



SPIRIT

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MUT
MANGOSUTHU
UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY

**THE FACULTY OF
NATURAL SCIENCES
CONTINUES TO PRODUCE
SENIOR GRADUATES**

**MUT TO HOST THE ENERGY-WATER-FOOD-
CLIMATE-NEXUS INTERNATIONAL SUMMIT**

**SECOND YEAR IT BLIND CRICKETER AND THE
PROTEAS SHOW THE KIWIS WHO IS BOSS**

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45 YEARS ♦ OF SHAPING ♦ OUR PEOPLE'S FUTURE



shape and own the future

OPINION EDITORIAL

MBALI MKHIZE, SENIOR DIRECTOR: MARKETING AND COMMUNICATIONS



Editor-in-Chief:
Mbali Mkhize

INTERNATIONAL VISITORS AFFIRM MUT'S GLOBAL STATUS

As a University rooted in Umlazi Township, we have made great strides in both the national and international space during our 45 years of existence. Our 45th birthday coincides with our country's 30th year of democracy, and we are proud of the contribution we have made to multiple communities both during and before the democratic era.

We appreciate the decision of our Founder, Prince Mangosuthu Buthelezi, to locate the University in the biggest township in KwaZulu-Natal. This has given us a huge advantage in empowering our community with relevant skills and knowledge. We are also reaching out to the rest of the world to say we are here, come to us. Despite MUT not having a fully-fledged international office with full-time staff, we currently have more than 20 international partnerships in the USA, Asia, and Africa. Our colleagues engage at a global level through conferences, seminars, and bilateral collaborations with external stakeholders. All these engagements raise our profile and open new doors for MUT.

This year alone, MUT has hosted three eminent international guests who are actively involved with MUT. The first one was Dr Victor Ibeanusi, Dean of the School of the Environment from Florida Agricultural & Mechanical University (FAMU) in the USA. His visit on 5 February 2024 was aimed at igniting participation in the planned EnergyWaterFoodClimateNexus International Summit to be hosted by MUT from 1 to 4 July 2024. The summit attendees will include students from the USA, our partner universities, and some of our sister institutions in the province. A visit by Dr Terry Hofecker from Ohio, USA, a week later sealed participation in this summit by Ohio State University and other universities.

Already this summit has drawn positive media attention to MUT. At a national level, it is attracting partnerships across national and provincial governments, together with South Africa's research agencies and various regulating bodies.

As our first 45 years open onto the next 45, it is certain that the future of MUT as an international university is on an upward path.



VICE-CHANCELLOR'S CORNER

LOOKING BACK AND LOOKING FORWARD



Acting Vice-Chancellor & Principal:
Professor Marcus Ramogale

This year we celebrate 45 years of existence. Mangosuthu University of Technology today is a far cry from the fledgling institution that, back in 1979, opened its doors to 15 students who had confidence that we would change their lives. I must say they were the best students at the time, all admitted for studies in Electrical Engineering.

Today, I doubt that a higher education institution commencing with such a small number would grow in stature as MUT has grown. We are grateful to our late Founder, Prince Mangosuthu Buthelezi, who sadly passed away on 6 September last year. We are also grateful to our people – students, staff, and alumni – for their faith in this institution and their various efforts to make this University a better place to be. We are also appreciative of the people of Umlazi Township for their good neighbourliness. While our

presence here in Umlazi has made a huge difference to our neighbouring communities, we also pay tribute to how this township has made a difference to our graduates, who today have become industry captains and people of stature in various fields. Citizens of this township offer our students places to stay during their time at MUT; we appreciate that gesture.

We plan to dedicate a day to celebrate this 45-year milestone in the next term, and to include our communities so they may appreciate our presence and we may also pay tribute to their support. In advance, we pray for our 45-year anniversary and for all of you to be safe and attain your personal and professional goals. Looking at where we are now, the first term has shown that our outlook for 2024 is positive. The total number of registrations for annual and first semester programmes stands at 12,365, which includes 3,457 first-time entering undergraduates. This is an increase of 493 first-time entries, or 16.6%, compared to the same time last year. This is a great victory for all of us, given that we started the year with water and energy challenges which posed a risk to the registration process. I want to pay tribute to those warriors who present a compelling story for prospective students to choose only MUT. Our first-time entering students knew they wanted to enrol with MUT, and our returning students continue to regard MUT as a centre of knowledge that will empower them with a better future. We thank them for their patience. Here we let our people “shape and own the future”.

At least 80% of our students have been provided with accommodation so far. We have allocated 9,375 students to 37 external residences, and 636 students to our internal residences, which is still short of 285 to reach our internal total of 921. We applaud our government for serving and giving access to previously disadvantaged students.

We are looking forward to a good year. Let this 45th anniversary be a year when we reflect deeply on how we have made invaluable contributions to MUT, and how we could still make a difference.

MUT AT THE NEXUS OF ENERGY, WATER, FOOD AND CLIMATE



Dr Victor Ibeanusi and DVC: RIE Professor Nokuthula Sibiyi in the background

MUT TO HOST THE ENERGY-WATER-FOOD-CLIMATE-NEXUS INTERNATIONAL SUMMIT

MUT will host the EnergyWaterFoodClimateNexus International Summit at Coastlands Hotel, Musgrave in Durban, South Africa, from 1 to 4 July 2024. The Summit is a collaboration between MUT in Durban and Florida Agricultural & Mechanical University (FAMU) in Tallahassee, Florida, USA. The two universities have been in partnership for more than 23 years. FAMU has been hosting the Summit for more than a decade in Florida, and this will be the first time that the Summit is held in Africa.

The discourse of EnergyWaterFoodClimateNexus continues to cut across the globe, and this has become even more evident in Africa. Participants will come

from government and academia as evidence-based research is required for policy development and country strategies. In addition, the Summit delegates will also include young people from high schools and universities so that they can raise awareness about the need to undertake research on the core areas of the Summit – energy, water, food, and climate – and become activists. Women and vulnerable communities will be represented to enable them to take home innovative strategies to influence behaviour change in the thematic areas of the Summit.

Professor Nokuthula Sibiyi, MUT's Deputy Vice-Chancellor: Research, Innovation and Engagements

(RIE) is the Local Organising Committee Chairperson, while Dr Victor Ibeanusi, Executive Dean: School of the Environment at FAMU, is the Founder and Convenor of the Summit.

For more details, please visit www.mut.ac.za/summit



ENERGY WATER FOOD CLIMATE
NEXUS[®]
INTERNATIONAL SUMMIT

INTERNATIONAL SUMMIT GETS A BOOST FROM SANEDI

MUT has received a boost for its international summit, the EnergyWaterFoodClimateNexus International Summit, that will be hosted by MUT at Coastlands Hotel in Durban from 1 to 4 July 2024. Joining MUT and Florida Agricultural and Mechanical University (FAMU) will now be the South African National Energy Development Institute (SANEDI). Over and above hosting the Summit, these three institutions will spearhead the establishment of a Specialisation Centre of Energy, Water, Food, and Climate which will see that more research happens around the Centre and gets papers published in accredited journals.

Professor Marcus Ramogale, acting Vice-Chancellor and Principal, thanked Professor Nokuthula Sibiyi, Deputy Vice-Chancellor: Research, Innovation, and Engagements (RIE) and Mbali Mkhize, Senior Director: Marketing and Communications, for engagements with SANEDI. "This partnership with SANEDI will not only support the planned summit but will also ensure that proceedings go beyond the scheduled summit. The partnership is a five-year arrangement with seed funding of R2,6 million. We are truly grateful for the grant funding agreement with SANEDI. This shows that our stakeholder engagement programme is meaningful to our stakeholders," said Professor Ramogale.

For SANEDI, this grant funding agreement with MUT shows "how the unsolicited proposal submitted by MUT has objectives which are aligned with that of SANEDI. Because MUT showed a clear vision of how and what it wants to achieve, we believe this funding will leverage each institution's expertise," said Moranakele Thipe, Manager in the office of SANEDI's CEO, Dr Titus Mathe.

