

SPIRIT

APRIL 2021 – ISSUE NO. 1

LEADING FROM THE FRONT!

Professor Ramogale
honoured for promoting
student entrepreneurship



shape and own the future



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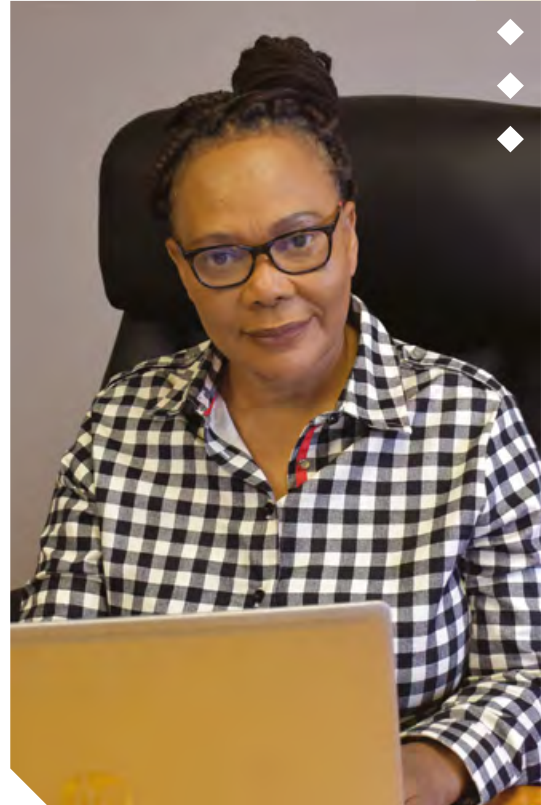
From the Desk of the Editor-in-Chief

Some lessons learned in 2020

The song we were made to sing in high school cannot be truer:

*Bal' izibusiso zakho-ke,
Uzibale-ke ngazinye, he!
Bala phela, aziningi na?
Bong' iNkosi ngazo, ungasoli, qha*

*Count your many blessings
Name them one by one
And it will surprise you
What the Lord has done*



Mbali Mkhize

To borrow from my Publications Officer, Mr Bheki Hlophe, with whom I have worked for over ten years, “The year 2020 was a watershed moment for the whole world”. This is what inspired me to spread this message of hope as we commence 2021: that despite everything negative that happened to us last year, we can still reflect and count our blessings with appreciation.

At the beginning, it was so surreal watching people dying in Italy, Spain, France, England, Brazil, and then in the USA. Before long, it was here too. Our families and friends started dying. My brother passed away in July. My last sight of him was when I took him to hospital. I never spoke to him afterwards; no one did. Even those who did not have COVID-19 were dying. Obviously, the risks and exposure to infection were too high. We will never know. What we do know is that we lost our beloved in huge numbers and we carry their memories in our hearts.

I have thought about this so many times and I can only say that we adjusted our lifestyles and we survived. I am now reminded of the many theorists who have

pointed out that living organisms develop different traits over time to adapt to new life challenges. During COVID-19, it's true that we all came up with different strategies to survive.

One message that the University leadership and our government reiterated over and over again was to mask up, sanitise and social distance. That worked! With these protocols came many new demands and we adapted. It was not easy but it was what we needed to do.

As we start 2021, we look back and celebrate the life we once had, the life we lost; and we embrace the new normal, knowing that there have been many blessings in our lives. We begin 2021 at MUT knowing that if we are to survive this year, transformation must be natural and come from within.

We are ready to embrace 2021 knowing that the shock cannot be worse than 2021 – and with that positivity, we carry our blessings into 2021 and will continue counting them.



*Professor Marcus Ramogale,
Acting Vice-Chancellor & Principal*

Message from the Acting Vice-Chancellor

Transforming our culture

The holiday break gave me a lot of time to think about our role at MUT. The more I read and thought about our strategy statement, “Shape and Own the Future”, the more I began appreciating this commitment that we all made for our University in 2019. Even while lying in bed early in the year for three weeks in severe pain and fatigue from COVID-19, I kept on looking for a deeper sense of the meaning of “Shape and Own the Future”.

The first thing that dawned on me was that the culture of MUT, that we say we would like to change, must first start with our wellness. How do we expect to “Shape and Own the Future” if our wellness is not at the centre of our day-to-day activities?

For this reason, I have discussed with the executive management committee that we need to start having open conversations about people’s COVID-19 experiences. I will soon be launching VC Conversations with staff and students who have survived the virus. Through these public conversations, I believe we will be able to help other staff and students to find ways to deal with COVID-19.

My second realisation was how critical our mission, vision, goals and core values are in our quest to “Shape and Own the Future”.

Our core values of Accountability, Integrity, Respect and Excellence (AIRE) are particularly important in creating a future we can be proud of.

Accountability

Let us lead by example and hold ourselves accountable. Let us take full responsibility for our activities and be accountable for our work. Let us be responsible and answerable for our actions.

Integrity

Let us do the right things. Let us be honest and be committed to our people, colleagues and students. Let us strive to support one another and be transparent in how we engage with each other.

Respect

Let us respect one another and differing opinions. The golden rule, “Do unto others as you would like done unto you”, is so meaningful in the context of respecting one another. Respect is earned and is a two-way process. You will be respected if you show respect to others.

Excellence

Let us make 2021 our year to shine, to do our best in everything we do. Let us celebrate our successes and take pride in what others are achieving.

With this in mind, we are entering 2021 with a big responsibility: to educate our young people in such a way that they can shape and own their futures. As if we didn’t already know it, the COVID-19 pandemic has both exposed and increased the dire unemployment levels in South Africa. Our message to students is that there are no jobs but there is plenty of work – if you think of work as an opportunity to solve problems. At MUT we are on a mission to create employers, not just employees; and now more than ever before, we are working to empower young people to become entrepreneurs by finding work wherever there are needs to be met.

As we bid good-bye to our final-year students and welcome our new first-year intake, may we embrace the journey for ourselves and others to shape and own the future – keeping in mind our vision, mission, goals and the core values which bind us together.

Resilient leadership propels Umlazi District to matric excellence amid COVID-19

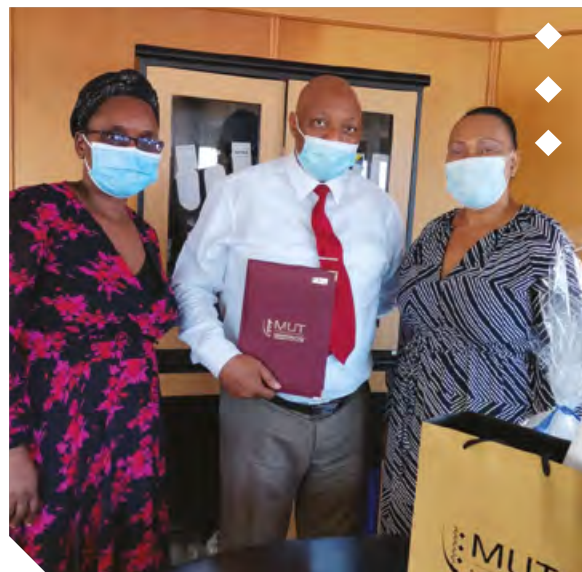
The remarkable leadership and support by the Umlazi district director Mr Ntokozo Cele and his management team saw the Umlazi district place second highest performing district in the province of KwaZulu-Natal at the end of last year.

First position would have been greater but scoring a pass of 80% is excellent performance considering the large number of learners who wrote matric exams in the district. This achievement by a district consisting of schools where online learning is not even a possibility due to lack of resources is testament to a district on a mission to provide quality education.

The turning point for Mr Cele was observing the sterling performance and improvement by schools that have in the past years performed dismally. Clearly, the district pulled out all the stops as soon as Grade 12 learners were allowed to return to class after the hard lockdown.

“It was very trying but we had to soldier on while navigating unfamiliar COVID-19 conditions. We basically learned as we went; we had set ourselves a target and we were not about to allow the pandemic to tarnish our legacy of achieving excellent results. I have lost count of the many planning meetings I convened. We had to make quick decisions on how we were going to manage the situation and fill the gaps as some teachers were not able to return to class due to comorbidities or age-limit conditions,” said Mr Cele.

Mr Cele recalled the many times he had to leave the office in the late evening to spend more hours doing work at home. Luckily, he has a habit of making countless planned and impromptu visits to schools to monitor progress and assess and provide support where there are gaps. This hands-on leadership style worked in his favour as there was no resistance from



Mr Ntokozo Cele (Ndotsi) (middle) with Zama Sishi, (left) Director: Stakeholder Relations at MarComms, and Mbali Mkhize, Senior Director: MarComms

his management team who gave him the needed support to propel the district to excellence.

As a strategic partner to the district, MUT paid a welcome visit to Mr Cele. “I want to extend gratitude to MUT for its contribution as a partner to schools in our district. I appreciate the work you do with our schools. Your programmes have seen schools such as uMbebebe High School improve from 64.7% in 2019 to 80% in 2020. It is the impact of these strategic partnerships that we were able to achieve these results,” Mr Cele said.

Mr Cele extended his willingness to meet with the MUT Vice-Chancellor as well as the Deputy Vice-Chancellor: Teaching and Learning to share his long-term vision for the journey together with MUT to position Umlazi as an education ecosystem.

TEACHING & LEARNING THROUGH THE PANDEMIC

Welcome to MUT in 2021 – where safety and learning continue hand in hand

A message from our Acting Vice-Chancellor, Professor Marcus Ramogale



Professor Marcus Ramogale. Acting Vice-Chancellor

While the Coronavirus is still waging its war against all of us, we have learnt to refuse to let it triumph over our lives. With this in mind, I trust that things will be much better for us all in the coming year.

