

# KE EO TABA!

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

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



**Qwaqwa Campus Newsletter**

**May 2025**







## FROM THE EDITOR

As we navigate the vibrant tapestry of 2025, *KE EO TABA!* magazine brings you a chronicle of pivotal moments shaping the Qwaqwa Campus. This year has already ushered in significant leadership transitions, marking a new chapter in the institution's storied history.

We extend a warm welcome to Prof Hester C. Kloppe, who took up the mantle of the 15th Vice-Chancellor and Principal of the UFS on 1 February 2025. Her appointment heralds a period of anticipated growth and innovation. Concurrently, we congratulate Prof Cias Tsotetsi on his appointment as the Vice-Principal: Academic and Research, effective 1 January 2025 – a role critical to the university's academic and research excellence.

The academic year reached a crescendo with the two-day graduation ceremonies held on 4 and 5 April. The sheer joy and accomplishment of the 1 176 graduates as they proudly received their qualifications was testament to their dedication and the university's commitment to nurturing future leaders.

Another notable highlight was the South African Mountain Conference (SAMC 2025) – a resounding success that highlighted the UFS' growing international stature. This year's conference, themed *Overcoming Boundaries and Barriers*, attracted 304 participants from 22 countries, including 10 African nations. The breadth and depth of intellectual exchange were unparalleled, featuring 249 presentations over four days, encompassing eight parallel sessions, nine special sessions (including a pioneering poster session), and a Royal Indaba. This remarkable gathering not only facilitated scholarly discourse but also forged vital international connections.

Furthermore, 17 March marked the release of the impactful documentary film, *Qwaqwa: Place of Barriers and Bridges*. The first portion of 2025 has been a period of strong progress for the university.

As the year rapidly progresses, we encourage our readers to embrace moments of joy and relaxation amid their demanding schedules. May 2025 be a year of abundant success and fulfilment for the entire UFS community. **K**

Thank you,

**PRECIOUS SHAMASE**  
EDITOR

## Molaetsa wa MOHLOPHISI

Ha re hetla, re tadima mabalankwe a ditaba makaseneng wa rona wa selemo sa 2025, e leng *KE EO TABA!* Re fumana hore o totobatsa lethathama la diketsahalo tsa bohlokwa tse ahileng khemphase ena ya Qwaqwa.

Re amohela Prof Hester C Kloppe ka diatla tse mofuthu, ya nkile sekola ka ho ba Motlatsa – Mokanseliri (Motlatsi wa Tjhansela) e bile e le Mosuwehlooho wa bo-15 wa Yunivesithi ya Freistata ho tloha ka la 1 Hlakubele 2025. Kgetho ya hae ya ho ba mosuwehlooho ke tshenolo ya makgabane a tlang le tshibollo ya tse ntle. Re boela re lebohela Prof Cias Tsotetsi ha e le mona a kgethilwe ho ba Motlatsi wa Mosuwehlooho: Ditabeg tsa Thuto le Diphuputso, ho tloha ka la 1 Pherekong 2025 – e leng mosebetsi o hlokolosi haholo ditabeng tsa thuto le dipuhuputso tse tswileng matsoho.

Selemo sa rona se fihlile sehlohlolong ka ho tshwara mokete wa dikapeso ka letsatsi la laboraro (3) le la labone (4) kgwedding ya Mmesa. Thabo le katleho ya baithuti ba 1 176, ba fumaneng mangolo a bona a thuto e bile bopaki bo felletseng ba boitelo ba baithuti bana ba rona ekasita le maikemisetso a Yunivesithi ho otla baetapele ba ka moso.

Taba e nngwe e hlahelletseng ka mahetla ke Seboka sa Maloti a Afrika Borwa ('South African Mountain Conference') sa 2025 – e leng katleho e kgolo e bontshitseng ntlafalo le kgolo ya Yunivesithi ya Frestata boemong ba matjhanba. Seboka sa selemong sena, seo mookotaba wa sona e leng 'Overcoming Boundaries and Barriers', se hohetse ditho tse ka bang 304 ho tswa dinaheng tse 22, ho kenyeletse le dinaha tse 10 tsa Afrika. Bophara le botebo ba phapanyetsano ya tsebo e bile ntho eo re sitwang ho e lekanya, moo ho bileng le dipehelo tse 249 ka matsatsi a mane feela, m oho bile le mekgahlelo e robedi ya dipehelo tsa tsebo, dipehelo tse robong tse ikgethileng (ho kenyeletse le nehelano ya diphousetara), ha mmoho le kopano ya Royal Indaba. Kopano ena e tsotehang ha e ya tlisa feela ditaba tsa thuto empa e tlisitse le tsebano pakeng tsa ditho tsa matjhaba.

Ho feta mona, ka la 17 Hlakubele, ke letsatsi leo ka lona ho thakgotsweng filimi e bitswang 'Qwaqwa: Place of Barriers and Bridges'. Karolo ya pele ya selemo sa 2025, e bile nako ya kgatelopele e matla molemong wa yunivesithi.

Jwalo ka ha selemo se tsamaya ka potlako e kgolo tjena, re kgothaletsa babadi ba rona ho nyakalla le ho kgatholoha le ha mosebetsi o le matla. Ha selemo sa 2025 e be selemo sa kgora, katleho ekasita le thabo maikutlong a lona. **K**

Ke a leboha,

**PRECIOUS SHAMASE**  
MOHLOPHISI

## AMAZWI OMHLELI

Njengoba siqhubeka nochungechunge lwezinhlelo zonyaka wezi-2025, ingosi ye-*KE EO TABA!* ikulethela izingqikithi ezihlabahlosile nokuyizo eziyisithombe seKhempasi yase-Qwaqwa. Lo nyaka usuvele uthe uqala wasingenisa ngezinguquko ezisimamayo kwezobuholi, nokuvule ikhasi elisha emlandweni wesikhungo.

Siqale ngokwamukela ngezandla ezimhlophe uSlz Hester C. Kloppe othathe igxathu elikhulu lokuba nguSekela-Shansela aphinde abe ngu-Thishanhloko weNyuvesi yase-Free State kusuka lu-1 ku-Nhlolanja 2025. Ukuthatha kwakhe lesi sikhundla bekwandulela isikhathi esibalulekile soguquko kanye nokudlondlobala kwenyuvesi. Asiphinde sihalalisele ngokufanayo ukuqokwa kuka-Slz Cias Tsotetsi njengo-Sekela-Thishanhloko: Kwizinhlelo zemfundo noCwaningo eQwaqwa, noqale lu-1 ku-kuMasingana 2025 – nokuyiqhaza elibaluleke kakhulu kwimpumelelo yesikhungo ezinhlelweni zemfundo noCwaningo.

Lo nyaka usuvele uqale ngeqophelo ngokusingatha imicimbi emibili yokuthweswa kweziqu obe ngezinsuku ezimbili okungu-4 no-5 ku-Mbasa. Injabulo nokuzigqaja okube khona ngesikhathi abafundi abayi-1 176 bethola iziqu zabo ibe ubufakazi bokuthi bazinikelile kwaphinde kwaba ubufakazi ekutheni iQwaqwa ikhiqiza abaholi bakusasa.

Olunye udaba oluthathe amehlo kube yilolo lwenkomfa i-South African Mountain Conference (SAMC 2025) – nebe impumelelo ekubekeni isithombe esidlondlobalayo se-UFS ezingeni lomhlaba elicokeme. Inkomfa yakulo nyaka ibimiselwe kwindikimba ebithi 'Overcoming Boundaries and Barriers' ihehe ababambiqhaza abangama-304 emazweni angama-22, ali-10 kuwo ngawasebalazweni i-Afrika. Ubunzulu bokucobelelana ngolwazi bale nkomfa bebungefaniswe nalutho, kube nezethulo ezingama-249 ezinsukwini ezi-4, izethulo zethulwe ezindaweni eziyi-8 ezehlukahlukene kuyo inkomfa, kanye neziyi-9 ebezisingethe izethulo zenkomfa ezibalulekile (nokubuyi kwabhangqa umbukiso wokuyidlondlobalisa), kanye nohlelo lwe-Royal Indaba. Lokhu kuhlalanga kwezingcithab'chopho akuhlakulanga nje kuphela imfundo ephakeme kodwa kunikezele ngethuba lokuxhumana ezingeni lomhlaba.

Okunye okuhlalukile, kube ukuthi umhla zili-17 ku-Mbasa ube usuku olungekhohlakale njengoba kushicilelwe ifilimu eyisixoxamlando onomthelela omuhle eyaziwa ngokuthi i-Qwaqwa: Place of Barriers and Bridges. Isigaba sokuqala wonyaka wezi-2025 sibe isikhathi sokudlondlobala kwempumelelo enkulu kwinyuvesi.

