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Inspired by the spirit of service: The meaning of the Mandela month



Seated from left Professor Sibiya, Niki Richards, Operations Manager at COSAS with MUT staff and COSAS volunteers standing

Lessons from afar

“This past May, I had the honour of meeting in the U.S. (San Francisco) with members of the Committee of South African Solidarity (COSAS)—a grassroots organisation that continues to do incredible work in communities for our country to be on par with developed countries. Their unwavering commitment to social justice, youth development, and volunteerism deeply moved and inspired me. COSAS played a pivotal role in the global anti-apartheid movement, particularly in the U.S. and Canada, by creating vital awareness, advocacy, and fundraising platforms. By endorsing the Freedom Charter, the

committee stood firm on core principles of equality, shared resources, land reform, and democracy. It ensured that international solidarity remained firmly linked to the essential goals of liberation. Even after the dawn of a democratic South Africa in 1994, COSAS continues to mobilise resources for marginalised communities and supports numerous NPOs in South Africa.

As we enter Mandela Month, I urge all MUT students and staff to reflect on the power of service. COSAS reminded me that change does not only come from

government policy or institutions—it often starts from the ground up, with ordinary people deciding to stand up and make a difference.

Volunteerism is not just an act of kindness; it is a form of leadership. Whether it is tutoring schoolchildren, cleaning our environment, or supporting local food drives, every act of service counts. It builds our character, strengthens communities, and keeps the legacy of Nelson Mandela alive in a way that is active and enduring.

Grassroots organisations like COSAS show us that passion, purpose, and people-power can achieve meaningful impact—even with limited resources. They are helping shape a South Africa rooted in solidarity, dignity, and hope.

Let us be inspired to do the same. This Mandela Month and beyond, let MUT be a beacon of service. Find a cause. Lend your time. Lead with compassion. “What counts in life is not the mere fact that we have lived. It is what difference we have made to the lives of others.” – Nelson Mandela

I urge you to go out there and become the COSAS of Umlazi Township, let us build our Township not only during the Mandela month but let us organise ourselves and make all our efforts sustainable.

I wish also to acknowledge all the efforts being led by our Department of Community Engagement with support from every department in ensuring that there is a plan in place where most individuals could do their bit of service during the Mandela month.”



“ Education is the most powerful weapon we can use to change the world. ”

– Nelson Mandela

QuoteCosmos

MUT VC partners with Ministry of Higher Education in hosting the 3rd G20 Education Working Group meeting in Durban



Professor Nokuthula Sibiya, and other delegates that attended the meeting with MUT student peer helpers

The Vice-Chancellor and Principal of Mangosuthu University of Technology (MUT), Professor Nokuthula Sibiya, collaborated with the Ministry of Higher Education to host the 3rd G20 Education Working Group meeting from July 1 to 3, 2025, at The Capital, Zimbali, just north of Durban. This significant event is part of South Africa's G20 Presidency, which it assumed from Brazil on 1 December 2024.

Under the theme “Solidarity, Equality, and Sustainability,” South Africa's G20 Presidency brings together the world's largest economies, represented by 19 countries along with the European Union and the African Union. Participants included prominent nations such as the United States, China, India, Brazil, and Germany.

The Department of Higher Education, along with the Department of Basic Education, played a key role in organising the activities of the G20 Education Working Group, facilitating discussions that

encompass vital issues in education. The meetings focused on two primary themes: “Building a Capable Professional Workforce” and “Models for Effective Professional Development and Lifelong Learning.”

“I ensured that our students get a sense of being in an international summit to show our commitment to our internationalisation agenda by actively participating. I led a team of five Student Liaison Officers: Mcebisi Nhloshle Nzuza, Nofezile Valentia Jali, Ayanda Nongcebo Khumalo, Ayanda Gule, and Mazwi Nhlakanipho Ndlazi. These students served as ushers, guiding international delegates and ensuring their needs were met, thereby gaining invaluable experience in the realm of multilateralism”, said Professor Sibiya.

For Professor Sibiya, “my involvement in the G20 Education Working Group is aligned with the University's Strategic Goal 4, which emphasises targeted national engagement and internationalisation. This engagement further demonstrates our commitment to advancing the post-school education and training sector within KwaZulu-Natal, while also contributing to the objectives outlined in South Africa's National Development Plan (NDP) and the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals,” said Professor Sibiya.

