

# *Our 2023 Journey*

UNIVERSITY OF THE FREE STATE



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



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





# Contents

3	Messages	<hr/>
6	Our mission	<hr/>
8	University leadership	<hr/>
10	Institutional excellence	<hr/>
16	Leading learning	<hr/>
24	Student achievements	<hr/>
32	Focused research	<hr/>
44	Impactful engagement	<hr/>
50	Inclusive spaces and facilities	<hr/>
54	Visibility and impact	<hr/>
60	Sporting champions	<hr/>
62	Inspiring alumni	









# WHO WE ARE

## MESSAGE FROM CHANCELLOR



**Prof Bonang Mohale**  
UFS Chancellor

Although Africa is poised to become the continent with the largest population of young people, its higher education system faces numerous socio-economic obstacles. The Tanzanian scholar-activist and Mwalimu Julius Nyerere Research Chair in Pan-African Studies at the University of Dar es Salaam, Issa Shivji, opines that, “Neo-liberalism has devastated African universities, turning them from vibrant centres of new thinking and academic comradeship into factories churning out marketable academic products and ‘saleable’ students.”

Amid increasing complexity in universities, evolving job profiles require continuous learning and upskilling through formal, non-formal, and informal education. Online learning platforms are growing, and corporate investments are shifting the focus towards continuous learning. The blurring of lines between work and study is driving changes in curriculum and funding sources, with increased competition for funds. Modular degrees and online platforms offer students greater choice and flexibility. Teaching models are shifting towards applied learning, emphasising creativity, emotional intelligence, and cognitive flexibility. In South Africa in particular, the high growth rate in higher education has not realised the sector’s full potential due to funding constraints. Overcoming the legacies of the past that are still evident in the form of structural inequalities, spatial disparities, and systemic injustices requires effort.

Amid these challenges, the UFS has remained steadfast in its transformation agenda, ensuring diversity, inclusivity, equity, belonging and access for those who have been disproportionately excluded from higher education opportunities. As such, a range of programmes yielding successful results have been implemented to broaden access and promote diversity. The university has leveraged technology as a powerful catalyst for change using digital platforms to enhance the teaching and learning experience, thus expanding the boundaries of the traditional classroom towards a blended teaching and learning approach in creating more access. The intellectual capital and research prowess of the university is key in driving innovation and spearheading collaboration and partnerships with industry, civil society and government to address the challenges facing society. These collaborations have been instrumental in supporting the university’s commitment to improving student success, student development and student employability – while ensuring global relevance.

Quality higher education is crucial for the potential of the youth to address the challenges facing South Africa and their impact on the world. Going forward, I am confident that the UFS will remain committed to academic excellence, equity and social justice and through continuous innovation and collaboration, ensure a bright future for generations to come.

## MESSAGE FROM COUNCIL CHAIR



**Mr David Noko**  
UFS Council Chair

The year 2023 was a landmark year for the University of the Free State, as it saw the introduction of Vision 130 – a 12-year strategy leading up to our 130th year of existence, celebrated in 2034. Vision 130 commits the university to strengthen its reputation among its peers and society as a research-led university of excellence. It states that the UFS’ ultimate intention is to be acknowledged as a university that impactfully supports societal development, thus aspiring for maximum societal impact, while ensuring a

continued emphasis on a broader institutional transformation agenda. This commitment to societal impact requires a purpose-driven focus on relevant and cutting-edge research as well as the preparation of globally competitive graduates, and 2023 was dedicated to a large extent to getting systems, strategies and processes in place to achieve these goals.

The launch of Vision 130, adopted by the University Council in September 2022, came at a particularly challenging time for higher



## MESSAGE FROM VICE-CHANCELLOR AND PRINCIPAL

On a global and institutional level, the year 2023 was marked by an equal measure of challenge and opportunity. In a geopolitical context, our world exemplified the pinnacle of global interconnectedness. Yet, at the same time, it was more divided and fragmented than ever before. In various places, inequality and injustice reached critical levels, posing a serious obstacle to sustainable development.

Against this background, 2023 was the first year of the implementation of the UFS' Vision 130 strategy – a bold, ambitious compass that will lead us to 2034, when our institution celebrates its 130<sup>th</sup> anniversary. Built on the values of Excellence, Innovation and Impact, Accountability, Care, Social Justice and Sustainability, Vision 130 embodies our aspiration to continue to grow and extend our influence and impact locally, regionally, and globally. It reflects our ambition to be a university with a consistent outward focus, and to be profound in what we deliver – building on past achievements, while constantly transforming ourselves in order to stay relevant within the dynamic and ever-changing international higher education sphere.

During 2023, undergraduate student success and overall student employability remained key focus areas, as these areas were reset and stabilised in the post-COVID pandemic scenario. It was a year marked by increased and meaningful collaboration with various high-profile stakeholders, such as the Kresge Foundation, the Department of Higher Education and Training, and the Michael & Susan Dell Foundation. The continued engagement as well as financial and advisory support these collaboration partners presented, allowed us to consistently improve student success, student development, and student employability.

With the visibility and impact of our institution a constant consideration, continued emphasis was also placed this year on developing platforms and spaces for robust engagement, debate, critical thinking, and exposure to diverse views for and among our students.

Each year brings us closer to 2034 – and to reaching our committed deliverables and articulated goals. We remain confident that the University of the Free State possesses the necessary ambition and human capital to reach our envisioned destination.



**Prof Francis Petersen**  
UFS Vice-Chancellor  
and Principal

education in our country. The governance and operational challenges currently faced by universities include increased and continuous demand for access for all academically deserving students, irrespective of their financial strength, and limited alternative options for young school leavers. This is magnified by poor student throughput and completion rates nationally. Higher education institutions are facing increasing financial pressures due to the failure of public funding levels for universities and students to match inflationary cost increases and growing student numbers. These dynamics, together with

continued inefficiencies and changes in the National Student Financial Aid Scheme (NSFAS) funding model and delivery, have created numerous and complex institutional disruptions and challenges.

Milestones and accolades received, as well as challenges confronted during 2023, reflect the commitment of the University of the Free State to continuously renew itself to ensure the retention of our vitality and relevance. Beyond merely seeking to survive current and future changes, we aim to continue to grow and extend our influence and impact locally, regionally, and globally.



## OUR MISSION

*To impart and generate new knowledge that impactfully supports societal development*

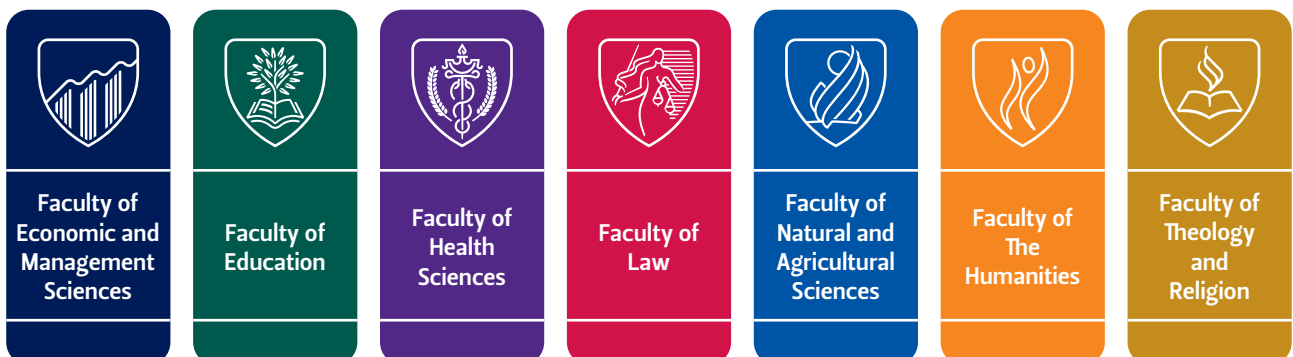
## Our values



## UFS in numbers

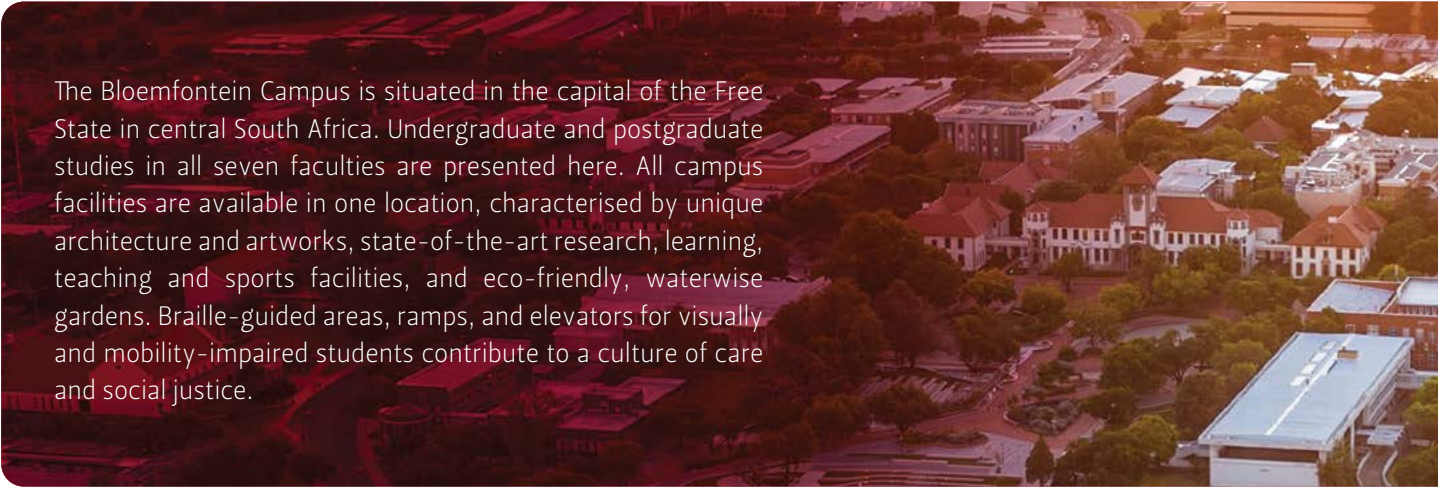


## Our faculties



# Our campuses


In 2023, the UFS celebrated its 20-year anniversary of being 'one university – three campuses.'