Being a small and relatively young University, we treat each another as one big family. Just as we care about all of you, we would like you to show that you care for your fellow students by continuing to put each other's safety first this year.

In our two internal residences and 33 external residences, we have never had reports of COVID-19 infection. The reason for this is that we knew that we needed to "Save lives and Save the academic year" and we went to great lengths to accomplish this. We shared the message everywhere and we tightened

our security systems to ensure that the virus was not imported into our residences.

Over and above that, we ensured that there was social distancing in classes and we even took tough decisions by cancelling possible 'super-spreader' events. I must thank the 2020 SRC from the bottom of my heart for always supporting our various endeavours to place our students' safety first. I am hopeful that this year, we will be able to partner with the 2021 SRC in the same way in order to protect you.

It would be remiss of me not to mention that in our efforts to save the academic year, we have changed the way we deliver our lectures. I am heartened to say that as I pen this message to you, our deans are busy ensuring that your online learning will be a positive experience. They have put together a student-friendly online programme for each of the modules offered by the University. The idea is to give you a memorable and exciting experience as you find yourself in this new world of online learning which – albeit hastened by the COVID-19 pandemic – is the way of the future.

We have also included a platoon system as part of our teaching and learning. This is a great asset towards assisting you to study independently. You are on a new journey to make history for yourselves and for the future, so embrace the opportunity with grace and a positive spirit.

I look forward to engaging you online and I am hopeful that you will also support our efforts to save the 2021 academic year and to save lives. Please remember to always 'mask up', maintain social distances and to sanitise your hands always.

MUT completes the 2020 academic year in spite of COVID-19

Mangosuthu University of Technology (MUT) has once again made good on its promise to give students the best education possible. This in spite of the COVID-19 pandemic and its accompanying restrictions on movements and the number of people in the same space.

Speaking at a Senate meeting as students were registering for the second semester in November, Dr Manyane Makua, Acting Deputy Vice-Chancellor: Teaching and Learning, congratulated the University for its hard work in ensuring that teaching and learning continue.

“There are many challenges that we confronted but together we were successfully able to deal with them,” said Dr Makua. “Our response to challenges says a lot about our ability to complete the academic year.”

The writing was on the wall for MUT at the time, yet preliminary results were telling a good story. MUT had recorded an improvement in its mid-year student pass rate compared to the same period in 2019, despite having to adopt a hybrid teaching and learning strategy necessitated by the COVID-19 pandemic.

This incredible feat was not achieved overnight; neither did it come easily. The threat of COVID-19 infections was ever-present, and nothing reminded the University of this more than when staff and students fell ill.

The University had to put many measures in place to ensure that both staff and students were safe, and each faculty implemented systems to ensure that the academic year was successfully completed.

When students were back in campus, the Platoon System – a system of dividing students from the same class into small groups that attend classes on a rotational basis – continued as originally conceptualised, with more emphasis placed on blended learning. Mobile device data was provided for both staff and students to facilitate the smooth implementation of blended learning. Learning materials were made available to students in printed and online formats. Academic staff were also trained in using multimodal platforms for teaching and learning.

Professor Marcus Ramogale, Acting Vice-Chancellor, said: “We are moving from one dispensation to another and we have to accept that in terms of teaching and learning it has to be a hybrid approach.”

He added that the COVID-19 pandemic “forced us into a future we have been talking about and we are moving there slowly”.

Avoiding the online teaching and learning trap

Reflections by Dr Manyana Makua

Dr Manyane Makua, Acting DVC: Teaching & Learning of the MUT has a vision of seeing online teaching and learning flourish at MUT. He believes that if left unattended, it could implode and hurt students’ future aspirations or even destroy someone’s potential to become the best teacher. For this reason, he took it upon himself to lead an online audit on what is posted online. There is a potential for success but there is also a potential for failure if the online teaching and learning platform does not have protocols and is not regulated.

As a starting point, Dr Makua believes that the online platforms must be more student-centred vs lecturer-centred. “Look, online teaching and learning is the future. We need to make it work for both staff and students. This is how I envision transforming teaching and learning today and for the future. Let us make teaching and learning a positive experience for both students and staff. We must go back to the basics on how teaching should never be a one way-street.

In addition, Dr Makua believes that online teaching can never be a one-size fits all project. “It needs to be customized for a specific group and it also needs a personality. My portfolio will be enhancing the skills of



our lecturers to become more efficient and effective on online teaching”.

“We need to deploy appropriate interventions to assist our students. We need to upload content that will be easily consumable by our students. We must guide the students on their online journey, and we must put ourselves in the shoes of the students as they navigate the online milieu by thinking carefully

about the target group, content, learning outcomes, pedagogical approach, how we organize the content, learning resources, and assessment of the teaching and learning resources. Do not deny yourselves opportunities to move with the times. Keep on reading so you can adapt to the new normal as it is here to stay”, said Dr Makua.

There is a huge buy-in by the MUT Senate on this approach to teaching and learning. The Student Representative Council which naturally is at the coalface of student complaints about struggles with online teaching and learning has supported this vision by Dr Makua. Globally, students have decried online teaching and MUT is addressing this gap. Big Brother is watching and this will be to the benefit of both students and lecturers.



From left, Ntuthuko Mhlongo, Writing Centre Practitioner, Dr Katie Bryant, Writing Centre Coordinator, Tshepang Mashiloane, Writing Centre Practitioner

MUT opens a Writing Centre to support staff and students

You can argue whether leaders are born or created, but when it comes to writers, there is no doubt about it: good writers are taught!

Teaching the art of writing is an act of empowerment in itself. After all, what is more powerful than the written word? Even after more than 2000 years, Julius Caesar is still remembered not just as a statesman but also as an influential historian. This is one of the reasons why the University has opened a Writing Centre to empower both staff and students with academic writing skills, which lay the foundation for academic success.

Dr Katie Bryant, coordinator at the Writing Centre, said that the centre would provide essential academic writing skills which would help with various academic tasks. “The centre will provide the following services:

assistance with assignments, lab reports, essays, annotated bibliography writing, writing research proposals, and support with understanding issues of academic integrity and referencing,” said Dr Bryant.

Dr Bryant, who is also an Adjunct Research Professor from Carleton University in Ottawa, Canada, said the goal of the Writing Centre is to continue to build a strong academic and research writing culture at MUT. “The premise here is that everyone needs some form of assistance with their writing. You can only get better with experience. And you need a constructive reader. We come from different backgrounds,” she explained.

The Writing Centre will be a much-needed resource for first-year students as they transition from high school into the tertiary education system.

The centre is operational during MUT working hours
(Monday to Thursday from 08h00 – 16h00 and 08h00 – 13h00 on Fridays).

Students and staff need to register an account at the Writing Centre’s online booking platform mut.mywconline.com or email the Centre on writingcentre@mut.ac.za. They can also chat with the Writing Centre via WhatsApp @ 079 020 0172. The centre is on the first floor of the main campus’ library building.

Accounting & Law department uses tutors to enhance student support



Some of the tutors, from left, Guy Noel Katimele, Mpumelelo Mkhize, Malusi Biyela

- ◆ *“The tutors are*
 - ◆ *assigned to the*
 - ◆ *relevant subjects*
- and guided by the subject lecturers. They assist students in small groups with tutorial classes.”*
- Dr Ramsarghey*

The largest department in the University has appointed 46 tutors to ensure that its approximately 2 300 students receive maximum support. The Department of Accounting and Law offers six diploma programmes and two post-diploma programmes (the advanced diploma and the post-graduate diploma). Its head, Dr Kevin Ramsarghey, said a further diploma and four post-diploma programmes are currently in the registration process.

In order to service its current programmes, the department currently has a staff complement of 25 members and 46 tutors. Dr Ramsarghey said the tutor programme was established to give support to teaching and learning as the class sizes are large and students need assistance over and above the lectures they receive. “The tutors are assigned to the relevant subjects and guided by the subject lecturers. They assist students in small groups with tutorial classes,” he said. He added that the end goal is for the tutors to be able to provide assistance to students on various topics as the year progresses, so that students have a better understanding of the subjects and are better prepared for assessments.

Tutors also benefit. According to Dr Ramsarghey, “Tutors also assist the lecturers with administrative

duties; it is good work experience for them, considering that this is the first job for most of them. This work experience is then reflected on their curriculum vitae and lecturers are nominated as references.”

Sinegugu Nxumalo, an Advanced Diploma in Cost and Management Accounting student, tutors third-year accounting students. Sinegugu said she never dreamt of becoming a tutor, but helping friends and students at the residence with accounting made her realise that she had a passion for imparting knowledge to others. Now she has become a good and emphatic listener.

Londiwe Chonco, a National Diploma in Accounting (cum laude) graduate, is studying towards an Advanced Diploma in Accounting Sciences at UNISA. Londiwe said she was grateful for the opportunity to help third-year accounting students. According to Londiwe, tutoring is about having a desire to help and to share knowledge with others. She added that she wanted to be part of the tutoring programme while furthering her studies and getting to understand the working environment.

The tutor programme is funded through the Teaching and Learning Development Centre (TLDC) and the Human Resources and Development department.

ONWARD AND UPWARD FOR MUT ACADEMICS

Meet MUT's most cited academic

Dr Taurai Mutanda, a lecturer in the Department of Nature Conservation, has been deservedly rewarded for his toils. As of November 2020, Dr Mutanda had 2 925 citations (h-index 13; i10-index 14). He said he was “excited and humbled” by the rate at which researchers and academics were citing his work. “It means that I am doing something right. My scientific work is authentic and ethically published,” he said.