Njengoba unyaka uqhubeka sigququzela abafundi bale ngosi ukuthi bathokozele izikhathi ezimnandi nokuthi banganyukelwa amaphaphu njengoba benezinhlelo zomsebenzi ezingelula. Sifisa sengathi unyaka wezi-2025 ungaba unyaka ochichima impumelelo nenjabulo kuwo wonke umphakathi we-UFS. **K**

Ngiyabonga,

**PRECIOUS SHAMASE**  
KUBEKA UMHLELI



## NOTICE BOARD

## UPCOMING EVENTS

13 MAY  
**EMOTIONAL  
INTELLIGENCE**



30 MAY  
**SECOND  
QUARTER ENDS**



23 JUNE-11 JULY  
**UFS HOLIDAY  
FOR STUDENTS**

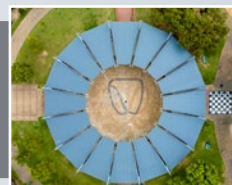


8 AUGUST  
**WOMEN'S  
BREAKFAST**



17 OCTOBER  
**BE BETTER, BE SAFE CAMPAIGN**

17 MAY  
**OPEN DAY  
QWAQWA CAMPUS**



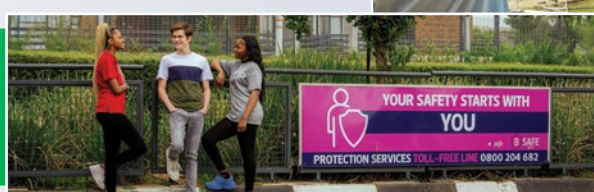
2 JUNE-21 JUNE  
**MAIN MID-YEAR  
EXAMINATION**



21 JULY  
**THIRD QUARTER  
COMMENCES**



26 SEPTEMBER  
**SOCCER AND  
TOURNAMENT**



5



6



7



10



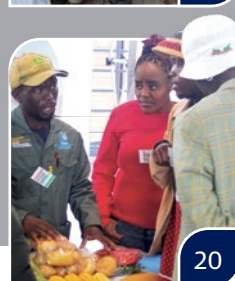
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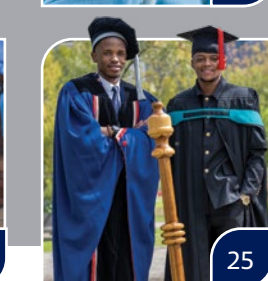
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20



23



25

## Ke Eo Tabai editorial team

All articles in this newsletter were written by Precious Shamase, from the University of the Free State Qwaqwa Campus, unless otherwise stated.

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## Ke Eo Tabai online

<https://www.ufs.ac.za/media/general/publications>

# Qwaqwa's Horizon Brightens: Prof Hester Klopper's Vision for the UFS and its Community

A wave of renewed energy and collaborative spirit swept across the UFS Qwaqwa Campus as it warmly welcomed Prof Hester C. Klopper, the university's 15th Vice-Chancellor and Principal and history-maker as the first woman to hold this prestigious position. Prof Klopper's arrival, after she official took office on 1 February 2025, marked not only a change in leadership, but a powerful reaffirmation of the Qwaqwa Campus' vital role in the university's ambitious Vision 130 journey.

The welcoming ceremony – attended by staff, local government representatives, royal houses, and school representatives – was a testament to the strong ties between the UFS Qwaqwa Campus and its community. In her address, Prof Klopper emphasised the importance of collaboration and mutual growth, stating, "The future of universities must be rooted in the community. This campus plays a critical role in advancing the UFS agenda through innovation, creation, and collaboration. No one can progress unless everyone progresses together."

Prof Klopper's vision for the UFS, and particularly for the Qwaqwa Campus, is deeply intertwined with the university's Vision 130, a road map for achieving academic excellence and societal impact. She outlined five key priorities during her tenure:

- **Entrepreneurship and Innovation:** Fostering a dynamic ecosystem that encourages innovation and strengthens partnerships with the community.
- **Sustainability:** Ensuring the university's long-term financial stability through diversified income streams and strategic programme revisions.
- **Internationalisation:** Expanding global research collaborations to enhance the UFS' international standing.
- **First-Choice Employer:** Attracting and retaining top-tier academic and administrative talent.
- **Multi-Campus Integration:** Strengthening the cohesion and unique strengths of the UFS' multi-campus model. >>





The vice-chancellor and principal's address highlighted the unique atmosphere of the Qwaqwa Campus, noting the 'extreme friendliness, helpfulness, and sense of collegiality' and the 'quiet determination and commitment' of its staff and students. She also acknowledged the campus' strong focus on socio-economic development and its crucial role in serving the surrounding communities.


"This campus, with its unique location and strong focus on socio-economic development, fulfils an important part of our vision as the University of the Free State, reflecting our aspiration to have maximum societal impact in the communities that surround us," the vice-chancellor and principal stated.

During her stakeholder engagement, Prof Klopper stressed the importance of 'engaged scholarship' and community-based learning, recognising the value of indigenous knowledge and the role of technology in fostering collaborative learning. She also highlighted the research excellence of the Qwaqwa Campus, particularly the Afromontane Research Unit, which contributes significantly to understanding the

challenges faced by mountain communities and ecosystems.

Prof Prince Ngobeni, Campus Principal: Qwaqwa Campus, echoed Prof Klopper's sentiments, emphasising the campus' integral role in the Maluti-a-Phofung community. He highlighted the campus' potential to improve lives.

Prof Klopper concluded her address with a powerful message of collaboration: "It is the conviction that nobody can get there unless everybody gets there." This sentiment resonated deeply with the audience, reinforcing the university's commitment to its stakeholders and its dedication to mutual growth.

As the incoming and newly appointed vice-chancellor and principal's vision for her tenure takes root, the Qwaqwa Campus stands poised to play a vital role in realising the university's Vision 130, driving innovation, fostering community development, and ensuring that the UFS remains a beacon of higher learning in South Africa and beyond. The Qwaqwa Campus staff and community welcome Prof Klopper and are excited about this dawn of a new era. 



## Envisioning Qwaqwa's Future: Prof Tsotetsi Outlines Ambitious Five-Year Plan

**Q**waqwa Campus – In a vision that promises to reshape the academic and research landscape of the Qwaqwa Campus, newly appointed Campus Vice-Principal: Academic and Research, Prof Cias Tsotetsi, has unveiled his strategic five-year plan. Stepping into his role on 1 January 2025, Prof Tsotetsi aims to elevate the campus to new heights, aligning his initiatives with the broader directives of the University of the Free State Vice-Chancellor and Principal.

In an exclusive overview shared with *Ke Eo Taba*, the campus staff magazine, Prof Tsotetsi outlined key focus areas designed to foster growth and innovation.

### Internationalisation at the Forefront

A central pillar of his vision is the aggressive pursuit of internationalisation. Prof Tsotetsi plans to actively support the development of research grant proposals with international scholars and promote the co-supervision of postgraduate students. He emphasised the crucial role of the International Office, led by Bulelwa Moikwatlhai, in realising these ambitions.

"We will leverage existing partnerships and actively seek new collaborations with high-ranking international institutions," Prof Tsotetsi stated. He highlighted the recent engagement with Philipp Wierzchowski from the University of Bremen as a prime example of successful international collaboration. Furthermore, he aims to facilitate visiting scholar programmes and student exchange initiatives, including virtual exchanges, to broaden the campus' global reach.

### Diversifying Income Streams and Enhancing Student Success

The newly appointed vice-principal also emphasised the importance of diversifying income streams and improving student outcomes. He intends to actively participate in student recruitment and monitor student

completion rates. A significant focus will be placed on enhancing the throughput rate of postgraduate students and supporting staff members engaged in research and further studies.

To achieve this, he plans to encourage faculties and departments to organise writing retreats and dyad sessions. Strategic conference attendance, aimed at forming partnerships, will also be prioritised. Additionally, he will explore funding opportunities from various sources, including public-private partnerships, philanthropies, short learning programmes, the Spencer Foundation, and the EU's Erasmus+ programme.

### Commitment to Equity and Quality

The transformation agenda remains a priority for Prof Tsotetsi, who has pledged to improve the campus' equity profile, addressing both colour and gender parity. He also committed to working with faculties to enhance the campus' programme quality management (PQM), acknowledging the existing improvements while striving for continuous advancement in the evolving work environment.

### Advancing Teaching and Learning:

To elevate pedagogical approaches, Prof Tsotetsi will encourage staff participation in initiatives aimed at improving teaching practices and fostering peer critique. He highlighted the crucial role of the Centre for Teaching and Learning, led by Prof Strydom and Dr Bernard, in this endeavour.