The Bloemfontein Campus is situated in the capital of the Free State in central South Africa. Undergraduate and postgraduate studies in all seven faculties are presented here. All campus facilities are available in one location, characterised by unique architecture and artworks, state-of-the-art research, learning, teaching and sports facilities, and eco-friendly, waterwise gardens. Braille-guided areas, ramps, and elevators for visually and mobility-impaired students contribute to a culture of care and social justice.



The beautiful Qwaqwa Campus at the foot of the Maluti Mountains in the picturesque Eastern Free State serves students from the immediate area and surrounding provinces. The campus has a strong focus on socio-economic development, informed by the rural context in which it is located. Programmes, underpinned by a strong research agenda, focus on identifying the best possible strategies to create jobs and stimulate economic growth in this area. The campus is home to the internationally acclaimed Afromontane Research Unit (ARU), a high-excellence multi-disciplinary mountain research 'community of practice' that leads African mountain research on the continent.



The South Campus, nestled in the hills to the south of Bloemfontein, is home to the university's Blended Learning Innovation and Support Services (BLISS), a subdivision of the Centre for Teaching and Learning (CTL). Utilising the South Campus' state-of-the-art multimedia production studio, BLISS has the primary goal of providing holistic, integrated services and support towards a new blended learning future for the UFS. The BEd Foundation Phase programme is also offered on this campus, providing a well-rounded education that equips graduates with an integrated knowledge and understanding of teaching learners between the ages of six and nine years.



# UNIVERSITY LEADERSHIP



**Vice-Chancellor  
and Principal**

Prof F Petersen

**Internal Auditing**  
Mr V Visser

**Communication and Marketing**  
Ms L Loader

**Institutional Advancement**  
Dr R Ally

**Campus Principal:  
Qwaqwa Campus**  
Dr M Mandew



**Deputy Vice-Chancellor:  
Institutional Change, Strategic  
Partnerships and Societal Impact**  
Dr M Qhobela

**Community Engagement**  
Bishop B Ramahlele

**Unit for Institutional Change  
and Social Justice**  
Prof C Chasi



**Deputy Vice-Chancellor:  
Research and Internationalisation**  
Prof V Reddy

**Research Development**  
Dr GJ Taylor

**Library and  
Information Services**  
Ms J Molopyane

**SARChI Chairs**  
Prof M Labuschagne  
Prof C Pohl-Albertyn

**Centre for Graduate Support**  
Dr D Wessels (acting)

**Office for International Affairs**  
Prof L Jacobs (acting)

**SADoCol**  
Mr H du Preez

**Transformation of the Professoriate  
Mentoring Programme**  
Dr H van den Berg



**Deputy Vice-Chancellor:  
Operations**  
Prof P Naidoo

**Finance**  
Mr C Liebenberg

**Human Resources**  
Ms S van Jaarsveld

**University Estates**  
Mr N Janse van Rensburg

**Information and Communication  
Technology Services**  
Dr V Coetzee

**Protection Services**  
Mr N Masalesa

*Visibility  
and  
Impact*





**Deputy Vice-Chancellor:  
Academic**  
Dr E van Staden



**Executive Director:  
Student Affairs**  
Mr T Hlasho



**Registrar**  
Mr NN Ntsababa

**Centre for Teaching  
and Learning**  
Prof F Strydom

**Directorate for Institutional  
Research and Academic Planning  
(DIRAP)**  
Ms L Joubert

**Faculty of Economic and  
Management Sciences**  
Dean: Prof P Burger

**Faculty of Education**  
Dean: Prof L Jita

**Faculty of Health Sciences**  
Dean: Prof G van Zyl

**Faculty of Law**  
Dean: Prof S Kamga

**Faculty of Natural and  
Agricultural Sciences**  
Dean: Prof D Vermeulen

**Faculty of The Humanities**  
Dean: Prof M Masoga

**Faculty of Theology  
and Religion**  
Dean: Prof L Sutton (acting)

**Student Affairs**  
Dr WP Wahl

**Student Counselling  
and Development**  
Dr M Dunn-Coetzee

**Art Gallery**  
Ms A de Jesus

**KovsieSport**  
Mr J Laka

**Housing and Residence Affairs**  
Mr QT Koetaan

**Health and Wellness Centre**  
Sr R Johnson

**Legal Services and Compliance**  
Mr V Booysen

**Student Academic Services**  
Mr A Naidoo

**Governance and Policy**  
Ms E van Pletzen

**Student Recruitment Services**  
Ms N Mbadi

**Systems and Project Management**  
Dr N Noruwana

**Kovsie Phahamisa Academy**  
Adv S Hyland

**Academy for Multilingualism**  
Dr N Ngubane

## STUDENT LEADERS



**SRC PRESIDENT  
Bloemfontein Campus**  
Okuhle April



**SRC PRESIDENT  
Qwaqwa Campus**  
Nqobizitha Zwane



**SRC PRESIDENT  
South Campus**  
Andiswa Dube

# INSTITUTIONAL EXCELLENCE

The year 2023 was the first year of the implementation of Vision 130, which sets out the strategic intent to reposition the institution towards realising specific long-term goals by 2034. Vision 130 commits the UFS to strengthen its reputation among its peers and society as a research-led university of excellence. It states that the UFS' ultimate intention is to be acknowledged as a university that impactfully supports societal development.

## VISION 130 GOALS



**Goal 1:** To improve academic excellence, reputation, and impact.



**Goal 2:** To promote an environment of agility, flexibility, and responsiveness based on trust and accountability.



**Goal 3:** To advance a transformational institutional culture that demonstrates the values of the UFS.



**Goal 4:** To promote stewardship and the prioritisation of institutional resources for strategic intent.

## UFS REMAINS STEADY IN THE WORLD UNIVERSITY RANKINGS

University of the Free State  
RANKED 801-1000



World  
University  
Rankings 2023

[www.thewur.com](http://www.thewur.com)

The UFS maintained its position between 801 and 1 000 in the prestigious Times Higher Education World University Rankings. The university remains one of nine South African universities ranked in the top 1 000 on the 2024 THE list, which was released on 27 September 2023. It improved its scores in four out of five dimensions compared to the 2023 listing. Of the more than 2 600 institutions that submit data, 1 904 global institutions are reflected in the rankings.

## Prof Petersen receives national and international recognition



Prof Francis Petersen, UFS Vice-Chancellor and Principal, was elected as **Chairperson of the Board of Directors of Universities South Africa** in mid-November. He will serve in this position from 2024 to 2025.

Prof Petersen was also recognised as one of the individuals making an impact on Africa's development, receiving the **RUFORUM (Regional Universities Forum for Capacity Building in Agriculture) Recognition Award** for his outstanding leadership, foresight, and contribution to the promotion of excellence in higher education on the continent.

Due to his visibility internationally and his promotion of the impact of the UFS and South Africa abroad – but specifically in the United Kingdom (UK) – he was also appointed to the **Board of the South African Chamber of Commerce UK**.

### 2023 in numbers



11

policy processes reviewed and digitalised



612

off-campus accommodation inspections conducted



136

ER24 interventions benefiting UFS staff and students

## UFS HOSTS NATIONAL GLOBAL CHANGE CONFERENCE

Researchers, members of industry and government, businesspeople, funders, and representatives from foreign diplomatic missions convened at the start of 2023 for the fifth National Global Change Conference, hosted on the Bloemfontein Campus.

The purpose of the conference was to share and debate current local research and development initiatives that form part of the Global Change Grand Challenge (GCC5), one of the focus areas developed under the Department of Science and Innovation's Ten-Year Innovation Plan. The GCC5 supports knowledge generation and technological innovation to enable South Africa, Africa, and the world to respond to global environmental change, including climate change, in an informed and innovative way.



Free State MEC for Agriculture and Rural Development, Thembeni Nxangisa, representing Minister Barbara Creecy during the Fifth Global Change Conference at the University of the Free State





## TOP HONOURS AT THE MACE EXCELLENCE AWARDS

Five UFS departments have been awarded for different campaigns embodying excellence at the national association for Marketing, Advancement, and Communication in Education (MACE) 2023 Excellence Awards. The UFS won 11 awards altogether, including the sought-after

Chairperson's Award of Excellence, awarded to a single entry that embodies true excellence in marketing, advancement, or communication, for the UFS Leadership, Organisational Development, and Employee Well-Being's Women's Day Breakfast.

## Juanita Burjins Joins USAf Leadership Team

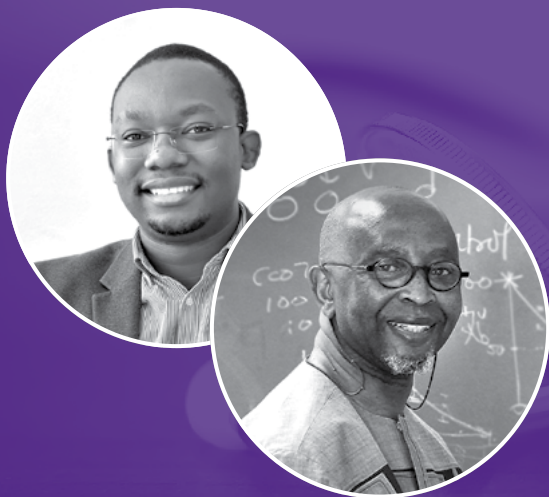
**Juanita Burjins**, Head: Leadership and Development in the Department of Human Resources, was appointed as a member of the Universities South Africa's (USAf) Leadership Management Strategy Group (LMSG). The appointment to the group in April 2023 is a testament and a recognition of Burjins' leadership and expertise, not only in the field of human resources, but also in the higher education sector.



## DR MALAN ELECTED FIRST FEMALE PRESIDENT OF VASCULAR SOCIETY

**Dr Asha Malan**, the Head of Vascular Surgery in the Faculty of Health Sciences, has made history by becoming the President-elect for the Vascular Society of Southern Africa. This is the first time in the society's 40-year existence that a woman has attained this prestigious position. Dr Malan is one of only seven qualified female vascular surgeons in the country and holds the distinction of being the youngest and first woman to head an academic unit in South Africa.

# Experts appointed to WHO positions



**Prof Champion Nyoni** (left), Senior Researcher in the School of Nursing has been appointed to the World Health Organisation (WHO) Academy Standing Advisory Quality Committee – making him the only representative from Africa to serve in this academy.

