

KE EO TABALA

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



Qwaqwa Campus Newsletter

July 2021

Degree a dream come true for Qwaqwa Campus security guard

Story | Nonsindiso Qwabe

“ I remember my first History class. I had just finished my night shift, and so I went to class in my full uniform, even forgetting to change my outfit because I was so excited! I understood very well that this was the chance I had been waiting for all my life.”

University of the Free State security guard, Kostina Mahlangu, fondly recalled the first day he began his undergraduate degree at the university after wanting to study for more than two decades. His dream came true in 2017 when he had the opportunity to enrol for a BA extended programme majoring in Sesotho and History. Mahlangu received his qualification during the April graduations. He described the moment when he saw his name roll down with the list of graduates as one that he would not forget as long as he lived.

Mahlangu, the last born of 12 siblings, matriculated in 1994, but could not study further as both his parents had already passed on, leaving him without any financial means. “I remember applying to the UFS, but I could not proceed with my application as I did not even have the application fee, which was R50 at the time.”

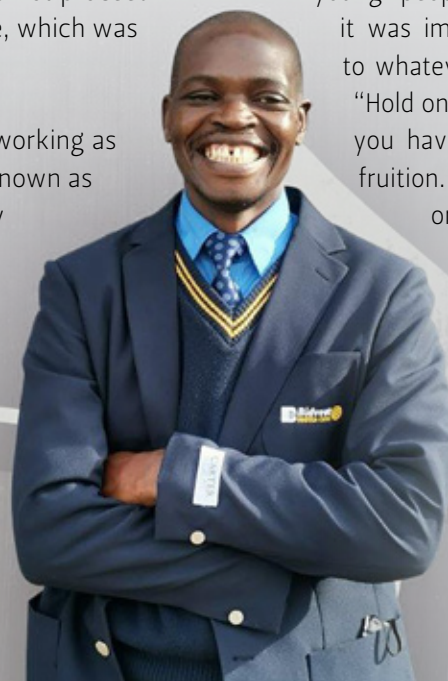
In 1995, he completed a security training course and began working as a security officer at OR Tambo International, which was still known as Jan Smuts Airport at the time. He went on to work as a security guard for many companies before starting at the UFS in 2015. When he began studying, he would attend classes during the day and work at night, sometimes not even going home for days on end because of his hectic schedule.

“It was challenging, this campus became my second home, but when I start something, I always want to see it through. I am grateful for the support I received from

my family and from Protection Services, because without them it wouldn't have been possible.”

Mahlangu would like to pursue a Postgraduate Certificate in Education (PGCE) in 2022. “Education is very important.”

Sharing a word of wisdom with young people, Mahlangu said it was important to hold on to whatever dream you had. “Hold on to whatever dream you have until it comes to fruition. Stand your ground on what you believe in, be determined, and have a clear vision.”



**Bidvest
security
guard Kostina
Mahlangu**

Thank you for **washing** your hands

HELP **COMBAT** THE **SPREAD** OF COVID-19 **ON AND OFF** OUR CAMPUSES

2020/21 SRC

No student who has registered should ever have to stop along the way because of financial difficulties, but they should go all the way to graduation. This is the firm belief anchoring newly appointed SRC President for the Qwaqwa Campus, Sifiso Mofokeng, and his entire committee, for the duration of their term. The 2020/2021 committee took up office in April, and Mofokeng said they were adamant to meet student demands and address issues pertaining to student service delivery, even under COVID-19 constraints.



Photo | Supplied

“Students in Qwaqwa need accommodation, and because on-campus accommodation isn’t enough to cater for all students, most of them rely on private accommodation that is being built anyhow, which affects the accommodation allowance. Transport is also a serious problem, and we hope to see some transformation happening there too,” he said.

