

INSPIRING UFS STAFF

dumela

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



NOVEMBER 2020 - ISSUE TWO



FROM THE EDITOR

How things have changed! Most of us have spent these past few months trying to get used to the new life COVID-19 has brought.

In a year in which we as an institution were to focus on visibility, much of the attention has shifted to keeping an invisible presence; staying connected with colleagues, students, stakeholders – working and studying remotely.

For many of us, it was the first time working from home – let alone for more than 200 days of a national lockdown.

Adjusting to this invisible presence, we are also getting a glimpse of a different kind of visibility.

In classrooms, it is the visibility of now being present all the time. Where lecturers would be visible to students only in the class setting, their voices (and images) are now present all the time, as students can go back and listen to online lectures; revisiting and listening again until they understand content better.

Outside of the classrooms, it is talking virtually on a regular basis with colleagues, family, and friends on platforms such as *Microsoft Teams*, *Skype*, and *Zoom*.

Looking at this edition of *Dumela*, we focus on the brave new world we now have to navigate.

Bulkier than previous editions, we bring you information on how to embrace this new normal, keeping well, and holding things together during uncertain times; and features on frontline staff who have been there from day one of the national lockdown. Striving for excellence in everything we do, we also highlight the successes and achievements of staff and departments.

Hope you enjoy the read.

Stay well and safe!

Amanda Tongha
EDITOR



PHOTO | Sonia Small

WHAT'S INSIDE



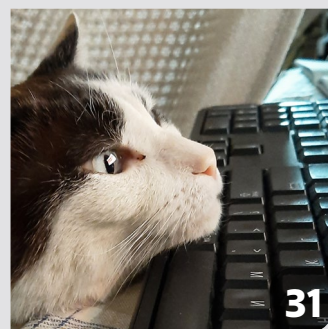
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The Dumela editorial team

consists of staff from the Department of Communication and Marketing as well as representatives from all faculties, departments, and campuses of the UFS.

NOTICE BOARD

25 NOVEMBER TO 10 DECEMBER 2020
16 DAYS OF ACTIVISM FOR NO VIOLENCE
AGAINST WOMEN AND CHILDREN

27 NOVEMBER 2020
SECOND-SEMESTER CLASSES END

30 NOVEMBER TO 18 DECEMBER 2020
MAIN EXAMINATIONS

1 DECEMBER 2020
WORLD AIDS DAY

4 JANUARY 2021
COMMENCEMENT OF ACTIVITIES OF
ACADEMIC AND SUPPORT SERVICES STAFF
MEMBERS. ALL CAMPUSES.

JANUARY 2021 TO 16 JANUARY
ADDITIONAL EXAMINATIONS

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ISSUE TWO 2020

dumela

NOTICE BOARD

COVID-19 and national lockdown: A timeline

By Dr Cindé Greyling and Amanda Tongha

Social media is littered with memes about 2020: January, February, Lockdown, December ...
in reality, much has happened since March 2020.



- 1 March:** First COVID-19 patient arrives in South Africa.
- 12 March:** World Health Organisation declares COVID-19 a pandemic.
- 17 March:** UFS suspension of academic programme. 
- 19 March:** The Free State reports its first COVID-19 cases.
- 23 March:** President Cyril Ramaphosa announces a nationwide 21-day lockdown. 
- 24 March:** Prof Francis Petersen announces UFS lockdown measures.
- 26 March:** South Africa's national lockdown Level 5 begins. 
- 4 April:** More than 1 million confirmed COVID-19 cases worldwide.
- 17 April:** Letter from Prof Francis Petersen to staff and students about the way forward for the academic programme.





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- 1 May:** South Africa's national lockdown lowered to Level 4.
- 11 May:** First UFS students return to campus. 
- 1 June:** South Africa's national lockdown lowered to Level 3.
- 11 June:** More than one million COVID-19 tests conducted in South Africa. 
- 17 August:** South Africa's national lockdown lowered to Level 2. 
- 1 September:** UFS second semester begins.
- 18 September:** Global COVID-19 cases surpass 30 million. 
- 21 September:** South Africa's national lockdown lowered to Level 1.
- 21 September:** Prof Francis Petersen announces return of staff to campus as from 1 October 2020.
- 1 October:** 100% of staff component return to campus. 


Holding things **together** in uncertain times



Barend Nagel is Audio-Visual Specialist in the Department of Communication and Marketing

Against all odds, it seems that we are all 'holding things together' (for the most part). In the past few months, I've had to learn how to navigate some unfamiliar digital terrains. One of the first things I got into the old 'noggin', was where to find the mute button and how to store my documents in the clouds. I've repeatedly heard phrases such as: "you're on mute", "can everyone see my screen?", "nothing from my side", "please excuse the background noise". It's all rather entertaining to imagine these scenarios around a boardroom table. Jokes aside, it's incredible to see how flexible and adaptable we are.

I assume that it's safe to say we would never have imagined ourselves facing the situation we are currently experiencing. But alas, this is our reality (at least for the moment), and commendably, we are proving that we can show resilience in the face of adversity. We had the opportunity to present the very first UFS virtual open day with tremendous success. We have also engaged with various audiences through the UFS Thought-Leader Series – one of the many platforms that have shifted to a virtual and digital experience. My favourite virtual event was the 2020 Rector's Concert, of course. With all that talent and virtual glamour, I didn't even realise that I wasn't wearing a suit!

We might not be together in person at the moment, but we are together in this virtual-reality reality we are facing. We deserve to give ourselves a pat on the back for showing such courage and resilience while taking on this brave new world. Bravo to everyone for keeping a positive attitude in uncertainty! Let us hope that we may soon struggle with getting rid of that mute-button reflex we have gotten so accustomed to, because I imagine myself searching for the mute button somewhere on the boardroom table. 

Wellness in a pandemic



Burneline Kaars is Head of the Division of Organisational Development and Employee Well-being in the Department of Human Resources


The Coronavirus outbreak has challenged the well-being of many employees and has forced us, as the Department of Human Resources, to adapt and rethink our interventions rapidly. We consider the well-being of our staff a priority, a response that is based on the core values of our department, which are encapsulated by our deep CARE for employees.

The main stressors that employees reported during the pandemic, were the threat and risk of infection, the stigma associated with being infected, social exclusion due to physical distancing precautions, financial loss, job insecurity, and most prominently, feeling overwhelmed with working from home. Many employees also experienced an increase in anxiety after the first loss due to the virus was reported.

The above has had an impact on the mental well-being of many employees. Therefore, it has become imperative for the Division of Organisational Development and Employee Well-being to foster a supportive environment by providing employees with tools and strategies to manage distressing emotions, enabling them to act proactively.

We are mindful that wellness is a multi-dimensional concept and that it depends on balancing and enhancing many aspects of life. Accordingly, staff members have different needs, therefore we have different approaches to supporting these needs. The various wellness support interventions presented by our division, some of which are mentioned below, strives to address the well-being needs of our staff.

Firstly, the 'I Am' short learning programme promotes holistic well-being through online or contact-based sessions. To promote physical activity, online workout routines have been posted to allow employees to exercise in the comfort and safety of their homes. In conjunction with this, a virtual walking challenge created a platform for team members to compete against their colleagues. Webinars were also hosted on a range of topics, including healthy eating, childcare, working remotely, emotional intelligence, stress management, financial wellness, and mindfulness. Employees also have access to online counselling services for mental health, financial distress, relationship difficulties, etc.

As we navigate these uncertain times together, we recognise the need for strong, healthy bodies and positive mindsets. 



Hope will propel you to heights beyond imagination

Dr Motlatji Bonnie Maloba is Head of the Department of Medical Microbiology in the Faculty of Health Sciences, and just like thousands of other frontline workers, there was no rest for her during the deadly COVID-19 pandemic that forced South Africa into lockdown.

According to Dr Maloba, this was a tough, weird, and challenging time, especially working during the first few days of Level 5 lockdown. Leaving her kids at home to go to work, sometimes over weekends as well, the sparse cars on the road, the COVID-19 screening at the gate, producing a permit at a roadblock near home, wearing a mask in public all the time, and hand sanitiser everywhere was the new reality.

“Teatime in the tearoom – where people eat, laugh, talk with no masks, now felt like entering a danger zone. The day we handled a sputum specimen from a patient who was subsequently diagnosed with SARS-CoV-2, was a difficult one.”

According to her, there was also the fear of returning home with the virus.

The impact of COVID-19

The COVID-19 pandemic will have a definite impact on the number of students admitted to institution, depending on facilities, infrastructure, IT resources, and research funds redirected to COVID-19, says Dr Maloba. “With this new normal, everyone will have to step up their personal hygiene, healthy lifestyle, environmental hygiene, be considerate of others, practise minimalism – do much with little, and love your loved ones hard! Redeem the time always!” advises Dr Maloba.

Brave frontline warriors

“Front-liners are human and, like all people, will respond differently to risk. Some are still going strong as warriors – still focused and ready for daily war against this monster virus. Those who still got up to enter the battle zone usually have a very strong spiritual muscle; some, like myself, also have a strong support system, both at work and at home; some sees being a front-liner as a calling that cannot be relented upon when the going gets tough,” says Dr Maloba.

She commends the lecturers and students from the Faculty of Health Sciences who remain brave and committed to finish their modules despite the challenges.

Lessons learned

“Message to self: ‘You are much stronger than you think, but also rest and be kind to yourself, and keep on doing little things that matter to you.’ There is nothing that can propel a human being to heights beyond imagination than HOPE!”

By André Damons

Dr Motlatji Bonnie Maloba is one of thousands of frontline workers who kept going when the country went into lockdown.



Clear, consistent communication

– a critical part of the COVID-19 survival kit

While universities across the world are grappling with the impact of COVID-19, the need to communicate effectively has never been as critical as it is now. To successfully navigate through a crisis of this magnitude, one of the most important steps is to centralise communication as early as possible.

This is exactly what the university's executive management did – to centralise all institutional communication to the Department of Communication and Marketing (DCM) – even before the national lockdown commenced. During a crisis, there is no such thing as over-communicating. The secret is communication, and more communication.

Since the national lockdown, the crisis response team of DCM worked almost non-stop to ensure that information was shared with staff, students, and other stakeholders frequently, openly, and honestly. After all, the most important information is that

which can have a critical impact on employee health, safety, and well-being.

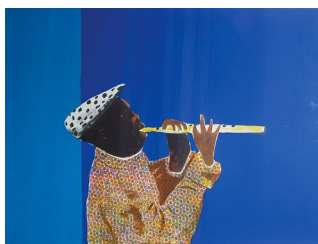
The centralisation of communication has also afforded us the opportunity to monitor and measure our communication efforts and to establish areas where we can improve even further. Inter-departmental support and cooperation from various business areas have been outstanding and has assisted greatly in enhancing our crisis communication and marketing strategy. One thing not to forget is the institution's brand positioning – especially during a crisis when the world is dissolving into chaos. A concerted effort is made to market and position the university as a thought leader and to position subject experts in the national media. We are, after all, an academic institution with a richness of knowledge and opinions that can shape the discourse of the many crucial and topical matters at hand. ◀

By Lacea Loader

Communicating information that matters. From the left; Martie Nortje, Manager: Reputation, Brand and Marketing Management; Lelanie de Wet, Manager: Digital Communication; Lacea Loader, Director: DCM; Dr Nitha Ramnath, Deputy Director: DCM; and Amanda Tongha, Manager: Internal Communication.



Arts continue despite COVID-19 disruption



As the old saying goes, 'where there's a will there's a way' – and that is exactly what the arts and music departments in the Faculty of the Humanities have been doing. Since the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic and the implementation of a national lockdown, the curtain was closed on live concerts and art exhibitions, which took a


back seat along with everything else.

