

Guided by Greatness: Honourable Minister of Sports, Arts and Culture, Gayton McKenzie Uplifts Young Boys During Visit to MUT — Page 7



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Message from the Editor-in-Chief



Professor Busisiwe Nkonki-Mandleni
Director CEAD

We are pleased to reflect on a productive and inspiring second quarter at Mangosuthu University of Technology (MUT), marked by strong collaborative efforts and meaningful community engagement. We extend our sincere gratitude to the committed project leaders and partners who have spearheaded impactful community engagement and development projects. These initiatives continue to address pressing societal challenges, while reinforcing our core mission of research, teaching, and learning.

We are particularly grateful to note that, during this quarter, project leaders and partners have taken to MUT Radio to share their work and insights with a broader audience. This platform has proven to be an effective tool for raising awareness and deepening our community connections.

Our Community Engagement Policy remains a vital framework for our work, grounded on the principle of reciprocity. This principle emphasises mutual benefit and knowledge exchange between the University and the communities that we serve. Encouragingly, this reciprocal approach has led to the publications of three research papers in accredited journals, highlighting the academic value and impact of our engagement work.

In response to the demands of the Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR), we have continued to foster strategic alliances aimed at equipping young South Africans with the skills required to thrive in a rapidly changing world. Our joint initiatives with the Environment and Language Education Trust (ELET), the Centre for the Advancement of Science and Mathematics Education (CASME), and the Banking Sector Education and Training Authority (BANKSETA), have made significant strides in advancing STEM education, digital literacy and entrepreneurship, while MUT community delivered successfully on projects that address environmental sustainability,

reading for primary and secondary school learners, and assisted reproductive technology for cattle farmers.

We are quite encouraged by the rising momentum of student volunteerism across the University faculties. Through these engagements, MUT is shaping socially conscious graduates who are not only equipped with academic excellence, but also driven to make meaningful contributions in their communities.

We thank all those involved for their dedication and passion. Together, we are building a University that is rooted in its communities, responsive to societal needs, and committed to transformative learning.

As part of our commitment to inclusivity and celebrating linguistic diversity, we are proud to bring you a translated version of our Editor-in-Chief's note in isiZulu.

Scroll down to read Inothi Yomhleli – Ikota Yesibili—because your language matters.

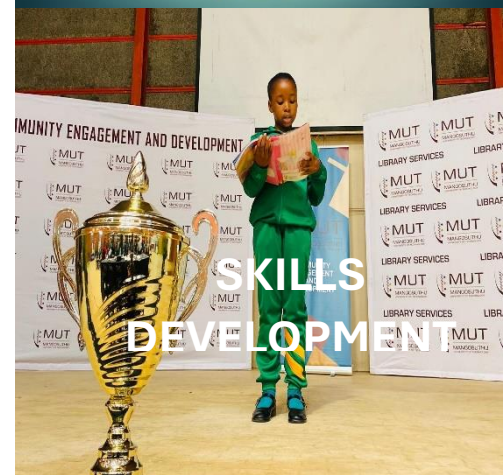
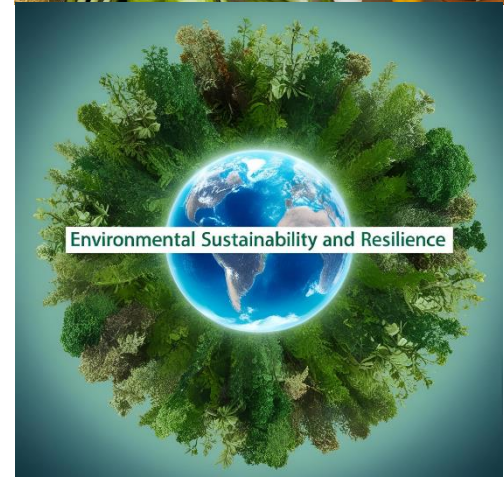
Siyajabula ukwabelana ngempumelelo engaphezu kweyilindelekile kule kota yesibili eMangosuthu University of Technology (MUT), lapho kube khona ukusebenzisana okuqinile kanye nokuzibophezela okukhulu emisebenzini yokuzibandakanya nomphakathi. Sifisa ukubonga ngobuqotho kubaholi baphrojekthi kanye nozakwethu abathe bagqugquzela imisebenzi ebalulekile yokuthuthukiswa komphakathi. Le misebenzi ayixazululi izinkinga zomphakathi kuphela, kodwa iphinde iqinise imisebenzi yethu yesayensi, yokufundisa kanye nokufunda.

Siyajabula futhi ukwazisa ukuthi kule kota, abaholi bamaphrojekthi kanye nozakwethu sebevakashele umsakazo weMUT Radio ukuze babelane ngolwazi mayelana nemisebenzi yabo kanye neqhaza labo emphakathini. Leli yithuba elibalulekile lokwandisa ukufinyelela nokwakha ubudlelwane obunzulu nomphakathi.

Inqubomgomo yethu yokuzibandakanya nomphakathi iyisiqondiso esibalulekile emsebenzini wethu, futhi isekelwe ezimisweni ezifana **nokubuyisana (reciprocity)** – okusho ukuxhumana okubuyisanayo phakathi kwenhlangano nemiphakathi. Leli simiso seliholele ekushicilelweni kwephepha lesayensi kumajenali aqinisekisiwe, okubonisa ukuthi umsebenzi wokuzibandakanya nomphakathi unomthelela omkhulu ocwaningweni.

