

INSPIRING UFS STAFF dumela

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



VISION **130**
*Renew and Reimagine
for 2034*

MAY 2024 – ISSUE ONE

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



From the Editor

Welcome to this edition of *Dumela!* We are excited to share with you the latest staff news. From our colleagues who graduated at the recent graduations to the research that staff is doing in the field (literally in the veld), teaching our students inside and outside the classroom and also in the community.

This jam-packed edition of *Dumela!* is published under the banner of care – one of the university's values that links to *Vision 130*. This includes our colleagues who reflect on care in their workplace (read more on p.5), the care for staff's well-being (read about Organisational Development's plans for the year on p.6), and care for the environment with Dr Anthony Mapaura and Lumko Mboyi who signed up for the fight of their lives – managing Mexican feathergrass in the Eastern Cape.

You too can make a difference in someone's life. Find out how by reading our story about the Food Environment Programme on p.23.

As Jackie Chan once said, “Sometimes it takes only one act of kindness and caring to change a person's life.”

We invite you to reflect on whose life you have recently impacted with your kindness.

Until next time,

Lunga Luthuli
EDITOR

Van die Redakteur

Welkom by hierdie uitgawe van *Dumela!* Ons is opgewonde om die jongste personeelnuus met jou te deel. Van ons kollegas wat by die onlangse gradeplegtigheid gegradueer het tot die navorsing wat personeel in die veld doen (letterlik in die veld), om ons studente binne en buite die klaskamer en ook in die gemeenskap te onderrig.

Hierdie propvol uitgawe van *Dumela!* word gepubliseer onder die vaandel van omgee – een van die universiteit se waardes wat by *Visie 130* aansluit. Dit behels ons kollegas wat besin oor omgee in hul werkplek (lees meer op bl.5), omgee oor personeel se welstand (lees oor Organisatoriese Ontwikkeling se planne vir die jaar op bl.6) en omgee vir die omgewing met dr Anthony Mapaura en Lumko Mboyi wat aangemeld het vir die stryd van hulle lewens – die bestuur van Meksikaanse veergras in die Oos-Kaap.

Jy kan ook 'n verskil in iemand se lewe maak. Vind uit hoe deur ons storie oor die Voedselomgewingsprogram op bl.23 te lees.

Soos Jackie Chan op 'n keer gesê het, “Soms verg dit net een daad van vriendelikheid en omgee om iemand se lewe te verander.”

Ons nooi jou uit om na te dink oor wie se lewe jy onlangs met jou goedhartigheid beïnvloed het.

Tot volgende keer,

Lunga Luthuli
REDAKTEUR

Ho tswa ho Mohlophisi

Re a o amohela phatlalatsong ena ya *Dumela!* Re thabela ho o sebela ditlamorao tabeng tsa basebetsi. Ho tswa ho bomphato ba rona ba sa tswa apara ho ya ho tseo basebetsi ba yunivesithi ba ntseng ba di etsa ha ba ile lepatlelong, ba ruta baithuti ba rona kante le kahare ho phapusi ya borutelo hammoho le metseng eo re dulang ho yona.

Phatlalatsong ena e tletseng tswete ya *Dumela!* E phatlaladitswe tlasa tlhokomelo, eleng engwe ya melaotheo e re hokanyang le Ponelepele 130. Ho kenyetsetsa kahare kahoo bomphato ba rona ba bontshahatsang Tlhokomelo Mosebetsing wa bona (bala ditaba leqepheng la Page 5), tlhokomelo ya bophelo bo botle ba basebetsi (Meralo ya Ntshetsopele ya Mokgatlo bakeng sa selemo leqepheng la Page 6), le tlhokomelo ya tikoloho le Dr. Anthony Mapaura hammoho le Lumko Mboyi ba ikanetseng ntwala e hlwahlwa – ya ho okamela jwang ba lesiba ba Mexico bo fumanehang Kapa Botjhabela.

Le wena o ka etsa phapang bophelong ba motho. Fumana hore jwang ka ho bala pale e ka Lenaneo la Tikoloho ya Dijo leqepheng la Page 23.

Jwalo ka ha Jackie Chan a ile a re, “Ka nako tse ding ho nka ketso e lengwe feela ya khathallo le tlhokomelo ho fetola bophelo ba motho.”

Re o memela ho hetla morao ho bophelo ba motho eo o kileng wa bo ama morao tjena ka tsela ya kgathallo.

Ho fihlella nako e tlang,

Lunga Luthuli
MOHLOPHISI

Umbhalo ovela kuMhleli

Syakwamukela kule ngosi ye-*Dumela!* Siyajabula ukukubhalela izindaba zakamuva zabasebenzi benyuvesi. Sikuphathele izindaba kusukela kwezozakwethu abathweswe iziqu emicimbini esanda kuba khona yokuthweswa kweziqu kuye kufike ezintweni ezikade zenziwa abasebenzi benyuvesi ngesikhathi benza ucwaningo ezigangeni, kuye kufike ekufundiseni kwabo ngaphakathi nangaphandle kwamagceke enyuvesi kanye nasemphaakthini.

Le ngosi ye-*Dumela!* edidiyelwe ngokuphelele ishicilelwe ngaphansi kwesiqubulo esithi ‘ukunakekela’, nokuyiqubulo seminye yeminxa yenyuvesi esizosiholela kwiNgobombono eyaziwa nge-*Vision 130*. Kudidiyelwe nezindaba ezibandakanya ozakwethu abakhombisa ukunakekela uma besemsebenzini (ungafunda okuthe xaxa ekhasini lesi-5), ukunakekelwa kwabasebenzi ukuthi baphile bayimqemane yini (ungafunda okuthe xaxa maqondana nezinhlelo ze-Organisation Development zonyaka esikuwo ekhasini lesi-6), kanye nokunakekelwa kwendawo yesikhungo nokuwuhlelo oluqhutshwa uDkt. Anthony Mapaura kanye no-Lumko Mboyi.

Nawe ungakwazi ukwenza uguquko empilweni yomunye umuntu. Thola ungakwenza kanjani lokho bese ufunda izindaba zethu eziqondene nohlelo i-Food Environment Programme ekhasini lama-23.

Ngokwamazwi omlingisi uJackie Chan sifunda ukuthi, “Kwesinye isikhathi kuba isenzo esisodwa sokunakekela nesobubele ukushintsha impilo yomunye umuntu.”

Sifisa ukuthola ohlangothini lwakho ukuthi ubani osuke washintsha impilo yakhe muva nje ngobubele bakho.

Kuze kube kwenye ingosi elandelayo,

Umhleli: *aLunga Luthuli*
KUBEKA UMHLELI

Notice board

27 May 2024
International Studies Group:
Stanley Trapido seminar series presents *A United or Broken Family? Effects of Labour Migration on the Family Unit in Post-colonial Botswana* by Dr Unaludo Sechele

29 May 2024
Africa Day Memorial Lecture

6 June 2024
DF Malherbe Memorial Lecture

14 June 2024
Annual UFS Learning and Teaching Conference and Awards

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Caring is sharing



By Gerda-Marié van Rooyen

Carson McCullers, author of *The Square Root of Wonderful*, aptly stated: “The closest thing to being cared for is to care for someone else.” This sentiment resonates deeply within the educational environment of the university, where faculty and staff are naturally inclined to care – a core value of *Vision 130*.

Refloee Matli | Intern:
Community Engagement

“To care means stripping yourself of your ego and being human. In the university environment, we meet different individuals from different backgrounds; it is crucial to care about people and to have a supportive community during your studies, because it can get draining. The care you receive from your classmates and lecturers can change your life in many ways. I am very proud of the work that the Department of Student Counselling and Development and Organisational Well-being do. They have set the standard and created an atmosphere that enables care to manifest itself throughout the university.”

Angelique Carson-Porter
Lecturer: Nutrition and Dietetics

“Caring entails the recognition, acknowledgement, and appreciation of my additional efforts and work. It involves celebrating milestones, which boosts my motivation and empowers me to excel further. In the workplace, caring encompasses employee well-being, professional development, a nurturing culture, work-life balance, recognition, clear communication, and community engagement. Employees want to feel empowered to pursue their personal and professional development goals. Care inspires us to make a positive impact beyond ourselves, whether through fund-raising, volunteering, or participating in charitable events. By embodying these values, we strive to be exemplary corporate citizens, contributing to the greater good.”

Armand Bester | Medical Scientist: National Health Lab

“In the university community, care thrives within a supportive ecosystem that fosters success for academics, supporting staff and students alike. As a supervisor, care translates into creating a safe learning environment where students feel encouraged to ask questions and explore ideas. The invaluable support provided by staff ensures efficient services that complement the efforts of academics. Genuine care among students is essential for maintaining a healthy campus environment. Conversely, the absence of care can disrupt university activities significantly. When care begins with oneself, it has the potential to inspire others, propelling us collectively towards greater achievements at an accelerated pace.”

Dr Joseph Pali | Senior Lecturer: Congregational Studies and Leadership

“Care is an action inspired by a love for other human beings to help them to be who they are supposed to be. The work environment cannot be isolated from other spheres of life, as we carry burdens, challenges, joys, and inspirations that may inadvertently affect our performance at work. One shows care and appreciation for another when we take time to greet and embrace each other. It can be evident when your colleagues or leadership at work visit, call, or email to enquire about your welfare. Care is part of the spiritual values and practice of African ubuntu.”

Jahrose Jafta | Publishing Coordinator: African Languages Press: Library and Information Services

“Care means the necessary support is available to perform at one’s optimum. Showcasing care includes the freedom to be active and to be in touch with the industry landscape so that we are not left behind. Our (department’s) care extends to the writers we publish by organising their book launches and sharing their milestones to transform and restore African languages and isiZulu and Sesotho to be developed, used, and preserved. Finding space for these creative outputs in the literary market is care, for it speaks to access, inclusiveness, and representation of a people. Recognising someone’s effort and taking needed breaks fosters a thriving environment.”





Organisational Development – three times as strong!

By Dr Cindé Greyling and Burneline Kaars

UFS Organisational Development comprises three former departments, all aimed at elevating our employees. The three functions we operate from are Employee Well-Being, Organisational Development, and Leadership and Development. We had a very successful 2023, with our Women's Breakfast winning the prestigious Marketing, Advancement, and Communication in Education (MACE) Chairperson's Award of Excellence, and we have big plans for this year.

It is all about being better

During 2023, we had almost 6 000 attendees at our different initiatives, with about 2 500 attendees at our flagship events, and we want to exceed these numbers in 2024. We firmly believe that the well-being of our employees is paramount to the overall success and thriving of our institution, therefore we go out of our way to provide you with impactful and enjoyable events and programmes.

To remind you of our aim, we incorporate 'Be Better' into most of our designs. We aim to be better than we were yesterday – you can always start where you are and elevate yourself and those around you.

In for a treat

In April, you can look forward to our More Money financial wellness campaign – packed with influential guest speakers and good advice. During May we are hosting a Mental Health Awareness Week with guest speaker Marion Scher, and a theatre production that will make you look differently at mental – don't miss that one!

To heat up the winter months, we have our annual Soccer and Netball tournaments during May and June, and two lunch-hour talks that will help you to Mind your Mouth – it is not just our bodies that need training!

Our Annual Women's Breakfast needs no introduction – besides mentioning that, you will be blown away by our team's creativity again this year. As we welcome spring, you can participate in our amazing race with a twist. This year, it is an Amazing Taste Race where we take your taste buds around the world.

Towards mid-September, you can brush up your safety skills with our ever-important BeBetter BeSafe campaign, followed by a focus on Mental Health during October.

As always, we end the year on a high note with our Ambassador Banquet and the increasingly popular Men's Breakfast in November.

Don't miss the smaller stuff

Although we love hosting you at our flagship events, our other initiatives and programmes offer loads of value and fun. Please check in with UFS Organisational Development to participate in offerings such as Career Management, Stress Management, Psychological Safety, Nutrition and Fitness, and much, much more. Our experts can also tailor initiatives to your department or team's specific needs. We cannot wait to 'Be Better, Together'.

Organisational Development Programme

- **1 March 2024** Programme launch with guest speaker: Dr Steve Harris
- **12–14 March** Health and Wellness Fair
- **24 April** Financial Wellness talk with guest speaker: Mr Lee Langenhoven
- **15 May** Mental Health Awareness Week: Marion Scher
- **17 May** Mental Health theatre production
- **31 May** Soccer tournament
- **7 June** Netball tournament
- **10 and 17 July** lunch-hour talk: Emotional Management
- **23 August** UFS Annual Women's Breakfast
- **6 September** Amazing Taste Race
- **17–19 September** BBetter, BSafe Campaign
- **October** Mental Health Campaign
- **7 November** SWAT Appreciation Banquet
- **22 November** UFS Annual Men's Breakfast



UFS bolsters security at campuses with technical upgrades

By Lunga Luthuli

To strengthen security measures and ensure the safety of its campuses, the university has recently implemented a series of technical security enhancements. Tankiso Seboka, the Head of Technical Security Services in Protection Services, sheds some light on the key improvements aimed at bolstering the security posture across all three campuses.

Seboka emphasised that these enhancements are campus-specific and informed by a comprehensive security vulnerability assessment. He stated that the department was grateful for the funding received from the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET), as well as the top-up received from the university for the project.

A safer environment for students, staff, and visitors

Among the notable upgrades are the installation of high-tech CCTV cameras, five network recording servers, and network-based modern alarm systems. Seboka highlighted the significance of these enhancements in improving surveillance capabilities and response readiness, and ultimately fostering a safer environment for students, staff, and visitors.

"The use of high-quality CCTV cameras equipped with artificial intelligence technology acts as a force multiplier and plays a crucial role during the investigation of reported incidents," Seboka stated. "These upgrades enable proactive identification and mitigation of security risks, facilitating a conducive learning and work environment."

The decision to implement these upgrades was prompted by a combination of factors, including the need to address specific threats, such as theft of university property, unauthorised

entry to the UFS campuses, as well as to bring efficiency to the department's operations. Seboka underscored the importance of swift response and mitigation efforts, particularly in combating increased incidents of theft reported at lecture halls. Despite the diverse layouts and infrastructural differences between the campuses, the department has adopted a uniform approach to security enhancements, ensuring consistency and efficiency across all locations.

