



SPIRIT

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RECLAIMING OUR INDIGENOUS FOOD HERITAGE



25 YEARS OF RESEARCH, A FUTURE OF POSSIBILITIES

MUT FEMALE FOOTBALL ACE BREAKS HER PREVIOUS RECORD

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FROM THE DESK OF THE EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

An Anchor University that is grounded locally and growing globally



Editor-in-Chief, Mbali Mkhize

In a rapidly-changing higher education landscape, Mangosuthu University of Technology (MUT) is redefining what it means to be locally grounded and globally relevant. Through a clear stakeholder engagement strategy and intentional brand positioning, MUT is stepping confidently into its self-proclaimed role as an Anchor University – serving the Umlazi community, inspiring the nation, and connecting with the world.

One of the most significant demonstrations of this commitment was MUT's decision to host its 2025 Open Day at Vukuzakhe High School in Umlazi. Basic

Education officials applauded MUT's decision to have the event at an Umlazi school, which was a powerful act of inclusion. By bringing the University to the learners, rather than the other way around, MUT made a statement: "We are embedded in this community, and the future of Umlazi's youth is central to our mission".

This approach reflects a more profound, strategic shift. MUT is no longer just a university in Umlazi, it is a university for Umlazi. Our stakeholder engagement programmes are intentionally designed to revitalise Umlazi Township through education, innovation, sport and entrepreneurship. Projects like the annual MUT Schools Community Cup which will take place in August, the Fundanathi Literacy Programme, and our continued reading interventions in primary schools, demonstrate how academic expertise can translate into early-stage social impact.

We are also building our institutional identity through sports development, with a sharpened focus on women's sport. Our female football captain, Wendy Madziba, represents more than athletic excellence; she symbolises a university investing in its student leaders and in building a brand through sport like leading universities worldwide.

Our transformation story is playing out in other ways too. The MUT Men's Conference, together with our visible leadership during Africa Day 2025 celebrations, show that we are cultivating a value-driven, inclusive institutional culture that stakeholders can trust and partner with.

Importantly, the MUT brand is also beginning to gain traction internationally. Our recently signed memorandum of agreement (MoU) with DS Innovation in the United States is already attracting international media attention, including a feature in a Phoenix, Arizona publication. This is more than good press, it is strategic visibility! It shows that our work resonates beyond borders, and that MUT is emerging as a serious player in global higher education and innovation networks.

From Umlazi to the US, from literacy to leadership, MUT is positioning itself as a university of impact: one that not only exists, but transforms.

FROM THE OFFICE OF THE VICE-CHANCELLOR AND PRINCIPAL



**Vice-Chancellor and Principal,
Professor Nokuthula Sibiyi**

As I approach the end of my first year in office, I am deeply humbled by the incredible progress we have made together. It has been a year of listening, learning and leading – but above all, it has been a year of witnessing the true power and potential of our University community.

This year, MUT has taken bold strides in advancing research, innovation and inclusivity. I am especially proud to announce that five of our researchers have been awarded prestigious National Research Foundation (NRF) ratings, with effect from 1 January 2025. This national recognition speaks volumes about the calibre of talent we nurture at MUT and the real-world relevance of our research.

This success is no accident; it is the outcome of strategic efforts such as our NRF Rating Workshop, which empowered our staff to navigate the rating process and pursue scholarly excellence with purpose. Our goal remains clear: to turn knowledge into impact and build a University where research drives societal progress.

We continue to celebrate outstanding individuals like Dr Kegomoditswe Mathobela, whose PhD in Public Health advances accessible STI diagnosis for underserved women, and Dr Sixolise Manciya, whose PhD in sustainable agriculture explores food security among smallholder farmers. These are scholars shaping the world through their work. I am equally thrilled to recognise Dr Darlington Hove for his recent PhD in Mathematics – a rare and commendable feat in a demanding discipline.

During this period, I have also observed innovation taking root and thriving at MUT. The student-developed Camp Comm App is revolutionising communication on campus, a testament to our commitment to technology-driven solutions from within.

We are also building a more inclusive future through our Disability Capacity-Building Partnership with the University of Cape Town (UCT), and forming impactful global relationships – including through our recent engagement with universities in Namibia and the US (New Orleans and Sacramento); top organisations like DS Innovations in Arizona; and a US non-profit (the Committee for South African Solidarity in San Francisco) where a South African is mobilising action for disadvantaged communities in South Africa.

It would be remiss of me not to highlight the remarkable achievements of our students in sport and entrepreneurship. Whether on the field or launching their ventures, our students are demonstrating that leadership, discipline and creativity are thriving at MUT. With the proper support and focus, these achievements can catapult lives toward greatness.

All of this proves one thing: MUT is not just evolving, we are rising – together. I am honoured to be part of this journey. Let us continue to move forward with purpose and pride.

AFRICA DAY 2025



Dr Laven Samuels

MUT joins forces for Africa Day 2025

On 30 May 2025, Durban's Greyville Racecourse transformed into a vibrant hub of culture, scholarship and unity as higher education institutions across KwaZulu-Natal came together for a landmark Africa Day 2025 celebration. Under the theme "Strengthening African Unity and Higher Education Collaboration", the event marked a significant shift from traditional campus-based observances to a dynamic, city-wide celebration of African identity and academic solidarity.

Spearheaded by DUT's Department of International Education and Partnerships, the event was a

collaborative effort involving all regional universities, including MUT. MUT's Marketing and Communications Department played a central role in both the planning and execution of the day's activities.

The programme featured a rich blend of cultural and academic elements. The day opened with a sterling performance of the African Union anthem by a university choir, followed by traditional poetry and dance that celebrated the continent's diverse heritage. A keynote address on African collaboration in higher education set the tone for the day's intellectual engagements.

"Reclaim the African narrative,"- Dr Lavern Samuels

The Africa Day 2025 celebration began with a powerful and reflective welcome from Dr Lavern Samuels, Director of International Education and Partnerships at DUT. Addressing a diverse audience of students, academics, community leaders and city officials, Dr Samuels set the tone for the day's theme: "Strengthening African Unity and Higher Education Collaboration."

In his opening remarks, Dr Samuels reminded attendees that Africa Day is more than a ceremonial occasion, it is a call to action. He reflected on the vision of post-colonial African leaders like Ghana's Kwame Nkrumah, noting that the continent has not always followed the path it envisioned. "Education," he said, "is a great engine of liberation, and must be central to Africa's journey forward."

Dr Samuels described Africa Day as a reminder of the resilience, diversity and strength that define the continent. “We must build our resilience as a continent so that the global winds of change do not blow us over,” he urged. His words resonated deeply in a gathering that brought together institutions such as MUT, DUT, UKZN, and UNIZULU, united under the banner of African Partnerships for University Advancement (APUA).

Dr Samuels emphasised the importance of Africa-centred internationalisation, celebrating APUA’s role in building bridges between institutions and across borders. “While some build wars,” he said, “we build

bridges.” He called on African scholars and institutions to tell their own stories, to place African scholarship at the forefront of global discourse, and to foster innovation rooted in the continent’s unique strengths.

Dr Samuels address also highlighted the importance of unity and excellence in shaping “the Africa we want” – a just and equal continent for all its people. He praised the collaborative spirit of the event, concluding with a hopeful vision: “May we continue to tell the African story. May we reimagine our future with unwavering determination and a shared commitment to African scholarship and innovation”.

MBALI MKHIZE JOINS THE DIALOGUE ON INCLUSIVE TRANSFORMATION



Mbali Mkhize, third from left, and other panel members

One of the most impactful moments of the Africa Day celebration came during the academic panel discussion. Mbali Mkhize, Senior Director, Department of Marketing and Communications at MUT, delivered a thought-provoking presentation on how universities can evolve from historically exclusive institutions into inclusive, community-anchored spaces. Drawing from MUT’s own initiatives, Mkhize introduced the University’s Anchor Strategy, which focuses on revitalising the Umlazi Township through partnerships with non-profit organisations (NPOs), corporations and local artists.

Addressing the audience, Mkhize posed this question: “We must ask ourselves: how do we, as institutions, become catalysts for change in the communities we serve?” She highlighted MUT’s role in facilitating water access through the Gift of the Givers project, and emphasised the importance of preserving local art and history by working with musicians and cultural practitioners. Gift of the Givers is a local NPO with international reach.

Mkhize’s message was clear: universities must not only educate, but also empower those around them. “We are not just institutions of learning – we are agents of transformation,” she said, advocating for a model where universities act as intermediaries that connect resources to the people, bypassing bureaucratic delays and fostering real-time impact.

The afternoon featured student panel discussions on African student mobility, institutional showcases of cross-border collaborations, and a series of exhibitions. These included a Museum and Art Gallery Centre, African literature displays, technology innovations, and traditional food booths hosted by DUT and UKZN students.

The event concluded with a festive atmosphere of dance, music and networking, leaving attendees inspired by the power of unity in diversity. MUT’s participation, primarily through the voice and vision of Mbali Mkhize, underscored the University’s commitment to community engagement and continental collaboration.

RECLAIMING OUR INDIGENOUS FOOD HERITAGE



Indigenous food attracted a lot of attention

How an indigenous food Market Day could spark a food revolution

Food plays a key role in both physical and mental health, which is why our feature story in this edition is about food. This is a deliberate decision, given the need for better knowledge on this subject to guide people in what they buy and eat. Leading the charge is Professor Xolile Mkhize, an expert on the subject of food production and consumption, community nourishment, and nutrition appreciation.

On 17 June 2025, a significant event transpired at MUT: an event that serves as a catalyst for broader socio-economic change rather than merely an isolated awareness initiative. During her address to staff and students that attended the Indigenous Food awareness event at the University's Anniversary Lane, Professor Xolile Mkhize – a specialist in food systems on a global scale – articulated the complexities and challenges inherent in the South African food system, which is characterised by both fragmentation and historical colonisation. Professor Mkhize's discourse went beyond the mere identification of issues; it sparked a movement aimed at empowering youth to actively participate in food production. Her address touched on the quality of food that is produced, the challenge of markets for small-scale farmers, and the need for a change in people's attitude towards food – particularly indigenous food which has been replaced by Western food, which is often of questionable quality. The initiative seeks to break down some of the assumptions about food production, such as the myth

that you can't plant food if you are living in an urban setting. According to Professor Mkhize, this is something called urban farming, where you use every space available to grow food. For example, you can plant your crops on a wall, a practice called vertical farming. She also says you can cultivate your crops within the township and market your products locally, thereby enhancing the township's economy. A Market Day initiative could encourage Umlazi residents and students alike to return to urban food gardens, transforming unused or underutilised spaces into micro-farms that feed families and foster pride.