MEET THE REST OF THE SRC COMMITTEE:

- **DEPUTY PRESIDENT:** Siphosihle Nkosi
- **SECRETARY GENERAL:** Snethemba Gabela
- **TREASURER:** Snethemba Dlamini
- **POLICY AND TRANSFORMATION:** Bongeka Mthiyane
- **STUDENT DEVELOPMENT AND FIRST GENERATION STUDENTS:** Ntombikayise Mnyandu
- **COMMUTER STUDENTS:** Xolani Ntimane
- **MEDIA AND PUBLICITY:** Sifundo Masuku
- **ASSOCIATIONS AND RELIGIOUS AFFAIRS STUDENT COUNCIL:** Philani Nxumalo
- **CAMPUS RESIDENCE COUNCIL:** Qiniso Zondi
- **ACADEMICS COUNCIL:** Regomoditswe Maleka
- **ART AND CULTURE:** Boitumelo Molefe
- **UNIVERSAL ACCESS AND SOCIAL JUSTICE COUNCIL:** Olebogeng Mohlala
- **POSTGRADUATE STUDENT COUNCIL:** Mosidi Mokoena
- **INTERNATIONAL STUDENT COUNCIL:** Motsusi Nare

KE EO TABA!

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GUEST EDITOR:

Nonsindiso Qwabe

C: 0 84 038 7004 | T: 058 718 5093 | E: QwabeNSB@ufs.ac.za

Articles and photos by Nonsindiso Qwabe, unless indicated differently.

Greetings, Qwaqwa Campus Community!

My name is Nonsindiso 'Bee' Qwabe, Communication's new interim kid on the block, and it's an honour to be guest editing this issue of Ke Eo Taba. As an award-winning journalist and passionate storyteller, I am absolutely thrilled to bring you an issue filled with stories of sheer courage, resilience, and tenacity in the face of varying adversities.

We're weathering tough times as individuals and as a community at large, and are in desperate need of sunshine and hope, which is what I hope you will draw from this edition. My experience of the Qwaqwa Campus – in the short time I have been here – has shown me that our campus is filled with people who are determined to thrive and make a difference against all odds. The beautiful pieces of content in this issue won't fix the problems we are navigating, but they can inspire hope and belief that we can overcome anything.

The campus is lonely without you; may you find strength to weather this period and come back stronger and more determined to thrive.

Love and strength to you

NONSINDISO QWABE



First ever **MOUNTAIN CONFERENCE** *comes to Maloti-Drakensberg*

Story | **Nonsindiso Qwabe**

Mountains have always played an important role in the culture and history of people, and Southern African mountains specifically are home to high levels of biodiversity, supporting a wide diversity of livelihoods. They also produce virtually all of our sub-arid region's fresh water and provide ecosystem services to millions of people. The African Mountain Research Foundation (AMRF), in association with the Afromontane Research Unit (ARU) of the University of the Free State (UFS), and the Global Mountain Safeguard Programme (GLOMOS), is organising the first-ever Southern African Mountain Conference (SAMC2022) to be held in the Maloti-Drakensberg in South Africa from 14 to 17 March 2022. The theme of the conference is Southern African Mountains – their value and vulnerabilities.

SAMC2022 is intentionally multidisciplinary, seeking to bring together key stakeholders in the scientific, policy, practitioner, and livelihood sectors, which will lead to stronger cooperation for mountains, providing a strong science-policy industry interface.

Dr Ralph Clark, Director: Afromontane Research Unit, said Southern African mountains are complex socio-ecological and geo-political trans-boundary systems that produce virtually all of our sub-arid region's fresh water, host some of the richest biodiversity in the world, and sustain major agricultural and tourism economies. "However, these mountains are under immense pressure from immediate threats and from global change. Yet – compared to many other mountain regions (including within Africa) – Southern Africa's mountains are poorly researched, and thus poorly understood, systems. SAMC2022 seeks to bring together key stakeholders in the scientific, policy, practitioner, and livelihood sectors. To achieve our purpose, we feel it is very important to have an excellent mix of keynote speakers – representing the best of science from Southern Africa's mountain regions."

Dr Clark said the call for abstracts is already open to any discipline – single, multi-, inter- or trans-disciplinary – with topics of interest including archaeology and history, climatology and climate change, water resources and management, as well as mountain communities, their resilience and adaptation, to mention just a few.

To submit your abstract, please click on the following link:
www.samc2022.africa and then select '**Abstracts**'.

