

INSPIRING UFS STAFF

dumela

UNIVERSITY OF THE
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YUNIVESITHI YA
FREISTATA



JUNE 2021 – ISSUE ONE



FROM THE EDITOR

Much has happened since COVID-19 disrupted our lives more than a year ago. Instead of living in an uncertain world for a few months, we have been living in this world for more than a year now.

Going through various stages of the national lockdown, remote work has become a full-time or part-time norm. For many staff, it has been a demanding time of working around the clock.

During this time, we welcomed new students to the university with our first ever online registration in February this year. We celebrated the achievements of senior students during several virtual graduation ceremonies. Our April graduation ceremony became the biggest virtual graduation to date, with just over 7 900 qualifications awarded to under- and postgraduate students, as well as three honorary doctorates.

The speed at which everything had to be achieved is almost impossible to believe, but we did it – a testament to the flexibility and determination of our staff.

Six months into the new year, and with a virus still ravishing lives, the UFS is gaining momentum again.

We see this in the renewal taking place on campus. See pages 7 and 8 for information on the newly built modular lecturing space and assessment centres on the Bloemfontein and Qwaqwa campuses, as well as other infrastructure projects.

We heard it when we interviewed the people featured in this edition of the Dumela magazine. Talking about the university and their work, they utter words like 'growth', 'new approaches', and 'rethinking'.

Renewal, reimagining, and rethinking are also important themes from the official opening address of the Rector and Vice-Chancellor, Prof Francis Petersen, earlier this year – a clarion call to action for both staff and students. Read about it on the next page.

I hope you are inspired by these and other stories as you browse through the rest of the magazine.

Wishing you a relaxed second half of 2021!

Amanda Tongha
EDITOR

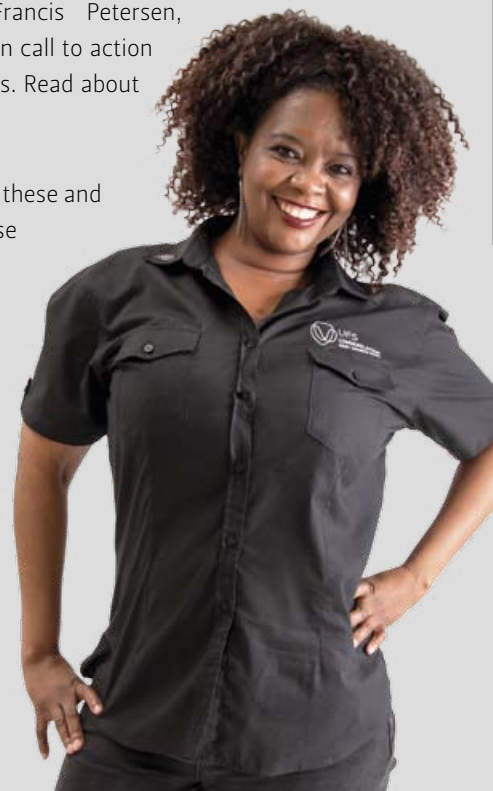
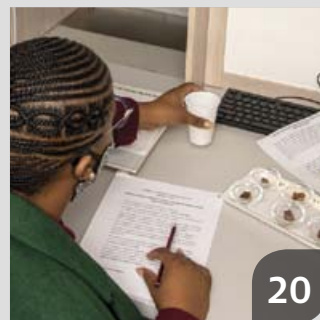


PHOTO | Sonia Small

WHAT'S INSIDE



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YOUTH DAY

12-23 JULY 2021
HOLIDAY BREAK

12-16 JULY 2021
MANDELA WEEK

18 JULY 2021
MANDELA DAY

26 JULY 2021
THIRD QUARTER COMMENCES

9 AUGUST 2021
NATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY

17 SEPTEMBER 2021
KOVSI'S MULTILINGUAL MOKETE

The year 2021 – A time to reflect, rethink, and reimagine what is possible, and doing it



Delivering his annual official opening address, Rector and Vice-Chancellor, Prof Francis Petersen, officially welcomed the University of the Free State community to the current academic year on 5 March 2021. This year marked the first time ever that the official opening ceremony was held virtually; in the interest of the safety and well-being of staff and students and in adherence to COVID-19 regulations, the virtual opening ceremony was broadcast via YouTube to all campuses.

The unfamiliarity and heightened uncertainty brought on by COVID-19, our resilience, vision, and renewal inherently premised on the rethinking and reimagining of higher education – the University of the Free State in particular – was Prof Petersen's core message. "The COVID-19 pandemic has proven that no institution

or individual can take on the economic, environmental, social, and technological challenges of our world on its own. But the COVID-19 pandemic also provided an opportunity for us to rethink and reimagine higher education and the University of the Free State in order to contribute to a more inclusive, cohesive, fairer, and sustainable future," said Prof Petersen.

Prof Petersen also emphasised that engagement, conversation, clear communication, and decisive action yield the type of environment in which we all want to work and study. "I can assure you that we will continue with engagement in a sphere of respect and tolerance for different views – always focusing on fairness and social justice." [K](#)

By Dr Nitha Ramnath

Remote Teaching and Learning:

Grounded **Lessons** from **Emergency** Redesign

By now, the phrase 'no one got training for working within the pandemic' is a common slogan. In the higher education sector, it is meant to calm impatience associated with the disruption of systematic learning and the interactive ambience in learning institutions. Indeed we count our losses every day, and if we must heal, perhaps we must count – the course outlines used to frame the learning *experience*; computer skills that were learnt and improved with assistance in labs; real lecturers who could discern a confused face and see those aha! moments; tutor appointments with the promise of tricks for understanding; library visits with hard-copy volumes that smell of knowledge; peer study groups; ad hoc invitations to campus events; not to mention cafeteria engagements about anything from content to teaching styles.


Yet COVID-19 has purged all the frills and thrills of learning and instituted a logistics-based regimentation of learning ethos. It is a sin even within well-off societies that do not have the added burden of social inequalities and a visible digital divide. Students in many societies across the globe lament mental-health issues associated with learning in isolation. Remote teaching and learning have to contend with the diversity of learning abilities, preferences, and needs – all from a sudden disruption that has no defined time frames yet.

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

Nevertheless, we should not consider it all a burden. Crafting appropriate blended approaches towards teaching for specific levels, will make it possible to create learner-centred tuition journeys. These should at least take into consideration the following five elements:

- Different **fields of study**
- Individual **learning abilities**
- Balancing the acquisition of '**new learning skills**' with **gaining 'new knowledge'**
- Nurturing **social attributes** (for example, developing self-initiative) – a by-product of different levels of learning, from the first year to completion of qualification, with the assistance of academic support units
- **Learning environments** – some people can focus while being surrounded by noise, but some cannot. Thus, student accommodation is not just about creating a home away from home; it is about finding a place where one can personalise a certain level of seclusion or immersion to create an enabling environment. The preferred mix of learning materials comes into the equation as well.

Reflecting upon an academic year of emergency remote learning – which 2020 was for the Qwaqwa Campus – it seems that **infusing and enhancing reachability** within the remote learning is the way to go. Many confuse the need for the human element or interaction with the demand for 'a teacher in front of a class'. Indeed, let's face it, direct interaction will remain ideal for a long time. Even for those who are happy to dispense with it, their previous experience of classes remains a powerful benchmark to imagine learning entitlements. Therefore, innovative ways to **remove a generic institutional face** from registration, orientation, interaction with lecturers and tutors, class/peer associations – are the way to go. Academic administration, academic support, as well as teaching and learning spaces must reorganise themselves in such a way that they have real identities behind them. A 'humane-remote' environment should not sound like a contradiction if we are to master the new normal without begrudging it. This 'humane-remote blend' should consider the overlay of the five elements outlined here **from the perspective of the student**, not just the institution.

Of course, none of us received training for the pandemic, but in higher education we were trained to pursue meaning – and this is a time to remember that meaning is a site where reason and feeling meet. 

By Prof Pearl Sithole



DR LEBEKO NTSEPE: _____

The **new** force driving FARMOV'S strategic relationships

The clinical research organisation FARMOV'S on the Bloemfontein Campus of the UFS has appointed Dr Lebeko Ntsepe as the newest member of their executive committee.

Dr Ntsepe, the new Strategic Relations Executive, is ready for an exciting and fulfilling journey at FARMOV'S. He will establish and maintain key strategic relationships on behalf of the organisation.

Happy to be back in a clinical research environment

Dr Ntsepe was a general practitioner in Phuthaditjhaba for 18 years before joining FARMOV'S. During this time, he was also involved in clinical trials.

"I am very happy to be back in a clinical research environment! The FARMOV'S team is very knowledgeable and energetic. The environment is also very professional and welcoming. These factors are already contributing to a very fulfilling and exciting journey," says Dr Ntsepe.

