

Special Edition



Ubuntu Nexus

The spirit of collective humanity and interconnectedness

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND DEVELOPMENT (CEAD) DIRECTORATE

Mandela Month Edition – July 2025



**MUT MARKS MANDELA MONTH
WITH A SERIES OF COMMUNITY
INITIATIVES**

Theme: "It's still in our hands to combat poverty and
inequity"



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Message from the Editor-in-Chief

MUT has done it again! This year, the theme 'Education and Literacy, Shelter, Food and Nutrition, Sanitation, and Active Citizenship' provided us with a framework that resonates deeply with the mission of our University.

As an Institution of higher learning, we are entrusted with the responsibility of producing graduates who are not only skilled professionals, but also compassionate citizens who understand their role in shaping society. Mandela Month offered a timely reminder that education is not confined to lecture halls; it is equally about developing character, instilling values, and inspiring a lifelong commitment to service.

In partnership with external stakeholders, our University community carried out a total of 20 activities during this Mandela Month. These initiatives reflected the breadth of our commitment — from immediate humanitarian interventions, to long-term projects designed to create sustainable impact. Among the highlights were the launch of projects addressing substance and drug abuse, an issue that continues to challenge the health and well-being of Umlazi community; a green initiative aimed at raising awareness and fostering action around climate change, which represents one of the

most pressing challenges of our time; and the establishment of a book club at Ndukwenhle High School, a step towards promoting literacy and nurturing a love for learning among school learners. Each of these projects represents not only an intervention but also an investment in the future.



Professor Busisiwe Nkonki-Mandleni
Director: CEAD

What stood out most vividly throughout the month was the spirit of our students. They did not merely participate, but actively demonstrated leadership and innovation in a range of activities. Their energy and creativity affirmed that the values of social responsibility and active citizenship are alive within the next generation. In parallel, our academic staff and MUT professionals displayed relentless dedication, lending their knowledge, skills, and time to ensure

that the activities had real and lasting impact. This seamless collaboration between students, staff, and partners is perhaps the clearest expression of what Mandela himself envisioned when he called for unity in the service of humanity.

Mandela once reminded us: "There can be no greater gift than that of giving one's time and energy to help others without expecting anything in return." The efforts of our University community this month have been a living testament to this principle. In every activity and in every conversation, and in every effort to address social ills, we saw the embodiment of Mandela's vision.

Yet, as we celebrate these achievements, it is also important to acknowledge that Mandela Month is not an end. Rather, it is a catalyst — a call to embed service, compassion, and responsibility into the fabric of our daily lives. The true measure of our commitment lies not only in what we achieve in July, but in how we carry forward this spirit throughout the year.



Our challenge now is to ensure that the projects launched this month are sustained, that partnerships are deepened, and that the lessons learned translate into long-term impact.

As a University, we are committed to ensuring that our Mandela Month activities are not symbolic gestures, but building blocks of transformation. We see these initiatives as part of a broader vision: to be an Institution that produces graduates who are not only academically excellent, but also socially conscious; to be a community of scholars and professionals who engage meaningfully with society; and to be a catalyst for positive change in South Africa and beyond.

Mandela taught us that change is possible when ordinary people come together for an extraordinary purpose. This Mandela Month, MUT community lived out that truth. Let us now recommit ourselves to carrying his legacy forward, with courage, humility, and a renewed sense of purpose. May the example of service and unity we have seen guide us in the months and years ahead, ensuring that Mandela's dream of a better world remains not just a memory, but a living reality.

I am forever grateful to MUT staff and students, as well as the University management, for affording CEAD an opportunity to coordinate this important course of action that benefits both our immediate communities and the broader society. Your trust and support made it possible for us to bring together the collective energy, skills, and goodwill of our University in service of others.

**NELSON
ROLIHLAHLA
MANDELA**

**“It is in your
hands, to make
a better world
for all who live
in it.”**





Dr Mfanozelwe Shozi
Deputy-Director: CEAD

This marks the second consecutive year that I have had the privilege of coordinating Mandela Month activities. I am grateful to Professor Busisiwe Nkonki-Mandleni, the Director of CEAD, for entrusting me with this responsibility.

The mobilisation strategy was guided by the principle that programmes should be student-centred, community development-focused, and linked to the values of teaching, learning, and volunteerism. The common thread running through all Mandela Month activities was student volunteerism and giving back to the community. There was significant collaboration across all structures, comprising both internal and external partners.

Several highlights exemplified the spirit of cooperation and activism. The refurbishment of Mafukuzela Primary School, undertaken by Amazulu Football Club is one such example.

Ukhozi FM, Build It, and many other organisations also contributed to the Green Campus Initiative, the Denis Hurley provision of breakfast and lunch, Sports Day, Masterclasses, the MUT Library digital reading drive at Ndukwenhle, the Substance Abuse Awareness Programme, and the Biomedical Programme, which focused on sanitary pads and essential self-care items. Additionally, the "Data is More Than Numbers" initiative was successfully organised by the Directorate of Institutional Planning.

Some programmes, such as the Green Initiative and Sports Day, were inclusive of contract employees, including cleaners and security staff, alongside staff members and students. Overall, all programmes ran smoothly.

I was particularly pleased to see students volunteering in large numbers. We must also acknowledge MUT Radio for its role in promoting and broadcasting the Mandela Month programmes and activities.



MUT celebrates Mandela Month with community-focused initiatives

MUT marked Mandela Month with a range of community engagement activities designed to create lasting impact. On 1 July 2025, Professor Busisiwe Nkonki-Mandleni, Director of the Community Engagement and Development (CEAD) Directorate, reflected during a MUT Radio interview on the significance of Mandela Month, emphasising the importance of preserving Mandela's legacy through active community involvement, particularly among the youth.

Speaking during the interview, Professor Nkonki-Mandleni emphasised the value of the month: "As South Africans, it is very important for us to celebrate this month. Every year during July, we do exactly what Mandela wanted us to do, to live according to the values that he held very high. And make sure that we teach our communities about those values."



Professor Nkonki-Mandleni highlighted the critical role of young people in carrying forward Mandela's vision, noting that it was essential to "educate our youth about the importance of Mandela Month." Professor Nkonki-Mandleni outlined the wide-ranging initiatives planned by CEAD, which span the entire month of July. "We have encouraged each and every staff member and student to come on board and indicate activities they would love to do in reaching out to our communities, whether it is the University community, or the external communities," she said. The activities are organised under thematic areas: active citizenship; food security; climate awareness; education and literacy; and substance abuse prevention.