Challenges, such as cabling issues and access to elevated positions, were addressed during the implementation process to maintain operational efficiency. The technical upgrades complement existing security measures by extending surveillance coverage and enhancing threat detection capabilities. Seboka highlighted the role of AI-powered cameras in identifying suspicious behaviour in real-time, thereby deterring criminal activities and streamlining investigation processes. This, he said, "reduced the workload of security personnel and speeded up investigations".

Notable improvements in security operations

Since the implementation of these enhancements, the UFS has observed notable improvements in security operations, including increased efficiency and threat detection. Looking ahead, Seboka said: "Plans are in place for further enhancements, particularly focusing on biometrics, system integration, and digitalisation to keep pace with evolving security needs and technological advancements."

The overarching goal of these upgrades aligns with the UFS' broader security strategy, emphasising the university's commitment to ensuring the safety and well-being of its campus community in line with *Vision 130* objectives.

As the UFS continues to prioritise security initiatives, these technical upgrades stand as a testament to the university's proactive approach to creating a secure environment conducive to learning and innovation.



Tankiso Seboka believes these upgrades align with the UFS' broader security strategy, emphasising the university's commitment to ensuring the safety and well-being of its campus community.



Mosiua Bereng explores Maloti Drakensberg on horseback, compiling botanical survey of the area

By Leonie Bolleurs

“I cannot fully describe the beauty of the Namahadi cutback. Majestic mountains with streams cascading down from their high peaks, and the sheer cliffs on the edge of the escarpment are truly magnificent.”

These are the words of Mosiua Bereng, a PhD student in Environmental Geography affiliated with the university's Afromontane Research Unit. He spent more than two weeks in the Namahadi cutback, exploring the northern parts of the Maloti Drakensberg and collecting plant specimens.

Bereng, who obtained his Bachelor of Science in Agriculture from the University of Lesotho in 2004 and his master's in Environmental Ecology from the University of Pretoria's Centre for Environmental Studies in 2014, is also a curator at the Katse Botanical Gardens in the Lesotho highlands.

Botanical survey of the northern Maloti Drakensberg

His research, which focuses on the botanical survey of the northern Maloti Drakensberg (M-D), aims to contribute to the floristic knowledge of this area. “This will be achieved by conducting botanical exploration of the poorly known section of the M-D, namely the northern M-D, covering the Namahadi cutback as the core area and extending westward along the range to the Monantsa border,” he says.

Sharing his experience in the remote Namahadi cutback, far from any human settlement and only accessible on foot or on

horseback due to the terrain, Bereng explains that he needs to spend a minimum of two weeks deep in the mountains to make significant collections per trip. “This means that I must pack enough dry food to last me for that time. I use horses to carry my food and all my camping equipment. The horses are also helpful in hauling my plant presses after collecting plant specimens from the study area, because they are very heavy.”

According to him, accessibility to the Namahadi cutback could be considered the reason for targeting it, because people do not normally reach it. “The place is a very deep and magnificent cutback in the Qwaqwa Maloti. Its orientation also makes one eager to observe what it holds botanically. It is in a high rainfall area and experiences orographic rainfall. Unlike other sections of the M-D that have been explored botanically, it experiences more sunlight, making its surface warmer. This condition can make it host some unique flora compared to the rest of the M-D.”

His work in the mountains included the compilation of an inventory of the plant species of the Qwaqwa Maloti, producing quality herbarium specimens and documenting the flora in the region. This included the endemic and near-endemic species. He also assessed the phytogeographical linkage with the rest of the M-D to see if there are any floristic similarities.


“The most interesting finding so far has been the recording of *Massonia saniensis* in the alpine area. A small, green-leafed plant with scattered, minute papilla on top of the leaves and white flowers from the centre of the two opposite leaves on the ground – growing on the wet gravel area in the alpine. The plant has only been recorded in the interior of the M-D, being part of Lesotho,” he remarks.



Bereng is of the opinion that conducting more inventories of plant species will result in the recording of narrow-range plant species that have never been documented before in the M-D or in botanical knowledge. According to him, this will be a valuable addition to the flora of the M-D, with the findings contributing to a broader understanding of the poorly known flora of the region. He states that the Qwaqwa Maloti could be an important area for conservation; it could serve as a strategic conservation area of Witsieshoek, connecting the Golden Gate National Park in the Eastern Free State with the Royal Natal National Park in KwaZulu-Natal.

Prospects of discovering new species

“The Namahadi cutback holds the prospect of discovering new species to be described, which would be the most rewarding of all. Some species that were previously unknown are likely to be unveiled to the botanical society, potentially sparking further research in the area as well as on individual species,” he comments.

In the Eastern Cape, Bereng participated in the Custodians of Rare and Endangered Wildflowers (CREW) Bioblitz,, which he describes as a very exciting and educational event. Among the many species he recorded are the *Huttonaea grandiflora* and *Disa nivea*. Additionally, he also found *Massonia* species in the Eastern Cape that were different from the ones he found in the Qwaqwa mountains, the *Massonia wittebergensis*. Some of the species Bereng recorded were seen by him for the first time. “I found that conducting more fieldwork in the M-D was very helpful, as I was able to distinguish different species between the Qwaqwa Maloti and the Eastern Cape M-D,” he says. 



Mosiua Bereng, a PhD student in Environmental Geography, spent more than two weeks in the northern parts of the Maloti Drakensberg, collecting plant specimens to contribute to the floristic knowledge of the area.



Photos: Mosiua Bereng

Outreach work completes him, says Prof Steven Matshidza

By André Damons

Doing outreach work is not about the recognition or the awards for Prof Steven Matshidza, Head of the UFS Department of Orthopaedics; it is about caring for patients and helping them achieve a better life.

Prof Matshidza, who is passionate about outreach work, is leading a team of dedicated medical professionals – some of them specialists in their field – who sacrifice their weekends to perform much-needed and life-changing surgeries in rural Limpopo and the Free State.

Living his passion

“I do it because outreach is my passion and an integral part of me. It is just something I have to do. I love it. It’s an addiction. Doing outreach is where I feel I am complete; I am a surgeon. I don’t need to worry about how many students didn’t attend class or failed class. That’s the place where I focus only on the patient. Nothing else matters,” Prof Matshidza explains.

He started this project in 2016, shortly after moving from Limpopo to Bloemfontein to take up a position at the UFS. He received a call from Dr Phophi Ramathuba, Limpopo’s MEC for Health, asking him to move back to Limpopo. He said no, but still offers assistance in the form of outreach work, recruiting doctors, and training specialists.

Since then, they have performed more than 2 000 orthopaedic operations in this province and more than 600 in the Free State, making significant inroads in tackling the huge backlog of patients waiting for these operations in public hospitals. Last year, he and his dedicated team performed the first successful robot-assisted knee-replacement surgery at Botlokwa Hospital – a level one district and rural hospital, which is the first of its kind in Limpopo.

Expanding into a multi-specialist project

The team has also won several awards, including awards from the Limpopo Provincial Government, the South African Medical Association (SAMA), and the Rural Doctors Association of Southern Africa (RuDASA) special award. Their work was also acknowledged by President Cyril Ramaphosa during a visit to the province in September 2020, the Health Professions Council of South Africa (HPCSA), as well as Dr Zweli Mkhize, former Minister of Health.

“Doing outreach also means you are operating in areas where you don’t normally work; you are operating on people who would otherwise have to wait years for operations. The good that came out of this is that when we started the outreach, that place only had two orthopaedic surgeons for the whole province. Now there are more than 12, half of whom took part in the outreach,” says Prof Matshidza.

The project started with four orthopaedic surgeons who would visit the province for a weekend every four months to perform operations at one hospital. It soon expanded to hospitals in other districts of the province, becoming a multi-specialist project with specialists in other fields from other universities also volunteering their time.



Prof Steven Matshidza says outreach is his passion and an integral part of him. “It is just something I have to do. I love it.”

Women’s health care in the Free State – a time for collective action

By André Damons



Prof Ray Maharaj, a specialist obstetrician and gynaecologist formerly based in KwaZulu-Natal, was recently appointed as Full Professor and Academic Chair in the Department of Obstetrics and Gynaecology at the university.

In addition to this position, he assumes leadership as the Academic Head of the Department of Obstetrics and Gynaecology at Universitas Academic Hospital, while also taking on the role of Provincial Head of Women’s Health in the Free State. Embracing his new portfolio with a spirit of adventure, Prof Maharaj envisions exciting opportunities for growth and development across multiple spheres. “My mission is to elevate academic standards, foster research initiatives, and enhance women’s health care within the province,” he said.

Demonstrating a proactive approach, he initiated measures to address maternal mortality and cervical cancer by establishing the first provincial lekgotla and implementing cervical cancer screening programmes at district level.

Advocate for improving women’s health

According to Prof Maharaj, who left behind a successful legacy of growth and development at Prince Mshiyeni Memorial Hospital – which also houses KwaZulu-Natal’s largest and busiest maternity unit – he is grateful for the unwavering support received from management and colleagues at the different institutions who share his vision.

Prof Maharaj is committed to lifelong learning and has pursued academic excellence, earning seven graduations across diverse fields, including science, medicine, obstetrics and gynaecology, medical education, and medical law. He is widely published and has presented original research papers on local and international platforms. He is the recipient of several awards, the most recent of which was the South African Health Excellence Award in 2023.

Prof Ray Maharaj was recently appointed as Full Professor and Academic Chair in the Department of Obstetrics and Gynaecology.

As an advocate for reducing maternal mortality, teenage pregnancy, and addressing other women’s health challenges, he has leveraged his expertise to raise awareness through scholarly publications and local and international media. Recognising the complexity of these issues, he emphasises the necessity of collaborative efforts involving all stakeholders to successfully address these and other burdens, such as rising teenage HIV infection rates in the Free State.

Armed with a Master of Medical Law earned cum laude, and prior membership of the Board of Directors of the South African Medico-Legal Association, Prof Maharaj is also well equipped to confront the medico-legal challenges affecting the Free State.

Additionally, his experience as an examiner in the Colleges of Medicine of South Africa and assessor with the Medical and Dental Board of the Health Professions Council of South Africa underscore his commitment to shaping the future of medical education and health-care practice in South Africa.





New titles for a new wind of change

By Gerda-Marié van Rooyen

With each passing season, the Faculty of The Humanities witnesses transitions in academic roles, evidencing academics' passion and intrinsic motivation for their fields.

Prof Gladys Kigozi-Male

Centre for Health Systems Research and Development (CHSR&D)

Prof Kigozi-Male completed the national Future Professoriate Programme in 2023, a year after her promotion to Associate Professor from Senior Researcher. In the preceding five years, she (co-)supervised and graduated six master's students, providing guidance to three master's and two continuing doctoral students. Her research on tuberculosis, HIV, sexual and reproductive health, and COVID-19 challenges has yielded publications in 26 peer-reviewed journals and 18 national and international conferences. These outputs align with the CHSR&D's mission to inform health policies across the three levels of government to improve and inform new and existing policies, strategies, and practices.

Recognised with a Y-2 rating from the NRF in 2021, she serves as a reviewer for national and international journals and as an evaluator of conference abstracts. Prof Kigozi-Male also contributed to assessing grant applications and research protocols for the National Research Fund (NRF) and the South African Medical Research Council (SAMRC). Prof Kigozi-Male likes to contribute to learning and teaching scholarship, research, international collaboration, and mentorship. "I view this as a responsibility to help lay the groundwork for other aspiring academia."

Prof Stephanie Cawood

Associate Professor: Centre for Gender and Africa Studies (CGAS)

Following her 2019 appointment as Director of the Centre for Gender and Africa Studies, Prof Cawood was recently promoted to Associate Professor as well. "My roles as Director of the CGAS and as a scholar at Associate Professor level remain unchanged, but I need to focus more of my attention on my research agenda in the future," she explains. Prof Cawood says she feels gratified that her contributions have been recognised.

"I believe I was considered for promotion because of my well-rounded performance across the domains of learning and teaching, scholarship of engagement, leadership and administration, and research."

Over the past two years, she has maintained high levels of engaged scholarship, conducted substantial supervision, and seen seven doctoral students graduate, while conducting and publishing original research. While being instrumental in operationalising the values and principles of *Vision 130*, she wants to help create a work environment that allows staff the space and academic freedom to try new things and to make and learn from mistakes. "This kind of academic freedom is important for creativity and productivity to thrive."

Dr Thys Heydenrych

Programme Director: Drama and Theatre Arts

Last year ended on a high for the Programme Director, as he was awarded his PhD in Drama and Theatre Arts. Although Dr Thys Heydenrych is still getting used to his new title, he has enjoyed the journey. "It still feels surreal to finally have my PhD. It was hard work and took a lot of hours, but I was fascinated by the topic, and the journey of discovery was enjoyable."

His PhD follows 20 years after he started his undergraduate studies in 2003 at Kopsies. Dr Heydenrych's thesis examined what would happen if the sexuality of the characters Richard and Hamlet were changed by transposing Shakespeare's *Hamlet* and *Richard III* into queer adaptations. "As part of the investigation, I directed the two productions. Seeing these characters live and breathe on stage – not the stereotypical queer comical and camp characters you normally see – creates a sense of belonging and inclusivity. I would like to build on that and explore it further in other Shakespeare plays," he says with reference to how he would make *Vision 130* part of his career road map.