The other short-term objectives of the grant funding agreement will see the signing of an MoU and the establishment of a Steering Committee to provide oversight to the entire project.



Dr Titus Mathe, SANEDI CEO



Sicelo Xulu, SANEDI Board Chair

THE SPIRIT OF GIVING TOWARDS MUT ABOUNDS



From left, a Motsepe Foundation official; SRC President, Tobisa Dalasile; and Dr Precious Moloi-Motsepe, Co-founder of Motsepe foundation and Dr Thembi Kweyama

THE MOTSEPE FOUNDATION CLEARS THE WAY FOR 146 STUDENTS

The Motsepe Foundation has yet again made inroads in reducing student debt at MUT. On 23 February 2024, Dr Thembi Kweyama, Dean of Students, was invited for the official handover of a R1,1 million cheque for this purpose in Sandton, Gauteng.

Upon her return, Dr Kweyama convened a special meeting for the Student Services Trust Fund to disburse the funds, following guidelines that would ensure transparency and consistency. “I did not want our indigent students to suffer when the funds were received by the University. We needed to disburse the funds immediately because even the funder would have wanted that to happen. The process also included the Students’ Representative Council (SRC), and we

were able to support students who were not funded by NSFAS. An amount of R1,325,490 was set to clear qualifying students for registration for the 2024 academic year,” said Dr Kweyama.

For the SRC President, Thobisa Dalasile, this was a huge milestone for student leaders as they were a part of the allocation process. “We acknowledge and give thanks to the Motsepe Foundation; this will go a long way in alleviating financial challenges faced by our students. It is not something that we take for granted that 146 students were registered. All that these students could do is work harder so that they may get better jobs and support the University. We hope to get more support for the SRC Trust Fund,” Dalasile said.

GIFT OF THE GIVERS CONTINUES TO PROVIDE SOLUTIONS TO PROBLEMS

The support of the Gift of the Givers Foundation continues boldly into 2024. Gift of the Givers has provided various kinds of solutions to MUT over several years, and it is always at the right time. On 15 February 2024, with water shortages around Umlazi Township, Gift of the Givers was there to provide water to lessen the burden. “We will be sending you two pallets of water which will translate to at least 2,000 5-litre bottles of water. We hope this will go a long way in solving the unexpected problems,” said Rayhaan Muhammad Sooliman, the Gift of the Givers Chief Operations Director and son of the organisation’s revered founder, Dr Imtiaz Sooliman.

Two years ago, Gift of the Givers installed a 450,000-litre water tank at MUT so that the University does not suffer when there are water challenges. The support this year came at a time when even the tank was empty. “By providing the two pallets of water, we were able to get our reservoir back to the desired levels. The support from Gift of the Givers did not end

there. They also immediately dispatched their truck to provide starter food packs even earlier than the normal time. About 500 students became recipients of this support and will receive this monthly as part of the Student Food Pantry supply. This pantry is solely stocked by Gift of the Givers,” said Mbali Mkhize, Senior Director: Marketing and Communications.

An unexpected gift also came from Gift of the Givers in the form of more than 30 boxes of M&Ms sweets for campaigns for students and staff. It has been good times on campus.

Recognising the magnitude of Gift of the Givers’ support to MUT, Professor Marcus Ramogale, Acting Vice-Chancellor and Principal said during the State of the University address: “I have always maintained that stakeholder management is the cornerstone of an institution’s success. The African idiom, ‘If you want to go fast, go alone, but if you want to go far, go together’, cannot be truer for MUT.”



Off loading water from the Gift of the Givers truck are Gift of the Givers official, and Nosipho Mfeka, an intern in the Department of Marketing and Communications. Below them are, from left, Nikela Mchunu, Supervisor - Maintenance; Mbali Mkhize, Senior Director: Marketing and Communications; Thandeka Nduli, another intern in the department

PARTNERING WITH THE MEDIA: OUR BOLD DVC TAKES ON THE CHALLENGE



Professor Nokuthula Sibiyi, Deputy Vice-Chancellor: Research, Innovation and Engagements (RIE)

A request from the media to make a statement on behalf of a university is quite daunting, and rightly so! Most university officials do not have any training in how to deal with the media. Fear is therefore a common response, as is a lack of understanding of the need to work with the media to get a message across to the general public. This is somehow strange, given that the media played a key role in the struggle for freedom in South Africa prior to 1994. Why then does a call from the media still send chills down the spine of many? This is not the case with at least one of the University's Executive Management Team members, Professor Nokuthula Sibiyi, Deputy Vice-Chancellor: Research, Innovation and Engagements (RIE).

Professor Sibiyi has taken to the role like a duck taking to the water, yet she boldly says that she has

never had any training in how to deal with the media. "All I need is time to prepare," she said. Professor Sibiyi also said that if she receives questions in time, she will manage. "The list of questions makes it easy for me to be spontaneous and logical when I am responding. It also helps me to know if it is a radio or television interview as I need to put in more effort in making sure that I look presentable physically in case of a television interview. I once received a call from the media while I was driving. I had to pull over on the side of the road. I was not happy about that. I did not have time to prepare for that interview," said Professor Sibiyi.

On how she feels when being interviewed, Professor Sibiyi said: "I am not going to lie and claim that I feel totally relaxed. It feels like I am being interviewed

for the job. So, I prepare myself psychologically, emotionally as well as physically for the interviews as this is the only opportunity I have to lobby for our event.”

Professor Sibiyi said there are reasons why she is so prepared to work with the media. The first one is that she understands the role of the media in a democratic state where the media must seek answers for the general public from newsmakers and decision-makers. Professor Sibiyi said

“ The media are instrumental in providing facts to allow the society to be better informed about the issues that matter to them. The media also provide a platform for criticism and debate to ensure that information is tested and examined from all points of view.

Throughout the year, the University has a number of events from which it aims to achieve certain goals. These events have to be communicated to certain individuals and groups, including the general public. For the 2024 academic year, some of these events are the EnergyWaterFoodClimateNexus International Summit, which MUT will host from 1 to 4 July; and the SASUF Research and Innovation Week that takes place in Sweden from 13 to 17 May, and which a number of MUT staff will attend.

During the week of 19 to 23 February 2024, Professor Sibiyi had media interviews with a number of global and national media houses: News Central, Newzroom Africa, eNCA, Channel Africa, East Coast Radio, Radio Langa, Vibe FM, Voice of Wits, and Channels TV. She also received coverage in some print media, including Farmers Review Africa and Pretoria News, talking about the EnergyWaterFoodClimateNexus International Summit. More interviews are lined up for the coming weeks to

intensify the recruitment for the Summit that MUT will be hosting in partnership with Florida Agricultural and Mechanical University (FAMU).

Commenting on the EnergyWaterFoodClimateNexus International Summit, Professor Sibiyi said: “Working with the media gave us an opportunity to market the 2024 Summit. This will be the first Nexus Summit in Africa. As MUT is celebrating its 45-year anniversary, the University is focusing on programmes that will put MUT on a global stage. In our deliberate effort to build a global University, MUT is not only engaging deeply with the broader society through its research, innovations and engagements, but is also increasing its tempo in galvanising engagements with international institutions.”

Professor Sibiyi has advice for others in high places regarding media interviews.

“ I want to encourage my fellow colleagues to make use of each available opportunity to talk about MUT, which is a small university in terms of the size, student enrolment, research output etc. We need to take turns to showcase the excellent activities we are engaged with to put MUT on the map.

She reiterated that part of the University’s core business was engagement with all its key stakeholders and partners. “So, I use all platforms for engagement including the media. I value the opportunity of participating in interview sessions with the media,” Professor Sibiyi said.