"We will support participation in SoTL fellowships, Scholarship of Learning and Teaching conferences, and teaching awards," he said. "This will create a space for innovation in teaching and assessment." He also pledged to support colleagues in pursuing national fellowships, such as the TAU fellowship.

He expressed his enthusiasm for collaborating with the UFS community, faculties, centres, and other units to elevate the reputation of the Qwaqwa Campus and drive it to greater achievements. His vision paints a promising picture of a vibrant, internationally connected, and academically robust future for the campus. 





# Qwaqwa: Mountains, Resilience, and Hope Unveiled in New Documentary

The University of the Free State (UFS) community is abuzz with the release of *Qwaqwa: Place of Barriers and Bridges*, a compelling documentary that delves into the intricate relationship between the people of Qwaqwa and the majestic Maloti-Drakensberg. Produced by Prof Vasu Reddy and Prof Jared McDonald, the film offers a nuanced portrayal of a region grappling with challenges while simultaneously showcasing its inherent resilience and potential.

Nestled at the confluence of the Free State, KwaZulu-Natal, and the Kingdom of Lesotho, Qwaqwa is a region where towering mountain peaks dictate the rhythm of life. *Qwaqwa: Place of Barriers and Bridges* goes beyond scenic visuals, exploring the profound impact of these mountains on the culture, identity, and daily existence of its residents. The documentary features a diverse cast, including residents, members of royal houses, and seasoned researchers, providing a comprehensive 'insider's view' of the region.

"We wanted to present a range of voices and experiences," explained Prof McDonald. "Many of the characters are from Qwaqwa, offering invaluable perspectives. But we also balanced personal reflections with scholarly insights, providing a scientifically informed view of Qwaqwa's past and future."

The film does not shy away from the challenges facing the region, including the impacts of climate change and the complexities of local governance. However, it equally emphasises the opportunities that the mountains present for development and progress. Prof Reddy highlighted the symbolism of the mountains themselves: "Mountains are far more than geospatial features. They are a visual and cinematic force, echo chambers of deeper meaning, revealing hidden layers of history, heritage, and identities."


The production process, spanning six months from concept to final cut, was a testament

to the dedication of the filmmakers and their team. "It was inspirational to work with a range of professionals," said Prof Reddy, "from the technical crew to the film's subjects, including the mountain itself. It was a great feeling of shared purpose."

Prof McDonald, who resided in the Eastern Free State and worked on the UFS Qwaqwa Campus for a decade, described the project as 'a labour of love'. He hopes that his colleagues on the campus will "feel a sense of pride in their work and appreciate the deep and complex history of Qwaqwa".

*Qwaqwa: Place of Barriers and Bridges* is more than just a documentary; it is a testament to the resilience of a community and the enduring connection between people and their environment. The film challenges viewers to consider the potential for change amid adversity, highlighting the mountains as a 'catalyst for progress and development'.

The film was released to coincide with the Southern African Mountain Conference (SAMC2025), allowing an international audience to engage with the unique story of Qwaqwa. The documentary is now available for viewing and serves as a powerful reminder of the importance of understanding and addressing the complexities of regional development.

This documentary is a must-watch for anyone seeking to understand the heart of Qwaqwa and the enduring spirit of its people. 



## Record-Breaking Triumph: Three Students Conquer Master's in One Year

In an extraordinary feat of academic dedication and streamlined support, three students from the University of the Free State Qwaqwa Campus Faculty of Education have shattered expectations by completing their master's degrees in Education in a single year – a record-breaking achievement. Their remarkable journey, guided by the unwavering mentorship of Dr Motsekiso Letuma, stands as evidence to the power of focus, perseverance, and a robust academic support system.

### Three students, one year, extraordinary results

Mkhulu David Mokoena, Mmanako Mokano, and Lerato Thelma Koalane – driven by a passion to impact the educational landscape – embarked on this accelerated academic path. For them, it was not just about obtaining a degree; it was about making a tangible difference.

"What motivated me to pursue a master's in Education stems from personal passion, career aspirations, and a desire to make a positive impact on the field of education," Koalane explained.

Mokano echoed this sentiment, stating, "I decided to pursue a master's degree to enhance my skills and knowledge, thereby excelling in my chosen field."

Their journey, however, was far from easy. Balancing demanding work schedules with rigorous academic requirements demands immense dedication and sacrifice. "It wasn't easy being a new department head and studying," Mokoena admitted, highlighting the need for exceptional time management and unwavering focus.

Mokano emphasised the challenge of balancing coursework, research, and personal life. "I had to strategise to ensure I allocated sufficient time to accomplish everything on my plate," she said.

Despite the hurdles, their determination, coupled with the unwavering support of Dr Letuma, propelled them forward. "The supervisor did play a huge role in accelerating the academic journey through consistent regular feedback," Koalane acknowledged.

Dr Letuma's approach was pivotal in their success. "From the beginning, I told the students that a master's degree was designed to be completed in one year," he explained. "This psychological approach set the tone and instilled a strong sense of urgency and purpose in them."

### Driving knowledge, inspiring peers: The power of efficient higher education

He highlighted the students' remarkable dedication and preparedness. "These students never presented me with excuses or obstacles worth mentioning. >>



Unlike others, they were always present and always prepared."

The university's robust support system, including subject interest groups (SIGs), the Committee for Title Registration (CTR), and the Ethics Committee, also played a crucial role. "These three key structures ... play a vital role in facilitating students' research journeys," Dr Letuma noted.

The students' research projects, focusing on leadership practices, alternative disciplinary measures, and managing indiscipline in special schools, yielded valuable insights for the education sector. Their findings, which are already contributing to academic discourse through publications and journal submissions, demonstrate their commitment to advancing knowledge in their field.

"This study has contributed significantly to the existing body of knowledge on addressing bullying in secondary schools," Koalane stated.

The students' success serves as an inspiration to the academic community, proving that with dedication, focus, and a supportive environment, ambitious goals can be achieved within condensed timeframes.

"It is possible to complete your qualification while working, as long as you are dedicated and focused," Mokoena advised.

Dr Letuma believes their achievement reflects the university's commitment to fostering a conducive research environment. "Their success is a direct reflection of the well-structured and functional support system that was in place."

Looking ahead, the students aim to pursue further academic endeavours, with plans for PhD studies and continued research. Their dedication to giving back to the academic community is evident in their willingness to mentor future students.

"I am talking about students who have completed a master's degree (full dissertation). One has already published a paper from their study in a Q2-ranked journal, the other's paper is currently under review in the same tier, and the third student has two papers under review in accredited journals," Dr Letuma proudly stated.

Their extraordinary achievement not only underscores their personal potential but also highlights the transformative power of efficient higher education and dedicated mentorship. ■

# Beyond the Walls: A Glimpse into the Heart of Residence Life

Interview with **Itumeleng Lebusho**,  
Senior Officer and Residence Head

Residence life at any university is more than just providing accommodation; it is about fostering a community, nurturing growth, and shaping future leaders. To understand the dedication and passion behind this crucial aspect of the student experience, we sat down with a residence head to delve into the rewarding yet challenging world of residence management.

## Q: What is the most rewarding aspect of being a residence head?

"Seeing students grow, both personally and academically, is incredibly fulfilling. Creating a safe, supportive, and engaging environment where they can truly thrive is what makes this role so rewarding. And of course, seeing them fully enjoy the activities we plan is the cherry on top!"

## Q: What are the biggest challenges you face?

"Managing student conflicts and disciplinary matters while maintaining a positive culture is a constant challenge. Clear communication, mediation, and fostering mutual respect are key. Consistent guidance and fair policy enforcement help us maintain a balanced environment."

## Q: How has residence life changed since you started?

"There has been a significant shift towards student wellness, mental health support, and academic integration. Technology has also transformed how we connect with students. And I have seen a noticeable improvement in discipline and order within the residences." >>

## Q: What is a typical day like?

"There is never a dull moment! It is a mix of engaging with students, addressing concerns, overseeing operations, attending meetings, and working with student leaders. It is not a nine-to-five job; it is a lifestyle. We are on duty 24/7."

## Q: What do you wish more staff understood about residence life?

"That it is more than just accommodation. It is a crucial community that plays a vital role in students' holistic development. This requires constant effort, beyond regular working hours."

## Q: Favourite memory?

"Apart from our Green Campus national champions achievement and being part of the best Reslife team in South Africa, it is witnessing a student who initially struggled blossom into a student leader and mentor. It reaffirms the importance of our work."