**Prof Motlalepula Matsabisa** (right), expert on African traditional medicine and Head of the African Medicines Innovations and Technologies Development Platform (AMITD) within the Department of Pharmacology, has been appointed to serve on the WHO Global Centre for Traditional Medicine Editorial Board/Evidence Task Force.

## DR MARHAYA SELECTED TO DHET PANEL FOR FOUNDATION PROGRAMMES

**Dr Luyanda Marhaya**, Director of Academic Planning and Quality Assurance, has been selected by the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET) to join the Foundation Provision Reference Group (FPRG). His primary role in this position is to assist the department in assessing applications for foundation programmes submitted by universities, ensuring compliance with the current Foundation Provision Guidelines.



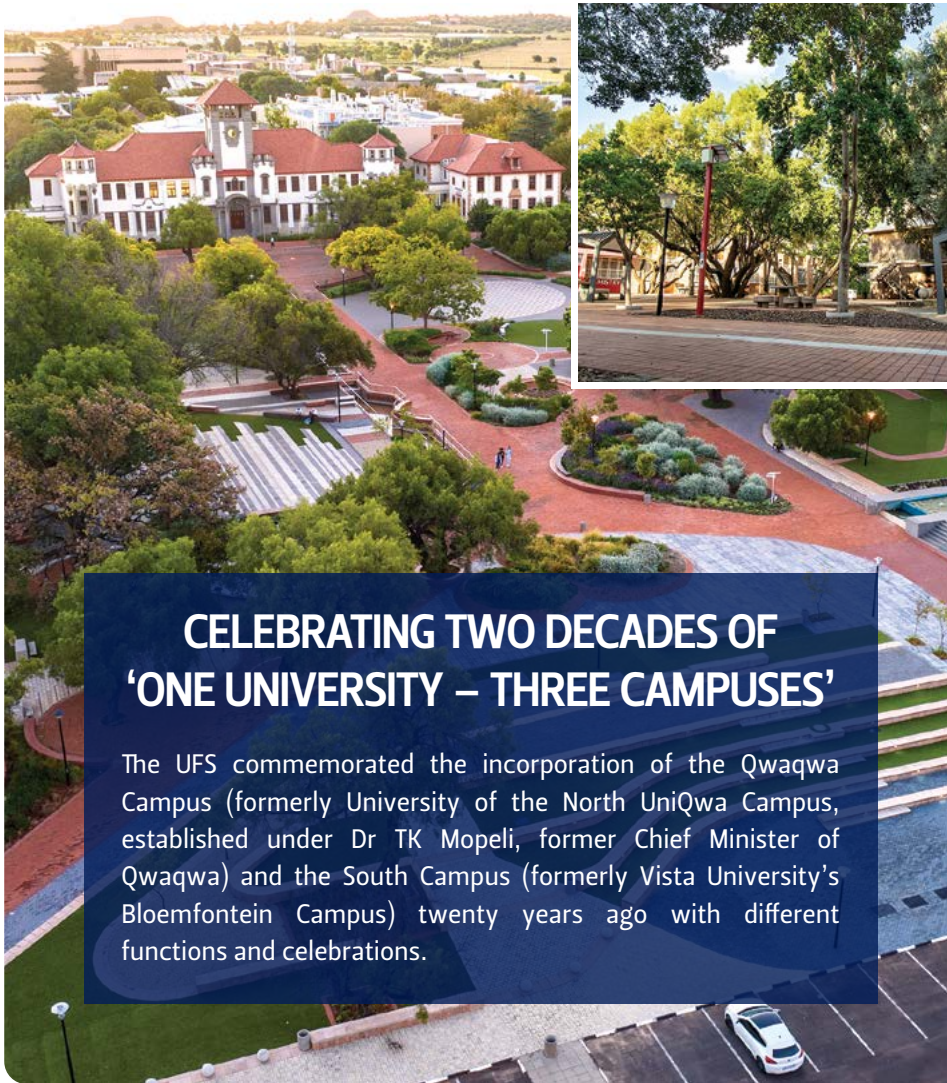
## CUADS staff members lead USAf task team on disability

**Martie Miranda**, Deputy Director of the UFS Centre for Universal Access and Disability Support (CUADS), and **Charity Morrison**, CUADS Disability Support Manager, have been nominated to lead a Universities South Africa Transformation Managers Forum task team to review universal access and disability support in the public higher education sector.

Their nomination is an expression of the UFS' commitment to instilling values of care and social justice, where staff and students have a sense of belonging.







## CELEBRATING TWO DECADES OF 'ONE UNIVERSITY – THREE CAMPUSES'

The UFS commemorated the incorporation of the Qwaqwa Campus (formerly University of the North UniQwa Campus, established under Dr TK Mopeli, former Chief Minister of Qwaqwa) and the South Campus (formerly Vista University's Bloemfontein Campus) twenty years ago with different functions and celebrations.

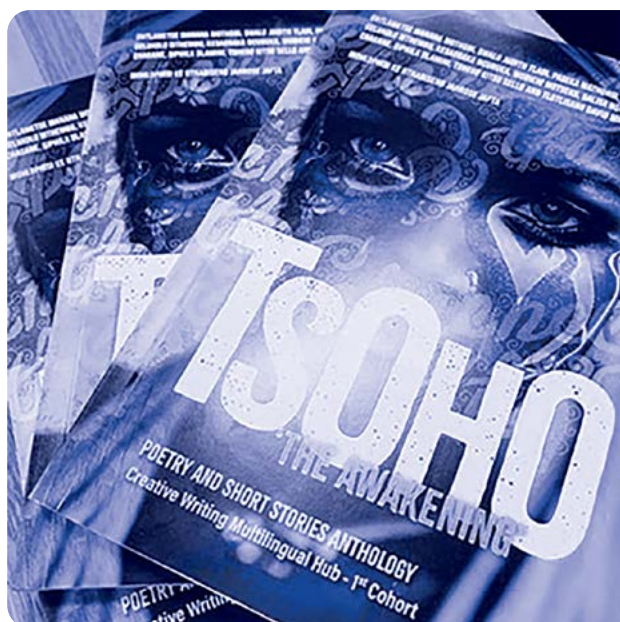


## UFS publisher receives feather in literary cap

Nthabiseng (JahRose) Jafta, a publishing coordinator at African Languages Press in the Library and Information Services, received the Silver Medal Award and other accolades at the Eurasian Literary Festival held in Egypt.







## UNIQUE MULTILINGUAL AUGMENTED REALITY BOOK LAUNCHED

African Languages Press and the Academy for Multilingualism launched a seminal book, *TSOHO 'The Awakening'*. This anthology of poetry and short stories, featuring seven indigenous languages, stems from the first cohort of authors who participated in the Creative Writing Multilingual Hub masterclasses in July. The book features an app with an augmented reality feature that brings images to life, with audio recitals in different languages.









# LEADING LEARNING



# LEADING LEARNING

In 2023, the UFS took a deliberate step to further increase its focus on transforming *Learning and Teaching* through a greater emphasis on digitalisation of systems and processes, including investment in digital infrastructure to support blended learning and teaching. This is to ensure the substantial transformation and realignment that are necessary to accommodate the changing realities and needs of a high-performance 21st-century African university that is globally, nationally, and continentally relevant.

In the UFS context, key challenges remain student success and throughput, as well as curriculum responsiveness and relevance, technological innovation, the changes wrought by the COVID-19 pandemic, and issues around

inclusion, equity, and social justice. Ensuring sound and transparent academic governance, curriculum administration, and an operational and systems support structure that will facilitate this, remains paramount.



## SIGNIFICANT INCREASE IN PhDs AMONG UFS ACADEMICS

The 2023 April graduation saw a general total of 94 PhDs being conferred, which is a significant growth compared to the 84 conferred during the previous year's April graduation ceremonies.

This is in line with Vision 130, which expresses the goal that 75% of all academic staff should have PhDs by 2030.

### 2023 IN NUMBERS:

67  
candidates in  
Transforming  
the Professoriate  
programmes



25,7%  
share of professoriate  
are black



261  
academic staff  
participating in  
Curriculum Renewal  
Programme since  
2021 roll-out



30  
new online apps and  
software programmes  
approved



59%  
of academic  
department heads  
are associate or  
full professors

36,6%  
share of professoriate  
are female



## UFS LAUNCHES DIPLOMA IN TECHNICAL VOCATIONAL TRAINING

In collaboration with the South African Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET), the South African Institute for Distance Education (SAIDE), Open Learning, and the European Union (EU), the UFS launched an Advanced Diploma in Technical Vocational Training on the UFS Bloemfontein Campus. This innovative programme, which is offered at NQF level 7, includes resources such as Mathematics Method, Method of Teaching Automotive Repair and Maintenance, Collage-based Work-integrated Learning, and Method of Teaching Electrical Engineering, and is designed to meet the evolving demands of the modern workforce by combining cutting-edge technical education with a strong vocational focus.

Deputy Minister of Higher Education, Science and Innovation, Buti Manamela, delivers the keynote address at the launch of the Advanced Diploma in Technical Vocational Training.



## UFS conducts language resource audit to promote multilingualism

A Language Resource Audit was done at the Academy for Multilingualism in June, assessing the language-related resources available within the UFS, including evaluating language courses, language support services, language learning materials, and faculty expertise. The audit aims to strengthen multilingualism practices in order to promote linguistic inclusion and embrace diversity in academic and social spaces. The audit was accompanied by the second UFS Translanguaging Seminar and the UFS Language Policy Strategy and Practice Seminar.





# Clinical Simulation and Skills Unit celebrates a decade of excellence

The Clinical Simulation and Skills Unit (CSSU) within the School of Biomedical Sciences celebrated its tenth anniversary in 2023. The unit has become a national and international leader in medical simulation training, with thirty-four academic articles, eight master's and seven PhD dissertations completed in its first ten years of existence.



Prof Chris Viljoen, Head of the School of Biomedical Sciences; Prof Gert van Zyl, Dean of the Faculty of Health Sciences; Prof Francis Petersen, UFS Vice-Chancellor and Principal; and Prof Mathys Labuschagne, Head of the Clinical Simulation and Skills Unit

## Dr SARPONG awarded ACCA prize for financial management

Dr Prince Sarpong, Senior Lecturer in the School of Financial Planning Law (SFPL), has been honoured with the prestigious Association of Chartered Certified Accountants (ACCA) prize for Financial Management. The ACCA is a globally recognised professional body for accountants.







