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

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



# Letter from the editor



With the appointment of Prof Francis Petersen as the 14th Rector and Vice-Chancellor of the University of the Free State on 1 April 2017, the start of a new season has been earmarked for the Kovsie community.

Over and above the news and development shared with readers in this edition, the inauguration of Prof Petersen is a specific highlight. The inauguration event, gala dinner, and welcoming events were hosted on all three UFS campuses to extend the celebration of his appointment to all staff and students. Take some time and 'join us at these events' while you page through the photosreads reflecting these memorable moments.

All the messages and performances at the different ceremonies – from the message by Paramount Queen Mopeli of the Bakoena Royal House on the Qwaqwa Campus, to the Grey College Gumboot dancers, and the mass choir of close to 400 members on the Bloemfontein Campus – contributed to the success of this enthralling few days in the history of our university.

“My role is to build on what students and staff have worked so hard to establish over the past 113 years. I am excited about stepping into the shoes of the great leaders who came before me, and to continue their inspirational work of making this institution even greater.”

You are also invited to read more about the man in the Rector's shoes in our article on p. 4.

We continue to strive for excellence in all spheres of university life, including research, teaching and learning, and on the community front. Do take some time to read about our interesting research, as well as the great work performed by our staff and our students.

*All the best till next time.*

## EDITOR

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Cover: Prof Francis Petersen, UFS Rector and Vice-Chancellor. Photo: Sonia Small





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# New Rector and Vice-Chancellor

promises to hear every voice

BY HETTIE HUMAN

Extensive experience, strong management skills, and a passionate desire to promote social justice, are among the qualities Prof Francis Petersen, Rector and Vice-Chancellor of the UFS, will be relying on to lead the university over the next five years. Knowledge about the dynamic nature of higher education in South Africa today, means that he will also be obliged to call on his boundless patience, willingness to listen to diverse views, and persuasive skills to continue transforming our institutional culture into one that will serve the UFS well in the current, sometimes volatile, climate.

Prof Peterson may have started his academic career as an engineer (he studied Chemical and Metallurgical Engineering), but it has already become clear that he bucks the stereotype of the natural scientist who is more interested in facts and figures than human emotions. He has experience of management in the corporate sector as Executive Vice-President: Research and Development at Mintek and Executive Head of Strategy at Anglo American Platinum, among others, and has served at Stellenbosch University, the former Cape Technikon, and the University of Cape Town – at the latter as Dean and later Vice-Rector.

“My style is to listen to what people have to say before deciding what we should do. My team and I will be talking to students, staff, and stakeholders to find out what their concerns and needs are. We cannot afford to ignore certain people, or to allow certain groups to dominate or prescribe our plans for the future. I feel very strongly about encouraging diversity and inclusivity. We must make this an institution where everyone feels welcome, and where we work together to meet all our needs. We need to listen to all the voices,” he explains.

“At the top of our agenda is promoting academic excellence and innovation, and creating a campus that recognises diversity and is fair in the opportunities it offers to students and staff – both academic and support staff – of all races, genders, sexual orientations, religions, and cultural groups. I want people to be excited and committed about being Kovsies.”

Our new Rector and Vice-Chancellor acknowledges that change is inevitable, but he is adamant that no-one who wants to join the team in working to achieve this change in a responsible and sustainable manner, should be alienated, excluded or treated as less worthy.

Prof Petersen took up office on 1 April 2017. He is married and has two sons. **P**

“At the top of our agenda is promoting academic excellence and innovation, and creating a campus that recognises diversity.”



PHOTO | SONIA SMALL

**Prof Francis Petersen,  
Rector and Vice-  
Chancellor of the UFS.**

# Africa's Black Rhino conservation strategy must change

BY ANDRÉ GROBLER

**T**he conservation strategy of the black rhino in Africa needs to change in order to protect the species from extinction, a group of international researchers has found. The study that was published in the *Nature Scientific Reports* reveals that the species has lost an astonishing 69% of its genetic variation.

## South African researchers took part

The researchers, which included local researchers from the National Zoological Gardens of South Africa, have highlighted the fact that this means the black rhino is on the brink of extinction. "We have found that there is a decline in genetic diversity, with 44 of 64 genetic lineages no longer existing," said Prof Antoinette Kotze, the Manager of Research and Scientific Services at the Zoo in Pretoria. She is also affiliate Professor in the Department of Genetics at the University of the Free State and has been involved in rhino research in South Africa since the early 2000s.

## DNA from museums and the wild

The study compared DNA from specimens in museums around the world, which originated in the different regions of Africa, to the DNA of live wild animals. The DNA was extracted from the skin

of a museum specimen and from tissue and faecal samples from animals in the wild. The research used the mitochondrial genome.

## Ability to adapt

Dr Desire Dalton, one of the collaborators in the paper and a senior researcher at the NZG, said the loss of genetic diversity may compromise the rhinos' ability to adapt to climate change. The study further underlined that two distinct populations now exist on both sides of the Zambezi River. According to Dr Dalton, these definite populations need to be managed separately in order to conserve their genetic diversity. The study has found that although the data suggest that the future is bleak for the black rhinoceros, the researchers did identify populations of priority for conservation, which might offer a better chance of preventing the species from total extinction. However, it stressed that the rhino poaching 'pandemic' needs to be defeated, because it puts further strain on the genetic diversity of the black rhino.

## Extinct in many African countries

The research report further states that black rhino have been hunted and poached to extinction in many parts of Africa, such as Nigeria, Chad, Cameroon, Sudan, and Ethiopia. These rhino are now only found in five African countries, namely Tanzania, Zimbabwe, Kenya, Namibia and South Africa, where the majority of the animals can be found. **B**



“The rhino poaching ‘pandemic’ needs to be defeated, because it puts further strain on the genetic diversity of the black rhino.”

The black rhino is on the brink of extinction. The study that was published in the *Nature Scientific Reports* reveals that the species has lost an astonishing 69% of its genetic variation.

# Study shows athletes struggling with identity outside sport

BY JÓHANN THORMÄHLEN

**A**s a former international swimmer, Dr Marizanne Grundlingh was interested in understanding life after sport for professional sportsmen and women. Although it wasn't a personal struggle, it nevertheless triggered her PhD study called *After The Triumph: An Anthropological Study Into The Lives Of Elite Athletes After Competitive Sport*.

Dr Grundlingh was a member of the South African national swimming team for six years. She competed in the World Short Course Championships in Indianapolis in 2002 and in several World Cup Circuit events in Europe between 2000 and 2004.

**“It is important for athletes to tap into social networks during their playing days, as these connections become essential in forging a career after competitive sport.”**

Her interest in this topic was based on the rapid professionalisation of rugby in South Africa, and she wanted to understand how the professional rugby player experienced retirement from this particular sporting context.

Dr Grundlingh, who graduated at the UFS in 2016, undertook trailblazing research in the emergent field of sports anthropology and also

made a significant contribution to heritage studies. “Many athletes struggle to adapt to the changes in daily routines and in forging an identity outside of the sporting sphere,” says Dr Grundlingh about her conclusions. “It is important for athletes to tap into social networks during their playing days, as these connections become essential in forging a career after competitive sport.”

She says many athletes are concerned with their ‘symbolic immortality’ and how they will be remembered. “Museums are tangible spaces where athletes of the past are commemorated. The commercialisation of heritage at the Springbok Experience Museum in Cape Town shows the change in these remembrance practices during the professional sporting era.”

According to Dr Grundlingh, her findings highlight the importance of player development programmes for professional athletes from a young age. “It also alludes to the importance of forging meaningful social networks during their ‘active’ athletic careers.” **F**

**Dr Marizanne Grundlingh represented South Africa in swimming at international events.**

PHOTO | SUPPLIED







# Researchers celebrated for outstanding achievements

BY OTENG MPETE

The University of the Free State's (UFS) Vice-Rector: Research, Prof Corli Witthuhn, hosted a Research Celebration, at which the new National Research Foundation (NRF) ratings, presentation of the UFS Book Prize, and the Research Support Award were announced. The UFS Chancellor, Dr Khotso Mokhele, and Chairperson of the UFS Council, Mr Willem Louw, were in attendance among academics and staff members.

Presenting the opening remarks, UFS Rector and Vice-Chancellor, Prof Francis Petersen, congratulated all researchers and prize recipients on behalf of the rectorate. He applauded all researchers who had put their best foot forward and were acknowledged by the NRF. Furthermore, Prof Petersen said that the success of UFS researchers informed that the university received international recognition. "Research has the ability to play an active role in transformative action that leads to change. We are striving to be a leader in research output," said Prof Petersen.

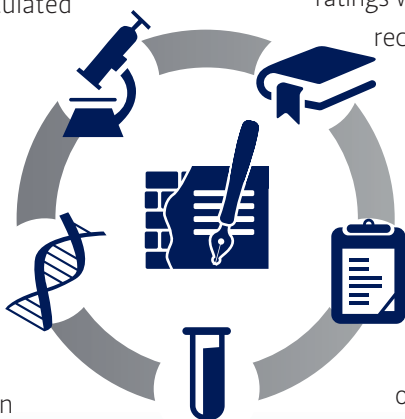
Prof Fanie Snyman, Dean of the Faculty of Theology, walked away with the most sought-after award of the day, the UFS Book Prize for Distinguished Scholarship,

for his book, *Malachi*, on the last book of the Old Testament. The book was published in Germany and can be used by theology scholars and academics.

