

INSPIRING UFS STAFF

dumela

*Inspiring excellence, transforming lives
through quality, impact, and care.*

UNIVERSITY OF THE
FREE STATE
UNIVERSITEIT VAN DIE
VRYSTAAT
YUNIVESITHI YA
FREISTATA



DECEMBER 2021 - ISSUE TWO



FROM THE EDITOR

Here we are again, at the end of another academic year. Where has the time gone? This time, next year, we will hopefully look back at a year somewhat familiar to life before March 2020.

Come January/February 2022 we will see increased on-campus activities with staff and students returning to our campuses. With the coronavirus still active in our communities, several measures have been put in place to ensure the health and safety of our students and staff. Please familiarise yourself with the UFS COVID-19 Regulations and Required Vaccination Policy mentioned on page 4 in this edition of the Dumela.

Getting back to the basics, some of our colleagues share what they are looking forward to in the new year. For some it is a year filled with new memories, hope, personal development, and new challenges. For others it is more integrated work, supporting our students and having a safe and healthy workplace.

These are also some of the things we are writing about in this last edition of 2021. We introduce you to new colleagues, tell you what happened over the last few months, and what extraordinary things staff are doing. I hope these stories inspire and excite you about returning to our campuses.



PHOTO | Sonia Small

Whatever you do next year, may you do it with vigour and bravery. Stay safe, rest, and enjoy the holidays. Till next year.

Amanda Tongha
EDITOR

NOTICE BOARD

17 DECEMBER
UNIVERSITY CLOSES FOR RECESS AT 16:30

3 JANUARY 2022 | UNIVERSITY OPENS
ONLINE REGISTRATION AND ACADEMIC
ADVICE – SOUTH CAMPUS

17 – 31 JANUARY 2022
ONLINE REGISTRATION AND ACADEMIC
ADVICE – SENIORS

1– 11 FEBRUARY 2022
ONLINE REGISTRATION AND ACADEMIC
ADVICE – FIRST-YEAR STUDENTS

14 FEBRUARY
LECTURES BEGIN

31 MARCH 2022
LAST DATE FOR REGISTRATION OF MASTER'S
AND DOCTORAL STUDENTS

From the Rector and Vice-Chancellor

We have reached the end of another eventful, challenging year. And once again, I am immensely heartened by the resilience, tenacity, and innovation displayed by our entire UFS community.

The COVID-19 pandemic continued to be a significant factor in our planning and operations this year. I would like to extend my deepest condolences once again to all those who have suffered loss as a result.

The UFS Council approved the *COVID-19 Regulations and Required Vaccination Policy* on 26 November 2021. Until now, the university has used a strategy of *persuasive encouragement*, supported by comprehensive educational and communication strategies, for our staff and students to vaccinate. I want to emphasise that the university does not force anyone to be vaccinated but has the right to require vaccination if anyone wants to access the three campuses. This is mainly to protect our staff and students. The policy is flexible and accommodating and makes provision for *Vaccination Exemption Committees* to evaluate applications for exemption from staff and students.

Our theme for the next five years is: *Towards a more inclusive, diverse, and engaged university, driven by impact and visibility*. The university is developing an ecosystem where the institution, the private sector, industry, commerce, government, and communities co-create and collaborate to provide human-centred solutions, which are digitally supported to respond to the challenges of society. As a university, we are embracing our society-focused role as well as our global citizenship, and we will be using the United Nations' sustainable development goals as a yardstick to measure our societal impact.

In terms of our domestic arrangements for 2022: We want our

staff and students back on campus. Classes will be presented on campus, except for a few qualifications that will take on a blended format. A contingency plan is in place and a thorough risk assessment has been done if lockdown levels are implemented that restrict face-to-face instruction.

The new year is bound to present its share of challenges. But I am deeply grateful to be able to tackle it as part of a team with an excellent track record in finding solutions through dedication, innovation, and care. And as a valued member of our staff, each one of you forms an important part of that team.

Have a safe and blessed festive season. Stay well, and stay safe.

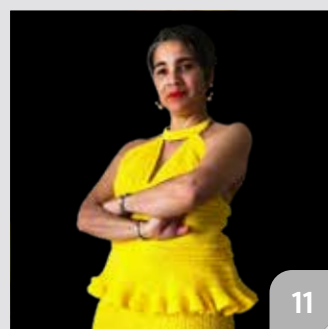
Prof Francis Petersen



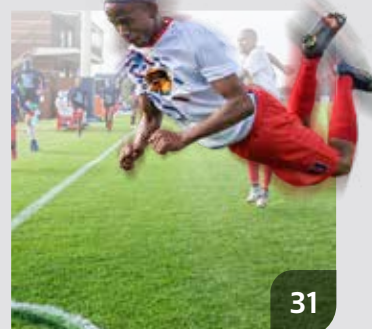
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dumela is compiled by the Department of Communication and Marketing at the University of the Free State.

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Dumela online
<http://www.ufs.ac.za/media/general/publications>



Return TO CAMPUS 2022



After almost two years, the University of the Free State (UFS) is ready to welcome our staff and students back to our three campuses. Albeit cautious, we are delighted that the global situation has improved to such an extent that we are able to reconstruct the way we deliver teaching and learning.

The UFS is one of the leading traditional contact universities in South Africa and a predominantly residential university. During 2019/2020, the Department of Communication and Marketing completed intensive narrative-building research across our campuses and a key element that stood out from responses was “feeling like a family”. We believe that this can be attributed to our working and living together on our three campuses. Many universities worldwide have campus buildings across the city where they are situated in, while the UFS is distinct in that all three our campuses are enclosed locations.

“While we support a blended learning approach, a sole online learning platform is not practical.”

Considering this unique attribute and the overall character of the university, the viability of consistent remote working and studying conditions are not aligned to our culture. While we support a blended learning approach, a sole online learning platform is not practical. Regarding the UFS Return to Campus Plan 2022, we envisage the return of all students, employees and ad hoc contract workers for the commencement of the 2022 academic year.

We all long for the bustle on our campuses when students return to continue preparing themselves for a career and for life. Although adapted, we are excited to play a pivotal part in the “student life” experience where students collect fond memories, lasting friendships, and graduate skills.

By Dr Cindé Greyling

We will RETURN!