According to him, FARMOV'S can also play a key role in the transformation of the clinical trial industry in South Africa. Dr Ntsepe is looking to establishing new relationships on behalf of the organisation to facilitate organisational growth and profitability.

Experienced in leading

Dr Ntsepe, who strives to create societal and organisational transformation in everything he does, has been fortunate to fulfil different leadership roles over the past few years. He has served as a board member of various private and public enterprises, including the Health Professions Council of South Africa (HPCSA) and various hospitals.

"I genuinely care about vulnerable groups in society. For this reason, I started a non-profit organisation that aims to take care of children in child-headed households. The organisation distributes clothes, school uniforms, and food. I am very passionate about this initiative and I hope to make a tangible difference in the rural Eastern Free State communities in years to come," says Dr Ntsepe.



We can achieve more if we collaborate

Dr Ntsepe believes that collaboration is the key to sustainable growth. "If we share our knowledge and insights with one another, we can make a bigger impact. Every single person in an organisation can drive change. Hence, we should pool all our resources together to ensure mutually beneficial growth for FARMOV'S, the UFS, and the Free State."

If you would like to invite Dr Ntsepe to participate in strategic conversations, contact him at:

E: Lebeko.Ntsepe@farmovs.com 

By André Damons

For more information on FARMOV'S,
please visit the website: www.farmovs.com

CUADS 20-year



PHOTOS | Supplied


Twenty years ago, the need was identified to accommodate students with disabilities on the Bloemfontein Campus, and in an attempt to provide an accessible environment and academic life for these students, the Unit for Students with Disabilities was established in February 2001. The unit started with one staff member, fifteen registered students, and one Braille printer. Since 2015, the name of the unit has changed to the Centre for Universal Access and Disability Support (CUADS), with offices on all three campuses. There are currently 247 registered students, 13 staff members and three Braille printers, with a pool of ad hoc South African Sign Language interpreters, editors, and amanuensis.

Full integration of students with disabilities

After 10 years of existence, the unit was ready and committed to look at future possibilities for the full integration of students with disabilities. A lot of work has been done to accommodate students with disabilities across all categories of disability, including study courses, accessibility to buildings, accessibility of learning materials, residences, sporting activities, computer facilities, interpreting services for deaf, hard of hearing, and deafened students, as well as the provision of a specialised exam and test venue for alternative test and exam procedures.

CUADS now forms part of the dynamic student support environment of the Department of Student Affairs, and although the last decade has not been without a lot of growing pains and buy-in from different stakeholders, the centre has aimed to ensure that the UFS becomes an accessible higher education institution of choice for students with disabilities. While the primary focus of the support services offered by CUADS is to promote equity for students with disabilities in order to reach academic success, a holistic approach to student participation and success is followed to ensure a humanising experience.

Universal Access

CUADS' involvement with the UFS Integrated Transformation Plan through the Universal Access Work Stream has assisted in integrating disability and universal access matters, which have contributed thus far to the approval of Disability Sport as part of the Integrated Sport Strategy, Disability and Universal Access advocacy as part of the Advocacy, Awareness and Analysis Strategy, including universal access considerations in the UFS Estates Technical Manual for infrastructure, and the Policy on Universal Access and Disability Support for students with disabilities. 

By Martie Miranda and Mosa Moerane

celebration

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CELEBRATION

PHOTO | Supplied



Timeline

- Establishment of **Unit for Students with Disabilities (USD)** within Student Counselling and Development
- **First blind student graduated** at the UFS



- Unit became an **independent** department within Student Affairs



- **Ten-year celebration**, embarking on integration of support to students with disabilities
- Celebrating a **ramp** at the front door of the **Callie Human Centre** as a graduation venue

- **Sign Language** interpretation integrated with Interpreting Services

- Name change to **Centre for Universal Access and Disability Support (CUADS)** and adopting universal access as approach to include students with disabilities

- Became part of the UFS transformation agenda through the UFS **Integrated Transformation Plan**
- **Mental health** challenges added as a category of students with disabilities supported by CUADS
- Formalised orientation and mobility training for students with visual impairments to enable **independent movement** around our three campuses



- Commenced with **tactile paving** project on Bloemfontein Campus

- **Policy** on Universal Access and Disability Support for students with disabilities **approved by Council**
- Universal access considerations within the **UFS Estates Technical Manual** for infrastructure.

2001

2008

2011

2013

2015

2017

2019

2021

2005

- First deaf student (Sign Language user) registered, with **Sign Language interpreting services** provided

2009

- First **full-time Sign Language interpreter** appointed



2012

- **Alternative exam arrangements** integrated with Exam Division



2014

- **Accessible transport services** established between South Campus and Bloemfontein Campus with First Car sponsorship

2016

- Documenting **40 graduates with disabilities** in one year for the first time, which repeated itself in the following years



2018

- Establishment of CUADS offices on **South Campus** and **Qwaqwa Campus**, with CUADS coordinators appointed
- First **Biennial CUADS Formal Function** held

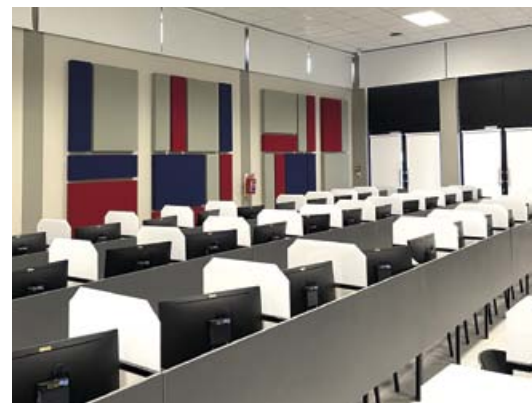
2020

- **Disability Sport** integrated into ITP Sport Strategy
- **Disability and Universal Access** advocacy integrated with ITP Advocacy, Awareness and Analysis Strategy

Making dreams VISIBLE



The new façade of the Odeion



The new modular lecturing space and Assessment Centre on the Bloemfontein Campus

There is a story about a behavioural scientist meeting a group of workers on a building site. The first worker seemed tired. When asked what he was doing, he said he was laying bricks. The second, with a lacklustre attitude, replied that he was building a wall; the third, doing the same work, was whistling, smiling, and going about his duties with passionate energy. Although he was a bricklayer like the other two, his answer was: "I am building a cathedral."

Maureen Khati, Assistant Director of Project Management: Facilities Planning, and the team at University Estates manage projects for various infrastructure projects at the UFS. The Corona curveball was just another challenge that had to be overcome in a world where funding, tenders, project teams, and building-site inspections are managed with a passion for design, practicality, and clean audits.

One example is the newly built modular lecturing space and assessment centres on the Bloemfontein and Qwaqwa campuses. In terms of design, the challenge was that the building had to accommodate at least 1 000 students, could be divided into five separate spaces, and host 890 computers. Ramps, instead of stairs, increased accessibility. Not an inch

was wasted, and even the corridors were built with desks against the walls where students could plug in laptops.

University Estates are team players. According to Khati: "We need to understand stakeholder needs. Our team works closely with Protection Services, ICT, as well as Mechanical and Electrical Engineering. We must ensure that these buildings are practical and functional."

If you have ever experienced the frustration of renovations to your house, consider that the University Estates team has completed 87 projects over the past year. Some of these are major projects, such as the new façade of the Odeion, new residences, practical multifunctional buildings, new lifts in several buildings, social spaces around the campuses, the continued upgrade of the SASOL library, new labs – the list goes on.

When asked where the energy comes from to stay creative, passionate, and enthusiastic, Khati said: "It's simple, we make people's dreams visible."

Cathedral builders indeed. 

By Igno van Niekerk

Qwaqwa Campus 24/7 Study Centre ready for use



The 24/7 Study Centre will alleviate the pressure on the TK Mopeli Library.

The Qwaqwa Campus 24/7 Study Centre is ready for use. The centre boasts 360 seats on the ground level, 47 on the mezzanine level, a security area, ablution facilities, and a printing station.


The total size of the centre is 681,5 m²; it will help alleviate the pressure that the TK Mopeli Library has been experiencing in recent years with the rapid increase in student numbers.

Prof Pearl Sithole, Vice-Principal: Academic and Research, had this to say about the centre: "We are currently undergoing a balancing act between hibernating from a huge health threat and affording students the learning experience they deserve. Our excitement over the 24/7 study centre for students is based on



The new Faculty of Economic and Management Sciences and SAS building.

knowing that the facilities enabling our students to achieve the 'aha! intellectual moments' are readily available. Studying and learning need to be versatile, and at times more focused. Once we master the balance between the logistics of COVID-19 safety and the careful thresholds of exposure to learning as experience – we will have the facilities to execute that balance."

