

# CONCILIO

UNIVERSITY OF THE  
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UNIVERSITEIT VAN DIE  
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YUNIVESITHI YA  
FREISTATA



South Campus Newsletter  
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**Sailing the ship  
during a hurricane with  
*Dr Marinkie Madiope*  
at the helm**

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# CONCILIO

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# Sailing the ship during a hurricane with **Dr Marinkie Madiope** at the helm

By Eugene Seegers

**I**n a world turned upside down, one needs a leader at the helm to guide your ship safely through treacherous waters. Dr Maria 'Marinkie' Madiope is such a vigilant and resilient leader.

The Council of the University of the Free State (UFS) appointed Dr Madiope as Principal of the South Campus on 20 September 2019. She took up her new post on 1 January 2020, bringing with her a wealth of knowledge and experience in the open distance and eLearning environment. At heart, she remains a teacher and a mentor, or as she describes herself, an "ever-present mother and sister" to those with whom she works.

During the coronavirus pandemic, Dr Madiope has courageously led the South Campus in its mission to be recognised as the Educational Technology Centre for Digital Learning in Africa and beyond.

Of her initial experiences on the South Campus, Dr Madiope says: "I very much appreciated the warm welcome when I arrived on campus. Indeed, I am humbled by everyone's support, as we strive together to take this campus to greater heights."

Despite the challenges that remote working and other aspects of the COVID-19 pandemic present to staff well-being, staff both on and off campus are living out the South Campus mission and taking pride in their work, as they follow the example of this, our extraordinary Principal!

**Dr Maria Madiope took over the helm of the UFS South Campus on 1 January 2020, just in time to steer the ship during the COVID-19 storm.**

*Photo: Sonia Small, Kaleidoscope Studios.*



## PUBLIC HOLIDAYS 2021

1 January **New Year's Day**  
22 March **Human Rights Day**  
02 April **Good Friday**  
05 April **Family Day**

27 April **Freedom Day**  
1 May **Workers' Day**  
16 June **Youth Day**  
9 August **National Women's Day**

24 September **Heritage Day**  
16 December **Day of Reconciliation**  
25 December **Christmas Day**  
27 December **Day of Goodwill**

# 'Creative Clubs' uplifts Mangaung learners

By Eugene Seegers

Among the many social-responsibility projects that are run from the South Campus, there is one that stimulates higher-performing learners who may be overlooked in underperforming schools.

Starting in January 2019, the *Creative Clubs* programme has been helping 100 Grade 10 learners with strong academic profiles from ten schools around the campus in Mangaung to do just that. Funding of R3,8 million along with a three-year agreement with the Manufacturing, Engineering and Related Services Sector Education and Training Authority (MerSETA), enabled the project to create an environment in which learners can develop certain skills, such as problem-solving, critical thinking, and higher-order reasoning.

Dr Joleen Hamilton, coordinator of the '*Creative Clubs*' project, explains, "We want to help learners develop certain skills, but also assist them to gain self-confidence in reading and understanding English." Sessions are conducted each weekday afternoon; two schools per afternoon visit the South Campus.

"We specifically want to address internal motivation," Dr Hamilton adds. "To increase their motivation, learners must believe in their abilities, potential, and in themselves. Getting them to believe in themselves was an unfamiliar idea to the learners." These young people need self-confidence so that they can have the courage to persevere, even if a problem proves challenging.

While the programme was still in its fledgling stage, 84 learners participated in a competition hosted by the Nelson Mandela University (NMU), called MathArt, in which learners had to create artworks based on mathematics principles, either as seen in man-made designs or in nature. Seven learners earned certificates at a prize-giving ceremony held on 30 August 2019, with three learners reaching the semi-finals, while another three reached the final round. One learner was awarded a 'highly commended' certificate.

This project has had several benefits for the learners, such as learning to socialise and to work as a team, broadening their general knowledge, opening doors to different careers, and changing the way they approach their schoolwork.





Learners participate in an origami exercise where they had to fold the structures themselves.  
*Photo: Supplied.*





# Waterwise indigenous gardens dress up South Campus

*By Eugene Seegers*

If you have ever stood on the South Campus and marvelled at the verdant tranquillity that only nature can bring, you have Jeanné Combrinck and her team of landscapers to thank. With her innovative, cost-saving ideas and approach, Jeanné's green fingers have managed to create a haven that thrills every nature lover on campus, whether they are visitors, students, or staff members.

Her approach is simple in its ingenuity: Use only natural, indigenous, and waterwise plants that are at home not only in the Free State but to the craggy slopes of the South Campus. For example, 120 umbrella trees (*kiepersol*) have been planted in the campus environs, and the entire front garden alongside the Ukubizana Lecture Hall has been converted to solely waterwise, mostly succulent, plants.

Other flora have been selected for their hardiness and liking for hill country such as that which is found on the South Campus. These include wild olive trees, spider ivy (known colloquially as *hen and chickens* due to its ability to reproduce), Camdeboo stinkwood (*witstinkhout*), agapanthus, and clivias. Jeanné says she is fortunate to have the assistance of a grey-water irrigation system that makes her task of nurturing these plants much more manageable.









