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MUT
MANGOSUTHU
UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY



MUT INTERNATIONAL WEEK

VICE-CHANCELLOR WELCOMES DELEGATES AT MUT'S 2ND INTERNATIONAL WEEK

Thank you so much for attending our second International Week both physically and online. It is an honour to host you this week. We note that some of you have travelled from as far afield as Botswana, Gauteng, Limpopo, and the Free State.

The second International Week was held from 21–24 November 2022.

“This International Week is part of our implementation plan for our Internationalisation Strategy 2025. That plan entails deepening our knowledge of how the internationalisation agenda at universities is rapidly changing. It is thus for this very reason that every year in November we invite all our strategic partners to add more currency to our internationalisation efforts. The context of internationalisation at universities is dynamic, and you are therefore here to enhance our internationalisation agenda. We do hope that you will also take new lessons learnt back home, get our University on your funding radar and also find new ways on how we could all collaborate to improve our mandate for teaching and learning, research and innovation, and community engagement.

“I am pleased to note that our agenda for the whole week includes representation from diverse stakeholders right through to how students could participate in the institution’s internationalisation efforts, whether at home or through cultural immersion programmes. A few years ago, we led our student leaders on a cultural immersion tour. It was the first time most of them had travelled outside South Africa. They returned to South Africa more aware of other cultures and participated positively in the student culture change project that we had developed.

“We start deliberations on our International Week being very cognisant of the impact of Covid-19 on creating



Professor Marcus Ramogale, Acting Vice-Chancellor

new campuses which are more than a shadow of their previous selves, with fewer staff members and fewer international students because many of the international students have opted for Collaborative Online International Learning and/or Internationalisation at Home. These are forms of internationalisation that would have been impossible many years ago. I am glad that we have various practitioners who will unpack these programmes more in the week.

“Those of you that had an opportunity to read my previous opinion piece in the MUT’s international magazine, Boundless, will note that I referred to a book, titled A world without work, in which the writer shows how new technologies have impacted the world of work, bringing dislocation, ‘but overall people move on; with new jobs getting created and society benefiting despite anxieties when new technologies emerge’. Surely, we are benefiting from emerging technologies in the internationalisation arena. We aim by the end of this International Week to have reached out and received input across borders as more of you are joining through online platforms.

“Drawing from the conference programme, I have used the African idiom, ‘If you want to walk alone, go fast but if you want to go further, walk together’. We have moved from having one signed MoU in just more than

a year to more than 10 quality MoUs ranging from South Africa (Cape Peninsula University of Technology and University of Venda), but also Botswana, Namibia, Cameroon, UK, France, Sweden, USA; and there are ongoing discussions in Ghana, Nigeria, India, and across the world. The fact that we are close to signing two partnerships with universities in France, is a huge milestone for us, given the language barriers and also the fact that we were able to get into higher education landscape in France through the strategic leadership of Professor Moncef Meddeb who will also be participating in this programme tomorrow.

“Working with eThekweni Municipality’s Intergovernmental Relations office will provide us with greater leverage than we have imagined.

“This week’s deliberations aim to advance our internationalisation agenda and the themes will focus on:

- Lessons learnt from South Africa’s Department of Higher Education and Training’s week in France,
- Understanding of South Africa’s higher education landscape,
- Navigating partnership challenges,
- Ability to rise above negativity for collaborations to succeed,
- Strengthening KwaZulu-Natal’s research agenda,
- Laying a foundation for international study programmes, and
- International education opportunities.

“Ladies and gentlemen, we cannot walk alone on this journey, we need to walk with you so we may go further by 2025 and beyond. Always remember the African Proverb which says: ‘If you want to go fast, go alone, if you want to go far, go together’. I look forward to walking together on this internationalisation journey which has always been very close to my heart. I was once an international student in the UK and it was a life-changing experience for me. I hope we can all be able to create those experiences for our university communities.”



I-WEEK DELEGATES MEET IN UMLAZI FOR FURTHER DISCUSSIONS

MUT International Week (I-Week) delegates from the University of the Free State, University of KwaZulu-Natal, the eThekweni Metropolitan Municipality, and MUT staff met the MUT Acting Vice-Chancellor and Principal, Professor Marcus Ramogale, at Umlazi's famous Max's Lifestyle on the last day of the gathering. This was in response to a presentation by Mr Andile Wafa, who encouraged MUT to enhance the township economy, a sentiment that was appreciated by the delegates.

Professor Ramogale informed the delegates of the University's latest developments, which included plans for the future. Among other topics, Professor Ramogale highlighted that they had created an Institutional Advancement office because "we want to do more".

Professor Ramogale said the success of the second International Week has made the University seriously consider making the conference an annual activity on the calendar. "We will invite people to talk about international relations," he said.

He explained that his vision of MUT was that of an institution at the centre of connecting nations. This envisaged position was supported by the Registrar, Dr Phumzile Masala, and the Acting Deputy Vice-Chancellor of Teaching and Learning, Dr Manyane Makua. Dr Masala said the type of collaboration Professor Ramogale was talking about would go a long way in

positioning the institution as a destination of choice for both local and international students.

Dr Makua highlighted the importance of partnerships, a point that was made by several speakers at the I-Week. Dr Makua said partnerships needed people who thought alike and had the same goals.

"Corporations are made up of people who have these qualities. They pull together their resources. Malls are built by people with like minds, which is why they are wealthy. You will never be wealthy if you work alone," said Dr Makua.

Dr Makua added that the reason for most people's failures is that they work in silos. He encouraged various institutions to work together to achieve more.



Professor Marcus Ramogale, at the head of the table, talking to some of the speakers and MUT staff

MUT'S I-WEEK REIGNITES STAKEHOLDER INTEREST

Many presenters at MUT's I-Week brought something of benefit to the University. eThekweni Municipality has opened its doors to the University, as was affirmed by the Speaker of the eThekweni Municipality, Councillor Thabani Nyawose, as well as the Head of Intergovernmental Relations, Eric Apelgren.

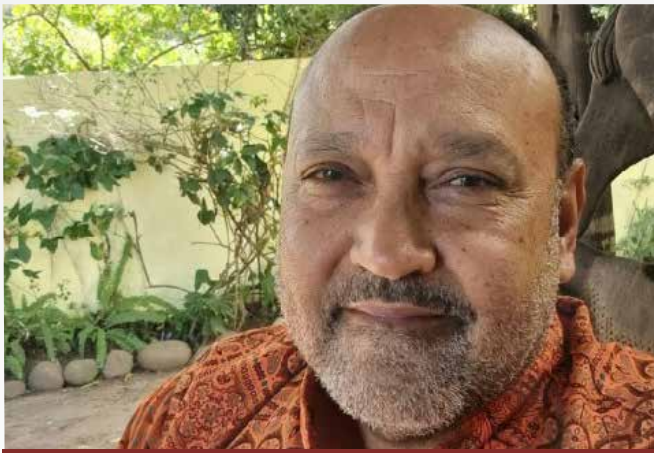
Brand South Africa provided an in-depth perspective on how universities could use their resources to build equity in their internationalisation efforts.