Professor Sibiya also said, “As a follow-up to this summit, I will be encouraging our staff and postgraduate students from all faculties to submit opinion pieces on topics related to South Africa's G20 Presidency. These pieces will be considered for publication by the Department of Higher Education, providing an important platform for sharing perspectives on this pivotal international leadership role.”

As South Africa continues to navigate its G20 Presidency, the collaborative efforts demonstrated at events such as the 3rd G20 Education Working Group Meeting reaffirm the nation's commitment to fostering educational development and international co-operation.

MUT hosts National Launch of EDHE-ABSA Innovation Challenge A defining moment for MUT



From left, Nonhlanhla Magagula, Head: Corporate Citizenship Programmes, Absa bank; Dr Phethiwe Matutu, Chief Executive Officer, Universities South Africa (USAf); Dr Edwell Gumbo, Director: Entrepreneurship, Universities South Africa (USAf); Professor Nokuthula Sibiya; and Dr Kevin Ramsarghey, Acting Dean: Faculty of Management Sciences

On 25 June 2025, the Mangosuthu University of Technology (MUT) proudly hosted the national launch of the EDHE-ABSA Innovation Challenge — an event that not only brought together key players in higher education and corporate innovation but also signalled MUT’s growing influence in shaping South Africa’s entrepreneurial future.

Held at the University’s Student Centre, the launch attracted high-level representatives from all sectors of the entrepreneurial ecosystem, including Universities South Africa (USAf), ABSA, and several of the country’s 26 public universities. The event was a proud moment for MUT, confirming its status as a university committed to community relevance, practical innovation, and youth empowerment.

Speaking at the event, Vice-Chancellor and Principal, Professor Nokuthula Sibiya, described MUT as “a

beacon of innovation and applied learning,” adding that the institution was “truly honoured” to host this launch, which she called “a defining moment in our shared journey toward building an entrepreneurial, resilient, and inclusive higher education sector.”

She highlighted that hosting the EDHE-ABSA Innovation Challenge at MUT was not just symbolic, but strategic, affirming the university’s deep community roots and entrepreneurial potential. “Our students are grounded in practical knowledge and deeply attuned to the needs of their communities. What they have needed — and what we now commit to providing — is the structured ecosystem to nurture, support, and grow their innovations consistently,” she said. Professor Sibiya closed by reinforcing how this national Innovation Challenge aligns with MUT’s brand promise: ‘Shape and own the future.’ “This initiative gives our students the opportunity to test

their ideas, build confidence, learn from failure, and access a network that can take their innovations to scale. It empowers them to become owners of their future, not merely participants in it," she said.

Dr. Phetiwe Matutu, CEO of Universities South Africa (USAf), delivered a powerful address that reinforced the national significance of the Innovation Challenge. "We are living in a time that demands bold ideas and bold action. Our role, as universities, is to ensure that we are not just teaching content, but cultivating thinkers, innovators, and entrepreneurs," she said.

Dr. Matutu applauded MUT for its leadership and its willingness to push boundaries. "The choice to host this event here, at MUT, is deliberate and meaningful. It reflects a recognition that innovation does not only emerge in urban centres or traditional powerhouses — it lives in townships, in rural communities, in every space where young people are determined to change their circumstances."

She emphasised that USAf and EDHE are committed to ensuring that no student — regardless of their

background — is excluded from opportunities to innovate and contribute to national development. "Entrepreneurship is how we address unemployment, how we close inequality gaps, and how we future-proof our graduates," she added.

ABSA's Nonhlanhla Magagula, Head of Corporate Citizenship Programmes, highlighted the collaboration between academia and industry: "This initiative brings together some of the boldest and brightest minds across South Africa's universities to reimagine what is possible through entrepreneurship," she said.

Among the many distinguished guests present were Dr. Edwell Gumbo, Director of Entrepreneurship at USAf, university leaders from KwaZulu-Natal, and several innovation champions across the higher education sector — all signalling a strong collective commitment to student entrepreneurship.

As the launch concluded, a palpable sense of momentum was palpable. The message was clear: MUT is not only ready to shape the future — it is ready to lead it

"Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world."

