



University of Fort Hare
Together in Excellence

UFH NEWS

SPECIAL EDITION | 2023 SPRING GRADUATION



*Towards a
decade of Renewal*

Gaudeamus Igitur! **Congratulations To All Our 2023 Spring Graduates**

On 13 October, the University of Fort Hare (UFH) hosted its Spring Graduation ceremony at the Alice campus' Sports Complex to celebrate students who have reached this milestone in their academic studies.

Altogether, 427 graduates across the University's six faculties crossed the stage to collect their qualifications.

The breakdown of qualifications awarded are as follows:

- 132 Undergraduate Certificates
- 13 Postgraduate Diplomas
- 212 Honours Degree
- 45 Masters
- 25 Doctoral Degrees

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

Including the Autumn Graduation held in May, the University is proud to have produced close to 3400 graduates this year.





2023 SPRING GRADUATION

Click below link to watch a highlights video from the day:
[2023 SPRING GRADUATION](#)



A DREAM DELAYED IS NOT A DREAM DENIED

– Most Senior Graduate Realizes His Dream

Growing up, Mr Phillip Mayenzeke Nkosiyaphantsi dreamt of studying theology and becoming a Minister - a desire that was inspired by his father who was an ardent Christian.

At age 65, Mr Nkosiyaphantsi from Balasi Village outside Qonce (King William's Town) in the Eastern Cape fulfilled that dream when he graduated with a Bachelor of Theology during the 2023 University of Fort Hare Spring Graduation ceremony.

The father of three and grandfather of three is this season's most senior graduate.

"I feel elated and proud of myself for achieving this lifelong dream," he said.

This is Mr Nkosiyaphantsi's second degree from UFH. In 2001 he graduated with a Bachelor of Social Science, majoring in sociology.

He enrolled for his degree in theology in 2020 after retiring at age 60 from his job at the Department of Labour where he worked since 1985.

"I always told myself if my heart and health were still ok after retirement, I would pursue my dream to study theology because Ministry has always appealed to me, and as Christians, we have a responsibility to serve God's people."

While Mr Nkosiyaphantsi says being a full-time student at his age came with a few challenges, such as adapting to new technology and methods of teaching, his fellow classmates and lectures were welcoming.

"I had to enroll for a computer class to navigate the new technology and with the help from children, I was able to adapt quickly. My classmates and even some of my lecturers were younger than my children and they made my time at UFH worthwhile. The HOD, Prof Reuben Rashe was also very helpful in my academic journey," he said.

Mr Nkosiyaphantsi thanked his wife and his children for their unwavering support. "When I got stuck my children would assist and encourage me. When I stayed up late at night, doing my assignments, my wife stayed up with me."

A dream delayed is not a dream denied

"If like me, you have a dream that was deferred and still want to realize it, do it! The road to realizing one's dreams is not always without difficulties but when you reach the destination, it becomes worthy."



"I always told myself if my heart and health were still ok after retirement, I would pursue my dream to study theology because Ministry has always appealed to me, and as Christians, we have a responsibility to serve God's people."

Four-Times Graduate's Compelling PhD Research On Family Business Featured On BBC



“I initially chose the UFH as it is in my hometown, however, once I met the academic staff and learnt about their achievements, I knew that this was where I wanted to stay. I have learned so much about myself and the academic world by being a part of the Fort Hare family.”

A few weeks before she crossed the graduation stage to collect her PhD in Business Management, University of Fort Hare (UFH) four-times graduate, Dr Angela Pike-Bowles was featured on BBC World Service Radio where she was invited to share the pros and cons of family business, this drawing from her PhD research.

The 31-year-old mother of two from East London holds a bachelor, honour and a master's degree in commerce from Fort Hare and now her PhD.

Through her thesis titled: The Moderation and Mediation Influence of Dynamic Capabilities and Decision-Making Dimensions on South African Family Business Performance, hopes to add to academic research surrounding the family business domain in South Africa.

“Currently, research in family business is limited, therefore my study has the potential to significantly benefit the family business landscape by providing lucrative strategies for both policyholders and family businesses.”

Her topic is inspired by her parents' successful family business. “I have always had an interest in family businesses and their strategic approaches as I grew up within a family business that my mom and dad started in 1991. Their family business is still operating successfully all these years later.”

Under the supervision of Prof Willie Chinyamurindi and Dr Juliet Purchet-Townes, Dr Pike-Bowles, a former UFH time-on-task lecturer, collected three hundred and forty-seven questionnaires from family business managers and owners within the eight districts of the Eastern Cape.

The results indicated there is both a significant and mediation relationship between the dynamic capabilities constructs entailing environmental scanning, scenario planning, knowledge creation, culture, and formal organisation with the decision-making constructs of strategic foresight, flexibility, and creativity with family business performance.

The study also found that a moderation relationship does not exist between these constructs; however, a moderation relationship does exist between the dynamic capabilities constructs of knowledge creation and culture and strategic foresight when moderated by strategic creativity.

Through practical development, the study contributes to a lucrative family business dynamic capability model that is unique to the Eastern Cape family business domain, a first of its kind.

