



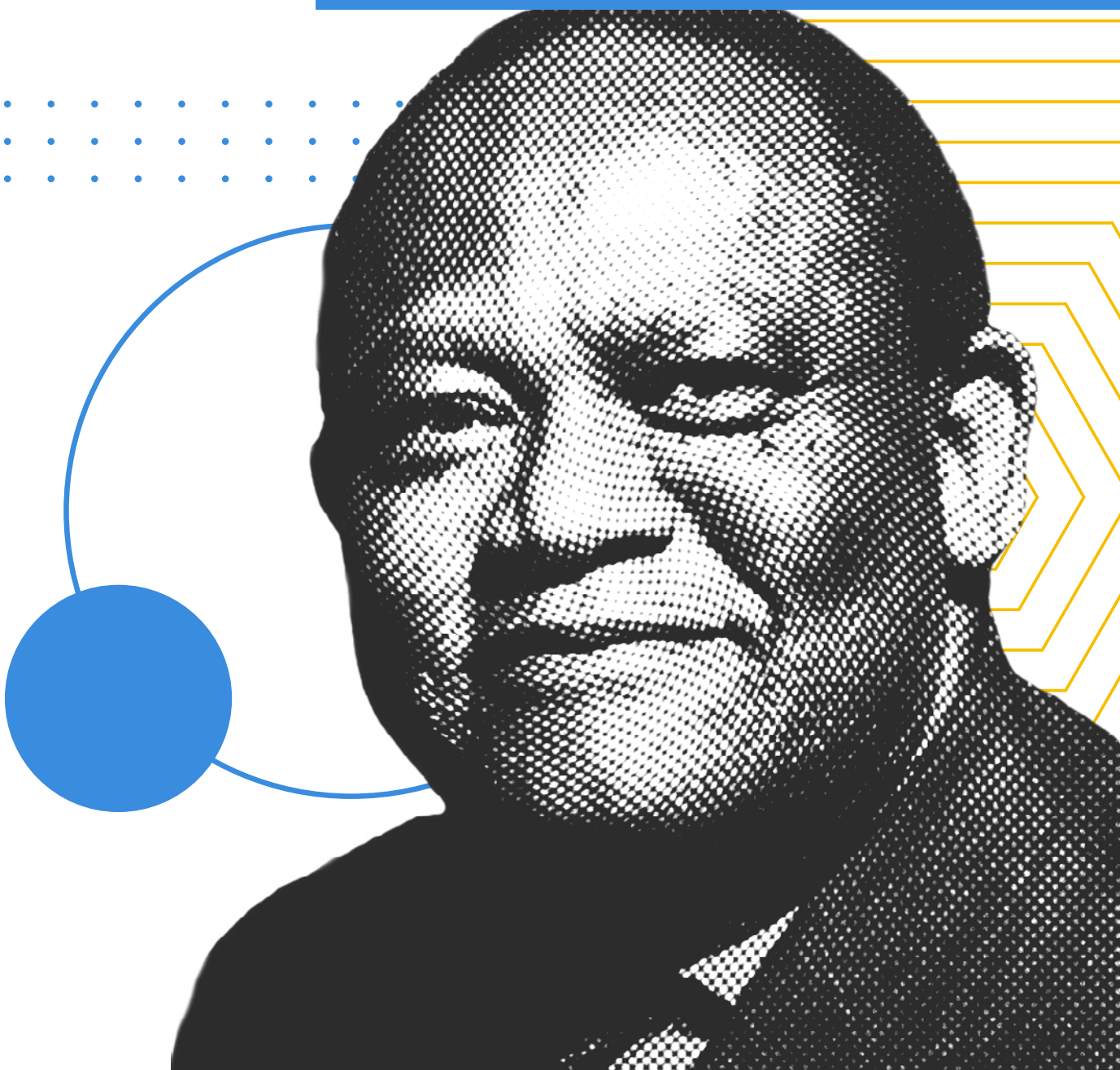
University of Fort Hare  
*Together in Excellence*

# UFHNEWS

1st Quarter 2024

## THE YEAR OF ZK MATTHEWS

**ZK MATTHEWS**  
GRADUATION CENTENARY



# PRESERVING THE LEGACY AND BUILDING THE FUTURE – THE YEAR OF ZK MATTHEWS

The Vice-Chancellor, Prof Sakhela Buhlungu officially opened the University for the 2024 Academic Year on 9 February, a day after the institution celebrated its 108th year in existence (1916-2024).

Prof Buhlungu declared 2024 as the Year of Zachariah Keodirelang “ZK” Matthews to mark the centenary graduation of Prof ZK who became the University’s first graduate in 1924.

“If there is one person who should be celebrated for championing academic freedom and university autonomy, it is Prof ZK Matthews.”

He urged the University community to organize a series of academic and intellectual events such as lectures and symposiums, publish academic papers, and an exhibition on ZK Matthews and his legacy at UFH.

In his address that he titled, “Preserving the Legacy and Building the Future” the VC reflected on the year that was (2023) and gave a hopeful glimpse of what is to come in 2024.

## Preserving the Legacy

“The 2023 academic year represented an extremely important moment in the history of the University. Through numerous activities and programmes, we managed to consolidate our efforts across the spectrum of our work towards the realization of the revitalisation programme that we refer to as “A Decade of Renewal.”

“By the end of the year our University emerged energized and assertive and earned the respect in higher education and other circles in South Africa and beyond.”

Among the activities and achievements, the VC highlighted the strong financial performance that the University’s Finance Department, which is headed by four Chartered Accountants, continues to exhibit. “Sound cash flow management enabled investment activities which yielded significant investment income for the year.”

He also highlighted some of the huge strides made in Teaching and Learning in 2023. These include the approval of three innovative and unique programmes by Senate that have been submitted to the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET) and will be submitted to the Council of Higher Education this year for accreditation. “The programmes are the Bachelor of Entrepreneurship, the Bachelor of Science in Dairy Science and Food Technology, and the Bachelor of Arts

(Honours) in Liberation Studies.”

In the area of Research, the VC reflected on the launch of the five new Research Niche Areas, which are Renewable Energy; Sustainable Agriculture, Water Usage and Impact of Climate Change; Infectious Diseases and Medicinal Plants; Research in Inclusion and Township Economies; and African Liberation Heritage in Citizenship and Society.

He also drew attention to the solid and impactful partnerships that were forged in the year 2023, such as the formalization of the research collaboration, through the signing of a memorandum of agreement between the University and the Universidade Rainha Njinga Mbande in Malanje, Angola. The partnership funded by the South African Department of Science and Innovation (DSI) three years ago also led to a training of academic staff from Angola. “The training has already commenced with one PhD student already admitted and more being considered,” he said.

The VC also detailed the strides made in Institutional Support through the establishment of an Ad Hoc Committee that resulted in the unblocking of infrastructure delivery and ultimately improved the governance in the unit.

As much as he celebrated the milestones, the VC also remembered some of the “dark days” such as the brutal assassination of his driver and bodyguard Mboneli Vesele outside the VC’s house. The incident followed the assassination of the Fleet Manager, Mr Petrus Roets on 19 May 2022. To honour their memory, the VC invited their family to the ceremony, where he once again assured them that the University community would not rest until justice was served.

## Building a Better Future

“Our achievements and success in 2023 provided a solid foundation which ensured that the year 2024 is a success.”

Guided by the Strategic Plan, <https://www.ufh.ac.za/strategy/> this year the University continues its upward trajectory of achieving excellence in all the functions of the University.

On the cards, is the completion of key infrastructure projects such as the pioneering Early Childhood Development Centre in East London and the two DHET-funded water and wastewater treatment projects in Alice that will bring much-needed relief to the University and its surrounding communities.

This year we will also see the roll-out of smart classrooms, the automation of teaching and learning administration processes, security technology installations, and a new network connection via Makhanda that will spell the end of network connection challenges on the Alice campus.

In the area of Research, Partnership and Innovation, the VC announced the finalization of an agreement with a major funder for the Endowed Chair in Dairy Science & Technology – an announcement met with a resounding round of applause from the guests.

Met with much glee from the academic staff that were in attendance was the recruitment drive to fill 30 academic posts.

Also welcoming was the establishment of a Retail Operations Committee (ROC) to spearhead the rental of vacant facilities across the University’s three campuses. “The ROC has identified vacant properties and developed a draft rental register. The rental of retail spaces on campuses will commence in the first

semester of this year. One of these will be a restaurant at the staff centre in Alice.”

The start of work on the much-anticipated East London Student Centre and the expansion of the Alice Library have also been put on the cards for this year.

The VC reminded the university community of their obligation to uphold the University’s Legacy. “Each generation of students, staff, and administrators have an obligation to preserve this University and its legacy so that generations to come can benefit from it. Our ‘Decade of Renewal’ is our contribution towards the preservation of UFH and everything it represents and stands for.”

We look forward to the year 2024, the Year of ZK Matthews.





## UFH ENTERS LEAGUE OF WORLD'S TOP 2000 UNIVERSITIES FOR ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE

The University has ranked in 1952nd position for the year 2023-24, significantly up from its prior rank of 2259th position in 2022-23. The latest ranking also sees UFH's breaking through into the international league of top 2 000 universities ranked by URAP for academic programme quality along with 15 other South African universities.

The University's academic quality continues with stellar pace following the release of the 2023-24 University Ranking by the Academic Performance (URAP) World Rankings earlier this year.

The URAP World Rankings programme aims to rank international higher education institutions (HEIs) for their academic performance.

According to the ranking body's website "URAP covers approximately 12% of all higher education institutions in the world, which makes it one of the most comprehensive university ranking systems."

UFH showcased a remarkable ascent in the latest rankings, climbing 307 places.

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South African universities.

While none of the Eastern Cape universities ranked in the top 10 institutions, UFH's success has been particularly noteworthy when compared to other historically disadvantaged institutions (HDIs) in the country.

Among the eight HDIs in the country, only six achieved a ranking from URAP. Among these, UFH claimed the second position, right behind the University of the Western Cape (UWC), with Sefako Makgatho Health Sciences University ranking third.

UFH further impressed as the HDI recording the highest jump in rankings. Here, UFH increased its ranking with 307 places, and it was followed by Walter Sisulu University (163) and University of Venda (125).

The Academic Performance (URAP) World Rankings programme methodology involves scoring universities against several key performance indicators.

Indicators include articles and documents to measure scientific productivity, citations to measure research impact, and article and citation impact totals to measure research quality, and international collaboration to measure international acceptance.

Since URAP is an academic performance-based ranking, publications constitute the basis of the ranking methodology. Both quality and quantity of publications

and international research collaboration performance are used as indicators.

"The URAP rankings empowers UFH leadership team and the institution's Council with an independent assessment tool and alternative methodology to monitor, measure and assess the efficacy our strategic programmes and initiatives for the academic project, our research enterprises and international partnerships," said Professor Sakhela Buhlungu, Vice-Chancellor and Principal of UFH.

"With another platform at our disposal for measuring research and academic performance, the University is further enabled to identify areas of strength and potential areas for improvement," he said

# NEW GENERATION OF ACADEMICS PROGRAMME (NGAP) LECTURERS EMPOWER MATRIC CLASS OF 2023

The University is proud to have played a meaningful role in empowering the matric class of 2023 at neighbouring schools.

Through a community engagement programme initiated by the New Generation of Academics Programme (nGAP) Lecturers, the University built strong ties with Grade 12 and 11 learners at Zwelimjongile Secondary School and Tamsanqa Secondary School in Debe Nek, located about 35km from the Alice campus, to highlight career paths to pursue at UFH.

The nGAP is a prestigious programme under the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET) that involves the recruitment of highly capable scholars as new academics. Currently, the University is a host to thirteen (13) lecturers.

According to Ms Pfarelo Grace Tshivhandekano, nGAP Lecturer at the Department of Zoology and Entomology, the community engagement initiative, which is in its pilot phase, stems from a realization that aspiring first-time entrant (FTEN) students have limited information on the courses available at university.

“It was noted that most information students from more rural areas were exposed to is focused on STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Science). This means that information on a significant portion of alternative options is not known, which discourages learners from pursuing higher education, especially for those who do not have Mathematics as a subject at school. Thus, this holistic initiative seeks to expose learners to options they did not otherwise know were available.”

Tshivhandekano explained that the focus was on schools within the local municipality that still find UFH inaccessible because of various factors, including being unaware of the process of enrolling at university.

“To access these schools, the nGAP lecturers had first-hand exposure to some challenges faced by the learners, as it took us over an hour to navigate the poor roads. Despite this hurdle, there was a session with matriculants from Zwelimjongile and grade 11 and 12 pupils from Tamsanqa.”

The lecturers also noted, with concern, the lack of network connectivity which spells a challenge for

online applications.

“The trip was a lesson in humility and a reminder that charity begins at home; we need to start with the schools in our local areas before we want to reach schools in neighbouring towns and municipalities,” said Human Geography lecturer, Ms Serame.

“The learners and teachers were grateful that we made it a priority to reach out and empower them,” said Dr Mlala who is a Chemistry Lecturer.

During these sessions, lecturers showcased degrees available at UFH, identified qualifying subjects for the different degrees, spoke of the APS score structure, and shared information on the application process.

“We intend to maintain and strengthen the relationships with these schools and potentially extend it to other schools where we plan to invite other key stakeholders to join in,” said Ms Tshivhandekano.

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# IT TAKES A VILLAGE – GRADUATE TEACHER CONTRIBUTES 100% TO MATRIC PASS

Behind the success of the Matric Class of 2023 are teachers, and among them is University of Fort Hare (UFH) Bachelor of Education graduate, Ms Zenceba Ngiwaza whose geography class obtained an impressive 100 percent pass rate.

The 26-year-old from Lusikisiki graduated from UFH in 2021 with a B.Ed degree, majoring in Geography and isiXhosa. A week before her graduation, she secured a teaching post at Dalubuhle High School in Sheshegu, a small village located in Alice, where she teaches various subjects, including social sciences, life orientation, and mainly geography to multiple grades.

Overall, the school obtained an applaudable 100 percent matric pass.

Speaking to UFH Media, a few days after the National Senior Certificate results were announced last week Thursday, it was evident that Ngiwaza and the school community went above and beyond to attain these successful results.

“Sometimes, to achieve comfort you need to go through uncomfortable situations. I wanted to be there for my class in every way that I could, as such, I sacrificed the comfort of my apartment in town to sleep on a sponge in one of the school classrooms where our learners were camping for extra lessons in preparation for exams.”

“Some of the villagers also opened their homes to accommodate learners who were attending the lessons in the afternoons and early mornings. It was truly a village coming together for a greater good.”

During lessons, the learners take centre stage, she says. “When teachers enter the field, we set ourselves goals, and mine is to create a teaching and learning environment that is conducive for learners to succeed, and I use teaching methods that are learner centred. I also ensure that our classroom becomes a space where learners can freely express themselves. At the end of the lesson, I do assessment exercises to ensure no one is left behind.”

Beginning of 2023, Ngiwaza battled mental illness and was booked off for six months and another teacher held the fort for her. She won the battle and returned

in the second semester of the school year.

Raised by her late maternal grandmother who valued education, Ngiwaza kept that value and is determined to pass it on to the younger generation. “My grandmother was uneducated and strongly advocated for us to get an education. Even on days that we did not feel like going to school, we knew when it came to her, we had no other option. She was very strict and did not compromise.”

Sadly, her grandmother passed away when she was in matric.

Initially, Ngiwaza’s preferred career choice was social work, however, fate had it otherwise. “I am passionate about working with children and I always wanted to contribute to their social wellbeing and being a social worker was fitting for me at the time. However, when I was accepted for the B.Ed degree, fate decided that I would become a teacher. And now I love it. I still work with children and contribute to positively shaping their minds and empowering them for the future.”

On the day the matric results were released, Ngiwaza says some of her learners reached out to her to thank her for believing in them and some parents also called to express their gratitude.

“During my primary and secondary schooling, I had supportive teachers, and now I want to be that supportive teacher to my learners,” she said.



## AWARD-WINNING RESEARCHER JOINS UFH

### Prof. Moses Retselisitsoe Phooko



Prof Moses Retselisitsoe Phooko, an award-winning law and human rights researcher has been appointed as a Full Professor at the Faculty of Law, and Director of the UNESCO Oliver Tambo Chair of Human Rights, effective 1 March 2024.

