



BOUNDLESS

July 2025 | Issue Number 05



MUT
MANGOSUTHU
UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY

CONTENTS

Umlazi to the World — MUT's Exciting Journey into the Global Arena	1
Reflections on the MUT's USA Visit —Momentum, Meaning, and the Mandate to Act	2
MUT Broadens Horizons with Strategic U.S. Partnerships	3
A Turning Point in Global Engagement	4
Strengthening Academic Synergies at CSUS	4
Driving Digital Futures with DS Innovation	5
Rekindling Historical Ties with COSAS	5
Looking Ahead: The 2026 AI Summit	6
Broader Gains for MUT	6
Professor Sibiya elevates MUT on the global stage	7
A Vision for Global Engagement with Local Impact	8
A Call to Action	9
Championing the spirit of perseverance and supporting one another as we strive for a brighter future	10
The Birth of SUNO: A Legacy of Courage	10
MUT's Vision: Empowerment through Education	10
Resilience in the Face of Adversity: Lessons Learned	11
Transformative Approaches to Food Security: Professor Mkhize's Advocacy for Sustainable Agricultural Practices at the FAO Workshop in Rome	12
Breaking ground: roping in academia in international travel	13
A New Dawn for Volunteerism at MUT: Unleashing the Power of Student Engagement	14
From Dreams to Reality: Bandile's culinary journey ignited by Awethu's inspiring mentorship at MUT Radio	15
From Eshowe to the Global Energy Summit: A beacon of Innovation and Leadership	16
MUT lecturer achieves rare mathematical feat with PhD in Applied Mathematics	17
MUT professionals selected for prestigious international training in Berlin	18
The case of two conferences, conceptualized by two MUT senior directors, now earning international recognition	20
Starting off with the Focus Conference, A Trailblazing Moment: The 12th Focus Conference at MUT	21
This is more than a conference. This is MUT's moment to lead, and the world is paying attention	22
MUT Secures Two Prestigious BRICS Research Grants	23
MUT scholar invited to the U.S. under the Fulbright programme to advance sustainable urban development	24
From humble beginnings to the Global EnergyWaterFoodClimate Nexus Summit	25

CREDITS ◆ ◆ ◆

Editor-in-Chief: Mbali Mkhize

Editors: Zama Sishi, Bheki Hlophe

Copy Editor: CopyEditPaste

Writers: Mbali Mkhize, Zama Sishi

Photos: Zama Sishi, Bheki Hlophe, supplied by story sources

Designers: The Market Masters

Printers: Process Litho

UMLAZI TO THE WORLD — MUT'S EXCITING JOURNEY INTO THE GLOBAL ARENA



Mbali Mkhize

Dear Reader,

We are pleased to present our latest newsletter, where we take the opportunity to celebrate not only our milestones and achievements but also the dedicated individuals and mission that make Mangosuthu University of Technology (MUT) a remarkable institution. From our early beginnings to our current standing, we are proud to share how MUT has garnered recognition on the global stage.

As we near the conclusion of our Strategy 2020–2025, we reflect on our ambition to enhance both national and international engagements. What began in 2021 with five informal partnerships has grown into a dynamic network of over 32 institutional partners spanning Europe, the United States, Africa, Asia, and China. This remarkable expansion underscores how a clear vision, dedication, and meaningful relationships can generate significant achievements within a short period.

A recent highlight of our international efforts was our participation in a Big Data analysis competition in China, where we celebrated a notable victory. One of the winners, Dr Darlington Hove, is being celebrated in this publication

for a rare PhD thesis in mathematics. Therefore, the success in China exemplifies the exceptional talent we possess at MUT and our capability to excel on international platforms.

Through this journey, we have learned that the human connections we cultivate are what truly matter. Internationalisation extends beyond formal agreements and travel; it is fundamentally about fostering authentic relationships built on trust, shared objectives, and mutual respect.

I want to share a personal experience that illustrates this concept. In 2019, a chance introduction to Dr Loretta Cheeks, facilitated by Dr Gloria Braxton from the United Negro College Fund project, significantly transformed our trajectory at MUT. When the DHET Minister's delegation visited the U.S. later that year, I was able to leverage this connection, leading to fruitful outcomes. This exemplifies the essence of internationalisation; small introductions can evolve into impactful partnerships. Today, our global partners continue to thrive, and MUT is honoured to contribute to their journeys.

While our roots are firmly established in Umlazi, our aspirations are substantial. This statement reflects the commitment of our staff, students, and partners, who represent the MUT brand with integrity and excellence. We express our sincere gratitude to our past and present Vice-Chancellors for their unwavering belief in MUT's global potential. Their active participation in international academic and leadership circles has facilitated many opportunities and fostered enduring connections.

As we advance toward Vision 2030, our focus will be on developing a more inclusive, dynamic, and sustainable internationalisation programme. A primary objective will involve re-engaging international students whose numbers were affected during the COVID-19 pandemic. This initiative extends beyond recruitment; it aims to rejuvenate the cultural richness, intellectual diversity, and global dialogue that international students contribute to our campus community.

At the core of MUT's internationalisation efforts lies our collective mission. This endeavor cannot be undertaken by a single office or a limited number of individuals; it is a shared journey for all who recognise the transformative potential of global engagement. Whether you are a student disseminating research internationally, a staff member representing MUT at conferences, or a partner institution creating new opportunities, your involvement is essential to this mission.

As we conclude Strategy 2020–2025 and transition into a new chapter, we are enthusiastic about the exceptional international experiences that lie ahead.

REFLECTIONS ON THE MUT'S USA VISIT MOMENTUM, MEANING, AND THE MANDATE TO ACT



Professor Nokuthula Sibiyi

Recently, I led a visit to the United States. It was more than a professional engagement—it was a moment of validation, vision, and sobering reflection. Focused on STEM collaboration, artificial intelligence integration, entrepreneurship development, and grassroots fundraising strategies, the trip signalled that Mangosuthu University of Technology (MUT) is no longer simply seeking global inclusion—we are actively shaping it.

One of the most affirming aspects of the visit was the level of engagement we received. We held high-level meetings with the Chancellor and Presidents of at least three respected US universities. Their interest in MUT was not just diplomatic—it was grounded in mutual respect and genuine academic curiosity. This reinforced a powerful truth: The MUT brand now carries weight beyond our borders. We are seen as a serious institution capable of contributing to and benefiting from global academic and research partnerships.

This is a moment to be seized. We must follow up and follow through. Internationalisation can no longer be seen as the task of one office or department—it is a shared institutional imperative. The momentum is here, and it belongs to all of us. Our engagements around STEM and

Artificial Intelligence (AI) showed us what is possible when innovation is inclusive and intentional. AI is already transforming how universities teach, conduct research, and engage with communities. MUT cannot afford to remain on the sidelines of this revolution.

We now have a clear vision to:

- Integrate AI literacy into our STEM and broader academic offerings.
- Partner with global institutions for collaborative research in AI, data science, and emerging technologies.
- Prepare our students not just to adapt, but to lead in the industries of the future.

It would have been remiss of me knowing our funding challenges not just to benchmark why a small NPO is thriving. Our interactions with this grassroots non-profit was eye-opening. It is thriving not because of large endowments, but because of strong community ties, trust-based fundraising, and long-term relational capital. I saw ourselves in this story. As a university deeply embedded in the Umlazi community, MUT has a powerful story of impact and resilience—and this must become a cornerstone of our fundraising approach.

We must all begin to:

- Humanise our institutional story when speaking to funders.
- Build donor relationships founded on shared values and tangible impact.
- Develop a diversified fundraising model that includes alumni, international partners, and philanthropic networks.

