

KHOTHATSA

TO INSPIRE

VOL. 6 | 2024

A portrait of Prof Anthea Rhoda, a woman with short dark hair and glasses, wearing a black blazer over a light-colored blouse. She is standing in front of a brick wall with a window in the background. Her hands are crossed in front of her.

Khothatsa Introduction:

Prof Anthea Rhoda, University of the Free State Acting Vice-Chancellor & Principal

It is with pride and gratitude that I introduce this publication of the Khothatsa project, a shining example of the University of the Free State's commitment to innovation and impact. Khothatsa, meaning "to inspire" in Sesotho, embodies the importance of lecturer and student engagement in teaching and learning excellence. The Khothatsa project reflects our institutional values of quality, impact, and care, underpinned by collaborative efforts to harness diversity and cultivate inclusivity. Hearing the voices of our students is aligned with our university's Vision 130 where a student-centered approach is a key focus.

The project aims to inspire change and promote innovative approaches to teaching and learning challenges through collaboration and co-creation between lecturers and students. Over the past year, the Khothatsa project has continued to demonstrate its value in addressing key issues that affect student success. The project's ongoing impact is a testament to the unwavering commitment of our lecturers and students who believe in the transformative power of education. Their commitment has allowed us to make a tangible difference in the lives of many, and for this, I am deeply thankful. I invite you to explore the outcomes of this admirable initiative in the pages that follow and join us in celebrating the spirit of inspiration that the Khothatsa project represents.

Prof Anthea Rhoda, University of the Free State Acting Vice-Chancellor & Principal



POSTAGE
OCTOBER
BLOEMFONTEIN



FREE STATE
Qwa Qwa
SOUTH AFRICA



2024

SOUTH AFRICA

POSTAGE
OCTOBER
BLOEMFONTEIN
SOUTH AFRICA
2024



UFS
UNIVERSITY OF THE FREE STATE
UNIVERSITEIT VAN DIE VRIESTAT
YUNIBESITHI YA FREISTATA

Contents

Nnini Gabrielle Mofokeng	2	Realeboga Makgeledise	22
Dr Mabohlokoa Khanyetsi	3	Prof Theodore Neethling	23
Katleho Matsikane	4	Nelisiwe Mkhomazi	24
Adv Inez Bezuidenhout	5	Mr Lyle Markham	25
Rethabile Sehenye	6	Danelle Fisher	26
Dr Maleho Letloenyane	7	Mr Anathi Nyadu	27
Thembinkosi Masango	8	Promise Mazibuko	28
Dr Daniel Andrew	9	Mrs Sebatatso Tsaoane	29
Boitshepo Moleko	10	Khoza Lizbeth Prevelege	30
Dr Eugene Fortein	11	Dr Sammy Mokoena	31
Yamkela Dube	12	Aylene Alexander	32
Dr Anathi Makamane	13	Dr Hanli Joubert	33
Amanda Sambo	14	Sharianne Davids	34
Mr Brent Damian Jammer	15	Dr Glen Legodu	35
Sonja Dlamini	16	Nthabiseng Zandisile Sibande	36
Mrs Petro Swart	17	Ms Ntombizodumo Shezi Radebe	37
Mpho Mndaweni	20		
Mr Khanya Motshabi	21		



Nnini Gabrielle Mofokeng

Dr Mabohlokoa Khanyetsi



I felt how much she cared about her students. I still do not have funding this year, but with people like Dr Khanyetsi around, I feel like there is nothing to worry about this year besides my studies.

As I start, I do know she would have loved it if I wrote this essay in my mother tongue, Sesotho. As much as I also like it, unfortunately, I would not be able to translate most of the description words I want to use into Sesotho.

The first thing that makes me love her is her pride in her mother tongue and her dedication to furthering her studies while using it. There is nothing as amazing to me as a red gown. She truly inspired me to study hard, especially after graduation week, when she asked if we had seen her in her red gown and expressed her hope that we would also wear it one day. Without a doubt, besides Dineo Babili, Dr Khanyetsi is the best lecturer ever. What I also appreciate about her is that she doesn't create long, difficult-to-grasp slides. She makes her slides concentrate only on the main points of our study units. Studying for Sesotho tests becomes so easy with Dr Khanyetsi's slides.