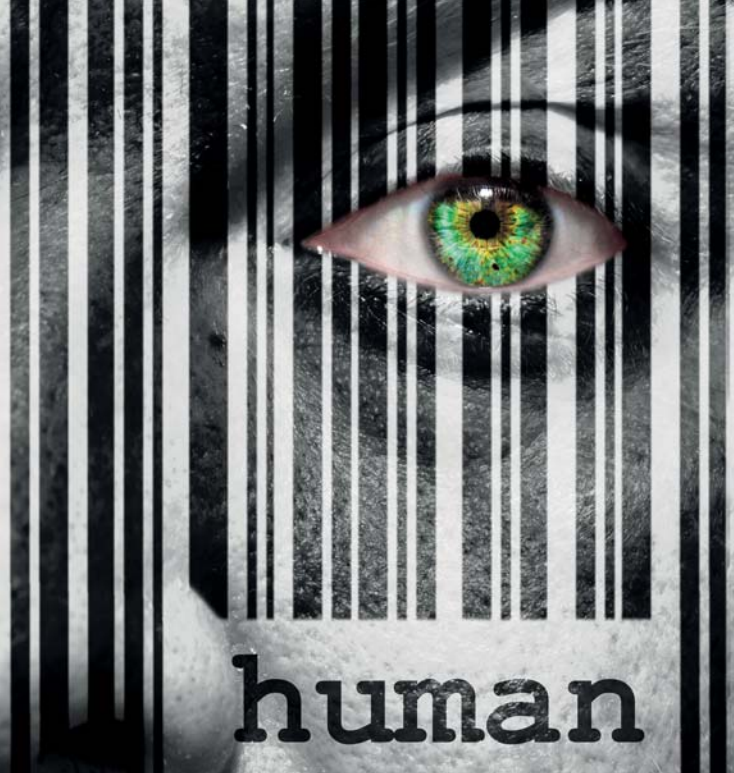
"I have no words, I am sincerely grateful for this award, but I must also thank the university. I am grateful for the support that has enabled me to complete the book and achieve this award," said Prof Snyman. He is the third academic to be awarded this prize.

The university's new NRF-ratings were celebrated. The UFS has 27 new rated researchers and seven researchers' ratings were renewed. Prof Jonathan Jansen received an NRF A-rating and Dr Daniel Spence a P-rating.

The Directorate of Research Development's Eleanor van der Westhuizen was awarded the Research Support Award, which is to acknowledge those who accelerate and propel research and/or researchers. **R**



**Photo caption:** From the left, Dr Daniel Spence, NRF P-rated researcher; Eleanor van der Westhuizen from the Directorate Research Development; Prof Francis Petersen, Rector and Vice-Chancellor; Prof Fanie Snyman, Dean: Theology and Religious Studies; and Prof Corli Witthuhn, Vice-Rector: Research.



# National Human Trafficking Resource Line:

a **victim-centred** approach to combating crime

BY MAMOSA MAKAYA

As a response to the rising number of human trafficking cases in South Africa and around the world, key roleplayers in various fields have joined forces to come up with workable solutions on how to stop the crime and assist victims. Some of the work done by NGOs and law enforcement agencies has been supported by insights from research conducted in communities and by academic institutions. According to Prof Beatri Kruger, Adjunct Professor of Law in the Faculty of Law at the University of the Free State and experienced researcher in human trafficking, support for victims has grown in leaps and bounds with the help of the latest technology. More and better quality information can be collected to strengthen efforts of combating the crime,” she said.

## Resource line a helping hand to victims

One such technological development is the national Human Trafficking Resource Line, which provides various services, including information on trafficking activities, assistance to agencies working with victims of trafficking in persons (TIP), creating a network from which data can be collected, analysed, and activities tracked, in order to ensure the best service to victims.

The resource line connects callers, often victims of TIP or anonymous tippers, to service providers in social services, law enforcement, places of safety, medical

facilities, and government agencies, especially during emergencies.

Call specialists are trained by Polaris, an American company using international standards and protocols.

## Empowering service providers is the key to success

Support for service providers such as NGOs, safe houses, and government departments in the network is in the form of skills-training programmes for staff, and a referral system in various provinces around the country.

To strengthen the network further, services provided in each province are being standardised to ensure that the right people are contacted when handling cases, and that key stakeholders in each province are used.

Human trafficking is a crime that permeates multiple academic disciplines and professions. Therefore, information collected from victims through such a helpline and collated by agencies, will assist academic institutions such as the UFS in furthering their research while strengthening the content of academic programmes in fields such as Law, Law Enforcement, Social Sciences, Health Sciences and International Relations.

The number to call for reporting or providing tips on TIP-related crimes and activities, is 0800 222 777. **B**

# Who am I? Questions of identity among Rwandan rape survivors

From 7 April to 15 July 1994, a mass genocide swept through Rwanda after years of Belgian colonial rule that divided the country along ethnic lines. Rape was also used as part of a political strategy to torture and humiliate mainly Tutsi women, and as a means of spreading HIV.

## Individual focus

Why is it important to listen to what these rape survivors have to say? Michelle Nöthling, a master's student in the UFS Centre for Trauma, Forgiveness and Reconciliation Studies, responds, "We speak of groups – refugees, foreigners, and the like – yet we tend to forget the *individuals* and the lasting impact trauma has had on each person."

## Narrative exploration

Michelle maintains that we are the product of the narratives around us; things like how to be a woman, how to dress, speak, or treat others. Her research delves into how these rape survivors see themselves, how *they* narrate their lives. She also investigates power relations based on gender, for example, how language can be used as a divisive tool.

"We tend to forget the individuals and the lasting impact trauma has had on each person."

## Rwandan backdrop

In Rwanda, gender roles are deeply entrenched. Traditionally, a 'girl' remains such while she is a virgin. Her transition into womanhood is usually marked by marriage and followed by motherhood. However, rape disrupts this structure, leading to an identity crisis, as

these girls are catapulted into motherhood with an unplanned child resulting from a traumatic event.

Reaching their mid-teens, the children, too, started asking questions about identity or paternity. For those mothers who were finally able to open up to their children, the experience has been mostly liberating – often leading to a closer relationship between parent and child. Michelle intends to interrogate how such significant moments shape the way these women perceive themselves. Research tends to portray these survivors solely as mothers of rape-born children. Michelle, however, seeks to examine their identities more deeply.

"These survivors still bear the heavy burden of being marginalised, stigmatised, and severely humiliated. Despite this, they have developed their own communities of belonging; people with whom they connect, to whom they relate, and to whom they are not ashamed to tell their experiences," she said. **B**

Michelle Nöthling, master's degree student in the Centre for Trauma, Forgiveness, and Reconciliation Studies at the UFS.



PHOTO: EUGENE SEEGER

## Willem Louw – a technocrat who has

BY ILSE SMALBERGER

**W**illem Louw is the new Chairperson of the Council of the University of the Free State. He was elected as Chairperson during a special meeting on 20 January 2017, after Justice Ian van der Merwe stepped down on 31 December 2016.

Willem has served on the Council since 2009, but as a result of his work at Sasol he had contact with professors in the Departments of Physics and Chemistry at the UFS long before his appointment to the Council. He studied Civil Engineering at Stellenbosch University (SU), although he had a liking for Law throughout his entire life.

He spent the greatest part of his career working for Sasol, and after 25 years retired as Managing Director

of Sasol Technology. At Sasol Technology, his job mainly revolved around the management of capital projects within and outside South Africa.

“Sasol has provided me with incredible opportunities to undertake both ‘soft’ projects like company reorganisation, the acquisition of businesses, and the implementation of businesses, as well as ‘hard’, steel-in-the-ground projects,” he says.

As Vice-Chairperson of the Council and member of the Audit and Risk Management Committee, Willem was closely involved with the definition and measurement of Council objectives and the financial sustainability of the UFS. As Chairperson, he is looking forward to new challenges, such as providing a firm foundation for the relationship between the new Rector, Prof Francis Peterson and the Council.

## MEET OUR COUNCIL

PHOTO: JOHAN ROUX



Itumeleng Pooe

# Passionate, progressive, and positive

BY ILSE SMALBERGER

**P**assionate, progressive, and unfailingly positive are the words that come to mind when one meets Itumeleng Pooe.

# learnt to work with people

The issue of the university's Language Policy will also be on the Council's agenda for some time to come, and Willem is ready to lead this matter through "expected turbulence", as he calls it.

Although he is officially retired, Willem is not ready to sit back and relax. He is currently busy with a PhD at Stellenbosch University on the contribution of the executive sponsor to the success of mega projects. He is also still involved with the School of Management and Department of Civil Engineering at Stellenbosch University.

Willem is married to Ané, and together they have five children and seven grandchildren. **B**



## Willem Louw

Itumeleng was appointed to the University Council by the Minister of Education last year. She is an alumna of North-West University and served as council member and deputy chair of the NWU Council from 2007 until 2014. She also serves on the board of the Cape Town Hotel School.

She is currently employed by the South African Maritime Agency, working at developing integrated national marine tourism and leisure. In her own words, she is "ambitiously entrepreneurial" and also sells wine privately, working towards distributing amazing and exquisite South African wine in Africa.

Itumeleng views the UFS as a very progressive university and a rising giant in the higher-education landscape in South Africa.

"I take my role as council member very seriously. I hope to use my marketing and communication expertise to propel the university's brand forward as one of the most special places to study in Africa.

Internationalisation is also imperative and I believe I have a lot to offer in this regard," she says.

She also feels that transformation should be at the core of the university's business and that it should remain ongoing.