Universities also provided invaluable input ranging from the University of Venda, with which MUT has a



eThekweni Metropolitan Municipality Speaker, Thabani Nyawose

partnership; the University of Pretoria; Appalachian State University (USA); ENSIIE (France); the University of the Free State; University of KwaZulu-Natal; University



eThekweni Metropolitan Municipality Head of Intergovernmental Relations, Eric Apelgren

of the Western Cape; the University of Zululand; and MUT, as well as all Acting Deans of Faculties, Drs Xolile Mkhize, Fundiswa Nofemela and Mthokozisi Ntuli. Overall, stakeholders such as the National Research

Foundation; Department of Higher Education and Training; Universities South Africa; DAAD; Alexander von Humboldt; the US State Department; and the French Embassy, through its attaché, Dr Moncef Meddeb, showed a strong affinity towards the trajectory that MUT has taken. In particular, Dr Moncef Meddeb requested MUT Publications and Media Relations Officer, Bheki Hlophe, to give him an MUT site visit.

“I was impressed by your University. Many collaborations are still to take place between my country and yours. I am humbled and overjoyed at the gains you made during the South African and France Higher Education summit in France. Please relay my gratitude to Dr Manyana Makua who led the delegation to France. That is what leadership is. You travel miles and miles to bring something in return,” said Dr Meddeb. “I see many collaborations between our universities. I will be coming back early in the year to make a few announcements.”

NRF EXECUTIVE ENCOURAGES UNIVERSITIES TO ADOPT AN INTEGRATED APPROACH TO FUNDING

An executive at the National Research Foundation (NRF) has encouraged universities to adopt an integrated approach when it comes to funding their research. Dr Aldo Stroebe, Acting Group Executive for Strategy, Planning and Partnerships, and substantive Executive Director for Strategic Partnerships at the NRF, was speaking at the second MUT I-Week.. Dr Stroebe said it was important for universities to look at their areas of research and identify the key ones that they will pour their resources into and also establish partnerships to support those areas.

“Not every institution can be excellent in all areas that they support. A well-chosen internationalisation strategy is not just focusing on the internationalisation of students. It must very strongly include the internationalisation opportunities for staff. The impact on students is made by the staff,” explained Dr Stroebe.

He added that national research funding bodies across the world were reviewing their funding priorities and interrogating the contribution of various research projects to the public. Dr Stoebe said the NRF strengthened the country’s science and innovation through public resources, but there was a need for universities to form partnerships to strengthen their international competitiveness.



Dr Aldo Stroebe, Acting Group Executive for Strategy, Planning and Partnerships, and substantive Executive Director for Strategic Partnerships at the NRF

“The construct for internationalisation is strongly informed by postgraduate study and research,” said Dr Stroebe. “This emphasises the role of higher education in the science, technology and innovation landscape and the fundamental role of universities within the global knowledge system.”

Universities’ role in knowledge generation and advancement or technology advancement must be reflected through quality, he explained.

Dr Stroebe ended his session with a discussion on the challenging role that higher education is expected to play in society. He asserted that although universities generated knowledge and train graduates, they are also expected to play a role in transforming society.

FRENCH ATTACHÉ CALLS FOR INTERNATIONAL PARTNERSHIPS TO TACKLE COMMON CHALLENGES

“Partnerships are important because, given the scale of the problems that we are facing and the global challenges that we are facing, no one can afford to work by themselves. We are doing the work redundantly.” These were the words of Dr Moncef Meddeb, the Attaché for Science and Technology at the French Embassy in Pretoria, addressing participants on the second day of the MUT I-Week.

Dr Meddeb, who is responsible for organising the South African and France Higher Education summit held in France in June 2022, said the major task of higher education is that of tackling challenges facing humanity. This was made clear by the Covid-19 pandemic, which found universities competing against each other.

“Universities worldwide were competing, somehow. It was a competition to be, you know, the best ones in the international rankings. I think that’s not relevant anymore. Now we are seriously facing something that is threatening not only one country or one university, it’s about humanity itself. At the end of the day, we need to tackle the challenges that are threatening humanity,” explained Dr Meddeb.

But Dr Meddeb emphasised that although the challenges might have an international commonality, it was important to recognise the local elements.

“If we think about the international partners, we all need each other, the challenges are global but the solutions must be local and we need the local knowledge and the indigenous knowledge of all our communities worldwide,” confirmed Dr Meddeb.



Dr Moncef Meddeb, the Attaché for Science and Technology at the French Embassy



AMBASSADE DE FRANCE EN AFRIQUE DU SUD

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Égalité
Fraternité*

ETHEKWINI MUNICIPALITY THANKS MUT FOR HELPING COMMUNITIES

Understanding the value of partnerships, and good neighbourliness, the University’s management introduced a concept of ‘anchoring’ within the community. This ‘anchoring’ is also a part of the University vision, “to be anchored in our communities”. This concept means having plans to grow together with

your neighbours. In terms of the University’s intentions, this strategy opens the University to the general public and does away with the ivory tower mentality. As a follow-through to its commitment to grow with its neighbours, the University has been at the forefront when its immediate neighbours experienced problems.

During the aftermath of the floods that ravaged Durban and other parts of KwaZulu-Natal, the MUT sourced and distributed large food parcels to its students and the community of the Umlazi Township. While addressing the second I-Week, the Speaker of the eThekweni Metropolitan Municipality, Thabani Nyawose, thanked the University for coming to its neighbours' aid when they needed help. "The University is the first one to offer help, even before the city. We thank MUT for that," said Nyawose.

Responding to the comments made by the Speaker, Mbali Mkhize, the Senior Director of Marketing and Communications at MUT, said in all the societies she was aware of, helping a neighbour was an act of godliness.

"Our neighbours around the University are people like us. We feel their pain and rejoice at their achievements. I must also hasten to add that the Gift of the Givers was a God-sent to us. We only made contact with them once, and they gave us more than we expected. Now they call us to check if we need anything. It is a pleasure working with them," said Mkhize.



From left, Thabani Nyawose, and Mbali Mkhize

Through its Department of Marketing and Communications, MUT sources food parcels from the Gift of the Givers and distributes them to students, staff and the general public in need. On top of that, Gift of the Givers has been instrumental in many new initiatives at MUT.

MUT I-WEEK CREATES A PLATFORM TO DISCUSS INTERNATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES

Most presenters focused on how higher education institutions should plan for the near future by creating ties with each other. The speakers highlighted the need for students and staff to work on common issues with their counterparts at other institutions, such as the same areas of research, or in the case of staff, enrolling and studying common academic programmes, and, in the case of students, possibly obtaining joint accreditation from more than one institution.

What dominated discussions was creating ways for students to get to different places of study, to not only study academic programmes, but also the local cultures and sub-cultures, so that when they return to their country, they would have changed, and have a new perception of the world. There was a strong sense from presenters, like Professor Theo Davies, an Alexander von Humboldt scholar, that such an experience would go some way in dealing with social ills, like racism, xenophobia, gender-based violence, and others.



Some of the speakers, delegates and MUT staff at the event

several opportunities that DHET offered for studying abroad. Adams presented opportunities for historically disadvantaged institutions as well as opportunities for students themselves. One of these programmes is the Erasmus+ programme, which is linked to the European Union.

SOUTH AFRICA SWEDEN UNIVERSITY FORUM

South Africa • Sweden



ALL SYSTEMS GO AS MUT PREPARES FOR SASUF 2024

MUT Vice-Chancellor, Professor Marcus Ramogale, identified several research collaboration opportunities between MUT and Swedish universities when he engaged Vice-Chancellors from various Swedish universities who attended the SASUF 2023 Vice-Chancellors' Forum. The forum was part of the SASUF Research and Innovation Week hosted by the University of the Western Cape from 28 to 31 March 2023.

