



University of Fort Hare
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UFH NEWS

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THE UNIVERSITY OF FORT HARE LAUNCHES FIVE NEW RESEARCH NICHE AREAS



“The University of Fort Hare is a Well of Change,” – Dr Pali Lehohla

Opening his keynote address at the Archbishop Thabo Makgoba 6th Annual Lecture, Dr Pali Lehohla, South Africa’s former and longest-serving Statistician-General, reminded the audiences of the pivotal role played by the University of Fort Hare in the development of the country and the continent by saying: “The University of Fort Hare is a well of change. For this is where many a leader that formed the African anti-colonial movement and anti-apartheid struggle were schooled and tooled into a formidable front.”

The sixth installment was held on 23 August at the Miriam Makeba Arts Centre on the East London Campus. As per norm, the lecture themed: **Leadership in Local Economic Development** jointly hosted by the University’s Faculty of Management and Commerce and the Archbishop Thabo Makgoba Development Trust (ATMDT, created a platform for insightful and meaningful dialogue on matters of local economic development.

Giving background to the lecture was none other but the Archbishop himself who said: “The aim is to get people talking and reflect on the values and some of the practical things that people could do in their corners whether in academia or any of their God-given gifts. We are so proud to be associated with the University of Fort Hare through this mission to construct meaningful conversions on this theme.”

Since its inauguration at Fort Hare, the event has attracted highly influential guest speakers who are

key role players in the economic development sector. They include Ms Thokozile Xasa, then Minister of Sport and Recreation; Mr Tembinkosi Bonakele, former Commissioner at the SA Competition Commission; Dr Lulu Gwagwa, South African’s first black Town Planner; Dr Batandwa Siswana, public finance specialist; and Mr Luvuyo Mosana, the Chief Executive Officer at the Eastern Cape Socio-Economic Consultative Council (ECSECC).

Through his lecture, Dr Lehohla painted a picture of a hopeless South Africa and of a hopeful South Africa.

In depicting a hopeful South Africa, Dr Lehohla made reference to the BRICS Summit that was recently concluded in the country. “The BRICS 2023 Summit hosted by our President, Honourable Cyril Matamela Ramaphosa reminds us of the greatness of our country amongst nations. The BRICS in SA will go down in history as one of the gatherings of the global south, which represents the theme that Fort Hare led in the representative voice of Africa in President Kenneth Kaunda of Zambia, President Robert Mugabe of Zimbabwe, President Nelson Mandela of South Africa, Prime Minister Ntsu Mokhehle of Lesotho and Robert Mangaliso Sobukwe amongst many an anti-colonial and anti-apartheid political luminary.”

“This lecture comes at an opportune time, therefore. It sits at the nexus of hope and hopelessness. I am humbled to be one who has been chosen to present on this greater than life occasion.”

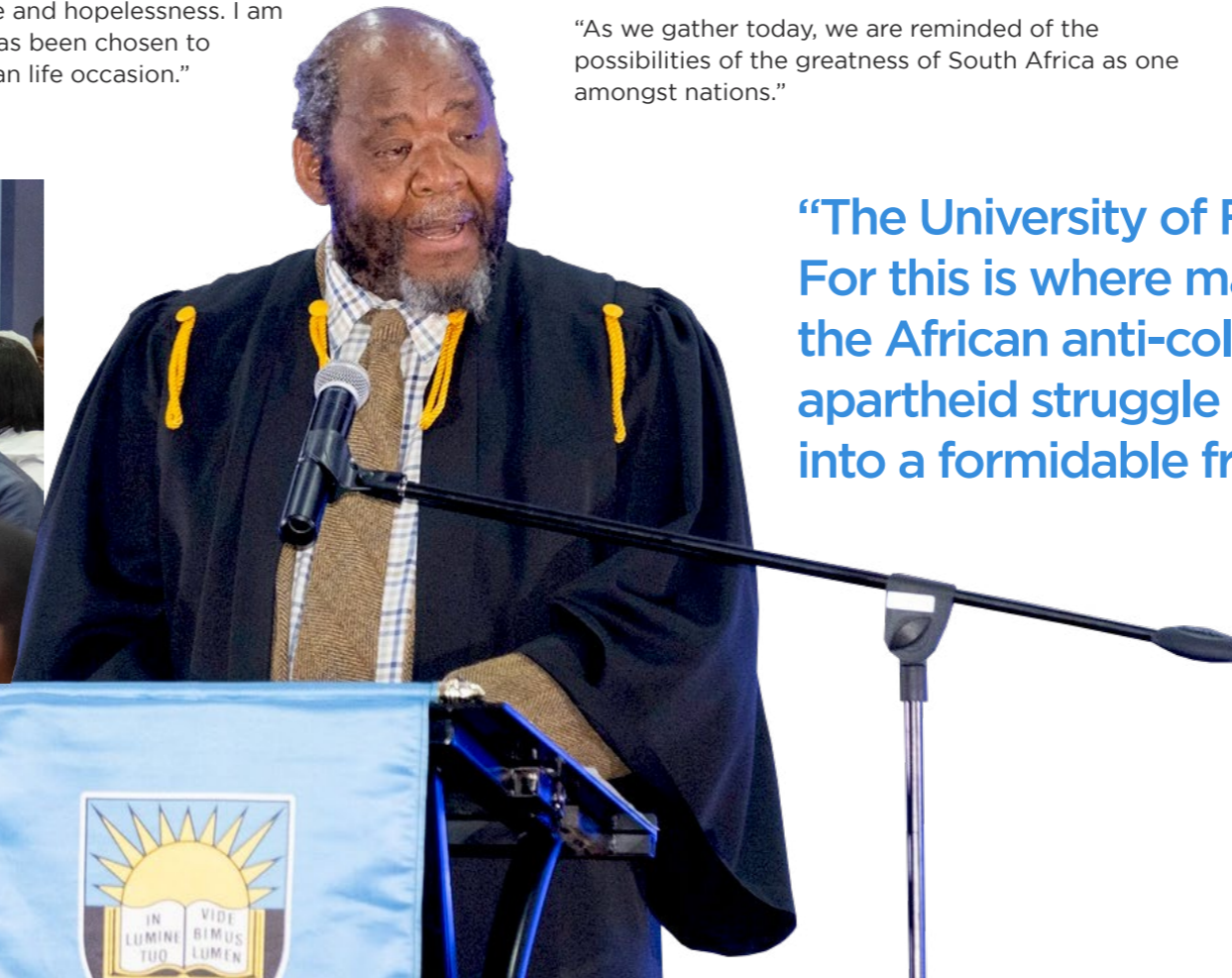
“This lecture also happens not only at a critical time but on a critical date in our calendar of our record of a charade of debilitating disappointments in our latter half of the three decades of post-apartheid South Africa experience. We are sadly reminded that on this very day the 23rd of August in 2021 Babita Deokaran, our martyr against corruption was assassinated.”

He further delves into several disappointing moments and actions that continue plunge to the country into a state of hopelessness such as corruption, unemployment, inequality, poor service delivery and xenophobia.

“Our Rainbow nation that we so prided ourselves in has become a stranger of its former self. President Mandela receiving Census 96 results from Statistics South Africa had a lot to say about the stature of South Africa and how not to disappoint those who brought us to power. He lectured us on the matter of remaining true to the nation and the world.”

He concludes his lecture by making a call to South Africans to keep their conscience alive and act on the words of Chief Albert Luthuli in his ten Commandments which states, “It is so easy to admire a person, to admire what he or she stood for or stands for, and yet shrink from cutting off the mission of the present.”

“As we gather today, we are reminded of the possibilities of the greatness of South Africa as one amongst nations.”



“The University of Fort Hare is a well of change. For this is where many a leader that formed the African anti-colonial movement and anti-apartheid struggle were schooled and tooled into a formidable front.”



