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Vice-Chancellor takes MUT to the global public health stage



Professor Sibiya, making a contribution as a panel evaluator at the International Conference on Public Health 2025

When Professor Nokuthula Sibiya, MUT Vice-Chancellor and Principal, received an invitation from the International Institute of Knowledge Management (TIKM), it marked a significant milestone in global recognition of her leadership in public health and research excellence. This invitation to serve as an Evaluation Panel Member at the 11th International Conference on Public Health (ICOPH 2025) represents a giant leap towards MUT's growing

international stature. An MoU signed between the two institutions on 17 March 2025 crafts the roadmap for this partnership.

The conference, held from 7-9 August 2025, in Bangkok, Thailand, brought together leading academics, practitioners, and policymakers from around the world under the theme "Redefining Public Health: Harnessing



MUT VC, Professor Nokuthula Sibiya, sixth from left, with some of the attendees and MUT staff

Innovation, Collaboration, and Equity for Resilient Public Health Systems." This ambitious theme calls for reimagining public health systems in response to global challenges, emphasising innovation in health technologies, cross-sector collaboration, and a renewed focus on equity principles that align perfectly with Professor Sibiya's research interest and MUT's institutional values.

In her distinguished role on the evaluation panel, Professor Sibiya reviewed academic presentations, provided expert feedback to international researchers, and helped maintain the scholarly integrity of this prestigious conference. Her

participation firmly positioned MUT on the global health discourse map, demonstrating the university's capacity to contribute meaningfully to international conversations about health system resilience and innovation.

"This international recognition is also a call to MUT staff and researchers, particularly those in health sciences, research, and innovation, to think globally and act boldly," Professor Sibiya emphasised. "I encourage our university research community to explore opportunities to present at international conferences, engage in interdisciplinary research, and contribute to building equitable and resilient health systems."

WOMEN'S MONTH

Faculty excellence recognised at International Forum



A proud VC! Professor Sibiya enjoying the crowning moment as her team gets awarded for their excellent research

The Faculty of Applied and Health Sciences has achieved remarkable international recognition following our participation in the International Conference on Public Health (ICOPH 2025) in Bangkok. Our carefully selected delegation of five experts presented groundbreaking research across critical areas, including non-communicable diseases, communicable diseases, maternal health, and computational chemistry.

Nokukhanya Thembane, who served as both coordinator and presenter, was honoured for her dual contributions in delegation coordination and innovative drug discovery research. The Department of Biomedical Sciences was particularly well-represented, with presentations spanning from antimicrobial resistance research by Siyabonga Hadebe to parasitology co-infection studies by Roxanne Pillay.

Dr Ayanda Magwenyane from the Analytical Chemistry department and Dr Ziningi Jaya from Biomedical Sciences also received formal acknowledgements for their valuable presentations, demonstrating the breadth and quality of MUT's health sciences research portfolio.

This international recognition validates our institution's commitment to addressing urgent global health challenges while building the research capacity that will serve our communities for years to come.

Our delegation gained critical insights into emerging trends, including India's SMARThealth Pregnancy app for managing anaemia and gestational diabetes, Liberia's successful dual HIV/Syphilis testing programs, and innovative approaches to medicinal plant research for novel drug development. These learnings will be integrated into MUT's curriculum, research agendas, and community health initiatives.

The conference emphasised the integration of AI and digital health tools in public health systems, areas where MUT is well-positioned to contribute. The networking opportunities have laid the groundwork for joint research projects, academic exchanges, and shared initiatives that will expand our global engagement footprint.

The success of MUT's participation in ICOPH 2025 demonstrates the power of effective coordination and institutional support. Nokukhanya Thembane, who served as delegation coordinator, managed all logistical aspects, including visa processing, flight arrangements, accommodation, and conference registration, ensuring our team could focus entirely on their research presentations and networking opportunities.

This successful trip reflects the collaborative effort across multiple university divisions. Dr Anette Mienie's Research, Innovation and Engagement (RIE) Office provided vital sponsorship and guidance, while departmental leadership

from Dr Nsele and Dr Qwabe supported their team members' participation. The Faculty of Applied and Health Sciences, under Acting Dean Professor Alfred Msoni, provided crucial academic backing.

Special recognition goes to Marketing and Communications, particularly Zama Sishi, who facilitated the MOU signing early in the year and followed up, providing all international relations and communication needs, helping to elevate MUT's international brand throughout the engagement. The seamless execution of this complex international engagement showcases MUT's growing capacity for global participation and sets a strong foundation for future international collaborations.