Professor Mkhize challenged the University community to see land not as a commodity, but as a lifeline. It is about food provision, energy enhancement and reconnection. In this way, people would learn to "love the land", understand its rhythms, and reclaim the knowledge and dignity once held by generations of indigenous food growers.

The MUT event emphasised the importance of traditional African cuisine as both a sensory experience and a critical call to action. Speakers urged attendees to reclaim local food sovereignty, honour the contributions of small-scale farmers, and reassess the current paradigms surrounding food production, distribution and consumption. The underlying objectives were not only to promote awareness of indigenous food practices, but also to stimulate discourse on sustainable practices that



Members of the Faculty of Applied and Health Sciences – front, from left: Professor Alfred Msomi, Dean of the faculty; Professor Xolile Mkhize of the Department of Community Extension; Zama Ngema-Msomi, Lecturer in the Department of Community Extension. Back, are left, Dr Eric Mthembu, Head of the Department of Community Extension; and Dr Lindelani Qwabe, Head of the Department of Analytical Chemistry, at the event

respect both cultural heritage and community resilience.

This landmark event has sparked an even more exciting vision: the creation of a regular Market Day at MUT – a transformational initiative that could reshape student life, empower the Umlazi community, and ignite a cultural and economic shift rooted in land, heritage and opportunity.

Mbali Mkhize, Senior Director: Marketing and Communications, was surprised that all food stands were sold out minutes after the opening of the event, and commented to Professor Xolile Mkhize, “This is your time to expand your vision. There is a gap that MUT needs to fill in feeding staff, students and the community with the right knowledge. You have created more than a market; this is a lifestyle revolution. What if shopping on campus meant more than grabbing fast food? What if students and staff had access to locally grown, culturally relevant, nutritious produce, sold directly by emerging farmers, alumni, and community members,?”

Market Day at MUT could become just that: a lifestyle revolution that changes how people eat, shop and even think about food.

Bheki Hlophe

“We need to start being intentional – not just about what we eat, but how we grow it, where it comes from, and who it empowers,” said Professor Mkhize in her address at the inaugural MUT Market Day. Professor Mkhize was supported by her Head of Department, Dr Eric Mthembu, and the dean of the Faculty of Applied and Health Sciences, Professor Alfred Msomi. Dr Mthembu

underscored the urgency of preserving indigenous seeds, their vital role in sustaining traditional farming systems, and their contribution to food security. As a strategic contribution to this effort, Dr Mthembu announced that he would establish a dedicated indigenous seed bank at the University.

Growing entrepreneurs, one stall at a time

Phindile Xulu, an alumna of the Department of Community Extension, sold amadumbe, imfino yezintanga and pumpkin during the Market Day event – and her produce flew off the tables in minutes. Xulu has been profiled in the media several times because of her passion for farming, and she is one of several alumni who demonstrated how rural farming meets real demand in urban spaces.

Muzi Mkhize, also an alumnus, was present to sell indigenous bean varieties that he produces. Muzi is also a livestock farmer, breeding indigenous goats and cattle.

A regular Market Day would provide a stable, visible and welcoming platform for struggling entrepreneurs, offering direct income opportunities; exposure to new customers; networking with students, academics, and municipal partners; and education on packaging, branding and marketing for growth.

The faculty dean, Professor Alfred Msomi, offered a very powerful message to the staff and students. “Your insights on entrepreneurship and food system transformation reignited our commitment to SDG 2: Zero Hunger,” he said. These are not just sales; they are steps out of poverty, acts of resilience, and real

contributions to food security in one of South Africa's most vibrant yet economically challenged townships.

A university anchoring a food movement

MUT's location in Umlazi Township, and its abundance of open space, makes it uniquely positioned to host a monthly or seasonal Market Day, transforming its grounds into a vibrant marketplace; a showcase of urban farming projects; a live classroom for community entrepreneurship, health sciences, agriculture, and environmental studies; and a celebration of culture, food and heritage.

The partnership with alumni, local government like eThekweni Municipality and the Department of Agriculture, and all others that were at the event, gave MUT an opportunity to connect classroom knowledge with community needs, creating a living lab of sustainability, wellness and entrepreneurship.

Professor Mkhize's impact is not limited to MUT. She is a globally recognised food systems expert whose work contributes to the United Nations' Food Systems Pathway 1, which focuses on enhancing sustainable, local production and reclaiming indigenous knowledge systems.

Her challenge to staff and students was clear: "We cannot be told by another continent that our food is healthy. We must start eating it. It is an embarrassment that we don't know." Professor Mkhize urged students and her colleagues to take up the fight against food colonialism with urgency and pride, reclaiming African food not only in thought, but in practice as well.

From a moment to a movement

MUT's Indigenous Food Awareness Day was not a once-off. It was the beginning of a larger, louder, longer-term transformation. With the idea of a Market Day now gaining momentum, the University has a chance to lead a new narrative in Umlazi Township, one where land is loved and farmed again. This is a chance for MUT staff and students to fill up their plates with indigenous foods that are nutritious, accessible and culturally sanctioned. Everyone interested in the idea will grab the chance to learn; the activity is hands-on and community-centred. There is also a philosophical part to the narrative. "Food becomes an entry point to healing, opportunity, and unity," said Mkhize. "This is not just about food," said one participant. "This is about power. This is about purpose."

MUT Market Day would not only feed bodies, it would nourish minds, revive culture, and drive economic inclusion for the people of Umlazi Township and beyond.



Finance's Delani Buthelezi, foreground, bought some of the indigenous food on display

CELEBRATING MUT RESEARCH



Founding Director, Dr Anette Mienie, at the 25th celebration of the creation of the Research department

25 years of research, a future of possibilities

Twenty-five years ago, when MUT was still a Technikon, a remarkable journey began that would transform not only the University, but also the lives of countless individuals. It was a bright morning in the year 2000 when a dynamic young woman named Dr Anette Mienie embarked on her mission to establish the Research Office at the University. It was a path that would transform the landscape of innovation and excellence at MUT.

The early days were filled with challenges, but Dr Mienie's unwavering determination propelled her forward. Dr Mienie assembled a team of passionate academics and staff, each dedicated to the idea that research could serve as a catalyst for change. "That time, it was I, the Vice-Chancellor and Principal, Professor Aaron Ndlovu, and the Deputy Vice-Chancellor: Academic, Professor Edmund Zingu, who possessed the terminal qualification. But through hard work, determination and ambition, staff soon attained Master's qualifications and PhDs. The rest as they say, is history," said Dr Mienie.

"Our Research Office became a beacon of hope and possibility. It was not just an administrative hub; it evolved into a space where dreams took flight and societal challenges were tackled head-on. Staff began visiting my office and ideas emerged. Now, as we

celebrate our silver jubilee, we reflect on the incredible legacy that has been established. It is a legacy filled with stories of resilience, innovation and empowerment," said Dr Mienie, and many will attest to that. Dr Mienie's foresight and the dedication of her team have laid a foundation that will support future generations of scholars and innovators.

Today, the University stands proud, enriched by a quarter of a century of achievements that can be traced back to that initial spark of inspiration. With a commitment to relentless pursuit of knowledge and societal transformation, the Research Office is poised for the next chapter. As Dr Mienie often says, "Research is not just about finding answers; it's about creating a better world".

Together, we honour the visionary leadership of Dr Anette Mienie, the relentless spirit of the research staff, and the trailblazing researchers who have made this journey possible. The next 25 years promise to be another thrilling expedition of pushing boundaries, creating even more impact, and truly transforming society through research.

25 reasons to celebrate the Research Office:

- Founding of the Research Office (2000) by Dr Anette Mienie, laying the foundation for MUT's research excellence.
- Development of research policies and strategies to anchor the research agenda.
- Establishment of multidisciplinary Research Centres fostering collaborative innovation.
- Introduction of Research Excellence Awards recognising and rewarding high-impact researchers and innovative projects.
- Receipt of an NRF Excelleration Award 2020/2021 – an award for South African Research institutions, derived from the words “excellence” and “acceleration”.
- Hosting of Postdoctoral Research Fellows – advancing knowledge creation through postdoctoral mentorship and scholarship.
- Retired Professors Programme – tapping into seasoned expertise for mentorship and legacy-building.
- Seed Fund Programme – facilitating innovative research through early-stage funding opportunities.
- Research Capacity Development Grant (RCDG) – supporting the professional growth of emerging researchers through submitting grant proposals.
- Global research partnerships – strategic collaborations with international institutions for global impact.
- Significant growth in research income – sustained increase in research funding from diverse sources.
- Establishment of the Higher Degrees Office – supporting postgraduate research excellence and scholarly achievement.
- Inaugurating First Women Researchers in 2025 – a historic milestone for gender equity in academia.
- Women in Research Programmes that empower and advance women scholars across disciplines.
- Growth in number of NRF-rated researchers, showing increasing recognition by the National Research Foundation.
- Research recognition and awards – local and international accolades celebrating excellence.
- Annual Research and Innovation Week, a flagship event showcasing research outputs and collaborations.
- Introduction of an Ethics and Integrity Framework, a robust ethical governance system in research.
- Establishment of an Innovation and Commercialisation Unit to support technology transfer and intellectual property management.
- Community-engaged research initiatives – research that addresses societal challenges and uplifts communities.
- Patents in SA and across the world – several patents registered to protect MUT intellectual property.
- Digital Research Repository – launch of an open-access institutional repository for global visibility.
- Writing workshops and retreats – conducted to build capacity in translating research for public and policy impact.
- Outstanding staff retention – evidenced by a dedicated, long-serving team that continuously provides excellent research support services.
- Visionary leadership by the director – a scientist at heart, who went the extra mile by attaining a law degree specialising in Intellectual Property, aligning legal insight with research innovation.

CELEBRATING OUR NRF-RATED RESEARCHERS



Professor Papy Numbi

MUT is proud to announce that five of its researchers have been awarded prestigious National Research Foundation (NRF) ratings, effective from 1 January 2025. This recognition is a testament to their outstanding research contributions, scholarly leadership, and commitment to addressing pressing societal challenges through innovation and academic inquiry.

An elated Dr Anette Mienie, acting Deputy Vice-Chancellor: Research, Innovation and Engagements, said that an NRF rating “is a prestigious and career-defining recognition”.

According to Dr Miene, a “C” rating signals that a researcher is an established scholar with a consistent

and credible track record of quality research, both nationally and internationally. “Their work is regularly cited, and they are known for producing quality outputs. The “2” sub-category indicates that most reviewers agree the researcher has achieved this standing, though not all may place them at the very top of the “C” category. I am therefore proud of Professor Babatunde Bakare [featured below] for attaining the C2 echelon,” she said.

