

# KE EO TABALA

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

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



Qwaqwa Campus Newsletter

August 2022- Issue One





## EDITOR

"How does one sail through a storm? I'm not a sailor and I have never sailed, but it seems to me that the basic or minimum requirements for sailing in a storm are the following: resoluteness, teamwork, experience, and commitment to the course you have chosen." These words were recently shared by our Campus Captain, Dr Martin Mandew. We recently concluded a very eventful and challenging semester on the Qwaqwa Campus, and as we charter into the last semester of 2022, I am certain that we can all learn a thing or two from our principal's sentiments as we buckle up for the ride ahead.

Welcome to the first issue of the **Ke Eo Tabal** newsletter for 2022. Apart from being an institution that excels in teaching, learning, and research, the UFS is also focused on making a social impact in society. In this issue, we celebrate the hard work and dedication of our staff, students, and alumni alike. Qwaqwa Campus has some fascinating stories to tell; we share some remarkable tales of the work happening on the campus, as well as externally through projects and collaborations – from an alumna starting a vegetable cooperative in her community of Monontsha, a student's journey to become a lecturer, and some exciting collaborations happening internationally that will position the Qwaqwa Campus as a leading research hub for sustainable development.

We can all consider ourselves lucky to be part of a team with an excellent track record of finding solutions in the midst of great difficulty. As a valued member of staff, each of you plays an important role in this team.

**Wishing you all the best for the semester ahead!**

Photo: Sotia Small

**Nonsindiso Qwabe**

EDITOR | REDAKTEUR | MOQOLOTSI | UMHLELI

## REDAKTEUR

"Hoe navigeer 'n mens deur 'n storm? Ek is nie 'n seeman nie en ek het nog nooit geseil nie, maar dit lyk vir my die basiese of minimum vereistes om in 'n storm te navigeer, is die volgende: vasberadenheid, spanwerk, ervaring en toewyding aan die kursus wat jy gekies het." Hierdie woorde is onlangs deur ons Kampuskaptein, dr Martin Mandew, gedeel. Nie lank gelede nie het ons 'n baie gebeurtenisvolle en uitdagende semester op die Qwaqwa-kampus afgesluit, en waar ons ons nou in die laaste semester van 2022 begeef, is ek seker dat ons almal 'n ding of twee uit ons prinsipaal se sentimente kan leer terwyl ons vasgordel vir die rit wat voorlê.

Welkom by die eerste uitgawe van die **Ke Eo Tabal**-nuusbrief vir 2022. Afgesien daarvan dat die UV 'n instelling is wat uitblink in onderrig, leer en navorsing, fokus dit ook daarop om 'n sosiale impak in die samelewing te maak. In hierdie uitgawe vier ons die harde werk en toewyding van ons personeel, studente en alumni. Qwaqwa-kampus het 'n paar boeiende stories om te vertel; ons deel 'n paar merkwaardige verhale oor die werk wat op die kampus gedoen word, asook buite die kampus deur middel van projekte en samewerking – van 'n alumna wat 'n groentekoöperasie in haar gemeenskap in Monontsha begin het, 'n student wat a dosent geword het, asook 'n paar opwindende samewerkings op internasionale vlak wat die Qwaqwa-kampus sal posisioneer as 'n toonaangewende navorsingsentrum vir volhoubare ontwikkeling.

Ons kan onself gelukkig ag om deel te wees van 'n span met 'n uitstekende rekord van oplossings te midde van groot struikelblokke. As 'n gewaardeerde personeellid speel elkeen van julle 'n belangrike rol in hierdie span.

**Alles van die beste vir die semester wat voorlê!**

## MOQOLOTSI

"Motho o sesitsa jwang seketswana lewatlang le nang le difefo tse matla? Nna, ha ke mosesisi wa seketswana mme ha ho mohla nkileng ka sesisa seketswana lewatlang, empa ho bonahala ho na le bonyane ditlhokahalo tsa motheo tse mmalwa bakeng sa ho sesisa seketswana lewatlang le nang le difefo tse matla mme tse latelang ke tsena: maikemisetso, ho sebetsa mmoho jwalo ka sehlopha, boiphilelo, le boitlamo tseleng wa lewatle eo o e kgethileng." Mantswe ana a ileng a buuwa ke Kapteini wa Khampase ya rona, T Dr Martin Mandew. Morao tjena re sa tswa dihela semestara e bileng le diketsahalo tse ngata le tse phephetsang mona Qwaqwa Campus, mme jwalo ka ha re kena ho semestara ya 2022, ke na le bonnete ba hore kaofela re ka ithuta dintho tse itseng ho tswa maikutlong a rona a sehloho ha re tlama mabanta bakeng sa leeto le ka pele ho rona.