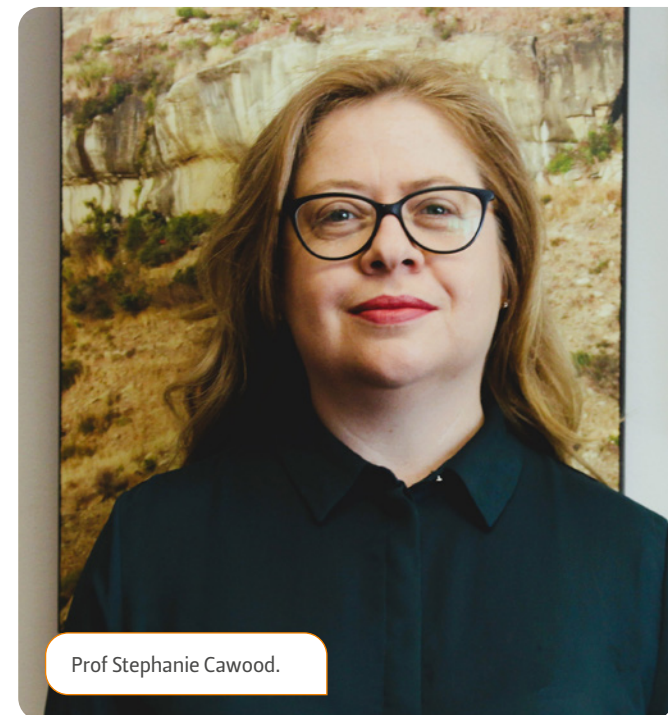


Photo: Supplied

Prof Stephanie Cawood.



Photo: Supplied

Dr Thys Heydenrych.

mamela!

The heart that beats with care

In the heart of South Africa, amid the flat Free State plains, sits a shining gem – the University of the Free State (UFS). At the UFS, the priority list is quite clear. Here, the goal is simple yet often overlooked: care – one of the six values that make up the institution.

'Mela knows that the UFS prioritises the well-being of employees and nurtures students, while also extending a helping hand to the community. It is an approach that might raise eyebrows for its audacity to care in a world often criticised for its indifference.

First in line for UFS care are its employees. Recognising that a university's strength lies in its staff – from academic personnel to support staff – the UFS ensures that they are not just employees, but valued members of a vibrant academic family. Programmes focused on professional development, mental health, and work-life balance are not just token gestures but are part of the UFS culture. After all, a happy employee is more likely to inspire, and an inspired student or colleague is more likely to excel (and in turn, inspire again).

Then come the students, the true heart(s) of the UFS. In an educational landscape that often feels like a relentless race for grades and accolades, the UFS offers its students something invaluable: a caring environment. Here, education goes beyond textbooks and lectures. It is about moulding well-rounded individuals ready to tackle the world's challenges. Support systems – from academic advising to mental health services – ensure that students are seen and heard; not just as learners, but as individuals navigating the complexities of life.

Finally, the UFS' commitment to the community encapsulates its efforts of care. Understanding that a university does not exist in isolation but is part of the larger societal fabric, the UFS actively engages with its surrounding community through various outreach programmes. From offering educational opportunities to underprivileged sectors to spearheading community development projects, the UFS' efforts reflect a belief in the power of education to transform societies.

In a world where educational institutions are often critiqued for losing sight of their foundational values, the University of the Free State stands out for its commitment to caring. By prioritising the well-being of its employees, nurturing its students, and engaging with the community, the UFS not only educates but also elevates, proving that in the business of higher education, the heart matters as much as the mind.

May we all continue to inspire, love, mould – and above all – care.

Love, 'Mela



Prof Gladys Kigozi-Male.

The mile runner making kids with cancer's road smoother

By Gerda-Marié van Rooyen

A true expert is someone who can explain jargon to a kid. A true hero has empathy and is willing to stand in the gap. Dr Mampoi Jonas, a paediatric oncologist, is both of these and much more.

"I believe we are all called to something greater than ourselves. If I can impact a life here, a family there, a community out there, and remain grounded and faithful to God's call upon my life, I have surely emptied myself."

Prof Jan du Plessis, Head of the Paediatric Oncology Unit at the UFS, says working with Dr Jonas is "an adventure full of joy, singing, and life. We are not a team because we work together, we are a team because we trust, respect, and care for each other. Her caring, open and honest nature is inspiring".

Dealing with children diagnosed with cancer and their families is no easy matter. "The diagnosis brings a lot of emotional stress, and often a search for reasons and possible alternatives to the planned management. The key is to acknowledge that we are dealing with patients, but that they belong to an entire community. Different voices within that community have a say."


She says it is often a matter of "finding out where the whole family is and journeying with them throughout the process. When the emotions come, we let them be and find a way beyond them". Dr Jonas considered road running as a way to 'let it all out' and sees this sport as therapy and a 'ventilation strategy'.

Paediatric oncology

Treating children with cancer is a multi-faceted, multi-disciplinary field. Sometimes, it gets so busy that the other team members, including the nursing sister or the social worker, will ask doctors to allocate time to have a chat with the parents to explain what is wrong with the child, so that they can explain it to the other family members at home.

Other times, Dr Jonas has to allow parents to take their child back home "because their elders feel that there is no cancer diagnosis, but the clinical picture is a result of outstanding cultural practices that have not been performed". We then agree to put our clinical knowledge aside and acknowledge that belief systems often differ. The key is to make all the parties involved see that we have a mutual goal of achieving a favourable outcome for the child."

Early diagnosis

The late presentation of patients with advanced-stage disease is a proverbial obstacle in the road. "There are many advances in the treatment of childhood cancer, but the cost of acquiring these is something that remains a problem." Although clinical research has and continues to widen the range of available treatment options – early presentation, accurate diagnosis, and directed therapy for early diagnosed cancer provide a better impact on disease outcome. Dr Jonas aims to make diagnosis easily understandable. She likes to be a team player and dreams of progressive health care for all patients. 

Dr Mampoi Jonas, a paediatric oncologist, believes we are all called to something greater than ourselves.

Photo: Anja Aucamp



Prof Thuthukile Jita says that she is seeing the narrative change from one of policing to one of support, aligning with the UFS' vision of producing graduates of the highest calibre.

Prof Thuthukile Jita: pioneering a paradigm shift in education at the UFS

By Igno van Niekerk

In the VUCA* world of education – which is constantly under scrutiny as it holds the key to our future – few individuals stand out as brightly as Prof Thuthukile Jita. She has become a trailblazer in the field of teaching practice at the university. Her commitment to excellence and thirst for improvement leave a mark on both the university and the broader educational community.

Stepping into her role as a lecturer in 2017, Prof Jita recognised the need for a shift in the approach to teaching practice. She understood that if 'it takes a village to raise a child', that same village must take care of the future of our children: the new generation of educators.

In line with the UFS' Vision 130, Prof Jita also understands the importance of fostering stronger partnerships with schools, bearing in mind that collaboration is key to the success of the education of future educators.

Instilling a culture of proactivity and professionalism among students

The road to transformation is not without its challenges. Prof Jita recognised the frustration felt by schools when students arrive unprepared after holidays, expecting to begin their practical teaching immediately, sometimes without even informing the principals of their arrival. Determined to address this issue, she started efforts to instil a culture of proactivity and professionalism among students. She shares that she is now seeing the narrative

changing from one of policing to one of support, aligning with the UFS' vision of producing graduates of the highest calibre.

Seeking inspiration beyond borders, Prof Jita embarked on a journey of discovery, drawing wisdom from African and global perspectives alike. In Chile, she found insights that resonated with her vision for teaching practice, while in Minnesota, she discovered innovative approaches to observation methodologies.

Back at the UFS, Prof Jita implemented scheduling systems, which empowered lecturers to plan evaluations of practical teaching well in advance. This forward-thinking approach streamlined operations and ensured more comprehensive assessments. Her collaborations with other university departments, including Career Services, has resulted in initiatives such as the Career Services 'career closet', which provides students with access to professional attire – indicative of her holistic approach to education.

Digital transformation a powerful tool for shaping the future of education

Prof Jita's initiatives have garnered attention from universities across the country. Yet, she remains humble in the face of accolades, viewing challenges as opportunities for growth rather than obstacles. In her eyes, digital transformation is not merely a buzzword, but a powerful tool to shape the future of education – a sentiment echoed in her belief that 'embracing technology is embracing the future'.


*VUCA stands for volatility, uncertainty, complexity, and ambiguity. It describes the situation of constant, unpredictable change that is now the norm in certain industries. 

Photo: Supplied

Transformation is integration, not elimination

By Dr Cindé Greyling and Burneline Kaars

At the heart of the UFS lies a commitment to foster a diverse, inclusive, and equitable community. For us, diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) are not merely a trend, but a fundamental building block for creating a thriving and caring environment.

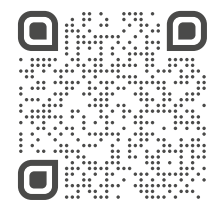
Crafting our future

The UFS is making strides towards meeting sectoral targets, yet acknowledges the gaps, particularly in representation among certain groups. This introspection serves as a compass guiding us towards targeted strategies and initiatives.

Leadership plays a pivotal role in initiating and sustaining DEI efforts. By engaging our campus community in meaningful dialogues and equipping them with the necessary tools through tailored training programmes, we lay the groundwork for inclusive leadership. These initiatives enrich our understanding of DEI and empower individuals to become agents of change within their spheres of influence.

It is all in the baking

During 2024, you will see several of our DEI initiatives being marketed with a cupcake somewhere in the design. The cupcake serves as a metaphor for our aspirations. If you remove ingredients from the recipe, you ruin it, but you can include ingredients to improve it. To make a standard cupcake superb, you add a little essence, maybe some colour, then you mix it all together and heat it up before you let it cool down. Quite a process – but worth it!



Scan the QR code to watch the Transformation is integration video.

You will be treated to a cupcake at all of our 2024 DEI events, where participants will explore culinary diversity. This includes the following:

- Men's Roundtable Discussion (25 April)
- Digitalisation Training (throughout 2024)
- Leadership 2.0 Loading (throughout 2024)
- The Amazing Taste Race (6 September)
- Mental Health Awareness Month in October 2024.

At the end of each term, employees can also participate in 'What's your story,' facilitated by Heartlines, and win small prizes with quizzes.

Embracing growth

Along this journey, we will confront barriers that impede our progress. Unconscious biases, lack of diverse role models, and fear of making mistakes loom as possible challenges. Yet, armed with knowledge and awareness, we will transform these barriers into opportunities for growth.

In the grand tapestry of diversity, equity, and inclusion, every thread is indispensable. As we embark on this collective journey, let us pave the way for a brighter, more inclusive future where diversity is celebrated, equity is upheld, and inclusion is a lived reality.

Look out for more initiatives during 2024 presented by UFS Organisational Development. Together, let us unlock the true potential of our university – one cupcake at a time! 🍪

1. Jennie Masalla and Anela Madyaka from Organisational Development in Human Resources.
2. Participants who have participated in previous Amazing Race events, showcasing their enthusiasm and competitive spirit.



Photo: Tania Allen



Scan QR code to access Sesotho article.

Innovating for impact: relaunching the Shepherd Centre

By Edzani Nephalela

As you catch a glimpse of a regular day in our country, you might wonder if anyone cares. However, at the university, care resonates for every facet of an individual – from their physical health to their spiritual well-being.

Recently inaugurated, the Shepherd Centre held an event at the Centenary Complex on the Bloemfontein Campus towards the end of last year to reaffirm its essence and convey its objectives. Various stakeholders attended, representing bodies such as the Faculty of Theology and Religion, the Kopsie Phahamisa Academy, the Office for International Affairs, the Community Engagement Office, and the Faculty of Law, alongside pastors and ministers affiliated to the centre.

Repositioning and reintroducing the centre

Sinovuyo Mogwasi, the Project Coordinator, said that the primary purpose of the evening was to communicate their offerings, reaffirm their existence, and share their upcoming projects that started this year. "It is an honour to reposition and reintroduce ourselves. One project the centre is looking forward to is the Creating Ethical Leaders in Faith-based Communities project, which we will be working on with a new partner, the Centre for Ethical Leadership, based in Seattle, USA.

This partnership will help instil ethics and accountability in pastors and ministers in South Africa through the short learning programmes we offer."

This initiative was a testament to the Shepherd Centre's unwavering dedication to its mission. It stands poised to embark on a journey of collaboration, innovation, and a steadfast commitment to nurturing leadership and enriching various communities. As it forges ahead, guided by its newfound partnerships and a shared vision of excellence, it is steadfast in its resolve to make a lasting impact on both a local and global scale.

Alice Fong, the CEO of the Centre for Ethical Leadership, joined online and shared insights about the centre's mission. She said that Mogwasi's continuous knowledge, ethics, and accountability values resonated with that of the centre.

"The energy and vision Mogwasi shared align so much with the Centre for Ethical Leadership that it was easy to say yes to her proposal! The launch was brilliant, inspiring attendees with what can be and what will be. We are excited to see this partnership expand the minds of UFS students and students worldwide!" said Fong.

Pathways for personal growth and exploration

For Mogwasi, the relaunch represents a pivotal moment, offering many courses that cater to diverse spiritual needs and serve as pathways for personal growth and exploration.

This revitalisation enriches the academic landscape and provides students with opportunities for spiritual nourishment and intellectual engagement. By diversifying its offerings, the Shepherd Centre embraces inclusivity and acknowledges the varied spiritual journeys of its community members. 🌱

Sinovuyo Mogwasi says the relaunched Shepherd Centre offers many courses that cater to diverse spiritual needs.

Photo: Leonie Bolleurs



Dr Edward Netherlands was recently part of a research team that discovered a new bullfrog species, named *Pyxicephalus beytelli*.

Photo: Supplied

New bullfrog species add a significant piece to the puzzle of amphibian biodiversity

By Leonie Bolleurs

Did you know that bullfrogs exhibit remarkable parental care behaviour? Unlike many amphibians – laying eggs and providing no further care – bullfrogs are known to fiercely guard their eggs and tadpoles, which are often found in shallow water or attached to submerged vegetation. This parental investment contributes to the survival and development of their offspring, showcasing an intriguing aspect of bullfrog behaviour and ecology.

This interesting fact was shared by Dr Edward Netherlands, Senior Lecturer in the Department of Zoology and Entomology at the UFS, who was recently part of a research team that discovered a new species of amphibian, *Pyxicephalus beytelli*, or commonly referred to as Beytell's bullfrog. The research team from South Africa, led by Prof Louis du Preez from the North-West University (NWU), consisted of colleagues from the UFS and NWU.

An article about this finding, *A new bullfrog from southern Africa (Pyxicephalidae, Pyxicephalus Tschudi, 1838)*, was published in the *African Journal of Herpetology*.