A DECADE OF GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT FOR THE TLDC



Dr Manyane Makua

DR MANYANE MAKUA, ACTING DVC: TEACHING AND LEARNING, **REFLECTS ON THE TLDC'S ACHIEVEMENTS**

In 2023, the Teaching and Learning Development Centre (TLDC) celebrated its remarkable first decade of existence. Standing as a beacon of innovation and excellence in education at MUT, the TLDC has tirelessly dedicated itself to enhancing the quality of teaching and learning experiences for academics and students. A recent milestones is the centre's establishment of

an e-Learning Unit to provide strategic support for the integration of technology in teaching and learning. Through its myriad of workshops, seminars, and personalised support initiatives, the TLDC has fostered a culture of continuous improvement and professional development among staff members.

MORE MUT STAFF ARE PUBLISHING IN FOCUS CONFERENCE PROCEEDINGS

The TLDC, after its 10th Focus Conference hosted in August 2023, published conference proceedings with Springer Nature in the DHET-accredited journal *Advances in Social Science, Education and Humanities* in September 2023. A total of 33 papers were published on the scholarship of teaching and learning, of which 11 were from MUT staff members, representing a significant increase from the three papers published by MUT staff in the 2022 proceedings.



INVESTING IN CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT FOR MUT ACADEMICS

Enrolment in postgraduate diplomas

In line with its commitment to staying abreast of emerging pedagogical trends and technological advancements, the TLDC has provided support for MUT academics to enroll in the Postgraduate Diploma in Education Technology at UCT and the Postgraduate Diploma in Digital Education at Wits University. Eleven staff members successfully registered for the 2024 academic year at these institutions. This will enhance the proficiency of MUT academics in understanding pedagogies and related practices, while also expanding the pool of professionals skilled in using educational technologies to enhance teaching and learning. In this way MUT is ensuring that it remains at the forefront of educational excellence.

Academic Induction

Since 2023, the TLDC has enrolled 34 newly-appointed lecturers in the MUT Academic Induction programme. The induction ensures that new academic staff members are introduced to the MUT teaching and learning context, policies, and procedures, including contemporary teaching practices.

RESEARCH OUTPUT ON THE RISE

A VIEWPOINT BY PROFESSOR NOKUTHULA SIBIYA, DVC: RESEARCH, INNOVATION, AND ENGAGEMENTS

A University's stature is supported by a dynamic research programme. I am happy to share that there has been a remarkable increase in DHET-accredited research output at MUT. The University attained a total of 82.42 research units in 2022, an increase of 13.52 units from the 68.9 units awarded for 2021.

In addition, MUT currently owns four South African patents, of which two are also protected in 21 other countries, and one provisional patent. Unitary patents for two pharmacophore inventions were granted for 17 countries in Europe. The University also owns two trademarks: the wordmarks 'Mangosuthu University of Technology' and 'MUT'.

There has also been an increase in South African National Research Foundation (NRF) rated Researchers, with six rated researchers in 2022 and 10 in 2023. Let me take this moment to commend Professor



Professor Nokuthula Sibiya is very proud of her nursing background

Babatunde Bakare who has recently received a C2 rating from the NRF. A researcher in this category is an established researcher with a sustained record of productivity in his field, who is recognised by his peers nationally and internationally.

ENGINEERING FACULTY DEAN RATED A C2 RESEARCHER BY THE NATIONAL RESEARCH FOUNDATION

The Dean of the Faculty of Engineering, Professor Babatunde Femi Bakare, was granted a C2 rating by the National Research Foundation (NRF) on 1 March 2024. This great news was delivered to Professor

Bakare by the Director of the Research Directorate, Dr Anette Mienie. A C2 rating means that all the reviewers are firmly convinced that the applicant is an established researcher as described. The

applicant may, but need not, enjoy some international recognition for the quality and impact of their recent research output. Professor Bakare's request for the new rating was based on his last five years of academic activity.

Professor Bakare sums this up eloquently: "My research career in the last five years has resulted in 52 DHET-accredited journal publications, 15 peer-reviewed conference publications, three book chapters, and supervision of four PhDs and five Master's candidates to degree completion. Of the PhDs I supervised to degree completion, three are academic staff members in the Department of Chemical Engineering at MUT; and of the Master's candidates I supervised, four are academic staff in the same department." Professor Bakare is also currently supervising two academic staff for their PhDs, and one for a Master's degree.

Over the last five years, Professor Bakare has also received funds from the NRF and WRC that were used to support his research endeavours. "I have also been appointed as an editorial board member of the following reputable and accredited journals: *Journal of Engineering, Design, and Technology*; *Frontiers in Environmental Sciences*; Springer Nature's journal *Discover Sustainability*; the *International Journal of Environmental Science and Technology*; and the *South African Journal of Chemical Engineering*," he added. Responding to the news, Professor Bakare said he was "incredibly grateful and honoured" to receive the "prestigious" C2 rating from the NRF. "This

recognition serves as a testament to the hard work and dedication poured into my research endeavours," he said.

He also said it underscored the significance and impact of his research contributions so far. "It validates the innovative approaches and methodologies employed in tackling complex issues within my field of expertise. Moreover, it serves as motivation to continue pushing the boundaries of knowledge and contributing to the scientific community and society at large," he said. Professor Bakare said he was indebted to his colleagues, mentors, and collaborators for their invaluable support and guidance throughout his journey.

An excited Deputy Vice-Chancellor: Research, Innovation and Engagements (RIE), Professor Nokuthula Sibiyi, congratulated Professor Bakare and said he deserved the new NRF rating. "I wish to express immense pride and congratulations to Professor Bakare for the C2 rating by the NRF. Professor Bakare's achievement not only highlights the exceptional talent within South Africa, but also underscores the nation's commitment to fostering scientific excellence and becoming a leader in the field of Chemical Engineering." She added that Professor Bakare had won numerous awards over the years for his research work. Her direct message to him was: "Congratulations on not just reaching your goals but doing what you once thought was impossible. If anyone deserves to celebrate this kind of achievement, it is you. Well done!"



Professor Babatunde Femi Bakare

SOME NOTABLE DEVELOPMENTS IN THE FACULTY OF MANAGEMENT SCIENCES



Dean of the Faculty of Management Sciences, Dr Bheka Ntshangase

GROWING STAFF CAPACITY THROUGH WORKSHOPS AND QUALIFICATIONS

The faculty ran a Design Thinking Workshop from 5 to 9 February 2024. According to the Acting Dean, Dr Bheka Ntshangase, the workshop was in preparation for the introduction of Master's and doctoral programmes. This is a continuation of the capacity development programme that Dr Ntshangase put in place when he became dean of the faculty. His plan has resulted in a sharp increase in the number of senior qualifications, particularly PhDs. Some

of the faculty staff members that have obtained their PhDs recently are Thulile Duma, a lecturer in the Department of Human Resources and Management; Nomusa Majiya, head of the Department of Office Management and Technology; Bule Nyangiwe, a lecturer in the Department of Communication; Keith Zwane, a lecturer in the Department of Accounting and Law; and Lungani Makhathini, also a lecturer in the Department of Accounting and Law.

DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNICATION APPOINTS A SEASONED ACADEMIC

The Faculty of Management Sciences' Department of Communication has been strengthened to make an even bigger impact in empowering students with

key communication skills. This will be because of the appointment of Dr Khulekani Amegius Gazu as a senior lecturer in the department. Dr Gazu joins

the University from UNISA where he was a lecturer and senior lecturer from June 2021 to December 2023. Before joining UNISA, Dr Gazu worked at the University of Zululand from 2011 to 2021, where he was a lecturer and later an acting Head of Department. Prior to joining academic in 2010, Dr Gazu served as an educator and deputy principal.

Dr Gazu is a seasoned academic who has published five articles so far, the last one having been published on 4 March 2024. He is currently working on others which he is expecting to submit this semester. Dr Gazu said that the two doctoral candidates that he has been supervising have submitted their dissertations for external examination, while one Master's candidate has passed and is awaiting graduation in May 2024. "I have also successfully co-supervised one Master's and one doctoral student to completion; they graduated in 2018 and 2023, respectively," he said.

