

ALUMNI

MAGAZINE



MUT
MANGOSUTHU
UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY



**THE MAN WHO BROUGHT
ENTERTAINMENT TO
ORDINARY SOUTH AFRICANS**

**A SERIAL ENTREPRENEUR WHO IS
EQUALLY AT HOME IN THE RAILWAY
AND BABY FOOD SECTORS**



**SHE IS THE LEADER
OF THE PACK AND A
LEGEND IN HER FIELD**



**A CEO WHO REMEMBERS
HER ROOTS**



The all-important **FIRST STEP**

Attaining a post-matric qualification is the first step towards economic liberation. It does not matter what the qualification is; in the end everything you do will have a connection to what you first studied.” These were the words of the late Dr Ben Ngubane to the MUT Class of 2014, spoken during the Faculty of Natural Sciences graduation ceremony dedicated to him.

Mbali Mkhize, Senior Director, Marketing & Communications

Some of our readers may have heard those very words in 2014. They capture the enduring value of a post-matric qualification and I am sure we can all testify to their truth in one way or another. Whether you studied matric under a tree or in a posh high school or private college, you all converged at MUT to receive your first post-matric qualification. Our discussions with alumni have shown that the qualifications for which they enrolled may not have been their original preference, but they embraced them as a means to an end – and this strengthened their determination to succeed.

What became evident as we dug deeper in interviews with alumni is that to reach one’s goals, sometimes one has to let go of the past and look into the future. This positive thinking has propelled MUT graduates to use their first qualifications to jumpstart their careers. The stories covered in this publication show the journeys of some of our alumni gems, and the bigger picture they create is a pattern of creativity, innovation, adaptability and futuristic thinking.

A common thread between many stories is how problem-solving gives rise to entrepreneurship. It is encouraging to see these entrepreneurs’ passion for solving the problems of the lower-income group and the contribution they are making. These activities are not necessarily linked to the qualifications for which these go-getters studied. However, the training that comes with the qualification makes everything come together.

The sterling work which our alumni are doing will captivate prospective students, inspire other alumni and encourage academics and employers who played a role in shaping their stories. We can no longer afford to stand by and say we are unemployed. The time is now to develop a can-do mindset and look at how we become relevant, using our qualifications as a starting point.

We salute all alumni and acknowledge how they have delved into the unknown, taking MUT with them even onto the global stage. MUT has recently introduced its first Master’s qualification in Nature Conservation, and is heartened that many of its alumni have gone on to pursue further degrees up to PhD level, still proudly waving the MUT flag.

Congratulations go to our 2021 Master’s degree recipients, whose research topics are all featured in this publication. Your efforts to sustain the environment do not go unnoticed.

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Foreword by Professor

Marcus Ramogale

ACTING VICE-CHANCELLOR & PRINCIPAL

The MUT alumni who graduated over the past 10 years or so know that whenever I engage them, particularly during university graduation ceremonies and State of the University addresses, I always say, “Let not your past determine your future.” I say this to encourage students and graduands to understand that they can be anything they want to become. Today, as I read the accomplishments of our alumni, I am filled with joy as these are the stories that we will always use to show that MUT is a stepping stone to a better life.

For our part, we keep striving to do more to ensure that students succeed after graduation. For instance, we have looked at the curriculum and enhanced it by ensuring that it includes these courses: Communication Skills, End-User Computing, Work-Integrated Learning/ Project-Based Learning/ Service Training and Entrepreneurship. All these courses assist to develop our students holistically to succeed and advance themselves in the world of work. Looking at some of the successes, I am encouraged that our efforts are bearing some fruit. We need to multiply these successes however. My plea to prospective and current students is to treat these courses with the utmost regard as they enhance your employability, innovativeness and currency.

Last year, the Department of Higher Education and Training recognised my efforts in entrepreneurship leadership at MUT. This is not an accolade I take lightly. It is an affirmation of my quest to ensure that your qualification has meaning, be it in the workplace, at home or in new industries that bring your entrepreneurial ideas to life.

Without sounding like a broken record, I would like you to

revisit my annual memorial lecture to students where I share this Cash Flow Quadrant:



Its architect is Robert Kiyosaki, the author of Rich Dad, Poor Dad, and it represents:

- **E- Employee**
- **S- Self Employed**
- **B- Business Owner**
- **I- Investor**



The quadrant dispels the notion that being an employee for the rest of your life will create wealth. Rather, it energises us to create wealth through business ownership and investing.

From the stories that have captivated me here, I see our alumni moving beyond unemployment and embracing entrepreneurship as the future. I am excited and inspired by

the journey that you have taken, which echoes MUT's own determination to "shape and own the future". The future is you and it is in your hands. We have offered you tools, skills and competencies that can move you from zero to hero. We look forward to hearing you say, "I moved from nothing to something that is beyond belief." Continue shining the light beyond belief.

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MUT CONVOCATION

Our Convocation is the life and soul of the University, their role is much bigger than just being alumni. This community of stakeholders take pride in MUT, they know and appreciate the history of their alma mater. At all encounters Convocation have pledged their commitment in supporting the vision and elevating the University brand to greater heights. MUT alumni give testimony to our institution that arose in a township in 1979 to provide technical training to African students in KwaZulu-Natal.

Convocation is led by an executive committee whose main role is to create a sense of responsibility and accountability towards the community in general and their alma mater.

Meet the six-member executive that was elected during the December 2019 annual general meeting of Convocation.



Sandile Dlamini is the President of the MUT Convocation and Convocation representative on the University Council. Sandile graduated with a diploma in Finance and Accounting in 2018. In his first meeting with the MUT executive Sandile said: "Our main priority is to see the University develop, it is our responsibility to mobilise funds to take care of the historical debt that is crippling the University and its graduates."



Thokozani Hadebe – Deputy President
Diploma Civil Engineering
Class of '17



**Sanelisiwe Mnyandu – Convocation
representative on the University Council**
Diploma and B.Tech Human
Resource Management
Class of '10



Sandile Mbonambi
Diploma Civil Engineering
Class of '15



Dalinhlanhla Buthelezi
Diploma Environmental Health
Class of '16



Sinothi Ndlovu – Convocation Treasurer
Diploma Civil Engineering
Class of '03



A serial entrepreneur

who is equally at home in the railway and baby food sectors

Famous singer Beyonce once said, “This goes out to all the women getting it, you’re on your grind. To all the men that respect what I do, please accept my shine.” It is these words that have seen our alumna Dorothy Mofomme thrive in what was once seen as a male-dominated space – and that’s just the start.