## Prof Roodt receives prestigious prize from SA Akademie vir Wetenskap en Kuns



**Prof Andreas Roodt**, former Head of the Department of Chemistry and retired Distinguished Professor in the same department, was awarded the MT Steyn Prize for Natural Science and Technology Excellence from the *SA Akademie vir Wetenskap en Kuns*. The prize, a major recognition of his life's work, was presented to him for his contribution to the exploration and sustained development of natural science and technology and the successful application thereof in broader society.

## UFS ACADEMICS RANKED AMONG TOP 50 IN SOCIAL SCIENCES IN SA



Prof Melanie Walker



Prof Ivan Turok

Two UFS SARChI Research Chairs were included in the second edition of Research.com's ranking of the best scholars in the field of Social Sciences and Humanities. **Prof Melanie Walker** from the UFS Higher Education and Human Development research group and SARChI Chair: Higher Education and Human Development, and **Prof Ivan Turok** from the South African National Research Foundation, who holds the Research Chair in Strengthening Urban Economies: People, Place, Production and Policy, have been ranked 41<sup>st</sup> (ranked 5 286 in the world) and 20<sup>th</sup> (2 825) in South Africa respectively.

## Prof Maré is Free State Agriculturist of the Year



**Prof Frikkie Maré**, Associate Professor and Head of the Department of Agricultural Economics, walked away with the Agricultural Writers SA's Agriculturist of the Year award for the Free State. The awards are meant to honour everyone who plays a role in ensuring food security in the country – from producers to economists, input suppliers and industry organisations.

## STUDENT SUCCESS AT UFS SHOWCASED IN INTERNATIONAL PUBLICATION

The UFS was recognised internationally for its exceptional work in promoting student success in a publication titled *Transforming Lives at the Institutional Level: Equity Promotion Initiatives Across the World* featuring 31 exemplary good practice institutions from 24 different countries, all dedicated to transforming students' lives. The acknowledgement came as the UFS was nominated as an international case study showcasing best practices. The publication highlights how the UFS has significantly improved student success, bridged racial achievement gaps, and successfully implemented high-impact practices to support its students.



Prof Francois Strydom and Dr Sonja Loots from the Centre for Teaching and Learning formed an integral part of the publication





## Programme director honoured with FISA awards for fiduciary excellence

**Henda Kleingeld**, Programme Director for the Postgraduate Diploma in Financial Planning at the School of Financial Planning Law (SFPL), was awarded the prestigious FISA Chairperson's Award for her remarkable contributions to the fiduciary profession. The award, presented by the Fiduciary Institute of Southern Africa (FISA), recognises individuals who have made a significant and lasting impact on the fiduciary landscape.



## ACCOUNTING LECTURER TRIUMPHS IN GLOBAL ACCOUNTING EXAMS

**Michelle de Lange**, accredited Accounting Lecturer in the School of Accountancy, finished second in the world at the 2023 Chartered Global Management Accountant (CGMA) Board Examination. Only one point separated De Lange from the first candidate in this challenging exam.







# STUDENT ACHIEVEMENTS

## SIPHILANGENKOSI FINDING SOLUTIONS FOR AFRICA'S YOUTH

Siphilangenkosi Dlamini, a final-year undergraduate student in Political Governance and Transformation, participated in the annual Africa YouLead Summit in Arusha, Tanzania, where he was also appointed the Interim Chairperson of the African Youth Business Council. The summit features initiatives on the continent that promote youth-led entrepreneurship and enterprise innovation, job creation, housing, and feeding for Africa's youth population.



### Hard work pays off for EnactusQwaqwa team



The Enactus team on the Qwaqwa Campus were crowned runners-up among seasoned institutions at the 2023 Enactus National Exposition, which took place at the Sandton Convention Centre in Johannesburg. Enactus is an international non-profit organisation that equips students to improve the world through entrepreneurial action. It provides a platform for teams of outstanding students to create community development projects that put communities at the centre of improving their livelihoods.

## ACCOUNTING STUDENTS ACE SAICA EXAMS

The Initial Test of Competence (ITC) examination of the South African Institute of Chartered Accountants (SAICA) was passed by 98% of UFS BAccHons/PGDip (Chartered Accountancy) graduates from the class of 2022. The examination is written after obtaining an accredited postgraduate qualification in accountancy. UFS graduates obtained an overall pass rate of 93%, exceeding the national pass rate of 75%.





## DR MHUNDWA RECEIVES PRESTIGIOUS SUZMAN MEDAL

Dr **William Mhundwa**, Senior Registrar in the Department of Internal Medicine, has become the first candidate from the UFS to be awarded the prestigious Suzman Medal as the top student in the 2022 examinations of the Fellowship of the College of Physicians (FCP). Candidates from all medical schools in the country as well as other African countries wrote this examination.

Prof Thabiso Mofokeng, Head of Department: Internal Medicine, and Dr Busiswa Bisiwe, Head of the Unit: Nephrology and Dr William Mhundwa's (right) supervisor.



## PFARELO WINS SUNDAY WORLD UNSUNG HERO AWARD



Education student **Pfarelo Maphangule** was awarded the 2023 Sunday World Unsung Hero certificate in the Community, Sports, Arts, and Culture category at an awards event in Johannesburg. The annual ceremony celebrates the achievements of young South African innovators who are nominated as role models in categories such as business and entrepreneurship, technology, science and innovation, education, and community development.

## UFS STUDENTS PART OF MASTER'S PROGRAMME IN AUSTRIA



**Frans Benecke** and **Su-Mari Dreyer** spent 2023 studying in Salzburg as two of the beneficiaries of a collaboration programme between the UFS and the Salzburg University of Applied Sciences (SUAS) in Austria, which forms part of a Consecutive Master's Degree Programme in International Finance.



## Tlotlisang publishes second book at 23

Tlotlisang Mhlambiso, a BEd student in his final year, launched his second book – a collection of short stories titled *A Journey Worth the Ride* – at the UFS Academy for Multilingualism. He was also recognised by the National Youth Development Agency as 2023's Education Trailblazer.

## MICHAEL 2023 ERNST MACH GRANT RECIPIENT

Michael Skosana, a student on the Bloemfontein Campus, has been selected as the recipient of the 2023 Ernst Mach Grant scholarship exchange programme at the University of Applied Sciences in Austria. The Ernst Mach Grant is a programme aimed at students from non-European universities who wish to spend a semester or two at an Austrian university of applied sciences.



## Department of Architecture celebrates international recognition

A group of third-year students from the UFS Department of Architecture exhibited their work at the 2023 Venice Biennale, an international architecture exhibition showcasing ground-breaking architectural work from various countries around the world. The artefact produced from this project is a 3D-printed sculptural device that shows the translation between sound and object and illustrates the sound data through 3D-printed forms.



## OSM'S ROSE DUO SECURES VICTORY AT 2023 NATIONAL SASMT COMPETITION

Pianist **Karlin Kock** and cellist **Willie Naudé**, both third-year BMus Performance students in the Odeion School of Music (OSM), clinched victory in the highly competitive open category of the prestigious 2023 National South African Society of Music Teachers (SASMT) Pretoria Ensemble Competition. OSM ensembles have taken the top spot in the open category for three consecutive years.



2023  
IN NUMBERS



4 643

counselling sessions  
attended by students



27% increase from 2022 in number  
of students making use of  
SADAG (SA Depression and Anxiety Group)

## STUDENTS EXCEL IN JSE INVESTMENT CHALLENGE

The Department of Economics and Finance in the Faculty of Economic and Management Sciences achieved success in the prestigious JSE Investment Challenge competition. The third-year group (pictured) secured second position, while the honours group claimed third place. The challenge is a prestigious national competition designed to introduce students to investment fundamentals, offering practical experience that equips them with the knowledge and skills necessary for informed decision-making in real financial markets.



## Alexandra receives 2023 L'Oréal UNESCO Women In Science award



Alexandra Howard, a PhD candidate in the Department of Zoology and Entomology and the Afromontane Research Unit (ARU), was a recipient of the 2023 L'Oréal-UNESCO For Women in Science National Award for her research on the value of bats as part of integrated pest management strategies in agriculture. This makes her one of only seven women scientists to be honoured with this notable distinction, which has been celebrating women scientists around the world for the past 25 years.

## Postgraduate students win big at SA Society for Microbiology conference



Three postgraduate students in the Department of Microbiology and Biochemistry were honoured with awards for their research at the 2023 Biennial Congress of the South African Society for Microbiology (SASM) in Stellenbosch. **Samantha Mc Carlie** (pictured), a PhD candidate, was awarded the prestigious SASM bronze medal for publishing in an outstanding publication, while Azil Coertzen, a first-year master's student, won the prize for the best poster presentation at the congress for her work on infectious coryza. Tyla Baker, who is currently studying towards her MSc degree in Microbiology, won the prize for the best BSc honours student.



## PhD STUDENT WINS YOUNG MINDS AWARD AT INTERNATIONAL SYMPOSIUM



**Muthianzhele Ravuluma**, a student from the Department of Soil, Crop, and Climate Sciences working on his PhD in Agrometeorology, won the International Society for Horticultural Science (ISHS) Young Minds award for the Best Paper and Best Poster Presentation during the 12<sup>th</sup> International Workshop on Sap Flow, which was held in Rotorua, New Zealand.

## Students triumph in 2023 SDG challenge



A group of students from different disciplines within the Faculty of Natural and Agricultural Sciences have claimed victory in the prestigious SDG Challenge South Africa, a global competition that unites students and organisations to address the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (UNSDGs), which encompass critical issues such as climate change and the reduction of global inequalities. Team UFS joined forces with Ivanhoe Mines – a prominent mining company operating in the Democratic Republic of the Congo – to develop a waste management strategy for the Kamo-a-Kakula Copper Complex.

## UFS doctoral candidate triumphs in national Three Minute Thesis competition



**Milton Mogotsi**, a PhD student in the Faculty of Health Sciences, won the esteemed National Three Minute Thesis competition (3MT) against formidable nationwide competition with revolutionary infant virome research. The annual competition serves as a platform for postgraduate students to enhance their academic, presentation, and research communication skills by succinctly explaining their research to an intelligent but non-specialist audience within a concise three-minute timeframe.