Among the key initiatives, Professor Nkonki-Mandleni indicated, are the launch of Campuses Projects, in partnership with Durban University of Technology (DUT), focusing on food security interventions, and the MUT Green Initiative for Climate change project, to encourage the University community to maintain a clean campus while promoting climate change awareness. Additionally, Professor Nkonki-Mandleni indicated a book club would be launched at a local school under the leadership of Dr Nthabiseng Mosala-Bryant, the Senior Director of MUT Library Services, and a substance abuse prevention project, which would be implemented in partnership with Stellenbosch University and Nelson Mandela University. Highlighting the long-term vision behind these activities, Professor Nkonki-Mandleni explained, "As much as they look like outreach activities, we want to have lasting relationships with our communities." She encouraged students and staff to actively participate, adding that even small acts of service can create meaningful change.

Professor Nkonki-Mandleni noted that the month would conclude on 31 July with sporting activities organised by the Department of Sports and Recreation, promoting the principle of a sound mind should be in a sound body. She also noted that through these initiatives, MUT was commemorating Mandela Month in addition to promoting a culture of service, compassion, and social responsibility within its community.

[Listen to the full interview: https://iono.fm/e/1571638](https://iono.fm/e/1571638)



Prayer and health drive brings MUT and Umlazi community together



Professor Busisiwe Nkonki-Mandleni, Director of the CEAD Directorate, seated fourth from the left, joins MUT staff and Umlazi community representatives in prayer for the Mandela month

The CEAD Directorate hosted a Prayer and Wellness Programme at the United Brethren Church of Southern Africa (UCCSA) in Umlazi on 3 July 2025, to usher MUT into its Mandela Month activities. The event brought together MUT staff, students, and church leaders with the shared goal of praying against social ills and promoting health and wellness.

The programme, led by Bishop Nkosiphile Ndlovu of the UCCSA and Pastor Siboniso Mtshali, began with prayers and scripture readings that emphasised the importance of combining prayer with action as a means of addressing poverty and inequality. Religious and university representatives then offered focused prayers on key societal challenges, including the economy, restoring hope, youth unemployment, the influence of

drugs and alcohol, and gender-based violence (GBV). GBV was linked to unemployment, with calls for practical skills development for young people, along with encouragement for the congregation to embrace compassion, tolerance, and love within their communities.

The wellness session, presented by Ntombenhle Ndlovu, a Lecturer from the Department of Community Extension, MUT, made a presentation on nutrition and lifestyle as essential foundations for holistic health. Ndlovu stressed the importance of balanced spiritual, nutritional, and mental well-being, promoting healthy eating, regular physical activity, and informed lifestyle choices to prevent disease.

Her guidance included “replacing refined starches with whole grains, favouring grilled or boiled meals over fried foods, eating more fruits, vegetables, and fish, staying hydrated, and maintaining waist measurements within healthy limits (women <88 cm; men <102 cm).” She also highlighted the impact of family medical history and the need to address both undernutrition and obesity trends in the country.

Professor Busisiwe Nkonki-Mandleni concluded the programme by highlighting MUT’s strategic priorities of excellence in teaching and learning, research, community engagement, and national and international partnerships. She emphasised sustainability and ethical collaboration, noting that, “There is a policy for community engagement which emphasises sustainability and ethical engagement with our communities. MUT does not come with an ‘I know it all’ attitude but invites the knowledge and experiences the community partner has and adds them to academic knowledge from MUT.”

This event highlighted MUT’s dedication to supporting Umlazi through faith, health, and partnership.



MUT Radio Breakfast Show features Faculty of Engineering's Mandela Month community engagement drive



MUT celebrated Mandela Month with initiatives aimed at honouring the late President's enduring legacy through meaningful community engagement. On 4 July 2025, Sanjivi Naidoo, a Lecturer in the Survey/Civil Engineering department, and a representative for community engagement, joined Mvelo Hadebe on the *Vuk"ubangene* MUT Radio Breakfast Show to discuss the significance of Mandela Month and the faculty's planned initiatives.

Naidoo described Nelson Mandela as his hero, recalling the profound impact of Mandela's release from prison in 1990. "Mandela was my hero. I was 20-something when he came out of prison. From the time he came out to the time he passed away in 2013, he has been nothing but an inspiration to me. Every time he spoke on television during those years, I teared. He touched my heart."

Speaking about the importance of integrating Mandela's values at MUT, Naidoo explained, "We should celebrate by living life from the heart. We are a people-orientated Institution, in the business of empowering and uplifting people. Mandela shared his care, his love, his passion, and brought our country together. Bringing Mandela Month into MUT will change everything."


The Faculty of Engineering, in collaboration with the CEAD Directorate, has planned several impactful community engagement projects. Naidoo highlighted the Peace Education Programme, an initiative aimed at promoting personal development and leadership skills among students and staff. The programme utilises social media platforms such as WhatsApp, to deliver a self-employment and life skills curriculum. "The Peace Education Programme is designed to uplift, to promote personal development and leadership skills. We have started with WhatsApp among students and staff through a self-employment curriculum," Naidoo noted.

In addition to internal faculty projects, numerous community focused programmes have been registered via the CEAD Directorate. Naidoo emphasised the broader vision of these initiatives: "As part of Mandela Month, it is not just outreach activities. These initiatives should have spin-offs of lasting relationships and positive impact."

Naidoo also shared guidance for the youth, urging them to emulate Mandela's approach:

"Education is important, but the thing that drove Mandela, the thing that made him unique, is that he used his heart first. He put his heart first and cared for others. When you see somebody, do not think what they are, feel that person."

Staff and students interested in participating in the Peace Education Programme can contact Naidoo via WhatsApp on 079 493 3782. The programme seeks to inspire a culture of care, leadership, and social responsibility among students and staff while extending Mandela's legacy beyond the University and into local communities.