Prof Phooko is an accomplished Pan-African scholar who has published extensively in SADC community law and human rights. He has vast experience in higher education and has held various leadership roles.

In 2021, Prof Phooko, a National Research Foundation (NRF) Y2-rated researcher, was awarded an NRF Research Excellence Award for Emerging Researchers in the Humanities and Social Sciences. The Constitutional Court of South Africa has cited some of his research articles.

He has successfully supervised students both at the LLM and LLD levels.

Prof Phooko has worked as a Law Clerk at the Constitutional Court, lecturer at the University of South Africa, and associate professor at the University of Limpopo amongst other institutions.

Before joining the University of Fort Hare, Prof Phooko was an associate professor and a director for Professional Development and Community Engagement at the North-West University. He also acts as an ad hoc judge of the High Court of South Africa, Gauteng Division, Pretoria, and is a Member of the Electoral Court of South Africa. His written judgments are available on SAFLII. Ultimately, Prof Phooko’s qualifications include a Diploma in Human Rights (University of North-West), an LLM (North-West University), an LLM (University of Notre Dame, USA), and an LLD (University of South Africa).

In Prof Phooko’s words, “Joining an iconic institution such as the University of Fort Hare which has produced renowned leaders who have significantly contributed to the liberation of mankind has come at the right time and reaffirms my commitment to the ideals of social justice and pursuit of knowledge production that will contribute towards the search in finding sustainable solutions.”

# “RECLAIMING A SAFER UNIVERSITY” - UFH LAUNCHES ITS FIRST- EVER GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE PREVENTION UNIT OFFICE

In a landmark move to combat Gender-Based Violence (GBV) within its community and beyond, the University of Fort Hare (UFH) today, 26 March 2024, officially opened its first-ever GBV Prevention Unit (PU) Office and launched the “Reclaiming a Safer UFH” campaign, declaring in unison that indeed: #GBVPreventionIsYourBusiness.

This historic moment re-affirms the University’s stance of zero-tolerance of GBV on campus. It also serves to honour the memories of Nosiselo Mtebeni and Siphosethu Mqomboti, two UFH female students who died at the hands of GBV.

Located on the Alice campus the realization of the GBVPU Office and the launch of the campaign marks a significant milestone in the University’s ongoing commitment to fostering a safe, secure, and respectful environment for all, a commitment made in 2019 with the establishment of the Unit.

According to the Director of the GBVPU Ms Nonhlanhla Sibanda Moyo, the Office which will be staffed by her, the investigation officer, a social worker and two interns will intensify the Unit’s mandate to actively combat GBV by receiving and investigating complaints, facilitating resolutions, and providing support to both complainants and alleged perpetrators.

The campaign aims to instill a sense of personal ownership and collective responsibility in addressing the scourge of GBV by cultivating personal ownership, promoting community involvement, strengthening prevention initiatives, and amplifying awareness about the services and resources available at the Unit.

The event brought together internal and external stakeholders such as the South African Police Services, NGOs advocating against GBV such as Masimanyane Women’s Rights International, the Eastern Cape Liquor Board and the Raymond Mhlaba Municipality for this worthy cause.

Ms Cheryl Zondi, a survivor of a sexual abuse case involving a Pastor, delivered a powerful and

sober address as the guest speaker, reminding the audience, “that it is never your fault.”

A wholesome conversation ensued between the audience and a panel comprising representatives from the Student Representative Council, Campus Protection Service, Residence Department, the GBVPU, Student Council Unit and Employee Wellness. The talk laid bare the challenges, strides, and road yet to be travelled in bringing GBV to its knees.

Delivering the keynote address, the VC stressed the importance of dealing with reported cases of GBV, appropriately. “It’s either we fight together, or we sink together. Because once a person is affected by GBV, it kills them.”

The VC also highlighted the importance of changing perceptions notorious for breeding GBV incidents. “To deal with GBV, you don’t just use the stick alone, we need to sit down and change the consciousness of gender equality because as long as men feel they are superior to women, cases of GBV will persist.”

“The appeal, therefore, is for those in positions of power such as the SAPS to be on our side and not on the other side. And my appeal to the University community is to Make GBV Your Business!”- said the VC.

The programme proceeded with a walk to the Tyume Bridge located outside campus which was once a scene of a GBV incident where two students were attacked resulting in the murder of Mqomboti. In a tear-inducing moment with the humming of “Senzeni Na?” in the background, a moment of silence was observed in memory of the victims and the survivors of GBV. The bridge was reclaimed and declared a “safe spot” henceforth.

The event ended with the unveiling of the plaque and cutting the ribbon, which signified the official opening of the UFH Gender-Based Violence Prevention Unit Office.

“To deal with GBV, you don’t just use the stick alone, we need to sit down and change the consciousness of gender equality because as long as men feel they are superior to women, cases of GBV will persist.”





## EMERITUS STATUS FOR REVERED UFH SCIENTIST, PROF ANTHONY JIDE AFOLAYAN

**“Academics don’t earn a lot of money, they earn respect which is acquired through the manner you conduct yourself. Do not commit crime or get involved in unethical activities.”**

In recognition of his illustrious career spanning four decades of dedicated research and academic leadership, Prof Anthony Jide Afolayan at the Department of Botany has been awarded Emeritus status by the University of Fort Hare (UFH) – a well-deserved honour for the distinguished academic.

Prof Afolayan, a National Research Foundation (NRF) C2-rated researcher who is an expert in Medicinal Plants and Economic Development has demonstrated exceptional leadership and academic prowess throughout his career.

He has published more than 550 peer-reviewed articles in DHET-accredited journals and 19670 citations.

At Fort Hare, Prof Afolayan has graduated 54 PhDs, 19 MScs, 42 BSc Honours, and hosted 25 post-doctoral fellows, and he developed the curricula for MSc and PhD programmes in Ethnobotany and Phytomedicine.

Prof Afolayan holds a PhD in Botany (Plant Physiology) from the University of Pretoria, an MSc in Botany (Plant Ecology) and a BSc (Hons) in Botany from the University of Ibadan.

He started his academic career in 1982 as an Assistant Lecturer at the Department of Botany, Ondo State University, Ado-Ekiti, Nigeria. He joined UFH in 1997 as a Lecturer. He climbed the ranks and became a Full Professor in the Department of Botany from 2001 to 2021 where he made significant contributions as the leader of the institution’s Medicinal Plants and Economic Development Research Niche Area.

He served as the HOD for two terms and represented the Faculty of Science & Agriculture on numerous University Committees.

He has held various teaching and research positions at UFH, and other universities such as the University of Pretoria, the National University of Lesotho, and University of Ilorin, among others.

Notably, he is the founder and former President of the Society for Medicinal Plants and Economic Development (SOMPED).

Prof Afolayan held several strategic administrative roles within the university, including Head of Department and Manager of the Electron Microscopy Unit.

In addition to his academic roles, he has made substantial contributions to scientific journals as an editor and reviewer. He is the Editor-in-Chief of the Journal of Medicinal Plants for Economic Development and serves as a member of editorial boards of several prestigious publications.

His research interests encompass a wide range of topics, including the identification, cultivation, and bioactivity of medicinal plants, as well as their commercialization for economic development and community empowerment. He has led numerous research projects focused on these areas, attracting significant funding and producing groundbreaking results.

Upon his retirement in 2021 and before the awarding of his Emeritus status, Prof Afolayan was appointed as an Adjunct Professor within the Department of Botany.

His outstanding contributions to the field of Botany have been widely recognized, as evidenced by numerous awards and honors throughout his career. These include the Vice Chancellor’s Senior Research Medal and the University of Fort Hare Merit Award, among others.

In an interview with UFH News, Prof Afolayan said: “I am truly honoured to have been awarded this status while I am still alive. I consider it to be the peak of my academic career.”

Advising professors who aspire to acquire Emeritus status, Prof Afolayan said integrity was key. “Academics don’t earn a lot of money, they earn respect which is acquired through the manner you conduct yourself. Do not commit crime or get involved in unethical activities.”

His appointment as Professor Emeritus is a testament to his exceptional achievements and commitment to advancing botanical research and education. His legacy continues to inspire future generations of scholars and researchers in South Africa and beyond. His dedication to nurturing the next generation of scholars has left a lasting impact on the academic community.

More information on Prof Afolayan’s accomplishments and contributions to the field of Botany can be accessed on his website: <http://anthonyafolayan.co.za>.

# PROFESSOR WERNER NEL'S PROFESSORIAL INAUGURAL LECTURE EXPLORES CLIMATE CHANGE IN THE SUB-ANTARCTIC: PAST, PRESENT, AND FUTURE



“Recent advancements in cosmogenic nuclide exposure dating techniques have revolutionized our understanding of past glaciations in the sub-Antarctic. Our findings challenge previous hypotheses, revealing that Marion Island experienced its last glacial maximum over 56,000 years ago, much earlier than previously believed.”

Professor Werner Nel, a well-established Physical Geography scholar at the University of Fort Hare's (UFH) Department of Geography and Environmental Science joined the ranks of Full Professor after delivering the University's 34th Professorial Inaugural Lecture this afternoon.

Titled “Climate Change in the Sub-Antarctic: Past, Present, and Future,” in his address, Prof Nel delved into the complexities of climate change in the sub-Antarctic region. He provided a comprehensive analysis of the region's climatic evolution and its implications for the future.

He centred his address on the more than two-decade-long research fieldwork conducted with collaborators from the University of South Africa, the University of Free State, the University of Johannesburg, the British Antarctic Survey and the Scottish Universities Environment Research Centre. Titled: Landscape and climate interactions in the sub-Antarctic, the multinational project is a continuation of earth sciences projects that have been running on Marion Island since 1996.

The sub-Antarctic, a biogeographical zone encompassing small islands between 46° and 60° South, plays a pivotal role in global climate dynamics due to its unique position in the Southern Ocean. Professor Nel emphasized the significance of these islands, particularly Marion Island, in understanding past climatic regimes and predicting future trends. He highlighted the use of advanced dating techniques, such as <sup>36</sup>Cl cosmogenic nuclide exposure dating, to reconstruct past glacial chronologies with unprecedented accuracy.

“Recent advancements in cosmogenic nuclide exposure dating techniques have revolutionized our understanding of past glaciations in the sub-Antarctic. Our findings challenge previous hypotheses, revealing that Marion Island experienced its last glacial maximum over 56,000 years ago, much earlier than previously believed.”

Furthermore, Professor Nel explained the intricate relationship between glacial dynamics and climatic drivers, underscoring the role of Southern Hemisphere climatic variability in shaping local ice extents. He emphasized the importance of considering smaller-scale deglaciation chronologies in deciphering broader climatic patterns across the Southern Ocean.

“Our research indicates that sub-Antarctic islands experienced more extensive glaciations

during Marine Isotope Stages 3 and 4 than during the globally recognized Last Glacial Maximum. This discrepancy underscores the complex interplay between regional climatic factors and ice dynamics in the Southern Hemisphere,” he explained.

Transitioning to the present, Professor Nel discussed alarming trends in recent climate records, particularly the significant warming observed across the sub-Antarctic islands since the mid-20th century. Utilizing long-term meteorological data, he highlighted a substantial increase in temperatures and a notable decline in precipitation, attributing these changes to shifts in synoptic weather patterns.

“Our analyses reveal a consistent warming trend across the sub-Antarctic islands, surpassing previous projections for the 21st century. If current trends persist, we anticipate further temperature increases of up to 2.9°C per century, exacerbating the vulnerability of these fragile ecosystems.”

Looking ahead, Professor Nel outlined potential ecological ramifications of continued warming, including accelerated glacial retreat, alterations in frost cycles, and heightened risks of invasive species proliferation. He underscored the urgent need for proactive measures to mitigate climate change's adverse impacts on sub-Antarctic biodiversity and ecosystem resilience.

“Increasing temperatures pose existential threats to the sub-Antarctic islands, necessitating concerted efforts to safeguard their ecological integrity. Addressing climate change requires international collaboration and decisive action to preserve these invaluable ecosystems for future generations,” he urged.

Professor Nel's address resonated strongly with attendees, underscoring the urgency of addressing climate change in the sub-Antarctic and the imperative of scientific research in guiding adaptive strategies.

The East London born who holds a BSc in Earth Sciences, an Honors degree in Environmental Analysis and Management, and both an MSc and PhD in Geography from the University of Pretoria expressed his gratitude to his former lecturers, collaborators, the current HOD Prof Paul Sumner and his wife for being the driving force behind his success.

# NEW STUDY PREPARES AUTHORITIES FOR CLIMATE-RELATED DISASTER IN URBAN COASTAL CITIES



Despite coastal cities being at high risk of climate change disasters, huge gaps remain in planning and distributing information on disaster mitigation and climate change adaptation strategies at a local government level, new research by UFH found.

Data gathered in East London by researchers Dr. Emmanuel Busayo and Professor Ahmed Kalumba from the University's Department of Geography and Environmental Science shows that planning and community knowledge of a disaster plan was lacking.

Busayo and Kalumba examined progress in East London to achieve goals towards linking climate change adaptation (CCA) and disaster risk reduction (DRR).

One essential element of both these strategies to mitigate against climate change, the researchers point out, is for all stakeholders to devise and implement a

sustainable plan to deal with the potentially disastrous effects of climate change on coastal cities.

Currently, 40% of the world's population lives within 100 km of the coast and coastal settlements, some in low-lying areas, are growing fast. Coastal cities are at higher risk of rising sea levels, increased temperatures, storm surges and flooding - all linked to climate change.

The researchers pointed out that in South Africa, there is the additional issue of the legacy of apartheid urban planning leading to cities that remain segregated and a concentration of socio-economic marginalised communities.

The study underscores the importance of understanding potentially affected communities and their ability to respond to disasters. It also stresses how essential it was for decision-makers to ascertain

the ability of communities, families, and individuals to anticipate, cope, and recover from the effects of disasters.

"These approaches are very key in the integration of vulnerable groups in disaster plans and policies, evacuation management and community

planning to attenuate the impacts of disaster," the paper reads.

The paper also stresses that the community must be allowed to participate in formulating disaster plans and mitigation strategies and that indigenous knowledge must be obtained and incorporated.

"Communities with strong locally-driven disaster plans respond better in disaster conditions," the researchers cautioned.

The study focused on East London, a coastal city in South Africa's Eastern Cape. South Africa's four coastal cities, Cape Town, Durban, Gqeberha (previously known as Port Elizabeth) and East London, face the threat of flooding by 2050 due to the rising sea levels exacerbated by climate change.

The paper states there is "considerable doubt" about the city's climate resilience."

Only a few people (13.5%) knew about the availability of community disaster plans.

The research included responses from multi-stakeholders in the East London Buffalo City Metropolitan Municipality.

Respondents identified poverty, poor housing units and malnutrition as factors that would aggravate climate change-related disasters.

Further data showed that East London communities would find it difficult to recover from disasters due to the following factors:

- A lack of household emergency plans,
- A shortage of funds,
- Not enough assistance and support from local government
- A lack of information regarding disaster issues,
- Not enough support in rebuilding households,
- The loss of belongings,
- Loss of lives and property,
- Loss of valuables
- Low crop yields

"This study concludes that there are a lot of climate disaster challenges that require attention, for example, lack of response and support from local government, poor correspondence among stakeholders, poor and financial capacity among others.

"Implementing lessons learnt from this study warrants numerous efforts. Further work that respects the importance of indigenous knowledge is needed," the researcher added advocating for the inclusion of indigenous people in policymaking at every level of government," the paper concluded.

"Sensitising the community on the importance of communicating with disaster managers should be critically emphasised in a bid to make them know the benefits of a disaster preparedness plan," the paper continues.