Dr Mutanda's philosophy is “publish or perish”. For this reason he follows the latest trends in his research field closely and contributes actively to applied research. “My research is focused on algal biotechnology, specialising in algal bioprospecting, renewable bioenergy, and bioremediation of wastewater streams using greener technologies. I am also interested in algal metabolites such as carbohydrates, proteins and oleaginous compounds, specifically long-chain polyunsaturated fatty acids (PUFAs). I have published widely in the field of prebiotics and probiotics (synbiotics enzymology) and their biotechnological applications.”

Dr Mutanda's strong point is recognising the value of working with others. He endeavours to collaborate and work with reputable researchers in his research field and believes that “co-authoring is the cornerstone to published work being cited”. Beyond that, he believes his work is making a relevant contribution to knowledge about algal biotechnology and synbiotics. “I publish authentic peer-reviewed research that is an embodiment of knowledge contribution,” he said.

When he joined the University on 1 March 2018 as a researcher in the Department of Nature Conservation's Centre for Algal Biotechnology (CAB), Dr Mutanda had a mission to fulfil. “Since I joined CAB, I have co-authored and published seven technical papers, one book chapter, and one review paper,” said Dr Mutanda. He has successfully co-supervised two MSc students and one PhD candidate with fellow University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN) academics. He has also examined several postgraduate theses from various universities in South Africa. “I frequently participate



Dr Taurai Mutanda

in university postgraduate research days and high school science festivals as a judge to motivate and inspire upcoming young scientists,” he said.

In 2019/2020 Dr Mutanda was awarded funding, through South Africa and Austria's joint Scientific and Technological Cooperation programme, for research focusing on microalgal biopolymers and their biotechnological applications. This bilateral relationship has borne fruit in a big way. On 17-19 November 2020, members of his department, together with Dr Anusha Raykaran, a senior lecturer in the Department of Biodiversity and Conservation Biology at the University of the Western Cape, met virtually with their counterparts from Austria's University of Natural Resources and Life Sciences (BOKU).

According to Professor Akash Anandraj, director of CAB (which hosted the workshop), one of the issues discussed was the creation of partnerships with like-minded national and international organisations with the aim of harnessing technology for the benefit of humanity. One result of the workshop was that it served to launch a pilot-scale study into the use of microalgae in a medical “patch” for wound healing. The patch has been developed by Professor Gibson Stephen Nyanhongo from BOKU, and CAB will contribute by providing algae species that can assist with wound healing, especially after surgery. “This is

a biological treatment for patients recovering from surgery, burns, and other skin conditions. The main ingredient from algae was phycocyanin. This proved to be a unique approach to treating and healing wounds,” said Professor Anandraj.

As a renowned and cited author, Dr Mutanda’s scholarly engagement involves peer-reviewing several journal articles from high-impact scientific journals. He is also a panellist for the National Research Foundation (NRF) and Water Research Commission (WRC). Dr Mutanda has been recently awarded the highly competitive and prestigious NRF Thuthuka Rating Track Grant for 2021 to 2023, and is currently in the process of being considered for an NRF rating.

Dr Mutanda has some advice for those who would like to take a deep dive into research. “Identify a clear research area to develop and choose an experienced mentor for guidance. Normally, the identification of a suitable research area starts at Master’s level of study. Novice researchers must be passionate about their research area and generate and disseminate new knowledge; hence, they must work closely with postgraduate students under the supervision of experienced academics. New researchers must attend relevant conferences/symposia to network with other researchers and to learn new developments in their research areas. Writing good articles under the supervision of experienced researchers is a good start.”

More PhDs as MUT strengthens its academic offerings

In 2016, the University’s management announced that it would now be mandatory for academic staff to have at least a Master’s degree. Both the academic and support staff took the challenge head-on and a number have obtained terminal qualifications. Lately, a number of staff have joined the ranks of those with a PhD:

Dr Eric Bonginkosi Mthembu – Head of Department, Community Extension

Dr Mthembu read for a Doctor of Philosophy in Grassland Science at the University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN). His study was titled “The potential of agroforestry and intercropping for sustainable fodder production for smallholder dairy farming in KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa”. Dr Mthembu, who heads the Department of Community Extension, carried out an on-farm trial in the rural area of the Upper Thukela where shortage of fodder is a major constraint for communal dairy farmers. According to his graduation citation, Dr Mthembu “contributed a unique long-term data set which showed that integrating trees and grasses (agroforestry) increased the quantity and quality of fodder. This knowledge benefits small-scale dairy farmers by increasing feed for livestock and saving money on expensive concentrates”.



Dr Kevin Ramsarghey – Head of Department, Accounting and Law

Dr Ramsarghey read for his doctoral degree in Management Sciences at the Durban University of Technology (DUT). The title of his thesis is “Informing teaching and learning practice: identifying educator capabilities for improving student performance in accounting education”. Dr Ramsarghey’s research focused on educator capabilities (work experience, teaching experience and teaching qualification) that are used to improve student performance. The study was conducted with accounting academics from MUT, DUT and UKZN using individual and focus group interviews.



Dr Xolile Mkhize – Senior Lecturer, Department of Community Extension

Dr Mkhize received her PhD in Food and Nutrition from DUT. Her thesis was titled “Addressing food and nutrition insecurity through the development and implementation of an agricultural and nutrition education programme on legumes for older farmers living in Mariannhill, KZN, South Africa”. The aim of

the study was to determine and address levels of food and nutrition insecurity among selected non-legume producing elderly farmers as part of an intervention study.



Dr Archie Buthelezi – Senior Lecturer, Department of Environmental Health

Dr Buthelezi obtained his PhD in the field of air quality management from the University of Pretoria. In his thesis, “The risk of exposure to indoor air pollution in a low-income settlement in Durban, South Africa”, he focused on indoor air pollution (IAP) in the low-income

settlement of Umlazi Township. Dr Buthelezi argues that indoor air pollutants in some dwellings exceeded the international limit meant to protect human health. Dr Buthelezi discovered that some households used ‘dirty’, non-electric fuels indoors which contributed to indoor air pollution and caused health-related problems.



Dr Thulile Duma – Lecturer, Department of Human Resources and Management

Dr Duma received her PhD in Higher Education from UKZN. Her thesis was titled, “Experiences of academic success of students with disabilities at universities of technology in South Africa”. Duma examined the experiences of academic success

among final-year students with disabilities at two universities of technology in South Africa. Drawing from phenomenology and utilising photo-voice, semi-structured interviews, observations and document analysis, her study revealed that despite disabling environments faced by these students at the universities, successful students with disabilities showed resilience, self-determination and self-efficacy to succeed. These students require empowerment to overcome stigma and negative attitudes they experience.



Dr Thembi Kweyama – Dean of Students

Dr Kweyama received her PhD in Community Psychology from the University of Zululand.



Published paper lands Dr Ntuli a global advisory role

When Dr Mthokozisi Ntuli, the Student Development Officer in the Student Affairs Department, presented a paper at an international conference in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia in 2019, little did he know that it would catapult him to global prominence. This week he has been selected to be part of the Global Editorial Advisory Board at Harvard University in Boston, Massachusetts, United States.

“My paper sought to address the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) through the lens of higher education. The paper was later published in the University World News (UWN). It gained traction as it attracted international scholars such as from Harvard University,” said Dr Ntuli. Dr Ntuli will join the Board as Series Editor for a book series on ‘Higher Education and the Sustainable Development Goals’.

Dr Ntuli will be responsible for the following:

- ◆ Providing guidance and opinion on the scope and direction of the series
- ◆ Acting as advocate for the series
- ◆ Encouraging proposals in the field of expertise and submitting for them consideration by the Global Advisory Board
- ◆ Conducting reviews of submitted proposals or manuscripts



Dr Mthokozisi Ntuli

The Board consists of leading voices in the field. Dr Ntuli will be a sounding board and champion for the series. Dr Anette Minnie, Research Director at MUT, said, “You have done MUT proud! Well done and thank you for sharing. Best of luck with this exciting adventure.”

MUT is also proud of Dr Ntuli. He is a researcher to watch in future!

- ◆ *“My paper sought to address the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) through the lens of higher education. The paper was later published in the University World News (UWN). It gained traction as it attracted international scholars such as from Harvard University.”*
- ◆ *– Dr Ntuli*

Nature Conservation staff members appointed to high-profile public roles

Unprecedented! Refiloe Ntoi, a lecturer in the Department of Nature Conservation, has been appointed to serve in the Ministry of Higher Education and Training as a Ministerial representative on the MUT Council that will deliberate on the various objectives of the Council. This is the first time such an appointment has been made in the history of the University.

A “super excited” Ntoi said she was informed that she would be at the nucleus of the strategic decision-making platform. Ntoi has described the Council as playing a “game-changing role”. As for how MUT will benefit from her appointment to this role, she said she believed that it would serve as “a great springboard for the University, holistically, in terms of contributing to the true emancipation of the higher education and training sector of our country.”

The head of the nature conservation department, Professor Roger Coopoosamy, said the department was “very excited about this appointment, and very glad to be part of the Ministry”.

Beyond the higher education sector, the department is also a reservoir of personnel for the country’s professional environment. On 17 December 2020 Sithembile Nkosi, a lecturer in the department, was asked to join the Scientific and Technical Advisory Group (STAG) for the “Mouse Free Marion” project which seeks to protect the island by eradicating destructive house mice from it. A few weeks later, on 5 January 2021, Nkosi was appointed as a member of the Prince Edward Island Advisory Committee (PEIAC).

Marion Island and Prince Edward Island – collectively known as the Prince Edward Islands – are situated in the Indian Ocean nearly 2 000 km southeast of Cape Town. Marion Island is approximately 29 000 ha in size and has a coastline of about 72 km, while Prince Edward Island is approximately 24 500 ha. The two islands were declared Special Nature Reserves under South Africa’s National Environmental Management: Protected Areas Act No. 57 of 2003. Prince Edward Island is unique because it has never been permanently inhabited and is also a marine protected area. This makes it a special place for conservation and research.