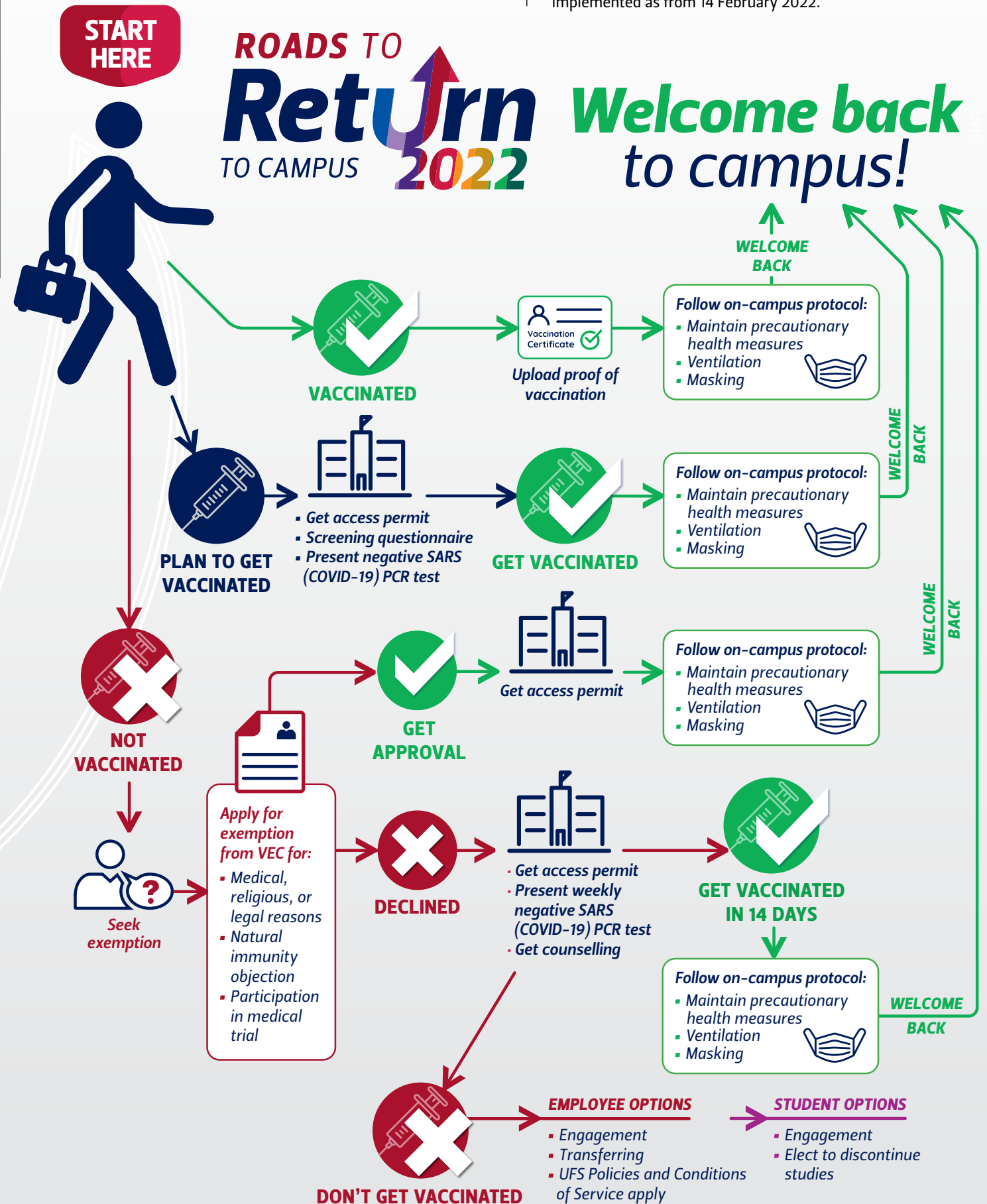
#ReturnToCampus2022



Demystifying the UFS COVID-19 Regulations and Required Vaccination Policy

The Council of the University of the Free State (UFS) carefully considered and approved a vaccination policy for the institution during its meeting on 26 November 2021.

The aim of the [COVID-19 Regulations and Required Vaccination Policy](#) is to regulate access of staff, ad hoc contract workers, and students to all the university’s premises. The policy will be implemented as from 14 February 2022.



LESSONS FROM A PANDEMIC: Looking back, looking ***ahead***

As we near the end of the year, there is much to be grateful for this year, and plenty to look forward to in 2022. Dumela asked a few colleagues what stood out for them in 2021 and what they are anticipating in the new year.

By Amanda Tongha



KEKELETSO TAKANG

Project & Marketing Coordinator Social Responsibility Projects: South Campus

2021 was a year of adjustment for me. We had come out of the whirlwind that was 2020 and had to adjust to a new normal. I found myself adjusting in so many areas of my life, from work to culture, health and relationships. Having been a Business School student this year, I also learned to manage my time effectively. Overall, I learned to count my blessings and be patient with those in my work and social circles.

A new year brings forth hope for new things. With staff and students returning to campus in 2022, I look forward to a new challenge as we all commit to designing a new norm, similar to a caterpillar becoming a butterfly. I also hope to impact the hundreds of lives we engage with positively through our projects at the South Campus.

“A new year brings forth hope for new things.”



MANDY JAMPIES

Postdoctoral fellow coordinator: Research Development

For me 2021 was a year filled with challenges, changes, uncertainty and personal growth. It has made me a better person with more resilience. It was also a year filled with gratitude and special moments. My biggest lesson learnt in 2021 was that uncertainty does not last forever and one just needs to step up and get things done and to live for the moment. Nearing the end of 2021, I am feeling grateful that I still have a job and my family, and I am happy to be alive. I have learned the meaning of perseverance and to celebrate life rather than to fear life.

In 2022, I will be ready for another year filled with great memories, fulfilling my potential and a year where I can add to the betterment of myself and others; a new year with fresh opportunities, health and prosperity, as I want to continue working on my goals professionally and personally by continuing to foster good relationships in my career and along other avenues. I am really looking forward to a great 2022.



LEGOPHENG MAPHILE

Assistant Director: UFS Library and Information Services Marketing and Community Engagement

For educators and academic librarians spending another year with the COVID-19 pandemic required an amoeba type of adaptive and transformative skills. With the lockdown levels changing without notice or without any rulebook one had to find better ways to perform without the established provided by the comfort of an office. On a lighter note, in my next life I will require a five-bedroomed house with two rooms dedicated to office space. Sharing our bedroom turned office with my partner was not a bed of roses, as she also often worked from home.

For my colleagues at the university and elsewhere there are lessons to adapt to teamwork and shifting from “my project or working in silos”. We all have a duty to adapt to new ways of working productively.

“We all have a duty to adapt to new ways of working productively.”



ARINA ENGELBRECHT

Well-being specialist, HR Organisational Development and Employee Well-being

2021 did not start on a high note, as we lost a very dear friend due to COVID-19. That just made me realize that life is short and that we must live life to the full. One should make a difference, spend time with our dear ones and pay attention to every moment. We all experience challenges from time to time, at work as well as personal, and this year was no exception. What kept me going was to stay connected with friends and colleagues, being physically active, keeping a gratitude journal and spending time with my Saviour for guidance.

My hopes for 2022, for myself and for everyone that reads this article, is to become the Best version of Yourself; to keep going strong in the face of adversity, to stay humble, to laugh more, to have positive thoughts although the world is negative, to live your passion and never forget where your strength comes from. I would like to end with this quote by Nikki Banas:

“If you only carry one thing throughout your entire life, let it be hope. Let it be hope that you can get through the toughest times. Let it be hope that better things are always ahead. Let it be hope that you are stronger than any challenge that comes your way. Let it be hope that you are exactly where you are meant to be right now and that you are on the path to where you are meant to be. Because during these times, hope will be the very thing that carries you through.” Let us embrace the good of 2021 and make 2022 the BEST!”



BULELWA MOIKWATHLAI

Officer: Internationalisation: Office for International Affairs

2021 was a year of multiple lessons, an opportunity to reflect, reimagine and restructure “business as usual”. The move to virtual spaces highlighted the need to pay more attention to our soft skills as we became more vulnerable and had to live the notion of “no man is an island”. Through this, I learned the need for collaboration, being vocal, and showing support for mental health. A lot of issues we had to deal with were centred around our mental health and our need to heal. This year gave us opportunities to broaden our reach, have access to resources that were not readily available, and build more networks locally and abroad.

For 2022, I am hoping for a sustainable holistic approach in the provision of student services; to do away with the solo work mentality; and to place an emphasis on collaboration across all departments at the University of the Free State. More efforts and resources are to be invested in assisting both students and staff with their overall well-being. To have a more intentional approach in being there for these cohorts at the University, being intentional in building an inclusive culture, gives a voice to all and celebrates all. South Africans are driven by the paradigm of Ubuntu – “umntu ngumntu ngabantu” and if we could bring this paradigm with us when we are at our workplace we would function and succeed more as a university.

“More efforts and resources are to be invested in assisting both students and staff with their overall well-being.”



ANITA LOMBARD

CEO: UVPERSU

2021 was not much different from 2020, when COVID-19 changed the lives of South Africans in the wink of an eye and all our plans took a different turn. Over the past two years, I have learned that life is precious, but short. I have also learned that we could still stay connected. Technology opened many doors locally and internationally.

This pandemic, and people across the globe suffering, taught me to be more thankful for privileges and to identify opportunities to show empathy and give support where needed. 2021 again emphasized how important it is to make the most of each day and to care for one another.

The great Desmond Tutu once said, “Hope is being able to see that there is light despite all of the darkness.” I hope that all South Africans will be responsible for protecting themselves and their fellow citizens against this terrible virus that is destroying so many lives.

I sincerely hope for a safe and healthy workplace for all staff and students on our three campuses in 2022 and in years to come. Most of all, I hope for love, respect, fairness, equality, integrity and commitment to make our world a better place for all its inhabitants. One or other form of “darkness” doesn’t have to steal our happiness. We can achieve together and create light despite the darkness. On behalf of UVPERSU, I wish you a wonderful rest period and a new year filled with light and blessedness. Stay safe till we meet again.

Staff **wellness** and **return** to campus

The University of the Free State's Division of Organisational Development and Employee Well-being believes that employees are the most valuable assets of the university and looking after their well-being will translate to the success of the institution.

Throughout the year, the Division of Organisational Development and Employee Well-being in the Department of Human Resources, implements wellness initiatives ensuring an environment that encourages staff members to take an active role in the enhancement and maintenance of their overall well-being.

Burneline Kaars, Head of Organisational Development and Employee Well-being says, "These initiatives are centred on themes that promote personal and professional performance and well-being, which contribute to an energised and inspired workforce. Employees can take care of themselves, but it's the workplace where they spend most of their day, and tight schedules and deadlines often result in compromised health and personal care."

Wellness Survey

In a recent Wellness Survey conducted by the division, 84% of employees preferred the institution to focus more on their psychological well-being and 51% on occupational support.


A further 61% responded with a need to address stress, with and 51% calling for mental support initiatives.