## Q: How do you foster community?

"By encouraging inclusivity, hosting engaging events, and promoting open communication. We work closely with student leadership to ensure that everyone feels heard and valued."

## Q: Essential qualities for students to thrive in residence?

"Adaptability, respect for diversity, responsibility, willingness to engage, and respect for authority."

## Q: How do you support academic and personal growth?

"Through academic support programmes, mentorship initiatives, and wellness activities. We collaborate with university departments to provide necessary resources."

## Q: Advice for students struggling to adjust?

"Reach out for support, engage in activities, and build connections. It takes time, but residence becomes a home away from home. We are here to bridge that gap."

## Q: Encouraging participation?

"We create diverse events, offer leadership opportunities, and use social media and direct communication. We also consult students to ensure that events align with their interests and the university's vision."

## Q: Common concerns?

"Academic stress, roommate con-

flicts, and personal adjustments. We address these through mediation, mentorship, and connecting students with campus support services."

## Q: Role of residences in shaping university experience?

"Residences are crucial for social and academic growth. They provide cultural exchange, leadership development, and life skills. It is the last initiation school before adulthood."

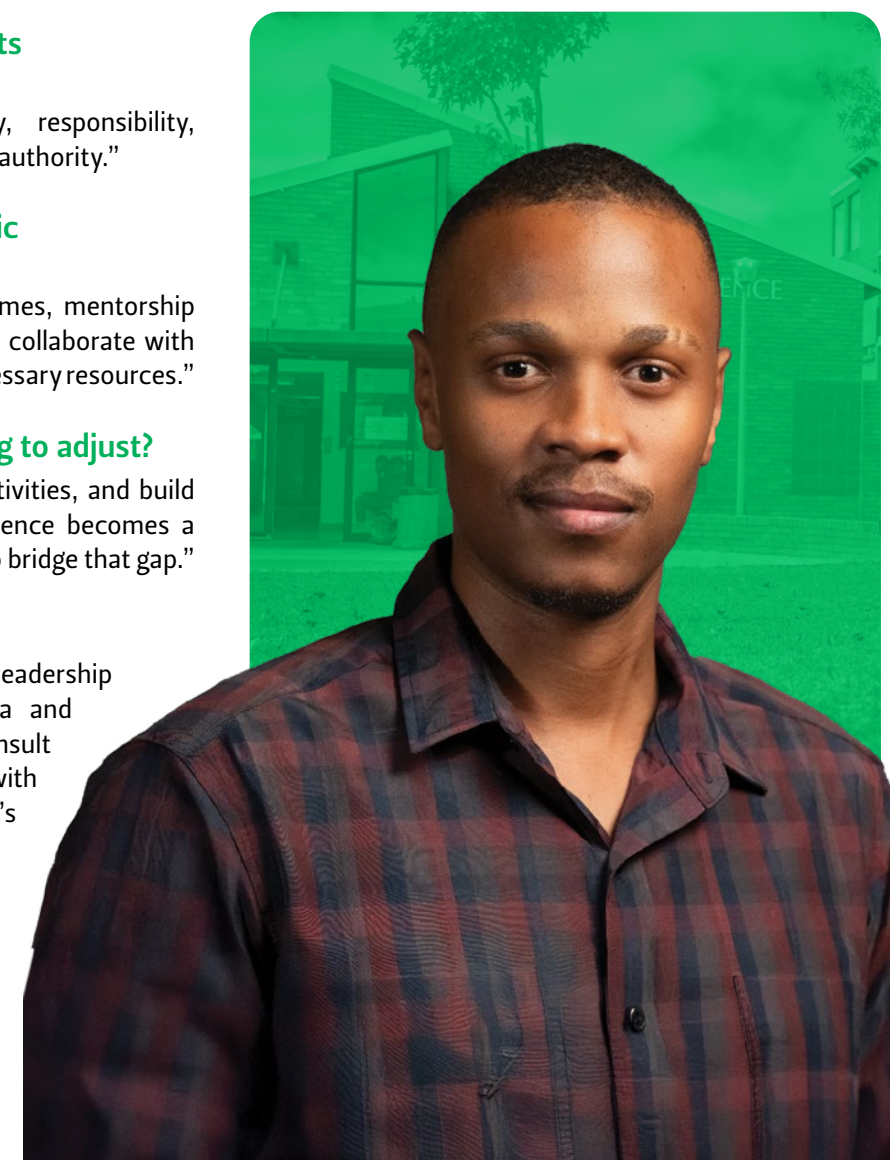
## Q: Success story?

"A shy student who became a confident leader and mentor. It highlights the impact of a strong residence support system."

## Q: Something surprising about you?

"I am an obsessive hard worker who sometimes sacrifices everything to ensure that my work is perfect."

This glimpse into the life of a residence head reveals the dedication and passion that goes into creating a supportive and enriching environment for students. It is a role that extends far beyond the physical walls of the residence, shaping lives and building futures. ■





# Celebrating Excellence: PhD in Science Education



The University of the Free State Qwaqwa Campus is proud to celebrate the remarkable achievement of Dr Halalisani Mngomezulu, a dedicated academic in the Faculty of Education, who recently completed his PhD in Science Education at the University of Johannesburg. His graduation on 24 March 2025 marks a significant milestone—both a personal triumph and a contribution to the growth of science education within the institution and beyond.

## Research with Real Impact

Dr Mngomezulu's doctoral thesis, titled *The Effect of Formative Assessment on Grade 10 Physical Sciences Learners' Academic Achievement, Attitudes, and Self-Regulation Skills*, investigated how formative assessment can serve as a transformative learning tool. Moving beyond traditional grading, he explored strategies such as feedback, peer assessment, and self-assessment to improve not only learners' academic performance but also their confidence, motivation, and ability to take ownership of their learning.

"My goal was to show that assessment can be a support structure for learning, not just a measure of achievement," he explains. His research demonstrated tangible benefits, with learners showing increased engagement and a more positive attitude towards Physical Sciences.

## Challenges Met with Commitment

Conducting research in real classroom settings presented logistical challenges, particularly in coordinating with schools and educators. "It took patience and open communication to ensure minimal disruption to teaching while gathering quality data," Dr Mngomezulu reflects. Careful planning and strong partnerships with participating schools proved essential.

Despite these hurdles, the journey became a powerful learning experience. "The PhD strengthened my research skills, deepened my understanding of learner-

centred education, and helped me grow in confidence as a scholar," he shares.

## Academic Roots and Global Insights

With academic roots in Physical Sciences, Dr Mngomezulu has long been committed to enhancing science education. From undergraduate studies through to his PhD, he has focused on curriculum development and assessment strategies that support meaningful learning.

His academic journey has also been enriched by collaboration, including a fellowship at Columbia University in New York and active participation in international conferences and departmental seminars. "Engaging with global scholars exposed me to new perspectives and helped refine my work," he says.


## Advice to Aspiring PhD Candidates

Dr Mngomezulu is quick to share thoughtful advice with those considering a similar path: "Know your purpose before you start. A PhD requires passion, perseverance, and a strong support system. Surround yourself with mentors, peers, and people who believe in your journey. And always take care of your well-being—physical and mental."

## Looking Ahead

Now equipped with advanced research and pedagogical tools, Dr Mngomezulu is eager to continue contributing to the transformation of science education in South Africa. He believes in the potential of assessment as a tool to empower learners and promote equitable education practices.

"The PhD journey is not just about earning a title," he reflects. "It's about contributing to knowledge that can genuinely change lives—in classrooms, in communities, and across the education system."

The UFS Qwaqwa Campus congratulates Dr Halalisani Mngomezulu on this inspiring achievement and looks forward to the continued impact of his work in advancing learner success and educational excellence. 

# Building Foundations: Bongiwé Mdadane's Heart for First-Year Success at Kutlwano Residence

For Bongiwé Mdadane, Residence Head of Kutlwano Residence – a haven for first-year students – the most rewarding aspect of her role is not just about providing accommodation, it is about laying the groundwork for a successful university journey. "Seeing my students adjust well to the university system, navigate campus, and ultimately complete their qualifications on time tells me that I've laid the foundation," she says.

Mdadane's dedication stems from a deep understanding of the challenges faced by transitioning matriculants. "The biggest challenge is dealing with young adults who think they have it all figured out, yet they need guidance and mentoring to blossom," she explains. She sees her role as more than just a manager; it is about nurturing potential and helping students realise their goals.

Residence life, she notes, has evolved significantly. "The focus is now on student-centredness," she explains. "We prioritise their needs and involve them in event planning to ensure that programmes resonate." This approach fosters a sense of ownership and engagement, making Kutlwano more than just a place to sleep. "It's about creating a living and learning environment, offering holistic student development, and ensuring a safe and hygienic space," Mdadane emphasises.