# FOCUSED RESEARCH

# FOCUSED RESEARCH

Globally, research is increasingly characterised by mutually beneficial research collaborations. Complex problems faced by societies locally and globally also require multi-, inter- and transdisciplinary inputs and teams. This necessitates work across academic departments, faculties, and other national and international research groups and entities to produce new knowledge that is globally, continentally and regionally relevant and applicable, as articulated in *Vision 130*.

In response to this evolving research context, the UFS' research goal is to increase its contribution to local, regional, and global knowledge, to address fundamental and

strategically important developmental questions, and to make an economic, social and cultural impact at regional, national, and continental level, and beyond.

## 2023 IN NUMBERS



**4,5%**

of permanent academic staff made up of international research leaders



**47%**

of scholarly output was with international collaborators



# TOP RATED SCHOLARS

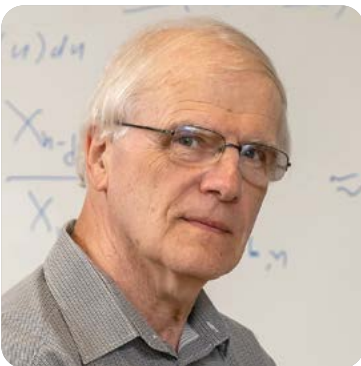


## Prof Melanie Walker

**Prof Melanie Walker** received an A rating from the NRF in the field of higher education and human development. Her most recent books from the selection of more than 140 books she has authored, focus on higher education and human development, as well as educating 'public good' professionals. She is also the Global South's first President of the Human Development and Capability Association (HDCA).

## Prof Willem Boshoff

**Prof Willem Boshoff** is a conceptual artist who primarily engages with text and language. For more than four decades, his visual artworks have commented on established language systems and how these function in society to empower or to exclude. His artistic practice involves extensive interdisciplinary research in the fields of lexicography, botany, philosophy, as well as music, with a special interest in contemporary New Music composers.



## Prof Maxim Finkelstein

**Prof Maxim Finkelstein**, a Distinguished Professor in the Department of Mathematical Statistics and Actuarial Science, is the only researcher with an A1-rating in South Africa in probability, statistics, and operational research – recognising him as a world leader in his discipline. Prof Finkelstein's area of expertise is the modelling of random events and quantifying probabilities of their occurrence.

## Dr Matteo Grilli

**Dr Matteo Grilli** is a historian from the UFS International Studies Group and a P-rated scientist in the field of political history. He specialises in the political history of Ghana and Southern Africa, as well as in the history of Italian communities in Africa. He has published articles in *History in Africa* and the *South African Historical Journal*, and his first monograph, *Nkrumaism and African Nationalism*, was published by Palgrave Macmillan in 2018.



# First of its kind installation at Boyden Observatory



The UFS is gearing up to be a leading academic institution in astronomical research. The institution has successfully mounted a spectrograph with a polarimeter to the Boyden Observatory 1,5-m telescope that will provide scientists with visual access to both the Northern and Southern

Hemispheres. The instrument, which can be accessed from Boyden – an astronomical research observatory and science education centre a few kilometres outside Bloemfontein – will allow researchers such as the Astrophysics Group at the UFS to do simultaneous polarimetry and spectroscopy of astronomical sources.

2023  
IN NUMBERS



205  
NRF-rated  
researchers



146  
postdoctoral  
fellowships



## UFS RESEARCHERS CONTRIBUTE TO ROAD MAP FOR GENOMIC DISEASE SURVEILLANCE IN AFRICA

As chair of the Africa Centre for Communicable and Preventable Diseases (Africa CDC) working groups on Vaccine Preventable Diseases (VPD), **Prof Martin Nyaga**, Associate Professor and Head of the Next Generation Sequencing (UFS-NGS) Unit, took a leading role in 2023 in the future of genomic surveillance as a public health tool in Africa. The VPD Working Group of the Africa Pathogen Genomics Initiative (Africa PGI) – a unit of the Africa CDC – is one of four such expert focus groups (malaria, foodborne diseases, and antimicrobial resistant organisms, being the focus of the others) whose insights are informing the work of the Africa PGI of the Africa CDC. Its mandate is to develop a road map that will enhance the use of genomic surveillance tools in the fight against VPD such as measles, polio, rotavirus, cholera, typhoid fever, malaria and Ebola.



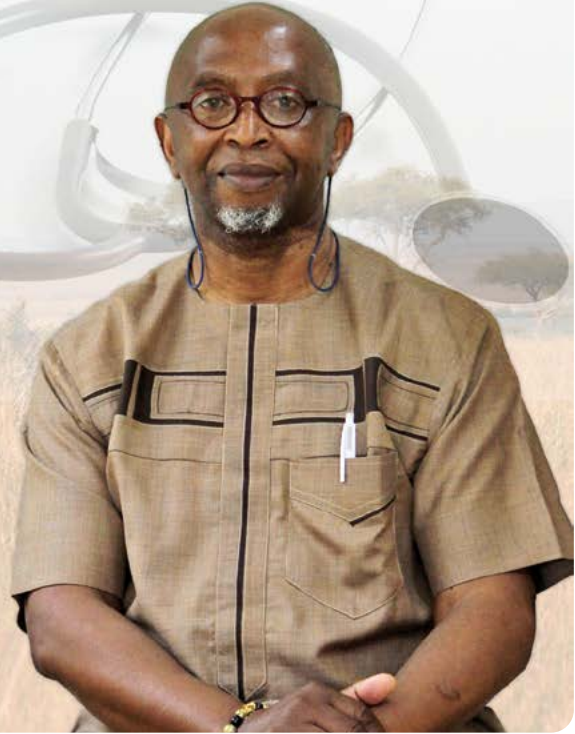
## Prof Moffett receives award from SA Association of Botanists

**Prof Rodney Moffett**, Honorary Research Fellow in the Department of Plant Sciences and Top Research Fellow in the Afromontane Research Unit (2018–2019) on the UFS Qwaqwa Campus, was awarded a Silver Medal from the South African Association of Botanists (SAAB) at their 48<sup>th</sup> annual conference that took place in Polokwane. Prof Moffett received this award for his outstanding research that contributed to the advancement of botany and plant sciences in South Africa.



## PROF MATSABISA NOMINATED FOR WHO TRADITIONAL MEDICINE GLOBAL SUMMIT

Prof Motlalepula Matsabisa, African traditional medicine expert and Director of the UFS Department of Pharmacology, attended the first World Health Organisation (WHO) Traditional Medicine Global Summit in India in August after being invited to serve as a member of the Summit External Advisory Group for the WHO Traditional Medicine Global Summit. As chairperson of the WHO Regional Expert Advisory Committee on Traditional Medicine (REACT), Prof Matsabisa provided advice on themes, content, and format of sessions, as well as reviews and recommendations to the summit session coordinators and speakers. The Advisory Group was comprised of nine members nominated across the six WHO regions and globally, with recognised expertise in traditional medicines as well as expertise on the summit focus areas.



## Dr Collins' work adopted as national standard for wetland mapping

Dr Nacelle Collins, Research Fellow in the Centre for Environmental Management, received his second PhD – this time awarded by the Department of Geography, which awarded four PhDs on the UFS Bloemfontein Campus and two PhDs on the university's Qwaqwa Campus at the April 2023 graduations ceremonies. He is the first recipient of a PhD in Geography majoring in Geo-informatics at the university – a discipline where scientists are using advanced technologies, such as remote sensing, to interpret geospatial data. The results of his study have already been adopted by the South African National Biodiversity Institute (SANBI) as the national standard for wetland mapping in South Africa.







## International award for UFS Department of Nuclear Medicine

A research paper by a Senior Lecturer and Medical Specialist in the Department of Nuclear Medicine has won the Society of Nuclear Medicine and Molecular Imaging (SNMMI) International Best Abstract Award for South Africa. The abstract, by **Evbuomwan**, was about evaluating the efficacy of a new nuclear medicine radiopharmaceutical in the identification of active disease in patients with rheumatoid arthritis. It was selected for this award by a special committee at the SNMMI 2023 Annual Meeting, which took place between 24 and 27 June in Chicago, USA.

## Reusable sanitary pad developed

**Dr Marietjie Schutte-Smith** (second from left), Senior Lecturer in the Department of Chemistry, together with **Prof Deon Visser** (third from left), Head of the Department of Chemistry, and **Prof Lizette Erasmus** (right), Associate Professor in the same department, are leading a diverse team that dedicated 2023 to doing something about people's challenge of not having access to conventional sanitary ware and water due to poverty and infrastructure challenges – a challenge many young women in South Africa face every month. The team included **Prof Katinka de Wet** (left), Associate Professor in the Department of Sociology, in this process in an effort to gain a better understanding of the current perceptions, experiences, and preferences of those who will ultimately use these sanitary products.



## HONORARY DOCTORATES CONFERRED IN 2023



### **Prof Adipala Ekwamu** Science

A mentor to hundreds of students and initiator of several journals, who had mobilised around one billion US dollars for higher education in Africa as Executive Secretary: Regional Universities Forum for Capacity Building in Agriculture (RUFORUM).



### **Dave Pepler** Zoology

An ecologist and naturalist who holds an MPhil in Zoology from the University of Cambridge and has published a variety of academic literature.



### **Prof Peter Vale** Political Science

A leading scholar in the field of international relations who has been widely published in academia as well as in the popular media.

## Prof Atangana ranked world no. 1 in mathematics

The year 2023 was a particularly successful year for **Prof Abdon Atangana**, renowned mathematician from the Institute for Groundwater Studies. He was ranked number one in applied mathematics, mathematical physics, mathematics, and statistics in the world, and number 260 in all of science, technology, and engineering in the Stanford University World's Top 2% Scientists list.

Prof Atangana was also one of five young scientists who was awarded the first UNESCO-Al Fozan International Prize for the Promotion of Young Scientists in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM). The ceremony took place in June 2023 at UNESCO headquarters in Paris,



France. Additionally, Prof Atangana was shortlisted as one of the finalists for the prestigious Alkebulan Immigrants Impact Awards (AIIA) 2023, in the South African Flag Carrier category.