Re amohela ka diatla tse pedi kgatiso ya rona ya pele ya lengolo le yang ho babadi ba rona kapa newsletter **Ke Eo Tabal** bakeng sa 2022. Ntle le taba ya hore UFS ke setheo se hlaheletseng ka mahetla sa thuto, le ho ithuta, le diphuputso, e boitse e tsepamisitse maikutlo tabeng ya hore e be le tshusumetso setjhabeng. Kgatisong ena, re thoholetsa mekutu le boinehelo ba moifo wa rona, baithuti, le di-alumi ka ho tshwanang. Qwaqwa Campus e na le dipale tse thahasellisang tseo e ka di phetang; mona re abelana le rona dipale tse ding tse makatsang tsa mowsebetso o etsahalang khampaseng, mme kante ho khampase re abelana ka diprojeke le ditshebedisano – ho tloha ka alumna e qadileng ka kgwebo ya meroho ya cooperative motseng wa habo wa Monontsha, seithuti se ileng sa ba morupelli, le ditshebedisano tse ding tse thahaselling tse etsahalang matjhabeng tse tla beha Qwaqwa Campus sehlohlolong jwalo ka setsi sa diphuputso bakeng sa ntshetsopele e tshwarellang.

Kaofela ha rona re ka ikotla sefuba jwalo ka karolo ya moifo o nang le nalane e tswileng matsoho ya ho fumana ditharollo hara mathata a maholo. Jwalo ka setho sa bohlokwa, e mong le e mong wa lona o phetha karolo ya bohlokwa sehlopheng sena.

**Kaofela ha lona re le lakaletsa tsohle tse molemo bakeng sa semestata e ka pele!**

## KUMHLELI

"Udlula kanjani umshayeli womkhumbi eziwombeni ezinzima olwandle? Angisiye umshayeli wemikhumbi futhi angikaze ngaba sohambweni olukanjalo kodwa kumina kubukeka sengathithi ulwazi oluvamile noludingekayoukuzeudluleeziwombeniolwandleyilolu: ukuqina ume idolo, ukubambisana ngokusebenzisana, ukuba namava, kanye nokuzimisela ngokuphikelela endleleni osuyikhethile." La mazwi asanda kushiwo uThishanhloko weKhempasi yaseQwaqwa, uDkt. Martin Mandew. Sisanda kuphothula isigaba sonyaka (semester) ebesimatasa futhi sinezingqinamba eKhempasini yaseQwaqwa, njengalokhu-ke singena kwisigaba sokugcina sonyaka wezi-2022, nginesiqiniseko sokuthi singafunda okuthile emazwini abekwe uThishanhloko wethu njengoba sesibuyela okokugcina emsebenzini owejwayelekile.

Sikwethulela okokuqala ngqa ingosi yephephandaba i-**Ke Eo Tabal** yonyaka wezi-2022. Ngaphandle kokuba isikhungo esihamba phambili kwezokufundisa, ukufunda, kanye nocwaningo, iNyuvesi yase-Free State iphinde ibheke ngelokhozi indaba yokuba negama elihle kwinhlalomphakathi. Ngamanye amazwi, sibungaza ukuzikhandla kanye nokuzinikela kwabasebenzi bethu, abafundi kanye namalungu omphakathi angekho emagcekeni enyuvesi kodwa ayingxenywe yayo. IKhempasi yaseQwaqwa njengengxenywe yeNyuvesi yase-Free State inomlando ohlabahlosile ongase uxoxwe ngayo; sineminye yemisebenzi encomekayo eyenzeka ngaphakathi esikoleni kanye nangaphandle kwamagceke esikole ngendlela yokuba nemisebenzi esixhumanisa ngokubambisana – kusuka kwilunga lesifazane lenyuvesi elaqala umsebenzi wezitshalo endaweni yangakubo eMonontsha, umfundi owagcine esewumfundisi, kanye nezinye izinhlobo zokusebenza esinazo kwamanye amazwe omhlaba nezizokwenza ukuthi iQwaqwa ibe sendaweni efanele njengesikhungo esihamba phambili kwintuthuko yolwazi lokulondoloza.

Sisonke kumele siziqhenye ngokuba ingxenywe yalabo abanegama elihle ekutholeni izixazululo ngezikhathi zobunzima. Njengelunga elihloniphekile labasebenzi benyuvesi, omunye nomunye udlala indima ebalulekile kulo mphakathi wabasebenzi.

**Sinifisela okuhle kulesi sigaba sonyaka esesiqalile.**





# NOTICE BOARD

1-5 AUGUST 2022

## FACULTY OF THE HUMANITIES CAREER WEEK

9 AUGUST 2022  
**WOMEN'S DAY**

22 AUGUST 2022  
**PROF GEOFREY MUKWADA  
INAUGURAL LECTURE**

23 AUGUST 2022  
**RECTOR'S ENGAGEMENT  
WITH STAFF VIA TEAMS**

2 SEPTEMBER 2022  
**RECTOR'S CONCERT**

## INTERNATIONAL CULTURAL DIVERSITY FESTIVAL

19 SEPTEMBER 2022

11 OCTOBER 2022  
**STUDY ABROAD FAIR**

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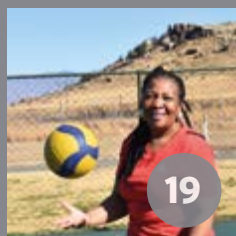
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**Ke Eo Taba! online**  
[www.ufs.ac.za/ke-eo-taba-2022](http://www.ufs.ac.za/ke-eo-taba-2022)