Find a Common Cause in Defence of Academic Freedom

“In the current period, striving for academic freedom and institutional autonomy in one university is a futile exercise. Yet in the current context, the public higher education system is extremely fragmented as institutions and their leadership increasingly retreat into an inward-looking and competitive posture. It is my considered view that the association of university vice-chancellors can do much better by finding common cause in defence of these freedoms.”

Prof Buhlungu, the Vice-Chancellor of the University of Fort Hare (UFH) was delivering the 57th annual TB Davie Memorial Lecture hosted by the University of Cape Town (UCT). Organised by the Academic Freedom Committee, the lecture on academic freedom was established by UCT students to commemorate the work of Thomas Benjamin Davie, VC of the university from 1948 to 1955 and a defender of the principles of academic freedom.

Prof Buhlungu joined the list of distinguished speakers of this prestigious lecture that includes Prof ZK Mathews, UFH’s first graduate (1924) who delivered the 3rd Lecture in 1961, titled: *“African Awakening and the Universities”*,

In his lecture titled: *“Academic Freedom and Institutional Autonomy: A View from the Thyme Valley,”* Prof Buhlungu identified four moments that marked the introduction of ethnic education and assault on academic freedom at UFH – the Extension of University Act of 1959, the appointment

of Broederbond Professor JM De Wet in 1968, the closure and subsequent annexation of the Federal Theological Seminary to UFH in 1974/5, and the handing over of the university to the Ciskei Bantustan in 1981.

The VC captivated an audience that filled the New Lecture Theatre on UCT’s campus who listened attentively as he, through his address, created a conversation between TB Davies (UCT) and ZK Mathews (UFH) – two academic freedom fighters as he narrated the current landscape of the resistance and the fight for academic freedom at UFH, universities in the country and in the world.

Prof Buhlungu took the audience back to 1959 “the year that marked the first major assault on academic freedom and institutional autonomy at Fort Hare,” when parliament passed the Extension of University Act of 1959 where strict parameters were set for the college adherence to which was to be monitored by the Department of Bantu Education. “One of these was that the institution was to cater specifically for Xhosa-speaking students. Within the institution segregation governance and administration structures were enforced, including the creation of separate Council and Senate structures for blacks.”

He boldly narrated the events that characterise the state and context of academic freedom at Fort Hare such as the arrival of Professor Johannes Marthinus de Wet, a member of the Broederbond in 1968 who seemed to be on a mission to intensify state control over the University, its staff and students.

The VC did not only limit the impact of the assault on academic freedom and institutional autonomy to Fort Hare but also the outwards effect, specifically at the neighbouring Federal Theological Seminary of Southern Africa (FEDSEM) in Alice.

He further marks crucial moments relating to academic freedom and institutional autonomy during the Bantustan Years, from Apartheid to Democracy, and to the Fort Hare he inherited in 2017.

“Often people ask me, had I known about what was awaiting me at Fort Hare, would I have taken the job of Vice-Chancellor? I still do not have an answer to that question. Indeed, I often ask myself, did I accept a poisoned chalice at UFH? Again, I have not formulated an answer yet! However, the six and a half years that I have spent at the helm of the University of Fort Hare have provided me with invaluable insights on issues of academic freedom and its handmaiden, institutional autonomy.”

“The story of Fort Hare of the last six years has been told by others, particularly through the media. Sadly, the way the story has been rendered has not always been paid sufficient attention to evidence and close examination of how the institution ended up where it is.”

He outlined some of the underlying issues that led Fort Hare to be where it is currently, such as the heavy burden of bureaucratic micromangement and the spectre of physical violence and its implications for Academic Freedom.

He ends his address by making four propositions. “Firstly, he reminds the audience that in the public higher education sector, academic freedom and institutional autonomy are shaped by context. “They mean slightly (but at times vastly) different things to different institutions because of these institutions’ different socio-political contexts and histories. Thus, we should allow the diversity of experiences in the higher education landscape to shape our understanding of academic freedom. This also means that the enablers as well as the threats to these freedoms will vary from one institution to another, one region to another and one country to another.”

Secondly, he highlighted how crucial it is for the association of university vice-chancellors to find a common cause in defence of these freedoms. “This also includes standing up when a Dean of Faculty of a former black university is murdered in cold blood for taking a stand in defence of the integrity of academic qualifications!”

Thirdly, the VC underlined the increasing burden of bureaucratic ‘tick box’ reporting which infringes on the powers of University Councils”. “In the last decade or so, we have witnessed serious incursions into, and erosion of, academic freedom and institutional autonomy in the public higher education sector. Furthermore, the emergence of universities as “exploitable resources” (Jansen, 2023) means that governance structures have the potential to contain members who can pose a threat to institutional autonomy as they seek to promote interests of vested interests inside and outside the University.”

Lastly, he emphasized that, in the global age, the impulse to intervene and set limits to academic freedom and autonomy is present among all state officials, regardless of their well-meaning intentions and parameters set by legislation. “We would do good by making all state officials and university leaders learn from the catastrophic consequences that state control did to the University of Fort Hare through the Extension of University Act of 1959 and the Annexation of the University to the Ciskei Bantustan in 1981.”

The lecture ended with a robust and insightful question-and-answer session, and in response to one of the questions, the VC reminded us that: “Academic Freedom is not frozen in time, it is something that needs to be shaped by all of us.”

[Click here to watch the recording of the live stream.](#)



Research Niche Areas Boost Fort Hare's Academic Profile

The long-awaited establishment of Fort Hare's Research Niche Areas is set to bolster the university's research and innovation profile worldwide. The five RNAs, which were unveiled during a ceremony at the East London International Convention Centre in September form part of Fort Hare's 2022 to 2026 Strategic Plan for institutional renewal.

After an extensive application and approval process that began last year, the RNAs have been identified as:

- Renewable Energy
- Sustainable Agriculture, Water Usage and Impact of Climate Change
- Infectious Diseases and Medicinal Plants
- Research in Inclusion and Township Economies
- African Liberation Heritage in Citizenship Society

Among university leadership, dignitaries in attendance included acting Deputy CEO of the National Research Foundation Dr Gugu Moshe as well as representatives from healthcare NGO Beyond Zero, Desmond Tutu Foundation and Eastern Cape Department of Rural Development and Agrarian Reform.

[Watch the highlights of this significant event by clicking here.](#)



Evaluation of UFH's Readiness to be Declared a UNESCO Nelson Mandela Legacy World Heritage Site has Commenced



“The visit will be followed by a desk review, a report written by an expert either on the significance of a property nominated for inscription on the World Heritage List or on specific issues as cultural tourism management, risk preparedness at site level, and protection and management aspects.”

The process to evaluate the University of Fort Hare's (UFH) readiness to be declared as a United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) Nelson Mandela Legacy World Heritage Site has commenced.

This moment of history in the making was marked by a visit by Mr Charles Akibode, an expert from the International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS), a non-governmental organisation dedicated to the conservation of the world's monuments and sites which is an advisory body to UNESCO.

The site visit to the University's Alice campus took place in August.

This great African University was nominated for this significant global recognition in 2016 when it celebrated its 100 years anniversary. It is among ten national locations that are significant and attached to Nelson Mandela's values which are anchored on the principles of human rights, liberation and reconciliation, that are nominated for this global recognition.

The 10 sites are:

1. Constitutional Hill
2. University of Fort Hare & ZK Mathews's House
3. 16 June 1976 - The Streets of Orlando West
4. Lilliesleaf
5. Mqhekezweni
6. Ohlange
7. Sharpeville
8. Union Buildings
9. Waihoek
10. Walter Sisulu Square

According to Mr Akibode, the main purpose of the technical evaluation missions is to make an on-site evaluation of the conditions of Integrity and Authenticity; the State of Conservation, the Factors Affecting the Property, the Protection and Management Systems; the Boundaries of the nominated property and its Buffer Zone; and the Interpretation and Presentation of the site and its Visitor and Tourism strategies.

Mr Akibode explained the role of ICOMOS and presented an in-depth report on the technical evaluation's expectations.

The process is expected to take 16 months to complete from the date the organisation received the nomination from the UNESCO World Heritage Centre, which was in March.

