

SPIRIT

JULY 2021 - ISSUE NO. 2



Uniting against COVID-19 and misinformation

MUT launches radio station in honour of youth

HOW TO APPLY TO MUT

All first year applications to study at MUT are submitted through the Central Applications Office (CAO). This is a simplified way of applying for more than one programme, using one application form, and paying a single application fee. Apply online at www.cao.ac.za or by downloading an application form.

CHECKING THE PROGRESS OF YOUR APPLICATION

You can track the progress of your application by going to www.cao.ac.za and entering your CAO number, sending an email to enqgeneralcao@cao.ac.za or call 031 268 4444.

CLOSING DATES FOR APPLICATIONS

Faculty of Engineering 1st semester	30 Sept
2nd semester	31 May
Faculty of Natural Sciences	30 Sept
Faculty of Management Sciences	30 Sept

Applications submitted after 30 September accumulate a late application fee determined by the CAO.

APPLICATION DOCUMENTS

For South African applicants

- Grade 11 final results, grade 12 June exam results, National Senior Certificate or Statement of Results
- Identity document
- Students transferring from other universities should submit an academic record and a certificate of good conduct

Non-South African applicants

- Valid passport
- Valid proof of medical insurance cover
- Police clearance certificate
- SGCE, GCE, GCSE, IGCSE or Cambridge School Certificate

MINIMUM ENTRANCE REQUIREMENTS

- National Senior Certificate with a diploma pass or N3 with 50% pass in Mathematics and English
- A minimum of 6 subjects with level 4 pass for diploma study and level 3 for Access Courses
- English Home Language or First Additional language, level 4 pass
- Specific subject combination and pass level relevant to the qualification; and
- Minimum points as per faculty requirement and as listed in the CAO handbook

GENERAL ADMISSION REQUIREMENTS

Each faculty stipulates admission requirements based on points aggregate calculated from the best six subjects presented by the prospective student. Over and above the points system, some departments administer a compulsory entrance test.

ADMISSION POINTS CALCULATION GUIDE

National Senior Certificate	
NSC Level Rating	NSC % Points
7	90 – 100
6	80 – 89
5	70 – 79
4	60 – 69
3	50 – 59
	40 – 49

Senior Certificate	
Symbol	Points
A	Higher Grade 8 Standard Grade 6
B	7 5
C	6 4
D	5 3
E	4 2

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Credits

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From the Editor-in-Chief

Many inventions are born out of a desire to improve mankind's lifestyle, or at least to preserve it. Even the atomic bomb was originally created with 'good' intentions, as a defence tool in response to a perceived threat from Nazi Germany. Albert Einstein was one of the scientists who initially encouraged the USA to develop the bomb, which resulted in an estimated 200 000 people being killed at Hiroshima and Nagasaki. He later called it his greatest mistake, saying that "had I known that the Germans would not succeed in developing an atomic bomb, I would have done nothing."



Mbali Mkhize

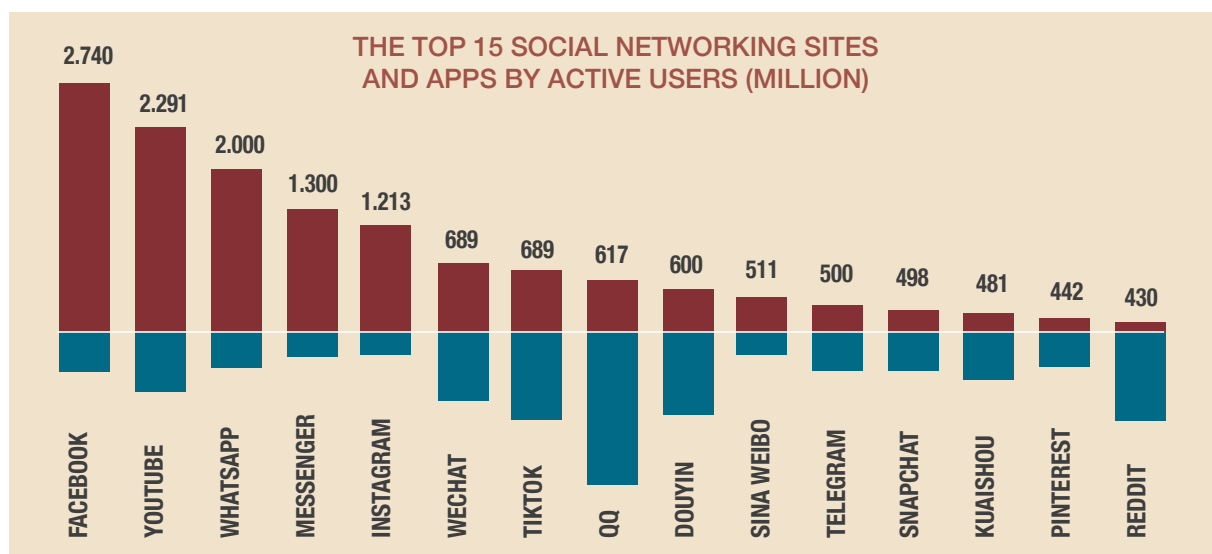
Even the most noble innovations often have unintended negative consequences. The Internet, which is indispensable to so many of us, has also indirectly facilitated scams, misinformation, horrific forms of abuse and even terror attacks, and these have had significant consequences at every level of society. Much of this is linked to various forms of social media. The influence of social media – for better or for worse – is obvious when one considers its scale:

1. Facebook – 2.74 billion active users
2. YouTube – 2.291 billion active users
3. WhatsApp – 2.0 billion active users
4. Facebook Messenger – 1.3 billion active users

5. Instagram – 1.221 billion active users
6. Weixin/WeChat – 1.213 billion active users
7. TikTok – 689 million active users
8. QQ – 617 million active users
9. Douyin – 600 million active users
10. Sina Weibo – 511 million active users
11. Telegram – 500 million active users
12. Snapchat – 498 million active users
13. Kuaishou – 481 million active users
14. Pinterest – 442 million active users
15. Reddit – 430 million active users

Source: Statista.com

<https://www.dreamgrow.com/top-15-most-popular-social-networking-sites/>



These social media platforms are used across all sectors of society and across all age groups. Today, a six-month-old baby watches YouTube, WhatsApp videos and so forth. And a 90-year-old could watch his or her great-grandchildren in school or at home wherever they are in the world.

All these social media platforms are meant to make us happy and help us through life, and in some ways they do this well. Unfortunately, they also allow misinformation and disinformation to spread. Misinformation is any false or out-of-context information that is presented as fact, whether with the aim of deceiving or not. Disinformation is a type of misinformation that is intentionally false and intended to deceive or mislead. In both cases, incorrect or disproven information is shared, with often significant consequences. The role of misinformation has really come to the fore during the COVID-19 pandemic.

As governments fight the war against COVID-19, a lot of disinformation about it has been peddled across various social media platforms, resulting in what has been called an “infodemic”. The World Health

Organisation (WHO) defines an infodemic as “too much information including false or misleading information in digital and physical environments during a disease outbreak”. Drivers of the infodemic have ranged from “presidents to religious, and opinion leaders, through to citizens, a small, but influential group of COVID-19 sceptics and these have harmed an otherwise somewhat successful response to the pandemic on the continent” (Bernard Sabiti: CIPESA.ORG).