# QWAQWA CAMPUS:

*a hub of knowledge for transdisciplinary and boundary-spanning solutions*

The Qwaqwa Campus is steadily growing its reputation as a leading research and learning hub for sustainable development in Afromontane regions through transdisciplinary responses to challenges faced by mountain communities. This issue of *Ke Eo Taba!* highlights the significant strides that the Qwaqwa Campus has made to solidify its presence in the academic space.

Prof Pearl Sithole, Vice-Principal: Academic and Research, shared her reflections on the growth of the campus over the years.

Background Photo: Kaleidoscope | Photo of Prof Sithole: Supplied

The Qwaqwa Campus is well on its way to becoming a hub of knowledge for transdisciplinary and boundary-spanning solutions, Prof Sithole said.

She said the focused energies to upskill the campus over the past few years, are beginning to bear fruit and produce lasting results. She attributes this, among other things, to the involvement of colleagues in collaborations with national, regional, and continental institutions.

Despite the unprecedented challenges brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic, the UFS was able to advance its vision of comprehensive internalisation through partnerships.

Internationalization has been identified as a key component in improving the quality of education delivered in institutions of higher learning.

### A campus hard at work

The Qwaqwa Campus has been hard at work, forging and cultivating new knowledge through agreements and collaborations with regional, international, and even continental universities.

"These collaborations that have been happening are now beginning to reap the rewards. The campus is now an environment with academic and scholarly conversations – more and more of that – in addition to work that's been done in other spaces," Prof Sithole said.

She said the campus is committed to increasing research output, particularly in areas where women researchers are scarce. ■

*"We are on our way to becoming a hub of knowledge production by scholars who are confident in their own disciplines. I'm now looking forward to seeing more women on senior academic levels."*







# THE STORY BEHIND **our Faculty Officers**



**Dilahlwane Mohono**  
Faculty Officer for the Faculty of  
Natural and Agricultural Sciences

**D**ilahlwane Mohono is no newbie to student life. She has served as Faculty Officer in NAS for five years and has been with the UFS for 20 years in various positions, all centred around serving students. So, what is her secret to success? Being a great leader, a good listener, an advocate for student success, and applying great care to decision-making.

"I love being able to assist students, walking with them throughout their academic journeys, and seeing them graduate and get jobs."

As someone who has worked her way up to where she is today, she says encouraging students is her greatest passion.

Mohono says she feels most satisfied when she inspires excellence and transforms the lives of students through impact and care. "I believe that I must excel in what

I am doing, so as to inspire excellence in the students, transform their lives by educating them through academic advising, so that they understand the rules and regulations guiding their studies – which will also have a positive impact, because I care."

**"It's important to equip yourself with the necessary skills and knowledge in order to have a fruitful experience."**

Working at a higher education institution is a double blessing for Mohono, as she gets to serve the student body while also enriching her own life through furthering her studies.

"Being in my job has exposed me to so many new things. I've learned more about university systems and have grown more confident in my own abilities. Working interchangeably with different colleagues who are well-versed in different fields outside of my knowledge, has opened my eyes to a lot of things. As you participate more, you grow," she said.

She regards the Qwaqwa Campus as a beautiful platform to learn, grow, and develop yourself, and says she always reminds students and colleagues alike to seize the opportunities that the campus presents. "This is a beautiful campus to be at. I always advise everyone to just remember why they are here and to make the most of the time they've been given." ■

**T**hey are the engines responsible for creating opportunities for the growth and success of students, and for giving them an outstanding university experience. These are key aspects of a great faculty officer. *Ke Eo Taba!* profiled two of the four faculty officers on the Qwaqwa Campus about the multiple hats they have to juggle in order to handle the responsibilities of serving staff and students. ■

Photos: Nonsindiso Qwabe



**Lungile Mohale**  
Faculty Officer in the Faculty  
of the Humanities

**I**n the three years and three months that Lungile Mohale has been with the Faculty of Humanities, her greatest delight has been in building solid relationships with students and colleagues alike.

Mohale says these relationships, along with the privilege of being able to balance work and social life, are some of the things she loves most about her job.

"This makes it easy to be all that I am, from a family person to an employee of the University of the Free State." As a mediator between staff and students, Mohale said having a multivalued attribute – possessing multiple values simultaneously – has been her greatest strength and most-treasured quality. "I always wish to serve the students and also build a strong team or group, depending on

the task. When serving students or colleagues, it must be a win-win situation for the faculty and for the students or colleagues. This means unpacking, interpreting, and applying the UFS rules impartially for all individuals. I am happy to see the improved communication strategies and channels from the faculty to the students, and the other way around."