Also ready for use is the new building housing the Faculty of Economic and Management Sciences, Student Academic Services (SAS), Financial Aid, Student Finance, and the service centre. It has two 120-seater halls plus a 300-seater lecture hall, and a 60-seater lecture hall. 

By Thabo Kessah

Construction of the Academy for Multilingualism on Qwaqwa Campus underway

The beginning of 2021 saw the establishment of the Academy for Multilingualism, which is currently under construction on the Qwaqwa Campus. The academy will be hosted in a separate building next to the new media lab on the campus. The concept was informed by the decision of the UFS Council in 2016 to adopt the then new Language Policy that made English the language of instruction throughout the university.


"The academy will comprise a 100-seater multipurpose lecture hall, four 30-seater lecture halls, an office, reception area, tearoom, cleaner's store, and a paraplegic toilet," said Facility Management's Daniel Mofokeng.

The project will be completed on 28 August 2021.

Meanwhile, the new million-litre reservoir is already in use. This will help alleviate the water supply challenges that the



Qwaqwa Campus' two reservoirs.

campus has had to deal with because of the water problems in the Maluti-a-Phofung area. There are now two reservoirs on campus receiving their supplies from a borehole. 

By Thabo Kessah

Pushing boundaries leads to Y2 rating from NRF for Theology researcher

Dr Lodewyk Sutton's path to research excellence started several years ago when his master's degree in Theology was upgraded to a PhD programme as a result of his contributions to the field of Psalms research. The themes he worked on were about identifying body language, and the development of imagery from the perspective of war and honour, which extends into the field of canonical-critical research. Dr Sutton completed his doctorate in 2015, and was then awarded a postdoctoral fellowship, where he had the opportunity to expand on his PhD research, ultimately publishing four articles in reputable, peer-reviewed journals.

New avenues of understanding

In subsequent years, Dr Lodewyk focused even more on a coherent theme in studying the Psalms, combining all three perspectives mentioned previously. He says: "This resulted in significant new avenues of understanding the texts of the Psalms, and the relation between Psalms and other texts, as well as the appropriation to other contexts."

Dr Sutton's research also contributes to the interpretation of psalms with themes of war and violence, where God is called upon to restore justice. Dr Lodewyk says: "Considering that the final shaping of the Psalter took place in the Second Temple period (after 515 BCE), after the Babylonian Exile, the post-war reality of the Psalter should not be ignored."

The impact of this research was indicated by an invitation to present a paper titled *The homiletic value of war imagery in the lament Psalms, from the perspective of the imprecatory Psalms* (https://www.sbl-site.org/meetings/Congresses_Abstracts.aspx?MeetingId=33) at the annual meeting of the Society of Biblical Literature in Denver, Colorado.

Modern significance

Dr Sutton believes that his research findings can also help in understanding how concepts of war, violence, wrath, and revenge in the Old Testament Psalms can be related to, among others, post-apartheid South Africa, which he says, "desperately needs to start thinking differently about these concepts". He adds: "After a process of reconciliation for more than 25 years after 1994, we are again at a point in South Africa where violence and wrath are being exhibited in high crime, violence, and xenophobic attacks. This research ideology could




Dr Lodewyk Sutton

provide those who suffered injustice and dishonour with a renewed honour and purpose for restoration. And those who experienced that they have been misled and that their previous purpose and identity have been taken away from them can be offered a sense of renewal and purpose in re-establishing their identity and hope. Issues of trauma could also be addressed."

NRF rating

In late 2020, Dr Sutton was awarded a Y2 rating from the National Research Foundation (NRF). According to the NRF, a Y2 rating means a young researcher (40 years or younger), who has held a doctorate for less than five years at the time of application, and who is recognised as having the potential to establish themselves as researchers within a five-year period after evaluation, based on their performance and productivity of quality research outputs during their doctoral studies and/or early post-doctoral careers.

Dr Lodewyk says: "As an academic at the UFS, the rating positions me as a scholar in the Faculty of Theology and Religion who can contribute to its research and international standing." 

By Eugene Seegers

South Campus researcher tackles multiple projects during pandemic

PHOTO | Eugene Seegers




Dr Angela Stott-Vogt did not rest on her laurels during lockdown.

Dr Angela Stott-Vogt did not let a little thing like a pandemic stand in the way of her research or teaching. In addition to building her own studio at home so that she could record and publish lessons for her students and for a UFS short learning programme, she also ensured that her research projects continued to fruition despite the national lockdown and other limitations that would have hampered a less determined soul.

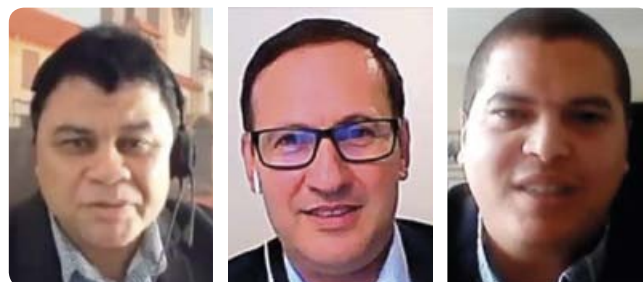
Here is a brief summary of her accomplishments since January 2020 (some of them in concert with other researchers at the UFS) [View full list [here](#)]:

- Four publications in international conference proceedings
- Three publications in academic journals, and one book chapter
- Five articles under peer review
- Three students under postgraduate supervision, and another as co-supervisor; two of these graduated cum laude early in 2021.

As might be expected, Dr Angela Stott-Vogt has applied for an NRF research rating. This application was approved by the UFS internal committee and has been submitted to the NRF for evaluation. 

By Eugene Seegers

Connecting with Alumni: Voices from the Free State podcast series



Bringing Kowsies together. From the left are Prof Francis Petersen, Rector and Vice-Chancellor; François van Schalkwyk, and Keenan Carelse, UFS alumni leading the university's United Kingdom Alumni Chapter.


Intended to reconnect alumni with the university and their university experience, the UFS Alumni office has successfully initiated a podcast series titled *Voices from the Free State*. François van Schalkwyk and Keenan Carelse, UFS alumni leading the university's United Kingdom Alumni Chapter – the hub of a developing UFS international programme – have put their voices together to produce and direct the podcast series.

The **podcasts** are featured on the first Monday of every month, ending in November 2021. Taking a light interview format, featured alumni share and reflect on their experiences at the UFS, how it has shaped their lives, and relate why their ongoing association with the UFS is still relevant and important. The podcasts are authentic conversations – they provide an opportunity for the university to understand and learn about the experiences of its alumni, to celebrate the diversity and touchpoints that unite them, and also to reflect the richness of South Africa.

Connecting with alumni

“I am delighted that this initiative is being led by our alumni, as it serves as an opportunity for all of us to gain insight and understanding about the relationship that our alumni share with the UFS. This is indeed a great initiative; the format of the podcast is refreshing, as it gives us a personal alumnus perspective without taking too much time,” says Prof Francis Petersen, Rector and Vice-Chancellor of the University of the Free State.

Chartered accountant, Likeleli Monyamane, chief technology expert, Bertus Jacobs, South African rugby union player, Jamba Isaac Ulengo, and HR expert Frikkie Meintjes have so far featured in the series, with a few more inspiring alumni lined up for the next few episodes.

For further information regarding the podcast series, or to propose other alumni guests, please email us at alumnipodcast@ufs.ac.za 

By Dr Nitha Ramnath

COVID-19 vaccine testing and the UFS connection



The dedicated team working tirelessly at the SANCLBP is, front row from the left: Kittie Cloete, Dr Quinton Meyer (Director), and Angela Sekabate. In the back row are from the left: Marli Watson, Charles Poonyane, Dr Yolandi Roodt, Esmé Marais, and Dr Ruan Ells.

When the first COVID-19 vaccines arrived in South Africa, people took note for two reasons. First, there was a sigh of relief in anticipation of the end of the pandemic, and second – why would a sample of the vaccines be going to Bloemfontein first? The South African National Control Laboratory for Biological Products (SANCLBP) at the University of the Free State (UFS) has been tasked to test the COVID-19 vaccines before distribution. But why?

The background story

The SANCLBP was established at the University of the Free State in 1998 through a tender from the National Department of Health. Since then, the SANCLBP has been the only recognised national control laboratory to perform lot release testing of human vaccines for South Africa and has also assisted some neighbouring countries in this regard.


As a full member of the World Health Organisation (WHO) Control Laboratory Networks for Biologicals, the SANCLBP is one of only 15 laboratories worldwide contracted by the WHO to test prequalified vaccines.

The SANCLBP is also represented on the South African Health Products Regulatory Authority's (SAHPRA) team of vaccine assessors participating in the joint review of COVID-19 vaccines for the African region through the African Vaccine Regulatory Forum (AVAREF).