Dorothy has come full circle in her career as an engineer, entrepreneur, philanthropist and mentor to many. Arriving at MUT in 2000 from the village of Marapong on the border of the Mpumalanga and Limpopo provinces, Dorothy knew that she needed to keep her chin up and make her presence felt as she embarked on her diploma in electrical engineering. Right from the onset she never profiled herself as a follower but a leader, taking on the huge responsibility of being a class representative during her first and third semesters. From then on, nothing could stand in the way of her becoming a respected engineering technician and fulfilling her dream of starting her own engineering company and uplifting women and young girls in the sector.

Dorothy boasts a very rich career that includes many successful projects in state-owned and private enterprises in South Africa and Africa. Her extensive experience, drive and

passion propelled her to found her first company, Valotec228, in 2011. It was a very ambitious move for a woman to venture into the railway sector but Dorothy was set on her goal of making a mark and creating opportunities for young people. The business provides a variety of solutions to the railway industry, including railway signalling, mechanical design, assembly, construction, railway maintenance, optic fibre solutions as well as quality management solutions.

Valotech228 has given Dorothy an opportunity to give back to her *alma mater* by training six MUT electrical engineering students. Her support for university students extends to include other universities and TVET colleges. For instance she has transferred her skills as a guest lecturer for BTech students at Tshwane University of Technology and worked with deaf learners from various communities in Gauteng to give them hands-on information technology experience.



What makes Dorothy proud is that she has been able to break down many walls to get to where she is. For her it has never been about going down the easy route. “We pride ourselves in being a 100% black woman-owned business, managed by highly qualified professionals who are offering diverse services of Railway Signalling, Railway Track, Quality Management in Projects (ISO 10006), Mechanical and Electrical Engineering Solutions, all with a specific emphasis on meaningful business transformation,” said Dorothy. She further stated that it is the impact on others that gives her hope and opens her eyes to opportunities to impact South Africa positively, especially in terms of job creation for young people.

Dorothy doesn’t call herself a serial entrepreneur for nothing. A few years ago she diversified her business interests into a line that one would never associate with a girl whose career

has always been about hard hats, boots, board meetings, designs and drawings. In 2018 she co-founded Nalydia Foods, another 100% black women-owned enterprise which produces, packages and distributes baby foods that are free of preservatives, artificial colourants and artificial flavours. “As a mother who has always worked and raised children, I understand the plight of working women who need to juggle work and raise their babies. These women do not have the luxury of time to prepare fresh, healthy food for their babies. We want Nalydia to be a healthy solution in a bottle for these women. The aim is to firstly grow the product and client base in South Africa and then globally,” Dorothy said.

This bottled food range is completely natural as it is produced using fresh ingredients only. The first all-natural Vegetable & Chicken Nalydia Food Solution is available in 125ml, 200ml, 250ml and 340ml. The product has been specifically formulated for babies aged from 7 months and older, as well as elderly people and those who need easily digestible foods while going through medical treatment or recovery. In the two years since it was launched, Nalydia has been profiled on many radio stations and on national television.

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Right from the onset she never profiled herself as a follower but a leader, taking on the huge responsibility of being a class representative during her first and third semesters.

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A CEO

who remembers her roots

Dr Thandeka Ellenson is young, kind, respectful and brilliant. Her character has not been changed by the accolades she has gained over the last two decades. This year she graduated from Columbia Southern University (USA) with a Doctor of Business Administration (DBA) and just last year, she was confirmed as CEO of the Moses Kotane Institute (MKI) in Durban. MKI is an entity of KwaZulu-Natal's (KZN's) Department of Economic Development, Tourism and Environmental Affairs and it focuses on research and development to drive innovation, technology and economic development in KZN.

Dr Ellenson has always been determined not to disappoint her grandmother and her mother, the two women who instilled the values that she has always upheld. These are respect (and self-respect), altruism and integrity, and they have been the cornerstone of her success. Each time Ellenson succeeds, she remembers her roots – her family and her *alma mater*, MUT, where she started her career. Whenever she moves into a new position, she carries the heart of MUT with her. When took her next job at UKZN she would always channel opportunities to MUT. This continued even when she moved to the Construction Industry Development Board (CIDB) where she opened construction opportunities to MUT graduates. At the South African Sugar Association (SASA) she went on to spearhead collaborations between MUT and SASA, resulting in SASA bursaries being offered at MUT and a support programme being kickstarted for the Department of Community Extension.

Thandeka's current flagship collaboration with MUT culminated in a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) being signed between MUT and MKI. This collaboration will hopefully facilitate more engagement for MUT in innovation, research and development work, and assist us in playing a pivotal role in shaping the KZN economy. But that is not all. "If

I had my way in curriculum development, I would like to see MUT consider introducing a qualification in maritime studies. It cannot be that being so close to the sea, we do not have a qualification in maritime studies," she lamented.

"My journey has not been a straight journey. It has been a meandering one albeit with an intention of finding myself. As a learner at Ongoye High School, my dream was to study for a qualification in chemistry or chemical engineering. However, my arrival at MUT showed me that there are other options in the business sciences. I studied for a National Diploma in Human Resources Management and I was just drawn into business science. I never looked back and tackled the most feared qualification – the MBA. When I succeeded there, I knew that I was crafted for the business world and I embraced everything that I had learned in different business units where I had worked. That has come in handy and I believe that this was to prepare me for the position that I now hold," Ellenson said.

Dr Ellenson finds inner peace in reading, listening to music and watching comedy. Her personal development journey included reading both the Bible and the Quran. She is well travelled and seems drawn to the Asian countries, especially Hong Kong and Shanghai. "I love the fact that these cities are open 24/7 and this gives me time to relax and not rush because the city is shutting down for the day," she said.

She has two key messages for MUT students:

"Imfundo ayikhulelwa – you can still learn more regardless of your age."

"The youth needs to consider delving into the digital economy. That is the future."

MUT ALUMNUS PLAYING A SUBSTANTIAL ROLE IN GROWING THE COUNTRY'S ECONOMY THROUGH

entrepreneurship

For the past 12 years, Mpumelelo Ngwenya has worked tirelessly to expand his businesses while being an employee and consultant to a few organisations.

Ngwenya wears many hats as a businessman, philanthropist, and professional engineering technologist. Ngwenya has donated his time, funding, and expertise to help others, always on behalf of unemployed youth. Ngwenya is a patron who seek to create job creators dedicated to seeking solutions to the South African problems of unemployment. Alongside his role in mentoring upcoming entrepreneurs, he has achieved plenty of success as an entrepreneur and business leader in his own right. After graduating with a Diploma in Civil engineering at Mangosuthu University of Technology in 2005, his dreams materialised when he decided seize opportunities that had prominence in putting him at a better chance of being a job creator.

"My target is to create employment for 20, 000 people by end of the 2021, by giving upcoming entrepreneurs mentorships and every support they need to start their businesses, Ngwenya said"

Ngwenya serves as Managing Principal of a couple of business ventures ranging from engineering consultations, fruits, vegetables, animal farming, nursery and coal distribution that has over 100 employees spread across the country.

