

The development is expected to take 14 months to complete and upon completion, the campus and surrounding households will have an increased and more reliable water supply with adequate pressure.

The Alice campus has been battling with the issue of erratic water supply for years. To address this ongoing challenge, a few years ago the DHET Infrastructure Support Team undertook an analysis of what was

happening to identify the key problems. Based on the team’s findings and recommendations, the required budget was approved by the DHET Minister.

The site handover was attended by representatives from UFH led by the Vice-Chancellor, Prof Sakhela Buhlungu and the Deputy Vice-Chancellor for Institutional Support, Dr Nosisa Mayaba. Also represented were the Amathole District and the Raymond Mhlaba Municipalities.

On-site, the representatives were taken on a tour by Mr Dave De Wet from Sinakho Consulting who explained the extent of the work that will be undertaken.

Dr Mayaba who is responsible for the University’s infrastructure which falls under her portfolio said the primary focus is to improve student’s experience on campus. “As we all know water is a basic need and the non-interrupted supply of water to our students is vital.”

The VC said this project is a perfect example of the District Development Model introduced by the Presidency which encourages all three spheres of government to work together to coordinate and integrate development plans.

“This project is not for certain individuals, it is for the benefit of the 10 000 students on campus and the communities that surround the University. This is a classic case of a rising tide that will raise all boats,” said the VC.



# DHET R96-million grant propels Alice library closer to the vision of being a modernised library of the future

“With this funding, the enhancement of student experience is going to be a reality. The funds will give us the spaces that will take Information Literacy for the Digital Age Initiative (#IL4DAI) to a new height”

The Alice Library infrastructure project that will see the facility be transformed into a futuristic space for information literacy has received a substantial financial boost through a R96-million infrastructure grant awarded by the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET).

“With this funding, the enhancement of student experience is going to be a reality. The funds will give us the spaces that will take Information Literacy for the Digital Age Initiative (#IL4DAI) to a new height,” said Dr Connie Bitso – Director of UFH Libraries.

Built in 1970, the library located on the University’s main campus in Alice, comprise four floors with each floor space measuring about 600 square metres totalling to 2400 square meters

Over the years, as the student population increased drastically, the structure became inadequate to service the current student population. Faced with this challenge, a plan to extend and upgrade the library was devised and fundraising initiatives were put in motion for the library infrastructure project. The grant from DHET is a result of the ongoing fundraising initiatives and will address some of the prevailing challenges.

“The plans for the Alice library extension that was developed by my predecessor, the late Ms Yoli Soul, is clearly going to be a reality. However, we are going to modernise it into the library of the future that will be relevant even in 15 to 20 years time,” said an excited Dr Bitso.

Sharing interesting views on digitalization and libraries and her vision for the Alice library infrastructure project - a vision that speaks to digital solutions for the 21st Century - it is evident Dr Bitso strongly believes technology, inclusivity, and versatile spaces to accommodate diversity and dynamics of users’ needs are fundamental.

“The virtual realm of the library contributes heavily to its tech advancement. For inclusivity, it should be offering digital multimedia resources to its duly registered users through a one-stop avenue all year round, anytime, anywhere, to allow for self-paced and self-regulated learning. For diversity, it should have a mobile version for its library website and catalogue so that students can easily engage with digital resources from any device when they have a good wireless connection.”

“Within the virtual realm, a technologically advanced library provides a 24/7- and 365-days online support service of an Ask-a-Librarian largely assisted through artificial intelligence to help learners get immediate answers. As well as online forums where students can find frequently asked questions and tips on literature searching, researching and referencing in the form of guides, video tutorials and voice instruction for various kinds of students’ abilities, impairments and requirements.”

To ensure the Alice library is light years ahead of other universities in the country, Dr Bitso reckons that green technology, vibrancy, invigorating library spaces with a variety of lighting depending on the purpose of zone space, soundproof of zones for vibrant engagements and discussions; research-driven physical infrastructure and interior design for aesthetics that enhance concentration and studying flair – are key things to be implemented in the upgrade project.

“A library should ideally be a versatile space for all types of formal, informal and non-formal education, including various students’ learning needs from practising drama, music, broadcasting studios, art

studios, writing centre and career office. There should be auditoriums that could serve as a lecture hall, examination room, and performance theatre. A building that could easily host a conference without much disturbance to those who want to have a quiet study time.”

“I envisage innovative learning hubs where students will come and do projects in interactive spaces with top of the range technologies for creativity, innovation and incubation of business ideas. Areas that have technology and equipment to connect with others in a different geographical location. As far as possible, with technologies for augmented and virtual reality, artificial intelligence and robotics. Lastly, I envisage rejuvenation areas such as a coffee shop, a restoration and meditation room,” she said.

Dr Bitso’s vision for the Alice Library is strongly aligned to one of the institutional goals set out in the University’s 2022-2026 Strategic Plan which is to provide efficient and fit for purpose infrastructure and support services to the University community.



## Staff and students riding in style with new R3 million fleet injection

“Students have been longing for safer and comfortable transportation between campuses and the new busses have made that possible for us. We are particularly excited about the disability-friendly busses as it indeed proves that we are a University that strives for inclusivity.” - SRC President

The University has invested R3 million in student and staff mobility after taking ownership of four new commuter buses that were purchased last month.