**"Transformation should be at the core of the university's business."**

Itumeleng is a very proud mother to two young adults; Kamogelo (23) is a UCT BCom (Accounting) graduate and Kago studies digital marketing at Vega in Cape Town.

"I am an ardent hiker, reader, perpetual traveller and lover of exotic destinations, and aspiring cook. Honestly? I am just passionate about life," she says. **B**

# Rantooa Moji – passionate about

BY ILSE SMALBERGER

**R**antooa Moji has recently joined the UFS Council by virtue of being chairperson of the university's Institutional Forum (IF). The IF's function is to advise Council in accordance with the Higher Education Act and UFS Statute.

Born and bred in Qwaqwa, Rantooa is a junior lecturer in Chemistry at the university. He completed his BSc (Hons) in Chemistry at the then UNIN (Qwaqwa), which is now part of the UFS. He also completed an MA (HES) at the University of the Free State.

"I pursued science mainly due to my school background, but I also have a keen interest in the subject. The diverse applications of chemistry in daily

life have always fascinated me and that is why I chose to pursue it," he says.

During his postgraduate studies at the UFS, Rantooa was exposed to education and management trends in higher education. He has subsequently become involved with labour relations issues through the personnel union Nehawu. Rantooa says he has a passion for the welfare of workers and therefore fulfils a number of roles in the union, including representing members in disciplinary and grievance hearings, being part of the negotiations team, and representing the union on a number of institutional committees, such as the Health Care Committee.

Rantooa is married, with two daughters and one son. **B**

## MEET OUR COUNCIL

# Dr Marius Swart



Dr Marius Swart,  
member of the  
UFS Council.

"Higher education is a challenging environment and expectations about excellence and human development are being tested."

BY ILSE SMALBERGER

**M**arius Swart, a Kowsie alumnus, is an Alumni election on the University Council. Not only is he a Kowsie alumnus, but all four of his siblings and their spouses are Kowsie alumni, as well as his three children.



# the welfare of workers

“I feel that my experience as an academic and a union activist stands me in good stead to ensure that the views and aspirations of employees are taken into account in the Council’s deliberations and decision-making.”

Rantooa Moji, member of the UFS Council.



PHOTO | STEPHEN COLLETT

## – a Councillor with deep roots in the UFS

He is currently practising as cardiothoracic surgeon at Mediclinic in Bloemfontein, but has always been involved with the Faculty of Health Sciences at the university. He spent eight years as consultant in the Department of Cardiothoracic Surgery and recently became a registered student again when he enrolled for an interdisciplinary PhD. He is currently also supervisor for the research projects of undergraduate medical students.

Thus, Marius no doubt has a substantial interest in the issues and future decisions at the UFS.

“Higher education is a challenging environment and expectations about excellence and human development are being tested. Transformation is on everybody’s lips, but we have to guard against what

I would call retroformation – moving back to old regimes and new forms of exclusion,” he says.

Marius is excited to begin his term with a new Rector and Vice-Chancellor. He realises that many challenges await him as councillor on the way forward, but he is ready to pull his weight in Council.

“My own daughter is involved in the challenges students are experiencing on a daily basis, and my wife is supporting a first-generation rural student. The university should be sensitive to these students. Empowering them can bring change to communities.”

His interests are varied and it is clear that he has a vision for a better world. **P**

# PSP provides **scholarly support system** for

# Prof Wilson-Strydom



BY JÓHANN THORMÄHLEN

**P**ublishing her first book and receiving a rating from the National Research Foundation (NRF) are career highlights for Prof Merridy Wilson-Strydom. As an emerging scholar, the Prestige Scholars Programme (PSP) of the University of the Free State (UFS) played an important role in reaching these goals.

According to this Associate Professor at the Centre for Research on Higher Education and Development, the PSP provided an important scholarly support system, both through the coordinators and the other researchers who are part of the programme.

Prof Merridy Wilson-Strydom loves asking questions and has a strong focus on research. She also enjoys supervising PhD students.

PHOTO | SONIA SMALL



“I found the support and advice provided during the process of applying for funding and rating really helpful,” she says about receiving an NRF C2 rating, based on her work over the past eight years.

She compliments the PSP writing retreats, which “provided a wonderful space for writing and it was during the writing retreats that I did a lot of the writing for my book that was published by Routledge in 2015”. Her book, *University Access and Success: Capabilities, Diversity and Social Justice*, moving back into academia from institutional research, working closely with undergraduate students as research participants, and postgraduate supervision are all highlights of her work.

Her book makes a valuable contribution to higher education literature related to access and transition to universities. However, contrary to the mainstream approaches to access which rely on school performance and admissions tests, she poses the issue of social justice at the centre of the analysis.

Thuthuka Programme, another project headed by her and funded by the NRF, was a study to understand the lives of 40 undergraduate students (on the UFS Bloemfontein Campus) who attended township high schools. The study had a particular focus on identifying institutional practices that either enable or constrain students’ capabilities for success in undergraduate study.

One of the outputs was the writing of an E-book called *In our own words: Perspectives on being a student*. It was written by 30 undergraduate students and the purpose was to provide a platform for students to tell their own stories about life as a student. **B**



# Prof Moffett's third book \_\_\_\_\_ provides comprehensive guide to **Basotho medicinal plants**



Prof Rodney Moffett's three books documenting Basotho plants, animals, and the history of the Free State and Lesotho.

BY THABO KESSAH

Prof Rodney Moffett has recently published his third book, *Basotho Medicinal Plants – Meriana ya Dimela Tsa Basotho*. This latest offering deals only with medicinal uses and is based on the data from his first book, *Sesotho Plant and Animal Names and Plants Used by the Basotho*.

“The latest book came about after a Sesotho language advisor in the Free State Department of Education suggested that there was a need for the medicinal uses of plants used by the Basotho to be documented in the vernacular. In a situation where there is an almost total lack of scientific literature in the vernacular, the greatest value of this book, therefore, is that it provides a comprehensive guide to the medicinal uses of plants in Sesotho,” said Prof Moffett, Honorary Research Associate in the Department of Plant Sciences on the Qwaqwa Campus.

“It comprises two parts. Part one lists the medicinal categories and plants used, and part two lists the medicinal uses arranged according to the Sesotho names of the plants. It is easy to read, as the information is presented alphabetically with the Sesotho name first, followed by the scientific name and usage thereof. Because a plant often has more than one Sesotho name, the scientific name is included to identify it.”

Prof Chris Nhlapo, Deputy Vice-Chancellor of the Cape Peninsula University of Technology, and Prof Ntsamaeeng Moteetee from the University of Johannesburg are impressed with the book, respectively saying that it assists in documenting the deep indigenous knowledge of the “proud tradition of the Basotho Nation” and it is “an important contribution to the documentation of medicinal plant uses”.

“In a situation where there is an almost total lack of scientific literature in the vernacular ... it provides a comprehensive guide to the medicinal uses of plants in Sesotho.”

The title of Prof Moffett's second book is *A Biographical Dictionary of Contributors to the Natural History of the Free State and Lesotho*.

Prof Moffett was honoured with a Lifetime Researcher Award during the Academic and Research Awards on the Qwaqwa Campus in November last year. **B**

PHOTO: THABO KESSAH



# Inauguration ceremony

suitable way for **Prof Petersen** to resume his role as **Rector and Vice-Chancellor**

COMPILED BY LEONIE BOLLEURS

**O**n Friday 19 May 2017, the University of the Free State celebrated the inauguration of its 14th Rector and Vice-Chancellor, Prof Francis Petersen. The formal inauguration was held in the Odeion Theatre on the Bloemfontein Campus.

During his inaugural speech, Prof Petersen committed himself to developing the UFS into an institution that would have an even greater impact than before.

“This institution I am striving to establish will be one that responds positively to inclusivity, diversity, and transformation, and which can incorporate these values into our curriculum, scholarship, and research in a productive way,” said Prof Petersen.

Present at the inauguration ceremony were, among others, Vice-Chancellors

and representatives of several universities, members of the university’s executive team, captains of industry, members of staff, and the Student Representative Council of the Bloemfontein and Qwaqwa Campuses, as well as members of Prof Petersen’s family. Dignitaries attending the event included Dr Khotso Mokhele, UFS Chancellor, and Madam Justice Mahube Molemela, Chancellor of the Central University of Technology and Judge President of the Free State High Court. Also present were Justice Steven Majiedt, Chancellor of the Sol Plaatje University and Judge of the Supreme Court of Appeal; Madame Justice

1. Prof Francis Petersen, Rector and Vice-Chancellor of the UFS, and Dr Khotso Mokhele, Chancellor of the UFS.
2. The Odeion String Quartet performed a musical item at the inauguration.
3. Prof Petersen with previous rectors, Prof Frederick Fourie (left) and Prof Francois Retief.
4. Prof Ahmed Bawa, Chief Executive Officer: USAf who delivered a congratulatory message on behalf of USAf.
5. Present at the inauguration ceremony were, among others, Vice-Chancellors and representatives of several universities. From the left, front, are: Prof Norman Duncan, University of Pretoria; Prof Mahlomaholo Mahlomaholo, Walter Sisulu University; Prof Ingrid Woolard, University of Cape Town; Prof Francis Petersen, University of the Free State; Prof Ahmed Bawa, CEO of USAf; and Prof Nico Koopman, Stellenbosch University; back: Prof Henk de Jager, Central University of Technology; Prof Yunus Ballim, Sol Plaatje University; Prof Dan Kgwadi, North-West University; and Prof Christopher De Beer, Sefako Makgatho Health Sciences University.
6. Prof Lis Lange, Vice-Rector: Academic at the UFS.