## Dr Schoeman represents SA at 2023 World Women Scientists Conference

**Dr Yolandi Schoeman**, a postdoctoral fellow in the Centre for Environmental Management (CEM), represented South Africa at the 2023 World Women Scientists Conference in China. She was part of the South African Council for Natural Scientific Professions (SACNASP) delegation at this global event, which was made possible through a collaboration between SACNASP, the Department of Science and Innovation (DSI), and the China Association for Science and Technology (CAST). She was also invited to participate in a panel discussion on science and the future of women in science.

## UFS RESEARCHER CONTRIBUTES TO NATURE CLIMATE CHANGE ARTICLE

**Dr Soumya Ghosh**, Postdoctoral Researcher in the Department of Genetics, is one of eight authors who contributed to the article: 'Funding African-led Climate Initiatives', which appeared in the reputed journal, *Nature Climate Change*. The paper was inspired by the African action at the United Nations Climate Change Conference of the Parties 27 (COP27) that took place in November 2022, which illuminated the role of the African continent in mitigating the climate crisis.



## Two UFS researchers finalists in 2023 NSTF 'Science Oscars'

**Dr Michael Pienaar**, Senior Lecturer and Specialist in the University of the Free State (UFS) Department of Paediatrics and Child Health, was a finalist in two categories of the 2023 NSTF-South32 Awards, popularly known as the 'Science Oscars' of South Africa – namely in the TW Kambule-NSTF Award: Emerging Researcher and the NSTF-SAMRC Clinician-Scientist Award categories.

**Dr Edward C Netherlands**, Senior Lecturer in the Department of Zoology and Entomology, was also a finalist in the TW Kambule-NSTF Award: Emerging Researcher category.



# SARChI RESEARCH CHAIRS

## SARChI: South African Research Chairs Initiative

The main goal of the SARChI Research Chairs is to strengthen and improve the research and innovation capacity of public universities for the production of high-quality postgraduate students, research, and innovation outputs.



### Prof Hendrik Swart

#### Physics

Chair:	Solid-state Luminescent and Advanced Materials
First cycle:	2013-2017
Second cycle:	2018-2022
Third cycle:	2023-2027

TIER 1 - Solid State Luminescent and Advanced Materials

### Prof Melanie Walker

#### Higher Education and Human Development

Chair:	Higher Education and Human Development
First cycle:	2013-2017
Second cycle:	2018-2022
Third cycle:	2023-2027

TIER 1 - Higher Education and Human Development



### Prof Maryke Labuschagne

#### Plant Science

Chair:	Disease Resistance and Quality in Field Crops
First cycle:	2016-2020
Second cycle:	2021-2025

TIER 1 - Disease Resistance and Quality in Field Crops



**Prof Felicity Burt****Division of Virology**

Chair:	Vector-borne and Zoonotic Pathogens
--------	-------------------------------------

First cycle:	2016-2020
--------------	-----------

Second cycle:	2021-2025
---------------	-----------

TIER 1 - Vector-Borne and Zoonotic Pathogens

**Prof Carolina Pohl-Albertyn****Microbial Biochemical and Food Biotechnology**

Chair:	Pathogenic Yeasts
--------	-------------------

First cycle:	2018-2023
--------------	-----------

Second cycle:	2024-2028
---------------	-----------

TIER 2 - Pathogenic Yeasts

**Prof Ivan Turok****South African National Research Foundation Research Chair Economics**

Chair:	Strengthening Urban Economies: People, Place, Production and Policy
--------	---

First cycle:	2020-2024
--------------	-----------

TIER 1 - Strengthening Urban Economies: People, Place, Production and Policy

**SANRAL RESEARCH CHAIR****SANRAL: South African National Roads Agency**

At school level, the chair helps to train teachers, support student-teacher interns, and incentivise education results so that participating schools become centres of excellence. At an academic level, the SANRAL Chair is supervising a cohort of doctoral and master's students, while also guiding research and publications in mathematics, science, and technology education.

**Prof Loyiso Jita****South African National Research Foundation Research Chair Economics**

Chair:	Mathematics, Natural Sciences and Technology Education
	2014-2023







# IMPACTFUL ENGAGEMENT



# IMPACTFUL ENGAGEMENT

Given the growing emphasis on stakeholder involvement, collaboration, and communities of practice, engaged scholarship has emerged strongly as a means and form of academic enquiry that is able to co-create impactful research and relevant curricula that address real-world problems. The UFS recognises the importance of engagement and involvement of identified stakeholders in ensuring that their voices are incorporated into the research process and output. The UFS' engaged scholarship strategy promotes social change and provides a framework to support and promote scholarship within the relevant academic disciplines and their aligned communities.



## UFS TRAINS STUDENT VOLUNTEERS TO FIGHT FOOD INSECURITY

To ensure food security for students, KovsieACT – in collaboration with the Department of Sustainable Agriculture and Food Systems – held training sessions for approximately 150 student volunteers at the UFS community gardens on the Bloemfontein Campus. The project consists of two large food tunnels, which provide an educational intervention that addresses food insecurity on campus, and by extension, food insecurity challenges students experience at home.

## Community engagement partnership with Soutpan launched

A flagship partnership between the Faculty of The Humanities and the community of Ikgomotseng in Soutpan was launched in early 2023. This will see participation by various departments within the faculty, including a parenting project with carers at day-care centres and in the communities, led by students from the Department of Psychology. The Department of Drama and Theatre Arts will stimulate the children's minds through puppet shows, while the Department of History will collaborate with the community on heritage issues.





## Prof Matshidza performs groundbreaking surgery during medical outreach

**Prof Steven Matshidza**, Head of the Department of Orthopaedics, heads an outreach programme that has seen more than 2 000 orthopaedic operations in Limpopo and more than 600 in the Free State. The outreach work helps to tackle the huge backlog of patients waiting for operations in public hospitals while addressing the shortage of orthopaedic surgeons in the country - especially in rural areas. In 2023, Prof Matshidza and his dedicated team performed the first successful robotic-assisted knee-replacement surgery in Limpopo at Botlokwa Hospital.

Prof Steven Matshidza (right) and Dr Lindelani Nevondo, an orthopedic surgeon in private practice, with Pres Cyril Ramaphosa during the president's visit to Limpopo.



## ENTREPRENEURIAL UPSKILLING FOR FREE STATE YOUTH

In partnership with the National Youth Development Agency (NYDA), the UFS School of Accountancy held a training programme for approximately 100 Free State youth in need of

entrepreneurial upskilling. The training, aimed at developing entrepreneurial skills among the youth, took place on the Bloemfontein Campus over several sessions.

2023  
IN NUMBERS



**10 544**  
food parcels  
distributed on  
three UFS campus



**R3 450 000**  
value of food  
parcels  
distributed



**19**  
KoviesCare GBV Student  
Ambassadors appointed

## UFS PART OF SUCCESSFUL 2023 TRITECH NATIONAL SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY FAIR

The Centre for Mineral Biogeochemistry was part of another successful Trittech National Science and Technology Fair – an exciting STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) research competition. The UFS has been partnering with Trittech and other sponsors since 2021 to

bridge the gap between high school and tertiary education. The Trittech Fair, which started in 2008 and is open to all Grade 7-12 learners, aims to equip them for tertiary education by introducing them to scientific research and incorporating modern technology into research.



The fourth cohort of farmers received their certificates for the completion of the Agribusiness Transformation Programme at a ceremony held at the UFS Paradys Experimental farm. The programme, a partnership between the UFS and Standard Bank, has seen 111 farmers in the Free State receive training to date, along with 18 farmers from the Northern Cape. A further 30 farmers in the Free State and 16 in the Northern Cape have enrolled in the programme, demonstrating its continued growth and success. The programme's vision is to develop black commercial farmers and foster a sustainable black-owned agricultural sector in the country.

## Farmers reaping rewards of agribusiness transformation programme





## UFS assists foreign-trained doctors to prepare for their OSCE board exams



Free State Premier Mxolisi Dukwana addressing the foreign-trained students



After being approached by the Premier of the Free State, the Faculty of Health Sciences assisted foreign-trained doctors to prepare for the objective structured clinical examination (OSCE) component of their national board exams in order to register as doctors in South Africa. Over the course of two weeks, the faculty provided some last-minute training to 49 students who studied at universities in Russia, Turkey, and China. These students completed their studies between 2020 and 2022 but were unable to take the board examinations.

## LEARNERS FROM UFS CREATIVE CLUBS SHINE AT BLOEMFONTEIN SCIENCE EXPO

All 23 Grade 10 learners taking part in the UFS Creative Clubs Programme were awarded medals at the Bloemfontein regional Eskom Expo for Young Scientists (EYS) competition from 3 to 5 August 2023. The learners, who

attend Bloemfontein township schools, had been working on their projects for more than a year as part of the Creative Clubs Programme, which is run by the UFS Faculty of Education.









# INCLUSIVE SPACES AND FACILITIES



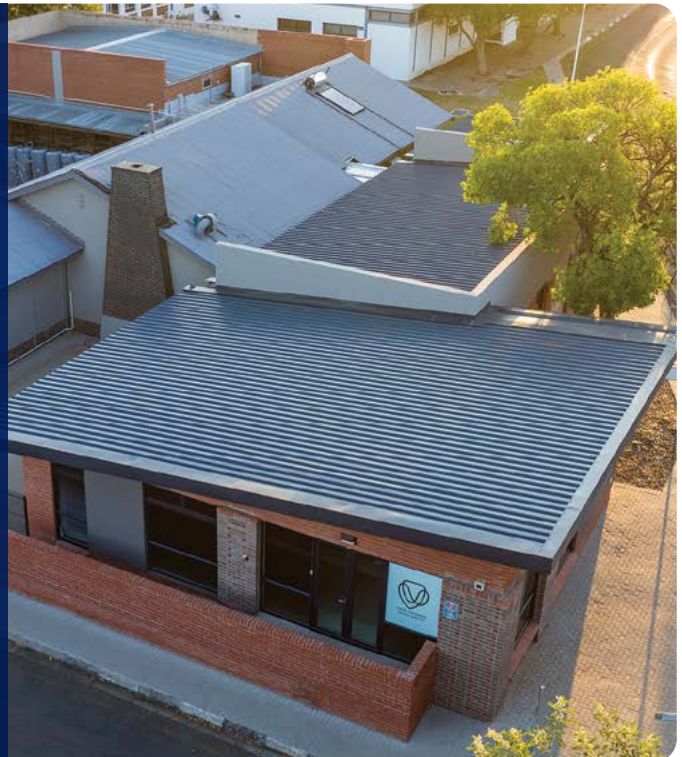
## UFS UNVEILS CUTTING-EDGE ELECTRON MICROSCOPY EQUIPMENT

The Centre for Microscopy in the Faculty of Natural and Agricultural Sciences unveiled a sophisticated JEOL high-resolution transmission electron microscope (HRTEM) during a two-day microscopy conference on 14 and 15 March 2023. The microscope is part of a larger

investment in research equipment worth R65 million. The HRTEM microscope can be utilised across disciplines and gives the UFS an advantage in uncovering new solutions and creating national and international interdisciplinary research collaborations.

