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Masakhe iVC Newsletter: A call to build, shape, and deliver, together



“*Masakhe*” (*let us build*) is a collective call to action. It speaks directly to MUT’s commitment to shape and own the future, while advancing the IGNITE 2030 imperative to move from vision to delivery.

Through *Masakhe*, the interim Vice-Chancellor and Principal reinforces a stakeholder-centred approach that places responsibility in the hands of all staff, students, leadership, and partners alike. It is a reminder that the future of MUT will be delivered by strategy and through the active contribution, accountability, and shared effort of its people.

In this spirit, *Masakhe* invites each member of the MUT community to take ownership, align with our goals, and play a meaningful role in building a university that is inclusive, responsive, and future-focused.

Professor Rushiella Songca

IGNITE
2030 FROM VISION
TO DELIVERY

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From the iVC's desk

“As our university embarks on a new phase of its institutional journey, the imperative before us is to translate vision into delivery. IGNITE 2030, our strategic framework, outlines an ambitious pathway toward transformation, excellence, and relevance in a rapidly evolving higher education landscape. The task now is to operationalise this strategy in a manner that is coherent, inclusive, and impactful.

Since assuming office, I have prioritised structured engagements with a broad spectrum of stakeholders, including Executive Management, academic and professional staff, student leadership, parents, organised labour, alumni and institutional directorates. These engagements are foundational to ensuring that the implementation of IGNITE 2030 is informed by the lived realities, expertise, and aspirations of our university community. This process forms a central pillar of my 100-day plan, which is designed to deepen institutional understanding, strengthen alignment, and build a shared sense of purpose. It is through these engagements that we can refine our approach, identify systemic challenges, and co-create solutions that enable effective delivery.

A consistent theme emerging from these interactions is the importance of alignment. For IGNITE 2030 to succeed, every member of staff, across faculties, departments, and support services, must have clarity regarding their role in advancing the University's strategic objectives. Institutional success is contingent upon coordinated effort, shared accountability, and a commitment to working in unison.

Equally important has been the opportunity to reflect on the structural and operational challenges that staff encounter in their daily work. These insights are critical. They provide a basis for strengthening systems, improving efficiencies, and ensuring that our institutional environment supports, rather than constrains, performance and innovation.

As this engagement process continues, I will be consolidating these insights into a comprehensive iVC's Operational Plan. This plan will not only align with the priorities of IGNITE 2030 but will also position the University to enhance its standing in national and global benchmarks, including international ranking systems such as the Times Higher Education rankings.



Students and staff joined MUT Management when they lit the candles that symbolised the new beginning



While challenges remain, I am confident that through shared commitment, strategic clarity, and collective effort, we can realise the ambitions of IGNITE 2030. Our goal is to strengthen our position as a leading University of Technology, responsive to societal needs, grounded in excellence, and globally competitive.

The future of MUT is one of promise and possibility. It is a future we will shape together.”

Professor Roshieella Songca indicated the new beginning when she lit one of the handles

Driving a new era of research excellence at MUT

At a time when universities of technology are being called upon to deepen their research impact and relevance, Professor Roshieella Songca, interim Vice-Chancellor and Principal, is charting a deliberate and ambitious path to strengthen research capacity at the Mangosuthu University of Technology (MUT). Central to her vision is a priority to significantly improve the University’s research output while building an inclusive and enabling environment for both emerging and established scholars.

Her approach began at the highest level of governance. In one of her first strategic engagements, Professor Songca formally requested that the Council increase the allocation of financial resources towards research. This move signals a strong institutional commitment to reposition research as a core driver of academic excellence, innovation, and societal impact.

Speaking at a recent Staff Induction organised by the Human Resources and Development unit, Professor Songca outlined a practical and inclusive roadmap for achieving this vision. She emphasised that research development at MUT must be a collective effort, accessible to all staff regardless of their current level of experience.

“I will be meeting all MUT researchers soon, and everyone at MUT is welcome to join cohorts of either emerging or established researchers, as well as first-time authors,” she said. “With a new Deputy Vice-Chancellor for Research, Innovation, and Engagement coming soon, I will be tabling these as priority areas for implementation, supported by proper monitoring and evaluation measures.”

This cohort-based model is designed to foster mentorship, collaboration, and structured progression along the research pipeline, from novice researchers taking their first steps into publication to seasoned academics expanding their scholarly footprint. It reflects a shift towards a more supportive and developmental research culture, where knowledge production is guided and sustained.

Professor Songca has also placed a strong emphasis on advancing women in research. Recognising the structural and systemic barriers that often limit participation and progression, she announced plans to issue a targeted call to enhance research opportunities for women.



Professor Rushiella Songca

“I will be issuing a call to enhance research for women and would like to drive this through a dedicated plan, developed in collaboration with researchers themselves,” she noted.

Among the flagship initiatives under consideration is the development of a transdisciplinary publication that brings together diverse research themes. This collaborative book project will cover critical areas, including gender-based violence (GBV), water, food security, energy, and other pressing societal challenges. Importantly, the initiative is open to all staff members interested in embarking on a publication journey, making it a powerful entry point for first-time authors.

By encouraging cross-disciplinary collaboration, the initiative not only strengthens research output but also aligns with broader national and global

imperatives to address complex, interconnected challenges through integrated knowledge systems.