Her daily routine is a whirlwind of email checks, maintenance oversight, meetings,

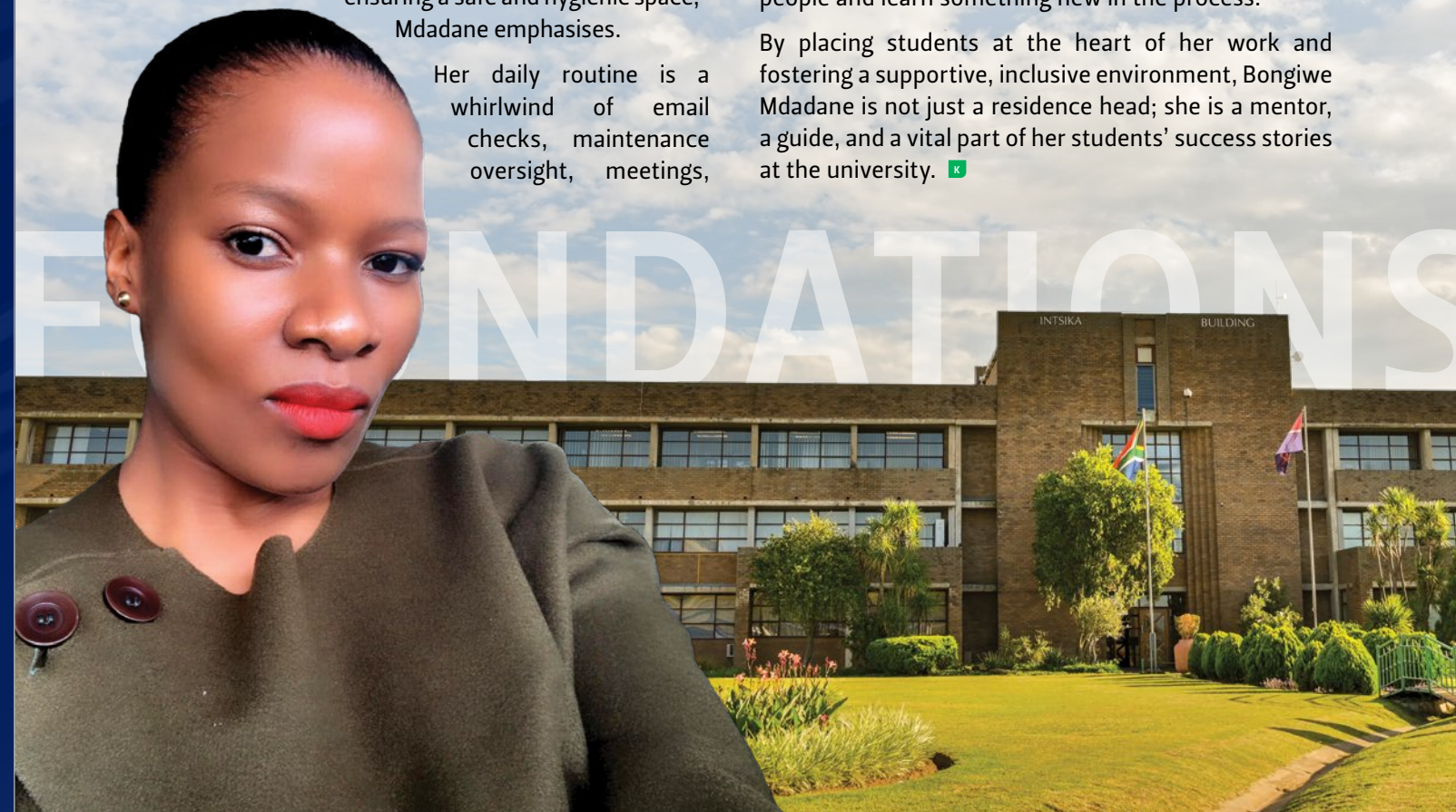
and residence administration. "It's a lot of administration, but it's all in service of our students," she says. And what keeps her motivated? "Seeing my students graduate, alive and well," she says with a heartfelt smile.

Mdadane is passionate about creating an inclusive environment. "We aim to create a home away from home, a space where everyone feels seen, heard, and valued," she states. This is achieved through diverse programming that celebrates diversity and promotes a sense of belonging. The spirit of Ubuntu is also central to Kutlwano's ethos. "We live in a shared space, and students need to accommodate each other," she explains, referencing the residence's core values: respect, integrity, accountability, excellence, prosperity, harmony, and diversity.

Academic support is a crucial component of Kutlwano's offerings. "Since I deal with first-year students, I make sure they understand how to navigate online platforms and their timetables," Mdadane says. "We offer residence tutorials and encourage study groups for challenging modules."

Her advice to students is both practical and profound: "As university students, you're trainee professionals. Embrace this season. Learn to engage with diverse people and learn something new in the process."

By placing students at the heart of her work and fostering a supportive, inclusive environment, Bongiwé Mdadane is not just a residence head; she is a mentor, a guide, and a vital part of her students' success stories at the university. 





## Welcoming Dr Maonei Gladys Mangwanya to the UFS, Qwaqwa Campus

The University of the Free State (UFS), Qwaqwa Campus, has expanded its Faculty of Economic and Management Sciences with the esteemed arrival of Dr Maonei Gladys Mangwanya as a Senior Lecturer in Public Administration and Management. Joining the university on 1 February 2025, Dr Mangwanya brings a wealth of experience and a profound dedication to public service to the vibrant academic community nestled in the Free State highlands.

Dr Mangwanya's transition to the Qwaqwa Campus marks a significant shift from the bustling urban landscape of Pretoria. Reflecting on this move, she described it as "both a rewarding and humbling experience to become part of the Qwaqwa Campus community," hinting at the unique connection she is already forging with the region.

Her approach to navigating change is deeply influenced by Dr Spencer Johnson's seminal work, *Who Moved My Cheese?* This book, she shared, "profoundly shaped how I approach change and uncertainty. It taught me that adaptability and a willingness to evolve are critical not only in professional life but in personal growth as well." This philosophy of embracing change will undoubtedly resonate with students and colleagues alike.

In a surprising revelation, Dr Mangwanya offered a glimpse into her personal journey, sharing, "I repeated both my Ordinary Level and Advanced Level exams twice. It was a difficult period in my life, and I never imagined that I would one day earn a Doctor of Philosophy in Public Administration." This testament to resilience and perseverance stresses the power of second chances and serves as an inspiring narrative for anyone facing academic or personal hurdles.

Looking ahead, Dr Mangwanya is keen to engage with the local context, stating, "I am most looking forward to working closely with local municipalities—particularly in Maluti-a-Phofung—to improve service delivery through meaningful engagement with mayors and municipal managers." Her ambition to contribute to the

region's potential through academic collaboration and community-based research signals a commitment to practical application of her expertise.

Dr Mangwanya identified a critical juncture in her field: "One pressing challenge in Public Administration is bridging the gap between academic theory and practical implementation, especially in the area of service delivery." However, she views this challenge as an opportunity to innovate in pedagogy, advocating for the integration of "fieldwork, digital innovation, and community engagement into the curriculum" to cultivate future public servants who are both theoretically grounded and practically adept. She also emphasized the growing need for research that offers tangible solutions to real-world problems.

Her passion for Public Administration is deeply rooted in a "profound concern for the lived realities of ordinary citizens and a genuine love for people." Dr Mangwanya's academic journey, though initially marked by setbacks, ultimately fuelled a rigorous scholarly inquiry into governance, fiscal decentralisation, and institutional reform, particularly within contexts grappling with inequality and service delivery challenges. Her research ethos remains firmly grounded in the belief that effective public administration must prioritize people and justice.

In her concluding remarks, Dr Mangwanya articulated a powerful vision for public service: "Public service should not be about ticking boxes or pushing paper. It should be about people. I hope my presence here at Qwaqwa contributes to building a generation of scholars and practitioners who are grounded, curious, and committed to making real impact in the lives of those they serve."

The UFS, Qwaqwa Campus, warmly welcomes Dr Maonei Gladys Mangwanya and anticipates the significant contributions she will undoubtedly make to the academic landscape and the broader community. Her dedication to impactful research, student mentorship, and community engagement aligns perfectly with the university's mission and values. 



## Qwaqwa Campus Welcomes Rising Academic Star, Karabo Molapo

The University of the Free State (UFS) has welcomed a dynamic new addition to the Department of Geography within its Faculty of Education, Dr Karabo Molapo – a rising academic star hailing from Zebediela (Mathibela) in Limpopo.


