

VC'S ANCHOR STRATEGY GAINS TRACTION



MUT VC, Middle, presenting the guitars to Comtech Principal, right, and Xolani Hlongwa, music teacher, second from left, and music students

MUT and neighbouring school, Comtech, talk brotherly love

MUT Vice-Chancellor, Dr Enoch Duma Malaza enhanced his external stakeholder engagement when he visited Umlazi Comtech on 14 September 2018. The visit is a strategic positioning initiative of the new Vice-Chancellor to the local schools that have for the past 39 years provided MUT with quality students. Comtech is a major strategic partner to MUT as they are the main feeder school to MUT. This initial engagement between the MUT VC and Comtech leadership is in line with Dr Malaza's anchor strategy of building and embracing relations with neighbouring schools to enable MUT to create a viable education ecosystem for the community of Umlazi Township.

Comtech principal, Mr Nkosinathi Shandu, who took over as principal in 2017 was delighted about this historic visit which was a first for his school. This was confirmed by Mr Lucky Luthuli the longest serving retired principal of Comtech who also graced the Vice-Chancellor's visit to the school. "Thank you for coming here, we are like a son to MUT because what you do at MUT is what we do here at Comtech. Our genes are the same, both our focus is science; commerce; and engineering. There are many schools in Umlazi but we are a school literally in your premises. Umlazi Comtech has a very strong legacy of uniform discipline, music and academic excellence. When you talk of a partnership between our institutions you can be proud of what we are globally known for," said Mr Shandu in welcoming Dr Malaza to Comtech.

The Vice-Chancellor's visit was amongst many reasons prompted by positive feedback from friends and family who attended his inauguration where the Comtech band provided world-class performance. The VC thanked Comtech for being a viable pipeline of students to MUT, he said: "we would like to engage you when we roll out our strategy of being anchored in our communities. The partnership will allow us to create synergy with what you offer when we develop programmes. Also MUT looks forward to a meaningful relationship as we think how we engage business and community leaders of Umlazi on our strategy." A number of strategic projects are in the pipeline as the two education partners work towards formalising their relationship.

MUT's efforts result in book donations to Umlazi schools

Learners of five Umlazi Township schools are about to experience change in their young lives. This will improve their chances of becoming successful citizens, with the ability to make an impact on the lives of others. On 13 September 2018, Emthethweni, Phila, Nselele, Ntwela Primary Schools, and the host, Khalipha Primary School, received Bright Books for their learners from

Iqraa Trust and Elet. Nareshini Ranganthan, Elet's Director, said their gesture was "more than just a donation to mark World Literacy Day. The more than 200 books we are donating forms part of Project Rise which we are driving. We would like to see the donation kick-starting the culture of reading at our schools in order to improve the learners' level of English. Although the books are intended for leisure reading, they will have a positive influence on the learners' academic progress. We are aware of the challenges that the schools are facing," said Nareshini.

Echoing what Nareshini said, Dr Mahmoud Youssef Baker, the CEO of Iqraa Trust, said that reading gives the reader freedom. As a way of encouraging the learners to see the value of reading, Dr Baker suggested that the teachers aim to reward the learners with books whenever they do well. Dr Baker, an economist who studied overseas, advised the schools to have libraries. He asked teachers to donate books and make an effort to further their studies. Teachers from the five schools became excited when Dr Baker informed them about a US scholarship available at the US Embassy.

The Principal of Khalipha Senior Primary School, Thenjiwe Mbhele, said she was very grateful to MUT and the sponsors for donating books which would change the learners' lives. Sindi Cele, an English teacher at Ntwela Primary School, said she was going to take advantage of the donation by starting a book club.



Seated from left, Nomusa Shamase, Circuit Manager, Dr Baker, and Nareshini, with (standing) Umlazi Township school teachers and MUT's Zama Sishi, right

Coffee with the VC

There is always an air of excitement when a new line manager starts. It's all about what changes he or she will bring to the organisation and of course, how compatible the new person will be with the rest of the team.

