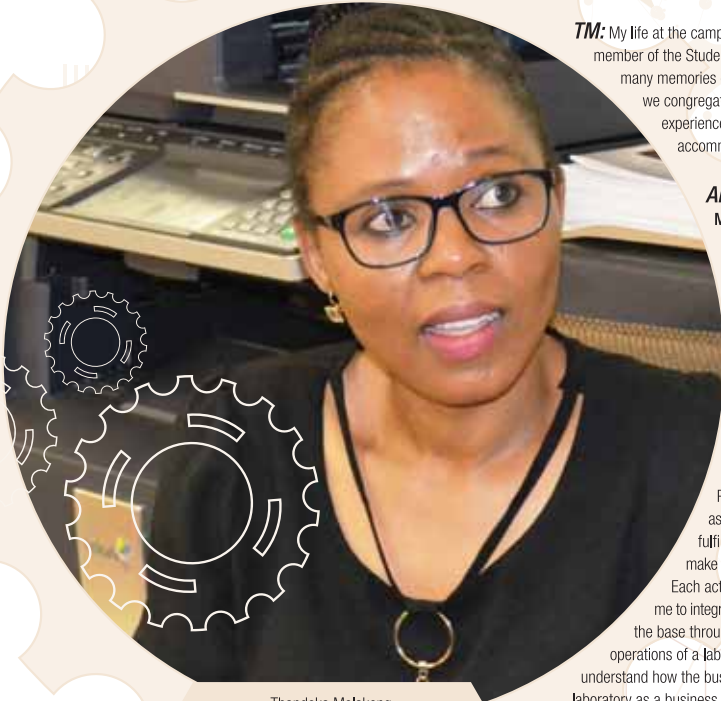


Alumna driving the economy throughout the African continent



Thandeka Molakeng

AR: Where did you spend your time on campus?

TM: My life at the campus revolved around my studies and being an active member of the Student Christian Movement (SCM). Bozzoli Hall holds so many memories other than academic work for me, as that is where we congregated for services. Campus life was a wonderful experience for me as everyone was extremely friendly and accommodating.

AR: How has your career evolved since leaving MUT?

TM: MUT prepared me theoretically and practically. This provided me with a solid foundation in the field of Analytical Chemistry. Because I knew the different instruments that are typically used in the industry, the transition from student life was less traumatic. I have worked both in analytical laboratories and in product development, as the curriculum covered all aspects of chemistry: Organic, Inorganic, Physical and Analytical. The position I gained as Head of the Analytical Laboratory for Phalaborwa Mining Company, now Phalaborwa Copper, as the Lab Superintendent in 2011 was one of the most fulfilling roles I have ever had. I had to lead a team, make investment decisions and manage internal customers. Each activity had different dynamics. The position allowed me to integrate all that I had studied. Analytical chemistry provided the base through which I could run and understand the basic operations of a laboratory. Through my postgraduate studies, I could understand how the business fitted together holistically, and position the laboratory as a business.

My current role is Head of Sales: BASF, Africa. I lead a team based in the four country clusters in South, East, West and North Africa. We are responsible for sales, technical support and logistics for the performance materials division in the African continent. I am part of the senior leadership team within the organisation, with direct disciplinary reporting to the MD role in South Africa and functionally reporting to the Senior Vice President in Germany, Europe.

AR: What drives you to give back to MUT?

TM: As a Christian I believe in the concept of giving. I am aware that I have been tremendously blessed in my career and therefore it is required of me to give back. The little contribution that I make as an MUT graduate is driven by the fact that I know I have to give back. I also understand the transformational power that education has for us as individuals. The little that I give helps in shaping our society. I thank the MUT Alumni team for giving me the platform to participate in empowering current students.

In my spare time I have started a clothing brand, **I am Fashion**. This venture was solely motivated by my desire to be relevant in giving as I don't want to be limited by what my salary can do. So I continue to push myself to build up a solid business from which I will be able to extend my giving.

Contributions made by alumni form the cornerstone for the success of any institution. Through various initiatives, the Alumni Relations Office reaches out to alumni to reconnect and participate in the development of MUT. During the four-city alumni roadshow in 2017, MUT reconnected with a number of alumni who had lost contact with their alma mater.

Thandeka Molakeng, Head of Sales at BASF Africa, was amongst the graduates who marvelled at an opportunity to reinvest her time, skills and finances to empower current and future students, especially females, from the deep rural communities. She shared her experiences as a typical MUT student and why she is obligated to contribute to the alumni bursary fund.

AR: What makes you a typical MUT student?

TM: I believe I fit the profile of a typical MUT student. I say this with a sense of pride as I come from humble beginnings. I was born in rural KwaMnyamana near Bulwer, to a single mom. My grandmother raised me while my mom worked as a domestic worker. My time at MUT was memorable at all levels. I entered MUT as a teenager and left as a young woman. I graduated in 1999 as the top student in my faculty with a diploma in Analytical Chemistry.

TRIBUTES



Zolile's parents, (foreground) Mr Comfort Khumalo, and Mrs Princess Khumalo during the memorial dedication

Chairperson of Council drives a healing process for the Khumalo family

"Zolile Khumalo - gone but not forgotten"

- Mr Morallane Morallane

Unveiling a fountain erected in honour of the late Zolile Khumalo, Mr Morallane Morallane, Chairperson of Council, led the University in committing to ending gender-based violence and driving healing for the Khumalo family. Here is what he had to say:

How does a university express its sympathy to the family of a loved one who passed away at one of its residences? How does it raise awareness on the scourge of gender-based violence and femicide that is gripping our country? We have been grappling with this tragedy since 2 May 2018 when we heard of the death of Zolile Khumalo. This is the worst trial any parent could endure, and it has been our worst trial as a university. This is because when students move to university residences, we are expected to provide a 'home away from home'. Unfortunately, it is at the very residences and campuses that are supposed to be home to students, that some students meet people who shatter their dreams and families.

The destiny of Zolile might have been destroyed on the eve of 1 May, but as a university we refuse to forget her life at MUT. It is our intention to let the country and the world know that what happened to Zolile is unfortunate, and we refuse to have an incident like this ever take place again at MUT or at any university.

As we open the Student Housing Phase 1, we express our gratitude to DHET for their support because we will now be able to move some of our students from the city back to the main campus.

It is thus fitting that as students move back to this beautiful campus, they see this fountain of water as a constant reminder that we care for every student who enters through the gates of MUT. Therefore, I would like to dedicate this fountain as a memorial for Zolile Khumalo. Anyone who ever passes this fountain must not only remember Zolile but must think and reflect about how they should report any signs of gender-based violence.

Finally, I would like to thank our Ministers here, the Honourable Naledi Pandor, Minister of Higher Education and Training, as well as our Chancellor, Lindwe Sisulu, Minister of International Relations and Cooperation, for all their messages of support and activism in raising awareness about gender-based violence. It would be remiss of me not to acknowledge the presence of Zolile Khumalo's parents. We will walk with them to allow them to have closure on this tragedy. Bo Mntungwa, sinethemba lokuthi loku okuncane kokunikhumbuzza indodakazi yenu. kuzoba isiduduzo. (To the Khumalos, we hope that this little memorial will heal you emotionally.) Siyabonga.