"The COVID-19 had a range of psychological effects on people and generated needs in this field, including emotional support, stress management, coping, and dealing with loss and bereavement. Many respondents reported changes in their job descriptions and responsibilities having to get used to online meetings, new technology and procedures, and more flexibility were all introduced unexpectedly, needing employees' adaptation to, and grasping of these changes," says Kaars.

However, 94% of employees showed satisfaction with the division and the institution's response in addressing their wellness needs.

Returning to campus in 2022

With the institution's plans to return to campus in 2022 and 49% of participants wishing the division to address work integration and 47% anxiety, Kaars says the division will embark on departmental and faculty roadshows to introduce the Organisational Development and Employee Well-being programme and to get feedback from employees on what initiatives they would want to be offered.

Kaars says, "As the University is returning to some degree of normality in 2022, it is critical to reimagine and rebuild for the post-lockdown period. Employees will need to adapt and respond to these changing needs, and the employees will be the beating heart of the University who will define its ultimate success." 

By Lunga Luthuli



INSTITUTIONAL AUDIT Quality Assurance in place at the UFS




Timeline

By now, you would have either seen, heard about, or participated in some activity related to the upcoming Council on Higher Education (CHE) Institutional Audit the University of the Free State (UFS) is preparing for. The CHE is an independent statutory body established in terms of the provisions of the Higher Education Act No. 101 of 1997, as amended. It advises the Minister responsible for Higher Education and Training and is the national authority for quality assurance and promotion in higher education.

The CHE, through the Higher Education Quality Committee (HEQC), exercises its quality assurance function using a variety of mechanisms, one of which is institutional audits that are mandated by the Higher Education Act. Institutional audits undertaken from a quality assurance perspective are neither forensic nor inquisitorial investigations. They are, however, aimed at assessing the integrated quality management systems at institutions with a specific focus on the management of the core academic functions of higher education, that is, teaching and learning, research, and community engagement, as framed by the institution's respective vision, mission and strategic goals.

“Quality assurance is one of the three steering mechanisms used at the national level in the higher education sector, the other two being funding and policy-based planning.”

A team of experts at the UFS have been hard at work to prepare for the CHE Institutional Audit that is scheduled for May 2022. A steering committee was established in May of this year, followed planning, strategising, and readiness workshops. In August, the steering committee hosted several roadshows to brief academic and support staff on their role in the audit.

Continuous communication and surveys have been sent out since, in order to support the steering committee to prepare for the upcoming visit. Some of the outputs include a series of videos about the UFS facilities and a comprehensive Self Evaluation Report including a Portfolio of Evidence. 

By Dr Cindé Greyling

New Director for Innovation and Contracts ready to engage and support researchers

Ravini Moodley, newly appointed Director for Innovation and Contracts in the Department of Research Development at the UFS, is looking forward to engaging with research teams and finding ways to support them in getting their research to make the impact that they envision.

Moodley, a mother four kids (two of which are doggies), took up her new position on 1 October and says she is working with a fantastic team under the leadership of Dr Glen Taylor. The Human Resources team and the Kovsies spirit helped her to settle in quickly.

"I am really excited to have joined the UFS team. One of the lines that really inspired me from the UFS strategic plan: 'The University of the Free State will strive for social justice in everything it does. It will be an institution where its diverse people feel a sense of common purpose and where the symbols and spaces, systems and daily practices all reflect commitment to openness and engagement'," says Moodley.

Always been interested in science and technology

Moodley, who grew up in KwaZulu-Natal, but has lived in Gauteng for many years, says her time with her family is really special and they enjoy hiking and being outdoors. She enjoys gardening, reading and scrapbooking. She worked in the agriculture sector before working in technology transfer. "I have always been interested in science and technology from watching 'Beyond 2000' as a child, to studying Microbiology and Plant Pathology at university and now I love working in the Intellectual Property and Technology Commercialisation space."



Ravini Moodley, newly appointed Director for Innovation and Contracts in the Department of Research Development

Moodley says her new position is similar to her previous one at the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research though the mandates of the universities and science councils are quite different. Science councils often have to translate research into industrial application and universities having a broader mandate in teaching and conducting research all the way from basic to applied research.

Looking forward

She says she is looking forward to getting to understand the different areas in which the UFS conducts research. It is also an interesting time to be at the university with new ways of working and new roles for higher education institutions being developed to ensure that new knowledge is created and directed towards improvement of society in an inclusive manner.

"Research is usually a long and difficult journey, culminating in choices at the end on whether to publish or protect the intellectual property for commercialization. If we start thinking about how we want the research to impact society and ourselves from early on in the process, it may help us to open up more pathways to achieve that envisaged impact. If managed effectively it does not have to be a choice of whether or not to publish, but rather how to protect the intellectual property effectively before publication."

What she wants to achieve

Moodley says she would like to help showcase the technologies from the University and tell the incredible stories of the impact that UFS technologies are making on social, economic and environmental improvements in the region.

"Another area in which I would like to do more work, is to enable more and stronger engagement between industrial partners and the UFS. Stronger collaborations with industry will give UFS staff and students exposure to real technical needs in production environments and will give industrial partners a window into the exciting research being done at our university."

By André Damons

FROM BANNER TO BAG

Outdated and damaged banners contribute to **self-sustainable wool project.**

"Creating much from something small." This is how Dr JW Swanepoel, Senior Lecturer and Researcher: Department of Sustainable Food Systems and Development, who is also the principal investigator of the RUFORUM wool project, describes the latest edition to their range of products that are manufactured by a group of women from the community at the Paradys Experimental farm.

The women are trained by Doretha Jacobs from the same department to produce various wool products. The project helps them to make these products and provide financial assistance to their families.

The tote bags, made from recycled banners and felt, add to their existing range of felt pencil cases, laptop bags, hand/book bags, tray cloths, and soft toys.

Giving a purpose

"The wool that we use in making felt is not the most expensive part of the wool clip. We use the cheaper wool cuts to produce felt products, and subsequently add value to it. I believe that by incorporating the old banners into the felt bags it gives things that cannot be used anymore a new purpose," Carien Vorster, also from the Department of Sustainable Food Systems and Development explains.

When Martie Nortjé, Assistant Director: Branding and Merchandise in the Department of Communication and Marketing, provided them with the outdated and damaged banners of the university,

they decided to incorporate it into their wool products and develop the bags.

Towards self-sustainability

Should you want to support this initiative or just want to buy a beautiful, locally made product for you or your loved ones, you can order from the UFS Wool Wise Facebook page. Soon the products will also be available from KovsieGear, the university's merchandise shop.

"We would like the wool processing part of the project to be self-sustainable. Markets should be established, and products manufactured at high quality while keeping up with the demand. We would like to create profitable micro-businesses for the women engaged in the production and as the demand grows, increase employment and establish more businesses," concludes Dr Swanepoel.

By Leonie Bolleurs

Tote bags, made from recycled banners and felt add to their existing range of products, manufactured by a group of women from the community at the Paradys Experimental farm. Displaying the bags are, from the left: Carien Denner; Martie Nortjé; Wiaan Gibbons, Assistant Officer, Reputation, Brand and Marketing; Dr JW Swanepoel; and Doretha Jacobs, Clothing and Textile Lecturer in the Department of Sustainable Food Systems and Development.



Passion for crochet turns to fruitful business for Nicolene Butler

A personal project to commemorate Women's Month and her 50th birthday reignited a passion for crocheting, and unwittingly, a new business venture for Nicolene Butler, an officer in the Faculty of Education.

In June this year, Butler decided to crochet a bright yellow two-piece for her birthday – which falls on the day after Women's Day – as a way of tapping back into her love for the craft and to celebrate herself. "The love of knitting, crochet, and sewing comes from my grandmothers, mother, and aunts. I showed interest from a young age and learned from them. I decided to crochet the brightest colour ever for myself as a way of celebrating my womanhood. Oftentimes, we women celebrate everyone else but ourselves." Butler said she shared her work, complete with matching shoes and a bag, on social media and received a response that was way more than she anticipated.



A love project

She has gone on to start a formal crochet business and is currently busy with the branding for her love project. "I completed some orders this year for people who don't even know me. Sometimes we do things, thinking that no-one is watching. I'm now busy knitting some garments for the next winter season. However, I really don't want to make money out of this. I just want people to enjoy what I'm doing and wear it with pride," she said.

Butler said she hoped to use her story to motivate other women to also tap into their own passion and do what they love. "I would like to tell other women to find what makes them happy, and to do it with love and passion. Sometimes we downplay our talents, but people are watching and appreciating what you do. I believe that each of us was born with some talent. Start your project. Go and buy what you need, because you've put it aside all these years. You are going to find joy in what you do because it comes from your heart, and you are going to do it with love and passion. Start with that little idea in your head. Who knows, maybe you could create the most beautiful items ever." 📧

By Nonsindiso Qwabe

Nicolene Butler in her bright yellow two-piece she crocheted for her birthday.