According to the NRF, Y-rated researchers are typically researchers under the age of 40 who are recognised by their peers as having the potential to establish themselves as researchers, having demonstrating this potential through recent research outputs.



Dr Courage Mlambo

Professor Papy Numbi – C2 Rating (up from a Y1 rating)

Faculty: Engineering

Research Profile:

Professor Numbi's research spans innovative energy systems, mechatronics and sustainable urban development. His work addresses energy efficiency in buildings and industrial applications, with a strong emphasis on data-driven modelling, system automation, and climate-conscious engineering solutions. Professor Numbi collaborates extensively with industry and academic partners across the Southern African Development Community (SADC) and Europe, contributing to both innovation and policy advancement in energy sustainability.

Starting from humble beginnings in the academic hierarchy, Professor Numbi has lived up to the intentionality he showed as an up-and-coming researcher. Today, his hard work exemplifies the DHET's mention of human capital development, especially in research and innovation.

Dr Courage Mlambo – C3 Rating

Faculty: Management Sciences

Research Profile:

Dr Mlambo is a specialist in digital pedagogy, curriculum transformation and educational technology. His research explores how technology can enhance learning outcomes and reduce digital inequality in higher education, particularly in historically disadvantaged institutions. His work has influenced both academic policy and staff development programmes at MUT and beyond. He is also a vocal advocate for decolonising the curriculum and promoting inclusivity in digital spaces.



Dr Abiola Ezekiel Taiwo

Dr Abiola Ezekiel Taiwo – Y2 Rating

Faculty: Engineering

Position: Postdoctoral Research Fellow

Research Profile:

Dr Taiwo's research portfolio is extensive, covering renewable energy systems, bioprocess engineering, high-pressure technology, and the water–food–energy nexus. He also works in waste valorisation, process simulation and optimisation, artificial intelligence in engineering, and techno-economic analysis. Comprising over 40 DHET-accredited journal publications, more than 15 book chapters, and international conference presentations, his work contributes to climate-smart technologies and sustainable industrial processes. Dr Taiwo is a driving force in expanding MUT's research visibility through cross-continental collaborations.

Professor Babatunde Bakare also obtained a C2 rating once again, and Ncobela, a lecturer in the Department of Agriculture, was granted a Y2 rating.

These ratings not only reflect individual excellence but also elevate MUT's institutional research profile.

NRF-rated researchers are nationally recognised experts, which:

- strengthens MUT's eligibility for competitive research funding;
- attracts high-quality postgraduate students;
- supports the University's internationalisation and strategic partnership agenda; and
- aligns with national priorities, such as the National Development Plan and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

"This achievement is a powerful signal that MUT is cultivating a thriving research culture grounded in excellence, innovation and community impact. Our rated researchers are mentors, collaborators and knowledge producers who are shaping the future of South Africa and the continent," said Dr Anette Mienie proudly.

Professor Nokuthula Sibiyi, MUT's Vice-Chancellor and Principal, is a C2-rated researcher herself. Congratulating the newly-rated researchers, she said, "As MUT continues to grow its research footprint, these scholars will serve as ambassadors of excellence and play a pivotal role in advancing research capacity, postgraduate training, and international collaboration. Their achievements highlight the strategic value of investing in scholarly talent and institutional partnerships. We salute our researchers and look forward to the journey ahead!"

MUT LEADS THE CONVERSATION ON A NEW ERA OF RESEARCH FUNDING



Dr Anette Mienie

In a historic moment for the research community, MUT hosted a groundbreaking consultative session with the National Research Foundation (NRF) in the University's Council Chambers on 17 June 2025. The atmosphere buzzed with hope and possibility as the NRF unveiled a visionary plan to modernise research funding by replacing traditional funding instruments – the Competitive Programme for Rated Researchers (CPRR) and Competitive Support for Unrated Researchers (CSUR) – with a forward-thinking new framework: Thematic Research Funding Instruments.

This signifies more than just a change in funding, it embodies a commitment to inclusivity and collaboration. Historically, the CPRR supported NRF-rated researchers, boosting their projects while many talented individuals were often left on the sidelines. While the CSUR aimed to assist unrated researchers, acknowledging their potential, its support was somewhat limited. The introduction of thematic funding aims to address this gap by taking a collaborative approach.

The new framework champions diverse research teams – comprising established, emerging and next-generation scholars – to unite and address pressing national challenges in areas like Health, Energy, and Information and Communication

Technology (ICT). This collaborative spirit ignites a passion within researchers, challenging them to break down disciplinary silos and create transformative solutions that can change lives and uplift communities.

Key highlights of this reimagined funding model include:

- a strong emphasis on societal impact, placing the needs of communities at the forefront;
- prioritisation of capacity development and succession planning, fostering the next generation of innovators;
- promotion of infrastructure and resource sharing among institutions, encouraging unity and shared purpose; and
- revised eligibility criteria with a broadened thematic focus to ensure a wider array of ideas and talents.

Dr Anette Mienie expressed the euphoria surrounding this shift: "This is nothing short of a revolution in how we approach research. I am beyond excited about the opportunities this presents for our researchers and South African society as a whole. We are not just funding projects; we are cultivating vibrant research communities that can truly make a difference."

This transformation is ultimately about building a sustainable and resilient research ecosystem in South Africa. An NRF senior representative reinforced this vision, stating, "We are building research communities, not just research projects".

As these initiatives unfold, they remind us all of MUT's firm commitment to nurturing a research-intensive culture that is collaborative, strategic and future-focused. With the first Call for Proposals under the new thematic programme set to launch later in 2025, MUT researchers are positioning themselves at the forefront of innovation, ready to leave their mark on the world.

From mentoring scholars to secure their NRF stripes, to engaging in national dialogues on funding reform, MUT exemplifies the power of leading by example. This collective journey, which aims for equity and access in research, is deeply rooted in the belief that every voice matters and every idea can spark meaningful change.

Dr Mienie could not be happier as she witnesses this dream unfold. "Stay tuned as we embark on this exhilarating journey. The future of research is being boldly written at MUT!"

MAJOR STRIDES IN RESEARCH DURING THE OPENING QUARTER OF 2025



Dr Anette Mienie, seated, left, and Dr Mandla Hlongwane, also seated, and the Research team

The latest report on the University's research performance indicates that the institution is well on its way to becoming a research-informed University, which is a precursor to being a research-directed University. This is important progress for an institution that, 45 years ago, was established as a teaching-focused institution and has been working hard to improve its research output and ranking.

In the first three months of 2025, the University achieved 8.375 research output units. So far, its total cumulative research output units are 8.375, from a total of 242 staff members: the Faculty of Engineering has 1.325 units from 66 staff members; the Faculty of Management Sciences has 3.17 units from 77 staff members; while the Faculty of Applied and Health Sciences leads with 3.78 units, from 99 members.

A total of 12 DHET-accredited journal articles were received during this period. The Faculty of Applied and Health Sciences led the charge, with five papers. Professor Xolile Mkhize of the Department of Community Extension, and Nokukhanya Thembane, a senior lecturer in the Department of Biomedical Sciences, each featured twice. Professor Babatunde Bakare, dean of the Faculty of Engineering, and Professor Sandiso Ngcobo, head of the Department of Communication, also each featured twice.

During this period, a total of R7 636 407 in cumulative external income from research grants and contracts was received – up from R 6 050 600 during the same period in 2024. The major contributors were the Director of the

Research Directorate, Dr Anette Mienie, and her colleague in the directorate, Dr Melvin Mothoa, who contributed R4 730 985, followed by CEAD Director, Professor Busisiwe Nkonki-Mandleni, with a sum of R615 000; and Dr Mandla Hlongwane, Deputy Director: Intellectual Property, with a sum of R500 000.

During the period Mthobeli Myeza in the Research Directorate as pre-grant administrator. Myeza is responsible for overseeing all matters related to the National Research Foundation (NRF) and pre-grant processes, ensuring seamless support for research funding applications and scholarly activities.

On 16 January 2025, the Research Directorate hosted an NRF rating workshop. Dr Anette Mienie said the objective of the workshop was to equip participants with a comprehensive understanding of the rating process, criteria, and its significance in academic and research careers. "The workshop was open to both academic and support staff who sought to enhance their knowledge of NRF ratings, thereby fostering a culture of research excellence and informed engagement within the academic community," said Dr Mienie.

The Research directorate, among other things, also ran intellectual property awareness workshops. The first one was held on 6 March 2025, with 26 participants, and was facilitated by Professor Michael Twum-Darko, a Cape Peninsula University of Technology (CPUT) academic. The second was held on 19 April 2025, presented by Dr Mandla Hlongwane, Deputy Director: Intellectual Property.

MUT CAMPUS RADIO TURNS 4



The MUT Radio Programmes Manager, Awethu Kelese, left, with DJs Grace Ramokaelo, middle, and Mvelo Hadebe

Celebrating a voice that unites, informs and inspires

MUT Campus Radio has turned four, and what a journey it has been! From humble beginnings to a dynamic, student-driven broadcasting platform, MUT Radio is now a powerful voice of the campus that reaches staff, student, and the wider community. It does so through thought-provoking content – and interactive Outside Broadcasts (OBs) – that create dialogue on issues that matter, from social and cultural to health and educational. The past year alone stands as a testament to how far MUT Radio has come, and how brightly its future shines.

Taking radio to the people

One of the station's most significant achievements is its growing presence outside campus walls. In 2024 and early 2025, Outside Broadcasts (OBs) became a hallmark of MUT Radio's outreach. For instance: Umlazi High School was abuzz on World Radio Day (13 February 2025) as The Vuk'ubangene Breakfast Show went live on-site, engaging learners and educators with the power of radio.

On the same day, The Hlanganani Midday Show broadcasted a conversation on climate change with MUT's Dr TT Poswa, aligning with this year's global radio theme.

Later, The Hangout Show closed the day with a historic simulcast with TUT FM, symbolising the growing collaboration between institutions.

From Dr Pixley ka Isaka Seme Hall to Ingelosi Primary School, these OBs amplify voices that often go unheard, showcasing MUT Radio's commitment to being a bridge between academia and society.

Radio with purpose

The station's anchors have made it their mission to go beyond entertainment. They are leading critical conversations that raise awareness and spark change. For instance:

- On 19 February 2025, Zolile Machi from MUT's Writing Centre joined Vuk'ubangene to demystify plagiarism and reinforce academic integrity.
- On 21 February 2025, MUT Radio marked International Mother Language Day with multiple shows, including OBs and interviews with MUT's Professor Alfred Msomi, Dr Ngubane, and an IsiXhosa specialist from Walter Sisulu University, reinforcing the value of linguistic diversity and inclusion.
- On 4 March 2025, The Hlanganani Midday Show hosted Rajendrie Govender from the Faculty of Applied

and Health Sciences to educate listeners on cervical cancer and HPV – bringing health awareness directly to the student body.