PHOTOGRAPHERS: EYE POETRY, JOHAN ROUX, CHARL DEVENISH AND RULANZEN MARTIN.



Mandisa Maya, Acting President of the Supreme Court of Appeal; Willem Louw, Chairperson of the UFS Council; Kopung Ralikontsane, Director General: Office of the Premier; Dr Jeanine Nothnagel, local Councillor representing the Mangaung Metropolitan Municipality; Prof Ahmed Bawa, Chief Executive Officer of Universities South Africa; and Prof Crain Soudien, CEO of the Human Sciences Research Council. Matshela Koko, Eskom Chief Executive Officer, David Noko, Executive Vice-President from AngloGold Ashanti, and Andile Sangqu, the Executive Director and Executive Head of Anglo American South Africa, also attended the event.

Vice-chancellors from universities in South Africa attended the event. Former vice-chancellors of the university, Prof Francois Retief and Prof Frederik Fourie, and the former Chairperson of Council, Justice Faan Hancke, honoured guests with their presence. Also in attendance were members of the UFS Council, UFS Rectorate, President of the UFS Convocation, deans and acting deans, Kovsie Alumni Society, and the SRC Presidents of the Bloemfontein and Qwaqwa Campuses.

In his speech, Prof Bawa said: “We congratulate both Prof Petersen and the UFS on an excellent appointment. He brings with him significant experience as an academic, as an academic administrator, and as a professional engineer. Prof Petersen will bring with him techniques to produce the

most beautiful solutions to a university as a social institution. On behalf of the 26 public universities and their vice-chancellors, I wish Prof Petersen every success. We commit ourselves as Universities SA vice-chancellors to working closely with him and to support him whenever necessary.

Several congratulatory messages were delivered at the inauguration dinner. David Noko, a former colleague and friend of Prof Petersen, said: “Together we served on the board of Royal Bafokeng Platinum. The broader business, especially the mining fraternity, are standing proud that today we can say one of our own is leading an institution of learning. Prof Petersen, we look up to you and your type of leaders for guidance to find lasting solutions.

Dr Khotso Mokhele also delivered a congratulatory message. He said: “I do not believe there is currently a vice-chancellor of any university in this country that comes from an engineering background and who also has technikon experience, research-council experience, private-sector experience, and academic-university experience at dean and deputy vice-chancellor level. I want to congratulate the Chairperson of Council and your colleagues on the Council for an incredibly inspired choice in Francis Petersen as the Rector and Vice-Chancellor of this university.” **P**



1. Prof Crain Soudien, Chief Executive Officer of the Human Sciences Research Council, Cheslyn Petersen, Prof Petersen, and Prof Chris de Beer, interim Vice-Chancellor of Sefako Makgatho Health Sciences University.
2. Dr Nthabeleng Rammile, Vice-Chairperson of the UFS Council; Prof Petersen, and Madam Justice Mahube Molemela, Chancellor of the Central University of Technology and Judge President of the Free State High Court.
3. Prof Henk de Jager, Vice-Chancellor of the Central University of Technology; Prof Francis Petersen; and Prof Corli Witthuhn, Vice-Rector: Research at the UFS.
4. Margot Viljoen delivering a musical item, “The Serpent’s Kiss from The Garden of Eden.”
5. Mr Willem Louw, Chairperson of the UFS Council; Dr Khotso Mokhele, Chancellor of the UFS, Prof Petersen; Prof Lis Lange, Vice-Rector: Academic at the UFS; Dr Andrew Kaniki, Executive Director: Knowledge Fields Development at the National Research Foundation; and Prof Dan Kgwadi, Vice-Chancellor of North-West University.
6. Mr David Noko, Executive Vice-President from AngloGold Ashanti. He delivered a congratulatory message to Prof Petersen at the dinner function.

WELCOMING CEREMONIES:  
QWAQWA, SOUTH AND BLOEMFONTEIN CAMPUSES



Students and staff gave Prof Petersen a warm welcome to the Qwaqwa Campus. Some students took the opportunity to take selfies with their new Rector.

# Wide spectrum of stakeholders join in welcoming ceremonies

Paramount Queen Mofumahadi Mathokoana Mopeli of the Bakoena Royal Council; Willem Louw, Chairperson of the UFS Council; and Prof Francis Petersen during the welcoming ceremony on the Qwaqwa Campus. The Basotho blanket is worn by kings, and the university hopes the symbolism will be a source of inspiration to Prof Petersen.

The week of 11-19 May 2017 was one of the highlights in this year's calendar for staff and students of the UFS, with various ceremonies taking place to welcome Prof Francis Petersen. The festivities culminated in the official inauguration ceremony at the Bloemfontein Campus on 19 May 2017.

The Qwaqwa Campus welcoming ceremony took place on Thursday 11 May 2017, attracting a wide spectrum of community leaders from the area. Prof Petersen was welcomed by representatives from the two trade unions, National Education Health and

Allied Workers Union (Nehawu) and UVPERSU, as well as representatives from the Student Representative Council (SRC), the Thabo Mofutsanyana Education District, and the House of Traditional Leaders. Paramount Queen Mopeli of the Bakoena Royal House bestowed a special honour upon Prof Petersen by clothing him in a traditional Basotho blanket and hat. She said, "From our heart of hearts, welcome, Prof Francis ..., and all Godspeed during your tenure."

The South Campus in Bloemfontein hosted a welcoming ceremony on 18 May 2017. The ceremony included a number of vocal performances and messages from various



4

1. "We are one university with three campuses. We expect the same level of excellence on all three campuses," Prof Petersen said at the South Campus welcoming ceremony.
2. Flag-bearers and drummers walking to the Madiba Arena.
3. Prof Francis Petersen (fourth from the right) and his wife, Cheslyn, with the South Campus management team on the South Campus.
4. Prof Petersen and Willem Louw, Chairperson of Council with the Qwaqwa Campus SRC just after Prof Petersen's welcoming ceremony on the Qwaqwa Campus.
5. Tshego Setilo, Programme Director at the South Campus welcoming ceremony.



PHOTOGRAPHERS: EYE POETRY, JOHAN ROUX, CHARL DEVENISH AND RULANZEN MARTIN.





stakeholder groups. The same afternoon, the Institute for Reconciliation and Social Justice (IRSJ) also facilitated a panel discussion, titled *Diversity, inclusivity, and social justice and the renewed call for decolonisation*, on the Bloemfontein Campus.

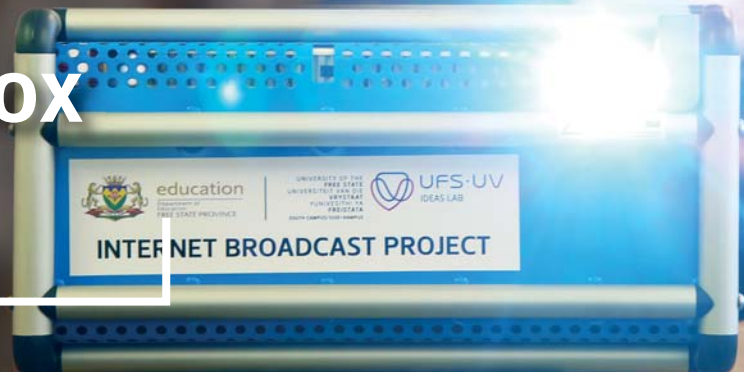
The welcoming ceremonies culminated in an event in the Callie Human Centre on Friday 19 May 2017 at the Bloemfontein Campus, with a number of performances by musicians

associated with the UFS, marimbas, drum majorettes from Jim Fouché Secondary School, the Grey College Gumboots, and school choirs from Eunice Secondary School, Brebner Primary School, and Willem Postma Primary School. Representatives from key stakeholders such as Nehawu, UVPERSU, the Campus Ministries Forum, SRC, Alumni, Convocation, and the UFS Council had the opportunity to convey their messages of welcome to Prof Petersen. **F**

1. From the left: SK Luwaca (SRC President, Bloemfontein Campus), Prof Elelwani Ramugondo (UCT), Prof Francis Petersen (UFS), Prof Melissa Steyn (Wits), Prof Andre Keet (UFS).
2. Ankia Bradfield delivered a musical item.
3. Lesley Mokgoro, attorney at Phatshoane Henney Attorneys; Annamia van den Heever, Director: Institutional Advancement; and Werner Landman: Chairman Bloemfontein Business Chamber at the cocktail function for stakeholders and donors which took place at the Naval Hill Planetarium.
5. Grey College gumboot dancers.
3. Prof Petersen at the Bloemfontein Campus welcoming ceremony.
6. Dr Khotso Mokhele, UFS Chancellor; Prof Francis Petersen and his wife Cheslyn; and the Chairperson of the Council, Willem Louw; participating in the celebrations at the Bloemfontein welcoming event.
7. Drum majorettes from Jim Fouché Secondary School lead the procession to the Bloemfontein welcoming ceremony.
8. Delia Moumakwe sings, "Something Inside So Strong."

The All-in-One device as deployed in an IBP school.

# South Campus delivers out-of-the-box solutions



BY EUGENE SEEGERS

The IDEAS Lab on the South Campus supports learners in 93 schools by means of academic videos transmitted via the Internet Broadcast Project (IBP) and its own custom-built All-in-One (AIO) device. The project is a collaboration between the university and the Department of Education in the Free State. It includes support for Mathematics, Physical Science, Life Science, Economics, Accounting and Geography. The AIO was purpose-built by the team at IDEAS Lab to facilitate the delivery of video lectures from highly qualified teachers to identified schools. It comprises a projector, speakers and a computer, which are housed in a custom-made, hard-wearing frame. The AIO is then set up at each school to which lessons are broadcast.

