



University of Fort Hare
Together in Excellence

UFH NEWS

SPECIAL EDITION | 2023 MAY GRADUATION

2023 MAY GRADUATION

*Towards a
decade of Renewal*



UFH CELEBRATES 100 YEARS OF GRADUATION

This year, 2023, marks 100 years from when the University of Fort Hare (UFH) celebrated its first graduation ceremony in 1924. It was during this historic occasion that the great Zachariah Keodirelang "ZK" Matthews, the son of a mineworker, and Edwin Ncwana became the first graduates of the University.

A year later, in 1925, Mr Milner Langa Kabane (18 June 1900 – 1945) who was an educator, editor of Imvo Zabantsundu newspaper, political activist, and a pioneer of the first "Bill of Rights" version in South Africa, graduated from UFH with a Bachelor of Arts (BA) degree and a teaching diploma.

To commemorate this 100th year of graduation – a momentous occasion – the University's Institutional Advancement Department (Marketing and Communications), with the assistance of the UFH Postal and Registry Unit, was able to go back into history and reflect on some of the highlights of graduation ceremonies dating back to the mid-1920's.

In our search, the earliest piece of record we managed to retrieve was an A5, 21-page graduation programme with the words: "Graduates' Day, 9th May 1925," and the South African Native College logo, the name of the institution before it was changed to the University of Fort Hare, printed on the cover.

The intro in the programme reads as follows: *"An interested and expectant audience filled the Library in Stewart Hall, Fort Hare, on Saturday afternoon, 9th May, 1925. The occasion was the second graduation ceremony of the South African Native College."*

"The chair was occupied by Principal Kerr. He called upon Bishop Smyth to constitute the meeting with prayer and then a Xosa hymn, Sinelizwi lika Tixo, composed by the late Rev. John Bennie, was sang."

"The chairman then called upon Dr Henderson, chairman of the Governing Council of the College who said: - The auspicious occasion on which we are met here is of course primarily one for congratulations and good wishes."

Mr Kabane was the only graduate that day.

In 1927, the graduation ceremony was opened with an isiXhosa hymn sang by the students, a passage of scripture was read by Rev. W.S Malton and prayer was offered by Rev. John Lennox, after which the three

graduates namely, Thomas Amos Carey; Alfred John Ferreira; and Samuel Oppelt were presented to the Vice-Chancellor by Mr D.D.D.T Jabavu. Officiating the ceremony was Prof A.S Kidd of Rhodes University College who acted as the Deputy VC in the absence of Rev J.D Kestell who was the VC at the time.

A year later, in 1928, the University recorded another historic moment when it capped its first black female graduate – Gertude Ntlabathi who obtain a Bachelor of Arts. Her name became synonymous with black excellence – a woman who paved the way for many black South African females who followed suit.

During the 1935 graduation ceremony, the University capped 10 graduates. Among them was Archibald Campbell "AC" Jordan, a novelist, literary historian, and intellectual pioneer of African studies. AC Jordan was conferred a Bachelor of Arts Degree, majoring in English and Ethics.

"This University was established in 1916 to empower black people, and we dare not drop the ball."

Rev. John Langalibalele Dube, who was a South African essayist, philosopher, educator, politician, publisher, editor, novelist, poet, and the founding president of the African National Congress was bestowed a Doctor of Philosophy Honorary Degree during the 1937 graduation. In presenting Rev Dube with the Honorary Doctorate, Mr Jabavu said: "The honour is done to a man who has been a genuine South African patriot, a true servant of the country and a pioneer under great difficulties in several import fields."

The Great Sir Charles Henry Njonjo, the former Attorney-General of Kenya who passed away last year at the age of 101-years, was among the over 60 cohort of graduates in 1946. During this ceremony, Anton Muziwakhe Lembede who was a South African activist and founding president of the African National Congress Youth League was awarded a



Z.K. Matthews (left) pictured with Edwin Ncwana. Credit: © University of South Africa

Degree of Master of Arts (Philosophy) in absentia. Lembede titled his thesis: *"The Conception of God as expounded by, or as it emerges from the writing of the Great Philosophers from Descartes to the Present Day."*

In 1951 and 1952, where our retrieved archived graduation programmes end for the 1900's, the Zulu Prince, Mangosuthu Buthelezi crossed the stage to collect his Bachelor of Arts Degree, he was followed by Robert Mugabe, former and late President of Zimbabwe who also collected his BA degree in 1952.

Over the years, several astute leaders in their respective careers and spaces, have crossed the University graduation stage, they include, Robert Mangaliso Sobukwe, Nelson Mandela, Yusuf Lule, Chris Hani, Phyllis Ntantala and Nolitha Fakude... the list is endless.

The University has also awarded Honorary Doctorates to several individuals who have made an impact in their careers and spaces they operate in, most

importantly, individuals who have made an impact on the lives of others.

The shape and size of the graduation programmes notably changed over the years, signifying the evolution in the content and context of UFH graduation. However, one thing remains the same, since 1925, UFH graduations are an occasion for "congratulations and good wishes."

There will always be song, dance, and ululation.

The May Graduation was held from the 15th to 19th May at the Alice Campus' Sports Complex where the University graduated close to 3000 students from across its six Faculties during 10 sessions.