“The visit will be followed by a desk review, a report written by an expert either on the significance of a property nominated for inscription on the World Heritage List or on specific issues as cultural tourism management, risk preparedness at site level, and protection and management aspects,” explained Mr Akibode.

Several crucial steps will be carried out during the process, the central part being the ICOMOS Panel which decides the corporate view of the organisation that is presented to the World Heritage Committee. The process will culminate in a final report to be presented to the World Heritage Committee.

The formal programme for the visit was held at Senate Chambers. An esteemed delegation representing various stakeholders including the University's management led by the Vice-Chancellor Prof Sakhela Buhlungu; the National Heritage Council, the **South African Heritage** Resources Agency; Department of Sports, Arts and Culture; the Imingcangathelo traditional house, Raymond Mhlaba Municipality and the Student Representative Council were in attendance.

The programme included a presentation prepared by the UFH National Heritage and Cultural Studies Centre which provided a deeper understanding on the origins, land ownership and boundaries of the University.

Delegates were taken on a tour of some of the University's historic sites, such as Freedom Square where the Stewart, Livingstone and Henderson Halls are located and where the Tambo and Sobukwe walks connect. The tour proceeded to the Christian Union Building, then the Old Fort ended at the Original Dining Hall.

Fort Hare Named One of South Africa's Coolest University Brands

The University of Fort Hare is one of the coolest university brands in South Africa – this according to the Sunday Times GenNext survey that unveiled the most admired South African brands across 70 categories, including institutions of higher learning.

The University of Fort Hare is the only Eastern Cape university that appeared on the list.

Other institutions of higher learning in the brand survey that the University of Fort Hare surpassed in ranking position included UNISA, Northwest University, and Sol Plaatje University. The overall top five coolest brands were (1) Univen, (2) Yale University, (3) Stanford University, (4) Oxford, and (5) the University of Fort Hare.

Researchers conducted visits to 98 schools to survey tweens (8 – 12 years) and teens (13 – 18 years), and other engagements took place to survey young professionals (25 – 30 years). The Northern Cape was excluded from visits due to sparse distribution of schools. With 5 900 young people being surveyed, the Sunday Times GenNext survey had a statistically representative sample of South African youth. The survey was also audited by PricewaterhouseCoopers (PwC).

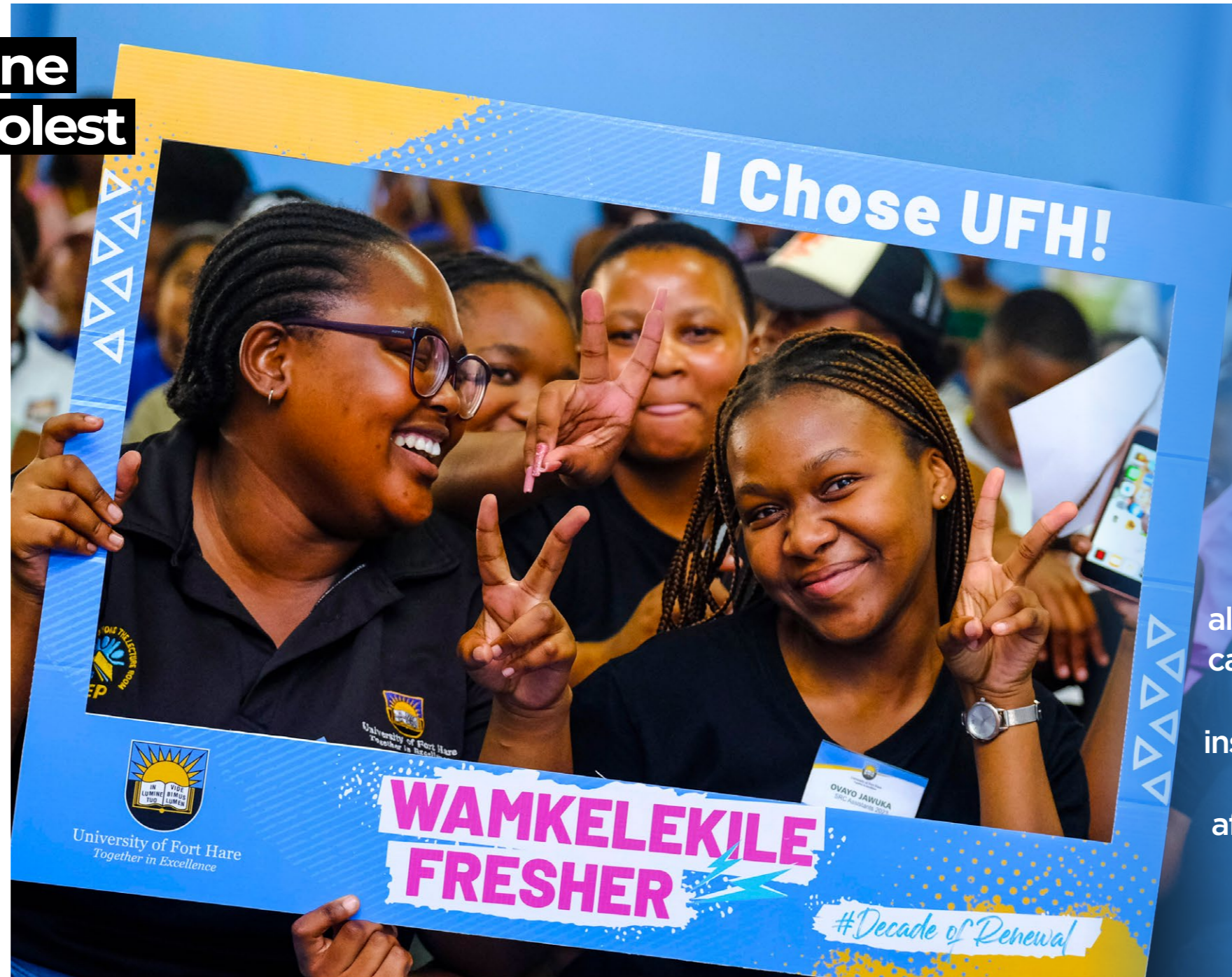
“This is a major achievement and highlight for the University this year,” announced Vice-Chancellor and Principal, Professor Sakhela Buhlungu.

“The achievement is the sum of all our collective efforts across the entire institution. A brand involves many touchpoints, experiences and interactions. It is impossible to attribute this achievement to a specific portfolio or directorate.”

“I want to congratulate every employee, student and alumnus that have adopted our vision, lived and demonstrated our values, or engaged as ambassadors for our institution. Special thanks also go to my management team and also the Council of the University of Fort Hare,” he said.

Professor Buhlungu said the findings of Sunday Times project intersect with what the University is witnessing in terms of application increases to the University.

“We’ve had a massive jump in undergraduate applications. Applications to UFH increased from 38 000 for the 2022 academic year to 219 000 for this academic year [2023]. This represented an increase a 476% increase on a year-on-year basis,” he said.



“Consistently prospective students tell us they select Fort Hare because of the excellent quality of academics, the inspirational leaders and the helm of the organisation, the programme mix that aligns with their future career plans, the good reputation of the institution and also the high levels of brand affinity they have with the University.”

JP Roodt, Director: Marketing and Communications at UFH said: “The Sunday Times GenNext survey delivers insights into youth brand preference and behaviour and ranks the most beloved brands for South African youth. It is a barometer of what youth find trendy and inspirational. It is also a holy grail for the assessment a brand’s health and performance.”

Roodt said Institutional Advancement (Marketing and Communications) conducts several studies and frequently present findings to University’s Management Executive Committee (MEC) or Committees of Council.

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Roodt explained brand affinity as one of the highest attainments of effective brand management, communication and reputation management.

“Brand affinity involves the alignment between the personal value systems of an individual with the University’s vision, mission and values. This forges strong emotional connections between students.

Roodt dispelled myths and misinformation that the University’s bold and tough stance on rooting out corruption had resulted in unmitigated reputational damage and that management did not handle matters around academic fraud and the SIU investigations with diligence, care and urgency.