IMPORTANT DATES:

DEADLINE FOR **SUBMISSION: 31 August 2021**
NOTIFICATION OF **ACCEPTANCE: By 15 November 2021**



TAKING COVID-19 MESSAGE TO THE STREETS:

Community Engagement takes part in **Phuthaditjhaba Vaccination Activation**

Story | **Nonsindiso Qwabe**

As South Africa's vaccine roll-out recently passed its one million milestone in early June, a mass activation took place at the Setsing taxi rank in Phuthaditjhaba to encourage elderly members of the community to sign up for the vaccine. The activation was in line with the national roll-out of the COVID-19 vaccine. Its location was well selected, as it took place in the heart of Setsing, which is often populated by large numbers of shoppers and commuters. The activation was a collaboration between the Qwaqwa Campus Engaged Scholarship, the Department of Community Development, the Agape Foundation for Community Development, and the Government Communication and Information System (GCIS). Engaged Scholarship's main agenda is seeing the university producing socially responsible graduates and meeting society's most vital needs.

Moodi Matsoso, Officer: Community Engagement (top management), said the CE office found it fulfilling to be part of the activation, as it was a way of serving the government in saving lives. "The partnership with Agape benefits our Community Development students a great deal, because upon completion they will be ready for work, since they will be developed in total."

Agape Executive Director, Daniel Moloi, said: "The more we communicate and teach the community, the more they will understand the importance of the vaccine. The activation was also an opportunity to get rid of some misconceptions surrounding the vaccine."

Photo | **Thabang Mokoena**

Prof Ocaya **looking to uplift individuals** with Rhodes Scholarship ambassadorship

Story | Nonsindiso Qwabe

“If the money and the resources are there, why not use those to uplift an individual, and in uplifting the individual you’re really uplifting his entire community. It should be a person who will pay it back in a really significant way. A person with a passion for something, who can change the world.”

According to Prof Richard Ocaya, this is the calibre of recipient that the Rhodes Scholarship is looking for. Prof Ocaya has been appointed as a Rhodes Ambassador at the University of the Free State for 2021-2024. This is an unpaid, voluntary position in which Prof Ocaya will work with the National Secretariat of the Rhodes Southern



Prof Richard Ocaya

Africa Scholarships. He will, among others, assist the National Secretariat with raising the profile of the Rhodes Scholarship on campus, and identifying and offering guidance to undergraduate and postgraduate students who may be interested in applying for the Rhodes Scholarship.

He will also be working with academic leaders to identify talented students who may be interested in applying for a Rhodes Scholarship to undertake postgraduate studies at the University of Oxford. Prof Ocaya said the selection of scholars focused on outstanding intellect, character, leadership, and commitment to service.

Photo | Thabo Kessah

Construction of the **ACADEMY FOR MULTILINGUALISM** underway

Story | Thabo Kessah



The beginning of 2021 saw the establishment of the Academy for Multilingualism, which is currently under construction on the Qwaqwa Campus. This 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 campus has had to deal with because of the water problems in the Maluti-a-Phofung area.

Photo | Thabo Kessah

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

24/7 STUDY CENTRE *a huge success with students*

Photo | Supplied

Story | Thabo Kessah and Nonsindiso Qwabe

The newly built Qwaqwa Campus 24/7 Study Centre has seen an influx of students in its few weeks of operation, and students are already lauding the new establishment as a much-appreciated addition to campus infrastructure. The centre boasts 360 seats on the ground level, 47 on the mezzanine level, a security area, ablution facilities, and a printing station. 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, Campus Vice-Principal: Academic and Research, had this to say about the centre: "Our excitement over the 24/7 study centre for students is based on 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."

Second-year BSc student majoring in Mathematics and Computer Sciences, Neo Motaung, said the study centre allowed for better concentration and "encouraged the mood to study".

"It's much quieter and really accessible. It's also a bit cooler, but that is a good thing because it keeps you fresh while studying. It is noise controlled and monitored, so you only focus on what you are there for. I love it."

These sentiments were also shared by Anele Seme, a first-year BSc student majoring in Botany and Life Sciences, who said: "The study centre is much better, because everything in there is on point. We're able to study very well, and whenever we need to."

Thank you for
keeping safe
physical distancing.