In one of the sessions, Vice-Chancellor Prof Sakhela Buhlungu reminded the University community, parents, and the graduates why this University came into existence saying: "This University was established in 1916 to empower black people, and we dare not drop the ball."

WOMEN LEAD 2023 MAY GRADUATION

Sixty-three percent (63%) of the graduates capped during the 2023 May graduation are women. In addition, over 60% of those who graduated *cum laude* are women.

Altogether, 2992 students crossed the graduation stage to collect their merited qualifications. This year's ceremonies were special because they mark 100 years of students graduating at this historic institution.

The following degrees were conferred by Chancellor, Advocate Dumisa Ntsebeza SC, and the Vice-Chancellor Prof Sakhela Buhlungu:

- 2168 Undergraduate Degrees
- 412 Honours
- 302 Postgraduate Diploma and certificates
- 77 Masters Degrees
- 33 Doctoral Degrees

Commenting ahead of this special occasion, Mr Actor Katurura, Acting Deputy Registrar: Academic and Administration said: "As we stand at the cusp of the University of Fort Hare's centennial graduation ceremonies, my thoughts for some reason have turned to the 2002 coming of age comedy-drama, "Drumline". Drumline is a "fish out of water" story about a gifted young man from Harlem who gets a place at a historically black College in Atlanta, Georgia."

"Certainly, many of you graduating this season are young. That you are here is surely testimony that you are gifted and for some of you at least, arriving at and trying to fit into this citadel of higher learning was a real fish out of water experience and yet in the coming days we will be celebrating your triumphant journey through your chosen areas of study."

"This means that you have traveled through

contested territory and that every inch of ground you gained, every module that you passed required dedication, preparedness, hard and smart work, and more. Over and above the usual and inevitable challenges of higher education the bulk of your studies were during the miasma that came with the Covid-19 pandemic."

Remarking on the 100th year of graduation, Katurura accentuated on the evolution of UFH graduations since 1924. "Having come this far it is therefore fitting that there is evidence of real transformation in patterns of achievement at this graduation. This year there will be more female graduates at every level except at the doctoral level but even here the gap between the number of male and female graduates is closing. The majority of those graduating with *cum laude* are also women."

"Graduation is a very distinct coming of age event, which is why in America they have "commencement" speeches delivered on such occasions. One of the punchlines from the movie Drumline says, "Gentlemen [and ladies] you have now crossed the burning sands....!" The phrase aptly captures that "against all odds journey" of challenge and sacrifice which you have gone through to arrive at this point. Therefore, you who are graduating here can now rightfully bang on the doors of opportunity, whether they be in education, careers, entrepreneurial endeavor, or any other, and proclaim, "We have crossed the burning sands, grant us entry!"

Congratulations to all our graduates. You have now joined the ranks of UFH's esteemed alumni, go forth and make your mark in the world.



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DAY 1

FACULTY OF SOCIAL SCIENCES AND HUMANITIES

Click below link to watch a highlights video from the day
[GRADUATION DAY 1](#)



INTRODUCING UFH'S FIRST COHORT OF GRADUATES IN NEW BUSINESS MANAGEMENT PHD QUALIFICATION



“Being an NQF level 10 qualification, there is no higher level of qualification. These students are now eligible to become academics and employees of this or any other university.”

Among the graduates conferred doctoral degrees during the University of Fort Hare 2023 May Graduation was the first cohort of the Business Management Doctoral Degree.

The qualification offered by the Department of Business Management under the Faculty of Management and Commerce, received a nod in October 2018 from the South African Qualifications Authority in accordance with the National Qualification Framework.

The three graduates are Doctor Justice Ngonidzashe Muchineripi supervised by Professor Willie Chinyamurindi; Doctor Ziyanda Mzamo supervised by Professor Olabanji Oni and; Doctor Sakhumzi Stamper, also supervised by Professor Chinyamurindi.

According to the head of the Department Dr Juliet Townes, the qualification was necessitated by post-graduate students' need for further vertical articulation following the completion of their Masters degree.

“The department, by its size, did not have a PhD programme. This necessitated us to propose an NQF level 10 qualification. This is a direct response to the regional needs in the development of knowledge and ensuring that high-level academic research takes place in the field of business management, enabling individual and institutional capacities,” she explained.

The research-based qualification is carried out over a minimum of four years with the candidate's thesis examined by three academics selected by supervisors and approved by internal structures, and the highest decision-making body in academic matters being Senate.

For his thesis titled: “An intellectual capital structural model in ICT-based small businesses: the role of organisational capabilities on business performance” Dr Stamper focused at testing an intellectual capital-structural model and ascertaining the role of human and organisational capabilities

on business performance in ICT-based small businesses in South Africa. The study used a quantitative approach, and it was conducted using the views of 261 owners/ managers of ICT-small businesses operating in South Africa.

Dr Muchineripi's study titled: “A Structural Equation Model on Small Business Performance: The Mediating role of Effectuation & Entrepreneur Identity,” investigates the mediating role of effectuation on entrepreneurial identity and performance among small businesses in South Africa. Three hundred and eighty questionnaires were distributed to Small Medium and Micro Enterprises through structured questionnaires for testing the hypotheses on the mediating role of effectuation on entrepreneurial and performance among small business. The candidate has published 2 papers in accredited journals from previous work and is currently working on publishing 2 articles from the current study.

