



## MICROSOFT'S KZN PUBLIC SECTOR HEAD

**Born and raised in Umlazi Township's F section, Sandile completed his matric at Ogwini Comprehensive High School and enrolled for the diploma in Cost and Management Accounting in 1994. Little did he know that MUT was to be a giant platform, propelling him to explore and realise his leadership and entrepreneurial dream at a young age.**

## Sandile Mahlaba - Class of '94

Because of his inquisitive nature and love for exploring technology, Sandile would spend hours with the MUT IT team in the server room and he was the first student to own an MUT email address. This opened his eyes to the potential of technology to connect with like-minded youth all over the world, and he went on to establish the MUT branch of AIESEC - a global network of youth innovators that focuses on developing leadership and entrepreneurship skills. Being part of the organisation required him to attend international conferences which involved travelling and creating international linkages.

"Those were my best years at MUT. All the travelling required conceptualising and implementing projects on campus and with the community of Umlazi Township. I was a real pioneer and I think I am still one today. One of the major projects I spearheaded was a seven-day international conference attended by over 350 students from universities in South Africa, the UK, the US, Sri Lanka, Canada, India, South Korea and China, who showcased a number of entrepreneurship projects. This initiative and others which I was involved in elevated the profile of MUT as an institution capable of competing on a global stage," says Sandile.

Despite all the demands of being a student and an advocate for youth leadership development, Sandile was also the treasurer of the Student Representative Council (SRC) - an experience which he believes taught him financial accountability and allowed him to build relationships with international funding agencies such as USAID. As a member of the SRC, he was among a student delegation that visited Howard University in the US to benchmark their student

leadership strategy. This was in line with his SRC's belief in creating more opportunities and asking less from the University.

A big moment for Sandile was when he joined Microsoft South Africa in 2011. There he was responsible for public sector technology transformation, focusing on delivering technology to provincial and national government departments, including Home Affairs and the 'smart' health, cities and policing projects. He moved to KwaZulu-Natal in 2018 to head up the KZN Microsoft public sector, which entails re-building the business and bringing the Microsoft flair into the province. In this role, Sandile is responsible for developing a Microsoft ecosystem in KwaZulu-Natal, spanning from SMME development to CSI and education. "We are pushing a lot of digital transformation for the province, considering that the fourth industrial revolution is moving faster than we can adopt it. Our task involves taking digital transformation projects to the citizens to enhance service delivery using technology," he says.

Sandile has worked briefly for the MUT Community Development Centre conceptualising community development projects, and has also worked for AIESEC full time as its Vice-President and as Africa President. His relationship with AIESEC, which started at MUT, has enabled him to give a lot of international exposure to the youth through exchange programmes and student development programmes. The bond with AIESEC is particularly special to Sandile because it was through it that he met his wife Tebogo Semmelink-M. It is no surprise that their children (age 13, 10 and 3) are also IT wizards who have established their own coding company named Zetabyte.