Nkosi said that the STAG is a group of researchers assisting with preparations for the proposed mouse eradication attempt on Marion Island by 2023. She will be serving there for three years. “Threats to Marion Island include climate change and invasive alien plants, but the



Refiloe Ntoi



Sithembile Nkosi

biggest threat to the ecosystem and the native species of the island is the house mouse (*Mus musculus*),” said Nkosi. She added that a Google image search of “house mouse on Marion Island” shows the devastating impacts of this species on the native birds. “Therefore, there is a need to develop a lasting solution in ridding the island of these nuisance mice and other threats,” said Nkosi.

Nkosi will also be serving on the PEIAC for three years. “I will be contributing to restoration ecology, invasive alien species management, and reviewing management documents, among other things. On 10 March 2021, we held our first meeting as the committee, and it was highly productive,” she said.

Nkosi said that these were some of those opportunities where she felt she could contribute to something more significant, “which is of international importance because we are talking about a Ramsar site, in terms of the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands of International Importance. This is an international treaty for the conservation and sustainable use of wetlands. It is also known as the Convention on Wetlands. It was signed in 1971 at Ramsar, in Iran. This will be a new page that I can open for my students.”

Nkosi said that being appointed to the STAG and PEIAC meant that someone took notice of her contributions over the years as meaningful enough to contribute to making a difference in these Special Nature Reserves. Her appointment to serve on these bodies also means that MUT and her department are represented. She will be part of the structures that will implement various innovative management strategies in the next three years.

“My students will be getting first-hand information on the management, successes, failures, and lessons learned in implementing the various strategies. I will also be able to disseminate opportunities available in Prince Edward Island to my students. These opportunities were previously not readily available to them,” said Nkosi.

Presidential nomination to the National Policy Development Framework team for Dr Ntshangase

In academia and the world of research, nothing is more exciting than getting recognition for the work that one undertakes. This is more so when that recognition comes in the form of a nomination by the highest office in the land, the Presidency.

This has been the case for MUT's acting dean of the Faculty of Management Sciences, Dr Bheka Ntshangase, who was nominated to the team responsible for implementing the National Policy Development Framework in March this year. For the softly-spoken Dr Ntshangase, this honour could not have come as a surprise but rather as a form of confirmation that his contribution is making a difference and more is required from him.

"I am the accredited facilitator for the Executive Development Programme (EDP) offered by the National School of Government (NSG), which is aimed at directors, chief directors, and deputy directors-general of government departments," said Dr Ntshangase. "I am a specialist in public policy formulation, implementation and evaluation; financial management and budgeting; and programme and project management."

◆ *"This is a lifetime opportunity for me as I will be contributing to the national policy formulation discourse."*
– Dr Ntshangase

Dr Ntshangase is a veteran of working with the NSG. His work there spans a decade, starting in 2009 and ending in 2019. "Based on this extensive experience, I was recommended by the NSG to be a member of this Framework, which was approved by parliament in December 2020. I was nominated in March 2021."

Despite only being nominated in March this year, Dr Ntshangase's work at the National Policy Development Framework has already started. "At this point, we are scrutinising the policy formulation



Dr Bheka Ntshangase

process of the country, identifying challenges in the policy implementation, conducting skills audits and competencies of the public officials, and the impact of finance in policy implementation," he said. "Thereafter, the training programme on Policy Formulation and Implementation will be developed and offered to public officials in all spheres of government."

This is an opportunity for Dr Ntshangase to further cement his name in public policy formulation and implementation. "This is a lifetime opportunity for me as I will be contributing to the national policy formulation discourse," he said. "This is enhancing my understanding of public policy formulation and implementation, and I will better understand the challenges of implementation."

MUT will also reap the benefits of Dr Ntshangase's involvement in the National Policy Development Framework. "In the future, MUT will be partaking in the training of public officials in policy formulation and implementation," said Dr Ntshangase.

DELIVERING ON OUR STRATEGY

A big fish for the Directorate of Institutional Planning and Research

In life, it's not often you can say you've "caught a big fish" – and you have to have the facts to back it up! MUT can say this with pride. Liile (pronounced Diile) Lerato Lekena is that big fish, and she joined the University's Directorate of Institutional Planning and Research (DIPR) as its director on 1 January 2021.

The main goal for such a major appointment is to improve the University's impact on the higher education sector. This is also Lekena's driving philosophy. "I am passionate about institutional effectiveness and efficiency in higher education. I have over 15 years' experience in different higher education portfolios, in both academia and support environments. With the experience I have gathered over the years, I hope to continue serving the South African higher education sector and MUT in particular through conceptualising, proposing and leading projects to inform institutional strategic planning; through policy development, risk management and decision-making towards institutional effectiveness and efficiency; and through performing environmental scans and determining critical national and international trends, opportunities and issues that may impact on institutional strategies," she said. Lekena would also like to promote stakeholder participation in strategic planning exercises towards the achievement of MUT's institutional vision, mission and values.

Lekena has worked as an institutional researcher and as a quality advisor for surveys and institutional research at the Tshwane University of Technology for the past nine years. The work she did in both portfolios focused on aspects of all the above-mentioned activities, and her work involved the gathering, analysis and synthesis of data into insights and intelligence to inform corporate strategy and its execution. She also did work in support of academic and enrolment planning.



Liile Lerato Lekena

Prior to that, Lekena worked as an evaluations consultant and academic development officer for the University of the Witwatersrand and the University of KwaZulu-Natal respectively. She also has experience as an academic. She has written, presented and published articles in international and national accredited conferences and journals.

Lekena holds a Master's degree in education from the University of KwaZulu-Natal and a certificate in higher education management from

the University of the Witwatersrand. She is currently pursuing a doctoral degree in Science and Technology Studies at Stellenbosch University, specialising in higher education strategy and decision support.

In addition, she has been elected deputy president of the Southern African Association of Institutional Research (SAAIR) from 2021 to 2022. According to the constitution of the SAAIR, she will go on to become its president from 2023 to 2024 once her current term as deputy is over.

The work of the SAAIR is to advance research and analysis, leading to the production of improved management information for understanding, planning, management, and operation at higher educational institutions and agencies. The organisation also furthers the professional development and training of individuals engaged in institutional research and analysis, or those interested in its utilisation in planning, management and resource allocation.

Lekena said she was looking forward to contributing to the SAAIR which empowers employees in the institutional research field. "I am very passionate about what SAAIR does. Being part of the organisation has helped me grow to the level I am at today. Planning, policy formation and decision support in higher education are skills not taught in the traditional qualifications which many of us in this line of profession were trained in," she concluded.



New façade to bring new life to the University

A year and a half ago, the University celebrated 40 years of existence. This was a proud moment during which the University highlighted its illustrious history: over 40 000 graduates, and an enormous impact upon the economy of the country and beyond. This phase in the history of the University also resulted in a re-look at the University's infrastructure. Some elements needed a facelift, while some needed more than that.

One of these was the front façade of the old Executive Administration building. It needed a new look that would bring it into the modern age. Lindo Mzolo, infrastructure coordinator in the Department of Infrastructure, said that giving the façade a facelift was part of the general University Beautification Plan. Lindo said the aim of the plan was to "renew the face of our 41-year-old institution. The concept was also aligned with the new Corporate Identity that the institution adopted a year ago".

Lindo said that the University decided on this particular façade as it was considered an ideal site to embody this beautification concept. It faces people

entering the University, and it is located on University Lane which is very popular with the students. The façade is meant to dominate everything visible, just as education is supposed to dominate every aspect of people's lives, said Lindo.

The new façade carries a huge University logo, which is meant to inspire and remind everyone of the University's unique position and what it was founded for – to change the lives of many through education! The façade makes a bold statement that projects the University's proud history and also the confidence with which it approaches the future.

Lindo said that the façade is a sign of "a tangible development that resonates with the strategic corporate trajectory that the institution is championing – something which can be 'seen and felt' rather than only being good on paper. This therefore creates a sense among our key stakeholders – students and staff in particular, but also the university community in general – that the University is changing for the better."

Anchored in our community: Dr Buthelezi shines the spotlight on household air pollution in Umlazi Township

The University's expert in air pollution, Dr Archie Buthelezi, says South Africa faces multiple air pollution challenges and has responded to these challenges in various ways. These include legislative reform, revision of ambient (outdoor) air quality standards, proactive planning and control measures by local authorities, and sector-specific controls.

Despite all these efforts, the control of emissions from household fuel burning remains a challenge. "Household fuel burning contributes to indoor household air pollution and outdoor air pollution concentrations, and has a significant impact on human health," said Dr Buthelezi, a senior lecturer in the Department of Environmental Health.

According to Dr Buthelezi, the use of fossil fuels by residents in low-income households leads to numerous associated respiratory health problems. These impacts are worsened by environmental conditions. For instance, Umlazi Township has a humid subtropical climate. High humidity levels outside a dwelling can make it difficult to control the relative humidity inside the building, as pollutants don't disperse easily in such conditions and can affect indoor air quality.

Numerous factors contribute to the complex issue of air pollution in the township. Dr Buthelezi says that several studies have shown that people's exposure to combustion (burning) related pollutants varies according to their socio-economic status (occupation, education, income etc.). In other words, exposure to such pollutants is highest amongst the poorest communities who have limited choices and a limited ability to take action. For example, the economic conditions in the area are such that people cannot afford to buy pre-paid electricity. This results in the use of solid or 'dirty' fuels which create pollution. Another factor impacting on pollution is the overcrowding in the area.