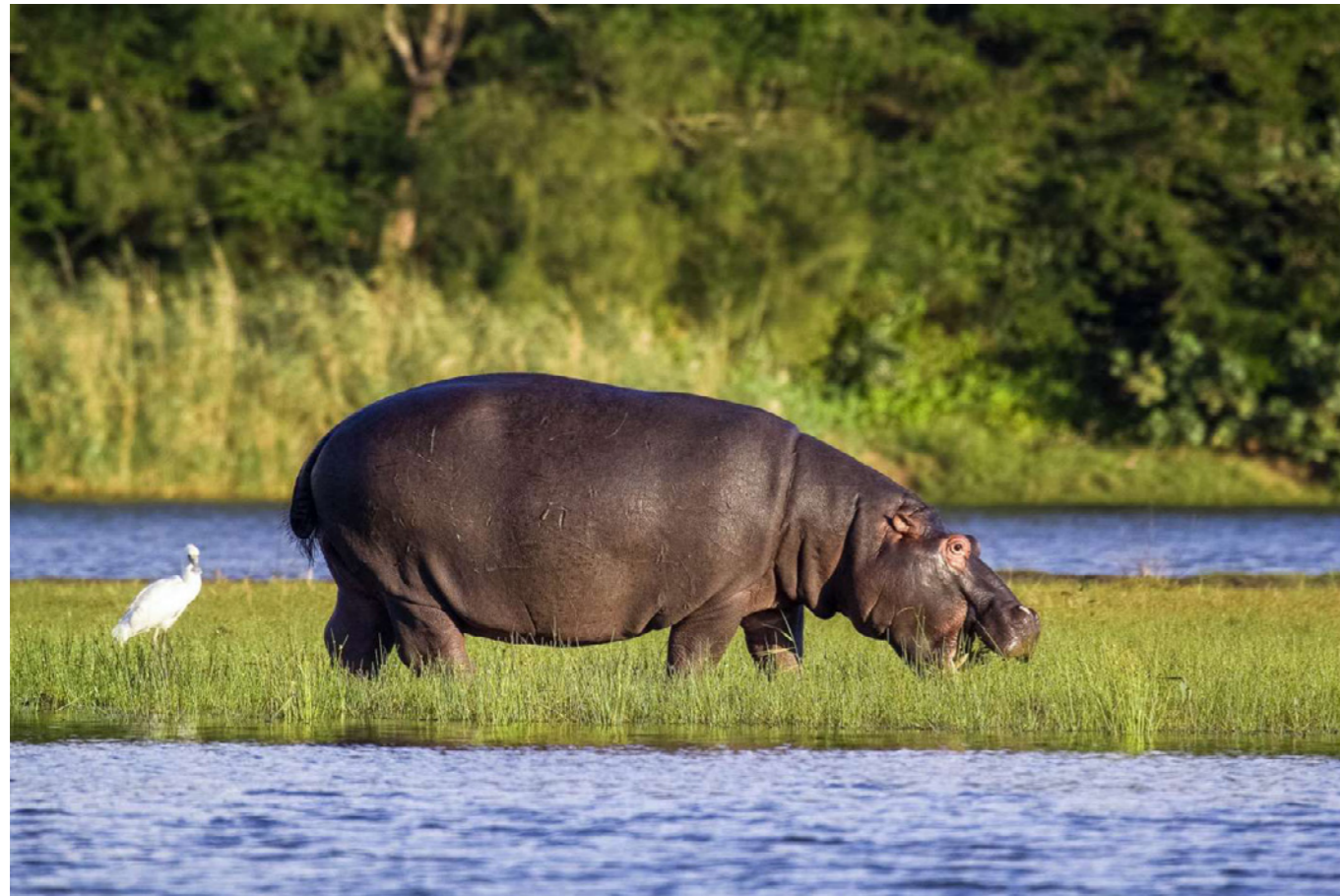
"Consequently, local and indigenous knowledge and practices can be instilled to improve disaster preparedness plans," the paper continues adding that if successfully coupled with scientific research and solid policy this can become a powerful strategy to mitigate against disaster.

The researchers warned that there are also "various gaps in current research" as to what the most effective way would be to disseminate information on disaster plans.

Electronic media is often used to provide information, the data shows.

"The disadvantage of these methods of information dissemination is that there might be unconfirmed information or just gainsaying from family and friends. On the other hand information from the electronic media can only be received when people are available to listen to the radio or watch television, hence, early warning information is not received by people on a large scale. Since dissemination of information is central to disaster response, this process under disaster cannot rely on the public to serve themselves with information."

# URGENT CONSERVATION EFFORTS NEEDED TO PRESERVE WORLD HERITAGE STATUS OF ISIMANGALISO WETLAND



**“Between 1987 and 2017 an analysis of the condition of these wetlands has revealed significant depletion of water. It appears to be due to human activity which may include climate change, built-up areas, and agricultural activities in the area,”**

An analysis of 30 years of satellite images has led researchers from the University of Fort Hare to raise the alarm about the shrinking Isimangaliso Wetland in Kwa-Zulu Natal.

Analyzing satellite images of the past 30 years, the researchers found that the wetlands in the Isimangaliso Wetland Park, a world heritage site, have shrunk by 5% between 1987 and 2017.

The Isimangaliso Wetland in KwaZulu-Natal is an invaluable natural resource providing resources and services to people, a habitat for several species, and a sought-after tourism destination.

“This wetland depletion might have a significant impact on biodiversity including humans and animals as well as plants thus diminishing its world heritage status. Consequently, this natural gift needs to be conserved to create a liveable environment for wetland animals to moderate local climate as well as preserve human wellness and protection by reducing flood disaster disasters and maintaining efficient water quantity and quality in the area,” according to the paper.

The Isimangaliso Wetland Park is 275 km north of the port city of Durban on the east shoreline of KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa. It is a world heritage site known for its diverse and rich biodiversity.

It includes 280 km of coastline stretching from South Africa’s border with Mozambique to Mapelane south of the Lake St. Lucia estuary. The wetland stretches over 3280 km. It is a world heritage site known for its wide variety of animal, aquatic, and marine life. It is an area of rich biodiversity and encompasses various ecosystems: coral reefs, shorelines, subtropical woodlands, savanna, and wetlands.

The researchers found that the size of the wetlands in the park was shrinking. In a novel approach to studying the wetlands, they used geospatial techniques and satellite images to study the wetland’s transformation and detect shifts in biodiversity due to both natural and human processes.

“Between 1987 and 2017 an analysis of the condition of these wetlands has revealed significant depletion of water. It appears to be due to human activity which may include climate change, built-up areas, and agricultural activities in the area,” the paper reads.

In their study, researchers attached to the Department of Geography and Environmental Science, the University of Fort Hare’s Faculty of Science and Agriculture, used geospatial science coupled with satellite imagery to quantify wetland depletion and changes.

They used Landsat Thematic Mapper images for 1987, 1997, and 2007 and Landsat 8 Thermal Infrared Sensor and Operational Land Imager imagery for 2017 from the United States Geological Survey (USGS) archive. The Landsat satellites are managed by the American Space Agency (NASA) and the United States Geological Survey.

The researchers used a fine-scale Normalised Difference Water Index (NDWI) and change detection analyses to reach their conclusions. For instance, NDWI highlighted open water features in a satellite image allowing for more accurate analysis.

“These results open up new opportunities to examine the current size of the Isimangaliso Wetland and its potential impact on biodiversity and urgent intervention in conserving the wetland,” they wrote.

“The result from Landsat images data shows land use activities have

reduced wetland extent and distribution by 5% between 1987 and 2017. Wetland loss could be a significant problem for the local communities that depend on them as a natural resource as well as for many wetland species.

“Such significant problems illustrate the need for improved management by both the communities and the environmental policy-makers. The wetland map and land-use change assessment on wetlands can help to underscore the wetland depletion and its attendant vulnerability as well as serve as a guide for land-use practices that have a direct and indirect effect on wetlands,” the paper concluded.



# KNOWLEDGE SHARING AT BUFFALO CITY MUNICIPALITY HAMPERING EFFECTIVE SERVICE DELIVERY - STUDY

“A knowledge transfer system would allow employees and political representatives to share what and who they know to speed up and provide efficient service delivery to residents, improve decision-making and achieve business goals in the municipality.

In 2015, the Buffalo City Municipality in East London became the first South African municipality to appoint “knowledge management champions”, develop a knowledge management strategy and framework and conduct training for officials, managers and political representatives.

In 2023, eight years later, researchers from Fort Hare University examined how the process was going.

They concluded that knowledge transfer in the Buffalo City metro is limited and stifled by bureaucracy. However, there is a reason for hope.

“A knowledge transfer system would allow employees and political representatives to share what and who they know to speed up and provide efficient service delivery to residents, improve decision-making and achieve business goals in the municipality.

“To rethink service delivery, [the metro] needs to find better ways to share information assets, business processes and staff expertise with their citizens and business partners,” a paper written by Samuel S. Ncoyini and Liezel Cilliers from the Department of Information Systems at the Faculty of Management and Commerce reads.

Ncoyini and Cilliers examined how the municipality’s knowledge management system was functioning.

For their research, they interviewed five mid-level and senior managers working in the information technology and knowledge management units and collected data from other relevant sources.

“A lack of knowledge management and the transfer of knowledge and information have been identified as two of the main contributors to poor service delivery, not only in the Eastern Cape but throughout South Africa,” the paper continues.

“The study found that the municipality’s bureaucratic organisational structure hampers any attempts at knowledge sharing.

“It was also found that information is not seamlessly transferred between managers and their subordinates. The municipality has a culture of knowledge hoarding in attempts to augment personal importance or worth.

This means that the structural position of the knowledge management department in an organisation is crucial.

The research found that the culture in the Buffalo City metro had not been supportive of a knowledge system because the “hierarchical and bureaucratic management suppresses any attempts at openness and

support.”

It was a step in the right direction to move the knowledge management unit to the Office of the City Manager, the paper continues but warns that a culture change must be sustained. The researchers said that “knowledge hoarding [was rife] to augment personal importance or worth.”

The municipality’s organisational strategy must include knowledge management, the researchers advised. The study also recommends that knowledge transfer practices and initiatives are fully supported and promoted by the top management.

“Buffalo City Metropolitan Municipality employees need to be educated in using a knowledge management system and any other technological tool that can be useful in sharing of knowledge,” they wrote adding that investment in technological infrastructure would be crucial for a successful knowledge transfer.

But they added the following cautionary note:

“Buffalo City Metropolitan Municipality’s most valuable intellectual resources are entrenched in the employees’ minds. Therefore, if the municipal employees are not motivated to share their knowledge, no amount of investment, infrastructure and technological intervention can make knowledge transfer effective. Training is critical for effective knowledge transfer among the municipality employees.

The paper also identifies the exclusion of knowledge sharing as part of performance appraisals as another barrier to effective knowledge transfer.

“Buffalo City Metropolitan Municipality top managers must recognise the shortcomings of bureaucratic structures and acknowledge that they slow the processes and limit the information flow. The reporting procedures in current structures consume excessive amounts of time for knowledge to filter through every level of the municipality. Knowledge transfer succeeds with structures that support ease of information flow, with fewer boundaries between divisions,” the paper concludes.



# RURAL YOUNG PEOPLE WHO KNOW MORE EAT HEALTHIER, FORT HARE RESEARCHERS FIND

A better understanding of what a healthy lifestyle is could contribute significantly to helping young people in rural communities eat better, University of Fort Hare researchers found.

The findings of the study have revealed that the relationship between attitudes towards healthy eating and nutrition knowledge is still a challenge in rural communities of the Eastern Cape.

“Based on the findings of the research, programs on nutrition knowledge awareness can be encouraged to assist young people in rural communities to better understand the importance of healthy eating and change [their]

attitudes. Further, research can be done on a larger scale to determine those attitudes toward healthy eating and nutrition knowledge,” the researchers wrote.

The 150 participants also said they don’t always eat healthy.

“This could mean that many of the young people residing in rural areas lack nutritional knowledge or that the challenges they face related to access to information on nutritional knowledge and healthy eating behaviours result in them not considering these nutrition factors or not regarding them as important.

The findings also showed the presence of positive and negative attitudes toward healthy eating

among the young people participating in this research. The other factor that could negatively impact attitude is the growing popularity and convenience of fast food consumption,” the paper continued.

Other factors like household income, personal experiences, the impact of mass media messages, and the example set by parents also influence the food choices of young people.

The research funded by the National Institute for the Humanities and Social Sciences was done by Dr. Nomasonto Xazela, from the University of Fort Hare’s Department of Livestock and

“Based on the findings of the research, programs on nutrition knowledge awareness can be encouraged to assist young people in rural communities to better understand the importance of healthy eating and change [their]attitudes. Further, research can be done on a larger scale to determine those attitudes toward healthy eating and nutrition knowledge,”

Pasture Science and Prof Willie Chinyamurindi and Dr. Herring Shava from the Department of Business Management.

The research sought to infer implications that assist the work of practitioners within marketing management and consumer decision sciences. The results have the potential to inform also how marketing should be done concerning the promotion of healthy living.

“Young people often face a challenge concerning issues related to nutrition including healthy eating,” the researchers wrote. They set out to understand how these challenges exist for young people living in a rural community.

“South Africa faces an obesity challenge. Given high obesity levels and nutritional challenges there is a need to ascertain the link between consumer attitudes and knowledge of nutrition since they influence eating behaviour,” the paper reads.

Researchers used questionnaires to collect data from 150 participants.

Their research further found that programs were necessary to encourage a better understanding of healthy eating and to change attitudes towards a healthy lifestyle.

Some of the other significant findings of the study include:

1. There was a wide range of answers to the question of whether the food they eat should keep them healthy with only 14.8% of young people surveyed strongly agreeing with the idea that the food they eat must keep them healthy.
2. A large group (32%) strongly agreed with the statement that it is important for the food they eat to be nutritious
3. Thirty percent of the young people surveyed disagreed that it was important for the food they ate to contain vitamins and minerals

4. There was a large range of answers to the question regarding the importance of food, being an aid in weight control with 31.3% strongly agreeing, 23.3% agreed while 28% strongly disagreed.
5. 43.3% of respondents said they do not always follow a healthy and balanced diet.
6. When asked whether they just eat what they like without worrying about the healthiness of food, 40.7% of the young people strongly disagreed while 22% strongly agreed.
7. The majority of respondents (51.7%) indicated that the nutrition content of the food item is the most important aspect they wish to know about when they make their purchases, and 23.1% indicated food safety as the most important aspect.
8. 59.7% indicated that they throw away all expired food items but 14.6% of the young people indicated that they do not care at all about the expiration date on the food items. In comparison, 2.1% of the respondents indicated that they continue to eat the food if there is no obvious change in the quality of the expired food items.

“This study did identify a positive attitude towards nutrition based on nutrition knowledge,” the authors added.

“The results found the existence of a significant negative relationship between attitudes towards healthy eating and nutritional knowledge. In other words, as attitude towards eating increases, nutrition knowledge among young people decreases. Furthermore, although the young people participating in this research can have positive attitudes, but they can also decide not to engage their nutritional knowledge concerning making nutrition decisions,” they concluded.



# DEVASTATING CLIMATE CHANGE KNOWLEDGE GAPS AMONG SMALLHOLDER FARMERS IN ADM

A “profound knowledge gap” exists amongst smallholder farmers from the Eastern Cape’s Amathole area about the country’s climate change response policy, research done by UFH shows.

Oluwabunmi Oluwaseun Popoola, Shehu Folaranmi Gbolahan Yusuf and Nomakhaya Monde from the University’s Department of Agricultural Economics and Extension write in a paper published in the journal Sustainability that this is of concern as rural smallholder farmers are part of the country’s agricultural system.

The South African National Climate Change Response Policy (NCCRP) was instituted in October 2011. Amongst the policy’s priorities is building capacity and resilience in the country’s agricultural sector.

The plan is to use the public agricultural extension system (a system promoting both production and the conservation of resources) as the centre of a strategy to sensitize, educate and build capacity.

In their research, the authors, however, found that the majority of smallholder farmers in the Eastern Cape’s Amathole District Municipality, 89% of those surveyed, did not know about this policy.

“Findings revealed that there was an extremely low awareness of the policy and a dearth of sensitization campaigns and capacity-building training by extension officers in the study area,” the paper states.

“This is to the detriment of farmers, the paper continued, as the practical and policy implications outlined could aid an increase in the resilience of farmers, with support from extension advisers and other relevant stakeholders.

“Public sensitization and education to strengthen the

climate change resilient capacities of its citizens is a major priority for South Africa’s NCCRP. It is, therefore, expected that there should be some form of awareness of the NCCRP to smallholder farmers particularly, about the government’s efforts to enhance their adaptation capacities.

