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A Note from the Editor-in-Chief



Professor Busisiwe Nkonki-Mandleni
Director CEAD

On behalf of the CEAD Team, I welcome all our readers as we embark on a new year full of community engagement possibilities. Thank you for your continued support in making this newsletter a reality. We are honoured to be of service to you. I'm thrilled to share inspiring stories that showcase the impactful work of MUT students, staff, and community partners as they contribute towards achieving MUT's goal three of the Strategic Plan, which is 'Excellence in Community Engagement'.

This edition highlights staff, students, and community partners who are making an impact through meaningful community initiatives. At MUT, we believe in the power of transformation driven by action; this newsletter is a celebration of just that. From classrooms to communities, our students continue to make a difference by stepping up, standing out, and serving where it matters most. In the first quarter, their dedication to service was evident through their volunteer work at the Denis Hurley Centre, supporting the homeless and demonstrating MUT's shared value of compassion in action.

Our staff have also remained steadfast in advancing community engagement through various impactful projects. This quarter, we are proud to spotlight the Assisted Reproductive Technology (ART) Project, a forward-thinking initiative aimed at enhancing herd genetics and livestock productivity. This project not only benefits farmers in uMzimkhulu; but also enriches the academic experience of Animal Production students in the Faculty of Applied and Health Sciences.

The first quarter has coincided with Heritage Month, and the CEAD Directorate proudly featured Nomonde Msomi of Impilo Home in Dassenhoek, near Pinetown, Durban. Msomi is a woman who has made a profound impact in her community. Msomi's story is a testament to the quiet strength and lasting influence of women in our society. In the same spirit, our feature, led by MUT's strategic partner, the Small Enterprise Development Finance Agency (SEDFA), on Empowering Women Entrepreneurs for Global Success, showcases how MUT is nurturing leadership and enterprise among women at every level.

We continue to foster strong partnerships with various community stakeholders, extending the University's impact beyond its walls. One such collaboration is with Azibuye Digital Solutions, through which we launched the Code Like a Girl Bootcamp, a programme benefiting schools in remote rural areas. This initiative, generously funded by Vodacom, has seen remarkable success. On 26 February 2025, a graduation and award ceremony was held at Vodacom, where learners from six participating schools at Umlazi Township and around, Mhawu, Nwabi, Skhwama, Fundinduku, Menzi, and Mathinta, were honoured for their participation.

Our Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) with Jonoka Development Solutions was concluded on 11 February 2025,

leading to the successful facilitation of a workshop by the founder, Professor Blessing Karumbidza. The workshop focused on Asset and Asset Resource mobilisation, Circular Economy with an emphasis on e-waste recycling, and the Agricultural Value Chain, particularly relating to student placements and the value addition of traditional crops, such as amadumbe (taro) and yams. The session was attended by representatives from CEAD, the Research Directorate, Technology Station and Chemicals (TSC), and the Department of Agriculture.

In partnership with BankSeta, two MOAs were finalised on 5 March 2025. These covered a Digital Literacy programme delivered to two schools; and a Mathematics, Science, and Accounting project involving five local schools. The STEM-focused project was officially launched at MUT on 12 April 2025 and involved 84 learners.

Additionally, our collaboration with the Moses Kotane Research Institute (MKRI) facilitated a series of capacity-building workshops in early 2025. These included:

- **Entrepreneurship Training, which took place from 3–14 February.** The training was about Business planning, management, marketing, pricing, and costing;
- **Digital Literacy, from 5–14 March.** Computer basics, internet use, and Microsoft Office applications;
- **Introduction to Python Programming, from 18 March–4 April.** Covering variables, data types, control flow, conditional statements, and function creation.

These collaborative efforts highlight our commitment to meaningful, skills-oriented community engagement. Recognising that future leaders are shaped from a young age, the CEAD Directorate continued its commitment through the 2025 edition of the Inspiring Young Minds Reading Project Competition, which sought to spark reading with understanding among the change-makers of tomorrow. Additionally, this year's 2025 Community Engagement Day shone a spotlight on projects carried out by faculties that do more than make headlines; they make a real difference.

Together, we are not just imagining a better future; we are building it, one step at a time.

In closing, I am delighted to share with you the upcoming conference on the "Scholarship of Engagement" under the theme "Bridging the knowledge gap in advancing the Scholarship of Engagement for maximum societal impact." For further details, the link is shared on page 16 of the newsletter. Let us see you there!