Educators have not been overlooked, either. The UFS was the very first university to provide an Advanced Certificate in Teaching in a fully digital format, the ACT Online programme. It is designed for practising teachers to upskill themselves in order to address the needs in the classroom better. It not only advances their careers, but strengthens their knowledge, competencies and subject specialisation as well. Ultimately, this leads to an improved quality of education, which has a profound impact on multitudes of students around South Africa.

Coupled with these projects is a new joint initiative termed *ICT For Education* between the CSIR, the national Department of Education, the Department of Rural Development and Land Reform and the UFS. For this project, 24 primary and secondary schools in South Africa were identified to promote technological advancement in the education sector.

The course on IT support is structured in such a way that anyone in the community can take it, starting with topics such as 'My role in the community'.

Tablet computers have been allocated and deployed at these schools, to learners as well as nearly 400 teachers. The South Campus is involved in the training of the teachers and learners in the use of the tablets in the classroom and other educational opportunities. In addition, training for 48 unemployed young people who will be providing first-line support began in March at a school in Thaba Nchu. **B**

PHOTO | ELRIEKA VAN DALEN



# New developments in the Faculty of **Theology and Religion**

PHOTO: EUGENE SEEGERS



Bishop JM Khumalo, Apostolic Church of Christ; Prof Fanie Snyman, Dean of the Faculty of Theology and Religion; and Rev Simon Galada, Wesleyan Church, at the faculty's official opening in February 2017.

BY EUGENE SEEGERS

**A**t a meeting of the UFS Council last year, a name change was accepted for the Faculty of Theology, renaming it the Faculty of Theology and Religion. This change signals an openness in approach to other religions, in addition to those of Christian denominations. This is a development that took root in Europe a few years ago. Furthermore, a growing field of interest is the impact religion has had and still has, even in highly secularised societies. This name change is the first of its kind in South Africa, which means that the faculty will lead the way in transformation and impact-based religious studies.

Prof Fanie Snyman, Dean of the Faculty of Theology and Religion, says of these refinements, "The new name and restructuring of departments will lead to a new synergy that will have an impact on our teaching and research in the faculty. Exciting times lie ahead for the Faculty of Theology and Religion!"

Apart from the change in the name of the faculty, departments within the faculty were also regrouped, with new names. The Departments of Old Testament and New Testament merged to become the Department of Old and New Testament Studies,

while the Departments of Systematic Theology and Ecclesiology merged and will now be known as the Department of Historical and Constructive Theology. The former Departments of Practical Theology and Missiology became the Department of Practical and Missional Theology. The Department of Religion Studies remained unchanged to emphasise the importance of religion in South Africa and the world at large.

The rationale for these groupings is the distinction of theological disciplines in terms of the study of texts (Old and New Testament), sources (Systematic

**"[These changes] will lead to a new synergy that will impact our teaching and research."**

Theology and Church History), and practices (Practical Theology and Missiology). One benefit of these newly constructed departments is that they will be more cost-effective, but the more important advantage is that this will stimulate discussion and research across the various theological disciplines. **B**

# strives towards going 'green'

BY LERATO SEBE

**E**ight provinces, including the Free State, were declared disaster areas last year due to the ongoing drought. This had a devastating effect on the agricultural sector, leaving many communities dry.

University Estates at the University of the Free State found an ideal project to make university buildings greener. A total of 30 water storage tanks, varying in size from 5 000 to 20 000 litres, were installed at various buildings on the Bloemfontein Campus. As a pilot phase, these tanks were specifically installed at residences and buildings with high traffic volumes.

“The purpose of the project is to harvest rainwater, which will be used during emergencies when the campus does not have water and the emergency water storage facility is depleted.”

According to Benedict Mochesela, Project Manager of this initiative, the purpose of the project is to harvest rainwater, which will be used during emergencies when the campus does not have water and the emergency water storage facility is depleted. “This water is not intended for drinking, but for the flushing of toilets,” says Mochesela.

He says the water will also be used for watering flowerbeds and gardens when the water has been

standing for a long time without being used. Mochesela says, “Currently all the pedestals for the water tanks are in place and the implementation of these tanks is scheduled for the end of April 2017.”

A number of water storage tanks are already in place at the Qwaqwa Campus and a preliminary phase of using grey water from residences is currently being implemented at the South Campus. Grey water is made up of bath, shower, and bathroom basin water. The water is reused for toilet flushing as well as for irrigation purposes.

“Recycling of water is one of a number of initiatives the university intends to undertake to ensure and show the community that this institution remains conscious of the environment and to the changes we continuously need to adapt to.” **B**

PHOTO | ANJA AUCAMP

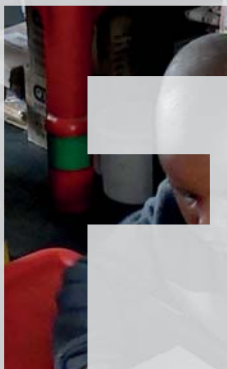
Benedict Mochesela, Department of University Estates.





Community

# Science



## collaboration between **CUT** and **UFS** **community engagement**

BY DIKGAPANE MAKHETHA

**A**ny phase in a learner's life can be the right time to explore science. As for Grade R learners at Nzame Primary School in Mangaung, it all started when their Deputy Principal, Charles Busack, attended the Global University for Lifelong Learning (GULL) workshop coordinated by the university's Community Engagement in October 2016. The GULL

network enables its affiliated organisations to recognise the individual and collective efforts of those who are creating progressive transformation in communities and in the workplace. Consequently, a community-based initiative, Science4Fun, was developed and launched at the primary school in February 2016, where learners would start to experiment with science through play.

## Young researchers shine

BY THABO KESSAH

**T**he University of the Free State's Afromontane Research Unit (ARU), which is situated on the Qwaqwa Campus, has the potential to produce some of the world's best and dynamic young researchers. This is the view shared by Drs Henri Rueff and Reetu Sogani, who were the keynote speakers during the ARU Colloquium hosted at Golden Gate in the Eastern Free State in November last year.

From the left, are: Dr Reetu Sogani (India); Dr Greg Greenwood (US-Switzerland); Teboho Manchu, Acting Campus Principal; Dr Jianchu Xu (China); Dr Henri Rueff (Switzerland); Dr Glen Taylor, Senior Director: Research Development; and Dr Elsa Crause, Campus Vice-Principal: Academic and Research.

Dr Rueff, a geographer and environmental economist from the Universities of Basel and Bern in Switzerland, was referring to no less than 10 Qwaqwa Campus postgraduate students who made oral and poster presentations during the inaugural international colloquium.

PHOTO | THABO KESSAH



Every Tuesday morning, these fun science activities form part of the foundation phase programme, in which Dr Elizabeth Conradie of the Central University of Technology (CUT) and four postgraduate Science

For Grade R learners at Nzame Primary, their basic Geometry insight about shapes advanced to engineering skills when they built modern pyramids, connecting jelly sweets and sosatie sticks.



PHOTO | SUPPLIED

students from the UFS engage teachers and learners in exciting experiments and demonstrations.

Most people just know pyramids as big, impressive structures built a long time ago in Ancient Egypt. However, for Grade R learners at Nzame Primary, their basic Geometry insight about shapes advanced to engineering skills when they built modern pyramids, connecting jelly sweets and sosatie sticks.

“More fun exercises are lined up for curious minds, exploring other sciences such as Chemistry and Mathematics, combined with music.”

According to Dr Conradie, more fun exercises are lined up for curious minds, exploring other sciences such as Chemistry and Mathematics, combined with music. The initiative will assist to equip learners with the basics of Science into more advanced learning phases of the schooling years, giving them an advantage. **B**

during the international

## Afromontane Colloquium

### Colloquium an opportunity to interact

“You have some of the world’s most motivated and highly skilled students who have the courage to stand in front of extremely critical scientists from all over the globe – and that must be commended,” he said.

Dr Reetu Sogani from India said that her first trip to South Africa did not disappoint. “This colloquium

“I had the opportunity to interact with brilliant and young scientists from this part of the world.”

was a very good learning experience for me as I had the opportunity to interact with brilliant and young scientists from this part of the world,” she added.

In closing the colloquium, the Senior Director: Research Development, Dr Glen Taylor, committed the UFS to the success of the unit.

“The ARU will strengthen the research output of the campus. But most important of all, it is setting the research agenda for the Qwaqwa Campus, and for the institution at large, to address the challenges that the surrounding mountain communities are faced with,” he said. **B**

# Nuclear Medicine on the forefront of cancer research



Dr Je'nine Horn-Lodewyk's tumour detection method could be the cost-effective breakthrough needed to decrease the mortality rate in breast cancer patients.

BY OTENG MPETE

**T**he field of Nuclear Medicine in South Africa and the rest of the world is expanding rapidly due to the development of hybrid cameras and new radiopharmaceuticals. These developments have a huge impact on the diagnosis and therapy of cancer.

The most advanced of these cameras, Positron emission tomography, combined with normal CTs (PETCT), is not yet widely available in South Africa due to the cost of the cameras and the radiopharmaceuticals. A more cost-effective alternative can be of great benefit. To achieve this, the focus should be on developing new radiopharmaceuticals that can be used with the current cost-effective gamma cameras, according to University of the Free State researcher, Dr Je'nine Horn-Lodewyk from the Department of Nuclear Medicine.