One vital thing I will never forget about her is when I was extremely down in many ways. I had financial stress due to being wrongfully affected by N+1 and not having *anyone*, yes, *anyone* from my so-called family members to turn to. Due to the fact that I had been attending her classes and participating as well, she noticed when I was no longer attending and asked about my whereabouts. She made sure I received the message. I went to her office as she asked. I remember being the only one who didn't write SSMT3728 test 2. When I arrived in her office, she asked me why I didn't come to write the test and why I was suddenly no longer attending. Tears started rolling down my cheeks. The fact that the situation I was in forced me to quit my studies the previous year really messed me up. I then told Dr Khanyetsi everything she needed to know. Due to her good heart and since it was still early, she insisted on giving me a chance to write my second test,

but I refused. Not because I wanted to, but because I had completely lost my ability to concentrate. Yes, I was attending at first, but I didn't hear anything. I kept telling her my story while my tears kept falling. Due to all this, she asked me where my parents were, and I told her I no longer had them. They died when I was young. She then called Mme Mensele to come and be a witness to the fact that she had given me a chance, but I unfortunately refused the offer. Mme Mensele did come, and I repeated my story to her. I told them that as long as someone provided me with food, I would not be quitting. They further asked me to write a note stating why I refused to write the test. I remember that this took place on the 20th of October 2023.

Dr Khanyetsi and Mme Mensele further encouraged me to come back this year no matter what. Dr Khanyetsi further asked me where home was, and I told her that I had no place to call home. I told her I've been staying with various relatives since my mom died in 2010. I further said to her that before she died, we stayed in Diepsloot, renting a room. They were touched by my story and concluded that my situation was sad. The fact that she made an effort to reach me meant a lot to me. Although I was afraid to go to her office, not knowing how she would react, I am now happy that she is one of the reasons I am back and thriving.

Especially when she said, "I want you here next year. You have to finish your degree and get yourself out of the dark your whole life is in."

I felt how much she cared about her students. I still do not have funding this year, but with people like Dr Khanyetsi around, I feel like there is nothing to worry about this year besides my studies.

There is so much I can say about Dr Khanyetsi, but I will leave it there. I hope one day she will read this and know that she isn't just a lecturer but also someone to look up to. Another thing she does is topping up her lessons with a joke that helps us remember what she said that day based on a joke she said.

I love Dr Mabohlokoa Khanyetsi.



Ke thabile haholo ho bona mosebetsi wa hao o le motle mme sena se ntiisetsa hore o ile wa thuisa boelets'i ba ka mme wa boya sekwele.

Karabo ho Ms. Nnini Mofokeng

Mosala le dikgutsana ha a kwate,

A ka kwata, di ka robala naheng!

Ke lebohile haholo Ms. Nnini Mofokeng ha o nkgethetse ho fumana kgau ya Kgothatsa. Ka kgau ena ke tla kgothala mme ke tswelopele ho etsa mosebetsi wa ka ka bokgabane. O bontshitse hore hara tse ding, o kgahluwe ke mawala le malepa a ka a ho etsa mosebetsi. O hlalositse ka nepo hore ke rata puo Sesotho ke bile ke sebetse ka matla ho e ratisa baithuti. Ka hona ke tla sebeletsa ho intlafatsa le ho feta, e le hore ke ntlafatse tsela ya ka ya ho rupela. Ke thabile empa ka ha ke selallane, meokgo ya ka e ile ya tsholoha marameng ha ke bala ditaba tse o susumeditse ho nkgethela boemong ba ho fuwa Kgau ya kgothatsa Univesithing ya Freistata.

Ke boetse kea leboha ha o ananetse kopo ya ka ya hore o tswelopele ka dithuto tsa hao hobane ke ka tsona o ka etsang hore bokamoso ba hao bo tjhabe mme bo hlahise ditholwana tse monate. Dikgomo ha di na motloha pele! Nalane ya kgolo ya hao e ile ya nkama maikutlong ha bohloko. Ha o ne o pheta nalane ya kgolo ya hau, ke ile ka ithuta matla le sebete ho wena le ha o ne o hanana le

boelets'i ba ka ba hore o ke o ngole teko ho kata sekgeo le hore o tle o tsebe ho ya ngola tlhahlobo. Mathata ke ditomoso tsa bophelo. Mosotho o re ha ho bosiu bo se nang meso.