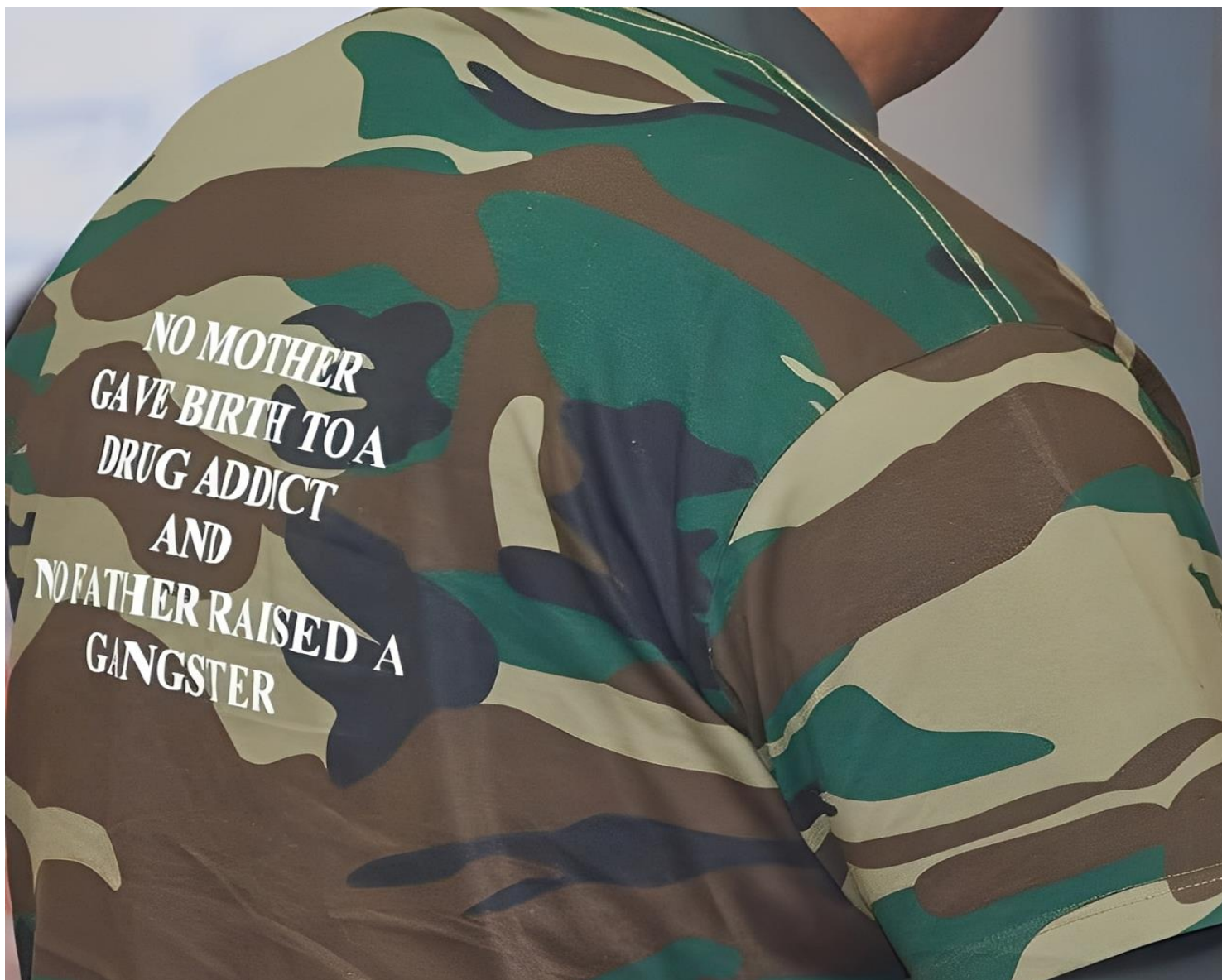
 [Listen to the full interview
https://iono.fm/e/1572996](https://iono.fm/e/1572996)

"A good head and a good heart are always a formidable combination."

Nelson Mandela



Hope rising: MUT ignites a community response to drug abuse



As part of Mandela Month 2025, MUT hosted a two-day Training on Hope, Rehabilitation, and Values (THR.V) programme from 10 to 11 July. The training brought together a diverse collective of community leaders, including pastors, educators, School Governing Body members, and representatives from Non-Profit Organisations (NPOs), all united by one urgent mission: to combat the escalating crisis of substance abuse in their communities.

Participants discussed a wide range of topics, from addiction prevention models to trauma-informed care and the essential role of the community in recovery. They expressed a deep yearning to help young people, to support struggling parents, particularly women, and to find lasting, innovative solutions to the problem of drug abuse. "We do not want a one-day T-shirt wonder," one participant insisted. "We want change that lasts."

Reverend Jacobus Nomdoe, the Regional Director of Global Teen Challenge Africa and founder of the Hope Revolution, introduced participants to the philosophy behind the Hope Revolution, an environment of care rooted in indigenous knowledge, faith, family, and professional support. "If you want to heal a child, you must call a grandmother," Reverend Nomdoe said, emphasising that healing must be community-led and culturally grounded.





Participants engaging in critical discussions around drugs and substance abuse

A key moment during the training came through a simple yet profound exercise in motivational listening. In paired sessions, participants took turns speaking and listening without interruption. This seemingly small task revealed how rare, and how healing it is to truly listen and be heard. As one participant noted, “When you give someone your full attention, it shows they matter, and you feel it too.”

Another highlight was a role-play that allowed participants to step into the shoes of both the addict and the family members who live with them. Through this exercise, they unpacked the emotional weight of addiction: the manipulation, the fear, the trauma, and the shame.

Participants reflected on their own enabling behaviours and the importance of setting boundaries, using a concept introduced in the training called “carefronting”, which means approaching difficult conversations with compassion and clarity. They proposed creating safe spaces at MUT and in communities, and setting up confidential referral systems.

As the training closed on day two, participants reflected on family restoration, ethical leadership, and Ubuntu, the belief that “your child is my child”. They called for a return to community values, mutual accountability, and collective action against addiction. Dr Bruce Damons and Professor Veonna Goliath of Nelson Mandela University pledged continued support, while Professor Busisiwe Nkonki-Mandleni, Director of CEAD, thanked facilitators and proposed a follow-up session in a year to review progress.

The THRV training left an indelible mark on all present. From real-life testimonies to conceptual tools, and from theoretical frameworks to grassroots strategies, the programme showed that lasting change begins with empathy, action, and a shared belief that healing is possible. As one participant remarked, “We are not just fighting drugs; we are fighting for our sons, our daughters, and the future of our communities.”