- Nelson Mandela

MUT Gender Forum engages in G20 Summit to advocate for Gender-Transformative Education



From left: Programme Specialist: UNFPA, RSA- Ms Precious Magogodi; Pinky Khoza; Deputy Minister: Basic Education, Honourable Dr Reginah Mhaule, MP; Dr Paulette Naidoo; Education Manager: UNICEF South Africa, Dr Andile Dube

The Mangosuthu University of Technology (MUT) Gender Forum proudly represented South Africa's higher education sector at the high-level G20 event, "Education for Gender Equality and Peace: Advancing Gender-Transformative Education for All," held on 1 July 2025, at the Durban International Convention Centre (Durban ICC), KwaZulu-Natal. MUT delegates who participated in the 3rd G20 Education Working Group Meeting included the acting Dean of Students, Dr Paulette Naidoo, and Senior Committee Officer Pinky Khoza, both of whom are Executive Committee Members of the MUT Gender Forum, accompanied by five peer helpers. The event was convened under South Africa's G20 Presidency by the United Nations Girls' Education Initiative (UNGEI), the Department of Basic Education, and the Department of Higher Education and Training.

This global dialogue brought together education leaders, policymakers, and civil society to confront persistent inequalities in education, especially for girls, marginalised groups, and learners in

conflict-affected or under-resourced contexts. "The summit gave MUT a unique platform to amplify its voice on the global stage, and demonstrate its commitment to inclusive, Afrocentric, and transformative education models," said Khoza. "This is a defining moment for Historically Disadvantaged Institutions (HDI) to take the lead."

Khoza further said, "We participated in Gender-Transformative Leadership discussions where case studies from Sierra Leone, Burkina Faso, and South Africa were discussed, highlighting leadership and policy innovation through frameworks like the Freetown Manifesto that was developed in Freetown, Sierra Leone, in 2022, and the Gender at the Centre Initiative (GCI)."

Dr Naidoo, who deals with students' well-being, said, "I was heartened by discussions on Gender-Based Violence (GBV) in Education, where we discussed strategies such as staff vetting, institutional safety standards, and whole-school/university safety models. In addition, the inclusion of boys and

gender-diverse learners was critical; it sparked a dialogue on mental health, dismantling harmful masculinities, and inclusive pedagogies”.

Commenting on the report from the MUT representatives, Professor Nokuthula Sibiyi, MUT Vice-Chancellor and Principal, said, “I am happy that as MUT we added input on recommendations on how to tackle these issues so that the meeting would not degenerate into a talk shop. The recommendations they have tabled include renewed political and financial commitments to implementing gender-transformative education, among others.

“Our involvement reflects our proactive stance on gender equity and inclusion. Through initiatives such as the Gender Forum and curriculum transformation efforts, MUT is positioning itself as a national leader in advancing Gender-Transformative Education (GTE)”, added Professor Sibiyi and concluded that the University plans to align its work with national and global frameworks, including the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the Freetown Manifesto, and GCI.”

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Nelson Mandela



Global partnerships fuel academic pride at MUT



MUT PhD students, with Professor Clinton Aigbavboa, Director of CIDB Centre of Excellence at UJ

Mangosuthu University of Technology (MUT) continues to champion academic development and global collaboration. In 2020, the Research Directorate issued a call for funding through the University Capacity Development Programme (UCDP) grant, which is funded by the British Council in partnership with the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET). This prestigious grant was awarded to six MUT staff members pursuing their PhDs: Thobile Zikhathile, Refiloe Ntoi, Raj Naidoo, Nomfundo Ndlovu, Bongani Qwabe, and Sanele Mngadi.

As part of the programme, the cohort visited Manchester Metropolitan University in 2022, gaining valuable international exposure and academic enrichment.

This year, MUT celebrates a significant milestone as two members of the cohort have completed their doctoral studies:

Dr Bongani Qwabe, from the Department of Office Management and Technology, has long been passionate about improving academic environments. His PhD research focused on institutionalising entrepreneurship education as a strategic approach

to enhance entrepreneurial spirit in selected schools in KwaZulu-Natal. His journey is a testament to resilience and dedication, having previously earned a Master's degree cum laude and the Dean's Merit Award.

Dr Refiloe Ntoi, from the Department of Nature Conservation, has also completed her PhD with distinction. Her research contributes to the growing body of knowledge in environmental sustainability and conservation practices. Dr Ntoi's academic journey reflects MUT's commitment to nurturing talent that addresses both local and global ecological challenges.