While we celebrate growth, the journey is not without its ironies. One of our brightest minds, Professor Babatunde Bakare, a C2-rated researcher, is relocating to the United States as a faculty member. His departure is a tangible and painful reminder of the global brain drain that continues to pull talent away from African institutions.

His move underscores a paradox—we are seeking international partnerships to build academic capacity, while our own experts are being pulled abroad. This is not just a loss for MUT; it is a loss for the continent. Yet, we remain hopeful that wherever our scholars go, they carry the MUT legacy with them—and that someday, they may return with new insights, networks, and resources.

Despite this, we believe deeply in the power of our youth. When our students and early-career academics engage globally, we are planting seeds for the future. Many will come back—bringing home fresh knowledge, global standards, and innovative thinking that will enrich South African institutions, communities, and industries.

They are our ambassadors, our future innovators, and our reason for continuing to internationalise.

The impact of this visit is already visible. As a direct result of our engagements, MUT will in September and November, respectively, host reciprocal visits this year from the presidents of two USA universities, a Chancellor of another US university, and the CEO of DS Innovation, with whom we signed a transformative Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) during the visit.

In total, two Memoranda of Understanding (MoUs) were

signed—both significant milestones that will shape research, innovation, and exchange programmes at MUT.

These outcomes are no mean feat. They resonate deeply with the goals set out in our outgoing Strategy 2025, and they form a powerful springboard into Vision 2030—a strategy that demands bold thinking, expanded global engagement, and sustainable partnerships. From Umlazi to the world—MUT is on the move. The momentum is real, the groundwork is laid, and the future is global. Let us rise to the occasion, together.

MUT BROADENS HORIZONS WITH STRATEGIC USA PARTNERSHIPS

In a landmark move to expand its academic and innovation reach, Mangosuthu University of Technology (MUT) undertook a high impact visit to the United States, led by Vice-Chancellor Professor Nokuthula Sibiya. The visit marked a pivotal moment in MUT's pursuit of global relevance—shifting the university's internationalisation agenda from intention to impact. A team of strategic institutional leaders joined the Vice-Chancellor: Mbali Mkhize, Senior Director of Marketing and Communications; Zama Sishi, Director of Stakeholder Relations; and Dr Thobeka Makhathini, Senior Lecturer in the Department of Chemical Engineering and a key contributor to the "Women in Climate Change" initiative. This carefully curated team reflected the university's commitment to inclusive innovation, strategic partnerships, and institutional transformation.

What began as an ambitious visit turned into a defining milestone for MUT. The delegation secured key Memoranda of Understanding (MoUs) with: DSI Innovation and California State University, Sacramento.



Seated, Dr Loretta Cheeks, and Professor Nokuthula Sibiya, signing the MOU at SUNO. Witnesses are Dr Kenneth Williams, and Mbali Mkhize



President of Sac State: Dr Luke Wood with Professor Nokuthula Sibiya

Additionally, engagements were initiated with Southern University at New Orleans (SUNO), where further departmental collaborations will bring these partnerships to life in the coming months.

A TURNING POINT IN GLOBAL ENGAGEMENT



Left to right: Dr Luria Young, Southern University of Baton Rouge, LA (SUBR); Dr Lisa Mims-Devezin, Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs; Dr Camacia Smith-Ross, Chief of Staff to the Chancellor (SUNO); Dennis Shields, Esq., President of Southern University and A&M College System (SUS); Professor Nokuthula Sibiya, MUT Vice-Chancellor and Principal; Dr Loretta H Cheeks, DS Innovation CEO; Dr Rebecca A Chaisson, Dean of School of Social Work (SUNO); Dr Thobeka Makhathini (MUT); Mkhize Mbali (MUT)

The progress made on this trip reflects just how far MUT has come since September 2021, when its international portfolio consisted of only five informal partnerships. Today, the university commands attention on global platforms.

One such platform was the inaugural Global Innovation Summit hosted by SUNO on 5 May 2025. Here, Professor Sibiya delivered a keynote titled “AI for Inclusive Education”, underscoring the potential of artificial intelligence to drive educational equity. Her message

resonated deeply with attendees and set the tone for subsequent discussions with SUNO Chancellor Dr James H Ammons and Dr Loretta Cheeks, CEO of DS Innovation. Their conversations explored:

- Integrating AI into STEM education
- Building innovation ecosystems in underserved communities
- Facilitating academic and cultural exchange across institutions.

STRENGTHENING ACADEMIC SYNERGIES AT CSUS

At California State University, Sacramento, the MUT team was welcomed with a robust programme coordinated by Dr Bogtamo Ati Mosupyoe, a South African academic serving as Dean of the Black Honors College. Each college and administrative unit presented offerings tailored for collaboration, showcasing mutual interest in long-term engagement.

The highlight was a high-level meeting with CSUS President Dr Luke Wood, which yielded critical outcomes:

- Plans to co-design entrepreneurship and innovation curricula
- Guidance and partnership in the establishment of MUT's future Business School
- Collaborative research on climate change, public policy, and digital transformation.

DRIVING DIGITAL FUTURES WITH DS INNOVATION

The MoU with DS Innovation signals MUT's entry into the digital age of higher education. The agreement includes:

- Upgrading MUT's research infrastructure with cutting-edge digital tools
- AI and data science training for faculty and students
- Establishment of Innovation Labs at MUT campuses to support student-led solutions and entrepreneurship

REKINDLING HISTORICAL TIES WITH COSAS



Seated, MUT Vice-Chancellor and Principal, Professor Nokuthula left; and Operations Manager, Nicole Richards, also seated, middle, with their teams

In San Francisco and Berkeley, the delegation met with the Committee for South African Solidarity (COSAS), a long-time ally from the anti-apartheid movement. Today, COSAS supports efforts that promote sustainable development, education, and grassroots innovation.

Key themes discussed included:

- Volunteer programme design and community engagement
- Resource mobilisation for institutional development
- Integrating community partnerships into MUT's broader Anchor Strategy.

LOOKING AHEAD: THE 2026 AI SUMMIT



Seated, Dr Luke Wood, left, and his Executive; and also seated, MUT Vice-Chancellor and Principal, Professor Nokuthula Sibiya, and the MUT delegation

One of the most exciting outcomes of the U.S. visit is MUT's commitment to host an AI Summit in 2026. Planned in collaboration with SUNO, CSUS, and DS Innovation, the event will bring global academics, innovators, and policy thinkers to South Africa. Themed "AI for Sustainable Futures: Innovation, Inclusion, and Impact", the summit will spotlight:

- Women in Climate Change leading sessions on AI in climate resilience
- Workshops on ethical AI, smart cities, and environmental sustainability
- South Africa's role in shaping responsible and inclusive AI policy.

BROADER GAINS FOR MUT

The partnerships fostered on this trip unlock several long-term benefits:

- Increased access to world-class research facilities and expertise
- Academic exchange programmes that empower both students and staff
- Integration of technology into teaching, research, and community outreach
- Joint research initiatives in water management, AI, and public health
- Heightened global visibility for MUT on respected international platforms.

Reflecting on the journey, Professor Sibiya said, "This visit was more than diplomacy—it was a catalyst for real change. From our roots in Umlazi, we are now building bridges with institutions around the world. These partnerships reflect the maturity of MUT's global brand and show that our time has come."

With two signed MoUs, reciprocal visits by three U.S. university leaders already planned, and the AI Summit on the horizon, MUT is clearly on a path of international transformation.

As Strategy 2025 winds down and Vision 2030 picks up momentum, MUT is not just engaging with the world—it is helping shape the future of global higher education.