The four new 22-seater buses, three Iveco's and one Mercedes Benz Sprinter were unveiled on the 13<sup>th</sup> of February, a few minutes after the Vice-Chancellor, Prof Sakhela Buhlungu delivered the official opening address on the Alice campus.

Three more buses (2 x 65-seater) and a 65-seater disability-friendly bus, are expected to be delivered in the next few months as part of the University's bigger fleet replacement plan.

UFH fleet's total seating for student and staff commuters relying on University transport now stands at 430, following the procurement of the new busses.

With UFH's existing commuter bus fleet offering a combined seating capacity of 342 before purchasing of the new busses, the University will have increased its fleet seating capacity by 25,7% even after the asset disposal of the older fleet, which comprises eight busses.

According to *Mr Mbulelo Gingcana*, UFH Acting Fleet Manager, the fleet replacement plan was started by the late Fleet Manager, Mr Petrus Roets who was assassinated in May last year.

“We started the process a few months before Mr Roets' assassination. We are pleased that his aspiration to provide safe transportation to the University's staff and students has been realized,” said Mr Gingcana.

Dr. Nosisa Mayaba, Acting Deputy Vice-Chancellor at the University of Fort Hare said the expansion of the UFH bus fleet was undertaken as a result of an aging fleet, increased demand for shuttle services by staff and students, to realize better newer fuel efficiency mobility solutions, and selecting with technologies for lower carbon emissions.



The UFH student and staff transit fleet provides weekday shuttle services to and from East London and Alice and vice versa and is also used for transporting students for extracurricular events such as sports to destinations inside and outside of the Eastern Cape.

“We are realising significant cost saving through the bus commuter for staff, and we also know that some studies argue that public bus transit dramatically reduces Green House Gas (GHG) emissions,” she said.

Mr. Charles Matumba, UFH CFO said the University made a responsible and proudly South African purchase. “The majority of the busses were procured in support of a South African OEM with a commuter bus assembly plant and bought locally,” he said.

Commenting on the new fleet acquisition, an excited UFH SRC President Siphokazi Mbalo said: “Students have been longing for safer and comfortable transportation between campuses and the new busses have made that possible for us. We are particularly excited about the disability-friendly busses as it indeed proves that we are a University that strives for inclusivity.”

# UFH co-hosts SA economic society's first-ever national PhD conference

“There are millions of South Africans that depend on the theories, models and findings that you will come up with in your studies.”

Economic Researchers and practitioners from across academia, government and the private sector in South Africa converged on the University of Fort Hare's East London Campus for the inaugural National PhD Conference hosted by the Economic Society of South Africa (ESSA) in collaboration with the Economic Research Southern Africa (ERSA) and the Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC).

The conference seeks to afford PhD students from all economics programmes at SA universities the opportunity to present their work and get feedback from the economic researchers and practitioners whose roles are to be discussants and to give comment on the research presented.

The gathering was held from the 6<sup>th</sup> to 8<sup>th</sup> of February at the Phyllis Ntantala Collaborative Library.

The presenters were selected from an application process which entailed an invitation from ESSA to PhD students to submit an extended abstract based on a completed or near completed paper from their doctoral thesis which has not been accepted for publication in a peer-reviewed journal. The submissions were evaluated by a conference scientific committee with the help of nominated discussants and a maximum of 25 applicants were invited to present their papers at the conference.

The discussants include economics gurus such as:

- **Elias Masilela** - Author and Executive Chairman of DNA Economics and a Commissioner of the 1st & 2nd National Planning Commission
- **Reza Daniels** - Associate Professor in the School of Economics at the University of Cape Town
- **Daniela Casala** - Economics Professor at Wits University
- **Matthew Simmonds** - Executive Director at the ERSA
- **Debra Shepherd** - Senior Economics Lecturer at Stellenbosch University

- **Forget Kapingura** - Associate Professor at the UFH Economics Department
- **Chris Desmond** - Economist specializing in health and social policy research related to human development over the life-course.
- **Steve Koch** - Managing Editor of the South African Journal of Economics
- **Allan Davids** - Senior Economics Lecturer at the University of Cape Town

Speaking during the opening ceremony, ESSA President, Heinrich Bohlmann said when the idea to host the conference was sparked, they approached one of the Senior Lecturers at the UFH Economics Department, Dr Palesa Makhetha-Kosi who got the ball rolling.

“We are honoured to hold this first PhD Conference at the University of Fort Hare. We are here to learn; we are here to work.”

Bohlmann encouraged the conference goers to engage each other during the session saying: “We are a very small economics society and there are a lot of big brains in this room which presents a great opportunity to get to know each other to build networks and expand our society,” said Prof Bohlmann.

Welcoming the delegates to this important gathering, the UFH Dean of Management and Commerce, Prof Richard Shambare took the opportunity to remind the doctoral students about one of the fundamentals of research which is to produce and disseminate studies that has a positive impact on ordinary citizens.

“There are millions of South Africans that depend on the theories, models and findings that you will come up with in your studies. We must investigate topics that impacts on people's lives and we should not forget to investigate topics and test theories that are Afrocentric because it is critical for us to do so,” said Prof Shambare.

In addition to the paper presentations, a masterclass on Writing for Publication was conducted by Steve Koch, Managing Editor of the South African Journal of Economics.

One of the doctoral students, David De Villiers from Stellenbosch University presented his paper titled: *Can macropudential policies prevent extreme capital flows?* He described the gathering as insightful and exciting.