Fluorodeoxyglucose ( $^{18}\text{F}$ -FDG), a radiolabelled glucose analogue, is currently the radiopharmaceutical most commonly used in PET/CT imaging for mainly oncology indications. Although it is considered the gold standard for imaging in several malignancies, it does have

certain disadvantages. An  $^{18}\text{F}$ -FDG PET/CT diagnostic imaging study can cost between R25 000 and R35 000 for a single patient in the private sector. The  $^{18}\text{F}$ -FDG is also more radioactive, which requires much stricter handling and shielding to avoid high radiation dosages to staff and patients.

In the search for the ideal radiopharmaceutical for tumour detection, the South African National Nuclear Energy Corporation (Necsa) has developed a local synthesis process for ethylenedicysteine-deoxyglucose (EC-DG). EC-DG is also a glucose analogue similar to FDG. They succeeded in labelling the compound with Technetium-99-metastable-pertechnetate ( $^{99\text{m}}\text{TcO}_4^-$ ), the most common nuclear medicine isotope used for approximately 95% of nuclear medicine procedures, creating  $^{99\text{m}}\text{Tc}$ -EC-DG.

In partnership with Dr Horn-Lodewyk, this compound was successfully used in various animal models and clinical scenarios, resulting in approval by the Medicines Control Council to use it in a human study. Research is also planned in order to investigate diagnostic accuracy in other cancers like lymphoma. **B**



Excellence

Excellence Through

Research

# Science

is diversifying the uses of

# traditional medicines



BY OTENG MPETE

According to the World Health Organisation, a large majority of the African population are making use of traditional medicines for health, sociocultural and economic purposes. In Africa, up to 80% of the population use traditional medicines for primary healthcare.

The Indigenous Knowledge Systems (IKS) was identified as a lead programme under the directorship of Dr Motlalepula Matsabisa. Research undertaken by the IKS Lead Programme focuses on some key priority diseases of the country and region – including malaria, HIV, cancer and diabetes.

“All of these projects are aimed at adding value through the scientific research of medicinal plants, which can be used for treating illnesses, diseases, and ailments.”

## Not just a plant or tree

Malaria is a priority disease and is prevalent in rural and poor areas, resulting in many traditional health practitioners claiming to treat and cure the disease. There may well be substance to these claims, since as much as 30% of the most effective current prescription medicines are derived from plants. For instance, chloroquine and artemisinin for malaria, Metformin for diabetes, Vincristine and Vinblastine for cancer are plant-derived drugs.

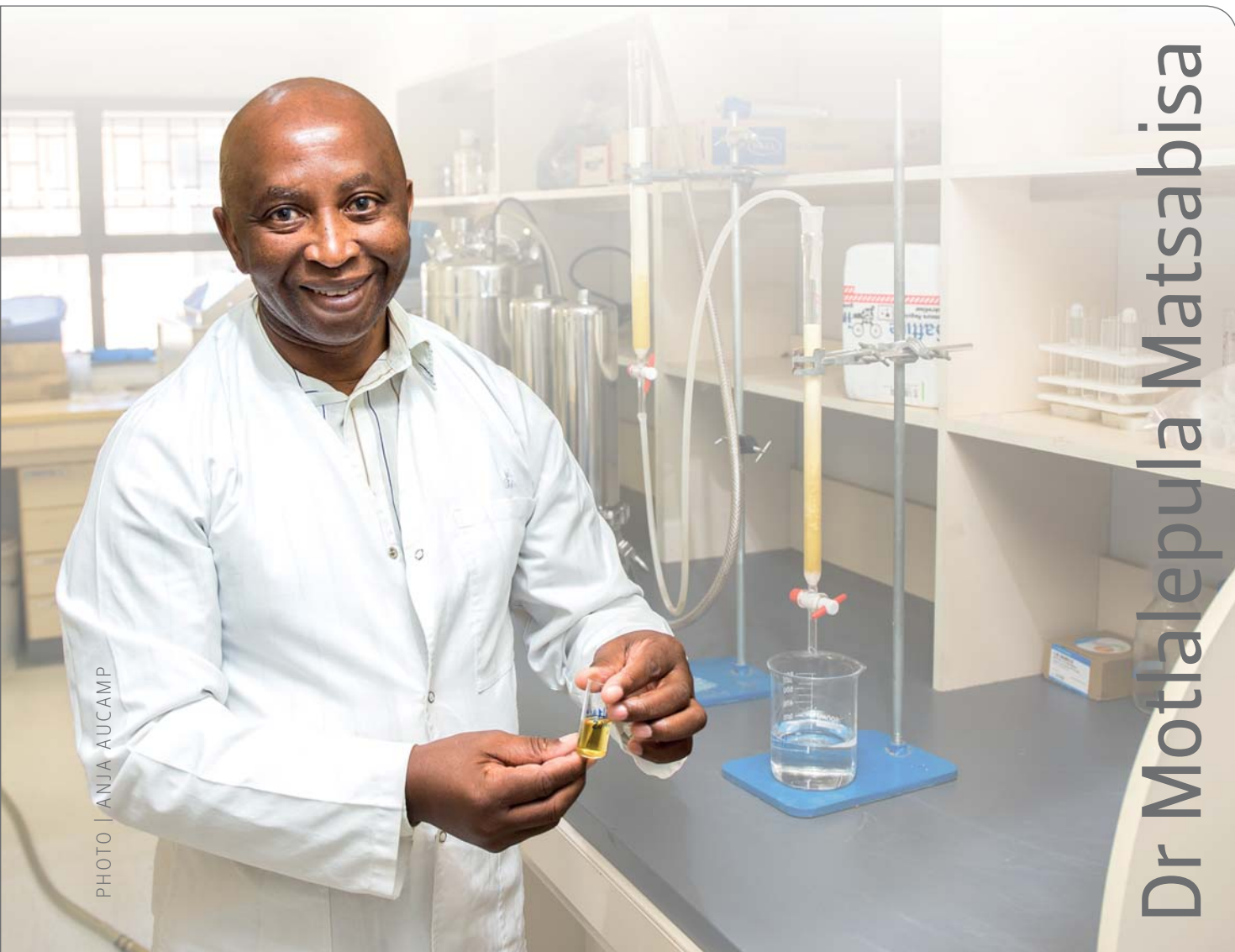


PHOTO | ANJA AUCAMP

# Dr Mottlalepula Matsabisa

Dr Matsabisa’s current research is investigating a South African medicinal plant that has been shown to have *in vitro* antiplasmodial activity, with subsequent isolation and characterisation of novel non-symmetrical sesquiterpene lactone compounds offering anti-malarial activity. These novel compounds are now patented in South Africa and worldwide. This research is part of the UFS and South Africa’s striving to contribute to the regional and continental malaria problem. The UFS is thus far the only university that has been granted a permit by the Medicines Control Council to undertake research on cannabis and its potential health benefits.

## Recognition well deserved

Through Dr Matsabisa’s research input and contributions to the development of the pharmacology of traditional

medicines, he recently became the first recipient of the International Prof Tuhinadrin Sen Award from the International Society of Ethnopharmacology (ISE) and the Society of Ethnopharmacology in India. ISE recognises outstanding contributions by researchers, scientists and technologists in the area of medicinal plant research and ethnopharmacology internationally.

More recently, Dr Matsabisa undertook research projects funded by the National Research Foundation, as well as the Department of Science and Technology, on cancer, gangrene and diabetes. He is also involved in a community project to develop indigenous teas with the community. He says, “All of these projects are aimed at adding value through the scientific research of medicinal plants, which can be used for treating illnesses, diseases, and ailments”. **B**

## Serving with a heart for the ministry



PHOTO | ANJA AUCAMP

## Lack of HIV education still affects children

BY JÓHANN THORMÄHLEN

“Despite all the advances in the management and prevention of HIV, children still become infected every day, often due to lack of education and access to health care.” This is according to Dr Nickie Goedhals, Senior Lecturer and Pathologist in Medical Microbiology and Virology at the University of the Free State (UFS).

A case study she was part of and which was published in the UK medical journal *The Lancet* in 2012, demonstrates the transmission of HIV to a child through surrogate breastfeeding. This study is one of the many highlights in the young researcher’s career. She received her first rating from the National Research Foundation (NRF) in 2017 for the work she has done in Medical Virology over the past eight years.

According to the above-mentioned study, only about 1% of infants in South Africa are breastfed by a surrogate. However, results from a study in the Free State showed that shared breastfeeding by a non-biological caregiver was the most important factor associated with HIV infection in discordant mother-child pairs. Therefore, continued education about the risk of HIV transmission is needed.

Dr Goedhals is also continuing with research on HIV by looking at HIV-drugs resistance. She is in the process of starting new projects focusing on HIV infection and drug resistance in infants.

She says, although her NRF Y2-rating is the starting point of a research career, it shows that she is heading in the right direction, and it “gives access to

**D**r Khamadi Joseph Pali is the coordinator of the Higher Certificate in Theology at our university's Faculty of Theology and Religion. This course focuses on Biblical hermeneutics, Christian leadership, African theology, and pastoral care for students who have a passion for the ministry. In addition to this responsibility, he participated in a collaborative doctoral programme with the Vrije University (VU) in Amsterdam, the Netherlands, from 2011 till December 2016.

**Eugene Seegers** visited Dr Pali to find out more about the programme with the VU.

### **What is the theme of your doctoral thesis?**

"The theme of my PhD thesis is *Leadership and Transformation in the African Church: A Practical Theological Study of One Denomination*. The Dutch Reformed Church in Africa in the Free State region was used as a case study. The study was an attempt to understand what kind of leadership transformation is needed.