With such unprecedented restrictions, most of the 2020 concerts scheduled to take place at the Odeon School of Music (OSM) have been postponed until 2021, with the exception of some. The 2020 Rector's Concert took place on 11 September 2020, and it was indeed a virtual virtuosity of note. The concert was produced by Michelle Horn of the Odeon School of Music (OSM).

The Free State Youth Wind Ensemble, the OSM String Quartet, and the OSM Camerata also took part in concerts. The OSM Camerata recently released their rendition of *Ukuthula*, which they performed virtually.

Virtual exhibitions keep art pulse beating

Apart from the concerts, the UFS art scene was also buzzing, with numerous virtual exhibitions taking place. A notable one was the virtual exhibition of Sam Nhlengethwa, titled *Leeto: A Sam Nhlengethwa Print Retrospective*.

Another virtual exhibition that intrigued art lovers was *Folds & Faults: An exhibition of African Woman Artists Examining Identity, Culture and Heritage*. Both of these exhibitions were hosted by the Johannesburg Stegmann Gallery. 

By Rulanzen Martin

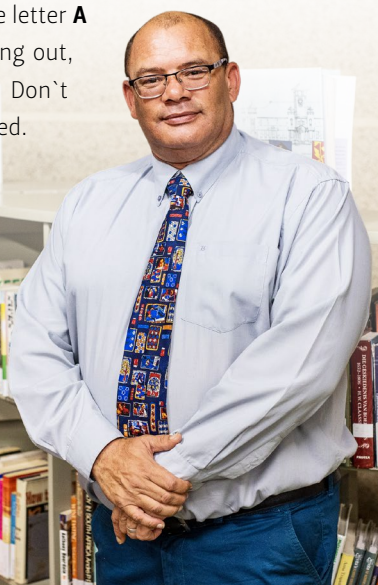


LOCKDOWN 2020[©] AND THE A TO D

Although the heading suggests that 2020 is copyrighted, the situation since lockdown has given a new meaning to ©. The lockdown brought a new sense of alphabetical teaching. The lockdown taught us the alphabet from A to D.

Naturally, we started with the letter **A** – **A**bstain and **A**void, not going out, and **A**voiding close contact. Don't forget that **A**lcohol was **B**anned.

PHOTO | Anja Aucamp




**Lee Goliath is Chief Officer:
Librarian in Library and
Information Services**

Getting to the letter **B** – we started giving up on things. **B**an alcohol and any gathering, and the most controversial, **B**an cigarettes. Immediately there was a **B**lack market for these **B**anned products.

This was one of the most difficult years and we were overwhelmed by ©, the **C**oronavirus and **C**ovid-19. The letter **C** of course also features in the names of Pres **C**yril Ramaphosa and **C**licks and, most importantly, **C**urriculum. This resulted in my baby daughter reciting the months of the year as **C**ay, **C**une, **C**uly, **C**august, and **C**eptember.

D stands for the letter **D** in the name of Minister Nkosazana **D**lamini, who used her **D** on **D**ont's.

For the rest of the alphabet, we must wait and see what is left. And I have not even mentioned any political party. 

By Lee Goliath

PHOTOS | Supplied

Virtual reality **OPEN DAY** – one of many virtual firsts


With the cancellation of the 2020 open days on the Bloemfontein and Qwaqwa Campuses, the Department of Student Recruitment Services embarked on the development of a virtual open day for all three campuses with tremendous success, the first-ever UFS Virtual Open Day took flight on 31 July 2020.

The project leader – Ilze Bakkes from the Department of Student Recruitment Services – says: “This virtual platform provided us with an opportunity to present the virtual visitor with a holistic experience of all three campuses simultaneously from anywhere and anytime. The success of the Virtual Open Day resided in the energy and commitment from the core group towards the shared vision, as well as the cooperation from faculties and departments across the institution to provide relevant and interesting content.”

Marketing and promoting the UFS in the virtual world, the Virtual Open Day was planned and executed around the needs and prerequisites of the target audience to provide all the information they require to apply and to choose the UFS as their institution of choice. The experience was packaged and presented in different digital formats, including hotspots, links, videos, welcoming messages from the Rector and Vice-Chancellor, Campus Principals and Deans, and downloadable PDF documents.

Bakkes says special care was taken to develop a distinct and consistent look and feel for the Virtual Open Day and to present each hotspot professionally and in an enticing manner.

“The Virtual Open Day will remain one of the key tactics to recruit students for the UFS and we are already planning a postgraduate, undergraduate and international Virtual Open Day for 2021, an all-in-one experience.”

- With more than three thousand unique visitors, and counting, the UFS Virtual Open Day is attracting a rather sizable audience. 

**By Barend Nagel and
Ilze Bakkes**

Ilze Bakkes



Dr Ntombizandile Gcelu played a key role in hosting the virtual symposium of the World Education Research Association's International Research Network in Africa.



Connected workspaces. *Transformed* experiences.

Three lecturers from the School of Education Studies at the UFS came together to create a space for women in academia to share their experiences as black academics within the higher education sector.


The virtual symposium of the World Education Research Association's (WERA) International Research Network (IRN) in Africa, which was held in July 2020, created a platform for women from across the globe to comfortably narrate their stories of navigating oppression in higher education and overcoming social exclusion in order to take up leadership opportunities within academia and to contribute to women-friendly transformation in the sector.

The conveners of the symposium were Dr Ntombizandile Gcelu, Dr Fumane Khanare, and Dr Desiree Larey.

Dr Gcelu, who hosted the symposium, said its purpose was to advance worldwide educational research on the complexities and opportunities of historically marginalised women in higher education from an African perspective.

“The symposium has allowed women to collectively revisit, address, and reflect on women's experiences in relation to transformation. Its aim was to bring the international research network together in order to collectively present our different perspectives and further explore pathways for support as individuals and as a group.”

The keynote speakers included black women academics from various universities in South Africa, Africa, and the UK, including the Vice-Principal: Academic and Research of the Qwaqwa Campus, Prof Pearl Sithole, and Dr Brenda Marina, President of the International Mentoring Association (IMA) from the United States of America.

“This virtual symposium was held with the goal to create a model on which further attempts at transformation with relation to women in Africa could be based.” 

By Nonsindiso Qwabe

Kovsie Phahamisa Academy

– empowerment through education

With more than six years of experience as the Director of the School of Financial Planning Law at the UFS, Adv Shirly Hyland comes to the new short learning programme support unit, named Kovsie Phahamisa Academy (KPA), fully equipped for the monumental task ahead. The KPA's main purpose is to support all entities that offer short learning programmes and to expand the UFS' reach and audience on this front. In an ever-changing educational landscape, empowering students through such short courses is essential for the growth of individuals who can contribute to the economy while still learning.

The KPA is the operational hub for short learning programmes. Is your faculty or department planning to launch such a short course? Then the Kovsie Phahamisa Academy is your first port of call in the process, carefully mapped out to assist you in getting a programme off the ground and to provide support when it comes to the day-to-day operations.

Adv Shirly Hyland heads up the KPA office as its director. She says, "To help is the very purpose of the Kovsie Phahamisa Academy." It is certainly no coincidence that 'Phahamisa' means 'lift up' in Sesotho! Dr Gerhard Botha, who previously took care of the Faculty of Theology and Religion's Shepherd Centre – which also offers short courses – has been appointed as the Deputy Director. Hercules Dreyer is in charge of programme design, and Lorraine Hechter is the systems manager.

Contact slp@ufs.ac.za for standard operating procedures regarding SLPs, visit the webpage at www.ufs.ac.za/kpa, or go to the UFS Intranet for documentation at www.ufs.ac.za/kpasupport



By Eugene Seegers

"To help is the very purpose of the Kovsie Phahamisa Academy."

– Adv Shirly Hyland,
Director: KPA.

PHOTO | Anja Aucamp



South Campus helps educators *move online*



As anyone in higher education can tell you, 2020 has been a roller-coaster ride. For many educators, the COVID-19 pandemic was a baptism of fire into the virtual arena. In order to accommodate teachers who are adapting to this whole new world, the Short Learning Programme division on the South Campus launched two courses on distance teaching.

The first is a basic course, titled *Harnessing social media for distance teaching*. The course is aimed at teachers with little knowledge of using technology for teaching, including in contexts where learners' only access to the internet is WhatsApp. It is meant to help teachers of any ICT-skill level to develop competence and confidence in using WhatsApp for education. Thirty-six teachers have already been admitted, and more than 70 have been accepted into the more advanced course.

The second, more advanced course is titled *Teach with online technologies*. This programme is for teachers with moderate to advanced computer literacy and access to the Internet. It covers a wide range of online technologies, including the use of learning management systems, online storage and collaborative options, and much more. Participants are required to critically evaluate the resources they find against criteria for online pedagogy to lead to meaningful learning.

By Eugene Seegers


A reflective look at TRANSFORMATION at the UFS

The recent Transformation Review Week of the UFS, which took place from 6 to 11 September 2020, served as an opportunity for staff and students to reflect critically on the progress of the UFS transformation agenda during the first years of the implementation of the Integrated Transformation Plan (ITP).

Prof Barney Pityana, Prof Crain Soudien, and Prof Sabelo Ndlovu-Gatsheni formed part of a panel of external experts who conducted the formative mid-term review. The review was successfully conducted during 30 sessions, which saw the participation of 146 staff and 28 students, including the SRC from all three campuses.

“The success of the review will depend on how we, as an institution, respond to the final recommendations. We should never forfeit opportunities that can assist in refining a transformed future,” says Liana Griesel, Senior Director: Directorate for Institutional Research and Academic Planning.

In addition to the ITP Review exercise, the university community was encouraged to participate through submissions in the form of articles, poetry, songs, artwork, and personal stories, all of which are available on the UFS website and digital platforms.

The formative review report will provide the university with insights on how to progress towards accelerating transformation at the UFS. 

By Dr Nitha Ramnath


Charter of **ethical conduct** to drive Rector's Project **Care**

During 2018, the Council of the UFS expressed interest in the development of values to promote equality and just treatment for our staff and students. Therefore, under the direction of the UFS Rectorate, the university has embarked on a process of drafting a Charter of Ethical Conduct.