Ngwenya is one of MUT alumni entrepreneurs under 40, running multimillion rand companies in South Africa. Ngwenya believes in his ideas and is putting all efforts to change the South African narrative by challenging the mind-set and approach towards achieving economic freedom that solve economic issues that South Africa is facing and worsened further the state of economic affairs after the Covid-19 Pandemic.

He calls support from individuals and business owners to help Small, Medium and Micro Enterprises (SMME'S) as he believes working together can eradicate poverty and uplift the standards of South African communities. Ngwenya expresses his gratitude to God for giving him the wisdom and assigning him to help others.



The man who brought
entertainment
to ordinary

South Africans

Maxwell Noge believes that everyone deserves a break, regardless of their economic status. He is the man who made it possible for ordinary families to be entertained by accessing the world of digital satellite television. It was in 2016, while he was working as a Chief Digital Officer, when Maxwell first pitched the idea of “open view” digital television to his then employer. His employer did not buy into the idea at first, and Maxwell put more time and research into his vision of creating a once-off payment package to enable low-income families to afford satellite television. He went on to design a network for DSTV Openview HD and put a business case together that was eventually supported by government. The result was a beautiful story where even ordinary South Africans have access to DSTV. It was his passion for working with people on the ground and giving opportunities to underserved communities that motivated him to see his dream becoming a reality.

Maxwell's story starts with him, a young boy from a village in Limpopo, arriving in Durban by train in the 1990s with nothing but a suitcase full of dreams and bold ambitions. Considering his family background and upbringing, he said MUT was the “best choice” for him – a family environment that made him feel at home whether he was at the residence or in the lecture room.

Ironically, his study choice and future career were shaped by his first-ever encounter with a public telephone at Durban station, when he had to call a family friend to get directions to MUT for registration. He had not yet decided what qualification he wanted to pursue, and the “telephone moment” encouraged him to register for electrical engineering, light current. Standing in the registration queue without even having applied to study at MUT, Maxwell was so sure that electrical engineering was what he came to MUT for that he refused to leave the queue – and even started crying uncontrollably at one point. He believes this determination was what attracted the attention of the former head of electrical engineering, Mr Des Mack, who helped him secure a bursary which included a computer.

His journey was further shaped by the telephone because his sponsor was





the telecommunications company, Vodacom, who also took him in for his year of in-service training. What was meant to be a one-year training turned into a permanent job in the space of just three weeks. Maxwell's work ethic and dedication impressed his supervisor so much that he gave him a permanent job with full benefits even before he finished his diploma.

Maxwell graduated in 1999 and spent just eighteen months with Vodacom before joining another telecommunication company where he was based in Tanzania and spent three years building telephone networks. He later moved to Mozambique to join a team to build and set up communication networks there.

When we talk of big dreamers, Maxwell comes to mind. He has built a very colourful career in the telecommunications industry, starting at the bottom as a trainee and working his way up to executive level. Amongst his big achievements is being promoted three times in a space of three years, and working as an executive to a team of over 400 employees. Another milestone was leading the 2010 World Cup broadcast programme.

Maxwell is a world-class executive with a global business view. He has chosen to work hard and be hands-on in all aspects of his work. In 2018 Maxwell left the corporate sector to work on a long-term project in the medical field with an American partner. His early dream of ensuring that people are equally connected and entertained has been realised through his many years in the telecommunications and information technology sector.

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Maxwell graduated in 1999 and spent just eighteen months with Vodacom before joining another telecommunication company where he was based in Tanzania and spent three years building telephone networks. He later moved to Mozambique to join a team to build and set up communication networks there.

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She is the leader of the pack and a *legend* in her field

It was a watershed moment when the CEO of FNB announced that our very own Thobeka Thala was leader of the pack among all the FNB branches in the KwaZulu-Natal province. This accolade, better known as the POP Legend award, is one of the bank's ways of recognising outstanding performance by team leaders across South Africa. Thobeka, an MUT Marketing graduate who is team leader at the Umzimkhulu branch, outperformed hundreds of her peers and made history for her rurally-located branch.



“**B**eing called a legend for my performance and having my name announced by the CEO is a big step forward in my career. To be considered for this award is an assurance that you not only know what you are doing but you are doing it better than others. The selection criteria for the award are very precise and are based on your performance as well as that of your team. I am a legend and leader but I need to also give credit to my team who made sure that we deliver no matter what,” Thobeka said.

She credits her success to her love for her work. For her, things just make sense because she is exactly where she needs to be. Some may call it chance but she calls it destiny. Looking back at when and how she joined the bank, it is no surprise that she is thriving and looking forward to a bright future in the sector.

On the last day of her internship at a municipality in 2011, Thobeka received a call for an interview at the bank. This came as a surprise as she had never applied for the position. Nevertheless she wanted the job and was confident that she was capable of handling any work in the sales and marketing

sector. She started doing research on what the job entailed and prepared herself thoroughly for the interview. To her surprise she did well and was offered the position. How the bank got hold of her CV was still a mystery to her. After she had settled into her new job, Thobeka called the human resource department to enquire how they had got the CV. To her surprise she was told that it had been submitted by her marketing lecturer and head of department at MUT, Dr Mphathi Ndlovu. “I was so humbled to realise how much Dr Ndlovu cared about the future of his students even after they graduated. I have called to thank him for this very kind gesture but I still need to take a moment and thank him in person. This legendary award would not have been possible if it was not for Dr Ndlovu who explored opportunities for me to secure the job of my dreams,” she said.

Thobeka appreciates the motivation of the friends and family who are always cheering her on and wishing only the best for her. She also sees herself as being blessed with a team that is as driven as she is and is willing to work hard. At MUT we salute our legend flying our flag high and writing the positive history of our institution.



Bright is talking the talk and walking the walk

Bright Hlongwane was never an ordinary student. Right from his early days at MUT, he never underestimated the power within himself. Always out and about advocating for the wellness of his fellow students, Bright would knock on any door, regardless of hierarchy, if it was to benefit his peers.

Bright is a selfless advocate for youth empowerment and a strong believer in human dignity. During the Durban floods in 2017, he rolled up his sleeves and went from door to door checking up on fellow students residing in rented accommodation near campus. They were hard hit by the floods and many lost almost everything. It was not just a fact-finding exercise; Bright rang the alarm bells and sent funding proposals to corporates to come to the aid of the students. This was just one of many programmes that Bright drove during his time as an MUT student, even though he never contested for formal student leadership positions. Both then and now, his efforts have always been less about himself than the young people of South Africa.