Selemong sena, 2024, Ke ile ka thaba haholo ha ke o bona ka sehlopheng sa SSML3718. Ka bona sefahleho sa hao se kganya kgotso. Ka thaba ha o ithukgubetsa ka matla mme o le sehlahlo. Ke hopola o mpotsa hore na ke ntse ke o tseba. Karabo ya ka e bile "e!, ke ntse ke o tseba. Ke thabile haholo ho bona mosebetsi wa hao o le motle mme sena se ntiisetsa hore o ile wa thuisa boelets'i ba ka mme wa boya sekwele. Botle ke ho rema tjhetjhe le sa edile, matlopo-tlopo a fumane hlaba ya tona.!

Ke re ka sona sefutho sena seo o se bontshang thutong ena SSML3718, o tswelopele ho ithuta. Ka thuto, o tla fihlela toro ya hao ya ho apara kobo e kgubedu ya dingaka le ho akgela mohleho mahetleng. Yona kobo ya nanabolele. Bang ba e bitsa seanamarena ha ba bina, ba tsanyaola. Thuto ke lere, leikokotlelo, letotolo la bokamoso! Pele ya pele le hara mathata.

Dikgomo!

Mabohlokoa Khanyetsi





Katleho Matsikane

Adv Inez Bezuidenhout



She has made me a project manager for a project she is working on, on which we will be working together with esteemed advocates from the Free State Association of Advocates.

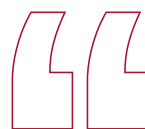
Katleho Matsikane is a little girl from a small town called QwaQwa, trying to make something out of this borrowed life. In 2021, I began my LLB journey, and, boy, it has not been easy! All went fine until my second year in 2022, when things took a sharp turn, and there I was, just a little girl from a small town lost in a relatively big city. I lost interest in my academics. I lost interest in life, and my vision of becoming a jurist one day disappeared in the midst of 2022.

I was definitely depressed, but I knew I had come too far to quit studying law. I was halfway through this 'prestigious' degree. With a little faith in myself, I found myself doing my third year, and I was still not performing as well as I had anticipated. As a student of the Faculty of Law, I have had the privilege of being taught by numerous esteemed lecturers, but Adv Inez Bezuidenhout's exceptional teaching style, guidance, and mentorship have made her stand out.

Her zeal for teaching shines through in every lecture, and her love for her subject is fascinating. Her ability to simplify difficult ideas into understandable and accessible chunks makes it simple for students to understand and remember the material. Her lessons are organised so effectively that it has made it easier for me to stay motivated and focused on my academics.

In addition to her academic contributions, Adv Bezuidenhout has influenced my personal growth and development. She instilled in me the values of discipline, responsibility, and accountability. Her encouragement and support have also given me the strength to face novel challenges and pursue opportunities outside of the classroom. She has made me a project manager for a project she is working on, on which we will be working together with esteemed advocates from the Free State Association of Advocates. In this project, fellow students will be shadowing and receiving lectures from admitted advocates. Of course, she is doing all the hard work; she is just making me a project manager, which makes me love her even more! She has also offered to help me enhance my skills and grow my references. She is a true mentor.

She has inspired me to chase my dreams and reminded me of why I chose this career. Because of her, today I am a mentee of the Women Practising Law Programme by the Law Faculty in partnership with the International Association of Women Judges (IAWJ), and I also hold the position of Deputy President of the United Nations Associations of South Africa (UNASA) UFS Chapter. I am grateful for the opportunity to have learned from her and hope that she will continue to inspire and motivate future generations of students at UFS.



The more exposure we can offer our students to diverse learning experiences, the better we can equip them for the challenges they will likely face in their academic and legal careers.

Dear Kathleho,

This response is to thank you for the beautiful, heartfelt message and your nomination for the Khotatsa 2024 award. Your kind words are indeed well received and serve as inspiration and motivation to challenge me to excel in teaching and as an encouragement to recognise how we impact each other and imprint on each other's lives.

Your message reminds us that who we are is shaped by what we experience, and what we experience shapes our belief in what is possible. I believe hope starts with passion, and passion should drive our teaching. With hope in mind, we can cure the residue from a past where we felt alienated from opportunity.

Your message also reminds us to work with what we already have in our hands. Linking you to the profession does not take effort; I merely need to go back in my footsteps and knock on the doors of the proverbial giants who helped me shape my being as a legal professional. I pay homage to those who preceded me, without whom I would not have had the experience necessary to extend the reach, link up with, and share the value of community. It is in service that we receive, and what we receive compels us to share what we believe. May your journey as a legal scholar be blessed, and may you always recall the impact you had and the impact you will have on those who share the path with you.