According to Dr Buthelezi, epidemiological studies have linked substandard housing with an increased risk of chronic illnesses such as allergy and asthma. "Umlazi Township comprises formal settlement areas but there has been unlimited growth of informal structures due to a shortage of housing, making it impossible to clearly differentiate the two settlement types (i.e. low-income versus informal). There is also an increase in evidence that associates housing quality with morbidity from



infectious disease, chronic illnesses, injuries, poor nutrition and mental disorders," he said.

Dr Buthelezi is of the view that the problem is escalating because of a lack of application of the necessary guidelines. But before these can be applied, the authorities first have to address the social determinants of health in South Africa. "It will be very difficult or even impossible to implement the guidelines, especially in

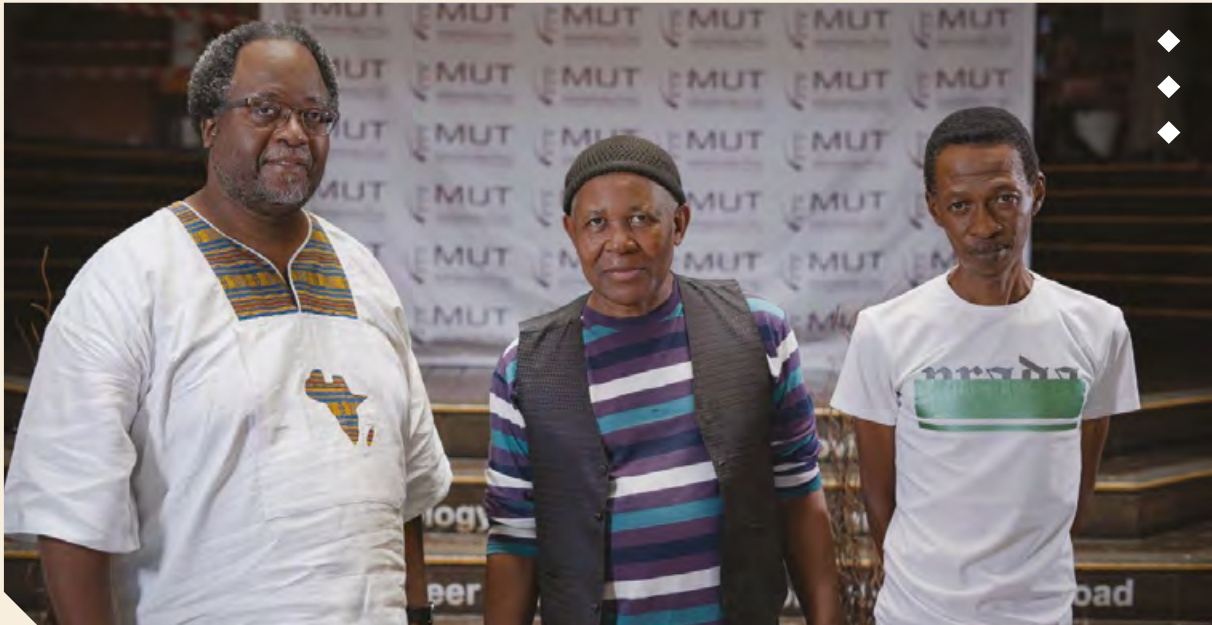
informal settlements, due to social issues and a lack of housing and infrastructure. Without proper housing and sanitation, there is little possibility that the guidelines may be implemented," he said.

Dr Buthelezi believes that the guidelines should be improved. "While these guidelines mention the need for walkthrough surveys and indoor air quality monitoring, little mention is made of technical dwelling characteristics. For instance, nothing is said about ventilation in relation to the technical requirements of air change rates that should be considered when undertaking an indoor air quality assessment," he said. In his opinion, as much technical detail as possible should be included in the Guidelines for Management of Domestic Indoor Air Quality, given the implications of household air pollution for human health.

Dr Buthelezi recently did a study that included the proper measurement of the size of a portion of the house, a kitchen for instance, and other factors that influence air movement in a room. He pointed out that although the South African National Standards (SANS) detail the minimum air requirements for a room (for example, a kitchen), no reference is given to the size of the kitchen in terms of room volume, which dictates the amount of air needed. Furthermore, no consideration is given to other factors that influence air movement in a room.

Dr Buthelezi argues that countries can benefit from the Paris Agreement, which he sees as a viable tool to limit climate change "provided that countries get their priorities right; for example South Africans must first put their house in order". He says the adoption of this agreement in 2016 was a milestone in international climate politics and was perceived to bring years of near deadlock negotiations to a conclusion.

MUT resurrects Gibson Kente's township musical through a public lecture



From left, MUT Acting Vice-Chancellor and Principal, Professor Marcus Ramogale, Percy Mtnwa, and Mzwandile Ngoqo, Bra Gib's son

It was a celebration of song and spoken words when MUT honoured the Father of South Africa's Township Theatre, Gibson Kente. Kente, or 'Bra Gib' as he was affectionately known, Bra Gib single-handedly created a genre called township musical, which was a popular form of theatre and a dominant means of expression for black performers during the apartheid years.

In true Kente fashion, the public lecture needed no introduction. The lecture started with Nomalanga Hlubi's performance of Bra Gib's *How Long?*. Hlubi's band featured maestro guitarist, Themba Mokoena, who performed in most of Kente's plays from 1972 onwards.

Mokoena was part of Kente's original performance of *How Long?* This opening performance was the first time that he performed the song. Mokoena is one of South Africa's finest guitarists and it was his skills that caught the attention of Bra Gib in the first place.

Acting Vice-Chancellor & Principal of MUT, Professor Ramogale said: "Bra Gib made fighting injustices of the apartheid regime his calling at a time when you could pay the ultimate price for standing up against such a brutal system. This stance against apartheid earned him a jail term in 1976 after the filming of his famous play, *How Long*. His Soweto home was firebombed in 1989 destroying his early scripts and records."

The keynote speaker at the lecture was multi-award-winning playwright, actor and director, Percy Mtnwa.

Mtnwa was carefully selected to present this lecture because of his experience working with Bra Gib. He was part of the cast of Kente's *Mama and the Load* in 1979.

Mtnwa's address was titled, *Giving voice to the marginalised: the role of theatre in fighting injustice and uniting citizens*.

"Bra Gib fought seriously against cultural hegemony, that is why he wanted to be an independent entrepreneur commercially based in the township for the people. He was a very compassionate person, he cared about the people. That is why on his plays, I believe, he closed it after 7 months because he said it was too intellectual and performing for educated blacks and I don't like that. What about," said Mtnwa.

Mtnwa said that there was a lot that young artists could learn from Bra Gib.

"As an artist, it is important that you stay healthy all the time and Gibson Kente was a health fanatic. It would be very rare to hear that Bra Gib was sick and in hospital. He would encourage us to eat well so that we are able to do what he wanted us to do very well," he said.

Mtnwa commended Bra Gib for his professionalism which he said many artists could learn from.

"He was professional and the one thing I liked about him was that nobody taught him how to do that,"

said Mtwa. He was driven by that consciousness that moved him to pursue the knowledge to do all the things that he wanted to do.”

Art Manager, Nothando Mkhize, who facilitated the lecture at the Natural Sciences Mini-Gallery, wrapped up the lecture with an interview of both Mokoena and Kente’s son, Mzwandile Ngoqo. Mokoena reminisced about Kente’s work ethic and his loyalty to theatre.

“Working with Bra Gib helped me a lot,” said Mokoena. “I still respect him like a father to me.”

For Ngoqo, his father’s contribution was mostly going to be remembered for giving expression to life in the township and providing a platform for fighting apartheid through theatre. “His [Bra Gib’s] biggest frustration would be that today’s music does not carry any message or meaning,” said Ngoqo.

The lecture was part of MUT’s bigger agenda to not only honour South Africa’s unsung heroes who made extraordinary contribution to what the country has become but to also contribute to the nation-building agenda.

“We have therefore set out a clear vision for our University to spearhead a nation-building agenda, and pursue social cohesion programmes,” said Professor Ramogale. “In attaining the nation-building agenda, as well as the social cohesion programme, we then conceptualised the preservation of local history and curation of local art project. This is a huge project that will end up as a centre of knowledge.”

This is not the first time the MUT has embarked on such an initiative that contributes to nation-building while also sharing valuable knowledge with the greater South African public. In September last year, MUT hosted a public lecture in honour of nurses’ exemplary transformative leadership during pandemics.

But this journey started as part of the institution’s 40th anniversary celebration in 2019 when the University honoured its Founder, Prince Mangosuthu Buthelezi, and the founder of the African National Congress, Dr Pixley ka Seme, with public lectures.

The Gibson Kente Memorial Lecture aired on 1KZN on Saturday, 19 December 2020. The lecture is also available to watch on YouTube.

Celebrating the spirit of gratitude through giving on birthdays

Birthdays are a time of joy as one celebrates yet another year of life. Regardless of how many activities are planned, the emphasis is always on the person celebrating their special day. But birthdays are also an opportunity to share the joy more widely. For Sibongile Bulose, Schools Liaison Officer at MUT, birthdays are an opportunity to rally loved ones to contribute to a cause that she has chosen that year.

“I donate items equal to the amount of years I am turning each year,” she said. “I ask friends to join me in celebrating my birthday. Instead of a party or buying me gifts, I ask close friends to buy something for less fortunate people.”

By celebrating her birthdays like this over the last four years, she has been able to consistently make a difference. “In the previous years I have done #SponsorAGraduate. Friends would buy a graduation item for any graduate they meet in town and give this student items to wear during graduation,” said Bulose. “I don’t select any institution; it’s for anyone in need of a graduation item, be it shoes or graduation attire or anything.”



Sibongile Bulose (middle), with some of the learners that benefited from her generosity

This year was a special one for Bulose. “This year it was number 43, so 43 items to give away. I managed to get 43 pairs of shoes, bottled water, masks, rulers, pencils, exam pads, and bags. I was assisted by friends mainly through my Facebook,” she said.