Siphinde siqokomise ukubaluleka kobambiswano lwamasu esilwakhayo ukuphendula izidingo zenguquko yeMboni yesine (4IR). Ukuhlanganyela kwethu ne-Environment and Language Education Trust (ELET), iCentre for the Advancement of Science and Mathematics Education (CASME), kanye neBanking Sector Education and Training Authority (BANKSETA) kuqhubeka ngokuphumelelayo ekuthuthukiseni imfundo ye-STEM, ulwazi lwezobuchwepheshe, usomabhizinisi kanye nokusimama kwemvelo.

Siyakhuthazeka futhi ukubona umfutho okhulayo wokuzinikela kwabafundi ekusizeni umphakathi. Ngale misebenzi, i-MUT ikhulisa abafundi abanomthwalo wemfanelo emphakathini – abangochwepheshe abanezinga eliphezulu futhi abazimisele ukushintsha izimpilo emphakathini.



MUT explores strategic partnership with Jonoka Development Solutions

A delegation from MUT visited Jonoka Farm, in uMzinyathi, west of Durban, on 2 April 2025, to explore potential areas of collaboration between the University and the farm. Owned by Professor Blessing Karumbidza of Jonoka Development Solutions, the farm is already a valued partner in MUT's community development initiatives.

The site visit included representatives from the CEAD Directorate, the Department of Agriculture, Research and Innovation, and Technology Station in Chemicals (TSC). The aim was to identify opportunities for academic engagements, student training, and community-based projects.

Professor Karumbidza led the team on a walkabout across the four-hectare farm, highlighting various indigenous and medicinal crops, including amadumbe, imfino, turmeric, garlic, and pawpaw trees.

Delegates were shown an experimental seed plot and facilities for researchers. He also demonstrated the importance of indigenous knowledge, discussing the medicinal value of various plants and the nutritional significance of local foods.



Professor Blessing Karumbidza, leading the MUT team on a walkabout across the four-hectare farm

The MUT team reflected on the visit and expressed strong support for strengthening the partnership. Professor Busisiwe Nkonki-Mandleni, CEAD Director, emphasised the benefits of this collaboration for both the University and the community. She highlighted the potential for student internships, research projects, and volunteer programmes such as Mandela month initiatives.

The farm's potential as a living laboratory for students was widely recognised, and Professor Karumbidza assured the team that accommodation and research facilities were available.

Delegates also discussed engaging nearby schools and community members to promote home gardening food security, and the

health benefits of growing organic food.

The visit concluded with a commitment to develop a collaborative plan to guide the partnership between Jonoka Farm and MUT. This would include profiling the farm's resources, involving students and academic staff, and working closely with the community to promote practical, land-based development.

Professor Karumbidza expressed appreciation for MUT's support and reiterated his commitment to community involvement. The site visit was a significant step in building a deeper, more impactful partnership rooted in sustainability, indigenous knowledge, and inclusive education.

Restoring our shores: MUT students lead Winklespruit Beach clean-up and inspire sustainable thinking

Waves met purpose as Winklespruit Beach turned into a hub of green action, where MUT students joined forces with local stakeholders for a coastal clean-up under the Environmental Education and Sustainability (EES) Project, bringing renewed environmental energy to the shoreline on 13 April 2025.

Led by the dedicated Dr Sibonelo Mbanjwa, a Lecturer in the Department of Nature Conservation: Faculty of Applied and Health Sciences, the clean-up is a call to protect the fragile marine ecosystems. Each bag of litter that was removed restored the beach's beauty and strengthened awareness of marine pollution's impact on biodiversity and public health.

The activity reflected the project's mission to combine environmental education with civic action. MUT students actively engaged, gaining hands-on insight into the link between human behaviour and ecosystem health. The clean-up brought classroom concepts to life, reinforcing key messages about pollution prevention, waste management, and sustainable

living, while cultivating a sense of shared environmental responsibility.

However, important concerns surfaced. Participants voiced frustration over persistent beach pollution, highlighting the need for broader public education, stronger enforcement of anti-littering laws, and improved local waste infrastructure. Many also called for a shift away from single-use plastics in daily life.

Motivated by the strong turnout and community spirit, the project is set to expand. Plans include regular beach clean-ups in partnership with local authorities, schools, and environmental groups. Upcoming initiatives will also feature educational workshops on marine ecology, school recycling drives, and citizen science projects that involve learners in tracking beach pollution trends.

The journey to a cleaner coastline has only begun, and with such passionate involvement, the tide is turning towards a more sustainable environment.



Dedicated MUT students take action to clear litter from the Winklespruit Beach coastline

Each small act of care contributes to a broader wave of change, reminding us that lasting impact starts at community level. As awareness grows, so does the collective responsibility to safeguard our oceans for generations to come.

In the long term, the EES Project aims to build a generation of environmentally conscious citizens who take ownership of their natural surroundings. Anchoring these initiatives in practical experience and community involvement makes the project more than a beach clean-up; it becomes a platform for cultivating a culture of environmental guardianship.



It takes a village: MUT, Sivusisizwe Africa Initiative and Honourable Minister: Gayton McKenzie unite to empower future men

Nurturing
Boys to
Men!