Assisted Reproductive Technology Project



Student Volunteerism Project

ART Project paving the way for healthier, high-quality calves



Cattle lined up for screening as part of the artificial insemination process

Exciting developments are underway in the Cow Breeding Improvement initiative – the Assisted Reproduction Technology (ART) project, led by Helen Mapeka, a Lecturer in the Agriculture Department in the Faculty of Applied and Health Sciences. The initiative utilises artificial insemination and synchronisation techniques to enhance herd genetics and productivity.

The 2025 phase of the project commenced on 22 January 2025 at uMzimkhulu community, in the south coast of the KwaZulu-Natal, near the border with the Eastern Cape, with the selection of 92 cows, each carefully ear-tagged for identification. Of these, 49 cows underwent comprehensive pregnancy and body condition assessments – crucial factors for

the Artificial Insemination (AI) programme.

A total of 42 cows from the 49 received hormonal injections to induce oestrus synchronization, a process that aligns the reproductive cycles of the cows, ensuring they come into heat simultaneously for controlled breeding.

By 27 January 2025, the fifth day of synchronisation, 37 cows had received the second hormone dose. On 31 January 2025, which was the ninth day of synchronisation, the cows were scanned again for pregnancy and administered Prostaglandin F2 alpha (PGF2) injections, a hormone that resets their reproductive cycle, thereby preparing them for breeding.

On 1 February 2025, a half-dose of oestradiol benzoate – a hormone

that stimulates the cows' ovaries to release eggs – was administered, triggering ovulation. This culminated in the artificial insemination procedure on the following day, when the 37 cows were inseminated with frozen-thawed Boran breed semen – high-quality sperm from a top Boran bull.

Moving forward, the focus will be on monitoring the success rate of artificial insemination and tracking the progress of the synchronized cows to evaluate the effectiveness of these advanced techniques.

This innovative breeding approach will soon enable farmers to raise healthier, high-quality calves that grow well. It is all about supporting the local farmers and ensuring a sustainable food supply for the future!

CEAD is excited to see the results and will share more news on the project.

Engaging hearts and minds: MUT's 2025 community engagement day spotlights community projects and young voices



Sithola Ulwazi Entrepreneurial Skills Development (SUESD) project display



Environmental Education and Sustainability (EES) project exhibition

MUT hosted its annual Community Engagement Day on 5 March 2025, at Seme Hall, bringing together project leaders, faculty members, students, community representatives and external stakeholders in a dynamic showcase of the University's commitment to societal impact.

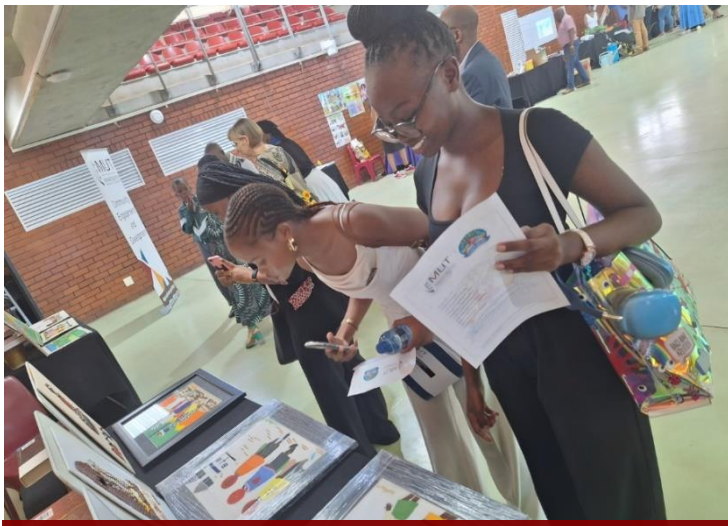
Organised by the CEAD Directorate, the event served as a platform to highlight various community engagement projects, while strengthening collaborative development ties. Dr Anette Mienie, Acting Deputy Vice-Chancellor for Research, Innovation, and Engagement, officially opened proceedings by emphasising MUT's strategic vision of integrating community engagement as a key pillar alongside teaching, learning and research.

Professor Busisiwe Nkonki-Mandleni, Director of CEAD, further reinforced this message by stressing the importance of collaborative engagement between universities and local communities, showcasing MUT's ongoing efforts to bridge the gap between academia and community needs through meaningful partnerships.