Working and training not a problem for PARALYMPIC HERO LOUZANNE

The flexibility that her work as residence head provides her allows Louzanne Coetzee to pursue her athletic career, says the Paralympic hero.

The blind athlete returned from the Paralympic Games, hosted from 24 August 2021 - 05 September 2021, with a silver and gold medal as well as a world record and an Africa record in her two events. She is the resident head of House Akasia on the Kopsie campus.

"The University of the Free State (UFS) supports me in my sporting career in the fact that I can do my work as resident head and still train, which I'm grateful for.

"I receive a lot of assistance from KopsieSport and from DB Prinsloo (director of KopsieSport). He is always willing to assist wherever."

Working with students

According to Coetzee, her job gives her great satisfaction, especially working with the students.

"It is an opportunity to be involved in young students' lives. I enjoy having an influence on them. My job mainly entails the management

of finances, working with the service manager responsible for the facilities at the hostel, managing the resident committee, and facilitating co-curriculum programmes that run in conjunction with the students' academic programmes.

"I can manage all my day-to-day tasks without any help. When I need to get somewhere or something need to be fetched, I can ask a colleague for help," Coetzee said. She was born without any sight.

According to Coetzee, her running guides are always willing to take her where she needs to be for training.

"Whenever we decide to train off campus, I can always rely on them to come and pick me up. When we do road work for training, we run on the campus. We do track training at Pellies Park."

The Tokyo Experience

Coetzee describes the welcome back from Tokyo, Japan, as an overwhelming experience.

"I expected quick congratulations, but the students welcomed me back with open arms. They sang for me and gave me a gift and cake. I felt very loved by the UFS when I came back. It was very special for me.

"My colleagues took students with them to the airport. My residents' committee planned a surprise for me. Actually, the whole country showed love and appreciation. It would not have been possible without their full support."

She will study again in 2022, doing a postgraduate diploma in business administration.

See article UFS sport stars excel during tough times in 2021 on page 31. 📧

By Ruan Bruwer



Paralympic hero and resident head of House Akasia on the Bloemfontein Campus, Louzanne Coetzee.

UFS collaborates internationally to increase PhDs in global health

By Leonie Bolleurs

A group of ten doctoral staff members (five from the UFS and five from UNIVEN), from different disciplines in health sciences, including Anaesthesiology, Orthopaedics, Obstetrics, Dietetics and Nutrition, Gynaecology as well as Occupational Therapy in the Allied Health Sciences, will be finalising their PhD studies in 2022 and 2023.



Bonolo Makhalemele and Chevon Slambee from the International Office are the project coordinators of the University Staff Development Programme.

They are part of the University Staff Doctoral Programme (USDP) that falls under the University Capacity Development Programme (UCDP) that is aimed at increasing the number of PhD holders in global health. This initiative is coordinated by the UFS and has the University of Venda (UV) from South Africa and the University of Virginia from the United States (UVA) as consortium partners.

USDP essential in addressing health issues globally

According to Bonolo Makhalemele, project coordinator in the Office for International Affairs, the value and importance of collaboration have been highlighted in recent times as the

realm of health has been placed under the spotlight due to the developments in the pandemic. "It is as such that the development and cultivation of projects such as the USDP in Global Health is essential in addressing health issues on a global scale – therefore, improving the quality of life," she says.

UVA provides the group of PhD candidates from the UFS and UV with technical expertise in the form of co-mentorship from personnel with a strong international leadership pedigree in global health. Furthermore, they assist in providing access to state-of-the-art equipment and lab facilities.

Through these partnerships the project aims to strengthen



Three of the candidates visited the University of Virginia in February 2020. Pictured here are, from the left: Dr Edwin Turton, Tirhani Masia and Dr Julia Mafumo.

cross-border collaboration between the three partner universities, thereby diversifying knowledge paradigms.

Raising the quality of academic qualifications

Prof Corlia Janse van Vuuren, Head: UFS School of Health and Rehabilitation Sciences, is of the opinion that the international connection with the UVA is raising the quality of academic qualifications. She adds that the USDP is an enriching journey for the group of UFS academic staff members who participate in this initiative.

A series of profiles of the ten candidates will be published on the UFS's communication platforms.

MENTORING PROGRAMME paving success path for early-career black female academics

Mentoring has been identified as an important instrument in fostering the success of early-career academics, as capacitating a cohort with institutional potential can pave the way for institutions to groom their own talent. Recognising this hub of untapped potential, a mentoring programme – which is aimed at developing black female early-career academics – is one subset of the Mountain-to-Mountain project that is starting to bear fruit.

Prof Aliza le Roux, one of the brains behind the programme, said the idea with the programme was to pair early-career female researchers who want to pursue a career in academia with senior, more experienced women academics, who will provide focused support and accompany them on their journey in academia. She said 12 senior women in academia on the Qwaqwa and Bloemfontein Campuses, as well as from the Appalachian State University, are paired with 12 mentees for mobile, distance mentorship. The pairs go on a journey together, check in regularly with each other, and design their own path based on the needs of the mentee.

"I don't think the university realises how many women they have who are willing to share their time and passion for academia with others. I think there's great potential to expand the programme from being just Qwaqwa Campus-specific to becoming a UFS-wide programme,"

Prof Le Roux said. "We are trying to see how we can make the mentorship programme an institutional programme, because there's definitely a need, especially for black early-career women – not just on the Qwaqwa Campus, but for women in general."

Business Management Lecturer and PhD candidate on the Qwaqwa Campus, Lebohang Masoabi, is reaping the benefits of the programme as one of the mentees for 2021. This is what she had to say:

"This mentorship programme allows me to connect to individuals who have a lot of knowledge and experience. Having someone who knows more than yourself, who can share advice, offer guidance, and be a sounding board for your thoughts. Through this mentoring programme, I stand to benefit from experience beyond my own. This programme has shown me that a mentor is crucial to my continued growth and development."

By Nonsindiso Qwabe

Picture caption: Nozipho Kheswa, Hloniphile Khuzwayo, and Ngitheni Nyoka, are some of the participants in the academics mentoring programme.



*Dr Kananga Mukuna,
Founder of the
International Journal
of Studies in
Psychology.*

DR KANANGA MUKUNA


– the brain behind the International Journal of Studies in Psychology

With the dream of sharing peripheral perspectives of psychology, Dr Kananga Mukuna, Senior Lecturer in the Faculty of Education on the Qwaqwa Campus, founded the International Journal of Studies in Psychology, a first from an African standpoint. The journal, which was initiated earlier in 2021, aims to posit itself as an interdisciplinary platform for scholars and publishing professionals to communicate original research addressing current issues informed by best practices.

Dr Mukuna said the journal was the culmination of years of dreaming and hard work. "It has been my goal to have a journal since I started my journey in research; to see a journal owned by a young African scholar. I am passionate about research, and my experience with reading articles relating to the field of psychology sparked the desire to start a journal in my specific domain. This journal aims to look at psychology from an African perspective in a holistic manner.

"It is going to focus on rural perspectives and expose knowledge that is not always known by the greater audience. This is a blind peer-reviewed and fully open-access journal that provides an advanced platform and opportunities for studies in psychologically related research outputs."

Dr Mukuna said two volumes have been published so far, with a third one already in process. However, it has not yet been accredited by the Department of Higher Education and Training, a process that takes more than three years. "We still have a long way to go. The ultimate dream is to see the journal being accredited and attracting international scholars to publish in the journal. Scholars are still hesitant, because this is a new journal; however, as time goes by, the journal will be beneficial to produce knowledge."

So, what can we expect from the journal? According to Dr Mukuna, the quality of work being published, ethical consideration in terms of publication, producing quality papers, and creating a large platform for scholars around the world are important considerations. 

By Nonsindiso Qwabe

CTL LEADS DISCUSSIONS about academic literacy development in South Africa

The Unit for Academic Language and Literacy Development within the Centre for Teaching and Learning collaborated with the University of Pretoria's Unit for Academic Literacy and DIRISANA to host the first-ever Joint Virtual Conference on 14 and 15 October 2021.

The theme of the conference was Academic Literacy and Writing Centre Practitioners' response to COVID-19 and the move to Online/Blended Teaching and Learning. The two keynote speakers included Dr Kabelo Sebolai from Stellenbosch University and Dr Laura Dison from the University of the Witwatersrand. Both keynote presentations focused on highly topical issues



Dr Laura Drennan

pertaining to academic literacy and writing centres, and were extremely well received by attendees. The conference saw close to 160 attendees register and 30 papers representing a host of higher education institutes, both nationally and internationally.