Dr Mzamo looked at formulating a model to link innovation and the sustainable business growth of immigrant entrepreneurs. Also, to investigate if there was sufficient relationship between innovation and sustainable business growth of immigrant entrepreneurs within the Johannesburg metro. A mixed approach was used to achieve the objectives. Mzamo's study is titled, “A model for linking innovation and sustainable business growth of immigrant entrepreneurs in Johannesburg metropolitan area.”

Dr Townes said this qualification is the pinnacle of university studies. “Being an NQF level 10 qualification, there is no higher level of qualification. These students are now eligible to become academics and employees of this or any other university.”

Congratulations to the Faculty and the graduates.

INTRODUCING UFH'S MOST SENIOR PHD GRADUATE, DR SKOTA-DAYILE, AGE 70

Dr Nomvuyo Pretty Skota-Dayile from Mdantsane Township in the Eastern Cape is the University of Fort Hare 2023 May Graduation's most senior PhD graduate at age 70.

Dr Skota-Dayile graduated with a PhD in Education, proving that age should be no barrier to fulfilling dreams.

It took her nine years – stalling along the way – to complete her doctoral degree, a journey she proudly proclaims to have no regrets undertaking. While mindful of skeptical views about studying at an advanced age, Dr Skota-Dayile says studying and learning have no age limit and should always be encouraged.

“I started my PhD journey in 2014 and have no regrets about my decision.” After numerous delays and five supervisors later, she graduated on Thursday, 18 May, during the Faculty of Education's morning graduation session.

Supervised by Dr Sipho Moses Mkhomi, she titled her thesis: “Parents' Views of their 0-4-year-old Children's Sociocultural Development at Home while in ECD Centres/ Preschools: Implications for Early Childhood Development (ECD) Policy,” is a qualitative study which investigated parents' views of their 0-4-year-old children's sociocultural development.

Congratulations Dr Skota-Dayile



MEET OUR YOUNGEST PHD GRADUATE THIS SEASON, DR XHAMLA NQORO

At age 29, Dr Xhamla Ngqoro from Ntabozuko (Berlin) is the University of Fort Hare 2023 May Graduation's youngest PhD graduate. He graduated this morning with a Doctor of Philosophy in Chemistry during the Faculty of Science and Agriculture graduation ceremony.

For his thesis titled: “Development and in vitro biological studies of polymer-based wound dressings with high haemostatic capability for the management of bleeding wounds,” Dr Ngqoro under the supervision of

Professor Blessing Aderibigbe, investigated the development of a class of polymer-based topical gels loaded with selected bioactive agents.

He has published one article and four book chapters and two research papers from his doctoral study have been submitted for publication in Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET) accredited journals.

Well done Dr Xhamla



DAY 2

FACULTY OF MANAGEMENT AND COMMERCE

Click below link to watch a
highlights video from the day
[GRADUATION DAY 2](#)



DOUBLE DELIGHT AS IDENTICAL TWINS GRADUATE SIDE-BY-SIDE WITH SAME DEGREE



They were born five minutes apart twenty-five years ago and they have been inseparable since. During the 2023 May Graduation, identical twins Refiloe and Hape Sejake walked the stage side-by-side and were hooded at the same time to graduate with the same degree – most likely a first for the University of Fort Hare in its 100 Years of Graduation.

The pair graduated with Bachelor of Nursing degrees.

Refiloe and Hape were born in Johannesburg and raised in Virginia in the Free State by a single mother and their maternal grandmother in a one-room shack and later moved into an RDP house. They matriculated from Marematluo Secondary School in 2017.

How they ended up at UFH is an amazing tale, that was inspired by an occasion that occurred when they were just eight years old.

“When we were eight and in Grade 2, our mother graduated from Fort Hare. We attended the graduation day at the Alice campus. Although we could not enter the hall due to children not being permitted inside, we felt the celebrations and the emotions that came with it while we were standing outside with family-friends. From that day, we knew this is where we wanted to study.”

Their mother, Juliet Sejake graduated with a Social Work degree and currently works as a Social Worker at Sibanye-Stillwater Mine.

The twins’ passion for nursing was ignited and nurtured from childhood when they cared for their grandmother who was diagnosed with diabetes and hypertension that caused her to lose her eyesight in 1999.

“She used to call us her little nurses as we brought her medication and water to drink.” After 10 years, in 2009 their grandmother underwent an eye operation and her sight was restored, sadly she passed away in 2021 after suffering a stroke. “We wish she was here to witness her little nurses being qualified as professional nurses.”

How they ended up at UFH is an amazing tale, that was inspired by an occasion that occurred when they were just eight years old.

Walking across the stage side-by-side came as a surprise, said the duo. “One of us was next to go on stage when the Dean (Prof Mzikizai Nduna) asked to call the other twin to come on stage together. It was so unexpected and exciting! We have watched the recording over and over,” they giggled.

In addition to having physical resemblance, the twins also do a lot of stuff together. They wear the same clothes, eat the same food at the same time, and sometimes speak the same sentences at the same time.