PROFESSOR SIBIYA ELEVATES MUT ON THE GLOBAL STAGE



Professor Nokuthula Sibiya

In a historic moment for African higher education, Professor Nokuthula Sibiya, Vice-Chancellor and Principal of Mangosuthu University of Technology (MUT), delivered an unforgettable speech during her official visit to California State University, Sacramento (CSUS), on May 8, 2025. Titled “Bridging Continents, Transforming Futures: Global Engagement Between MUT and Sacramento State,” her address marked the beginning of a new chapter for MUT, one that would elevate the university to the global stage and redefine its role in academic excellence, innovation, and social impact.

Observers described Professor Sibiya’s speech as both “inspirational and historic,” and for good reason. Her message was crystal clear: global collaboration is no longer a luxury—it’s an essential element for institutions of higher learning striving to make a real difference. Her visit wasn’t just a ceremonial affair but a deliberate move to lay the groundwork for a multifaceted partnership with CSUS. This partnership would focus on research, innovation, and shared education leadership—an alliance with the potential to shape both institutions’ futures.

“I’m here not only as a representative of Mangosuthu University of Technology but as a representative of an African university born out of exclusion, tasked with societal transformation,” Professor Sibiya declared in her

speech. “We do not seek global engagement for prestige; we pursue it because excellence is no longer optional. For universities like MUT, excellence is a moral imperative.” Her words echoed beyond the walls of and into the hearts of those who had gathered to witness this pivotal event. For Professor Sibiya, this wasn’t just about international recognition—it was about forging meaningful connections that would lead to transformative change both locally and globally.



First to third, from left, are Zama Sishi, Mbali Mkhize and Professor Nokuthula Sibiya, all from MUT; with Dr Boatamo Mosupye, Dean of the Black Honors College, fourth left; and Dr Thobeka Makhathini also from MUT, and faculty members at the Black Honors College

The Vice-Chancellor’s keynote address provided a powerful snapshot of the higher education landscape in South Africa, touching on the enduring legacy of apartheid and its lasting impact on the country’s institutions. She shared with the audience in New Orleans how South Africa’s higher education system was shaped by exclusion, with Historically Disadvantaged Institutions (HDIs) like MUT facing the ongoing challenge of catching up to their Historically Advantaged counterparts.

In one of her engaging discussions during a visit to New Orleans, many academics were astonished to hear how segregated South African higher education was during apartheid, and how those historical injustices continue to reverberate through the institutions today. It was a moment that underscored the urgent need for global collaboration to bridge the gap between institutions still grappling with the aftermath of historical inequalities.

A VISION FOR GLOBAL ENGAGEMENT WITH LOCAL IMPACT



Professor Nokuthula Sibiyi

Professor Sibiyi's speech also laid out her vision for MUT's future and the vital role of global partnerships in advancing that future. "It is both an honour and a profound privilege to address you on this historic occasion, which marks a pivotal moment in Mangosuthu University of Technology's trajectory toward becoming a globally connected, ethically grounded institution of higher learning. I have titled my reflections: 'A Vision of Global Engagement for Local Impact,'" she began, drawing the audience into the vision that was both ambitious and rooted in the values of MUT.

She went on to explain how her decision to lead MUT was inspired by more than just institutional management—it was shaped by the philosophy of Nelson Mandela, who once said, "Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world." This guiding principle, she shared, is not merely idealistic rhetoric but a call to action. Universities around the world, she emphasized, must embrace a new paradigm of collaboration that transcends borders, where education is not just about prestige but about equity, justice, and innovation.

"We are entering an era where the boundaries between disciplines, economies, and nations are dissolving," she said. "No institution can afford to exist in isolation. This is why we have embarked on this landmark visit—to establish new strategic partnerships with leading institutions like the New Orleans University System and California State University, Sacramento."

Her choice of these particular institutions was no accident.

SUNO's proud legacy as a Historically Black College and University (HBCU), rooted in the fight for racial justice, resonated deeply with MUT's own story. Similarly, CSUS's focus on applied research and interdisciplinary education aligned perfectly with MUT's emphasis on producing skilled technologists and career-focused graduates.

Drawing on the vision of Dr Martin Luther King Jr, Professor Sibiyi reminded the audience that true education involves both intellect and character. "The function of education is to teach one to think intensively and critically. Intelligence plus character—that is the goal of true education," she quoted, tying the mission of MUT to a broader, more global vision of education.

As the conversation shifted to MUT's strategic priorities, Professor Sibiyi shared a bold vision for the future. Under her leadership, MUT was committed to forging partnerships that would not only impact the academic world but also bring lasting change to the communities it served.

She outlined the key initiatives that MUT was pursuing, including joint research initiatives in energy, water, food and climate, healthcare innovation, and in the near future, Artificial Intelligence for sustainable development. Additionally, she emphasised the importance of student and faculty exchanges to foster global citizenship and cross-cultural academic dialogue.

"We will launch joint online courses and co-certifications in

AI, ethics, data science, and digital innovation, tailored to meet the needs of African and global development,” she announced. “Furthermore, we aim to host an AI and STEM Innovation Summit annually in KwaZulu-Natal, where African and international scholars can engage in collaborative problem-solving.”

In addition to these initiatives, Professor Sibiya expressed her desire to strengthen MUT’s internationalisation agenda by building an innovative and entrepreneurial ecosystem. She highlighted MUT’s Anchor Strategy, grounded in the African philosophy of Ubuntu—which emphasizes shared humanity and community solidarity—as the core guiding principle for these efforts.

Professor Sibiya also shared ‘Ubuntu and Leadership for Change’, explaining that “Ubuntu is not just an African tradition—it is a universal ethic,” Professor Sibiya

declared, inviting the audience to understand how this philosophy would shape the future of MUT’s engagements. “Ubuntu teaches us that ‘I am because we are.’ It urges us to recognise our shared humanity and embrace a collective responsibility for each other’s success.”

This philosophy, she explained, is deeply woven into the fabric of MUT’s Anchor Strategy, which serves as both its moral compass and its operational guide. It asks not just what can we do? but who benefits, and how can we rise together?

By referencing the words of Mandela and Dr King, Professor Sibiya reaffirmed the university’s commitment to societal impact and its determination to shape a better, more equitable future through education. “Our partnerships are MUT’s response to that question: ‘What are you doing for others?’”

A CALL TO ACTION



Professor Nokuthula Sibiya, right, receiving a gift from Dr Akram Botrous, Director: Office of Water Programs

Before concluding her address, Professor Sibiya called on her colleagues in the delegation to briefly share their roles in ensuring that the discussions at the summit translated into lasting, actionable outcomes. Each speaker outlined their commitment to turning these collaborative dreams into tangible initiatives that would affect not only the students at MUT and CSUS but the broader global community as well.

“Let us rise together,” Professor Sibiya urged, leaving a lasting impression on everyone present.

In this landmark visit, Professor Sibiya not only elevated the profile of MUT but also highlighted the crucial role that higher education must play in shaping a future where global collaboration and local impact work hand in hand. As she concluded her speech, it was clear that MUT, under her leadership, was poised to lead the charge in creating a more connected, inclusive, and innovative global education system. The world, indeed, was watching—and Professor Sibiya’s vision promised that MUT would not only be part of the conversation but help define it.

CHAMPIONING THE SPIRIT OF PERSEVERANCE AND SUPPORTING ONE ANOTHER AS WE STRIVE FOR A BRIGHTER FUTURE



From left, Dr Thobeka Makhathini, and Zama Sishi, both from MUT; Erika Witt, Director, Southern University at New Orleans Museum of Arts (SUNOMA); Professor Nokuthula Sibiyi, MUT Vice-Chancellor and Principal; Mbali Mkhize, also from MUT, and Dr Kenneth Williams, Director: Cyber Security, SUNO

Two institutions, one along the Indian Ocean and another along the Atlantic Ocean, came together for a summit unbeknown of their shared journey of resilience. Let us explore Highlights from Mangosuthu University of Technology (MUT) and Southern University at New Orleans (SUNO).