The Vice-Chancellor led a diverse delegation that represented the institution across different conference tracks and themes. Several new partnerships were established at the conference and MUT researchers

are already working on conference papers and projects for SASUF 2024 to be co-hosted by three Swedish institutions from 13 to 17 May 2023.

Briefing his delegation after the conference, Professor Ramogale said, "We need to act as quickly as possible; however, it is important when choosing partners to identify similarities and to work with Swedish institutions that are a perfect match for MUT. We will honour the invitation to participate in the SASUF 2024 Research and Innovation Week to be hosted in Sweden."



Acting Vice-Chancellor and Principal, Professor Marcus Ramogale, with the MUT team that took part in the SASUF Conference

The foresight of MUT researchers who are already working on new projects and strengthening existing joint projects will see MUT making an even bigger impact in 2024. Affiliating with SASUF gave MUT the momentum to build life-long partners at home and in Sweden.

The SASUF 2024 Research and Innovation Week will be hosted jointly by three Swedish universities: Lund University, Malmö University and the Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences. Setting the scene for SASUF 2024, the Vice-Chancellors of the host institutions highlighted good weather and easy transit between the three host institutions as some

of the benefits that delegates should look forward to.

“You are probably asking yourselves why are three institutions hosting? Well, it makes sense because we have three campuses that are very close to one another; you are looking at about ten minutes by car from one campus to the next. Our differences and our similarities make the partnership more meaningful. You will experience the old traditional university which is Lund, and the newer institution founded in 1977 which is Malmö University, while the Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences will provide a feel of the countryside,” said the hosts.

MUT POSTER PRESENTATIONS AT SASUF 2023

Climate Change Awareness and Decision on Adaptation Measures by Livestock Farmers in South Africa

Professor Busisiwe Nkonki-Mandleni, Director at the MUT's Community Engagement and Development Directorate, presented a poster on climate change awareness during the SASUF sustainability summit. The poster culminated in a research project undertaken by MUT's Professor Busisiwe Nkonki-Mandleni in collaboration with Professor Anna Ouma of Umea University, Sweden, and Dr Ogunde from the University of the Free State. During the conference, Professor Nkonki-Mandleni connected with some delegates who expressed an interest to partner on the project.

Following is a brief abstract of the joint project:

Due to glaring evidence of climate change with adverse effects on livelihoods in terms of animal production, the poster was presented to seek collaborations on the research findings of the study that established the extent of awareness of climate change and adaptation measures among select livestock producers in the Eastern Cape. Findings indicated that marital status, level of education, formal extension, temperatures and how land was acquired, significantly affected awareness of climate change. The study suggested that the positive and significant variables that affected awareness and adaptation, which were married livestock farmers, formal extension, how land was acquired, gender, and information on climate change to improve livestock production, be considered when adaptation strategies are implemented. The fact that how land was acquired



Professor Busisiwe Nkonki-Mandleni presenting a poster at the conference

was positive and significant in both selection and adaptation models indicated its effective role in creating awareness and adaptation to climate change. Gender, which positively and significantly affected adaptation, suggested selection of adaptation strategies depends on males possibly because they are the ones who make decisions in household farming activities. Finally, information on climate change to improve livestock production appeared to play a significant role in the selection of adaptation measures. This calls for timely and relevant information on climate change to be made available to livestock farmers.

Towards a Framework for Holistic Student Support

Arthi Ramrung, a lecturer at the Teaching and Learning Development Centre's Maths & Science Unit, captivated South African and Swedish audiences who took a keen interest in the poster which focused on holistic student support.

"A team of members from the Higher Education Learning and Teaching Association of Southern Africa initiated a project that focuses on researching and understanding holistic student support to develop possible models and or frameworks thereof. The team comprises members from six South African universities (University of Cape Town, Witwatersrand, University of Johannesburg, Durban University of Technology, MUT, and the University of the Western Cape).

"The project draws on the notion that to prepare students for academic success, we need to consider the student as a whole, i.e. not only their academic needs but their psychosocial needs as well. Influences of environment, background and culture structure how a student engages with their studies. We would like to understand the Swedish environment and its influence on students' development in addition to the South African environment. As such, we look for collaborative partners from Sweden.

"This study aims to gain insight into the types of support that incorporate both the epistemological and ontological access our students need to succeed in higher education. The project will expand to include all levels of study as we often forget the ontological influences on postgraduate students' learning and development. Developing and implementing holistic student support systems aimed at addressing the all-inclusive student experience both at the undergraduate and postgraduate level, has the potential to counterbalance some of the consequences of these realities and improve overall student success. Moreover, building elements of care could have the added benefit of supporting student well-being and integration," explained Ramrung.

Phytoremediation Technology

Awonke Mbangi, a lecturer in the MUT Department of Agriculture, is excited at the prospects gained from presenting his project on phytoremediation. Mbangi's poster presentation was well received and enabled him to connect with Dr Owusu-Sekyere Enoch from the Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences who will partner with Mbangi on assessing the economic impact of the contamination around the affected communities. Mbangi was also linked to Professor Christian Maurize



MUT's Arthi Ramrung, right, with a delegate at the conference



Awonke Mbangi during poster presentation at SASUF2023

from Lulea University of Technology. Although Professor Maurize was not part of the delegation attending the conference, he has done a lot of work on this subject.

"My proposal is on phytoremediation technology which is the use of a special group of plants called hyperaccumulators to remediate contaminated soils. These soils pose a threat to food security, water bodies, and biodiversity in the environment. We also want to employ different techniques to make the pollutants more bioavailable to the plants. This is done by applying chelating agents like ethylenediaminetetraacetic acid. After the growing period, these plants will be harvested, dried and burnt in a furnace. The heavy metal-rich ash will then be extracted and this can be disposed of in a responsible manner that does not threaten food security, human health and biodiversity. We also want to look at the degradation of organic compounds using microorganisms. This is, however, beyond the scope of our expertise and the SASUF conference was instrumental in establishing partners who can add value to this area.

"Overall, the conference was a very enriching experience and I hope to nurture the connections into strong professional relationships that can benefit not only the people involved but our students and the institution at large," said Mbangi.

MUT PRESENTATIONS AT THE SASUF 2023 SUSTAINABILITY WORKSHOP

Challenging the view on knowledge and power

Zama Sishi, Director of Stakeholder Engagement, jointly presented a workshop session with Susanna Höglund Arveklev, a lecturer from University West in Sweden. The joint session was titled, Inclusive internationalisation: Transforming the education horizon through dialogue about teaching and learning practices in South Africa and Sweden.

Sishi's presentation responded to Sustainable Development Goal 4, focusing on quality education. "Our project aims to generate curriculum reforms that shift the norms to learning as a social practice with co-creation between educators and students, thereby challenging and shifting prevailing norms and power order. The workshop outlined various ways that would enable universities to achieve inclusive internationalisation. Strategies to decolonise knowledge dissemination and student feedback considered basic integrated communication strategies such as finding the students where they are using modern-day communication channels and applying more than one way to engage with students in class. Disrupting norms in education and a shift from the popcorn theory were suggestions provided towards meaningful learning outcomes and knowledge control," Sishi said.