Explaining why they chose the Amathole District Municipality to conduct their research the authors of the paper said: “The Amathole District Municipality’s Integrated Development Plan identified major hydrometeorological risks for the region as droughts, floods (river, urban, and dam failure), grassland fires, and severe storms (wind, hail, snow, lightning, fog). Based on the report, the district experienced severe drought in 2008, which lasted until 2010 and there is a greater chance of recurrent periods of droughts in the near future as some parts of the District are already faced with regular periods of below-normal rainfall conditions.”

The paper highlights that the agriculture sector is bound to be hard hit by climate change. This sector creates jobs and foreign exchange earnings for the country but its contribution is already in decline and climate change will cause a further decline.

In South Africa, the researchers point out, the agricultural system has two distinct components: the commercial agricultural farming sector and the smallholder division.

“Smallholder farmers are largely faced with challenges in securing land, limited access to capital, insufficient infrastructure, illiteracy and a lack of skills, high dependence on natural resources, low awareness and adaptive capacities. The growing trepidation for the smallholder sector thus stems from the

understanding that they are already constrained and have become greatly susceptible to climate change-led environmental degradation.

They pointed out that while the commercial agricultural sector also faces climate change challenges, they are advocating for greater emphasis on the smallholder population because it is already a vulnerable group and climate change is increasing their vulnerability.

“For this reason, the response capacity of the South African national government is critical, especially as regards implementing adaptation interventions to curb climate change immediate threats while developing

short-medium-long term control measures,” The paper continues.

To do the survey researchers visited 301 smallholder farming households near Idutywa, Willovale and Elliotdale. Farmers were divided into three groups, according to what their farms produce, crop, livestock and poultry. Most (61.12%) had below secondary education and 91.03% had farming 30 years or less experience in farming.

Most of the farmers who took part in the survey were older than 50. Farmers reported that they make a living by selling produce (79%) and of these 86% made less than R10 000 from their annual sales. Just over one-third of farmers (35.55%) indicated that they had another source of income that could help them cope with climate change.

Answers provided by the farmers showed that 89% did not know about the policy and over 90% claimed there had been no campaigns, workshops, or programs organized in their region to inform them of this. They also received no training.

Around 10% of farmers indicated that they had been sensitized about the policy by government sources, other information sources such as radio, television, and newspapers, or their cooperative associations. Only 0.66% said they have received training on using modern climate change adaptation technology and of these, only 1% implemented what they had learned on

their farms.

In contrast though, close to 85% of respondents said there was an urgency for extension services on climate change issues.

“Public sensitization and education to strengthen the climate change resilient capacities of its citizens is a major priority for South Africa’s NCCRP,” the paper continues. “[I]t is therefore, expected that there should be some form of awareness of the NCCRP to smallholder farmers particularly, about the government’s efforts to enhance their adaptation capacities. However, this study shows that there is a profound knowledge gap among the farmers in the study area about the instituted response policy. This is of serious concern, as rural smallholder farmers are also an integral part of the country’s agricultural system. As such, they must be aware of policies being initiated to aid their production practices.”

The researchers advocated for urgent action, emphasising serious concerns that climate change will bring about more disasters and affect major economic sectors including agriculture.

“Climate change threatens agriculture with massive implications, especially for resource-poor smallholder farmers. This is why the NCCRP is extremely important in addressing the climate change challenges experienced in South Africa, particularly in the agricultural sector,” the paper continues.

“The study recommends immediate government intervention in the form of appropriate, functional extension services, particularly for carrying out climate change coping and adaptation education, and support. Training for smallholder farmers in the region should be facilitated to increase their capacity. Capacity-building and training in appropriate coping and adaptation practices should be carried out through an increased mobilization of smallholder farmers in the study area. There is also a clear need to empower local authorities in the area of financing and in translating government policy into pragmatic guidelines for appropriate farming practices,” the paper concluded.

# THE DIFFERENCE ART MAKES: FORT HARE RESEARCHERS MAKE OUT A CASE FOR IMPROVED ART EDUCATION IN PRISON



“Creative art education is a communication strategy that allows those who normally remain silent to voice their feelings through creative artwork, either by drawing and painting on canvas or paper.”

The Department of Correctional Services should use the services of qualified creative art teachers to reduce boredom, conflicts, and recidivism and to promote self-expression and opportunities among women offenders, researchers from the University of Fort Hare found.

“Offenders need creative art resources and professional educators to improve their adult learning, and their knowledge about the value of creative art education programmes to their humanity.” This according to the University of Fort Hare’s Dr. Siphe Potelwa and Professor Emmanuel Olusula Adu from the University of Fort Hare.

Their research explored how a creative art education program can help women prisoners deal with their emotions and also escape bad experiences during their incarceration.

“In South Africa, the Department of Correctional Services (DCS) expects that incarcerated adult [women] offenders will quickly change their lives because of confinement. Most of the [women] were very sad that creative arts education was [removed] from the holding cells, not recognised and not supported as a component of Adult Basic Education and Training (ABET) within correctional centres.

This research aimed to understand the reasons for the lack of support for creative art education programmes [in the prison context],” the researchers explained.

Very few qualitative studies are available to show the value of art education in prison. Creative art education for women prisoners has greatly improved globally. Correctional authorities also recognise these as a valuable addition to rehabilitation programs in some places. In other countries, however, considerable opposition to introducing art programs in prison as part of the offender rehabilitation process remains.

The participants for this study were four incarcerated adult women at the Medium-C correctional centre in East London, South Africa. They all had creative art portfolios that included drawings, crafts and paintings.

They also were women who demonstrated their determination to continue with their art in prison.

“It is very sad that despite all the gains of this country, incarcerated adult [women] offenders cannot have even one professional creative art educational teacher or intern. This study provides an understanding of the perception of incarcerated adult female offenders who took the deliberate decision to not be deterred by the barriers and challenges they encounter. They refused to be passive and do nothing while incarcerated even when their artworks were seized by the warders

during search operations. The encouragement currently provided by the warders and senior officials turned out to be inadequate for creative art education ... in the correctional centre,” the researchers wrote.

The study further highlighted a lack of art resources, books on art and educators as major barriers to implementing these programs.

To find out more about the impact of art programs on women prisoners, the researchers studied the data they collected to look for aspects of creative art education, that influenced the correctional centre to support and recognise the art programme for the rehabilitation of adult women offenders by allowing them to develop their skills of creative independence.

Their findings included that while creative artworks of adult women offenders were seized as punishment, creative art education programmes are perceived as a harmless advantage for offenders in terms of discipline, self-expression and personal transformation.

“Data gathered from offenders resulted in a greater understanding of their lifestyle and expression through their creative artworks. Researchers used observation, interviews and focus groups to add further context to the data collected.

The research concluded that a creative art education programme can contribute to personal skills development, personal change or transformation, self-expression, and the positive self-worth of adult women offenders.

“The results showed that creative art education allows and develops confidence, and challenges offenders’ low self-esteem. Therefore, there needs to be advocacy for creative art education for incarcerated adult

[women] to be taken into consideration as for other academic subjects offered by correctional centres.”

The paper concludes that access to art resources would encourage more offenders to participate in the program and could be used as a tool to develop discipline under women prisoners.

“Creative art education is a communication strategy that allows those who normally remain silent to voice their feelings through creative artwork, either by drawing and painting on canvas or paper.”

The paper also calls for more research to be done to “expose the importance of creative art education programmes” and to improve this aspect of adult education in correctional centres.

# RESEARCH INTO PROBABLE SOLUTIONS TO GRADUATE UNEMPLOYMENT GETS A NOD FROM PAN-AFRICAN RESEARCH ORGANISATION

A study by UFH researchers that seeks to uncover probable solutions to the continental challenge of graduate unemployment has been granted funding by the Council for the Development of Social Science (CODERSIA) in Africa to the tune of USD 15 000 (about R300 000).

The Council, a Pan-African research organisation headquartered in Dakar, Senegal aims to help African scholars to produce knowledge and give an African voice to global debates on issues affecting Africa and Africans.

The research by the Fort Hare scholars titled: A Systematic Literature Review of University to Work Transition Research in African Higher Education Institutions (1980 – 2023), is funded under the Council’s Advanced Senior Research Grants for Higher Education Studies after submitting a winning proposal.

The scholars involved are from the Faculty of Management and Commerce, they are Prof Willie Chinyamurindi (Full Prof), Dr Juliet Townes-Puchert (Senior Lecturer), Zikhona Dlaza (PhD Candidate) Dr Angela Pike-Bowles (Time-on-Task Lecturer).

In their proposal, the scholars state that: “Several African countries are currently facing a high unemployment rate. Most affected by this are also graduates, the end product of the African higher education system. In South Africa for instance, there is a noted increase in the unemployment rate, and often affected by this are graduates from the South African higher education system (Statistics South Africa, 2021a).”

“This situation has led to calls for researchers to be more alert to not only the challenge but also the necessity for nuanced solutions that assist in addressing the challenge.”

The researchers support the integration of the entire body of work around themes related to graduates, the African higher education system and labour market interventions. “In doing so, models can be proposed whose focus and feature are to address the challenges faced especially by African graduates. Further, a need exists to ascertain the experiences of transition as faced by graduates into the labour market.”

According to the researchers, a review of the review of

literature details three issues that can be addressed from such research. Firstly, the need to explore those capabilities and skills expected of African graduates and their participation in the labor market system. Secondly, to ascertain how African universities are assisting their graduates for the labour market. Thirdly, to collate all the empirical work done around university to work transition research in proposing best practice strategies on the African continent.

The primary purpose of the study, according to the researchers, is to use a systematic literature review to achieve the following:

1. To establish the extent and nature of empirical research on university to work transition research in African higher education Institutions (1980 – 2023).
2. To illustrate the challenges related to university to work transition on the African continent through the documented research.
3. To showcase best practice examples of solutions to university to work transition on the African continent through documented research.

Dr Townes recently returned from Nairobi, Kenya where all the successful researchers for the programme gathered for a methodology and inception project meeting from 6 to 8 February.

At the meeting, each research team was given the opportunity to present their proposals and get preliminary input from their peers and invited resource persons.



# ECONOMICS POSTGRADS MAKE THE CUT INTO SA HISTORIC NATIONAL BUDGET SPEECH COMPETITION’S TOP TEN

Two postgraduate students from the Economics Department, Peter Takunda Mugwira and Ernest Pedzayi, made it into the top ten finalists of the 52nd Nedbank & Old Mutual Budget Speech Competition

Launched in 1972, this is one of the longest-running youth competitions in South Africa. It challenges Economics and Finance students from SA’s 26 universities to write an essay that speaks to the country’s current key social and economic challenges.

The competition is held under two categories - undergraduate and postgraduate.

For this year’s competition, the undergraduate essay topic asked students to discuss the inflation dynamics in emerging markets between 2017 and 2022 and the implications for the conduct of monetary policy with a particular focus on South Africa.

Postgraduates were asked to share their views on “Just Energy Transition” and discuss its potential impact on the SA economy. The finalists were selected by an adjudication panel comprised of representatives from the business sector, academia, and external consultants.

According to the organisers, the objective of the competition is to promote the principles of sustainable economic development; develop future leaders in the field of economics, with a focus on young black university students; and to make young South Africans excited about economics as a subject and career path. It also seeks to provide the students with an opportunity to network with key players in the financial world.

UFH has been represented several times in the competition since 2006 and showcased great success in the past years. In 2019, Bekithemba Qeqe made history for UFH when he took home the top prize in the postgraduate category, and in 2020, Luyanda Matomane was placed third in the postgraduate category.

Both in their final year toward a Master of Commerce Degree, Peter and Ernest say although they did make it to the top three of the competition, they felt honoured

to be counted among the top ten.

“I am very excited to have been part and parcel of such a prestigious National Competition. It is a huge platform that presented a great opportunity to express my views concerning economic policies, ideas and strategies in South Africa and the rest of the world,” said Ernest.

This was the second time that Peter was selected as a finalist in the competition, he also made the cut in the 51st competition. “Each selection is an honour considering the number of applicants hoping to make it. For my essays to be recognized among the best, twice, is truly an unforgettable experience for me.”

Prof Forget Kapingura, head of the UFH Economics Department congratulated the pair. “The competition organizers refer to the top ten finalists as ‘the top ten best minds in Economics in South Africa.’ As the Department we are excited to have our students counted on the list of the best. We are hopeful they will be placed in the top three spots.”

The final round of the competition was held in Cape Town, ahead of the Minister of Finance’s Annual Budget Speech and the top three winners were announced at a gala dinner.



# FORT HARE RESEARCHERS MOTIVATE FOR TEACHING CURRICULUM TO INCLUDE SKILLS ON HANDLING AND PREVENTING CYBERBULLYING

“In this regard, teachers play an important role in educating learners on how to protect themselves from these threats. Teachers that use technology in their classroom must supervise the learners when they use the internet and promote cyber safety behaviour.

Researchers from the University of Fort Hare have called for skills training in identifying and handling cyberbullying to be included in the curriculum for student teachers.

Teachers are the first line of defence when it comes to preventing and mitigating the damage of cyberbullying but student teachers who took part in a research study on the topic said they have received no training to do so, research from the University of Fort Hare revealed.

The research was done by Liezel Cilliers and Willie Chinyamurindi respectively from the University of Fort Hare’s Departments of Information Systems and Business

Management.

Almost half of the student teachers, who took part in their research were previously victims of cyberbullying while a third had been perpetrators of cyberbullying.

The study found that cyberbullying was considered a serious issue among student teachers, but that the awareness of the issue decreases as the locus of attention moves away from the classroom.

As cyberbullying was not discussed at a tertiary level student teachers felt ill-equipped to deal with it.

The researchers argued that cyberbullying should be included

in the curriculum at the university level to prepare student teachers, but also at the school level to equip the learners with this life skill.

Currently, South Africa has no policy in place at either the school or university level to deal with cyberbullying.

The first part of the research questionnaire included questions on how serious cyberbullying is perceived at school and individual levels. More than 80% of respondents indicated that they were aware of cyberbullying on the internet and considered it a serious issue at an individual and school level.

During their practical training, 78% of respondents were aware of cyberbullying taking place where they were working. Fewer respondents (67.3%) indicated that they were aware of cyberbullying at a national level and even less (21.3%) at the university where they studied. However, 36.7% of the respondents admitted that they had been perpetrators of cyberbullying previously, while 45.5% were victims of cyberbullying in the past.

The researchers said that 90% of student teachers asked said the topic should be included in the curriculum at both school and university levels.

Most (68%) did not know if there

was a policy to prevent and deal with cyberbullying at the university while 80% of the respondents indicated that they were aware of such a policy at the school level.

“This is interesting as no such policy exists within either space,” the researchers remarked.

Technology was also identified as being useful to prevent cyberbullying in making the internet safer for children, they added.

The researchers however cautioned that learners are often too young to understand the dangers of technology such as inappropriate material (pornography), personal information being compromised

(identity theft), and emotion-related threats.

“In this regard, teachers play an important role in educating learners on how to protect themselves from these threats. Teachers that use technology in their classroom must supervise the learners when they use the internet and promote cyber safety behaviour.

At the meeting, each research team was given the opportunity to present their proposals and get preliminary input from their peers and invited resource persons.





## UFH RESEARCH ETHICS INDUCTION AND TRAINING WORKSHOP – A RESOUNDING SUCCESS

In upholding its commitment to strengthening its research profile by creating a research culture that focuses on quality and impact, the University of Fort Hare (UFH) recently hosted a Research Ethics Induction and Training Workshop to ensure that members of the UFH Research Ethics Committee (REC) are well-trained and are abreast of new developments in research ethics in South Africa and beyond.

“Research Ethics is a critical part of the research process, and in South Africa, research projects must be reviewed and approved by RECs that are duly accredited by the national accrediting body, which is the National Health Research Ethics Council (NHREC) of South Africa,” underscored Dr Aceme Nyika, UFH Director for Research and Innovation at Govan Mbeki

Research and Development Centre (GMRDC).