The voice of Bright Hlongwane has been heard on many international platforms in recent years, including an historic occasion when Bright addressed the United Nations Economic and Social Council Youth Forum in 2019, as well as recently at the World Youth Forum in Egypt. He is loud and may never be silenced in his belief that youth participation in economic decision-making could be the solution for government to curb youth unemployment. This is a message he declares through his famous mantra: “Nothing for us, without us.”

At home Bright has built a strong personal brand of a young boy born and bred in Umlazi Township, with strong views on youth entrepreneurship. He is not afraid to challenge

the status quo and has explored all avenues to reach out to decision-makers to take the voice of youth into consideration. Bright has written an open letter to President Cyril Ramaphosa and begs the ANC NEC to “give young people a chance at leading.” He has spoken at many other forums including radio and television interviews, carrying the message that “the youth is capable, give them a chance.”

Delivering a keynote address at the 2021 Youth Business Indaba, Bright called for effective implementation of transformative entrepreneurship interventions in South Africa to address the challenges of chronic youth unemployment, inequality and poverty. “There is a need to start creating employment for the youth through entrepreneurial activity because the problem of youth unemployment is frightening. The whole country is sitting on a keg of gun powder which might explode anytime. To avert this calamity, government must start rolling out a plan to create jobs immediately,” Bright said.

When he was just 22, Bright founded Isimangaliso Group (Pty) Ltd, a diverse company with interests in branding, media and marketing communications, transportation, logistics and construction. He is also secretary-general of Youth in Business South Africa (YIBSA), a non-profit organisation whose sole purpose is acceleration of youth employment. Within a space of just eight years, Bright has grown in leaps and bounds as an entrepreneur, public speaker and youth activist.



MUT STUDENTS ARE DOING IT FOR themselves

– with a little help from Dr Sakhile Ngcobo

Back in 2019, more than 60 aspiring student entrepreneurs had the rare privilege of learning from and being mentored by a seasoned executive with extensive experience in the mining, rail, maritime and agricultural sectors. It was during MUT's 40-year anniversary celebrations and Dr Ngcobo had come back to his *alma mater* more than 20 years after his graduation to share his expertise with the next generation.

Dr Ngcobo ran a full-day masterclass on entrepreneurship as his way of giving back to an institution that had shaped and given him a very strong foundation in agriculture. As he shared memories of his time on campus, the students could not believe that a man with such an impressive business resumé had once been a student and spent time in the same lecture halls and dining halls as them. They were only convinced when Dr Ngcobo pulled out his archives and shared retro pictures of himself and his friends on field trips and at MUT

parties – and then they were truly inspired to go after their entrepreneurship dreams!

This masterclass class conducted by Dr Ngcobo two years ago sharpened the skills of students to become more innovative when designing their project plans and drawing up their business proposals. This has resulted in many student entrepreneurs competing successfully in the Department of Higher Education and Training's Entrepreneurship Development in Higher Education (EDHE) programme.

In June this year, Dr Ngcobo accepted an invitation from MUT's Faculty of Management Sciences to be part of a panel of judges to adjudicate the internal rounds of the 2021 EDHE Entrepreneurship Intervarsity competition. Eighteen shortlisted participants pitched their business innovations under the categories of "business idea", "existing business – technology", "existing business – social impact" and "existing business – general." Dr Ngcobo was more than impressed with the level of maturity displayed by the aspiring entrepreneurs.

"This was a day well spent. The passion in the faces and stories of these young entrepreneurs brings me joy that through entrepreneurship we are on the right path to [alleviate]

graduate unemployment. One can never be too busy to mentor and coach MUT student entrepreneurs; I am looking forward to holding the hands of these students to make sure that their business ideas flourish. Of course I can never do it alone, so I will be getting into contact with my networks and friends to also avail themselves in mentoring and guiding MUT student entrepreneurs," Dr Ngcobo said.

He wished all MUT participants the best of luck for this year's intervarsity competitions and assured the students that they are already winners and must see their business innovations through to fruition regardless of the outcome of the competition.

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One can never be too busy to mentor and coach MUT student entrepreneurs; I am looking forward to holding the hands of these students to make sure that their business ideas flourish.

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LADY SURVEYOR-GENERAL BREAKS

GENDER STEREOTYPES

With women still dramatically underrepresented in the senior ranks of most companies, MUT alumna Rosalind Mdubeki has beaten the odds. “I felt a heavy burden to represent our gender in a manner that puts us on par with our male counterparts without losing my femininity,” she says of her appointment to her current position as Surveyor-General in Bloemfontein.

Mdubeki, whose family responsibilities include raising seven children with her husband, Mr Siyabonga Mdubeki (also an MUT alumnus), says she is driven by her tenacious spirit, her commitment to serving the public, and her faith which allows her to appreciate and carry on her work as a God-given purpose.

Mdubeki is the second black woman in the Surveyor-General position and her hard work has been evident in her career journey. She graduated with a Diploma in Surveying in 1997, after which she had a short stint working as a survey technician with Eskom. In 1999 she was awarded a bursary which enabled her to complete her BSc in Land Surveying in UKZN. After completing her articles, she registered as a professional land surveyor. As her career progressed, she filled a number of managerial positions including Deputy Chief Land Surveyor before moving into her current position.

She reminisces about some great memories she has of MUT, including the welcoming party (Boogie Woogie) for new students; meeting her wonderful husband; travelling for practical work; and the heaps of weekend work her favourite lecturer used to set, which helped her develop the necessary focus, confidence and determination to succeed.

After serving more than a decade as Surveyor-General, Mdubeki is one of the MUT alumni who are exemplifying the ability of women to lead well and to push through the glass ceiling – all in line with MUT’s transformation agenda.



Pinky Ngcobo-Khoza

– Finding her passion under COVID-19

We have always known that Pinky is a very talented musician. Today she is referred to by the media as MaNgcobo-Khoza with great respect and admiration.

MaNgcobo-Khoza has always been singing at MUT's year-end events and probably at some private functions too. She has produced a single, "Izizwe," which is available on all online platforms and is taking South Africa by storm. She is also busy producing an album which is soon to be finalised.

It was MaNgcobo-Khoza's video on Facebook, Instagram and YouTube that got her noticed by the SABC who did a cutting-edge profile on her on Women's Day this year. The SABC interview drew attention to the government's lack of support for the arts, leading to artists' talents being hidden because they still have to work full-time while pursuing their passion. In the case of Pinky, she works full-time providing secretarial support to the Executive Management Committee at MUT – a job she does tremendously!

MaNgcobo-Khoza grew up in Ozwathini, at Bhamshela in the Maphumulo region. She attended Ngayiphi Primary School and later Ngcongcongga and Skhulile Secondary schools. After studying at MUT, she went to DUT for her BTech and thereafter acquired a Master's degree in Public Administration.