Höglund Arveklev shared a case study showcasing how University West adopted norm-critical pedagogy to educate nursing students towards an awareness of social norms and power structures. "Central in norm-critical pedagogy is to create a friction and question what's 'normal'. We are creating learning that reveals and challenges norms and changes unequal power relations. Students are taught to understand that one can't navigate from one's own perspective; even with good intentions, some actions may have discriminating effects on others," said Höglund Arveklev, summarising the case study.

Translating the lessons we have learned from the Covid-19 era into the work of PhD studies and social justice considerations.



Zama Sishi, and Susanna Hoglund



Xolile Ngubane, second from right, with SASUF partners

Xolile Ngubane, Director at the Technology Station in Chemicals at MUT presented a session focusing on Covid19 Impact on Rural and Township Entrepreneurship. The presentation was a collaboration between MUT, Stellenbosch University, Södertörn University, Stockholm University, and Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences. "SMMEs still remain one of the key routes to sustainable rural and township livelihoods pre- and post-socio-economic crisis, including the 2008 global recession. Some studies have considered the plight of the rural and township SMMEs even prior to the Covid19 era and these entities (rural and township SMMEs) fall under communities described as being poverty-stricken. Rural and Township SMMEs are the most affected. This project is based on the case study of rural and township SMMEs in the province of KwaZulu-Natal and the impact of Covid19 on their operations and business sustainability," said Ngubane.

VIEWS OF HIGHER ACADEMIC LEADERSHIP ON ACADEMIC FREEDOM

Now that MUT is fully active in the internationalisation agenda, many platforms are available that provide opportunities for the University to engage in agenda-setting discourses for higher education. One of those discourses is academic freedom. At the South Africa-Swedish Forum held digitally in September 2022, MUT had an opportunity to gain a high-level understanding of academic freedom as understood by various universities in South Africa and Sweden.

Professor Astrid Soderbergh from Widding University (Sweden) believes that academic freedom is a necessary foundation; a contract that universities have with society. It is under threat in Sweden. Only the freedom of research is legally protected.

According to Professor Tawana Kupe, Vice-Chancellor and Principal at the University of Pretoria, South Africa, academic freedom is embedded in the Bill of Rights of the South African Constitution. Section 16:1 stipulates that (1) Everyone has the right to freedom of expression, which includes— (a) freedom of the press and other media; (b) freedom to receive or impart information or ideas; (c) freedom of artistic creativity; and (d) academic freedom and freedom of scientific research.

In terms of institutional arrangements in South Africa, universities have a right to appoint, and choose their visions and missions. That is where tensions arise with major contestations being on tuition fees and control by funding agencies.

Professor Sizwe Mabizela from Rhodes University also believes that the selling point for academic freedom is the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa's Section 16. "Higher education needs to promote and sustain academic freedom and scientific enquiry. There should be this awareness of threats to academic freedom and academics need to become role models for academic freedom and as such, model equality in their relationships. Academic freedom restrains governments and others from interfering in the pursuit of truth or knowledge. There is a need for a social compact

between the University and society."

He cautioned, though, that the biggest threat lies within the corridors of the academy where some individuals seem to think that others have an obligation to subscribe to their ideas. "We need to embrace the mantra of academic freedom," he said.



Professor Astrid Soderbergh



Professor Tawana Kupe



Professor Sizwe Mabizela

INTERNATIONAL STUDENT RECRUITMENT



Umlazi Schools that took part in the Campus France, and MUT and Campus France officials

STUDY ABROAD OPPORTUNITIES FOR UMLAZI HIGH SCHOOL LEARNERS

The first term of 2023 was dedicated to both inbound and outbound student mobility, providing opportunities to MUT students and Umlazi Township high school learners to explore calls to study abroad on fully funded scholarships. As an anchor university, MUT has a duty to grow in stature with surrounding communities.

In implementing MUT's Anchor Strategy, the Marketing and Communications department organised an Education Abroad tour in collaboration with the international scholarships unit of the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET), and Campus

France South Africa. Nine schools were selected and hosted at Velabahleke High School for presentations from MUT, DHET, and Campus France on 17 April 2023 as part of the three-day recruitment tour. The occasion became an opportunity to showcase Umlazi Township excellence as each school was invited to bring their top achievers who would meet and exceed the academic criteria to qualify for the scholarships.

Kealeboga Letlhaku, Deputy Director of International Scholarships at DHET, opened the minds of over 150 Umlazi learners to undergraduate study opportunities

across Europe, Asia, the UK, and other countries. It was a eureka moment for the young girls and boys who had not even imagined having their careers launched outside the borders of South Africa. Letlhaku painted an exciting picture as she started from the basics of what a scholarship is, what study abroad entails, what opportunities are available, what the application process was, and lastly how these opportunities would put learners on a global platform and enable them to contribute even to some of the complex South African and global challenges.

“I want to tell you how you can benefit from these scholarships; the government has made them for you and I want all of you to take advantage of them. Trust me, you already have one foot in the door because of your academic excellence. When we communicated with your schools, we did not mention your names, it is your schools that selected you because they have confidence in your capabilities. I want to see each one of you applying to at least one call that is open or will be opening soon. I advise you to subscribe to our department so we can send you alerts when the call for applications opens,” said Letlhaku addressing learners.

Both learners and educators found comfort and vigour to explore the opportunities when they heard about the support that DHET provides to scholarship nominees. Knowing that the department does not just “ship students to a foreign country”, Letlhaku explained that DHET offers a range of support programmes for scholarship awardees. “We provide pre-departure

orientation to prepare students in terms of cultural differences, academic programme, and expectations from both South Africa and host countries. Constant monitoring of learners’ academic progress is done, and interventions are provided, if necessary. We walk the entire journey with the students even beyond completion of studies abroad.” Letlhaku said.

Carrying their school badges with pride and looking forward to becoming global citizens, the learners who attended were from Velabahleke High School, Menzi High School, Shumayela High School, Ogwini Comprehensive High School, Zwelibanzi High School, King Shaka High School, Umlazi Senior Secondary School, Sibusisiwe Comprehensive High School, and Sidelile High School.

Learners were not the only beneficiaries of the study abroad opportunities, presentations covered scholarships for Master’s and PhD programmes available, to the excitement of teachers who requested more information as these postgraduate opportunities would elevate their skills and provide a global aspect to their lesson planning. Responding on behalf of the learners, Amahle Ntshayintshayi, a grade 12 learner from Velabahleke High School accentuated that the process of moulding gold requires dedication and resilience. Similarly, moulding the future of learners requires resilience and dedication. “I promise we are going to consider the opportunities; we will work hard and with resilience to prepare ourselves to study abroad,” said Ntshayintshayi.

TAKING CAMPUS FRANCE TO UMLAZI TOWNSHIP

The French Embassy, represented by Gail Vermaak, Manager for Campus France South Africa, mesmerised Umlazi High School learners during her presentation of French-South Africa scholarships. Vermaak connects scholarship awardees to more than 1 000 French universities as part of her work at Campus France, an entity of the French Embassy.

Destination marketing is a tactic Vermaak employed to attract MUT final-year students and Umlazi grade 12 learners to study in France. Finding out that over 3 500 people from all over the world study in France each year, assured students of a life outside of Umlazi Township.