Throughout their studies they were allocated the same room from first to final year– something they said they prayed for every year.

As luck would have it, they are also doing their community service at the same facility– Aberdeen Hospital.

Their mother Juliet, said although she knew graduation day was inevitable, it felt unreal when she witnessed her daughters being capped.

“I was overwhelmed with emotions, thinking of our humble beginnings, having to raise children in a shack with a leaking roof. I pray that my daughters would become successful and remember to lend a hand to those who are currently in their humble beginnings.”

ACADEMICALLY INCLINED TAXI BOSS OBTAINS HIS PHD AT FORT HARE

Growing up in Mount Coke near Qonce in the Eastern Cape, Dr Sakhumzi Stamper showed signs of being business-minded when he started lending money to his peers in primary school to earn interest. Coupled with this, he was also academically gifted, obtaining good results in Maths and Science.

During the UFH 2023 May Graduation, the 32-year-old, who owns taxis and lectures at Walter Sisulu University, formed part of the first cohort that graduated from the University of Fort Hare's new qualification – a Doctoral Degree in Business Management offered by Faculty of Management and Commerce.

Dr Stamper holds an undergrad, honours in Human Resources and a masters degree in Business Management, all obtained at WSU.

Under the supervision of Prof Willie Chinyamurindi, Stamper titled his thesis: *“An intellectual capital structural model in ICT-based small businesses: the role of organisational capabilities on business performance.”* The study focuses at testing an intellectual capital-structural model and ascertaining the role of human and organisational capabilities on business performance in ICT-based small businesses in South Africa. The study used a quantitative approach, and it was conducted using the views of 261 owners/managers of ICT-small businesses operating in South Africa.

It revealed that there is significant positive relationship between knowledge management capability and human capital. Additionally, he uncovered that innovation capability and business performance had a significant positive relationship and that intellectual capital mediates the relationship between learning capability and business performance.

As he shared his PhD journey, it became evident that his study somehow resonates with his life story - an intellectual who fused his business capabilities to excel.

Dr Stamper is the youngest of seven children raised by two grandmothers, one who was a cleaner and the other was a social grant recipient. To alleviate the financial burden, for pocket money he started his own

informal money-lending business in primary school. By the time he got to high school, he had raised enough capital to stock up on sweets to sell.

“I used to lend my peers R1 and charged interest of 20%. I saved up the money and stocked up on sweets to sell to my mates when I got to high school.”

All this while, he brought home good school reports and passed his matric with flying colours.

With the assistance of a family friend, he was able to enrol at Walter Sisulu University to pursue his first degree, a Diploma in Human Resources. Although this was not his first choice, he excelled in the programme.

“I applied late and had to settle for the available course. Commerce was foreign to me, coming from Maths and Science, nonetheless, I gave it my all. He excelled to the extent that he graduated cum laude and went on to complete his B-Tech, Honours Degree and Masters Degree in the field of commerce.

To survive financially, throughout all his level of studies, Stamper ventured into several businesses and even took up part-time and full-time jobs. “At some stage I sold airtime, I held down a part-time job at a local pharmaceutical, tutored junior students and worked as an *Expanded Public Works Programme (EPWP)* supervisor.”

“When Prof Willie returned my papers with red all over it, it was tough. My wife motivated me by reminding me why I started this journey – to make a name for a child raised by a cleaner and a social grant recipient.”



He was dealt with two major blows, when his two grandmothers, who were his greatest supporters passed away in 2013 and 2017.

“These are the women who were there for me in every step of my academic journey and my endeavors to make ends meet. I was shattered by their deaths but became adamant to continue making them proud.”

While doing his Masters Degree, Stamper was offered a job as a part-time lecturer at Walter Sisulu University to lecture Advanced Strategic Management and Business Management 2.

Using his tax returns and his part-time lecturer salary he bought his first taxi in 2018 and over the years extended his fleet to three taxis and runs the business with his wife, Aphiwe who he says has been his anchor in his PhD journey. “When Prof Willie returned my papers with red all over it, it was tough. My wife motivated me by reminding me why I started

this journey – to make a name for a child raised by a cleaner and a social grant recipient.”

He was appointed permanent lecturer a few years ago.

Commenting on his PhD journey, he said: “I have never read so much in my life, and Prof Willie made me do it, simply because he wanted me to produce research that is impactful. He wants the best even if it means submitting a thousand times and he is very strict with deadlines. Above all, in our journey as candidate and supervisor, he showed me ubuntu.”

Dr Stamper says he wants to dispel the misconception that people in the taxi industry are uneducated.

“I hope my story sends a message that taxi owners are also ambitious people with quests for educational advancement. In this industry, we have people with degrees and I am proud to say, I am a Taxi Boss who is an Academic Doctor.”



DAY 3

FACULTY OF LAW & FACULTY OF HEALTH SCIENCES

Click below link to watch a highlights video from the day
[GRADUATION DAY 3](#)



“I am proud to be the first person in my village to have completed a doctorate or even a Masters degree. I am also proud to be the family’s first graduate. It is a very big achievement for me, and my family. I hope it will show others in my village that it’s possible for them too.”