These items were part of the #SponsorAMatriculant for their matric dance. The items were donated at KwaQumbu Primary School in Odidini, Umbumbulu.

“If your child has a nice dress they no longer use, they can give it to a matriculant to wear to their matric dance,” said Bulose. “To give to the less fortunate is to appreciate the gift of life.”

MUT congratulates Umlazi Township schools for 'sterling' performance



A very happy time for the recently graduated grade 12 learners as they, and teachers meet MUT staff

To say the good Grade 12 results of 2020 were achieved against all odds would be an understatement. When announcing them on 22 February 2021, Angie Motshekga, Minister of Basic Education, acknowledged that the Class of 2020 had faced excruciating circumstances. These included several levels of lockdown, the ever-rising number of people contracting the coronavirus, the deaths of people known and unknown, the fear of contracting the virus, and for some learners, having to learn to do their work online. These were hard times indeed, and it must have been quite overwhelming for 17 to 19-year-olds to cope with. Nevertheless the majority succeeded, aided by the positive messages from government and other fronts.

The province of KwaZulu-Natal achieved fourth position nationally, despite being one of the provinces most severely affected by the coronavirus. The Umlazi District obtained second place nationally, with an 80.9% overall pass rate. Its star performer, as always, was Menzi High School.

Menzi High School is a familiar name in basic education because of its excellent performance each year. The school had been achieving 100% for the last eight years, and 2020 was no different, said the school's principal, Ms Muntu Ntombela. She made this comment during a visit to her school by members of the MUT Department of Marketing and Communications (Marcomms), which gives support to Umlazi Township schools which are important stakeholders of the University.

Muntu said that over and above what the school always does to keep the bar high, they added double periods in 2020. "Our double periods are now two hours," she said. School management also decided to increase contact hours. For instance, accounting hours were moved from four to five hours per week.

Menzi High not only achieved a 100% pass rate, but 84% of learners achieved a Bachelor's pass for university entrance. Five learners got As, including Thembelani Ngubane who got 100% in maths and 99% in physics. He is planning to enrol with the University of Cape Town to study mechatronics. Thembelani said it was team work and the help that he got from his teachers that saw him through.

A learner who got 7As was Thobile Cele, from Umlazi Township's 'W' section. Thobile said the reason for her amazing success was that she always knew what she wanted and worked hard towards it. At just 17 years of age, Thobile is going to study medicine at the University of KwaZulu-Natal's Nelson Mandela School of Medicine in Durban.

Learners themselves admitted it was not an easy year. They thanked their teachers who motivated them and made them look at the bright side of life beyond the pandemic. "Team work, dedication and support by parents and the Department of Education made it all possible. As a school we also wish to thank Mangosuthu University of Technology who have consistently supported us even during the hard lockdown. We wish all our learners all the best in their future careers and plead with them to plough back into the school when they have made it in life," said Muntu.

Congratulating the Umlazi Township schools, Mbali Mkhize, senior director of Marcomms, said the 'sterling' performance of the schools was a clear indication that achieving good results was possible despite all the hurdles, as long as learners received the necessary support, particularly from their parents and teachers and the Department of Education. Mbali also emphasised that the learners had to play their role by being prepared to listen to wise voices.

Continued support for Menzi High in the time of COVID-19

COVID-19 has posed different types of challenges for school principals and their management committees. Amongst other things, they have had to change course and repurpose their annual plans to fit within the COVID-19 protocols of social distancing, wearing of masks, sanitising and regular hand-washing. With over 1 200 learners from grades 8 to 12, Menzi High School had to seriously stretch its time and resources to make sure that lives were spared while the curriculum was completed.

This top-achieving school's first priority, according to its principal, Muntu Ntombela, is protecting its legacy of obtaining a 100% pass rate and outstanding matric results. This legacy is what has motivated MUT to sustain its partnership with the school and make a contribution by providing support to ease the burden for its principal, educators and learners.

"Taking into consideration the new challenges brought by COVID-19, it was necessary for MUT to respond to the pressing needs brought by this new normal. Realising that some learners could not afford the proper PPEs such as face masks and sanitisers, we submitted a proposal to ABSA bank to come on board as part of the Circle of Excellence Awards and donate the most needed PPEs to Menzi High School on behalf of MUT," said Zama Sishi, director of stakeholder engagement at MUT's Marcomms department.

Assisting a school with a legacy of excellence resonates with most organisations and this was the case with ABSA as well. The bank donated 3 000 face masks and 300 bottles of sanitiser. The masks were not imported but were manufactured by small business owners in KwaZulu-Natal – which was a great way for the bank to resuscitate the SMMEs who had been hard hit by COVID-19. Accepting the donation, Ms Ntombela told the ABSA/MUT delegation how the donation would ease the load for the school.

"Some things that we may take for granted are a real challenge for most of our learners. We have learners who recycle and wash surgical masks, and at times I have been alerted by our security personnel that there are learners outside the gate who could not be let in because they do not have masks. My duty is to make sure that learners are at school, so in such



Ms Muntu Ntombela, Menzi High Principal

situations I have had to make a plan and provide those learners with masks. This donation we are receiving today from the ABSA Public Sector – KZN will enable us to allocate two masks per learner. This gesture to us is the start of a great partnership. At Menzi we pride ourselves with excellent results and even this year we want to assure you that we will achieve our target for the matric class of 2020. We are so grateful to MUT, you have done a lot for our school and I want you to know that you are at the centre of our achievements," she said.

ABSA was represented by the regional head for KZN and Mpumalanga, Mr Keketso Motsoene; regional manager, Yolisa Mlungwane; and relationship expert Wandile Ngubane. The delegation was amazed to have been introduced to such excellence at the centre of the township.

"Thank you MUT for opening our eyes to such a gem. As a bank we are very attracted to schools that are making a visible impact like Menzi High School, and we would not have known about all the amazing work you are doing if we were not introduced to the MUT Circle of Excellence Awards. I want to assure you today that this will not be the first time we come here. As a bank we have many community development projects and I already see a lot of alignment between your school and our initiatives," said Keketso after handing over the donated PPE to Menzi High School's principal.

MUT SHOWS THE WAY IN ENTREPRENEURSHIP

Professor Ramogale awarded for entrepreneurship focus

MUT is solidifying its place as an institution where students who want to pursue entrepreneurship can thrive – and the country is taking notice! At the helm of this approach to creating future employers is acting vice-chancellor and principal, Professor Marcus Ramogale.

For his efforts, Professor Ramogale was awarded the Entrepreneurship Development in Higher Education (EDHE) Rising Star DVC Award at the EDHE Entrepreneurship Intersarsity towards the end of last year. At the awards, which he attended virtually, Professor Ramogale was commended for the progress that MUT has made in advancing entrepreneurship.

“What we have been doing at MUT over the years is to try and institutionalise entrepreneurship education,” he explained. “We started in 2015 when our Senate adopted a core curriculum as part of our academic identity. Part of that core curriculum includes entrepreneurship education.”

The decision to foreground entrepreneurship education in the curriculum is what will set MUT apart from other institutions of its kind in South Africa. “Being a university of technology, we felt that one of the things that would distinguish our students is to make sure that every graduate that comes from the institution has some entrepreneurship skills,” said Professor Ramogale.

This was a bold move for MUT, which is the only university wholly located in a township. But the reward has been great for the institution and its graduates. For years, MUT’s challenge has been to ensure that all its graduates participate in some form of economic activity.



*Professor Marcus Ramogale,
Acting Vice-Chancellor*

For many alumni, economic activity has unfortunately only meant getting a job upon graduating. Professor Ramogale has been a staunch campaigner against this kind of thinking, and students have embraced his message as the gospel.

“I have been really encouraged by the students because when you talk to them about entrepreneurship ... when you say there are options in the world, you get this remarkable reception amongst our students. We are very pleased that MUT students have taken this message to heart,” he said.

The world is also watching and listening. Recently, MUT was joined by the Wadhvani Foundation, which is assisting it in developing entrepreneurship education. The plan is falling into place.

“Our plan is to make sure that every student at MUT has been introduced to entrepreneurship,” said Professor Ramogale. “They go through a very basic course and those that have a keener interest can go into an advanced course.”

Professor Ramogale said the challenge is in changing the mind-set of graduates so that they think of themselves as employers rather than job seekers. This is made more difficult by the fact that students come from families where they are expected to get qualifications so that they can get jobs.

“Our message to students is that there are no jobs but there is plenty of work – if you think of work as an opportunity to solve problems. There are so many problems in our society. If students begin to look for work and not jobs, I am sure the unemployment problem will be solved,” said Professor Ramogale.

MUT inspires a wide range of student ventures

A number of student businesses have been born from the University's drive to inspire entrepreneurship. Some of these are a social empowerment venture called Jabulani Foundation, a shoe cleaning business called Shoe Garden, a clothing company called MW Keep Believing, and a food business called Esnandini Cordon Bleu.

The Jabulani Foundation

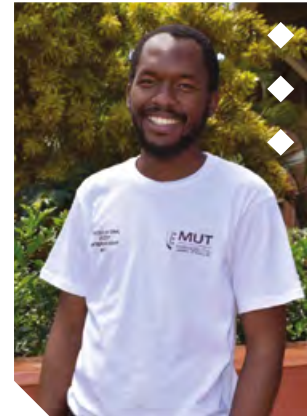
The foundation of every country is the education of its youth. But for learners and students from far-flung areas who often lack electricity and internet access, applying for tertiary education online is often an insurmountable challenge. Jabulani Mngadi, a final-year human resource management student, grew up the rural area of KwaNgcolosi in KwaZulu-Natal and will never forget how he struggled with online applications. In fact it took him until his final year of studies to see his dream taking shape. Having learnt from his personal experience, in June 2020 Jabulani decided to register a non-profit organisation, the Jabulani Foundation, to make a difference to others facing similar challenges.