Dr Gazu is aware of the communication shortcomings of students from historically disadvantaged institutions and has enough experience to help them. "Communication and general linguistic competence challenges are not unique to our institution; many other historically disadvantaged communities of practice are still grappling with the same. I personally subscribe to a communicative approach to language teaching – specifically the production of literary and non-literary texts. This helps students regard both spoken and written texts as a point of departure for communicative functions," said Dr Gazu. For him, "reading notes or rules and writing discrete sentence responses belong to a structural school and seldom resolve competence challenges among second language speakers of a language". According to Dr Gazu, the solution is "through immersion in the written texts and execution of various functions of language that students learn. They must read extensively and intensively, write and present ideas to audiences".

Dr Gazu said that having worked at a comprehensive full-time institution, and later at an open distance e-learning institution (OdeL), he brings an eclectic accumulation of teaching and learning strategies. "First, I regard my practice as ever evolving in response to the needs and contexts of my students. Working in the Department of English Studies and later in the



Dr Khulekani Amegius Gazu

Department of Language Education, with teachers-in-the-making at a comprehensive institution, gave me a grounding in both content and pedagogical knowledge at undergraduate and honours levels," said Dr Gazu. He is now confident to try out various assessment strategies, including transformative ones – "thus offering epistemic freedom to students" – where programme requirements and institutional policies permit. He says that the OdeL experience has enhanced his online teaching and assessment, including setting assessment tasks that require engagement with cases and scenarios, instead of focusing on content knowledge which students readily provide".

Dr Gazu said he is able to administer all tasks on a Learning Management System where students do not have an opportunity to attend in person, thus increasing educational access beyond geographical and economic limitations. "While this may be my first encounter with students in a university of technology, I believe the underlying pedagogical principles that have shaped my teaching so far are adaptable to the Communication Department I am currently servicing," said Dr Gazu.

The Communication Department also welcomed Thuthukani Dlamini as a lecturer. Dlamini has 10 years of teaching and lecturing experience accumulated from the University of Zululand, Mancosa, North West University and Chatsworth High School. He is at the completion stage of his doctoral studies.

FACULTY OF NATURAL SCIENCES KEEPS DEVELOPING



The Dean of the Faculty of Natural Sciences, Professor Roger Coopoosamy

INTERNATIONAL RESEARCH COLLABORATION

The Dean of the Faculty of Natural Sciences, Professor Roger Coopoosamy, has made a bold statement about his faculty. He said his faculty continues to put more layers of development on top of the other. Part of this development is international collaborations in research. For instance, the Department of Community Extension has already begun to honour the stipulations of the Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) the department signed with an American organisation called Soil1 LLC on 10 August 2023. The Head of the Department, Dr Eric Mthembu, said the MOA establishes the basis for the following: a relationship under which MUT and Soil1 LLC will work together

using Soil1 LLC's proprietary soil testing technology; for other agriculture-related expertise to be integrated with the University curriculum; and for regenerative, sustainable land use and carbon conservative agricultural practices to be advanced at MUT. "The aim of this MOA is to provide for cooperation on academic and industrial activities of the three organisations – MUT, Soil1 LLC, and Ohio State University – that will strengthen mutual understanding, foster friendly co-operation, and promote sustainable and productive academic and practical collaboration and exchange between staff, students, and research of all the parties," said Dr Mthembu.

On 12 February 2024, Soil1 LLC's Dr Terry Hofecker was at MUT to discuss a way forward with Dr Mthembu. Still on the international front, members of the faculty will be attending a Joint Conference ISEH ICEPH & ISEG on Environment and Health in Galway, Ireland, from 11 to 18 August 2024.

These are the reasons the dean of the faculty has said that "the Faculty of Natural Sciences aims to be a global leader in natural sciences education, research, and innovation, cultivating a community of scholars dedicated to advancing understanding of the technological advancement in the field of natural sciences to address challenges through interdisciplinary collaborative research".



From left, Dr Terry Hofecker, Dr Eric Mthembu, Dr Xolile Mkhize, Senior Lecturer: Department of Community Extension; and Dr Sandile Mthimkhulu, Lecturer: Department of Agriculture

THE FACULTY OF NATURAL SCIENCES CONTINUES TO **PRODUCE SENIOR GRADUATES**

Three students will be graduating with a Master's degree in Nature Conservation on 19 April this year. The Dean of the Faculty of Natural Sciences, Professor Roger Coopoosamy, said the research conducted by the students was of a high level. The following is the synopsis of the students' work:

Mthandeni Innocent Mthembu

Title of Dissertation:

The sustainable development of iSimangaliso Wetland Park to mitigate the socio-economic crises of surrounding communities to improve the management of Protected Areas

Supervisor:

Professor Roger Coopoosamy (MUT)

Synopsis:

This study investigates how sustainable development initiatives in iSimangaliso Wetland Park affect the socio-economic well-being of neighbouring communities as

well as the efficacy of Protected Area management strategies. The study recommends continuous community involvement, flexible management strategies, and duplicating successful models in similar situations. It also suggests further research on long-term effects, comparative analyses with other protected regions, and the impact of innovation on conservation. The research concludes that iSimangaliso Wetland Park's sustainable development initiatives have improved local communities' economic opportunities and living standards. Combining community needs with conservation goals shows that environmental sustainability and socio-economic progress can coexist in Protected Area management.

Supervisor's comment:

The sustainable development in iSimangaliso Wetland Park plays a crucial role in ensuring the protection of natural resources while addressing the socio-economic challenges facing the communities living adjacent and inside iSimangaliso Wetland Park.



Mthandeni Innocent Mthembu



Omphile Khutsoane

Omphile Khutsoane

Title of dissertation:

Physical and Morphological Changes Induced by Agricultural Activities: A Case Study of Goukou and Kruisriver Wetlands, Riversdale, Western Cape

Supervisor:

Professor Georgina Arthur (MUT)

Synopsis:

The study assessed and compared vegetation conditions of the three disturbed areas present in Goukou and Kruisriver wetlands, Riversdale: (1) areas currently covered with dense infestations of invasive alien species, (2) areas that were historically infested with dense invasive alien plants, but which have been cleared, and (3) areas which have remained with the minimal infestation of invasive alien plants. The vegetation condition was determined through a desktop analysis using landcover mapping as a basis for the assessment. The WET-health tool was used to determine the impacts on four major components: hydrology, geomorphology, water quality, and vegetation. One of the main objectives of the study was to assess the vegetation condition of the three disturbance unit types present in the Goukou wetland and Kruisriver. Findings from the study are

likely to be different in the community composition amongst other sites that were not sampled, with some conservation areas at sites that might have slightly higher indigenous species richness. Moreover, results indicate that the removal of alien species in most cases improves the ecosystem and restores vegetation composition. The study concluded that the vegetation condition had decreased as a result of invasive alien species.

Supervisor's comment:

This study adds knowledge to invasive alien species that exacerbate loss of biodiversity in conservation areas. The problem of invasive species is that it could result in indigenous species' extinction both in plant and animal kingdoms. The understanding of the physical and morphological changes may assist in providing answers to management of these areas under this investigation.