YOUNG PHD GRADUATE BEATS THE ODDS

Dr Sibusiso Alven, 29, who grew up in “deep rural” Cofimvaba, has scaled academic heights to graduate with a PhD in chemistry at the University of Fort Hare – a reward for all the years he had to walk over 10 km and cross a river to get to school as a young boy.

He is one of the youngest PhD graduates of the UFH 2023 May Graduation.

Commenting on his graduation, he said: “I am proud to be the first person in my village to have completed a doctorate or even a Masters degree. I am also proud to be the family’s first graduate. It is a very big achievement for me, and my family. I hope it will show others in my village that it’s possible for them too.”

Now a Postdoctoral Research Fellow at Nelson Mandela University, he aspires to be a full researcher in the field of chemistry, which has been his passion since high school.

As a little boy, Alven had to walk over 5km to the local primary school in Magwala village near Cofimvaba to get an education. The daily challenge required even more grit in his high school years, as he had to traverse across a river that swelled during the rainy season, on the 13 km journey to school.

“We walked for hours just to get to school, and then back. In winter it was dark when we got out of the house because we had to leave around 5:30 in the morning to make it on time, walking in groups for safety. Even when scholar transport was eventually provided, it was not always reliable.”

Dr Alven enrolled for a Bachelor of Science at UFH in 2012, majoring in chemistry and biochemistry, where he also did his Honours and Masters degrees.

His mother Noluntu Alven says she and his father, an ex-migrant worker did their best to make ends meet and are both delighted by their son’s success as poverty and other challenges did not deter him.

“I had to sell fruit in town to make ends meet,” she said.

Describing her son as disciplined and focused, Noluntu said his PhD achievement far exceeds all their hopes and dreams for him.

One of his peers Basabele Ngalo, who is currently pursuing a doctorate at Nelson Mandela University said Dr Alven was an inspiration to him to follow suit.

“He always gives it 100% and I think he has a bright future ahead. He has succeeded already and will continue to succeed. I don’t know anyone who has published as many papers as he has, even before he completed his PhD.”

Dr Alven has published 19 articles in the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET) accredited journals and five book chapters with three other manuscripts and two book chapters accepted for publication.

Dr Alven says he almost didn’t go to university, because at the time it was uncommon for anyone in his home village to go to university after matric. He credits a young man from his village for motivating him and his peers to go to university and one of his professors for pushing him to PhD level.

RARE DISEASE NO MATCH FOR ASPIRANT LAWYER'S DETERMINATION

The power of resilience was on display at the University of Fort Hare's 2023 May Graduation, when Siphamandla Boyce received his LLB degree – his second qualification from the institution – and the one that puts him within touching distance of his dream.

The Libode-born made headline news in 2021 for showing resilience in the face of serious adversities when he graduated with a UFH Bcom Law Degree despite battling major health setbacks caused by a rare neuro autoimmune disease.

Siphamandla left his hospital bed, where he is undergoing different therapy treatments following another health setback, to walk across the stage during the Faculty of Law graduation ceremony.

His agony started when he was in Grade 10 at Zingisa Comprehensive School in Mthatha, when his eyesight became so poor that he was unable to write his June exams.

While he had always been sickly, this was something new. Though he went back to school and performed well in the December exams, the temporary blindness would be the start of a horror journey as mysterious as it was painful.

After years of strokes, seizures, excruciating headaches and agonising limb pain, he was finally diagnosed with the rare autoimmune disorder, Behcet's disease, in 2018.

But where lesser mortals might have given up, Siphamandla relentlessly pursued his goal of becoming a lawyer.

Even when his parents discouraged him, he continued his studies, re-enrolling time and time again despite the seriousness of his condition.

It was in 2017, the second year of his BCom Law studies, that the symptoms that had tormented in high school became a living nightmare.

At home in Libode for the December holidays, he woke up one morning to a headache such as he had never experienced. He was rushed to St

Mary's Hospital in Mthatha, where he vomited and suffered a seizure – the first of many.

A scan would show severe swelling on his brain.

"The doctor was not sure what it was. The only thing he could do was prescribe medication," said Siphamandla.

He did not respond well but returned to Fort Hare for his second year regardless, thanks to his faculty manager Kunjuzwa Mkiva.

Sadly, his return would prove to be short-lived. Feeling immense fatigue and simply too tired to go to class, he was forced to de-register and spent most of that year "in and out of hospital, being diagnosed with meningitis over and over again" while suffering seizures and headaches.

"Around April, I had my first stroke. I woke up and couldn't move my left arm and left leg. This happened three times in 2017."

Desperate for answers, he secured a referral to see Dr Bhupendra Bhagwan – the same doctor who had assisted him with his eye problem in 2013.

At the start of 2018 he was admitted to Durban's St Augustine's Hospital for a biopsy on the ulcers in his mouth, but the mystery remained.

Yet even this was not enough to deter Siphamandla as he once again enrolled for the BCom programme with the help of Mkiva.

That June he started to experience severe pain in his knees and after a spell in East London's Life Hospital, he again went to see Dr Bhagwan in Durban.

He was told that the only option was to perform a biopsy on his brain, even if this procedure was "dangerous".

After the surgery, they had an answer – Behcet's disease.