Under the COVID-19 lockdowns in 2020, she began pursuing her dream. Starting small, she realised that she could combine her passion and her job. The result was to select a music genre that fitted her and dovetailed with her mission in life. This is to contribute to the nation-building agenda and encourage women and the youth to shine wherever they are, regardless of circumstances. Her genre, African Spiritual Music, aims to bring hope amidst all the pain that South Africa has gone through, from the COVID-19 pandemic to Gender-Based Violence. This genre has made a hit in KwaZulu-Natal and soon MaNgcobo-Khoza will be a force to be reckoned with.

"I am on a journey to make people appreciate their roots through my music. During the lockdown in 2020, I read about so many painful things that were happening among the disenfranchised communities. I then took it upon myself to write music that would heal the nation. At the back of my mind I also wanted a music genre that would remind us of where we have come from. As I wrote my music I realised that I had to align it to my own voice. This is the voice that my people long ago used when they sang songs. Embarking on this journey is not easy at all. First, I must be loyal to my employer. This means a lot of hard work for me and I still have to give my time to my family. As the saying goes, 'Where there is a will there is a way.' I pray that my dream to make my voice heard through music will be realised soon," said MaNgcobo-Khoza.





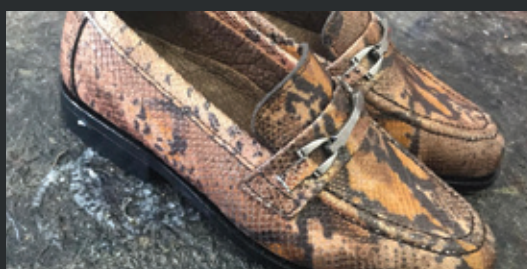
THE DYNAMIC DUO WHO PAIRED UP TO CREATE PAIRS!

It was the love of fashion and style that brought Khethokuhle Gumede and Lindani Buthelezi together. The two gentlemen met at MUT while pursuing their public management qualification, and by 2018 their friendship had blossomed into a business partnership.

The two craftsmen have the belief that when shoes are comfortable and classy, so is the mind, body and spirit. After successfully sharing fashion styles, they decided to go all in and start a tailor-made shoe manufacturing business. They are equal partners and co-founders of Ihawu Vision, a shoe company that manufactures classic leather footwear. "We realised that the only way to put our idea to the test was to just start. Making customised shoes for clients who are happy to wear our brand has been a driver and inspiration for us to pursue our dreams and grow our business. Our shoes are made on order according to individual client specifications and needs. We already employ

two staff members and we are happy to be contributing to their family income," said Khethokuhle.

Khethokuhle and Lindani acknowledge the role MUT played in their growth, and both say there is a positive difference between who they are today and the two young men who enrolled at MUT for the first time in 2016. In 2020 they graduated with an advanced diploma in Public Management and are indeed growing personally, academically and professionally. They share responsibility for the business, with Lindani being in charge of marketing while Khethokuhle is a strategist and an ideas person providing innovative strategic direction to keep the business successful.



Khathi Charcoal

KEEPS BUSINESS

FIRES BURNING

Ntuthuko Khathi is one young man whose fire and drive for success is unmatched. It is the same fire that drove him to start his charcoal business, Khathi Holdings, which manufactures and distributes charcoal and braai products. The company produces lumpwood charcoal using alien trees.

Amid depressing unemployment statistics in South Africa, Ntuthuko decided to put all the skills learned through his mechanical engineering diploma to innovate and create his own work. For him, entrepreneurship is a transformative option to unlock income generation and empower communities. He says hard



work is a vehicle for endless opportunities. “Telling the story of our Khathi Charcoal brand is an ongoing process. Each day our business grows, shifts and adds new chapters to the story. The most liberating and powerful realisation is that trying new things is never a losing solution; even if you fail at what you tried to accomplish, you still learn so much from the setbacks,” said Ntuthuko.

Ntuthuko attributes his success to MUT’s student entrepreneur programmes and the pre-graduation work readiness programme that he attended while studying at MUT. He is certain that these interventions steered his personal and business growth. Khathi Holdings supplies products to formal and informal business owners such as butcheries, shisanyamas and lodges around KwaZulu-Natal. Growing up in rural Jozini, Ntuthuko is fully aware of the many challenges faced by rural communities and has made it part of his business vision to empower local communities. All of his employees are recruited from within the community of Jozini where his business is located.

The business was started in 2017 and has withstood all the challenges brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic. It currently has fifteen permanent staff and three casual staff.

FOOD SECURITY AT THE CENTRE OF SIMISO'S BEING

Each day Simiso Mathonsi works hard to feed his love for farming and all things agricultural. This is a love he has had from a young age, watching his late grandmother growing her own crops which he would harvest and sell to the local community. Simiso is very aware of the problem of food security in South Africa, which is caused by the growing population as well as unforeseen challenges such as the COVID-19 pandemic. This avid agriculturalist thinks a mindshift post COVID-19 is a necessity. He believes that a permanent solution to tackle challenges of hunger and poverty in South Africa will be for the country to produce its own food.



“I have had the privilege to travel to China and visited the Demonstration Centre of China-South Africa, Agricultural Technology Station. One lesson I learnt was that South Africa is behind with technology and is missing out on innovative agriculture. To meet the huge demand for food, we need to adopt modern technology to meet this growing demand like other countries,” said Simiso.

Being selected to participate in the National Science Week as a student at MUT was a life-changing opportunity for Simiso. It was at that time that he realised he had chosen a career he loved and wanted to grow in. He acknowledges

that the little opportunities provided by MUT outside the lecture room confirmed his belief in the potential of farming to change people's lives.

Simiso is currently working on a poultry project in Mandeni, northern KwaZulu-Natal. He designed the project to make a difference to the local community. Besides creating job opportunities, he aims to transfer skills to people who are interested in farming and agriculture-related value chain activities. Having realised that many people struggle to develop sound business plans and write funding and partnership proposals, he will use his skill set to develop his community in this area.

“

To meet the huge demand for food, we need to adopt modern technology to meet this growing demand like other countries.

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ALUMNI PERSPECTIVES

Winners and losers...

the advent of the coronavirus

The advent of the novel coronavirus, COVID-19, has sent shockwaves across the global social and economic system. Whereas 18 months ago we were talking about the fourth industrial revolution as the next big thing that would change the manner in which business is done globally, our business continuity plans never saw this pandemic coming.

As with other crises that the world has faced, we must have the courage to reinvent ourselves and keep moving forward. Some businesses will close down forever, and new ones will emerge. It becomes the duty of every business leader to think of ways to protect their businesses and much-needed jobs. Therefore, my advice is that we seriously look at the macro issues affecting our businesses and plan how we will respond. Will your customers still be needing your service? Will they still put your service amongst their 'top priority' expenditure line items? How do you bolster your competitive position in the marketplace post COVID-19?