Honourable Minister: Gayton McKenzie with young learners at the event

On Saturday, 10 May 2025, MUT hosted a profound youth empowerment initiative organised by MUT partner Sivusisizwe Boys to Men (B2M) Africa Initiative, in collaboration with MUT's Community Engagement and Development (CEAD) Directorate.

The NPO's role is to nurture boys to men. The event brought together learners from various schools across eThekweni. With a clear focus on mentorship, and empowerment, the programme created a space where these boys could find role models, get guidance

and motivation, and a sense of purpose.

The event's keynote speaker, Honourable Minister of Sports, Arts and Culture, Gayton McKenzie, delivered a powerful and deeply personal address. Drawing from his own life journey,

from a troubled youth to becoming a member of Parliament, Honourable McKenzie emphasised that one's background does not determine one's future, and challenged the youth to focus on their goals with discipline and commitment. He encouraged the boys to delay distractions until they had secured their futures, reminding them that success requires sacrifice. His speech, filled with emotional narratives and practical advice, left a lasting impression on the audience.

Other speakers added depth and urgency to the conversation. Craig Boucher from the Heartlines "Fathers Matter" campaign highlighted that over 60% of South African children are growing up without their fathers. Boucher emphasised the social and emotional impact of this national crisis. He advocated for the importance of positive male role models, whether biological fathers or not, and spoke about successful sports-based interventions where coaches acted as "social fathers," providing mentorship and emotional support to young boys.

Dudu Thabede, CEO and founder of Sivusisizwe Africa Initiative, spoke with heartfelt conviction about her own experience. Thabede raising her son without a father, explained

how her organisation was born out of this pain and the recognition that boys need male voices in their lives, especially during adolescence.

Thabede made an impassioned plea to the Department of Sports, Arts and Culture, and society at large to bring more men into mentorship roles and to revive the principle of communal child-rearing, echoing the timeless African proverb: **"It takes a village to raise a child."**

Representing MUT leadership, Acting Deputy Vice-Chancellor: Resources and Planning, Dr Bheka Ntshangase, reiterated the University's commitment to community engagement as one of its three strategic pillars, alongside teaching and learning, and research and innovation. He stressed that addressing fatherlessness is not only a social imperative but an institutional one, requiring sustained collaboration between academia, civil society, and government.

In her closing remarks, Professor Busisiwe Nkonki-Mandleni, Director of the CEAD Directorate, extended sincere gratitude to the young boys for their courage, to Honourable McKenzie for his authentic and empowering message, and to all partners and stakeholders who made the event possible.

She reaffirmed CEAD's commitment to youth development through sport and mentorship, referencing the ongoing MUT Schools and Community Cup initiative, which aims to revive sports in Umlazi Township.

Professor Nkonki-Mandleni also called for further support from the Department of Sports, Arts and Culture in mobilising resources for community engagement work that remains largely unfunded.

A pulsating question-and-answer session followed, during which educators, coaches, and the young boys shared experiences, ideas and reflected on the importance of male guidance in influencing young men's futures.

With the Honourable Minister's active support and the strong foundation laid by Sivusisizwe Africa Initiative and the CEAD Directorate, this project is poised to grow into a national movement of hope, healing, and transformation.



**Sivusisizwe B2M
Africa Initiative**



**MUT's hands-on Community
Partner**

Strategic alliance with BankSeta and ELET empowers Grade 12 learners with STEM education and digital skills

In response to the pressing demands of the Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR), a strategic alliance has emerged to equip young South Africans with the skills needed to thrive in a fast-changing, technology-driven world. A joint initiative between the Environment and Language Education Trust (ELET), the Centre for the Advancement of Science and Mathematics Education (CASME), the Banking Sector Education and Training Authority (BANKSETA), Mangosuthu University of Technology (MUT) and the University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN) is driving a groundbreaking programme aimed at preparing disadvantaged Grade 12 learners for STEM-related careers.

Recognising that access to quality education in Mathematics, Physical Science, and digital literacy is essential for success in a high-tech economy, the initiative targets learners from eThekweni Municipality who show strong academic potential but attend schools with historically poor performance in these subjects.



Educators guide Grade 12 learners through complex Physical Science concepts during a Saturday class

A total of 50 Grade 12 learners studying pure Mathematics and Physical Science has been recruited, with participating schools selected based on their stability and commitment from staff and leadership.

The Skills Development and Career Preparation Programme is scheduled to run over 16 Saturdays, with tuition rotating between Mathematics and Physical Science. In addition, 20 learners will also be enrolled in a digital literacy programme, designed to strengthen their readiness for the modern workforce and digital economy.

