

COVID-19 in focus



Muzi Khumalo

MUT responds to COVID-19 to protect staff and students

This year will be remembered as the year the COVID-19 epidemic almost brought the world to a standstill. China was the first to be severely affected, but it was only a matter of time before positive cases of the disease appeared across the world, and Europe and the United States fast became no-go zones. The novel coronavirus arrived a little later in South Africa, with the first case announced on 5 March. The patient was from the KwaZulu-Natal Midlands, an hour away from MUT by car.

For MUT, this first case was too close to home. Having tracked the virus' progress in Executive Management Committee meetings since mid-February, the University now sprang into action to protect the wellbeing of its staff and students.

The first step was for the University's Health Services to deliver a presentation to the EMC, the Student Affairs Management Committee and the University Senate. This was to enable the decision-makers to understand what the threat was about and thereafter cascade the information down to staff and students.

An MUT COVID-19 Task Team was then set up to advise the Vice-Chancellor on the disease and to map out various strategies that the University could adopt to protect its people. The Task Team, chaired by Mr Muzi Khumalo, senior director: Operations consists of representatives from various divisions of the University: Resources & Planning, Student Affairs, Occupational Health & Safety, Operations, Health Services, Marketing & Communications (MarComms) and Environmental Health. The MUT COVID-19 Task Team must be commended for its early interventions to safeguard the lives of students and staff.