THE BIRTH OF SUNO: A LEGACY OF COURAGE

The story of Southern University of New Orleans begins in the 1940s when a group of local leaders, led by attorney AP Tureaud, rose against the oppressive forces of racial discrimination in education. Their relentless advocacy paid off in 1956, when the Louisiana Legislature established SUNO, paving the way for African American students who had faced barriers to higher education for far too long.

In 1959, SUNO opened its doors with just over 160 students. Under the visionary stewardship of Dr. Felton G. Clark, the university began to flourish. Despite its modest beginnings and ongoing financial challenges, SUNO became a beacon of hope in the New Orleans community, with Dr Clark guiding its growth toward academic excellence.

MUT'S VISION: EMPOWERMENT THROUGH EDUCATION

Meanwhile, across the ocean, the Mangosuthu Technikon was born in 1979 from the steadfast vision of Chief Mangosuthu Buthelezi, the then Chief Minister of the KwaZulu Homeland, now known as the KwaZulu-Natal province in post-apartheid South Africa. In a time of deep segregation and inequality, he recognised the vital need for educational opportunities for black South Africans who did not have a higher education institution offering technological qualifications. Starting with just 15 students, Mangosuthu Technikon, now known as Mangosuthu University of Technology (MUT), after it was promulgated

in 2007 as a university of technology, has emerged as a vital force for empowerment and growth. Like Dr Clark's leadership at SUNO, Chief Buthelezi's commitment to MUT was instrumental in navigating the challenges of its early years, ensuring its survival and eventual success amidst the harsh realities of apartheid. He moved from donor to donor, resulting in a conglomerate of companies that supplemented the initial seed funding provided by Sir Harry Oppenheimer.

RESILIENCE IN THE FACE OF ADVERSITY



Dr James H Ammons, Chancellor, SUNO

Both SUNO and MUT faced overwhelming challenges that would have discouraged many institutions. For SUNO, Hurricane Katrina in 2005 threatened its existence as the storm-ravaged New Orleans. Yet, in true resilient spirit, SUNO rose from the devastation, not just rebuilding physically but also rejuvenating the community's spirit. Under Chancellor Dr Victor Ukpolo, the university emerged stronger than ever, garnering recognition as one of the top Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) by U.S. News & World Report in 2016. Today, the current Chancellor of Southern University at New Orleans (SUNO) Dr. James H. Ammons, Jr. who was appointed to this position on January 8, 2021, after serving as the Executive Vice President and Chief Academic Officer of the Southern University System. With a distinguished career in higher education, Dr Ammons has previously worked at FAMU, where MUT also has a partnership agreement.

At MUT, Professor Sibiya, the first female Vice-Chancellor in the university's history, draws inspiration from SUNO's recovery story. She is committed to guiding MUT toward

academic excellence while addressing the challenges stemming from historical injustices and modern-day constraints. Professor Sibiya believes in the transformative power of education, and just as SUNO overcame turmoil, she is determined that MUT will also thrive.

Through their shared histories, both MUT and SUNO exemplify the strength found in community, determination, and a commitment to education despite adversities. As these institutions continue to evolve, they serve as powerful reminders of what can be achieved when resilience meets vision.

This year, both these institutions will embark on a collaborative journey marking a pivotal moment of reflection of how they got to be where they are and how they could give their founding fathers who have deeply rested in peace a resurrection that they will make their collaboration a success.

TRANSFORMATIVE APPROACHES TO FOOD SECURITY: PROFESSOR MKHIZE'S ADVOCACY FOR SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURAL PRACTICES AT THE FAO WORKSHOP IN ROME



Professor Xolile Mkhize

In an era marked by global challenges such as food insecurity and malnutrition, the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) of the United Nations hosted a pivotal workshop in Rome, convening 30 esteemed experts to address these pressing issues. Among the notable participants was Professor Xolile Mkhize, a senior lecturer at Mangosuthu University of Technology and a prominent advocate for sustainable agriculture, leading the MUT SDG 2 initiative aimed at eradicating hunger. Professor Mkhize's participation underscores the importance of local voices in global discussions, particularly as she brings a wealth of experience from her upbringing in Umlazi Township's BB's Section, not too far from MUT.

The workshop's theme, "Leveraging Local and Traditional Food Markets (LTFMs) and Public Food Procurement to Improve the Availability of Nutritious Food," resonated deeply with Professor Mkhize's professional objectives and personal commitments. Reflecting on her motivations, she stated, "This workshop represented more than a professional obligation; it encapsulated a cause I am deeply passionate about, influenced by my experiences in South Africa."

The objectives of the workshop included synthesising current evidence on the roles of LTFMs and public food procurement in enhancing the availability and accessibility of nutritious food, as well as identifying the constraints that inhibit their efficient operation. Participants also explored how these frameworks could create opportunities for scaling up among small-scale supply chain actors and small to medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in supplying nutritious food. Additionally, discussions incorporated the socio-economic and environmental dimensions necessary for sustainable food systems.

Professor Mkhize's session focused on the struggles faced by small-scale producers, particularly in terms of access to resources and technology. "Closing these gaps is essential to ensure future food resilience," she asserted. The workshop fostered a collaborative environment in which academics, policymakers, and representatives from various sectors exchanged insights on globalisation, urbanisation, and their implications for food systems. The gathering fostered a collective understanding that addressing food insecurity requires urgent and unified action across diverse cultural contexts.

As the workshop ended, the atmosphere was imbued with optimism, emphasising the pivotal role of local and traditional food systems in building sustainable futures. Walking through the historic streets of Rome after the workshop, Professor Mkhize articulated her commitment to returning to South Africa with innovative strategies to support local producers. "Every effort toward ending hunger contributes to a more equitable world," she affirmed.

Professor Mkhize's influence extends beyond academia, as she has been sought after by leading corporations like Unilever and Nestlé and has earned respect within governmental spheres for her expertise in food and nutrition policy. Her recent panel participation, alongside prominent figures such as Jason Clay from World Wildlife Fund and Roberta Bove from GAIN, highlighted her focus on improving access to finance for small-scale supply chain actors and SMEs.

Dr Anette Mienie, currently serving as DVC: Research, Innovation and Engagements has played a crucial role in supporting Professor Mkhize's academic journey, particularly during her early years as a lecturer. The collaborative efforts of the research directorate and the deans in the Faculty of Applied Health Sciences have been instrumental in fostering such impactful initiatives.

BREAKING GROUND: ROPING IN ACADEMIA IN INTERNATIONAL TRAVEL



Dr Thobeka Makhathini

In an era where academics are often overwhelmed with teaching, research, and administrative responsibilities, Professor Sibiyi decided to include an academic representative in the delegation to the USA. Among the delegation members was Dr Thobeka Makhathini, a wastewater management and climate change researcher and a departmental representative for Work-Integrated Learning (WIL). This inclusion was noteworthy as it marked the first time an academic was intentionally part of such a delegation. The Vice-Chancellor decided to enhance meaningful international engagement and highlight the importance of academic contributions in addressing global challenges like climate change.

Dr Makhathini's contributions during the visit were invaluable. At Sacramento State University and Southern University at New Orleans, she exchanged ideas with faculty and students, showcasing MUT's innovative climate research and the importance of integrating climate change education across academic disciplines, particularly in engineering. Her discussions emphasized preparing students for the professional challenges ahead.