Staff at Ekuthuleni Preschool show off some of the knitted handiworks from the South Campus.

By Nelia Oosthuysen

**Mandela Day is just around the corner, but on the South Campus, there is no concern that COVID-19 will prevent a 67-minute meaningful act of love. The tight-knit family of the South Campus decided to reach out to a small ECD centre in the Nkopane village, close to Sterkspruit, called Ekuthuleni Preschool.**

Contact was made with the ECD centre through the work done by the UFS Schools Partnership Projects in Sterkspruit. This division of the Social Responsibility Projects (SRP) work in the underperforming secondary schools in the Sterkspruit area. Being familiar with the community and the challenges they face, the teacher-mentors were able to identify an institution that required the support.

Ekuthuleni Preschool has 15 learners, and the only resources the learners have access to are a few broken toys, three sponge mattresses, and a few old blankets. No tables or chairs are available in the ice-cold building.

Prof Lynette Jacobs, not being at her “knits’ end”, wrote a letter to the principal to offer the assistance of the South Campus staff, with no strings attached.

Since September 2019, staff members have eagerly knitted squares that are then sewn together to form blankets. Knitting has been a form of therapy to the staff, and the learners of Ekuthuleni will soon be able to be comforted with love under a knitted blanket.



# ACT grad runs his seventh Comrades marathon



ACT graduate Valiko Matshaya with his wife and son.  
*Photo: Supplied.*

*By Eugene Seegers*

Valiko Matshaya (58) obtained his matric certificate in 1991 at the age of 32. However, he did not stop there. After obtaining his National Professional Diploma in Education (NPDE) at the UFS in 2009, he started teaching in 2011. Valiko teaches English and Life Skills at Thusanong Primary; he has also taught in Adult Basic Education Training (ABET) at the Vukuzenzele Abet School in Thabong, Welkom.

In 2014, he passed his Master's in Christian Counselling, and on 30 November 2019, he received his Doctorate in Leadership through the Faith Bible College (he is an ordained minister in the Apostolic Faith Mission). Matshaya is also working towards an Advanced Certificate in Teaching (ACT) through the UFS South Campus online programme.

In addition to his academic journey, he is a long-distance runner who has completed seven

Comrades and two Two Oceans Marathons. Matshaya is also a Level 3 coach for Athletics South Africa middle-distance races and a Level 3 Schools Association head coach.

These achievements do not come without sacrifice, though. Valiko wakes up at 05:30 each morning and trains for 45 minutes before going to work. In the afternoon, he trains his school athletes, and on weekends he runs long distance.

It is not all work and no play, though. Valiko enjoys soul music and says his favourite artist is 'the Boss', Bruce Springsteen. Through his example, he has also had the joy of seeing his son take up the running shoes, following in his footsteps. As a family man, he especially enjoys training with his wife and son.



# Meputso bakeng sa Tshebeletso ya Nako e Telele: *Dilemo tse 25*

By Nelia Oosthuysen



Morao tjena Dries van Tonder o ile a fumana moputso bakeng sa tshebeletso ya nako e telele ya dilemo tse 25 ntle le ho ho kgaotsa mona UFS. O ile a kgethwa jwalo ka Motsamai wa Faculty lefapheng la Faculty of Education ka 1994. Ka lebaka la bokgoni ba hae bo ipabollang dipuong tsa Senyesemane le SeAfrikaanse, empa ka ho kgethehileng Sesotho le Sepedi, o ile a fetisetswa lefapheng la Centre for Education Development (CED). Bofelong ba 2011, Dries o ile a amohela boemo ho School of Open Learning (SOL), e sa tswa thehwa ho Vista Campus ya mehleng ka lehlakoreng le ka borwa la Bloemfontein. Mona, o ne a ikarabella ka ho thaotha le ho thusa baithuti ka keletso dithutong tsa bona. Hape, bokgoni ba hae ba dipuo bo bile bohlokwa haholo boemong bona. Kajeno, khamphase ena e tsejwa jwalo ka South Campus mme ha se feela hore e amohela baithuti ba ithutang ba le hole.

Oom Dries o re: o hlahile ka 1957 polasing ya Ramapothaba seterekeng sa Thaba Nchu Freistata. Ramapothaba ke lebitso la Barolong le bolelang 'haufi le thaba'. Barolong ke morabe wa Batswana o tswang tikolohong ya Bophuthatswana, oo setso sa ona e leng Thaba Nchu. Polasing moo ba ne ba na le dinku le dikgomo, moo a neng a sebetsa jwalo ka ngwana le basebetsi ba polasing ba Basotho mme ka hoo a ithuta Sesotho. Basebetsi ba polasing ba ile ba mo reha lebitso la Thabo, leo motso wa lona e leng Thabile, le bolelang 'thabo'. Baithuti ba bangata ba South Campus ba boetse ba mo tseba jwalo ka Thabo. Ho parola le dilemo tsena, tjantjello e kgolo ya hae kamehla e bile ho sebeletsa baithuti; ka lebaka la bokgoni le tsebo ya hae ya dipuo o bile le tlatsetso e kgolo ntlafatsong ya dipuisano le baithuti, hammoho le dikamano le batho ba ditso tse ngata tse fapaneng – e leng makgabane a melao ya bohlokwa e behwang sehlohlolong mona UFS.