Coffee with the VC was the MUT strategy review process which Dr Malaza adopted to have a conversation around MUT's Strategy 2020-2025, which dovetails with the DHET's 6-year planning cycles. The strategy review process builds upon MUT's current strategic plan which expires in 2019. According to Dr Malaza: "At the heart of the strategy development process should be a drive to distance ourselves from the past, thereby focusing on where we are as MUT, where the world is and where we want to go in the future. Our approach towards the strategy development and review process will involve a more ideological than academic approach. This means that our new vision for the University will be based on the aspirations of MUT stakeholders. Our approach will be 'bottom-up' rather than 'top-down'. We need to find consensus of opinion as we develop this strategy, therefore the process will be iterative. We will consult all our staff members, students and all other relevant internal and external stakeholder groupings."

More than 400 staff members participated in these engagements and there was real coffee on that wintry day! Student representatives from all structures also participated.

"We all need to find a reason for coming to work and a common purpose that will shape our future. As part of the MUT community, it is my philosophy that we should begin to reflect on the critical skills that each one of us should bring to the table.

ALUMNI CORNER

Conversation with the KZN Young Achiever 2018

The Alumni Relations Office had a conversation with Mxolisi Phakathi (MP), a graduate of the Department of Environmental Health. Mxolisi is a reflection of how MUT develops and empowers its graduates to be able to participate in the new world order. He was listed amongst the Mail & Guardian's 200 young, influential South Africans in June, and a month later he was named KZN's Young Achiever 2018. These accolades are given to South Africans under the age of 35 who have done exceptional work in their fields and who also make an effort to uplift society.

AR: Mxolisi, congratulations on your recent achievements! We are proud of your work and would like to inspire our young students to look up to you. Please give us a brief account of your activities.

MP: I grew up in Umlazi Township and graduated from MUT in 2009. I work for South African Airways as Acting Senior Manager: Industrial Safety, where I am responsible for ensuring that aircraft engineers and maintenance employees are working in a safe, healthy environment.

There are so many developments in my area of expertise as regulations keep changing. When things go wrong, safety, health and environmental specialists can be prosecuted. This keeps me on my toes and eager to keep abreast of any new developments. I am in the final stages of my MBA dissertation and am also a Master of Public Health (MPH). Improving my skills will enable me to make a significant contribution to business and society.

AR: What exactly did you do to get this recognition?

MP: Growing up in Umlazi Township exposed me to a number of human activities which harm the environment. This sparked my interest in environmental management. I have always participated in environmental conservation projects such as clean-up campaigns and pollution prevention. I also worked on a project which educated rural primary schools on the importance of sustaining the environment. Through the project we rewarded schools that undertook campaigns to keep their schools clean and environmentally sustainable. The nomination was based on the work that I do representing the KZN province.

AR: To whom are you dedicating this achievement and why?

MP: The achievements are dedicated to my parents, especially my late father, Bheka Phakathi, who was an employee at MUT's Transport department. Despite many financial constraints my parents upheld wonderful spiritual, emotional and social values that contributed to my becoming an assertive individual. My parents are strong advocates for education and giving back to the community. I am grateful to them for raising me to be the best in what I do. They taught me to respect others, learn by mistakes and to never stop learning new things.



Mxolisi Phakathi

AR: You studied Environmental Health. How has this qualification and time spent at MUT contributed to your achievements?

MP: Obtaining a qualification from a reputable institution like MUT has created a platform that has enabled me to think ambitiously and to act with a great sense of resourcefulness to achieve my goals. Being a young professional living in a challenging, transitional South Africa, education is important. The experience in leadership which I acquired while at MUT from the academic staff in the Environmental Health department has contributed to where my career is at this stage. This shows that as an institution, MUT is not only teaching the principles of leadership and management, but grooming future influential leaders to take this country and the world to greater heights. I am honoured to have been part of the MUT family and the exceptional facilitators of the Environmental Health Programme.