In addition to her interview on BBC Africa, Dr Pike-Bowles' paper has been published in an accredited journal.

Reflecting on her PhD journey, she acknowledges that the journey is not for the faint-hearted.

“I have ample respect for every academic who is studying for a degree, working full-time, and managing a family. I completed my PhD with a newborn which took a lot of scheduling, support, and no sleep. I would not change a thing as I have grown into a strong academic woman who was guided by the best-supervising team, Prof Chinyamurindi and Dr Townes.”

She also acknowledged that it was a great experience doing her PhD at UFH. “I had the best supervisory team! We worked so well together! I would get continuous motivation, detailed feedback, structured dates for chapter submissions, and new articles to review. They have pushed me to where I am today, and I will forever be grateful for their positive impact on my life.

However, she strongly urges those who have an interest in doing a PhD, to take the journey to empower themselves. “I encourage others to get out of their comfort zones and achieve something others didn't think was possible. I was never an A student in high school. However, I found my true self in university and have never looked back. Obtaining a PhD would benefit your future career, however, one must be prepared to sacrifice their social life and sleep in order to successfully complete a PhD.”

Speaking about choosing Fort Hare to travel this academic journey, she said. “I initially chose the UFH as it is in my hometown, however, once I met the academic staff and learnt about their achievements, I knew that this was where I wanted to stay. I have learned so much about myself and the academic world by being a part of the Fort Hare family.”

“I am grateful to my wonderful husband, my two beautiful small children, ages one and three, and my family who have been my pillow of strength throughout my academic career.”

Currently, Dr Pike-Bowles works at the family business, Umbono Welding as the health and safety manager. Her goal is to eventually become a professor within the next ten years.”



All Odds Defied!

Despite a life-threatening tumour and being diagnosed with tendinitis, Dr Ncediswa Zukani made her way across the graduation stage with the aid of crutches and knelt in front of Vice-Chancellor Prof Sakhela Buhlungu to be capped for her PhD in Education during the University of Fort Hare 2023 Spring Graduation ceremony.

“My PhD journey was difficult but worth undertaking,” said Dr Zukani.

A teacher by profession, Dr Zukani said a rejection by a school she was redeployed to had ignited her quest to pursue a doctoral degree.

“When I was assigned to that specific school and was not accepted by the school community, I felt disheartened. However, in my distress, my mother advised me not to wallow in the rejection and instead to go back to school and improve my qualifications. I did my honours, master’s and then my supervisor motivated me to pursue a PhD, which I did.”

While teaching at an East London primary school, she noticed some of the learners who transitioned from Grade R to Grade 1 were not fully prepared for the grade, a concern that inspired the title of her thesis: “Quality of Early Childhood Care Education learning programmes in preschools in East London Education District.” The study examined the quality of the early childhood care and education (ECCE) programmes offered at early childhood development (ECD) centres in the East London Education District in South Africa.

In the middle of her PhD studies in 2019, she fell ill and visited her doctor for a medical examination. “A day before an interview for a lecturer position, my doctor called me to inform me that I had a tumour. Right there, I said a silent prayer and asked the Lord to take over.”

Following her diagnosis, she underwent radiation and was placed on incapacitated leave. However, this did not deter her. “Some people did not believe I was unwell, especially my work colleagues because during this trying time, I wrote a paper and presented it at the University of Swaziland. Furthermore, an opportunity came knocking at the end of 2019, I received a scholarship to go and study in Italy, however, COVID-19 happened, and I was unable to take up the scholarship.”