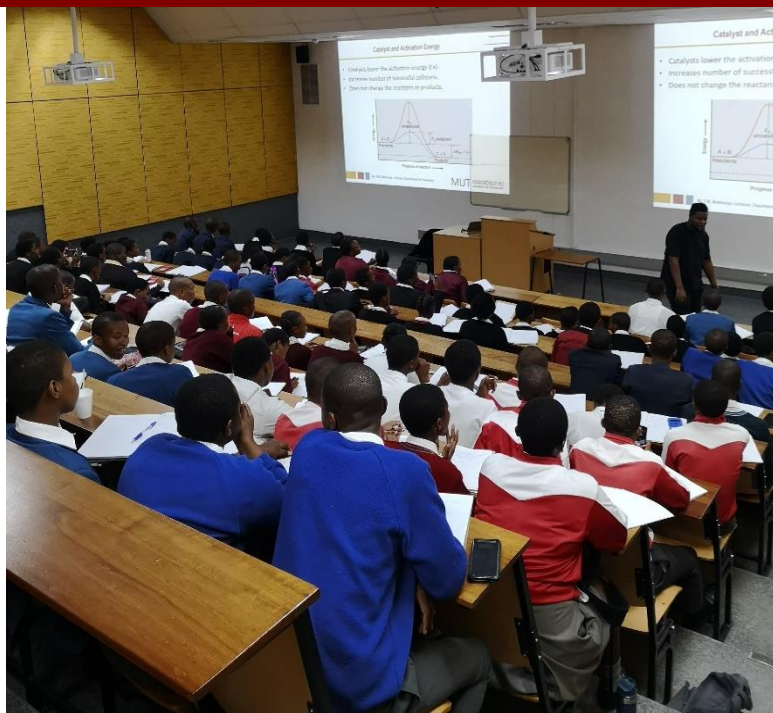
Saturday classes commenced on 12 April 2025 and are hosted at both MUT and UKZN. Schools participating under the MUT banner include Umlazi Commercial High, Zwelethu Secondary, Mathinta High, Fundinduku High, and Mhawu High. Each Saturday session runs from 08:30 to 13:30, providing learners with intensive academic support in a university environment that inspires excellence.

Through these efforts, MUT and its partners are laying the foundation for a more inclusive and technologically prepared generation. The initiative demonstrates the power of collaboration in addressing educational inequality and building a future-ready generation.

The extra mile: MUT's Faculty champions academic support in Umlazi



Professor Alfred Msomi, Dean Faculty of Applied and Health Sciences, addresses learners as the visionary behind the impactful academic support programme



Motivated learners from selected Umlazi high schools attending a Saturday academic support class

In a bold move to bridge academic gaps and build futures, the Faculty of Applied and Health Sciences at MUT has launched an empowering academic outreach for Grade 12 learners from Umlazi and surrounding areas. This initiative, which began in May 2025, brings together talented young minds every Saturday for extra lessons in Mathematics, Accounting, and Chemistry — core subjects crucial for university admission and career success.

This initiative, run in collaboration with the CEAD Directorate, is a powerful expression of MUT's ongoing commitment to community upliftment. It reflects a broader mission to make quality education more accessible and to invest in the potential of young people from historically disadvantaged areas. Under the leadership of Professor Alfred Msomi, Dean of the faculty, and Dr Sfundo Gumede, Acting Head of the Department of Mathematical Sciences and project manager, the committed facilitators behind this impactful programme are changing lives through their dedication.

Participating schools include Comtech High, Naleni High, Umlazi Commercial High, Swelihle High, Shumayela High, Reunion Secondary, Isipingo Secondary, Mafumbuka High, and Zwelethu High. Each weekend, classrooms buzz with energy as learners engage with complex concepts under the guidance of passionate educators. As the sessions continue to roll out across the year, there is growing hope that the programme will become sustainable, paving the way for a stronger pipeline of university-ready learners.

Turning the page on literacy: capacity-building workshop empowers Umlazi and Pinetown educators



Umlazi and Pinetown District educators listening attentively during the workshop



Sane Ngubane of Shuter & Shooter facilitating the training session

The MUT Reading Project is making strides in transforming literacy education—one term, one teacher, and one learner at a time.

The first capacity-building workshop for English teachers took place on 11 February 2025, facilitated by Dr Nobuhle Ndaba a Lecturer, Communications Department, MUT. She led a session on reading strategies, focusing on developing learners' ability to read for meaning.

On Thursday, 8 May 2025, dedicated educators from seven primary schools across Umlazi and Pinetown Districts—including Embonini, Umgijimi, Sukuma, Ngilosi, Mariannridge, Chief Lokothwayo, and KwaManzini—gathered once again for the second capacity-building workshop to strengthen their skills in teaching reading for meaning, with the shared goal of improving literacy

outcomes for Grade 4 and 5 learners and addressing the persistent literacy gap in South African education.

The workshop, facilitated by Sane Ngubane from Shuter & Shooter Publishers, focused on reading for meaning – part 1. Using a detailed Intermediate Phase training manual, she highlighted South Africa's reading crisis - nearly 50% of learners cannot sound out the alphabet by the end of Grade 1, and 80% cannot read for meaning by Grade 4. Ngubane also examined various reading interventions implemented at school, district, and provincial levels. Her session focused on how learners acquire reading skills, how to help them derive meaning from texts, and the application of the engaging "Reading Salad" teaching model.

The workshop was highly interactive, encouraging peer engagement and active learning. One memorable exercise had participants pair up to identify each other's names—an activity that cleverly demonstrated the building blocks of phonemic awareness and decoding skills.

Educators left the session with strategies and techniques to implement in their classrooms, and a renewed sense of purpose.

The MUT Reading Project team remains committed to supporting teachers through termly workshops and meaningful engagements. With every session, the project takes a bold step forward in addressing literacy challenges and nurturing a generation of confident readers and thinkers.