# 'The closest I will come to doing magic'

*By Leonie Bolleurs*

The post-school life of Francois de Beer, one of the graduates in the Faculty of Natural and Agricultural Sciences who obtained his qualification in Chemistry and Biochemistry during the April 2019 graduation ceremonies, can be seen as one great act of 'magic'. Other people might describe it as a coincidence with a couple of resulting miracles.





## An opportunity

After completing his schooling at Fichardt Park High School in 2008, Francois decided to study at the University of the Free State (UFS). “Kovsies gave me the opportunity when nobody else would,” said Francois.

He did not have Maths at school but wished to study in a Science field. “It is the closest one will ever come to doing magic,” he said.

## The human element

Francois, who initially did not perform very well academically, did a bridging course in Mathematics and since then achieved distinctions in all his subjects. He related his story: “I did not have any Maths subjects at school; therefore, it was challenging for me to get onto this path. The big difference was that Elzmarie Oosthuizen from the UFS bridging programme saw something in me when nobody else did. She gave me the opportunity to do the Mathematics course, after which I was able to continue further on the Science path.”

“I would highly recommend the UFS to other prospective students. I think this university has a human element that really looks after its students,” Francois said.

Francois is currently pursuing his postgraduate studies in Chemistry. He wants to make a difference in the lives of other people, just as others have made a difference in his life.

**Francois de Beer, who achieved distinctions in all his subjects and is currently pursuing postgraduate studies in Chemistry.**

*Photo: Johan Roux.*



# Sweet sounds of the South Campus choir

By Bonisile Gcisa

The South Campus choir was established in April 2019 by Bonisile Gcisa, who is still the choir leader. He approached registered South Campus students to audition and with the widespread interest, the choir was born. It is a mixed choir that mostly sings a cappella. A few of their many musical items this year include Leebe (Dove) from Mohapeloa and then some own compilations from Bonisile himself. These include Pelonomi ya Morena and a folk song titled Think of me/Dink aan my. The choir practises on Friday afternoons in the Ukubizana centre on campus and perform throughout the year at organised performances, churches and schools where the South Campus is involved. We, as the South Campus, are truly proud of our choir and the high standard maintained under the leadership of Bonisile!







## Positives of a pandemic — Time for introspection and healing

By Nelia Oosthuysen

Every year begins chockfull of new opportunities, expectations, dreams... And so we also approached 2020 with a perennial positivity unaware of what lay ahead. New challenges? The COVID-19/Coronavirus pandemic took care of that, more than we ever could have anticipated. On 23 March 2020, our President announced a national lockdown period that would have numerous implications. Most of these implications would be negative as we know all too well – our personal lives, the things we read in the paper/on social media and what we see around us, but I decided to stop and focus on the positives that could come out of this pandemic as well as some “food for thought”.

We were all dumbstruck at our planet’s ability to heal itself in such a short time and show off the astounding beauty that nature has to offer, such as the sparkling clean canals in Venice. Pollution decreased in leaps and bounds, and for once, residents of some of the major cities in the world could not see what they were breathing in! NASA observed this phenomenon with satellites in the atmosphere that travelled above Asia, America and Europe during this time.

On a more personal note, the lockdown period was an opportunity for me – but one that I hope everyone also used to some degree – to step back, do a little introspection and reflect on the crucial aspects of everyday life. Reflecting on the significance of relationships with family and friends, our responsibility towards our planet and everything on it, as well as a new awareness and sensitivity towards those in a less fortunate position than I am in. Last, but certainly not least: How is my spiritual life? Am I spending enough time with my Creator as my only source of energy in these trying times? I can only speak for myself, but during this time, I was able to take stock of my life again and to prioritise what is and what should be important to me. Let us then go forth with a new lease on life keeping in mind the following: “Some people cannot be cured, but everyone can heal.” – Unknown.





# IDEAS Lab announces new control studio

By Eugene Seegers

The IDEAS Lab on the South Campus is proud to announce that the new studio, which has been in the making for the past few years, is now 95% complete.

The studio has state-of-the-art broadcasting equipment, including high-definition cameras, a multi-camera broadcasting programme, teleprompters, and a redundancy backup application to make sure we

never lose a second on air in case of any technical difficulty.

The studio can host about 20 people at maximum capacity. It is equipped to do livestreaming, talk shows, voice-over recording, public announcements, and a whole lot more.

Studio B in the IDEAS Lab on the South Campus.

Photo: Supplied.