The Jabulani Foundation was established to help prospective students from rural areas to apply for higher education and funding. Typically, these applicants have to travel to Durban to visit relevant offices in person, or try to find a town with an internet café. The Foundation's helpers visit the rural areas, armed with laptops and smartphones that can scan documents to help matriculants apply to the National Student Financial Aid Scheme (NSFAS) and to the Central Applications Office (CAO), which processes the applications for most tertiary institutions in KwaZulu-Natal.

Jabulani said that with the increased focus on digitalisation, he realised that applying for tertiary education would become even tougher for those from disadvantaged societies where infrastructure is lacking. His foundation's spokesman, Makabongwe Sithole, said the foundation aims to empower youth



One of the members of the Jabulani Foundation



Jabulani Mngadi

“in a practical way by taking our services, and our own resources, to the communities”.

The Jabulani Foundation has joined forces with other campus organisations that also aim to empower youth. Even though these organisations are working with different communities, their collaboration is a form of outreach and a way to “assist South Africa at large”, said Makabongwe.

Makabongwe said he believes it is essential for student entrepreneurs to have a plan that will help them work towards achieving their goals. But they must not stick too rigidly to it. “When challenges arise, be flexible enough to restructure, and alter your plans towards achieving that big, audacious goal,” he said.

The foundation's biggest challenge is funding, as they want to assist as many communities as possible. If prospective benefactors can help financially, these young men will welcome laptops that might be speedier than the ones they are using.

The Jabulani Foundation was one of three enterprises, all started by final-year human resources management students, which formed part of MUT's presentation at the virtual Student Entrepreneurship Week (SEW2020) on 2-4 November 2020.

Shoe Garden

Known as “a business that makes dirty sneakers smell fresh again”, Shoe Garden was the brainchild of Nombulelo Ncube, also a final-year human resources and management student. Nombulelo said she realised that if one is looking for opportunities, “you need to be willing to do things that nobody wants to do”. That is how she came up with the idea of cleaning shoes.

Nombulelo calls her business a “shoe laundry” and she started with cleaning sneakers. It was a way to test if she was suitable to be an entrepreneur, she said. She soon realised that this could be extended to cleaning other shoes too. Now she intends scaling up to include shoe repairs. That would be a way to uplift the community, because she plans to take shoes that are completely broken, and fix them at Shoe Garden’s expense.

Nombulelo welcomes the digital era, which COVID-19 merely accelerated. “Businesses had to think on their feet about how they were going to survive the lockdown. We realised it’s now no longer just about the lockdown; whatever strategies we came up with during that phase are now going to be the new norm,” she said.

Nombulelo also embraces the mechanisation that comes with the fourth industrial revolution. To that end she dreams of acquiring a machine that will wash and repair shoes, to save her doing it all by hand. She maintains that regardless of how automated things may become, people will always wear shoes.

She admits Shoe Garden has had a weak marketing strategy but is working on applying e-commerce, which is creating a stronger online presence from which to engage with its customers. The aim is to get customers to book their services online.

Her advice to young people, particularly MUT students, is: “If there’s any part of you that believes that an idea could work, just run with it. Believe in your idea and in yourself. Self-development is a vital part of this process.”



Nombulelo Ncube

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- ◆ *believes that an idea could*
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- your idea and in yourself. Self-*
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- this process.”*
- Nombulelo Ncube

MW Keep Believing

Worried about negative youth behaviour, Sphamandla Maxwell Sangweni, another final-year human resources and management student, decided to form a clothing company that would make a bold statement against drugs and alcohol. The philosophy of the company is: “Don’t indulge in stimulants and think you are cool; just dress well”.

Sphamandla said that he observed that when young people party, drink alcohol and take drugs, they think they are living a life – but it’s a dead end. “Instead we should be sharing ideas like how to find jobs, and create job opportunities,” he said.

Sphamandla was inspired by the letters M and W and then decided to use these letters in the name of his clothing company, MW Keep Believing. The initials are from his middle name, Maxwell, and he liked the way the letters are visual opposites of each other. Together they show how life can go up and down. He integrated the slogan “Keep Believing” into the brand name, because he wants young people to realise they can achieve whatever they set out to do. “I want to bring back hope because we are lost,” he said. He is also hoping to inspire others on campus who have been reluctant to start their own ventures.

Asked about challenges he faces, he gave the example of when friends try to bargain down his prices, which doesn’t help him make a profit. As for his competitive advantage, Sphamandla said his company doesn’t just provide clothes, “but attractive clothes”.

MW Keep Believing is a local product which can help boost the economy. Its designs have now expanded from different styled t-shirts, shorts, tracksuits, hats and caps to COVID-19 masks. Someone else does the sewing, and Sphamandla hopes to give back to the community by employing more young people –



Sphamandla Maxwell Sangweni

“dynamic creative people who are willing to work”. In his word of advice, he said that aspiring entrepreneurs should just “start with what you have, where you are”. They do not need funding, he added, “only a customer and a plan”.

- ◆ *“Don’t indulge in stimulants and think you are cool; just dress well. We should be sharing ideas like how to find jobs, and create job opportunities.”*
- ◆ *– Sphamandla Maxwell Sangweni*



With bibs, from left, Bhekuyise Bhengu (Mabhiza), Simphiwe Goniwe (Bhabs), and Sanele Shandu (Slovo), with customers

Esnandini Cordon Bleu

Identifying opportunities and taking action are key to addressing the youth unemployment crisis. Three MUT alumni did not wait for the door of opportunity to open but created their own. They are Simphiwe Goniwe (Bhabs), an office management and technology graduate; Sanele Shandu (Slovo), a civil engineering graduate; and Bhekuyise Bhengu (Mabhiza), a public administration graduate – and their positivity is rubbing off on others!

These three young, self-driven go-getters are the co-founders of Esnandini Cordon Bleu, located outside MUT's Seme gate, where they sell traditional food. "For now we are using our limited resources to kickstart our business, where we cook and sell inhloko, uphuthu, cabbage and ujeqe. We price our meals at R45. Our vision is to open an Esnandini Cordon Bleu restaurant and further look into the value chain of our business model," said Bhabs.

The owners of this business say that what they are doing is the "art of hustling". The notion of this street hustle came after their previous business, called Isiqalo Institute in Academics, was severely affected by COVID-19. The institute was initiated to conduct tutorial programmes for matriculants who did not do well in their final exams. To assist, it deployed highly experienced and qualified educators from high schools around South Africa that had an exceptional

◆ "Our vision is to open an
 ◆ Esnandini Cordon Bleu
 ◆ restaurant and further look
 into the value chain of our
 business model."
 – Simphiwe Goniwe

record of producing learners with a high pass rate, explained Bhabs.

Giving up is not an option for these young leaders who are determined to create change in their families and communities. "We would like to applaud the University for introducing an entrepreneurship module in the accounting and HR departments and further request that it be introduced across all departments so that the University produces students who will be job creators in South Africa. This will have an enormous impact on the economy and eradicate the high rate of unemployment we are faced with as a country. We further encourage students to start taking risks, be frugal and save a portion of their NSFAS allowances to accumulate start-up capital that will give them a kickstart when venturing into entrepreneurship," said Bhabs.

ALUMNI IN ACTION

MUT alumnus becomes first African CEO of Sabi Sands Game Reserve

Oscar Mthimkhulu's treasured relationships with numerous stakeholders in the ecotourism and conservation industry are among the many factors that positioned him as the best candidate for the job. Oscar completed his first qualification in nature conservation at MUT in 1996, at a time when the majority of students did not understand the course and would jokingly refer to it as a "baboon course". His fondest memory of being at MUT was the nature conservation field trips they took to protected areas for learning purposes. Amongst his other qualifications, Oscar also holds a Master's degree in environmental management and development.

A CEO position is very demanding, and full of uncertainty and risk in this day and age. For Oscar, leaders must be held to higher standards, and he believes integrity is still the cornerstone of effective leadership. In this regard, being a motivational and principled leader is challenging because one cannot pour from an empty cup; one needs to self-motivate to be in a position to give support to everyone within your circle of influence.

"It helps to be people-oriented, strategic, and an innovative thinker. This is why I remain a lifelong learner, and this allows me to constantly nurture and develop my strengths ... It is not a given that when you are in a leadership position, you know it all," he said.

Since his appointment through the Sabi Sand Pfunanani Trust, his teams are pursuing key priority community projects that focus on empowering local communities. He believes his teams can make a huge difference to the reserve and all its members, and ensure that the Sabi Sands Game Reserve remains the premier ecotourism destination for travellers from all over the globe – which is important for employment in the said communities.

His dream is for African communities to understand the value of conservation in their own space,



Oscar Mthimkhulu

without it being imposed on them. He is passionate about conveying the importance of managing and conserving natural resources as a sustainable source of livelihood for people.

He says conservationists need to learn and embrace the fact that conservation is not purely about fauna and flora, but also about people because they are part of the system. In practising conservation, it is important to collaborate with ecotourism and tourism specialists to develop a sustainable and pro-community product and model within conservation constraints.

Mthimkhulu encourages innovative entrepreneurs within the conservation space. The state of the current economy in this COVID-19 era requires a different breed of conservationists. Conservation cannot be practised and applied in isolation without cooperation and collaboration with other strategic role-players, he says.

Celebrating Nursing Alumni Heroes

Nontobeko Zwane – Saving lives on the frontline in Saudi Arabia

Nontobeko Zwane is one of the inspired generation of nurses that, in an era of HIV/Aids and COVID-19, is caring with courage and compassion for the ill and the injured. She hails from KwaNdengezi, near Pinetown west of Durban, and her late mother was a domestic worker. Nontobeko knew her only ticket out of poverty was to get good grades that would help her get a bursary to further her studies. Determined to succeed, she refused to listen to prowling thoughts about having no plan to pay for her studies.

