



35th Chancellor's Distinguished Alumni Awards Dinner

26 August 2017

*Inspiring excellence. Transforming lives.
Inspireer uitnemendheid. Verander lewens.*



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



Dr Khotso Mokhele

UFS Chancellor

Chancellor's Distinguished Alumnus of the Year Recipient

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The Chancellor's Distinguished Alumnus of the Year is the highest honour accorded to an alumnus in recognition of the recipient's distinguished achievements. This award celebrates an excellent alumnus who serves to inspire fellow alumni, current students and the community at large.

VIAN CHINNER

Young Alumnus of the Year Recipient

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This award acknowledges the achievements of alumni who have graduated within the past decade and have contributed immensely to their fields.

LEAH MOLATSELI

Cum Laude Award Recipients

4-6

This award is bestowed upon an alumnus to recognise excellence in any field, whether vocational or voluntary.

DAVID ABBEY
 JOHAN EKSTEEN
 ZOLA VALASHIYA

Executive Management Award Recipient

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This service award is presented to an individual who has delivered exceptional service to the University of the Free State.

SARINA CRONJÉ

Kovsie Ambassador Award

8-9

The Kovsie Ambassador Award is bestowed upon an individual whose achievements have brought distinction to him/her, benefited his/her community and brought credit to the University of the Free State.

CRYSTAL-DONNA
 ROBERTS
 FRANCO SMITH

VIAN CHINNER



Chief Executive Officer:
Xineoh

QUALIFICATIONS

BCom Financial Management
(UFS) 2010

Described by Gene Anderson, CEO of Advanced Online Technology and The Billionaire Foundation ambassador, as one of the “most brilliant” people she had ever worked with, Vian Chinner epitomises ambition.

He started his career as a computer scientist when he applied mathematical modelling to commodity trading while he was working at a boutique trading firm in 2004. The following year he founded a trading company where he developed proprietary trading algorithms that consistently outperformed commodities funds in the US and Europe.

After analysing various global markets and their respective opportunities, Chinner determined that a business in online marketing could open doors to multiple industry sectors and so in 2011 his first online marketing company was launched. Two years later he started Ylopo Inc, a venture backed by Move Inc, a top-three real estate portal in the US and focused on applying marketing automation and machine learning to enhance the rental and real estate search experience.

In 2012 Chinner embarked on a self-funded trip to San Francisco where he attended his first marketing conference. With just a set

of home-printed business cards he made the necessary contacts on his first trip to the US, and from there on, he continued attending conferences and events when the opportunity arrived.

At present Chinner is at the helm of Xineoh, a performance marketing company he founded in 2014. The company, based in Bloemfontein, and with offices in Cape Town, Oregon and Vancouver, specialises in applying mathematical modelling and machine learning to optimise conversion in industries including real estate, mortgage banking and e-commerce in which Xineoh has generated more than \$30 million in revenue for its clients.

Chinner’s innovation and drive saw Xineo reach \$1million in revenue during its first year, a figure which doubled in its second year of operation. Today Stanford University, Harvard University and a Fellow at Intel Corporation are among the investors in Chinner’s vision. This vision secured him \$2 million of funding from US and Canadian investors in 2017 which will be used to grow Video Llama, a one-stop personal shopping assistant for video streaming; which will initially be rolled out in the US market.

LEAH MOLATSELI

Having launched South Africa's first legal e-commerce website with instant legal document download capability, Leah Molatseli is the perfect example of what happens when innovation meets passion

The attorney-turned-businesswoman began her legal journey in private practice in 2012 at the age of 24 where she quickly worked her way up the ranks to become an associate. After completing the Entrepreneurship Development Programme offered by the University of the Free State and with the MTN Foundation, the entrepreneur bug bit and Lenoma Legal was born. Since Lenoma Legal's launch in 2016, Molatseli has been listed in the Top 5 of the 2016 QuickBooks and Saturday Sun Momprenuer Competition landing her a feature in Entrepreneur magazine which boasts a South African readership of more than 200 000. She also participated in the Bloemfontein leg of the Engen Pitch and Polish business pitching competition in which she was placed third and

her company was selected as one of South Africa's Top 10 tech start-up companies for Seedstars. She was also nominated as one of 50 inspiring women in technology in South Africa.

With an interest in youth and women development Molatseli sits on the boards of Entrepreneurs Networking South Africa, an organisation for South African entrepreneurs, and Phenomenal Women, a non-profit organisation with a focus on empowering women in business through training, networking and workshops.

This driven mother of three is a former president of the Free State and Northern Cape branch of the South African Society of Labour Law and lends her writing skills to publications including SME Toolkit, SA Labour Guide, Farmers Weekly, News24 Voices and She Leads Africa, while serving as the chapter lead for The Hook Up Dinner Bloemfontein, a monthly networking community for entrepreneurs.