As a champion for Women in Climate Change, she inspired young women to pursue STEM careers, highlighting the need for diverse voices in tackling climate challenges. Dr. Makhathini also focused on Work-Integrated Learning (WIL), connecting MUT students with global internship opportunities. Her meetings with academic and corporate representatives explored potential collaborations aimed at providing MUT students with hands-on experience in the United States' environmental sector.

Moreover, her interactions with COSAS representatives at both universities promoted student leadership in social justice and sustainability. Dr Makhathini's role was pivotal in shaping networks that promise to benefit her department, the university, and the broader fight against climate change, making her participation in the delegation a significant stride towards a sustainable future. "Next time, I will get another academic, and I hope that from this visit you can now start building your own networks and be productive, uyalwazi udaba, take it from your sisters here who make the best out of these delegations for the good of the University", said Professor Sibiyi upon arrival back in SA.

A NEW DAWN FOR VOLUNTEERISM AT MUT: UNLEASHING THE POWER OF STUDENT ENGAGEMENT



Professor Nokuthula Sibiyi and Nicole Richards, committing to a volunteer development programme

In a vibrant meeting room at the Congress of South African Students (COSAS) in Berkley, San Francisco, a wave of optimism swept through the gathering. The Vice Chancellor's delegation met with enthusiastic representatives from COSAS, marking the inception of a transformative initiative that aims to weave a culture of volunteerism deeply into the fabric of the MUT campus. With a shared vision for social responsibility and community engagement, these officials stood unified, ready to inspire students and staff alike.

Professor Nokuthula Sibiyi said, "I envision a profound transformation in how we nurture a spirit of volunteerism among our students and staff," declared one delegate passionately. "If we can achieve this, we will pave the way for a dynamic resource mobilisation strategy led by our community. The model championed by COSAS is beautifully simple: rally people to a greater cause. Let us steer our university towards this noble goal."

Zama Sishi, director of stakeholder relations management at MarComms, expressed her excitement: "This meeting has ignited a fire within me! We possess powerful tools—our social media platforms and MUT Radio—to amplify the Vice-Chancellor's inspiring vision. Just imagine a radio broadcast that plays the latest hits and celebrates the spirit of giving! We have an opportunity to spark a movement."

Motivated by the COSAS representatives, MarComms senior director Mbali Mkhize has crafted a compelling plan for the Radio executive to bring to life. This plan aims to spotlight the unsung heroes of volunteerism among our students, highlight upcoming initiatives, and passionately promote the importance of giving back to our community. Through dynamic segments, students won't just hear about volunteering opportunities; they'll connect with the incredible stories of peers making a meaningful impact.

"Education is the Most Powerful weapon which you can use to change the world."

Nelson Mandela



FROM DREAMS TO REALITY: BANDILE'S CULINARY JOURNEY IGNITED BY AWETHU'S INSPIRING MENTORSHIP AT MUT RADIO



Bandile Madinane

In the vibrant heart of MUT Radio, a remarkable journey of self-discovery began, ignited by the passion of a visionary leader and fuelled by the determination of an aspiring chef. Awethu Kelese, the Programmes Radio Manager for MUT Radio, was not just a figure behind the microphone but a beacon of inspiration for those around him. His mission? To empower students to believe in their potential and chase their dreams with unrelenting fervour.

Among the many students Awethu mentored was Bandile 'BANDZIVA' Madinane, a spirited second-year accounting student whose life was about to take an unexpected turn. With her bright smile and infectious enthusiasm, Bandile was already making waves as the weekend breakfast show presenter on MUT Radio. However, beneath her academic exterior lay a hidden passion—cooking, a love that had simmered quietly since her culinary school days a decade ago.

One day, as if the universe were aligning in her favour, Bandile stumbled upon the Koo Colour Your Plate competition on SABC 2. A wave of excitement washed over her. As the only contestant from Durban, she knew this was her chance to reignite a long-lost passion. With Awethu's encouragement ringing in her ears, reminding her that it's never too late to pursue one's dreams, Bandile dared to step outside her comfort zone.

The competition was fierce, filled with vibrant personalities and culinary talent, but Bandile's heart burned brighter than the flames of her stove. She felt a rush of joy as she immersed herself in the process of creating dazzling dishes that showcased her unique flair for flavour. "It's been a chance to reconnect with my passion for cooking and push myself beyond my limits," she exclaimed, reflecting on the profound journey she undertook.

Though she did not walk away with the grand prize, finishing as the first runner-up, Bandile emerged a true winner. With a R30,000 cash prize in hand, she recognized that the real treasure lay in the rekindled fire of her culinary passion. She had set out to rediscover herself and, against all odds, she did just that. The competition transformed into a celebration of resilience, a testament to the idea that obstacles are merely stepping stones to greatness.

Bandile's triumph echoed far beyond her personal achievements; it served as an inspiring reminder to her community and peers. Her journey illustrated the power of courage—the courage to take risks, to embrace forgotten dreams, and to continue pushing the boundaries of what one believes they can achieve. As she shared her story, the message was clear: no matter the time it takes or the challenges that arise, dreams are worth pursuing.

Awethu Kelese watched proudly as Bandile, a student he had guided, blossomed into a symbol of hope for others. His influence as a mentor was woven into the fabric of her success, showcasing that academic achievements were just one facet of a student's journey. Under his leadership, students like Bandile learned to believe in themselves and unearth their hidden talents.

Together, they inspired a wave of ambition—a movement among the youth of Durban to pursue their passions and dreams, no matter how daunting the road may seem. The story of Awethu and Bandile is not just a tale of ambition and mentorship; it's a vibrant tapestry of dreams reignited, lives transformed, and the unquenchable spirit of growth that defines them both.

FROM ESHOWE TO THE GLOBAL ENERGY SUMMIT, A BEACON OF INNOVATION AND LEADERSHIP



Middle, Sicelo Xulu receiving the International Thought Leader Award from Dr Victor Ibeanusi, left

In a landmark recognition of South African leadership in the global energy transition, Sicelo Xulu has been appointed to the board of the prestigious EnergyWaterFoodClimate (EWFC) Nexus Summit. This global platform, founded by Dr. Victor Ibeanusi in Florida, USA, brings together thought leaders committed to sustainable development and climate resilience.

Xulu's journey is one of extraordinary transformation, from the rural classrooms of uBambiswano Secondary School in Eshowe, KwaZulu-Natal, to the forefront of international energy policy. A proud alumnus of Mangosuthu University of Technology (MUT), where he earned his National Diploma in Electrical Engineering in 1996, Xulu credits the institution for laying the foundation of his career. "MUT gave me direction and opportunity. It was a launchpad for everything that followed," he says.

His professional journey began at Eskom in 1994, where he gained deep insights into South Africa's energy systems. Rising through the ranks, Xulu became Managing Director of City Power in Johannesburg, where he led transformative projects that electrified over 100,000 homes and introduced more than 150,000 smart meters, ushering in a new era of energy efficiency and access.

Xulu's leadership style is marked by innovation, inclusivity, and a deep commitment to social impact. Under his guidance, City Power implemented forward-thinking policies and community-driven initiatives that not only modernized infrastructure but also empowered

underserved communities. His work has consistently bridged the gap between technical excellence and human development.

Currently, Xulu serves as Chairperson of the South African National Energy Development Institute (SANEDI) and Head of the Result Management Office at the Department of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs (COGTA). In these roles, he continues to champion sustainable energy policies, infrastructure reform, and climate resilience.

In 2024, Xulu was named the Nexus International Thought Leader, a title that reflects his influence in shaping global energy discourse. He remains closely connected to MUT, where he is spearheading the vision for a Climate Change Centre—a multidisciplinary hub focused on renewable energy, climate adaptation, and mentorship for young engineers from disadvantaged backgrounds.