“We have empirical data that shows the opposite. In one of our recent studies, 86,49% of prospective applicants for postgraduate studies indicated they strongly agreed or agreed with the statement that the University has a good reputation.”



PPS Partners with UFH with New Career Centre to Prepare Students for Professional Life

“This university boasts the higher number of presidents on the continent and possibly the highest number of influential people in modern society. As PPS, we are proud to be associated with such a prestigious institution.”

A new student career centre at the University of Fort Hare’s Alice campus encapsulates the university and the private sector’s commitment to give graduates the best possible chance of finding employment on completion of their studies.

Funded by the Professional Provident Society (PPS), the facility is geared towards achieving job readiness through the provision of employment portals and detailed information sessions.

The PPS Career Centre was unveiled at an event attended by university management, student leadership, postgraduate students and funder representatives.

Deputy Vice-Chancellor for Teaching and Learning Professor Renuka Vithal said UFH was grateful for ongoing support from donors and the private sector. Finding employment in South Africa and abroad was a very big issue for young people, she said.

“We monitor employment of our graduates and are working very hard so that they find employment.”

Vithal was pleased that the career centre, which she described as a “very opportune space”, would be open to students 24/7. The centre offers every imaginable career-relevant amenity, including 20 laptops and

spaces for workshops and information sessions.

Various institutions will be brought on board to present to the students, while partners such as the Department of Labour will be invited to provide career advice. The programme would include mock scenarios as well as instruction on how to dress and what to say during an interview, Mngqeta explained.

The jobs portal loaded on the laptops – the number of which is expected to be increased shortly – will reflect every career opportunity available, whether locally or in other parts of the world. PPS representative Ayanda Seboni said what came through strongly was that UFH had been the first educational institution for people of colour.

“This university boasts the higher number of presidents on the continent and possibly the highest number of influential people in modern society. As PPS, we are proud to be associated with such a prestigious institution.”

“What we value the most is education because we know it changes the future. But careers also make a difference; that’s why we are excited to partner with you on this initiative.”

Fort Hare Foundation Director Nokulunga Mngqeta described the partnership as one that would benefit both the university and students as they went out into the world.

“Many of our students are the first graduates in their families, villages or communities, so the impact goes beyond the institution,” she said.

“It means a lot because the product offers employability. As a university, we are there to educate and make sure our students have access to the job market.”





UFH Demonstrates Accountability at The Commission for Gender Equality's Hearing on Gender Transformation

In a significant step towards advancing gender equality and transformation, the University of Fort Hare (UFH) recently appeared before the Commission for Gender Equality (CGE) for an investigative hearing. The hearing, which took place in Johannesburg on 20th September, saw a delegation led by the Vice Chancellor, Professor Sakhela Buhlungu, presenting UFH's progress and challenges in promoting gender transformation at the institution. The delegation included: Dr Irma Du Plessis, Director in the VC's Office; Ms. Nonhlanhla Sibanda-Moyo Director: GBV Prevention Unit; Dr Paul Tladi, Director: Human Resources and the Dean of Student Affairs, Mr Lufuno Tshikhudo.

The CGE is an independent state institution established under Chapter 9 of the Constitution of South Africa. Its core mandate is to promote respect for gender equality, protect, develop, and attain gender equality, and make recommendations to parliament regarding legislation affecting the status of women and gender parity in South Africa. The CGE possesses significant powers and functions, including monitoring, investigation, research, lobbying, advising, and reporting on

issues related to gender equality. It can also convene public investigation hearings and litigate against public and private sector entities where necessary.

During the current financial year, the CGE initiated an investigation process focusing on gender transformation within the higher education sector. UFH was selected as one of the institutions to participate in this process. The investigation involves sourcing documentation, onsite visits, and holding a public investigation hearing. The aim is to identify challenges faced by the university and the measures it has implemented to promote gender transformation in line with legislative requirements.

UFH showcased several commendable initiatives aimed at fostering gender transformation. Notable achievements include the adoption of a Gender-Based Violence (GBV) policy, the establishment of the GBV Prevention Unit, and the appointment of a Director to head this unit. The CGE recognized these developments as evidence of UFH's institutional commitment to addressing GBV and gender transformation issues comprehensively.

However, challenges were acknowledged, particularly in the underrepresentation of women and persons with disabilities in management and key academic positions, such as Professorships, Associate Professorships and Senior Lecturers. The university also noted the need to increase the inclusion of individuals with disabilities in the workforce. UFH emphasized its ongoing efforts to advance these groups through employment equity measures and other strategies. It highlighted the importance of promoting inclusivity and providing support for students with disabilities.

In conclusion, the CGE appreciated UFH's responses and its commitment to promoting gender transformation. This hearing represents a significant step in the university's journey towards fostering a more inclusive and equitable academic environment. Moving forward, the CGE will consolidate its findings and recommendations into a report, which will be presented to Parliament before the end of March 2024. This ongoing collaboration between UFH and the CGE signals a positive development for gender transformation in the South African higher education sector.

RESEARCH WITH IMPACT



The results of a study that followed 169 household enterprises from four provinces in South Africa for 12 months has found that embeddedness significantly impacts how household enterprises make saving, borrowing, investment and financial management decisions.

Coined by economic historian Karl Polanyi as part of his substantivist approach, in economics and economic sociology, embeddedness refers to the degree to which economic activity is constrained by non-economic institutions.

The study conducted by UFH economics scholar, Prof Simatele Munacinga presents a package of possible policy interventions, including support for alternative finance, business advice centres, instrumental support, practical literacy, and entrepreneurial skills training.

Prof Simatele recently represented her findings at the colloquium held in collaboration with the Eastern Cape Socio-Economic Consultative Council (ECSECC), where some of her respondents received close to R1million in funding from the Eastern Cape Development Corporation (ECDC).

Prof Simatele is an economist focusing on transformative research with a special interest in development finance that addresses poverty and marginalization. Her research seeks to provide a deeper understanding of finance for development and how the poor interact with the financial sector.

"Connecting with my respondents and seeing my research make a difference in their lives is one of my greatest achievements as an academic," said Prof Simatele who recently earned herself a well-deserved National Research Foundation (NRF) C2 Rating.

[Click here to read the draft paper.](#)

Prof Meyer Delivers a Powerful Inaugural Lecture

Professor Edson Meyer, a revered scholar in the field of material science for renewable energy who is currently the Director of the Fort Hare Institute of Technology (FHIT) joined the ranks of Full Professor after delivering the University of Fort Hare's 30th Inaugural Lecture on 2 August 2023.

Titled: ***The inevitable death spiral of Eskom and the mitigating role of solar energy***, Prof Meyer gave an electrifying exploration on the death spiral associated with finite resource fuels for electricity and its impact on the economy and our daily lives and proposes sustainable solutions to the current energy crisis.

Born in a small Karoo town to parents who were both teachers, Prof Meyer emphasised that while attaining the position of full professor is regarded as a pinnacle of one's academic career, he still has much more to achieve both personally and academically.

"Becoming a full professor means, at least to me, that I now have more to give to my peers, emerging staff, fellows, and students. I am also hoping, sincerely so, that this achievement will also be an inspiration for the emerging staff and in particular my children," he said.

This achievement is in recognition of Prof Meyer's diligent work and an affirmation of the work he has produced since joining the University 21 years ago. Professor Meyer obtained his PhD in Physics from the University of Port Elizabeth in 2002 and in the same year, he joined UFH as a senior lecturer and later became head of the Physics Department.

He was appointed as the Director of the FHIT in 2005 where he turned the institute into an entity with a vibrant research culture of new knowledge creation in energy-related fields. He established the SolarWatt Park on the Alice campus where research is conducted on various aspects of solar photovoltaic (PV), solar thermal, heat pumps, grid-connected PV systems, biomass gasification and biogas digestion.