As if this damage was not enough, as soon as COVID-19 vaccines came into being, the ‘anti-vaxxers’ emerged. The lives that have been lost as a result of COVID-19 denialists and anti-vaxxers will one day haunt them and they will echo the regrets that Einstein had.

Today as I write this, nurses in the USA are saying, “now we are fighting to save the lives of the denialists and anti-vaxxers.” Do not be a denialist or an anti-vaxxer: read and comply. I hope you will appreciate our efforts to raise awareness on COVID-19 and get more people to vaccinate. Let us become a VacciNation.



Staff and students came to witness the official opening of the site



Acting Deputy Vice-Chancellor: Resources and Planning Dr Johan van Koller, left, and SRC President Mthokozisi Gumede officially opened the coronavirus vaccination site on the main campus

◆ “Do not be a denialist or an anti-vaxxer: read and comply.
◆ I hope you will appreciate our efforts to raise awareness on COVID-19 and get more people to vaccinate. Let us become a VacciNation.” – Mbali Mkhize

Message from the Acting Vice-Chancellor

It would be impossible to talk about 2021 without mentioning the role that the COVID-19 pandemic has played in shaping how we relate to each other and the opportunities (or lack thereof) that we have at our disposal. For instance, businesses that are reliant on face-to-face encounters have had to adapt the way they operate or run the risk of folding. This is one example of a new way of doing things in response to the pandemic, and highlights the need to offer services that remain in demand.



*Professor MM Ramogale
Acting Vice-Chancellor & Principal*

It is no secret that one of the most significant casualties of the pandemic has been the formal and informal business sector. Despite measures introduced to support small businesses, a large number have closed. This has increased South Africa's already high unemployment numbers, particularly among young people. As the COVID-19 pandemic continues to wreak havoc across the country and province, they are the ones hit the worst.

According to Statistics South Africa, the official unemployment rate among the youth (aged 15-35 years) was 46.3% in the first quarter of this year. This means that almost half of young people of working age who are not studying are unemployed. Equally

concerning is the fact that 9.3% of these unemployed youth are university graduates. These grim statistics are certainly enough to challenge assumptions about higher education being an automatic advantage in securing employment upon graduating.

It was in this environment – few employment opportunities, coupled with shrinking and changing business opportunities – that we commemorated Youth Month in June. It was not all doom and gloom however. At MUT we hosted our 2021 graduation virtually and 2 812 graduates were capped. The fact that 1 631 of these graduates were female was cause for further celebration. In line with our vision, our institution is on course to transform lives through education by becoming a “transforming, equitable, sustainable and academically excellent University of Technology anchored in its communities”.

Education's ability to change lives has motivated many of our students to further their studies at MUT. No one exemplifies this better than 54-year-old Nhlanhla Tembe, who graduated with a Diploma in Building at this year's graduation ceremony. His is a story of dedication, sacrifice and perseverance to achieve his dream of going to university. As a business owner in the construction industry, his qualification will add value to his future entrepreneurship endeavours.

- ◆ *At MUT we hosted our 2021*
- ◆ *graduation virtually and*
- ◆ *2 812 graduates were capped. The fact that 1 631 of these graduates were female was cause for further celebration.*

MUT's entrepreneurial spirit is spreading. Current students and alumni are not only embracing entrepreneurship, they are also on the lookout for opportunities in every market. Using one's qualification to become an entrepreneur aligns with our vision to train individuals to become employers rather than employees. This has been the gospel that we continue to preach to our students: not to limit themselves to seeking employment opportunities, which are in short supply. Many of our students have embraced this way of thinking and have taken entrepreneurship seriously.

One of them is mechanical engineering graduate, Ntuthuko Khathi. Khathi identified an opportunity to provide a local, high-quality product, which remains in demand despite the national lockdown. He has created a brand of charcoal, Khathi Lumpwood

Charcoal, which is fast becoming a household name in South Africa's braai community. His business not only contributes to the fight against unemployment, but it also adds to the country's efforts to eradicate alien invasive species.

It is entrepreneurship efforts such as his that further deepen our conviction that MUT will one day become the institution of choice for students who wish to pursue entrepreneurship. Our students' response to the 2021 Entrepreneurship Development in Higher Education (EDHE) Intersivity competition continues to increase, along with the quality of businesses that our students are starting.

Professor MM Ramogale
Acting Vice-Chancellor & Principal



Nature Conservation Master's graduates had their private graduation which they funded themselves



Wandile Sihiya won the regional EDHE competition, and took part in the national competition



Ntuthuko Khathi showing his product (Picture courtesy of Twitter)

UNITING AGAINST COVID-19 AND MISINFORMATION

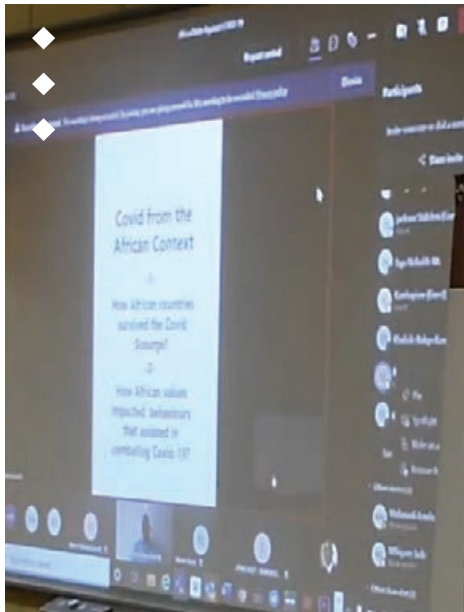
Africa unite against COVID-19

Prompted by how the developed countries were bulk-sourcing COVID-19 vaccines, MUT initiated a national conversation to bring to the fore how under-developed or developing countries in Africa were not at the forefront of this initiative. The University conceptualised a webinar titled, “Africa unite against COVID-19”. A limited number of students was invited to attend at the lecture theatre while at the same time observing social distancing protocols. The webinar was joined online by staff and students.

Chairing the webinar was Dr Thobile Poswa who divided the webinar into four sections, thus ensuring it was not a monotonous presentation. At the webinar, Mr Koffi Kouakou – a futurist, author, storyteller and social commentator – praised all 35 African leaders for prioritising the threat of COVID-19 as a phenomenon that could have wiped out the whole continent. Kouakou acknowledged the role played by South Africa’s president, Mr Cyril Ramaphosa, who was tasked with leading a continental response to COVID-19.

“His quick response to developing a plan for Africa, set the tone and was embraced by all the African leaders. In addition, previous experiences with deadly pandemics such as HIV/AIDS, Ebola, and other health-related problems have taught Africa to act and not delay preventative measures,” said Kouakou, to the delight of the audience as it began to appreciate how Africa had survived the scourge of COVID-19.

“Something went quite well in Africa. Bodies did not lie on the streets. Africa was united and revisited old ways of known herbs that had been helpful to fight certain ailments. Many people began using alternative medicine. Our health systems also rose to the occasion, coupled with government support as the lockdowns helped



The online event was very successful

prepare the health systems. African unity was seen as pivotal and there were some best practices in Botswana, Rwanda, Madagascar, Tanzania and Morocco,” Kouakou continued.

But there was also something else. Africa’s value systems also played an important role. In South Africa in particular, Ubuntu became more prominent. There was a sense of compassion as everyone united and got together in addressing nutritional problems, mental illness, depression and Pan-Africanism. A Solidarity Fund was launched and assisted greatly in assisting with issues of food security.