Founder and
Managing Director:
Lenoma Legal

QUALIFICATIONS

LLB
(UFS) 2010

DAVID ABBEY



Acquisition and Leveraged
Finance Deal Maker:
Rand Merchant Bank

QUALIFICATIONS

BCom Hons Accounting
(UFS) 2008

BCom Accounting
(RU) 2007

David Abbey is widely respected for his integrity, sound business acumen and commercial savvy. A recipient of numerous accolades and honours, David has attracted offers from local and international blue-chip companies because of his high intellectual and execution capability.

While employed at PricewaterhouseCoopers, David Abbey achieved the highest ratings at the PwC Advisory and Banking Practices serving as Vice-Chairperson of the PwC Investment Banking specialist group before being headhunted by Rand Merchant Bank. There he helped establish the Finance Target Operating Model and after just seven months became the youngest strategist and executive assistant to the Chief Financial Officer receiving the coveted Rand Merchant Bank Special Service Distinction Award in 2015. Furthermore, Abbey was selected as one of 30 out of 40 000 employees to take part in FirstRand's Executive Leadership programme in which he not only graduated with top honours but was recognised as most likely to become CEO of the FirstRand Group to which the Rand Merchant Bank belongs.

Passionate about education and early childhood development Abbey is involved in mentoring young professionals and ran the Banking and Capital Markets Financial Instruments Programme, where he guest lectured on investment banking, financial instruments, industry and technical developments at University of the Free State, Rhodes University, Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University and the University of Cape Town.

Abbey is a Chartered Accountant, who qualified concurrently as a Certified Information Systems Auditor (a global qualification recognised as the highest qualification for information technology and information systems professionals). He joined the Association of Black Accountants in Southern Africa's education committee in 2009 and is a member of the Johannesburg branch board of the organisation as well as chair of the database and communications committee. He is the public relations officer of an online motoring publication, DriveRSA and is also a motoring journalist.

JOHAN EKSTEEN

At just 11 years old Johan Eksteen had ambitions of being a stud breeder. Six cows and one bull later, Johan was the youngest stud farmer to be registered in the South African Stud Book – a business he grew substantially before selling in order to cover his tuition fees. Today, Johan Eksteen is the founder of Agricon, a Bloemfontein-based company that designs and manufactures cost effective, innovative and eco-friendly pellets for the agricultural and industrial industries.

After having established Agricon in 1993 with his brother, André, Eksteen would in 2006 become the sole owner and grow the business into a global specialisation. His strong business acumen has led to Agricon developing its largest export

market on the African continent. Agricon also exports to Germany, Sweden, Australia and Asia. Johan has successfully tapped into new markets by adapting equipment to pelletise a range of products including tobacco dust, vermin compost, rooibos tea and organic fertilisers.

The MBA graduate received the UFS Business School's Entrepreneurship Award in 2013. This was followed by his first prize win of the ILO Free State Enterprise Job Creation Challenge as well as an Entrepreneur of the Year Award in the small business category of the Sanlam and Business Partners' Annual Entrepreneurship competition in 2014. In 2016, Eksteen walked away as Entrepreneur of the Year in the same competitions.



Owner:
Agricon Pelleting

QUALIFICATIONS

MBA
(UFS) 2005

MSc Sustainable Agriculture
(UFS) 1998

ZOLA VALASHIYA



Co-Founder and Director:
Debate Afrika

Schools Projects
and Campaigns Manager:
Corruption Watch

QUALIFICATIONS

LLB
(UFS) 2014

Masters of
Public Administration
(Central European University)
2016

Zola Valashiya is a legal mind, an avid writer, a human rights advocate and pioneer in debating excellence. An esteemed thought leader, he has served as Vice-Chairperson of the South African National Universities Debate Championships (2013), World Universities Debate Championships secretary-general (2014), and president of the Central European University Student Union (2016) in Hungary where he obtained his Master's in Public Administration.

Valashiya has lent his writing skills to Al Jazeera, The Journalist and AMAZE (Online) Network and together with UFS alumnus Sibusiso Tshabalala co-piloted the Africa Kusoma Literacy Initiative which won them the Google Zeitgeist Young Minds Award in 2012. It was this passion for literacy and youth development that saw

Valashiya co-found Debate Afrika, a voluntary association utilising debate as a tool for both critical thinking and education in underprivileged schools.

Additionally, he is the Schools Projects and Campaigns manager for Corruption Watch where he engages with the youth on integrity, leadership ethics, accountability and transparency.

This Zulu speaker is multilingual, having mastered nine languages including Afrikaans, SeSotho, Mandarin, French and German. He is a Brightest Young Minds alumnus (2013), Mandela Rhodes Scholar (2015) and a Young African Leadership Initiative Mandela Washington Fellow (2017) and presently features on the Mail and Guardian list of top 200 young South Africans.

SARINA CRONJÉ

Before there was Zola Budd there was Sarina Cronjé, a woman who today is regarded as a legend in the athletics world, both as an athlete and trainer.