She says successful academic advising or a life-coaching session with students is what inspires her to continue striving to be the best at her job. "What I strive to achieve is to transfer the knowledge – through academic advising – to our students and teach them to excel within their comfort space. I believe that everyone's talents, personal traits, goals, and ambitions can be merged with one's studies to ensure a happy future. It's the satisfaction on a student's face that inspires me to always do the best," she said. ■

**"The approach I use to achieve uniformity and transparency in the faculty is to give quality information to everyone and also to provide the ways in which information can be accessed, which can be passed on to the coming generations."**







# STAFF APPRECIATION CEREMONY

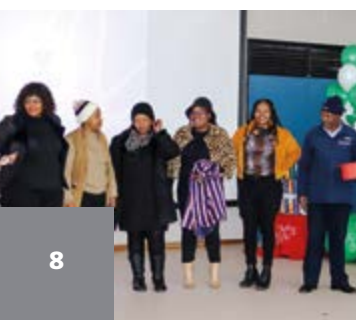
*in honour of the foot soldiers at the coalface*

It is often said that a picture paints a thousand words.

Commitment and dedication to the cause were honoured and appreciated as staff members from different faculties, departments, and units gathered to celebrate the successful execution of two of the most gruelling moments in the academic year – registration and graduation.

The African Safari theme set the scene as colleagues gathered in African print attire. Together, they sang, danced, played, and reflected as they looked back on lessons learned from the most demanding marathon projects of the year. The event sought to celebrate and grow the unique collegiality of the Qwaqwa Campus. ■

Photos: Thabiso Mdakana



# From Student to Lecturer

*a tale of hard work and dedication*

Newly appointed English Lecturer Peter Moopi recalled his academic struggles as he reflected on his journey from being a student to standing on the other side of the lecture room. “I didn’t start out as a bright student. I had to build and develop myself. Sometimes I would get very low marks in a module, and I’d feel like I wasn’t good enough. I had to push myself beyond my limits.”

Moopi began his journey with the UFS in 2016 when he enrolled for a Bachelor of Arts degree majoring in English, Business Management, and Psychology on the Qwaqwa Campus. He went on to complete his honours degree in English in 2019 and enrolled for an MA degree in the same field in 2020, which he obtained during the April 2022 graduations. A month later, in May, he was appointed as a lecturer in the Department of English on the campus.

In addition to his academic struggles, Moopi said he had to make ends meet in order to have something to eat, as his undergraduate bursary did not provide money for food. He said he often had to improvise and navigate with friends for food. In his honours year, he struggled to find a balance between his studies and his tutoring job at the time, and landed in the doctor’s office because of a mental breakdown. “The doctor simply said, ‘Peter, you need to sleep, because you’re overworking yourself,’” he recalled. These struggles built his diligence and perseverance, he said.

He is currently pursuing his PhD in English, with a focus on African decoloniality in English literature.

Moopi considers the Qwaqwa Campus as a hub that has developed him academically and personally. He is particularly grateful to his mentors – Prof Rodwell Makombe, Prof Oliver Nyambi, and Prof Irikidzayi Manase – who have been present throughout his journey. “Being on the Qwaqwa Campus has built me in many ways. My experience has really been delightful, insightful, challenging sometimes, and highly inspirational and profound.” ■

Photo: Nonsindiso Qwabe



# Mpho Twala – *the girl with the land*

The Bachelor of Community Development qualification develops young professionals who are able to work collaboratively with the community to come up with initiatives that build resilience and sustainability. Before obtaining their qualifications, students are required to identify community needs and to come up with viable ways to eradicate these.

It was during this period that Monontsha-born Mpho Twala, a recent CommDev graduate, identified a once-thriving community vegetable garden that had been abandoned and subsequently stripped over the years. Further research led her to realising that the soil was still very fertile, and with a bit of work, could once again be revived to become an income-generating business. *Ke Eo Taba!* met up with her to hear more about this amazing initiative.

## Bringing change to the community through vegetable farming

Twala, with no agricultural background, approached the locals for permission to revive the 1-ha garden into a community-owned vegetable garden. “The land has been uncultivated for more than a decade, and after conducting a needs analysis, I didn’t want to leave it like that, because I saw that if I worked with young people, this would help with the high unemployment rate among the youth in this area,” Twala said.

She says she was driven by bringing about change in her community, which she believes was inspired by her studies.

“I’ve always wanted to do something in my community, and CommDev taught me to see opportunities instead of challenges.”

The vegetable garden currently has 17 employees, 10 of whom are under the age of 35. They are currently harvesting cabbages, various forms of spinach, and white onion – all organic – for home consumption, community purchasing, and they occasionally sell to hawkers trading at Setsing.