Dr Molapo, who completed her PhD in Curriculum and Instructional Studies at the remarkably tender age of 27, has already garnered attention for her exceptional achievements. As a former secondary school teacher, she brings a unique blend of practical experience and academic rigour to her new role.

"To have completed my PhD as a secondary school teacher at 27 is something that continues to amaze people," Dr Molapo shared. "It's a privilege to be counted among the youngest PhD holders in South Africa."

Beyond her academic pursuits, Dr Molapo enjoys reading biblical and motivational books, indulging in reality television, and exploring the natural world. She expressed excitement about exploring the Drakensberg, known as the Maluti Mountains in Sesotho, and the Fika-Patso Dam in Phuthaditjhaba, Free State.

A significant influence on her academic journey was Dr Myles Munroe's *Living with Purpose*, a book she received as a gift after being recognised as the Overall Best Mentor across all faculties at the University of Limpopo in 2017.

Dr Molapo's initial impressions of the UFS were shaped by its iconic mountains, a testament to her geographical interests, as well as the university's motto, 'In Truth is the Light of Wisdom', and the Basotho language.

The UFS community eagerly anticipates Dr Molapo's contributions to the Department of Geography and the university as a whole as she embarks on this new chapter in her academic career. Wishing her a fruitful stay on the UFS Qwaqwa Campus. 





# New Beginnings at Qwaqwa

The University of the Free State Qwaqwa Campus has welcomed a dynamic new member to its academic community! On 1 January 2025, Dr Vongai Ruzungunde embarked on an exciting chapter, transitioning from the vibrant coastal city of East London to the heart of the Free State. This move marks not only a professional shift, but also a personal one, as our new colleague embraces the unique spirit of this campus and its surrounding region.

When asked about this significant transition, Dr Ruzungunde shared, "It has been a meaningful new chapter, both professionally and personally." This enthusiasm for the new environment is palpable and hints at the fresh perspectives he brings to our institution.

When prompted about a book that has profoundly influenced him, the response was immediate: *The Purpose Driven Life* by Rick Warren. This book, he explained, fostered deep reflection on purpose, service, and the profound impact that individuals can have on others. This perspective continues to be a guiding principle in his approach to academia, shaping his interactions with students and the broader community.


Interestingly, there is a surprising twist to his academic journey. Many might assume a lifelong dedication to their chosen field, but our new colleague revealed, "Something that often surprises people is that I had no idea what Industrial Psychology was when I began my studies. In fact, I chose it somewhat by chance, as I was actually trying to avoid studying Economics." This candid revelation stresses the often-unpredictable paths that lead us to our true callings. What began as a detour ultimately blossomed into a perfect fit, merging a curiosity about human behaviour with a passion for impacting lives and fostering inclusive workplaces.

Looking ahead, Dr Ruzungunde is eager to immerse himself in the "unique cultural and economic landscape of the Qwaqwa region, especially through the lens of Industrial Psychology". He sees immense potential in understanding how local industries, communities, and social dynamics shape work behaviour, development, and inclusion. This presents exciting opportunities for meaningful research and community engagement right here on our doorstep.

In the realm of his expertise, he highlighted a critical challenge and a corresponding opportunity: "One of the most pressing challenges in Industrial Psychology is promoting genuine gender diversity and inclusion in workplaces – not just on paper, but in lived experiences." He astutely pointed out that while many organisations strive for diversity, deeply ingrained biases and a lack of truly inclusive cultures persist. However, this challenge also fuels a powerful opportunity to develop evidence-based strategies that champion diverse talent, cultivate psychological safety, and ensure that every individual feels valued and heard.

Reflecting on his academic journey, he shared a relatable experience – a journey that began with a general interest in people and a desire to make a difference. It was through exploration and deeper understanding that Industrial Psychology truly 'clicked', revealing a field that seamlessly integrated psychology, business, and human connection. This passion has only grown, solidifying his commitment to improving lives within the workplace and fostering thriving environments.

In closing, he expressed genuine enthusiasm to join the academic family at Qwaqwa, stating, "I believe education is not just about information, but transformation. I look forward to contributing to that transformation for my students and community, while also learning from the unique perspectives and experiences here. My door is always open – for collaboration, for mentorship, or even just for a meaningful conversation."

We extend a warm welcome to our new faculty member and look forward to the invaluable contributions he will undoubtedly make to our university and the wider community. His unique journey, insightful perspectives, and passion for his field are a welcome addition to the University of the Free State Qwaqwa Campus. 



# Celebrating Voices: Language a Human Right

In a heartening display of inclusivity and cultural richness, the University of the Free State (UFS) Qwaqwa Campus recently marked International Mother Language Day (IMLD) with a celebration that resonated deeply with the spirit of our community. This year's IMLD, marking its silver jubilee, was a testament to the power of language in bridging divides and fostering understanding.

The UFS Academy for Multilingualism, a beacon of linguistic diversity, spearheaded this initiative at Thiboloha School, a resource centre for learners with barriers to learning and development. This event was not just a celebration; it was a powerful step towards realising the UFS Vision 130, which champions inclusivity and belonging for all.

The primary objective of the day was to create a shared space where deaf learners from Thiboloha and hearing learners from Letlotlo Primary School could interact, exchange languages, and celebrate their diverse cultures. This interaction was more than just a gathering; it was a living embodiment of social cohesion, right here in the Qwaqwa community.


## Language as a Human Right

This celebration aligns perfectly with the broader context of Human Rights Day commemorated on 21 March, with South Africans reflecting on the journey towards equality and the importance of upholding the rights of every individual. The Constitution and Bill of Rights recognise language, culture, and community as fundamental human rights, ensuring that everyone has the right to belong and express themselves.

The Pan South African Language Board (PanSALB) plays a crucial role in promoting and protecting these language rights, fostering respect for all languages spoken in our diverse nation. At the UFS, we echo this commitment, recognising that language is not just a tool for communication, but a cornerstone of identity and culture.

## Embracing Multilingualism at the UFS

On the Qwaqwa Campus, we see firsthand the transformative power of embracing multilingualism. By providing platforms for learners to celebrate their mother languages, we are not only empowering them academically but also fostering a strong sense of belonging and cultural pride.

The IMLD celebration at Thiboloha School was a poignant reminder of the importance of language in building bridges and creating a more inclusive society. As we move forward, let us continue to champion multilingualism, ensuring that every voice is heard and every culture celebrated. 





# Research Excellence: Dr Sunge Achieves Y2 Rating

The University of the Free State (UFS) Qwaqwa Campus proudly celebrates the exceptional achievement of Dr Regret Sunge, a lecturer in the Department of Economics and Finance, who has been awarded a prestigious Y2 rating by the National Research Foundation (NRF). This recognition marks a major milestone in his academic career and underscores his growing influence in the fields of economics and finance.

The Y2 rating is reserved for promising young researchers—typically under the age of 40 and within five years of completing their PhD—who have shown the potential to establish themselves as future leaders in their discipline. Dr Sunge is one of only 3.8% of newly rated researchers in South Africa, and notably, economics and finance represent just 4.9% of all NRF-rated researchers.

“I am thrilled to have received the NRF Y2-rating for the period 2025 to 2030,” said Dr Sunge. “Being recognised

through such a rigorous and competitive process is both humbling and energising. It reflects the dedication, collaboration, and support that have shaped my journey so far.”

## Research with Real-World Impact

Dr Sunge's research lies at the intersection of agricultural production and environmental sustainability, with a strong focus on addressing food insecurity in the context of climate change. His work contributes to shaping sustainable agrifood systems in South Africa and beyond, using econometric methodologies that support both theoretical advancement and practical application.

His research is particularly relevant to Phuthaditjhaba, where livestock agriculture plays a key role in the local economy. By identifying sustainable practices that can enhance productivity and resilience, Dr Sunge's work aims to improve livelihoods while addressing environmental challenges.

## A Strong Foundation and Collaborative Spirit

Dr Sunge's PhD research provided a solid base for his NRF rating application, with three of the five reviewed papers originating from his doctoral work. He has since expanded this foundation through international collaborations, which have enriched his research with global insights and expanded its scope.

He credits much of his success to the mentorship and collaboration of colleagues such as his PhD supervisor, Prof Nicholas Ngepah, research partner Dr Delphin Kamanda Espoir, and postdoctoral host, Dr Calvin Mudzingiri. Institutional support from the Faculty of Economic and Management Sciences (EMS) and the Qwaqwa Campus has also played a crucial role.

Beyond academia, Dr Sunge has actively engaged with international organisations. He contributed to the United Nations Young Economists Network (UN-YEN), led a team studying Africa's macroeconomic growth, and worked as a research assistant for the OECD and African Union Commission (AUC) on their Africa Development Dynamics publication.