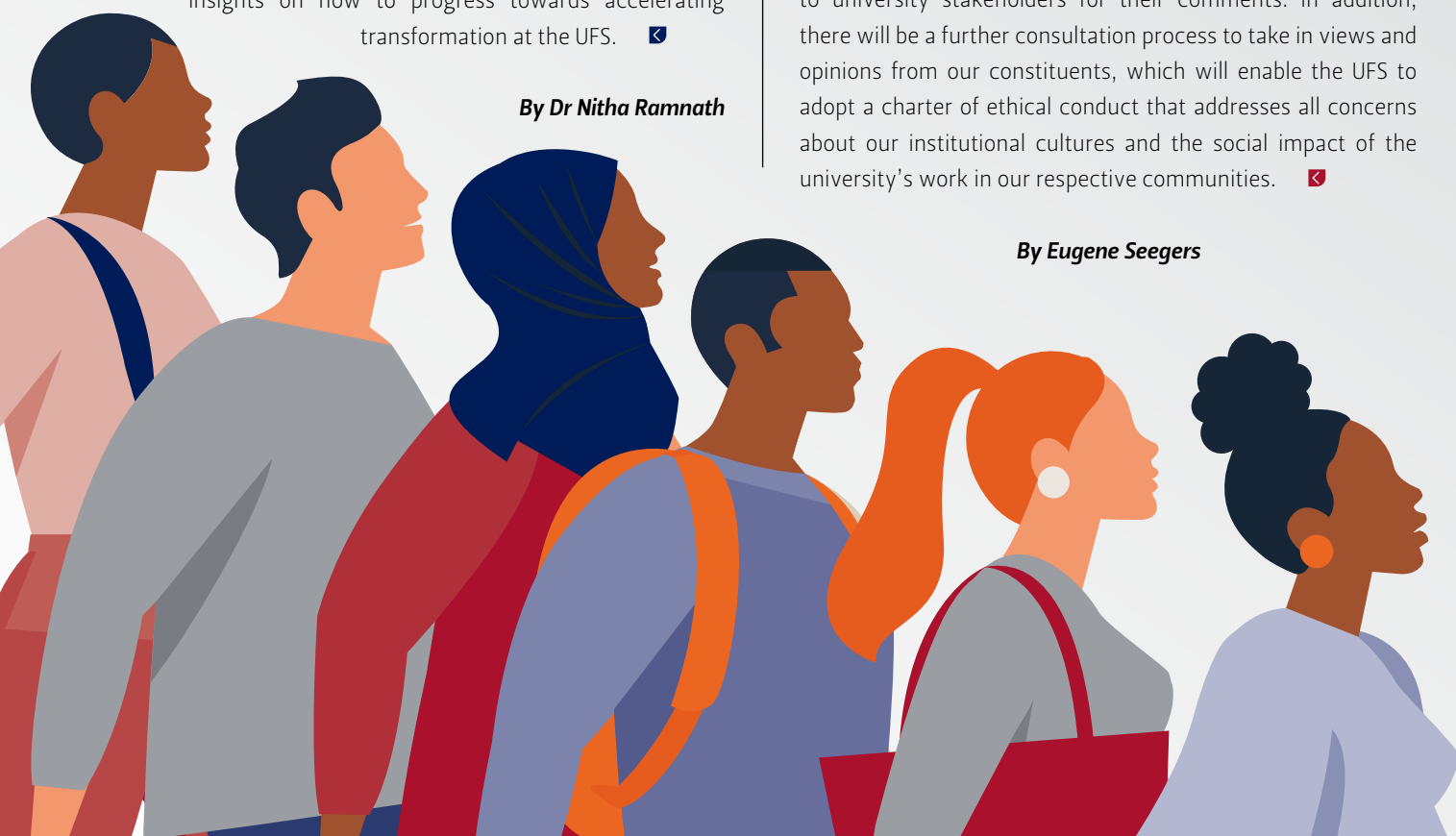
The charter subscribes to the core values of South Africa's Constitution and the Bill of Rights, reaffirming the university's commitment to work towards more equitable, inclusive, and just futures for its stakeholders and constituents, while combating the ongoing negative legacies of apartheid and colonialism. The values described in the charter set a standard to which staff and students are expected to adhere.

Prof Colin Chasi, Director of the Unit for Institutional Change and Social Justice, says, “This draft charter was developed by a process that has entailed wide consultation. Further broad engagement is now being undertaken before the charter can be adopted.”

“This will not just be a beautiful document that decorates walls on campus. It will position the university to produce more caring cultures in its various spheres of operation,” Prof Chasi emphasised.

A draft of the Charter of Ethical Conduct has been circulated to university stakeholders for their comments. In addition, there will be a further consultation process to take in views and opinions from our constituents, which will enable the UFS to adopt a charter of ethical conduct that addresses all concerns about our institutional cultures and the social impact of the university's work in our respective communities. 

By Eugene Seegers






Shaping the university's reputation

Reputation is the single most important aspect of any business. One of the many aspects of reputation deals with how others perceive you. This can be summarised as your overall character or how you are actually combined with your reputation, which is how others think you are.

The Reputation Management Forum (RMF) was established in August 2019 to support the university in achieving its reputation management objectives, and to strengthen and expand its reputation. The RMF integrates the overall communication efforts of the university

consistently across all markets and to all stakeholders, working cross-functionally to leverage and align existing programmes across departments, faculties, and the campuses.

Under the chairpersonship of the Director: Communication and Marketing, the RMF consists of the directors of Institutional Advancement, Student Recruitment Services, the Office for International Affairs, Community Engagement, the Head of the Careers Office, faculty marketers, and representatives from the South and Qwaqwa Campuses.

Projects that the RMF is currently working on to further enhance the role of the forum and to ensure integration of various areas of operation, include the strategic positioning of the UFS as a thought leader on contemporary topics in the national and international public domain, with Dr Nitha Ramnath, Deputy Director: Communication and Marketing as task team coordinator; improving the experience of stakeholders at touchpoints in the institution, with Ms Nomonde Mbadi, Director: Student Recruitment Services as task team leader; and the development of an interactive and informative communication plan for alumni to ensure a resonance and amplification of core, integrated, institutional messages with Ms Annamia van den Heever, Director: Institutional Advancement as task team leader. 

By Lacea Loader

UFS 2020 THOUGHT-LEADER Webinar Series brings top experts together


The annual UFS Thought-Leader Series is taking the form of webinars this year, and although things are somewhat different, our contribution to public discourse still continues, as we offer innovative solutions that impact the lives of people nationally and globally. As part of the Vrystaat Literature Festival's online initiative, *VrySpraak-digitaal*, and in collaboration with *Vrye Weekblad*, four webinars are planned as part of the UFS 2020 Thought-Leader Webinar Series, and will be facilitated by the editor of *Vrye Weekblad*, Dr Max du Preez.

Themed '**Post-COVID-19, Post-Crisis**', topics for discussion include Health and Modelling, Economy, Politics, and Human Rights, presented from August to November.

The first webinar in the series of four, titled Health and Modelling, took place in August, and successfully saw the attendance of 290 guests. The panellists included top experts such as Prof Salim Abdool Karim, Director: Centre for the AIDS Programme of Research in South Africa (CAPRISA) and Chair: South African Ministerial Advisory Committee on COVID-19; Prof Glenda Gray, President and CEO: South African Medical Research Council

(SAMRC); and the UFS' Prof Felicity Burt, NRF-DST South African Research Chair in Vector-borne and Zoonotic Pathogens Research.

In September, a second webinar focusing on the South African Economy was held with panellists Dr Trevor Manuel, Chairperson of Old Mutual Limited; Mondli Makhanya, Editor-in-Chief of City Press; and Ann Bernstein, Executive Director: Centre for Development and Enterprise, joining Dr Du Preez.

This was followed by a Thought-Leader webinar looking at Politics in South Africa in October. Joining Dr Du Preez for the discussions were Prof Francis Petersen, Rector and Vice-Chancellor, Prof Bonang Mohale, Chancellor of the UFS, Mr Moeletsi Mbeki, Deputy Chairman of the South African Institute of International Affairs, Prof Thuli Madonsela, Law Trust Chair in Social Justice, Stellenbosch University, and Prof Philippe Burger, Pro-Vice-Chancellor: Poverty, Inequality and Economic Development at the UFS. The fourth and last webinar is scheduled to take place on **2 December 2020** and will focus on predictions for 2021. 

By Dr Nitha Ramnath

UFS COVID-19 *rapid* RESPONSE

This is not only the year of firsts; it is also the year of fast. When COVID-19 showed up in South-Africa, the University of the Free State COVID-19 frontline workers had to respond speedily to contain the spread of the virus on our campuses. And Kovsie Health did a sterling job.

Preparing for the impossible

"The COVID-19 virus is highly contagious and unpredictable and that is what makes it so dangerous," Dr Gerhard Jansen from the UFS Health Practice explains. Riana Johnson, Deputy Director: Kovsie Health, agrees: "I don't think anyone was prepared for something like this pandemic. We had to learn fast, and we are still learning each day." They agree that their team effort, with the support of Prof Prakash Naidoo, Vice Rector: Operations, has helped to put the needed processes and protocols in place. "We quickly realised, and accepted, that we will be in the centre of the COVID-19 battle on campus," Dr Jansen says. But, Johnson notes,

Dr Gerhard Jansen and Riana Johnson are playing an instrumental role in the UFS' COVID-19 response.




you can get infected anywhere and not just in the workplace. Following the protective protocol, and lots of support from family and colleagues, helped her to cope during stressful times.

Processes and protocols

With the support of various departments, Kovsie Health was a key role player in implementing the screening checks at all UFS access gates. This included the completion of a screening questionnaire, temperature checks, providing masks to staff and additional PPE for UFS health staff, and encouraging hand hygiene and social distancing. They trained designated UFS staff and students in the required processes and protocol to manage the infection risks on all three campuses and maintained good relationships with external stakeholders such as ER24 and the Department of Health. "This pandemic demonstrated how important teamwork really is," Johnson says. Internally, they relied heavily on the support of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT), Human Resources, Housing and Residence Affairs, Protection Services, and Facilities Management, to name a few.

Keep it up

Dr Jansen warns that we are not out of the woods yet, and that hand hygiene, face masks, and physical distancing must be adhered to at all times. We may even experience a second wave of infections as the lockdown levels ease, Johnson explains. Besides drawing from his medical knowledge and skills, Dr Jansen learnt how important change is: "Put yourself in a position that allows you to adapt to change." 

By Dr Cindé Greyling





“COVID-19 was new to us all, but we couldn’t shy away from it.

We learned about the entire process, which enlightened us on the various ways of testing.”

QWAQWA nurses optimise skills during COVID-19 pandemic

Recognising the need to provide relevant health care in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, a group of four professional nurses on the Qwaqwa Campus completed training that enabled them to test staff and students returning to campus.

The nurses have transformed their clinic into a fully-fledged testing facility able to conduct tests on a daily basis, send it off to the local lab at the Mofumahadi Manapo Mopeli Hospital, and provide results within two to three days of testing. They are also fully equipped with the necessary personal protection equipment.

This all happened under the care of Clinic Head Sister Mathapelo Moloi, who says she saw the need to be equipped in testing in order to manage the influx of staff members and students returning to campus.

Sister Moloi says a room in the clinic was transformed into a permanent testing room that is decontaminated daily. “I realised that once people started returning in their large numbers, if we


don’t know how to conduct tests ourselves, we’d have to send them to public facilities, which had the potential to cause chaos and delays.”

Acquiring **new** techniques

Sister Moloi says she invited Department of Health officials to train them on conducting diagnostic COVID-19 tests.

“COVID-19 was new to us all, but we couldn’t shy away from it. We learned about the entire process, which enlightened us on the various ways of testing”, Sister Moloi says.

She says since completing the training, a number of staff members and students have been tested. She says when online screenings for people requiring access to the campus are completed, she also receives the results, making it easy to pick up on potential cases. If a person reports any signs of COVID-19, they are attended to before being granted access to campus.

“We’ve been very busy since we’ve all returned to campus. Getting our first positive cases was extremely scary, but we’ve since gotten the hang of it. Conducting our own tests has helped us control numbers as positive cases are identified sooner, which minimises contact with many people. When someone tests positive, we’re able to arrange counselling for them to help them cope with the positive result.” 

By Nonsindiso Qwabe

PROTECTION SERVICES

adapt quickly as **frontline** workers

When everyone was still figuring out what exactly a lockdown meant, Protection Services was on duty.

Classified as an essential service from the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, they had to adapt more quickly to the 'new normal', while still keeping everyone safe.

Noko Masalesa, Senior Director: Protection Services, says being frontline workers created anxiety and fear. "Especially for those in the front line, such as security officers, because no one knew what to expect – it was a first experience for all of us."


They adjusted swiftly. Shifts were rearranged for staff to spend less time at work and to make sure that if infections occur, business can continue without disruption. "We even had to make special transport arrangements for our members, as there was limited public transport."

He says a lot of lessons have been learnt. Meetings could continue online, and some Protection Services functions could operate from home. According to Masalesa, some best

practices, such as forms of access control, will continue even after lockdown.

A COVID-19 operational Oversight Committee was also established. Masalesa says a dedicated senior member of Protection Services was assigned to "familiarise himself with the regulations each time the country moves to a different lockdown level" and to advise the committee accordingly.

Access control was amended, as security officers at gates had to physically check permits, access cards, take temperature readings, and scan QR codes, says Cobus van Jaarsveld, Assistant Director: Protection Services.

