

A rare outing melts Umlazi senior citizens' hearts

True to its newly given mandate, MUT is entrenching itself deep within the hearts of its immediate communities. For the second year running, the University invited a group of local senior citizens from Khanana Place of the Aged in Umlazi's C Section to its annual 2018 end-of-year collegiality event.



Mrs Malaza, standing, with one of the esteemed guests

The MUT invitation has become a sweet headache for Bishop Bongani Mkhize, who manages Khanana. "Some complained about being left out. They have developed a habit of looking forward to the event," said Bishop Mkhize. Being taken out is not an everyday occurrence for the elderly at Khanana, and some of them looked a bit bewildered at the ICC. A number of them had a long chat with Mrs Yolanda Malaza, the wife of the University's VC Dr Enoch Duma Malaza, while she was giving them some presents from MUT. Mrs Malaza had to go back to another senior citizen who wanted to tell her more, and the others had to wait for a long conversation to finish before they could receive their presents and whisper their own important message to Mrs Malaza, who enjoyed the interaction.

MUT's relationship with the Khanana Place for the Aged has been going on for a number of years. MUT's Department of Community Extension visits to do gardening and has also trained its chefs and an assistant. "The 103 residents become very excited when they see the students. They regard them as their grandchildren," said Bishop Mkhize. He said that what MUT was doing for the aged was lifting their spirits and giving them much-needed love.

International partnership with YNU on the horizon



Dr Ajayi making a presentation to the interlocutors

Dr Oluyomi Ajayi, CEO of Siyacanda Energy (Pty) Ltd approached Prof Nokwethemba Ndlati (Executive Director in the Office of the Vice-Chancellor) with a proposal for an international partnership between MUT and Yunnan University, China. YNU wishes to establish relationships with MUT in research centres of excellence, student exchange programmes, staff mobility, joint PhD programmes, information exchange on best practices, cultural awareness programmes and the like. Prof Ndlati accepted the proposal with open arms as her current portfolio is responsible for identifying stakeholders with which the University should develop partnerships.

In fact, the suggested areas of collaboration form part of MUT's strategic objectives. A meeting was scheduled to "start the conversation" and after hearing what Siyacanda Energy (Pty) Ltd and YNU are all about, Prof Ndlati suggested a few key areas that MUT requires growth in, namely transformation, student exchange, faculty exchange and academic leadership.

Students jostle to apply at MUT

"It is not by accident that MUT received more than 86,000 applications for first-year students for 2019. We commence our student recruitment activities very early each year, so that by the time learners write their first quarterly examinations, they know very well that MUT is a number one choice for their university studies," said Zama Sishi, Director of Stakeholder Relations Management at MUT.

In just three months, the schools liaison team has criss-crossed the country and the SADC region in line with the Strategic Plan 2025 which, inter alia, aims to diversify the student body and bring an international flavour on campus.



MUT's Ayanda Bulose addressing learners at the Sofia International School, Lesotho

MUT looks beyond borders to boost diversity

MUT's Schools Liaison team recently went on an international student recruitment drive in Lesotho, Swaziland and Botswana. The purpose of this task was to ensure that the campus is diversified not only in terms of colour but also culture and ethnicity. Diversity is one of the foundational themes of MUT's Strategy 2020-2025, which envisages an MUT that is understanding and values differences among students and the University community as a whole.

MUT currently has students from Botswana, Congo, DRC, Lesotho, Nigeria, Swaziland, Zambia and Zimbabwe. "Although the number is not great, we are heartened by the reward that our brand is moving outside South Africa. We acknowledge the fact that the students currently enrolled at MUT are cash paying and the currency differential outside South Africa has an impact on these students," said Zama Sishi, Director of Stakeholder Relations Management. The student recruitment team has also prioritised recruitment within the borders of South Africa and KwaZulu-Natal. Recently they spent a week recruiting students in Vhembe district in Limpopo and will soon be in the Eastern Cape. "Our biggest selling point throughout these visits is the fact that our fees are highly competitive. Both in Lesotho and Swaziland, it was after we told learners about our fees that word spread and more learners started flocking to our exhibition stand. We gladly took potential students through the application process and the choice of either applying online or manually," concluded Ayanda.

The Schools Liaison team was treated like royalty when they visited the Botswana Ministry of Education to forge a relationship between MUT and the ministry. The officials said they would like to see their students venturing out to MUT to gain more knowledge, and they invited MUT to be part of their next exhibition. "I am so happy to have met MUT as this relationship will help our students explore an international level," said Mrs K Kopi from the Botswana Ministry of Education. The team also visited libraries and did a mall activation at Game City Mall in Gaborone to ensure that even the parents got the message that MUT would like to have their children as part of the general student body. "During the visits to our neighbouring countries, we found that many learners were interested in coming to pursue their studies at MUT. Some saw it as an opportunity to see South Africa and experience living in a coastal area. Some were convinced only after seeing pictures of the campus and student residences. Most learners enquired about the Faculty of Engineering and the Faculty of Natural Sciences. Accommodation was another popular question, along with funding and financial aid," said Ayanda Bulose, Assistant Schools Liaison Officer.