While there is no cure, it can be managed and ever since then Siphamandla has followed a strict



"I wanted to be the youngest at whatever it is I chose to do, to have my life established at a very early age."

regimen of "one pill in the morning and one at night".

"In 2019, I had some room to breathe because I was receiving the right medication," he said.

The following year, he completed his BCom against every odd imaginable.

"I wanted to be the youngest at whatever it is I chose to do, to have my life established at a very early age.

"My plan was to have my LLB at 22 but things didn't quite work out that way."

During the graduation ceremony, he got a special mention from the Vice-Chancellor, Prof Sakhela Buhlungu and the Deputy Vice-Chancellor for Teaching Learning, Prof Renuka Vithal asked him to stand as she related his story of sheer determination.



DAY 4

FACULTY OF EDUCATION

Click below link to watch a highlights video from the day
[GRADUATION DAY 4](#)



“This has been my epic journey to graduation – it’s my story which I hope will encourage and motivate older ones and say to them in particular - I am living proof that with effort, prayer and support, anything is possible!”

UFH CLERK SECURES FIRST DEGREE, ALMOST 50 YEARS AFTER PASSING MATRIC

Richard Scott who is a Senior Clerk at the University of Hare’s Honeydale Research Farm in Alice, obtained his first University degree, almost 50 years after passing his matric.

The 62-year-old graduated with a Bachelor of Administration in Public Administration and became the first University graduate in his family.

“Walking across that stage, enrobed in my academic regalia, being capped by the Vice-Chancellor, and then congratulated by the Registrar, has been an almost unimaginable dream which I had long given up on. And yet, God willing, that is the scene that played out during the UFH 2023 May graduation,” he said.

Scott completed his matric in 1978 and although he obtained the required results for tertiary institution admission, his family’s financial circumstances did not permit him to do so, at the time.

“My folks simply could not afford to send me to a tertiary institution to further my studies. I made peace with it and got on with life the best way I could. I ventured into a technical career path, very far removed from any academic nuances and I worked as I could to support my family.”

However, almost by a stroke of fate, years later, he became an employee at UFH - managing the print room.

“This move jolted my life into a new direction as I had to work with academics daily. Once again, that gnawing feeling of having missed out on what I really wanted to do was starting to rear its head.”

“To cut a very long story short, between being the victim of retrenchment, taking on piece-meal jobs to put food on the table and at times being berated and ridiculed by some colleagues in these places of employment, I knew deep down that something better was heading my way.”

“To my utter delight, I became temporarily employed at the Exams Office at UFH and I witnessed hundreds of students graduate every year. I had no doubt that this was what I wanted too.”

In 2020, he enrolled for the Bachelor of Public Administration qualification, while he was full-time employed.

“Basically, I went back to the world of studying after 42 years, during which time I had barely read a book! It was very daunting at first when I discovered the extent of the reading and preparation one had to do as a student, but I was not going to be deterred. That was also the year in which Covid-19 turned our lives topsy turvy, so I had to learn very quickly (as did all other students) how to navigate online learning and assessments. It was a challenge, a complete paradigm shift, but we got through it.”

Unfortunately, in 2022, his spouse had a bad run with her health and had to be hospitalised for a while which put added pressure on trying to keep up with his studies.

“The final challenge was the complete 180 degree, turn-around which was implemented in the very last semester of our three-year experience as students when it was decided to return to contact teaching and learning, and experiencing writing exams physically at the sports centre. Talk about another paradigm shift.”

Despite all the obstacles which came across his path, Scott passed every single one of his modules without having to write even one supplementary exam, from the first year right through to the third year. He even passed several of his courses with distinction.

“This would not have been possible without the advice and assistance I received from a very loving supportive family and awesome dedicated and driven lecturers and fellow students. Many of my friends and family members are very proud of my achievement but I am the proudest because I know first-hand the challenges, I endured to achieve the end goal.

“This has been my epic journey to graduation – it’s my story which I hope will encourage and motivate older ones and say to them in particular - I am living proof that with effort, prayer and support, anything is possible!”

Congratulations Richard!



UFH'S "DIMITRI" BACKS HIS VOCALS WITH A MUSIC DEGREE

"My time here at Fort Hare has been the highlight of my life. I enrolled in 2019 and a year later I was already singing and winning on international stages. Amazingly, I went on to perform and win four more international competitions."

He has won several international opera singing competitions and has performed for the President of South Africa, and now, the University of Fort Hare's opera singing sensation, Sazi "Dimitri" Gcaba has crossed the 2023 UFH May graduation stage to collect his Bachelor of Music Degree – backing his impressive music career.

The 24-year-old who hails from Flagstaff in the Eastern Cape rose to stardom in his second year of study at the UFH Music Department when after several rounds of meticulous judging by acclaimed opera maestros such as the now late Sibongile Khumalo; Andrew Staples and Marsha Thompson, was announced winner of the London-based Voices of South Africa International Opera (VOSA) 2020 online competition in the under 22 years category.

The VOSA victory was the first of many international opera competitions he went on to claim – deservingly so.