These transformative conversations are helping build social cohesion by tackling issues of identity, rights, culture and community.

“We use our platform to educate, connect and celebrate the diversity of voices at MUT and beyond. This is not just student radio – it is public impact broadcasting,” said one of the station’s senior anchors.

A station that grows with its people

In line with its fourth birthday celebrations, MUT Radio launched its 2025 Talent Search. Out of 25 hopefuls, it welcomed nine new volunteers – a reflection of the station’s growing reputation as a training ground for future media professionals.

Initiatives like Career Tuesdays with the Co-operative Education Directorate, Legal Insights with Mlambo Attorneys, and Human Rights commemorations with experts like Professor B Nkonki-Mandleni and Ismail Joosub, continue to enrich the station’s content and broaden its educational reach.

Whether hosting acclaimed musician Ntsika Ntsika on Timeless, or broadcasting a public lecture by Professor Kalpana Balakrishnan from India, MUT Radio is establishing itself as a knowledge-sharing hub and cultural pulse point for both the University and the broader community.

Four years of growth and counting

MUT Radio’s success is no accident. It’s the result of dedicated student anchors, engaged academic staff, visionary leadership, and a deep belief in radio’s power to unite. Celebrating 115 years of the Nazareth Baptist Church, hosting departmental spotlights, and streaming events like “VC in Conversation” are just a few recent examples of its multifaceted engagement.

As the station looks to the future, its goals are clear: to expand its listenership, deepen its content, amplify the voices of those who are often unheard, and continue to be a vibrant platform that reflects the heart of MUT.

“At four years old, MUT Radio is no longer just campus radio – it’s community radio, social radio, and change-making radio,” said one Radio Management Committee member.



Nomcebo Ngcobo, left; and Lwandile Mbatha, right; with MUT Radio staff, Sineziwe Majola (Snezy M, second from left); and Awethu Kelese, broadcasting at Umlazi High School

CAMPUS INNOVATION

Camp Comm – the App built by students, for students



Rogerant Tshibangu, left, and Sibongiseni Masondo. Note the App on Tshibangu's mobile phone

At MUT, innovation is not just a buzzword, it's a movement. Deep within the corridors of the Department of Electrical Engineering, an extraordinary digital transformation is taking place. Spearheaded by Dr Richard Chidzonga, supported by the ingenuity of Rogerant Tshibangu (lecturer) and Sibongiseni Masondo (industrial technician), MUT has launched a groundbreaking mobile platform that's capturing national attention: the Camp Comm App.

What began as a departmental communication tool has rapidly evolved into a powerful institutional platform that was designed, built and scaled by MUT students themselves. This is not only a triumph for campus life but a testament to MUT's strategic focus on innovation, research and technology-driven education.

The Camp Comm App was born from a visionary idea: to solve the persistent challenge of fragmented communication between staff and students. Instead of emails lost in inboxes and outdated notice boards, students now have one seamless mobile app for:

- instant academic updates and alerts;
- module-specific communication between lecturers and students;
- consolidated timetables, events, and announcements; and
- interactive tools for campus events (like real-time voting and games).

Developed using Flutter and Firebase and supported by seed funding from the Technology Innovation Agency (TIA), the project became a real-world innovation lab. A team of five Electrical Engineering students gained hands-on experience in app development, software testing, operational workflows and entrepreneurship.

What truly sets Camp Comm apart is its scalability and impact. The piloted version quickly became an institution-wide platform, gaining momentum even beyond the institution. Its milestones speak for themselves:

- It was successfully used for the 2024 MUT Year-End Staff Function, enabling live engagement.
- It became the official app for the 2024 WIPO Summer School, proving its professional event capacity.
- It facilitated academic stream selection over three semesters, transforming administrative efficiency.
- It earned a R500 000 investment from TIA and interest from commercial partners.
- It featured at the 2025 Durban Business Fair, attracting interest from other institutions.

The development team is now eyeing a R1.5 million funding round to strengthen the app's cybersecurity features and scale it nationally, positioning it as a leading solution for digital transformation in higher education.

With over 1 000 active installs across Android, iOS, and Huawei, and high engagement rates during academic events, the app has become a trusted part of student life. Its low uninstall rate reflects its consistent value, while daily classroom usage showcases how deeply it is integrated into teaching and learning at MUT.

Dr Chidzonga, the proud Head of Department, captures the heart of the movement: "It is more than just an app; it is a living example of what MUT can build, scale, and export to the world." Tshibangu, one of the project's originators, adds: "We wanted to empower students through innovation. What we got in return was a product that now empowers the entire institution – and soon, possibly the country." The Camp Comm App is no longer just a communication tool; it is a symbol of what happens when academia meets ambition – and when student innovation becomes institutional and even national transformation.

This project is a shining reflection of MUT's Strategic Goal 2: "Driving excellence in research, innovation, and engagement". It shows that with the right support, mentorship and belief in student potential, MUT is not only producing graduates but shaping leaders, creators and changemakers.

ADDING VALUE TO THE BUSINESS COMMUNITY



Anil Lonappan

Kudos to Anil Lonappan for a game-changing IoEWR presentation at DUT

What was initially scheduled as a 90-minute workshop turned into a captivating, 1-hour 48-minute engagement filled with insight and enthusiastic interaction as MUT's Anil Lonappan delivered a masterclass titled "The Identification of Engineering Works Regulations (IoEWR) and its Legal Consequences".

The presentation was given to the Faculty of Engineering at DUT. The Q&A segment, in particular, sparked meaningful dialogue and highlighted the depth of interest in the topic. Colleagues from DUT described the workshop as one of the most informative and clarifying sessions they have attended on engineering regulations and professional registration.

Anil's ability to demystify complex issues surrounding ECSA registration and compliance was a standout feature of the presentation. Multiple DUT staff members reached out after the session, praising his ability to finally answer long-standing questions that had gone unresolved for years.

This exceptional clarity was no coincidence: Lonappan serves on six ECSA committees and undergoes annual

professional training, which equips him with the up-to-date expertise needed to speak with authority and precision on engineering governance in South Africa.

"It is always a privilege to share knowledge, but the real reward is seeing it click for others," said Anil. "I'm grateful for the engagement and humbled by the positive response from my peers at DUT."

The impact at a glance:

- Extended session due to audience demand
- Multiple follow-up commendations from DUT colleagues
- Long-standing ECSA registration questions finally answered
- Real-time impact on professional development and compliance understanding.

Anil's contribution is not just a win for DUT's Faculty of Engineering, it's a win for the entire engineering community as clarity on regulatory compliance strengthens both professional standards and public trust. Congratulations, Anil!

MUT, AN ANCHOR FOR THE COMMUNITY



One of the learners that won trophies, with Dr Mfanozelwe Shozi, Deputy Director: CEAD, and Education department officials that applauded MUT initiative

Reigniting reading skills among school learners

The Community Engagement and Development (CEAD) Directorate continues its efforts to empower primary school pupils with reading skills through its primary school English reading project – an initiative that provides a nurturing space for learners to develop essential literacy skills. On 19 June 2025, members of CEAD, other University staff, officials from the Department of Basic Education (DBE), and supporters of the reading project were at Mariannridge Primary School near Pinetown for the MUT Reading Project Competition – the second in 2025 – which promotes a culture of reading across classrooms in Umlazi and Pinetown Districts, laying the groundwork for long-term educational success.

The project is the brainchild of the CEAD and is a response to Goal Three of the University's Strategic Plan: "Excellence in community engagement". According to CEAD Director, Professor Busisiwe Nkonki-Mandleni, partners are needed to achieve this goal. When engaging with communities, the team is

guided by a set of principles that include reciprocity, transformation, sustainability and ethics.

The Umlazi Township primary schools that took part in the competition were Embonini, Umgijimi, KwaManzini, Ingelosi, Emthethweni, Sukuma and Mariannridge Primary School, which hosted the event. Chief Lokothwayo Primary School attended as an observer and intends to join the group. The Grade Four and Five learners were assessed on their fluency, expression, presentation and volume, among other things. In addition the Grade Five pupils were tested on their comprehension of what they read – or "reading for meaning", as the CEAD's Dr David Ighodaro explained.

Saloshini Pillay, a subject advisor from the DBE, said that every child who participated in the event was a winner as they had to demonstrate the necessary reading skills to even reach this point. "All the children deserve a round of applause. It takes a lot to read in front of people. No one mumbled," Pillay said. She went on to give some constructive comments about the



Pupils from different primary schools, with their teachers and Education department officials

pupils' performances. She commented on how they pronounced some of the words and noted that they needed to improve their eye contact with the audience. Pillay said reading was a big part of the curriculum.

As far as results are concerned, the Grade 4 category winners were as follows: first position was awarded to Embonini Primary School, second spot went to Mariannridge Primary School, and third place was taken by Ingelosi Primary School. Embonini also took the first position in the Grade Five category, followed by Umgijimi Primary School and the host school, Mariannridge Primary, which took third position.

The overall winning schools for the competition were Mariannridge Primary (Grade 4) and Umgijimi Primary School (Grade 5). All participants received personalised certificates, while the top-performing learners were awarded trophies. The overall winning schools were presented with roving trophies in recognition of their excellence.

While this is a competition that results in winners, speakers highlighted the need to "close the gap" in improving reading for all. As the principal of the host school, Thembi Mngadi, said, the MUT logo on the trophies and certificates would remind the pupils that they needed to aim high to reach places like MUT and to secure their future.

BASIC EDUCATION OFFICIALS APPLAUD MUT OPEN DAY AT UMLAZI SCHOOL



Some Vukuzakhe High School learners at the Biomedical Sciences stand

The University's constructive attitude towards its neighbouring schools and the Umlazi Township community has once again resulted in a big gain for the learners of local high schools. On 20 May 2025, the University held its Open Day at Vukuzakhe High School. Department of Basic Education officials and others in the system hailed MUT's decision to have the event at a place that is within reach of the community. The schools that attended the event were Menzi High, Qhilika High, Velabahleke High, Ndukwenhle High and Sishosonke High and Vukuzakhe, the host school.

Learners from these schools gained from presentations from the following MUT departments: Chemistry, Community Extension, Electrical Engineering, Marketing, Human Resources, Public Administration, Accounting, Biomedical Sciences, Agriculture, Sport and the Clinic. The Central Applications Office (CAO) was also represented.