The communities responded well in quelling the spread of the virus. Adaptability became a key feature in Africa’s response to prevent the spread of the virus. More than a year into the pandemic, many African countries are maintaining social distancing protocols and still wear masks.

Kouakou believed that a nation that is not healthy is not productive. It is thus an imperative that African governments all invest in strong health systems. As a continent Africa must still become more vigilant and united as well as communicate about COVID-19 effectively.

MUT staff respond to call to get vaccinated

The fight against the COVID-19 pandemic is far from over. In mid-May South Africa joined its counterparts by starting to roll out registration for the vaccine in a phased approach, prioritising those most vulnerable to the virus. For MUT, this was an opportunity to educate and encourage staff and students to get vaccinated to save their lives and protect their loved ones. This was an important task for the Department of Marketing and Communication (Marcomms) at MUT.

For Marcomms senior director, Mbali Mkhize, the key to successfully managing the COVID-19 pandemic is not only vaccination itself, but also the provision of accurate information to the university community so that people can make informed choices.

“We realised early on from social listening that there are many myths and conspiracy theories about the COVID-19 vaccine, which made a lot of people sceptical about taking the vaccine,” said Mkhize. “This was the case even though the 60-years and above age bracket had been vaccinated before in their lives and have had their children and grandchildren vaccinated against other diseases.”

Marcomms appointed three COVID-19 Change Agents to strengthen its efforts in ensuring that the message gets to the relevant audience. Their first assignment was to target staff members who are 50 years and above and assist them with their registration to get vaccinated.

Twice a week Marcomms set up a COVID-19 registration table at Senate Chambers and Anniversary Lane, where staff were assisted with registering to get their jabs. A company encouraging staff to get their jab was also running simultaneously.

The role of students was significant even though they were not yet eligible to get vaccinated.

“Our fight against COVID-19 is not just being waged at universities. We are also using our stakeholders as ambassadors that carry the message of safety into our communities. We entrusted our students with getting the vaccination messages to their parents and grandparents,” said Mkhize.

The registration tables at Anniversary Lane doubled



One of the students who vaccinated on the first day



MUT staff heeded the call to vaccinate; Nikela Mchunu, right, was first, Raymond Zulu followed

up as a place where students could register their loved ones who might not be able to register themselves. Allowing students to bring ID numbers of their family members who were eligible to vaccinate, and helping them get registered, was part of a University strategy to overcome the illiteracy barrier in many communities. The other advantage of allowing students to register their older family members was that students got to understand how the process worked with the hope that when their turn came, they would already know what needed to be done.

Mkhize said: “When it is the students’ turn to get vaccinated, our work will be largely done. We would have a cohort of students who understand the significance of being vaccinated against the COVID-19 pandemic.”

MUT's Task Team for COVID-19 keeps MUT up to date

MUT is probably among the top universities globally in prioritising communication around COVID-19. This began with the establishment of the COVID-19 Task Team which approved a Communication Plan. It is this plan that has ensured that MUT communicates COVID-19 messages on a daily basis. The COVID-19 messages range from safety compliance to a call to vaccinate.



MUT ran a strong campaign, informing staff and students about the necessity of vaccination



CELEBRATING OUR YOUTH

MUT launches radio station in honour of youth of yesteryear and today

When MUT celebrated 40 years of existence in 2019, the University proudly recognised its profound impact on the economy of the KwaZulu-Natal province and beyond. Its graduates are leaders in major organisations and they continue to hold their *alma mater* high wherever they are. The University applauds their actions, their commitment, and their continued zeal to push the country's economy forward.

Much has happened since 2019 and the illustrious history of the institution has continued to develop, despite the yoke of COVID-19. A key highlight is the brand new radio station that was launched on 16 June 2021. Mbali Mkhize, Senior Director of the Department of Marketing and Communications, said the date was deliberately chosen to symbolise the importance of the country's youth.

"We are aware that June 16 is a national holiday for reasons that all of us know. We associate with those reasons. We decided that in line with Youth Day and Youth Month, let us launch our beautiful radio station on this day. This is how we honour the youth of 1976. This is also how we are showing the way to the youth of today, and we are saying they must take the baton and run with it now," said Mkhize.

She added that the station had recruited more than 20 staff members. "Most of these staff members – DJs, newsreaders, producers, in-house engineers and technicians, are young people. We see young people as an investment for our economy, the country and us. Usually there are huge positive results from this strategy. Many managers, including sport managers,



Acting Vice-Chancellor Professor Marcus Ramogale, right, and SRC President Mthokozisi Gumede, officially opened the MUT Radio Station on Youth Day

apply for [positions with us]. Of course, you do have to have experienced personnel to act as the foundation of anything if you want success. We have that as well," she said.

◆ *"We decided that in line with Youth Day and Youth Month, let us launch our beautiful radio station on this day. This is how we honour the youth of 1976. This is also how we are showing the way to the youth of today, and we are saying they must take the baton and run with it now."*
– Mbali Mkhize



Awethu Kelese, near the camera, and Maphu Msomi broadcasting in the brand new studio



Disk jockeys 'King Africa', left and Londiwe Kunene, right, with a guest in the studio

By the first weekend of June, the station was almost ready. Martin Sims, an engineer from Blue Cow, the company that set up the broadcasting equipment, said it was state-of-the-art. "It is durable, effective, and suitable for the purpose, which is online based broadcasting," he said.

Both the Management and Council of the University have hailed the project. On 3 June 2021 Morailane

Morailane, the University Council Chair, and Professor Marcus Ramogale, the University's Acting Vice-Chancellor and Principal, were almost speechless when they visited the station. The two leaders' message was that the newest communication platform was a giant step forward for the University!

Please visit www.mut.ac.za to learn more about the station.

FRESHERS IN FOCUS

First-year students happy with enrolling at MUT

“My future is brighter than I imagined it to be before I enrolled with MUT. I am happy with the services and guidance provided by the institution and will take all the lessons from what I have witnessed and heard and use it in the future.” – First-year student

The gulf between school and tertiary (post-matric) education can be very daunting, and many new students experience what is generally known as ‘culture shock’. There are several reasons for this, including being away from home. The main one is the completely different set-up in tertiary education. For instance, the students are expected to take decisions themselves, for themselves. For the first time they are responsible for everything they need to do. This includes deciding to go to lectures.

The decisions students make determine their future. If they make poor decisions, those might affect them. Some do not graduate, and some drop out of university because they did not understand that the ‘freedom’ they got when they enrolled should have been accompanied with responsibilities. Universities are now aware of this, and are putting together plans to close this gap.

Students that joined MUT this year are grateful for the way the University is dealing with them. Nothando Chili (19), a freshman Office Management Technology student from Mthwalume on the south coast of KwaZulu-Natal, acknowledges the benefits of enrolling at MUT. She is a person who believes in doing things herself, for herself, “not to be dependent on anyone”. This view of life ties in with the fact that “MUT is known for its academic excellence and I always wanted to be one of those who get to study and be part of an institution that performs exceptionally well,” she said. She added that “MUT is close to my home town. I’m a teen who never gets used to being away from home, so every now and then I visit my parents because it does not cost much.”



Nothando, left, and Sisanda at the University’s main campus

Nothando also thinks that MUT is fair towards new students. “As first-year students we were given some time to settle down and get used to the new way of learning. Lecturers are considerate when it comes to balancing assignments and classes. If we have an assignment, they give us time to go through it and attempt various ways of doing it,” she said.