The event featured compelling presentations by faculty deans including Professor Babatunde Bakare of the Faculty of Engineering, Dr Kevin Ramsarghey, of the Faculty of Management Sciences, and Professor Alfred Msomi, of the Applied Health Sciences faculty. The deans detailed their faculties' contributions through ongoing and upcoming projects while recognising key faculty members who drive these initiatives.

A highlight came with the CE Essay Competition where MUT students presented thoughtful reflections on the University's strategic goal of excellence in community engagement and most importantly their role, with the top three winners from 24 submissions receiving prizes including a laptop and power banks.

The participation of primary school learners from Ngilosil and Marianridge Primary Schools added a special dimension as they showcased their reading skills they acquired through CEAD's 'Reading Project', while Deputy Director of Sports and Recreation Siyabulela Mkwalo delivered an insightful presentation on sports' role in youth development and social cohesion by reflecting on the MUT Sports Cup CE project.



Moments from the interactive exhibition session

Messages of support from University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN), Durban University of Technology (DUT) and from MUT strategic partners, Small Enterprise Development and Finance Agency (SEDFA) further enriched the event as they emphasised how such community engagement initiatives promote sustainable development and create valuable collaboration opportunities between academia, government and private sector.

The day concluded on a high note with the recognition of community engagement project coordinators and external partners who have contributed significantly to MUT's development initiatives, including impactful projects like the Food Security for Better Health initiative, Phytoremediation Project, Environmental Education & Sustainability programme, Assisted Reproductive Technology Project, and STEM Robotic Education & 4IR Development Project among others.

Attendees then enjoyed an interactive exhibition session where they could explore various community engagement projects through dynamic displays and conversations with project teams.

The 2025 Community Engagement Day reinforced MUT's dedication to creating meaningful, lasting impact through its community engagement projects while fostering stronger connections between the University and the communities it serves.

The event celebrated existing achievements and also set the stage for expanded collaboration in the years ahead, truly embodying MUT's vision of being a transforming, equitable, sustainable and academically excellent university of Technology anchored in its communities. into tangible community benefits.

Food Security for Better Health project exhibition



STEM Robotic Education & Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR) Development project on display



Showcasing of Funda Nathi Reading (FNR) project



Driving change: MUT students commit to volunteering at Denis Hurley Centre



Dr Mfanozelwe Shoji and Dr Raymond Perrier, first and second from right, pictured with MUT student volunteers and individuals supported by the Denis Hurley Centre

On 15 March 2025, 27 MUT students gathered at the Denis Hurley Centre in Durban's Central Business District for an induction workshop.

Organised by the CEAD Directorate and Student Affairs, the session provided a platform for students to support the homeless, gain some understanding of social issues, and reflect on their role in community development.

A highlight was when 12 homeless individuals joined the workshop to share their experiences and engage in a dialogue with students. When asked why they volunteered, students expressed a strong desire to help those in need, and learn more about being responsible citizens.

Facilitated by Dr Raymond Perrier, Executive Director of the Denis Hurley Centre, the session featured group discussions where MUT students were paired with homeless individuals. These conversations challenged stereotypes, revealing that many homeless people are clean and often indistinguishable from others.

Unemployment and economic hardship emerged as the main causes of homelessness, with participants also learning about police harassment, and reduced life expectancy among the homeless. The workshop dispelled the misconception that all homeless individuals are drug users or criminals.

The session concluded with a tour of the centre's facilities. The initiative continues with two waves in 2025. The first was in late March to May, offering 2.5-hour sessions on selected days.

The first session began on 22 March 2025. Students documented their experiences through TikTok videos, and those completing 10 registered hours with a video submission will receive a certificate co-branded by the Denis Hurley Centre and MUT.

MUT students are not just volunteering; they are breaking stereotypes and making a lasting impact.



FEATURE INTERVIEW ON MUT RADIO

"Human Rights, Empowerment & Purposeful Leadership"

With Professor Busisiwe Nkonki-Mandleni (Director: CEAD)

Aired on The Hlanganani Midday Show | 19 March 2025

As part of MUT's commemoration of Human Rights Month, MUT Radio's 'The Hlanganani Midday Show' hosted an inspiring interview with Professor Busisiwe Nkonki-Mandleni, Director of the CEAD Directorate, on 19 March 2025.


In her heartfelt discussions with host Siphamandla Mhlongo, Professor Nkonki-Mandleni reflected on human rights, by sharing her personal journey in woman leadership, and the transformative role of universities in promoting equality and development through community engagement.