The case of COVID-19

Although no one could possibly have predicted the events of the past 18 months, Dr Quinton Meyer, SANCLBP Director, says being part of SAHPRA's Biological Medicines Expert Advisory Committee, as well as the COVID-19 Vaccine Registration Working Group, has helped them to react quickly and prepare to facilitate and expedite the release of COVID-19 vaccines to the South African public.

According to Dr Meyer, all human vaccines available on the South African market are subject to lot release by the SANCLBP. During the lot release process, apart from retesting, the SANCLBP also reviews the manufacturing data for each lot and ensures that the product complies with the current marketing authorisation conditions. "Thanks to COVID-19 vaccines," Dr Meyer explains, "people have also become aware that the shipping and storage temperature can impact the quality and stability of the product." Hence, they also review the shipping conditions for each lot to ensure that the cold chain has been maintained in transit.

Although it is not always broadcast on national news, all vaccines will reach the market via Bloemfontein first. The UFS is extremely proud of the dedicated team at the SANCLBP who looks after the health and safety of our entire nation. 

By Dr Cindé Geyling

UFS staff and students at the forefront of the vaccination process

Staff and students from the Faculty of Health Sciences at the University of the Free State (UFS) were at the forefront when the first doses of the Johnson & Johnson vaccine were rolled out as part of a 3B clinical trial for health-care workers at the Universitas Academic Hospital.

Dr Nicholas Pearce is Head of Surgery at the UFS and Head of the Universitas Hospital task team. He is also part of the provincial COVID-19 team for the Free State. Dr Pearce set up a vaccination station for health-care workers at the hospital and Dr Samantha Potgieter, infectious disease expert at the Universitas Academic Hospital and Affiliated Lecturer in the Department of Internal Medicine at the UFS, was the first health-care worker in the Free State to receive the vaccine.

Second- and third-year students from the UFS School of Nursing were also part of the process; they were responsible for screening patients before and after receiving the vaccine.


Dr Pearce said they were rolling out the Johnson & Johnson vaccine as part of a 3B clinical trial. Since the vaccine has not yet been registered with the South African Health Products Regulatory Authority (SAHPRA), the vaccination of health-care workers was made possible by enrolment in this early access programme as part of an extension to the study.

Vital to vaccinate health-care workers

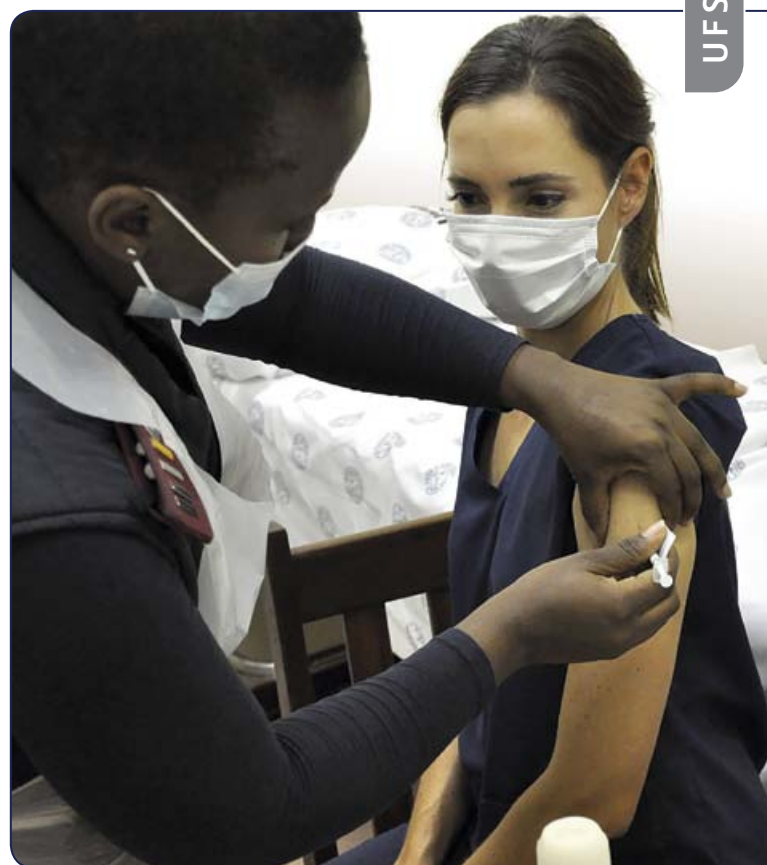
"It is vital to vaccinate health-care workers to prevent staff members from getting ill and dying. So, it is a critical process, as all health-care workers are key people we have to protect in terms of the fight against COVID-19," said Dr Pearce.

Dr Potgieter, who is working tirelessly in the COVID-19 ward at the Universitas Hospital in Bloemfontein, said she is extremely excited and also excited for the Free State to receive this vaccine. "I am grateful to Dr Pearce and his team for setting up this vaccine station for us at the Universitas Hospital," she said.

According to her, the plan is to first vaccinate front-line health-care workers and thereafter essential workers and those at risk of severe disease, according to the national Department of Health's vaccination plan. Said Dr Potgieter: "It is extremely important to vaccinate health-care workers; I think, not

only are we trying to protect our health-care workers from occupational exposure to COVID-19, but we also want to preserve our workforce so that we may continue to serve our community as best we can." 

By André Damons



Nurse Monica Mens injects the first person in the Free State, Dr Samantha Potgieter, with the COVID-19 vaccine.

On 24 May 2021, Dr Pearce and team helped to roll out Phase 2 of the national vaccination programme, vaccinating people 60 years and older at the Universitas Academic Hospital. Those who registered received the Pfizer vaccine.

REUBEN MAEKO makes every day count

For Reuben Maeko, the new Senior Marketing and Communication Officer for Health Sciences at the UFS, every day must count. “I wake up with determination and go to bed with satisfaction, meaning that I give my all to everything I do,” says Maeko.

Maeko, who joined the UFS at the beginning of February this year, is not new to the higher education environment. He previously worked at the University of Limpopo (UL) as marketing officer, where he coordinated student recruitment

projects, international student recruitment, open days, orientation, and other marketing projects. He was also given the task of coordinating a ‘student satisfaction survey’ for UL that covered undergraduate and postgraduate students.

The biggest project that Maeko was part of at the UL, was the coordination of the university’s 60th birthday celebration. He also coordinated the marketing projects of the Department of Education, travelled to SADC countries representing UL, and attended the International Student Fairs AFRICA (ISFA) in Kenya and Tanzania in 2019. He recently formed part of the laptop distribution committee for students at UL during COVID-19.

Always wanted to be part of the UFS community

“I am very happy with the new environment. I mean, we all need growth and new challenges. The UFS is a good institution and I always wanted to form part of its community.”

“I would be very happy to see the Faculty of Health Sciences continue to attract the best performing learners around the globe.”

“The 4IR has arrived, and marketers are being forced to take a different direction of marketing their institutions. I want to see myself implementing new strategies and learning more about UFS narratives that will be user-friendly for our stakeholders. I need to focus more on building more stakeholder relationships for the faculty and implementing all the marketing and communications strategies in collaboration with the DCM at the UFS,” says Maeko.

By André Damons

Reuben Maeko



QUINTER ONYANGO:

The UFS and I chose each other

Just like her job as Marketing Officer in the Faculty of the Humanities, the decisions Quinter Onyango makes – whether simple or complex – differs each day and it is never the same. Some decisions may require out-of-the box thinking, so that every decision she makes should positively benefit the faculty and its departments.

Her enticing aura, drive, experience, and warm smile are the perfect combination of attributes for a marketing officer in a faculty that is about people and human relations.


Her most important driving force is sharing information and mentoring students while working with academics and supporting staff to explore opportunities. “This will help various internal and external stakeholders grow in their chosen field through partnership, communication, marketing, research collaboration, and networking,” she says. Not only is she a good problem solver, but also an avid *Kwasa-Kwasa* dancer.

Quinter is an experienced marketer with extensive knowledge in internationalisation, communication, marketing, and international student life. She previously held an international student life and support-services position at the University of Fort Hare.