A few entrepreneurs have sprung up as manufacturers and distributors of sanitisers, face masks and other PPE. We must now imagine the many other changes that will make doing business different from what used to be. In these changes lie opportunities for us to reposition or start up new



lines of business. For instance, the centralisation of global manufacturing in China will be reviewed particularly in areas like medical supplies, food security and other essential goods. We must therefore say, "What opportunities will this present for our types of business?"

My good professor at Harvard Business School, Professor Ranjay Gulati, asked us a simple question: "When is the best time for businesses to get ahead? During uptimes or downtimes?" After much debate, Professor Gulati said that it was during downtimes that innovators and new business ideas got a better platform to take off than during uptimes. He was basically saying that we should never let a good crisis go to waste; it presents learning and growth opportunities as well. As technical students, trained at MUT in problem-solving, this is the time we should think deeply about how we will get tailwinds from the changes that this pandemic will bring in our economy. In conclusion, we need to take advantage of the business support platforms that have been created by both Government and the private sector. Let us resist the temptation to sit back and weep in our corners under lockdown. Yes, it is a frustrating period, but let's craft well thought-out proposals to preserve our businesses beyond this period.

By Mlamuli Buthelezi, MUT Alumnus, Class of '86



Resilient leadership in the time of COVID-19

I'm often asked what we mean by resilient leadership in the context of the current health crisis. I think everyone will agree that returning to a world that existed before COVID-19 would mark failure. We all should expect more. We have a chance to use what we've learned during this pandemic to usher in a new and better normal. The key to doing so would be exercising resilient leadership; having the ability to energise our teams by looking outward; imagining a successful future and embracing trust to get us there.

The biggest challenge organisations will likely face next is the tension between getting back to work and embracing a new reality. How leaders and organisations handle the recovery may define their brands for years to come and ultimately define whether they are truly operating as a social enterprise. Rebuilding working structures and relationships and factoring in priorities like mental health and well-being in a post-COVID-19 world will require a new kind of leadership – one that is authentically more human, is rooted in connections, and focuses on uplifting, inspiring, and enabling workers to deliver their best.

By Sthembiso Phakathi, MUT Alumnus, Class of '90



Stories best told by an **Engineering executive**

Engineering executive Dr Pat Mazibuko is breaking all the stereotypes often associated with engineers. One of these is that engineers can be impersonal, reserved and take little interest in other people. Contrary to this, Dr Pat has mastered the art of conversation, a skill that resulted in him publishing Series 1 and 2 of a book titled *Conversations with the Best*. Series 1 of the book has earned Dr Pat a double nomination – for Best Inspirational Book and Best Upcoming Male Author – in the Book Behind Awards.

Conversations with the Best outlines some of the impactful conversations that Dr Pat has had with different people of all classes at different stages of his life. Through the book, Dr Pat aims to demonstrate the ancient wisdom of listening to those who have travelled the path before. His belief is that the book will touch the hearts and minds of readers. Series 2 of the book deals with various issues including leadership lessons, motivation, life skills, as well as topical issues like the COVID-19 pandemic. Such conversations are meant to set the agenda and create a chance for a leadership dialogue at all levels.

“*Conversations with the Best* was informed by a deep conversation on the N2 with an old man that I was with. We live in times where people are depressed by all sorts of

things, and I wanted to motivate people with practical and real-life scenarios. This is not related to my professional work but these are real-life lessons drawn from all walks of life. The book gave me an opportunity to preach in a very succinct way, thus touching the hearts and souls of people. I took a leaf from the late Quincy Jones in his song: ‘What good is a song if it can’t inspire, it is not good enough to sing.’ I then asked myself the question, ‘What good is a book if it can’t inspire, then it is not good enough to read’,” said Dr Pat.

Dr Pat embraces education as part of getting a foot in the door and believes that the current generation should not only study to be employed but to create employment. In describing his writing style, he says the book is meant to be intriguing and some chapters will drive the reader to have a conversation with the man in the mirror.

NATURE CONSERVATION MASTER'S RESEARCH IN THE SPOTLIGHT



MUT's Nature Conservation graduates sink their teeth into research

MUT's Master of Nature Conservation graduates are shining a light on the value of research and uncovering crucial new knowledge in this very important sector. Conducting research during a pandemic could not have been easy for the thirteen researchers who graduated at MUT's virtual ceremony on 19 June 2021. The graduates explored a range of research topics whose findings are set to contribute to local knowledge and decision-making. Among the research undertaken by the MUT Class of 2021 were studies on climate change, water scarcity and a review of South Africa's conservation laws. In this publication we share a synopsis of our researchers who are putting our institution in a great position to grow its postgraduate studies.

A review of conservation laws in the Republic of South Africa – Vanrooi Moreki

The project aimed to review the existing legislation and policies pertaining to conservation of ecosystems and species in South Africa, in order to assess the data published in South Africa on its ecosystem and species threat and loss. In so doing, it attempted to determine whether the purpose and goal of the policies are being met, as well as the effectiveness of the policies and procedures in conservation of ecosystems and species. The intended objectives present an overview of environmental pressures on South African biodiversity and further give a clear description on the regulatory enforcement procedures.



The effect of climate change on the eco-physiological functioning of the Blue Carbon mangrove species, *Avicennia marina* on the Umgeni River Estuary

– Ganesan Govender

The effects of climate change pose severe risks to coastal environments. The most striking of these is sea level rise, which threatens the welfare of coastal inhabitants, ecosystems and infrastructure and also magnifies the impacts of coastal storms. Efforts to curtail the impacts of climate change have thus become topical. Mangrove forests seemingly have a major role to play in negating the effects of climate change. The current study sought to provide insight into the role that mangrove forests play in reducing the effects of climate change and provides management strategies to successfully conserve these valuable species. Mangrove forests have profound adaptations that allow them to significantly reduce the planet's atmospheric carbon content

as displayed by the high CO₂ assimilation in this investigation by the blue carbon species, *Avicennia marina*. They also display prolific mechanical resilience, thereby protecting coastlines. However, an evaluation of mangrove ecology at the Umgeni River estuary suggested that mangrove species have migrated upstream over the past 20 years. Sea level rise will result in the loss of these species as they will not be able to adapt to the change in conditions. This research project proposes the effective management and propagation of these species, to ensure the maintenance of the integrity of this important ecosystem in Durban as a model that may be adapted throughout the world.