Protection Services also conducted campus patrols to ensure compliance with regulations and that complaints about non-compliance are addressed. "It needs to be mentioned that staff, students, and contractors in general comply with the lockdown regulations, which is very commendable," says Van Jaarsveld. 

By Jóhann Thormählen

Members of the COVID-19 operational Oversight Committee are, from the left (back row): Daniel Alexander, Wilson Pongwane, Cobus van Jaarsveld, and Aina Mupupa.

In the front are, from the left Riana Johnson, Katleho Leechoo, Stephen Matthews, and Msokoli Ngqangaza.

PROTECTION SERVICES • BESKERMINGSDIENSTE





Helping to prevent the spread of COVID-19 in residences are, from the left: Ntabiseng Mokhethi, Residence Head of the new Medical Residence on the Bloemfontein Campus, and Quintin Koetaan, Senior Director: Housing and Residence Affairs.

Embracing the new normal in on-campus housing

The everyday life for the on-campus student population has changed significantly due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The Department of Housing and Residence Affairs (HRA) has embraced a phased-in approach for the return of students to comply with the university's reintegration plan as allowed by the country's lockdown levels.

HRA has worked closely with the different UFS faculties to identify students, especially those staying in on-campus residences, to prepare for their return to residence.

Combined efforts with Kovsie Health, Protection Services, and the Division of Student Affairs: Residence Life Office ensured safe spaces within residences. Hand sanitisers in foyers, notices about social distancing, mask etiquette, personal hygiene, and basic principles to abide by in reducing the risk of COVID-19 infection, formed part of preventative measures.


To further prevent the spread of the virus, HRA used the guest residence principle to place students in single occupancy, says Quintin Koetaan, Senior Director: Housing and Residence Affairs.

His colleague, Pulane Malefane, Assistant Director: UFS Student

Life, highlighted HRA working closely together with Kovsie Health and residence heads in responding to students with symptoms, quarantine, and isolation processes.

"Even though residence life programmes were interrupted, residence heads, together with their student leaders, developed innovative methods of maintained engagement with their students. Online communities were preserved through corridor WhatsApp groups, and student mentors went to the extent of contacting their residence members by calling them individually to check if they are coping with virtual learning."

Residence curricula such as the first-year mentorship programme were swiftly moved to e-mentoring, with assistance from other Student Affairs Offices such as Gateway.

In a quest to ensure the safety and academic success of the UFS student community, Koetaan advised that HRA will continue with the rigorous coaching of the new normal as students pour back onto campus. 

By Xolisa Mnukwa

Standing up against **GENDER-BASED** VIOLENCE

As Crime Investigating Officer in the Bloemfontein Campus Department of Protection Services, Elise Oberholzer is passionate about her work, where she puts her expertise in sexual and gender-based violence-related (GBV) crimes to good use. As a former South African Police Service (SAPS) detective, activism against GBV remains close to her heart.

Oberholzer assists victims with all complaints of gender-based violence, whether on or off campus. According to the SAPS national protocol, only a member of the Family Violence, Child Protection and Sexual Offences Unit may take a statement from a victim of a sexual offence, in order to prevent secondary victimisation. Hence, the investigating officer at the University of the Free State (UFS) does not take statements from victims if a criminal case is to be registered, as this can have a negative impact on successful prosecution.

"Only when a victim decides against pressing criminal charges but intends to continue with disciplinary procedures against a suspect, does the UFS investigating officer take a statement," explained Oberholzer.

PROCEDURE FOR GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE CASES

The procedure for all cases involves Protection Services assisting the victim to open a criminal case at the Park Road SAPS, which includes organising protection orders against perpetrators; determining if the abuser or attacker is known or still in the vicinity, to ensure that the victim is safe and that the assailant is arrested; ensuring that counselling is arranged either by the investigating officer, the Gender Equality and Anti-Discrimination Office, or other role players within the Sexual Assault Response Team (SART).

As part of this process, victims receive medical attention and emergency services are called to deal with injuries and provide transportation to hospital. In rape cases, victims are briefed regarding the process to follow and the availability of the Tshepong Victim Support Centre at the National Hospital for

support. Members of the SART team also provide assistance throughout the process, including nominating a representative to provide emotional support to the victim in the absence of a close trusted friend. All staff members involved are always on standby to assist after hours.

By Valentino Ndaba

Elise Oberholzer plays an instrumental role in the fight against gender-based violence and sexual crimes at the UFS.



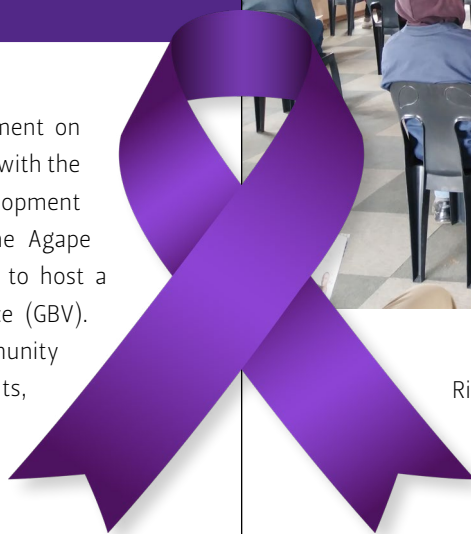
PHOTO | Anja Aucamp

MEN'S DIALOGUE

on gender-based violence

The Office for Community Engagement on the Qwaqwa Campus collaborated with the Department of Community Development and their community partner, the Agape Foundation for Community Development, to host a men's dialogue on Gender-Based Violence (GBV). Representatives from significant community structures such as government departments, political parties, community leaders, students, and the general public participated in the dialogue. Other stakeholders included representatives from the Government Communication and Information Services, the Economic Freedom Fighters, and the Right to Care.

Community Development student, Mr Thabang Mokoena, explored the association between the current scourge of GBV and family dynamics. He encouraged young men to educate themselves and change their attitude towards their female peers.



Participants in the Men's dialogue on Gender-Based Violence.

Right to Care addressed the participants regarding caring for the wound after surgical male circumcision. Agape shared a presentation on its Entrepreneurship programme. Effective communication, family, dysfunctional relationships, individual rights, and different forms of abuse were debated.

The forum created a reconciling and safe platform where the community could express their concerns and at the same time try to understand their societal challenges as they work together towards their resolutions. <

By Dikgapane Makhetha

EMERGENCY NUMBERS

UFS SEXUAL ASSAULT RESPONSE TEAM

Toll-free (after hours) line | **0800 204 682**

Bloemfontein Campus | **051 401 7777**

Qwaqwa Campus | **058 718 5460**

South Campus | **051 401 7455**

UFS PROTECTION SERVICES

Bloemfontein Campus

051 401 2634 / 051 401 2911

080 020 4682 (toll-free)

Qwaqwa Campus | **058 718 5460 /**

058 718 5175

South Campus | **051 505 1217 / 051 505 1478**

CAREWAYS

Staff members are encouraged to contact Careways at the following contact details should they need assistance:

Call toll-free **0800 004 770**

SMS your name to **31581**

Email | ewp@lifehealthcare.co.za

HIGHER HEALTH MENTAL HEALTH HELPLINE

Toll-free number (24 hours) **0800 36 36 36**

SMS | **43336**

COVID-19 TOLL-FREE NUMBER

0800 029 999

ICT SERVICES

setting a standard of excellence

One of the world's leading certification bodies, Bureau Veritas (BV), awarded ICT Services ISO 9001:2015 certification for quality management during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Kate Smit, Head: Risk and Quality Management at ICT Services, explains that ISO 9001 is an internationally recognised standard for quality management based on several key principles that include strong customer focus, engaged leadership, a process approach to business practices, and continual improvement. The certification according to ISO standards demonstrates that ICT Services is working in accordance with national and international best practices, showing its credibility and competence to stakeholders and customers.

BV awarded ICT Services this certification without any audit findings. The UFS is the only South African university to have obtained this level of certification for its IT operations.

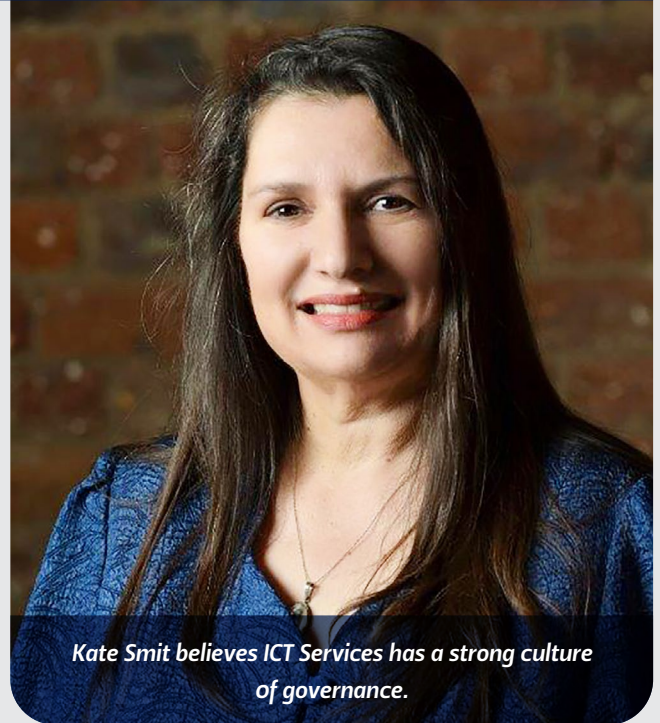
The scope of this certification included all functions performed by ICT Services.

Consistency and transparency

Smit says their decision to become ISO 9001 certified exemplify a commitment to providing quality services to all staff, students, and stakeholders. "This certification confirms that we value superior quality, superior service, innovation, flexibility, agility, and reliability," she adds.

When ICT Services embarked on ISO 9001 certification in April 2019, Smit knew it would launch their department into a class of companies and organisations that can proudly claim a focus on customer service and a commitment to continual improvement. "This improved our business operations by providing more consistency and transparency in the way we work," she says.

According to Smit, ICT Services has consistently invested in its staff, knowledge, and systems in order to deliver outstanding




Kate Smit believes ICT Services has a strong culture of governance.

PHOTO | Supplied

project implementation and customer-focused services. She believes those values are embedded in the culture of ICT Services.

Quality Management System

"The implementation of a quality management system (QMS) afforded us the opportunity to look at our business practices and to set a standard of excellence for our core services. It has laid the groundwork for creating global operations systems that support our technical and operational work, and that build the capacity of our staff and partners worldwide," she says.

"The QMS is also a critical factor in managing the business expectations of our staff and students. It ensures the first principal of quality – which is customer focus – in not only meeting the needs of the UFS community, but exceeding their expectations," says Smit. 



By Leonie Bolleurs

HR receives Top Empowerment Awards

A 90% pass rate in the Adult Education and Training programme, learnerships rolled out to Housing and Residence cleaners, as well as the General Security Certificate for Security Guards. These are some of the reasons why the university's Department of Human Resources (HR) was nominated for the 2020 Top Empowerment Awards.

Under the leadership of Juanita Burjins as Head of Leadership and Development in HR, the university was entered in the Education and Skills Development category. Burjins' role is to ensure that no one


“HR supports the careers and personal development of staff and complies with all skills development processes.”

is excluded from training, whether it is support or academic staff in the various programmes offered to staff, namely the Engage Leadership programme and the Executive Development programme.