Empowering young girls in a Durban township: a Mandela month

Empowerment begins with dignity and education, and that is exactly what MUT aimed to provide young girls at Inhlakanipho High School in KwaMashu, north west of Durban, during Mandela Month. On Friday, 18 July 2025, Mandela Day, staff from the Biomedical Sciences department and the CEAD Directorate joined forces to address a critical yet often overlooked need: access to sanitary pads and essential self-care items that significantly affect girls' confidence, health, and school attendance.

In addition to distributing these essentials, the MUT team engaged learners in meaningful conversations about health, hygiene, and the importance of education. Dr Ziningi Jaya, a Lecturer in the department, introduced students to the fascinating world of Biomedical Sciences, sharing entry requirements and opportunities available at MUT, inspiring the girls to consider future careers in science and healthcare.



Dr Ziningi Jaya speaking to young girls



Staff from the Biomedical sciences department with Inhlakanipho high school learners

There was also a discussion on female hygiene, creating a safe and respectful space for open dialogue and empowering the girls to manage their menstrual health with confidence. The response from the learners was heartfelt, with many appreciating the honesty and care with which sensitive topics were addressed.

This initiative reflects Nelson Mandela's legacy of education, equality, and community care. MUT remains dedicated to nurturing such connections and ensuring that education and empathy continue to transform lives in communities like KwaMashu. As Mandela wisely said, "A fundamental concern for others in our individual and community lives would go a long way in making the world the better place we so passionately dreamt of."



The Directorate of Institutional Planning and Reporting Mandela Month webinar: Harnessing data to empower MUT's future



Data is more than numbers; it is a powerful tool shaping the future of MUT. In celebration of Mandela Month, the Directorate of Institutional Planning and Reporting (DIPR) hosted an enlightening webinar on 22 July 2025, spotlighting the critical role of data in guiding MUT's strategic vision and enhancing its community impact.

Led by Ayanda Nongogo, Director of Monitoring, Evaluation and Reporting, and Tebello Mofokeng, Deputy Director of Management Information, the session detailed DIPR's essential contributions to the MUT's community engagement initiatives and the University's transformation goals. Opening remarks by Professor Busisiwe Nkonki-Mandleni, Director of CEAD, praised DIPR's commitment to serving MUT. Professor Nkonki-Mandleni also applauded the MUT community for extending Mandela Day into a month-long period of meaningful engagement, embodying the spirit of service and transformation.

The webinar provided a comprehensive look at DIPR's mandate, covering strategic planning, statutory and Higher Education Management Information System (HEMIS reporting), and data analytics. Attendees met the team behind the data, learning how they support key stakeholders such as the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET), the Council on Higher Education (CHE), and the South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA). The importance of data literacy, evidence-based decision-making, and collaborative governance was emphasised as crucial to enhancing student success and securing institutional funding.

Echoing Nelson Mandela's dedication to service and accountability, DIPR's presentation demonstrated how data drives development and promotes transparency. The session concluded with a call for MUT staff to engage actively in strategic processes, champion data quality, and participate in upcoming capacity-building roadshows.

As MUT charts its future, DIPR reaffirmed its commitment to building a data-literate, digitally agile University community, one empowered through targeted reporting and training initiatives that strengthen institutional decision-making and transformation.



MUT supports Denis Hurley Centre during Mandela Month



MUT student volunteers prepare to serve meals to the homeless at the Denis Hurley Centre

Fighting hunger and preserving dignity were at the heart of a Mandela Month initiative led by the CEAD Directorate. On 24 July 2025, CEAD team, led by Professor Busisiwe Nkonki-Mandleni, CEAD Director, teamed up with Shuter & Shooter, one of its partners, to participate in a well-coordinated feeding scheme at the Denis Hurley Centre, a central refuge for the homeless community.

From the early morning, MUT students and staff volunteered enthusiastically, preparing and serving breakfast and lunch. Additionally, the team toured the Centre to learn about its rich history and holistic services, which include showers, laundry facilities, and a movie room – providing clients with more than just food, but a space of care and dignity. The initiative brought to light the challenges faced by the homeless, while nurturing empathy among MUT students and staff. MUT Radio's live broadcast captured stories that touched hearts and broadened understanding of the lived realities of those the Centre serves. The Deputy President of MUT's Student Representative Council (SRC), Skholiwe Khumalo, expressed a heartfelt desire to find ongoing ways to support the Centre.

Sane Ngubane, MUT's partner representative from Shuter & Shooter, emphasised the need to continue acts of kindness beyond Mandela Month, while Dr David Ighodaro, Researcher: Community Engagement at CEAD, shared an emotional observation about desperation among the homeless, reminding all the harsh realities many endure daily. Dr Mfanozelwe Shozi, CEAD's Deputy Director, applauded the MUT community's spirit of Ubuntu, urging greater participation – especially among male students – in future visits and campaigns.

The successful feeding scheme strengthened community bonds and laid the foundations for ongoing support and social upliftment. As Nelson Mandela famously said, "Overcoming poverty is not a task of charity. It is an act of justice." This event stood as a testament to that truth.

MUT remains committed to building bridges with communities like the Denis Hurley Centre, continuing to promote dignity, care, and hope for those most vulnerable.



MUT student volunteers in active service



Voices from the frontline of service



Skholiwe Khumalo
SRC Deputy President 2024/25

I am Skholiwe Khumalo, currently pursuing an Advanced Diploma in Marketing at Mangosuthu University of Technology. I come from Bergville, western KwaZulu-Natal, in a disadvantaged rural area called Engoba. In addition to my academic responsibilities, I also serve as the Deputy President of the SRC, a role that has strengthened my passion for community engagement and servant leadership.

During my time at the Denis Hurley Centre, I was deeply moved by the compassionate service provided to the homeless community. I had the privilege of assisting in cooking and serving meals, and engaging with individuals who depend on the centre daily. What stood out to me was the unwavering commitment of the staff and volunteers in preserving human dignity through kindness, consistency, and respect.