Mduduzi Lethukuthula Mthethwa

Title of Dissertation:

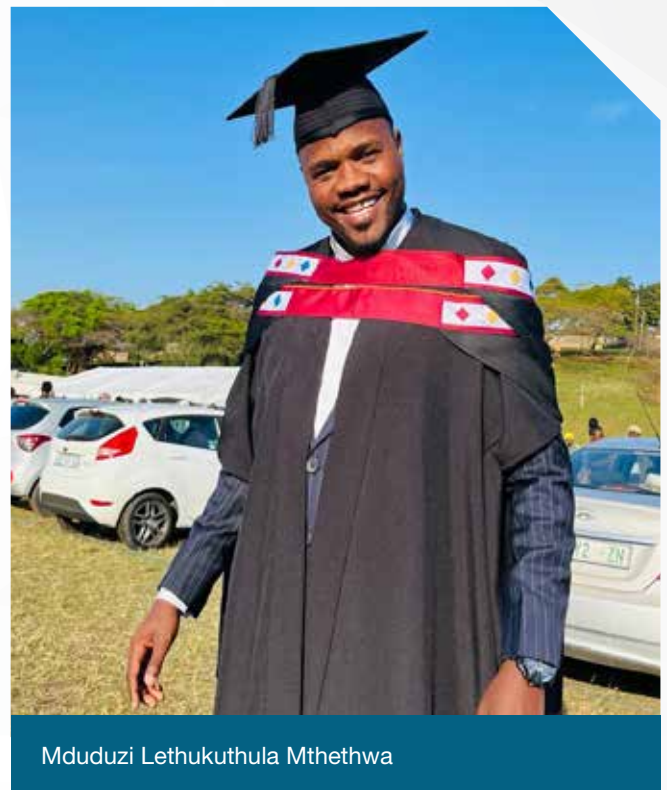
Impact of heritage sites in nearby communities case study: iSimangaliso Wetland Park

Supervisor:

Professor Roger Coopoosamy (MUT)

Synopsis:

The dissertation investigates the socio-economic effects of iSimangaliso Wetland Park on the neighbouring communities. Furthermore, it addressed the extent of community involvement, collaborative initiatives, cultural conservation, and the park's ability to address the needs of the local population. The results of the study indicate that the park has a substantial impact on the local economy, particularly in sectors related to tourism. The park recognises the significance of adjacent communities, yet it necessitates a deeper level of involvement and ongoing communication. Collaborations exhibit a diverse range of characteristics, encompassing both educational and cultural dimensions. However, there is room for improvement in terms of aligning these collaborations with the specific needs of the community. The findings highlight the profound influence of heritage sites like iSimangaliso Wetland Park on their neighbouring communities, emphasising the importance of ongoing collaboration, engagement, and alignment with community needs.



Mduduzi Lethukuthula Mthethwa

Supervisor's comment:

The investigation allows for the understanding and preservation of cultural heritage sites in the reserve confines. The importance of such is of historical significance, especially in the education of the new generation who lacks the historical context of our country. The preservation and conservation of these sites are critical and collaboration between park authorities and surrounding communities is necessary.

INFRASTRUCTURE DEVELOPMENT AT MUT



Dr Johan van Koller, Acting Deputy Vice-Chancellor: Resources and Planning

NOW YOU WILL NEED A GPS TO NAVIGATE MUT, QUIPS DVC: RESOURCES & PLANNING

Come the end of 2024, the University will be sporting a different look. The Acting Deputy Vice-Chancellor: Resources and Planning, Dr Johan van Koller, said the construction of new and upgraded infrastructure is a commitment that the Executive Management Committee (EMC) has made over the past few years. Nineteen out of 29 infrastructure projects, most of which started in 2023, are expected to have been completed by the end of the year. These projects will offer relief to the University community, particularly in the areas of water and electricity, student accommodation, and teaching and learning. One of these projects is the roof repairs on the main campus. The roof repairs started in October 2023 and are expected to finish in May 2024. There is

also the construction of a new water storage tank and pump rooms that started in December 2023, and will end in May 2024. The Director of Infrastructure Projects, Lubabalo Ngcaweni, said that the completion of this project will improve water availability at the University.

Another project will be the renovations of the Biomedical Laboratories – Phase 2. Ngcaweni said this project, which started in March 2024 and is expected to be completed in October 2024, will improve the quality of teaching and learning at MUT. The refurbishment of the C45 and C47 Computer Labs was completed in March 2024. The labs boast new furniture which has improved the teaching and learning environment.

After June 2024, the L venues in the Faculty of Management Sciences will also see improved teaching and learning after their refurbishment is complete. The project started in September 2023 and Ngcaweni said these lecture venues are now disability friendly; lighting is fixed; broken seats will be replaced; the roof is being repaired; and academic activities will be conducted more easily. The male and female ablutions are also being refurbished.

Some of the first-year students, most of whom are housed in the internal residences, will now enjoy the newly-renovated Block E. This project, which started in June 2023, will finish in May 2024. Ngcaweni said the completion of the project would improve the institution's student residence on campus. Having better conditions for on-campus residences will improve students' life on campus, he said.

Another block that will sport a massive change at the end of the year is Block A, one of the student residences on the main campus. Repairs and renovations started in October 2023 and will finish in September 2024. Ngcaweni said the improvements will make the block compliant with the DHET norms and standards for student housing.

After June 2024, the MUT soccer and athletics facilities will have added spring in their gait. The soccer and athletics field project, which started in October 2023, will come to an end. This field will be at an international standard, with very good drainage, a stormwater upgrade, and good lighting that will enable the playing of games at night.

The two libraries at the University will also have a new look after March 2025. The main campus library will have a new lift, while the North Campus will have been refurbished. All of this will make life easier for library users.

The University's newest additions to its infrastructure, the new Engineering Block, and the Student Centre, will also see improvements. Close circuit television (CCTV) cameras will be installed in these structures and more office space is being added to the new Engineering Block. This project will be concluded in August 2024.



The new Engineering Building

From July 2024, the iconic Dining Hall (DH) will receive some attention too, raising it to the required level. The project will finish in December 2024.

The University's Senate Chamber will be reconfigured "to ensure maximum compliance and capacity", according to Ngcaweni. The project will start in July 2024, and finish in December this year.

Besides these building projects, the University is presently busy with two projects that will alleviate the stress of loadshedding. One of these is the provision of an alternative power supply to lecture venues and laboratories. This project, which started in December 2023, is expected to end in August 2024. Ngcaweni said the completion of the project will mitigate the impact of load-shedding and enable students to continue with their lectures during load-shedding times. Another power-related project will be the installation of new generators at the Admin Building and the Faculty of Natural Sciences. The project started in January 2024, and will finish in December 2024.

TRANSPORTING MUT TO NEW HEIGHTS



Khehla Cyprian Ndlovu

INDUSTRIOUS TRANSPORT HEAD HAS PLANS FOR 2024, AND THANKS STAFF FOR SUPPORT

One of the US presidents said that what he missed most about being in number 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, was that he was never late, and he never lost a single item or document. This was largely because of the people that managed him and his office, including those that managed his transportation, which included Air Force One.

MUT staff can say something similar with regard to transportation. The university cars they drive are reliable; they are good quality brands that do not break down; and they enable them to reach their destination on time,

like the former US president. The cars are also usually clean, they have enough fuel, and they are available to those that book them in time. The MUT Transport Department is responsible for all of this – particularly the head of that department, Khehla Cyprian Ndlovu, whose mannerisms and temperament are largely responsible for the high level of service that the University staff and students receive.

Ndlovu is reliable, trustworthy, respectful, industrious, fair, and honest. These traits are a bedrock of any human relationship. Although MUT starts working at 8am and

closes at 4pm from Monday to Thursday, and at 1pm on a Friday, Ndlovu is a usual sight in his office, or the University yard, well before and after these working hours – and during the weekend too. This is not only because of the nature of his work, but because of his dedication towards his job.

Ndlovu's daily routine is as follows: preparation of the early morning trips taken by staff; connecting with departments for their field trips with students; checking the availability of drivers for trips; making sure that all the vehicles are ready; checking planned field trips to different locations; planning weekend trips for the Sport department; and, on a regular basis, making sure that all vehicles in the MUT fleet are roadworthy and registered properly with the national Department of Transportation. Ndlovu does all of this with a smile that encourages staff to work with him. Ndlovu is hardly seen with a long face at work. Staff members give him a lot of respect because of the professional way he deals with them – something that goes a long way towards making their job easier.

In many cases, those in positions like Ndlovu's would complain about the attitude they get from the large groups of people they work with. Not so with Ndlovu. He usually takes his time, explaining problem areas to staff so that they understand that he is willing to assist them, despite the challenges he has to deal with.