The perfect opportunity to grow

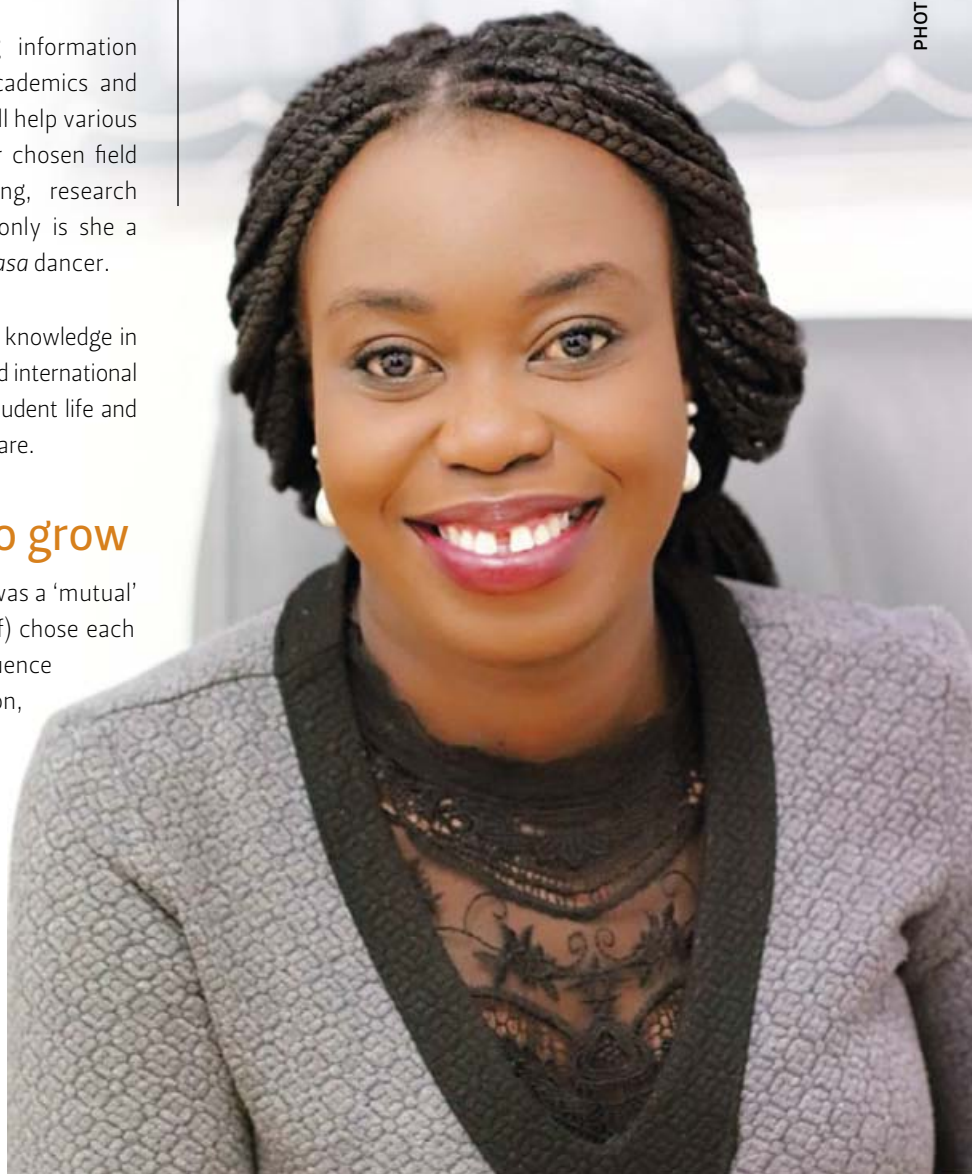
Her appointment as Marketing Officer at the UFS was a ‘mutual’ choice – “I tend to think we (the UFS and myself) chose each other. I wanted a career where I could influence everything I love doing, which is internationalisation, communication, and marketing,” she says.

Her vision for herself and the faculty is to break the proverbial glass ceiling. It provides an opportunity to live out her passion of championing elements to forge the agenda of intensifying the humanities’ international footprint. “This involves marketing the faculty

in niche areas to both local and international stakeholders, marketing our diverse programmes to both local and international students, as well as generating a third income stream by assisting departments in identifying and submitting funded project proposals and through short learning programmes,” she says. 

By Rulanzen Martin

Quinter Onyango enjoys interacting and sharing ideas with people from all backgrounds and is a firm believer in the principle that people’s diversity is a source of strength to be valued and built on.



They are doing it all

During working hours, and often beyond, our colleagues in the Faculty of Natural and Agricultural Sciences are giving their all to science, whether it is by conducting research or supporting academics.

However, some employees in the faculty do carve out time from their busy schedules to invest in their hobbies. When a call was sent out for staff to share about their hobbies, several colleagues responded and shared their lives and photos with *Dumela*.



Prof Jonathan Noble, Head of the Department of Architecture, has a very interesting and unusual hobby. For the past 15 to 20 years, he has been building audio projects, and in particular triode amplifiers. According to him, amplifiers of this kind are highly prized and have a special sound. He believes that there are parallels with architecture (which is his research field) due to a complex convergence of science and art, circuit engineering, and psychoacoustics.

Pictured is Prof Noble with the T-Rex (Transformer King) single-ended 300B amplifier, which currently powers the midrange and high frequencies in his home audio system. "The build is somewhat exotic, with a Zebrano hardwood box surround and anodised, laser-cut aluminium top plate. Special components sourced all over the world – power transformers and chokes custom wound in South Africa, special toroidal output transformers from Holland, power supply capacitor from France, beeswax and copper audio capacitors from the USA, and valves – both new and old – from Japan, Russia, and the US.

Prof Aliza le Roux, Associate Professor in the Department of Zoology and Entomology on our Qwaqwa Campus, is living life at both ends of the spectrum. When she is not doing



Taekwondo or riding her green Triumph Thruxton motorcycle, 'Groenie die Drakie' (pictured here), during fun rallies, she likes crocheting, reading, and quilting.

She says her motorcycle makes her experience her surroundings so much more deeply. "Every sense has to be alert while you're riding, and your whole body is involved in the journey. You are forced to be in the moment. It's almost like mindfulness, but with a bit of spice added to it."

Prof Le Roux says that she made blankets for almost all her friends. She also made toys for her son and the little ones in the family. "It is a fantastic hobby; it keeps me away from social media and emails, and my friends only tease me a little bit about it. I like that I'm doing something that isn't just fleeting but will be useful or fun for someone I love."



Dr Olivia Kunguma, Lecturer in DIMTEC, sees cooking and travelling as her hobbies. She says if it was not for her being an academic, she would have been a chef. "The kitchen is my happy place," she says.

"I enjoy modernising or experimenting with Zimbabwean cuisine such as dried kapenta, soya chunks, sorghum pap, dried pumpkin leaves, and chimukuyu (dried Zimbabwean beef/biltong)."

Travelling the globe, Dr Kunguma says that Koh Samui, Thailand, was her favourite destination. In Koh Samui, she ate deep-fried grasshoppers, silkworms, crickets, water bugs and bamboo worms on a stick, served with a secret brown sauce. "The bugs were creamy, crispy, salty, and very tasty." She also tried a food combination of sticky rice served with mango. "As weird as the combination sounds, I loved it," she says.



Tascha Bremer, Lecturer in the Department of Quantity Surveying and Construction Management, developed a social media platform with her husband that is linked to a book they recently published, based on their bucket list.

In their book, *The Unrivalled Passport*, they have 128 destinations and places to see, 80 experiences to try out, 52 sports to play/see, 30 types of food to taste, and 20 romantic ideas to try out. Their top three experiences thus far have been floating in the Dead Sea in Israel, staying in an overwater bungalow in the Maldives, and celebrating Easter in Athens, Greece.

Dr Roné de Wet, Lecturer in the Department of Basic Medical Sciences, says she enjoys sculpting and karate in her downtime. "I enjoy sculpting as an art because – it is therapeutic and relaxing; my right brain can take over with



creativity and freedom. It is the total opposite of my occupation as a lecturer where my left brain must function," she says. A bust of a woman looking up with gratitude for all the blessings received is her favourite piece.

Dr De Wet, who has always had an interest in Oriental culture's ways of meditating and relaxing, joined a karate club in 2018 to encourage her son to continue with karate. She fell in love with the sport and today she has a fifth kyu (blue belt).



Dr Patricks Voua Otomo, Senior Lecturer in the Department of Zoology and Entomology on our Qwaqwa Campus, is a gamer. "The kids and I share video gaming as a hobby". He recently opened a 'gaming lounge' called Spamming in Harrismith. His favourite game is the popular soccer game, FIFA. "My interest in gaming during these times where we are mostly at home, has allowed me to share a common interest with my two children, Naomie (7), and Ryan (11)," he says.



Prof Maryke Labuschagne, Professor in Plant Breeding, has been playing the saxophone for the past seven years and says she loves every minute of it. "One can play the saxophone until you are old, so I hope I still have many years of playing left."

"I have always loved the saxophone; it is such a soulful instrument. The music covers a wide range from jazz to classical," she says. She loves music and believes that it is a wonderful stress reliever. "It takes you to a different world." 🎷

By Leonie Bolleurs

Music maestro

DR DAVID NKOSI joins OSM



Dr David Nkosi, who joined the Odeion School of Music (OSM) as Senior Lecturer on 1 April 2021, has more than twelve years of experience in music education. Dr Nkosi will teach Music Education and Practice.

He has occupied several positions in the South African education sector, including school music teacher, lecturer in African music, as well as lecturer in arts education. His research interests focus mainly on indigenous African musical arts, school music education, teacher training, arts education, as well as the cultural and creative industries.