Shining a light on academic literacy and writing centres



Michelle Joubert

The conference also provided the opportunity for the launch of the South African Association of Academic Literacy Practitioners (SAAALP). In discussions related to future collaborations on the second day of the conference, it became evident that there is a dire need to create further opportunities for such dialogue for academic literacy and writing centre practitioners. The organising committee intends to satisfy this need through the newly formed association. There are already plans in place to host the second joint conference in 2022.

For more information about SAAALP, please visit the website at www.saaalp.com

By Dr Laura Drennan and Michelle Joubert

UFS hosts 6th International Symposium on Place Names



Meeting of the Organising Committee. At the top from the left is Prof Cosimo Palagiano (Italy), and Prof Peter Jordan (Austria). At the bottom from the left is Prof Paulo Menezes (Brazil), Prof Theodorus du Plessis (SA), Dr Chrismi Loth (SA)

The Sixth International Symposium on Place Names (ISPN) was hosted from 29 September to 1 October 2021 by the Department of South African Sign Language and Deaf Studies in partnership with the Joint IGU/ICA Commission on Toponymy. The Department took over the mandate for hosting the ISPN symposia from the Unit for Language Facilitation and Empowerment when it was amalgamated into this department in 2018.

A first for ISPN, this event was hosted virtually, with support from the ICT division. The Symposium concluded the activities of the Department during Deaf Awareness Month, with UFS researchers presenting papers on place names in South African Sign Language. Prof Peter Jordan, one of the Co-chairs of the Joint ICA/IGU Commission on Toponymy and also Research Fellow in the Department, pointed out at the May 2021 Business Meeting of the Commission that there is a growing interest in research in signed place names internationally. He also remarked that the topic is even garnering interest at the level of the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names (UNGEGN).

The theme of the 6th ISPN was “Standardisation and the wealth of place names – aspects of a delicate relationship”. Delegates attended from five continents; Africa, Europe, Australia, South America and North America. Talks presented research on place names as cultural heritage, the standardisation of place names, the phenomenon of multiple place names as well as place names in signed languages. As usual, two keynote addresses were included in the programme. The first, ‘Reconciling the safeguarding and the standardisation of geographical names’, was delivered by Pierre Jaillard (Chair of UNGEGN), and the second, ‘Theorising multiple place names in southern Africa’, by Dr Tendai Mangena (Great Zimbabwe University). This year marked the first time the ISPN organised an accompanying workshop. The workshop, Collecting and documenting informal and alternative place names, was presented by Dr Gerhard Rampl, Chair of the Austrian Board of Geographical Names and very well attended.

The aim of the ISPN series is to advance research on place names, especially in Southern Africa and now also with a special interest in signed place names, as well as to provide a platform for international collaboration in this regard. The next event is planned for 2023. 📌

By Dr Chrismi Loth

THE FUTURE OF COAL AND ENERGY IN SOUTH AFRICA

The Department of Urban and Regional Planning, together with the Centre for Development Support at the University of the Free State, co-edited two publications the past year.

Pictured are Prof Lochner Marais, Stuart Denoon-Stevens, Dr Deidre van Rooyen, and Prof Maléne Campbell.



PHOTOS | Supplied

A long-term interdisciplinary project on mining and communities in South Africa by the Centre for Development Support (CDS) and the Department of Urban and Regional Planning at the University of the Free State (UFS) delivered two publications in the past year.

According to Lochner Marais, Professor in Development Studies in CDS, these books, describing the current socio-economic environment in the respective study areas and how mining affects it, were driven by the need to understand real-life problems and reflect on policy and theory.

As in the case of Emalahleni, the book, *Coal and Energy in South Africa: Considering a Just Transition*, analyses the potential effects of a mine closure due to the global shift away from fossil fuels towards renewable sources of energy.

From the UFS, Prof Marais, Dr Deidre van Rooyen, Lecturer in the Centre for Development Support; Prof Maléne Campbell, Associate Professor in the Department of Urban and Regional Planning; Stuart Denoon-Stevens, Lecturer in the Department of Urban and Regional Planning; and Prof Philippe Burger, Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Poverty, Inequality, and Economic Development, contributed to this book.

A valuable collaboration between the UFS academics and Prof Franklin Obeng-Odoom, the Series Editor of Edinburgh Studies in Urban Political Economy, also resulted in this book on Coal and Energy being published by Edinburgh University Press, one of the leading university presses in the United Kingdom.

‘An eye opener’

One of the reviews the book received from Prof Kristof van Assche, Professor in Planning, Governance and Development

in the Faculty of Science – Earth and Atmospheric Sciences at the University of Alberta, in the US, states, “This volume was an eye opener. The authors in this work of genuinely thorough scholarship skilfully use their South African mining story to develop bigger arguments about the complexity of transitioning away from a dominant resource economy ...”

As the authors note, the reverberations of unregulated and unanticipated closure after a boom can span generations. However, neo-liberal ideologies and mining companies anxious to avoid responsibility for communities they used to control, as well as workers desperately in need of opportunities do not prevent the search for a just transition. The analyses in this book reveal, beyond complexity and despair, many signs of hope and pathways to brighter post-mining futures.”

Planning for a post-mining future

“Future mine closure in Rustenburg depends on how quickly electric cars replace fuel-driven vehicles,” says Prof Marais.

In the second book that was published, *Mining and Community in the South African Platinum Belt: A Decade after Marikana*, Prof Marais, Dr Van Rooyen, Prof Campbell and Denoon-Stevens again contributed chapters.

Besides looking back at Marikana, comparing whether there have been improvements, this book also includes chapters on, among others, planning for a post-mining future in the Rustenburg region and the transition towards it; conflicting perceptions of sustainability in mining and what will happen in the likely case of mine decline and closure.

Prof Marais says planning for the decline of mining in both areas will be a significant challenge in the next ten to twenty years. Both books lay the foundation for understanding these potential changes. 📌

By Leonie Bolleurs



Thabo Pitse (middle) and
HD El Classico during their
performance of *Neem my
op Vlerke*.

'We're All in this Together'

Rector's Concert shining the spotlight on togetherness

The presence of an audience has always been an integral part of music concerts; artists depend on the presence of an audience. Truer words cannot be spoken than those by Rector and Vice-Chancellor Prof Francis Petersen during his heartfelt welcoming of the 2021 Virtual Rector's Concert.

The pandemic has changed the dynamic between audience and artist, inciting new approaches toward live performances, and the 2021 Rector's Concert was no exception! Dedicated to students, the 2021 Rector's Concert showcased the University of the Free State through a diverse group of artists, from first-years to Alumni staff.

An opportunity to connect

According to Prof Petersen, the concert is an opportunity for us to connect, to celebrate and let you know that you are not alone.

With close to 2 000 views, the 2021 Virtual Rector's Concert demonstrates that we are together even though we are distanced.

The talent of artists such as Caroline-Grace, Organized Chaos, and the Odeion String Quartet, to name only a few, had an immense presence on the virtual stage and transported the audience to new heights.

I was lucky enough to be part of the recording process and watch the live performances;

yet I couldn't help but give the artists the standing ovation they deserved while watching the concert virtually. I'm sure that I can't have been the only one to applaud after each item; my neighbours probably thought that I'd finally lost it.

The 2021 Rector's Concert is authentically spectacular, and I, for one, will remember it fondly. I am glad to have played a part in the positive reception and enjoyment of the concert. It was an absolute honour to work with the talented artists, fantastic crew, and incredible colleagues. Here's to hoping that we can bring people closer together than ever with Rector's Concerts still to come – no matter if they are virtual or in person. We're all in this together!

By **Barend Nagel**

The 2021 Virtual Rector's Concert can be viewed here:
<https://www.ufs.ac.za/2021RectorsConcert>



Vivo per Lei

Caroline-Grace Brüssow and Corneil Muller.



2020/21 SERVICE RECOGNITION AWARDS

On 28 October 2021, the University of the Free State celebrated the work and achievements of staff members during a Recognition of Service Awards. The awards honoured and acknowledged staff members who have shown loyalty, dedication, and hard work for 25 years and more of service to the university.

By **Lunga Luthuli**

2020 RECIPIENTS

35 YEARS



Prof Matie Hoffman
Physics



Dr Eelco Lukas
Physics



Dr Dorothy Russell
Paediatrics and Child Health

Staff members whose pictures do not appear on this page, who also obtained Service Awards, are listed on the next page.