The atmosphere which Nothando describes was also noted by Sisanda Ntshangase, an ECP (Extended Curriculum Programme) student from Jozini in the north of KwaZulu-Natal. Sisanda said, “In classes everything is pleasing. We also have projectors that make our learning easy. Study material is also available for us.”

Generally, Nothando is happy with the provision of resources. She says it is “fair”, and even though it may take some time, it does not normally disappoint. “For the past week, we have been encountering problems with the WiFi and data. This hit hard because we had to submit assignments and attend classes online. But soon after it was reported, they responded and provided us with good WiFi connections and data for e-learning,” she said.

Nothando also applauded the other departments for the support they give to the first-year students and the general student population. She suggests that the Clinic be open on Saturday from 7am to 5pm because “we sometimes get ill and need to consult with them”.

What new students (and others) need to know about the University Library

“Hey freshmen, please learn a bit about your library! It plays a key role in the academic set-up at MUT.”

– Dr Nthabiseng Mosala-Bryant, Senior Director of the MUT Library



MUT has one of the richest libraries in the country

The MUT Library is one of the best equipped, most modern libraries in the country. Students do not have to physically come to the library to use its services – they can connect remotely to both the library on the Main Campus and the North (Natural Sciences) Campus.

Senior Director of the Library, Dr Nthabiseng Mosala-Bryant, shares the following useful information:

- The two MUT libraries have 42 staff members – 34 at the Main Library and 8 at the North Campus.



A student checking out new books



Students searching for books to use

- There are nearly 26 000 print books at the Main Library and nearly 15 000 at the North Campus.
- There are over 1 000 e-book titles across both libraries.
- The Main Library offers 24 print journals (totalling nearly 3 000 individual issues) and 25 online journals. The North Library offers 8 print journals (comprising almost 900 issues) and 11 online journals.
- In addition, we offer access to nearly 4 600 online journals via service provider-hosted sites. These include the Wiley Core Collection (11), the Jove Customised Collection (13), Freedom Collection (2 355), Ebsco (37), Taylor and Francis (1 797) and Sabinet (384).
- We also provide access to nine databases with a combined access to over 22 267 e-journal titles. These include Taylor and Francis (200 journals), Science Direct (4 438 journals), IEEE (385 journals), Proquest (4 544 journals), EBSCO (12 200 journals), Sabinet (500 journals), Perlego (3 000 e-textbooks), Springer-Nature, Scopus and the Web of Science.
- In addition, Turnitin anti-plagiarism software is available in the MUT Library.



Students are complying with COVID-19 in the library

- ◆ *There are over 1 000 e-book titles*
- ◆ *across both libraries. The Main Library*
- ◆ *offers 24 print journals (totalling nearly 3 000 individual issues) and 25 online journals. The North Library offers 8 print journals (comprising almost 900 issues) and 11 online journals.*

GRADUATION CELEBRATIONS

Umlazi resident graduates with a Diploma in Building at 54

Local resident, Nhlanhla Tembe, recently graduated with a Diploma in Building (Construction Management and Quantity Surveying) at MUT. At 54 years of age, he was the oldest student to graduate this year, proving that education has no age limit.

Tembe was one of the 2 812 graduates who received their qualifications at MUT's virtual graduation on Saturday, 19 June 2021.

He comes from a family that encourages attaining university qualifications. Among his siblings are a doctor and an engineer, to name a few. Having family members with university qualifications inspired him also to chart a path in higher education.

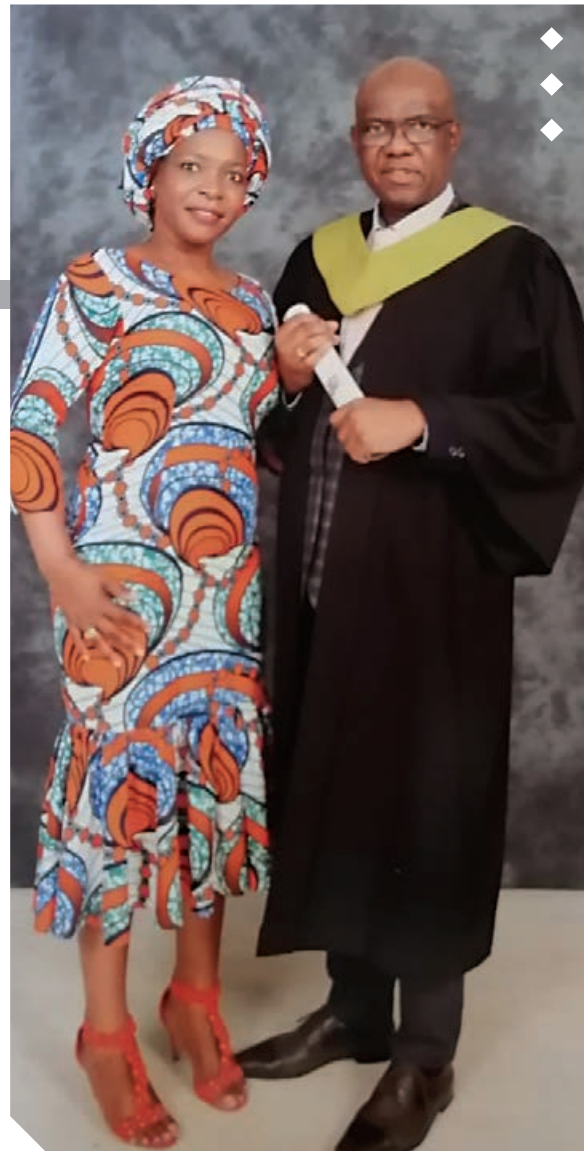
"When you are in a circle of people with all these qualifications, you feel that you must achieve something too," he said.

Tembe was drawn to a qualification in building because of his almost two decades of experience on construction sites.

"Most of the time I was self-employed. I was in the signage business on building sites," said Tembe. "I worked for almost 20 years in that business; and I saw that it (construction) is something that I can do at university now."

Attaining a university qualification was not an easy task. When Tembe initially came to register for his Diploma in Building in 2017, he was under the impression that he would be studying part-time, which was not the case. He registered for full-time study nonetheless.

"This was a dream that I had, and with the help of my wife that dream came true," said Tembe. "My wife has been a pillar for me."



Mr and Mrs Tembe

Unlike his younger counterparts, Tembe had the pressures of family life, working part-time and studying full-time to contend with. However, the thought of reading for an undergraduate qualification at the same time as his son, who is 17 this year, spurred him to persevere and reach the finish line.

Graduation 2021 – a story of increases

Every year, MUT plays a significant role in training future skilled youth to contribute to the economy as both employees and employers. These years of training and learning culminate in a graduation ceremony which the University hosts to celebrate its outgoing students' success.

With COVID-19 restrictions preventing the University from hosting a face-to-face ceremony, a virtual graduation event was held on 19 June this year. A total of 2 812 graduates were capped, along with a record number of Master of Nature Conservation graduates.

"It is commendable that the number of graduates has increased by just under 11% in spite of the COVID-19 pandemic and its restrictions. Our students prioritised their education and worked hard to complete their qualifications throughout last year's COVID-19 national lockdown," said Zolisa Gqamane, Deputy Registrar: Academic Affairs at MUT.

The increase was indicative of the University's never-say-die attitude and the students' dedication and commitment to their studies even when their world was turned upside down. Despite the challenges of adapting to a blended learning approach, where students learn face-to-face and virtually, these students got the job done.