Dr Nkosi is a qualified music teacher with a Postgraduate Certificate in Education (specialisation in Arts Education for Senior and FET Phase) from the North-West University (NWU). In 2014, he obtained his PhD qualification in Music Education (specialising in Applied Ethnomusicology) from the University of Pretoria. He obtained a master's degree in Policy and Arts Management from the WITS School of the Arts in 2017, as well as a master's degree in Music Education from the University of Pretoria. He obtained a BMusHons (Performance Studies) from the University of Pretoria and a BA Music and Society degree from the NWU.

Dr Nkosi also obtained a Postgraduate Diploma in Orchestral and Choral Conducting in 2008 from the School of Music at the Jyväskylä University of Applied Sciences (Finland).

As a scholar, he was an external assessor for honours, master's, and doctoral students in the fields of African Music, Music Education, and Indigenous Knowledge Systems at various South African universities, including UNISA, North-West University, the University of Pretoria, and the University of KwaZulu-Natal. 

By Marius Coetzee

PROF ANTHEA VAN JAARSVELD

wants **UFS Drama** to **shine** again

Her unique approach to Drama and Theatre Arts makes Prof Anthea van Jaarsveld the most suitable person to take over the reins as Head of the UFS Department of Drama and Theatre Arts. Prof Van Jaarsveld was officially appointed as head of this special department this year.

The Department of Drama at the UFS is one of the biggest in the country, and according to Prof Van Jaarsveld it is also the best, because the department produces some of the finest in the industry. Her main goal as head of department is to bring about a subtle change in emphasis that will ultimately make a real contribution to employability, a greater variety of job opportunities, and practice-orientated research. "My ultimate goal is therefore an approach within which academy and practice will find each other for the benefit of both," says Prof Van Jaarsveld.

Prof Van Jaarsveld has a scientific approach to drama and theatre arts. She never acted professionally. It is precisely from a scientific perspective that her knowledge of the theorising and contextualisation of drama text, theatre concepts, and the film industry is applied in order to maintain a balance in a profession where the emphasis on practical experience is overwhelming.

She studied Drama at the UFS and was also employed as Drama teacher at Eunice Girls' School. Following this, she started working as lecturer in the Department of Afrikaans and Dutch. "There I focused on the Drama genre in Afrikaans; therefore, I never actually left drama and theatre," says Prof Van Jaarsveld. In 2018, she returned to the Department of Drama.

Upon her return to the department where she started her studies, her aim is to ensure that the department again complies with the total package of the UFS and to make sure "that our students are prepared for a multifaceted and dynamic industry on a practical level".

Prof Van Jaarsveld took over from Prof Nico Luwes who retired in 2019. 📌

By Rulanzen Martin

Photo: For Prof Anthea van Jaarsveld, the balance between science, theoretical and practical experience is important for a balanced industry.



Tasting the ordinary and the extraordinary

In the past few years, staff has on more than one occasion had the opportunity to apply their taste buds in the newly renovated Sensory Laboratory in the Agriculture Building on the Bloemfontein Campus.

According to Liezl van der Walt, who prepares and executes all the sensory panels, the lab that was established by Prof Karin Blignaut in 1993, was renovated in 2018, transforming the small lab into a state-of-the-art facility with training, preparation, and tasting areas – the latter now consisting of 12 tasting booths.

On the team with Van der Walt – the sensory lab manager – is Dr Carina Bothma, main sensory analyst; Wilben Pretorius, statistician; and assistants Linda Marais-Lombard and Smangele Dladla.

Amaranth, cactus pear, and edamame

The lab not only provides postgraduate and undergraduate students with a facility to do sensory research for their studies, but also provides industry with consumer panels, where the acceptability of products is evaluated. “This panel consists of members of the public, according to a specific target market identified by the client. Specific sensory elements are evaluated according to the brief of the client,” says Van der Walt.

She says they have conducted several sensory studies. These include studies regarding the influence of salt reduction, as well as the effect of different feed supplements on the meat quality of various meat products.

Some interesting food products have been tested in the lab as well. These include underutilised vegetables such as amaranth and cactus pear, and newly introduced crops such as edamame. “Ancient grains, such as fonio, have also been profiled,” says Van der Walt.



The Sensory lab established by Prof Karin Blignaut in 1993, was renovated in 2018, transforming the small lab into a state-of-the-art facility with training, preparation, and tasting areas – the latter now consisting of 12 tasting booths.

Insects, food porn, and vetkoek

The lab was also involved in investigating some fascinating food sources, such as insects. “Entomophagy, the consumption of insects by humans, is currently also being investigated among South African consumers, and new food products are being developed from cricket flour,” says Van der Walt.

Another compelling study is about the effect of #foodporn on eye movement, and whether it will influence the consumer to prepare a recipe from social media. “Consumer behaviour is extremely important and, along with social media, influences the buying power of the South African population,” explains Van der Walt.

It is not only the extraordinary that is being investigated. *Amagwenya/vetkoek* is a very popular food product in South Africa, and two master’s students investigated the consumer’s behaviour with regard to its consumption, as well as the overall liking thereof. “The sensory attributes of *amagwenya/vetkoek*, purchased from street vendors and commercial outlets, were profiled using CATA. This technique enabled the consumers to describe their ‘ideal product’ and to compare it against the available samples,” Van der Walt clarifies.

So, the next time you receive an invitation to a tasting at the Sensory lab, whether it is lamb or crickets, do your bit and contribute to acceptable food products – one bite at a time. 🍴

By Leonie Bolleurs

From the left are: Linda Marais-Lombard, sensory assistant; Liezl van der Walt, manager of the sensory laboratory; and Smangele Dladla, sensory assistant.



PERLE DU PLESSIS

Children's book with a
powerful message –
a dream come true



Perle du Plessis



Perle du Plessis, accountant by profession and Deputy Director of Finance – with an imaginative, energetic spirit – recently fulfilled a lifelong dream by publishing her first children's book.

“As my children grow up, I become aware of issues that I struggled with as a child or lessons that I wish my ‘younger self’ knew. This self-awareness inspires my stories to bring children joy and to nurture a love of learning and reading.”

According to Du Plessis, Selbi-Sheep was born during the lockdown in 2020 and has since experienced invigorating adventures that you must read.

“The adventures of Selbi-Sheep were launched on 13 March 2021. The more I engage with children on this project, the more I realise that most of us carry all the emotional obstacles with us as adults.”

“I have published two stories in English and Afrikaans, namely *Selbi-Sheep breaks the rules/Skapie-Mê verbreek die reëls* and *The voice inside/ Die stem in my kop*.”

“My books provide a platform to access emotions for children, parents, and caregivers on very important topics such as discipline and positive self-image.”

“These powerful messages were illustrated by the talented Stephanie Kilian, a ray of sunshine sent across my path.”

The books are available in English and Afrikaans, and the Sesotho versions will be launched later in 2021. The main



Books published by Perle du Plessis

characters in the books, Selbi-Sheep and Sharlot-Sheep, also have handmade crochet dolls that kids can care for and nurture for role play or during play.

“Through my books, I hope to encourage children, parents, grandparents, and caregivers to experience the adventures of Selbi-Sheep. The colourful illustrations and powerful message apply to all of us. After all, in order to experience life in abundance, we should remain children at heart.”

My husband Lyndon and I are blessed with three beautiful children. 🐑

By Martie Nortjé

JEANNET MOLOPYANE

– enriching the library experience

An enriching library experience and a stimulating environment – this is what is on the books for staff and students with a new Director for the UFS Library and Information Services (UFS LIS). Making the move from Deputy Director: Teaching and Learning Information Services to Head of the UFS LIS, Jeannet Molopyane says she and her team have great and amazing plans in store for the university community.

A enthusiastic reader and writer

As can be expected of the person entrusted with the task to see to it that people have access to information, Jeannet is a keen reader. “I read a lot of spiritual books. They give me more grounding, emotional and mental stability as well.”

Adding to her repertoire of skills and interests, Jeannet is also an accomplished author with published articles in accredited and non-accredited peer-reviewed journals. She co-authored two journal articles titled, ‘A framework for workplace information literacy in academic contexts’ and ‘How is our service delivery? How can we do better? A total quality management analysis of an academic library’ in the accredited journals *Innovation: journal of appropriate librarianship and information work in Southern Africa* and *Library Hi Tech* respectively. She also contributed single authorship articles on customer care in academic libraries and the need for advanced information literacy to the peer-reviewed but non-accredited journal, *Interim Interdisciplinary Journal*.

The dream team

Jeannet, who has been in her current role for less than a year, says it is truly inspiring to have a hard-working team.