Rooting for the future: learners dig into sustainability at a Pinetown primary school



Amawelewele Primary School learners in Pinetown, west of Durban, planting trees in the school yard

In an inspiring display of youthful energy and green ambition, Amawelewele Primary School in Pinetown, west of Durban, became a beacon of environmental hope on 11 May 2025 as learners rolled up their sleeves and planted trees as part of the Environmental Education and Sustainability (EES) Project, spearheaded by Dr Sibonelo Mbanjwa, a Lecturer at the Department of Nature Conservation: Faculty of Applied and Health Sciences.

The green tree-planting activity was a living lesson in climate awareness, biodiversity preservation, and community-driven sustainability.

Under Dr Mbanjwa's expert guidance, learners engaged in practical conservation efforts, transforming their school grounds into a living laboratory of ecological care.

This initiative aimed to cultivate environmental stewardship by showing learners the critical role trees play in mitigating climate change, supporting ecosystems, and improving the quality of life in their communities.

Educators voiced the need for ongoing support, environmental learning materials, and more hands-on activities to enhance

student engagement. Responding to these, the EES project plans to branch out—literally. There are ambitions to extend the initiative across more schools in the Pinetown district and beyond.

Future plans include interactive workshops on climate action and biodiversity, collaboration with school eco-clubs, and greater community involvement to ensure that these green efforts take root and flourish.

This event planted trees while also sowing hope—hope that today's learners will grow into tomorrow's environmental champions.

Umlazi learners embark on a journey of literacy and learning



Dr Nobuhle Ndaba, back row, third from left, pictured with external stakeholders and participating learners at the event

Lively storytelling and learning filled the air as Grade 5 learners from three Umlazi primary schools gathered for a dynamic reading competition—held on 16 May 2025 as part of the FundaNathi Literacy (FNL) Project, led by Dr Nobuhle Ndaba from the Department of Communications, Faculty of Management Sciences at MUT.

The competition was a showcase of young talent and growing confidence in literacy skills. It highlighted the learners' ability to engage with texts meaningfully.

Learners captivated the audience as they read aloud, with an adjudication panel carefully assessing each participant on pronunciation, comprehension, expression, and engagement. This exciting literacy drive aims to expose learners to age-appropriate reading practices while equipping teachers with innovative tools to address literacy challenges in a fast-evolving digital world.

The FNL Project's overall goal is to promote literacy, foster a love for reading, support lifelong learning, improve academic outcomes, and build strong educational partnerships

within communities. Looking ahead, the next activity under the FundaNathi Literacy banner is set to take place in the third term of the school calendar. Even more exciting is the vision to expand the project's reach.

Plans are already in motion to partner with other departments and faculties at MUT, as well as external stakeholders, to broaden the project's capacity and impact.

The FNL Project is turning pages and shaping futures in the right direction.

CEAD Directorate sets 2025 student volunteerism in motion with an interactive orientation workshop

Student volunteers gathered for an orientation workshop hosted by the CEAD Directorate—designed for those committed to supporting University-led programmes and community projects on 5 May 2025.



MUT student volunteers who signed up for the programme attended the orientation workshop



Dr Mfanozelwe Shozi, Deputy Director: CEAD, facilitating the orientation session

opportunity to give back, but also as a means to enhance their understanding of pressing social issues.

Through active participation, students are expected to develop empathy, leadership skills, and a sense of civic duty that will benefit them beyond their academic careers.

As part of the programme, each student received a volunteerism logbook which must be diligently completed daily during their volunteer activities. This logbook will serve as a reflective tool and a record of their contributions to various organisations and projects.

The orientation workshop set a solid foundation for the student volunteers, who have now begun engaging hands-on with communities across Durban. Through this initiative, MUT aims to nurture socially conscious graduates who are equipped to make a positive impact in society.

First cohort of 2025 MUT student volunteers mark final day of service at Denis Hurley Centre



A sense of purpose echoed through the halls of the Denis Hurley Centre on 28 May 2025, as the first group of student volunteers from MUT wrapped up their final week of service at the centre—an urban sanctuary providing support to Durban’s homeless and vulnerable communities.

A visit, led by Dr Mfanozelwe Shozi, Deputy Director – CEAD Directorate, and Dudu Mbhele, CEAD’s Community Liaison Officer, formed part of a monitoring exercise to reflect on the students’ experiences. The student volunteers, who began their journey in January, spent their final day at the centre, assisting with meal preparation and serving the homeless while engaging warmly with them.

For many students, this was a transformative experience. From witnessing daily hardships to contributing meaningfully through service, the project broadened their understanding of social justice and human dignity.

As the partnership between MUT and the Denis Hurley Centre continues to grow, these student volunteers stand as proud examples of how education and humanity can come together to change lives—both their own and those they serve.

"THE SMALLEST ACT OF KINDNESS IS WORTH MORE THAN THE GRANDEST INTENTION." — OSCAR WILDE.



Hands in service: MUT students volunteers support the Denis Hurley Centre by preparing and serving meals to those in need



Young and making a difference!

This section highlights the exceptional story of Sbongakonke Zikalala, a dedicated MUT student volunteer from the Faculty of Management Sciences, who has been actively involved in supporting various community projects led by MUT.

Growing up, I witnessed the heartbreaking struggles of those who had nothing—people living on the streets, fighting just to survive another day. Each time I saw their pain, I thanked God for the blessings in my life—for the food on my family's table and for the opportunities I have been given. But gratitude alone was never enough for me. Deep in my heart, I knew I had to do something, no matter how small, to uplift others, to share the little I have, and to give hope to those who have been forgotten.