“I was born in the Eastern Cape... in an environment where ‘ukuthwala’—the practice of forcefully taking teenage girls for marriage—was a norm. I was fortunate to be spared because my parents were enlightened.”

Raised in a household that defied the odds, Professor Nkonki-Mandleni’s growth path was influenced by a thirst for knowledge and her mother’s leadership role in her community. Her aspirations to become a social worker shifted to education, which landed her on a PhD in climate change and adaptation, a field in which she discovered the profound vulnerability of women in the face of climate change challenges.

“And during my studies, I discovered that women were more vulnerable to climate change because of their economic backgrounds and the fact that they are treated as less equal than men in our society.”

As Director of the CEAD Directorate since 2015, Professor Nkonki-Mandleni has coordinated University/community engagement across several faculties, ensuring

 [Listen to the full interview https://iono.fm/e/1538362](https://iono.fm/e/1538362)

MUT’s academic knowledge is both shared with and enriched by communities.

Under her leadership, the Directorate has led projects that tackled social inequalities, climate resilience, and gender empowerment, such as the Code Like a Girl Bootcamps, rural STEM initiatives, gender-based violence campaigns, and human rights education, with strategic partners such as Azibuye Digital Solutions and the Goodman Foundation.

The office that she manages facilitates partnerships to leverage existing resources to carry out community engagement initiatives. The office also supports the development, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of CE projects. It additionally oversees community-based research that informs both curriculum and practice.

In the interview, Professor Nkonki-Mandleni emphasised that the office does not assume community needs; but listens, collaborates, and co-creates intervention initiatives with communities, guided by the CE policy principles, i.e. reciprocity, social responsiveness, ethical engagement, and sustainability.

Professor Nkonki-Mandleni expressed humility in her leadership role, recognising the struggles of women



Professor Busisiwe Nkonki-Mandleni during the live interview on MUT Radio

freedom stalwarts such as the late Winnie Madikizela-Mandela, the late Albertina Sisulu, and others who fought for women’s rights. She emphasised the importance of ensuring that women have full access to education, leadership, and representation, particularly in academia and industry.

“For young women, I wish they could hear that being a professor is possible. It’s not a no-go zone. If it has happened to me, it can also happen to them.”

Professor Nkonki-Mandleni urged young women to seek role models who support their leadership growth. She also called on academics, students, and civil society to sustain advocacy beyond commemorative days, promote female role models, prioritise engaged research, and advance social equity.

Inspiring young minds: the first MUT reading Project Competition 2025

The first MUT Reading Project Competition 2025 took place on 20 March 2025, at Ngilos Primary School, Umlazi Township. This landmark event brought together Grades 4 and 5 learners from six schools: Ngilos, Sukuma, Mgijimi, Emthethweni, Embonini, and Mariannridge Primary Schools. Aimed at enhancing literacy skills, the competition focused on improving reading proficiency among Grade 4 learners and promoting reading for meaning among Grade 5 learners. It was the first of three competitions scheduled for the 2025 academic year.

Professor Busisiwe Nkonki-Mandleni, Director of CEAD, delivered a speech on MUT's community engagement efforts, highlighting the University's role in promoting literacy development through collaborative initiatives such as the reading competition. Senior Education Specialist, Umlazi District, Saloshini Pillay stressed the critical role of reading in influencing young minds, and laying the groundwork for lifelong learning.



CEAD's Dr Mfanozelwe Shoji, left, and DoE's Saloshini Pillay presenting a certificate of participation to a learner



Front row, fifth and sixth from left, CEAD's Dr Mfanozelwe Shoji and Dr David Ighodaro, with external stakeholders who participated in the event

The competition saw 30 learners competing, with each school selecting three Grade 4 learners and two Grade 5 learners. The format included individual reading assessments for Grade 4 learners and a comprehension segment for Grade 5 learners, ensuring a well-rounded evaluation of their literacy skills.

Reading materials were sourced from their respective workbooks, and adjudicators assessed participants based on fluency, pronunciation, expression, and comprehension, among other criteria.

The competition yielded impressive results, with Embonini Primary School emerging as the overall winner in both the Grades 4 and 5 categories. All participants received personalised certificates, while top learners and the winning school were awarded trophies. The competition reinforced the importance of literacy in early education. This initiative continues to inspire young learners, fostering a love for reading and contributing to improved educational outcomes in Umlazi Township.