Industry, informal settlements and small-scale farmers' ability to cope and adapt to drought and other water-related to changing climate along three major rivers in KwaZulu-Natal – **Dr Sibonelo Thanda Mbanjwa**

My investigation placed emphasis on river systems associated with the uMgeni river system. The research results contribute to the knowledge and understanding of river chemistry due to farming and industrial actions along the river system. The investigation effectively interprets the current scenario and possible future impact by agricultural as well as social utilisation and reliance on the river system for livelihoods. It includes suitable recommendations for government interventions to improve monitoring, as well as compliance by industry and small-scale farmers residing along the rivers under investigation. The technical findings improve the understanding of river chemistry and biodiversity in relation to industry, small scale farmers, indigent squatter developments as well as recreational uses. The work is highly relevant in light of the scarcity of water and the need to conserve this precious commodity.



The impact of harvesting *Athrixia phylicoides* (Bush Tea) and the use of indigenous knowledge at Blyde River Canyon Nature Reserve, Mpumalanga Province, South Africa – **Phumzile Lucia Khoza**



The aim of survey was to determine the impact of harvesting bush tea and to gather indigenous knowledge about the plants. Due to increased harvesting pressure of this plants there has been a drastic decline in the population. Because of many uses, it faces problems of being over harvested and exploited. The results shown that the community members were showing interest on propagating the plants as they are benefiting both health care and financial. Community have showed enhanced knowledge about the uses of the plants. Predictive model was the best method to be used by the permit holder.

Traditional knowledge on the use of *Hippobromus pauciflorus* as herbal aphrodisiac to treat erectile dysfunction – Nonkululeko Lovejoy Ntshangase

In a world which is continually striving to alleviate disorders of the human body, it is not surprising that male sexual disorders receive a good share of the attention. During ancient times, people used to live on plant-based food but due to advancement and technology, more people now live on fast foods which have a drastic impact on their well-being, health and sexual health. Erectile dysfunction has many possible causes and can be the first symptom of an undiagnosed condition. The major reason why erectile dysfunction is more common with age is that older men are most likely to be on some kind of medication. Plants have served as an ever-ready source and a dependable medicine for the treatment of mankind's acute illness and a number of chronic diseases. A total of 61 plant species from 36 families were found to be used traditionally to treat male sexual disorders. The present study showed evidence that Durban



locals are knowledgeable about the use of medicinal plants and prefer traditional medicine to cure erectile dysfunction and other related diseases. The recorded aphrodisiac plants can potentially provide treatment that is low in cost and available to men in Durban and nationally. These plant species used by Durban locals are being reported for the first time in treatment of ED. Even though some have been tested before, they were tested for different ailments. Therefore, there is a dire need to develop African traditional medicine into acceptable natural medicines for the treatment and management of erectile dysfunction.

Assessing the effectiveness of traditional drinking water treatment and storage methods on water quality in the Tshivhase and Rambuda communities, Thulamela Municipality, Vhembe District – Tahulela Nemavhola

The aim of this investigation was to determine the level of pollution and contamination of rural water sources in the Tshivhase and Rambuda communities of Vhembe District; to investigate possible seasonal differences in water quality, perhaps related to rainfall; and to assess the effectiveness of water treatment methods used by rural communities. A total of 90 samples representing 10 water sources from six different villages were tested in the laboratory for pH, TDS, turbidity, nitrates, orthophosphate, E.coli and total coliform. All water sources were found to be contaminated and exceed World Health Organisation standards during both the dry and wet season. Bleach and store, boil and store and long-standing storage methods are three methods used by communities to improve water quality for drinking purposes. The bleach method was the only method that remained effective after water was stored. The boiling method was effective for a short period of time and became less effective in the storage facilities. The long-standing method was the least effective method. With correct application, the bleach method is recommended for use, with the boiling method as an alternative provided it is used immediately.



The changes in cytotoxicity levels in the corms of *Hypoxis hemmerlicoides* due to varying rainfall patterns: A study in Vernon Crookes Nature Reserve – Samkelisiwe Precious Ndlovu

Changing climatic conditions are expected to affect the levels of cell toxicity (cytotoxicity) in plants. To determine the impact rainfall has on plants (an objective of the study), especially medicinal plants, 12 samples of *Hypoxis hemmerlicoides* corms in the reserve were studied under controlled conditions using different parameters (the flooding effect, the drought effect and the annual rainfall pattern). It can be concluded that plants tend to protect themselves in ever-changing climatic conditions; the cytotoxicity levels rise when conditions are adverse, resulting in creation of a barrier by these plants to save themselves against destruction. For future studies, anti-microbial, chemical profiling and phyto-chemistry studies need to be undertaken to determine the effects of varying climatic conditions on the chemical constituents of medicinal plants.



Assessing effect of African elephant (*Loxodonta africana*) on the African baobab trees (*Adansonia digitata*) of the Mapungubwe National Park, Limpopo Province, South Africa – Dellan Steven Khosa

Mapungubwe National Park was created to preserve biodiversity and cultural heritage in South Africa and is an open system park with a high population of African Elephant (*Loxodonta africana*) as well as the iconic baobab tree (*Adansonia digitata*). The potential for elephant damage is therefore of concern to South African National Parks (SANParks). The study was carried out in 2019 to assess the impact of elephant on baobab in Mapungubwe National Park and address four questions: 1) to determine the baobab density and spatial distribution and compare the structure of the baobab population across the two sections of the Mapungubwe National Park; 2) to determine whether elephant damage caused death of the baobab trees and the proportion of baobab mortality between 2005-2009; 3) to determine the extent of elephant damage (debarking and dieback) within the eastern and western section, and which size class of the tree is most affected across the two sections of the park; and finally 4) to determine whether trees could survive to 2019 if they were 100% debarked in 2005. Results showed that 8% of baobab trees were found dead in 2019. Moreover, of 18 trees that had 100% debarking in 2005, only one (equal to 6%) was found dead in 2019. The results furthermore showed that debarking has increased considerably since 2009. The majority of trees (43%) in 2009 were in Class 2 (1-26% debarked), while in 2019 the majority of trees displayed 76-100% debarking (45% in Class 5). There is insufficient evidence to prove that all baobab mortality between 2009 and 2019 was due to elephant impact. The results suggest that the overall dieback damage remained minimal while debarking damage has increased between 2009 and 2019.



Effectiveness of botanical gardens in influencing visitors' ecological knowledge: A case study of the Pietermaritzburg (PMB) Botanic Gardens – Mpumelele Faith Gumede

Widely published studies have mostly focused on the effectiveness of botanical gardens as tourist destinations. Such studies have neglected to assess their effectiveness in imparting knowledge and awareness of sustainability, nature conservation and biodiversity to visitors. This study assessed the role and value of botanical gardens' environmental education in improving knowledge, changing attitudes and promoting good behaviour towards the environment. Public perceptions towards the role and value of botanical gardens were evaluated. The environmental education strategies used were also evaluated in terms of their effectiveness and the value they provide. The study resulted in the development of an environmental education model that will be instrumental in enhancing botanical gardens' ability to offer good quality environmental education. This research has provided practical solutions and recommendations for new strategies and technologies that can be used to increase ecological understanding and change people's perception of the importance of botanical gardens.