As a student leader, this experience reinforced the importance of selfless service and revealed the challenges many in our society face. I have learnt that meaningful leadership extends beyond campus, involving connection with and support for those around us. It reflects the values of Ubuntu and Mandela's legacy, which the Mandela Month honours. Academically, the experience broadened my understanding of social marketing, stakeholder engagement, and the vital role community-based programmes play in fostering inclusive, sustainable development. These insights will support both my studies and future efforts to create marketing strategies with social impact. I remain committed to using my voice within the SRC to advocate for student participation in outreach programmes like this. They not only build character, but also remind us of our responsibility as future professionals to serve and lead with empathy.



I am Anathi Alicia Cele, a third year Human Resource Management student and soon to obtain my Diploma qualification.

I come from a rural area known as uMthwalume, in the south coast of KwaZulu-Natal, best known for its beautiful oceans that bring the coolest air across its land. I grew up there, studied in that area, and I am glad to say it truly takes a community to raise a child – which is why I am where I am today. I also serve as the Deputy Chairperson under the Student Women Economic Empowerment Programme (SWEEP). It is my ambition to take part in life-changing initiatives.

Volunteering at the Denis Hurley Centre is yet another life-changing experience for me, one for which I will forever be grateful. One of the most important things I learnt during our volunteering was the value of patience – understanding that we are all different individuals who express ourselves in different ways. If we are not patient with one another, it becomes difficult to achieve our main objective, which is to ensure that our homeless brothers, sisters, and elders are well cared for.

We were a great team, surrounded by positive energy. I look forward to more volunteering opportunities, as they bring us together as MUT students.



Anathi Alicia Cele

Deputy Chairperson of SWEEP MUT



MUT launches green initiative for climate change



Your Trash. Earth's Burden!

Plastics release climate-warming gases as they degrade—contributing to the Earth's rising temperature.

Footprint Fact:

1 piece of plastic = emissions from miles of driving.

Message:

Litter isn't light. It leaves a lasting climate impact.

Call to Action:

Clean campus. Cooler climate. Lower footprint.



Pollution is Not Just Ugly—It's Deadly

Campus litter → Air, land & water pollution → Ecosystem imbalance → Carbon emissions → Climate catastrophe.

Climate Term Alert:

Unchecked littering increases our ecological footprint and intensifies global warming.

Call to Action:

Don't feed the heat. Clean it up.



Every Litter Leaves a Carbon Footprint

That plastic bottle on the ground? It doesn't just make the campus dirty

As it breaks down in sunlight and air, it releases greenhouse gases like methane and ethylene.

Call to Action:

What you drop today fuels tomorrow's climate crisis.

Bin it. Shrink your footprint. Protect your future.

Results:

- More carbon in the atmosphere.
- More heat trapped on Earth.
- More global warming.

MUT took a bold step towards environmental stewardship with the launch of its Green Initiative for Climate Change project on 25 July 2025. In her keynote address, Professor Busisiwe Nkonki-Mandleni, Director of CEAD and leader of the initiative, challenged the MUT community to take personal responsibility for climate action. She outlined three main purposes of the campaign: to drive dialogue and action around climate responsibility; to raise awareness about the consequences of littering and illegal dumping on campus; and to promote environmentally friendly, climate-resilient practices.

“Littering may seem like a small act... but every litter leaves a carbon footprint,” she cautioned, illustrating how even a discarded empty packet of chips can contribute to greenhouse gas emissions.

Professor Nkonki-Mandleni also highlighted the role of plastics, methane from landfills and livestock, and nitrogen from fertilizers as major drivers of climate change.

Quoting Nelson Mandela, Professor Nkonki-Mandleni reminded attendees, “It is now in our hands.” She urged students and staff to reject the mentality that cleaning is only the Facilities team's responsibility.

“When you see another student dropping a piece of paper, say ‘No, we are not supposed to do this.’ Let us not encourage conversations that justify acts of littering.”

Professor Nkonki-Mandleni indicated that she was aware of pockets of green initiatives on campus and encouraged dialogues among the MUT community to encourage actions against climate change.



Professor Busisiwe Nkonki-Mandleni, fifth from left, and Dr Anette Mienie, sixth from left, with other dignitaries at the launch of the environmental awareness poster campaign



Dr Annette Mienie, Interim DVC Research, Innovation and Engagement (RIE), described the launch as “an important step in MUT’s role as a champion of environmental stewardship and sustainable development.” Dr Mienie reminded the audience that this initiative was not a once-off campaign, but a foundation of a lasting culture of sustainability across the University.

Gugu Lushozi, MUT Facility Manager, reinforced this message by speaking on the value of a clean, well-kept campus. Lushozi called on students and staff to be active custodians of their environment, supporting cleaning teams, maintaining hygiene, and setting an example for others.

Dr Colin Pillay, representing the Office of the City Manager at eThekweni Municipality, commended MUT for being the first among the city’s university partners to take the lead on climate change action through its Green Initiative project. Dr Pillay emphasised that addressing climate change requires collective responsibility, with universities playing a crucial role in research, policy guidance, and practical solutions.

The formal launch of the Green Initiative was carried out by Zethembiso Ntombela, District Manager of eThekweni Municipality.

Student ambassadors from each faculty: Engineering, Management Sciences, and Applied and Health Sciences, led by Professor Nkonki-Mandleni and Dr Mienie, along with Dr Pillay and other dignitaries, helped raise awareness by placing posters across both main and North campuses.

The event concluded with hands-on cleaning activities coordinated by Dr Mfanozelwe Shozi, CEAD’s Deputy Director, and Thokakele Zondi from Durban Solid Waste (DSW).

Students and staff cleaned areas across North Campus, Seme Precinct, Technology Station in Chemicals (TSC) precinct, North Wing, Nkandla student residence, and A, B, and C students residences areas, putting the principles of environmental stewardship into immediate action.

Through this initiative, MUT demonstrated that climate awareness is a shared responsibility. The Green Initiative for Climate Change project marks the beginning of ongoing efforts to educate, inspire, and create a cleaner, more sustainable University environment.



Above and below, MUT students participating in the clean-up campaign



Honouring Mandela's legacy through environmental action



Donation of tree seedlings for planting at Gagasi Secondary School

In July 2025, the Department of Nature Conservation, through the Environmental Education and Sustainability Project, led by Dr Sibonelo Mbanjwa, marked the Nelson Mandela Month with a series of initiatives across schools in Umlazi. Inspired by Madiba's call to dedicate 67 minutes of service in recognition of his 67 years of commitment to justice, freedom, and equality, the department chose to focus on sustainability, education, and community upliftment.