# NEW MANAGEMENT & COMMERCE DEAN, PROF RICHARD SHAMBARE TO PRIORITIZE SERVICE ORIENTATION

Newly appointed Dean for Management and Commerce, Prof Richard Shambare has made it clear that being service-oriented would be key in executing his new role, successfully.

Prof Shambare joined the University on the 1<sup>st</sup> of January 2023 and during his first 30 days in office, he has met with staff, chaired his first Faculty Board meeting and is currently in the process of preparing for the 2023 academic year as well as refining the Faculty's operating plan.

*UFHNews* asked Prof Shambare a few formal and less formal questions to get to know a little bit more about him.



## Q: Please share a bit about your professional background, personal life, and interests?

A: I am a professor of entrepreneurship and marketing. Prior to joining UFH, I was a professor at the University of the Western Cape, where I also served as the Deputy Dean: Teaching & Learning in the Faculty of Economic & Management Sciences. My prior engagements before that were at the University of Venda and Tshwane University of Technology. I am very simple person with simple personal interests, mostly reading and movies. I love Star Wars and Star Trek.

## Q: What motivated you to join the University of Fort Hare?

A: Fort Hare is a university with a very rich history. It is an institution of leaders and great thinkers. For me, it really is an honour to be associated with such a university that produced some of the giants of our time, in the likes of Mugabe, Madiba, Khama, just to

name a few. This is a university whose soul exudes greatness. So, when I was offered the opportunity to join Fort Hare, I searched for reasons why I should not join UFH, and I could not find one. So, to answer to the question, the pursuit of life and to try and make an impact to society were my greatest motivators.

## Q: How has the transition been from the University of Western Cape to UFH – an institution that prides itself as a Great rural African University?

A: The transition has been great. The people at UFH are lovely. Everyone greets everyone. There is an ubuntu vibe going on around you and everywhere. This is awesome.

## Q: What have you identified as key focus areas in your new your portfolio?

A: My key focus is very simple – service. Service to students and service to the Faculty of Management & Commerce, the university and the community. This

service comes in different shapes and form. A few examples include ensuring that staff welfare in the faculty is prioritized, teaching and learning continues smoothly, and to ensure that administrative functions proceed seamlessly for students.

## Q: What is your approach to executing these key areas?

A: Prioritizing people is the approach. Working with people, one person at a time and one conversation at a time. There is no other way of running a faculty (or any organization for that matter) that does not involve building trust and the confidence of people.

## Q: In your first month in office which areas have you identified as pockets of excellence at UFH?

A: Undoubtedly, the greatest asset are people; both students and staff. Students are willing to learn and apply themselves and the Staff is willing to serve.

## Q: Lastly, what are your aspirations for UFH as it sets off on its journey of a Decade of Renewal and what is your advice on how to reach the envisaged destination?

A: Renewal is a journey; it cannot have a definitive end point. Constant and consistent improvement are necessary. I aspire to see the Faculty of Management & Commerce become a beacon for renewal in the University. This we aspire to develop new and relevant programmes that seek to prepare students for the future. Togetherness and cooperation are instrumental in achieving renewal.

*Once more, welcome to UFH Prof Shambare.*

“The challenges faced by these self-funded students motivated me to be pro-active and start knocking on doors to secure funding to help clear their debt”



## Education Dean Secures R10 Million Funding From ETDP-SETA to clear PGCE Students' Debt

Prof Vusi Mncube, UFH Dean of Education has secured a R10 million grant from the Education, Training and Development Practices Sector Education and Training Authority (ETDP - SETA) to clear the debt of one hundred self-funded Postgraduate Certificate in Education (PGCE) students who completed the programme last year.

The benefiting students will now be able to walk the graduation stage, collect their certificates and be well on their way to start their careers as Educators.

The PGCE programme is a teacher training qualification that students can apply for once they have completed a relevant degree with at least two teaching modules. It is a one-year programme.

According to Prof Mncube, annually, about 150 students who register for the qualification at UFH do not qualify for NSFAS and this is because they have been previously funded by the scheme for their undergraduate studies.

“The challenges faced by these self-funded students motivated me to be pro-active and start knocking on doors to secure funding to help clear their debt,” Prof Mncube said.

The beneficiaries were each awarded R100 000 towards their tuition fees (R35 000), accommodation (R37 000), meals (R20 000) and R8 000 for books.

Prof Mncube said the application and negotiation process for the grant started with the provincial office of ETPD-SETA in 2021.

“The Faculty of Education was advised to apply for student funding as soon as the registration for 2022 was completed. We submitted a list of 150 PGCE registered students to the SETA’s provincial office requesting funding for these students and the application was followed through with their Head Office.”

The letter of award was sent to the University in November last year.

As a Faculty that strives to produce educators who are critical thinkers, creative problem-solvers, initiators and leaders in education, the grant has greatly welcomed by the Faculty and the University.