In light of the inspiration I find from your message, I will strive to think innovatively about how I teach and how I can include more diverse opportunities for learning. I will remind myself of the humanness of my students even when our faces are masked by the digital platforms that serve as classrooms. I will also remind myself that no two individuals have the same experience and that it is not coincidental that we meet on your learning path. What you learn from another person's experience may shield you from learning the same lesson yourself. For this reason, it is essential to expose our students to different perspectives and the life lessons of different individuals in the same profession. The more exposure we can offer our students to diverse learning experiences, the better we can equip them for the challenges they will likely face in their academic and legal careers.

We will not know where life goes, but what we sow may be more than what we know.

You have encouraged me to seek new avenues of connecting learning with practice, limit my doubt about what is possible, and communicate in ways that reach beyond words.

Thank you, and may your journey be blessed.

Inez Bezuidenhout





Rethabile Sehenye

Dr Maleho Letloenyane



Now, as I approach my final year of studies at Kovsies, on the verge of graduation, I know that his influence will stay with me long after I leave the university.

My name is Rethabile Sehenye. I am a final-year Bachelor of Education student majoring in English Home Language and life orientation at the University of the Free State. Looking back on my final year, I can't help but feel immense gratitude for Dr Maleho Letloenyane's role in my journey at the University of the Free State. His mentorship wasn't just about academics but about helping me navigate the challenges of transitioning from living on campus to off-campus life.

His mentorship has been pivotal, guiding me through challenges and shaping my growth both academically and personally. Transitioning from living on campus at Welwitschia Residence to off-campus accommodation presented unforeseen obstacles. The commute became a daily struggle, affecting my punctuality and energy levels in class. Dr Letloenyane's assistance was invaluable during this time. Understanding my predicament, he offered practical solutions and emotional support, helping me adapt to the new circumstances and regain my focus on academic pursuits. In the classroom, his teaching style was a breath of fresh air. He didn't just lecture; he brought the subject to life with real-world examples that made everything click.

Dr Letloenyane's influence extends even beyond the classroom, as he generously shares his academic research with us during consultations, inspiring us to

delve deeper into our fields of study. One such example is his research published in The Independent Journal of Teaching and Learning, co-authored with our Dean Prof Jita, titled "School-based professional development interventions: The effects of a lesson study approach for mathematics teachers" (2020). This research delves into the efficacy of school-based professional development interventions, mainly using the Lesson Study approach, in enhancing the teaching and learning of mathematics in primary and secondary schools. Although I do not specialise in maths, I have always found it useful to adapt his strategies in the classroom during my teaching practice, allowing me to connect with my learners better and navigate their dynamic learning styles.

But more than anything, it was his belief in all of us that made the biggest difference. His encouragement gave me and my peers the confidence to face any challenge head-on, and his resilience became my own. Now, as I approach my final year of studies at Kovsies, on the verge of graduation, I know that his influence will stay with me long after I leave the university. In Dr Letloenyane, we didn't just find a teacher; we found a mentor and innovator. His impact on my academic journey has been immeasurable, and I'll always be grateful for the lessons he taught me both inside and outside the classroom.



My teaching methods often incorporate discussions, debates, and real-life case studies to make learning dynamic and relevant.

In Response To Rethabile Sehenye

As a university lecturer, my teaching philosophy is deeply rooted in the belief that education extends beyond the mere transmission of knowledge; it is a transformative process that nurtures the holistic development of students. My approach emphasises creating an inclusive and supportive learning environment while maintaining high expectations to inspire and challenge students.

Education should cultivate not only intellectual growth but also personal, social, and emotional development. To achieve this quest, I strive to recognise and nurture each student's unique strengths, interests, and aspirations, facilitating their journey towards self-actualisation. While the size of classes makes it challenging to attend to each student's needs, one endeavours to support personal growth in students. In my classes, through the content taught, I integrate discussions on ethics, integrity, and social responsibility into the curriculum, preparing students to be conscientious global citizens. This may be what Rethabile is referring to in her piece: students can only be rounded citizens if they are mentored appropriately.