“France provides excellent higher education because of the outstanding research and innovation capacity. We are among the world-leading economic powers. Culture, language, food, scenery, castles, and art galleries are just some of the things that will enhance your study experience. Our international students enjoy quality student life and as a top destination, students have easy access from France to other countries in Europe,” said Vermaak.

The Campus France tour provided for multiple audiences, and what was presented resonated with hundreds of students that packed Bozzoli Hall on 18 April 2023.



Facing camera, Gail Vermaak, Dr Temwa Moyo, and Kealeboga Letlhaku during a session at MUT's Bozzoli Hall

Because Campus France is not a university but a representative of all universities in France, the available streams cut across the faculties of engineering, management, and natural sciences. Several academic staff attended with their students and were invited to take up a call for Master's and PhD scholarships opening on 25 May 2023.

The Campus France tour to the MUT campus was conceptualised after a visit by Dr Monsef Meddeb, the France-South Africa Education Attaché. The partnership and collaboration between the two institutions are growing and have now tapped into the township high schools. This collaboration is set to revive international education in Umlazi Township as it has sparked a conversation to explore linkages at the school level following a request from Mr Vusi Mhlongo, Principal of Velabahleke High School, to be linked with schools in France. Mhlongo said, "These kinds of programmes inspire young leaders to excel, we are grateful that you have chosen township excellence; our bags are packed and ready for France."

RECRUITING STUDENTS FROM THE KINGDOM OF LESOTHO

The internationalisation of MUT calls for a diverse student population providing the coming together of cultures, languages, and standards of behaviour. Efforts to diversify the MUT campus manifest in different ways, one of which is recruiting students from quintiles 1 to 5, recruiting across and outside the KwaZulu-Natal province, as well as reaching some of the schools in the SADC region.

From 27 to 31 March, the MUT student recruitment team visited Lesotho to attract potential students to apply to study at the University in 2024. The week spent travelling around different districts in Maseru covered Leribe, Qasha's Nek, Mafeteng, Thaba Tseka, and Maseru central districts. Intense back-to-back travel with some of the districts located more than 500 km apart, demanded

extreme dedication from the team to make the MUT brand present.

International student recruitment brings a lot of competition and different dynamics like varying school calendars, different curricula, and the main challenge of funding and scholarship opportunities. The burning question at each encounter with students is whether MUT provides funding to non-South African students. Serious conversations led by the MUT international office are taking place to ensure that funding does not become a barrier to the institution's vision to attract international students.

The Lesotho career fair is a major event officiated by the



MUT Staff, Ayanda Bulose, squatting, and Sthembile Maphumulo, foreground, with glasses, with learners of on the Lesotho schools

Ministry of Education and Training, under the leadership of Mrs Mampaqa Anna Hlojeng who is responsible for approval of all the fair activities. Visiting the MUT stand at the fair, Hlojeng expressed her appreciation and noted the presence of MUT at the fair for three years in a row. “My office is very encouraged by your support; it takes a lot of logistics to create a platform for the BaSotho students to be exposed to opportunities in South Africa. As the officiator of the career fair, I keep a record of who is here and what qualifications and programmes you bring to the fair. We appreciate the diversity; our kingdom has an interest in building capacity in agriculture and engineering which are some of the qualifications you provide,” said Hlojeng.

The Leribe district career fair hosted at Leribe English Medium School was one of the most attended. “This is a very important programme for learners to get information and support in planning their careers. We have had to approve keeping learners at home so that we play host to the programme,” said Maletsika, a representative of the Leribe District Administration office.

The Lesotho student recruitment campaign presented MUT with an audience of more than 12 000 learners from 173 schools.

THOSE ALERTS IN YOUR INBOX ARE A GAME CHANGER

Globally, bilateral and/or international cooperation agencies such as DAAD, USAID, and others, provide various capacity-building opportunities for both staff and students at universities. They issue open calls for application proposals, or intent, annually. One of the respondents to such an alert in her inbox, Mbali Mkhize, Senior Director of Marketing and Communications, received not one but two awards through DAAD – the German Academic Exchange Service, as well as the German Rectors’ Conference for participation in the Dialogue on Innovative Higher Education Strategies. This saw her being trained in the National Multiplication Training which was awarded to the University of Venda

and the University of the Free State with the University of Potsdam in Germany as well as Leibniz Universität in Hannover.

Mkhize has finalised the National Multiplication Training 2021/22. She says, “I was one of the candidates who submitted an application and was selected on a competitive basis by a committee of experts in the field of internationalisation. The whole week spent at the University of Venda was to track successes of MUT on internationalisation, and these have been well documented.”



NMT-DAAD Training at Univen

Her next move is now to train a new generation on internationalisation, a process she had already started before the training. “It will now be intensified because now I am an official DAAD alumnus, and the whole idea is to multiply knowledge through mentoring the new generation. I am grateful to the University of the

Free State and the University of Venda who were the custodians of the National Multiplication Training 2021/22. There were many experts, some retired who were roped into making sense of this training, and I am honoured to have been mentored by the best.”

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IMPLEMENTING MUT STRATEGY 2025-INTERNATIONAL VISIBILITY FOR MUT AND MAKING INROADS IN AFRICA

Goals of project
Fostering an internationalisation agenda across three universities in Africa

Implementation plan: Measures and activities/ milestones and actors

1. Hosting collaborative public lectures or webinars during Africa Day
2. International student participation in the webinars as well as giving them a voice on MUT Radio
3. Engagements/visits by staff and/students at MUT, NIT, Botho, and SMCE
4. Entrepreneurship online conference for students from MUT, NIT, Botho, and SMCE
5. Cultural immersion tour for students from MUT, NIT, Botho, and SMCE
6. MUT International Week
7. Publication of an International newsletter

Status of your project: Which goals were already reached?

- Africa Day collaborative public lectures: Botho University & Botswana Open Air University with attendees from Namibia, SMCE, and other universities outside Africa
- International student participation in the webinars as well as giving them a voice on MUT Radio
- Voices from Africa: encouraging intercultural communication
- MUT International Week:
 - » Attendance-Germany, France, USA, Africa over four days
 - » Strengthened relations with partners (BrandSA, EThekweni Municipality, French & US embassies, Office of the Mayor, Department of Higher Education & Training (DHET))

Challenges and Support: What helped you? What was/ is still challenging?

- Processing honorarium for international speakers-Disclaimer clause stating payments can take up to 180 days because of verification processes
- Funding: Request for virement
- Office of the Vice-Chancellor & the executive support
- Project buy-in by colleagues in marketing & communications

Sustainability of your Project. Which are the next steps? Are there follow-up-projects?

- Internationalisation Project has now been funded by DHET for R16 million
- International newsletter: *Boundless*
- MoU signed with Botho University
- Pending MoUs with SMCE and BOA
- Partnering with BrandSA & EThekweni Municipality when we send delegations overseas
- Student cultural immersion tours
- 3rd MUT I-Week edition loading
- 2nd Africa Day edition loading
- Entrepreneurship webinar/conference

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NEW MEMORANDA OF UNDERSTANDING

SPELMAN COLLEGE LATEST MUT PARTNER

Professor Marcus Ramogale has expressed his appreciation of the new MUT international partners.