“We are extremely excited about the awarding of this funding, especially during the University’s Decade of Renewal where stability and cooperation between students and staff is key,” said Mncube who cited an excerpt from the University’s Strategic Plan 2022-2026, which reads as follows:

*“It is important to note that the Renewal will not only be limited to embracing new technologies through digitisation and automation of business systems in general; but will manifest in re-imagining learning and teaching, incorporating blended learning, ensuring the basic foundations of quality are in place and re-curriculating academic programmes to adapt to the new, improved reality at the UFH .....There will be a renewal of the Fort Hare student experience, prioritising the production of employable graduates and graduates of first choice amongst employers. The focus will be brought to bear on work ethic amongst staff and inculcating a service culture to create an institution that staff and students are proud to be associated with”. – Page 11*

“We are grateful to the ETDP-SETA. It is always pleasing for parents to see their children graduate to collect the qualification that will become the key to unlock their careers,” said Prof Mncube.



## Joint efforts result in R1.28 million funding for postgraduate students

A shared desire to assist postgraduate students from the University of Fort Hare to produce and publish impactful research that contributes to the body of knowledge has led to two UFH academics securing a R1.28 million bursary from the Health and Welfare Sector Education and Training Authority's (HWSETA) to fund 20 postgrads.

At the core of the collaborated effort by Dr Vuyokazi Lupuwana, a Senior Lecturer at the Department of Social Work under the Faculty of Social Sciences, and Prof Willie Chinyamurindi from the Department of Business in the Faculty of Management and Commerce, is to remove the barrier imposed by the lack of funding for postgraduates in the path to academic success.

The funding was granted to UFH after their joint application to HWSETA's Post Graduate Students Bursary Programme for 2022/2023 was successful.

HWSETA is an organization that is responsible for the education and skills development of the health and social development sectors with the objective to provide quality health and social services in world-class levels.

The prerequisite for this bursary is postgraduate students who are either doing honours, masters or doctoral degrees in areas of studies that fall within the Health and Social Development discipline.

The 20 beneficiaries at UFH are students who are pursuing postgraduate degrees in Social Sciences such as Counselling Psychology, Psychology and Social Work, and from Management and Commerce, the beneficiaries are postgrads whose studies are in the Industrial Psychology field.

According to a memorandum of understanding between HWSETA and UFH, the intention of the bursary programme is to meet the demand of sectoral research and development and innovation capacity to influence planning and implementation in South Africa by developing research capacity and scientific leadership for scholars to become established researchers that promote study themes relevant to the health and welfare sector.

The bursary covers research-related costs such as data collection/fieldwork; travel; data analysis; report writing and finalization of dissertation acceptance including document editing, printing and binding.



**“This is an excellent opportunity to assist UFH students in completing their postgraduate studies while also making a contribution to the development of skills within the health welfare sector”**

Additionally, the bursary will also support the recipients' registration, tuition and other essential student needs.

According to Prof Chinyamurindi, in the past, the HWSETA has supported UFH students and has often done in pockets of isolation between faculties. “This year, the HWSETA noticed the application by Dr Lupuwana and myself and encouraged us to work together in a consolidated funding application that supports previously disadvantaged students.”

“The majority of our students come from rural and disadvantaged backgrounds, as a result without funding, some of them cannot continue with their postgraduate studies due to the financial burden. When we made the applications, we looked at unfunded students from disadvantaged backgrounds who are performing well and are committed to their studies.”

“This is an excellent opportunity to assist UFH students in completing their postgraduate studies while also making a contribution to the development of skills within the health welfare sector,” said the pair.

One of the beneficiaries, Franciska Verschoor who is doing her Masters Degree in Psychology, said being awarded the bursary has lifted a huge financial burden off her and her family's shoulders. “Getting this bursary is a big deal for me. I have been relying on loans from family members to fund my studies and now that stress has been lifted from me and my family,” she said.

Another beneficiary, Mqokeleli Zaza who is also a Psychology Masters student, said pursuing a postgraduate degree without funding or being unemployed can be very challenging academically, financially and psychologically. “Now that I have this bursary, I will be able to focus on my studies without any worries about student debt. Also, it means when I complete my studies, I will be able to cross the graduation stage to collect my degree and pursue my career with ease.”



# Management visits Vesele's home to pay their last respects and honour his legacy

**On the 5<sup>th</sup> of February, members of the University of Fort Hare's Management Executive Committee (MEC) led by the Vice-Chancellor, Prof Sakhela Buhlungu, visited the family of the late Mr Mboneli Vesele in Ginsberg (Qonce) to pay their last respects and to honour his legacy.**

Vesele, a former defence force soldier who was affectionately known as "Ntlane" was the Executive Protection Officer to the Vice-Chancellor from 2017 (when the VC joined the University) until his life was cruelly snuffed out of him when shots were fired at the VC's vehicle outside his residence in Alice on the 6<sup>th</sup> of January 2023.

Mourners who spoke at his memorial and funeral service described Ntlane as the man who laid down his life in the fight against corruption at the University.

The MEC members, Prof Renuka Vithal (Deputy Vice-Chancellor for Teaching and Learning); Dr Nthabi Taole-Mjimba (DVC for Research, Partnership and Innovation); Dr Nosisa Mayaba (Acting DVC for Institutional Support); Mr Njabulo Zuma (Registrar); Mr Charles Matumba (Chief Financial Officer) and Mr Lufuno Tshikudo (Dean of Student Affairs) received a warm welcome from the family.

The executive committee was accompanied by senior managers and directors in their respective offices and supporting departments. Dr Pumezo Luphuwana, former UFH Council member also joined the visit to show his support.