He is the winner of the 2021 Aspiring Opera Singing Voice Competition under the Emerging Artist Category – a US-based competition that aims to

create a platform for music students around the world to showcase their talents. In the competition, he was selected out of 121 music students worldwide who submitted their pre-recorded auditions. The judges' citation read: "Out of 121 videos, your performance exemplified a combination of stellar technique, and great acting skills, creating a captivating performance."

He is also the winner of the 2021 Online London International Music; the 2022 Medici International and 2023 the Birmingham International Competitions.

In April 2022, he was selected to join 20 opera singers from around the world in an international fundraising event for Ukraine war victims. The Artist for Peace production was organized by Opera Cecilia, an international opera company.

The Baritone opera singer could not contain his excitement when he spoke to Institution Advancement Department (Marketing and Communications) about his journey to graduation and his time as a student at Fort Hare.

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Last year, during a memorandum-of-understanding signing ceremony between the ANC and UFH at the De Beers Art Gallery, he gave a stellar performance before President Cyril Ramaphosa with his rendition of *Ngabe Kwenzenjani?* – a powerful piece about the 1976 Soweto Youth Uprising.

"I do not know how many times I have relived this moment in my life where I performed in a room full of people, and among the audience was the President of the country. I will forever cherish that moment," he said.

Sazi says he owes his success to several people who have supported him, among them is his Grade 9 Music Teacher, Mr Fada who recognized his talent.

At Fort Hare, he found three "fathers" who shaped his singing career, according to him. They are Mr

Tamsanqa Ncokwana his voice trainer; Mr Ndumiso Mtshali, Ethnomusicologist and Music Lecturer and; the former HOD, Dr. Nduduzo Makhathini who is a world-renowned multi-award winning jazz maestro. "I learned from them, I learned from the best."

Dr Nduduzo named him as one of the most "hard-working students" in the Department.

Currently, he is participating in an international competition, the Virtuoso International Music Competition.

For now, he plans to enroll at the University of Cape Town Opera School next year, a step that he believes would unlock his future aspirations to study abroad and become a global opera singer.

Commenting about his graduation, Sazi described it as both sad and joyous. Sad because his greatest supporter, his mother, will not be there to witness it. "She passed away in 2021 due to Covid-19. Knowing that she won't see me graduate is painful but knowing wherever she is, she is proud of me, makes it all better."



DAY 5

FACULTY OF SCIENCE AND AGRICULTURE

Click below link to watch a highlights video from the day
[GRADUATION DAY 5](#)



INDUSTRIOUS UFH STUDENT GRADUATES WITH A BACHELOR OF COMMERCE

Kholosa Mfazwe who made it her business to keep people's shoes clean by starting Keay's Takkie Wash, graduated with a Bachelor of Commerce this week – certifying her passion for entrepreneurship.

The 25-year-old from Zwelitsha township near Qonce is currently pursuing her Bcom Honours Degree in Business Management at UFH. She started her takkie (sneaker) cleaning business in the first year of her undergrad studies four years ago.

“The idea for Keay's Takkie Wash came to me after I noticed that many students were walking around with dirty shoes. I saw an opportunity to provide an affordable solution to this problem,” she says.

According to her, the business has provided financial support for herself, especially her living costs while doing her honours as she is not funded – due to her being previously funded by NSFAS.

“I come from a home that is not privileged, so my business filled that financial gap. When I started it, I was funded by NSFAS, the allowance of R1500 that I got was not enough for my needs and wants, so I could supplement my income with the profit I made.”

Apart from sustaining her financially, Mfazwe said Keay's Takkie Wash has taught her several business skills, such as budgeting, planning, dispute resolution, customer service and how to carve out a competitive advantage to set herself apart from competitors in nearby suburbs.

“I realised that I needed to offer the best service, and since my target market was students, I needed to be affordable. Through Keay's Takkie Wash I have learned a lot about business and making sure that customers are satisfied. It makes me happy to see the smile on the faces of my customers. The feeling never gets old,” she chuckled.

She credits her late grandfather, Ntozelizwe Mfazwe for inspiring her passion for business. “My grandfather was a real champ, and he always told me to work hard for my goals. He was the one who told me about the importance of academic achievement and encouraged me to pursue my dreams with determination and perseverance.”

She started her entrepreneurial journey at Xolani Senior Secondary School, selling sweets and chips to my fellow learners for “petty cash”.

“That was the start of my love for business. It's amazing how the smallest things can lead to bigger things.”

Commenting on entrepreneurship as the key to unlocking economic development, Mfazwe said: “Entrepreneurship should be supported and encouraged, as it could help the country tackle its economic woes such as the high rate of unemployment and slow economic growth. I believe in entrepreneurship as a vital part of our economy and I am proud to contribute to its growth,” Mfazwe said.



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UFH PRODUCING EDUCATED FUTURE LEADERS

Ten (10) UFH Student Representative Council (SRC) members graduated during the University's 2023 May Graduation - eight with first degrees, and two with second degrees.

Leading the pack, is SRC President, Siphokazi Mbalo who obtained her LLB degree.