Jeannet Molopyane – new Director of the UFS Library and Information Services

“Everyone is displaying commitment and dedication, and this definitely demonstrates that the needs of our end users are of the utmost importance.”

“I am inspired by seeing colleagues grow, displaying their full potential – and equally, the collective urge to become a truly world-class library. It is so heart-warming to see colleagues embark on self-empowerment developments and programmes to ensure that the UFS LIS and archives are rated among the best in the country and, ultimately, globally.”

By Amanda Tongha

NTHABISENG KOTSOKOANE

– here to **build** library resources

A highly respected information specialist who holds multiple positions in the profession, both on the continent and internationally, is how colleagues describe Nthabiseng Kotsokoane, the new Assistant Director: Acquisition in the UFS Library and Information Services.

Nthabiseng, who joined the UFS during the lockdown in May 2020, came to the university with a long list of achievements. The current chairperson of the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA) Africa Section and secretary of the IFLA Division V, which represents information professionals from Africa, Asia and Oceania, Latin America and the Caribbean, Nthabiseng is intent on 'shaping the library and information profession and landscape'.

Experienced information specialist

Her extensive experience includes stints in the Australian Monash University library, the US-based Laureate International Universities, and various South African universities.

"I have worked in almost all the academic libraries in South Africa – Tshwane University of Technology, University of Johannesburg, UNISA, University of the Witwatersrand, and University of Cape Town."

Her new role at the UFS involves selecting and assessing scholarly resources, which includes acquisition and management of library resources, ensuring that the library budget is used effectively and efficiently, and negotiating with library resource providers and publishers to ensure that the licence agreements are favourable to the university.

New opportunities for libraries

Starting a new job during a pandemic, Nthabiseng says COVID-19 has created extraordinary challenges and new opportunities for all types of libraries and for higher education institutions.

"Libraries around the world have mobilised. They are providing valuable collections of reliable information on the coronavirus

to give people a source they can trust. They are strengthening the capacity of digital libraries and extending opportunities for eLending and accessing online resources. Libraries, especially in the medical research and health field, have been very active in compiling research resources for dealing with the pandemic and helping researchers to get information and literature on COVID-19."

Nthabiseng says the UFS is an exciting place to be.

"I can finally work in an institution where I can speak Sesotho, call my colleagues *mme* and *ntate*, *ausi* and *abuti*. I also think it is a place where staff is encouraged to grow and be their best. Staff development is taken seriously. I am very excited to work with the library team; they are workaholics – well, I am a workaholic myself. This is the kind of environment I thrive in."

By Amanda Tongha

Nthabiseng Kotsokoane is on a mission to shape the library and information landscape.





Health care on your doorstep



Quick and easy access to several health-care services under one roof. From the left, are Sister Sarien de Necker, Dr Arina Meyer, Dr Gerhard Jansen, Dr Elna Kleyn, and Sister Florence Maleho.

The University of the Free State Health Practice has been serving the UFS community for decades. Conveniently located on our Bloemfontein Campus, it offers quick and easy access to several health-care services under one roof. There is no need to struggle with your health or postpone check-ups – simply visit our UFS Health Practice for a pleasant experience. Our clientele ranges from UFS top management to staff/students with limited resources.

Several services and payment options

Over and above the general practitioner services, the physicians specialise in family health, travel medicine, and sport and exercise medicine. The practice also performs minor surgeries, treat non-sports related injuries, provide female health (PAP smears, contraception, etc.), and all blood tests. In addition, travellers can obtain vaccinations, and insurance policy examinations are also done. You can also get primary health care, physiotherapy, and biokinetic rehabilitation as part of the range of medical services offered at the UFS Health Practice.

An appointment system limits the waiting time and walk-in emergencies are dealt with as needed. While the practice claims from medicals aids, UFS staff members have the option to deduct visiting costs from their salaries should their benefits be depleted. Non-medical aid patients can settle accounts by cash, card, or EFT. Students can also use their student accounts for doctor and physiotherapy visits within a capped amount.

Convenient health care

The UFS Health Practice is open from Monday to Friday from 08:00 until 16:30, and mostly keep to its 15-minute consultation schedule, unless an emergency arises. Due to the unique setup, it can accommodate staff and student schedules, and the broader community is also welcome to make use of its services.

Dr Gerhard Jansen says quite a few staff members and their families are already visiting the practice, and they would love for more UFS employees to pay them a visit. “We are dedicated to our patients’ care and do regular follow-up calls to check on our patients’ health. When needed, we refer our patients for specialist care.”

By Dr Cindé Greyling

**For more information or
to schedule an appointment, please:**

Call: 051 401 2603/2530

Email: vanderwaltba@ufs.ac.za
maarmaw@ufs.ac.za
qongqolr@ufs.ac.za

Visit: <https://www.facebook.com/UFS-Health-Practice-360448925058027>

Healthy body, healthy mind

Waking up at five o'clock on a Saturday morning might be too much of a challenge for many of us, but it is not a big deal for a few colleagues on the Qwaqwa Campus. These 'early risers' have regular walks as part of their mission to stay fit, despite the restrictions posed by the COVID-19 pandemic.

"The year 2020 was a real challenge where, for the longest time, we could not go out for a simple walk. With stress brought on by the pandemic, we were itching to go out there and have some fun. Now that things are better, we have come together to push each other in our quest to remain physically and mentally fit. We do regular leisurely walks of at least 10 km at a time," said one of the organisers, Makekesemese Mokhatla from Housing and Residence Affairs (HARA).

One of the recent walks was from the renowned Basotho Cultural Village to the campus. "With winter upon us, we urge staff members to join us on our next walk. Remember,



'Early risers' during their walk from the Basotho Cultural Village.

a healthy body and a healthy mind can work miracles in these trying times. Next, we are looking at a 30 km walk from Kestell," said Mokhatla. 📌

By Thabo Kessah

PHOTO | Thabo Kessah

HUMOUR

mamela!

Ke re! 'Mela was convinced that some surprise would be awaiting us (again) in March. Luckily, March marched in, and March marched out – poof! – just like that, and the first quarter of 2021 was over.

Looking back at some of the trivial things we did about a year ago to take our minds off all the woes of the world, 'Mela can't help but chuckle. My fellow South Africans were drinking eggs for others' entertainment, and even 'Mela downloaded the TikTok app to see if it is worth the laughs.

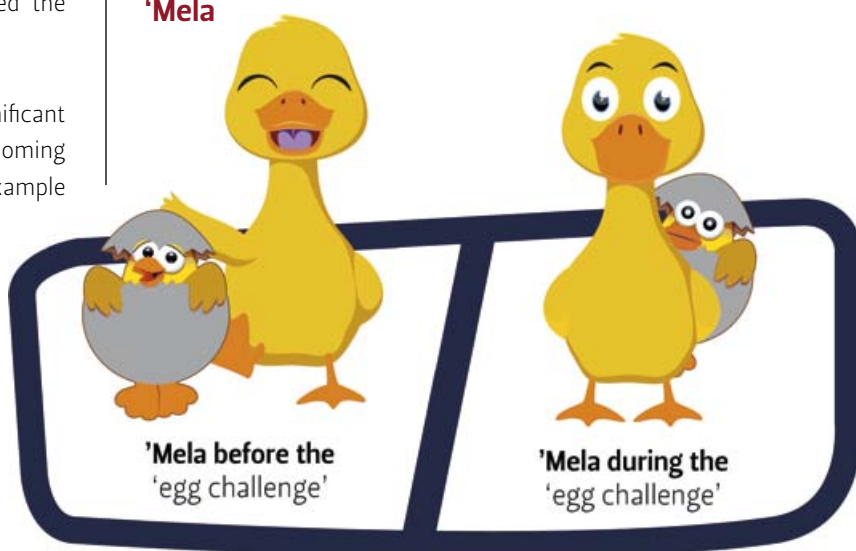
To 'Mela's surprise, it's nice to see that humour is still significant in helping us cope in stressful situations and overcoming difficulties. In fact, 'Mela thinks that it was a perfect example of rewriting the narrative of an otherwise morbid true story. 'Mela confesses that it was easy to ridicule the 'egg-drinkers' and 'TikTok-ers' at the time, but looking back at it now, 'Mela understands how it helped us survive by saturating our social media timelines.

My fellow South Africans, of course we weren't oblivious to all the loss and sorrow; but laughing about

some ridiculous challenges and content made us forget – if only for a moment. Now, all of a sudden, 'Mela wonders if we shouldn't take a more humorous approach to life. We should genuinely laugh more. We should laugh so hard that we need an inhaler and a Disprin or two for the headache afterwards.

The only question is: how do we rewrite our own stories with humour? But 'Mela is confident that we'll find an answer, because after all: if we can do it with an unimaginable event, we can certainly do it with anything. So, start laughing, start joking, and start taking humour seriously – because it's no laughing matter! 📌

Love,
'Mela



#GenderEquality #SpeakUp
#StopGenderBasedViolence

Become a staff well-being ambassador



Some of the current staff well-being ambassadors.