Currently, UFH has established three institutional RECs that are accredited by NHREC, namely:

1. Animal Research Ethics Committee (AREC), which reviews and approves research involving animals or samples from animals;
2. Health Research Ethics Committee (HREC), which reviews and approves health or medical research involving humans and;
3. Inter-Faculty Human Research Ethics Committee (IFREC), which reviews and approves non-medical research involving humans, secondary data analysis, survey-based research, desk-top research, and research that involves non-biohazardous materials such as

crops, soil, geological samples, etc.

Organized by the Research Ethics Unit in the Department of Research and Innovation (DRI) induction and training workshop was held on 29 February 2024 on the Alice campus.

In attendance, in addition to the UFH REC's members, were representatives from the community such as a local chief, a religious leader and retired teachers who are active community leaders in some of the rural areas where UFH researchers conduct research.

The workshop covered topics that pertain to the role and responsibilities of ethics committee members, code of conduct, research integrity, confidentiality, conflict of interest, material transfer agreements (MTAs) that ensure ethical sharing of research materials

or samples between collaboration partner institutions.

The session also covered data transfer agreements (DTA) for ethical sharing of research data between partner institutions, fairness in international collaborative partnerships established through memoranda of understanding (MOUs) or memoranda of understanding (MOAs), and the importance of protecting personal information in accordance with the Protection of Personal Information Act.

Attendees were also given an overview of the online Research Ethics Application system that is currently being developed at UFH.

# UFH HUMAN MOVEMENT SCIENCE SCHOLAR PRESENTS COMPELLING RESEARCH ON NCDs AT BRICSCESS CONFERENCE IN INDIA

In a resounding testament to the global impact of cutting-edge research, University of Fort Hare Human Movement Sciences Associate Prof, Maya van Gent recently honoured an invitation to speak at the International BRICS Council for Exercise and Sport Science (BRICSCESS) Conference in India where she presented compelling research on non-communicable diseases (NCDs) among adolescents.

Titled: “The Influence of Physical Activity and Psychosocial Intervention on Risk Factors Associated with NCD among Adolescents,” The research funded by the South African Medical Research Council from 2021-2023 addresses pressing concerns surrounding NCDs among adolescents.

The conference was held at the esteemed Manav Rachna International Institute of Research and Studies in Faridabad in New Delhi. The gathering served as a beacon of collaboration, welcoming approximately 500 delegates from 35 countries worldwide under the theme, “Advances in Holistic Health and Sport for Children and Youth: Innovation, Integration, and Sustainability through Science.”

Prof van Gent, a distinguished academic whose research interests include anthropometrics, and the role that physical activity and mental health play in promoting healthy living in various populations took center stage as an invited speaker, illuminating key facets of holistic health and sport for children and youth.

The findings of the study revealed alarming statistics, including high rates of overweight/obesity, elevated cholesterol levels, and hypertension among adolescents. Furthermore, unhealthy dietary habits, such as excessive sugar intake and inadequate consumption of fruits and vegetables, were prevalent.

Although male adolescents exhibited higher rates of meeting physical activity requirements, females, particularly those from low socioeconomic backgrounds in the Eastern Cape, were identified as being at significantly higher risk for NCDs, the study found.

“The interventions implemented, comprising physical activity and psychoeducational programmes, demonstrated significant improvements in metabolic risk factors. However, challenges regarding sustainability were noted, with sustained improvements observed only in certain variables, such as physical exercise and cholesterol levels,” Prof van Gent underscores.

In conclusion, the research calls for an urgent need for targeted interventions and policy changes to address the disproportionate risk of NCDs among female adolescents, particularly those from disadvantaged backgrounds.

“By prioritizing holistic approaches to health promotion, informed by scientific evidence, strides can be made towards mitigating the burden of NCDs on adolescent populations globally.”

Other highlights of Prof van Gent’s participation as a speaker at the conference included a pre-workshop conference that she presented alongside Prof Hans de Ridder from North-West University, titled “How to Write a Journal Paper” where they provided an “Overview of Predatory Journals and How to Avoid Them.”

She also participated in a radio interview, advocating for the myriad benefits of physical activity in promoting overall health and well-being. Moreover, the international delegates seized the opportunity to engage with the Vice-Chancellor of the host institution, exploring avenues for international staff and student exchange and fostering collaborative research endeavours between BRICS countries.



## QUEER MASCULINITIES SUMMER SCHOOL PROMOTES INTERNATIONAL COLLABORATION IN GENDER STUDIES

A new point of departure in Gender Studies is being paved through the inaugural Queer Masculinities Summer School. Currently underway (25-29 March), the Summer School is a groundbreaking collaboration between the University of Fort Hare (UFH) and Ruhr-University Bochum (RUB) in Germany.

Spearheaded by the UFH SARChI Chair in Sexualities, Genders, and Queer Studies, Prof zethu Matebeni and Prof Dr. Henriette Gunkel from the Institute for Media Studies and the Marie Jahoda Centre for International Gender Studies at RUB, this innovative initiative aims to explore and redefine notions of masculinity within the context of queer studies.

A diverse cohort of scholars from Germany, South Africa and Brazil have converged in Chintsa, a village in the Wild Coast region of the Eastern Cape for the week-long programme.

The participants include 14 postgraduate media studies and/or gender studies students from RUB and 12 postgraduate students working in the fields of masculinities and queerness broadly that were carefully selected from various South African universities, including UFH.

Also in attendance are Dr Asanda-Jones Benya from the University of Cape Town and Prof Osmundo Phino from the Universidade Federal do Recôncavo da Bahia in Brazil, two scholars who have significantly contributed to the conversation about queer masculinities.

According to Prof Matebeni, “The core objective of the Summer School is to interrogate questions around queerness in relation to masculinities, exchange ideas, learn together and to create different kinds of scholarship.”

The Summer School is a continuation of a long-standing partnership between the SARChI Chair and the Marie Jahoda Centre for International Gender

Studies that saw one of its postgrads, Dr Princess Sibanda having a fellowship at the Centre earlier this year.

Prof Dr. Gunkel said the gathering represents a crucial step towards fostering international dialogue and collaboration in the field of queer studies, especially in an academic space where the conversation around queer masculinities was not dominant. “It is important to start a conversation at a point where we also push beyond existing scholarship,” she said.

According to Dr Benya, the Summer School created a space to question thoughts and what people think they know. “The spirit was more around questioning about things that we think we know, and that people think of as natural and stable and showing that there is nothing natural about any of the things that people know. Also questioning certain ways of knowing that have become dominant in ways that kind of submerge other ways of knowing.”

Prof Pinho stressed the significance of global perspectives in understanding queer masculinities by bringing together scholars from different regions to broaden the understanding by developing a common language and shaping the conversation around masculinity that will transcend beyond borders.

Maximiliane Brand from the Marie Jahoda Centre said in addition to creating a platform for intense conversations in the academic context with publications on the cards, the Summer School also created a platform where new friendships were forged. “A lot of magic is expected to follow, both inside and outside of academia,” she said.

As anticipated, the gathering was a melting pot of ideas, perspectives, and experiences – a discourse that Prof Matebeni hopes would ultimately shape knowledge production across borders and in different geo-political positions.

# SA HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSIONER, PROF TSHEPO MADLINGOZI DELIVERS AN INSIGHTFUL LECTURE

The University of Fort Hare (UFH) Law Faculty in collaboration with the South African Human Rights Commission (SAHRC) hosted a guest lecture delivered by Prof Tshepo Madlingozi, one of eight Commissioners of the SAHRC.

According to Dr Eileen Carter, the Eastern Cape provincial manager of the SAHRC and UFH Law alumna, the lecture is one of the benefits of a valuable partnership between the University and the Commission that seeks to advocate for the realization of human rights.

Titled: Digital Literacy as Part of the Right to Basic Education, Prof Madlingozi whose focus is on basic education delivered an insightful lecture that painted a picture of the road travelled and still needs to be travelled in nurturing digital literature for inclusive education.

He started his lecture with an anecdote about his experience of embarking on a more than one-hour-long-walk to school with learners from a school in Xesi (Middledrift), an initiative led by the provincial SAHRC to flag and monitor scholar transport challenges.

“Access to education is critical for a developing country like South Africa. Coupled with our history, it is inevitable that mere access and conventional ways of teaching and learning will not be enough and led to the exclusion of already marginalized communities.”

“Put differently, merely saying schools should be accessible to all children is not enough for our landscape. Amongst others, the country’s terrain requires that schools be accessible for children with disabilities. Children must traverse long and treacherous roads, attend schools with limited resources, and suffer delays in the delivery of learner, teacher, and support materials. In all these scenarios, mere access is not enough,” he emphasized.

“A complementary system of education is required to amplify access to education while ensuring that education is of high quality and able to keep up with the needs of the Fourth Industrial Revolution. This system is digital literacy.”

According to Prof Madlingozi, the contours of

education are being reshaped by the advent of technology.

“Digital literacy which is the ability to navigate, comprehend, and critically engage with the digital world, emerges as a linchpin in the realization of the right to basic education. In the context of basic education, this proficiency becomes a conduit for enhanced learning experiences, ensuring that students are not merely consumers of information but active participants in a digitally connected world.”

He also highlighted some of the interventions and efforts by the Commission that seek to bridge the inequality and access to education gaps and ensure no learner is locked outside in the digital and literacy space.

He also delved into some of the hindrances that prevent or delay entering the digital literacy space, this includes the lack of technology infrastructure and the absence of Wi-Fi connections at some schools.

In conclusion, Prof Madlingozi made several recommendations, such as providing schools with state-of-the-art computer labs and reliable internet connections; initiating comprehensive curricular reforms to integrate digital literacy and establishing robust training programmes that will empower teachers with the skills and knowledge required to navigate the digital realm effectively.

He also emphasized the importance of community engagement, putting security measures in place to safeguard digital infrastructure, and urged that policies and initiatives be crafted using an equity-centric approach that acknowledges and mitigates existing disparities.

The lecture concluded with an equally robust and insightful questions and answers session between the audience and the panel that comprised Prof Madlingozi; Dr Carter; Prof Moses Retselisitsoe Phooko, Director of the UFH UNESCO Oliver Tambo Chair of Human Rights; UFH Law Senior Lecture, Dr Ntandokayise Ndlovu and; the Deputy Dean, Dr Simphiwe Bidi.



“Digital literacy which is the ability to navigate, comprehend, and critically engage with the digital world, emerges as a linchpin in the realization of the right to basic education. In the context of basic education, this proficiency becomes a conduit for enhanced learning experiences, ensuring that students are not merely consumers of information but active participants in a digitally connected world.”

# UFH MICROBIOLOGY PROFESSOR ELECTED AS FELLOW OF THE WORLD ACADEMY OF SCIENCES AND WINS GOLD AT THE SAMRC AWARDS



University of Fort Hare (UFH) distinguished academic and eminent researcher, Professor Anthony Okoh, has added yet another feather to his cap of accolades when he clinched the prestigious Gold Award at the South African Medical Research Council (SAMRC) Awards held recently. The award comes after his recent election as a Fellow of The World Academy of Sciences (TWAS). This dual recognition underscores his exceptional contributions to microbiology research, particularly in the fields of water quality, genomics, and public health.

Professor Okoh, Director of the South African Medical Research Council's Microbial Water Quality Monitoring Centre at the UFH, boasts an illustrious academic journey. Holding a BSc (Hon) in Microbiology, an M.Sc. (Microbiology) with Distinction, and a PhD in Microbiology.

His research endeavors traverse the intricate domain of Environmental and Public Health Microbiology, delving into critical areas such as water and wastewater quality, emerging pathogens, ecological health risk assessments, and antibiotic resistance. Professor Okoh's expertise extends to combating global health challenges posed by chemical pollutants and antibiotic resistance reservoirs.

Most recently, he was selected by the Water Research Commission (WRC) to serve as a member of an independent advisory panel to investigate and give expert advice on the recent cholera outbreak in South Africa that claimed the lives of hundreds of people.

Throughout his career, Professor Okoh has amassed a plethora of accolades and distinctions, indicative of his scholarly eminence. Notable among these are the Vice-Chancellor Emerging Researcher Award (2008) and the subsequent Vice-Chancellor's Senior Researcher Award (2011) conferred by the UFH.

With over 500 journal articles to his credit and a commendable record of supervising 57 PhD and 70 MSc students, his scholarly footprint is indelibly etched in academia.

Professor Okoh's influence goes beyond national boundaries, as evidenced by his pivotal role in international collaborations. His participation in the Surveillance of Reservoirs of Antibiotic Resistance initiative, under the auspices of the Alliance for the Prudent Use of Antibiotics (APUA), exemplifies his commitment to global health initiatives. Additionally, his representation of South Africa in bilateral cooperation workshops underscores his proactive engagement in addressing pressing environmental and health concerns.

As a testament to his leadership acumen, Professor Okoh served as the President of the South African Society for Microbiology from 2011 to 2013. Furthermore, his membership in esteemed scientific academies such as the African Academy of Sciences and the Royal Society of Biology underscores his stature as a luminary in the field of microbiology.

Despite his countless achievements, Professor Okoh remains grounded in his commitment to fostering inclusivity and capacity development, particularly among marginalized demographic groups. His stewardship of the SAMRC Microbial Water Quality Monitoring Centre has not only facilitated groundbreaking research but has also catalyzed skills development, empowering aspiring scientists across South Africa.

Reflecting on his latest accolades, Professor Okoh acknowledges the pivotal role played by the SAMRC in catalyzing his research endeavors. The SAMRC Microbial Water Quality Monitoring Centre stands as a beacon of excellence, emblematic of Professor Okoh's unwavering dedication to advancing scientific knowledge and fostering societal well-being.

"I feel very honoured that my works are recognized to the highest level of excellence that consequently enabled my election as a Fellow of TWAS. Also, the Gold award of the SAMRC is in recognition of my outstanding scientific contributions to health research and raising the profile of science in South Africa. These achievements, in my view, are testaments to the current giant leap our university received in the 2023 university ranking, and bear eloquence to the quality of research we do at Fort Hare, and I do not doubt that we will be seeing many more of similar awards amongst researchers in our university going forward."

"At this juncture, I wish to thank my former student and Deputy Director of our Centre, Dr Nolonwabo Nontongana, for nominating me for the SAMRC Gold award. My appreciation also goes to my wife, Prof Omobola Okoh and my children for all their support and sacrifices all through my research journey. Thanks are due to our indefatigable Vice-Chancellor, DVCs and Dean of our Faculty for providing the enabling environment for our research to flourish. Colleagues in the Department of Biochemistry and Microbiology are also appreciated for all their support."

"As we say in the research fraternity, a professor is as good as his research students! Also, professors don't go carrying test tubes, students do. So, these milestones that we are now celebrating would not have been possible without the wonderful and resourceful students that I have had the privilege of supervising over the years. So, I dedicate these two milestones, and indeed all other milestones that have come my way to my students, past and present, and my collaborators in and outside of South Africa. Special thanks are also due to all my funders, especially the SAMRC, that has made the greatest impact on my research. Above all, I bless the Most High God for the grace to do what we do."

He also thanked his colleagues at the Research Office and the Govan Mbeki Research and Development Centre (GMRDC) for their unwavering support.

As Professor Okoh continues to chart new frontiers in microbiology research, his SAMRC Gold Award and his induction as a Fellow of The World Academy of Sciences serve as a testament to his enduring legacy as a trailblazer in the scientific community. With each accolade, he reaffirms his commitment to leveraging scientific inquiry for the betterment of humanity.

Congratulations Prof!

# EC CHAPTER STEPS IN TO ASSIST GRADUATES



**“I’m eternally grateful to the chapter for clearing my debt and I want to encourage them to continue doing this good work because the struggle of students being in debt is immense and needs all kinds of interventions.”**

More than 100 Fort Hare students who have not been able to get their certificates on account of owing money are elated after their debts were cleared by the university’s Eastern Cape Alumni Chapter Executive Committee’s Student Debt Campaign.

In July last year, the chapter managed to raise over R360,000 during the launch of the initiative to help graduates who owed the university money to get their certificates.

One of the beneficiaries of the initiative is Bachelor of Education graduate Mandilakhe Krila, who completed his degree in 2019.

Krila, from Cofimvaba, a physical science teacher in Komani, said he used his academic record to apply for jobs until he was permanently employed last year.

“I did not go to the graduation because of personal problems,” he said.