The new partners include Spelman College, based in the USA, Atlanta Georgia. MUT and Spelman College had a partnership that was funded by USAID from 2000–2005. A year later, both institutions applied for new funding from the then Association Liaison Office. The relationship had a lot of impact on the capacity building of MUT’s researchers as well as the administrative staff from Fundraising and Development, International Relations as well as Marketing and Communications.

“I am happy that we have formally rekindled this partnership through a memorandum of understanding which we signed at the beginning of the year. Our areas of collaboration will encompass faculty development initiatives and capacity building for staff and faculty, as well as short-term faculty-led study abroad,” said Professor Ramogale. “This is not only in line with the MUT Strategy 2025 but it encapsulates the 2020 Department of Higher Education’s Framework for Internationalisation. In the voice of the Minister of



Higher Education and Training, Dr Blade Nzimande, our approach is a comprehensive approach that will ensure that we have an internationalised campus,” Professor Ramogale added.

“The scientific landscape is largely international, and we are reinvigorating our international presence to allow our researchers opportunities to co-author internationally. In this regard, we are on a mission to ensure that our researchers are active in the international collaboration landscape as it is associated with higher quality innovation than domestic collaboration,” said Professor Ramogale as he announced the Spelman College partnership to his executive management.

“I would argue that these quality partnerships provide us an opportunity for global ideas, resources and expertise to create more opportunities for groundbreaking discoveries and the broadening of the perspectives and knowledge base of those students who take part in international experiences,” he added.



MUT AND BHARATHIAR UNIVERSITY DECLARE THEIR MOU

In an online meeting held between MUT and Bharathiar University on 14 March 2023, both universities openly declared the MoU which was signed electronically on the 6th of March by the executive management of both universities.

Bharathiar University in India has been ranked by Times Higher Education Young Universities World Ranking in the range of 201 to 250. Bharathiar University is in Coimbatore, Tamil Nadu, India. Both Bharathiar University and MUT are named after changemakers – with Bharathiar University named after the Tamil poet Subramania Bharati and MUT named after Prince Mangosuthu Buthelezi. In addition, both universities are young, with Bharathiar established in 1982 and MUT in 1979.

Declaring the MoU, Professor Marcus Ramogale, MUT's acting Vice-Chancellor and Principal, shared MUT's vision and provided progress on the rationale for the University to encourage the entrepreneurship route for students.

“With the unemployment rate picking up in this country, we want our students to become employers, not employees. It is heart-warming for me that we will partner with a university that has put entrepreneurship at the heart of its value proposition,” he said.

Bharathiar University has made huge advances in entrepreneurship and has been impressed by MUT's managers who are driving the Vice-Chancellor's vision to have MUT known as a 'university of entrepreneurs'. The realisation of that dream may not be too far, given the commitment by the Director-In-Charge of the Bharathiar School of Management and Entrepreneur Development, Dr Rupa Gunaseelan, to implement the MoU activities as soon as possible.

“Very soon, we will put a plan forward which entails virtual meeting classes, a faculty and exchange programme as well as working with you to plan the Entrepreneurship Conference that you aim to host in October/November,” she said. She also said she was moved by the Vice-Chancellor's great interest to move MUT forward and this “will be a huge transformation for both universities”.



MORE GLOBAL INPUT



MUT DELEGATION TRAINED IN GERMANY FOR CLIMATE CHANGE MITIGATION PROJECT

Following the award of the Climate Change Mitigation project, co-sponsored by funding agency GIZ; German energy company efa Leipzig; and local energy company Siyacanda, a South African delegation visited an original equipment manufacturer (OEM) in Germany for training and transfer of first-stage technical know-how.

The South African delegation led by Dr Olu Ajayi, Siyacanda CEO, included Professor Babatunde Bakare, Mrs Petra Krueger and Mrs Anja, while the German delegation included Dr Hebnner, Dr Wolfgang Jockel and Mr Dominic Mncwabe.

On 20 May 2023, MUT will officially launch its Climate Change Mitigation project and will be joining a few elite universities in Africa to tackle climate change head-on. This project will enable MUT to contribute to Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 13 on Climate Action. "Our aim for sending a cohort of experts to Germany for training was to ensure sustainable improvement of the capacities of local experts in the field of climate protection and air pollution control," said Dr Ajayi.

During the training in Germany, the team was also introduced to the co-sponsor, efa Leipzig. At the OEM, the team received theoretical and practical training based on Dr Holger Födisch's environmental measurement technology, including:



Dr Jockel from Germany with MUT dean-Prof Bakare and Dr Olu from Siyacanda

- Flow measuring device (FMD 02),
- Filter monitoring device (PFM 13),
- Multi gas analyzer (MGA 12),
- Continuous emission measurement (CEM) systems,
- OPTIMA 7,
- Emissions data acquisition, analysis, and reporting,
- Basic service/maintenance of equipment and instruments, and
- Quality control and assurance.

"Complex as the training seems to be, I am happy that this marks the first Climate Change laboratory for MUT and it is a project that cuts across not just one faculty but all our faculties. I am committed to making this project a success, and I have already roped in other departments so that we give more depth and breadth to the University's research priority area on the environment," said Professor Bakare. He added that this project will also be an exemplar for private-public partnership as the results should drive SDG 13 which is of interest to both industry and government.

Dr Olu Ajayi has been working with MUT on ad hoc projects and for him to deliver such a huge project to MUT speaks volumes about his organisation's commitment to improving historically disadvantaged universities and communities. He mentioned a great respect for Dr Jockel, the German partner.



Dr Bethel Mutanga, left, with HoD, Dr Vikash Jugoo

In this partnership, the department receives **state-of-the-art equipment and simulators to use for student practicals.**

Furthermore, students and staff members can enrol and obtain industry certifications free of charge

MUT ICT EXCELLENCE CAPTIVATES PROSPECTIVE STUDENTS

The Department of Information and Communications Technology (ICT) at MUT is living up to the promise of what universities of technology are envisaged to do.

Recently, ICT emerged as the front-runner when it comes to the most sought-after qualifications by applicants. Over 15 000 prospective students applied for a place in the first-year Diploma in Information Technology, Class of 2023.

The popularity of this programme is by no means a coincidence. As MUT Deputy Registrar of Academic Affairs, Zolisa Gqamane, explains, the Diploma in Information Technology is not an 'easy' qualification for prospective students to get into although it is offered by several universities.

"It is one of those courses that students can read for in the bigger universities. That these prospective students have chosen MUT over other universities means the University's offering is superior," explained Gqamane.

The popularity of the course follows several ground-breaking activities and partnerships that the ICT department introduced in the previous year.