On 18 July 2025, the team visited Umbelebele Secondary School in R Section, Umlazi, and donated waste bins to support proper waste disposal and recycling. A second bin donation took place on 30 July at Sizwakele Senior Primary School. These practical contributions encouraged environmental awareness, and equipped the schools with tools to maintain a clean and healthy learning environment.





Dr Mbanjwa, middle, and his team, giving the waste bins to Umbelebele Secondary School staff

The initiatives helped to instil a culture of responsibility among learners while demonstrating Mandela's enduring spirit of service.

On 23 July 2025, the focus turned to climate action and food security. Learners and educators at Gagasi Secondary School in U Section, and Shumayela Secondary School in R Section, took part in tree planting and vegetable seed donation activities. The trees symbolised a commitment to greening communities and raising awareness about climate change, while the seeds offered schools an opportunity to start food gardens that could provide fresh produce and strengthen nutrition. The hands-on nature of the activities gave learners a sense of empowerment, and showed how sustainability can be integrated into daily life.

Each of these projects, whether through the simple act of donating bins, or the longer-term investment of planting trees and seeds, reflected the values that Nelson Mandela stood for. They were more than commemorative gestures; they were actions that created real opportunities for change. Turning 67 minutes of service into lasting impact, the Department of Nature Conservation has reinforced its commitment to nurturing young people, and strengthening communities, ensuring that Mandela's legacy continues to inspire and transform lives.



67 Minutes for the ocean



Participants during the Beach Clean-Up at Dakota Beach, Isipingo

As part of Nelson Mandela Month, the Environmental Education and Sustainability Project team carried out a beach clean-up at Dakota Beach, Isipingo. Held on 21 July 2025, the clean-up was an expression of social responsibility and service to the community.

MUT staff, students and Isipingo community members worked together to remove litter and debris from the coastline, safeguarding marine ecosystems and protecting biodiversity.

The exercise raised awareness among learners and community members about the importance of preserving coastal areas for both present and future generations.

This initiative also contributed to broader sustainable development goals by addressing key priorities such as climate action, life below water and the creation of sustainable communities. Most importantly, it demonstrated how Mandela's legacy can be honoured through practical action that benefits people and the environment alike.

The event served as a reminder that caring for the environment is a shared responsibility. Through their dedication and effort in restoring Dakota Beach, participants reaffirmed their commitment to a cleaner, healthier and more sustainable future, an outcome that truly reflects Madiba's enduring values.



Stepping into tertiary life: MUT helps Grade 12s navigate the path to higher learning

In celebration of Mandela Month, MUT extended a helping hand to the leaders of tomorrow by equipping Grade 12 learners with critical skills for the journey from high school to university. On 26 July 2025, Nomah Jili from the Faculty of Health and Applied Sciences, Department of Agriculture, presented the Grade 12 Institutional Readiness Programme to three different classes of enthusiastic learners. The interactive sessions were designed to demystify university life and prepare students academically, emotionally, socially and financially for the transition into higher education.

The programme covered five key readiness areas, beginning with academic and independent readiness, where learners discovered the realities of university-level learning, including time management, study techniques and adapting to self-directed learning environments. Financial readiness was also addressed, with guidance on the cost of higher education, budgeting skills and available funding options such as the National Student Financial Aid Scheme (NSFAS).

Emotional and social readiness formed another important discussion point, highlighting the importance of mental health, coping with homesickness and anxiety, and building supportive social networks. Learners were introduced to the various resources and support services offered at University, including academic advisers, counselling centres, libraries, health services and career guidance offices. The sessions concluded with practical tips for university applications through the Central Applications Office (CAO) and online platforms, covering key subjects, deadlines and required documentation.

Learners engaged in the discussions, asking questions, particularly about online application processes. Many expressed newfound clarity and excitement about pursuing higher education, with some noting they felt more confident in taking the next steps towards their academic ambitions. Reflecting on Nelson Mandela's legacy of education as a tool for empowerment, the initiative embodied his belief that "**Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world.**" The MUT readiness programme was about inspiring learners to embrace their future with confidence, resilience, and determination.



Nomah Jili, who led the Grade 12 learners through MUT's University readiness programme



MUT brings Mandela’s vision to life with digital reading drive at a Umlazi high school



Bongiwe Nyide, Deputy Director of MUT Library Services, standing, third from left, pictured with MUT library staff and learners from Ndukwenhle High School

In the true spirit of Nelson Mandela Month and its call to make a positive difference, MUT Library Services joined forces with the CEAD Directorate on 29 July 2026 to bring the gift of reading to Ndukwenhle High School, Umlazi. The team launched a new initiative designed to spark love for books while bridging the digital divide. At the heart of the project was the formation of a dedicated book club, named “The Reading Marvels”, complemented by a generous loan of Kobo e-readers to the school. These devices will give learners access to a wide range of literature and learning resources, encouraging them to embrace digital reading as part of their everyday lives.

The event was filled with energy and laughter, driven by interactive quizzes and spot prizes that kept the learners engaged. “This partnership perfectly embodies Madiba’s legacy of education,” remarked Bongiwe Nyide, Deputy Director of MUT Library Services, adding that “seeing the learners embracing their e-readers was truly inspiring”. The school expressed heartfelt appreciation for MUT’s involvement, with a representative reflecting in their message of thanks:

“On behalf of the Ndukwenhle High School Community, I personally thank the MUT Library Services team and staff for the privilege of a ‘Pilot Project Book Club Launch’ support package. Your leadership, stewardship and commitment to putting the education of a Black Child ‘front and centre’ deserve special acknowledgment. The insightful speeches, gifts and Kobo e-readers were practical demonstrations of your dedication to ‘Nation-building’ and civic duty. Your intervention will surely move a needle in promoting a reading culture among learners, educators and parents at Ndukwenhle High School.”

The initiative is set to have a lasting impact. “This is not a once-off engagement,” confirmed Dr Mfanozelwe Shozi, the Deputy Director of CEAD, signalling the beginning of a long-term partnership between MUT and the school in championing education, literacy, and digital empowerment.



