

# Orientation 2020

## First-Year Orientation plants seeds of social responsibility among students

Research shows that the first year at university is a crucial period for young people, posing numerous challenges but also serving as opportunities for growth and development. The general First-Year Orientation programme at MUT takes cognizance of first-year student needs by offering them a holistic orientation experience. On 14 and 15 February 2020, the University hosted first-year students at Seme Hall for orientation into their new 'home' over the next three or four years.

Dr Paulette Naidoo, Director of Student Counselling in the Department of Student Affairs, pointed out that this year's Orientation Programme "aimed to promote a cohort of civic-minded, socially-responsible first-year students who take responsibility for themselves and their communities". Formal, theoretical and practical aspects of civic and social responsibility were incorporated into the First-Year Orientation programme, and contextualised in terms of student volunteerism. Professor Busisiwe Nkonki-Mandleni, Director of the Institute for Rural Development and Community Engagement (IRDCE), unpacked the concepts of community engagement and student volunteerism for students, highlighted the range of projects which different units at MUT are involved in, and gave examples of student volunteerism in action.

The programme also encouraged students to use their initiative and implement their own student volunteer projects and activities. Dr Naidoo introduced the volunteer Peer Helpers initiative to first-year students, pointing out that the senior students in this Student Counselling initiative served as positive examples of student volunteerism.

The platform was also an important opportunity to introduce students to a Commitment Register which they could complete if they were interested in pursuing



*Happy to join MUT!*

student volunteerism projects. Many students in the audience completed the Register, expressing a keen interest in and commitment to giving back to their communities and the University in the duration of their stay.

It would not have been a complete orientation without a tour of the campus, where students were invited to participate in the 'Love Your Campus Clean-Up Campaign'. This campaign saw students combining their love for MUT and their passion for volunteering as they collectively cleaned the campus. Students responded with enthusiasm and together with the Peer Helpers went around campus picking up dirt to keep their University clean.