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Professor Sibiya Celebrates Her First Graduation as MUT Vice-Chancellor and Principal

On Thursday, 24 April 2025, an electric atmosphere filled the air as MUT ended its inaugural graduation ceremony, with Professor Nokuthula Sibiya leading as Vice-Chancellor and Principal. After three days packed with heartfelt sessions, the event brought together over 3,000 beaming graduates, their families, and the enthusiastic staff—all united in commemorating this remarkable milestone.

For Professor Sibiya, this ceremony was not just another event; it was a deeply cherished moment of pride and responsibility. Professor Sibiya recognised that the occasion represented more than just academic accomplishments; it was a testament to the resilience and determination of students who had triumphed over numerous obstacles on their educational journeys.

The atmosphere was vibrant, filled with laughter and celebration as graduates relished their hard-earned achievements. Professor Sibiya reminisced about the three-day celebration, overwhelmed with a sense of fulfilment. Professor Sibiya was particularly moved by the powerful stories shared by the graduates, many of whom came from historically marginalised communities. "Witnessing the joy and pride in our graduates' eyes, and their families', reminds me of our mission," Professor Sibiya reflected. "Education is an extraordinary catalyst for change, and we must ensure that every student, regardless of their background, has the opportunity to succeed," Professor Sibiya said.

Professor Sibiya also took a moment to recognise the

hard work and dedication of the University staff, whose support has been vital to the students' achievements. Professor Sibiya expressed heartfelt gratitude for the staff's commitment to excellence. With the sounds of applause still ringing in her ears, Professor Sibiya felt excited and ready for the journey ahead. There are plenty of opportunities and challenges waiting, but with passion, integrity, and a strong commitment to excellence, Professor Sibiya is eager to lead MUT into a bright future.



Vice Chancellor and Principal Professor Nokuthula Sibiya congratulates a proud graduate at the 2025 graduation ceremony

A visionary leap: Vice-Chancellor and Principal's inspiring library visit

On 26 March 2025, the MUT community welcomed a new era of dialogue and collaboration as Professor Nokuthula Sibiya, the Vice-Chancellor and Principal, held her first open conversation since assuming office in August 2024. With a heart full of promise, she expressed her unwavering commitment to fostering transparency and encouraging every voice within the University to contribute to its narrative.

Carrying this spirit of openness forward, Professor Sibiya accepted an invitation from library staff and made a meaningful visit to the University library on 30 April 2025. This visit was more than just a routine check; it was a powerful affirmation of her dedication to enriching the academic landscape for both students and staff. As she navigated the library's corridors, a warm exchange took place between her and the librarians, students, and staff members. Professor Sibiya listened intently to their stories and aspirations, embodying the genuine connection that is essential for growth and progress.

Professor Sibiya's exploration of the library was a true testament to her vision. Each interaction reflected her deep commitment to cultivating an environment where knowledge thrives, and everyone feels valued and heard. As Professor Sibiya wrapped up her visit, the Vice-Chancellor and Principal engaged in a thoughtful dialogue with the library's management team and staff, brainstorming ideas for future enhancements and innovations. The atmosphere was filled with optimism as



Vice Chancellor and Principal Professor Nokuthula Sibiya

her presence left an indelible mark, reaffirming her commitment to prioritising the needs and passions of all stakeholders.

This inspiring story of Professor Sibiya's library visit serves as a bold step forward, illuminating the path towards a more inclusive and supportive academic community. It is a powerful reminder that when leadership aligns with action, the possibilities for growth and transformation are limitless. The future is bright as MUT embarks on this journey, turning words into realities.



The Vice-Chancellor and Principal, right, accepted an invitation from the Library's Andisiwe MagoCoba



MUT and Southern University at New Orleans (SUNO) staff. Professor Nokuthula Sibiya is sixth from left, front row

Fostering global partnerships and innovation from Durban to New Orleans

On a bright morning on 5 May 2025, the bustling city of New Orleans welcomed a distinguished delegation from Mangosuthu University of Technology (MUT). Leading this delegation was Professor Nokuthula Sibiya, MUT's Vice-Chancellor and Principal. Her presence at the inaugural Global Innovation Summit at Southern University at New Orleans (SUNO), USA, was a testament to her commitment to fostering global partnerships and enhancing the University's academic and research capabilities.

One of the highlights of the summit was the partnership with DS Innovation, led by Dr Loretta H. Cheeks, a Southern University alumna. As CEO of DS Innovation, Dr Cheeks has been instrumental in building collaborative bridges between South Africa and the United States. Her work in AI strategy and advanced solutions development aligned perfectly with MUT's mission to empower the next generation of innovators and educators.

Throughout the summit, Professor Sibiya engaged in numerous discussions and workshops, exploring new opportunities for MUT's students and staff. Professor Sibiya met with leading experts and institutions, exchanging knowledge and forging connections that promise to bring significant benefits to MUT. Her genuine interest in learning from others, and sharing MUT's

achievements, created a dynamic and enriching environment for all participants.

The Vice-Chancellor and Principal stressed that the visit to New Orleans was not just about attending the summit; it was about strengthening international partnerships and exploring new horizons. "Attending the Global Innovation Summit at SUNO has been an incredible opportunity for MUT to engage with leading minds in the field of innovation. This summit not only allows us to showcase our achievements but also to learn from others and build lasting partnerships. Our commitment to fostering global collaboration is stronger than ever, and I am excited about the future possibilities that this event has opened for our students and staff," said Professor Sibiya.