HELP COMBAT THE SPREAD OF COVID-19 ON AND OFF OUR CAMPUSES

CUADS: enriching the student experience for students with disabilities

Story | Nonsindiso Qwabe

The first barrier to learning, especially for students with physical disabilities, is accessing the learning environment itself. With the aim of making the campus and academic life accessible to all students, the Centre for Universal Access and Disability Support (CUADS) is continuously committed to enriching the student experience for students with barriers to learning through implemented programmes.



Frank Letseleha came to the University of the Free State after he matriculated. He enrolled for a Bachelor of Education degree

CUADS is regarded as a lifeline for many students who would otherwise have struggled to complete their qualifications. For Frank Letseleha, knowing about CUADS during his high school years, it was a natural choice to come to the University of the Free State after he matriculated.

majoring in Sesotho and English in 2017, obtaining his qualification during the April graduations this year. Letseleha, who is visually impaired, said his academic journey was indeed challenging, but not impossible. "CUADS made the journey much easier for me. I'm very appreciative of what they did for me and are doing for students with barriers to learning." Letseleha, who is now permanently employed as an English teacher at his former high school, said you can still chase your dreams and do something with your life, even with barriers to learning.



Nokwanda Mdlalose, who also obtained her Bachelor of Arts degree majoring in Psychology and IsiZulu during this year's April graduation ceremony, says her academic journey would have been impossible without support from CUADS.

"Some days I'd wake up with blurry vision and other days I couldn't see at all, but I always knew that I had support. CUADS was always there for me."
Mdlalose said CUADS Qwaqwa Coordinator Thokozile Thulo.

Healthy body, healthy mind: Staying healthy while working from home

Working from home used to be a dream for some, but now is a new normal that we are adjusting to, with the hope of maintaining productivity as well as a healthy work-life balance. So, how can we stay healthy while working from home?

Start your day on a good note with a calming mental or physical exercise; this can be by meditating or going for an early-morning leisurely walk. It will get your brain pumping and in the right mood for a productive day of working. Nutrition is vital in ensuring a healthy mind and

body; therefore, fuel your body with healthy food throughout the day.

Invest in creating a comfortable workspace at home. Remember to keep those communication lines with colleagues open by creating an online support group to discuss challenges and tips on working from home. Assert boundaries regarding working hours and time to yourself to ensure a healthy work-life balance.

Finally, be kind to yourself during this transition, acknowledge that you are doing your best.



Photos | Supplied

Ke Eo Taba! speaks to
aspiring entrepreneur

BAANETSE MOKHOTLA

TELL US ABOUT YOUR PASSION FOR BAKING.

My passion for baking is something I grew up with; specifically baking for home ... I think it was ignited by my mother's love for baking, almost every weekend. It was never something I thought of doing as a business.

WHEN DID YOU START YOUR BAKING BUSINESS?

I started my first baking business in high school. I was selling to fellow learners in the bus and during breaks. At the time, I was selling only muffins in different flavours. I co-owned the business with a friend, and we would take turns in baking weekly. We baked because we loved things that our parents wouldn't agree to or be able to provide for us. Therefore, we knew that our baking profits would cover our 'wants'. However, after matric we parted ways, and we stopped baking for business as well.



Baanetse
Mokhotla

HOW DID THE BUSINESS DEVELOP DURING THE LOCKDOWN?

In May 2020, during the lockdown, another friend and I thought of baking for business. This time to cover our basic needs and to do something with our time, since we were home full time. The business relationship lasted for three months. From May, we only baked scones, and in June we introduced muffins, biscuits, and teatime carrot cakes for special orders. This was inspired by customers who would ask us to provide more than just scones.

WHAT KEPT YOU GOING?

Then, when I started working for myself, I thought of enhancing my baking skills even more. YouTube was my daily friend and finding bakers on social media was my daily goal – just to see what others do.

Fast forward to 10 October 2020. I did my very first designer cake. And so far, it has been grace. I have now done more than 120 cakes and is still counting.

With my friend, we were trading as Queens Freshly Baked. I later rebranded my business and I am now trading as Afrikan Glow Fantasies.

I have now been in business for seven months and the future looks bright, as I continue to reinvest the money I earn.



Afrikan Glow Fantasies – Baanetse's pride and joy