"Our youth must be equipped to lead tomorrow's energy revolution," Xulu emphasizes. His vision is not only technical but deeply human: to create a future where energy access drives education, health, and economic opportunity.

Xulu's appointment to the Nexus Global Board is more than a personal achievement—it is a beacon of what is possible when education, leadership, and purpose converge. His story continues to inspire a new generation of African innovators committed to building a just, sustainable, and inclusive energy future.

MUT LECTURER ACHIEVES RARE MATHEMATICAL FEAT WITH PHD IN APPLIED MATHEMATICS

a new mathematical theorem connecting these movements, known as “local times,” to market behaviours—adding a significant contribution to the field of stochastic processes.

Research That Responds to Real-World Failures

“Traditional models often fail to capture the true complexity of financial systems,” Dr Hove explained. “This shortcoming played a key role in the 2008 financial crisis. My research uses methods that don’t rely on assumptions that may not hold in real-world conditions.”

Supervised by Professor Rafal Łochowski, Dr Howe used Föllmer’s pathwise Itô calculus and a technique known as a truncated variation to illustrate when and how local time occurs along various price paths. Among his most intriguing results was the construction of a path inspired by the Cantor set—one that has quadratic variation but lacks local time. He then mathematically modified it to introduce local time, demonstrating the nuanced behaviour of price paths under different conditions.

Innovation Beyond the Textbook

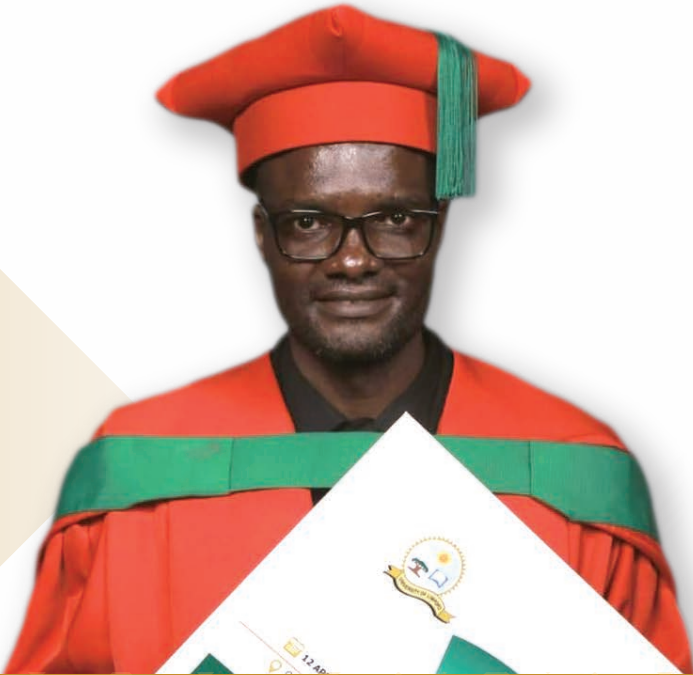
Dr Hove also explored Peano curves—mathematical constructs that fill 2D space in complex ways—and created an algorithm to calculate how often these curves cross specified levels. This helped define the mathematical conditions required for local time to be present, contributing further to our understanding of price path dynamics.

The PhD project was supported under the SA–UK University Staff Development Programme (USDP), which funds promising researchers across South African institutions. “I was already doing independent research in Financial Mathematics when the opportunity arose,” said Dr Howe. “The topic was a perfect match for my interests, and the environment was ideal for deep academic exploration.”

A Milestone for MUT and Future Scholars

Dr Hove officially graduated on 12 April 2025, and his achievement serves as an inspiration to both students and colleagues. It reinforces MUT’s commitment to fostering research excellence and addressing complex, real-world challenges through innovation and academic rigour.

As the newest member of MUT’s small but growing group of PhD holders in Mathematics, Dr. Hove’s work underscores the vital role of higher education in reshaping critical sectors, such as finance, through cutting-edge research. We extend our heartfelt congratulations to Dr Darlington Hove on this outstanding accomplishment!



Dr Darlington Hove

Mangosuthu University of Technology (MUT) is proud to celebrate a remarkable academic achievement by one of its own. Dr Darlington Hove, a Lecturer in the Department of Mathematical Sciences, has joined an elite group of scholars after being awarded a PhD in Applied Mathematics from the University of Limpopo.

Dr Hove’s accomplishment is especially significant in a discipline often regarded as one of the most challenging in academia. With only three Mathematics PhD holders currently active at MUT—and two others recently retired—Dr Hove’s success brings both prestige and momentum to the University’s growing research footprint.

A Thesis That Breaks New Ground

Dr Hove’s doctoral thesis, “Local times of deterministic paths and model-free càdlàg price paths and their application to mathematical finance”, explores highly specialised concepts in the field of quantitative finance. His research examines how financial markets can be analysed without relying on traditional financial models, such as the widely recognised Black-Scholes-Merton framework.

By focusing on “càdlàg” paths—a French term for functions that are right-continuous with left-hand limits—Dr. Hove applied a model-free approach to study how often security prices cross certain levels. This led to the development of

MUT PROFESSIONALS SELECTED FOR PRESTIGIOUS INTERNATIONAL TRAINING IN BERLIN



Zama Sishi, seated, and Mbali Mkhize

Mangosuthu University of Technology (MUT) continues to raise the bar in higher education innovation and global collaboration. In a significant milestone for the institution, Mbali Mkhize, Senior Director of Marketing and Communications, and Zama Sishi, Director for Stakeholder Engagement, have been selected—alongside Dr Carlien Jooste, Director for Internationalisation at Sefako Makgatho Health Sciences University (SMU)—to lead a groundbreaking international training project in Berlin, Germany. Training has started in South Africa where they have E-met their colleagues for this 18-month training programme which is hybrid.

The trio's successful proposal secured a coveted spot in the National Multiplication Training (NMT) programme, part of the Dialogue on Innovative Higher Education Strategies (DIES) initiative, jointly coordinated by the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD) and the German Rectors' Conference (HRK), and funded by Germany's Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ).

Out of many international applicants, only 30 participants from Africa, Latin America, and Asia were

selected—making this achievement especially momentous for two Historically Disadvantaged Institutions (HDIs) in South Africa. Together, the team will train over 60 professional staff from public universities across the country, reinforcing the value and capability rooted within South Africa's HDIs.

Since 2017, the University of Potsdam has coordinated the NMTs, which are designed to empower DIES alumni to multiply knowledge and leadership in their home countries. The project, aptly named "Building Bridges: Developing Internationalisation Skills for Professional Staff in Universities," aligns perfectly with MUT's Vision 2030, which seeks to position the university as a globally respected institution of higher learning.

Mkhize, a DAAD-DIES alumna, 2023, shared the ambitious objectives of the training which seeks to build capacity and breaking silos among those involved in the internationalisation agenda at universities.

"We aim to educate professional administrative staff on internationalisation concepts and how they can become champions of this agenda within their departments," she

explained. “Our goal is to break silos, encourage integrated planning across university functions, and support the implementation of South Africa’s National Policy Framework for Internationalisation in Higher Education.”

She added that these goals reflect MUT’s ongoing commitment to human capital development in administration, as championed by previous initiatives like the Empowered Administrators Conference.

Dr Jooste, the project leader and seasoned internationalisation strategist, outlined the intended outcomes for participants as entailing creating a knowledge ecosystem. “The participants will learn to define and apply internationalisation within their departments, report on their activities as required by national policy, and handle administrative processes relating to international staff and students with confidence.” She emphasised the importance of disseminating lessons learned from the training, saying, “This project will contribute to the creation of a global knowledge ecosystem within South Africa’s higher education landscape.”