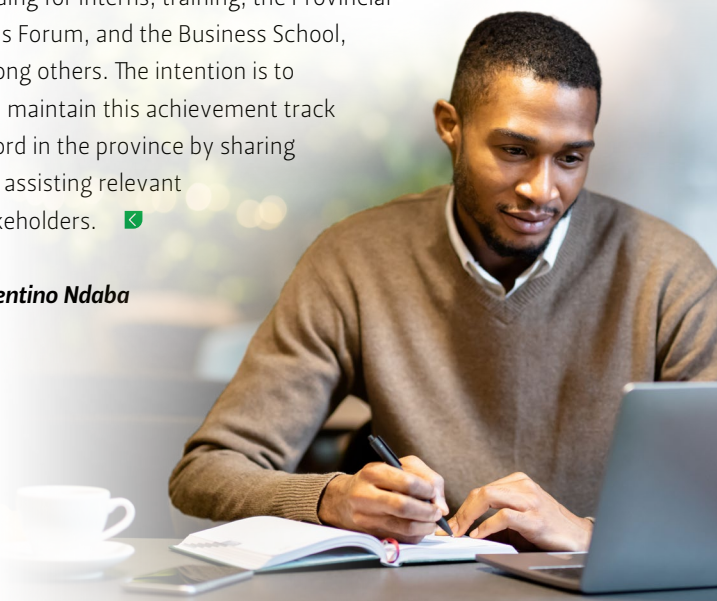
What does the award mean for the institution?

The award means that HR supports the careers and personal development of staff and complies with all skills development processes. According to Burjins, “We have increased our BBBEE scoring with regard to skills development. Our Diversity and Inclusivity training is also aligned to the Integrated Transformation Plan. We are one of the few universities that acknowledges and enhances the skills development of service workers who play a major role in our lives daily.”

Forward to the future

Some of the plans Burjins intends to implement in her environment to further build on the standards recognised by the award, include establishing and strengthening existing partnerships with various Sector Education and Training Authorities (SETAs), which involves funding for interns, training, the Provincial Skills Forum, and the Business School, among others. The intention is to also maintain this achievement track record in the province by sharing and assisting relevant stakeholders. 

Valentino Ndaba



Library **sets trend** with **ACCREDITED RESEARCH**

When students and staff speak, our Library and Information Services (LIS) listens. Not only does this result in maintaining high service delivery, but it also led to producing accredited research that can assist other libraries.


The LIS research shows that it values the “voice of the UFS community and thus pauses and touches base”, says Betsy Eister, Director: Library and Information Services.

LIS published an article, *How is our service delivery? How can we do better? A total quality management (TQM) analysis of an academic library*, in a DHET-accredited journal, *Innovations: journal of appropriate librarianship and information work in Southern Africa* in June 2020.

Eister is very proud. “An academic library is an extension of what happens in lecture halls and in research, and for the LIS staff to be researchers themselves is testimony to the belief and the high regard they place in their work.”

She says it is important to determine the relevance of the LIS services. They experienced concerns from staff and students and conducted a ‘holistic needs and concerns assessment’.

The LIS has learnt a few lessons in the research process, says Eister. Firstly, they can also contribute to the existing body of knowledge by sharing experiences. “We learnt that we are producing a lot of data on a regular basis, and that can be used for action research purposes – through ethical clearance of course.”

The research also helped them understand what academics go through to publish papers and the urgency of their information needs. 

By **Jóhann Thormählen**

Proud LIS staff members.

Front row, from the left:

Betsy Eister and Kegomodicwe Phuthi.

Back row, from the left: Ronet Vrey, Lee Goliath, and Jeannet Molopyane.

PHOTO | Anja Aucamp

DR DOROTHY RUSSELL: 35 years working with kids



Dr Dorothy Russell

The saying by Mark Twain: “Find a job you enjoy doing, and you will never have to work a day in your life,” perfectly describes Dr Dorothy Russell’s work of the past 35 years at the Bloemfontein Child Information Centre (BCIC).


This passionate occupational therapist started her long and fulfilling career at the BCIC, which is part of our Department of Paediatrics and Child Health at the university, shortly after the centre opened its doors 35 years ago. Three decades later, she still enjoys her service to parents, babies, and children with special needs.

Dream job

“This is my dream job that I prayed for, and I am still happy fulfilling my passion. I wanted to make a difference in the community, and I managed to achieve this goal every year. My passion to work with parents and their children has never changed over the years. As a very positive spiritual person, I am a perfect fit for the BCIC.”

“I have the ability to always notice the positive possibilities in challenging circumstances. My entire being strives to equip and empower children, especially children with disabilities, and their parents,” describes Dr Russell, Director and Senior Occupational Therapist, her work.

In the past 20 years, Dr Russell has seen more than 400 patients and clients at the Toy Library. She looks after 182 babies and children with Down syndrome and their intervention.

Dr Russell also participated in community projects and founded a Down syndrome parent support group to empower parents and provide occupational therapy intervention for the children. This group led to the establishment of the Down Syndrome Free State branch. 

By **André Damons**



ARU gets R8,4 million injection

The Afromontane Research Unit (ARU), the flagship research group of the University of the Free State Qwaqwa Campus, has recently been granted R8,4 million to establish a Risk and Vulnerability Science Centre programme.

The Risk and Vulnerability Science Centre (RVSC) programme was established by the Department of Science and Innovation (DSI) as part of the Global Change Research Plan for South Africa and is funded by the DSI through the National Research Foundation (NRF). The RVSC will focus on the need to generate and disseminate knowledge about risk and vulnerability on global change challenges faced by local policy makers/governance structures and communities in South Africa.

Invited to participate

Dr Ralph Clark, Director of the ARU, says the UFS, together with the University of Zululand and the Sol Plaatje University, has been invited to participate in Phase 2 of the RVSC programme. Dr Clark was approached by the DSI (on referral from the South African Environmental Observation Network – SAEON) in February 2020 regarding the potential for establishing a RVSC at UFS-QQ.

Subsequent interactions were held between the UFS and DSI, and in March 2020, the UFS formally accepted the DSI invitation. It has since been agreed that the RVSC: UFS will be hosted as a RVSC under the ARU umbrella, with dedicated personnel embedded at the UFS in this regard (internal processes and reporting) but reporting directly to the NRF regarding the RVSC.

Interest and support welcomed

Dr Clark welcomed this interest and support from the DSI-NRF, saying that the funds will further assist the UFS in growing its

excellent and growing research portfolio and building more research capacity on this traditionally undergraduate-focused campus. “The RVSC will contribute to much-needed solutions in an area marked by major sustainability challenges and will assist in moving Phuthaditjhaba away from its negative apartheid history towards becoming a sustainable African mountain city,” says Dr Clark.

By André Damons



Dr Ralph Clark



4IR makes online transition easy for Faculty of Education

Integrating the Fourth Industrial Revolution in the Faculty of Education curriculum – Dr Bawinile Mthanti.


As a way of incorporating new technologies into education to assist in getting ready for an automated world, the Faculty of Education began reimagining its curriculum and how it is taught in order to integrate the Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR).

This was a timely move, as it proved to be a much-needed skill during the period of online learning. The faculty's Teaching and Learning Manager, Dr Bawinile Mthanti, began introducing the concept of 4IR within the faculty in 2019. After identifying a gap in the integration of 4IR, she began the process of infusing it into the curriculum through workshops as a way of promoting blended learning.

"We're now in a very mobile generation. We come from a generation where there were no phones and computers, but in the 4IR it is now all about making things more efficient, faster, and more accessible," she said.

Dr Mthanti said discussions on 4IR have proven to be essential, as it made the transition to online learning easier for the academic staff and students at large.

"We were all forced to go into online learning because of the pandemic. This has assisted us, because the traditional ways of teaching did not always incorporate 4IR, but we've had to reimagine our content delivery to make the work easier to grasp for students."

"COVID-19 has taught us how to move everything online. Quality assurance of students' work is much more controlled and synced because everything is online. I love that the most, and I've even proposed that this way of working continues beyond the lockdown," she said. 

By Nonsindiso Qwabe


CTL inspires staff and students despite remote learning challenges

The Centre for Teaching and Learning (CTL) management team launched the *Khothatsa* publication to give recognition to our staff and students who are putting forth unprecedented efforts to make a success of emergency remote learning. *Khothatsa* means 'to inspire' in Sesotho, and as you will see from the way they express themselves, both students and staff have been and continue to inspire each other.

The project started with a call to students to write about how their lecturers have inspired them. After receiving students' submissions, lecturers were asked to reply. Prof Francis Petersen, UFS Rector and Vice-Chancellor, says of this initiative, "The narrative of staff and students illustrates how critical it is that our staff and students engage with diversity and use innovative approaches to challenges they face in the classroom."

One student-lecturer combo is Megan Pillay and Nico Oosthuizen in the Faculty of Theology and Religion. Megan says, "Lecturers are the lights of our life. They sculpture us to bring out the best in us. They are the persons whom we respect and admire most. Here I would like to share the story of my dearest lecturer who inspired me with his knowledge and dedication to his work."

In his response, Nico says, "You can only imagine the impact that your essay has on me. Knowing that I had the opportunity to fulfil my part in my creational vocation to inspire is immeasurably valuable."

In the foreword to *Khothatsa*, the management of CTL says, "We would like to dedicate this publication to all the staff and students that have and continue to inspire us." 

*By Eugene
Seegers*

*Megan Pillay and Nico
Oosthuizen recognised and
appreciated the inspirational
qualities in one another.*



Onnica
Msimango

ONNICA MSIMANGO:

Ensuring safety and health compliance on the Qwaqwa Campus


With 12 years of experience in quality safety management, Onnica Msimango's new role as the Occupational Health and Safety Officer on our Qwaqwa Campus involves navigating the waters of getting the campus ready for the gradual return of staff and students.

Msimango's main focus has been to interlink all the departments on campus to align with the safety requirements in order to

ensure compliance, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic. "If there is one thing that the pandemic has done in my role, it is to bring all the departments together towards one goal – ensuring compliance and the health and safety of everyone in the workplace. All this is new to all of us and we have, as far as reasonably practicable, done what we could and hope that everyone will align and comply with the requirements implemented."

Msimango is also a dab hand at designing and implementing systems for environmental, quality, and safety management. She has extensive experience in the mining and construction sector.

She has had her hands full working with different departments to ensure campus readiness for the eventual return of staff and students to the campus. "We are following the Department of Labour and the Department of Higher Education's directives in ensuring that there is compliance from the access point to the lecture halls and residences, which includes having sanitisers installed at all access points, enforcing social distancing in all venues around campus, and enhancing overall awareness."

She says safety, health, and environmental quality management is an ever-changing environment that constantly exposes her to new dynamics, thus keeping her on her toes. "I love the diversity of my job, as it enables me to focus on all-round campus compliance. It keeps me on my toes, and I love it." 

By Nonsindiso Qwabe




LiT
RADIO ON Q

celebrates **first** anniversary

The month of October marks the first anniversary of the Qwaqwa Campus online student radio, Q-Lit. "It has been a rocky road of sleepless nights, tears, and a lot of challenges. However, we have grown from strength to strength. We have made dreams of ordinary students possible. We have influenced change and inspired students to tap into their talents and potential," said an elated station manager, Mbuyiselwa Moloi.

The station came in handy during the worst lockdown period of the COVID-19 pandemic, when it bridged the communication gap between students and the university to integrate teaching and learning into the programming to ensure that no student was left behind. "With all of the regulations and online learning, Q-Lit had to be reinvented. While it was not an easy journey, we have grown more than ever before. Our August 2020 report shows that we have pulled in more than 1 600 listeners, even amid the learning, unlearning, and relearning processes. It was during this month that we also ran a series highlighting strategic

offices led by women on campus as part of our Women's Month celebration," Mbuyiselwa revealed.

Looking to the future, the station hopes to obtain a full broadcasting licence from the regulatory body, the Independent Communication Authority of South Africa (ICASA), soon. 

Mbuyiselwa Moloi with student volunteers, Keamogetswe Mooketsi (presenter), Tshumelo Phaladi (producer), and Siphamandla Shabangu (SRC member – Social Justice and Universal Access).