Their courageous performance was commended by the Acting Vice-Chancellor and Principal of MUT, Professor Marcus Ramogale in his congratulatory speech. He said: "Despite your graduation being

◆ *"It is commendable that the number of graduates has increased by just under 11% in spite of the COVID-19 pandemic and its restrictions. Our students prioritised their education and worked hard to complete their qualifications throughout last year's COVID-19 national lockdown."* – Zolisa Gqamane

online, the fact of the matter is that your certificate will be yours forever. It is your entry into the world of work [or] your advancement in the world of work if this is your second or third qualification. It is your sense of pride to leave a legacy to future generations that you persevered and graduated under very difficult circumstances during the COVID-19 pandemic. It is an achievement that will strengthen your resolve in life to always do better."

This story of perseverance in the face of adversity does not end there. The gender composition of this year's graduates reveals MUT's commitment to transforming the lives of the marginalised in society through education and research in action.

MUT'S post-diploma graduates are on the increase

MUT's future as an academic destination for students wishing to pursue post-diploma studies is looking bright, and the 2021 virtual graduation was evidence of the trend. This year 548 graduated with post-diploma qualifications, a 45% increase from last year's 378. This was in spite of the fact that MUT was among the institutions considered as being at risk of not completing the 2020 academic year!

"Last year, we were on the Minister of Higher Education, Science and Technology's list of

academic institutions at risk of not completing the 2020 academic year," said Gqamane. "Although we were the last institution to finish the academic year, our students continue to prove that they are among the best in the country."

The increase in post-diploma graduates also includes a record number of Master of Nature Conservation graduates. The 13 graduates' research theses will go a long way in advancing nature conservation efforts across South Africa.

Women lead the pack at this year's graduation

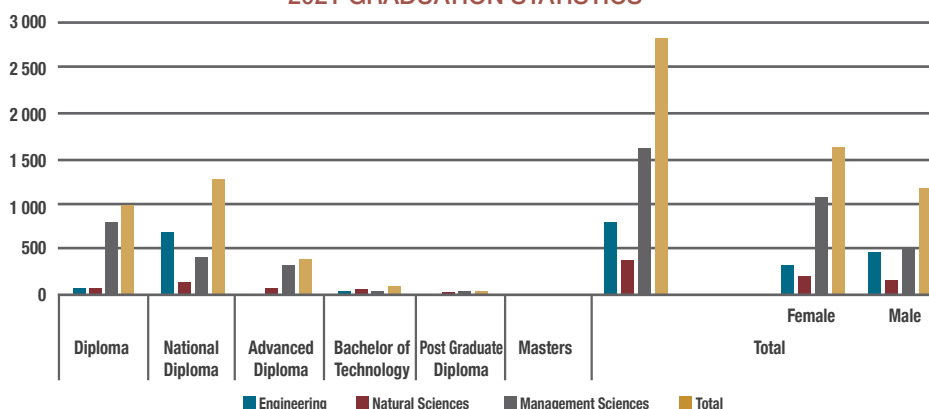
In line with the University's transformation agenda, this year's graduation saw 1 631 females receive their qualification at the institution, compared to 1 181 males.

"We are one of a few institutions with an equitable gender balance in our student population," said Gqamane. "It is wonderful news when we graduate more female students, especially in science and engineering where there is a marked shortage of black and female professionals. These numbers will go a long way in reaffirming MUT as an institution where all students succeed regardless of their sex or race."

In the Faculty of Management Sciences, 1 081 females graduated compared to their 535 male counterparts. Graduates from this faculty account for over half of this year's graduates. Women also led the pack in the Faculty of Natural Sciences, with 215 female graduates compared to 167 male graduates. However, female graduates are still lagging in the Faculty of Engineering, where there were 335 women graduates compared to 479 men.

The University's graduation success also extended to post-diploma graduation rates.

2021 GRADUATION STATISTICS



SPOTLIGHT ON MASTER'S RESEARCH

Master of Nature Conservation research focuses on improving quality of water from rural sources

The United Nations has identified scarcity of water as one of the growing challenges that many countries will face as populations expand. On top of this, rural communities who have to rely on natural sources of water are exposed to water pollution and contamination.



Tahulela Tshivhase

MUT Master of Nature Conservation graduate, Tahulela Nemavhola, conducted research to determine the level of pollution and contamination of rural water sources in the Tshivhase and Rambuda communities of the Vhembe District in South Africa's Limpopo Province. Nemavhola's study also investigated whether there was a seasonal difference in water quality in relation to rainfall.

His study, titled Assessing the effectiveness of traditional drinking water treatment and storage methods on water quality in the Tshivhase and Rambuda communities, Thulamela Municipality, Vhembe District, started with assessing which water sources were contaminated before the water could be treated.

"A total of 90 samples representing 10 water sources from six different villages were tested in the laboratory for pH, TDS, turbidity, nitrates, orthophosphate, E.coli and total coliform," said Nemavhola. "All water sources were found to be contaminated and exceed World Health Organisation standards during the dry and wet season."

Residents of Tshivhase and Rambuda communities use three methods to improve the quality of drinking water. The first is to add bleach to the water before storing it; the second is to boil and then store it; and the third is to leave it to stand.

Nemavhola's study found that: "The bleach method was the only method that remains effective even in the storage facilities. The boiling method was effective for a short period and became less effective in the storage facilities. The long standing method was the least effective method."

This research will contribute much-needed expertise on improving water quality in rural areas where residents either do not have access to running water or have intermittent access to it, forcing them to rely on traditional water sources.

Professor Gavin McDonald in the Department of Nature Conversation supervised Nemavhola's study.

- ◆ *"The bleach method was the only method that remains effective even in the storage facilities. The boiling method was effective for a short period and became less effective in the storage facilities. The long standing method was the least effective method."* – Tahulela Nemavhola

When elephants and baobab trees share a habitat, it's the baobab that suffers – MUT Master's study

It has been said that “When elephants fight, the grass suffers, but when they make love, the grass suffers also”. What happens when these majestic and towering animals share a habitat with an equally imposing giant of the African continent, the iconic baobab tree? A tree whose size is best described by the Togolese proverb, “Wisdom is like a baobab tree: no one individual can embrace it”?

This was the subject of inquiry for MUT Master of Nature Conservation student, Dellan Steven Khosa.

Khosa's study was titled, Assessing effect of African elephant (*Loxodonta africana*) on the African baobab trees (*Adansonia digitata*) of the Mapungubwe National Park, Limpopo Province, South Africa.

Khosa graduated with a Master of Nature Conservation qualification at MUT's virtual graduation on 19 June 2021. He was one of the 13 Master's students that the Department of Nature Conservation graduated this year, the highest number to date since the degree's inception.

This study, which was conducted in 2019, found that the damage to baobab trees was increasing due to the impact of elephants in the park.

“Results show that 8% of baobab trees were found dead in 2019. Moreover, of 18 trees that had 100% debarking in 2005, one tree (equal to 6%) was found dead in 2019,” Khosa said. “The results furthermore illustrate that debarking has increased considerably since 2009 with the majority of trees (43%) in 2009 only being in class 2 (1-26% debarked), while in 2019 the majority of trees displayed 76-100% debarking (45% in class 5).”

Khosa explained that although the study found an increase in debarking, it did not find sufficient evidence to suggest that baobab mortality between 2009 and 2019 was a result of elephant impact.