## Future Vision and Academic Growth

Dr Sunge views the Y2 rating as a catalyst for further growth. “This recognition motivates me to pursue higher-impact research and more collaborative work,” he explained. “It has enhanced my confidence and opened up new opportunities for funding, partnerships, and postgraduate supervision.”

His long-term goal is to transition from a Y2 to a C-rated researcher over the next five years—a step that will require balancing teaching, grant writing, and research project implementation. He also emphasises his commitment to teaching, ensuring that his academic

work enhances the student experience rather than detracting from it.

Dr Sunge continues to invest in his professional development, regularly participating in conferences and workshops to strengthen his econometric, analytical, and writing skills. His research approach remains dynamic and collaborative, enabling him to work across disciplines and contribute to solutions that matter on both local and international levels.

## A Milestone Worth Celebrating

Dr Sunge's achievement not only reflects his personal commitment to academic excellence but also enhances the reputation of the UFS Qwaqwa Campus as a hub of impactful research. His success is a source of inspiration,

particularly within the EMS faculty, where NRF-rated researchers remain few.

“My word to aspiring economists, especially those from marginalised communities, is this: with the right mindset, commitment, and resilience, we can be counted,” he said.

The University of the Free State congratulates Dr Regret Sunge on this well-deserved recognition and looks forward to the continued impact of his research on communities, policy, and the academic landscape. **K**



# Foundation of Qwaqwa Campus

On 19 April 1985, a significant milestone in the history of higher education in the Free State was reached. This date marks the official commencement of the Qwaqwa Campus of the University of the North, now a vital part of the University of the Free State (UFS).

The ceremony, held on the site designated for the campus' first building, saw the Rector and Vice-Chancellor, Prof PC Mokgokong, turn the first sod. This symbolic act represented a commitment to expanding educational opportunities and providing access to higher learning in the region.

The establishment of the Qwaqwa Campus was a

testament to the university's vision of inclusivity and its dedication to serving diverse communities. It laid the groundwork for a future where quality education would be readily available, fostering growth and development within the Qwaqwa region.

This foundational moment in 1985 is a crucial chapter in the UFS story, highlighting the institution's enduring commitment to broadening its reach and impact. The Qwaqwa Campus continues to be a vibrant centre of learning, contributing significantly to the academic landscape of the Free State and beyond. **K**







# International Office Spotlight: Bridging Worlds at the UFS

In today's interconnected world, internationalisation is no longer a peripheral activity but a core component of a thriving university. The University of the Free State (UFS) Office for International Affairs (OIA) stands at the forefront of this endeavour, fostering a global perspective across all campuses. This spotlight delves into the OIA's pivotal role, its diverse services, and how it empowers both staff and students to become global citizens.

## A Hub for Comprehensive Internationalisation

The OIA's core mission is to enable, support, and facilitate comprehensive internationalisation at the UFS. This means embedding international and intercultural dimensions into every facet of university life. From curriculum development to student experiences, the OIA ensures that all members of the UFS community benefit from global engagement. Ultimately, this contributes to the university's commitment to addressing the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals.

## A Spectrum of Services for Staff and Students

The OIA provides a comprehensive suite of services designed to support both staff and students in their international endeavours. These include:

- **International Student Support:** Assisting with immigration, applications, admissions, and social integration.
- **Delegation Management:** Hosting local and international delegations.
- **Curriculum Internationalisation:** Facilitating Collaborative Online International Learning (COIL), virtual engagements, and other initiatives.
- **Scholarship Management:** Overseeing study abroad opportunities for students and staff.
- **Exchange Programmes:** Managing incoming and outgoing student exchange programmes.
- **Joint Degree Administration:** Enabling and administering joint degree programmes.
- **Grant Support:** Assisting with grant writing for mobility, exchange, and capacity-building programmes.

- **Visibility and Promotion:** Promoting existing projects through publications, conferences, and online reports.
- **Partnership Development:** Facilitating collaboration through memoranda of understanding and memoranda of agreement.
- **Community Engagement:** Implementing projects such as 'Meal in a Jar.'
- **Institutional Reporting:** Providing reports on internationalisation activities.
- **Research and Development:** Conducting research on internationalisation to enhance initiatives.

## Meet the Team

Leading the charge on the Qwaqwa Campus is Bulelwa Moikwatlhai, Assistant Director of the Office for International Affairs. With 14 years of experience in higher education, including a decade dedicated to internationalisation, Bulelwa specialises in 'internationalisation at home' and is passionate about intercultural learning and comprehensive internationalisation.

Joining her on the Qwaqwa Campus is Mojalefa Mthembu, Assistant Researcher, whose expertise lies in comprehensive internationalisation, with a focus on global education and cross-cultural engagement. With four years of experience in higher education, Mojalefa is eager to share his insights and perspectives.

Both Bulelwa and Mojalefa work closely with their colleagues in the Bloemfontein Office to ensure seamless service delivery across all UFS campuses.

## Benefits for Staff: Expanding Horizons

Staff members can leverage the OIA's expertise in

numerous ways, including:

- **Immigration Support:** Assistance with immigration queries.
- **Mobility and Capacity Building:** Support with project applications and management.
- **Curriculum Internationalisation:** Partnering, support, and advice on joint degrees and other initiatives.
- **Mobility and Travel Advice:** Guidance on budgeting, visas, and vaccinations.
- **Partnership Support:** Advice on developing and maintaining international partnerships.
- **Scholarship Support:** Assistance with study abroad scholarship applications.
- **International Guest Hosting:** Support with receiving international delegations.

## Contact Information

For further information and assistance, please contact the OIA on the Qwaqwa Campus:

### Location:

Intsika Building, Second floor, Room 2022

### Bulelwa Moikwatlhai:

malob@ufs.ac.za; +27 51 401 3397;  
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### Mojalefa Mthembu:

mthembuma@ufs.ac.za

The Office for International Affairs is committed to fostering a globally engaged university community, empowering staff and students to thrive in an increasingly interconnected world. 



Bulelwa Moikwatlhai



Mojalefa Mthembu



# Building Bridges to Self-Sufficiency:

## A Recap of the Community Engagement Indaba

The UFS Qwaqwa Campus hosted a dynamic and impactful Community Engagement Indaba, themed: *Building Self-reliance, Self-sufficiency, Self-sustainable Livelihoods for Entrepreneurship*. The two-day event, held from 2 to 3 April, proved to be a rich success, fostering a collaborative environment aimed at addressing critical challenges facing our community.

The primary objective of the indaba was to explore innovative strategies for combating poverty, unemployment, and resource scarcity, while simultaneously promoting food security through entrepreneurship. It aimed to create sustainable livelihoods for vulnerable individuals and to strengthen the network of support among participating organisations.

Day one featured insightful presentations from eminent speakers hailing from both academia and broader society. These experts shared valuable knowledge and perspectives on developing sustainable learning pathways for those in need. The discussions centred

around empowering individuals to take control of their economic futures.

The Director of Community Engagement, Bishop Billyboy Ramahlele, shared the purpose of the day, saying that community engagement is not just about showing up for events or donating funds; it is about fostering a spirit of contribution that permeates every aspect of our lives. It is about recognising our interconnectedness and actively working to build a stronger, more supportive environment for everyone. The principles outlined in the accompanying image offer a powerful framework for cultivating this attitude of contribution, transforming our community from a collection of individuals into a thriving, interconnected whole.

### The Foundation of Gratitude

The journey begins with gratitude. "Be grateful – no one succeeds alone," the image reminds us. Every accomplishment, no matter how small, is built upon the sacrifices and support of others. Recognising this truth fosters humility and encourages us to pay it forward.

When we succeed, we honour those who paved the way for us by extending a helping hand to those who follow.

### People First: The Heart of Community


True community engagement places people at the centre. "Put people first – tender with young, compassionate with aging, sympathetic with striving, tolerant of weak and strong." This speaks to the importance of empathy and understanding. It calls us to create a space where everyone feels valued and supported, regardless of their age, background, or circumstances. Building bridges of compassion and tolerance strengthens the social fabric of our community.

Day two transitioned into hands-on action learning workshops, where participants engaged in practical skills transfer within key sectors: agriculture, the clothing industry, the food industry, and clean energy. These workshops provided tangible tools and knowledge, empowering attendees to implement sustainable practices and contribute to economic growth.

The indaba provided a unique platform for equal

exchange, where participants shared experiences, learned new skills, and expanded their expertise. The event fostered a sense of unity and collective action, demonstrating the power of collaboration in addressing the challenges of unemployment, economic stagnation, poverty, and the accompanying feelings of hopelessness.