FRELET DE VILLIERS: the 'key' in reaching for the stars


The Bloemfontein Children's Choir is in the fortunate position to have Dr Frelet de Villiers from the Odeion School of Music (OSM) as its pianist. Not only is she a passionate piano teacher, but also the developer of Pianoboost, an app that teaches how to play the piano.

"I do not believe that I am the best pianist at all, it would be very arrogant to say that. I just think that I have the necessary experience and skillset to aid the choir in reaching for the stars," says Dr De Villiers. She has performed with and

accompanied the choir before and is hopeful that the choir will be able to perform at national and international competitions again. "It has been a dream of mine to collaborate with the Tygerberg Children's Choir in a joint performance, as well as a concert (or more) with the North-West Children's Choir," she says.

The best of the best

She is excited about the potential and strides the choir will make in the near future. "The children singing in the choir are the best of the best. They usually also sing in their own school choirs, are involved in various other extramural activities and are very loyal to the choir family, and then, of course, you need the best choir conductor to lead the choir to excellence, and that we have in the person of Werner Stander." De Villiers believes in music and the arts and emphasise the importance of group participation for social development and cultural cohesion.

"I am really excited about the prospect of working with Werner. I got to know him as an honours-degree student in my class at the Odeion," says Dr De Villiers about Stander, who was recently appointed as the choir's conductor. She is hopeful and excited about teaming up with Stander, because they share the same values and belief system. "We both love children, and both have a passion for music and a drive for excellence." 



Werner Stander

Dr Frelet de Villiers is excited to accompany the Bloemfontein Children's Choir as pianist.



By Rulanzen Martin

Sinovuyo Mogwasi was appointed as the project coordinator for the Faculty of Theology and Religion's Shepherd Centre in May 2020.

New project coordinator at **SHEPHERD CENTRE** values growth

Amid a global pandemic and a national lockdown in South Africa, Sinovuyo Mogwasi joined the Faculty of Theology and Religion as Project Coordinator of the Shepherd Centre in May. Shepherd is where all the short learning programmes (SLP) of the faculty are administered. Sinovuyo's role involves coordinating all these faculty SLPs, including applications, registrations, study material requests, and certification for the programmes, along with some financial and HR matters. *Dumela* linked up with Sinovuyo to find out what path her journey has taken as part of the 40th anniversary celebrations of the faculty.

Number of years at the UFS?

"I have been at the UFS for seven years, arriving as a student in 2013. In 2017, I joined the Student Academic Services as an ad hoc staff member, and later on a permanent basis under the Student Service Centre."


Biggest accomplishment/change for the faculty?

"One accomplishment to be proud of, was increasing

its capacity in terms of the admission of undergraduate students in the past couple of years; the adjustment surely put a strain on not only academic, but also support staff. But I think the faculty handled it well, and we are continuing to grow."

Working in the faculty?

"I was appointed in May 2020, during lockdown Level 5. My first day at work was confusing, being at home and all. But my best memories would be of how warm and welcoming the staff in the faculty has been towards me, although I haven't met most of them face-to-face, but via calls and emails; everyone has been amazing."

"The faculty has allowed me to grow in my career and to have a key role in the short learning programmes offered in the Faculty of Theology and Religion. I have had opportunities to expand on my skills and knowledge and to be able to have a positive impact on the lives of our students." 

By Eugene Seegers

NICOLE MORRIS leading Student Affairs on the Qwaqwa Campus

Nicole Morris' deep passion for entrepreneurial, leadership, co-curricular programme development, working collaboratively to build systems that enhance the student experience, makes her the perfect fit for the job of Director: Student Affairs. Morris recently took up the position on the university's Qwaqwa Campus. She holds an MBA from Wits University and was herself an active student during her tertiary years, serving as SRC Vice-President.


The main focus of her role is to work with the Dean of Student Affairs to formulate and interpret the policy, direction, functions, and outcomes of student affairs, and most importantly, supporting the strategic and operational frameworks of the Division of Student Affairs (DSA) and the university, especially in rolling out programmes of the DSA in partnership with other departments and student structures.

"I have represented student affairs at a number of conferences both locally and globally. The knowledge and experience gained has helped me to contribute to creating meaningful student experiences. Having worked in student affairs for the past 10 years, agility and creativity is required on all fronts."

Morris admits that stepping into such a student-focused role during a nationwide pandemic has come with its own unique challenges.

"During this pandemic, the question around the development of co-curricular programmes is at the top of my list, noting the challenges our students face in accessing devices, data, and electricity," she says.

"Working collaboratively, I am working actively in creating a paradigm shift in dealing with the socio-economic challenges our society is facing, and finding solutions with students, staff,

and the community in addressing social justice issues in our communities." 

By Nonsindiso Qwabe

Nicole Morris: In charge of Student Affairs on the Qwaqwa Campus.



DR LIEZEL ALSEMGEEST poised to take Financial Planning Law to new heights

A life-long learner is how Dr Liezel Alsemgeest describes herself, taking on her new role as the Director of the School of Financial Planning Law in the Faculty of Law. A personal finance expert, Dr Liezel has been tasked to ensure that the School of Financial Planning Law remains the biggest education provider in its industry in South Africa.


She has served in several roles at the school since she started in 2012 and says this new experience will test and stretch her to become a better leader, a better academic, and a better person.

"I firstly want to continue the good works of my predecessors. Apart from that, I want to establish a constant research environment within the school. The area of personal finance is my research area, and I am extremely passionate about it. That said, it is a very new area of research and I want to focus on research that will help people become financially free and financially literate."

Dr Liezel started her academic career as a research assistant in the Department of Business Management in the Faculty of Economic and Management Sciences and was later appointed as a junior lecturer in 2006.

"I grew up in Bloemfontein and have lived in Bloemfontein all my life, apart from a few years spent overseas. I also completed all of my degrees at Kopsies and I am a proud Bloemfontein."

She says the School of Financial Planning Law prides itself on always being ahead of the curve.

"The school is a great place to work and study. I love that our team is like a well-oiled machine and that everyone has the passion to deliver the best quality service to our students. Another interesting thing is that there are only ladies working in the School of Financial Planning Law, and that makes me proud as I feel strongly about female empowerment, not just at Kopsies, but also in the financial services industry." 

By Amanda Tongha

Dr Liezel Alsemgeest is leading the team in the School of Financial Planning Law.

PHOTO | Anja Aucamp






Prof Robert Peacock is building relations between the UFS and the United Nations.

PROF ROBERT PEACOCK strengthening UFS/UN relations

Prof Robert Peacock from the Department of Criminology in the Faculty of Humanities, in his capacity as President of the World Society of Victimology (WSV), is a frequent attendee of high-level meetings of the United Nations (UN). The WSV enjoys Special Category consultative status with the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) of the UN and the Council of Europe.

With the many engagements that Prof Peacock undertakes, he is firmly establishing a rapport between these organisations. "In order to contribute to a world we eagerly await and to end preventable challenges, these activities constitute an ongoing engagement at the UFS with global agenda," he said. The Department of Criminology, under the leadership of Prof Peacock, can contribute to the "vision and action we urgently need to shed the harmful legacies of social ills and the abuse of power."

The participation of the WSV provides opportunities for interventions and to advance cooperation between international, national, regional, and local agencies and other interested parties concerned with the problems of victims of crime and the abuse of power. Prof Peacock recently provided expert consultation on 'Model Provisions Regarding Victims of Terrorism' at the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) and the United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism, hosted by the UN and co-sponsored by Afghanistan and Spain. 

By Rulanzen Martin

KovsieCAST makes E-learning more accessible to students

KovsieFM, in partnership with the Centre for Teaching and Learning (CTL), has launched a new podcast series called KovsieCAST.


The series was designed to help students achieve academic success. In each podcast, KovsieFM talks to experts from diverse fields on topics such as how students can manage the 'new normal', how to cope with new technologies, and even what to eat to stay healthy. The aim of this series is to expand on UFS online learning initiatives by allowing students to record mini-lectures or tutor sessions that they can use to help prepare for tests and exams.

KovsieCast,
a meaningful
and positive
contribution to
the University
of the Free
State virtual
learning space
and Academic
Project.

UFS experts from CTL, the Career Services Office, Student Counselling and Development, and the Department of Nutrition and Dietetics have all participated to ensure that the project is a success and of crucial benefit to students.

UFS Director for Student Life, Dr WP Wahl, said, "I am very excited about the project, and I believe it has the potential to contribute meaningfully and positively towards the Academic Project of the university."

Dr Wahl further added that the project is also guided by student feedback and engagement from various UFS communication platforms. "Through social media and online engagements with students, we keep in touch with their needs. This serves as the inspiration for the podcasts," added Dr Wahl.

The podcasts are distributed to Kovsie students every Monday and Thursday. Additionally, the episodes air on KovsieFM in Bloemfontein, and the Qwaqwa Campus' online campus radio station, Q-Lit, every week. 

By Xolisa Mnukwa

Link | Distributed: <https://iono.fm/e/918780>

How to sign a Microsoft Word document,



There are many ways to digitally sign a document, and there are many types of document formats. For now, let's focus on the fastest way to sign a Microsoft Word document in four easy steps.

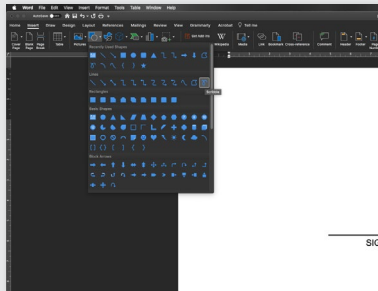
STEP 1:

Click where your signature is required.



STEP 2:

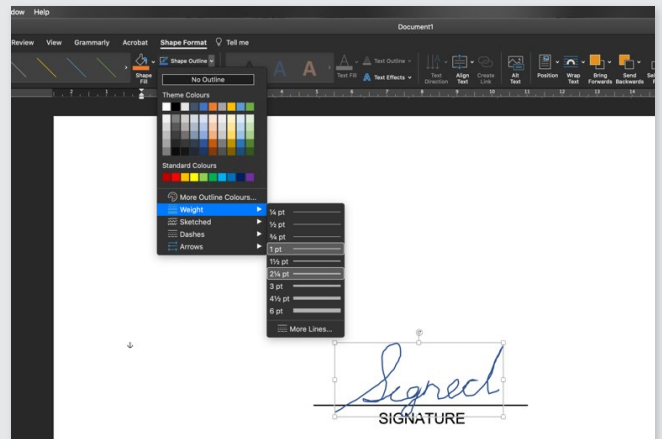
Go to the 'Insert' tab, click on the 'Shapes' dropdown, and select 'Scribble' under the 'Lines' category.



STEP 3: After clicking on 'Scribble', the mouse cursor will change into a 'plus' shape. You can now start drawing.



STEP 4: Now you can adjust the size with your mouse cursor, and the colour and line weight according to your preference in the 'Format shape' tab.



Voilà! You have successfully signed your document. It may not be as easy as signing a physical document, but at least you get to practise that signature for your next licence renewal.

By Barend Nagel

mamela!

HUMOR

Joe, never would 'Mela have thought that we would work so hard – much less from home! Sometimes 'Mela wonders what day it is, but before long, the coffee with five sweeteners and a teaspoon of milk (because of the new diet) kicks in and all confusion disappears.

Eish! How hard would it be for everyone to return to campus? 'Mela's biggest worry is, of course, having work clothes that still fit and pants that do not make us look like a Woolworths muffin. Will our budgets make it, because we'll have to start buying perfume and conditioner again? Luckily, the virus isn't worrying 'Mela too much, because there are still a few bottles of bulk sanitiser left from back in April 2020.