A key responsibility of the Division of Organisational Development and Employee Well-being is to actively promote and enhance the health and well-being of our employees. The philosophy of the programme views human beings as a complex interplay between various internal and external influences. Thus, optimal levels of health and well-being can only be achieved by following a holistic approach, both physically and emotionally. The way we function in one dimension can enhance or impede the way we function in another dimension. In response, the division develops and offers programmes for employees to enhance their overall well-being.

Staff Well-being Ambassadors Team


The implementation of the preventative programmes has been shown to have a beneficial impact on the health and well-being of attendees. Adequate attendance is also a critical factor in the success of preventative programmes, and as a result, continuous efforts are being implemented to reach as many employees as possible.

The Staff Well-being Ambassadors Programme (SWAP) at the University of the Free State has been created and introduced

to expand the reach and impact of the OD and Employee Well-being initiatives. The Staff Well-being Ambassadors Team (SWAT) is truly the backbone of our OD and well-being programme. Employees who form part of SWAT will act as accredited representatives of the OD and Employee Well-being division within their respective departments and workplaces.

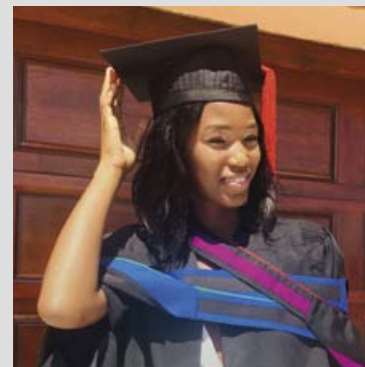
Promoting health and wellness

Staff well-being ambassadors are employees from across our three campuses, advocating for employees' holistic well-being and promoting a healthy workplace. The SWAT goal is to contribute to a supportive workplace environment and to encourage positive health and wellness behaviours. Ambassadors will support OD and Well-being initiatives by promoting health and wellness messages and behaviours, as well as inspiring their colleagues to get involved to improve their holistic well-being.

Please contact wellness@ufs.ac.za if you are interested in promoting health and well-being within your department or unit. 

By Burneline Kaars

Hats off to caps on!



Dr Zak Yacoob (left) (LLD (h.c.)).




Dr Sipho Pityana (right) (DPhil (h.c.)).



Dr Dolf van Niekerk (right) (DLitt (h.c.)).

Three virtual graduations, more than 8 000 newly capped graduates in 2021. UFS virtual graduations kicked off early on 4 January with a virtual graduation ceremony for students in the School of Health and Rehabilitation Sciences and the School of Nursing. The UFS hosted its second virtual graduation ceremonies for 2021 from 22 to 24 February 2021, awarding qualifications to students across the UFS Bloemfontein and Qwaqwa Campuses. During our autumn 2021 virtual graduations

from 19 to 22 April, the UFS awarded honorary doctorates to award-winning short-story writer, novelist, and poet Dr Dolf van Niekerk, acclaimed business leader Dr Sipho Pityana, and former judge of the Constitutional Court, Dr Zak Yacoob. These exceptional individuals humbly accepted the honour bestowed upon them and encouraged our graduandi with words of wisdom. 

By Amanda Tongha

Virtual graduation celebration: eliciting mixed emotions



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

A happy past

I can't remember the weather or the date, but I remember that I was wearing a long-sleeved button shirt with the best chino pants I had. I also taught myself how to tie a 'trinity-knot' tie (from a YouTube video, of course). It was my graduation.

Having been through one long graduation ceremony before (for my undergraduate studies), I decided to endure yet another session where everyone in the Callie Human Centre would be using their graduation programmes as make-shift fans.

It was glorious to walk across the stage, having the hood lowered to my shoulders, and receiving my degree. Alas, it feels like a world ago, and so much has changed due to the pandemic.

An unfamiliar present

With the ever-looming threat posed by the Coronavirus, the term 'virtual graduation' has become commonplace; however, the notion of watching your name scroll by as if you were an extra in a movie, is not easily accepted. It's not hard to imagine the disappointment of many graduandi, knowing that they will miss their chance of walking into a hall filled with thousands of people – all there to celebrate them.

It's no secret that graduandi in South Africa are unhappy with the current situation, and understandably so, but to my surprise, there are many families and graduates who saw beyond the frustration during the April 2021 UFS Virtual Graduation Ceremonies. During the four ceremonies, I witnessed comments in the live chat section that brought me close to tears.

Happy tears

Happy tears were brought about by the positive reception of the ceremonies; families commenting on how proud they are of their children's achievements, and how they have persevered in the face of adversity. Graduates congratulating each other, their friends, roommates, classmates, and more.


Sad tears

The moment my heart froze was when I had to quickly google 'posthumously', because it appeared next to some of the scrolling names. A few comments came through mentioning a deceased graduate: a sister, a son, a friend. My heart sank, and my mind went silent.

Proud tears

There were also comments to commend the UFS for the work put into the virtual graduation ceremonies and the future of our students. Many lecturers were thanked. Lecturers also congratulated their (former) students on their achievements. Admiration was evident and hard work didn't go unnoticed.

Mixed emotions

From students' point of view, we can only imagine what it feels like to graduate or study during a pandemic. It might not be what they had in mind, but it's certainly unique. 

By Barend Nagel

In memory of all the UFS graduates who graduated posthumously.

COVID-19 has hit KovsieSport hard, but not all gloom

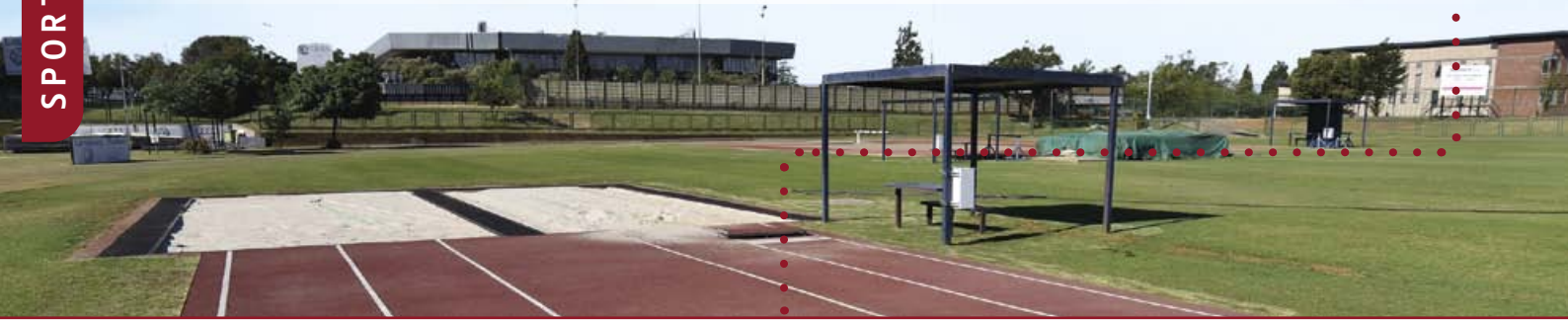


PHOTO | Supplied

Having been forced off the playing fields and tracks for a year has had an indisputable impact, but not all of it has been bad, believes the Director of KovsieSport.

The COVID-19 pandemic has brought student sports to a standstill for more than a year. The first time a Kovsie sports team took to the field again was on 4 April 2021 when the Shimlas contested their first match in the Varsity Cup, which is played in a secure bio-bubble in Pretoria.

There has also been some netball and athletics action where players participated for their country or as individuals in the case of athletics.

According to DB Prinsloo, Director of KovsieSport, Level five of the lockdown was very hard on the athletes. "At Level four, it went better when a couple of our national athletes were allowed to practise. In September, some of the teams slowly started training, but no one knew when they would be allowed to play again," he explains.

Had to get a new approach

Prinsloo says the pandemic has definitely hit them hard on many fronts. "We like to have personal contact with prospective students, but suddenly we had to find a new approach to recruiting students for our sport. We had to do it over the phone or via one of the online platforms and also had to find agents to assist in the process."



DB Prinsloo, Director of KovsieSport

Prinsloo admits that some of the new innovations have been working well.

"The online coaching was sound, and the coaches bought into it, getting the message across efficiently either via Zoom, WhatsApp calls, or sending videos in which they could show and explain."

Recreational sports still a challenge

One of the other challenges for the Kovsie sportsmen and sportswomen was to get access to training facilities. The Kovesi gym and the swimming pool have been closed for more than a year.

"It is also a challenge to get recreational sport (those doing it for the fun) going with only a certain percentage of students being on campus.

"In the case of athletics, we also had very few competitions in the Free State, with athletes being forced to participate in other provinces." ❏

By Ruan Bruwer