30 YEARS



Andria van der Berg
Provisioning



Anna-Marie Church
South Campus



Prof Francois Tolmie
Old and New
Testament Studies



Susan van Heerden
Finance



Leane Ackermann
Sociology

25 YEARS



Dr Tania Coetzee
Governance and Political
Transformation



Prof Philippe Burger
Office of the Dean: Economic
and Management Sciences



Annelize van der Merwe
Centre for Teaching and
Learning



Annamarie du Preez
Library and Information
Services



Arina Engelbrecht
Human Resources



Marinda Avenant
Centre for Environmental
Management



Prof Jacques Nel
Business Management



Prof Frikkie Naser
Animal Science



Renier Sonnekus
ICT Services



Riana Johnson
Health and Wellness Centre



Prof Nico Smit
Animal Science



Ankia Bradfield
Centre for Gender and
Africa Studies



Lydia Moilwa
South Campus



Stephen Matthews
South Campus



2022/21 SERVICE RECOGNITION AWARDS

2021 RECIPIENTS

40 YEARS



Vuyane Khosana
Finance



Petrus Mereko
Microbiology and Biochemistry



Philmon Bitso
Student Recruitment Services



Carrel Moqolo
Office of the Dean: Natural and
Agricultural Sciences



Adriaan Hugo
Instrumentation



Selby Moeti
Postal Services and
Documentation



Prof Helena van Zyl
UFS Business School

35 YEARS



Charlotte Louw
Library and Information
Services



Dr Johan Venter
Chemistry



Prof Jannie Swarts
Chemistry



Dr Linda van der Merwe
Mathematical Statistics and
Actuarial Science

30 YEARS



Hanlie Wessels
Internal Auditing



Joanna Fourie
Surgery



Prof Stephen Brown
Paediatrics and Child Health



Prof Muriel Meiring
Haematology and Cell Biology

25 YEARS



Igna du Plooy
Office of the Dean:
Economic and
Management
Sciences



Nelda Venter
School of
Accountancy



Jan van Niekerk
Protection
Services



Prof Marlène
Campbell
Urban and
Regional Planning



Ansa Kleynhans
Mathematics
and Applied
Mathematics



Rencia
Cornellessen
Housing and
Residence Affairs



Otria Bunyonyo
Residence
Cleaning Services



Tsholo Choane
Finance



Lena Maema
Residence
Cleaning Services



Linda de Wet
Soil, Crop and
Climate Sciences



Prof George
Petrus (Okkie)
Combrinck
School of
Mathematics,
Natural Sciences,
and Technology
Education



Carolina Ndayi
Residence
Cleaning Services



Prof Hanneke
Brits
Family Medicine

The following staff members, whose pictures do not feature, also received Service Awards.

2020 RECIPIENTS

25 YEARS

Wilson Pongwane
Protection Services

Dr Adre Le Roux
School of Education Sciences

Dr Elmarie Kotze
Soil, Crop and Climate Sciences

Yvette Makaum
Microbial Biochemistry and
Food Biotechnology

Marna van Zyl
ICT Services

Dr Christiaan Loubser
Surgery

Innes Basson
Instrumentation

Miriam Mogopodi
Microbial Biochemistry and
Food Biotechnology

JJ van Staden
Agricultural Economics

Prof Janus Pretorius
Psychiatry

Dr Theuns Kellerman
Family Medicine

30 YEARS

Dr Mike Fair
Animal Sciences

Irma Loock
Social Sciences

Alna Fourie
Management

Leon Du Toit
ICT Services

Talitha Du Toit
Finance

Ria Deysel
University Estates

Dr Roline Barnes
Physiotherapy

35 YEARS

Magogodi Ndamoyi
Exercise and Sport Sciences

Christina Khutsoane
Finance

Mary Makhapela
Consumer Science

GJ van den Berg
Internal Auditing

40 YEARS

Vuyisile Mazwi
Library and Information
Services

2021 RECIPIENTS

25 YEARS

Prof Angelique Van Niekerk
Afrikaans, Dutch,
German and French

Anita Claassen
Social Sciences

Anita Van Wyk
Finance

Huldah Raubenheimer
Library and Information
Services

UFS WOMEN'S FORUM seeks to grow talent *'in its backyard'*

Launched during August 2021, the UFS Women's Forum wants to unite all women at the institution in a common objective.

The Women's Forum is a safe space for women in the university to have their voices heard. It aims to formulate dialogue circles aimed at creating inclusive, diverse, innovative, multidisciplinary groups consisting of members from business, policymakers, experts, scientists, international organisations, NGOs, and academia.

Nombulelo Shange, Deputy Chair of the Women's Forum, says, "The forum seeks to create a platform of advocacy and activism which encourages the differences among us as UFS women, while addressing the intersectional challenges we face professionally and in various social spaces."

Although the forum is still small, because it is relatively new, all UFS women are encouraged to join and work towards building a movement that has the potential to add to their career development in meaningful ways, while also feeding back into their communities and engaging with diverse stakeholders.

Nombulelo adds, "We plan to create events and activities in 2022 and going forward which align with national and international campaigns and holidays and contribute to important discourse."

Geraldine Meyers works as Head of Quality Management and Accreditation on the UFS South Campus and serves as Treasurer for the Women's Forum.



Accomplishments thus far

One of the forum's biggest accomplishments to date was the launch held virtually on 6 August 2021. It was attended well and supported by the Department of Women, Youths, and Persons with Disabilities, the Commission for Gender Equality, and Prof Francis Petersen, Rector and Vice-Chancellor of the UFS. Nombulelo says, "We had the pleasure of having the late Prof Hlengiwe Mkhize as our keynote speaker, who at the time served as the Deputy Minister in the Presidency for Women, Youth, and People with Disabilities." During the event, Prof Mkhize said, "This Women's Forum will help you to stand together to have a common goal: to be an anchor for any woman who walks through these campuses."

ExCo members have also been working hard to build partnerships with stakeholders like African Women in Dialogue, South African Women in Dialogue, Topco, Standard Bank, and many others. ExCo members are also working to slowly increase visibility and growing the forum's membership. Nombulelo says, "Our recruitment drive is another accomplishment, not only because it has increased the number of members, but because it allowed us to engage with women from different departments, on issues affecting women at UFS and the ways in which social, personal, and family experiences intersect with the workplace. We recently had one such engagement with women from the Health Sciences; this robust discussion challenged us to consider a variety of things we had not contemplated as members of the forum." ❏

By Eugene Seegers

**For more information or
to sign up, visit
www.ufs.ac.za/womensforum**

**"The forum
seeks to create
a platform of
advocacy and
activism which
encourages
the differences
among us as
UFS women."**

QWAQWA STUDENT AFFAIRS DIRECTOR passionate about cultivating conducive environment for students

With 25 years of experience working in a student-centred environment, new Director for Student Affairs on the Qwaqwa Campus, Zoleka

Dotwana, said the most important role of the department is to foster an environment conducive enough for students to prosper.

Dotwana is an experienced manager, lecturer, strategist, and researcher who has worked for different institutions of higher learning. Having started her career as an academic tutor and part-time residence head, Dotwana said this laid the foundation for her love of working with students. "I love serving students, and I believe I have a passion for helping them blossom into better people when they leave institutions of higher learning," she said.

Steering students in the right direction

She said her experience working with students has taught her that the transition from adolescence to adulthood is when one needs the most support. "There's a lot that one goes through while growing up, and some mistakes that young people make can cost them their entire lives. They are easily misled and are harder hit by the rough patches if they don't get the necessary support. I myself struggled a lot while growing up, and I realised that with the right support you can bounce back – and so I spend my days providing that support to students."

Dotwana said the role of Student Affairs was to steer students in the right direction, while allowing them to have fun and make the best of the years spent at university. "They are an important group to look after, but we also need to allow them the space to be. When they come to university, they often find that they have to take on their lives without any parental authority, and a lot can happen during that transition. However, I still think that the

university years are the best years of one's life in terms of fun. You are only expected to focus on your studies, so our role as the department is to say yes, you will have fun, however, have it responsibly, and stay focused on what you're here to achieve."

Ensuring student success

She said student governance, student counselling, sport, residences, and clinics all need to come together to make this happen, as they are all key to student success. "All departments are key, but the whole portfolio combined is what produces this conducive environment. Without student counsellors, residences cannot stand."

Having worked at the Walter Sisulu University Mthatha Campus for many years, Dotwana said her desire was for students at rural universities to never see this as a limitation, but rather an opportunity to dream bigger. "I always say they must never use this as their point of focus, because once they set those limits, they may not achieve much. Rural universities are usually small, thus allowing students to explore possibilities in an environment that allows them to do so." ❏

By Nonsindiso Qwabe

*Zoleka Dotwana is on a mission to
prepare students for life and work.*



DR MPUMELELO NCUBE

driven by the need to **succeed** and **inspire**

A drive to be an advocate for social justice is what drove Dr Mpumelelo Ncube, the new head of the Department of Social Work, to pursue a degree and career in Social Work. “I needed to be an advocate for social justice and empowerment of the vulnerable individuals and communities,” said Dr Ncube, who took over from Prof Sandra Ferreira earlier this year.

