

ALUMNI CORNER

Growing a caring family of alumni

As MUT approaches its 40th year of existence and celebrates the sound education of 35,000 graduates, we are proud to reap the rewards of the strong values of caring and sharing among our alumni. The most important beneficiaries of this brotherly and sisterly attitude of our many alumni, are our current MUT students.

The touching story of **Siboniso Xulu**, a disabled first-year marketing student, revealed that our former students are a caring family of alumni. Without their assistance, Siboniso would have been unable to achieve his dream of completing his diploma at MUT. Siboniso hails from the distant rural area of Emahujini near Mtubatuba in northern KwaZulu-Natal. He is afflicted with cerebral palsy, a physical disability that affects his hands, and his fingers in particular. This makes writing a major challenge. Siboniso is the first student at MUT to be engaged in an extensive adjustment of the teaching, learning and assessment methods. He will be the first MUT student to be granted oral assessment.

After carrying out a thorough assessment, the MUT psychologists recommended that Siboniso be offered a specialised laptop with a mouthpiece that would automatically transcribe the verbal content. Since Siboniso was being raised by an unemployed, single mother in impoverished conditions, it became clear that Siboniso would need a good Samaritan to enable him to prepare and submit any written work. A proposal submitted by the Alumni Relations Office to 10 alumni who had also graduated in the Department of Marketing, was received with great compassion by **Ntandokazi Kheswa**, an alumnus of 1997.

Ntandokazi is a director of Hippo Park Engen, a filling station located on Nandi Drive, north of Durban. Born and raised in K section in Umlazi, Ntandokazi joined MUT after passing her matric at Vukuzakhe High School, also in Umlazi. She is generous and kind-hearted and owes a great deal to the community of Umlazi and MUT. This institution has prepared her to be able to provide not only for herself and her family, but also for the families of her employees. She gives credit to her parents for their guidance in developing her loving, caring disposition and her desire to protect others.

In 1995, while a student at MUT, Ntandokazi was crowned Miss MUT and had to become a role model for her fellow female students. Over twenty years later, this was an attribute that led her to make a major contribution towards Siboniso's dream of completing his diploma. Ntandokazi's donation now gives hope to Siboniso and other students who have to navigate higher education amidst the challenges of disability.

In giving advice to youngsters who have a dream of making a difference, Ntandokazi said, "You must be prepared to work hard, respect money and be hands-on. Being hands-on gives moral support to staff and contributes to positive team work." Ntandokazi is proud of being granted the opportunity to support a fellow student as she is a strong believer in making a positive difference in the lives of others.



Ntandokazi Kheswa, (right) with an employee at her Engen filling station

A young entrepreneur grounded by ethics and selflessness

Nkululeko Mthembu is a young entrepreneur well-grounded in strong ethics and selflessness. It all began with just a R1,000 registration deposit from his gran's pension grant, yet today he is an established professional quantity surveyor who has worked on mega projects in South Africa. At the tender age of 21, he was already responsible for a R200 million international project. Nkululeko was part of a team that did cost management for the cargo terminal at King Shaka International Airport, a project that involved monitoring of exchange rates and foreign currencies.

As a student Nkululeko did not have the money to pay his fees, but an announcement by his HOD, Mr Ravi Chetty, that a top student would get in-service training organised by the department, motivated Nkululeko to work hard. He became top student in his second year which earned him the in-service training at LDM, which was the start of a very successful career.



Nkululeko, (right) showing Zama Sishi, Director: Stakeholder Relations, MUT, some of his projects

Nkululeko graduated with a diploma in Quantity Surveying at MUT and has since furthered his studies with two other institutions, obtaining a B.Tech and a B.Sc in Quantity Surveying. In May 2018 when MUT was faced with the tragic passing of Zolile Khumalo, a first-year Quantity Surveying student who was shot and killed by a former partner at her residence, Nkululeko wanted to lend a hand to his alma mater. "Where I come from we did not have much, but I didn't realise how poor we were because I come from a strong community background. I believe in giving without expecting anything in return. When I read in the paper about the tragedy at MUT, I knew I needed to lend a hand and share the little that I have. I believe in sharing whatever I have and helping those that can't afford basic necessities. In order to take my mind off my demanding work, I prepare food parcels and donate to those who need support."

"Everything I have earned was gained on merit. I always pushed my boundaries and when I felt I had reached my limit as an employee, I opened my own business," he said. "When I opened my business I wanted a challenge. There are not many African quantity surveying firms in Durban. My business, Azadi Consulting, based in Berea Road, Durban, is founded on ethical business policies. I don't believe in disadvantaging others to get ahead. I believe in sustainability and have reinvested all the profits back into the business," he added.

Nkululeko has a long list of beneficiaries, including primary school learners, the church, needy communities and giving back to MUT. Over the years he has taken a number of MUT Quantity Surveying students for Work-integrated Learning. When he donated towards the Zolile Khumalo cause, he became the first alumnus to be introduced to the new Vice-Chancellor, Dr Duma Malaza. Nkululeko could not believe that his gesture earned him the honour of spending time in the VC's office and engaging with him.