Congratulations to SRC Members:

- President Mbalo
- Onenceba Kama - ISRC Secretary General, Bachelor of Arts
- Yamkela Situnda - EL Premier, Bachelor of Social Science
- Nande Sohuma - Alice Premier, Bachelor of Social Science
- Sbusisiwe Ndaba - Alice Secretary, Bachelor of Arts
- Sanele Lugayeni - Alice Academic Affairs Officer, B. Human Movement Science
- Aphelele Maliwa - EL Academic Affairs Officer, Bachelor of Laws
- Luyolo Mcothshane - Alice Student Service Officer, Bachelor of Library & Information Science
- Zanele Monakali - Alice Sports and Culture Officer, Postgraduate Certificate in Education
- Msimelelo Mayidume - Alice Residence Officer, Honours in Pure Mathematics

HEEDING AND LEADING

Two academic staff at the Department of Agricultural Economics Department of Agricultural Economics and Extension obtained their doctoral degrees during the May Graduation ceremony, this bringing the number of academic staff holding PhD's at the Department to 90%. The Department is heeding to and leading a call for all University academic staff to hold or be registered for a doctoral degree.

According to the Head of the Department, Prof Michael Aliber, they are one staff member away from having a 100% academic staff with PhD's.

Dr Lindokuhle Gwala and Dr Sifiso Mdletshe, both lecturers, each obtained

their Doctor of Philosophy in Agricultural Economics Extension. Through her study titled: "Insights into the drivers and impact of climate change and climate change adaptation in the Eastern Cape, South Africa: The case of Amathole District Municipality," Dr Gwala sought to understand how communal livestock farmers in the Eastern Cape's Amathole District are being affected by climate change.

Whilst Dr Mdletshe assessed the "Viability of Government-Funded Broiler Production: Lessons from Northern KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa."



WHEN THE CLIMATE MAKES YOU ACT

When Kuhle started her doctoral research in 2016, she never expected to be put through a personal trial by fire while also thinking about how global warming and other changing weather patterns would impact individuals and communities.

But that's what comes with the seven-year process of researching, writing, and then taking a PhD to touch.

The process, she says, is more powerful when you really believe in what you are doing. This was the case for Dr. Gwala whose interest in climate change and communal farming led her to explore why small-scale farmers provide the backbone of South African, and especially rural, food systems, providing nourishment for local communities and beyond.

"In the face of a changing climate, these farmers face unprecedented challenges that threaten their livelihoods and the food security of millions," she said.


Her new doctoral study, for which she was just awarded a PhD from the University of Fort Hare, comes at a critical time to address the many challenges faced by the Eastern Cape livestock farmers who are on the front lines of the climate emergency.

Through her work, she has identified key strategies for helping these farmers – and the stakeholders and systems they rely on – adapt to the changing climate by improving their access to climate change information.

This, she says, will help them continue to produce the food that sustains the local economy and communities that depend on livestock and their associated products for their survival.

Dr. Gwala's study identified the critical role that information plays in helping farmers formulate climate adaptation strategies.

The research shows that access to, and sharing of, accurate and timely information about weather patterns, soil health, and other factors, can help farmers make informed decisions about how to manage their land and livestock.



“Learning is a process, especially when it comes to research. You will have your work plan but when it comes to execution, things will go west, and you have to start the process again from scratch.”

It can also help them anticipate and respond to climate-related challenges, such as droughts and floods, which can have devastating impacts on their crops and animals.

Inspired to act

Dr. Gwala lectures at the University of Fort Hare's Department of Agricultural Economics and Extension.

She's been interested in climate change adaptation and response rates, farmer's perceptions of it, food security, and communal livestock production and extension advisory services over her academic career, she says, because of the pressing nature of the climate crisis.

The plight of Eastern Cape farmers is also especially close to her heart because she comes from a rural area of the province, in the Amatole District, near Dimbaza.

"I see how climate change is a challenge in rural areas every day, hence the interest to want to contribute [to understanding it], research wise," she said, adding that the biodiversity of the province is also a plus to her study.

"I worked across semi-arid, forest and coastal areas and so this allowed for a variety of experiences and perceptions of climate change to filter into my work."

She says the research highlights the challenges of communal farmers from their point of view.

"By understanding perception, we can understand where the challenges lie and emanate from when it comes to reduced cattle production rates as a result of climate change."

"I hope my research and its findings can strengthen the vulnerable rural population and help different stakeholders – government, farmers, policy makers, research institutions – share climate change information more effectively, improve communication channels or strategies, and implement climate change adaptation strategies that will improve cattle production in the province."

A PH balance

When looking in the rear view mirror, with research results and powerful findings in hand, it's easy to feel buoyed by the completion of the project, but Dr.

Gwala notes that doing a PhD is also about balancing a personal ecosystem too.

"The process was tedious, frustrating and draining, but worth it in the end," she said. "Being a permanent employee with a high workload, a mother, and a student is demanding and maintaining balance is not easy. You must deliver in all those areas. So, it was not easy."

She says the way through is to stick to a plan. "Learning is a process, especially when it comes to research. You will have your work plan but when it comes to execution, things will go west, and you have to start the process again from scratch."

"The key is to never give up. Finish what you started no matter how long it takes. Run the race until the finish line and never take shortcuts or go against your principles."

Dr. Gwala will now work on research collaborations and publishing her findings, alongside working to ensure that addressing the climate emergency is a top priority.



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Together in Excellence

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Institutional Advancement

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