Khosa's study set out to engage with four critical objectives: “to determine the baobab density and



Steven Khosa

spatial distribution and compare the structure of the baobab population across the two sections of the Mapungubwe National Park; to determine whether elephant damage caused death of the baobab trees and the proportion of baobab mortality between 2005-2009; to determine the extent of elephant damage (debarking and die-back percentage) within the Eastern and Western sections; to determine which size class of the tree is most affected across the two sections of the park; and to determine whether trees could survive to 2019 if they were 100% debarked in 2005”.

Khosa explained that with the knowledge of the damage that elephants can cause to the tree population, it was important to conduct the study at Mapungubwe National Park.

“Mapungubwe National Park was created to preserve biodiversity and cultural heritage in South Africa and is an open system park with a high population of African Elephants, as well as the iconic baobab tree,” said Khosa. “The potential for elephant damage is therefore of concern to the SANParks (South African National Parks).”

The study will contribute to critical conservation efforts at the park, especially now when baobab trees are on their way to becoming an endangered species due to climate change.

◆ **“Debarking has increased**
◆ **considerably since 2009 with**
◆ **the majority of trees (43%) in**
2009 only being in class 2
(1-26% debarked), while in 2019
the majority of trees displayed
76-100% debarking (45% in
class 5).” – Dellan Khosa

MUT Master's study establishes a link between erectile dysfunction and GBV

A MUT Master of Nature Conservation study has found a link between erectile dysfunction and Gender-Based Violence (GBV).

Nonkululeko Lovejoy Ntshangase's study, titled Traditional knowledge on the use of *Hippobromus pauciflorus* as a herbal aphrodisiac to treat erectile dysfunction (ED), uncovered that one of the main causes of GBV was erectile dysfunction. Erectile dysfunction, explained Ntshangase, led to cheating.

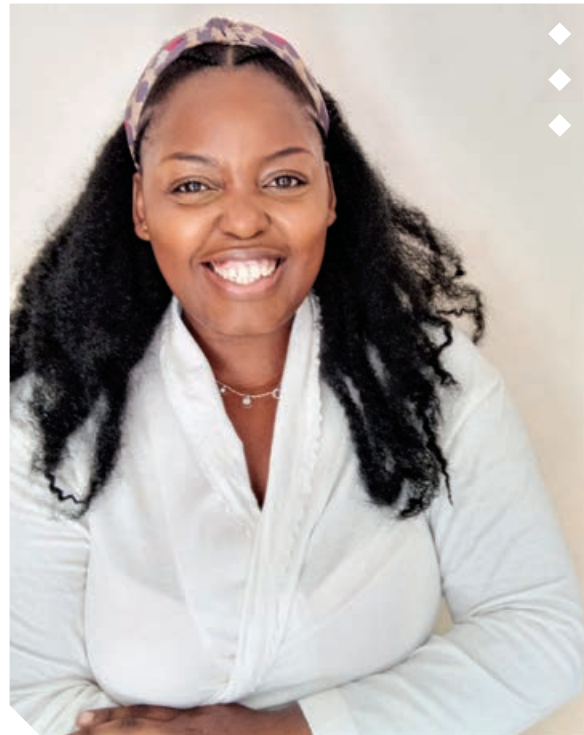
"Men would get frustrated. They have fears. Others find it difficult to buy western medicine because everything is in the open. It would have been easier if there was a private room where they could buy these western medicines. They say they are embarrassed by this situation," said Ntshangase.

With traditional medicine, no one gets to know; there is a reasonable amount of privacy. However, Ntshangase said that because some men have to take medication for chronic diseases, the traditional medicines may not have the desired effects. For this reason, some men over-compensate and take more traditional medicine than required. For instance, a diabetic man could have his western medication wiped out by the traditional medicine, which would lead to health problems, Ntshangase said.

She added that some of the information about traditional medicines' effectiveness, or lack thereof, was based on word of mouth. "I wanted to find out which one works," said Ntshangase. "I tested the traditional medicines in the lab to determine what amount was not harmful."

The critical part is that, as Ntshangase discovered, many men that are victims of erectile dysfunction are between 25 and 34 years old. She said this was because of the food that people eat and their lifestyle. She recommends eating healthily.

Ntshangase, who works at the KZN Herbarium in Durban, conducted her research in some Durban hospitals, and a hospital in Nkandla in the north of KwaZulu-Natal. Her research was supervised by Professor Roger Coooposamy, Acting Head of Department of Nature Conservation at MUT.



Lovejoy Ntshangase

She is one of 13 Master of Nature Conservation students who graduated at this year's virtual graduation. Other dissertations looked at water quality, invasive species, conservation laws in South Africa, and coping with drought and climate change, among others. This is the third year the department is graduating its Master's students.

- ◆ *"Men would get frustrated.*
- ◆ *They have fears. Others find*
- ◆ *it difficult to buy western*
- medicine because everything is*
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- this situation."*
- Nonkululeko Ntshangase*

FROM STUDENTS TO ENTREPRENEURS

Behind every great braai, there is an even greater fire

Archbishop Desmond Tutu described braai as the one thing that can unite all South Africans “irrespective of your politics, of your culture, of your race, of your whatever”. There is no doubt that the fire that would forge such a socially cohesive braai would need to be special!

This is where MUT mechanical engineering graduate, Ntuthuko Khathi, and his Khathi Lumpwood Charcoal come in. If Weber were to release a charcoal edition of its Braai Bible, Khathi’s brand of charcoal would feature prominently as every braai master’s secret weapon.

Khathi Lumpwood Charcoal ticks all the boxes, from being ethically sourced to being environmentally friendly, which is a rare quality for charcoal.

“We offer high-quality premium charcoal made from lumpwood,” said Khathi, who graduated in 2020. “Being made from lumpwood, it is also green efficient which is good for the environment.”

Khathi’s charcoal burns longer and produces less smoke. This not only means that customers can braai for longer but they can do so without having to worry about damaging the environment.

“Producing less smoke means that it produces less gases which harm the environment,” said Khathi. This is the equivalent of driving an electric car which sounds like a 1960s American sports car.



Ntuthuko Khathi showing his product (Picture courtesy of Twitter)

The business itself, which is based in Jozini, northern KwaZulu-Natal, employs 15 skilled and semi-skilled workers.

Khathi adds that the production process takes about a week. He goes through a careful process of selecting trees that can be used for producing charcoal, and only uses trees that are not indigenous. This is particularly important given the country’s efforts to preserve indigenous plants whilst also reducing foreign, invasive plant species.

It just goes to show that behind every great braai, there is an even greater fire!



Final-year IT student develops app to help visually impaired

Visually impaired individuals can now breathe a sigh of relief when it comes to recharging their mobile airtime, thanks to final-year Information Technology student Mzamo Mbhele. Mbhele, from Umlazi Township's J Section, has created an app that assists people to recharge their airtime and data bundles by simply running their smartphone camera over the voucher. The app is called Pre-paid TopUp. Mzamo says recharging using his app is instant and efficient. "I was inspired by my sister who cannot see well without glasses. I had to recharge for her each time she bought airtime," said Mbhele.

From a business perspective, Mbhele said the app was gaining traction. "It is blowing up like nothing I have seen before. It has received 7 000 shares on Facebook, over 4 000 installs, and is climbing." Mbhele said he would use the cash he is making to fund other projects and grow his software business.



Innovative! Mzamo Mbhele

◆ The following are some of the positive reviews the app has received:

◆ *"Thee Best – no longer have to punch the code, make mistakes; just scan and sorted."* – Sinenhlanhla Ndlovu.