Through these efforts, Professor Songca is laying the foundation for a research ecosystem that is inclusive, well-resourced, and strategically aligned. Her leadership recognises research as an institutional priority and a collective responsibility.

As MUT continues to evolve within a competitive higher education landscape, these interventions position the University to enhance its research profile, contribute meaningfully to societal development, and cultivate a new generation of confident, capable researchers.

A story of transparency: The 100-Day Engagement Plan

In a time when universities are facing many challenges and changes, it is more important than ever for leaders to stay connected with their communities. At MUT, the interim Vice-Chancellor and Principal, Professor Rushiella Songca, has introduced a 100-day engagement plan that has become a promise to uphold one of our core values: transparency.

While many talk about transparency, the real meaning comes from putting it into action. It's shown in how decisions are made, how information is shared, and how leaders connect with the people they serve. The 100-day engagement plan creates open spaces for conversations involving executive management, academic and professional staff, student leaders, parents, and various departments.

Instead of making the gatherings one-way conversations, Professor Songca has structured them to bring out real experiences, challenges, and ideas. This way, the University's future

direction, especially the implementation of IGNITE 2030, is shaped collaboratively rather than dictated from the top. This method builds trust, promotes inclusivity, and ensures that everyone's voice matters in transforming the University.

The engagement plan directly supports IGNITE 2030 Goal Five of creating an Engaging, Inclusive, and Supportive Environment. This goal emphasises a culture that values well-being, inclusivity, safety, and positive change, and it relies on accessible systems and values-driven leadership. The iVC's conversations help bring this vision to life by listening to staff and students, identifying obstacles, and fostering teamwork to solve problems.

Through these discussions, the leadership learns about the everyday realities of the University community, from issues like infrastructure and service delivery to opportunities for innovation. This deeper understanding allows for better



Professor Rushiella Songca, seated, left, and some MUT staff members, proudly wearing their IGNITE 2030 gear



decision-making and helps create a supportive environment where both staff and students can thrive.

The 100-day plan sets an important example, showing that MUT's leadership genuinely wants to listen, reflect, and be accountable. It emphasises that the success of the University relies on everyone taking part, where everyone has both a voice and a role in shaping our community.

As these conversations continue, they will help inform the iVC's operational plan and align the whole university. More importantly, they are cultivating a culture in which transparency is a standard upheld by all.

Professor Rushiella Songca

Warm staff response reaffirms spirit of cooperation at MUT

The iVC's ongoing engagements with staff across the University are already yielding a strong and encouraging outcome, a shared commitment to move MUT forward together.

Feedback from these sessions has been overwhelmingly positive, with staff receiving the iVC's messages with openness and care and expressing a clear willingness to collaborate and contribute to the success of IGNITE 2030.



MUT staff members respond warmly during a stakeholder engagement, reflecting the growing spirit of cooperation and shared purpose taking hold across the institution.



MUT staff proudly dressed in institutional colours, embodying the unity and shared identity that the iVC's engagement process is nurturing across the university community.

This growing sense of alignment reflects a collective understanding that institutional progress depends on unity, transparency, and shared responsibility.

Importantly, communication around critical matters, such as the recent water challenges, has been met with empathy and maturity. Staff have responded with understanding, demonstrating resilience and a deep commitment to maintaining continuity under difficult circumstances. Similarly, the iVC's Easter message was warmly received, reinforcing a sense of community, reflection, and mutual support during a challenging period.

These moments of connection affirm that MUT is not only engaging in dialogue but is actively building a culture where staff feel heard, valued, and motivated to be part of the journey ahead.

As engagements continue, this positive momentum provides a strong foundation for collective action, ensuring that the University can shape and own its future together.

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Professor Songca addresses staff and students during MUT's Human Rights Day commemoration on 25 March 2026, calling on the university community to embed the principles of dignity, equality, and justice in everyday campus life.

In what has been described as a first for Mangosuthu University of Technology (MUT), the university took a deliberate step beyond commemoration to critically reflect on the meaning and practice of human rights within its academic community during Human Rights Day on Wednesday, 25 March.

At the centre of this shift is Rushiella Songca, Interim Vice-Chancellor and Principal, who used the occasion to challenge the university community to rethink how human rights are understood and lived on campus.

Addressing staff and students, Professor Songca emphasised that human rights should be embedded in everyday university life.

“Human rights must not exist only as ideals we celebrate on a single day,” she said, “but as principles we actively live out in our lecture halls, residences, workplaces, and communities.”

Her remarks signalled a shift in institutional thinking, one that positions human rights as a continuous practice shaping the culture of the university.

Professor Songca further highlighted that the role of a university extends beyond teaching and learning. She argued that the true measure of an institution lies in its ability to create an environment where all members feel recognised, respected, and able to participate fully.

In acknowledging the importance of shared responsibility, she pointed to the role of the Student Representative Council in supporting students to exercise their rights and contribute to a more inclusive campus environment.

The engagement forms part of a broader institutional effort to embed human rights as guiding principles across MUT's systems and practices. It reflects a growing commitment to positioning the university not only as a centre of knowledge production, but as a space where dignity, equality, and justice are actively upheld.

As MUT continues to build on this momentum, the Human Rights Day reflection marks a significant moment in shaping a more conscious and values-driven institutional culture.