Dr Netherlands says the discovery of the new species, *Pyxicephalus beytelli*, is particularly thrilling; achieving something of this magnitude undoubtedly requires a collaborative team effort.

"Earlier this year, on a follow-up expedition to Namibia, we were again fortunate to find this bullfrog to officially name it before our paper was published. It was remarkable to hold an animal that you know is still unnamed," he says.

The new species was discovered in northeastern Namibia and northwestern Botswana, particularly in the Khaudum National

Park in Namibia. "This region was chosen for fieldwork due to its rich biodiversity and relatively undisturbed habitats," he states.

Dr Netherlands believes that the discovery of *Pyxicephalus beytelli* not only adds a significant piece to the puzzle of amphibian biodiversity, but also illuminates the remarkable adaptations and diversity of bullfrogs in the region. He is of the opinion that this finding underscores the importance of continued exploration and research in understudied areas such as northeastern Namibia and northwestern Botswana.

He says, "This newly discovered bullfrog, *Pyxicephalus beytelli*, represents an important milestone in biodiversity research. It is the largest frog species discovered in more than a century, highlighting the potential for surprising discoveries even in well-explored regions. Its unique characteristics, such as its vibrant colouration and impressive size, make it a valuable addition to our understanding of amphibian diversity and evolution."

"This discovery opens up numerous avenues for research, including investigations into its ecology, behaviour, reproductive biology, and genetic diversity. Furthermore, studying this new species can provide insight into the evolutionary history of bullfrogs in Southern Africa and contribute to conservation efforts aimed at preserving their habitats," adds Dr Netherlands.

There are many similarities between species of bullfrogs. However, Dr Netherlands explains that the team recognised the distinctiveness of *Pyxicephalus beytelli* through morphological comparison with known bullfrog species. "While the external structure and general behaviour of the new species are similar to other bullfrogs, its unique features, such as its striking colouration, prominent teeth, and bony protrusions on the lower jaw, set it apart as a distinct species deserving of further study," he describes.

Invasive grass slowly suffocating local livelihoods

By Dr Cindé Greyling

Dr Anthony Mapaura from the UFS Afromontane Research Unit is a conservation biologist and plant ecologist, and Lumko Mboyi is a professional environmental scientist. Together, they signed up for the fight of their lives – to help manage the Mexican feathergrass of the Eastern Cape. With their more than 30 years of combined experience and expertise, they are the best combo for the job.

Nassella tenuissima, also commonly known as Mexican feathergrass, is native to South America and the southwestern USA. In South Africa, it has naturalised and become invasive in the montane areas of the Eastern Cape, especially around the Barkly East and Clifford areas. When Mexican feathergrass invades an area, it outcompetes and displaces native species, forming dense monoculture stands. Mboyi's current research is the first detailed assessment of this species' actual distribution and its impact on the native biodiversity of the region.

Reducing carrying capacity of rangelands

"Since this grass is largely unpalatable and indigestible for livestock due to its high fibre content, heavy infestations reduce the carrying capacity of rangelands. Their large biomass poses a serious risk of wildfires. Since they remain green well into the dry season, they disrupt the normal ecosystem dynamics, leading to biodiversity loss, reduced ecosystem services, and low

productivity," Mboyi explains. "The sharp, needle-like awns can harm livestock, particularly the eyes, skins, mouths, and digestive tracts, as well as reduce the quality of wool. The worst part is that invasions are extremely difficult and expensive to control."

Biodiversity loss is a critical issue affecting everyone, Dr Mapaura says, hence we all have a duty to act. "Smuggling plants and participating in the trade of rare and endangered plants or animals and their products should be stopped. Everyone should adopt sustainable practices and call for stronger environmental control." Since the loss of natural biodiversity will affect us all, Dr Mapaura encourages education and research and consciously acting more responsibly towards the environment.

Catastrophic consequences for agriculture

"Invasive plant species pose significant threats to natural habitats and ecosystems. Specifically, the invasion of the *Nassella* grass genus may have catastrophic consequences for agriculture in the region, resulting in less productivity, more erosion, and altered water availability."

But all is not lost, Dr Mapaura states. "There are several concerted efforts committed to the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity throughout the world. I believe there is a lot of hope for a sustainable future, even though challenges remain. It's not too late to act, but we need to act urgently if we are to win. We are at a point in human history where our actions need to be in harmony with nature, because we are part of nature."



1. Farmers tirelessly strive to save their farms from the intrusion of *Nassella*.
2. Important pollinators thriving amid the indigenous vegetation.
3. Dr Anthony Mapaura in the field taking digital specimens.
4. Lumko Mboyi standing amid a sea of *Nassella* in the field, highlighting the scale of the invasion.



From the left are:
Prof Francois Strydom;
Prof Francis Petersen;
and Themba Hlasho,
Executive Director
of Student Affairs,
officially opened the
GPS@UFS Hub.

Photo: Supplied

Focus on the future

By Edzani Nephalela and Dr Cindé Greyling

At the launch of the Graduate Positioning Service (GPS@UFS) Hub earlier this year, Prof Francois Strydom, Senior Director in the Centre for Teaching and Learning (CTL) and the UFS project lead, said that this project has helped to catalyse innovations and highlight what can be achieved through collaboration with supportive partners inside and outside the university.

GPS@UFS was conceptualised by CTL and Career Services, with inputs from institutional stakeholders and generous donor support, aiming to equip students with essential technical skills, academic support, and career readiness tools for success in their studies, as well as their transition into employment.

"Currently, GPS@UFS comprises three projects: Digital Literacy, Scaled Responsive Student Tracking, and the Career Development Pathway. These projects converge within a physical space, in addition not initially planned. The idea emerged when the team recognised the necessity for a tangible venue where students could access various services beyond the digital realm." This resulted in the GPS@UFS Hub located at the UFS Modular Lecture Building. Prof Strydom expressed the project's goals to increase graduation rates, decrease dropout rates, and elevate employment rates, aligning with the institutional strategy, *Vision 130*.

Visible and in demand

According to Belinda Janeke, Head of Career Services whose offices have also relocated to the GPS@UFS Hub, they have several offerings to support their students – with their structured GPS@UFS Career Development Pathway as the golden route to future success. "In the pathway, we support students to create a contemporary CV and LinkedIn profile. We also help them to develop interview skills by offering mock interviews, followed by supportive feedback. We aim to help students market themselves well and network with professionals in the world of work. During our in-person Placement Preparation Days (PPD), we interact with students on all our campuses and guide them to improve their interview skills and personal brand offering," she explained.

Enhancing employability

Career Services also plays a vital role in preparing students for the job market and placing candidates in vacancies. The team has expanded exponentially over the past two years to fulfil a variety of roles – including their brand-new placement officers who actively place students in jobs. Janeke said they have recently launched the Career Hub – an online platform where students and employers can meet. This platform is open to students and alumni as a space to build a professional profile and apply for advertised vacancies.

New opportunities are continuously uploaded, and a monthly newsletter keeps students up to date with their selected field/s of interest.

In 2023, Career Services launched their first-ever corporate event where they showcased the UFS graduate offering and actively built relationships with industry partners. "We look forward to continuing with corporate events during 2024. This is an extension of our existing Career Fairs where businesses are invited to interact with students and share their expertise.

Our Career Weeks are faculty-specific and offer students a 'behind the scenes' look at different occupations. We supplement this with our podcast series where we interview experts in their fields about the good, the bad, and the untold stories of the world of work," remarked Janeke.

Direct students to GPS@UFS

During his opening of the GPS Hub, Prof Francis Petersen, Vice-Chancellor and Principal of the UFS, said, "The GPS Hub stands as a testament to our shared belief in the power of education to change lives and shape futures. It embodies our collective efforts to provide our students with the tools, resources, and support they need to thrive academically, professionally, and personally."

The GPS@UFS team invites all UFS employees to direct students to their in-person and digital offerings – "It is the best way to ensure that your students make a difference in their respective industries. Do not confine your influence to the classroom – let it stretch into your students' careers," Janeke concluded. 📌

UFS Business School: a quarter century of transformative leadership

By Michelle Nöthling

25
YEARS

In a world where success is measured by the impact one leaves, the University of the Free State (UFS) Business School has steadfastly pursued its mission of empowering individuals and organisations. Established in 1999, the Business School is celebrating a remarkable milestone this year, commemorating 25 years of providing exceptional management education and leadership development.

A quarter century of quality

The Business School is rightfully proud of its achievements over the past quarter of a century. In 2012 – responding to an increasing demand – it expanded its footprint on the Bloemfontein Campus with the unveiling of a state-of-the-art building. The school's steadfast commitment to quality was rewarded in 2018 when it received the prestigious CEEMAN (Central and East European Management Development Association) international accreditation, placing it in the ranks of esteemed business schools globally. In 2023, the school welcomed Christo van der Rheede – the former CEO of AgriSA – as a distinguished Adjunct Professor, adding invaluable industry experience to its cohort of specialists. Earlier this year, Prof Lidewey van der Sluis from the Netherlands was also appointed as an affiliated Professor, further expanding the school's international perspective and extending its global network.

Dedicated to empowerment and relevancy

Prof Nicolene Barkhuizen – who assumed the pivotal role of

Business School Director in 2023 – is proud of the school's steadfast dedication to empowering its students. "Our fundamental principles of care, innovation, and excellence will continue to equip students with a worldwide knowledge base, enabling them to flourish in a rapidly changing business environment," Prof Barkhuizen says. Their commitment to excellence is reflected in the selection of formal, accredited qualifications presented by industry experts.

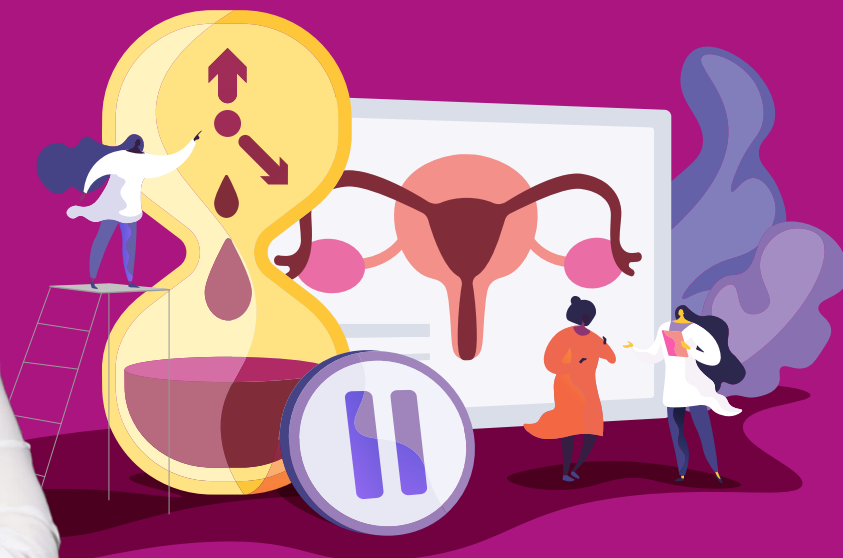
These qualifications range from Philosophiae Doctor in Business Administration (PhD) and Master of Business Administration (MBA) to Postgraduate Diploma in Business Administration (PGDip) and Bachelor of Management Leadership (BML). Furthermore, the school's Executive Education unit, established in 2004, offers a suite of tailored management development programmes and customised in-house short learning programmes to meet the specific needs of organisations and students alike. Through its collaboration with the School for New Learning at DePaul University in Chicago – recognised internationally as a leader in the field of adult and lifelong learning – the Business School ensures a current and innovative learning environment.

"In commemorating the Business School's 25th anniversary," Prof Barkhuizen says, "we honour those who embraced the Business School aspiration, made significant investments, and profoundly impacted the lives of numerous students, enhancing their value." Prof Barkhuizen invites the UFS community to celebrate this milestone with them through the various events and activities they will be hosting during the year. In April, the Business School will be presenting a webinar on the connection between business and the digital era, followed by a webinar in May on the nexus between purpose, people, and performance. Details will be communicated on the UFS Business School's website. 📌



The UFS Business School is proud of its achievements over the past quarter of a century.

Photo: Supplied



Dr Munita Dunn-Coetzee cautions women "not to ignore or minimise their mental health struggles during the perimenopause phase".

It's not in your head

By Michelle Nöthling

You feel different somehow. You notice that you laugh less easily. Your thoughts and words randomly disappear into a fog that has settled in your brain. Tired. Can anyone be this tired? Yet, sleep seems to have moved to another address. Anxiety, on the other hand, has moved permanently into the pit of your stomach. Small frustrations suddenly launch you into a rage. And while you desperately try to hide all of this, you secretly wonder: am I losing my mind?

Have you considered that you might be experiencing perimenopause?

The third P

Puberty. Pregnancy. Perimenopause.

Three major transitional experiences that have a profound impact on a woman's life. Despite perimenopause being a major physiological, neurological, and psychological life event – which all women go through – it often remains overlooked in conversations about women's health. Perimenopause refers to the years during which your body transitions to menopause. Typically, this takes place during a woman's 40s to 50s, although some can start experiencing symptoms in their mid- to late 30s already.

"Perimenopause is characterised by hormonal fluctuations – most noticeably, a dramatic decline in oestrogen levels," explains Dr Munita Dunn-Coetzee, Director of Student Counselling and Development. "These fluctuating hormonal levels," Dr Dunn-Coetzee continues, "can have profound effects on a woman's psychological and physical well-being."

It's more than a hot flush

A recent survey (*Women's Health, Lond, 2022*) found that most women were completely unaware of the wide variety of symptoms connected to perimenopause. Symptoms can include anxiety, rage, suicidal thoughts, brain fog, depression, weight gain, hair loss, memory loss, migraines, and changes in sexual function – to name but a handful. Dr Dunn-Coetzee cautions women "not to ignore or minimise their mental health struggles during this phase. If you're struggling with issues such as anxiety, depression, brain fog, or mood swings as you approach menopause, don't suffer in silence." She encourages women to empower themselves with knowledge, and to advocate for themselves as they seek support from a doctor or mental health professional.