◆ *"It's [quite] a great app. It will surely make things easier when recharging."* – Sizwe Khumalo.

"This app is awesome. I used it to recharge. It's quick and easy to use. Kudos to the developers." – Siyanda Mchunu.

MUT AT THE FOREFRONT OF POSITIVE TRANSFORMATION

MUT faculties collaborate with the municipality to address the energy crisis and energy transition



Seated, are Refiloe Ntoi, right, and Sbu Ntshalintshali, with members of staff and students from different faculties

The faculties of Natural Sciences, Engineering and Management Sciences have collaborated with the eThekweni Municipality to unpack how the institution could contribute to finding solutions to the energy crisis that has been affecting the country since 2008. The result of the partnership was a symposium that took place at the University on 28 June 2021. The symposium was addressed by Sbu Ntshalintshali, a manager of the Energy Transition Portfolio at eThekweni Municipality. Refiloe Ntoi, a lecturer in the Department of Nature Conservation, spearheaded the planning and execution of the event.

- ◆ *“The municipality plays a proactive role in facilitating the country’s green economy by prioritising the renewable energy agenda. The municipality’s Renewable Energy Roadmap gives direction for the city to derive 40% of its electricity from renewable energy sources by the year 2030, as per the Durban Climate Change Strategy, and to derive 100% of its electricity from renewable energy sources by the year 2050, as per the Climate Action Plan.” – Sbu Ntshalintshali*

Ntshalintshali gave a very informative lecture to the students and staff. The gist of his message was how the municipality plays a proactive role in facilitating the country’s green economy by prioritising the renewable energy agenda. He explained that the municipality’s Renewable Energy Roadmap gives direction for the city to derive 40% of its electricity from renewable energy sources by the year 2030, as per the Durban Climate Change Strategy, and to derive 100% of its electricity from renewable energy sources by the year 2050, as per the Climate Action Plan.

In addition, Ntshalintshali impressed upon the students and staff the need to learn about the various new renewable energy sources. He also talked about the problems and challenges that will accompany the country as it switches from a single (coal-based) energy source to diverse energy sources. Ntshalintshali called this period a “transition” and said the country was in a “crisis”. He said everyone had to ask themselves how they could contribute to reducing carbon emissions. He said the period the country was going through is both tough and exciting. “It is going to result in job creation as new models of energy production will be employed. Please, always think of a hybrid of technologies to address the energy crisis issue,” he said.

Both Ntoi and Ntshalintshali are of the view that students with different skills have a lot to contribute to the new ways of producing energy. Both said the sites where new energy generating plants should be built would need staffing, and this would require human resources skills. The sites would need proper assessment, which would require experts with natural sciences skills; and of course, the hard building jobs would need experts with engineering skills. Ntshalintshali said South Africa would be able to grow the economy if problems were approached this way. “This will also be a way to absorb part of the ‘73%’ of unemployed youth, and create sustainable jobs,” he said.

Ntshalintshali encouraged the students to visit the relevant municipality website for more information, or communicate with him directly on social media to have further discussions on renewable energy and the role they can play in the issue.

Ntoi told the students from all three faculties that “growing our economy will take more than one disciplinary approach. It needs a meeting of minds, an inter-disciplinary approach.” She said this was the reason why students from all faculties were invited to participate in this “critical” discussion forum. She emphasised that efforts towards securing renewable energy sources were in line with achieving all the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), “particularly SDG7, which is ‘Ensuring Affordable and Clean Energy.’”

As part of their contribution to finding solutions to the problems, Dr Kaniki Tumba, a lecturer in the Department of Chemical Engineering, said he would give his students an assignment to develop a full research proposal on environmentally-friendly energy generation. The academics could get involved in a number of ways, like organising meetings on the issue, as Ntoi had done, and by giving the students assignments.

Students from all faculties showed interest in the subject, asked questions, and made comments that Ntshalintshali said were good. For instance, Siyabulela Mkhize asked how biogas could be harvested and turned into renewable energy. To this and other questions and comments from the students, Ntshalintshali suggested that everyone needed to be practical and realistic. “There is no silver bullet for all the problems,” he said. He appealed to the students to change their ways of handling the energy issue. One of these would be watching business news, he said. The partnership is supported by all the faculty deans, and some staff from the faculties.

Mike Naidoo – at the helm of student transformation for nearly three decades

After 28 years of service at MUT, our Registrar, Mike Naidoo, retired at the end of July due to ill health. Professor Marcus Ramogale, Acting Vice-Chancellor and Principal, said: “Mr Naidoo, the longest-serving member of MUT’s current Executive Management Committee, retires after many years of distinguished and loyal service to the institution. The MUT he leaves today is a much bigger and more sophisticated institution than the one he joined many years ago, thanks to the creative contributions of stalwarts like him.”

Naidoo joined MUT in 1993 as Head of the Student Records and Enquiries Office, a year before South Africa’s democratic elections. He was appointed as Registrar in 1996. During his tenure, Naidoo oversaw 26 graduation ceremonies. This is no ordinary feat when one considers that MUT hosts graduations once a year. Put differently, there more MUT qualifications bearing Naidoo’s signature than the signatures of any other MUT Registrar.

Registration of students also fell within Naidoo’s scope of responsibility. Becoming a university Registrar at a time when South Africa was transforming afforded Naidoo an opportunity to transform the registration landscape – particularly by expanding access to more deserving students. His retirement comes at a time when higher education is going through yet another a transformation necessitated by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Naidoo has served as secretary to both the MUT Council and the Convocation Executive. These roles made him the custodian of governance matters at MUT. As one of the longest serving senior leaders at the institution, Naidoo was also a go-to person when



Bowing out with a smile! Mike Naidoo

it came to institutional memory and University rules and procedures.

What Naidoo will miss the most is interaction with staff and students, although COVID-19 has given him a taste of what interactions could be like in future since face-to-face encounters remain limited. “Sometimes it is painful when a student wants to see you to resolve a problem but you can’t meet them [because of COVID-19 regulations],” said Naidoo.

Phumzile Masala, who is Deputy Registrar, is Acting Registrar as the University looks to replace Naidoo on a long-term basis.

◆ *Mr Naidoo, the longest-serving member of MUT’s current Executive Management Committee, retires after many years of distinguished and loyal service to the institution. The MUT he leaves today is a much bigger and more sophisticated institution than the one he joined many years ago, thanks to the creative contributions of stalwarts like him.*

MUT landscape set to change as massive projects move towards completion

On 9 June 2021, the Acting Vice-Chancellor and Principal of MUT, Professor Marcus Ramogale, and members of the Executive Management Committee, went to inspect the construction projects currently underway at the MUT Main Campus. These projects are the Engineering Building and a Student Centre. The Engineering Building is 54% complete. Malindi Xala, Director: Infrastructure, said the project was expected to be finished in February 2022.

The new building will house the following facilities: on Level 2, electrical and mechanical plant, the main

entrance foyer, academic offices, boardroom facilities, storerooms, and kitchenettes; and on Levels -1, 0, and 1, laboratory facilities and support offices incorporated within the main laboratories.

According to Xala, the Student Centre is 57% complete. It is expected to be finished at the end of December 2021. The Centre will house the SRC Offices, Financial Aid offices, food and retail outlets, banking facilities, administration offices, the Finance Department, MUT Radio, coffee and book shops, gym and undercover parking.