Chief Education Specialist from the Department of Basic Education, Nombulelo Yeni, said the department considers MUT as a natural partner. "We have to partner with the University. MUT targets Umlazi community. This gives Umlazi schools a chance to do well." Yeni added that their target was that all Umlazi Township school learners should go to tertiary institutions.

The Principal of Menzi High School, Nozipho Ndlanya,

who collaborated with MUT's Department of Marketing and Communications to have the Open Day at Vukuzakhe High, gave many reasons for the event. Ndlanya said many students are unaware of the range of programmes offered at universities, and do not understand the difference between universities of technology and traditional universities.

"This knowledge gap affects their ability to make informed decisions about their future," said Ndlanya. She added that science, humanities, and management programmes are not equally promoted at open days. "Management studies often receive less attention. We urge a more balanced presentation of all academic fields to reflect diverse interests and potential of our learners," said Ndlanya, who requested that the event be held annually.

Among the more than 1 000 learners who first listened to the presentations and then visited the stands was Nonzuzo Duma, a Grade 12 learner from Vukuzakhe High. Nonzuzo, a Head Girl, was a changed individual when she left the hall where the event took place. "I learnt a lot about careers I did not know. For instance, I did not know about Human Resources and Management. I only knew about medicine, nursing and optometry. I also now know there is mechatronics." Nonzuzo obtained straight As in her Grade 11 exams.

MUT TAKES OPEN DAY TO NORTHERN KWAZULU-NATAL



Fifth from left, Councillor Thenjiwe Mbatha, Deputy Mayor, Umzinyathi District Municipality, sixth from left, Bongani Ntombela, Chief Education Specialist, Umzinyathi District, with learners from schools from uMsinga and surrounding

On 9 April 2025, MUT brought higher education closer to home for learners in the Umzinyathi District in northern KwaZulu-Natal, hosting an impactful Open Day at Ukukhanya KoMsinga Special School. The event welcomed more than 1 700 Grade 12 learners from 28 high schools across Lower Umsinga, Pomeroy and surrounding areas.

Organised by the MUT Marketing and Communications Department, in collaboration with its academic and support departments, the Open Day was designed to empower learners with the knowledge they need to make informed career decisions. With 2026 applications already open, the timing was perfect for learners to engage directly with MUT staff and explore their options.

The day was divided into two sessions: 933 learners attended the morning session from 11 high schools in Lower Umsinga, and 864 learners participated in the afternoon session from 17 high schools in Pomeroy and nearby areas. Bongani Ntombela, Chief Education Specialist (CES) for the Umzinyathi District, expressed his appreciation. "It is a rare occasion – most universities organise open days on campus, but MUT has come to the people. We feel special and honoured to be chosen among nine districts to benefit from this bespoke programme."

Learners had the opportunity to interact with representatives from a wide range of departments, including Engineering, Health Sciences, ICT, Management, and Student Support Services. Each

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Learners had the opportunity to interact with representatives from a wide range of departments, including Engineering, Health Sciences, ICT, Management, and Student Support Services. Each department provided detailed presentations on qualifications offered, admission requirements, and career prospects.

Zakhele Zondi, a lecturer from the Department of

Mechanical Engineering, commented on the impact of the programme. “We are not just here to promote our programmes, we are here to help learners see what is possible. Many of them are unaware that their subject combinations already align with exciting careers in science and healthcare. Today is about opening their eyes and their minds,” said Zondi.

The MUT team’s dedication was evident throughout the day. Staff members even stepped in to present on behalf of departments that could not attend, ensuring that no learner was left without the information they needed. These staff’s efforts reflected the true spirit of MUT, a university that is student-focused and committed to community upliftment.

The event also emphasised the importance of individual responsibility in career planning. Learners were reminded that choosing a career is a personal journey, not a group decision, and that applying early for enrolment is essential.



Cebo Dlamini, left, and Brian Msimang, from Civil and Survey Engineering, waiting to welcome learners to their stands



Mfundo Makhanya enjoys telling learners about Analytical Chemistry

MUT AND UMZINYATHI MUNICIPALITY UNITE TO EMPOWER RURAL YOUTH



Deputy Mayor, Thenjiwe Mbatha

The success of the recent MUT Open Day in Umsinga was not just a triumph of logistics, it was a powerful example of what can be achieved through strategic stakeholder collaboration. The event was made possible through a meaningful partnership between MUT and the Umzinyathi District Municipality, demonstrating a shared commitment to transforming education in rural communities.

Representing the municipality, Deputy Mayor Honourable TB Mbatha delivered a heartfelt address that underscored the importance of the occasion. “MUT is our university,” she said proudly. “This programme aligns with our vision as we rebuild and change the narrative about Umsinga. Our new focus is on education.” The Deputy Mayor emphasised the municipality’s efforts to support academic excellence, including the introduction of education awards and a renewed focus on out-of-school youth. She urged MUT to continue extending its reach beyond traditional learners, ensuring that all young people in the district have access to career guidance and opportunities.

“Most learners are out of school because they didn’t have the knowledge to plan for life after high school,” she noted. “We are in a rural area that has been overlooked and disadvantaged for too long. It is not common for services and information to be readily available to our learners. That’s why this partnership with MUT is so important.”

The collaboration between MUT’s Marketing and Communications Department and the Mayor’s Office was instrumental in bringing the Open Day to life. It ensured that learners from across the district – many of whom would not have been able to travel to Durban – could access vital information about university programmes, application processes, and career pathways.

Zama Sishi, MUT’s Director of Stakeholder Relations, reflected on the broader value of the partnership.

“Collaborating with the municipality allows us to extend MUT’s reach and relevance. More than recruitment, it’s about building trust, strengthening our community ties, and ensuring that no learner is left behind, no matter how remote their location.”

Sishi also extended heartfelt thanks to the MUT staff who made the event possible. “I want to sincerely thank every staff member who represented MUT at the Open Day in Umsinga. Your dedication, professionalism and willingness to go the extra mile truly embody the values of our university. You made a lasting impression on the learners and the community.”

The Deputy Mayor also praised the dedication of local educators and learners, noting that Grade 12 learners in Umsinga now attend classes seven days a week. “Kuyisifiso sethu ukubona abantu baseMsinga bephumelela babuye bazothuthukise indawo yaseMsinga,” she said. “It is our wish to see the people of Umsinga succeed and return to uplift their community.”

She concluded by calling on learners to listen attentively, make the right choice, and apply on time because the municipality is ready to support learners with bursaries and awards.

YOUR NETWORK IS YOUR NET WORTH: MUT VICE-CHANCELLOR AND PRINCIPAL CONNECTS WITH THE GLOBAL SOLIDARITY MOVEMENT



Professor Nokuthula Sibiyi, MUT's Vice-Chancellor and Principal, left, with COSAS's Nicole Richards

In a powerful demonstration of the saying “your network is your net worth”, Professor Nokuthula Sibiyi, Vice-Chancellor and Principal of MUT, recently met with a remarkable global organisation: the Committee for South African Solidarity (COSAS), based in San Francisco, USA. This strategic engagement is already laying the foundation for impactful partnerships to benefit MUT, its surrounding communities and the broader South African society.

COSAS is a respected international NGO dedicated to building solidarity between the people of South Africa and the United States. COSAS’ mission is simple yet profound: to mobilise resources, knowledge and

relationships to support education and community development in South Africa. For MUT, this meeting came at an opportune moment as the institution sharpens its focus on internationalisation and growing its communities through its Anchor Strategy.

During the meeting, COSAS extended a warm and enthusiastic hand of partnership, offering to connect MUT with their extensive network of supporters and donors across the USA. COSAS also expressed a strong desire to support projects that align with the Vice-Chancellor and Principal’s vision of empowering local communities alongside the University’s growth.

One immediate opportunity for collaboration emerged through the COSAS Solidarity Shipment, a humanitarian project to deliver school supplies to under-resourced schools and community organisations in South Africa. COSAS has 387 boxes of educational materials ready to be shipped and is looking for a South African non-profit or institution with an active importer’s code to receive the shipment.

“This not only opens the door for MUT to support educational development in surrounding communities, but also positions the University as a key conduit for international goodwill and grassroots impact,” said Professor Sibiyi, adding that the partnership “is even more inspiring because it reflects MUT’s growing global footprint”.

As the Vice-Chancellor leverages international networks to attract funding, resources and new ideas, she also strengthens MUT’s role as a transformative agent in KwaZulu-Natal and beyond.

The meeting with COSAS is just the beginning of what promises to be a fruitful collaboration. With shared goals and values, aligned missions, and mutual respect, COSAS and MUT are poised to bridge continents in the name of solidarity, education and transformation.

“As this partnership grows, it will remind the MUT community that relationships matter and that our collective net worth is found in the strength of our networks,” said Professor Sibiyi.

TRANSFORMING MUT FROM WITHIN



Some MUT men folks outside the conference venue

MUT men inspired after conference

The University's male employees now have a different feeling about what it is like to be a man. This was after the MUT men attended a groundbreaking "Men's Conference" on 19 May 2025, off campus.

The Vice-Chancellor and Principal of the University, Professor Nokuthula Sibiyi, addressed MUT men as "leaders and changemakers of MUT" who were meeting for "purpose, power and potential". Defining life as a "journey of growth, resilience and impact", MUT Vice-Chancellor Professor Nokuthula Sibiyi encouraged MUT men to take a second look at life and themselves, and re-examine their relationship with others. "This meeting is a call to arms for men who refuse to settle for less; who dare to lead with integrity; and are committed to leaving a legacy that matters.

The world needs men of courage; men who stand firm in their convictions, yet remain humble in their pursuit of wisdom," Professor Sibiyi said. She added that the meeting also needed men who build bridges, not barriers; who lift others as they climb; who understand that true strength lies in character, not just conquest.

Each speaker at the event highlighted some of the reasons that result in men behaving in a particular manner. For instance, some men become aggressive towards others, including their families. Advocate Mpumelelo Zikalala, from Zikalala Attorneys, said a man must know his role in the household, and by extension, in society.

"A man is an institution in the home," Zikalala said. Building from the theme of the event, which was "From Warrior to

Wisdom: Building a New Legacy for MUT Men", he said warriors are meant to destroy. But the theme suggests that men should be more than just warriors. "Do not be a warrior that destroys. Be one who builds. Times are changing. Know where to start and where to end. Be a changed person as you leave that door," he said.

He also said that men need to first define a few things. What is wisdom? What is quality? What is knowledge? And how do all of these define a man? Answers to these questions are relative, but they should be part of the development of man's skills to deal with life challenges. These answers should empower a man to make sound judgments. According to Zikalala, a man must have a plan as a guide. The plan must be communicated to those who are affected by the man's behaviour and presence.