His tremendous contribution to the body of knowledge in the field of PV became evident through his doctoral and postdoctoral activities. The assessment procedure developed during his doctoral studies, completed in 2001, presents a unique way to evaluate PV module performance, degradation and failure. This work is the second most cited by peers and has been cited 448 times to date. His research findings led to substantially improved understanding of previously neglected parameters in degradation analysis.

Since 2018, Professor Meyer has spearheaded research on various nano-structures for both Dye-Sensitized Solar Cells and Perovskites Solar Cells that has been published in 23 high-impact journal articles.

In his academic career, he has published 142 peer-reviewed articles, which have been cited more than 5400 times with an h-index of 32 and i10-index of 77. He has hosted 19 postdoctoral fellows, promoted 23 doctoral and supervised 26 masters graduates to completion.

During his time at UFH, he has fund-raised more than R100 million and in 2017 acquired a state-of-art first-of-its-kind confocal Raman AFM worth more than R7.7 million.

Among his impressive list of accolades, Prof Meyer a C-2 National Research Foundation (NRF) rated researcher is the recipient of the Chancellor's Medal for Emerging Researcher (2006) and the Senior Researcher Medal (2016) in recognition of his sustained research and scholarly achievements that reflect quality and excellence. He has a wide research network that stretches across various national and international forums such as the Boards of the South African National Energy Development Institute (SANEDI) and the Digitisation and Refurbishment Institute of South Africa (DRISA).

In his lecture, Prof Meyer introduced the audience to the notion behind his address and delves into the concept of time to give an understanding of the death spiral. He then took the audience through energy and solar energy considerations, both locally and globally and proposes sustainable solutions to the current energy crisis in the country.

"The electricity crisis in South Africa is due to a lack of proportional growth in generation capacity to population growth. And even with proportional growth, the death spiral dictates that the cost of electricity will continue to rise to a point that Eskom as we know it will cease to exist. The current rolling blackouts or loadshedding in the country has had an adverse effect on the daily lives of all citizens, in one way or another.

His commitment to making an impact in surrounding communities through his research came to the fore when he mentioned a study he conducted with a colleague that explores rooftop solar photovoltaics as alternative energy source for the rural community of Alice in Raymond Mhlaba Municipality, where the University is located.



"Becoming a full professor means, at least to me, that I now have more to give to my peers, emerging staff, fellows, and students. I am also hoping, sincerely so, that this achievement will also be an inspiration for the emerging staff and in particular my children."

At the end of his address, he urged Eskom to stay alive by saying: "In the words of John Donne, we are hopeful that Eskom will say: And death shall be no more."

In an interview ahead of his inaugural lecture, Prof Meyer gave credit to certain individuals from his formative years who have had a significant impact on the decisions and directions his life took.

"At school, it was my science teacher Mr. Simon Adams, who had a profound influence on my love for physical science. At University, during my first year, a very senior professor, Japie Englebrect, taught us physics and instil a sense of unambiguity in the science, which I think, deep down is what drew me to completing a PhD in physics under the mentorship of Prof. Ernest van Dyk at the then UPE. On the contrary, I hated chemistry in the first year. Now, however, and at this level of research, there is virtually no difference between chemistry and physics as the materials science are based on the same principles."

"When I arrived at Fort Hare on 1 April 2002, I knew unmistakably that my formative years are ongoing and that one should always be willing to learn from others, that one never knows enough, too much or specifically more than others."

He said his priorities at Fort Hare also shifted from one of self-attainment to one of transferring skills and making a real and substantive difference in the lives of students, thereby paying it forward.

"Today I am a full professor and have supervised and continue to supervise students from physics, chemistry, computer science, microbiology, and mathematics. I have come to the belief that to make any meaningful or novel contribution to the field of knowledge, there must be a holistic approach to a specific scientific problem, as is the case in life."

"At this stage, I value all contributions from research partners and colleagues, postdoctoral fellows, doctoral, masters, and even honours students. It is impossible for me to continue to be a high-performing researcher without the crucial assistance of all these team members."

Prof Meyer has now set his next challenge on bringing the institution's invention of charge-storing solar cells to market.

[Click here to watch the recording of the lecture](#)

Prof Van Niekerk Sheds Light on the “Gap” in the Current State and Prospects of Sport and Exercise Psychology in SA in his Inaugural Lecture



“I feel honoured to be inaugurated as a professor, more specifically in the field of psychology. I am humbled by the enormous amount of support and interest of so many colleagues, friends, and family in my work.”

Prof Leon van Niekerk, a professor of Psychology and a registered Counselling Psychologist became the 31st University of Fort Hare (UFH) academic to deliver an Inaugural Professorial Lecture, a significant occasion that marks the promotion to a Full Professor - the apex of an academic's career.

Titled: *“Mind the gap! The current state and prospects of sport and exercise psychology in South Africa,”*

Prof Van Niekerk gave an in-depth and insightful overview of sport psychology in South Africa, he analysed the factors that impede or facilitate its progress and proposed potential prospects for sport psychology that can aid in narrowing the divide between the current state and the future outlook of sport psychology in the country.

Born in Vereeniging, Prof Van Niekerk began his academic journey in 2001 at the University of Johannesburg, after a decade-long tenure as a full-time minister. He joined UFH in 2015, initially as a Professor of Sport Psychology in the Department of Human Movement Science, and currently as a Professor of Psychology in the Department of Psychology.

As a Counselling Psychologist, he has a keen interest in the mental preparation, mental health, and well-being of athletes and coaches, as well as the role psychology plays in the development and performance of athletes. His research in sport psychology has primarily focused on four sub-fields: addressing problem areas like sexual abuse in sport, exploring the relationship between exercise and psychological health benefits, investigating the psychological development and mental preparation of athletes, and more recently, examining the impact of exercise on the development of adolescents in collaboration with colleagues from Macau and India.

During his prolific academic career, he has helped shape the professions of several of his students, including one of his first PhD graduates, Dr Koketjo Tsebe who recently returned from Australia on an appointment as the team psychologist for Banyana Banyana during the FIFA Women's World Cup.

In his address, Prof Van Niekerk underscores that: “Sport and exercise psychology, with its focus on understanding the affective, cognitive, and behavioural aspects of athletes and individuals engaged in exercise, has significantly contributed to the growth and development of sports and exercise globally. However, in South Africa, there exists a noticeable disparity between the current status and the potential future of sport psychology.”

He critically examined the structural, cultural, and agency factors that hinder the progress of sport psychology in the country and also highlighted the historical context of sports in South Africa, including its

socio-political history and the impact of Apartheid-era injustices on sports development.

He gave an analysis of the current state of sport psychology in South Africa, encompassing teaching, research, and practice and emphasizes the need for culturally sensitive approaches to promote mental well-being and enhance athletic performance among diverse populations.

Prof Van Niekerk believes by addressing these challenges, South Africa can bridge the gap and unlock the full potential of sport psychology to benefit athletes, coaches, and the sports community at large.

He concludes his lecture with an exploration of the prospects for sport psychology in the country, focusing on youth development and mental health support, wherein he emphasizes the importance of integrating sport psychology into school contexts and developmental programmes during adolescence.

In addition, he advocates for proactive strategies to address mental health concerns in the sporting community, aligning with international sustainable development goals. “The proposed contexts of youth development and mental health promotion serve as crucial areas where sport psychology can contribute significantly to the well-being and success of athletes in South Africa,” he stated.

Asked about the motivation behind the topic of his lecture, he responded: “The “gap” between where we are in the field of sport psychology in South Africa and what we could offer is big. Although it is getting smaller, the field is still much unorganised and fragmented in its service delivery. We don't even have training programmes or registration categories for sport psychology in SA. The field has much to offer, but it is time to narrow this gap rapidly, by starting to organise the structures and opportunities for a more formal training and practitioner context in the field.”

Commenting on this momentous occasion in his career, Prof van Niekerk said he was honoured and humbled by the achievement. “I did not find sport psychology, it found me,” he said as he recalled several experiences, events and individuals that have been instrumental in his journey towards becoming a Full Professor.