Twala dreams of expanding the garden, adding more crops, and ultimately reaching commercial level. “We are currently classified under subsistence farming – farming for home consumption and selling the surplus so that the project can remain operational. But with the right funding and support, we can grow bigger and better.” ■

Photos: Nonsindiso Qwabe





# Bridging the gap

## between Qwaqwa Campus and the community: Moodi Matsoso

The Engaged Scholarship office, formerly known as the Community Engagement office, ensures that the UFS acts as a corporate citizen that contributes to community development.

On the Qwaqwa Campus, it is Moodi Matsoso, the Community Engagement Coordinator, who bridges the gap between the campus and the Qwaqwa community.

A woman of quiet demeanour, she often prefers her work to speak for itself – and it certainly does, because her reach extends far and wide in the surrounding community.

### Creating opportunities for community development

Matsoso is responsible for creating and increasing opportunities for students to participate in work-integrated learning and community-based education, working with willing community members and non-profit organisations (NGOs) to provide technical and vocational education training, entrepreneurship training and development, religious and faith-based training, to name a few. It is a job that often takes her away from the office, but she says what she loves most is that she learns a lot in the process of impacting communities.

“I love that my job is evidence-based and results-driven; you can see the work that we do in the community and the greater good it brings. I love our workshops, because they benefit community members tremendously; they are able to leave those sessions with an idea of how to improve their lives.”

She says through her office, they have created jobs and skills development by means of entrepreneurship workshops, upskilled pastors, and religious leaders to start social enterprises at their churches, and have seen many people beg into pig, poultry, and agriculture farming, which they are able to live on. ■

Photo: Nonsindiso Qwabe

“I work towards creating an enabling environment for engaged scholarship on the Qwaqwa Campus. My vision for our campus and its community is to be a place where social entrepreneurship is promoted. I believe it will eliminate poverty and promote economic growth.”



# Reaping the fruits of mentorship-

## from Qwaqwa to the world

Mentorship in the academic space has been recognised globally as an important instrument for fostering career growth and guiding career moves in higher education. This has been the experience for the first cohort of the early-career women academics mentorship programme, who recently widened their network and enjoyed the fruits of mentorship when they travelled to the Appalachian State University in Boone, North Carolina, in June.

The programme, aimed at equipping black female academics, is a brainchild of Prof Aliza le Roux, Assistant Dean in the Faculty of Natural and Agricultural Sciences. It was formed in 2020 as a subset of the R8 million Mountain-to-Mountain project between the UFS and App State University, funded by the US Embassy and Consulates in South Africa.

The group of mentees and mentors have been meeting virtually since the inception of the programme, with mentees based on the Qwaqwa Campus and mentors on the Bloemfontein Campus and in North Carolina. For the first time since its inception, they all met in person in June when the UFS group spent 10 days in Boone.

**In an interview, this is what some of the mentees who recently travelled to Boone had to say:**

The Boone trip was just amazing. It was my first time on a plane and my first time in America. The most interesting part of the Boone trip for me was the presentations we had from established academics, people who have been mentored before and are surprisingly continuing with the mentorship while being mentors themselves. Personally, I have never had a mentor before and only considered the mentorship when the call for applications came out. It is only when I got paired with my mentor that I realised the importance of having someone to guide and assist one in this very lonely and difficult academic journey. The US trip was the cherry on top of this mentorship. – Hadio Motaung, Lecturer and PhD candidate.

The Boone trip truly expanded my view beyond academia. The Appalachian State University produces a certain percentage of electricity for their community, and my thoughts were – only if the UFS could do that for Qwaqwa. Attending the Appalachian State Energy Summit and the Mandela Fellowship Scholarship events indeed strengthened the relationship between the two universities, besides the daily activities and training we indulged in. – Dipuo Mosea, Officer and MSc student.

This was my first international trip, and I am so thankful that it not only contributed to my personal development but also encouraged me to put more effort into my studies and consider studying further. My highlight of this trip was the Nelson Mandela Fellowship event, where I got to meet some of the fellows and talk about personal development as a whole and how one needs to make networking a part of their strategic plan in order to grow professionally. There are so many opportunities out there for young women who want to become leaders in their respective fields, and the right kind of network can get you on your way. I am proud to say that I've just completed my postgraduate degree in Management with the help of my mentor, and I am also planning to register for my master's degree next year. More projects (mentoring programmes) like this are needed to encourage women to take up leadership positions and excel in their respective fields of study. – Matseliso Makhubo, Senior Assistant Officer and PgDip Management student. ■

Photos: Supplied





# The UK-USDP Project

The University Staff Development Project (USDP) programme aims to develop a cohort of academically excellent and competent doctoral staff members. On the Qwaqwa Campus, the programme is entering its second year. Through a collaboration with the University of Venda and the University of the Highlands and Islands in Scotland, five staff members are currently pursuing their PhD qualifications. *Ke Eo Taba!* caught up with two of them.

Phumza Mbobo is Lecturer in the Department of Social Sciences and Commerce Education, and Gcina Mtengwane is Lecturer in the Department of Community Development.