“I’m happy that as I will be graduating for my honours degree this year, I will also have my certificate after completing the degree so many years ago.

“I’m eternally grateful to the chapter for clearing my debt and I want to encourage them to continue doing this good work because the struggle of students being in debt is immense and needs all kinds of interventions.

“I will also be contributing towards this course and attend most of their events in support.”

SRC president Aphelele Matinise said: “The SRC extends heartfelt gratitude to the EC alumni chapter for their generous efforts in raising funds to assist students with debts.

“Their contribution has alleviated financial burdens on students, enabling them to obtain degree certificates and reduce their debts for registration purposes.

Chapter chair Mosuli Cwele said they planned to carry out the initiative this year on a bigger and better scale.

“After the gala dinner [launch of the initiative], people kept on donating what they could,” Cwele said.

“Having helped 130 students for us is a dream, realising that we have managed, as a chapter, to ensure that we plough back and contribute towards students being able to look for jobs and work for the betterment of their families.

“The situation, especially when it comes to the rate of unemployment in the province and the country, is very bad, so withholding certificates doesn’t sit well with us.

“It is our wish that those we have helped can contribute towards this initiative, but this is not the end of it.

“We are planning phase two of this initiative where we hope we will come back with more ways of raising money to help more students.”

## UFH ALUMNA, HOMBAKAZI MERCY NQANDEKA EXUDES EXCELLENCE IN HER FIELD AND BEYOND



Scholar, agricultural expert, author, entrepreneur, international guest lecturer, and award-winning photographer are some of the titles that Hombakazi Mercy Nqandeka, a University of Fort Hare (UFH) BSc in Crop and Soil Science and Honours in Soil Science graduate has put to her name.

Born at Mqhele location in Xhorha (Elliotdale), after graduating from UFH, Nqandeka furthered her education with a double master's degree from the National University of Ireland under the Climate Change Agriculture Food Security program and at SupAgro in Montpellier, France, specializing in Resources, Agricultural Systems, and Development. While reading for her master's degrees, she collaborated with Makerere University in Uganda for her thesis.

Currently, she is pursuing a PhD in Medicine and Health Sciences at Stellenbosch University where she has focused her research on conservation of Indigenous Knowledge Systems within the realm of health – a demonstration of her commitment to both cultural preservation and community development in the agricultural and health sectors.

Most recently, she was invited as a guest lecturer at Utrecht College University in the Netherlands – one of the top 50 universities in the world. In addition to her academic accomplishments, Nqandeka is also an author with three published books: 'The Dissonant Rainbow' (2019), 'To My Young Self' (2020), and her latest work, 'Don't Upset ooMalume: A Guide to Stepping Up Your Xhosa Game,' published by Jonathan Ball in 2022. Her latest book is a captivating picture book that showcases various aspects of Xhosa culture, including food, clothing, beads, ceremonies, handcrafts, and nature.

She is also the founder of Homba Crafts,

a company based in Bulungula, Elliotdale, specializing in beads and Xhosa crafts. The company, which incorporates traditional bead styles with modern designs, provides employment opportunities for young, unemployed women in the area. Their beaded stethoscope has gained popularity for corporate gifting and individual purchases.

Furthermore, Nqandeka is a founder of Zidlo Farms Cooperative, a farming business dedicated to rejuvenating agriculture in the villages of Elliotdale. Collaborating with both men and women, they use the abandoned local land to produce vegetables supplied to local spaza shops and supermarkets in nearby towns.

Beginning this year, she won the second prize in the Margaret McNamara Education Grant's 3rd annual photo competition for her photo of bridesmaids at a Xhosa wedding ceremony, see details here: <https://www.mmeg.org/winners-photo-competition-fy24/2023/12/8/first-price> In an interview with UFHNews, she said she aspires to position herself as a "Go-to-authority for the preservation and promotion of Xhosa culture. I aspire to become a reliable resource for all facets of Xhosa cultural conservation." Academically, her goal is to emerge as a recognized scholar with expertise in the intersection of Agriculture, Indigenous Knowledge Systems and Public Health. "I aim to significantly contribute to the academic discourse surrounding these fields and ensure that I make a meaningful impact on their development integration."

In sharing words of advice to UFH first-year students, she said: "It does not matter where you come from, what matters is what you do in the space that you are at. Grab every opportunity and run with them, that is what has put me where I am."

## UFH THREE-TIMES GRADUATE'S RESEARCH CULMINATES INTO A BOOK ON THE HISTORY OF BLACK RUGBY IN SA



Research originated from his master's degree in Human Movement Sciences twenty years ago has led to Dr Philani Nongogo, a University of Fort Hare (UFH) three-times graduate and former lecturer, co-authoring a book that delves into the historical narrative of one of South Africa's most loved sports, Rugby.

Titled: "Umbhoxo: Making Rugby an Afrikan Game," according to the authors, Nongogo, Buntu Siwisa, Hendrik Snyders, and Mzukisi Twala, the book traces the history of the Afrikan rugby in the country from the 1800s to 1992 and plays a critical role in demonstrating how African people have contributed to the development of sport cultures, particularly the game of rugby, in South Africa.

Dr Nongogo holds a Bachelor of Pedagogics (B.Ped), majoring in Human Movement Studies/Science, English and Comparative Literature (1999); Bachelor of Arts Honours in Human Movement Sciences (2000) and a Masters Degree in Human Movement Sciences (2004). For his dissertation titled: "Origins and Development of Black Rugby in East London and its Response to South Africa's Rugby Unity, 1886-2000: A Study of Selected Clubs," Nongogo read and researched the lived sporting experiences of the Afrikan people in the greater East London. It was here at Fort Hare where he cut his teeth in the workplace, first as a Junior Research Fellow, then as a part-time Junior Lecturer, and finally as a Junior Lecturer on a full-time basis until December 2004 when he resigned to go read toward a doctoral degree at University of Pretoria.

Currently, Nongogo is a Senior Lecturer, former Acting Head, and a longstanding Programme / Course Coordinator of the Sport and Exercise Technology Section, within the Kinesiology and Coaches Sciences Programme in the Department of Sport, Rehabilitation and Dental Sciences, in the Faculty of Science at Tshwane University of Technology.

In an interview with UFHNews, he elaborated on the role played by Fort Hare and his late father, Mr Hamilton Mxoli Nongogo in realizing this scholarly book. "As the Writing Project Manager and Coordinator of the book project, I infused so much of my earlier thoughts, ideas, research material and parts of my master's dissertation, of course, for the book I had to do extra work and even revisited some of these places and research material. My area of study is mainly motivated by sports, and specifically, East London black people's rugby stories that I heard from my late father, and to whom I decided to honour, and reimagine, and relive his experiences, taking from his long relationship with the city, since the 1950s, as a young man, a worker, and sports lover."

"Critical to the writing of my master's dissertation and by extension the book, is the research material that is still housed at the National Heritage and Cultural Studies Centre (NAHECS) and the Africana Library at UFH.

Newspapers such as Imvo Zabantsundu; the Daily Dispatch's Supplement - Indaba; the then Kaffrarian Museum (now Amathole Museum) in Qonce; the Mayibuye Centre of the Robben Island Museum at the University of the Western Cape and the South End Museum in Gqeberha - all these repositories, and others elsewhere, were critical in his research," he said.

Nongogo recently held a launch for the book in East London and has given several interviews on national news platforms. He says the main object of the book is "to join the dots from the great-grandfathers and pioneers of the game to the current crop of black rugby players in general and the Afrikans in particular, who have been in South Africa's rugby national team (the Springboks) post-1992 and those who are in the current squad that have recently represented the country in the Rugby World Cup in France, and won it back-to-back."

## UFH ALUMNA DR KOKETJO TSEBE CATERS TO TEAM SA'S PSYCHOLOGICAL HEALTH AT 13TH AFRICAN GAMES



Dr Koketjo Tsebe, one of the University's esteemed alumni and an award-winning renowned Clinical Psychologist, is among 45 officials accompanying a squad of 214 athletics representing South Africa at this year's 13th edition of the African Games currently underway in Accra, Ghana from 8 to 23 March.

Her assignment is to cater for the team's psychological well-being during the games. This is not the first time the country has tasked the UFH Doctoral Degree in Psychology (Specialising in Sports Psychology) graduate with this significant role.

Last year she was the team psychologist for Banyana Banyana during the FIFA Women's World Cup and in 2022 she was appointed as a psychologist for team SA at the African Union Regional 5 Youth Games that were hosted in Malawi.

Hailing from Mahwelereng Township in Limpopo, Dr Tsebe's roots are deeply entwined with sports, having spent her formative years immersed in baseball and softball. Yet, her dedication to sports extends far beyond these disciplines, permeating into her professional endeavors within the sporting community.

A distinguished member of the South African Sports Confederation and Olympic Committee's High-Performance Psychology Working Group, Dr. Tsebe also serves as a board member for the South African Institute for Drug-Free Sport. Various entities have sought her expertise in sports psychology, including the Limpopo Academy of Sports, the 2021 FNB Football First Coaching Clinic, and the 2021 Carling Black Label Cup Championship coaches' selection. She has collaborated with both recreational athletes and elite performers across diverse sporting domains.

Currently, Dr Tsebe holds the position of senior lecturer at UNISA, where she imparts her extensive knowledge on sports, mental health, and the challenges posed by Covid-19. Her insights have been featured on numerous media platforms, including ThobelaFM, Capricorn FM, MotswedingFM, Radio200, PowerFM, SAFM and eNCA.

In an earlier interview with UFH Media, Dr. Tsebe emphasized the critical role of mental well-being in athletic excellence. She articulated, "Mental health wellness is vital in athletic performance, therefore, the role of psychology in sports is to help both the athletes and coaches on and off the pitch issues. On the pitch issues include overcoming pressure and anxiety, recovering from injury, building resilience, commitment, and mindfulness. Off the pitch issues are personal difficulties that affect players and performance such as academic difficulties, relationship stress and mental health conditions such as depression."

Driven by a profound commitment to her field, Dr Tsebe expressed her ultimate ambition, stating, "My overarching goal is to make a meaningful impact in sports psychology as an academic, practitioner, and leader."

Among her accolades and accomplishments, Dr Tsebe has been recognized as a finalist for the 2021 Momentum Gsports Awards in the Special Recognition category and the 2021 Mail and Guardian 200 Young South African awards in the sports category. She was also honored with the 2020 Limpopo Sports Awards for her contributions to sport psychology. Additionally, she has been a recipient of the National Research Foundation bursary, supporting her endeavors from Honours through Doctoral studies.

## UFH TRIPLE SCIENCE GRADUATE AND SA'S LONGEST SERVING DG, DR PHIL MJWARA HAILED FOR HIS EXCELLENCE



A three-times graduate of the University of Fort Hare (UFH), Dr Phil Mjwara has been lauded by the South African Medical Research Council (SAMRC) for his immense contribution to promoting SA's science, technology and innovation when he was bestowed the Presidential Award by the council during its 10th Annual Merit Awards held recently.

The award was granted a few days before the Higher Education, Science and Innovation Minister, Dr Blade Nzimande announced Dr Mjwara's retirement from being the country's longest-serving Director-General, in his role as the DG of the Department of Science and Innovation (DSI).

Dr Mjwara obtained a Bachelor of Science, Bachelor of Science (Honours) and Master of Science degrees from UFH between 1981 and 1987.

According to a statement issued by the South African Government News Agency, with 18 years of service, Dr Mjwara holds the distinction of being the country's longest-serving DG.

"He played a leading role in shaping the policy and institutional architecture of the country's National System of Innovation (NSI). He led the establishment of some of our country's key science institutions such as the Technology Innovation Agency (TIA) and the South African Nation Space Agency (SANSA)."

At the awards ceremony, SAMRC President Professor Glenda Gray said: "Dr Mjwara has set the vision for all policy development in the science and technology sector in SA. He saw the need to create sustainable programmes, infrastructure, and human capacity to ensure SA achieves excellence in critical areas of science and technology,"

As the Fort Hare community, we pride ourselves on our Alumni such as Dr Mjwara who continue to portray Excellence in the spaces they occupy.

**"He played a leading role in shaping the policy and institutional architecture of the country's National System of Innovation (NSI). He led the establishment of some of our country's key science institutions such as the Technology Innovation Agency (TIA) and the South African Nation Space Agency (SANSA)."**

# SOCIAL WORK PHD CANDIDATE DRIVES SOCIAL JUSTICE AGENDA THROUGH ADVOCACY - A PASSION FUELLED BY HER LATE GRANDMOTHER, WINNIE MADIKIZELA MANDELA

A passion for social justice advocacy ignited by her late grandmother, Winnie Madikizela Mandela has seen Busisiwe Madikizela-Theu, a University of Fort Hare (UFH) Social Work PhD candidate and former lecturer being appointed to serve on strategic boards that aim to bring change, growth, and impact in the social work profession.

“My Grandmother Winnie Nomzamo Madikizela was one of the first two black scholars to become professional social workers in South Africa. She believed in social justice and was a very prominent voice that shifted the narrative during the apartheid years. Living at a time when she was alive was one of the things that fueled my passion for social justice,” she said.

Most recently, Madikizela-Theu was appointed as an advisory board member of the Young Social Workers Network South Africa (YSWN\_SA), which is a subsidiary of the SADC (Southern African Development Community) Network. This is an addition to her role as an advisory board member at the University of the Free State’s Social Sciences Faculty where she gives insights on how the university could align their curriculum to practice.

Before she embarked on her full-time PhD journey, Madikizela-Theu had been in the NGO sector working as a project manager and coordinator for internationally funded projects since 2013. She also worked as a customs officer at the Land Border Post, an experience she says propelled her to go back to university and study Social Work.

Currently, the Social Work scholar is in the second year of her doctoral degree which focuses on Community Engagement, Creation of Shared Value and Sustainable Development Goals, building on her Bachelor of Social Work from the University of the Free State and a Master of Social Work (Research) degree from Nelson Mandela University.

Throughout her career, she has held impactful roles, including district coordinator for organizations such as Child Welfare, Khethimpilo, MIET, and REAP.

At UFH she has also lectured and supervised Social Work NQF level 7 and 8 students. She also gives guidance to PhD and Master’s students at LEAD 360 Afrika Innovation and Research, demonstrating her commitment to mentorship.

As an Associate Consultant with Triple C Consulting, she has contributed to international projects for organizations like the United Nations, focusing on education initiatives in East and Southern Africa. Through her organization, Nzinga Maledzi (PTY) Ltd, she aids corporate partners with staff wellness.

Her scholarly prowess is evident in presentations at international conferences, solidifying her reputation as a successful speaker. In 2021 She attended the Association of South African Social Work Education Institutions (ASASWI) International Conference held in South Africa to present her Master’s (Research) thesis, in the same year she presented at the 4th International Conference on Gender & Sexuality held in India as well as the South African Sociology Association conference hosted by the University of the Free State. In 2023, she attended the Teaching and Learning conference hosted by the University of Fort Hare where she presented a paper on Blended Learning.

She is due to present a paper at the 6th International Research Conference at the College of Humanities at the University of Ghana this year.

Her advocacy for social justice has seen her being interviewed on various platforms where she gave well-informed insights on the topics at hand. This includes being interviewed by Professor Thuli Madonsela for the Women Ready to Lead 2030 podcast. Recently, she was invited to talk to SABC’s TruFm Education Channel about Teenage Mental Health Issues.

Her exceptional work has not gone unnoticed, instead it is lauded with awards. Her accolades include the Elsabe Esterhuizen Trophy in 2015 and a finalist spot in the 2022 Accenture Gender Mainstreaming Awards. Beyond her professional accomplishments, she has volunteered with organizations such as The Rotary Club and The Dandelion Philosophy, exemplifying her



“Advocacy shines a spotlight onto issues which may have fallen through the cracks such as teenage mental health. Social Workers are very well positioned to speak on such issues because of how the curriculum is designed.”

dedication to community service and social impact.

Commenting on the importance of advocacy in the social profession, Madikizela-Theu said: “Advocacy shines a spotlight onto issues which may have fallen through the cracks such as teenage mental health. Social Workers are very well positioned to speak on such issues because of how the curriculum is designed.”