MUT delegation at the ICOPH2025, from left, siyabonga Radebe, Roxann Pillay, Dr Ziningi Jaya, Prof Sibiya, Nokukhanya Thembane, and Dr Ayanda Magwenyane



Proud moment, Professor Sibiya and Nokukhanya with their certificates and awards



Dileesha Lange, TIIKM International Relations Officer, with MUT VC and Principal, Professor Nokuthula Sibiya



Thumbs up from a satisfied conference delegates, Professor Sibiya is third from right

One University, two international projects: A day of global engagement and impact



Dr Colen Twaunde, Director of Academic Development at NUST, in the MUT Radio live studio

In a banner day for international collaboration, Professor Nokuthula Sibiyi, the Vice-Chancellor and Principal, emphasised the profound significance of generating immediate impact during her international engagements. “As a seasoned researcher, I always prioritise the research impact of every study. Every cent spent on internationalisation should yield meaningful outputs,” she stated, highlighting her commitment to the university’s strategic goals.

Professor Sibiyi also acknowledged the role played by Professor Marcus Ramogale, Deputy Vice-Chancellor for Teaching and Learning, who recommended to Teaching and Learning Development Centre (TLDC) an engagement with the Namibia University of Science and Technology (NUST). Despite being on leave, Professor Sibiyi felt compelled to meet the visiting team, expressing her admiration for the professionalism exhibited by the TLDC during their visit. “This gives me hope that we will engage in more activities with NUST in the future. I look forward to the TLDC team reciprocating this visit soon,” she added.

Coinciding with the visit, the Community Engagement and Development Centre (CEAD) hosted a successful Teams Masterclass, which attracted 46 participants, and was broadcast live on MUT Radio, especially for students and

academics who were in transit. Professor Sibiyi underscored the significance of this event, connecting it to her earlier visit to the USA. “It is essential to see tangible results from each meeting I make overseas, and this masterclass is a testament to those discussions,” she remarked, and thanked the Department of Marketing and Communications for channelling the appropriate projects to the relevant offices.

A cause particularly close to Professor Sibiyi’s heart is the volunteer development programme. Drawing from her experiences with volunteer initiatives in her church, Professor Sibiyi articulated the vital role of volunteers in facilitating community efforts, and enhancing social cohesion. “I fervently hope that MUT staff and students will embrace volunteerism, contributing meaningfully to our nation’s development and the goals outlined in the National Development Plan 2030,” Professor Sibiyi said. In reflecting on the day’s events, Professor Sibiyi remarked, “In just one day, I felt like I was experiencing engagements in both Namibia and San Francisco, USA. This demonstrates our growing internationalisation agenda, and reinforces our commitment to impactful global partnerships.”



From left, Ester Johannes, Dr Annelly Willemse, both from NUST, Awethu Kelese, Programmes Manager at MUT Radio; Mbali Mkhize, Senior Director, Marketing and Communications at MUT; and Dr Colen Tuaunde, Director of Academic Development at NUST



MUT SRC flying the MUT flat at the University Scholars Leadership Symposium, donned in African cultural attire

The Mangosuthu University of Technology (MUT) Student Representative Council (SRC) made a significant mark on the international stage by participating in the University Scholars Leadership Symposium (USLS) held in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, from August 5-8, 2025. This year's symposium, themed "Lead the Change," brought together hundreds of student leaders from universities worldwide to address global challenges and develop transformative leadership skills.

In its 13th year, the USLS has established itself as a premier platform for emerging leaders, designed to equip the next generation with the tools, confidence, and resources needed to tackle the world's most pressing issues. The symposium serves as more than just a conference—it's an immersive experience where student leaders engage with incredible speakers, heroes of hope and resilience, and like-minded peers from diverse cultural and academic backgrounds.

During the four-day symposium, MUT SRC delegates engaged in various activities designed to enhance their leadership capabilities. Interactive workshops focused on developing practical leadership skills, including strategic thinking, conflict resolution, and effective communication across cultural boundaries. Keynote presentations from global leaders provided delegates with real-world examples of transformative leadership, while structured networking sessions created opportunities to connect with student leaders from universities worldwide.

The delegates also participated in deep-dive discussions on contemporary challenges such as climate change, social inequality, technological disruption, and sustainable development. These sessions exposed MUT representatives to diverse global perspectives on issues that resonate both internationally and within the South African context.

One of the most valuable aspects of MUT SRC's participation was the opportunity to build international networks with fellow student leaders. The global perspective gained through interactions with peers from different countries and educational systems provides valuable insights that can be applied to local challenges within the South African higher education landscape.

The participating SRC members, including Mhlengi Ngubo, the President, will likely implement new approaches to student representation, community engagement, and problem-solving based on international best practices

observed during the symposium. The experience catalyses the development of more innovative and inclusive leadership strategies that can enhance student life and academic experiences at MUT.

MUT's participation in the University Scholars Leadership Symposium demonstrates the university's commitment to developing globally competent leaders who can contribute to local and international communities. As these student leaders return to campus, they bring enhanced leadership skills and a global perspective that enriches the university's academic and social environment.



MUT student leaders with acting Dean of Students, Dr Paulette Naidoo, middle, and Siphakamiso Madlala, Residence Superintendent, second from left