We are training the nation with the training set to benefit professional staff from 13 public universities, including:

- Sefako Makgatho Health Sciences University
- Mangosuthu University of Technology
- University of Venda
- Walter Sisulu University
- University of Fort Hare
- Nelson Mandela University
- Central University of Technology
- Sol Plaatje University
- Tshwane University of Technology

- Vaal University of Technology
- University of Limpopo
- University of Zululand
- University of Mpumalanga

Zama Sishi explained that the Curriculum is all about Innovation in Practice and explained how it will guide participants through critical content areas, and highlighted some of the programme milestones saying, “We’ll begin with deconstructing the concept of internationalisation—its history, relevance in the African context, and role in modern universities. We’ll explore intercultural competencies, communication strategies, and marketing for international offices, along with insights into global rankings and international student recruitment.”

The programme will conclude with participant-led “Change Projects”, where attendees present actionable ideas for advancing internationalisation in their home institutions. These sessions will include engagement with line managers to ensure institutional support and continuity.

This is not just another international training initiative—it is a First-of-Its-Kind Project. It is the first NMT project in South Africa led by HDIs, and it reflects the growing leadership of institutions like MUT and SMU in shaping higher education policy and practice nationally and globally.

“We are truly humbled,” said Mkhize. “This project is a symbol of what can be achieved when visionary leadership, strategic partnerships, and a commitment to transformation come together.”

Professor Nokuthula Sibiyi, MUT, Vice-Chancellor and Principal, also known as the Chief Strategist, said “Congratulations to our colleagues on this international recognition. We look forward to seeing the impact of this initiative echo across the higher education landscape of South Africa and beyond!”

THE CASE OF TWO CONFERENCES, CONCEPTUALIZED BY TWO MUT SENIOR DIRECTORS, NOW EARNING INTERNATIONAL RECOGNITION



Mbali Mkhize, Senior Director: Marketing and Communications, and EAC Founder



Dr Manyane Makua, Senior director :TLDC and focus conference founder

MUT's two senior director, Dr Manyane Makua, Teaching & learning Development Centre and Ms Mbali Mkhize, Marketing and Communications have for more than a decade convened conferences that have been changemakers in higher education. One conference, The Focus Conference targeting academia and the

Empowered Administrators Conference, targeting office professionals in academia, corporate world, State-owned-Entities and other sectors. Both these conferences have been attuned to changes taking place in academia in the world and this year really digs deep into global technological transformations currently unfolding.

EAC
Empowered Administrators Conference



STARTING OFF WITH THE FOCUS CONFERENCE, A TRAILBLAZING MOMENT: THE 12TH FOCUS CONFERENCE AT MUT



The team that has been driving the Focus Conference over years. From left, Cebo Nyondo, Dr Phiwayinkosi Gumede, Ntombikhona Nene, Mandla Mhlongo, Dr Manyane Makua, and Mashango Sithole

In the ever-shifting terrain of higher education—where artificial intelligence reshapes classrooms, global connections redefine pedagogy, and inclusivity is no longer optional—the 12th Focus Conference stands as a bold testament to transformation. Proudly hosted by Mangosuthu University of Technology (MUT) in Durban, South Africa, this year's Focus Conference does more than convene minds—it repositions MUT as a national and international thought leader in the future of education.

This is not just another academic gathering. The Focus Conference has become a trailblazing event that signals a new era for MUT, placing the university on the global academic map. With a growing reputation for tackling the real challenges facing higher education today, the conference is quickly becoming a must-attend summit for innovators, educators, and thought leaders from South Africa and beyond.

At the helm of this visionary movement is Dr Manyane Makua, whose leadership has elevated the Focus Conference from a respected forum into a catalyst for global academic transformation. Surrounded by a dedicated and passionate team, Dr Makua has pushed the boundaries of what the conference can achieve—curating themes that reflect the urgency of change and fostering a spirit of collaboration that transcends disciplines and borders.

This year's theme—"Innovation, Digital Equity and Global Collaboration in Higher Education"—captures the essence of what makes the Focus Conference so relevant and revolutionary.

Under Dr Makua's guidance, the conference provides a platform for urgent conversations on:

- Artificial intelligence and its role in assessment and teaching
- Equitable access to technology in diverse learning environments
- Cross-border collaborations that spark innovation
- Reimagining curricula to prepare students for a digitized, interconnected world.

With sub-themes spanning everything from virtual reality in pedagogy to internationalising curricula, the conference invites delegates to not only reflect but to act—to share research, present bold ideas, and forge new alliances. It is this spirit of forward-thinking and global connectivity that makes the Focus Conference a beacon for educational transformation.

But it is more than ideas being shared—it's a celebration of African ingenuity and global relevance. As a university rooted in community advancement and academic excellence, MUT's role as host demonstrates that solutions to global challenges can, and do, emerge from local innovation.

From fostering cross-cultural understanding to developing globally competent graduates, the conference promises to shape the future of education—not in theory, but in real, actionable ways. It is a space where ideas flourish and networks are built, all under the warm Durban sun and the shared vision of a better, more equitable educational landscape.

THIS IS MORE THAN A CONFERENCE. THIS IS MUT'S MOMENT TO LEAD, AND THE WORLD IS PAYING ATTENTION.



Some of the EAC organising team. From left, Sthembile Ndlovu, Zama Sishi, Mbali Mkhize, Nganele Dube, Ayanda Bulose, and Bheki Hlophe

The Empowered Administrators Conference conceptualized by Mbali Mkhize assisted by the founding team, Zama Sishi, director: Stakeholder Relations, Bheki Hlophe, Media Relations Officer and Jay Roopsunker, website officer is now in its 13th year. Mbali Mkhize said, “the Empowered Administrators Conference was born out of a vision to elevate the role of office professionals, shifting perceptions and unlocking potential in one of the most critical engines of organisational success. We began with a sharp focus on customer centricity, understanding that service excellence was the bedrock of professional value. As the workplace evolved, so did we. We expanded our mission to sharpen technology skills, enabling administrators to embrace digital tools that enhance efficiency and communication. From mastering productivity platforms to developing an agile mindset, our delegates became indispensable, tech-savvy assets in their workplaces.”

In recent years, the EAC focused on the Fourth Industrial Revolution, a shift that redefined the skills landscape, tackling automation, digital transformation, and the reshaping of administrative functions. The 13th conference aims to scaffold office professionals’ skills as we enter a new frontier: Artificial Intelligence. AI is no longer a distant concept; it is here and transforming how we work. This year, we focus on helping office professionals adapt to AI, embrace it, and make it work for them. Whether using AI tools to streamline workflows, improve decision-making, or enhance creativity, the future belongs to those who are ready to lead with human and artificial intelligence.

Zama Sishi said, “Looking ahead to EAC 2025, we are charting a new path. With the emergence of AI, there’s understandable trepidation in our profession. However, we are committed to equipping you with the tools and knowledge necessary to harness the power of AI as a supportive ally in your work. We’ve secured some of the best speakers who will share tested insights from various sectors, enabling you to advance confidently into the future”, supported by Bheki Hlophe who said: The media has amplified the EAC’s impact, turning powerful stories into national conversations. Through direct marketing and focused PR, we’ve turned the spotlight on administrators, proving they’re not behind the scenes, but at the heart of innovation whereas Jay Roopsunker said, “Online communications have been the lifeline of the EAC, expanding our digital footprint, streamlining registrations, and connecting a community of professionals beyond borders. Through strategic content and tech platforms, we’ve turned clicks into connections and curiosity into community.

The EAC support team from MarComms believed that “Success is in the follow-up. By staying consistent, communicating clearly, and always following through, we’ve ensured that every detail of the EAC reflects excellence—and that no delegate is left behind on their journey to empowerment.”