That is why I volunteer. That is why I wake up every day determined to make a difference—not just for myself, but for my community. My dream of becoming a Chartered Accountant South Africa (CA(SA)), Chartered Global Management Accountant (CGMA), and South African Diplomat is not just about success—it is about using my skills to create change, to give back, and to prove that no act of kindness is ever too small.

I am Sbongakonke Zikalala: a student, a dreamer, and someone who believes that love is shown not in words, but in action. That is why I am a student volunteer at Mangosuthu University of Technology (MUT), and also back home in Johannesburg, through church programmes and other community initiatives.

Through community work, I am gaining more than just fulfilment—I am learning real-world skills that will shape my future.



Sbongakonke Zikalala, proudly serving as a student volunteer from the Faculty of Management Sciences at MUT

Organising food drives and having face-to-face conversations with people at the Denis Hurley Centre has taught me that the world is not as good as it may seem. It has also taught me project management and teamwork. Mentoring children has strengthened my patience and communication. Fundraising for my church has sharpened my financial planning and persuasion skills—abilities that will make me not only a better accountant or diplomat, but also a more compassionate leader.

My dream of becoming a CA(SA), CGMA, or a diplomat is not just about mastering numbers; it is about using those skills to create opportunities for others. True success is not measured by personal wealth, but by how many lives we can change.

This is why I serve.

This is the legacy I choose to build—one act of kindness, one skill learned, and one life touched at a time.

MUT marks World Food Safety Day with community initiative



Dr Jugen Manyatsa and Dr Trishka Pillay, first and second from left in the front row, pictured with MUT Environmental Health students and external stakeholders during the commemoration of World Food Safety Day

To mark World Food Safety Day, observed globally on 7 June, the Faculty of Applied and Health Sciences at MUT held a dynamic community-focused initiative as part of the Informal Traders Food Safety Training Project. Led by Dr Jugen Manyatsa and Dr Trishka Pillay, Lecturers in the Department of Environmental Health, the event took place on Wednesday, 4 June 2025, uniting Environmental Health students, informal traders, and the public in a joint learning and awareness campaign.

On the day of the event, 70 MUT Environmental Health students participated in specialised training conducted by Environmental Health Practitioners (EHPs) from eThekweni Municipality. This training focused on the principles of food safety and the application of Regulation 638, with

relevance to informal food trading environments. This regulation dictates the correct manner of dealing with food that is meant for human consumption.

Empowered with this knowledge, the students engaged directly with 36 informal traders, applying their training through practical demonstrations and distributing educational pamphlets. The initiative also reached around 100 community members, further amplifying the campaign's impact.

The monitoring of all activities was closely overseen by the EHPs from eThekweni Municipality, alongside the MUT project leaders, ensuring adherence to both learning objectives and public health standards. Following the fieldwork, the students returned to campus where they took part in a structured feedback session

to reflect on their experiences, share lessons, and consolidate their understanding of the day's activities.

This initiative laid a solid foundation for future phases, including the upcoming Phase 2, which will provide training on vector control and pesticide safety in collaboration with the eThekweni Vector Control Unit and the Department of Agriculture, Land Reform and Rural Development.

With over 200 individuals reached through this effort, the project continues to align with its core objective, to empower informal traders and future environmental health professionals with the knowledge and skills needed to ensure food safety in every environment.



CEAD wraps up second quarter on a high note with literacy excellence through MUT's reading project

As the second quarter of 2025 drew to a close, the CEAD directorate delivered one of its most impactful initiatives, the second edition of the MUT Reading Project Competition. Held on Thursday, 19 June 2025, at Mariannridge Primary School in the Pinetown District, the event brought together Grade 4 and Grade 5 learners from seven primary schools across the Umlazi and Pinetown Districts. Participating primary schools included Mariannridge and KwaManzini (Pinetown), Ngilosi, Sukuma, Mgijimi, Emthethweni, and Embonini (Umlazi).

The competition forms part of MUT's broader literacy campaign aimed at promoting the love for reading and strengthening foundational skills in the early grades. Grade 4 learners focused on reading fluency, while Grade 5 participants were assessed on both reading fluency and comprehension. Each school entered five learners— three from Grade 4 and two from Grade 5, selected by their English teachers based on performance and proficiency.

Learners read from standardised English workbooks and were assessed on fluency, expression, volume, and presentation. Grade 5 learners also responded to comprehension questions.

CEAD Director, Professor Busisiwe Nkonki-Mandleni reaffirmed the



An attentive audience of young readers, educators and other stakeholders

University's commitment to advancing literacy through strong community partnerships. Emphasising sustainability as one of the principles that drive community engagement (CE) at MUT, Professor Nkonki-Mandleni also underscored the need to sustain the reading initiative, enabling broader inclusion and allowing schools that have not yet participated to benefit in future editions.

Mtwa Lazi, Head of Teaching and Learning Services in the Department of Education (DoE) for the Pinetown District, applauded MUT's support and highlighted the need to prioritise transitional years like Grade 4, especially considering the limited number of subject advisors in the district.

Saloshini Pillay, Senior Education Specialist from DoE Umlazi District, praised learners for their courage and reminded the audience that all participants were winners, having undergone a demanding selection process.