Empowering women entrepreneurs for global success

The Small Enterprise Development and Finance Agency (SEDFA), in partnership with the CEAD Directorate, hosted a two-day training workshop on 27 and 28 February 2025. The initiative aimed to equip women entrepreneurs from across KwaZulu-Natal, including Mthwalume (South Coast), Zwelibomvu and Savannah Park (near Pinetown), Amandawe (near Scottburgh), Sheffield (North Coast), Pinetown (west of Durban), Bluff (south of Durban), and Durban North (north of the Umgeni River), with the skills to expand into international markets.

Training was facilitated by DHL GoTrade and ITC SheTrades. DHL GoTrade focuses on unlocking cross-border trade opportunities, while SheTrades offers market access and training through nationally anchored hubs for women entrepreneurs. Targeting women already in business with export-ready products, the programme was designed for participants meeting key criteria: an annual turnover of R500,000 or more, engagement in the production or trade of tangible goods (excluding services), and a demonstrated interest in expanding into international markets. This ensured that the training reached capable entrepreneurs ready to take their businesses to the next level.

Dr Mfanozelwe Shozi, Deputy Director of CEAD, welcomed participants on the first day, encouraging them to embrace their roles as innovators and international trade leaders. Dr Shozi highlighted the training as a tool not only for skills development but also for opening doors to wider networks and opportunities.



Participants during one of the SEDFA training sessions

Key topics included e-commerce, logistics, international trade, contracts and conventions, and customs navigation. Each module was tailored to help participants strengthen their export readiness and gain a better understanding of the international trade environment.

The CEAD Directorate played a critical role by hosting the event, identifying suitable candidates, and linking them to SEDFA. This reflects the Directorate's ongoing commitment to promoting sustainable community development through enterprise support and capacity building.

This collaborative effort serves as a powerful example of how strategic partnerships between development agencies, academic institutions, and international organisations can uplift local entrepreneurs.

Enabling women to access global markets promotes inclusive economic participation and contributes significantly to individual advancement and broader socio-economic progress.



Nomonde Msomi, Director of Impilo Home, a care centre for children living with disabilities in Dassenhoek, Durban

Partner Recognition: Nomonde Msomi – Impilo Home

This section celebrates the exceptional contributions of Nomonde Msomi, whose unwavering dedication and commitment have significantly strengthened MUT's community engagement efforts.

As Director of Impilo Home, a care facility located in Dassenhoek, near Pinetown, Durban, that supports children with disabilities and those from disadvantaged backgrounds, Nomonde has played a significant role in creating a safe and nurturing environment for vulnerable young people. Over the past three years, she has actively collaborated with MUT academic staff on numerous community engagement initiatives.

These projects have included training residents in Basic Computer Skills, Time Management, **and** Career Guidance, among other life-enhancing skills. Nomonde's leadership, openness to partnerships, and hands-on involvement have helped foster meaningful, impactful, and sustainable outcomes. Her work continues to uplift lives and inspire all those involved in the University's outreach programmes.

A Message from Impilo Home

'We wanted to express our heartfelt gratitude for the exceptional service and partnership we have shared with you. MUT has been instrumental in supporting our initiatives, particularly with Impilo Home residents. For the past three years, many of our children's lives have been changed for the better. The projects we have collaborated on have been truly impactful, and we are grateful for the dedication and support you have shown. Thank you for building a brighter future for Impilo, and for being a valued partner. We look forward to future collaborations!'



Student Volunteer Recognition

This section highlights the exceptional contributions of Sivuyile Khathi, a dedicated student volunteer from the Faculty of Engineering, who has been actively serving at the Denis Hurley Centre in support of the homeless. Through her voluntary service, Khathi has significantly contributed to the success of MUT's community engagement initiatives, embodying the spirit of social responsibility and active citizenship.

Volunteer Story:

'Volunteering to feed the less fortunate has been one of the most humbling and enlightening experiences of my life. Through this journey, I have come to truly appreciate the value of kindness, compassion, and the importance of giving without expecting anything in return.'

Each time I handed someone a warm meal, I witnessed the gratitude in their eyes and realised how something so simple could mean so much. It served as a powerful reminder not to take life's basic necessities for granted and enabled me to cultivate a deeper sense of empathy and social responsibility.