Photos: Nonsindiso Qwabe

## Mbobo

### What attracted you to the project call?

I had just applied to register for my PhD on the UFS Qwaqwa Campus and was looking forward to making the most of this experience. I saw the project call, and at the time, I just got a supervisor who encouraged me to heed the call. I did some research on the project and found that it would benefit me a lot to join.

### What impact has the USDP had on your academic journey thus far?

As a new lecturer at the UFS and it being my very first time in Qwaqwa, this project introduced me to so many people with whom I share a common interest. I got to attend and present my study at an international conference (SAMC2022), and I made so many local and international connections and friendships that I'm sure will last me a lifetime. I get to travel nationally and internationally through my studies, and I get to grow as an academic. I have been assigned an international supervisor who specialises in my field, and I continue to learn so much through this collaboration. This project has opened so many doors for me that I would not have even imagined possible.



### Please tell us more about your research and how it will benefit the Afromontane region?

This study highlights the historical significance of local history in South Africa as it relates to the national History curriculum. It seeks to explore the silenced but active in the Afromontane liberation through an ethnographic study on the representation of women in the History curriculum. This study will reconnoitre the role played by Mofumahadi Manapo Mopeli, who is married to Dr TK Mopeli, former Chief Minister of the Bantustan of Qwaqwa, and member of the Royal Household in Qwaqwa. The study is located in the Afromontane region of the Eastern Free State, where there is a dearth with regards to the history of the area and the works of the people who have and continue to live in it. It seeks to shed light on this area while simultaneously promoting local history. ■

**“I made so many local and international connections and friendships that I'm sure will last me a lifetime.”**

## Mtengwane

### What attracted you to the UK-USDP project call?

I was introduced to the programme by Dr Jared McDonald, Assistant Dean of the Faculty of the Humanities on the Qwaqwa Campus. Upon examining the programme, I saw that it had many forms of support that were necessary for me to succeed in a PhD programme. The exposure to both local and international supervision support cemented my interest in the programme. Moreover, the programme offered a 'pre-set' network of both early career and advanced career academics, offering countless opportunities to learn from, collaborate, and grow with personally and professionally.

### What impact has the UK-USDP had on your academic journey thus far?

Because of the programme, I am able to get support for research equipment, as well as other resources to smoothen my PhD journey. Over and above that, I have had the opportunity to meet and interact with fellow PhD candidates with whom I share common interests, experiences, and challenges. This has created a platform for mutual aid and support.



### Please tell us more about your research and how it will benefit the Afromontane region?

My PhD study is on social and economic transitions of the youth in the former homeland of Qwaqwa. I use the decolonial theory to examine the lived experiences of the youth as they transition from childhood social and economic dependence to adulthood social and economic independence, given that Qwaqwa as a former homeland is a colonial and apartheid product that creates and perpetuates disadvantage for the youth as they undergo the mentioned transitions. Additionally, the study explores the trajectories of socio-economic transitions among the youth in Qwaqwa over the past 30 years; examines how the spatial location of Qwaqwa to major economic hubs in South Africa influences the participation of the youth in the national economy; investigates how young people from Qwaqwa utilise local resources to create livelihood opportunities in their local economy; and how the youth in Qwaqwa interact with employment institutions, policy, and legislation at national level. ■



# Qwaqwa Campus celebrates first **IN-PERSON GRADUATIONS** in almost two years

The highlight of the 2022 academic year so far was certainly the first in-person two-day graduation ceremonies in almost two years, and the Qwaqwa Campus did not disappoint in terms of the pizzazz that comes with the ceremonies. Graduations on the UFS Qwaqwa Campus are known for its unique traditional flair, and during the two-day ceremonies held on 29 and 30 April – the ecstatic graduates did not disappoint. One thousand six hundred and fifty-seven (1 657) qualifications were awarded during the graduations. As they walked across the stage to receive their qualifications, graduates ululated, chanted, and whipped out various forms of traditional dancing in celebration of their degrees. Male and female graduates could be seen beshaya indlamu (Zulu dance) or whipping out modern dancing styles as they strutted across the stage. Joining the excited graduates were the former Deputy Chief Justice and justice of the Constitutional Court of South Africa, Justice Dikgang Moseneke, and Ms Winnie Byanyima, the Executive Director of UNAIDS and an Under-Secretary-General of the United Nations, who were awarded honorary doctorates during the two-day celebrations. Justice Moseneke received his honorary doctorate on 29 April, and Ms Byanyima on 30 April. ■



Photos: Ian Van Straten





## ARU enters five-year agreement for **250 ha alpine land on the Maloti-Drakensberg**

The Afromontane Research Unit (ARU), on behalf of the University of the Free State, has entered into a five-year lease agreement with Transfrontier Parks Destinations for 250 ha of alpine real estate in the Maloti-Drakensberg – some of the highest elevation land in the Free State, it is situated at 3 100 m above sea level in the Witsieshoek area. Witsieshoek Mountain Lodge is managing the land on behalf of the Batlokoa community of Qwaqwa.