Their achievements were recently acknowledged by Professor Clinton Aigbavboa, Director of the Cidb Centre of Excellence at the University of Johannesburg. During his follow-up visit on 25 June 2025, Professor Aigbavboa commended the graduates and encouraged the remaining candidates to persevere. He also announced continued support for the programme, including additional funding and opportunities to attend international conferences, highlighting potential collaboration with the University of California in the United States.



Dr Bongani Qwabe

A reignited commitment to honour: New leadership breathes life into memorial protocol



MUT staff at Dlamini's memorial service

With the support of Professor Nokuthula Sibiyi, the Vice-Chancellor and Principal of MUT, the University organised a memorial service for Xolani Lundi Dlamini. This served as a heartfelt tribute and an important step towards revitalising an existing but often overlooked approach to honour and mourn staff members who have passed away. This event was not just about saying goodbye to Dlamini; it represented a renewed commitment to compassion and remembrance within the Institution.

Thanks to the proactive collaboration between the Operations and Marketing and Communications directorates, the memorial protocol — once existing only in principle — has been operationalised and brought back to life. This renewed effort underscores a reinvigorated culture of care and structured support within the University community. The acting head of Transport, Mr Khehla Ndlovu, who was away on business, drove the operation remotely with great success.

The memorial service, held in honour of a beloved staff member, stood as a solemn yet hopeful testament to this shift. For the first time in years, the University formally activated the protocol, ensuring

that every step — from family liaison to collective remembrance — was handled with the utmost respect. This signals a new culture, and even better was the presence of at least one EMC member and a few senior directors. The protocol, originally designed to guide the University in responding appropriately to the death of a staff member, had over time fallen out of practice. “A new culture of solidarity, care and compassion is developing and let this be a shining example of the transformation journey of the University”, said Mbali Mkhize.

This renewed effort has not only brought healing to the present moment but has also set the tone for a more compassionate and responsive Institution. Under the leadership of Professor Sibiyi, who has been commended for prioritising human-centred leadership, the University is forging a new path — one where legacy, loss, and love are acknowledged with dignity and care.

As the memorial service concluded, a shared sense of purpose was in the air: that moving forward, the University would honour its own not only through words, but through structured, sustained action. This is not just a new beginning — it is a return to values that truly matter.

Professor Nokuthula Sibiya Appointed Vice-Chairperson of USAf's World of Work Strategy Group



Professor Nokuthula Sibiya

Durban, 10 July 2025 — Professor Nokuthula Sibiya, a distinguished academic and leader at the Mangosuthu University of Technology (MUT), has been appointed Vice-Chairperson of the Universities South Africa (USAf) World of Work Strategy Group (WSG). The announcement was made following a decision by the USAf Board's Executive Committee at its meeting held on 29 November 2024. Her three-year term commenced immediately and will run until 31 December 2027.

Professor Sibiya is currently attending the USAf Colloquium on the Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR): The Role of Universities in Shaping the Future of Work, an initiative spearheaded by the WSG. In her new leadership role, she joins Professor Letlhokwa Mpedi, Vice-Chancellor of the University of Johannesburg (UJ), who serves as Chairperson of the WSG.

Speaking from the colloquium, Professor Sibiya expressed her honour at being entrusted with the role:

"This appointment is not only a personal milestone but also a reflection of MUT's growing influence in the national higher education landscape. I am proud to be representing MUT at this significant event where we are deeply engaging with the challenges and opportunities that the

Fourth Industrial Revolution presents for universities and the future world of work."

The USAf CEO, Dr Phethiwe Matutu, formally congratulated Professor Sibiya in her appointment letter, stating:

"It gives me pleasure to congratulate you on your appointment as the Vice-Chairperson of the Universities South Africa World of Work Strategy Group (WSG), as approved by the Executive Committee of the USAf Board of Directors. We look forward to your contribution in driving forward the strategic focus of universities in preparing students for the rapidly evolving world of work."

MUT is strongly represented at the ongoing colloquium, reinforcing the institution's commitment to actively shaping higher education policy and its intersection with labour market needs in the 4IR era. Professor Sibiya has promised to share photographs and insights from the event in due course.

With her leadership, the WSG is poised to enhance collaboration among universities and stakeholders further to ensure South African graduates are well-prepared for a dynamic and digital future.