A powerful catalyst

While this transition can be challenging (there are some fortunate women who glide through this change seamlessly), reward awaits! Dr Lisa Mosconi, a world-renowned neuroscientist and women's brain health specialist, found that the vast majority of women report feeling stronger, more capable, more resilient, and more in tune with their own bodies and priorities after completing this transition. "One of the most surprising things I've learned," says Dr Mosconi, "is that postmenopausal women are generally happier than younger ones – and generally happier than they themselves were before menopause."

It is essential, therefore, to break the silence surrounding the mental health challenges of perimenopause. Through open conversations – which include men – and by addressing both the physiological and psychological aspects of this transition, women can navigate perimenopause with confidence and self-compassion.

Nourishing care: the Food Environment Programme's commitment to student welfare

By Valentino Ndaba

At the heart of every educational institution lies a responsibility beyond academics – the duty to nurture and care for its students holistically. Recognising this, the university has instituted an initiative known as the Food Environment Programme. More than just the provision of sustenance, this programme embodies a profound philosophy of care, ensuring the well-being and dignity of every student within its community.

Established in August 2019, the Food Environment Programme has set ambitious yet essential objectives. Through the Food Environment Technical Committee (FETC), the UFS has initiated various cross-functional food projects during the past four years, involving key stakeholders from the Division of Student Affairs, the Department of Sustainable Food Systems and Development (Faculty of Natural and Agricultural Sciences), and the Department of Nutrition and Dietetics (Faculty of Health Sciences). Dr WP Wahl, Director of Student Life within the Division of Student Affairs, explained, "The UFS has a student-centred, health-promoting, sustainable food environment." This vision is underpinned by strategic objectives that include strengthening sustainability initiatives, enhancing food security, fostering collaboration, empowering students, and ensuring inclusivity and dignity.

Central to the programme's success is the active involvement of staff members. As Dr Wahl emphasises, "Staff members are vital partners in our commitment to student welfare." One impactful

way that staff can contribute is by donating to the No Student Hungry Food Bursary Programme. By participating in fundraising efforts or making direct contributions, staff members play a crucial role in sustaining initiatives that alleviate hunger among students.

Moreover, the Food Environment Programme operates with a clear set of criteria to ensure that assistance reaches those most in need. Students facing acute challenges of hunger and malnutrition are identified through collaboration between the Food Environment Office and the Department of Finance. Through this careful selection process, the programme targets its resources where they are most needed, maximising impact and ensuring efficient use of resources.

However, the success of the Food Environment Programme ultimately depends on collective action. Dr Wahl issues a rallying call to staff members, urging them to actively engage in the programme: "Our commitment to student welfare requires the active participation of every member of our community." Whether through financial support, volunteering, or advocacy, staff members have a crucial role to play in realising the programme's vision of a caring and supportive food environment.

In conclusion, the Food Environment Programme stands as a beacon of care and compassion within the UFS community. Beyond its strategic objectives and initiatives, it embodies a commitment to the well-being and dignity of every student. Through collective action and unwavering support, staff members can ensure the sustainability of initiatives that nourish both body and spirit, embodying the true essence of care within the university community.



The UFS has initiated various cross-functional food projects during the past four years, involving key stakeholders. Pictured are the vegetable tunnels on the Bloemfontein Campus.

Enhancing learning and teaching excellence: a preview of the 2024 conference

By Edzani Nephalela

The university is gearing up for its highly anticipated Learning and Teaching Conference, organised by the Centre for Teaching and Learning (CTL) – set to take place from 16 to 20 September 2024. This year's theme, *Enhancing Quality Blended Learning and Teaching within a UFS Context*, underscores the institution's commitment to fostering innovative approaches to education. As the countdown begins, UFS staff members are eagerly anticipating a five-day event with opportunities for professional development, knowledge sharing, and recognition of outstanding contributions to learning and teaching.

This conference serves as a platform for the UFS to showcase its exemplary work and engage in enriching discussions on pedagogical best practices. During the conference week, participants will have the chance to immerse themselves in diverse presentations, workshops, and panel discussions to advance teaching methodologies and enhance the overall quality of education.

Tiana van der Merve, Deputy Director in CTL, said one of the conference highlights is the prestigious Learning and Teaching Awards ceremony on 17 October. "This event celebrates excellence in various categories, acknowledging the dedication and innovation of UFS staff members. Among the accolades are awards for Innovation in Learning and Teaching, Research in Learning and Teaching, Most Valued Professional, Departmental

Excellence, and the esteemed Vice-Chancellor's Award," she said.

The application call document has recently been circulated and interested staff members will receive further information and guidance. The significance of obtaining a UFS Learning and Teaching Award cannot be overstated, as it acknowledges individual achievements and reinforces the UFS' commitment to excellence in learning and teaching.

"Excitingly, this year introduces a new addition to the award lineup: the Kovie Phahamisa Award for Short Learning Programmes. This category recognises the significance of short-term educational initiatives in expanding access to knowledge and skills within the UFS community," Van der Merve added.

Reflecting on the accomplishments of past winners – such as Dr Rosaline Sebolao, Teaching and Learning Manager in the Faculty of The Humanities, who was honoured with the Most Valued Professional Award in 2023 – underscores the profound impact of these accolades on both personal and institutional levels.

"This means that self-driven people also need encouragement. I therefore appreciate this as an encouragement to acknowledge my work in the faculty and the university. I always try to innovate how I do my work to engage those I serve (students and academics) and bring humanness to everything I do. Hence, I coined my project as 'humanising my Academic Project'. I will be forever grateful to the university for this acknowledgement." Dr Sebolao encourages colleagues to be passionate about their work and to develop and continue improving their portfolios, as these reflect what they do on a daily basis and inspire their continuous development. 📌

Photo: Supplied

Pencil in 16–20 September in your diaries. This year's conference offers a platform to engage in diverse presentations, workshops, and panel discussions. Pictured here, are: Dr Ekaete Benedict, Naquita Fernandes, Prof Brownhilder Neneh, and Annari Muller from the Department of Business Management after receiving the Bloemfontein Departmental Award at last year's award ceremony.



Photo: Supplied



Dr Andronicus Akinyelu, pioneer of the Information Technology Student Association (ITSA) on the Qwaqwa Campus.

Upskilling the youth: Dr Akinyelu's efforts to build a competitive cohort of young people for the workforce

By Anthony Mthembu

Dr Andronicus Akinyelu, Lecturer in the Department of Computer Sciences and Informatics, has become a member of the UFS community as a Postdoctorate Fellow on the Bloemfontein Campus. He later joined the Qwaqwa Campus as Lecturer. His move to this campus led him to realise the need to expose students in his department to opportunities that would enhance their competitiveness. As a result, Dr Akinyelu took the initiative and established the Information Technology Student Association (ITSA) on the Qwaqwa Campus in 2023.

According to Dr Akinyelu, the association has several objectives, which include fostering a vibrant community of future computing experts, providing a platform for skill enhancement, networking opportunities, and a rewarding university journey. The mission of ITSA on the campus is to equip students for the tech industry, and to improve their job prospects through vital skills advancement. In fact, ITSA has collaborated with organisations such as the Institute of Information Technology Professionals (IITPSA) and Enactus, which have set up programmes for the students to participate in. As a result, the students have something to put on their CVs and they also receive certificates for their involvement. "Our students here should not feel disadvantaged or that they are not capable of competing with the world," Dr Akinyelu said. In addition, the association connects the students with key industry players, so that they have an understanding of what they can achieve.

Furthermore, the organisation has garnered a lot of support from the students and is currently in the final stages of completing the registration process to establish itself as an official association on the Qwaqwa Campus.

Dr Akinyelu is also spearheading a community development project called *Artificial Intelligence and Robotics*. According to him, "The 4IR is fuelled by technological advances and one of the key players is artificial intelligence. This indicates that there is a surge in the demand for skills rooted in artificial intelligence." Therefore, the programme looks at equipping Grade 10 and 11 learners from high schools around the Qwaqwa Campus with knowledge and skills that are aligned with the Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR).

The programme, which runs annually for six months, selects ten top-achieving Grade 10 and 11 learners from three high schools to participate in the initiative. The selected group attends three-hour classes every Thursday, where they are exposed to an extensive curriculum in which Dr Akinyelu takes them through lessons on artificial intelligence and robotics, providing insight into the subject matter. He also trains the learners in building diverse robotic systems. Moreover, the learners receive training in Python programming and all the training sessions incorporate hands-on practical exercises to reinforce their learning. At the end of the learning programme, the learners are invited to a celebratory ceremony where they receive certificates for their involvement.

Although the community development project was formed from Dr Akinyelu's personal drive to give back to the community, he admits it also forms part of the larger goal of equipping young people to be competitive in the workforce. 📌



Marion Island: Digging dirt and the roaring forties

By Michelle Nöthling

An excerpt from an article published in the Daily Maveric

The world has turned grey, and nature has turned angry. A battle of three against one is raging halfway to Antarctica. Wind, rain and ocean unite their assault against the red-and-white icebreaker floating almost 5 000 tons. As above, so below. Staring at an invisible horizon from her porthole, Dr Marike Stander is as determined as the forces outside. Her destination: a near-inhospitable island. Her mission: finding fingerprints.

Dirt fingerprints. Or to be scientifically accurate: geochemical tracers found in eroded sediments. These 'fingerprints' help geologists to trace soil back to where it originated from. Think, for example, of a garden with several flower beds, and each flower bed is filled with soil from an unknown source. To figure out where the soil in each flower bed came from, geologists would collect soil samples and analyse these to find 'markers' or 'tracers' in the soil, which are like tiny fingerprints that can reveal its origin. These tracers are composed of natural elements or isotopes that are present when the soil was formed from the weathering of rocks. By comparing the tracers from the soil samples with the 'fingerprints' of different rocks and sediments from various regions, geologists can determine the likely origin of the soil from the different flower beds. Similarly, geochemical tracers can be used to study the movement and transport of sediments in rivers, lakes, and oceans. By analysing the tracers in sediments deposited on the ocean floor, scientists can trace their path and understand the processes that carried them there, such as currents, erosion, or even human activities like dredging or construction. In other words, geochemical tracers not only enable us to identify the origin of these materials, but also how they move around. But what is the significance?

Dr Stander, a lecturer and researcher in the Department of Geography at the University of the Free State, has made digging

dirt her business. Her research focus is on sediment source tracing and the often-overlooked issue of soil erosion. Soil erosion is of global importance, since it not only impacts the storage of carbon and nutrients, but also the production of food and the pollution of water resources. "Soil erosion has detrimental effects on agricultural productivity by degrading arable land quality," Dr Stander says, "but also that sedimentation in water bodies diminishes reservoir storage capacity with a myriad of adverse effects on aquatic environments." In terms of agricultural practices, the ability to identify and quantify sediment sources and understanding soil erosion processes hold immense value for sustained productivity and food security. When considering water resources — which are under immense pressure in South Africa — it holds value in planning reservoir placement, optimising water storage and ensuring healthy aquatic environments," Dr Stander explains.

But how did she find herself in the belly of an icebreaker with no land in sight and the sea floor four kilometres down? The Sub-Antarctic Landscape and Climate Research Group, led by Prof Werner Nel (University of Fort Hare) and Prof David Hedding (Unisa), approached Dr Stander to assist them in a research project. One of the objectives of the project is to explore how viable geochemical tracers in the substrate of Marion Island would be. Although only a tiny dot on the map — less than 300 km² — this untamed, tempestuous island captivated Dr Stander. She also discovered the only way to safely navigate the waterlogged mires and jagged lava flows is in gumboots. "One day we hiked in extreme rain. I was literally soaked all the way through. It was actually filling up my gumboots." The one thing that really surprised her was experiencing the Roaring Forties. "You haven't experienced wind until you've worked on Marion Island!"

Marion and its smaller neighbour, Prince Edward Island, are part of South Africa's Western Province, and the first and only remote territory belonging to our country. Places such as Antarctica, the Southern Ocean, as well as Marion and Prince Edward Islands have



Dr Marike Stander has made digging dirt her business. Her research focus is on sediment source tracing and the often-overlooked issue of soil erosion.

much simpler ecosystems in comparison to mainland systems. Even slight changes in the environment trigger almost immediate reactions in these sensitive ecosystems that subsequently serve as early warning systems on the one hand, and predictors of possible consequences in the more complex mainland systems on the other. South Africa is the only African country with research stations that have the ability to explore these regions.

Fascinated by Marion Island's volcanic features, Dr Stander points out that "in mainland South Africa, the Drakensberg Basalts are about 180 million years old, where this island is less than one million years old—and it's actually still considered an active volcano." Prof Hedding, one of the leading researchers of the group, was fortunate enough to capture a small volcanic eruption on video while over-wintering for research during 2004. Although only a small team of 10 – 12 researchers and technicians permanently occupy the island, scientists from around the world and across disciplines visit Marion.

It is especially this amalgamation of expertise and disciplines that Dr Stander finds most exciting. "It changes your perspective and allows your mind to not only think outside the box, but also to think about all the interconnected boxes and how they affect each other." Since the earth is composed of inseparable interconnected ecosystems, interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary work is essential.



Being part of such an international team with researchers from the United Kingdom and France, Dr Stander was able to share and learn additional geochronological techniques and field methods. "It really expands your experiences, your expertise, your knowledge, your skill set. I've grown so much as a researcher and as a person as well."

Her newly gained knowledge is now not only put to practice in catchment areas in the Eastern Free State — renowned for its erodible soils — but also promotes South Africa's alignment with global initiatives. "Healthy soils play a pivotal role in achieving many of the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)," Dr Stander says, "since it links to safeguarding terrestrial ecosystems, reversing land degradation, and promoting sustainable agriculture, to name but a few." Sustainability cannot be practiced in silo, though, relegated to 17 exclusive areas of SDGs.

Spending three weeks immersed in Marion island's simplicity of existence proved this to Dr Stander. "Suddenly you realise that humans built up this world that is filled with just stress and anxiety, and they create these issues that just cause more anxiety." She learned that we need less than we think we do.