In a move towards understanding how range-expanding species may affect our current alpine environment under future climatic conditions, the ARU has been hard at work setting up the alpine base along the old Namahadi border post on the Mont-aux-Sources and Amphitheatre summits of the Drakensberg. The mountain area is home to a variety of landscapes and is rich in flora and fauna. ARU Director, Dr Ralph Clark, said the lease of 250 ha of land would allow for more exciting projects and collaborations to take place.

**The lease is a first for a research institution in Southern Africa and a game changer for the ARU and alpine research.**



“The lease is really amazing. The alpine base will allow us to have a strong alpine research hub on the summit, which is something unheard of in South Africa due to the extreme climate conditions as well as the crime risks associated with having any project on top of the Drakensberg, since it is a remote area with a high influx of Lesotho herders for grazing in the summer,” he said.

The lease is for five years – renewable for a further five years – and is sponsored by the Department of Science and Innovation, Dr Clark

said. As custodians of the 250 ha, the ARU will have first rights to projects, and can work on collaborations with anyone who wants to do work up there.

“There’s a lot of exciting work that can be done. We have exciting projects lined up for the land, including the RangeX research project which was launched in October 2021. What I am pushing and advocating for on the international boards I sit on, is for an alpine programme similar to what’s being done in Switzerland with the Swiss Alps,” Dr Clark said. ■

Photos: Supplied



## Biodiversity project set to inject **love and tourism** on Witsieshoek Mountains

**What does Qwaqwa look like from an outsider’s perspective?**

Green, with vast, majestic mountain views that take your breath away. And this is why understanding its unique features is key to its preservation and development.

A UFS-led project is underway to protect and conserve the unique biodiversity found in Witsieshoek and the Maloti-Drakensberg. It is led by Dr Andrinajoro Rakotoarivelo – better known as Joro – a zoologist, bioinformatic and molecular ecology consultant from the Indian Ocean Island of Madagascar, who is currently affiliated with the Afromontane Research Unit (ARU) as a researcher. Dr Rakotoarivelo is leading the project under ARU Professor-in-Residence, Prof Peter Taylor.

Witsieshoek is one of the few community-land protected areas that has not yet been gazetted as national parks. Owned by the Batlokoa community of Qwaqwa, Witsieshoek is a key treasure to locals, as they are the custodians of the area.

Dr Rakotoarivelo said mapping the biodiversity found on the mountains would enable responsible conservation and ecotourism to thrive in the area.

“The aim is to build a database of Witsieshoek biodiversity, as it is a major tourist attraction. Through the work we’re doing, we’ll be able to boost the visibility by promoting its vast richness. The more stable the protected area is as a reservoir of Qwaqwa, the more it will be able to boost the economy of the locals by bringing in tourism.”

He said the project would also create an incentive for community locals to own, protect, and promote their own land while promoting ecotourism. “This area is a highly-prized destination, and it’s time for locals to see and value this too.” ■

Photos: Supplied



**FUN READ**

## **Taboos aside, bats are beneficial to the ecosystem**

Dr Rakotoarivelo is also a bat lover and specialist. For his PhD, he focused on the conservation of Malagasy bats. While acknowledging that it is a natural human element to fear nocturnal species – especially bats and owls – understanding their benefits would lead to more communities embracing them. Bats feed on insects that can potentially harm crop production.

“Bats play a major role in pest control in the ecosystem, and communities can benefit from having them around, especially in places where a lot of agriculture and farming take place.”

## **Bats not like how movies and folklore make them out to be**

One of the biggest drives in farming currently, is to reduce the use of pesticides and to promote biocontrol. Pesticides cost a lot of money and contain residuals that can harm water and the environment.

“While commonly associated with vampires and the like, by stopping the vilification of bats and explaining their benefits, we would change the world of farming. The bat community contributes to the regulation of insects, keeping the ecosystem balanced,” he said.

In other countries, bats feed on mosquitos, which are carriers of malaria. Having them around helps to reduce the abundance of mosquitoes.

So, what do you think, dear reader – can you see yourself embracing bats more? ■





# Staff sports:

*a window on our beautiful campus*

Strong relationships are crucial when striving for success in pretty much any aspect of our lives, be it sports, at work or in our private lives. Whether working together on the pitch or in boardrooms, building strong relationships can make the difference between winning and losing.

Dr Grey Magaiza has been involved in forming lasting partnerships through staff sporting events with local and international institutions and has found this to be much more effective in nurturing collegiality than teaching or research collaboration.

“We have used sports to put the Qwaqwa Campus on the map. We’ve had other universities come to visit us, such as the National University of Lesotho, the University of Eswatini, the Mangosuthu University of Technology, and many other universities; the benefit of this is that we’ve managed to build lasting relationships. Sport becomes a congruent to accessing other universities’ capabilities and systems.”

## Work hard, play harder

The relationships that have emerged out of sport have proven to be lifelong, he said, because through sport you know that no matter where you go, you’ll have a contact – regardless of whether you are in the same discipline or not.