Partnering with global giants to deliver market-relevant training

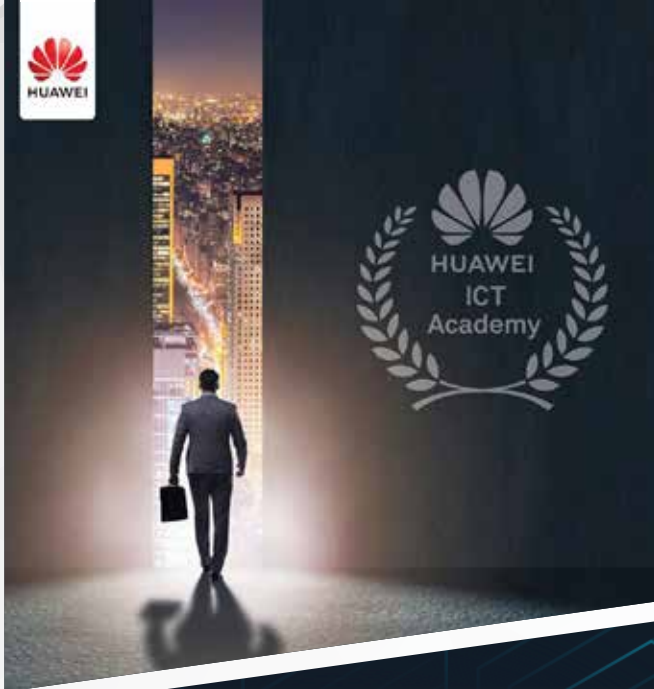
In its quest to deliver training that is rigorous and relevant to market demands, the ICT department partnered with Amazon AWS Academy and Huawei, one of the world's leading providers of fifth-generation mobile technology.

The department is now an accredited Huawei academy through this partnership with the tech giant. The initiatives were the brainchild of Dr Bethel Mutanga, a lecturer in the ICT department.

"In this partnership, the department receives state-of-the-art equipment and simulators to use for student practicals. Furthermore, students and staff members can enrol and obtain industry certifications free of charge," said Dr Mutanga.

Dr Mutanga said that the certifications and skills offered to the students and staff through this partnership would be cloud computing, artificial intelligence, the Internet of Things (IoT), big data, computer networks, computer security, and cyber security. Dr Mutanga said these skills have been identified as scarce skills by the government.

"According to my research findings, the skills gap was too wide; industry partnerships and certifications



can solve the problem. Through our Advisory Board Vice-Chairperson, Sfiso Nxumalo, I established contact with one of Huawei's executives, Xiashupin Sue and her team," Dr Mutanga explained.

The Huawei ICT Academy is a partnership between Huawei and academic institutions worldwide. Through this partnership, the academy delivers Huawei ICT technology training, encourages students to get Huawei certification, and develops talents with practical skills for the ICT industry and the community.

"As a result, this partnership is envisaged to improve both graduate employability and curriculum development. In addition, this partnership allows for free training of MUT academic staff to ensure they remain relevant in the industry," said Dr Mutanga.

Dr Vikash Jugoo, the Head of the ICT department, indicated that the partnership with Huawei would help to give "our students the edge by being exposed to the latest communications technologies and smart devices. It will also help staff to keep abreast of the new advancements in the field of telecommunication."

The Amazon partnership will give MUT access to the AWS Academy's free, ready-to-teach cloud computing curriculum that prepares students to pursue industry-recognised certifications and careers. In addition, having MUT as a registered partner institution allows students to do hands-on practicals on Amazon cloud infrastructure.

With the global reliance on technology to solve societal issues, the department is spearheading MUT's commitment to fostering and supporting the spirit of entrepreneurship.

Nurturing entrepreneurship and fighting graduate unemployment

The spirit of entrepreneurship that the ICT department nurtures is perhaps best exemplified by Mzamo Mbhele, who was in the third year of his Diploma in Information Technology (Software Development) qualification when he started looking for innovative ways to contribute to fighting unemployment.

Mbhele developed Job X, a mobile application that helps South African graduates seeking employment to look for jobs. Launched in November of the previous year, Mbhele's app downloads are north of 40 000.

His app development is an example of the mindset that Professor Marcus Ramogale, Acting Vice-Chancellor and Principal and the father of entrepreneurship at MUT, has been trying to inculcate within the student population. Professor Ramogale has always reminded students that there might not be any jobs in South Africa but there is a lot of work for those who see work as solving societal issues and turning these solutions into entrepreneurship projects.

Some of the skills developed for entrepreneurship are often nurtured through activities outside the classroom. It is for this reason that the ICT department regularly hosts hackathons targeting specific skills development.

Hackathons for skills development

Last year, the ICT department hosted three hackathons to get students involved in practical activities, which include workshops and competitions whereby students learn new technologies and thereafter compete in problem-solving.

The hackathons tasked students with assembling computer components and installing computer software and drivers to ensure that the computer could perform all its functions and connect to the internet. Workshops were conducted on 4IR technologies which included 3D printing, the IoT, and big data, and students received demonstrations on augmented and virtual reality.

Third-year communication network students were involved in a four-day Hackathon on Ethical Hacking, where they were exposed to the process of detecting vulnerabilities in an organisation's infrastructure that an attacker can exploit.



Head of the ICT department, Dr Vikash Jugoo, second from left, and Acting Dean of the Faculty of the Natural Sciences, Professor Roger Cooposamy, fourth from left, a partner from Industry, left, and ICT students

Their software development counterparts were involved in a Data Science Hackathon where they were taught advanced analytic techniques to extract valuable information from large datasets, to make strategic decisions. The use of artificial intelligence and algorithm efficiency are important techniques that are taught.

RESEARCH, INNOVATION AND ENGAGEMENT DVC SECURES FUNDING FOR INTERNATIONAL COLLABORATIVE STUDY

MUT's efforts at creating new international collaborations and strengthening existing ones have received yet another boost in the form of funding for a collaborative study. The Deputy Vice-Chancellor: Research, Innovation and Engagements, Professor Nokuthula Sibiyi, has secured funding for a collaborative project between South Africa and Sweden, which is part of SASUF (read more about this forum's activities in the South Africa Sweden University Forum chapter earlier in the publication).

Professor Sibiyi said the study was part of the SASUF Project, which is a collaborative project between MUT, DUT and Swedish universities. The project aims to make an invaluable contribution towards improving the health of the nation by strengthening maternal and child mortality surveillance, unpacking the trends in mortality, and making relevant information available for action.

He further explained that the approach adopted during this exploratory project was to involve senior researchers from the two participating Swedish universities in achieving the objectives of the project through workshops/seminars, postgraduate research training and/or supervision and public lectures.



Professor Nokuthula Sibiyi

The Deputy Vice-Chancellor said the Swedish collaborators were involved in a broad level of research and teaching activities in their institutions, "which are very relevant from the perspective of further possible collaboration in the proposed areas and regarding the listed activities".

Explaining how the funding fits into the general research and engagement goals, Professor Sibiyi said the project

aimed to develop a strategic approach to promoting universal health coverage and Sustainable Development Goal 3 health target indicators for maternal and child health in South Africa.

“This project will not only improve excellence in research and engagement, as outlined in the strategic objectives of the University; but will also address the major challenge of high maternal and child mortality rates in both countries,” said Professor Sibiya.

Professor Sibiya has expressed her appreciation to Mbali Mkhize, who is the MUT coordinator for SASUF. Professor Sibiya said Mkhize has been instrumental in supporting staff who expressed their interest in submitting their applications for funding.

“As part of the planned capacity initiatives, a workshop for grant writing will be offered to MUT staff so that during the next round of the call, more staff could be awarded the SASUF grant,” Professor Sibiya concluded.

NOTABLE VISITS TO MUT

It would be remiss of this publication not to acknowledge some great visits towards the end of the year.