Dr Ncube’s academic and professional repertoire is exceptional and his deep-rooted passion for social work is definitely a bonus for the UFS Department of Social Work. He has a PhD in Social Work from the University of Johannesburg, a master’s degree in Social Development, and a Bachelor’s degree in Social Work from the University of Witwatersrand.

Driven by the need to succeed in whatever task he sets for himself, Dr Ncube says that he strives to make the lives of those in his path better – “The positive change should, however, begin with me so that others could easily believe in my efforts.”

Opportunity to raise a new generation

He joined academia in 2013 after working as a psychosocial services manager in the NGO sector. “My move to the UFS was in line with my career progression and the need to contribute meaningfully at a strategic level of social work education and practice,” Dr Ncube says.

The opportunity to work in academia has in fact provided him with an excellent opportunity. “I have the opportunity to raise a new generation of social work professionals that would be passionate, ethical and professional in their practice. In that way, my impact as an educator can be felt in all corners where my students are,” Dr Ncube says.

“I have the opportunity to raise a new generation of social work professionals that would be passionate, ethical and professional in their practice.”



Dr Mpumelelo Ncube is a dynamic an academic with a clear vision of growth for the Department of Social work and its students.

An academic of note

As a senior lecturer, he also notes the tidal changes currently sweeping through academia. He says, “In the age of the fourth industrial revolution, the Social Work academic programme should be able to identify and embrace various developments that would provide the flexibility to attract postgraduate students in different places without the need for relocation. This relates to the delivery of the programme. However, apart from adapting to these changes, the Social Work programme should also foster a cultural innovation with students and enable them to embrace the technological advancements in their social work practice.”

Apart from being an advocate for social justice and a lecturer he also sees his position as HOD as a being a catalyst to enable others within the department to publishing more research.

“Research is a key performance area for any academic, hence the mantra, ‘publish or perish’,” he says. However, he also cautions that trick of publishing research lies in “self-discipline, self-motivation and finding a research niche”.

Social work is his passion

Social work is Dr Ncube’s passion but he also says that it is a profession, which is “seriously underutilised especially in under developing nations”. The socio-economic conditions in these countries largely drive the underutilisation. “These are nations largely plagued by poverty, unemployment, political illiteracy challenges with policy development and implementation ,and moral degeneration among many challenges,” he says. In addition, it is therefore, as Dr Ncube mentions, that “the relevance of the social work profession shall be ever-present”. ■

By Rulanzen Martin

Thandeka Mosholi – driving social change and engagement on the South Campus

Thandeka Mosholi joined the South Campus of the UFS in 2020 as a project manager and was later appointed as the Head: Social Responsibility, Enterprise, and Community Engagement (SRP). Dumela caught up with this energetic woman to find out more about her roots, her passions, and the maxims she lives by.

Early days

Mosholi was born in the small town of Odendaalsrus in the Free State but was raised by her grandparents in Klerksdorp. She says, “My grandparents motivated me from a young age and told me that education is the only key to success and that education can change the poverty cycle in communities.”

Following these exhortations, Thandeka registered for an Education Diploma at the then Technikon Free State after completing matric. She later obtained a BTech degree in Education as well as a master’s degree in Education from the Central University of Technology.

Mosholi started her working life at the Hillside View Campus of Motheo FET College in 1998 and was later appointed as Provincial Curriculum Specialist at the Department of Education from 2007 to 2013. In 2014, she was appointed at the Central University of Technology as Work Integrated Learning Coordinator. From 2016 to 2017, she worked as a project coordinator at Marematlou Training Institute, and from 2018 to 2020, she worked at the South African Municipal Workers Union as Training Manager responsible for the skills development of municipal workers.

Recent achievements

Since 2021, Thandeka has been the Head of SRP. The SRP unit is responsible for assisting the South Campus with third-stream income through short learning programmes, school partnership programmes, the Internet Broadcast Project, and marketing. All these programmes run on external funding from SETAs, donors, and partnership with the Department of Education.

Mosholi says, “My aspiration for this department is ‘It always seems impossible until it’s done’.” Thandeka’s innovation and passion for the education sector makes it possible for her to enjoy her current position. She adds, “I strongly believe in teamwork, as this increases the success rate of any project.” ■

By Eugene Seegers

“Remember, don’t be pushed by your circumstances, but be led by your vision.”

Thandeka Mosholi lives by the maxim, “It always seems impossible until it’s done.”



LARSHAN NAICKER

on a *quest* for *life-long* learning

Making a move from Rhodes University to the University of the Free State (UFS), Larshan Naicker's career is marked by years of service to academic and public libraries. The newly appointed Deputy Director: Teaching & Learning at the UFS Library and Information Services (LIS) has been actively involved in the Library Association of South Africa serving in its executive committee as well as the Higher Education interest groups.

With his background and networks, he is sure to make an impact in students' journey-seeking knowledge.

"My role in the UFS-LIS is to provide a shared leadership and management in the delivery of teaching and learning information services that contribute towards academic success and lifelong learning of undergraduate students in support of the academic project."

Prior moving to Bloemfontein, Naicker spent seven years at Rhodes University, where he was the Head: User &

Research Support Services at the university library. Before that he worked in the public library sector in KwaZulu-Natal.

Growing up in Durban, Naicker was inspired by his late uncle George Naicker, "an activist for the liberation movement during the apartheid days", to live the life he lives.

"His resilience and tenacity after being sentenced to 14 years' imprisonment on Robben Island in 1964 for the Natal Sabotage Trial with other political prisoners has contributed to the liberation of South Africa. His life has demonstrated that, against all odds, one can succeed."

With qualifications from the Durban University of Technology and University of KwaZulu-Natal, and currently pursuing an MBA at the Rhodes University Business School, Naicker is an example of a lifelong learner, a character trait he wants to instil in generations of students to come. ✎

By Amanda Tongha



Larshan Naicker,
New Deputy Director:
Teaching & Learning
at the UFS Library
and Information
Services.

DR LUYANDA MARHAYA

– *Quality assurance* specialist

Dr Luyanda Marhaya is a veteran in the Higher Education Sector, having been active in both government and the public and private sector for the past 15 years and more. In addition, he has more than 15 years' management experience. On 1 October 2021, Dr Marhaya joined the Directorate for Institutional Research and Academic Planning (DIRAP) as Director for Academic Planning and Quality Assurance. Dumela had a virtual chat with him to find out what propels this academic specialist.

Returning to the UFS

I first came to the UFS for a master's degree in Higher Education, which I completed in 2012. I think I fell in love with the Free State back then. The seriousness and the precision surrounding the degree I was doing also impressed me deeply. Therefore, when this opportunity came, it really was a matter of an alumnus returning home, because that qualification had propelled me to a certain strand of higher education, which prepared me for this role.

His motivation?

For me, it's not about the title or how educated we are as the people who are responsible for ensuring that students get access to higher education. I come from a village in a small town in the Eastern Cape and I've walked that journey. Coming from that background, I would want to get to a university as a student and receive all the resources, with all the support to ensure that I really succeed in my studies. Thus, taking that analogy for me, that is where passion comes from; knowing that I am able to contribute to that student who comes from a small village around some small town, whether in the Free State or somewhere else in the country, and ensuring that that student gets a quality education.

On being a published researcher, including a book entitled *Does extended programme provision work in South Africa?*

I wrote the book as I was starting my career, dealing with

this delicate profile of students at previously disadvantaged higher education institutions in South Africa. My observations and research brought to the fore how differently students in extended programmes are treated compared to those in mainstream programmes.

Certainly, time allowing, I would really like to focus my current field, which is quality assurance and quality teaching and learning, because I think in the era of COVID-19, quality in education becomes a crucial question. How is the quality in pedagogy? How is the quality in assessment? How is the quality of online platforms used by students? It brings a whole range of other questions to the fore, and as people who guard against quality, it becomes imperative for us to devise instruments that are fit for purpose, to really ensure that there's quality learning and teaching. I would want to delve into that space, especially in terms of how universities have adapted to produce new knowledge during a pandemic. I think that this 'new normal' really requires of us to change a whole range of things. But in the process of changing, I will still want to maintain quality. ✎

By Eugene Seegers



Dr Luyanda Marhaya

ARISTA VAN DER WESTHUIZEN COVID-19 survivor

longing for a *mask-off* society

It started with tiredness, an abnormal heartbeat and not being able to swim properly – a sport she passionately enjoys. This is what Arista van der Westhuizen, Officer at Microbiology and Centre for Mineral Biogeochemistry and UVPERSU executive committee member, remembers on contracting COVID-19 in October 2020.

Suddenly everything she did felt like having to put in “more effort”.

“My heart was beating out of control while swimming and at random times during the day. My doctor thought I had sinusitis. I was not tested; the doctor only gave me an inhaler and cortisone for sinus. I had no fever or loss of smell or taste at the time; however, I was not asked if I had a strange taste in my mouth.”