As the summit concluded, the MUT delegation, comprising Dr Thobeka Makhathini, Senior Lecturer in the Chemical Engineering department; Mbali Mkhize, Senior Director of Marketing and Communications; and Zama Sishi, Director of Stakeholder Engagement: Marketing and Communications, was armed with a wealth of new ideas, collaborations, and partnerships that are set to propel the MUT internationalisation agenda. Following the summit in New Orleans, the Vice-Chancellor and Principal has already crafted a continuity plan to ensure the visit is fruitful.

Professor Sibiya champions MUT's ambitions in AI and STEM

At the Global Innovation Summit at Southern University at New Orleans (SUNO), USA, Professor Nokuthula Sibiya, the Vice-Chancellor and Principal of MUT, emerged as a transformative figure, embarking on a mission to forge strategic partnerships with the Southern University System in Louisiana. Professor Sibiya embodies MUT's unwavering commitment to global collaboration and innovation.

During the summit, Professor Sibiya's keynote address captivated the audience, igniting a powerful sense of purpose among leaders from esteemed institutions like Southern University at New Orleans, Xavier University, Dillard University, Louisiana State University, and the Southern University System. Professor Sibiya's passionate discourse resonated, highlighting the essential role of global collaboration in driving technological advancements and educational excellence.

Professor Sibiya highlighted MUT's unique standing as a historically disadvantaged institution, showcasing its transformative impact on students from marginalised communities. "Over the past 45 years, MUT has crafted the futures of influential industry leaders and entrepreneurs, many of whom continue to enrich our University through meaningful partnerships," she shared, weaving an inspiring narrative of growth and resilience.

Professor Sibiya declared, "We are not merely joining global conversations; we are positioning ourselves at the forefront of innovation. We are dedicated to building a University that is globally competitive, yet ethically conscious and deeply embedded in our local communities. Africa is not on the sidelines in the era of AI; we are stepping into the spotlight. By integrating STEM into the very fabric of our University and our communities, we envision a future driven by innovation and collaboration. To our partners in the United States; we come not just to learn, but to share, co-create, and grow alongside you."

Professor Sibiya's vision resonated, showcasing MUT's dedication to leading global dialogues with purpose and



From left Dr Camacia Smith-Ross, Chief of Staff to the Chancellor, Southern University at New Orleans, Dr Dennis J. Shields, President, Southern University System, Professor Sibiya, Dr. Loretta Cheeks, CEO/Founder, DS Innovation and Strong TIES, Dr Thobeka Makhathini

heart. Professor Sibiya envisions a University that exemplifies global competitiveness while remaining firmly rooted in its local ethos, championing ethical consciousness in every endeavour.

Dr. Dennis J Shields, Esq., President-Chancellor of the Southern University System, enthusiastically embraced Professor Sibiya's vision, reaffirming his commitment to the internationalisation of education. He emphasized the need to equip graduates to become trailblazers in a dynamic and rapidly evolving job market driven by the AI revolution. With eagerness, Dr Shields expressed his intention to visit MUT to turn their discussions into actionable partnerships.

Through her dynamic leadership and visionary outlook, Professor Sibiya not only guided MUT's delegation, but inspired a collective journey toward innovation and meaningful global connections. Together, they stand poised to shape the future, championing the power of education and collaboration as catalysts for change.

MUT and DS Innovation unite to propel STEM forward in a landmark signing

On Tuesday, 6 May 2025, a landmark Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) was signed at the Southern University of New Orleans Museum of Art (SUNOMA). This MOU marks the beginning of a significant partnership between MUT and DS Innovation, LLC. It signifies MUT's ambitious goal to embed STEM into the core of the University, and expand its global reach.

The choice of the Southern University of New Orleans Museum of Art as the venue for this signing adds a layer of cultural and historical significance to the event. Museums are places of learning, preservation, and inspiration, much like the goals of this partnership. By signing the MOU in such a setting, both parties underscore their commitment to fostering innovation and education within a context that values history and culture.

DS Innovation, LLC, a U.S.A. a Woman-Owned Small Business certified by the Small Business Administration, provides cutting-edge technology consulting and training services. Founded in 2018 by Dr Loretta Cheeks and based in Arizona, USA, the company specialises in developing AI-enabled services and solutions, as well as STEAM capacity building that drives institutional and business transformation and operational excellence.

During the signing ceremony, Professor Sibiya, Vice-Chancellor and Principal of MUT, expressed her enthusiasm: "This partnership with DS Innovation is a monumental step for MUT. It aligns perfectly with our vision to integrate STEM into every facet of our university, empowering our students to lead in the age of AI."



Professor Sibiya, right signing the MOU alongside Dr Loretta Cheeks

Dr Loretta Cheeks, CEO of DS Innovation, echoed this sentiment: "We are thrilled to collaborate with MUT. This Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) represents our shared commitment to advancing education and innovation. Together, we will create transformative opportunities for students and educators alike."

The museum's setting underscores the importance of integrating cultural appreciation with technological advancements, fostering a holistic approach to education and innovation. This setting also highlights MUT's Anchor Strategy, which emphasises the preservation of MUT and Umlazi Townships' histories and the curation of Umlazi Township's art.



Seated right, Professor Sibiya and Dr Loretta Cheeks with MUT and SUNO staff