Almost complete! The new Engineering faculty block is taking shape



The new Student Centre

MUT and partners give laptops to 50 students



Now these students can cope with the new circumstance – learning online. Dr Makua is sixth from the right next to MUT staff from the Financial Aid Office

“Guard these laptops with your life.” This is what Dr Manyane Makua, Acting Deputy Vice-Chancellor: Teaching and Learning, said to some of the 50 students that received laptops from the University’s Financial Aid Office on 17 June 2021.

Dr Makua appealed to the students individually as he handed out the laptops, adding that he hoped they would take advantage of the opportunity they had been given. Looking after the equipment would ensure it benefited them even after they graduated from the University.

Dr Makua said that he was “grateful to the Financial Aid Office for pulling off such a brilliant initiative”. The laptops were provided through funding from Standard Bank as part of a R290 million nationwide initiative led by Universities South Africa (USAf).

The Manager of the University’s Financial Aid Office, Andrew Kubone, said the laptop initiative was aimed

at students in the ‘missing middle’. These are students who do not qualify for National Student Financial Aid Scheme (NSFAS) support because of their parents’ salary scale, yet their parents struggle to meet the financial needs of their children at university.

The process to secure laptops for students started in 2020, with Dr Linda Meyer of USAf. Dr Meyer applauded the University’s attitude and said it was heart-warming to work with the team led by Mr Kubone. Dr Meyer pointed out that the University management, and its relevant office, worked hard to secure the laptops for the students. She added that USAf was working “relentlessly to advance the interests of the students”.

Two second-year Accounting students, Samkelisiwe Ndlovu and Ayanda Mbili, said they appreciated the gesture. Ndlovu said she was “very grateful” and added that the laptop would be of great help to her as students have to do online learning because of the COVID-19 pandemic.

“We use sport to fight GBV” – Sport Officer

The University is actively working to deal with gender-based violence (GBV) and is using different avenues to get the message across. For instance, over the last two years, the University’s Department of Marketing and Communications has run a campaign on GBV. Now we are focusing on how the University’s Sport Department fuses the issue into its activities. According to Bongile Ganyile, a Sport Officer who is currently acting as Deputy Director in the department, the sport administration is using sport to set an example that everyone else can follow.



MUT has a huge number of sporting codes

“As the MUT sport administration, we have identified sport as an innovative instrument that can be used to fight the scourge of GBV and achieve peace, justice and harmony among the members of university communities and the country at large,” said Ganyile.

They have decided to take advantage of the popularity of sport and are encouraging students to take part in all the sporting codes that are available. “Every year during our annual recruitment drive, we explain to the new students that have just joined us that they can join any sport code. For a number of years we have had our female rugby team. This year two of our



Keen hockey players!

◆ “As the MUT sport administration, we have identified sport as an
◆ innovative instrument that can be used to fight the scourge of GBV and
◆ achieve peace, justice and harmony among the members of university
communities and the country at large.” – Bongile Ganyile

female rugby players, Nobuhle Mjwara and Anesipho Malgas, joined the Sharks female team. This may seem ordinary to some parts of our country, but for two young black women from Umlazi Township, it is indeed unusual! This is more than exciting for us. It clearly shows that the mindset of our students is shifting,” said Ganyile. Nobuhle and Anesipho are second-year students studying towards diplomas in Office Management Technology and Accounting respectively.

In other sporting codes there are changes too. Ganyile said that MUT is moving towards a point when all the sporting codes will have both male and female teams. The MUT bodybuilding team is already both male and female.

“Our coaches, team managers and sports leaders in general are encouraged to ensure that in all our sports projects, a message of the fight against gender-based violence is always included. This is done through making sure that women’s participation in sport is always encouraged, and also their participation in leadership positions,” he explained.

What pleases the sport administration most is that there is a change in how both female and male students behave, and talk about gender-related issues. He described this situation as “progressive” and “very relevant to the current times”. “We are hoping that this is the start of good things. We would like to see our sport students’ positive attitude rubbing off on society as well,” he said.

Ganyile concluded by saying that what was happening at the University, at least in the sport arena, was changing students for the better. As former President



A boxing enthusiast



We also have a women soccer team – Ganyile

Mandela once observed, “Sport has the power to change the world. It has the power to inspire. It has the power to unite people in a way that little else does. It speaks to youth in a language they understand. Sport can create hope where once there was only despair.”

TSC-assisted businesses make a huge impact on the local economy

The University's Technology Station in Chemicals (TSC) continues to empower small and medium-sized enterprises. This time the focus is on two women-founded and women-headed chemical businesses in KwaZulu-Natal and the Eastern Cape. Both were given guidance and assurance by Sbu Nkosi, the Deputy Director of the TSC, and Gugu Ngcobo, a technologist at the station.



Some of the products manufactured at Nomandla Ngcoya's factory

The first business is in Pietermaritzburg's Mbali Township and was founded in 2017 by Nomandla Ngcoya, a PhD student at the University of KwaZulu-Natal. Known as the D Chem Group, it is the brainchild of a woman who could not see herself doing any other economic activity except running a chemical-based business. Ngcoya describes her business as her "first love" and says it is making a huge contribution in the KwaZulu-Natal Midlands region.

D Chem manufactures a wide range of industrial and home chemical products. Some of these are dishwashing liquid, hard surface cleaners, oven cleaners, thickened bleach, laundry bleach, car wash and wax, engine degreaser and tyre polish.

Ngcoya said these products are shipped to a strong clientele base that D Chem Group has established in the public and private sectors. Some of these are Umgeni Municipality, Msunduzi Municipality, Msunduzi Museum, Coative, Hlophe Butcheries and B&M Analysts. Ngcoya sometimes does the delivery herself in the late hours of the day. She added that the business is doing very well and has just landed a huge contract from a private sector client.

One of the beneficiaries of Ngcoya's business is Ntando Solontsi, Head of Sales at D Chem Group. Solontsi says now he has enough cash to look after his family. Solontsi is one of the nine people currently employed in the firm, of which six are temporary and three are permanent.

The other business assisted by the TSC is Sobag Trading, which operates in the Umthatha area in the Eastern Cape and is owned by Ncebakazi Sobai.

Sobai used to sell her products as a hawker, and after a long struggle she made a breakthrough in 2019. She formed a co-operative called Mapenzi Ya Mama and with assistance from the OR Tambo Municipality, she attended a five-day training course at the TSC. This co-operative later split and Sobai continued alone under a different name.

Engaging with the MUT TSC has provided Sobai with ongoing benefits, including improved skills, closeness of resources, continuous product improvement, proper product testing to assure quality, market readiness, and continuous coaching and mentorship. Through MUT incubation, Sobag Trading is now ready to be a fully functional chemical industry. The company produces detergents, pine gel, multi-cleaners, hard surface cleaners, dishwashing liquid, bleach, and laundry washing powder.

In addition, Sobag is one of the beneficiaries of a virtual sanitiser training event which took place just before the first lockdown in March 2020. Sobag has grown even further as the demand for the sanitisers has grown due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Ncebakazi said she wants to include beauty products and green detergents in the range.

Sobag currently supplies local retailers and many informal shops in the Umthatha area. The company has three permanent staff, including the owner, and hires more staff on a temporary basis if there is a demand.

Both of these women-owned businesses are a strong indication of the determination and zeal of the owners, who have gone through some trying times on the road to success. A number of other people are now benefiting as a result of their efforts.



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