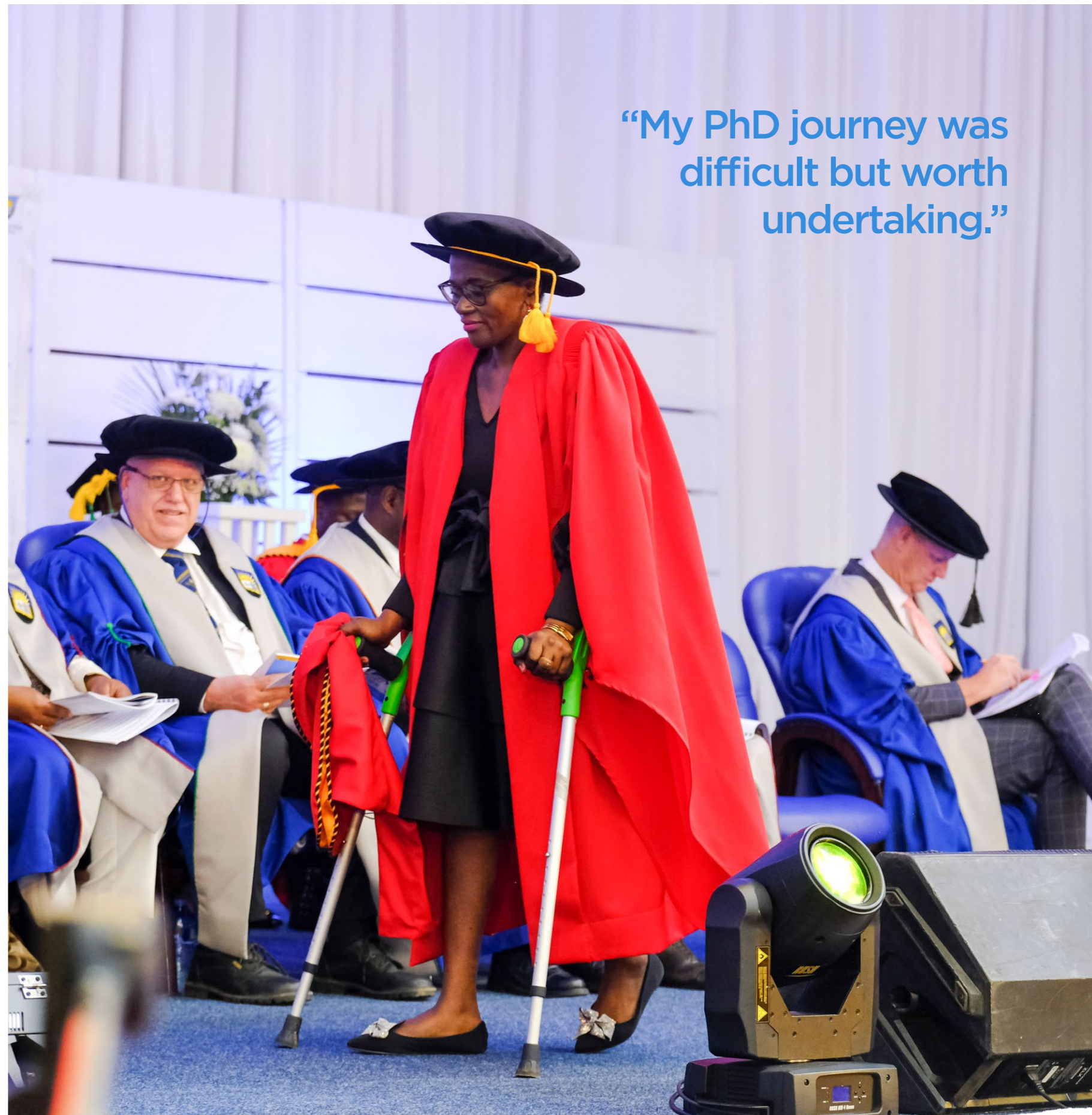
She carried on with her research under the supervision of Dr NH Ganqa who she says was extremely supportive throughout.

“Amid my health scare, my mother sadly passed away in 2021. I was devastated because I thought she would be with me when I graduated with my PhD. I lost interest and dragged my research, and at some point, I wanted to drop out. In the middle of 2021, I relocated to Pretoria then a friend sent me a call for an abstract at the University of Namibia, I wrote the abstract and presented it at Unam and my interest was rekindled.”

Just when she thought things were falling into place, she fell ill again was unable to walk properly, and was diagnosed with tendinitis. “I went to different physiotherapists the pain in my leg got worse as months passed. One morning I decided to see my physician, who wrote an admission letter to the hospital for an MRI. At the hospital, they did the MRI and scans, and the results came back indicating that the tumour was back and was pressing a nerve hence the inability to walk. I went for an operation, chemo, and radiation.”

Dr Zukani said all these adversities made her question whether she did not deserve this PhD, but with the support from her circle, she persevered and overcame these adversities.

“My PhD journey was difficult but worth undertaking.”





Resilience Rewarded!

“I will remember my graduation at Fort Hare as the best day of my life.”

Mama Nomngenisio Josephine Dalasile, who lives with a permanent disability caused by polio contracted as a young toddler, obtained her first University Degree at age 65!

The pensioner who is originally from Ngcobobo and currently lives in East London, was among the exceptional graduates that got a special mention from Vice-Chancellor Prof Sakhela Buhlungu in his UFH 2023 Spring Graduation speech on Friday. She graduated with a Bachelor of Theology.

Her resilience was rewarded by the VC who called her up to the stage and gifted her with an alumni blazer, officially welcoming to the alumni community. The VC who met Ms Dalasile during an earlier engagement with UFH Students Living with Disabilities said: “We have the most resilient students and Ms Dalasile embodies that resilience,” as he draped her in the black & gold blazer on stage to the delight of graduation attendees who responded to this act with a standing ovation and thunderous applause.

Ms Dalasile was diagnosed with polio at the age of two, the virus left her paralyzed in one leg. “I am happy to be alive to give testimony about my life because many did not survive this virus,” she said.

Growing up under dire financial circumstances, she was forced to leave school and look for a job. “I only had a JC Form 3 (Grade 10), and circumstances back home did not allow me to further my studies.”

Fortunately, in the mid-1980s she landed a job as a switchboard operator at an East London public hospital, and she was able to go back to school (part-time) and completed her matric in 1987 at age 29 whilst working full-time.

“I have always been hungry for knowledge. That is why I went back to school, to fill that hunger.”

On the verge of going on pension, at 59 years she enrolled for a college qualification and thereafter enrolled at UFH.

The mother of one said she did not expect a special mention from the VC. “It was so warm.”

Congratulations Mama Nomngenisio.







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Institutional Advancement

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