Creating a supportive learning environment is paramount for student success. This involves establishing strong, respectful relationships with students and making myself approachable and available for guidance and mentorship. Additionally, I strive to foster an inclusive classroom where all students feel valued and respected, encouraging open dialogue and diverse perspectives. Rethabile also touches on these aspects in her piece. I am a believer in supporting students to reach their potential, but that requires that we, as lecturers, find ways of motivating students, even in the most trying of circumstances, to be high achievers, which leads me to the next section, which is high expectations.

Setting high expectations is crucial for motivating students to achieve their full potential. I aim to design

rigorous and engaging coursework that pushes students to stretch their intellectual boundaries. The cultivation of a positive mindset is also important, which is why I aim to instil the belief that abilities and intelligence can be developed through dedication and hard work, fostering resilience and a love for learning. All these point to the high expectations I have for all my students, and to achieve this, I also provide constructive feedback and celebrate their achievements in an effort to encourage them to strive for excellence.

I believe that active and experiential learning methods are essential for deep understanding and retention. My teaching methods often incorporate discussions, debates, and real-life case studies to make learning dynamic and relevant. I also incorporate group work and peer-to-peer learning to build teamwork skills and diverse viewpoints. This helps cross-pollinate students' knowledge and lessens barriers that some students may experience. Well-rounded knowledge, skills, and values result from engaging students in projects, research, and fieldwork that connect theoretical knowledge with practical application. This is particularly important for pre-service teachers because the school environment is forever changing; we, therefore, need to be abreast with the latest ideas and educational innovations in our lessons.

In essence, my teaching philosophy is centred on the holistic development and support of students, underpinned by high expectations and a commitment to excellence. By fostering a nurturing and challenging environment, I aim to empower students to become well-rounded individuals who are prepared to contribute meaningfully to society. Today's students, like Rethabile, face numerous challenges, and as far as possible, we should try to change the concept of university or university classes as a challenge. We should rather try to create those enjoyable experiences that will leave an impression long after students leave university.





Thembinkosi Masango

Dr Daniel Andrew



I have been inspired by his passion for teaching and his commitment to his work. His legacy will live to inspire and mould students forever.

Dr Daniel Andrew is a very kind lecturer at the University of the Free State Faculty of Theology. He is an easy-to-understand lecturer who also looks out for the best interest of his students. As a result, his lecture rooms are a warm environment in which to learn, and a student feels comfortable asking questions and expressing ideas. He makes even the most challenging ideas simple to grasp. Dr Andrew is one of the best at lecturing and is genuinely interested in a student's well-being and challenges. Whether it is a personal or academic issue, he is always available to listen and help, as his door is always open for consultations. He truly cares about the success of his students in life. That is why he thoroughly covers every topic in his lectures and personally cares for every student. In addition to the point mentioned above, he also promotes the building of a community in his classrooms, and students always feel comfortable sharing their opinions or ideas. His lectures are consistently thrilling and engaging since they push us to think critically and question our assumptions.

Dr Andrew's contribution to my learning process has been significant. His meaningful teaching of TMIS4814 helped me understand the reading material much better, and his support gave me confidence in pursuing my academic ambitions.

It was an honour to learn from him as a lecturer, and I am confident that his teaching material will continue to influence students for the better. We are always welcome in Dr Andrew's lectures, and his door is always open whenever we have issues to discuss with him or when we need guidance.

He is a good listener and has time for all of us. I have been inspired by his passion for teaching and his commitment to his work. His legacy will live to inspire and mould students forever. I have always felt safe and supported. Hence, he creates a conducive learning environment that makes a student feel free to ask questions and air our thoughts. Moreover, his lectures are well-organised and easy to follow, as he uses several examples and stories to explain complex ideas to us. He is a great role model, good and kind, patient and understanding. He treats his students as fellow scholars and all his students respect and appreciate him greatly. Thus, I conclude that Dr Daniel Andrew is a good, kind, and dedicated lecturer. I have spent almost four months in his classes, and this time has been comfortable and inspiring. I am thankful that I had a chance to learn from this great man, and I am sure he will continue teaching and changing students' lives for the better.





“

Students are regarded as equal partners and respected as persons with agency who can affect and impact teaching and learning strategies.

In Response to Thembinkosi Masango

I am honoured by the kind and sincere words of appreciation and humbled by the way in which you portray my contribution. I am a product of other lecturers and supervisors, and, as research indicates, we tend to teach and supervise in the way we were taught and supervised. At the same time, you also learn what not to do and be with your students. Your observations about my approach and style encourage and motivate me to improve these practices in the best interest of my students and their teaching and learning.