Staying with a friend and daughter and with her COVID-19 symptoms undetected, the trio continued to practise sanitizing and social distancing.

“I was scared, as my brother and his wife were hospitalised in July 2020 due to COVID-19 complications.”

She continued to push herself hard in the swimming pool as she prepared herself for the Midmar Mile Swimming Competition.

It was only after van der Westhuizen had demanded to see a cardiologist that she learnt that she had been infected with the virus.

“I felt my doctor did not believe me when I told him that I was not well. On my visit to the cardiologist, he stopped my swimming immediately as he discovered dangerous hypertension, arrhythmia and anaemia,” says van der Westhuizen.



Arista van der Westhuizen survived COVID-19 and wishes more people can vaccinate against the pandemic.

Without the virus having been detected and only learning the fact later, Arista was “really upset and scared”.

“I was pushing myself so hard in the pool, even though I felt ill, because a doctor had told me I only had a sinus infection.” She says, “I thought about the damage done to my body due to the hypertension. I felt guilty for going to the pool where other swimmers were. Luckily there were very strict rules on sanitizing. It is outdoors and I swim in my own lane.”

With the COVID-19 having a major effect on individuals’ mental well-being and being a long hauler struggling with brain fog and on anxiety medication that helps, van der Westhuizen hoped that it would pass in time.

“My support came from my swimming coach Simon Gray and social media support for COVID-19 survivors.”

With vaccines rolled out by age groups, van der Westhuizen did not think twice when it was her turn to vaccinate, as she “trusts science and research and wants to give other people a better chance to return to a mask-off society”.

Van der Westhuizen advises people to please get vaccinated and trust only fact-based articles that are openly available. “I cannot wait to see everyone’s entire faces in again public when they smile.”

By Lunga Luthuli

COVID-19 Vaccine

MYTHS

There is so much COVID-related information available – what do you believe? Backed by scientific information and expert knowledge, we would like to bust some myths about the COVID vaccine.

MYTH 1 It was made way too fast!

Wrong. It was not rushed. Researchers have been studying mRNA technology for 30 years, and scientists have also been working on the coronavirus during the 2003 SARS and 2013 MERS outbreaks. There was also large, multi-national collaboration and participation in creating the vaccine, backed by large amounts of funding.

MYTH 2 You can get COVID-19 from the vaccine!

Wrong. The mRNA vaccine does not contain weakened COVID viruses like other vaccines. However, you may still experience some mild side effects such as fatigue, aches and pains, and mild fever.

MYTH 3 The vaccine will change my DNA!

Wrong. The mRNA of the vaccine and your DNA never interact.

MYTH 4 The vaccine causes infertility!

Wrong. There is no data that point to this; it is also not biologically plausible. On the other hand, we know that COVID-19 is a high-risk event for a pregnant person and can also hurt the baby in many ways.

TRUTH The vaccine will keep me safe!

Right. The vaccine will keep you and those around you safe. It is the best way of protection against serious disease or death. It will also help you to get back to doing the things you love with fewer restrictions – such as returning to campus and attending events.

Protect yourself and others. Get VACS-ed!

For protection against the Virus and Access to the life you like, Campus regulations requires **Safety for you, and safety for all.**

For Return-to-Campus and Vaccination updates, visit www.ufs.ac.za/coronavirus

By Dr Cindé Greyling

mamela!

What a year! ‘Mela’s wings are dragging on the ground, and ‘Mela can’t wait to feel the warmth of rest during December. Luckily, ‘Mela’s exhaustion is not for nothing. The feelings of pride, gratification, and delight are also prominent this time round.

‘Mela is proud to have played a part this year. The year started with whispers of a vaccine for the “thing that must not be named”, and to date, about 13,8 million individuals are fully vaccinated. Let us hope that we can soon return to ‘normal’ and do our part to stay safe and vaccinate.

To be completely honest, ‘Mela ran around in circles at the thought of the needle, but ‘Mela decided to go for the vaccine to keep all the ducks safe. The Universitas Vaccination Site gave ‘Mela some ‘lekker’ human interaction, and now ‘Mela feels much safer, but ‘Mela is still looking forward to a day when we no longer need to wear

masks. Eish! It’s such a shame that ‘Mela didn’t invest in the ‘bottled air’ industry.

Luckily, we don’t give up when faced with adversity at UFS! There were so many milestones this year. Fruitful Rector’s Engagement sessions, a spectacular Rector’s Concert, the Inauguration of Prof Bonang Mohale as the eighth Chancellor of the UFS, and so many more memorable moments.

It has been quite the year and ‘Mela is lost for words, so ‘Mela would like to say goodbye to everyone until 2022. Stay safe during this holidays and be careful not to get a mask-tan (or to spend too much time in the sun). ‘Mela wishes you happy holidays and only good vibes! 🦆

With love,
‘Mela



Many stars of the University of the Free State (UFS) still excelled during these tough circumstances in 2021 and showed what can be done with true resilience.

Some of these sporting highlights include Louzanne Coetzee's Paralympic success, the Kovies netball team claiming another title, a young Varsity Football side reaching great heights and a USSA cross-country team's podium finish.

Coetzee returned home from the Paralympic Games in Tokyo with a silver (1 500 m; T11) and bronze (marathon; T12) medal.

The 28-year-old not only won two medals, but set a new 1 500 m African record (T11; 4:40.96) and a new world marathon record (T11; 3:11:13) in her class.

The Kovies netball team, which also reached the USSA final, won a record fourth Varsity Netball title.

The side convincingly beat Maties 55-39 in the final to be crowned champions. It was the biggest victory margin in a final and they did it after losing to Maties (46-54) in the first round.

The UFS men's soccer team had a superb tournament and reached the Varsity Football final, which it lost 4-1 to the University of Johannesburg, for the first time ever.

The side also produced the Player of the Tournament in the striker Sello Diphoko.

At the USSA Cross-Country Championships, hosted by the UFS, Kovies finished third overall with five medals and Pakiso Mthembu was crowned the 4 km men's USSA champion.

By Jóhann Thormählen

Sportsmen and women had to adapt and learn how to deal with various new adversities the past two years.



The University of the Free State celebrated the achievements of Louzanne Coetzee with a small celebratory function after her success at the Paralympic Games. From the left are Claus Kempen, Coetzee and Estean Badenhorst. Kempen (marathon) and Badenhorst (1 500 m) were her guides in Tokyo. Photo | Charl Devenish

UFS sport stars *excel* during tough times in 2021



The Kovies have won all four Varsity Netball finals they participated in. This year the University of the Free State claimed a fourth title and it has now won the tournament in 2013, 2014, 2018 and 2021. Photo | Varsity Sports



Sello Diphoko was one of the stars for the University of the Free State in Varsity Football. Diphoko, who played in his first tournament, was crowned Player of the Tournament and also received the Golden Boot award. Photo | Varsity Sports

FANS IN THE STANDS,

campus sport could return in 2022

Thousands in the crowd cheering their fellow students on and as many taking part in the sports they love.

Only a few years ago, this was part of our everyday life and not a world that once was.

However, it is on the wish list for DB Prinsloo, Director of KopsieSport, for 2022.

He hopes sport participation will increase even more during next year, especially for the general student on campus. This can be a reality as more students return to campus.

The University of the Free State (UFS) will help host to events such as USSA athletics and Varsity Cup rugby matches in 2022 and Prinsloo says KopsieSport is looking forward to these and other tournaments.

A decision has been made that the Varsity Cup, which was cancelled in 2020 and took place in a bio-bubble in 2021, will return to university campuses. Spectators might even be allowed if government regulations and the pandemic permits.

Although high-performance sportsmen and women of the UFS were allowed, while adhering to certain protocols, to compete during this year, other sporting activities for students have not started to function as usual yet.

Prinsloo says only some sports carried on like before the pandemic.

"Normal sporting activities, especially campus and recreational sport, are some of the things we are looking forward to. Because of Covid-19 protocols they were deprived of action."


According to him, this looks like a possibility in 2022, permitting how things stand with campus and national regulations.

Prinsloo would love to see fans on campus in the stands again and he is hopeful that this could become a reality.

In October 2021, the South African government decided to start allowing spectators back at sporting events, while adhering to certain protocols of course.

Even though it was during tough circumstances, many Kopsies still achieved great heights this year on the sports field.

And Prinsloo hopes for more of the same from the UFS sport stars next year.

He praised the athletes and his KopsieSport staff for adapting, finding new ways of doing things, staying motivated and determined during abnormal circumstances to still get out on top. 

By Jóhann Thormählen

Sport stars of the University of the Free State might take part in front of spectators, the first time since early 2020, next year.