"Except for condensed milk. You always need more condensed milk in your hot coffee." ☺





1. From the left are Dr Marlie van Rooyen, Department of Linguistics and Language Practice; Dr Xany Jansen van Vuuren, Department of Linguistics and Language Practice; Dr Robyn Smith, School of Health and Rehabilitation Sciences; Prof Corlia Janse van Vuuren, School of Health and Rehabilitation Sciences; and Prof Kobus Marais, Department of Linguistics and Language Practice.
2. From the left are Eric Lerata, Faculty of Health Sciences; Dr Xany Jansen van Vuuren; and Dr Marlie van Rooyen.

Photos: Supplied

Building strong foundations: a community project for early childhood development

By Dr Nitha Ramnath

Imagine changing a child's entire story by giving them a healthy start. This is the powerful mission behind a dynamic project at the UFS. The School of Health and Rehabilitation Sciences within the Faculty of Health Sciences is leading the charge in early childhood development and maternal health and well-being.

Fuelled by the belief in the impact of early childhood development, this interdisciplinary team – including collaborators from the faculties of Health Sciences and The Humanities – embarked on a community project in Mangaung and Trompsburg. Launched in 2022, it is not just a project; it is also registered research with a clear vision: to improve early childhood development outcomes across the Free State.

The impact is multifaceted, with preschoolers thriving through the health screenings, ensuring children aged three to five receive the support they need. Mothers and caregivers are also empowered by addressing their health and well-being, which directly impacts the care they can provide. Moreover, early childhood development centres get a boost, as the project assesses the learning environment and offers support to enhance early childhood development opportunities.

In addition, students join forces with experienced staff to provide valuable community engagement through health screenings, referrals, and locally tailored interventions. The project thus becomes a ground-breaking learning experience for students in both health sciences and language practice to develop crucial skills and graduate attributes by tackling real-world challenges in authentic settings.

Through the collaboration with the Department of Linguistics and Language Practice, language barriers are broken, which allows the team to connect with educators, mothers, and children in their own languages. This empowers the team to deliver impactful health information directly to the communities that need it most. Health Sciences students also gain valuable skills working alongside trained interpreters, fostering effective communication in authentic settings. One can consider this project as a bridge that connects families to both the education and health-care systems. The data collected will pave the way for the development of accessible and sustainable digital solutions to address the identified community needs.

This UFS initiative is more than research; it is a story of collaboration, innovation, and positive change. It is a story about caring enough to give children the best possible start, one healthy step at a time. 📖

UFS ICT Services Deputy Director dominates at international karate tournament

By Anthony Mthembu

The World Shotokan Karate-do Federation (WSKF) hosted its 16th annual WSKF World Championships in Tokyo late last year. A group of 24 individuals represented South Africa in the tournament, one of which was Michael van Rooyen, Deputy Director in Information and Communication Technology Services (ICT) at the UFS.

Van Rooyen competed in the veteran category against karatekas from, among others, Afghanistan and Mexico in his age group in the Kata division. As a result, he came fifth in the world in the above category and received a first Dan (black belt) certificate and an actual black belt in recognition of his accomplishment. As such, Van Rooyen describes the experience as a great learning opportunity. "I am really happy with my performance at the World Championships. We trained very hard for it and though it was tough, the experience was still amazing," he said. The South African team received more than 20 medallions ranging from bronze to gold. However, the highlight of the tournament for Van Rooyen was that his daughter also formed part of the national team and they competed together on an international stage.

Rebuilding a relationship with karate

Although this achievement at the WSKF World Championships is very recent, Van Rooyen has been practising karate for a long time. In fact, as a young person he competed on national level and eventually won a silver medallion. However, he took a break from the sport for some years. It was after a tragic and life-threatening accident in 2018 that Van Rooyen started rebuilding his relationship with the sport. According to Van Rooyen, the motivation behind getting back into the sport was that he wanted to live long enough to do more not only for himself, but for his family as well. As a result, he explains that the work and dedication he put into getting back into karate is what led him to perform at the level he did at the WSKF World Championships.

What the future holds

Part of the reward for making it into the top five at the WSKF World Championships is that you are automatically selected to participate in the next tournament. As such, Van Rooyen has an opportunity to compete at that level in 2025. Although he is currently uncertain as to whether he will be involved in the next tournament, he is still set on moving up on his rank from fifth to third in the world. In addition, he is currently training young people who have an interest in karate, as well as judging competitions such as the WSKF South African Championships which took place in 2023. Moving forward, Van Rooyen wants to continue contributing to the karate community by teaching the next generation of karatekas. 📖

Photo: Supplied



Michael van Rooyen competed in the 16th annual World Shotokan Karate-do Federation World Championships in Tokyo.



Staff graduation showcase: honouring academic accomplishments

By Leonie Bolleurs

We are celebrating the achievements of staff; highlighting the remarkable individuals who graduated at the recent April graduation ceremonies.

From academic to administrative staff – their commitment to lifelong learning and academic excellence serves as an inspiration to everyone. Let's applaud their hard work, perseverance, and dedication – their accomplishments are evidence of their passion and commitment to higher education.



Six from CDS graduate together

As the UFS celebrates its graduates, the Centre for Development Support (CDS) within the Faculty of Economic and Management Sciences (EMS) proudly acknowledges six individuals who have attained their PhDs in Development Studies. Among the distinguished cohort are Dr Elelwani Mmbadi, currently serving as Research Analyst in the Centre for Teaching and Learning (CTL), and Dr Chimwemwe Phiri, Postdoctoral Fellow at the UFS. Both Dr Mmbadi and Dr Phiri attribute a portion

of their success to the support provided by the CDS. In fact, Dr Mmbadi highlights that, "I would like to give special thanks to Prof Lochner Marais for his continued support and guidance throughout this PhD process. It is fair to say that without him this milestone wouldn't have been realised." The other graduates from the CDS are Drs Moffat Machiwenyika, Eziwe Mutsikiwa, Margaret Kusambiza, and Mavis Mushonga.

Pictured here, are from the left: Dr Chimwemwe Phiri, Dr Moffat Machiwenyika, Dr Eziwe Mutsikiwa; back: Dr Elelwani Mmbadi, Dr Margaret Kusambiza-Kiingi, and Dr Mavis Mushonga.

Photo: Supplied



Photo: Leonie Bolleurs

Versace Sepeesa

Versace Sepeesa is a facilitator in the Department of Mathematics and Applied Mathematics, responsible for teaching Calculus and Vector Analysis. He received his BScHons in Mathematics and Applied Mathematics.

According to Sepeesa, Mathematics has always been more of a game for him than anything else. He explains, "A game with a lot of rules, but if one takes the time to learn these rules, a whole new world is revealed." Although this revelation pushed him to go further than he had already gone, Sepeesa is looking forward to learning more.



Photo: Leonie Bolleurs

Sinovuyo Mogwasi

Sinovuyo Mogwasi is Project Coordinator of the Shepherd Centre in the Faculty of Theology and Religion. The centre handles all the short learning programmes offered by the faculty. She received the Bachelor of Management Leadership offered by the UFS Business School. Mogwasi indicates that she has always loved business management, especially strategy, marketing, and leadership. She believes that studying helps her improve and enables her to bring new innovative solutions to take the Shepherd Centre to new heights. Even with a full-time job and being a mom, she kept studying. She enrolled for the Postgraduate Diploma in Business Administration and aims to do an MBA in 2025. "I'm excited about the challenge ahead," she says.



Photo: Leonie Bolleurs

Siphilangenkosi Dlamini

Siphilangenkosi Dlamini, Assistant Officer in the Centre for Teaching and Learning, obtained his BA in Governance and Politics Extended degree. He believes that South Africa is a nation with massive potential, and to reach its potential, we must start by improving governance and initiating transformation. "I am now looking forward to applying the skills I've learned in the classroom in the real world through governance in public and private institutions. I also look forward to contributing to Vision 130 in this way," he says. Currently, Dlamini is pursuing his Postgraduate Diploma in Governance and Political Transformation.



Photo: Leonie Bolleurs

Emily Matabane

Since 2001, Emily Matabane – a Sign Language Instructor in the Department of South African Sign Language (SASL) and Deaf Studies – is doing what she loves: teaching hearing students Sign Language, enabling them to communicate with Deaf people. Recently, her other longstanding dream of obtaining a qualification was also realised. On 20 April 2024, she entered the Callie Human Centre, walked across the stage, and received her Bachelor of Education in Senior Phase and Further Education and Training degree. Describing her feelings around this milestone event, Matabane says she cried in disbelief that she made it. "I am so grateful to my God for the achievement because it took a long time to get here," she said.





Photo: Leonie Bollers

Dr Primrose Madende

Dr Primrose Madende is a researcher and lecturer for undergraduate and postgraduate students in the Department of Agricultural Economics. Coming from Zimbabwe where agriculture once thrived, she saw how its decline affected the economy. This ignited her interest in pursuing a qualification in agricultural economics. With her PhD, she aimed to contribute to the development of the agricultural sector and to also develop the youth to participate in the sector. This was also

the focus of her research: to create tailor-made development pathways to enhance youth participation in agricultural activities.

This approach empowers the youth to take charge of their development, fostering sustainable engagement in agriculture. "As a lecturer, I'm excited to share this knowledge and inspire the youth. It's a dream come true to make a practical impact in agricultural development and tackle pressing issues such as unemployment. This journey proves that investing in the youth can truly change the game."



Photo: Leonie Bollers

Thabiso Motsoeneng

Thabiso Jonah Motsoeneng, Lecturer in the Department of Social Sciences and Commerce Education, who also serves as Programme Director, recently completed his PhD in Curriculum Studies.

According to Dr Motsoeneng, he was driven by the desire to explore the field of curriculum studies in greater depth. He enjoys the opportunity to solve complex problems and contribute to the existing body of knowledge. "Being part of the academic team in the Faculty of Education was a great motivation, as I wanted to become an expert in the field of curriculum studies, especially Accounting Education, and to be a known scholar in the field." He says that he is looking forward to inspiring his students towards becoming great teachers who are able to bring hope and transformation to their communities. Future steps for him are obtaining professorship, and coming up with projects that would help impact the communities in one way or the other.



Photo: Supplied

Phiwa Dlamini

Siphiwayinkosi Dlamini's journey to graduation is one of resilience and determination. Though he initially aimed to become a lawyer, his path led him to a Bachelor of Social Science.

He came through the extended programme, steadily increasing his marks through constant and thorough reading and application. After doing relatively well in his core fields of study, he applied and was appointed to a tutor position. "Before tutoring I had little or no interest in lecturing or teaching; in fact, it was the last thing on my mind. However, the tutoring space ignited an interest I did not know existed."

Today Dlamini is doing his honours in Sociology. Future steps for him are to do his master's and then PhD. "I feel I have found a home in higher education and research. I am inspired by learning and personal growth, and I am curious and interested in exploring new ideas and experiences."



Photo: Supplied

Motlatsi Jaybee Makhalemele, winner of the 'best content producer' award in the commercial radio category at the 2023 Telkom Radio Awards.

Jaybee Makhalemele scoops 'best content producer' award at the Telkom Radio Awards

By Anthony Mthembu

The Digital Manager of KvsieX at the UFS and Producer at OFM, Motlatsi 'Jaybee' Makhalemele, won the 'best content producer' award in the commercial radio category at the Telkom Radio Awards, which took place in Johannesburg in December 2023. Makhalemele received the award for the afternoon drive time show which he produces, called *The Joy Ride*.

Makhalemele's victory comes after being nominated twice for the award; he considers the award as acknowledgement of a job well done by his peers. "The award itself means that my industry peers recognise my contribution to the industry as a whole, and that my work is worth the time and effort I put into it," he explained.

Impact of the award

According to Makhalemele, this victory did not alter much of his approach to his work, as the love he has for it would remain regardless of the award. However, he admits that winning the

award has its own perks. "I know I'm good at what I do, I've done it for many years, and I have learned from industry professionals and legends, so I know I can do the work. But the award means that the entire industry, even those who have never heard of me, now also know that I am good at what I do," he said. As such, he views this achievement as a way to gain access to opportunities that even he didn't know existed.

What the future may hold

Although he would not be opposed to receiving another award, Makhalemele has shifted his focus to guiding and nurturing the next generation of media practitioners. Therefore, in his role of overseeing the campus radio station, he is currently involved in the training of student presenters, among other things. He considers this to be part of his contribution to the industry. "I think once that happens, I can safely say I have done enough not only for myself, but for others in the industry as well." In addition, Makhalemele is currently working on a project that aims to revolutionise student media within the UFS and in institutions across the country. As such, the awards his eyes are set on are the ones which recognise the work he is currently spearheading with students at the UFS. 📺

Winter Wonder Garden

By Gerda-Marié van Rooyen

Garden lovers can still enjoy winter outside. Prof Willem Boshoff, Associate Professor of Plant Sciences, says winter is the ideal season to make a pot of tea, spend time in nature, while just sitting and relaxing – or reading a book.

Winter care

With increasing temperature fluctuations and unpredictable seasons, we can have dry winters. “We need to provide our plants with the best chance to tolerate and survive during extreme weather conditions,” warns Prof Boshoff. He considers mulch to be a crucial part of winter care. “It has been described as a garden miracle worker. It acts like a blanket that protects plants during winter.” This avid gardener says apart from assisting with water penetration and conservation, mulch also provides protection for the crowns and shallow roots of plants from irregular temperatures. Different materials, such as chopped leaves or wood chips, can be used as mulch.

Gardeners should keep watering their plants during the winter to keep the soil moist. “Although some plants are dormant above ground during the winter, they still require water as their roots develop. Soil moisture is important to protect both dormant and evergreen plants during cold periods, as moist soils hold more heat than dry soils, with a decreased risk of damage to plants during cold weather.”

Prof Boshoff says winter is not a gardener’s foe, as plants are less likely to be affected by insects and diseases. However, gardeners do not enter a passive time of year. “Our biggest challenge is frost, especially black frost, which can be deadly to sensitive plants. Do not wait for weather predictions – put measures in place in advance to protect your sensitive plants,” he advises.

He adds, “Move plants that are not winter hardened and in pots indoors or to a protected area.” Different types of covering materials, such as plant-protection blankets or sheets, are available.