The impact of vermicompost on growth and nutrient constituents of tomato, *Solanum lycopersicum* (L.) H. Karst – Olusoji David Alabi

The researcher is an agricultural conservationist and this project was born out of a desire to reduce the use of inorganic fertiliser and the excessive accumulation of nitrate in the soil, which has been traced as the cause of some chronic diseases in the community. The aim of the study was also to investigate how agricultural waste can be minimised and soil degradation addressed. This was achieved through feeding agricultural waste to earthworms. The leachate obtained from this process was introduced into growing tomatoes at different concentrations. At the end of the project, vermicompost was found to be a reliable organic fertiliser provided all conditions are met during production. Ecosystem management is required to support the growing global population and the researcher looks forward to doing more research in this area.





The road to a successful land reform and biodiversity stewardship programme (BSP) in South Africa: Case study of Mabaso Community Protected Environment

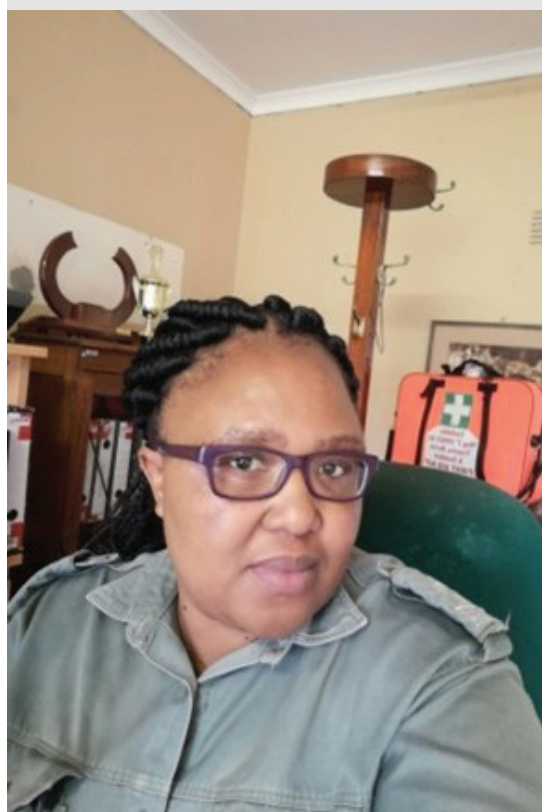
– Ayanda Cele

Traditionally, “protected area” expansion in South Africa has been restricted to state-owned land. In the process, abundant biodiversity has been left unattended. Recently, the introduction of the Biodiversity Stewardship Programme (BSP) has included land outside state-owned land, such as privately owned land and communal land regained through the land reform process. The aim of the study was to demonstrate that land reform and biodiversity stewardship projects can meaningfully contribute to protected area expansion and also improve the socioeconomic status of the country if done correctly.

This study looked at a rural community (Mabaso community in northern KwaZulu-Natal) which is part of the BSP and is regarded as one of the leading communities in the country in terms of natural resource management. The methods used for the study included focused question discussions with Mabaso community members that sit in the monthly advisory forum (AF) and general community members, as well as veld condition assessments. The results showed that with proper management, species composition in flat plains can easily improve and match the benchmark of the bioresource even in rural communities. Therefore, this paper suggests that the Department of Rural Development and Land Reform (DRDLR) needs to provide more resources including mentorship on each project after settlement.

Investigation of the cause of the decline of *Jankus kraussii* (ncema grass) in a wetland ecosystem in iSimangaliso Wetland Park area, St Lucia, Mtubatuba, KwaZulu-Natal – Thembeke Prudence Gama

Ncema grass is harvested and used by the communities in and around the iSimangaliso Wetland to make mats and other items which are sold to tourists. This provides household income and enables families to send their children to school. Through this study, the communities have been made aware of the importance of the Ncema grass, not just for their economic use, but as part of a healthy wetland ecosystem. They are aware of the health challenges that will be faced should this grass no longer be available, since it is important in filtering storm water excess and reducing sediment and pollutants entering water bodies. The communities now know how they must cut the grass and protect it, since it provides lifetime benefits for them and their loved ones.



The negative impacts of invasive alien species on the environment at Kruger National Park – Tshepo Mathebula

The negative impacts of invasive alien species on the environment are well documented. However, despite the predominantly negative perceptions associated with invasive species, it is evident that a number of these plants have been part of the landscape for generations and have numerous commercial and non-market uses. Consequently, there is a need for research that considers the impact of invasive species on the livelihoods, well-being of local communities and the environment. This project investigated the negative impact that prickly pear (*Opuntia ficus-indica*), an invasive alien species, has on the vegetation of the white and black rhino enclosure in the Kruger National Park. Furthermore the analysis intended to dig more into the history of the site vegetation before the enclosure, during the enclosure and after the usage of the enclosure, and the impact of prickly pear on the other vegetation. The research highlighted the apparent conflict of interest between the indigenous species and alien invasive plants, prickly pear in particular.

The impact of this plant has been an ongoing issue across South Africa, related to another apparent conflict of interest between local traders (for whom the sale of the prickly pear provides a livelihood source) and the South African government which is actively seeking to remove the plant from the landscape. The prickly pear has been sighted in most of the neighbouring farms and communities adjacent to the Kruger National Park which could be the main sources of its presence in the park.



TRIBUTE



Mthokozisi Nxumalo MP

Death be not proud! We pay a sad tribute to Mthokozisi Nxumalo class of '08. It was with shock and dismay that in the year 2021 we had to announce to our alumni community the untimely passing of one of our rising stars whose life was cut short in a tragic accident on the 1st of August.

At a tender age of 30 in May 2019, Mthokozisi was sworn in as a member of the South African National Assembly deployed by the Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP) under the leadership of Prince Mangosuthu Buthelezi MP and founder of MUT. The late honourable MP graduated from MUT with a National Diploma in Construction Management and Quantity Surveying. His political career blossomed during his university days. He was chairperson of SADESMO, a student organisation wing of the IFP, as well as SRC Treasurer in the 2011-2012 student leadership at MUT. Before taking his seat in the National Parliament, Mthokozisi was employed by Nongoma district office for Public Works as Structural Works Inspector, which is a position he held until 31 May 2019.

The University is proud of the milestones and giant steps that our graduates take in empowering the lives of current and future generations. Mthokozisi still had a lot to give but we may not change God's will.

Let Maya Angelou's poem give hope to friends, alumni, and family:

*"I can accept the idea of my own demise,
But I am unable to accept the death of anyone else.
I find it impossible to let a friend or relative go into that part of country of no return.
I answer the heroic question:
'Death, where is thy sting'
With it is here in my heart and my mind and memories".
Farewell Zwide!*



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