My approach to students and their teaching and learning is rooted in a pedagogy of transformation and compassion. In such an approach, the background and lived experience of the student is cardinal due to the tendency to decontextualise students and blame them alone for weak academic performance. Therefore, students are more than a number to me. They are people from real-life contexts, coming to higher education spaces where they sometimes feel alienated for various reasons, especially students from disadvantaged backgrounds.

Together with the contextualisation of students and the need for transformation in the higher education environment, a pedagogy of compassion keeps us involved and in touch with the student as a holistic person. Our first sessions were focused more on small group formation, where students had to find out more about each other, even about their shoe sizes and

favourite meals, which turned out to be hilarious but also revealing about the person you were sitting with for over three years. After establishing a supportive and accountable group, they were given tasks, which were not necessarily assessed for marks, to further build cohesion and caring. Group leaders interacted with students, and challenges that affected their learning were quickly identified and mitigated.

Establishing a relationship of collegiality, mutual sharing, and learning removed any feelings of superiority or inferiority, although we all knew that due to my appointment, I was in a leadership and mentoring role with them. Students are regarded as equal partners and respected as persons with agency who can affect and impact teaching and learning strategies. Timeframes could be negotiated and easily changed if it was in the best interest of the student and in line with the policies and frameworks of the institution.

Sharing my own stories as a Tintswalo from the early 1990s makes our teaching and learning opportunities more situated and grounded in real-life contexts. Being a novice lecturer at UFS and teaching and learning through a learning management system has often turned the tables, with the students being the teachers and me being the learner. A pedagogy of care helped a lot to create bonds of mutual respect as co-learners. In this regard, Phumlani and the final year group have shaped me and should be acknowledged as the real heroes and heroes in our learning and teaching journey. I thank you.





Boitshepo Moleko

Dr Eugene Fortein



History was never my favourite subject, but this time, it wasn't just history; it was Church History. To my surprise, I fell in love with the module...

Our Head of Department and Senior Lecturer in Church History and Politics is truly Moses living on earth. If I had free time, I would most definitely have written a book dedicated to him by now. Let's take it back to 2021, shall we?

In 2021, I was doing my first year and had already attended a few other classes that I did not enjoy. I entered this huge lecture hall in HMS and there he was. He had fair brown skin like me, and he most definitely looked South African (not that the other lecturers didn't). He had some softness and gentleness in his tone, was reserved, and looked like he loved what he was doing.

I remember that when he started telling us what his module was about, I immediately thought to myself, "Why do we need to go back to History?" History was never my favourite subject, but this time, it wasn't just history; it was Church History. To my surprise, I fell in love with the module (THIS1514), and I made sure to pass it year after year. Even though I did not pass with flying colours, it was a decent mark.

When I said my lecturer is gentle and soft, I do not mean to say he never gets serious; there are times I get afraid

to even go to class. He is so direct with his work that he wants us to come to class prepared and submit a reflection on the reading material. However, this has positive consequences because he teaches us to prepare ahead, be resilient, and educate ourselves. Of all the lecturers that have taught me until my final year, I have never had one that advocates for black success like he does. With this corrupted economy, he urges us to find our voice amidst the adversities of social injustice, racial discrimination, gender-based violence, poverty, and inequality.

Hence, I believe he is the only reason I never quit studying theology even after being ridiculed for doing a "Bible course", as they call it. I grew to love theology and found my voice like a seed pushing through a concrete wall. Dr Fortein managed to make me break barriers of injustice and silence. Now, I can advocate for change and speak the truth no matter how much it may hurt. In a nutshell, now I aim to reclaim my dignity as a black woman in a world filled with patriarchy and economic class differences. I will forever remember these words that he once said in class:

"Getting a higher education is a privilege; don't take it lightly."



Part of the university's vision is for our graduates to become responsible citizens, contributing to equality, nation-building, and a better future for all. I sense that you are well on your way to making UFS proud.

Dear Boitshepo,

Thank you for your kind words. It came as a surprise to me. I am so happy to hear that the church history modules have been a meaningful experience for you. The foundation of my teaching is that 'You cannot teach them if you do not know and love them.' Knowing that most of our students come from disadvantaged backgrounds where financial means are stretched, it is important for me that you make the most of the opportunity you have been given. Most students' parents or guardians can barely afford tertiary education for their children, hence the immense pressure to pass modules. Bursary payouts are also based on performance.