In honour of his memory, the Vice-Chancellor's Office presented the family with a University's flag and a framed portrait of Vesele with a tribute engraved on a gold plaque. The VC also planted a tree that is similar to the one he and Vesele bought and planted to signify the start of the VC's second term.

The MEC members and the accompanying support staff each shared their fondest memories of Vesele with the family and with each word uttered, it was

evident that Mr Vesele was valued.

Ms Zuki Mabombo, who is the Manager in the VC's Office said: "We hope this visit will bring us closure as we continue to struggle to come to terms with this loss."

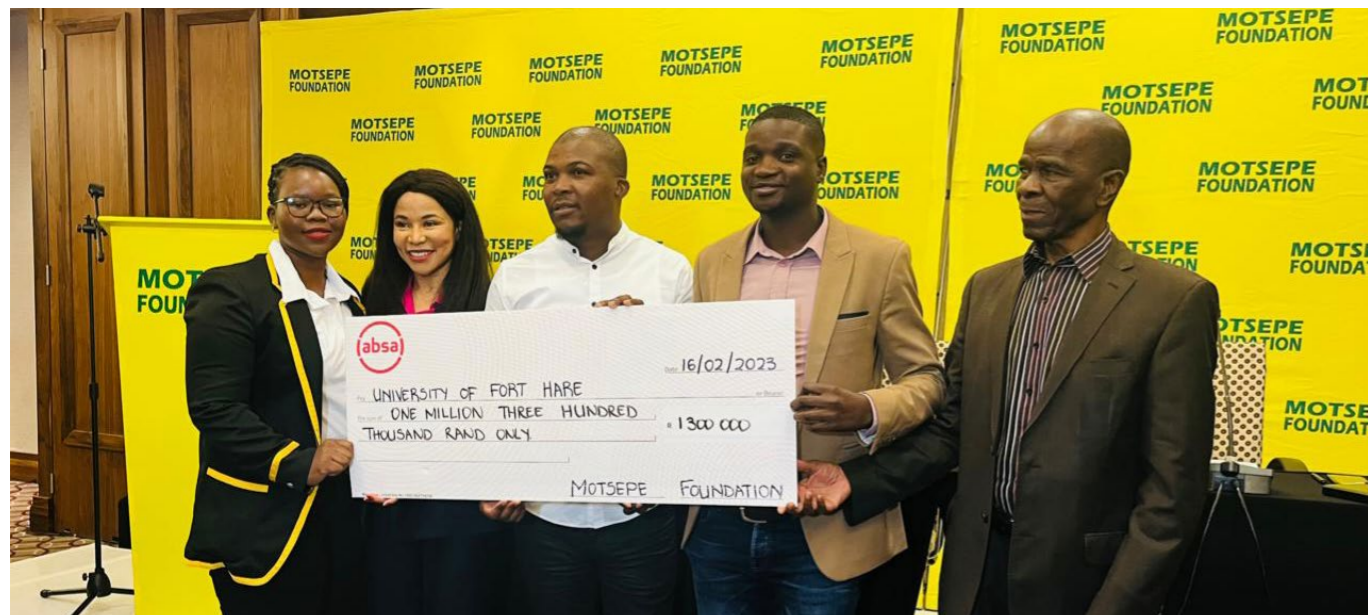
The University community will remember Ntlane for his dedication to his work and the impeccable professionalism in which he executed his duty. He will be remembered for his commitment to realizing a renewed University that is free of corruption.

The family thanked the MEC members and those who worked closely with Vesele for caring for their father, brother and hero even after his demise.

"Thank you for the compassion that you have shown us. Throughout this painful moment, you carried us. Your actions in honouring our brother's memory shows, without a doubt, you loved and cared for him. With time, we will heal. We hope his death will not be in vain and that his killers be found and prosecuted," said Vesele's sister, Lindiwe Vesele.

Vesele was a soldier, and his fight was against corruption. We hope his blood will nurture the soil for a corrupt-free Fort Hare.





## Motsepe donates R1.3m to SRC towards students' financial needs

**“As the SRC, we have committed ourselves to raise funds for unfunded students from disadvantaged backgrounds and those who fall under the missing middle category and cannot afford to clear their debt.”**

The University of Fort Hare has welcomed a generous donation of R1.3 million from the Motsepe Foundation to the University's Student Representative Council (SRC) towards the financial needs of students, such as registration, fees and historical debt.

UFH SRC President, Ms Siphokazi Mbalo has indicated that the bulk of the funds will be directed towards clearing the debt of unfunded students from disadvantaged backgrounds and missing middle students who are struggling to register due to debt.

“As the SRC, we have committed ourselves to raise funds for unfunded students from disadvantaged backgrounds and those who fall under the missing middle category and cannot afford to clear their debt. As such, we have decided use R1 million of the donated funds to clear their debt to ensure these students are able to register for the current academic year.”

“The remaining funds will be invested into initiatives aimed at addressing mental health challenges, women empowerment programmes, and Gender-Based Violence awareness campaigns.”

The cheque was handed over by Dr Precious Moloi-Motsepe, co-founder and CEO of the Foundation, and was received by Ms Mbalo and Student Developer, Mr Dzulani Munzhelele on Thursday, 16 February, at a ceremony held in Sandton, Johannesburg.

In total, the Foundation donated R30 million to SRCs from across the country. According to Mr Vumisa Mayisela, the Foundation's General Manager, the identification of the student needs to be supported will be conducted in partnership with the SRCs.