MUT SECURES TWO PRESTIGIOUS BRICS RESEARCH GRANTS



Dr Anette Mienie, Director: Research

Professor Paul Musonge, Research Professor in the Faculty of Engineering at Mangosuthu University of Technology (MUT), has been awarded two highly competitive BRICS Research Grants for the 2024–2026 funding cycle. The grants, each valued at R900,000, have been awarded by the National Research Foundation (NRF) to support international collaborative research across BRICS nations.

The first funded project, titled “Sustainable Biomass Valorization within the Water-Food-Energy Nexus: A Circular Economy Approach for Resource Efficiency in a Changing Climate”, brings together a robust international team of researchers from South Africa, Brazil, China, and Russia. South Africa’s participating institutions include MUT, the University of the Witwatersrand (WITS), University of Johannesburg (UJ), Cape Peninsula University of Technology (CPUT), and the University of the Western Cape (UWC), with uMngeni-uThukela Water serving as the industrial partner. Collaborating institutions abroad include five universities from Brazil, three from China, and one from Russia. Grant Reference: BRIC231102160232.

The second project, “Assessing Coastal Ecosystems’ Vulnerability for the Purpose of Adapting Governance

Nature Management,” focuses on environmental governance and coastal ecosystem resilience. This international partnership includes researchers from South Africa, Brazil, and Russia, with South African collaborators representing MUT, Durban University of Technology (DUT), and Izovutha Pty Ltd as the industrial partner. International collaborators include the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro (Brazil) and the A.O. Kovalevsky Institute of Biology of the Southern Seas of RAS (Russia). The full team of investigators convened in Brazil in December 2024 and is set to meet again in South Africa in August 2025. Grant Reference: BRIC231115163892.

These projects represent a significant milestone for MUT’s growing research footprint and its commitment to addressing global challenges through innovation and collaboration. It is anticipated that both projects will produce notable research outputs by the end of 2026, further enhancing the university’s reputation in sustainability, environmental governance, and applied engineering research.

“This recognition is not only a testament to the strength of our research community but also a signal of MUT’s rising contribution to international scholarship,” said Professor. Musonge.

MUT SCHOLAR INVITED TO THE U.S. UNDER THE FULBRIGHT PROGRAMME TO ADVANCE SUSTAINABLE URBAN DEVELOPMENT



Dr Mabongi Mvuyana

In a significant development elucidating the expanding global presence of Mangosuthu University of Technology (MUT), Dr Mabongi Mvuyana, a Senior Lecturer in the Department of Public Management, has been distinguished with the prestigious Fulbright Visiting Scholar Fellowship. Dr Mvuyana commenced her seven-month research tenure, from June 1, which will end on December 31, 2025, at the University of Maryland, where she will collaborate with the Colvin Institute of Real Estate Development within the School of Architecture, Planning, Preservation, and Real Estate Development.

Dr Mvuyana's selection resulted from a rigorous national vetting process conducted by the US Embassy in South Africa in collaboration with the Fulbright Foreign Scholarship Board. As an esteemed representative of South Africa, Dr Mvuyana joins a select group of scholars recognised for their exceptional academic accomplishments, innovative research proposals, and commitment to developmental objectives.

Her research initiative, titled “Building Sustainable Cities Through Establishing Comprehensive Housing Plans,” is intricately aligned with Sustainable Development Goal 11, which advocates for inclusive, safe, resilient, and sustainable urban environments. The focus of her work is to construct a holistic, integrated housing framework that addresses the multifaceted challenges of human settlement in South Africa, while promoting social equity, enhancing urban planning efficacy, and advancing real estate development.

Throughout her tenure in the United States, Dr Mvuyana will conduct a comparative analysis of housing policies in both the U.S. and South Africa, explore data-driven urban planning methodologies, and engage in collaboration with leading scholars and policy practitioners. Furthermore, she will partake in academic symposiums and contribute to the development of curricula at the University of Maryland.

The implications of this fellowship extend beyond Dr Mvuyana's individual professional trajectory; it represents a transformative opportunity for MUT. Her prospective engagements are expected to facilitate future collaborations, joint scholarly publications, and access to international research funding. Importantly, her scholarly contributions are poised to have a profound influence on curriculum innovation in the domains of Public Administration and Human Settlements at MUT, while concurrently fostering transformative practices in urban development throughout South Africa.

“This opportunity has deepened my commitment to research that transforms society,” Dr Mvuyana articulated. “It is an honour to represent MUT and South Africa on this global stage, and I am resolute in my commitment to ensuring that the outcomes of this work benefit our institution, our communities, and the overarching objective of fostering urban environments that serve all citizens effectively.”

Dr Mvuyana expressed profound gratitude to MUT for its continued support and encouragement. “MUT's steadfast dedication to research excellence has been instrumental in making this achievement possible. I carry forward the spirit of our institution — bold, forward-thinking, and dedicated to fostering meaningful change.”

Her journey serves as an exemplary inspiration for fellow scholars, students, and communities, illustrating that when talent is cultivated with purpose and opportunity, it can effectuate transformative change on a global scale world.

FROM HUMBLE BEGINNINGS TO THE GLOBAL ENERGYWATERFOODCLIMATE NEXUS SUMMIT



Dr Titus Mathe

Dr Titus Zwanani Mathe, a trailblazer in South Africa's energy and engineering sectors, has been appointed to the board of the EnergyWaterFoodClimate (EWFC) Nexus Summit. This appointment recognizes his decades-long contribution to sustainable energy and his leadership in shaping Africa's clean energy transition.

An alumnus of Mangosuthu University of Technology (MUT), Dr Mathe began his academic journey with a National Diploma in Chemical Engineering.

He later earned a BSc from Oxford University (USA), a PhD from the University of Cape Town, and a Master's in Business Leadership from UNISA—building a formidable foundation in both technical and strategic disciplines.

Dr Mathe's career spans over 30 years, with key roles at Sappi Saiccor, SA Cyanamid, CSIR, and Eskom. At SANEDI, where he has served as CEO since 2022, he has led initiatives in clean fuels, hydrogen, smart grids, and renewable energy. His leadership has positioned SANEDI as a key player in South Africa's Just Energy Transition.

Notably, Dr. Mathe directed the Green Transport Programme for the 2010 FIFA World Cup and oversaw the development of South Africa's first CNG and bioethanol infrastructure for public transport. At Eskom, he led the New Build Programme for Medupi and Kusile power stations and developed the Eskom Research Roadmap.

As Executive Sponsor of the EnergyWaterFoodClimate Specialisation Centre at MUT, Dr Mathe is leading a five-year plan (2024–2029) that focuses on climate resilience, capacity building, smart infrastructure, and policy advocacy. “Academia is a vital incubator for innovation and talent development,” he says.

Dr Mathe's appointment to the Nexus Board underscores his vision for Africa as a leader in clean energy innovation. “My goal is to promote collaboration, shape policy, and mentor future leaders—especially through institutions like MUT that shaped who I am,” he affirms.

Despite his many accolades, Dr Mathe remains grounded in his roots and committed to mentorship. “Africa has the potential to lead in clean energy innovation,” he says. “My goal is to contribute to that journey by promoting collaboration, shaping policy, and mentoring future leaders—especially through institutions like Florida Agricultural & Mechanical University (FAMU) and MUT, an institution that shaped who I am.”

Known for his humility, strategic insight, and passion for innovation, Dr Mathe's appointment to the Nexus Global Board is a powerful affirmation of his lifelong mission: to drive meaningful change for communities, the continent, and the planet.



MUT

MANGOSUTHU
UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY

WWW.MUT.AC.ZA



shape and own the future