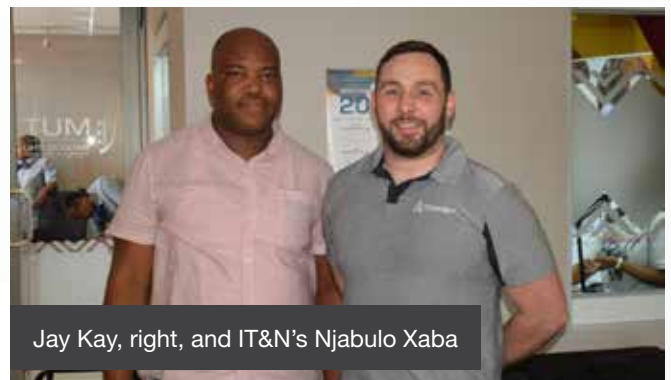
From France, French attaché, Dr Moncef Meddeb, visited MUT in November 2022 (refer to the MUT International Week chapter earlier in the publication). Dr Dossantos-Uzaralde from ENSIEE in France, visited MUT on a two-day fact-finding mission to explore how both universities could collaborate.

From the USA, Dr Terry Hofecker, CEO of Demeter Inc. visited the Faculty of Natural Sciences. The visit has produced positive spin-offs for MUT with partnerships that will be signed with Ohio State University research institutes, Sinclair College, SmartAgro Rural Development, and Soil1 LLC.

From the United Kingdom, Jay Kay from Askaris Cyber Security met with MUT’s Cybersecurity Specialist, Mr Njabulo Xaba, at a global cybersecurity conference in Johannesburg. The relationship led to Kay spending a week at MUT capacitating staff and students on cybersecurity.

Closer to home, from Botswana, Dr Godson Gatsha, Deputy Vice-Chancellor: Student Services at the Botswana Open University with strong ties to the Canadian Commonwealth of Learning (CoL), visited MUT to discuss ways in which MUT could become a member of the CoL to have greater access to:

- Open educational resources,
- The CoL consortium for Master of Business Administration and Master of Public Administration,
- Virtual University of the Small States of the Commonwealth Programmes and courses, and
- CoL’s TVET initiative.



MUT REAPS REWARDS FROM ITS RATED RESEARCHERS

The number of rated researchers at the University keeps growing. Towards the end of 2022, the University welcomed the news that two of its senior staff members have had their Natural Research Foundation (NRF) rating improved from C3 to C2. Professor Nokuthula Sibiyi, the Deputy Vice-Chancellor: Research, Innovation and Engagement, and Professor Theophilus Clavell Davies, a Research Professor in the Faculty of Natural Sciences, were thrilled with the news. Professor Sibiyi has been a C3 researcher since 2017.

Other staff members were awarded their first NRF rating, a welcome recognition of their toil. This is a big plus for a University that has taken a firm decision to move from being a research-informed university to being a research-orientated institution.

Professor Sibiyi said that being awarded a C2 rating meant that she was recognised by her peers as an established researcher with a sustained recent record of productivity in her research area, which is primary healthcare with a specific focus on maternal and child health. While she will continue focusing on this area as it makes it easier for adjudicators who deal with rating applications, Professor Sibiyi is also encouraged to stay on this topic because there is still a lot to be uncovered, and she will benefit from the discipline involved.

“My five-year plan focuses on enhancing international recognition for the quality and impact of my research outputs to be awarded a better rating in 2029,” said Professor Sibiyi.

Professor Davies said the recognition provides him with added “motivation, impetus and enthusiasm for what I do, which is my research on mitigating environmental and health impacts of mining on neighbouring



Professor Theophilus Davies



Dr Devashan Naidoo

communities; and unveiling the geoenvironmental co-factors of diseases of unknown aetiology. I garner satisfaction from the fact that my work contributes substantially towards improving the public health of mining communities as well as contributing towards the betterment of societies' lives and livelihoods.”

The implications of these ratings can only augur well for the University, a point that was articulated by both Professor Sibiyi and Professor Davies. They agreed that the University research output was on an “upward trajectory”. Said Professor Davies: “The upward trajectory in research productivity at MUT is bound to continue in the next five to 10 years, so long as the institution continues to recruit and retain the research/retired professorial cadre and the core of Postdoctoral Fellows whom they mentor.”

Professor Sibiyi said that her focus in 2023 was to

enhance opportunities for collaboration with regional, national and international partners, and also to focus on capacity building of the University community on research, innovation and engagement. During the eight years considered by the NRF when assessing the applications, Professor Sibiya has published 58 journal articles, featured in three conference proceedings, contributed five book chapters, and presented at 46 local conferences and five international conferences. She also co-supervised 24 PhDs and 18 Master's students. Professor Sibiya was a senior supervisor in all these instances.

Professor Davies has published more than 30 articles in reputable journals, with researchers from both Africa and Europe and his MUT colleagues in the faculty. In 2018, he published a book, *A Code for Geoscientific Fieldwork in Africa: Guidelines on Health and Safety Issues in Mapping, Mineral Explorations, Geo-ecological Research and Geotourism*. This 325-page book was published by Nova Science Publishers in New York.

Hot on the heels of these seasoned researchers are some young researchers whose impact is recognised by their international peers. One of these is Dr Devashan Naidoo of the Centre for Algal Biotechnology (CAB) which is part of the Department of Nature Conservation. Dr Naidoo was awarded a Y rating. A Y rating denotes a promising young researcher.

Dr Naidoo said that it was a “stepping stone further establishing me as a promising South African scientist”. He also said that the rating was an important achievement because it reflects the quality of the work that they conduct at the CAB, and MUT is now being recognised for it. The rating will allow the CAB staff to apply to different funding instruments and will improve “our chances of success as well as improve collaborative efforts between MUT and leading local and international universities”, he said.

Dr Naidoo's current research work focuses on investigating protein and peptide structures from cyanobacteria for their ability to block the action of important proteins involved in the transmission of Covid-19 in in vitro and in vivo assays. Dr Naidoo has thanked centre director Professor Akash Anandraj, “for his continuous support over the last three years; his research ethic and innovative ideas drive the passion to produce novel and impactful research”.



FUNDING PROPOSALS

The 2022 MUT key performance indicator target stipulated that seven funded proposals be finalised for the reporting year. This target was exceeded by nearly 400% as 27 proposals were funded in 2022. The cumulative income from research grants and contracts was R8 884 950.20.

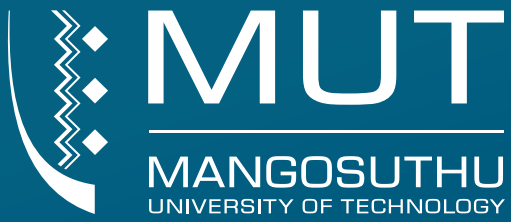
INNOVATION

MUT currently owns four South African patents, of which two were granted during the reporting period, and two trademarks. The successfully examined Patent Cooperation Treaty applications have now entered the international phase and were submitted to the United States Patent Office, the European Patent Office, the Canadian Patent Office and the Intellectual Property Office in China.

FELLOWSHIPS

Mbali Mkhize, Senior Director of Marketing and Communications, received a DAAD Fellowship (refer to the article, Those alerts in your inbox are a game changer, in the International Student Recruitment chapter).

Zama Sishi, Director of Stakeholder Engagement, received an International Visitor Leadership Program (IVLP) fellowship. The IVLP is the US Department of State's premier professional exchange programme. (Read more about Sishi in the article, Challenging the view on knowledge and power, in the South Africa Sweden University Forum chapter.)



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