### **Describe your journey from the UFS to the Netherlands?**

"My completion of this joint PhD programme is monumental, and a historical achievement for me and

the Faculty of Theology and Religion. After completing my master's degree in 2009, I was employed by the then Department of Practical Theology. Prof Kobus Schoeman, my head of department, proposed that I enrol for this programme. I agreed, viewing it as an opportunity to learn, empower myself, and be exposed to new study experiences."

### **What did this learning experience mean to you?**

"For me, it was an opportunity from God, enabling me to help my church and its members. My interaction with various scholars at the VU during my visits to Amsterdam was especially rewarding. The experience made me develop an open mind, interdisciplinary approach, and critical reflection.

"In my teaching responsibilities, I focus on Africa as our context of study. Learning about our past and how to engage that legacy effectively, especially in South Africa, is a measure of success in our academic and ministerial training. I intend to delve into transformation from the Christian and African perspective to understand what is needed for the practice of Christian religion and to drive transformation in the African context." **P**

research funds through the NRF for future projects". Other important research she conducted was on Crimean-Congo haemorrhagic fever – the study for her PhD.

"With all the service delivery, teaching, and administrative responsibilities of academic medicine, it is easy to lose focus. The PSP has really helped to create a focused and stimulating environment for research."

The Prestige Scholars Programme (PSP) at the UFS is the reason she applied for the rating. "With all the service delivery, teaching, and administrative responsibilities of academic medicine, it is easy to lose focus. The PSP has really helped to create a focused and stimulating environment for research." According to her, the PSP also provides access to a network of peers and senior staff at the UFS, as well as exposure to national and international experts. **P**

Dr Nickie Goedhals



PHOTO | SONIA SMALL

# Young researchers highlight biodiversity of Golden Gate at international colloquium



PHOTO | THABO KESSAH



BY THABO KESSAH

Jacob Mabena, Dineo Modise and Zama Shandu are some of the young and bright researchers on the Qwaqwa Campus. This was confirmed when their posters, summarising their research, were selected as the best during the Afromontane Research Unit Colloquium in November last year.

Mabena's poster was on his study aimed at documenting information about the occurrence of helminthic infection in both livestock and wildlife in the Golden Gate Highlands National Park (GGHNP), which will be beneficial to livestock farmers, neighbouring farmers, the surrounding community, and the Golden Gate Management in terms of disease management and control.

"Golden Gate is fairly unique in keeping both wildlife and livestock. Transmission of helminthic parasites between wildlife and livestock can occur in areas where grazing and water are shared. Such transmissions of disease among these two animal groups can threaten either livestock or wildlife. The effects of parasitic infections in animals result in reduced quality and quantity of products such as milk, meat, wool, and the reproduction of the infected animals. The study will document seasonal prevalence

of helminthic parasite infections and will be of value in developing surveillance strategies for helminthic infections by the veterinary authorities in the region," said Mabena, a master's degree student in Veterinary Technology.

Modise's research area for her BSc Honours in Life Sciences (Behavioural Ecology) was on road ecology and how the behaviour of ungulates such as zebra, springbok and blesbok is affected by a regional road (R712) running through the park.

Shandu's study was aimed at finding the most effective treatment method between uprooting and fire in order to control *Serephium plumosum*, commonly known as *slangbos*, in the park. Shandu, an MSc Environmental Geography student, concluded that uprooting was the best strategy to control *slangbos* encroachment in grasslands.

"Although uprooting is best, fire can still be used where control is critical and urgent, since it takes less time. The study has shown that it would be important to find proper chemicals that would be cheaper and safer to use," he added. **P**

**Photo caption: Jacob Mabena, Dineo Modise and Zama Shandu are the future of UFS Qwaqwa Campus research.**

**UV SAKE SKOOL**  
**UFS BUSINESS SCHOOL**



**Staff**



# Long hours in wind and cold weather help to reconstruct Marion Island's glacial history

BY LEONIE BOLLEURS

Liezel Rudolph, a lecturer for second-year students in Process Geomorphology, aims to reconstruct the glacial history of Marion Island through cosmogenic nuclide dating techniques. She is interested in periglacial geomorphology, a study of how the Earth's surface could be formed by ice actions (freezing and thawing of ice).

Liezel is a lecturer in the Department of Geography at the university and is researching landscape development in specifically cold environments such as Antarctica, the Sub-Antarctic islands, and high mountain areas.

“My involvement with periglacial geomorphology is largely due to academic giants who have carved a pathway for South Africans,” says Liezel.

Liezel visited Marion Island for the first time during her honours year in 2011, when she investigated the impact of seals on soil conditions and vegetation. Three years later, she visited Antarctica to study rock glaciers.

## The challenge of the job

A workday in Antarctica is challenging. “Our time in the field is very limited, so you have to work at every





possible hour the weather is not life-threatening: from collecting soil samples, to measuring soil temperature and downloading data, we measure polygons and test the hardness of rocks. The only way to get the amount of work done, is to work long hours in wind and rain with a positive and competent team! We take turns with chores: the person carrying the notebook is usually the coldest, while the rest of us are stretching acrobatically over rocks to measure and document every nook and cranny.”

## A typical workday

Liesel describes a typical workday: “Your day starts with a stiff breakfast (bacon and eggs and a bowl of oats) and great coffee! After that comes the 20-minute dressing session: first a tight-fitting underlayer, a middle layer – sweater and T-shirt, and then the outer windbreaker (or a quilt jacket on an extra cold day). Then you start applying sunscreen to every bit of open face area. Beanie on, sunglasses, two pairs of socks, two pairs of gloves. The few kilograms of equipment, one vacuum flask containing an energy drink, one vacuum flask containing drinking

**“We take turns with chores: the person carrying the notebook is usually the coldest, while the rest of us are stretching acrobatically over rocks to measure and document every nook and cranny.”**

water (it would freeze in a regular bottle), and a chocolate bar and piece of biltong for lunch. After this, we drive (on snowmobiles) or fly (by helicopter) to our study area for about eight hours of digging, measuring, downloading, testing and chopping. Back at the base and after a long and tiresome undressing session, we move to the lab with all our data to make sure that it is downloaded safely and captured onto a database. Afterwards, depending on the day of the week, we will enjoy a good meal. If you are lucky, such a typical day will coincide with your shower day. We can only shower every second day due to the

energy-intensive water production (we have to melt snow) and the sewage system (all the water has to be purified before it can be returned to the environment). Then you grab your eye shield (since the sun does not set during summer) and take a nap before the sun continues to shine into the next day.”

## Theoretical knowledge broadened

“Going into the field (whether island or mountains) provides me with an opportunity to test geomorphic theories. Without experience in the field, my knowledge will only be limited to book knowledge. With practical experience, I hope to broaden my knowledge so that I can train my students from experience rather than from a textbook,” says Liesel.



Liesel Rudolph, lecturer for second-year students in Process Geomorphology at the University of the Free State.

# Research on affordable rotavirus vaccine aims at reducing child mortality

BY LEONIE BOLLEURS

**D**r Trudi O'Neill, Senior lecturer in the Department of Microbial, Biochemical and Food Biotechnology, is conducting research on rotavirus vaccines.

She was inspired to conduct research on this issue through her fascination with the virus. "The biology of rotaviruses, especially the genome structure and the virus' interaction with the host is fascinating."

"In fact, it is estimated that, globally, ALL children will be infected with rotavirus before the age of five, irrespective of their socio-economic standing. However, infants and young children in poor countries are more vulnerable due to inadequate healthcare. The WHO estimates that rotavirus infection causes approximately 215 000 deaths each year. This roughly equates to eight Airbus A380 planes, the largest commercial carrier with a capacity of approximately 500 seats, filled with only children under the age of five, crashing each week of every year."

## Alternative to expensive medicines

"Currently, there are two vaccines that have been licensed for global use. However, these vaccines are expensive and poor countries, where the need is the greatest, are struggling to introduce them sustainably.

The main focus of Dr O'Neill's research is to develop a more affordable vaccine that can promote child vaccination in countries/areas that cannot afford the current vaccines.

## All about a different approach

When asked about the most profound finding of her research, Dr O'Neill responded, "It is not so much a finding, but rather the approach. My rotavirus research group is making use of yeast as a vehicle to produce a sub-unit vaccine. These microbes are attractive, as they are relatively easy to manipulate and cheap to cultivate. Downstream production costs can therefore be reduced. The system we use was developed by my colleagues, Profs Koos Albertyn and Martie Smit, and allows for the potential use of any yeast. This enables us to screen a vast number of yeasts in order to identify the best yeast producer."


## A future without rotavirus vaccination?

Dr O'Neill believes a future without rotavirus vaccination will be a major step backwards, as the impact of rotavirus vaccines has been profound. "Studies in Mexico and Malawi actually show a reduction in deaths. A colleague in Mozambique has commented on the empty hospital beds that amazed both clinicians and scientists only one year after the introduction of the vaccine in that country. **F**

Dr Trudi O'Neill, Senior lecturer in the Department of Microbial, Biochemical and Food Biotechnology.

"It is estimated that globally, ALL children will be infected with rotavirus before the age of five."

PHOTO | ANJA AUCAMP

The image shows a close-up of a wall with light-colored, square tiles. On the left side, there is a vertical metal grate with several rectangular openings. The text "Students and Sport" is overlaid in white at the bottom right.