A winter to-do list

“Winter presents the opportunity to enjoy the flowers of the torch lily and aloe plants, which provide beautiful, coloured flowers and attract sunbirds.” This academic says daisies, gazanias, pansies,

and primulas will bring colour to a winter garden. Those who want to put their hands in the soil may plant flowering daffodil bulbs for the upcoming spring. Others can try their hand at pruning and reshaping plants such as roses and fruit trees in winter. “This also presents the opportunity to make and plant your own cuttings. During late winter, spray fruit trees with a sulphur-containing spray before growth begins, to prevent the overwintering of common pests such as plant pathogens on stems and branches, and apply fertiliser to plants and lawns to support regrowth during early spring.”

Make the most of winter and the advantages it offers. Avoid staying indoors and get a vitamin D boost and fresh air – even if it means putting on a scarf and mittens. 📌



Aloes undoubtedly infuse warmth into your garden through their stunning blossoms. These torch-like blooms display a rich spectrum of hues, including yellow, red, green, orange, and various shades in between, standing out vividly against the backdrop of dark winter skies.

Profs Aliza le Roux and Peter Taylor’s path to academic innovation

By Igno van Niekerk

For the first time, the Department of Zoology and Entomology on the Qwaqwa Campus has two full professors: Profs Peter Taylor and Aliza le Roux. As full professors, they bring a wealth of knowledge and experience to the table. But this is not where it ends – they are also future-fit leaders, having learnt the power of sharing not only knowledge, but also connections, information, and insights to bolster opportunities and expand horizons. In this process, they act as leaders, guides and mentors to each other, fellow staff members, and students.

An environment of openness that fosters growth and learning

In a Teams conversation she was able to manage between meetings, classes, research, and other duties, Prof Le Roux noted that their cooperation – despite different backgrounds – created an environment of openness that fosters growth and learning. Not only do they learn from each other, but also share resources from their respective networks built over the span of their careers.

As an example, she mentions how Prof Taylor, a renowned expert in small mammal research, has tapped into his network of global connections – both academic and non-academic – to create unexpected opportunities and enrich the university’s academic landscape. His openness to learning and a keen eye for synchronicities also turned him into an ideal mentor to emerging scholars, ensuring that his legacy of expertise endures beyond his tenure. The adage, *it is not only what you know, it is also who you*

know can seemingly be altered to: *it is not only what you know and who you know, but also who your colleagues know* that can create opportunities to expand horizons beyond the confines of academia, creating synergies with the private sector as well as international partnerships.

As the faculty on the Qwaqwa Campus matures by building its own cohort of senior researchers, both students and staff members benefit from having sharp minds across the spectrum – from professional officers and newly minted PhD holders to full professors with decades of experience and connections. The modern professor is not the insular Einstein we may have expected in the past: a successful full professor embraces the spirit of enquiry, remains open to learning and changing, and forges connections that transcend geographical boundaries. According to Prof Le Roux, part of the joy that growing networks bring is the power of seeing the possibilities in what seem to be random encounters and then connecting dots that others may not even be aware of. And what a great feeling it is – to then see a student, a colleague, or a fellow academic shining. It is the joy of sharing that makes all this worthwhile.

The whole is much bigger than the sum of the parts

In the Department of Zoology and Entomology, it is becoming clear that systems thinking can be transformative when you bring together varied skills, backgrounds, and strengths in the spirit of connection. Experience has taught these two professors that the whole is much bigger than the sum of the parts. Pondering this, Prof Le Roux agrees, “Yes, it’s emergent properties, and we are grateful that the nature of our system results in positive consequences”. 📌



Photo: Sonia Small

Prof Aliza le Roux.



Photo: Supplied

Prof Peter Taylor.



Empowering change: the journey of the Centre for Global Change

By Igno van Niekerk

Nestled within the community of the Qwaqwa Campus, a beacon of hope shines amid the beautiful sandstone cliffs that define the Eastern Free State landscape: the Centre for Global Change (CGC).

Under the visionary leadership of Prof Patrick Otomo, the CGC aspires to make the most of the power of collaboration, innovation, and collective action in addressing the pressing challenges facing our world today.

The CGC is driven by its mission: *to improve the livelihoods of local communities by enhancing the sustainable use of resources for the benefit of present and future generations.* With this mission guiding its every endeavour, it is committed to building resilience against natural and non-natural risks and vulnerabilities, thereby safeguarding the well-being of communities across the Maluti-a-Phofung Municipality.

Promoting sustainability and resilience

As Prof Otomo explains, the CGC's vision is clear: to address the multifaceted challenges that threaten the livelihoods of local communities through strategic interventions aimed at promoting sustainability and resilience. With a focus on the 'Water-Energy-Social Issues Nexus', the centre aims to foster a deeper understanding of the interconnectedness of these critical domains, laying the groundwork for transformative change.

In 2024, the CGC started writing a new chapter in its journey, with a renewed focus on community engagement, talent development, and impactful research. Central to its objectives are the goal of raising awareness among the Qwaqwa Campus

community about the centre's vision, mission, and potential for collaboration. Through targeted outreach efforts and strategic partnerships, the CGC seeks to harness the collective expertise of scholars, practitioners, and community members alike, driving meaningful change at the grassroots level. Prof Otomo invites anyone interested in contributing and sharing ideas to visit the team in the Intsika Building (Office 1036) on the campus.

The centre is dedicated to nurturing the next generation of leaders in global change research. By attracting and empowering postgraduate students and researchers from diverse backgrounds and disciplines, the CGC aims to cultivate a culture of innovation and excellence that transcends boundaries. It currently supports a cohort of 20 postgraduate students, alongside postdoctoral fellows, and their respective supervisors, in conducting engaged research on water, energy, and local social issues.

Maximise the impact of research endeavours on society

Over the next three years, the centre will focus on driving the 'Water-Energy-Social Issues Nexus', leveraging funding support from the DSI/NRF to maximise the impact of its research endeavours on society. Through collaborative projects and strategic partnerships, the CGC aims to catalyse positive change not only within the Maluti-a-Phofung Municipality, but also across South Africa and beyond.

As the CGC charts its course forward, one thing remains clear: the journey towards a more sustainable, equitable, and resilient future begins here – on the grounds of the UFS Qwaqwa Campus. With passion, dedication, and a shared commitment to making a difference, the Centre for Global Change is ready to empower change and transform lives for generations to come.



Under the leadership of Prof Patrick Otomo, the CGC aspires to address the pressing challenges facing our world today. Pictured are, from the left: Terenki Mofokeng, Administrator; Noxolo Phungula, Project Manager; and Prof Patrick Voua Otomo, Director.

Photo: Supplied

Fostering care and inclusion: the appointment of Charity Morrison as HEDSA Secretariat

By Valentino Ndaba

In the dynamic landscape of higher and further education, the quest for inclusivity remains paramount. It is in this spirit of care and equity that the recent appointment of Charity Morrison as the Higher and Further Education Disability Services Association (HEDSA) Secretariat emerges as a beacon of hope and progress. Morrison's journey is not just a personal milestone, but a significant stride towards creating a more inclusive academic environment.

Morrison's official commencement in this role follows her election as secretary during HEDSA's biennial conference held in Gqeberha in September 2023. Under the overarching theme of 'Equality for all: where are we now?', the conference zoomed in on service provision for Deaf students, emphasising the officialisation of South African Sign Language (SASL). Her tenure spans four years, during which she aims to coordinate SASL workshops to professionalise the field – a critical resolution endorsed by the HEDSA Executive Committee.

Integral to her vision is the notion of individualised care, where each student's unique needs are acknowledged and respected. By fostering inclusion and standardising support services, HEDSA aims to pave the way for a more equitable academic landscape. Morrison's role as secretary positions her at the forefront of decision-making processes, ensuring that the voices of students with disabilities are heard and prioritised. "As the secretary of HEDSA, I will have a seat at the table where decisions are made – I will be part of the decision-making process," she said.

At the heart of Morrison's mission lies the Centre for Universal Access and Disability Support (CUADS), where she is the Communication Access Coordinator. The UFS stands out as a preferred institution for Deaf students due to its comprehensive support system. Here, students are not confined to specific courses due to interpreter limitations; instead, CUADS collaborates with various departments to ensure equal access across disciplines.

The pressing challenges facing disability services in higher education require nuanced approaches, and Morrison is poised to address them head on. Beyond tangible barriers, she recognises the need for a cultural shift, where inclusivity becomes ingrained in institutional ethos. Through initiatives such as the CUADS-developed checklist, institutions can proactively create welcoming environments without placing the onus solely on students to disclose their disabilities.

As she embarks on this journey, Morrison underscores the importance of quality communication access, particularly for Deaf students. By championing initiatives that prioritise dignity and respect, she aims to integrate care into the very fabric of higher and further education. Through collaboration and shared best practices, HEDSA endeavours to set a new standard for disability services – one rooted in compassion and inclusivity.

In essence, Morrison's appointment heralds a new chapter in the pursuit of care and equity in higher education – a chapter where every student, regardless of ability, is afforded the opportunity to thrive.

Photo: Sonia Small

Charity Morrison, Communication Access Coordinator in the Centre for Universal Access and Disability Support.



UFS welcomes two new faces in management

By Dr Cindé Greyling

Discover the inspiring journeys of Dr Dhaya Naidoo, Senior Director in the Directorate for Institutional Research and Academic Planning, and Tebogo Machethe, Director for Innovation and Contracts in the Directorate Research Development, who recently joined the university ranks.

Making data-driven decisions

In 2023, Dr Dhaya Naidoo was appointed as Senior Director in the UFS Directorate for Institutional Research and Academic Planning (DIRAP). "Institutional data not only tells us about the university, but also about its people – we don't just work with numbers, we work with lives and livelihoods," Dr Naidoo explains.

Starting teacher education at the University of KwaZulu-Natal during the 1980s due to financial constraints, Dr Naidoo's early years were marked by activism and a commitment to enlightening young minds amid the turbulence of South Africa's socio-political landscape. Teaching high school English has become not merely a profession, but a platform for advocacy and social transformation.

As his career unfolded, he transitioned from teaching students to educating teachers, recognising the pivotal role of mentorship and pedagogical innovation in shaping the future of education. His quest for knowledge led him to pursue advanced degrees in educational leadership and management at the Nelson Mandela University and Stellenbosch University, solidifying his expertise in navigating the complexities of academia.

The pivotal moment came when he ventured into the realm of institutional effectiveness and quality assurance in higher education. In an era marked by disruptive forces reshaping the educational landscape, his vision extended beyond traditional metrics of success to embrace a holistic approach. "I always believe that we can do better – that is what drives me," he says.

Breaking barriers in the commercial market

Tebogo Machethe, Director for Innovation and Contracts in the Directorate Research Development (DRD) since mid-2023, is a seasoned professional in the realm of intellectual property (IP) and commercialisation, boasting more than 15 years of extensive experience across various sectors.

His journey began with a strong academic background in engineering and law, moving into IP management, technology commercialisation, and fostering entrepreneurship within academic and research environments. Before joining the UFS, his career trajectory included stints at prominent institutions such as the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR) and the University of Johannesburg (UJ).

The commercialisation of intellectual property holds paramount importance within university settings. "Research and innovation are a core business of universities, and one of the ways to measure the impact of research and innovation is by introducing innovations into the market. It can be for the sole purpose of making money, but also to make an impact on society," he explains.

Machethe's role aligns with the university's objective of enhancing academic excellence and societal impact. He oversees projects funded through initiatives such as the Technology Innovation Agency Seed Fund Programme, aimed at advancing research outputs towards commercialisation.

Reflecting on his multifaceted role, Machethe underscores the interdisciplinary nature of his work. While not confined to a single domain, his responsibilities require a breadth of knowledge across various fields.

In addition to continuous development, he also lives by a Martin Luther King Jr. quote: "The ultimate test of a man's conscience may be his willingness to sacrifice something today for future generations whose words of thanks will not be heard." 📌



On International Mother Tongue Day in February this year, students participated in various organised activities, from learning different languages to familiarising themselves with available services and access procedures.

Embracing technology to advance multilingualism education

By Edzani Nephalela

This year's International Mother Tongue Day commemoration embraced a contemporary approach, injecting it with innovation under the theme: 'The Potential Role of Technology to Advance Multilingualism Education'.

The UFS Academy for Multilingualism, in collaboration with the Office for International Affairs (OIA) and The Pan South African Language Board (PanSALB), enthusiastically embraced technology to champion the cause of linguistic diversity and multilingual education during its celebration at the Thakaneng Bridge in February. Through compelling social media campaigns and multimedia resources, their objective was to heighten awareness and cultivate a deeper understanding of the cultural significance of mother tongues.

Aligned with the institution's Language Policy, the UFS is committed to fostering diversity and a sense of belonging among its students and staff. Dr Nomalungelo Ngubane, Director of the Academy for Multilingualism, emphasised that this day is observed annually to raise awareness of linguistic and cultural diversity and multilingualism. "At the UFS, we regard all languages brought to the university by our students and staff as powerful instruments for preserving and enriching our diverse tangible and intangible heritages." She further highlighted the focus of the 2024 celebrations – both at the UFS and globally – on various technological platforms that can be leveraged to promote the dissemination of mother tongues, fostering linguistic diversity and multilingualism within the university community,

while acknowledging and embracing all linguistic and cultural traditions. Dr Ngubane stressed that this approach inspires social cohesion, inclusivity, and solidarity based on an understanding and tolerance of diversity.

However, an event only achieves its full potential with its intended audience. Students participate in various organised activities, from learning different languages to familiarising themselves with available services and access procedures. Koketso Mokwena, a second-year student from the Faculty of Natural and Agricultural Sciences, highlighted how these events broaden students' perspectives and increase awareness. "I was unaware that the Academy of Multilingualism offers free services, so I learned that I could explore the academy and gain insights into the policies shaping our student lives. This empowers me to actively participate and contribute where necessary, as I will be better informed. Events such as this enable me to interact with individuals from diverse backgrounds and understand them better, given my multilingual abilities."

Going beyond the surface of the day's celebrations, participants pledged their support to the Academy of Multilingualism. Matome Mokoena, Officer from the OIA, said the gala was the highlight of the celebration, serving as a platform to showcase the institution's dedication to multilingualism, foster connections, and garner support for the cause. "This initiative surpasses mere celebration; it establishes a groundbreaking precedent for future events, underscoring a commitment to empowering linguistic diversity through innovative approaches. It paves the way for a future where all languages can thrive." 📌



Dr Dhaya Naidoo.