Ndlovu says that the most difficult part of his job is the limited number of vehicles available. "When staff and students need transportation, and there are no cars available because all are on trips, this cuts at the core of what we at Transport are supposed to do – provide service to both staff and students, and the University stakeholders. As part of the University business, we usually have to fetch a stakeholder from the airport or take them there." Ndlovu also says there could be improvements in the service offering if the number of drivers were to be increased, particularly because the number of the students keeps growing. "Sometimes I am forced to leave the office and take a trip because we only have two drivers with a Code 14 driving licence," he says.

However, Ndlovu says that the support he gets from his team in the Transport Department, and from his managers at the Operations Directorate, make his job a little easier. He says this support from his colleagues is "incredible; we work as a team. This always keeps me strong. If I am not in the office, someone is always there

to assist students and staff." Ndlovu says he has chosen to always be in the office even after hours, and to arrive early, to take care of business.

Ndlovu understands that being responsible for the University fleet requires not only dedication, but also the ability to be innovative and tread carefully. He has improved the branding of the cars for visibility and security, and has introduced a much more reliable manner of dealing with the return of the cars after hours.

However, he would still like to see some more improvements in the department. "We would like to have a policy that will state that the lifecycle of our cars should be five years. We would also like to have all MUT vehicles branded and have a bigger office space." Ndlovu would also like to have a system that allows staff to book cars remotely.

Ndlovu says he has plans for the current academic year. "In 2024, we anticipate new initiatives from the national Department of Transportation. The KZN Department of Transport has announced the introduction of a new number plate system. As the MUT Transport Department, we have decided to have personalised number plates to enhance the University fleet's professionalism, safety, and image. All MUT fleets will be personal, as follows: MUT-001, MUT-002, MUT-003." According to him, they will soon also be adding more vehicles to the MUT fleet.

Ndlovu thanks his colleagues in the department for respecting and supporting him. "Some of these colleagues have been in this department for a long time but take orders from me with a smile."



Ndlovu with one of additions to his fleet

STAFF REFLECTIONS



Dr Marlo de Swardt

I NEED A TEAM PLAYER IN MY TEAM, SAYS PHILOSOPHER SENIOR DIRECTOR: IT&N

Reading a piece of writing from the Senior Director: Information Technology and Networks (IT&N), Dr Marlo de Swardt, is likely to take you back to a time when Mathematics, Religion, Chemistry, and many other levels of thinking were known as Philosophy because they were defined as 'higher levels of thinking'. Dr de Swardt has a philosophical approach towards his work. He believes in teamwork done by team players, that everyone should be a leader in their sections of the project, and that he as the overall leader should empower everyone in his department.

Dr de Swardt defines a team player as an individual that

is humble and acknowledges that they do not know everything; in fact they regard knowing nothing as a starting point to gain knowledge. He hates the opposite: "I firmly believe that when you think you are the smartest in a room, you are in the wrong place. This brings about the fact that we are not in the office to achieve what I call an IG Nobel prize (ignorance of arrogance)."

Dr de Swardt believes in starting something from the ground up. He would be an ideal candidate for a new project. After all, he once worked for two start-up entities, where he learned the importance of observing something growing from the beginning, gathering shape

and strength, and marvelling at your contribution to the project. For Dr de Swardt, the first thing to do is not start the project, but to build the team first – then the team will start the project. That, together with the leadership that he gives to the team members, is empowerment, which Dr de Swardt believes is the cornerstone of the success of his department.

For Dr de Swardt, it is this level of empowerment that enables his team to deal with as many as 1,500+ service requests a month, “preventing more than 8,000 cyber-security attacks from entering our network”. Dr de Swardt said many of the requests do not only relate

to fixing a computer, network, or printer. He said IT&N plays a key role in the primary and supporting activities which transform a product or service from an idea to reality. “A service desk call gets recorded, application or software requirements are defined, the network division defines hosting requirements, cybersecurity concerns are identified and noted, and the project management methodology is used to execute and deliver the reality,” Dr de Swardt said. He added that after that, operations, and maintenance start as an ongoing 24/7 function. The following are the vital activities of the department: supporting activities, controlling the budget, managing employees, and the supply chain.



MUT BRAND AMBASSADORS



Sbahle Shamase

Thobeka Nxumalo

Sbusiso Lushozi & Sandiswa Zondi

GROWING THE MUT BRAND FROM WITHIN

Many organisations write on their notice boards, “Our people are our greatest assets”. It is a good expression to emulate. Emboldened by this expression, MUT has been finding ways to have meaningful conversations with its young people. This year it officially launched a brand ambassador programme to develop a positive brand perspective for MUT – all thanks to funding from the Sibusiso Bengu Development Programme (SBDP).

“We have always maintained that a weak brand inside cannot be strong outside. We need to develop an attitude of creating positive brand perceptions from within. We started looking at who would make an impact by engaging our students to amplify our communication initiatives. The student brand ambassadors are part of a vibrant group of brand advocates that we believe will contribute to an MUT that is known and respected, firstly by its primary stakeholders,” said Nganele Dube, Administrator in the Department of Marketing and Communications (Marcomms) and also Brand Ambassador Project champion.

At the beginning of this year, Marcomms trained 10 brand ambassadors to increase brand awareness and the spinoffs are greater than expected. “We have let the ambassadors do the talking and they engage students at random, asking them about the brand and their aspirations about what this giant brand called MUT can do for their future. The results are overwhelming. Students are proud of being a part of the ambassador programme. Each brand ambassador has their own story to tell about why they chose MUT. It’s mostly about how a sibling, a neighbour, or someone of note has let out that they are MUT graduates. That is what has compelled many students to be a part of this journey,” said Dube.

It has been humbling to see how young people who started engagements on the MUT brand are also becoming their own brands. Most of the brand ambassadors applaud the fact that they in turn have also gained more followers. Meet and follow the brand ambassadors who are now intentionally making the MUT brand more visible.

MUT OPEN DAYS



Learners of Khombindlela High School at the Open Day

SCOUTING FOR THE NEXT GENERATION OF MUT STUDENTS

The dawn of a new year is always a time for a new challenge and self-betterment for MUT's student recruitment team. You would have thought that receiving more than 100,000 applications for the 2023 academic year would be a sign that the recruitment team was doing more than enough – but resting on their laurels was not an option for them! In 2024 the student recruitment team in the Department of Marketing and Communications (Marcomms) gathered a team of subject experts from various academic departments to join them in their Open Day at Khombindlela High School on 20 March 2024.

It so happens that all the MUT academic departments are also always on a quest to attract the best-performing students to join programmes in their departments. As

one of the top-performing schools in the King Cetshwayo District, Khombindlela boasts an impeccable record of achieving 100% bachelor passes for the matric results for consecutive years. The Khombindlela High School visit was therefore a great opportunity for MUT's departments of Accounting, Analytical Chemistry, Biomedical Sciences, Civil Engineering, Environmental Health, and Public Management to find their next best student for the 2025 academic year.

On Wednesday, 20 March 2024 MUT turned Khombindlela High School into a recruitment base where they gathered various departments to present faculty and programmes to Grade 12 learners. Here are some of the excerpts of the presentations from MUT departments to learners at the MUT Open Day:

BIOMEDICAL SCIENCE – NOKUKHANYA THEMBANE, SENIOR LECTURER

“Our degree is a very intense programme; we only take 40 students for a more focused offering. The name of the programme is Bachelor of Health Sciences in Medical Laboratory Science (BHSML). We diagnose diseases, do research, and develop cures and solutions for diseases. It is a scarce skill degree. Our lab findings are a critical part of making important decisions about people’s lives. We follow a rigorous recruitment process to select the best 40 applicants. Students write an entrance test to assess their ability to make important decisions, followed by an interview to assess passion and ability to do the programme. The main subjects considered for admission



Nokukhanya Thembane

are Mathematics, Physical Science, Life Sciences, and English. We secure in-service training and internship for our students. We pride ourselves with a 98% employment rate.”

ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH – DR GUGU MNGUNI, SENIOR LECTURER

“The Bachelor of Science in Environmental Health is an intense degree but you will not regret choosing this programme. The programme trains students on the prevention of diseases, illnesses, and health issues caused by human action. We also focus on water quality, prevention of communicable diseases, vector control, and environmental pollution, studying the environment, and identifying environmental triggers that could harm human lives. Checking what is in the environment that could affect human life, such as adequate lighting, air circulation, and structural integrity. Occupational health and safety and food safety are some of the areas of focus for the Bachelor of Science in Environmental Health degree. The programme is regulated by the



Dr Gugu Mnguni

Health Professions Council of South Africa. I advise anyone interested in this programme to be clear about what they want, and make it a first or second choice to stand a better chance of being selected.”

CIVIL ENGINEERING – KAGISO MORUDU, LECTURER

“Civil engineering is not the only programme available in the faculty; we also have electrical engineering, chemical engineering, building & construction management, and mechanical engineering. Requirements are level 4 Mathematics, Physical Science, and English. In civil engineering, we focus on geotechnical, structural, civil, transport and environment engineering streams. Civil technicians and civil engineers advise roads and structural



Kagiso Morudu

engineers about the integrity of the soil and other services. There is also a four-year extended programme with the same minimum requirements. I want to advise students about the importance of applying to both the mainstream and extended programme, because if you do not make it to the main programme for various reasons, you do not

automatically get selected for the extended programme. Selection for the extended programme is only for students who apply to the programme. The good thing is that the extended programme is funded by the government through NSFAS.”

ANALYTICAL CHEMISTRY – MFUNDO MAKHANYA, LECTURER

“The best advantage if you want to enrol for a diploma in Analytical Chemistry is that students have an opportunity to apply in January for the first-semester intake or they can start the programme in June for the second intake. Our minimum requirement is level 4 passes for Mathematics, Physical Science, and English. The department also offers a six-month bridging programme which also allows a first and second-semester intake. For the bridging programme the minimum admission requirement is level 3 for Mathematics, Physical Science, and English. The bridging programme is not funded by NSFAS, it is a private opportunity offered to students by MUT to make sure that future engineers are not disadvantaged. Students are expected to fund their studies and tuition is paid upfront for the bridging



Mfundo Makhanya

programme. Very few universities offer this opportunity to study engineering with such low requirements. To complete the Analytical Chemistry diploma, students attend two years on campus and spend the third year in a chemical industry doing Work Integrated Learning (WIL) as a requirement for their qualification.”

PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION – VUYO KHUMALO, LECTURER

“In a nutshell, public administration involves working with the public and public policy to make sure that services are delivered. Training includes undertaking research on government planning of how services will be delivered; control, monitoring, and evaluation of whether the plan was executed, and funds used accordingly. You are trained on how to deliver the above services – policy, planning, budgeting, monitoring, and evaluation. Employment is across government departments and levels, and State Owned Entities (SOEs). The programme is very versatile and multidisciplinary. As long as the



Vuyo Khumalo

student has passed all their subjects and obtained a minimum of 25 points, they are qualified to apply for the public management diploma at MUT.”

ACCOUNTING & LAW – PHELELANI LUTHULI, LECTURER

“Programmes in the Department of Accounting & Law vary from private sector accounting to public sector accounting. Undergraduate programmes are: Diploma in Accounting, Diploma in Cost and Management Accounting, Diploma in Public Finance & Accounting, Diploma in Local Government Finance & Accounting. At undergraduate, students do all four main subjects which are financial accounting, management accounting, taxation, and auditing. Only as they articulate to postgraduate studies, do they then select a specialisation. All programmes in the department are



Phelelani Luthuli

fully accredited by professional bodies which is a seal of approval that our qualifications are on par with industry standards.”

The Open Day is just one of many student recruitment drives that MUT’s Marketing and Communications department hosts in collaboration with the academic and support services departments at MUT. These internal and external collaborations are an effort to bring a diverse cohort of first-time entering students to MUT.

MUT OPEN DAY IN NORTHERN KWAZULU-NATAL HAILED BY DISTRICT AND SCHOOL PRINCIPALS

King Cetshwayo District Coordinator, Bonginkosi Mnguni was overwhelmed with excitement on 20 March 2024 during one of MUT’s student recruitment drives in eMpangeni, in northern KwaZulu-Natal. Mnguni reminded the close to 1,000 matric learners from six high schools that they needed to realise how lucky they were to have MUT bringing useful information to them. “Usually, districts host career fairs and open days requiring learners to travel to a central venue. It is highly commendable that MUT brought the Open Day to you; the mountain has come down to Mohammed. Representatives of several MUT departments have come here to open your minds, and give you an understanding of what programmes are available at



Bonginkosi Mnguni

the University, and how to apply to study at MUT,” said Mnguni.

Mnguni was talking during the MUT Open Day hosted at Khombindlela High School in eMpangeni. The Open Day was a collaboration and stewardship of long-standing relationships between the district,

Khombindlela High School, and MUT. At the forefront of the event planning was Nozipho Mbatha, an educator at Khombindlela who thanked her principal, Ms Nompumelelp Mthiyane, for giving her support to the idea of MUT providing application information to their learners. In the spirit of good neighbourliness, Ms Mthiyane, with the approval of the district, invited surrounding schools to bring their Grade 12 learners to attend the Open Day.

What made this arrangement more commendable was that most learners were within walking distance from their respective schools to Khombindlela High School, which was the Open Day venue. In her welcome address, Ms Mthiyane told the learners to “grab” the opportunity with both hands and ask as many important questions as possible. “Matric is a very critical stage of life. As your teachers, we assume

that by now you have made your career plan for next year, which is why we created this opportunity to be given knowledge about programme offerings to shape your career plan. Questions like what can I study next year? Which programme do I qualify for? How do I find myself at MUT next year? – these questions will be answered today. As soon as this Open Day is over, you must demonstrate your commitment to your career plan. One of the ways to do that is to submit your application,” said Mthiyane.

The common thread in the presentations by the Central Applications Office (CAO) and the MUT department representatives who presented during the Open Day was the importance to aiming to achieve above the minimum requirements to stand out from the competition. Learners were advised that what they

MOTIVATION TO **BEAT THE ODDS AND** **FOCUS ON THE DREAM**

The story of Zakhele Nxumalo, Senior Administrative Assistant in the Office of the Dean, Faculty of Natural Sciences, dovetails with the expression, “Never be defined by your past. Your past was a lesson not a life sentence”. Zakhele’s ‘homecoming’ to his former high school, Khombindlela High School, was that of a polished professional that young people look up to. Addressing the attentive audience, Zakhele said that growing up, he was “very aware of how poor I was but knew that my journey would need to be one with a direction. I chose a direction of hard work and being street-smart on challenges that have made most young people meet their dreams”.

Zakhele continued, “I am very proud of my educators, having matriculated here in 2012. I was a commerce student. Today, I have an Advanced Diploma and a Postgraduate Diploma in Office Management and Technology; the sky will be the limit for me”. Acknowledging his presentation, the principal of Nongweleza High School, said, “Zakhele is a living testament to the work we do. We are grateful as



Zakhele Nxumalo

teachers to be given the responsibility to shape your future and careers. We want to do it justice so that your fate of the future is not asked from us”.



Siyabulela Mkwalo

MUT SPORTS ARE MAKING GOOD PROGRESS – SPORT DEPUTY DIRECTOR

The Deputy Director of the Department of Sport and Recreation has defined 2023 as a “successful” year and is promising that 2024 is going to be even better. Siyabulela Mkwalo said the department’s 2023 sport programme was guided by an ethos of promoting “student-centred” sport initiatives. “This delivery model was in line with a Sport Strategy that guides the department to execute its plans that range from high-level performance, to mass participation,” he said.