The feedback from attendees was overwhelmingly positive, with many expressing gratitude for the valuable insights and practical skills gained. The indaba successfully reinforced the UFS Qwaqwa Campus' commitment to community engagement and social justice.

The Community Engagement co-ordinator, Moodi Matsoso, extended her sincere thanks to all the speakers, facilitators, participants, and everyone who contributed to the success of this impactful event. "The Community Engagement Indaba laid a strong foundation for future initiatives aimed at building a more resilient and self-sufficient community. We look forward to seeing the positive impact of this event unfold in the months and years to come," she concluded. 



# Vibrant Student Affairs Week

The University of the Free State Qwaqwa Campus recently hosted its annual Student Affairs Week – a resounding success that brought together students, staff, and various departments to celebrate student engagement, support, and wellbeing. This year's edition featured a dynamic lineup of events, from informative exhibitions to spirited cultural showcases, thought-provoking dialogues, and charitable initiatives – all reinforcing the university's commitment to enriching student life in meaningful and inclusive ways.

## A Week of Connection, Empowerment, and Celebration

Kicking off on Monday, the campus amphitheatre transformed into a vibrant hub of activity. The Division of Student Affairs (DSA), in collaboration with several university departments and student organisations, hosted a series of exhibitions designed to spotlight the wide array of services available to students. From wellness and career guidance to mental health support and academic resources, the exhibitions offered an invaluable opportunity for students to engage directly with the people and platforms designed to support their success both inside and outside the classroom. Many first-year students expressed appreciation for the accessible format, describing it as a “one-stop introduction to thriving on campus.”

## Empowering Future Leaders

On Tuesday, the spotlight turned to student leadership and governance. A well-attended session introduced students to the structures, roles, and responsibilities of the Student Representative Council (SRC), faculty committees, and other key student formations. Attendees had the chance to interact with current leaders, ask questions, and gain insights into how student governance functions—and why it matters. The event also included a panel discussion where student leaders shared personal journeys of growth, resilience, and leadership development. This session not only demystified the process of getting involved but also inspired a new wave of students to consider stepping into leadership roles themselves.

## Arts, Culture, and Identity

Wednesday's programme brought a celebratory and reflective tone to campus with a showcase of arts and culture. Students representing various cultural groups took to the stage to share music, dance, spoken word, and theatrical performances. These creative expressions highlighted the richness of the campus's diverse student body and offered an opportunity to explore identity, heritage, and storytelling in powerful ways. The performances were followed by a short dialogue session on the role of culture in building inclusive academic communities, drawing enthusiastic participation from both students and staff.

## Giving Back Through Community Engagement

Thursday was marked by compassion and generosity through the campus-wide food drive, a central feature of the week. Organised in support of the No Student Hungry initiative and the Social Support office, the drive encouraged students, staff, and local partners to donate non-perishable food items. The response was overwhelming, with collection points overflowing by the end of the day. Volunteers from various student groups assisted in sorting and preparing food parcels, which will directly benefit students facing food insecurity. The initiative served as a reminder of the power of community when everyone comes together for a common cause.

## A Strong Finish: Health and Wellness

The week drew to a close on Friday with a high-energy aerobics and fun walk event, aimed at promoting physical health and encouraging a balanced student lifestyle. Participants from all corners of campus, including lecturers and administrative staff, joined in the festivities. The walk, which meandered through scenic parts of the campus, ended with a group cooldown session and wellness giveaways. It was a fitting conclusion to a week that celebrated not only academic and social development, but also physical and emotional well-being.

## A Lasting Impact

The annual Student Affairs Week has once again proven to be a cornerstone event on the Qwaqwa Campus calendar. More than just a series of activities, the week serves as a catalyst for building lasting connections, fostering student belonging, and promoting a holistic university experience. It reflects the Division of Student Affairs' ongoing commitment to ensuring that every student—whether a newcomer or senior, resident or commuter—has access to the support, opportunities, and encouragement they need to thrive.

As one student aptly summarised, “This week reminded us that we're more than just students here—we're a community.”





# UFS Qwaqwa Campus Clinic: A Beacon of Health and Wellness

Officially opened on 26 April 2016 by Prof JD Jansen, the then Vice-Chancellor and Rector of the UFS, the Campus Clinic on the Qwaqwa Campus stands as a testimony to the University of the Free State's commitment to the well-being of its students. This facility provides essential health-care services to the students, ensuring a healthy and productive environment for all.

The establishment of the Campus Clinic aligns with the UFS's core values, particularly Care and Social Justice, as articulated in Vision 130. Vision 130 is the strategic intent to reposition the institution for 2034, when the university will commemorate its 130th anniversary. The UFS values of Excellence, Innovation and Impact, Accountability, Care, and Social Justice shape and inform the UFS culture and provide a framework for our actions and decisions. The clinic embodies the university's dedication to creating a supportive and inclusive environment where the well-being of the students is prioritised. By providing accessible and quality health care, the clinic contributes to reducing inequality and promoting human dignity – central tenets of the

university's commitment to social justice.

## Services available are

- primary health care – treatment of minor ailments;
- monitoring of chronic (non-communicable) diseases such as hypertension, diabetes mellitus, etc.;
- care and support for HIV-positive patients; and
- preventative health care – vaccination programme for students at risk. This includes the prevention of HIV infection to those exposed to blood products in their practical duties.

The establishment of the Campus Clinic directly supports this mission and vision by ensuring the health and well-being of students, which is central to the university's focus. **K**



# Celebrating Success: Graduation Highlights





# Upholding Integrity:

## Reporting Unethical Conduct on the Qwaqwa Campus

Our institution thrives on a foundation of integrity, transparency, and ethical conduct. To ensure a safe and productive environment for all, it is imperative that we address and rectify any instances of fraud, corruption, unethical behaviour, or misconduct.

These actions, which deliberately disregard legal regulations and erode ethical standards, not only damage our reputation but also undermine the trust placed in us by our students, colleagues, and the wider community.

### The Importance of Whistleblowing

Becoming a whistleblower is a courageous act, a crucial step in safeguarding our institution's values. It provides a mechanism for individuals to report concerns about unethical or illegal practices within the workplace. By coming forward, you play a vital role in:

- **Protecting Institutional Integrity:** Upholding the ethical standards that define our institution.
- **Ensuring Accountability:** Holding individuals responsible for their actions.
- **Preventing Further Harm:** Stopping unethical or illegal practices before they escalate.
- **Promoting a Culture of Transparency:** Fostering an environment where ethical behaviour is valued and expected.

### Reporting Concerns Responsibly

We understand that reporting concerns can be daunting. To ensure a fair and transparent process, we encourage you to follow these guidelines:

- **Gather Evidence:** Whenever possible, collect documentation or other evidence to support your concerns.
- **Use Established Channels:** Familiarise yourself with the institution's established reporting procedures, which may include dedicated hotlines, online platforms, or designated personnel.
- **Maintain Confidentiality:** Respect the confidentiality of the process and avoid discussing your concerns with unauthorised individuals.
- **Act in Good Faith:** Report concerns based on genuine belief and with the intention of addressing wrongdoing.

### Institutional Support and Protection

Our institution is committed to protecting whistleblowers from retaliation. We have policies in place to ensure that

individuals who report concerns in good faith are not subjected to any form of reprisal.

We encourage all staff members to familiarise themselves with these policies and to exercise their right to report any instances of unethical or illegal conduct.

### Building a Culture of Ethical Excellence

Upholding ethical standards is a collective responsibility. By working together, we can create a culture where integrity is paramount and where all members of our community feel safe and respected.

Let us commit to fostering an environment where ethical conduct is the norm, and where we all contribute to the continued success and integrity of the Qwaqwa Campus.

### Where to Report:

#### UFS Whistleblowing hotline

Report fraud, corruption, unethical conduct, and misconduct confidentially and anonymously on any of the following platforms:

- Dial the toll-free number, +27 0 800 122 337 (lines are manned 24 hours a day, 365 days a year)
- Send an SMS to 33490
- Send a toll-free fax to +27 0 800 212 689
- Send an email to: [ufs@whistleblowing.co.za](mailto:ufs@whistleblowing.co.za)
- Postal: FREEPOST KZN665, MUSGRAVE 4062
- Online: [www.whistleblowing.co.za](http://www.whistleblowing.co.za)

#### How the Whistleblowing Hotline works:

- **Step 1:** Dial/email/SMS, or fax.
- **Step 2:** You may call anonymously, but make sure that you give all the information and details to the person answering the telephone.
- **Step 3:** You will be given a reference number – keep this confidential.

This platform is available to staff and students.

By embracing transparency and accountability, we can ensure that the Qwaqwa Campus remains a beacon of ethical excellence. 