“For example, in addition to modules that speak to the social work profession, I was also exposed to electives like Sociology, including family sociology, Psychology, including Psychopathology, and even disciplines like criminology. This has allowed me to speak as an expert in an array of spaces and also has exposed me to very diverse experiences, allowing me to advocate for social justice in areas that I could never have been able to occupy had I not been exposed to a social work qualification.”

In her new role as an advisory board member of the YSWN\_SA, Madikizela-Theu says she hopes to assist the organization in the mobilization of young social workers in overhauling the Social Work Profession

by looking at it from the lens of understanding. “To recognize it not just a profession limited to serving in the NGO sector, Social Development and Department of Health (Hospitals), but as a profession that can also open up opportunities to research and consulting opportunities as well as business opportunities and much more.”

“I hope to achieve this because Social Workers as it is with other professions, remain unemployed and those in employment tend to burn out. I believe that as a branch of Social Scientist, Social Workers have so much more that they can offer different sectors beyond the current line of careers that social work graduates are following at the moment. This is evidenced in the different endeavors which I have followed over the years in my career as a social worker thus far, from hosting Podcasts to Counselling clients experiencing grief and loss to being an international consultant.”

“I hope to show social work graduates that there is a vast spectrum of interesting things to do in this profession and only one’s imagination or lack thereof can stop them,” she concluded.

# YOUNG UFH POSTGRAD GRADUAND LANDS DREAM JOB AS AN AUDIT TRAINEE CANDIDATE AT DELOITTE IN LONDON

With a University of Fort Hare (UFH) BCom in Accounting degree under her belt and a Postgraduate Diploma in Accounting to be conferred this year, Lee Ann Mudzamba is heading to the UK to be an audit trainee candidate at Deloitte - one of the Big Four accounting firms in the world.

The three-year-long South African Institute of Chartered Accountants (SAICA) graduate programme at Deloitte London provides an opportunity for trainees to complete their articles to qualify as a Chartered Accountant (SA) on an international platform, auditing some of the firm's largest clients.

According to the call for applications made last year, to be eligible, candidates are required to have completed a SAICA designated qualification at a SAICA accredited university and be eligible to sit for the SAICA Initial Test of Competence (ITC) exams in 2024. The selection process entails rigorous skills testing.

Upon meeting all the requirements and passing all the tests for this great opportunity, the 23-year-old proud product of the UFH Nkuhlu Accounting Department was selected for the programme and will be leaving for the UK next month.

UFHNews met up with Lee Ann, a few days after she wrote her final SIACA ITC exams.

Ecstatic, Lee Ann, originally from Zimbabwe, says she has always been eager to move beyond borders to seek opportunities that will leap her closer to her career aspirations to become a Chartered Accountant, a sentiment motivated and supported by her mother.

"After I completed my matric in Zim, my parents were in full support of me going outside my birth country to pursue my dreams, and Fort Hare was the institution destined to set those dreams in motion. Now I am going outside the country again, and this time it's beyond the sea, something I had never anticipated," she said.

Here at Fort Hare, especially at the Teaching and Learning Centre (TLC), her selection for this prestigious programme comes as no surprise as she has asserted herself as a leader. As a student she was a TLC supplemental instruction leader for two years and later became a TLC language and writing consultant.

"TLC played a crucial part in building my confidence and turning me into a true team player. Through the centre, I actively contributed to the Fort Hare community which welcomed me as an international student. I have had the privilege of positively influencing numerous students, some of whom have become top achievers. This reflects my commitment to the triple bottom context as an aspiring CA."

Lee Ann says she draws inspiration from her self-employed mother, her father who is a lecturer and Midlands State University in Zimbabwe and her uncle Dr Modeni Sibanda who lectures at the UFH Bisho Campus. "My mother is a true go-getter, and she has inspired me to be the same."

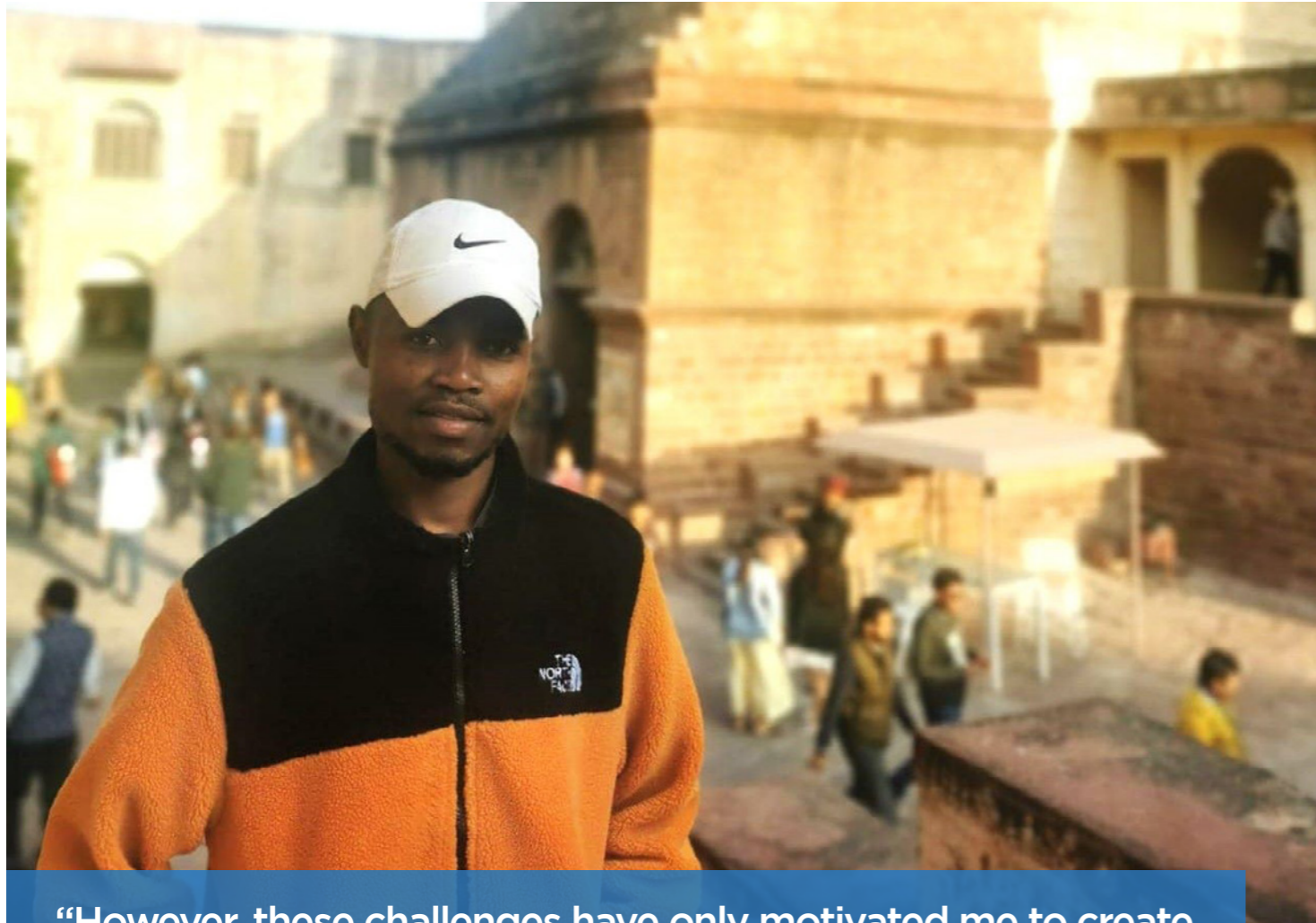
She expressed her gratitude to the TLC Consultants and the lecturers at Nkuhlu, especially Ms Ester Manson, for empowering her. "My lecturers empowered me academically, while my soft skills were sharpened at TLC."

This distinct training programme and its resulting qualification will no doubt equip Lee Ann with the skills and experience to pursue a career goal to one day be named as one of the top 35 under 35-year-old Chartered Accountants.



**"After I completed my matric in Zim, my parents were in full support of me going outside my birth country to pursue my dreams, and Fort Hare was the institution destined to set those dreams in motion. Now I am going outside the country again, and this time it's beyond the sea, something I had never anticipated,"**

# SHEER DETERMINATION LANDS THAMSANQA IN INDIA ON A GLOBAL CULTURAL BRIDGE PROGRAMME



“However, these challenges have only motivated me to create transformative melodies and use music as a medium for social justice and inequality. In the face of adversity, I strive to be a voice of change, shed light on the economic inequality and injustices that persist, not only in my homeland but worldwide.”

For someone who did not expect to complete matric, let alone enroll at university due to dire financial circumstances at home while growing up, Thamsanqa Dlamini, a UFH Bachelor of Music student surpassed his initial expectations when he recently visited Pali, Rajasthan in India to participate in the Cultural Bridge Global Winter School programme.

The ten-day (2 -12 January) transformative discourse is organized by the Cultural Bridge, a non-profit initiative that strives to foster cultural exchange by offering a meaningful learning experience in India to students around the globe.

According to the organizer, since its inception in 2020, the programme has brought together a diverse group of individuals, including professors, bureaucrats, social workers and industry experts from different continents with the mission to put a global lens on local issues and drive significant change in the world.

This year, the third edition was held under the theme: “Navigating Rural Transformation: A Global Lens on Continuity and Change.” It seeks to present a dedicated platform for learning, uniting scholars, academics, and experts across various disciplines to share their knowledge that seeks to address vital social issues, discuss inequality at length, and unite people from around the world to be the change they want to see.

The 28-year-old Dlamini who was born and raised in the hills of Emabheleni and grew up in Port Shepstone in a place called Mtwalume, enrolled at UFH in 2021 for a B Mus and is currently majoring in African Jazz. Before joining UFH, he was enrolled at a performing arts centre and a TVET college where he pursued his studies in music.

He secured himself a place in this transformative learning experience after responding to a call for applicants by the organizers. “Coming from a background of economic hardship, I am constantly searching for opportunities to enrich myself and widen my horizon, so when I came across the call, I knew this was an opportunity not to be missed.”

Born fourth of four children to unemployed parents, Dlamini recalled how difficult it was to make ends meet to put food on the table. “It was hard, we sometimes had to go around asking for food to cook. Sometimes there was some relief when my father, who was a skilled builder, would get a part-time job.”

“However, these challenges have only motivated me

to create transformative melodies and use music as a medium for social justice and inequality. In the face of adversity, I strive to be a voice of change, shed light on the economic inequality and injustices that persist, not only in my homeland but worldwide.”

His sheer determination is evident in becoming the first person in his family to obtain matric and to attend university. “I always knew that one way to end poverty was to take much importance of education, working hard, and pursuing my dreams in order to change the story of my life and create a better life for my family.”

Committed to addressing social injustices and bringing positive change through music, he has composed a song in memory of Nosicelo Mtebeni, (UFH Law student who was brutally murdered) titled Icala Legazi.

“I believe my passion for indigenous music and zeal to learn and explore the economic inequalities that exist in many different parts of the world led me to India. It was an eye-opening experience. I witnessed the rich multicultural heritage and struggles faced by the local communities daily. I also learned how music is rooted and intertwined with their lives and preservation of tradition.”

During his stay, Dlamini visited four schools to assess and compare the inequalities that exist between underprivileged and affluent communities where he gave lessons on the theory of music and gave a performance. He also met with members of the LGBTQI+ community to listen and learn about their lived experiences. They also went to different villages and visited several temples.

As part of the programme, Dlamini is expected to write a chapter on his experience that will be added to a journal – an exercise he says will prepare him for his aspiration to further his studies in music to PhD level and one day become an academic.

# FROM FORT HARE TO MALAYSIA, UFH STUDENT SHARES HER JOURNEY WITH THE VC



Three weeks after returning from the Asian Youth International Model United Nations 13th Conference in Kuala Lumpur in Malaysia, Kuhle Sicatsha, a University of Fort Hare (UFH) Bachelor of Commerce student met with the Vice-Chancellor, Prof Sakhela Buhlungu. She relayed her inspirational journey during luncheon with the VC.

Organized by the International Global Network (IGN), the conference brings together selected youth leaders from around the globe on a platform to engage and share perspectives and opinions in solving world issues.

Kuhle, who originally hails from Johannesburg and was raised in East London, was among 500 youths from 40 countries worldwide who were selected for this prestigious UN global youth conference. She was the only delegate from South Africa.

The 22-year-old secured her seat at the gathering after submitting a winning essay on "What young people can do to make the world a better place."

As part of their participation, the youth leaders were required to research and develop a speech on their country's stance on a specific global issue. For this gathering, the topic was "Reducing the Number of Deaths from Non-Communicable Diseases."

Kuhle's speech on South Africa's position on this topic was voted the best speech and her resolution that prevention was better than cure was voted as the best

resolution by the delegates. Read her speech here: <https://www.ufh.ac.za/sites/default/files/Position-Paper-SouthAfrica-Kuhle-Sicatsha.pdf>.

Impressed by her achievements, the VC said Kuhle's story was one of many testaments that being a Fort Hare student or graduate can take you anywhere in the world.

In commending her, Prof Buhlungu said: "You possess all the qualities to become a world leader. I am certain that one day you will become a great leader, I even see you occupying the seat of the Vice-Chancellor of this great University."

The VC's Office was also instrumental in realizing Kuhle's journey, after funding part of her registration fee.

Almost unable to contain her excitement, Kuhle was overwhelmed to meet the VC. "This is a significant moment for me that I will cherish for the rest of my life."

"To our Freshers (new students), as you start your journey at Fort Hare, I want you to remember that your past does not necessarily determine your future. Determination and staying focused on the end goal will determine your future."

[Read the background stories on her journey here:](#)

# UFH LAW DUO TO REPRESENT AFRICA AT THE PRICE MEDIA LAW MOOT COURT COMPETITION AT THE UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD

In a demonstration of their legal acumen and dedication, two University of Fort Hare (UFH) students from the Faculty of Law are bound for the UK to represent Africa at the prestigious Price Media Law Moot Court Competition hosted by the University of Oxford in April.

This remarkable achievement by Lerato Mmakgapo-Nkadimeng, a final-year LLB student, and Christian Buthelezi who is an LLB third-year Extended Curriculum Programme student is a true reflection of the high quality of legal education offered at UFH.

Organized by the Bonavero Institute of Human Rights in the Faculty of Law at Oxford, the annual competition is renowned for rigorously challenging students to engage in comparative research of legal standards at the national, regional and international levels, and to develop their arguments in written and oral forms on cutting-edge questions in media and ICT law.

This year's moot problem concerns freedom of expression, artificial intelligence, and defamation.

Every student globally must undergo a regional round, before advancing to the international round. The Africa rounds were hosted by the Mandela Institute at the Wits School of Law at the beginning of February and the teams that advanced to the international rounds along UFH are:

1. Moi University, Kenya
2. University of Benin, Nigeria
3. University of Botswana, Botswana
4. University of the Witwatersrand, South Africa

In an interview with UFHNews, excitement and optimism were palpable as the students narrated the journey that landed them in the UK.

"Late last year, we took part in an Internal Moot Court Competition hosted by the UFH Moot Court Society. We were on different teams (Junior and Senior). Impressed by our performance we were selected to represent South Africa in the Regional Rounds of Price

Media Law Moot Court Competition."

At the regional rounds, they once again demonstrated excellence when they both made it to the list of the top ten oralists.

"Our participation and selection in the top ten further proved that we are undoubtedly on par with our peers on the continent and the globe. Representing our continent on this global platform is certainly a gateway to our success in the law fraternity on an international level."

Both have set their future career aspirations on joining the bar as admitted attorneys and ultimately joining the judiciary.

Lerato and Christian thanked their coach Dr Tapiwa Shumba; and lecturers Prof Arthur van Coller, Dr Ntandokayise Ndhlovu, Ms Serone Stal, and Mr Halalisani Xulu for their unwavering support and belief in their success.

As the UFH team prepares to embark on this significant journey, they carry with them the hopes of the university, the country, and the entire African continent. Their participation in the Price Media Law Moot Court Competition is a testament to their achievements, the quality of legal education at UFH, and the vibrant and diverse legal landscape of the African continent.



# DISABILITY NO LIMIT FOR UFH FIRST-YEAR STUDENT

Born with cerebral palsy that caused flexion deformity on her wrists, Khanyisa Kufa is unable to use her hands but that did not stop her from realizing her dream of being the first person in her family to attend university.