The intention for 2024 is to continue offering a wide range of sport and recreation programmes that encompass the promotion of active lifestyle, healthy living and wellness for the entire University community. “The department has defined this academic year as a year of mass participation,

based on its carefully crafted theme that considers the limitations that we have to face as a department. The theme for this year is ‘Maximising output from a little input’. This motto corresponds well with the limitations that we must contend with. The bigger picture for this year is basically about promoting mass-based participation in both recreational programmes and competitive sport.”

Mkwalo said they were expecting the 2024 successes to come mainly from the fact that they now have a well-equipped in-house gym that will be officially opened in April 2024. He defined the facility as a “bedrock for the mass participation campaign”. He said the gym would have an immediate impact upon the aerobics programme that they would roll out, which would be anchored in this

facility. Mkwalo also said that they would continue with the collaborative efforts with both internal and external stakeholders that saw their programmes enjoying success last year. He said the “excellent partnership established with external stakeholders last year will be heightened in our quest to enrich learning, prepare engaged citizens and contribute to the public good”. Mkwalo said some of the partners that contributed to their success last year were the departments of Marketing and Communications (Marcomms), Community Engagement and Development, Student Counselling, Student Development, and Housing, as well as external stakeholders such as eThekweni Municipality, the Department of Education, the Umlazi Township schools, and sport federations, to name a few.

“The major achievements derived from this collaborative effort include the inaugural hosting of the Schools and Community Cup that attracted many learners from Umlazi Township schools, and the introduction of the inaugural residence leagues. These different league matches gave different athletes an opportunity to develop their abilities in sport, with less pressure.” Another highlight of the year was the Sport Day, which Mkwalo said was “inspiring”, with “overwhelming” participation by the students.

Mkwalo said the MUT students also participated in the Inter Varsity tournaments that seek to promote mass participation, campus life, and provincial competition among member universities. The Inter Varsity tournament is a prominent event in KwaZulu-Natal that brings together four universities in a spirited display of athletic talent and sportsmanship.

Other noteworthy 2023 achievements from the student-centered programmes last year include:

- MUT Football Academy team won both the domestic league and domestic cup in their inaugural season.
- The MUT Netball Team B placed first in group B in the eThekweni Regional League.
- The MUT Basketball male team won the Orcas Tournament, which consisted of five teams. Mkwalo said the team has maintained its undefeated record in the province in 2024 and continues to solidify their position as the cream of the KZN Basketball Crop.
- The MUT bodybuilding team’s performance was also part of the year’s highlights. Six of the University’s bodybuilding athletes were selected from the annual USSA competition to participate in the national championships.
- Thabisile Goba and Thakasile Duma were selected for the eThekweni Salga team that competed in the provincial games in December 2023. Netball Head Coach, Nkululeko Buthelezi, was chosen to be in the eThekweni Salga technical team and was chosen to be assistant coach for the netball Fast5 national champs KZN males’ team.

Mkwalo also reported that one of the MUT volleyball players, Mawande Mzulwini, a second year Electrical Engineering student, represented KZN U18 Volleyball at the Inter Provincial tournament in Limpopo last year. The KZN Team won gold.

SECOND YEAR IT BLIND CRICKETER AND THE PROTEAS SHOW THE KIWIS WHO’S BOSS

A second year Information Technology (IT) student was part of the blind Proteas team that swept their New Zealand counterparts aside at the end of February in Gauteng. Mpumelelo Luthuli, from KwaSanti, near Durban’s Pinetown, played three of the six T20 series

matches against New Zealand (the Kiwis) in various cricket fields in the Gauteng Province, from 20 to 27 February 2024. Mpumelelo, a fast bowler, and a B2 cricketer, got one scalp, and gave away only 36 runs in four overs. A blind person that is defined as B2 is

an individual that has an ability to be able to distinguish the shape of an object held in front of their face up to a sight acuity of 2-60. These individuals can see at a range of only two metres, what a fully sighted individual can see at 60 metres.

Commenting on the series, Mpumelelo, a fitness fanatic, said he thought it would have been more difficult if Bangladesh had not pulled out of the series. He said Bangladesh’s quick players would have given them some tough times. “The series was not difficult. However, the fourth and sixth matches were tough,” said Mpumelelo. He was donning the green and gold for the first time.

Mpumelelo, the only B2 player from KwaZulu-Natal, also played an ODI (One Day International) against the same opposition. The Proteas scored 376 for 3; New Zealand scored 69 for 9. South Africa won by 307 runs.

Mpumelelo hopes to make the team to play the World Cup from 18 November to 3 December 2024, in Pakistan. This will be his first international outing. “I am a bit scared, but also happy that I will be playing for the national team, the Proteas,” he said.



Mpumelelo Luthuli



Mpumelelo Luthuli with the Proteas cricket team

MUT VOLLEYBALL ACE WINS GOLD WITH PROVINCIAL TEAM

Mawande Mzulwini has been playing volleyball since 2015, when he was in Grade 5 at Port Shepstone Senior Primary School on the south coast of KwaZulu-Natal. He started off playing in the position of outside attacker; now he has graduated to middle blocker. Mzulwini is waiting for a clearance to play for Paragons Volleyball Club. He no longer qualifies for the Under 18. He is hoping to continue playing in the SALGA Under 20 for Ugu District in December this year. When the KZN I Health Super League resumes, he will play with the MUT volleyball team.

Mzulwini is young man that is mature beyond his age. He would remind most sports writers of Manchester United's striker, Marcus Rashford. Mzulwini said those that are interested in the sport, must focus on playing it and not worry about the attitude of others who do not have enough knowledge about it.

Mzulwini is from Merlewood in Port Shepstone. He is the second child of three siblings. His younger, Lubanzi, also plays volleyball and is currently in Grade 6 at Port Shepstone Primary School.



Mawande Mzulwini

UPCOMING EVENTS

ENERGYWATERFOODCLIMATE NEXUS SUMMIT

MUT will be hosting the 2024 EnergyWater-FoodClimateNexus International Summit, from 1 to 4 July. The Summit is the brainchild of the Florida Agricultural Mechanical University (FAMU) in the USA. After a visit to FAMU by MUT Acting Vice-Chancellor and Principal, Professor Marcus Ramogale, and other management staff to FAMU in 2023, it was decided that MUT should host the Summit in 2024. It will be the first time the Summit is hosted in Africa.



ENERGYWATERFOODCLIMATE
NEXUS[®]
INTERNATIONAL SUMMIT

#SASUF2024

MUT staff are also preparing for a SASUF Research and Innovation Week, which takes place in Sweden, from 13 to 17 May 2024. MUT staff will present posters, host satellite events, and workshops. All the

conference activities will be held in Southern Sweden and will be co-hosted by Lund University, Swedish University of Agricultural Science, and Malmo University.



South Africa

Sweden

University Forum

WIPO SA SUMMER INTELLECTUAL SCHOOL

MUT-WIPO SA Summer School on Intellectual Property and Transfer of Technology

“We are thrilled to announce the upcoming World Intellectual Property Organisation (WIPO) Summer School on Intellectual Property and Transfer of Technology, scheduled to take place from 25 November to 6 December 2024. The summer school provides an opportunity for senior students and young professionals to acquire a deeper understanding of each domain of intellectual property (IP) and the role and functions of the World Intellectual Property Organisation (WIPO). The programme consists of

lectures, case studies, simulation exercises, and group discussions on selected IP topics with an orientation toward the interface between IP and other disciplines,” said Dr Mandla Hlongwane, Deputy Director: Intellectual Property at the MUT’s Research Directorate. Registration is free.



EAC2024

MUT’s annual Empowered Administrators Conference (EAC) is taking place from 19 to 20 September 2024. The theme for this year is ‘Bold and Resilient’. The theme speaks about mastering the art of taking critical decisions and creating innovative solutions. The 2024 EAC will be at Durban’s Capital Zimbali Hotel. Jade Mthiyane, the Events Coordinator, said they are expecting over 200 office professionals from diverse organisations. Mthiyane appealed to prospective delegates to register early as places are limited. Prospective delegates may like to contact Mthiyane at MthiyaneJ@mut.aca.za



Some of the delegates that attended the 2023 EAC



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