“I would say there are more benefits to sports at an institutional level. It also assists with branding a campus, as we become known as a campus that is open to visiting and being visited, and as a result become more visible. Sport becomes a window through which others see the beauty of our campus.”

He said the sports committee is planning a trip to Mozambique next year and is hoping that more staff members will take on the opportunity to travel.

“Sport can also build a sense of community among colleagues. In the workplace, people who travel and play together begin to interact better and operate more efficiently. We are evolving our own culture of efficiency.” ■

*Stay tuned for more information on staff sports tournaments coming soon!*



Photo: Supplied

# Sports lover

Matseliso Letsela

Research across the world has shown that a lack of boundaries between the professional and personal lives of many employees leads to a poor work-life balance. For Matseliso Letsela, fondly known as Poppy on the campus grounds, staying active has been the perfect way to de-stress from the hectic demands of her job. She speaks to *Ke Eo Taba!* about achieving balance through sport.

Photo: Nonsindiso Qwabe

## What made you fall in love with sports and keeping fit?

Besides doing it for health reasons, I have always loved meeting new people as a mechanism of work-life integration, and I’ve found the sports ground to be one of the perfect places to unplug from work.

## Why is a work-life balance important?

At times we face pressure from our work, and there should always be a balance between work and personal well-being to avoid being overwhelmed. That’s where the wellness dimension comes in. Sports activities such as training sessions after long working hours are of paramount importance to alleviate this pressure, as it keeps the mind relaxed and the body healthy. The key role of the work-life balance is to blend these two important aspects of your life for a well-balanced day.

## What are some of the benefits of playing sports?

Sport not only rejuvenates the soul, mind, and body and keeps us healthy, but it also gives us an opportunity to interact with others. Social connections are also vital to one’s well-being. ■



Please give readers a few tips on how to get fit without going to the gym:



Drink a lot of **water**



Take regular **walks**



Do **gardening** and **house chores**



Follow a **healthy diet**



Have a **positive outlook** on life and choose to be happy at all times







## TRANS-LOCAL RESEARCH REVEALS

*that the younger generation is contributing to Qwaqwa development through entrepreneurship*

**H**as it ever crossed your mind that there could be similarities between our local Phuthaditjhaba community and a small rural mountain city in Japan?

Linking these rural mountainous communities through trans-local learning, Dr Melissa Hansen, Geography Lecturer and Subject Head on the Qwaqwa Campus, is coordinating the Japan Sustainability Science project with Prof Shogo Kudo from the Akita International University. The project-based collaboration is exploring the relationship between migration, entrepreneurship, and sustainable development between Phuthaditjhaba and Gojome, a rural town found in the Akita province in Japan. The partnership began in June 2017 and is exploring similarities and differences between the two mountainous towns.

### **Exploring the similarities and differences between two localities**

Trans-local learning involves linking different localities. Research participants from diverse backgrounds and locations come together and join in a set of fieldwork activities in order to re-interpret how they each view their own locality.

Through this sustainability project, Dr Hansen said they discovered that both young in-migrants are contributing to the sustainable development of their towns through entrepreneurship. "It has been found that the youth have been returning and settling back in Qwaqwa, as they find their hometown more profitable than staying in major cities. Along with their return comes the influx of new ideas from these major cities."

She said trans-local learning connects different localities so that each learns from case study reflections.

"The project is a field-based programme that focuses on linkages between Qwaqwa and Gojome, with the purpose of obtaining diverse perspectives that are useful when engaging with community projects. We aim to contribute to the development of the Qwaqwa Campus as a sustainability science hub and to foster the development of inter- and transdisciplinary research," she said. ■

Photo: Supplied

## **The UFS puts its foot down** *against sexual harassment, sexual misconduct, and sexual violence*

**T**he University of the Free State (UFS) strongly believes in the principle of human dignity as embedded in the Constitution of South Africa (1996) and resolves to ensure a safe work and study environment where all may pursue their studies, careers, duties, and activities free from discrimination, sexual misconduct, sexual harassment, and sexual violence, all of which are aimed at ensuring full access to the opportunities that an institution of higher education provides.

As such, the UFS is dedicated to creating an environment in which both staff and students are safe from sexual harassment, sexual misconduct, and sexual violence. Both staff and students are encouraged to familiarise themselves with the UFS Sexual Harassment, Sexual Misconduct and Sexual Violence Policy.

Anyone who has experienced or witnessed any act of sexual harassment, misconduct, or violence is encouraged to report such behaviour as soon as possible to any of the following reporting offices:

- The Gender Equality and Anti-Discrimination Office
- The Free State Centre for Human Rights
- Student Affairs
- Protection Services
- Residence heads
- Human Resources

**#StopGBV**  
**#EnoughIsEnough**  
**#EndGBV**

To read more about the policy, please visit:  
**[www.ufs.ac.za/GBVPolicy](http://www.ufs.ac.za/GBVPolicy)**