“I feel honoured to be inaugurated as a professor, more specifically in the field of psychology. I am humbled by the enormous amount of support and interest of so many colleagues, friends, and family in my work. It is indeed heartwarming to be among so many people who had an influence on my development and journey in the field. I am especially thankful and appreciative of my wife for her support on this journey.”

[Click here to watch the recording of the lecture](#)

Fort Hare's Prof Maroyi Calls for Greater Protection of SA Flora

The professorial inauguration of Professor Alfred Maroyi will be remembered as much for his powerful message to use South Africa's precious plant resources responsibly as it will the academic honour bestowed on him by the University of Fort Hare.

Maroyi, a lecturer in the Department of Botany in the Faculty of Science and Agriculture, has been on the front lines of the effort to preserve taxa in southern Africa and educate the scientific community and public about sustainable practices.

Delivering the university's 32nd Professorial Lecture, he explained that South Africa is home to six per cent of the world's flora and, in places like the Cape Floristic Region, 69 per cent of species are endemic to the area. Closer to home in the Succulent Karoo and Albany floristic regions, endemism stands at 40 per cent. Maroyi described the disturbing reality of the numbers of certain plant species in the Albany region being threatened by human practices.

One species was threatened by forestry, two by medicinal harvesting and industrial action, three by rural agriculture, 15 by alien plants, 11 by urban residential development and 15 by instances of illegal collection, he said. He cited the specific example of *Warburgia salutaris*, commonly known as the pepperbark tree, which is endangered in SA, Eswatini and Malawi and is extinct in the wild in Zimbabwe. The bark – used to treat gastrointestinal problems, coughs, colds and sore throats – is sought for its medicinal properties. "Its population size is shrinking by the day because of the decline in quality of habitat. It is also over-collected," he said.

"Ringbarking destroys the trees, and they will not survive because of the harvesting procedures used." For more than two decades Maroyi has worked tirelessly to protect the pepperbark. He has published a paper recommending that the species be conserved both in and outside its habitat.

Maroyi has also called for a multidisciplinary approach to conservation, appealed for long-term financial and political support and encouraged the active involvement of resource users in planning and management of populations. He has also pushed for the pepperbark to be introduced in home gardens. Furthermore, the professor is part of Team Warburgia,

a working group that host propagation, awareness and distribution workshops. One of those involved is a farmer who has donated thousands of seeds for ex-situ conservation efforts. "Plant diversity is the natural capital from which local communities make regular withdrawals. However, loss of biodiversity affects the poorest of the poor first while the rich are buffered from its immediate effects," he said. To make inroads against endangerment of species, it is essential that the extent of over-exploitation is understood and sustainable harvesting practices adopted.

Ecological and indigenous knowledge as well as recognising local peoples' rights to land resources are paramount. "Let's control over-exploitation, let's control invasive alien species and climate change. Let's reduce the CO² that's coming from our vehicles. Let's plant trees in our gardens."

Following his lecture, Maroyi was bestowed his full professorship by UFH Vice-Chancellor Prof Sakhela Buhlungu. "We wish Professor Maroyi a productive research and academic career, particularly in his field of botany," the VC said.

"This certificate [of professorship] is a symbol that he has reached the apex of his academic career. Full professorship is what we all hope to achieve." Dr Nthabiseng Taole-Mjimba, Vice-Chancellor: Research, Partnerships and Innovation at Fort Hare, congratulated Maroyi on his achievement and thanked him for his "powerful and inspiring" lecture.

"As a university we need to strengthen our research profile and you have been rated at C2 level, something we want to applaud you for. We want to support you to reach great heights." Maroyi holds a BSc Honours in bioscience and a Master's and PhD in botany.

He has previously lectured at the universities of Limpopo and Namibia and has published more than 200 peer-reviewed articles as well as chapters in 30 books. In addition, he has contributed 73 research output units at Fort Hare.

[Click here to watch the recording of the lecture](#)



"Plant diversity is the natural capital from which local communities make regular withdrawals. However, loss of biodiversity affects the poorest of the poor first while the rich are buffered from its immediate effects."



Exceptional Teaching Standards Lauded



This year's Vice-Chancellor's Excellence Awards in Teaching and Learning acknowledged lecturers who have achieved exceptional teaching standards at the University of Fort Hare.

With research traditionally elevated above teaching at tertiary institutions, Fort Hare, through these awards, recognises the outstanding contribution made by those in preparing students for life beyond the lecture hall.

The awards, in the categories of Developing Teacher, Experienced Teacher and e-Learning Excellence, were presented at the East London International Convention Centre in September.

According to UFH Teaching and Learning Centre (TLC) director, professor Vuyisile Nkonki, nominees were required to meet certain criteria.

They were asked to articulate their teaching practices through a portfolio of evidence, demonstrate practices that are impactful and embrace methodologies that live up to international standards.

"They were also required to show innovativeness in their teaching, educate in a way that is informed by scholarship and provide evidence that research is an important part of their approach," the TLC director explained.

Peer reviews in the form of observation reports and student evaluation, among other requirements, were other boxes nominees needed to tick.

The Developing Teacher category was won by Noluthando Mbangeleli, a lecturer in the business management department that resorts under the faculty of management and commerce.

She was recognised as an educator who stood out for her commitment to student development and employing an engaging teaching style that both challenged and inspired her students.

Mbangeleli, a student herself, is registered for a PhD in leadership at the University of KwaZulu-Natal.

The Experienced Teacher award was shared by three people: Kim Schmidt, who has worked in the Department of Social Work and Social Development since 2011; Arthur van Coller, an associate professor in the faculty of law; and Gail Young, a lecturer of 10 years in the faculty of management and commerce.

Schmidt said while she was involved in many projects, teaching undergraduate social work students was closest to her heart.

"It is the area where I most enjoy striving to improve my teaching so that students are empowered to become the best social workers they can be."

She was recently involved in the planning of an early childhood development seminar at Fort Hare in support of establishing community and research partnerships in this field.

Fellow recipient Van Coller also lectures for the Pretoria regional delegation of the international committee of

the Red Cross and the Law Society of South Africa. His main research interests are international humanitarian law, children's rights and tax law.

Young, meanwhile, is passionate about community engagement and has spearheaded numerous such activities. A recent endeavour was the provision of weekly support to accounting students living in a children's home.

The e-Learning Excellence category also featured a trifecta of winners, with human movement science lecturer Xonné Muller, accounting lecturer Wendy Terblanche and business management senior lecturer Ellen Rungani sharing the spoils.

Rungani said her role was to educate, inspire and support students to use innovation and entrepreneurship in solving community challenges.

UFH Led Study that Views Students' Perceptions of Using E-Learning Applications Through Social Justice Lens, Wins Best Paper Award



A study conducted by a team of researchers led by UFH academics into students' perceptions of using e-learning applications in accounting at residential universities in South Africa won a Best Paper Award at the Southern African Accounting Association (SAAA) Biennial International Conference.

The conference was held at Sun City and Wendy Terblanche, UFH Senior Accounting Lecturer, was there to receive the reward.

This is the second paper emanating from the research project initiated at UFH by Prof Gillian Bartlett and led by Wendy Terblanche in collaboration with Ilse Lubbe of the College of Accounting at the University of Cape Town, Elmarie Papageorgiou of the School of Accountancy at the University of the Witwatersrand, and Nico van der Merwe of the School of Accounting Sciences at the North-West University.

The winning paper analyses students' perceptions and experiences of using e-learning applications and finds that there is a clear link between students' experiences of e-learning and social justice issues in South Africa.

“The negatives regarding access far outweigh the positives, with lack of access to the internet, the cost of data, and electricity outages outweighing benefits such as more accessible and better learning resources. Speaking to issues of equity, or whether individuals are given tools and support to overcome their challenges, some students felt able to benefit from improved skills and found the use of e-learning applications easy, while others felt the need for more support.”

Findings

According to the team, in a post-COVID world, higher education institutions are considering divergent delivery modes, and searching for optimal pedagogical approaches, to build on what was learnt during the emergency remote teaching that took place during the pandemic. However, institutions (and their students), particularly in developing economies such as South Africa, face numerous social justice challenges.