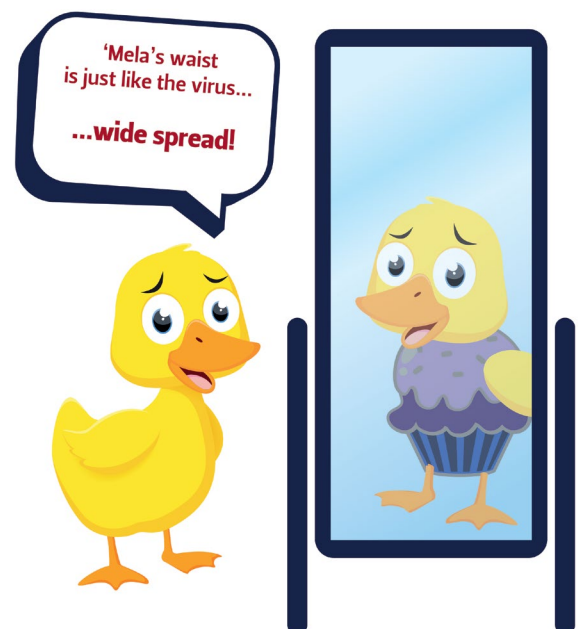
'Mela wishes for a break from all the thinking and worrying, and misses the 'lekker' blue KovieBrew from last year's Multilingual Mokete – oh, how nice that would be right now?

If, or when, we do return to 'normal', what would we call

the 'new normal'? Would it be the 'old normal'? Should 'Mela download the COVID-19 ALERT app, and will it save lives or is it really the government spying on us? See! – there 'Mela goes again, thinking and worrying!

As someone once said, 'If I keep stress-eating at this level, the buttons on my shirt will start socially distancing from each other.' One thing is certain: we seem to be a lot closer to a vaccine for the Coronavirus than to one for being South African! ☑

Love,
'Mela



Ready, steady, go!

Both the teams receiving first and second place in this year's Virtual Step Challenge are from Provisioning in the Department of Finance.

In the ten-week period of the challenge, the teams were working hard, walking seven days a week for not less than two hours a day.

Putting their tekkies to the tar and walking away in first place, was the team of Thato Nthotso and his wife, with Maarten Struwig and his daughter. They covered 4 735 km.

Ending in second place was the all-women team, Co-Fit killers, consisting of Marlete Paulsen, Andria van den Bergh, Letia Victor, and Mariette Kriek. They covered 4 127 km in this period.

In first place, participating on individual level, was Dorothy Russel (1 997 km) from the Department of Occupational Therapy, and in second place, Christa Jordaan (1 960 km).

Health benefits and bragging rights


Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, team members walked alone outdoors to make up their kilometres. They added the last kilometres to their



The all-women team, Co-Fit killers, consisting of Marlete Paulsen, Andria van den Bergh, Letia Victor, and Mariette Kriek, completed 4 127 km in this challenge.

tally on 31 July 2020, as this was the cut-off date for the competition.

The challenge brought forth more benefits than just the bragging rights to first and second place. The team was in agreement: "We never felt sick during the challenge; we did not pick up any weight, the challenge gave us energy, and it boosted our sense of meaning."

Besides the health benefits, the challenge was also an opportunity for teams to get to know each other from a totally different angle, and to have fun. 

By Leonie Bolleurs

Team Thato Nthotso and Maarten Struwig with close family members walked away in first place.



UFS FOOD ENVIRONMENT PROJECT: Looking after students' well-being



As part of their response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the UFS Food Environment Office and Tiger Brands, with the assistance of student and staff volunteers – were recently able to support 1 300 students with food parcels. In early March, the Food Environment Office secured a memorandum of understanding with Tiger Brands, which stipulated the provisioning of 500 food parcels to the value of R70 000 per month to the university. These parcels consist of maize meal; macaroni; Morvite; two-minute noodles; jam; peanut butter; tinned chakalaka; mixed vegetables; baked beans; and bully beef.

Food parcels were distributed from the UFS Bloemfontein Campus Kopanong Auditorium, and from the faith centres in suburbs surrounding the Bloemfontein Campus.

Members of the UFS Food Environment Project collaborated to develop a vegetable production and training programme to address the challenge of food insecurity on UFS campuses and beyond.

The UFS team managing the Food Environment Project include Prof Johan van Niekerk, Dr JW Swanepoel, and Carien Denner from the UFS Centre for Sustainable Agriculture, Rural Development and Extension (CENSARDE), Annelize Visagie (Food Environment Office), and Karen Scheepers from the Active Civic Teaching (ACT) office.

The office continues to work with senior management on the UFS Qwaqwa and South campuses to distribute food parcels to students in need. Gift of the Givers supports this initiative by provisioning 200 food parcels per month, with the UFS South Campus recently receiving 150 parcels from the organisation to distribute. In addition to this, the UFS No Student Hungry Programme aids food-insecure students with food through modest food allowances and daily access to one balanced meal. Through these initiatives, students have more time to focus on their studies without worrying about their next meal. <

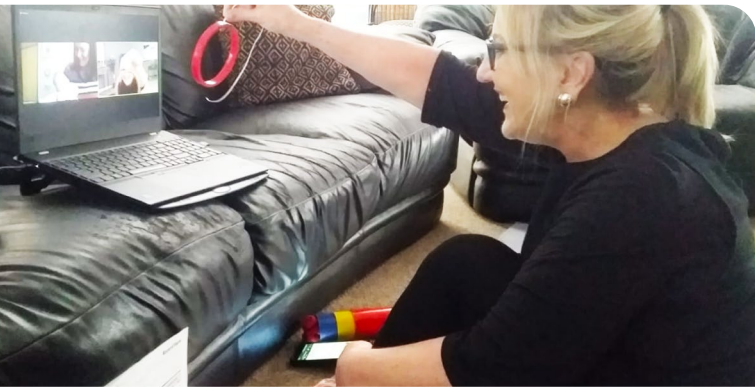
For more information on how you can contribute to these initiatives, visit the No Student Hungry donation page or email: Visagiea@ufs.ac.za

By Xolisa Mnukwa

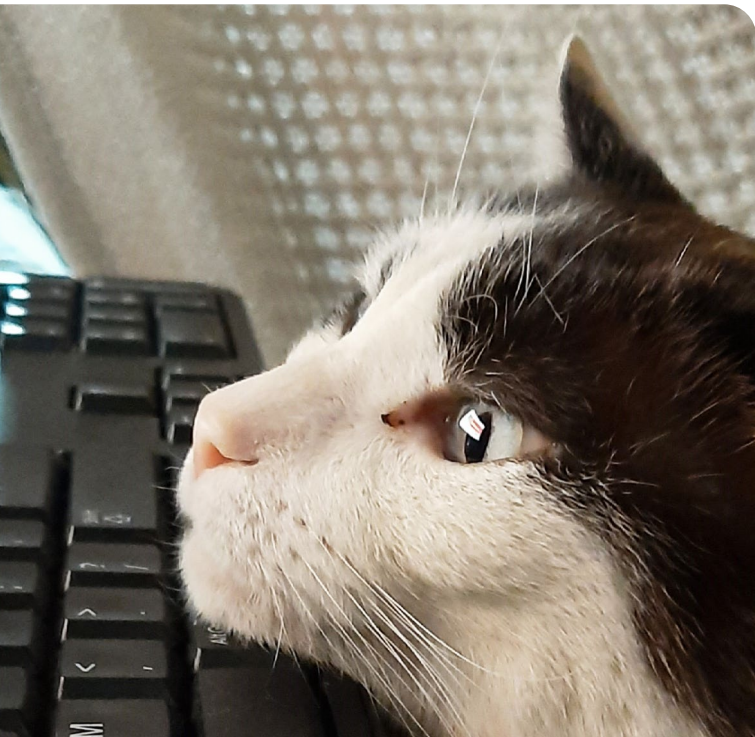


Working remotely

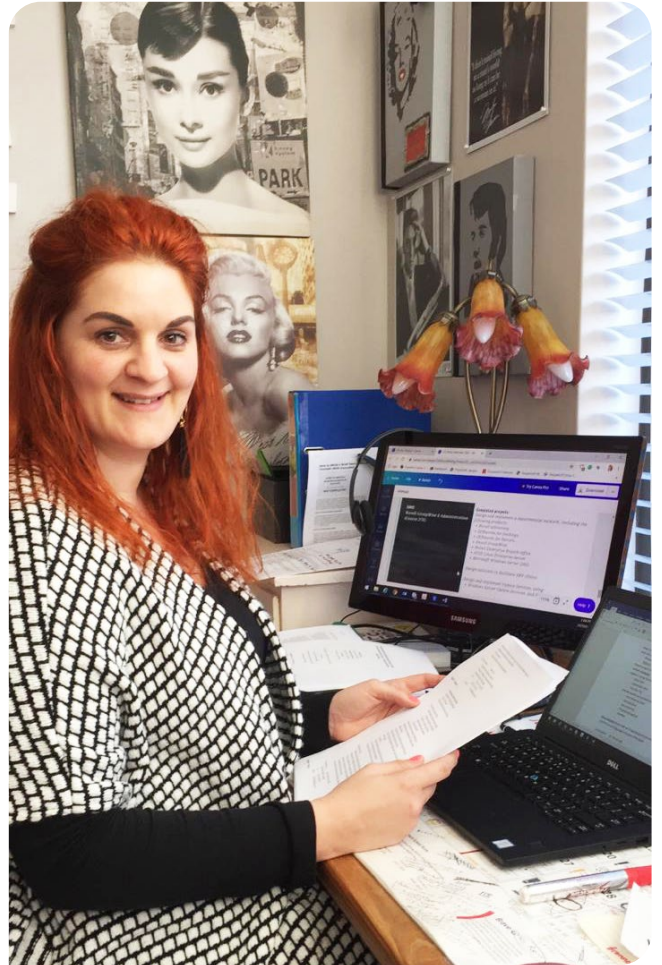
With COVID-19 forcing staff to work from home, there has been a shift in work habits. From sharing office space with feline creatures to working on a desk constructed from wine boxes, Kovie staff members shared some pictures of their home workspaces during the national lockdown. Have a look.



Dr Dorothy Russell, Occupational Therapist and Director of the Bloemfontein Child Information Centre in the Faculty of Health Sciences.



"Others have to keep their kids happy. I have to keep Matewis happy. Note the effective acoustic device – a cotton throw fixed over a pole." – Annemarie Wagener, Senior Lecturer in the Department of Architecture.



Belinda Janeke, Head of Career Services.



"Crazy but exciting times we are living in! God gives me strength for each day!" – Cecile Fourie, Clinical Assistant in the School of Nursing.



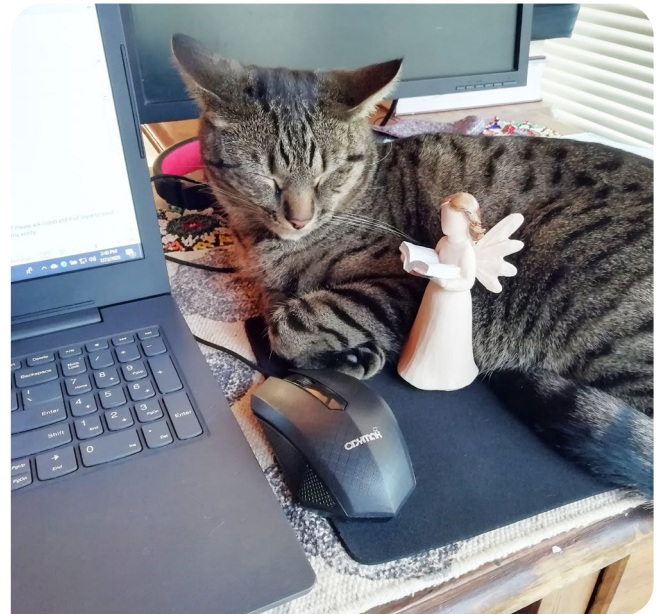
Dr Bawinile Mthanti, Teaching and Learning Manager in the Faculty of Education.