Building bridges through volunteerism



In the spirit of Nelson Mandela's legacy, MUT has taken a bold step towards strengthening its commitment to volunteerism and community engagement through a transformative partnership with a US organisation, called the Committee of South African Solidarity (COSAS). This collaboration came to life through two significant events in July 2025: a live radio interview on MUT Radio's *Vuka Ubangene* Breakfast Show on 29 July 2025, and an insightful master class at the University on 30 July 2025. Both engagements placed volunteerism at the centre of discussions, highlighting its role in building communities and fostering solidarity across borders.

The radio interview, conducted by Awethu Keletse, MUT Radio Programmes Manager, featured COSAS representatives discussing how the volunteer-run organisation supports under-resourced South African

communities with computers, school supplies, and grassroots initiatives.

Dr Mfanovelwe Shozi, Deputy Director of CEAD, during the broadcast, outlined MUT's Anchor Strategy for township development. Dr Shozi stressed the role of research collaboration, student involvement and partnerships with local organisations in creating sustainable solutions. The radio interview ended by inviting MUT students and staff to a master class on volunteerism as an opportunity for shared learning and international collaboration.

The master class, facilitated by Dr Shozi and Nicole Richards, a COSAS representative as guest speaker, drew strong participation from staff and students. COSAS's all-volunteer model, based on the "see one, do one, teach one" approach, was highlighted for building practical skills in leadership and organising.

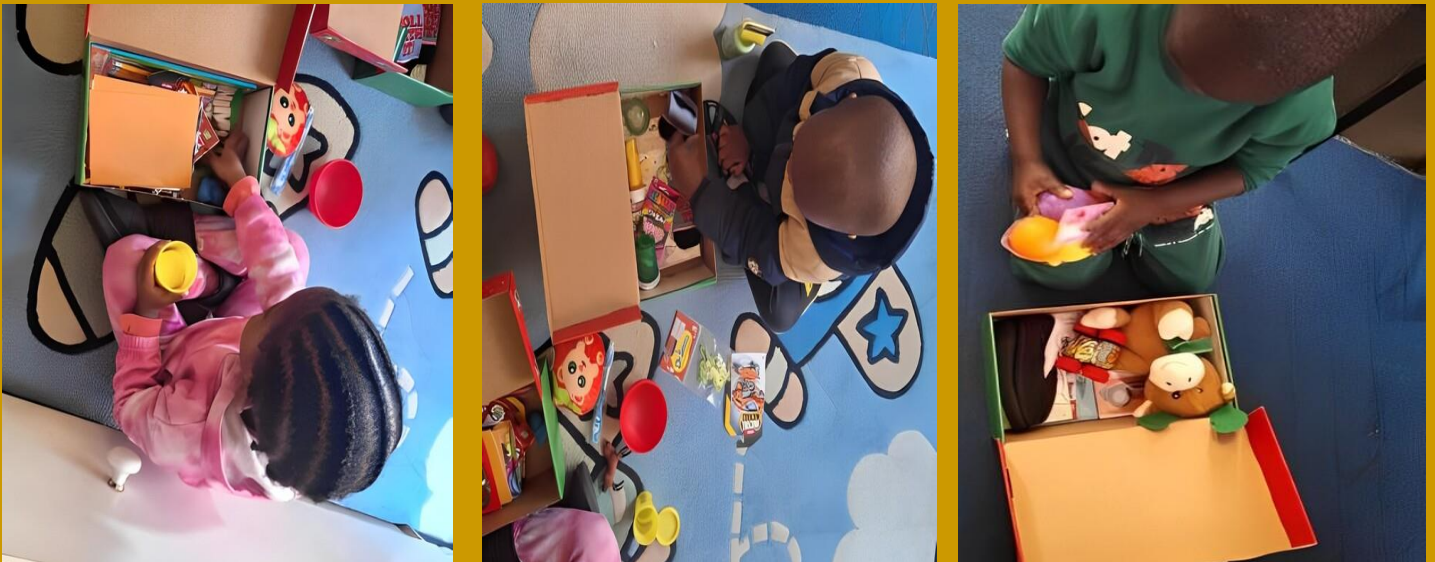
MUT leaders stressed volunteerism as a strategic tool for institutional growth and enhanced community development, linking it to existing initiatives of the *Ngqayizivele* Student Volunteer Programme. The partnership with COSAS is expected to expand opportunities for MUT student engagement and international collaboration.

Looking ahead, MUT and COSAS plan to hold regular interactions, create and promote a range of volunteer opportunities and explore the possibility of a formal collaboration through a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU).

Students and staff will be encouraged to join COSAS activities, with MUT Radio supporting outreach. This partnership not only teaches the values of volunteerism, but also puts them into practice, equipping students to serve their communities while acquiring skills for the future.



67 minutes of joy: MUT brings happiness to young hearts



Early childhood learners enjoying their newly received gifts at the KZN Society for the Blind creche facility

Bringing joy to young hearts, MUT marked Mandela Month by organising a gift-giving campaign at the KwaZulu-Natal (KZN) Society for the Blind, in Durban's Umbilo, on 30 July 2025. The initiative sought to spread happiness among early childhood learners while supporting positive social, emotional, and cognitive development during their formative years.

Dr Mfanozelwe Shozi, CEAD's Deputy Director, welcomed attendees to the campaign, expressing heartfelt gratitude for their participation. "Today, we contribute to Mandela Day's 67 minutes," he noted, highlighting the importance of giving back to the community. Representing Professor Busisiwe Nkonki-Mandleni, CEAD's Director, Dr Shozi emphasised the fundamental role of the CEAD Directorate, explaining that the directorate serves as a link between the community and MUT.

The children's excitement was palpable as carefully selected gifts were distributed, nurturing creativity, gratitude, and a sense of connection. The gift-giving proved to be a touching and inspiring experience, bringing smiles to the young recipients, while reinforcing a spirit of community among all involved.

Reflecting on the significance of such acts, Nelson Mandela once said:

"There can be no greater gift than to empower and uplift others, especially the young," and "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 that will determine the significance of the life we lead."

This initiative is a reminder that small acts of kindness can have a profound impact. MUT continues to build a community where compassion, learning, and growth thrive, honouring Mandela's legacy in meaningful actions.