## Centre for Mineral Biogeochemistry opens new facility

The Centre for Mineral Biogeochemistry (CMBG) in the Faculty of Natural and Agricultural Sciences showed off its new state-of-the-art facility in 2023 at a 'soft opening' to a select few guests, which included the Vice-Chancellor and Principal of the university. The new facility, which boasts various laboratories, is funded by the Department of Science and Innovation (DSI) and will host, among other initiatives, a Mineral Biogeochemistry Research Infrastructure Platform.





## INNOVATIVE SOLAR PROJECT PAYING DIVIDENDS

The UFS flagship renewable energy project in the form of solar plants across its three campuses is providing successful solutions to load-shedding problems, while promoting sustainable, clean energy solutions. The microgrid installation on the Qwaqwa Campus in the Eastern Free State is one of the biggest solar-diesel hybrid systems in South Africa, enabling this campus

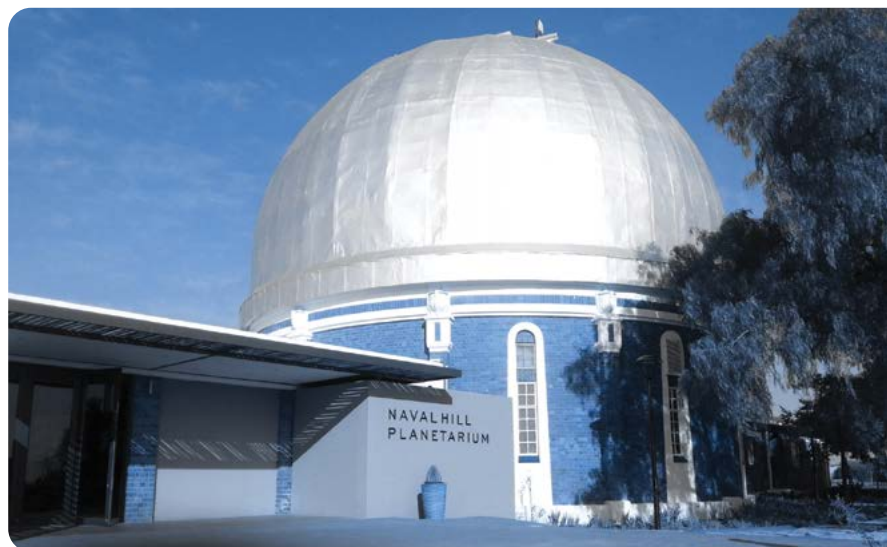
to keep running despite excessive power interruptions in the region. The installed grid-tied solar plants operate without batteries on all three campuses, giving the university an optimal configuration between capital cost and payback period. The university recorded savings of up to R32,5 million in 2023 since the first solar plant was commissioned in 2017.



Staff from UFS University Estates – Engineering Services; Obakeng Mocwana, Ben Mhlomi, Sibusiso Lediga, Waylon Kruger, Alain Isaacs, and Nicolaas Esterhuysen.

## Naval Hill planetarium celebrates decade of excellence

A decade ago, the former Lamont-Hussey Observatory in Bloemfontein became Southern Africa's first digital planetarium. Thanks to a collaboration between the UFS, the Mangaung Metropolitan Municipality, the Department of Science and Innovation, and the Free State provincial government – as well as donations from trusts, foundations, and businesses – the project has grown and thrived. At the end of 2023, the planetarium's first decade was celebrated with events and special shows, including the South African premiere of the American Museum of Natural History full-dome film, *Worlds Beyond Earth*.











# VISIBILITY AND IMPACT



# BENEFICIAL COLLABORATION

Aspiring for maximum societal impact is a defining characteristic of the UFS. The UFS is embedded in broader society, and the measure of the impact of our scholarship, research, learning and teaching is informed by the extent to which we contribute to the development of the Free State and South Africa. To realise the vision of a research-led, high-impact university, we draw on sustainable relationships with highly valued collaborators from across the world.

## Vision-driven collaboration between UFS and Uniting Reformed Church



Standing: Prof Eugene Baron, Ingrid Mostert, Prof Letšosa Rantsoa, Prof Jan Albert van den Berg  
Sitting: Rev Langa Fokase, Rev Linda Cornelissen, Prof Francis Petersen, Rev Godfrey Betha

The UFS and the Uniting Reformed Church in Southern Africa (URCSA) have signed a Memorandum of Understanding to strengthen their

partnership in various areas of mutual interest. The association aims to facilitate joint research projects and promote community engagement initiatives.

## ISRAELI WATER TECH IN QWAQWA

A partnership between the UFS and the Centre for Transboundary Water Management at the Arava Institute in Palestine, Israel, will contribute to the climate change discourse and bring relief to the water crisis in the Maloti-A-Phofung Municipality where the UFS Qwaqwa Campus is based.



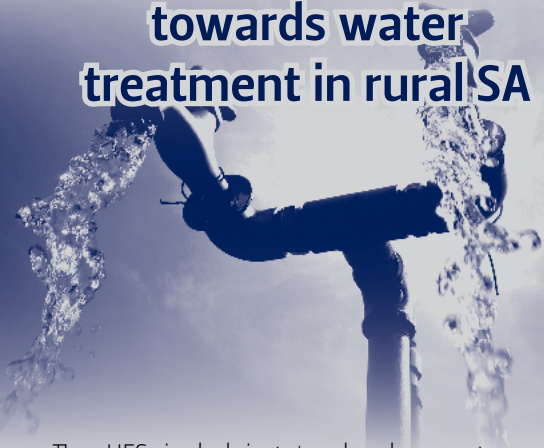
## Food innovation collaboration with Texas State University

Dr Brandon van Rooyen, Prof Wilna Oldewage-Theron, Ingrid Woodrow (CEO of SAAFoST) and Prof JW Swanepoel.



**Dr Brandon van Rooyen** from the Department of Sustainable Food Systems and Development and Manager of the Food Innovation Laboratory teamed up with Prof Wilna Oldewage-Theron, Professor of Nutrition from Texas State University (USA) and UFS Research Fellow, to develop nutritious products tailored to the needs of the low-income population. Part of their work involves strengthening ties with organisations such as the South African Association for Food Science and Technology (SAAFoST).

### Pioneering partnership towards water treatment in rural SA



The UFS is helping to develop a ground-breaking solution that aims to revolutionise low-cost domestic wastewater treatment and transform the country's water infrastructure in rural areas. Led by the UFS Centre for Environmental Management (CEM) in collaboration with the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR), this innovative approach is centred around ecological engineering and offers a promising solution to the pressing water security concerns and increased pollution risks facing the nation.

## INTERNATIONALISATION OF HEALTH SCIENCES IN AFRICA

The UFS welcomed senior members from the International Centre for Medical Research in Franceville (CIRMF), Gabon, to sign a Memorandum of Understanding between the two entities. CIRMF is a non-profit medical research centre that was established in 1974. Its primary focus is on diagnosing infectious diseases that pose immediate problems in Gabon and the Central African sub-region.



Prof Jean Bernard Lekana-Douki, Director-General at the CIRMF; Prof Francis Petersen, Rector and Vice-Chancellor and Principal of the UFS; and Prof Jean-Fabrice Yala, Scientific and Technical Director at the CIRMF.

## New equipment to assist with water research



Drs Dirk Jungmann (Technical University of Dresden), Tascha Vos (Centre for Environmental Management), Hilmar Börnick (Technical University of Dresden) and Marinda Avenant (Centre for Environmental Management).

Equipment used for purifying and concentrating water samples through a solid-phase-extraction process was donated by longstanding UFS collaborator, Technical University of Dresden (TU Dresden) in Germany. This will assist the Centre for Environmental Management to strengthen the education of postgraduate students and enable them to apply advanced methods for hazard identification in water quality assessments.

## UFS EXPERTS PART OF GROUNDBREAKING RADIATION SURGERY



A multidisciplinary medical team from the UFS and the Universitas Academic Hospital became the first in Southern Africa to use interstitial brachytherapy as a method for treating cervical cancer. Brachytherapy is a method of internal radiation therapy, where a source of radiation is placed inside or near the cancer, making it possible to deliver curative doses to the cancer while staying within the tolerance of the surrounding organs.

## Groundbreaking MOUs with National Credit Regulator and National Consumer Commission



Thezi Mabuza, Acting Commissioner of the NCC; Nomsa Motshegare, CEO of the National Credit Regulator; and Prof Francis Petersen, Vice-Chancellor and Principal of the UFS.

The Department of Mercantile Law in the Faculty of Law, in collaboration with the National Consumer Commission and the National Credit Regulator, launched a partnership through the signing of memoranda of understanding. This partnership will infuse consumer protection principles in the curriculum, contribute towards improved consumer protection through research, and influence consumer protection while addressing consumer concerns in the Free State and beyond.





## EDUCATION EXPERTS CO-EDIT SEMINAL WORK ON COLLABORATIVE TEACHING

**Dr Phindile Shangase**, Senior Lecturer in the Faculty of Health Sciences, together with Prof Daniela Gachago from the University of Cape Town and Prof Eunice Ivala from the Cape Peninsula University of Technology, co-edited the 2023 released book, titled *Co-teaching and Co-research in contexts of Inequality: Using networked learning to connect Africa and the world*.



## UFS leading consortium to build capacity for climate-resilient food systems in Africa

**Prof Linus Franke**, Head of the UFS Department of Soil, Crop and Climate Sciences, is leading a consortium of African university partners that aims to address the challenges of climate change and its effect on sustainable agriculture and food security in Africa. This consortium is funded by the European Union and brings together African universities with outstanding expertise in the field of measuring and managing greenhouse emissions in the agricultural sector.