# Students and Sport

# From lock to SA prop

## in six months



PHOTO | JÓHANN THORMÄHLEN

One of the rugby players that Kwenzo Blose looks up to is the Cheetah prop Ox Nche. He and Nche are both residents of the Vishuis men's residence.

“Playing rugby and performing well are great blessings, but I also have to prioritise and make sure that I obtain my degree.”



BY JÓHANN THORMÄHLEN

If someone told Kwenzo Blose at Glenwood High School he would scrum as prop for the South African U/20 rugby team at the Junior World Championship, he would probably have thought it was a joke. Because at the time he still played lock and only six months after the shift, he represented his country at the tournament in Manchester, England.

Apart from that, KovsieSport's Junior Sportsman of 2016, who will probably be playing in his second World Championship this year, only became a Shimla in 2017. Last year he was still playing for the University of the Free State's Young Guns.

## Beast also played lock at first

André Tredoux, former UFS and Cheetah talent scout, earlier said that the Springbok prop Beast Mtawarira also played lock and flank at school.

“Glenwood competed in the Wildeklawer Super School Tournament. Apparently coach André spotted me there and talked to Stephan Jacobs, another UFS coach. At

that stage, I still played lock and they told each other that they had to get me to the Free State and convince me to play prop. I knew nothing of these plans,” said Blose.

According to this Paulpietersburg-born rising star, who is 1.87 m tall and weighs 112 kg, he still has a lot to learn at prop. His greatest adjustments were in the scrums. “At prop you have to absorb the pressure for the rest of the pack in order to give your team front-foot ball.” He said Jacobs, who was his Young Guns scrum coach, and Daan Human, the Cheetah scrum doctor, had helped him a lot.

## An avid student off the field

Even though rugby has opened doors for the loose head who is studying LLB Law, he maintains a balance. “The main reason I came to university is to study. Playing rugby and performing well are great blessings, but I also have to prioritise and make sure that I obtain my degree.” **B**



# Producing a well-rounded student through mentorship

BY SIOBHAN CANAVAN

Research confirms that quality mentoring relationships have a powerful and positive effect on young people in a variety of personal and academic situations. In an effort to aid first-year students' transition to university, the university has launched the peer mentor programme in 2011. The vision of the P3 Mentorship Programme at the university is to increase student well-being through mentorship.

Through the use of Mediated Learning Experience, this programme is focused on student support in a social setting.

The programme aims to enrich the undergraduate student experience by linking an inexperienced first-year mentee to a trained and more experienced senior mentor. The primary mission of the P3 Mentorship Programme is to ease the transition of new students into university life so that they can succeed personally, socially and academically.

Evaline van Wyk, Programme Coordinator of the programme, said the peer-mentoring relationship guarantees a first-year student that there is someone who cares and that they are not dealing with day-to-day challenges alone.

"Mentors are willing to take time to get to know their mentees and through meaningful relationships help them learn new things that are important to them as people," she says.

The programme is a voluntary service and mentors receive no compensation. Mentors serve the first-year student community in collaboration with the

Residence Committee (RC) member for first-years through value-driven conversations.

*"The vision of the P3 Mentorship Programme is to increase student well-being through mentorship."*

The peer-mentoring relationship begins during the orientation week and ends at the end of the first academic year. In a typical ratio, six to eight mentees are assigned to one mentor, preferably before the start of the academic year. Currently, there are over 250 P3 mentors in the residences (both on-campus and day residences) who mentor more than 1500 first-year students.

A structured programme runs for an eight-month period in the on-campus residences. Suitable mentoring candidates with the necessary qualities are selected through an application and interview process. **B**



PHOTO | ANJA AUCAMP

Evaline van Wyk,  
Programme Coordinator,  
P3 Mentorship Programme.

# “Be assertive. Be you”

Says Rag Queen

BY RULANZEN MARTIN

“First and foremost, very bubbly, kind at heart – I give you the real deal. What you see is what you get.”

These words of Prudence Mahlaba, the first Black Rag Queen at the University of the Free State, need no explanation. The bubbly bombshell gave me a peep into her life. Her humbleness is inspiring, and even though she never anticipated becoming Rag Queen, she got into the competition because she is a person who likes to give back to others – and despite the crown, this is what Rag is all about.

This fourth-year LLB student and residence committee member of Akasia, says she always presents her true self. “You are someone else’s role model, so you have to be affirmative.”



It breaks her heart to see other people heartbroken.

“Especially a young woman who is broken and lost, with a low self-esteem, causes me stress and anxiety.”

“To these women, she wants to say, “Girl, you can do it. You are you, keep it up and be assertive,” she says. Coming from a challenged background, she understands the challenges facing young women

The radiant beauty, Prudence Mahlaba, during a photoshoot for her #PeopleOfKovsies billboard. She believes in the empowerment of women.

“I always try to present this bubblyness and positivity to people,” she says.

She always knew that she would make a positive impact and achieve great things. She also hopes to travel as soon as she gets the opportunity. Her relationship with God provides her with a healthy lifestyle, and she confesses that she hardly ever sees the inside of a gym. She spends most of her free time on YouTube watching reality shows. **B**



PHOTO | SONIA SMALL



Alumni

A career in **sign language interpreting** proves to be full of rewards for

## Natasha Parkins-Maliko

BY MAMOSA MAKAYA

Natasha Parkins-Maliko is an alumna of the University of the Free State who graduated with a master's in Linguistics. She is a well-rounded interpreter with a language combination of South African Sign Language-English-Afrikaans. She continued her studies and achieved an International master's in Sign Language interpreting at the Humak University of Applied Sciences in Finland. Natasha was recently presented with the Pansalb Multilingual Award in the category:

Natasha Parkins-Maliko. She was recently awarded the Pansalb Multilingual Award in the category: Translation and Interpreting 2016/2017, as recognition for her achievements in a 16-year career.

PHOTO | SUPPLIED

## Mphaila beats the odds,

flying high in his **growing career**

BY MAMOSA MAKAYA

Mphaila Mokoka is a proud alumnus of the university who works in the Business Operations unit of Oracle, a technology company based in Johannesburg. Despite the visual impairment he acquired as a young boy, he has overcome many hurdles, achieved a lot in his career, and can tell us his story today.

### Tell us about yourself.

"I graduated from the UFS with a BCom Financial Management degree in 2013. I am a proud Motswana, born in a village called Moruleng outside Rustenburg. I did my primary and secondary schooling at one of the best schools in the country called Prinshof School in Pretoria. The resilient and driven person I am today is because of the wonderful teachers I had at the school and I credit a great deal of what I have done to them."

### What are you passionate about in the workplace?

"Professionally, I love the corporate experience – the autonomy, the numerous learning opportunities. Trust me, there are many, particularly for someone with a severe visual impairment such as myself. My ultimate goal is to have my own business. Preferably in the financial services industry, as I'm currently studying through the UFS towards becoming a certified financial planner."

### As an alumnus, what skills and characteristics do you feel you developed at the university?

"I learned independence, courage and tolerance. Tolerance was a particularly valuable one for me, as I often got quite impatient with people, be it lecturers or fellow students who thought that as a person with



Translation and Interpreting 2016/2017, in recognition of her achievements in a 16-year career.

“Winning the Pansalb Translation and Interpreting Award for 2016/2017 was a pat on the back for me as a Kovsie in the true sense of the word. The university is where I started my journey in South African Sign Language interpreting, and from then on, I never looked back,” she said.

## A career of fulfilment in sign language

“The foundation of my success was laid by my lecturers and mentors – such as Dr Philemon Akach and Emily Matabane – where I trained in the Department of South African Sign Language (SASL) at the university.

“My determination and success is grounded in the motto, ‘Inspiring Excellence, Transforming Lives’ – a continued journey in excellence gives a renewed sense of pride for all language practitioners in South Africa,” she said.

Natasha went on to work in the deaf community for most of her career. She started as a grassroots

interpreter, and is now a professional interpreter registered with SATI (South African Translators Institute). She is also a sign language television interpreter on SABC for content such as SABC 3 news bulletins, the Budget speech, opening of Parliament, Youth Day broadcasts, and many more. Natasha is not only concerned with growing her career – despite her mover-and-shaker persona, she still takes time to volunteer her services for deaf people who do not have the financial ability to pay for interpreting.

## The journey to excellence never stops

As a role model and icon in her field, Natasha is the chairperson of the National Association of South African Sign Language Interpreters (NASASLI), the regional coordinator for the African Federation of Sign Language Interpreters (AFSLI), and the Africa regional representative on the board of the World Association of Sign Language Interpreters (WASLI). The award presented to her is no doubt a fitting accolade and something all UFS alumni take pride in. **B**

a disability, they needed to sympathise with me or undermine me simply because I didn't see as well as they did. Thanks to the university, I now know how to manage such situations, as it is still something I encounter in the corporate world.”

### **As a person with a disability, what would your advice be to young people in the same position who want to study further, and join the corporate world one day?**

“The corporate world is in need of people with disabilities. In the same way that women have been embraced and given opportunities to prosper, the same recognition should be given to us. My advice to all those young and upcoming brilliant minds with disabilities is to work hard, believe in yourselves, and be steadfast in your goals. It is only a matter of time before we are seen as equals of the so-called normal people, and the more of us entering the labour market, the sooner this change will take place.” **B**

Mphaila Mokoka







The Department of Communication and Brand Management commissioned drone footage of all three university campuses. This photograph of the Bloemfontein Campus was taken early in April this year. In future editions we will share some of this exclusive footage of our other campuses. Photo: Evert Kleynhans



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