Embonini Primary School took first place in both Grades 4 and 5. Mariannridge was second in Grade 4 and third in Grade 5, while Ngilosi and Umgijimi placed third and second in Grades 4 and 5, respectively.

All participating learners received certificates; the top performers were awarded trophies. Mariannridge Primary School was named the overall winner for Grade 4, while Umgijimi Primary School claimed the top position for Grade 5. Roving trophies were presented to both schools as symbols of excellence and motivation for continued literacy development.

As MUT wrapped up its second quarter, the reading project competition stood out as a meaningful example of what can be achieved through collaboration, dedicated teaching, and inspired learners. The initiative continues to provide a critical platform for developing literacy skills and building academic confidence among young learners.

MUT extends support to Umlazi youth



Dr Mfanozelwe Shozi, Deputy Director of CEAD, addressing youth on the importance of investing in personal growth and skills development

MUT partnered with Umlazi's Ward 89, and various stakeholders to host a meaningful Youth Day Celebration on 20 June 2025 in T-section, Umlazi.

This initiative followed an earlier engagement between MUT's Vice-Chancellor and Principal, Professor Nokuthula Sibiyi, and Ward 89 leadership, where it was agreed that MUT's CEAD Directorate, with Professor Busisiwe Nkonki-Mandleni at the helm, would integrate local youth into university-linked community engagement programmes.

Since then, CEAD has included young people from T-section and surrounding areas in key community engagement initiatives, including Digital Literacy programmes.

The Youth Day event, graced by Ward 89 Councillor Mbangeni Mjadu, provided career guidance, promoted self-development, and offered resources to enhance youth employability.

During the event, representatives from various organisations collectively urged young people to improve their academic performance and pursue practical skills. Speakers emphasised the importance of resilience, self-discipline, and awareness of both personal and structural barriers to employment.

Organisations such as Perfect Driving School and the Department of Labour, offered tangible advice and support, including free driving lessons and guidance on overcoming career obstacles.

Ngcweti Non-Profit Organisation (NPO) supported attendees with job application and interview tips, while information on Metro Police recruitment was also provided.

Dr Mfanozelwe Shozi, CEAD's Deputy Director, and Thobile Mbhele, Community Liaison Officer, reiterated the University's commitment to community engagement through partnerships, while peer helper Nofezile Jali from the Faculty of Management Sciences, encouraged youth to explore MUT's academic and entrepreneurial opportunities.

Participants urged for more support and sustained involvement of the various organisations post-Youth Day.

Pregnancy confirmed! ART project shows strong progress in Rural KZN



Cows undergoing pregnancy screening



Helen Mapeka, first from right standing, with MUT students during a practical training session

In the first quarter of 2025, the CEAD Directorate reported on the launch of the Cow Breeding Improvement initiative – a community engagement project led by Helen Mapeka, a Lecturer from the Department of Agriculture, Faculty of Applied and Health Sciences. Based in uMzimkhulu, the project uses Assisted Reproductive Technology (ART), including artificial insemination and oestrus synchronisation, to improve herd genetics and livestock productivity.

As a follow-up, Mapeka is pleased to share recent progress. On 22 June 2025, pregnancy diagnoses were conducted on 24 of the 38 inseminated cows, with 18 confirmed pregnant and six testing negative, an encouraging 74% success rate. Fourteen cows were unavailable for testing.

To further community involvement, Mapeka met with livestock leaders from the Harry Gwala region on 26 June 2025 at the Department of Agriculture in uMzimkhulu. The meeting introduced MUT's role in the ART project and explored hosting a Farmers' Day to promote collaboration and knowledge sharing on breeding improvement.

In parallel, the ART project is enhancing student learning. On 10, 11, and 22 June 2025, Mapeka facilitated a three-day workshop for MUT students, offering both theoretical knowledge and practical training in ART. This initiative forms part of MUT's ongoing commitment to developing skilled graduates capable of contributing meaningfully to community development.

Currently, the project continues with

training in ART techniques and record keeping, while preparations are underway to introduce the initiative to a second community. A project inception meeting is scheduled with livestock farmers in Buhlebezwe, at Ixopo.



Reproductive evaluation taking place on a farm



28 March 2025 – On the Hlanganani Midday Show on MUT Radio, hosted by Sphamandla Mhlongo, Dr Jugen Manyatsa, Lecturer in the Department of Environmental Health, shared insights on the Food Safety Training Project for informal traders.

Rooted in MUT's community engagement mandate, the project trains informal food vendors of Umlazi, particularly those selling ready-to-eat street foods, in proper food handling, hygiene practices, and basic food safety regulations.

The project was launched in 2019 and is aligned with environmental health priorities. It responds to food safety risks, including those highlighted by high-profile foodborne illness cases in South Africa. Dr Manyatsa emphasised that the project addresses public health concerns, provides real-world training for students, and strengthens institutional–community ties.

25 April 2025 – Jenny Boyce from the Mariannridge Community Development Project in Pinetown District, joined Sineziwe Majola on the Hlanganani Midday Show on MUT Radio. She spoke about the long-standing efforts of the organisation to address socio-economic challenges in the Mariannridge community.

Boyce elaborated on the impactful partnership with MUT, which began after the devastating floods of April 2022 that severely affected the Mariannridge area.

MUT has since supported two programmes: a literacy support initiative for Grades 4 and 5 learners at Mariannridge Primary School, and a Food Security programme involving over 55 household vegetable gardens. MUT contributes by providing tools, training, resources, and expert advice to help improve both literacy levels and household nutrition.