## PARTNERSHIP WITH PSC TACKLING SUBSTANCE ABUSE IN MANGAUNG

In a proactive move to address the escalating issue of substance abuse in Mangaung, the UFS partnered with the Public Service Commission (PSC) to host a roundtable discussion. Representing the UFS was **Dr Maréve Biljohn**, Head of Department for Public Administration and Management in the Faculty of Economic and Management Sciences. Also present were representatives from Mangaung communities and various government bodies.



## SA Sweden grant expands the classroom for students in public health education

**Prof Corinna Walsh** from the Department of Nutrition and Dietetics and her collaborators were awarded the South Africa – Sweden University Forum (SASUF) Virtual Exchange Grant, which commenced at the beginning of 2023, and focuses on nutrition and public health education.

# SPORTING CHAMPIONS

## GERDA STEYN BAGS REMARKABLE WINS IN TWO OCEANS AND COMRADES

Kovsie alumna Gerda Steyn became the first woman to win the Two Oceans Marathon four consecutive times. Steyn improved her personal best time by finishing the race 39 seconds faster than her winning time in 2022.

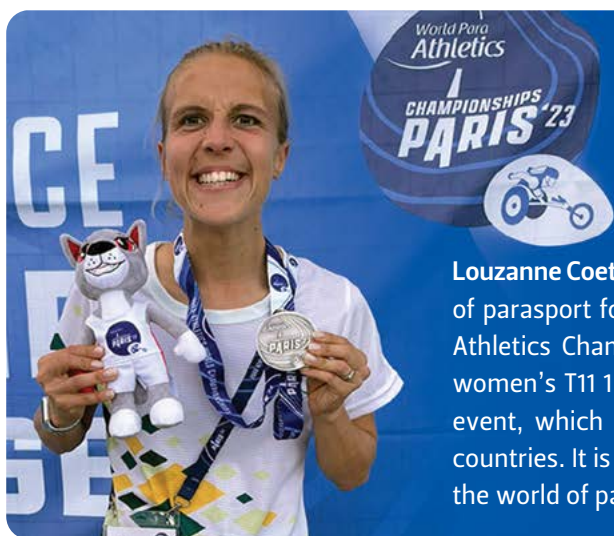
Two months later, she also broke a long-standing Comrades marathon record when she won the 96th edition of this gruelling ultramarathon. Steyn won the down run in a record time of 5 hours, 44 minutes, and 54 seconds, beating the down-run record previously held by Frith van der Merwe. This was Steyn's second Comrades win, after also winning the race in 2019.



## UFS players represent Proteas

Four UFS alumni – Karla Pretorius, Khanyisa Chawane, Boitumelo Mahloko, and Lefébre Rademan – as well as two current Kovsie Netball stars – Rolene Steurker and Refiloe Nketsa – were chosen to represent the South African netball national team in a test series against 2023 Netball World Cup champions, Australia.





## Louzanne Coetzee wins silver at World Para Athletics

**Louzanne Coetzee**, residence head at Akasia residence and coordinator of parasport for KovsieSport, scored a silver medal at the World Para Athletics Championships 2023 in Paris, France. Her medal – in the women's T11 1 500-metre race – was the first for South Africa at the event, which was attended by around 1 300 competitors from 107 countries. It is regarded as the second-most important competition in the world of paralympic athletics, after the Paralympic Games.



## JERRY LAKA APPOINTED PRESIDENT OF USSA

UFS KovsieSport Director Jerry Laka was appointed as the President of University Sport South Africa (USSA). With an extensive background spanning 28 years in the realm of sports administration and a stellar portfolio, Laka brought a wealth of knowledge and dedication to this esteemed position. USSA is the governing body for higher education sports in South Africa, holding membership in regulatory bodies such as the Federation of African University Sports (FASU) and the International University Sports Federation (FISU).

## TUMISANG MOTSOANE ELECTED TO THE NEC OF USSA

Tumisang Motsoane, a student in the Faculty of Law and SRC Sports on the Bloemfontein Campus, as well as Chairperson of the Sports Council at the UFS, was appointed as a Student Assessor in the National Executive Committee (NEC) of University Sports South Africa (USSA).



## BURTA DE KOCK TO SERVE ON WORLD NETBALL COACHING ADVISORY PANEL

Burta de Kock, UFS Netball Head Coach since 2002, was elected to serve on the World Netball Coaching Advisory Panel. De Kock, whose coaching career spans three decades, has coached the Kovsie Netball team, the national South African Proteas, as well as the South Africa Under 23s. Under her leadership, Kovsie Netball became the university team with the most gold medals, 18 brilliant South African Protea players were produced, and several Varsity Netball competitions were won.

# INSPIRING ALUMNI

## MASABATA CHABELI ESTABLISHES TECH SKILLS DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME

Masabata Chabeli's journey from teacher to tech entrepreneur led her to establish New Dawn Skills Hub, which focuses on developing skills in coding and robotics, building a new generation of artificial intelligence and Fourth Industrial Revolution experts. Chabeli is a former UFS lecturer and a graduate of the EBL Institute of Business and Technology, which partners with the UFS Business School on community development, entrepreneurship development, and digital skills development programmes.



## International recognition for Antoinette Louw

Renowned actress Antoinette Louw, alumna of the UFS Department of Drama and Theatre Arts, was announced 'Best Actress' at the European International Film Festival. This award, for her role as Rachel in the film *The Fragile King*, adds to her notable collection of acting awards over the years. Louw received her acting degree cum laude in 1996, and was also awarded several accolades during her student years.







## HONORARY DOCTORATE IN DIETETICS BESTOWED ON MAYE MUSK

Among the recipients of a UFS honorary doctorate in 2023, was Dr Maye Musk – the mother of SpaceX and Tesla founder Elon Musk. Dr Musk is an international best-selling author, dietitian, model, and public speaker. Her book, *A woman makes a plan*, is available in 100 countries and published in 30 languages. She has run her own nutrition business in eight cities and three countries for more than 45 years. In her acceptance remarks, she gave the audience a brief overview of her life and how she ended up obtaining a master's degree at the UFS – saying that she had many happy memories of Bloemfontein and the university and that her experiences in the city also helped her when she moved to Canada and the USA.

## Sinethemba Mbatha media officer at FIFA Women's World Cup

Sinethemba Mbatha, a UFS alumna in Social Science, was appointed as Media Officer for Banyana Banyana at the 2023 FIFA Women's World Cup. Previous accolades include two AFCON tournaments, one of which resulted in a triumphant victory with Banyana Banyana. She also worked with the U17 men's national team, which reached the quarterfinals. She has also served as a manager for the U23 men's Olympic team, highlighting her multifaceted skills within the challenging realm of international football.



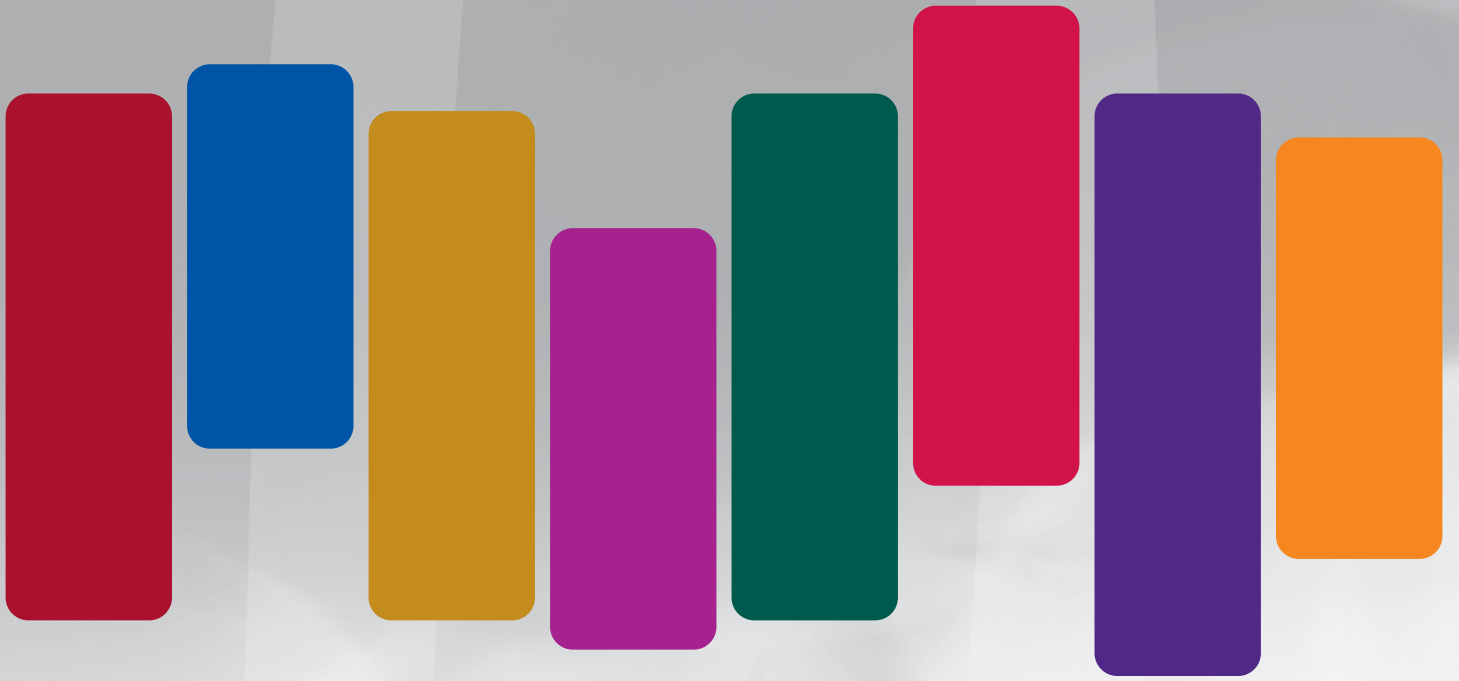
# Vision

The UFS is a research-led, student-centred, and regionally engaged university that contributes to development and social justice through the production of globally competitive graduates and knowledge.

Compiled by

Department of Communication and Marketing  
PO Box 339, Bloemfontein 9300, South Africa  
[www.ufs.ac.za](http://www.ufs.ac.za)







# *Visibility and Impact*

Compiled by

Department of Communication and Marketing  
PO Box 339, Bloemfontein 9300, South Africa  
[www.ufs.ac.za](http://www.ufs.ac.za)