Wellness, energy, fun, and team spirit define MUT Mandela Sports Day



MUT staff participating in the aerobic session of the Mandela Month Sports Day

The CEAD Directorate, in partnership with the MUT Sports Unit, hosted a Nelson Mandela Sports Day on 31 July 2025 to conclude the Mandela Month activities. Centred on the theme “It’s Still in Our Hands to Combat Poverty and Inequity,” the event brought together MUT staff in a celebration of wellness, unity and community spirit. The day aimed to encourage staff members to participate in interactive sporting activities, promote physical health and mental well-being, and strengthen relationships across the MUT community. The atmosphere was vibrant. The sports fields, basketball and netball courts became buzzing arenas of activity, energy and camaraderie.

Among the most popular attractions were the inflatable games, which drew enthusiastic participation and laughter. From the mechanical bull to inflatable darts and fighting sticks, staff members embraced the light-hearted competition. The aerobics session was another highlight, attracting more than 50 participants, while energetic music kept spirits high. Red Bull company added an extra spark to the day with its *Shayimoto* activation, entertaining the crowds with its spinning car and distributing drinks to participants. Netball and football matches provided a more competitive edge. Although only four netball teams played, the Operations’ Queens and KaMyaluza teams secured victories. Football proved to be the biggest crowd-puller, with all seven expected teams turning up and delivering exciting matches that drew loud support from spectators. The MUT Staff Team delivered a strong performance with back-to-back wins, while KaMyaluza and Indlela Yami teams also claimed victories in closely contested games.

The Mandela Sports Day drew over 230 participants, an increase on the previous year, with no injuries reported. The energy and enthusiasm across all activities demonstrated the power of sport as a tool for building community and morale at MUT.



MUT Radio Reflects on Mandela Month 2025 with CEAD's Deputy Director

The *Hlanganani* Midday Show on MUT Radio had the pleasure of hosting Dr Mfanozelwe Shozi, Deputy Director of CEAD, to reflect on the conclusion of Mandela Month 2025. Filling in for Professor Busisiwe Nkonki-Mandleni, the Director of CEAD, Dr Shozi reflected on the impactful programmes rolled out throughout the month, and discussed plans to sustain these initiatives throughout the year. “Mandela Month is the apex of voluntarism, where students and staff go out and volunteer to commemorate 67 years of Mandela’s service to our country and the world,” Dr Shozi remarked.

The month-long celebration saw a range of community engagement initiatives. These included a Substance Abuse Awareness programme led by Professor Nkonki-Mandleni, which trained participants to raise awareness about substance abuse and its social impacts. The Green Initiative for Climate Change promoted environmental awareness and sustainability across campus, while the Biomedical Sciences department visited Inhlakanipho High School, in KwaMashu, west of Durban, to distribute sanitary pads to young girls. A standout programme was the volunteering effort at Denis Hurley Centre, where staff and students prepared meals for over 400 people, contributing from their own pockets. Dr Shozi emphasised, “Voluntarism is not only about your service; if you have the means, you can also contribute financially to champion the cause of justice.”

The month concluded with Mandela Sports Day, featuring aerobics, football, netball, chess, inflatable games, and running, promoting both physical health and career opportunities in sport. Reflecting on personal highlights, Dr Shozi noted, “For me, the highlight was seeing MUT as one – staff, students, and the community coming together. It was also inspiring to see other universities look to us as an example.”


Looking ahead, Dr Shozi encouraged young people to keep the Mandela legacy alive: “MUT students must volunteer in various programmes. This opens doors to understanding the challenges facing our country and creates opportunities for personal and professional growth. Be innovative and seek ways to make a positive change in South Africa.”



Dr Mfanozelwe Shozi
Deputy Director, CEAD

The momentum of Mandela Month continues beyond July, with ongoing master classes, quarterly community engagement programmes, and an upcoming conference dedicated to the Scholarship of Engagement.

MUT Radio thanked Dr Shozi for sharing his reflections, marking another successful celebration of service, community, and innovation.

 [Listen to the full interview](https://iono.fm/e/1582265)
<https://iono.fm/e/1582265>



Mandela Month Closes with Dialogue and Reflection



The Environmental Education and Sustainability student volunteers leading interviews with MUT staff and students during the Mandela Month closing campaign

The Department of Nature Conservation, through the Environmental Education and Sustainability Project, concluded Nelson Mandela Month on 31 July 2025 with activities centred on service and reflection.

The highlight was a campus awareness campaign at MUT, where students and staff were invited to share their personal reflections on Nelson Mandela's legacy.

Through short interviews, participants expressed how Mandela's values of compassion, justice and equality continue to inspire their lives and shape their vision for the future. The initiative created an important opportunity for dialogue, encouraging the MUT community to see Mandela Month not as a symbolic commemoration but as a call to live out his values daily.

Alongside the campus campaign, the team also reached out to disadvantaged community members in surrounding areas such as Isipingo and Malukazi, providing support and encouragement in line with Mandela's belief in uplifting the marginalised. Together, these activities ensured that the closing of Mandela Month was both meaningful and memorable, reinforcing the idea that service and reflection are at the heart of Madiba's legacy.





Simangaliso Mdlalose
Faculty of Management Sciences
Human Resource Management

Step Up. Stand Out. Serve.

Be Part of the Change with CEAD

 **Calling All MUT Students!**

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

Meet Simangaliso Mdlalose

Some people watch opportunities pass by, while others seize the moment. Simangaliso Mdlalose chose the latter, entering the Community Engagement Day Essay Competition to share a viewpoint he believed was worth hearing.

His dedication and determination have now earned him well-deserved recognition, celebrating his commitment to making a meaningful contribution.

Why Get Involved?

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


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

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

The Directorate Offers Ongoing Opportunities Throughout the Year!

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

Here's How You Can Join Us!

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

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

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

Need More Info? We are Here to Help:

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SCHOLARSHIP OF ENGAGEMENT CONFERENCE 2025

DATE

18 - 20 NOVEMBER

VENUE

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

FORMAT

Hybrid (in-person &
virtual participation)

Please Visit:

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

Tel: 0318199422 / 0318199413

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Connect With CEAD!

SPREAD THE WORD!

Help us raise awareness about MUT's community engagement efforts

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

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

MEET THE EDITORIAL TEAM

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

Dr Oluwabunmi Popoola: *Writer*

Dr Ikponmwosa David Ighodaro: *Editor*

Dudu Mbhele: *Editor*

YOUR FEEDBACK MATTERS!

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

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