Another speaker, Thembinkosi Ngcobo, focused on the need for men to be fair to others by communicating their thoughts so that they can be understood. Knowing others' needs would result in harmony and peace, particularly in the household, Ngcobo said. Ngcobo also highlighted a need for men to do physical check-ups regularly, which will increase their chances of discovering physical problems early.

The speakers and MUT men discussed some exclusively men's issues based on their physical makeup and proposed solutions to the problems.

Thabo Zwane, Treasurer of the MUT Gender Forum, said that some small-scale meetings would be held in the wake of the conference, to proactively address relevant issues.

GROUNDBREAKING MUT-UCT PARTNERSHIP FOCUSES ON STUDENTS LIVING WITH DISABILITIES



Professor Nokuthula Sibiyi, third from right, with the project delegates from left: Dr Marcia Lyner-Cleophas; Noluthando Ntsimango; Dr Paulette Naidoo; Edwina Ghall; and Samukelisiwe Lindeka Mthembu, MUT Disability Project Officer

The Student Counselling Unit's efforts to promote an inclusive, enabling support environment for students with disabilities (SWD) are gaining momentum through a Disability Capacity-Building Partnership between MUT and the University of Cape Town (UCT). Through this external-donor-funded project, MUT aims to lay the foundation for a sustainable and well-integrated disability support system that enhances accessibility and inclusion for all students.

Dr Paulette Naidoo, Director of Student Counselling, said two focal disability project officers have been contracted for capacity building, training and services to support students with disabilities at MUT. "Upon completion of the training, the focal individuals will transfer the acquired skills and knowledge to relevant staff members and students at MUT. This process ensures that the competencies gained are effectively integrated into institutional systems for the sustained support of students with disabilities," said Dr Naidoo.

Another "exciting element" of the project is the site visits

to MUT, UCT, University of the Western Cape (UWC) and Stellenbosch University (SU). The MUT site visit, conducted on 22 and 23 May 2025, entailed physical assessments of the University's existing infrastructure and facilities to enhance compliance with universal access and design principles. Dr Naidoo is of the view that site visits to other institutions with established disability support units will provide the MUT delegation with an opportunity to view and apply disability support resources and best practices to the MUT context.

Vice Chancellor and Principal, Professor Nokuthula Sibiyi, congratulated Dr Naidoo for this milestone achievement in advancing the rights of students with disabilities at MUT and pledged her full support for the project. Professor Sibiyi also emphasised that accessibility and inclusion for persons with disabilities have always been one of her key priority areas for transformation at MUT. Professor Sibiyi expressed delight at the accelerated progress that was being made in this area, particularly through the MUT-UCT project partnership.

PHD SUCCESS STORIES



Dr Darlington Hove

MUT staff member achieves a rare feat in his Mathematics PhD study

Achieving a PhD in mathematics, a notoriously difficult subject, is a big thing. With two mathematics PhD holders having recently retired, MUT currently has three staff members with PhDs in this subject: the Dean of the Faculty of Applied and Health Sciences, the head of the Department of Mathematical Sciences, and Dr Darlington Hove, a lecturer in the same department. Dr Hove's newly-awarded PhD from the University of Limpopo was on the Applied Mathematics topic of "Local times of deterministic paths and model-free cádlág price paths and their application to mathematical finance".

Dr Hove responded to a call for PhD funding in various areas of Applied Mathematics, offered under the SA-UK University Staff Development Programme (USDP). "My application was successful, and I joined a cohort of eight other PhD Applied Mathematics students studying under different concentrations. My primary interest was in Financial Mathematics, and I was particularly drawn to one of the available research topics listed under an umbrella project in this area."

Prior to sending in his application, Dr Hove had already been conducting independent research in Financial

Mathematics, having decided that this would be the focus of his doctoral studies. The proposed topic captured his attention as it was unique and underexplored. He was also motivated by the opportunity to work under the supervision of a researcher actively developing novel approaches to the treatment of local times further motivated his decision. This field of study aligned well with both his academic goals and his long-term research aspirations.

Dr Hove's thesis explores how financial market prices can be studied without relying on traditional mathematical models. "The main reason for moving away from these traditional models is that they have often failed to capture the full complexity and interconnectedness of the financial system. This shortcoming contributed to the 2008 global financial crisis, which nearly brought the global financial system to a standstill," he said.

In his research, Dr Hove used a model-free approach, which does not rely on strict assumptions that are in the well-known Black-Scholes-Merton model. "Instead, it only requires one basic condition: there should be no

way to make unlimited profit from a very small investment, a fair principle in well-functioning markets,” he said.

Dr Hove’s focus was on a concept called local time, which helps researchers understand how long a price stays at a certain level. He proved a new mathematical theorem that links local time to how frequently a price path crosses certain levels for functions with finite variation.

“I used a mathematical method known as Föllmer’s pathwise Itô calculus to show that if local time is missing from a price path, it may allow someone to make extremely large profits simply by timing their trades well – something that should not happen in a fair market,” he said.

Dr Hove explains further how he achieved this. “To explore this further, I used a method called truncated variation, developed by my supervisor, Professor Rafal Łochowski, to study how often prices cross certain levels. I also created examples to show when local time exists and when it doesn’t. One important result was constructing a path (inspired by the Cantor set) which has quadratic variation but lacks local time - and then modifying it to bring local time into existence.”

Dr Hove also explored Peano curves, which are complicated paths that typically fill unit 2D space using unit segments – and developed an algorithm to calculate how often these paths cross intervals. This helped determine the conditions for when the local time is present in such paths.

Dr Hove graduated on 12 April 2025.

RESEARCH STAFF MEMBER PROPOSES SOLUTIONS FOR SMME FINANCIAL SUPPORT



Dr Melvin Mothoa

While Small, Micro and Medium-Sized Enterprises (SMMEs) are projected as a solution to South Africa’s economic problems, SMME business owners find it difficult to access the cash they need to enable them to make the desired impact in the economy. This was the challenge Dr Melvin Mothoa sought to unpack and help solve.

While pursuing his PhD at the Tshwane University of Technology (TUT) School of Business and Society, Mothoa conducted research that uncovered some hard-to-bear truths about this part of the South African economy. “Despite being widely recognised as key drivers of economic growth, employment and innovation, SMMEs in the region continue to experience barriers such as a lack of collateral, complex regulatory requirements, limited financial literacy, and inadequate support from financial institutions,” said Mothoa. He conducted his study in Gauteng, South Africa’s richest and most populous province which is considered the main driver of the Southern African economy.

Mothoa’s research critically examined existing funding frameworks, policies and the role of both public and private financial institutions. He was able to identify key gaps in current financial support mechanisms. The outcome of the study was the development of a conceptual framework aimed at improving SMMEs’ access to financial support. “This framework emphasises strategic stakeholder collaboration, streamlined funding processes, financial education, policy reform, and the leveraging of innovative financing instruments,” he explained.

Dr Mothoa will continue his focus on SMMEs even after his PhD studies. “Following the successful completion of my doctoral studies, my focus is now on advancing research in entrepreneurship finance, research management and administration, and policy development for SMMEs,” he said. His study was supervised by Professor Edward Rankhumise and Dr Ephraim Faku. Dr Mothoa graduated on 13 May 2025.

SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURE PHD ADDRESSES FOOD INSECURITY



Dr Sixolise Manciya

Sixolise Manciya has just been awarded a PhD in Sustainable Agriculture, with a thesis titled “Assessing the impact of banana production on household food security and income amidst climate change adoption: A case study of smallholder farmers in KwaZulu-Natal and Eastern Cape, South Africa”.

Dr Manciya’s study contributes to scholarship on food security and climate change. It focused on the contribution of banana production in achieving food security among smallholder farmers. It also investigated how much knowledge extension officers have about climate change and banana production in South Africa.

Dr Manciya said that smallholder farmers in South Africa continue to face significant challenges in ensuring food security, and climate change is a further danger to the sustainability of agriculture. “As a source of revenue, bananas can improve smallholder farmers’ food security by offering both financial stability and nutritional advantages. The contribution of banana cultivation by smallholder farmers to food security, particularly in South Africa, is not extensively documented, though. Extension officers are also essential in helping smallholder farmers adjust to the changing environment. Their capacity to offer smallholder farmers pertinent advice and assistance is strongly impacted by

their level of expertise and comprehension of climate change.

Effective adaptation techniques may be hampered by extension officers’ lack of understanding, which could have an impact on food security and agricultural output,” he said.

The study aimed to close the gap between the contribution of banana production to enhancing food security and evaluating the level of climate change awareness among South African extension officers.

Having a better understanding of these dynamics will aid in the development of interventions and policies that will improve the sustainability and resilience of agriculture.

One finding was that, although smallholder farmers produce banana crops, they are not adding value to them, and this limits the economic benefit the farmers derive. The study recommends that, to address this issue, the government encourage partnerships between smallholder farmers and the private sector to attract private investment into the value-added processing sector. Furthermore, the government can create community-based processing facilities, where smallholder farmers can share equipment, knowledge and resources for value-added activities.

The study also found that smallholder farmers are limited to selling their bananas to local informal markets only, as they do not have access to formal markets. To address this issue, extension officers need to educate farmers about formal market requirements such as production standards, packaging standards and market-oriented practices.

They must be able to inform farmers about record-keeping and the need for negotiation skills. Furthermore, the government can promote and facilitate contracts between smallholder farmers and agribusinesses.

A lack of resources has been highlighted as the main issue that affects extension officers when they are visiting farmers. To address this, extension officers need to encourage farmers to use local resources and inexpensive materials. They should also encourage innovative funding models, especially partnerships between private and public-supported agricultural programmes. To address the issue of difficult-to-access farms, the officers could organise group meetings and demonstration days in a central location that farmers

can easily access. Extension officers could also consider meeting farmers during weekends to accommodate those who are unavailable during the week.

Smallholder farmers have to contend with certain obstacles that have an impact on their earnings and the quality of their bananas. These producers face numerous adversities, such as high transportation costs, poor road infrastructure, lengthy distances to markets, and a lack of suitable storage facilities, despite producing high-quality bananas that draw repeated business. “In addition to having an adverse effect on their income, these marketing difficulties make it harder for the smallholder farmers to maintain the quality of their produce along the supply chain. To maintain smallholder farmers’ means of subsistence and the sustainability of banana production in their local communities, it is imperative that these issues be resolved,” he argued.

It can be concluded that bananas contribute to food security for rural households. Both districts of the study area have the advantage of favourable climatic conditions that are conducive to producing bananas throughout the year. Household members use money generated from selling bananas to purchase food and other essential home items. Production of bananas also contributes to local job creation, even though smallholder farmers do not employ a large number of people. However, household members mostly consume bananas as a fruit only, and do not add value by processing.