Currently, in the first year of her Bachelor of Communication studies at the University of Fort Hare (UFH), the 19-year-old who uses her feet to write and to do practically everything her hands would have is well on her way to reaching her future career goal of becoming a journalist.

Khanyisa who is originally from Dutywa and spent most of her childhood in Cape Town, says the character of resilience formed in her when she was still a young toddler. "According to my mother, I was about 18 months old when I used my feet to lift my bottle feeder and steered it towards my mouth to drink. From that day onwards, I used my feet to carry out most of the tasks my hands would have done for me."

Where others saw limitations, Khanyisa says her parents, especially her mother saw potential and encouraged her to live without limits.

"My mother always told me that I can do anything and everything that my friends can do, only differently. As such, I was sent to normal schools that were supportive and provided assistive devices to accommodate my needs such as a specialized laptop and a custom-made chair that supports my back when I am crouching to type or write."

In addition, she draws and paints, all this using her feet.

Khanyisa enrolled at Fort Hare this year for the Bachelor of Communication studies after matriculating from Colosa Senior Secondary School with a distinction in isiXhosa last year. "When I obtained that distinction in isiXhosa, it was a sign that my dream of becoming an isiXhosa Radio News Journalist was affirmed," she says.

Khanyisa says with the support and assistance from the UFH Disability Unit (DU), she found a home away from home at Fort Hare. "The staff at the Disability Unit ensured that I transitioned into campus life with ease. They went above and beyond to ensure that my time here as a student was without barriers. For instance, I

was assigned to a student residence room that suited my needs and that was accommodative to my elder sister who is my carer. At class I use a specialized laptop and the custom-made chair, and that has made things much easier for me."

The 19-year-old says she looks forward to crossing the graduation stage to collect her degree that would enable her to become a practicing journalist and play a critical role in being the voice of the voiceless by amplifying the stories and perspectives of marginalized groups.



# EC RENOWNED TRADITIONAL GWIJO SINGER, MR VEE SHOLO PURSUES MUSIC DEGREE AT UFH

Mr Vee Sholo, recognized by many as the singer of traditional Gwijo songs such as "Akalali Umntu Ozal'inkwenkwe," is not resting on his laurels, instead, he has embarked on a new journey – one that sees him pursuing a music degree at the University of Fort Hare (UFH), a decision he hopes will propel him towards his aspiration to be a music scholar.

Igwijo or amagwijo are Xhosa songs that are usually sung at events such as sporting events or traditional events such as weddings and imigidi (celebration of a young man's return from initiation school).

Born Vuyisani Sholo, the singer and qualified Audiologist from Mdantsane said upon recognizing the importance of formal music education in refining his craft and expanding his horizons, there was no doubt that Fort Hare was the go-to institution for him.

"I made this bold decision to enroll at UFH, a respected institution with a storied history in nurturing talents in the creative industry. Here, I am not only honing my vocal skills but also delving into music theory, composition, and performance techniques, equipping myself with the tools needed to navigate the ever-evolving landscape of the music industry," he said.

He majors in vocals and piano.

Mr Vee Sholo's inspiring music career started in 2008 when he was in matric. "I needed to raise funds to apply and enroll at university, so I auditioned to be a backup singer for local gospel star, Khanyisa Sabuka Nkantsu."

After taking a gap year, he enrolled at the University of Cape Town where he obtained a BSc degree in audiology in 2013. While in Cape Town he joined a band and recorded a gospel album.

He later returned to the Eastern Cape to practice as an Audiologist and opened his private practice.

However, his calling to do music never stopped, it kept calling and he answered with a second gospel album.

Around 2021, the self-taught graphic designer got into traditional gwijo music by chance when he was designing an umgidi invitation and the client requested

a back-up traditional gwijo song for the design.

"The client did not want the songs that were out there and being used already, she wanted something new. So, I recorded "Akalali Umntu Ozal'inkwenkwe" and that is how my journey with igwijo music started."

Currently, he has recorded two albums, two EPs and has produced ten projects. The artist has performed and headlined several events, even here at Fort Hare he performed at the Africa Day celebration and the Men's Indaba. "Fort Hare recognised my craft and that meant a lot to me, that is one of the reasons I didn't even think twice when I enrolled here."

Mr Vee Sholo who has set his goals on studying music to doctoral level says by obtaining a formal qualification, he hopes to serve as a role model for other musicians, demonstrating the importance of both preserving tradition and embracing innovation. Moreover, he sees his education as a means of elevating the status of Gwijo music on the national and international stage, showcasing its beauty and complexity to audiences around the world through scholarly work.



# FORT HARE, ABSA AND FORAFRIKA DISCUSS SUSTAINABLE FOOD SECURITY INITIATIVES FOR THE FUTURE



**“Some students come to university without any funding. Not knowing where and when their next meal might come not only causes psychological problems for them but also impacts their academic performance. To deal with this, we need holistic interventions,”**

A food parcel hand-over ceremony turned into a fruitful dialogue between the University of Fort Hare, ABSA Bank and ForAfrika – a humanitarian and development organisation – on sustainable food security initiatives that could benefit the student community.

The initiative spearheaded by the UFH Student Counselling Unit (SCU) directly results from a longstanding partnership between the University and ABSA that has seen several unfunded students receiving food parcels over the years.

This year, the donation valued at R100 000 will benefit over 150 unfunded students.

During the discussion, UFH Counselling Psychologist and head of the SCU, Ms Thobeka Msengana acknowledged that the issue of food insecurity is prevalent and a cause for concern across student communities in the country.

“Some students come to university without any funding. Not knowing where and when their next meal might come not only causes psychological problems for them but also impacts their academic performance. To deal with this, we need holistic interventions,” she said.

Adding to Msengana’s sentiments, Ms Nelisiwe Makhubu, the Community Development Officer at ForAfrika said that while handing out food parcels was an applaudable solution, sustainable solutions were needed to permanently keep hunger at bay.

“Reality is, not all unfunded students will receive these parcels. Those who receive it might share with their peers and the food will run out eventually.”

An intervention proposed by Ms Makhubu was starting food gardens at student residences – a proposal that was well received by Student Representative Council (SRC) Deputy President, Mr Aphelele Khalakhala.

“The proposal of food gardens completely aligns with our plan of going green at our student residences,” he said.

Khalakhala said the challenges faced by unfunded students from impoverished backgrounds were heartbreaking. “For the students who go to bed hungry, this donation is a huge deal and these discussions for sustainable solutions to end hunger give much greater hope for the future.”

ABSA Youth and Student Manager, Mr Faaraz Gani described the partnership as a humbling experience. “Small steps are better than no steps. Hopefully, other organisations will come on board and join this cause.”

UFH Student Affairs Dean, Mr Lufuno Tshikhudo welcomed the productive discussions and the food parcels delivered on the day, saying it bodes well with one University’s institutional goals which is to improve the quality of student life and enhance student experience by creating an environment that supports students in active and experiential learning, well-being, and psycho-social development.

# TEACHING AND LEARNING EXHIBITION & ROUNDTABLE DISCUSSION LIVES UP TO ITS PURPOSE

Robust conversations ensued during the University of Fort Hare's 2nd Annual Teaching and Learning Breakfast. Information sharing was key in keeping up to date with the changing needs in the Higher Education space.

Launched last year, the session organized by the Teaching and Learning Centre (TLC) brings together academics on a platform to engage in academic support services offered at the university that seek to advance teaching and learning at Fort Hare and how to utilize those services.

The programme included presentations on initiatives that seek to promote student and staff development. It also featured a presentation on Technology-enhanced Learning (TeL).

On the side of the formal discourse held at the Staff Centre on the Alice Campus, was the TLC exhibition that presented a hive of activity on Freedom Square and outside Gasson Centre on

the East London campus.

The exhibitors comprised various departments and units at the University who set up stalls to display the array of services they offer. These included Institutional Advancement, Library Services, the Student Counselling Unit, the Disability Unit, Student Wellness, the Health Care Centre, the Student Campus Ministry, the Department of Postgraduate Studies, and the Innovation Office.

UFH Crop Science Lecturer, Dr Silindile Miya who was among the academics who joined the session said the roundtable discussion was enlightening and vital, especially for academics new to the University.

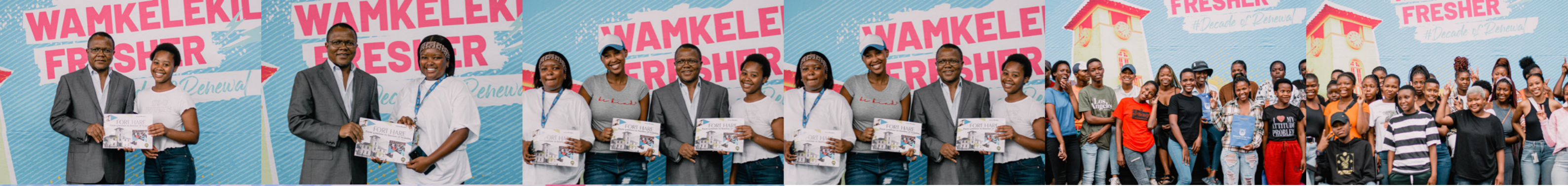
Ms Grace Tshivhandekano, a New Generation of Academics Programme (nGAP) Lecturer at the Department of Zoology and Entomology said the gathering allowed academics and students and academics to engage in meaningful conversations.





# Vice-Chancellor's FIRST-YEARS TOUR





# THEY CHOSE FORT HARE



WATCH HIGHLIGHT VIDEO OF 2024 ORIENTATION



WATCH HIGHLIGHT VIDEO OF FRESHERS INDABA





## QUEST FOR EXPERIENCE TURNS TO GOLD FOR UFH AT BUFFALO REGATTA

University of Fort Hare's class of 2024 went into the weekend's Buffalo Regatta looking to gain experience but came home with a clutch of medals instead.

East London's famous rowing race, held for the 136th time, provided a memorable few days for Asekho Jara and Sibabalwe Ndungane in particular.

Jara was part of the four-member team – which included Ndungane, Sibabalwe Nongwana and Sinazo Nohiya – who beat arch-rivals Walter Sisulu University in the final of the women's Quad event.

She was also in the UFH boat that triumphed in the combined men's and women's Eights race. Her third major performance came in the Singles, where she swept her way to a workmanlike third.

Along with the victory in the Quad race, Ndungane finished second behind University of Pretoria's Jeanne Riemann in the Singles.

"It was a good weekend," coach Lunga Mcetywa commented on their effort.

While numbers were slightly down compared to recent editions, he said very little compared to winning a medal at one of South Africa's most prestigious events.

As pleased as the coach was with the medal haul, he felt his charges were a paddle or two short on endurance.

Consequently, he has adjusted their training programme before the ripples on the Buffalo River have had a chance to settle properly. The new objective is to reach the standard required in 2km races.

UFH and WSU were two of four tertiary teams competing – the others being the rowing powerhouses of Pretoria and Cape Town.

"We are improving by the year," Mcetywa, who believed that they were already at a higher level than other Eastern Cape universities, said. "And teams like the University of the Western Cape."

The end goal is to compete as equals against the likes of Tuks and UCT.

With their star on the rise, Mcetywa was hoping that UFH's sports department could procure the latest equipment on display at this year's regattas to further enhance their chances of competing bow to bow with the best.

The sky would be the limit, he said.

With the first two events of the season now in their wake, Fort Hare will be using the next two months to prepare for the all-important University Sports South Africa (USSA) Sprints in Cape Town.

This event marked a watershed moment for UFH last year.

The men's Fours took gold in the D-division while the women placed second in the Fours (D-division), Pairs (C and D-division) and Singles (D-division) – resulting in them placing fourth overall out of nine universities.

The USSAs are in mid-April, giving the rowers all the time they need to regroup before knuckling down again.

Mcetywa, for one, had no doubt that they would arrive in the Western Cape a much-improved team.

## UFH RUNNERS LAUDED AT BORDER ATHLETICS AWARDS

The University of Fort Hare had many reasons to celebrate after the Border Athletics Awards in East London recently.

To the delight of his teammates, Aphelele Faneko was named best senior male athlete in the cross country category on the back of some exceptional performances last year. Mbali Tube and Liyema Qabavane, meanwhile, were recognised for representing the region at both the ASA 10km road and cross country championships.

Siyabulela Mnase was acknowledged for his selection to the provincial cross country team.

There was further joy for the UFH contingent when the university received a certificate of appreciation for hosting a superb Border Cross Country League event in January 2023. It was at that this race that Faneko sounded a warning to competitors that it would be his season, blitzing the field in the men's 4km despite heavy underfoot conditions.

Even though he knew he was in the running for the award, hearing his name called out came as a surprise as there were times last year when he struggled to find his very best form.

But the accolade also made him realise that no matter what the standard of an event, he should always give his all.

"Even if there's poor attendance or poor organisation [at a race], I must take every competition seriously," he said.

Faneko's time at UFH has come to an end and he will be entering the job market this year. As soon as he is settled, he will join a club to see where else his running talent can take him.

While the latter may have moved on, Tube, Qabavane and Mnase are still very much in the picture and will give athletics coach Zukisa Wanga a strong base to work from.

He described the recognition of his athletes as "really amazing" and believed they would be inspired to aim even higher this year.

Wanga said while Tube and Qabayane had performed well in cross country and road racing, he expected



them to mature in 2024.

Personal bests were well within their reach and he expected great things from Qabayane, who was moving up to senior level.

With student registration in full swing, the make-up of the athletics squad is yet to be finalised.

That said, Wanga has not wasted any time in getting the established runners together for preseason training.

"Track and field and half marathon preparations are currently our main focus. What I would like to see this year is more of our athletes qualifying for national competitions."

This, he said, would give them the confidence to challenge for podiums at the University Sports South Africa championships.

# UFH FOUR EXCEL FOR USSA NATIONAL SIDE AT SOFTBALL PROVINCIALS



Four softball representatives from the University of Fort Hare played starring roles in the USSA national women team's fortunes at the senior National Provincial Championships (NPCs), where they placed third.

Assistant coach Nolwazi Mabindisa, strength and conditioning mentor Silindile Mdleleni and players Zizipho Lingela and Sinenjongo Yolwa did their university proud as the team swung and pitched their way into the semifinals in Polokwane.

The University Sports South Africa team then saw off Limpopo in the playoff for third and fourth to claim bronze.

The week proved especially memorable for Mabindisa, who served as team manager last year. While she has won a championship silver as a player, it is the first medal she has brought home as a coach.

Third base shortstop Lingela made her third appearance for the national side but was sadly unable to play every game after suffering an injury midway through the competition.

Yolwa, meanwhile, started as catcher in the semifinal in only her second outing for the students.

The USSA outfit arrived in Limpopo on Sunday last week and spent three days training for the championship, which kicked off on the Wednesday.

They won three of their six round-robin matches to reach the playoff stage. One of these victories was an 11-1 thrashing of Western Province, a powerhouse of South African softball.

Ironically, the women from the Western Cape defeated KwaZulu-Natal in the group stages before the latter went on to oust the USSA team in their semi.

Since the national team had trounced the team who had defeated the eventual silver medallists, Mabindisa believed her charges had a real chance of reaching the final.

"We lost 3-10 to KZN. It was a very painful loss," she said. "I suppose nerves kicked in."

It was Gauteng who eventually won the women's division, making it two championship victories in a row.

While disappointed that the USSA side could not go all the way, Mabindisa was pleased with their performance given they had gone toe-to-toe with some of the best provincial teams in the land.

Save for a few changes, the same squad will take on Africa's best universities in the CUCSA (Confederation of Universities and Colleges Sports Association) Games in Pretoria later this year.

From what she had seen in Polokwane, they would be a strong contender for the title.

That four UFH representatives were involved at national student level was a sign that softball at the university was on the up, Mabindisa said.

Fort Hare also had five representatives in the provincial side that did battle at the NPCs.

Having so many coaches and players competing at this level would only strengthen UFH softball, she said.

"To get these types of accolades, it shows we are doing something right."

Because the champs were held earlier this year, local leagues will now only start in August - an unfortunate scenario for Fort Hare students not playing at national and provincial level.

However, Mabindisa is planning to arrange a series of intervarsity games and friendlies to keep her players fresh.



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