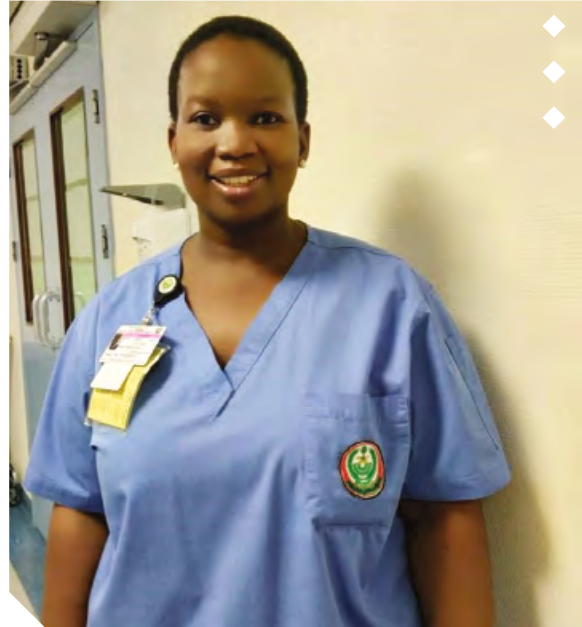
After staying home a year after completing matric, first came to MUT in 1999 where she completed her first year in public administration. Unfortunately she could not continue as her family could no longer afford to support her studies.

The idea of studying nursing came from her aunt who was also a nurse. She offered to pay for Nontobeko's nursing training at Candle Light Nursing School. Nontobeko qualified as an assistant nurse after two years, and within three months of starting work, she had the urge to study further. Back then, it wasn't the norm to continue studying without proper working experience, but she convinced her nursing manager that she could work and study simultaneously. Sure enough, she qualified as a registered nurse in 2006.

Nontobeko knew she still wanted more out of life. While working as a nurse, she returned to MUT in 2010 to study nature conservation, which became her new love. She was an active student who wanted to maximise her schooling days. In so doing, she achieved a leadership role in the Student Representative Council (SRC) which allowed her to represent women in a highly male-dominated space.

During her tenure in the SRC, she inspired change. After seeing the harsh realities faced by students from less fortunate backgrounds, the SRC leadership committed to helping them by sharing their meal cards and buying toiletries and sanitary towels for them once a month.

Nontobeko currently works in an Intensive Care Unit (ICU) at Security Forbes Hospital in Saudi Arabia, caring for critically ill patients who can do little for themselves. Her happiest moments are when her patients are moved from ICU back to regular wards.



Nontobeko Zwane

◆ *“The leading roles I have played in different organisations I have worked for taught me that an honourable life is in making sacrifices to serve others.”*
– Nontobeko Zwane

She says nursing in the middle of a pandemic makes her job even more challenging. It requires extra hard work, love for people, and a thick skin. “The leading roles I have played in different organisations I have worked for taught me that an honourable life is in making sacrifices to serve others,” she said.

Nontobeko is proud of her move to Saudi Arabia, where she works hard to represent South African nurses with confidence. She is determined to learn as much as she can as she serves those in need.



Two MUT players join the Sharks female team



Two of the University female rugby players are now part of the senior Sharks team. On 31 March 2021 Anesipho Malgas and Nobuhle Mjwara trained with the rest of the Sharks team. The second year Accounting and Office Management and Technology students respectively, said they were very excited about getting an opportunity to play for the Sharks.

“We are very happy. We love this game,” said Anesipho. Anesipho plays fly half (10), while Nobuhle plays flanker (6) and a second-row forward (4). Nobuhle has to jump and grab those throw-ins from the hooker during the lineout. Anesipho has to deal with so much focus as she kicks the conversion after a try has been scored. Such moments are usually match winners.

This news will not come as a surprise to their coach, Thabani ‘Sgebengu’ Yaka. Sgebengu was emphatic that Anesipho and Nobuhle were going to make it; his trust in them was as a result of what he had observed; the level of discipline, and application was good enough for him to make such comments. Both players have been playing rugby for some time, despite their relatively ages. Anesipho said she started playing rugby in 2016, while Nobuhle started in 2015. “I fell in love with the sport. My family supports me,” said Anesipho.

The fact that the two players have made some means to move up and join an international brand is a clear indication that they would like to make a mark on the sport, and have their ambitions fulfilled. Nobuhle is very clear about this, as is shown by what follows. Nobuhle says that she is a team player; her ambitions are interwoven to those of the team; this is the bigger picture for her. She says her central goal is to contribute to this “larger picture.” The “humbled” forward says her “primary plans are to always to put the team first.” Nobuhle is looking at adding value to this “larger picture.” The Sharks’ philosophy is a source of comfort for her, and what will propel her forward. “The



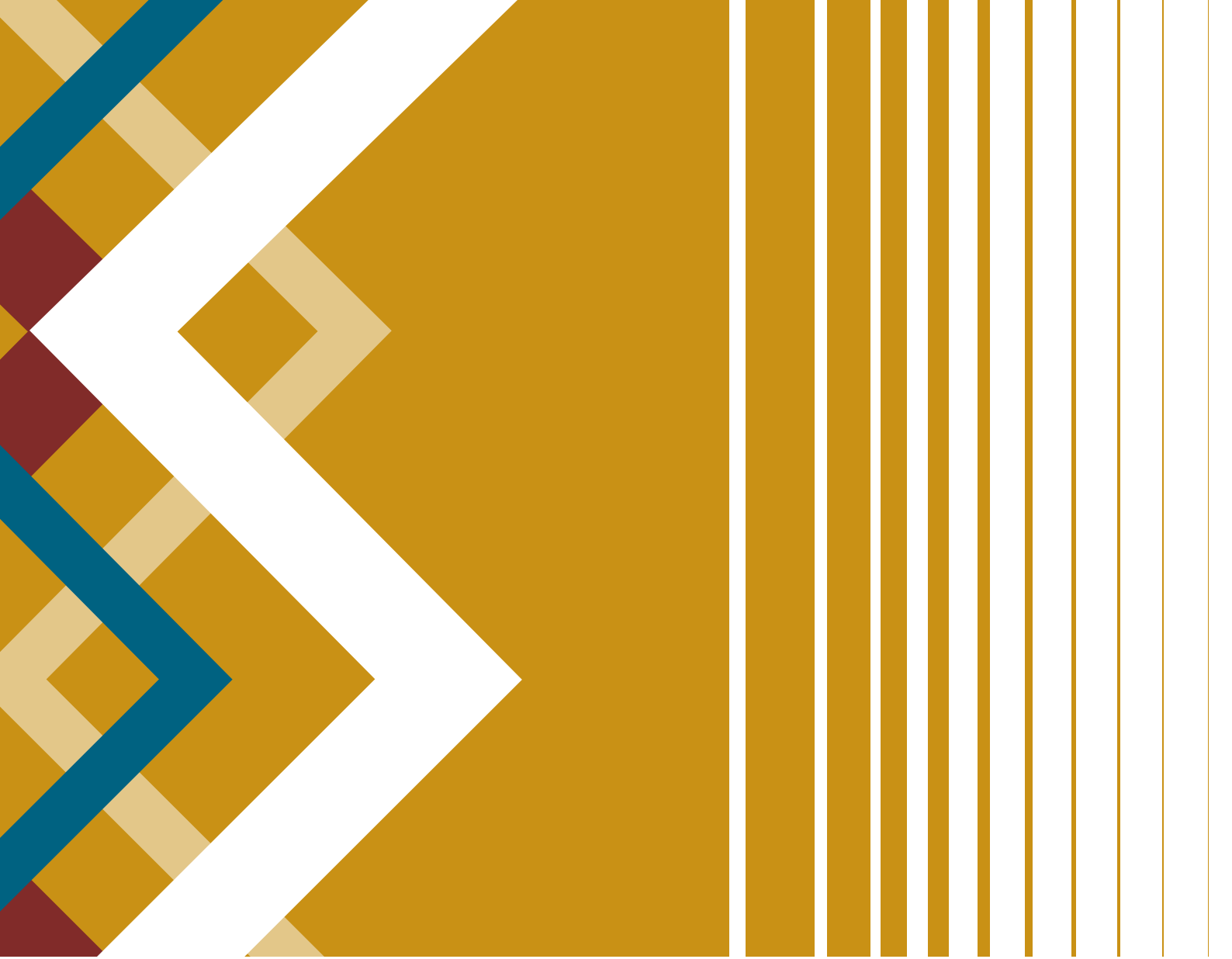
New home! New heights! Nobuhle, left, and Anesipho at the Sharks’ training grounds

Sharks is a team that encourages individuals to thrive regardless of their uniqueness and their background.”

Nobuhle says she pays attention to details, and is always looking at improving “every aspect of my game. I am planning to absorb, learn more, and grow my game,” she says. Nobuhle says she is willing to take on the challenges, together with the team. Nobuhle scored six tries, playing for the eThewini in the SALGA (South African Local Government) Games in 2019.

Nobuhle added that she was going to make time for studies, and rugby, about which she is “passionate”. For her this comes “naturally.” This is not new to her. Rugby has been part of her life from the age of 15. She says juggling sport and studies is every sports person’s life. Nobuhle sees sport as ‘education’. Nobuhle gives eight hours to her studies, eight hours to rugby, and eight hours to sleep. Not a bad way of handling things!

Both players live in Umlazi Township. Anesipho lives in Umlazi Township’s S section with her grandmother. The rest of her family is in Queenstown, Eastern Cape. Nobuhle lives with her family in the township’s V section.



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