Mr Munzhelele said the financial support from the Motsepe Foundation was invaluable and will go a long way in alleviating the financial burden on students who cannot register because of debt.

“We are grateful for the unwavering support from the Motsepe Foundation. We hope the foundation's generosity will encourage other private and non-private stakeholders to join efforts that seek to support disadvantaged deserving students,” said the Student Developer.

## UFH-RVSC Postgrads and Postdoctoral fellows featured at 5<sup>th</sup> National Global Change Conference

**“One of the objectives of the conference was to create an enabling environment for networking amongst the students, peers and seasoned researchers from within and abroad. The DSI/NRF, university research office and supervisors are all commended for the role they play in supporting the RVSC.”**

A team comprising postgraduate student postdoctoral fellows from the UFH-Risk & Vulnerability Science Centre (RVSC) represented the University at the 5<sup>th</sup> National Global Change Conference held at University of the Free State in Bloemfontein from the 30<sup>th</sup> of January to the 3<sup>rd</sup> of February 2023.

The purpose of the conference is to share and debate current local research and development initiatives that form part of the Global Change Grand Challenge (GCC5), one of the focus areas developed under the Department of Science and Innovation's (DSI) 10-year Innovation Plan.

At the conference, the University was well represented by the 10-member team, (seven postgraduate students and three Post-Doctoral Fellows) who presented impressive research papers that generated interesting debates on climate change issues. The team also responded to the audience's

questions with exceptional confidence and focus.

The conference provided a platform for students to interact directly with a wide range of prominent individuals, including legislators and renowned scientists.

According to **Dr Leocadia Zhou, Director of the UFH-RVSC**, a commitment was made to help the students get their research recognized by parliamentarians in view of some of the findings of the research results pointing to legislative issues.

“One of the objectives of the conference was to create an enabling environment for networking amongst the students, peers and seasoned researchers from within and abroad. The DSI/NRF, university research office and supervisors are all commended for the role they play in supporting the RVSC.” Said Dr Zhou.





# 2023 Teaching and Learning Centre (TLC) Exhibition

Freedom Square on the Alice Campus and Church Street (Outside Gasson Centre) on the East London campus were a hive of activity on the 28<sup>th</sup> of February and 1<sup>st</sup> of March when the Teaching and Learning Centre in conjunction with the UFH Student Support Services held an exhibition of the support services they provide to the University community.



# Student support can't end with first years' orientation

By: Dr Bellita Banda Chitsamatanga,  
 Researcher: SARCHI chair in Sexualities Genders and  
 Queer Studies, University of Fort Hare

In January, higher education, science & innovation minister Dr Blade Nzimande issued a press statement on the "Post School Education and Training Sector state of readiness for the academic year 2023".

He highlighted critical issues that require redress in universities which include: student accommodation; student funding; and gender-based violence and femicide (GBVF).

What immediately came to mind for me was the 2023 cohort of first year students.

For the first time, most of these students, who are said to number about 208,300, will be leaving home and have to transition from high school to a university environment.

Without doubt, even though the university system is viewed as a desirable teaching and learning space, for some of the first years it is not going to be a walk in the park.

Some will experience university as a place where students are emblazoned with societal values, skills and emerge transformed through the process of learning, unlearning and relearning the dos and don'ts of being varsity students.

What is crucial to the genuine transitioning of first year students, commonly called "amaFresher", is of course, the commitment by universities to ensure they seamlessly fit into university structures with as few hiccups as possible.

However, given the challenges raised during the media briefing by Nzimande, where does this leave first year students who are bound to accede to the already existing problems faced by universities?

More so, what is the role of universities in ensuring these first-year students by the end of their degree courses will emerge as well-rounded graduates who meet all the necessary skills needed to contribute economically to the development of the country.

Over the years, there have been tremendous efforts implemented by the government in terms of access to higher education since the inception of the democratic era in SA universities.

However, there remain a number of issues that require redress and these are not going to be an exception for the 2023 cohort.

For instance, the toxicity of high dropout rates, clogging of the system, cohabitation, GBV, drug abuse, lack of accommodation, and transphobic and homophobic abuse remain rampant at most universities in SA.

Moreover, this is a cohort of students who come into a higher education system that is riddled with very low throughput; episodic student-based protests over the manner in which complaints such as GBV, student funding and accommodation and curricula have been dealt with.

These protests have taken place against the backdrop of an educational landscape which brings together inequalities of gender, sexual orientation and gender identity, race, disability, socioeconomic status and geography in the most complex ways.

In the process, this becomes a threatening phenomenon within the academic circles and puts a dent on the higher education system in SA.

Furthermore, a majority of universities in rural settings inherit students that come from poor socioeconomic backgrounds and with financial challenges.

As such, lack of adequate funding which contributes to maintaining inequalities among students adds yet another dimension to the problems that first years, especially female students, are bound to encounter.

Hence to date, universities still struggle with high rates of unwanted pregnancies, HIV/Aids, drug and alcohol abuse, absenteeism, GBVF, mental health issues, and in some instances suicide and murder.

In my view, these all point back to lack of adequate accommodation, untimely release of funding as highlighted by the minister, and of course, the importance of having in place holistic programmes that prepare first year students for university life.

All these, in one way or the other, affect students if they are not either implemented, monitored and evaluated timeously, and violate students' right to education, and in the long run, have devastating consequences, some of which last a lifetime.