Secondly, in my view, there is no distinction between my convictions of faith, academic research, and teaching and learning. My search for justice and equality is based on my understanding of Jesus Christ

of Nazareth, the One who was born poor and fatherless in occupied Palestine. It has always been my aim for students to find their voice and to be able to interpret life and the Bible in a way that brings hope to the hopeless. It, therefore, excites me to hear that you are also finding your voice and courage to speak up against all forms of injustice.

Part of the university's vision is for our graduates to become responsible citizens, contributing to equality, nation-building, and a better future for all. I sense that you are well on your way to making UFS proud. Remember, learning, unlearning, and relearning are continuous processes. As you journey in life, especially beyond the campus of UFS, you will evolve, and relearning becomes important. May continuous learning amplify your voice and let your education make South Africa a better place.

Eugene Fortein





Yamkela Dube

Dr Anathi Makamane



She is always willing to help, even if it is not something related to her module, as long as it is life-changing.

Not every lecturer can manage to help every individual in her or his classroom without exhaustion. Throughout my journey of academic excellence, Dr Anathi Makamane has been a wonderful lecturer who is passionate and committed to doing her job. Due to her flexibility, she has played two roles in my academic journey: that of a teacher and a pastoral guide. She knows and understands that we are different students from different backgrounds. Therefore, she is always willing to help us.

Dr AS Makamane is my favourite lecturer of all time because she supports students and offers guidance where necessary. She loves her job to the point where if the lecture ends and you do not understand the content, she goes through it with you slowly and easily. I believe dealing with older people is sometimes challenging as they might have strong opinions on what is being lectured. Dr Makamane teaches her module very well, and we are passing it very well because she uploads the learning material on time. She continually updates us with her availability for office consultation so that if we face any difficulty in her module, we know where to find her. She teaches AGEX3734 and breaks it down into parts that are easy to understand and study.

Moreover, she sometimes motivates us to work

hard on our books so that one day, we will be proud of ourselves. There was a time when I needed advice regarding my career; I did not hesitate to go to her office and ask for help. She is always willing to help, even if it is not something related to her module, as long as it is life-changing. The way she makes life look makes her seem like my mother. One day, I would be happy to become an individual like her, helping people in all life's stages without expecting anything in return.

She is a wonderful leader and a leader who does not only delegate activities but makes sure that we are on the right track. She does not only coach us but also plays a part in mentorship. She delivers the content of the module and makes sure that she goes through it with us so that we will be able to understand and apply it to our lives on a daily basis. I will always appreciate her for being a kind, hard-working, and motivating lecturer.

In conclusion, Dr Anathi Makamane is a good representative in the faculty of Natural and Agricultural Sciences. Her dedication to nourishing our minds and making sure that we are skilled is highly appreciated. I personally thank her for being one of the people who changed my life.



“

Not only that, I strive to be accessible and supportive. I believe in empowering students to achieve their academic goals and providing guidance beyond the classroom whenever needed.

Dear Yamkela,

From the bottom of my heart, thank you for your incredibly kind nomination for the Khotatsa Awards. Your words have touched me deeply, and I am honoured to have positively impacted your academic journey.

It means a great deal to me that you find my teaching approach effective and supportive. I am passionate about creating an environment where every student feels valued and understood, regardless of background or learning pace. Reading your reflection and recognising that “not every lecturer can manage to help every individual in her or his classroom without exhaustion” is genuinely heartwarming.

Ifilosofi yam yokufundisa ijikeleza ekuxhobiseni iingqondo kunye nokukhuthaza ukuthanda ukufunda kunye nokucinga okuphangaleleyo. Ndiyakholelwa ekudaleni indawo yokufunda ebandakanyayo, nekhuthazayo apho wonke umfundi anokuphumelela ezifundweni, ngokwasengqondweni, nangobuqu.

Not only that, I strive to be accessible and supportive.

I believe in empowering students to achieve their academic goals and providing guidance beyond the classroom whenever needed. I attended a workshop on academic advising, and the skills I gained there have equipped me to provide better support, something the CTL will be glad to hear was truly beneficial. Your mention of our discussions on career advice exemplifies the holistic approach I aim to take in supporting students.

I am committed to continuous improvement in my teaching practice and am grateful for the opportunity to contribute positively to your educational experience at UFS. Your nomination motivates me even further to uphold these standards and continue to grow as an educator.

