

MUT graduate gives time to empower students

Joining MUT in 2012, Smanga Mathonsi was a young man full of dreams. He thanks MUT for propelling him towards achieving them, and he now says it's time for him to uplift other aspiring MUT students by offering them free extra tuition to help them complete their studies in record time, with distinctions just like him. Smanga, a young lad from KwaSithembe in Mandeni, completed both his diploma and BTech in Accounting at MUT.

"Pursuing my two qualifications opened a myriad of doors for me to achieve my career dreams. I was very fortunate to be given a rare opportunity to serve my articles before I actually graduated from my B.Tech. I was interviewed as the only diploma candidate to serve the articles, but that did not give me any challenges. I went on to pass my board exam in May 2018 and was immediately offered a job by Premier Professional Accountants. I am very grateful to my lecturers, especially Mr Francois Kenga, senior lecturer in the Department of Accounting."

He has a good way of showing students how to approach Accounting, and his standard is very high. Getting 50% in his class is worth about 90% in industry," Smanga said.

Smanga admits that his best times at MUT were mostly shaped by the type of friends he kept. His friendship with Nkosinathi Madlala and Sifiso Mbambo, who are now both employed by Transnet, was based on supporting one another to focus on their studies. The three young students created a policy of learning something new every day, which is what propelled them to achieve many distinctions and assist numerous fellow students with tutorials.



Smanga Mathonsi

Smanga understands very well how challenging it is to adapt to the tertiary environment, especially for students from under-resourced schools. For the past six years he has been an unrecognised tutor for MUT students. He has since established formal free tutorials in Accounting, Taxation, Auditing and Management Accounting, which includes a weekend accounting boot camp to prepare students for examinations. In 2018 he launched a competition for final-year accounting students in partnership with the South African Institute for Professional Accountants (SAIPA). The competition, which was open to all students regardless of their grades, was an overwhelming success, with students showcasing their knowledge of accounting to compete for prizes sponsored by SAIPA (trophies, prize money for the top three winners, and an overall prize).

The competition was hosted at Astra, an outsourced residence for MUT students. "After the competition we received many requests from students from other institutions who reside at Astra to also include them in the competition. Going forward the competition will be an annual event open to students from any institution. This gives us an opportunity to showcase our skills learnt at MUT and also to increase the number of students we impact upon," said Smanga.

Smanga's dream just keeps getting bigger as he achieves more and more milestones. He is also a co-owner of a non-profit organisation that trains accounting students on relevant accounting software to assist them to improve their chances of employment in the accounting sector. Smanga's ultimate goal is to open a company or own shares in an accounting firm while actively running his NPO.

MUT Convocation AGM zooms in on graduate unemployment

The Annual General Meeting (AGM) of the MUT Convocation, hosted on campus on 17 November 2018, took a serious look at matters of graduate unemployment and related social challenges affecting university students. Addressing Convocation, the MUT Vice-Chancellor Dr Malaza expressed concern at first-year students' lack of preparation for the tertiary environment, citing incidents of suicide and attempted suicide. He shared his vision and strategy to curb this pandemic. This includes refocusing the orientation of new students to include an orientation into the neighbourhood, as well as a stakeholders' summit early in 2019 to look into student under-preparedness and possible solutions.

Mr Kwenza Madlala, Convocation President, focused his address on the challenge of graduate unemployment and urged graduates to work together to find solutions.

"Your presence in this gathering is directly interpreted by the Convocation Executive Committee as a symbol of great commitment to institutional development and sustainability. By the same token, such a degree of commitment cannot be viewed in isolation from the harsh realities faced by our graduates. Amongst the 6.2 million unemployed South African citizens are our own graduates. These are students we shared a lecture room with, students we lectured and as an institution they are the people we skilled in the hope that their qualifications would give them a better chance to secure employment and better their lives and those of their families," he shared.



Mr Kwenza Madlala,
MUT Convocation President

Amidst the harsh realities of graduate unemployment, the President reminded Convocation of the potential that lies within them. He urged MUT alumni to group themselves and share opportunities to re-invest into this institution in various ways, and also to suggest solutions to government on issues of graduate unemployment. "As Convocation we have an enormous responsibility of ensuring that our institution stands and achieves pre-eminence. I challenge fellow graduates, especially those who graduated with the Department of Agriculture, to take the lead in seeking Public-Private Partnership MoUs with the Department of Agriculture to ensure that MUT plays a vital role in educating small farmers for the development and sustainability of subsistence and commercial farming. Agriculture plays a significant role in the country's economy and could provide a far greater opportunity for employment," said Kwenza. In order to curb the high rate of unemployment, he re-iterated the urgent need to develop entrepreneurs as one of the critical areas for the institution to invest in.