6 June 2025 – During the Hlanganani Midday Show with host Mvelo Hadebe, Helen Mapeka, a Lecturer in the Agriculture department, shared with listeners of MUT Radio the Assisted Reproductive Technology (ART) Project, an initiative supported by the CEAD Directorate at MUT. Launched in August 2024, the project aims to enhance livestock reproduction practices among smallholder and communal farmers through modern technologies such as artificial insemination and hormonal synchronisation.

Mapeka explained that the core goal is to address poor breeding management, improve livestock genetics, and assist small-scale farmers in transitioning from subsistence to commercial markets. This involves training farmers in areas such as animal identification, record keeping, and reproductive planning.

 [Listen to the full interview](https://iono.fm/e/1542052)

<https://iono.fm/e/1542052>

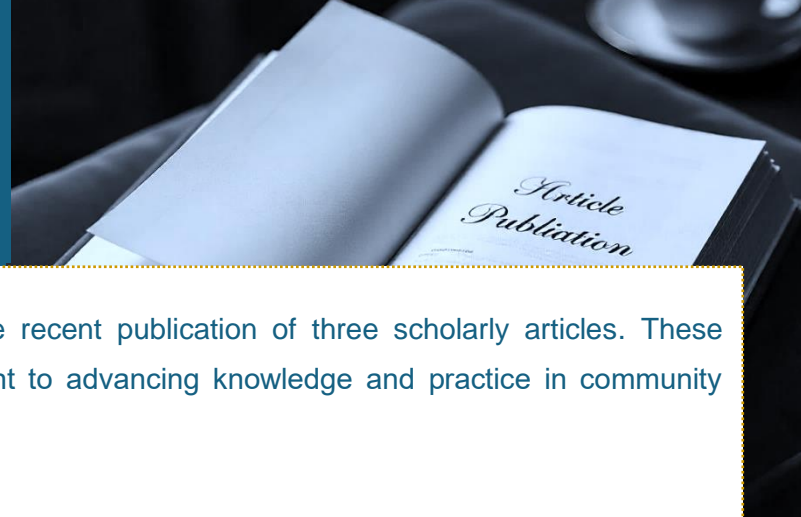
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 [Listen to the full interview](https://iono.fm/e/1564826)

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Celebrating recent publication of three scholarly articles



The CEAD Directorate is pleased to announce the recent publication of three scholarly articles. These publications are a testament to CEAD's commitment to advancing knowledge and practice in community engagement, sustainability, and development.

CEAD proudly recognise the following contributions:

- **Nkonki-Mandleni, B., Netshandama, V.O., and Ighodaro, I.D.**

Promoting Scholarship of Engagement Using the Appreciative Inquiry Model: The Case of Mangosuthu University of Technology, South Africa.

South African Journal of Higher Education, Volume 39, Number 2 (2025), pp. 202–220.

<https://dx.doi.org/10.20853/39-2-6701>

Published in May 2025.

- **Popoola, O.O., Ighodaro, I.D., and Nkonki-Mandleni, B.**

Advancing Sustainable Development Goals through University–Community Engagement in Higher Education.

International Journal of Development and Sustainability, Volume 14, Number 1 (2025), pp. 91–116.

<https://doi.org/10.63212/IJDS24090401>

Published in April 2025.

In addition, CEAD acknowledges and congratulates Dr Sibonelo Thanda Mbanjwa from the Department of Nature Conservation, Faculty of Applied and Health Sciences, for his significant contribution to community engagement scholarship. Dr Mbanjwa, who leads the Environmental Education and Sustainability (EES) Project, has published the following article:

- **Mbanjwa, S.T.**

A Cross-Sectional Study Assessing the Future of Community–University Relationships in the Face of Emerging Trends and Global Challenges such as Climate Change and Social Unrest.

Student's Journal of Health Research Africa, Vol. 6, No. 6 (2025).

<https://doi.org/10.51168/sjhrafrica.v6i6.1709>

Published in June 2025.

These publications reflect CEAD's growing impact in community engagement research and its role in contributing towards transformative and sustainable development.

Step Up. Stand Out. Serve.

Be Part of the Change with CEAD

 **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.



Shongwe Simphiwe Ayanda
Faculty of Management Sciences
Department of Public Administration and
Economics

Meet Simphiwe Ayanda Shongwe

When opportunities knock, some wait—others act. Shongwe Ayanda chose to act. With a drive to be heard, he submitted his entry to the Community Engagement Day Essay Competition, to share a perspective that mattered.

And today, he is being recognised for his effort, and commitment to making his voice count.

Why Get Involved?

Volunteering with the CEAD Directorate 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.

The Directorate 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 and Staff:** Keep an ear out for announcements in your lectures and emails!

Need More Info? We are Here to Help:

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SCHOLARSHIP OF ENGAGEMENT CONFERENCE 2025

DATE

18 - 20 NOVEMBER

VENUE

**Coastlands Hotel,
Musgrave, Durban,
KwaZulu-Natal
province, South Africa**

FORMAT

**Hybrid (in-person &
virtual participation)**

Please Visit:

<https://www.mut.ac.za/scholarshipofengagement>

Tel: 0318199422 / 0318199413

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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 Ikponmwosa 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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