Without doubt, universities do put in place different programmes in preparation of students' admission in residencies; taking them through the registration process and institutional support structures that are earmarked for orientation week but:

- Are these watertight?
- Are these fashioned in such a way that tick all the boxes in terms of ensuring students feel at home away from home?
- Do these orientation programmes look at the needs of a large pool of diverse students, and are these needs asserted?
- Student orientation does play a pivotal role in transitioning students into the university system and environment.
- But, this must not end there, as orientation ends, the question is what's next for these students?
- Are follow-ups made before the end of the academic year to tap into their experiences? How do universities keep audit on how their first years have transitioned?
- I believe such an audit will assist universities to come up with orientation programmes that are not only customised to suit their university culture and structures but also help in identifying best practices that can be implemented to endorse equitable learning environments that speak to diversity and inclusion of all students.
- Furthermore, such an audit trail may also assist to keep track of the number of students that drop out during the first year due to myriad of reasons, some of which are mentioned above.
- As a result, most first years are not only faced with the conundrum of striking a balance of adapting to a new environment, they are also expected to sharpen their cognitive, affective and psychomotor skills and most importantly, be technologically savvy.
- Without a doubt, for first years there is the issue of finding an equilibrium between university pedagogy both in hidden and formal curricula, and having to sit for the first main examinations, and that can be a daunting task for any student.
- This is where the importance of having ongoing mentorship programmes earmarked for first years comes in.
- Such programmes can promote student engagement, success, a sense of belonging, as well as guide first year students on how to access information and university services.
- Consequently, adoption and adaptation by first year students of the mentorship programmes that are tailored for them will curb problems of alienation that some first years' experience because of the manner in which universities are structured.
- As such, a one-size fits all approach, which does little or nothing to prepare first year students on university pedagogics as well as the dynamics of fitting into university structures will not work.
- As universities gear up for the first lectures for the 2023 academic year, there is need for them to foster a synergy with all the support services so as to accommodate the diversified needs of students, particularly for smooth transition of first years in a higher education environment.



# Rose reflects on her time at UFH

Earlier this week, the Registrar, Mr Njabulo Zuma announced the resignation of our beloved Dr Rose Masha, Deputy-Registrar: Academic Administration, a position she assumed in 2016.

According to Mr Zuma, during her time at UFH she has proved to be an invaluable asset to the University. "She worked tirelessly to improve academic administration in the University; often extending her efforts far beyond the scope of her duties."

In view of Dr Masha's imminent departure, the Registrar announced the appointment of Mr Actor Katurura, the Executive Manager in the Office of the Registrar as the Acting Deputy Registrar: Academic Administration starting on 1st March, 2023.

Bidding farewell to the University, Dr Masha penned this heartfelt piece below:



"As I am penning this reflective piece, I find myself smiling fleetingly as flashes of my trajectory through UFH play out.

February has been a very tough month for me, with extended registration, NSFAS delays and having to slowly bid my goodbyes to colleagues who have become my extended family. This month became even harder for my Academic Admin team whom I counted on to share my vision, and whose dreams and visions I shared in return.

As the 28th of February approached (why is this such a short month anyway?), it dawned on me how much I seem to have touched so many people's lives at UFH and how so many people seem to have touched mine.

Looking back, when I reported for duty as a Deputy Registrar Academic Admin towards the end of 2016, little did I know the extent of what was in store for me! When the moment of reckoning regarding this position came, lights exploded (more like firecrackers at the beachfront's Lights festival ha ha). I was never sure how each day would pan out. However, the support received from various corners of UFH made this tough position much easier to manage. Slow and steady, I realized that it is doable in bite sizes. Working in this position has toughened and softened me at the same time. Daily, I assumed different personalities (warrior, social worker, accountant, doctor, psychologist, comedian and anything in between).

We have been through challenging times as a University. Somehow, through all the curveballs, we have held hands and kept things together. I have seen it all unfold to this space that I feel has raised immense hope for many of our students.

As I assume my position as Director Accreditation at the Council of Higher Education (CHE), I seem

convinced that this is an extension of my work at UFH and other HEIs where I have been marinated, seasoned, cooked and braaied.

At UFH, particularly, I gained skills I never would have dreamt of ever attaining; I found some inner tenacity that I'd no idea I had.

As I conclude this reflective piece, I want to encourage colleagues, management, the student body and the SRC to keep up the strength, hope and fight for the Decade of Renewal and celebrate every milestone achieved (our grads certainly rock if I may say so myself!). I think we have just had a sneak preview of the renewal's benefits and as we open the gift box, a lot of goodies shall be revealed.

Thank you for the great memories and stay blessed."

- Rose

# UFH'S Longest-Serving Afrikaans Professor Retires After A Fulfilling 26-Year-Long Academic Career

The University of Fort Hare (UFH) bids farewell to its longest-serving staff at the Department of Afrikaans, Prof Susan Smith – an Afrikaans Literature Prof and Poet.

Prof Smith started her academic career in 1997 as a part-time lecturer at the then satellite campus of Rhodes University in East London. When UFH and the Rhodes satellite campus merged in 2005, she was mandated to establish an Afrikaans department in East London.

During the first few years, she was the only lecturer in the Department, designing and teaching 21 undergrad modules and supervising the first masters' student. In 2009 she was eventually appointed as full-time lecturer, while a second staff member joined the department.