Tebogo Machethe.

Photo: Anja Aucamp

Photo: Supplied



Art gallery celebrates 40 years

By Leonie Bolleurs

In 2023, the Johannes Stegmann Art Gallery, the oldest recognised art gallery in the Free State, celebrated its 40th birthday.

According to Angela de Jesus, Art Curator at the UFS – to celebrate this big milestone, the gallery hosted the exhibition FORTY, “a curated exhibition of 40 artworks by 40 artists in the UFS art collection”.

Dynamic space to explore the arts

De Jesus believes that the gallery promotes the importance of visual arts for research, teaching, and critical dialogue. Its vision is centred on the collection, presentation, promotion, and production of art that supports the UFS' commitment to academic excellence, innovation, and societal impact. She states that the gallery has hosted numerous national and international art exhibitions, multidisciplinary projects, educational and engaged scholarship programmes, as well as student presentations over the past four decades.

She comments, “Since its inception, the gallery has been a dynamic space for the exploration of the arts by the university community and art practitioners.” De Jesus believes that increased access to and participation in culture and creativity can be linked to an increase in human development and prosperity. She highlights that the arts play a significant role in building a society and developing holistic human beings. “The art gallery is invested in the creative endeavour,” she says.

“It has partnered with the creative industries to bring quality exhibitions and art programmes to the UFS for the growth and enjoyment of staff and students. This is with the intent of promoting the careers of local arts practitioners and building impactful engagements with society.”

Fulfilling the ideal for a dedicated space

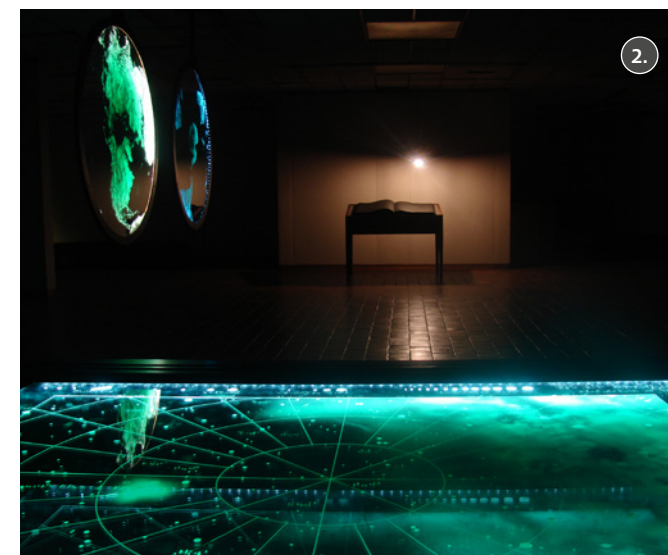
In 1983, the art gallery was established, fulfilling a longstanding ideal of the university and the Art Committee to have a dedicated space at the UFS for art exhibitions. Prior to the establishment of the gallery, many exhibitions were hosted at the university in the 1970s in various venues – particularly in the Equitas Building. De Jesus says the Art Committee, led by the arts departments, was very active at the time.

Recalling more history, De Jesus says that the gallery was not initially part of the Sasol Library's design. “It was added later when Prof Wynand Mouton, then Rector, asked about an art gallery, resulting in a space being allocated for it.” Regarding the name of the gallery, she remarks that it was named after Dr Johannes Stegmann in 1987 in recognition of his contribution as Chairman of Sasol and as Chancellor.

In 2004, the art gallery obtained an additional exhibition space in the Centenary Complex, with the main function of housing the UFS Art Collection – which currently consists of more than a thousand artworks donated to or acquired by the UFS over the past 80 years.



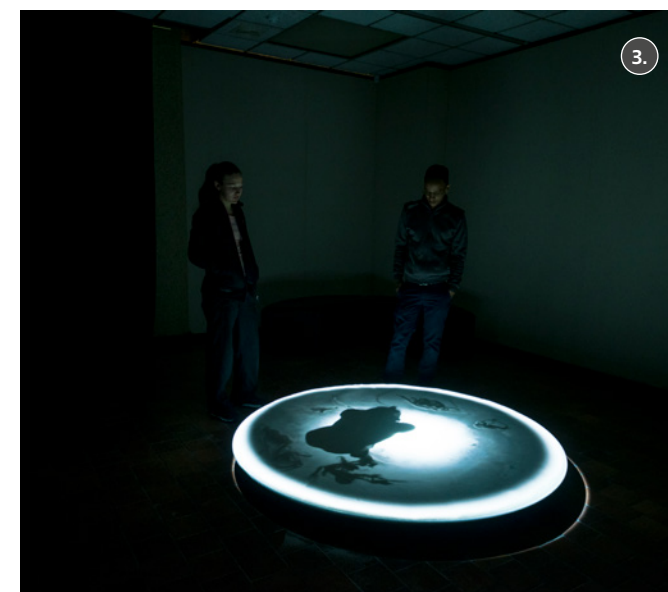
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1. FORTY: 40 artists, 40 artworks from the UFS Art Collection exhibition, Johannes Stegmann Art Gallery. 18 October-10 November 2023, curated by Angela de Jesus.
2. Berco Wilsenach, *The Blind Astronomer*, Johannes Stegmann Art Gallery. 29 May-21 June 2013.

In The Blind Astronomer, the visible night sky and cartographically correct star maps are presented as a tactile experience written only in Braille.
3. Keith Armstrong, *Shifting Dusts*, video, wood, sand, stereo sound. Choreography: Charlotte Vincent, sound: Guy Webster, dancer: TC Howard, acknowledgements: Vincent Dance Theatre. Courtesy of the artist and Queensland University of Technology. From the exhibition *The Mesh*, Johannes Stegmann Art Gallery. 17 July-11 August 2017.


The Mesh is an interactive and experiential exhibition that investigates how the 'mesh' of environmental, social, and cultural ecologies form our worlds.
4. Annual Student Exhibition of the first- to third-years in the Department of Fine Arts, Johannes Stegmann Art Gallery. 15 April-8 May 2015, curated by third-year students.
5. Igshaan Adams, *When Dust Settles*, Johannes Stegmann Art Gallery. 6 March-5 April 2018. Courtesy of the Standard Bank Young Artist Award and Blank Projects.

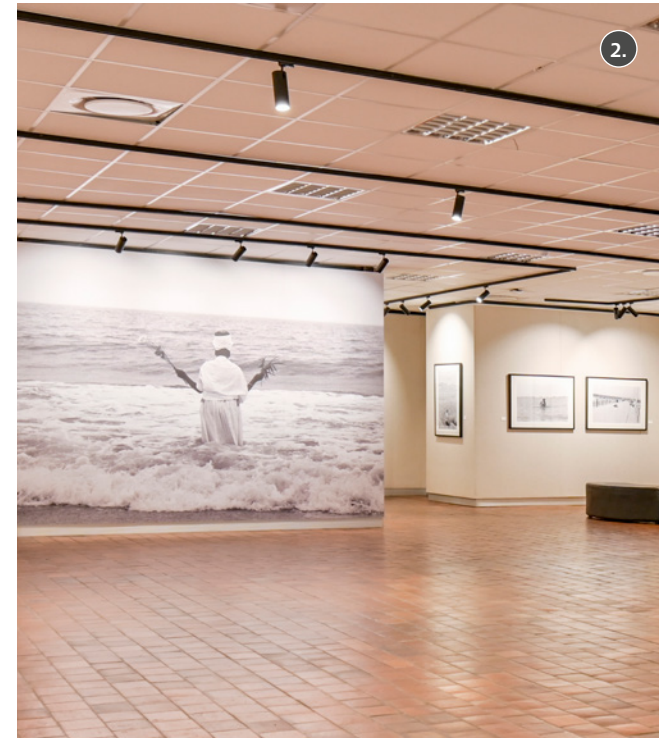
When Dust Settles is a large immersive installation of sculpture, textiles, and used vinyl panels ('tapyt'). The exhibition explores iconographies and objects of material culture central to the shaping of the artist's identity as a gay Muslim man and his upbringing in the 80s.



Seeing the world a bit differently

De Jesus says it is hard to explain how the Johannes Stegmann Art Gallery has impacted the lives and careers of students, art practitioners, and everyday people. However, she still remembers walking into the Stegmann Gallery as a learner, and it became one of the reasons why she chose a career in the arts.

"I am of the opinion that through art, we have the opportunity to see the world a little differently, to challenge easy assumptions about humanity, and to embrace more possibilities. The artworks find meaning through every staff member, student, supporter, and art lover who walks through the door," she remarks. 



1. Mohau Modisakeng, *To move mountains* (2015–2016), installation stills from four-channel HD video, *Lefa la Ntate* exhibition, Johannes Stegmann Art Gallery. 22 February–31 March 2017. Courtesy of Standard Bank Young Artist Award and WHATIFTHEWORLD Gallery.

Lefa la Ntate is an exhibition that represents a poignant moment of grieving, catharsis, and critical response to the historical legacy of exploitation and current lived experience of many black South Africans

2. Andrew Tshabangu, *Footprints*, Johannes Stegmann Art Gallery. 1 July–16 August 2019, curated by Theminkosi Goniwe.

Footprints is a survey exhibition covering twenty-five years of Andrew Tshabangu's distinctive black-and-white photography.

3. Diane Victor, *littleHistory – a retroflection*, Johannes Stegmann Art Gallery. 9 July–17 August 2018.

littleHistory – a retroflection is an exhibition that touches on the many themes covered throughout the prolific career of Diane Victor. Victor sheds light on the nature of man and contemporary South Africa, delving deep into the folds of politics, poverty, domestic and sexual violence.



"In the past 40 years, the gallery has seen more than 300 exhibitions, thousands of projects, walkabouts, talks, engagements, countless visitors, and discussions." – Angela de Jesus

Prof Oberholster: environmentalist, leader, and orchid enthusiast

By Dr Nitha Ramnath

Prof Paul Oberholster is a man of many hats. By day, he is the Dean of the Faculty of Natural and Agricultural Sciences at the UFS, a leading researcher in ecological and environmental engineering with a particular focus on water resource management, and a distinguished member of the Academy of Science of South Africa.

But Prof Oberholster is not all work and no play. He believes that a well-managed life includes time for passion projects. His dedication to lifelong learning is evident in his love of reading, particularly South African history from the early 1900s. When he needs a break from academia, he hits the road for scenic adventures, exploring the natural beauty of the Karoo and its charming historical towns.

Prof Oberholster's philosophy is clear: time management is key to a fulfilling life. He makes sure to carve out space for the things he enjoys, such as spending time with loved ones. Family and friends, he says, are the cornerstones of success.

And then there is his unique passion: orchids. Prof Oberholster is a dedicated orchid collector, with a particular interest in rare species. His collection reflects his love for the natural world and his appreciation of delicate beauty. This ability to balance his demanding career with his personal pursuits is a testament to his organisational skills and his commitment to a well-rounded life.


So, the next time you see Prof Oberholster leading the Faculty of Natural and Agricultural Sciences, and hear about his groundbreaking research, remember that behind the scientific achievements lies a passionate individual who values both knowledge and the beauty of the world around him. He is a scientist, a reader, a road trip enthusiast, and a lover of all things orchid! 

Photo: Supplied

Prof Paul Oberholster's true passion lies in the connection between research and its impact on people's lives.



Mind. Set. Match.

By Michelle Nöthling

“You know when you break a bone. It’s just a different pain. Deep down, I knew, this isn’t good.” We watch as Daniel Ricciardo – Formula 1 racing driver – peels the glove from his trembling hand. “I don’t know if there’s anything left for me in tennis,” says Serena Williams as she touches her swollen belly, “but I’m not done yet.” Tour de France cyclist Thibaut Pinot sits on the tarmac, his head in his hands. “When things don’t go as planned, it is difficult to live with it.”

Sports documentaries have exploded in popularity, enticing even non-sports fans into the drama of inter-team rivalries and iconic personalities. But something more than the drama attracts us. It is something much more primal that we recognise: perseverance through unimaginable pressure, adversity, and heartbreak.

“What separates great athletes from good athletes,” says sport psychologist Sach Galhenage. The critical value of sport psychology lies at the intersection of body and mind. Having played club cricket internationally and currently also part of the Kovsie cricket team, it comes as no surprise that Galhenage is researching the intricacies of mental fortitude for his master’s degree in psychology at the UFS. Galhenage is specifically interested in two components of mental fortitude critical to athletes: emotional regulation and mindfulness.

“Emotional regulation,” Galhenage says, “is having the ability to feel an emotion, but not allowing it to overcome you.” This is critical in high-pressure sporting moments when opponents might try to “get inside your head,” he explains. Emotional regulation allows you to identify the emotion, understand where it is coming from, and yet remain focused on the task at hand. Galhenage helps train athletes to recognise heightened emotions during a game as a normal process taking place, and to refocus on drawing on resources such as self-confidence, tenacity, and preparation.

Mindfulness – being in the moment – has become a massive third-wave behavioural psychology concept, Galhenage remarks. Studies are showing that mindfulness closely links with emotional awareness on the one hand, and mental fortitude on the other. “For athletes,” Galhenage explains, “this translates to keeping your attention laser-focused amid the chaos and distractions of competition.”

So, what is Galhenage’s advice for cultivating emotional regulation and mindfulness? Here are some of his tips:

- Keep a journal or record voice notes to reflect on your emotional triggers and responses.
- Engage in reflective discussions with team members or fellow athletes.

Sach Galhenage helps train athletes to recognise heightened emotions during a game as a normal process taking place, and to refocus on drawing on resources such as self-confidence, tenacity, and preparation.

- Practise simple breathing exercises – it assists in regulating both emotions and mindfulness.
- Brush your teeth with your non-dominant hand or focus on the texture of your food to build present-moment awareness.

“Perhaps most importantly,” Galhenage says, “reframe your relationship with failure and disappointment. Rather than being consumed by setbacks, study them with curiosity, treat yourself with compassion, and get excited for the next opportunity.”