"When lockdown started, I only had a camping foldout table that was suitable, so I set up all the computers and 'repurposed' earphones and got to work. It was a challenge, but I enjoyed the time saved on not having to drive to work. Plus, there was bottomless coffee – that really helped!" – Gavin Dollman, Lecturer: Computer Science and Informatics on the Qwaqwa Campus.



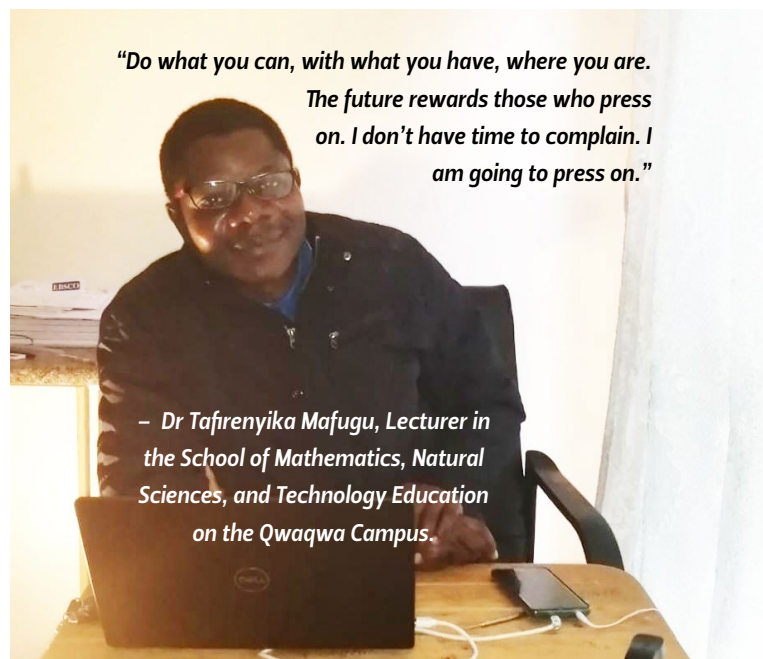
"Here is my standing desk, built in the middle of lockdown from stools, pieces of wood we had, and wine boxes (some empty, some full) from the wine order that arrived the day before the first lockdown that stopped the sale of alcohol." – Prof Martha Smit, Professor and Academic Departmental Head: Microbial, Biochemical and Food Biotechnology.



"My cat Kosie is the best associate one could ask for. Always ready to assist and so enthusiastic!" – Dr Annemie Grobler, Language Practitioner in the Faculty of Health Sciences.

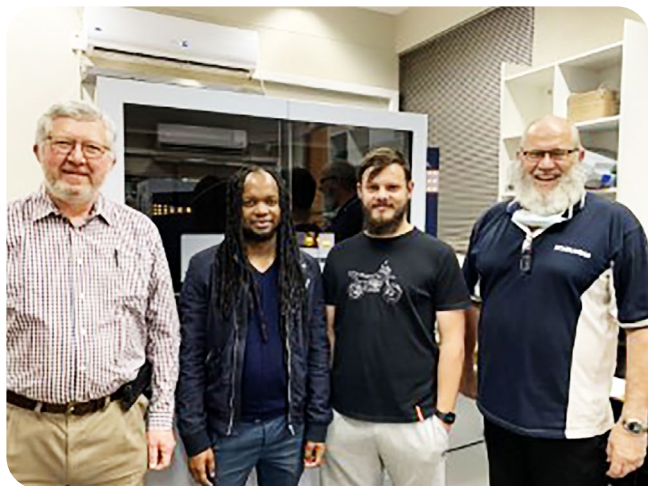


"My little one (Miané) enjoyed working with me." Jemima du Plessis, Assistant Officer in the Faculty of Health Sciences.



"Do what you can, with what you have, where you are. The future rewards those who press on. I don't have time to complain. I am going to press on."

– Dr Tafirenyika Mafugu, Lecturer in the School of Mathematics, Natural Sciences, and Technology Education on the Qwaqwa Campus.

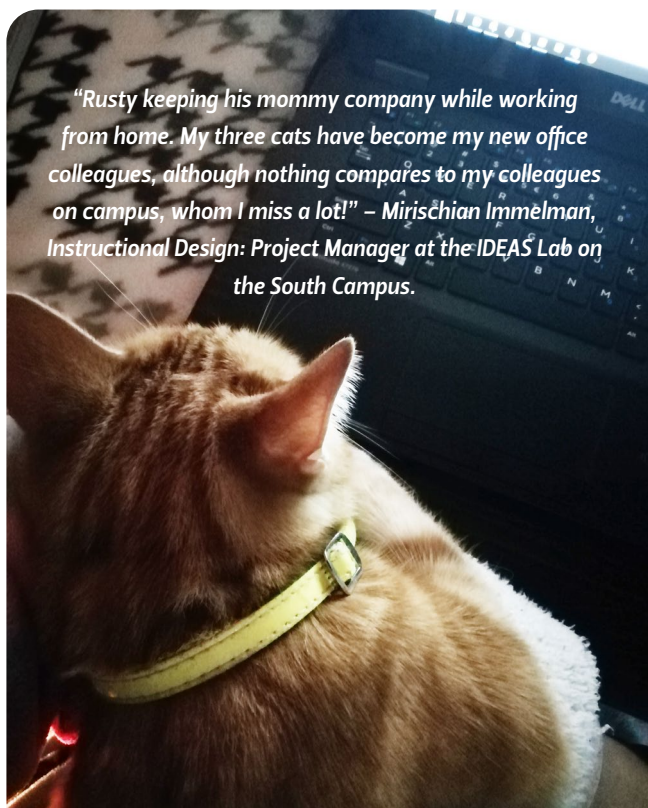


"COVID-19 has made our Inorganic Chemistry Group's hair grow slightly." Prof Andreas Roodt, Outstanding Professor in the Department of Chemistry. With Prof Roodt (right) are, from the left: Dr Johan Venter, Senior Lecturer; Dr Dumisani Kama, Senior Lecturer; and Shaun Redgard, Researcher.

1920s Working from home vs 2020s



A picture is worth a thousand words. – Errol Cason, Senior Lecturer: Animal, Wildlife and Grassland Sciences.



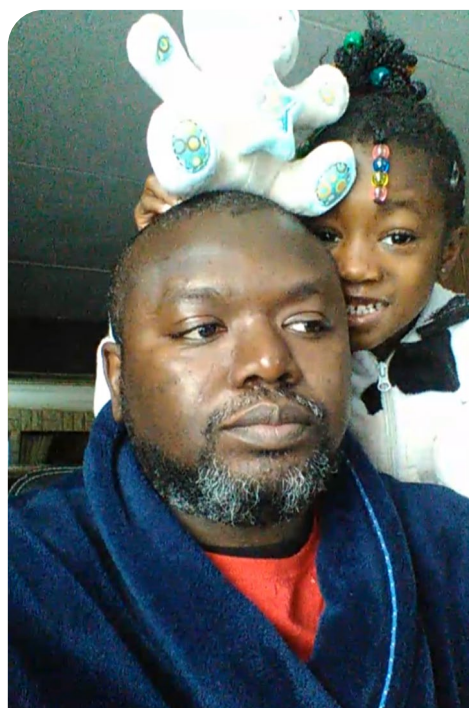
"Rusty keeping his mommy company while working from home. My three cats have become my new office colleagues, although nothing compares to my colleagues on campus, whom I miss a lot!" – Mirischian Immelman, Instructional Design: Project Manager at the IDEAS Lab on the South Campus.



Ready for work – Juanita Smith, Senior Officer: School of Social Sciences and Language Education.



"My dining room doubles as my workspace. I like to have plants and chose a seat with a view from the window. It is difficult to conduct students' exams, interns' supervision, and departmental meetings virtually. And my thesis." Lerato Mmusi-Makhele, Clinical Psychologist and Lecturer in the Department of Psychiatry



"This was in the middle of one of our virtual meetings." William Awusi, Faculty Manager: Office of the Dean, Faculty of Law.



Prof Mathys Labuschagne, Head: Clinical Simulation and Skills Unit, Support School of Medicine.



"I am working at the South Campus Call Centre. I operate very well handling calls and email requests. Because I must always be at my laptop to receive calls, it keeps me safe at home." Dries van Tonder, Chief Officer: Formal Programmes, South Campus.



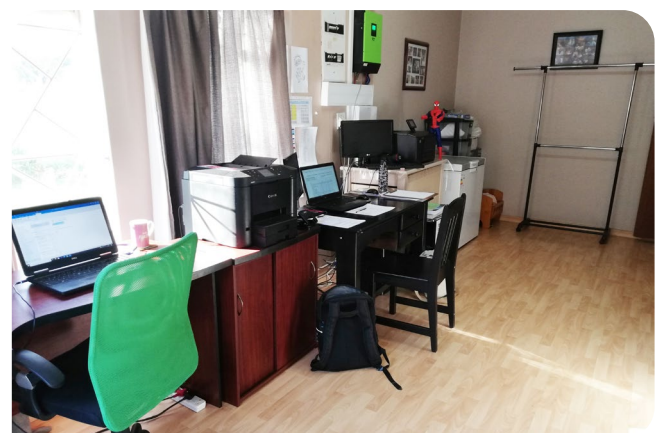
Prof Tom Ashafa, Professor in the Department of Plant Sciences.



Prof Pearl Sithole, Qwaqwa Campus Vice-Principal: Academic and Research.



"The cat's name is Ziggy. His mother was a stray cat from Pelonomi (Hospital). We got him just before lockdown. The advantage is that we have him with us all day and he is now very tame and cute. When I'm busy with my computer or printer, he comes rushing to play. I am doing all my administrative work from home and it is rough some days." – Karen Ehlers, Senior Lecturer in the Department of Genetics.



"Our office at home. It is a quiet day, as it is a school week for us. At least Spider-Man is a permanent fixture." – Hendri du Plessis, Programme Director and Lecturer: Quantity Surveying and Construction Management.

By Amanda Tongha

Kovsie sports star rewarded

While there hasn't been any student sporting action since the end of March, this didn't prevent a couple of Kovsies from making the news.

Three former Kovsie sports stars, Kesa Molotsane, Raynard van Tonder, and Karla Pretorius, as well as current student, Sikholiwe Mdletshe, received recognition.

At the Gsport Awards (for South African females in sport), Pretorius won the Global Woman in Sport trophy thanks to her stellar 2019 performance for which she was named the Player of the Tournament at the Netball World Cup.

"I see the award as a reward for your efforts and sacrifices. I am grateful for the wonderful platform that Gsport provides women," said Pretorius.

The athlete, Molotsane, is one of the digital education publication *Inside Education's* 100 South African shining stars. Seven individuals were recognised in the sports and recreation category for contributing to their communities through excellence in their career fields.


"This award is not just for me, but for the community that I'm

impacting. I want to continue making a change in the society through my athletics career."

Van Tonder won the category Four-Day Domestic Player of the Year at the Knights cricket awards function. He finished the competition as the leading run-scorer with an average of 70.25.

"It was a very big honour to receive the credit for your hard work. It wouldn't have been possible without the incredible support of my Knights teammates and the great work of our coaching staff."

Mdletshe, captain of the South African U21 netball team in 2019 and 2020, feature among the newspaper Mail & Guardian's 200 young South Africans. She is one of six winners in the sports category.

"I see this as an opportunity to keep learning, growing, and using what I have to make the changes that we as young individuals want to see. The change we want to see starts with us." 

By Ruan Bruwer

Flying the Kovsie flag high: Kesa Molotsane, Raynard van Tonder, Karla Pretorius, and Sikholiwe Mdletshe.