A former Springbok athlete, Cronjé's interest in the sport began as a Grade 7 pupil when she won her first cross-country event. Cronjé won the South African under-16 title in the 400m and it was then that she knew her destiny. She went on to forge a lucrative career setting South African records in the 800m, 100m, 1500m, mile and 3000m in addition to running the fastest 10km on the road in 1980. Many of the records set by Cronjé remained unbeaten for between eight and 10 years with her best times ranking in the top five of all time in South Africa.

Joining the Kovsie Sport family in the 1990s, Cronjé is a seasoned trainer for national middle- and long-distance athletes as well as cross-

country and road-running athletes. She is also the driving force behind Kovsie long distance champion Kesa Molotsane as well as Mthembi Chauque, Marne Mentz, Bennie Prinsloo, Lizandré Mulder and Heinrich Brühns.

It is the compassion, drive and in-depth knowledge displayed in her coaching methods that has earned her the reputation of being one of the most reliable athletics sport managers in the country.

She is married to Danie Cronjé, a great athlete himself who in 1981 ran the then second fastest time ever by a South African in the 3000m steeplechase. Furthermore, she is the mother of Olympic athlete and South African record holder Johan Cronjé whom she also trained. Her other sons are actor Hendrik Cronjé and Danie Cronjé jnr, an attorney and businessman.



Head of Athletics:
Kovsie Sport

QUALIFICATIONS

Bachelor of Science
(UFS) 1977

Postgraduate Diploma in
Higher Education
(UFS) 1983

CRYSTAL-DONNA ROBERTS



Actress

QUALIFICATIONS

BA Drama and Theatre Arts
(UFS) 2005

The public first took note of Crystal-Donna Roberts as a presenter on SABC 2 entertainment and lifestyle show *Pasella*. Since then the bubbly personality has chosen to wow her audience with her acting, rather than her presenting, abilities.

After she graduated Roberts worked as a bar tender before relocating to Cape Town where she became a high school drama teacher for six months. Not content with teaching and yearning to occupy the stage, Roberts jumped into the world of freelance acting, getting her first fruitful gig after five months without an income.

An active television, theatre and film actress, Roberts has appeared in a multitude of theatre productions in addition to starring in Afrikaans soap opera *7de Laan*, *Getroud Met Rugby*, *Montana* and *Vallei van Sluiers* in which she won public favour. However, it was her role in the 2015 film, *The Endless River*, which earned her praise for

her portrayal of her character. It was the first South African film nominated to compete for The Golden Lion Award at the Venice Film Festival. Moreover, Roberts became the first South African to be nominated in the best actress category at the same festival.

Presently she is playing the lead role in the internationally acclaimed film, *Krotoa*. It has won numerous awards including Best Film at the Harlem International Film Festival in New York. It also won: the Award of Excellence at the International Film Festival for Women: Social Issues and Zero Discrimination; Best of Show at the Depth of Field International Film Festival; Platinum Award at the International Movie Awards; Diamond Award at the Filmmakers World Festival; Best of Show at the IndieFEST Film Awards; Award of Excellence Special Mention: Women Filmmakers at the Accolade Global Film Competition; and World Platinum Award at the World Woman Awards.

FRANCO SMITH

Born in Lichtenburg, Smith got his first taste of professional rugby after being selected in 1999 for the Free State Under-18 Craven Week team. He became a regular on the Free State Under-20 and the UFS Shimlas teams prior to his Free State Cheetahs debut in 1992.

Smith would later have a stint playing for the Kimberley based Griquas (1996) and Bulls (1998) during which time he became South Africa's leading points scorer. Between then and 2005 Franco played for the Pumas, Welsh team Newport, as well as Italian club Treviso, with whom he won the National Championship of Excellence in 2002-2003 and in 2003-2004 and also won the Coppa Italia in 2005.

Smith's foray into coaching began in 2005 after he retired from playing professionally. He was appointed as technical adviser for the Free State Cheetahs before becoming their

backline coach a year later. It was not long before he returned to Italy as head coach of his former side Treviso, guiding them to two National Championship of Excellence titles from 2008-2009 and 2009-2010 in addition to an Italian Supercup and Coppa Italia in 2009 and 2010. Smith was reappointed backline coach of the Cheetahs and head coach of the Shimlas in 2015. He led them to their first Varsity Cup title that year.

In 2015 Smith was appointed head coach of the Free State Cheetahs before switching roles with former head of Free State Rugby and present head coach Rory Duncan earlier this year to take on the task of heading Free State Rugby.

Smith has also played nine test matches for South Africa and with a playing and coaching career as illustrious as his, the name Franco Smith should not be foreign to true rugby connoisseurs.



Director:
Free State Rugby

Assistant Coach:
Springboks

QUALIFICATIONS

BA Human
Movement Sciences
(UFS) 1996

Welcome back home



BLOEMFONTEIN CAMPUS



SOUTH CAMPUS



KWAQWA CAMPUS



NAVAL HILL PLANETARIUM



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

ALUMNI

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