For his 240-page thesis, Dr Manciya was supervised by Dr Natsha Cronje and Dr Misery Mpuzu Sikwela. He studied at the University of the Free State.

Dr Manciya graduated on 10 April 2025.

INCLUDE ENTREPRENEURSHIP EDUCATION IN SCHOOLS, SAYS DR QWABE



Dr Bongani Qwabe

While the University vigorously promotes entrepreneurship within its walls, one of its staff members decided to investigate entrepreneurship at the school level. Bongani Qwabe, a lecturer in the

Department of Office Management and Technology, did his PhD studies at DUT. His topic was “Institutionalising entrepreneurship education as a strategic approach to enhance entrepreneurial spirit in selected schools in KwaZulu-Natal”.

Dr Qwabe said his study was “most critical, and needed in the country, serving as a guiding tool to address societal problems faced by the population. Furthermore, the study not only examined policymakers’ perspectives, but also provided youth with alternative solutions to poverty, unemployment, and drug-related issues. Rather than focusing solely on employment, or reliance on government support, the research helped develop alternative strategies for economic empowerment”.

Dr Qwabe observed that many South African schools still place a strong emphasis on theory, with limited focus on practical, real-world skills. He believes that the integration of entrepreneurship education into the curriculum has the potential to bridge this gap, and help learners develop valuable skills such as problem-solving and financial literacy – skills that are often missing from the traditional curriculum.

The study also functioned as a community engagement initiative, involving collaboration with primary school teachers, community members, and learners to collect their perspectives on incorporating entrepreneurship education into the basic curriculum.

Dr Qwabe said the lack of entrepreneurial spirit among South African youth has contributed significantly to high levels of unemployment and poverty. “One of the underlying causes is the insufficient institutionalisation of entrepreneurship education within the country. Furthermore, youth unemployment remains a persistent challenge both nationally and globally. In South Africa, youth entrepreneurial participation is still fragile and largely underdeveloped,” he said.

Dr Qwabe recommends that schools encourage learners to engage with the business world from an early age. “To support this, the government should consider developing a clear policy on entrepreneurship education that requires its inclusion in the curriculum from primary through to secondary level. Learning about entrepreneurship in the classroom, learners are more likely to take an active interest and participate in entrepreneurial activities within their communities,” Dr Qwabe said. Dr Qwabe graduated on 21 May 2025.

STUDENT JOURNEYS

From finance to the frontlines of health: MUT graduate’s journey of purpose



Bongumusa Makhathini

Bongumusa Makhathini, a proud graduate of MUT, has achieved what many would consider extraordinary: earning his third qualification (a Bachelor of Health Sciences in Medical Laboratory Science) after leaving behind a stable career in finance to pursue a calling rooted in a desire to serve humanity.

His journey began in 2021 when he made the life-altering decision to resign from his permanent role

as a Personal Financial Advisor at Old Mutual. “It was not easy,” he reflected. “But I was driven by something deeper – my grandmother, Eslina Makhathini, who passed away from diabetes. That moment changed everything for me.”

Makhathini redirected his life toward understanding and combating the disease that took his grandmother. “I wanted to help others who might be at risk, just like her,” he said.

The transition was not without its trials. He faced self-doubt, financial strain, and the challenges of academic life – including weekly tests that stretched his endurance. Yet, he persevered. “I funded my studies entirely on my own,” he shared with pride. “Balancing part-time work and full-time studies was tough, but every cent went toward my education.”

Through it all, his mother Patricia remained his rock. “Her support was unwavering. I truly do not think I would be celebrating this milestone without her,” he added.

Now employed at Lancet Laboratories, Makhathini looks back with no regrets. “Steve Jobs once said, ‘You cannot connect the dots looking forward; you can only connect them looking backward’. That is exactly how I feel. Everything makes sense now.”

Makhathini’s story is a testament to resilience, purpose and the courage to start over. Even when people questioned his shift from marketing to medical science, Makhathini remained steadfast. “Your journey is your own,” he said. “No one else can walk it for you.”

To those considering a fresh start, he offered this encouragement: “As long as you are alive, the opportunity to begin again is always there.”

FROM DREAMS TO REALITY: BANDILE'S CULINARY JOURNEY IGNITED



Bandile 'BANDZIVA' Madinane

In the vibrant heart of MUT Radio, a remarkable journey of self-discovery has begun, 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, is 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.

Among the many students Awethu has mentored is Bandile 'BANDZIVA' Madinane, a spirited second-year accounting student whose life recently took 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 for cooking – a love that has been simmering 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 South Africa's SABC 2 television station. 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 Bandile didn't walk away with the grand prize, finishing as the first runner-up, she emerged a true winner. With a R30 000 cash prize in hand, she recognised that the real treasure lay in the rekindled fire of her culinary endeavours.

Bandile's triumph has echoed far beyond her personal achievements, serving as an inspiring reminder to her community and peers. Her journey illustrates the power of courage: the courage to take risks, to embrace forgotten dreams, and to continue pushing the boundaries of self-belief. As she shared her story with others, the message was clear: no matter the time it takes or the challenges that arise, dreams are worth pursuing.

Kelese has watched Bandile blossom into a symbol of hope for others. His influence as a mentor is woven into the fabric of her success, a success that shows that academic achievements are just one facet of a person's journey. Under Awethu's leadership, students like Bandile are learning to believe in themselves and unearth their hidden talents.

SPORT ROUNDUP



MUT Sport coaches gained a lot from winning coach, Manqoba Mngqithi, middle

Sport and Recreation Unit plans to make a massive impact

The first part of 2025 has seen the rollout of the Sport and Recreation Unit's strategic plan. The Deputy Director of the Unit, Siyabulela Mkwalo, said the Unit's main aim was to create "a platform for creating a humane, engaged and positive student experience through the planning of services and programmes that are geared at developing well-rounded students".

The Sport and Recreation Unit has been offering a variety of student-centred programmes to empower students with skills, knowledge and experience. Mkwalo said the Unit has delivered varied projects, one of which is the Sport Union and Club Executive induction on 14 March 2025 that was attended by 28 officials at Learning Commons. The event aimed at empowering elected student sport leadership with requisite knowledge that will enable them to perform their primary responsibilities in their respective portfolios and sport codes.

As part of the strategic plan, the Sport and Recreation Unit has recruited coaches, managers, instructors, facility and gymnasium attendants. A total of 38 contract staff members have been appointed, some in January 2025 and some in March 2025. Some of these staff members are deployed to the 15 sporting codes that are offered by the University; others are operating the gymnasium, and some are running aerobics classes. There is also a facility attendant. These staff members have varied contract periods as guided by the nature and activities linked to their sport codes. These staff members work with Sport Officers and are required to

submit monthly plans and reports. The contracts for these staff members are performance and conduct based.

During the period, chess lessons have also been introduced specifically for MUT staff members. Mkwalo said the aim "is primarily to enhance cognitive skills and mental well-being of the target audience. This project intends to contribute to staff wellness as chess improves memory, focus, concentration, and problem-solving abilities, while also boosting creativity and strategic thinking. Additionally, these chess classes are aimed to reduce stress, anxiety, and even lower the risk of dementia," said Mkwalo. The staff chess training takes place on Wednesday and Thursday every week. While the participants are still gaining knowledge of the sport, the University student chess club is miles ahead. The MUT student chess club became champions in the intervarsity chess tournament hosted by UKZN PMB campus on 17 May 2025.

The MUT Sport Unit hosted a coaches induction training on 28 March 2025 at the Student Centre. A key highlight of the event was the emphasis on "safeguarding" in sports, through creating a safe and supportive environment for athletes. Mkwalo said that the awarding of safeguarding certificates further demonstrated his unit's commitment to maintaining high standards of athlete protection and welfare. "This workshop was graced by the presence of a world class soccer coach, Manqoba Mngqithi, a high-profile, well-known coach in South African football.

Mngqithi's presence proved to be a big motivation to the coaches as he shared valuable insights and practical approaches that emerging coaches could adopt to enhance their coaching capabilities. His session was highly engaging and well received by the attendees, who appreciated the opportunity to learn from an industry expert. The level of interest in Mngqithi's presentation and knowledge of the game was indicated by the fact that the workshop took much longer than was planned as coaches had so many questions to share with Mngqithi. For them this was an opportunity to test their theories and experience of soccer, to which Mngqithi obliged, and advised."

The MUT Netball Club has represented the institution well. They participated in the Legacy Tournament held in Pietermaritzburg on 27 April 2025, which was part of the female netball team's preparatory campaign for the national University Sport South Africa (USSA) competition that will be taking place from 30 June to 4 July 2025. The female team secured third place in the tournament and Olwethu Mnyandu, a first-year Diploma in Marketing student, was recognised as the Most Valuable Player (MVP).

The male team secured second place. Mkwalo said this was a commendable performance as the team was only established in 2024. The other sport codes that will be attending the USSA competition during the same period are bodybuilding, dance and karate.

Another highlight of the period is that B2 blind cricketer, Mpumelelo Luthuli, an Information Communication Technology student, continued to represent the University and South Africa. Luthuli and the Blind Proteas played a five-match T20 series with their Indian counterparts in Bengaluru, India, in May 2025. Luthuli continues to be a shining star at an international level.

Finally, the MUT ladies' football team started the season in March 2025 with a bang. The team has been consistently winning their matches at the SAFA eThekweni Women's Regional League. Wendy Madziba, a third-year Chemical Engineering student, was the top goal scorer in the team as of April, with 19 goals. Their male counterparts hosted trials in the month of May, creating a platform for newcomers to display their talent and stand a chance to be included in one of the three university teams.



MUT Netball team

MUT FEMALE FOOTBALL ACE BREAKS HER PREVIOUS RECORD



MUT football ace, Wendy Madziba, right, tussling with a VUT player

While everyone's movement was limited by COVID-19, a teenager from Umzimkhulu, on the border of KwaZulu-Natal and the Eastern Cape, started kicking the football around. "Over time, I grew to enjoy the sport, and it has become a passion I continue to pursue," she said. That erstwhile teenager is Wendy Madziba, an S4 Chemical Engineering student and captain of the MUT female football team.

In a 3-5-2 formation, Wendy is on the right middle, attacking and defending, and creating opportunities for others. This system gives teams a chance to pile up pressure on the opposition, while having ample time to defend. Successful coaches like Antonio Conte, Pep Guardiola and José Mourinho have employed this system, but its success largely depends on the fitness of the players.

A right winger, as Wendy is, must have ball retention skills, pace, vision and precision when passing. Losing the ball to opponents disrupts the attack plan, and puts pressure on teammates. The right winger, or left winger, must pace themselves, as they cannot run at full speed for 90 minutes.