“The Department of Higher Education and Training in South Africa (DHET) vision of a post-school education system that enriches lives, promotes social justice, and overcomes historical inequalities, and the pandemic related mission that no student be left behind, have been challenged by issues of access that pre-existed the pandemic (Maity, Sahu, and Sen 2021; Cranfield et al. 2021). Achieving digital equity requires not only access to hardware, software, and connectivity to the internet, but also meaningful, high-quality, culturally relevant content (Willems et al. 2019),” Terblanche stated.

This qualitative study analyses and interprets the responses of accounting students from four SA universities to open-ended questions posed to them in a survey administered during the COVID-19 lockdown period. The following research question was addressed: *What are the positive and negative perceptions and experiences of accounting students of using e-learning applications?*

The broad lens of social justice theory was used as a framework to evaluate how students' access to technology (or not) results in social inclusion for some and exclusion for others. Students' comments, coded using an open coding process, were analysed into four ethical principles for a just society – *access, equity, participation, and diversity*.

“The negatives regarding access far outweigh the positives, with lack of access to the internet, the cost of data, and electricity outages outweighing benefits such as more accessible and better learning resources. Speaking to issues of equity, or whether individuals are given tools and support to overcome their challenges, some students felt able to benefit

from improved skills and found the use of e-learning applications easy, while others felt the need for more support.”

“Regarding *participation*, many students mentioned the benefits of working at their own pace and being able to rewatch videos, while the lack of interaction was raised as a significant negative factor of e-learning. Students have different learning styles or face different social barriers, and such diversity is seen by some students developing independent learning skills and finding e-learning more efficient and productive, while others find it less effective and harder to manage themselves and their time and adapt to e-learning.”

“Findings clearly link students' experiences of e-learning to social justice issues in South Africa, with some students finding successful participation in e-learning significantly more challenging than others. The nature of these challenges should be informative for institutions who are considering moving learning to online modes.”

Recommendations for the future

According to the team, lessons learned include that access to the resources required for effective e-learning remains a challenge in South Africa. At the same time, students have different learning styles and socio-economic backgrounds that are not always conducive to e-learning. More specific to the accounting discipline are challenges associated with participation, engagement with lecturers, and assessment.

“The nature of the benefits and challenges that emerged from the findings should be informative for institutions considering the move to online learning or blended modes of delivery. Curriculum developers and academics should consider the social justice issues highlighted in this study in adapting their pedagogical approaches.”

“Future research may broaden the scope to other SA universities and disciplines and extend the qualitative analysis to association with, for example, demographic characteristics and academic performance,” the team suggests.

Science & Agric Students honing their skills at Fort Hare Dairy Farm



“When we started the club, the vision was to, in addition to the good theory behind the science of agriculture being taught at Fort Hare, we wanted students to milk the cows, plant the crops, drive tractors and work the land. I am delighted to see the club continues to fulfill this vision.”

Determined to become captains of the industry, a group of students from Faculty of Science & Agriculture wake up in the wee hours of the morning and make their way to the Fort Hare Dairy Farm where they volunteer in the daily activities on the farm with the intention to hone their skills for the future.

This is one of the impressive initiatives of the UFH Agriculture Skills Development Club that was established in 2017 by former students of the faculty. The Club seeks to improve the practical skills of undergraduates by forging partnerships with key agricultural projects to offer students hands-on experience and ensure that the faculty produces all-rounded graduates.

The 210-hectare picturesque farm is located about six kilometres from the UFH Alice campus and nests on land owned by the University. It currently has about 1300 dairy cows in its stock.

A team from the UFH Marketing and Communications Department recently visited the farm to meet up with some of these students.

We found five of them at the top of a hill, hard at work, bottle feeding a herd of newly born calves, and this, right in the middle of their semester break.

“It is calving season and it is our favourite season because it keeps us busy,” exclaimed a familiar voice, it’s Sibulele Mapuza. In 2022, the 24-year-old from Butterworth was featured in *UFHNews* for being the top-performing first-year student in the faculty. She is currently doing her second year towards a Bachelor of Science in Agriculture in Animal Science and also holds an Agricultural Management Diploma obtained from Nelson Mandela University.

With her, was Sinovuyo Lumphuzi who hails from Middledrift, Ntombifikile Bhutsha from Bizana, Lutho Mathiwane from Alice, they are also pursuing their degrees in the BSc in Agriculture in Animal Science and,

Parsions Mellis from Lusikisiki who is doing his second year in the Bachelor of Agriculture in Agricultural Economics qualification.

“We woke up at 4am to be on the farm before sunrise because farm work starts early. We hitchhike from the campus to the farm and on some occasions, Prof Michael Aliber (Head of Agricultural Economics and Extension Department) gives us a lift,” they say.

Their typical mornings on the farm entail milking and feeding the herd, getting exposed to pasture management, routine maintenance, irrigation and sometimes driving the tractor.

One of their mentors is Mbuyisi Ntshanga, the farm’s Outside Junior Manager who happens to be an alumnus of the faculty and one of the club’s founding members. “When we started the club, the vision was to, in addition to the good theory behind the science of agriculture being taught at Fort Hare, we wanted students to milk the cows, plant the crops, drive tractors and work the land. I am delighted to see the club continues to fulfill this vision,” said Ntshanga.

Sibulele, Sinovuyo and Ntombifikile aspire to be veterinarians in the future. “We are highly passionate about the welfare of animals; hence we look forward to spending time on the Fort Hare Dairy Farm getting hands-on experience,” they said.

Parsions said volunteering on the farm has laid the foundation for him to become the best agricultural economist. “In this declining economy, agriculture is still the source of everything. I volunteer on the farm because I strongly believe that before you trade, you need to understand how things work on the ground to be able to make lucrative decisions.”

Lutho who fell in love with farming while herding his father’s livestock as a young boy, said: “When I was in high school, I knew that my future lies in agriculture and to realize this, I knew I had to come to Fort Hare to pursue my studies.” He has set his goal on becoming a commercial farmer.

Ms Nolitha Fakude



Ms Nolitha Fakude, one of our esteemed alumni who is the Chair of Anglo American has been honoured with the Brigadier Stokes award - the highest award in the South African mining and metallurgical industry. This accolade was bestowed unto Ms Fakude by the Southern African Institute of Mining and Metallurgy in recognition of her contribution to the mining fraternity.

Born in Cenyu, a small village in the Eastern Cape, Ms Fakude graduated with a BA(Hons) degree from the University of Fort Hare in 1989, thereafter she completed the Harvard Business School Senior Executive Development Programme.

Currently, she is the President of the Minerals Council of South Africa (MINCOSA), Non-Executive Director of

the JSE Limited and Vice President of the International Woman's Forum South Africa. Among other senior roles, she has served as Managing Director and later President of the Black Management Forum as well as Executive Director at Sasol for many years.

Ms Fakude shared her life experiences in the corporate industry in a memoir titled, Boardroom Dancing. The book takes the reader through the journey of a shopkeeper's daughter who has occupied very senior positions in the boardrooms of some major blue-chip companies.

Congratulations Ms Fakude!

Dr Koketjo Tsebe



UFH Alumna, Dr Koketjo Tsebe recently returned from Australia and New Zealand on an assignment as the team psychologist for Banyana Banyana during the FIFA Women's World Cup.

Dr Tsebe, an award-winning renowned Clinical Psychologist, obtained her Doctoral Degree in Psychology (Specialising in Sports Psychology) from UFH in 2019.

This is not the first time Dr Tsebe had been tasked with the significant role of catering for the mental needs of South African athletes during an international championship. In 2022 she was appointed as a psychologist for team SA at the African Union Regional 5 Youth Games that were hosted in Malawi.

Born in Mahwelereng Township, Limpopo, Dr Tsebe grew up playing baseball and softball, however, her passion for sports expands beyond the two sporting codes and spills over into the work she does in the sporting fraternity.