Her determination saw the department grow in leaps and bounds, and by 2011 the UFH Afrikaans Department was recognised in an annual report by the Department of Higher Education and Training as the fastest-growing Afrikaans department at tertiary level in the country.

She also played a significant role in the planning of the first Language Policy at UFH.

As an academic, her research focus on ecocriticism and ecopoetics paved way for many academics in the Afrikaans literary field to follow, especially the younger generation, who are adding their voices to this critical area of research.

During her career, she has published 10 articles in accredited and peer-reviewed journals, delivered 12 conference papers, of which two are keynote addresses, one nationally, and the other internationally, at the

University of Gent. She supervised 6 masters' students and five doctoral students. She was an external examiner for 19 masters' dissertations and 3 doctoral theses at various universities in South Africa.

As a poet, Prof Smith has published two solo poetry volumes, and poems in over 30 anthologies, of which 17 are school textbooks. Her poetry has during the past 20 years been prescribed at all school levels, both in Home Language Afrikaans and in Afrikaans First Additional Language, and has been included in Final Matric Exam Papers for many years.

In August last year she delivered the University's 28<sup>th</sup> Inaugural Lecture titled: **Can poetry save the earth? Language and Literature in the time of posthumanism**, where she took the audience on a journey of her academic career in Afrikaans literary from the time she obtained her Doctoral Degree in 1993, at age 32.

In her address, she reminded the audience that: "Words make or break things. Words move people. Words move mountains. And every word uttered, every poem read, has the possibility of changing perceptions and changing directions. It has the possibility of entering the mind and changing attitudes and actions. Of rethinking where we are, what our motherland looks like, what the soil underneath our feet looks like, where we are going, and how we are living on this soil and this land. The right word, the right poem, listened to by an absorbing, willing mind, can change the world."

In a notice sent to the University on her last day at Fort Hare, Prof Smith wrote:



"My heart is filled with so much gratitude for all the relationships I have been part of and for the love, kindness and support that I experienced over 26 years. Many of you have become my family, the people that were part of my daily life with whom I could share the joys and sorrows of our existence. I will cherish that forever. The people of Fort Hare, and the people of the Eastern Cape have made me a better person, they made it possible for me to look through different eyes, and walk in different shoes."

"I admire the road that the institution has been taking... do not get tired, do not falter. The high road of integrity, excellence, and truth is one that is worthwhile in the end. May you all have the courage to tackle the challenges that lie ahead."

**Die Universiteit wens jou alles van die beste in die nuwe hoofstuk van jou lewe Prof Smit.**

## Fort Hare rowers on a high after Buffalo Regatta

The University of Fort Hare's rowing team returned from the Buffalo Regatta in East London in high spirits and with invaluable experience after a number of top performances.

The way they celebrated at the end of the competition showed what it meant to the student-athletes to take part in such a prestigious event, said rowing coach Lunga Mcetywa.

"When our rowers sing and dance, you know they are definitely enjoying themselves. It was great seeing them supporting one another and mixing with some of the best rowers in the country."

Fort Hare competed in the C section and came away with second place in the women's singles, first in the women's doubles and first in the women's quads. The men participated in the B section, where they finished runners-up in the eights.

The team will now start preparing for the University Sport South Africa (USSA) championships in Moorreesburg, just north of Cape Town, at the end of March.

Mcetywa said the experience gained from the Buffalo Regatta would play a huge role in the development of the rowers. "We learnt that we still need to do lots of technical work. We also have to up the time we spend on the water to build up our endurance."

All in all, he felt the winning mentality and positive energy garnered from the event were important for their confidence.

"I feel our rowers did very well," he said after the regatta, in which most of the team participated for the first time.

"Most of them were nervous as the race was much bigger and more competitive than they had been exposed to before. I'm proud of how they kept their composure and applied the things we practised in training.

"If we can spend more time on the water to work on those aspects it can only be good for us going forward."



**"When our rowers sing and dance, you know they are definitely enjoying themselves. It was great seeing them supporting one another and mixing with some of the best rowers in the country."**

The team for the USSA champs would be "more or less the same" as the one that did duty in East London and the goal was to improve on their 2022 result, he said.

UFH Sports Officer, Tim Leeuw echoed Mcetywa's sentiments.

"The fact that the Buffalo Regatta is so prestigious and held in 'our backyard' makes it very special. You learn so much when you compete at the same event as some of the best clubs in the country."

The cherry on top for the team was the fact that the university's vice-chancellor, Sakhela Buhlungu, made a special trip to the race to meet with the team and cheer them on.

"It motivated us during the event and will also motivate us to improve," said Leeuw.

He admitted they were a "little bit behind" some institutions in terms of their experience, but that they were doing everything possible to continue their development.

"There is always room for improvement and one of our priorities is our equipment. If we can work towards supplying the students with more modern boats and equipment, it will play a big part in lifting the sport at the university."



**FNB Varsity Shield**  
**THE HEAT IS ON!**

The Varsity Shield tournament is in full swing and our boys, the Blues have kicked off their campaign to defend their championship title. Following four matches, the Blues are sitting at number five on the log.

For the tournament fixtures, results, and log visit:  
<https://www.varsitycup.co.za/varsity-shield-fixtures-logs>

LumaKeBlues

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