This system is very hard on these two players as they have to cover the full length of the pitch for most of the

game. But the rewards are big. Wendy has scored 13 goals in 14 matches and is the leading goal scorer. Her teammate after her has scored eight goals. Wendy, who scored eight goals last season, said one of her goals this season was break her own record, which she has already done.

This is not a surprise to those that know Wendy as a footballer. She says that she is inspired by two magnificent footballers: Cristiano Ronaldo and Anele Miya, one of Wendy's MUT teammates. Wendy is impressed by the 40-year-old Cristiano Ronaldo's work ethic and dedication – "he is testament to what can be achieved through hard work and determination" – while she appreciates Anele Miya's talent and experience, along with "her willingness to share her knowledge and experience with our teammates. What I love the most is that she is still young, which means she is going quite far".

Wendy attributes her own success to hard work, dedication and teamwork, "with my teammates' support and trust being crucial". Scoring more goals is a challenge she is excited to take on, and she is looking forward to pushing beyond her previous achievement and potentially competing at higher levels.

MUT BODYBUILDERS EXCEL AT USSA GAMES



From left, Nqubenhle Dlamini, who won bronze; Nhlakanipho Shoba; 'Wonder' Ndlovu, who won silver; Coach Max Nxumalo; and Pumla NeneF

The 10-member MUT bodybuilding team that took part in the USSA Games at DUT's Indumiso Campus (PMB) on 28 July 2025 came back with a "loot", as one of the University team's performances was described by a senior staff member some years ago. This time around, the bodybuilding team won five gold medals, one silver and one bronze. Team coach, Max "Bulldozer" Nxumalo, attributes this performance to team members adhering to his strict rules.

Nxumalo said his view of sport is based on the principles of team spirit, focus, respect and discipline. Nxumalo said that if the athletes follow these principles, "definitely" this will lead to best results. "I have a very disciplined team. The athletes are passionate. I believe next year the team will be on another level. As long as the MUT Sports Office supports the team, we will produce the best of the best," said Nxumalo.

One of the athletes that took part in the tournament was Pumla Nene, a third-year Public Finance and Accounting student. Pumla was able to defend her 2024 position, much to the coach's delight. Pumla won three gold medals in the Bikini 164cm, Overall Bikini, and Best Poser categories. Over and above adhering to the coach's rules, Pumla attributes her success to the passion she has for the sport, and the professional relationship she has with her coach. "It is all about passion for the sport, and the love of exercising.

"Also Coach Max invested so much in me so I could come out as the overall winner and the Female Best Poser. I am

forever grateful to him for believing in me," said Pumla. Pumla first competed in the USSA in 2023 and placed fifth. She used that result as motivation and did well last year, reaching the SA championship.

Other gold medal winners were Lindelani Mazibuko, a third-year Diploma in Accounting student, and Nhlakanipho Shoba, a third-year Diploma in Chemical Engineering student. Lindelani, who placed first in the Wheelchair Bodybuilding and Male Best Poser category of the USSA tournament last year, said his passion for the sport is fueled by the fact that he lives with a disability.

"I can lift weights, regardless of how I am built," he said. His wish is to be a professional body builder, and one day reach the Paralympics and represent South Africa. Like Pumla, Lindelani also adds to his coach's regime. He sticks to his strict diet – starch, vegetables, and water. Lindelani also trains for two hours every day.

Nhlakanipho also attributes his grand performance to his coach. He said he had competed in the Fitness Challenge division, which is all about endurance and strength, "kind of like CrossFit, and it really pushed me to my limits". He said without his coach's guidance, discipline and belief in him, even when he doubted himself, the win would not have been possible. His coach prepared him mentally and physically, and made sure he stayed consistent. "It is an honour to have represented my institution. I am just grateful to be part of something bigger than myself," he said.



Lucky Xolani 'Lundi' Dlamini

MUT mourns loss of long-serving driver

It is with great sadness that we share the news of the passing of Mr Lucky Xolani 'Lundi' Dlamini, who was fatally shot on 24 June 2025 on his way to work. Mr Dlamini served as a dedicated driver in the Transport Department at MUT, having joined the institution in the early 1990s. Mr Dlamini was born on 30 May 1972. Throughout his years of service, he became an integral part of the MUT community. He leaves behind his wife, uMaSosibo, and four children.

Mr Dlamini was more than a driver; he was deeply loved and respected by both staff and students for his warmth, humility and commitment to his work. Vice-Chancellor and Principal, Professor Nokuthula Sibiyi, said she witnessed Mr Dlamini's selflessness on numerous occasions, especially when he and his fellow drivers

went above and beyond to ensure our students reached events safely, even if it meant long hours and distances.

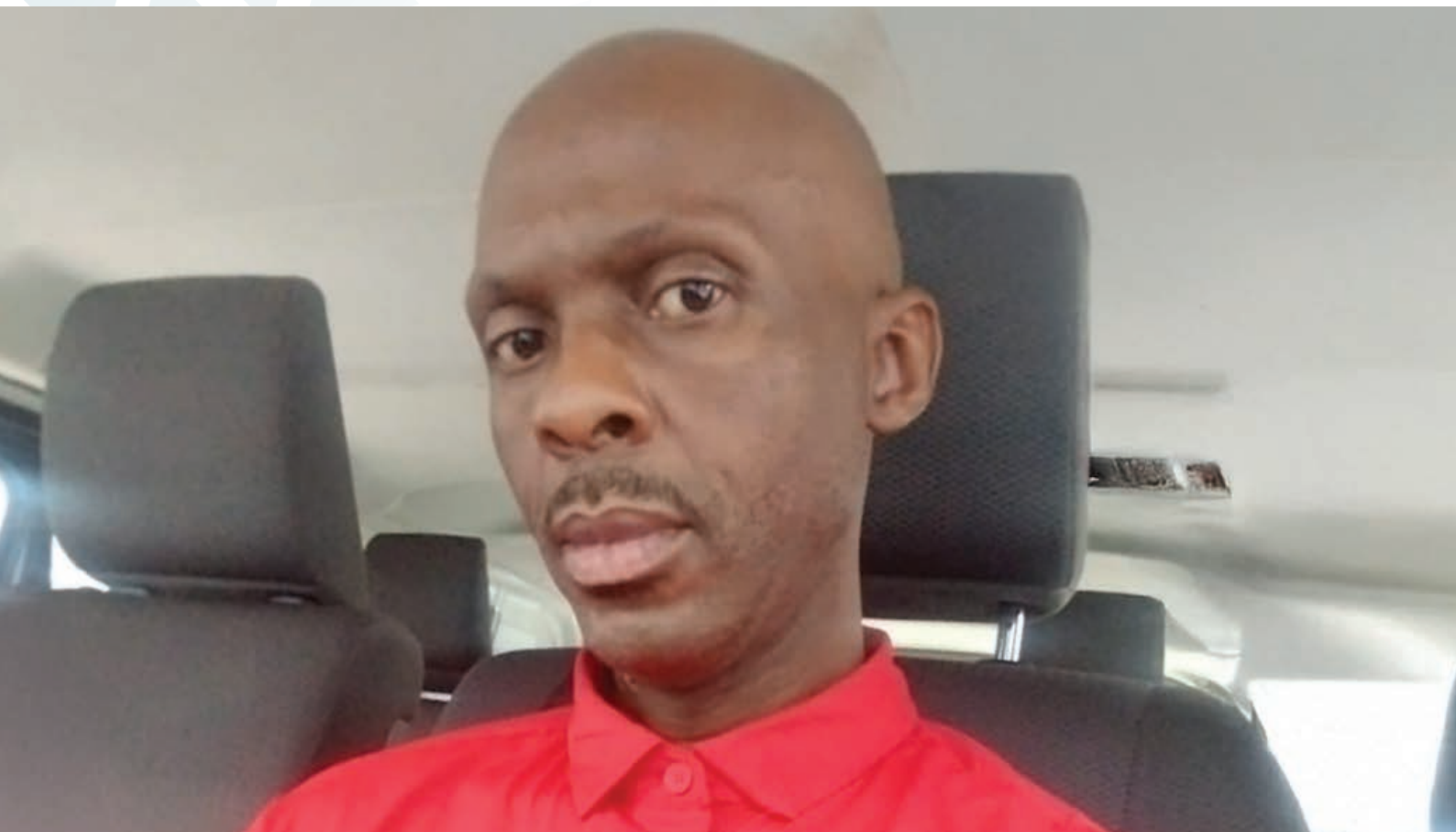
Mr Dlamini's dedication and sense of duty were an inspiration to all at MUT and his presence will be sorely missed. Many MUT staff and students will remember how Mr Dlamini wore his uniform with pride.

On behalf of MUT, Professor Sibiyi extended condolences to Mr Dlamini's family, friends, and all who had the pleasure of knowing him.

May his soul rest in peace, and may his memory continue to bring us strength and unity during this difficult time.

THINGS WILL NEVER BE THE SAME

KHEHLA NDLOVU'S EMOTIONAL TRIBUTE TO LATE COLLEAGUE INNO MQADI TOUCHES HEARTS



Zenzele Inno Mqadi

Emotions ran high at Mangosuthu University of Technology's second memorial service in two months, as Khehla Ndlovu, Head of Transport, delivered a deeply moving tribute to his late colleague and friend, Inno Mqadi.

In a heartfelt reflection that drew tears and nods from many in the audience, Ndlovu shared the story of how Mqadi had not only played a pivotal role in his professional journey but had also become a trusted friend and mentor.

"When I came for my interview, Inno was assigned to be the inspector when I had to do my test on the MUT bus," Ndlovu recalled. "He is the one who made the recommendation that I needed to be hired. I'm glad that thereafter we became friends."

His voice thick with emotion, Ndlovu revealed how he later asked Mqadi why he had vouched for him, despite being a stranger at the time. "He said that he knew I would be a good person to work with," Ndlovu said. "I'm

grateful I never disappointed him, but I'm saddened that today I pay tribute to him at his memorial service."

The tribute, personal and raw, struck a chord with many in attendance. It was a powerful reminder of how strong and meaningful bonds are often formed within the workplace—relationships built not just on roles or responsibilities, but on trust, respect, and shared experiences.

"We had great times in the department," Ndlovu added. "And now, things will never be the same."

His words painted a picture of camaraderie, mutual support, and the deep sense of loss felt by the Transport Department and the wider MUT community.

As the university continues to grapple with the tragic loss of two drivers in two months, tributes like Ndlovu's are a reminder of the human connections behind the uniforms and job titles—connections that endure even in the face of heartbreaking loss.



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