She is a member of the South African Sports

Confederation and Olympic Committee High-Performance Psychology Working Group and a board member on the South African Institute for Drug-Free Sport.

She also rendered sports psychology services to the Limpopo Academy of Sports, the 2021 FNB Football First Coaching Clinic, the 2021 Carling Black Label Cup Championship coaches' selection and has worked with recreational and high-performance elite athletes from different sporting codes.

Dr Tsebe is currently a senior lecturer at UNISA and has provided expert advice on the topic of sports, mental health, and Covid-19 on different media platforms such as ThobelaFM, Capricorn FM, MotsweddingFM, Radio200, PowerFM, SAFM, Enca, and far post-publication

In a previous interview conducted with UFH Media, Dr Tsebe said, "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."

"My ultimate aspiration is to make a significant contribution in the field of sports psychology as an academic, practitioner and in leadership," she said.

Some of her awards and achievements include:

- 2021 Momentum sports Awards finalist in the Special Recognition Award.
- 2021 Mail and Guardian 200 Young South African finalist in the sports category.
- Recipient of the 2020 Limpopo Sports Awards for work in sport psychology.
- National Research Foundation bursary holder for Honours, Master and Doctoral studies.

Men's Indaba

The University of Fort Hare held its 2nd annual Men's Indaba on 15 September. Themed, **"Breaking barriers: Promoting men's holistic mental and physical well-being"**, the event is aimed at decisively dealing with the scourge of gender-based violence, share experiences of manhood on various societal issues, and amongst other things.

[Click here to watch the highlights video.](#)





Women's Indaba

Launched last year, the UFH Women's Indaba event is a dynamic collaboration between the UFH GBV Prevention Unit and the Student Affairs Division. It's all about sparking conversations that shatter gender biases and uplift women from diverse backgrounds. This year's focus was on: **"Cultivating a Society that Champions Women's Leadership."**

[Click here to watch the highlights video.](#)



UFH Choir – Simply The Best!

The University of Fort Hare (UFH) Choir is officially the best university choir in the Eastern Cape, this after they were placed first, twice and second in all three categories of the Provincial Intersarsity Games held at Rhodes University in Makhanda.

The annual intersarsity extravaganza brings together students from UFH, Nelson Mandela University, Walter Sisulu University, and Rhodes who battle it out in various sports, arts and cultural activities.

The choir which featured members from the Alice and East London Campus sang their hearts out and claimed first position in the African and Western piece and were placed second in the Isitibili category.

For their African piece, the choir performed “Ceba Lomthi”, a choral written by well-known composer Ben Tyamzashe in honour of Tiyo Soga - a great African intellectual. For their Western Piece, they sang “How Lovely are the Messengers” written by Felix Mendelssohn.

Still beaming with excitement, Usisipho Nqunde, a member and the choir’s PR officer, says their victory affirms they were the best in the province. “We have now set our goals on eventually becoming the best in the country.”

Congratulations!

Fort Hare Dancers Win Treasure Trove of Trophies in Seychelles

It was rather fitting that the biggest moment of the year for the dancers of the University of Fort Hare came in one of the most idyllic settings on the planet.

The team’s performances in 2023 have been beautiful to watch and now, thanks to their stellar showing at the All-African Artistic Dance Championships in the Seychelles, the world know why Alice is considered one of South Africa’s dancesport capitals.

The five couples who made the journey to Africa’s smallest nation came home with eight trophies and the same number of medals – a treasure trove of silverware.

Inga Mtana and Zukhanye Lupuwana took top honours in the five-dance championship category, while teammates Lubabalo Xabanisa and Nontando Tsheleza were runners-up.

In the ProAm event, where students dance with their teachers, Wanzi Maxhobi swept the boards by placing first in the waltz, tango, Viennese waltz, slow foxtrot and quickstep.

Her delighted partner, Fort Hare coach Thandisizwe Matyumza, praised all his charges, saying he could not be prouder.

The Eastern Cape team were invited to dance at the Seychelles event after impressing at the national championships last year and the university made it possible by funding the trip.

While the championships were open to anyone, the calibre of competition was out of the top drawer. Club teams from Greece, Poland, Russia and Italy were among those vying for titles across the various categories.



“Fort Hare is the top dance club in the province, so there is recognition. It just needs to be taken to the next level.”

Matyumza, who himself represented South Africa last year, said one of his goals had been for members of his team to join him on the international stage.

What they had achieved at the competition went a long way towards achieving that, he said.

In fact, this dream can be realised sooner than expected as he awaits official confirmation of two Fort Hare dancers representing the country at the worlds next year.

“The world champs will be very, very difficult so it’s good the dancers have now had a taste of international competition. The other teams were strong, so I was surprised by the results we achieved.”

Many opponents congratulated them on their performances, he added.

As much as the team thoroughly enjoyed the Seychelles and the island nation’s “friendly people”, they were taken aback by how expensive everything was.

They got the shock of their lives when charged levies on checking out of their hotel.

“You are paying all the time in the Seychelles,” Matyumza said.

The experience did open his eyes to the fact that “a lot of fundraising” was needed to pay for trips to locations such as these.

On a positive note, he said the public were starting to recognise them.

“Fort Hare is the top dance club in the province, so there is recognition. It just needs to be taken to the next level.”

Injury-Hit Fort Hare Battle on to Claim Sevens Shield

Not many would have bet on the University of Fort Hare's men's team returning from Kimberley with silverware after losing three players to injury midway through the University Sports South Africa (USSA) Sevens tournament.

In a competition where numbers are limited to 12 per squad, the odds of winning a trophy with a quarter of the players on the crock list are not exactly overwhelming.

But, thanks to some imaginative coaching and even more grit, Fort Hare came back to Alice as the 2023 USSA Shield champions.

While the trophy may not be as prestigious as the main USSA Sevens Cup, where UFH were knocked out in the quarterfinals, it still speaks volumes about the calibre of player the university has on its books.

Fort Hare ran riot against Sol Plaatje University in the Shield semifinal to register a 40-0 victory before downing Eastern Cape rivals Rhodes 15-12 in the final.

"Winning a trophy is always a good thing, especially with a group that only had two-and-a-half weeks to prepare," coach Sive Maxham said.

"Sevens is very different to the 15-man game and requires you to be well conditioned. Winning the Shield was because of that hard work."

Being three players short meant that Maxham had to rotate his charges wisely as they battled in the Kimberley heat. With only two players on the bench, it was no easy task.

Sadly, Fort Hare's women suffered an even worse fate in terms of injury, as two concussions, a broken shoulder and another less serious injury put paid to their chances in the Cup quarterfinal.

They still ended a very credible seventh overall, however.

Maxham, who is Fort Hare's backline coach in the 15-a-side men's game, was a proud man afterwards as it had been the first outing at a major sevens event for several of his players.

He said Aphiwe Sidloyi, who also played at last year's USSA 7s, had been inspirational throughout the weekend.

"He was instrumental in managing the games. He was the main organiser," the coach explained.

"His communication was good with and without the ball, both on attack and defensively."

Maxham hoped that the sevens squad would get more opportunities to play throughout the year as opposed to only at the back-end of the season.

Doing well at the USSA tournament could see a team qualifying for the national Varsity Sevens. In fact, had 2023 been a qualifying year, Fort Hare would have found themselves playing in that competition next season.

Sevens was now a speciality sport, as proved by the Blitzboks on the international stage, and Maxham felt being able to draw from a wider pool of players would place the university in good stead for the future.

He suggested programmes giving rural communities access to sevens rugby at Fort Hare might be one way of achieving this.

Women's coach Lakhe Langa was understandably disappointed that injuries prevented his side from going further but praised them for their never-say-die attitude.

"They are very good players. They gave their best. We had one player on the bench and still managed to win games," he said.

Langa believed that in the future it would serve Fort Hare well to have 15 travelling players so that the additional players could come into the squad of 12 should anyone get injured.



"Sevens is very different to the 15-man game and requires you to be well conditioned. Winning the Shield was because of that hard work."



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