'This experience has reinforced the importance of service and influenced my character. It has inspired me to continue making a difference in my community, no matter how small the action may seem. Volunteering has shown me that meaningful change begins with a single act of love. I am proud to be a part of that.'

Dr Mfanozelwe Shozi, Deputy Director: CEAD, with Sivuyile Khathi at the Denis Hurley Centre

Step Up. Stand Out. Serve.

Be Part of the Change with CEAD Directorate!

Calling All MUT Students!

Are you ready to make an impact beyond the classroom? The **CEAD Directorate** invites **YOU** to get involved in community engagement initiatives that empower, uplift, and inspire.



Nofezile Valentia Jali
Faculty of Management Sciences
Department of Accounting & Law

Meet Nofezile Valentia Jali – One of MUT’s Rising Stars!

Nofezile took a bold step and entered the CE Day Essay Competition - and walked away as the overall winner!

She said **YES** to an opportunity that became a launching pad for growth and visibility.

Why Get Involved?

Volunteering with CEAD isn’t just about giving back — it is about growing forward. Through our initiatives, you will:

- Gain valuable experience
- Build leadership and communication skills
- Connect with purpose-driven peers
- Make a real difference in the lives of others


Imagine what **YOU** could achieve if you got involved — and stayed involved.

CEAD Offers Ongoing Opportunities Throughout the Year!

Don’t just participate once — become an active agent of change.

Here’s How You Can Join Us!

 **Information Booths:** Look out for our vibrant booths at the university entrance at the start of each semester. Instant sign-up and info!

 **Student Organisations:** We are working hand-in-hand with student groups to bring opportunities to you.

 **Faculty & Staff:** Keep an ear out for announcements in your lectures and emails!

Need More Info? We are Here to Help:

Phone: 031 819 9422 / 031 819 9413

Email: shabalalaS@mut.ac.za

Call For Papers

Bridging the knowledge gap in advancing the Scholarship of Engagement for maximum societal impact

18-20 NOVEMBER 2025

 HYBRID CONFERENCE



Mangosuthu University of Technology (MUT) is hosting a Conference on Scholarship of Engagement (SoE) under the umbrella of the South African Higher Education Community Engagement Forum (SAHECEF).

Sub-Themes:

- Conceptual and Multidisciplinary Perspectives on the Scholarship of Engagement
- Practical approaches for the implementation of SoE for maximum societal impact
- Practical and Implementation Challenges of Integrating CE into Teaching, Learning and Research
- Indigenous Knowledge Systems (IKS) and their Role in Enhancing SoE
- Community engagement as vehicle towards Community Development

REGISTRATION FEES

	Early Registration	Late Registration
Presenters (non-students), Physical attendance	R4 700.00	R5 100.00
Authors (students), Physical attendance	R2 000.00	R2 500.00
Online day participants (non-students)	R3 500.00	R4 500.00
Online day participants (students)	R1 500.00	R2 000.00

IMPORTANT DATES

Abstract submission deadline	31 May 2025
Notification of abstracts/workshop proposals	30 June 2025
Submission of full paper/workshop proposals	31 July 2025
Registration deadline	15 August 2025
Conference dates	18 – 20 November 2025

N.B Rates include conference pack, teas, lunches, water and a gala dinner.

PRESENTATION OPTIONS

- Options for both oral and poster presentations are available; and
- Options of ONLINE presentations with Zoom/Teams and OFFLINE presentations with recorded voice, are also available.

All extended papers may be published in the following journals:

- African Journal of Higher Education Community Engagement
- South African Journal of Higher Education

VENUE: Coastlands Hotel, Musgrave, Durban, KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa.

FORMAT: Hybrid Conference (In-person & Virtual Participation)

FOR REGISTRATION AND ABSTRACT SUBMISSION

Visit: <https://www.mut.ac.za/ceconference2025/>

Connect With CEAD!

SPREAD THE WORD!

Help us raise awareness about MUT's community engagement efforts

Share our newsletter with your partners, collaborators, friends, family, and colleagues.

"Together, we can amplify our message and inspire others to join us in our mission."

MEET THE EDITORIAL TEAM

Professor Busisiwe Nkonki-Mandleni: *Editor-in-Chief*

Dr Oluwabunmi Popoola: *Writer*

Dr David Ighodaro: *Editor*

Dudu Mbhele: *Editor*

YOUR FEEDBACK MATTERS!

We value your opinion – please feel free to share your thoughts with us!

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