Once again, thank you for this nomination. I look forward to continuing our journey of growth and learning together.

Warm regards,

Dr Anathi Siphesihle Makamane



Amanda Sambo

Mr Brent Damian Jammer



He was always ready for class, and his lectures were always well-organised and interactive, fostering a dynamic learning environment that encourages critical thinking and discussion.

I am honoured to have a chance to express my appreciation to the lecturer who made my first year as a student at the University of the Free State not as difficult as I had imagined it to be. He made me believe that by putting effort into something, you can achieve it, and indeed, I did.

Brent Damian Jammer, a lecturer at the University of the Free State (UFS), has had a profound influence on my academic success and studies at the UFS. His teaching methods, personal dedication, and inspiration to teach shaped me into the student I am today.

From my first encounter with Mr Brent in the classroom, I was honestly nervous as he was different from me in skin colour and how he spoke, so initially, I did not know how to approach him. But his passion and enthusiasm for his subject struck me, so I was eager to attend his classes and learn one or two things from him. I never really thought that I would enjoy my classes, not only because I was curious but because he made the most complex topics accessible and engaging. He was always ready for class, and his lectures were always well-organised and interactive, fostering a dynamic learning environment that encourages critical thinking and discussion.

Mr Brent's commitment to student success is evident in the many extracurricular opportunities he provides. I remember when it was time to write semester tests, as

we had no exams for his module, he would say, "Those who pass my test will get a trip to a certain farm where you will see how a farm is well taken care of," and indeed they did go.

To those of us who did not go, we were now motivated to study and make sure that we passed so that we could also go. You do know how one acts when dedicated to doing something they love; you try within yourself to do something, and that was me. As we can see, Mr Brent's influence went beyond academics.

I am grateful to Mr Brent for introducing me to the concept of lifelong learning. He believes that education is not just about acquiring knowledge for a degree but about developing skills and understanding that will serve us throughout our lives. This mindset has motivated me to continue to learn and explore new opportunities beyond the classroom. This has impacted my professional aspirations as well, as his example as a dedicated and passionate educator has inspired me to remember why I am here in the first place. His teaching did not just ignite my passion but also equipped me with effective communication and critical thinking skills, allowing me to be open-minded towards learning new things, which also boosted my confidence to succeed in the field. I am grateful for his mentorship, for I will carry all he taught me throughout my career.

Thank you, Brent Damian Jammer!



Top-performing students were awarded field trips to Jacobsdal Feedlot, where they learned about what the agricultural value chain entails.

In Response to Amanda

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the student who nominated me for this award. It is a great honour to see that my efforts toward students are being noticed and have a meaningful impact on their lives.

Upon joining the University of the Free State, one of my objectives was to enhance the learning and understanding of students beyond the classroom. As someone who has worked in the industry before, I saw the relevant skills gap between school and the industry, which encouraged me to try and close this gap by exposing students to the industry. This entails giving students access to practical farm examples from my work in the industry before becoming a lecturer. As agriculture is a practical field, I reckoned that it would add significant value to students' knowledge and understanding of farming, combined with the theory taught in class. Furthermore, walking the extra mile with students is something close to my heart as a parent and guardian, which gives them peace of mind that they have someone they can confide in and share any experience with. Having an impact beyond the classroom drives me to be in a position where I can give back and set a platform for students to grow and reach their full potential. Remember, some of our students are not fortunate enough to come from a farming background, and theory alone will not put them in a position to grow fully. Thus, there will always be an urge for me to give students hope in that regard, to get them as close as possible to a farming environment before they are employed.

Walking the Extra Mile to Give Students Industry Experience

Top-performing students were awarded field trips to Jacobsdal Feedlot, where they learned about what the agricultural value chain entails. Students went to the feedlot, where animals are fed, and the abattoir, where they are slaughtered and processed. This was an enjoyable trip where they expanded their knowledge of agro-processing. This was done in conjunction with Dr Lindie von Maltitz, the Afrikaans lecturer for Agricultural Economics.

I took my top performers on a field trip to NAMPO Harvest Day for an agricultural expo experience.

In my role, I had the privilege of taking two students to Vrede to attend a production auction for the first time. They not only enjoyed the experience but also gained valuable knowledge, which I believe will inspire them in their future endeavours.

As a small-scale farmer, I always strive to inspire the youth to get involved in farming. I took one of my students to my farm in Barkley-West. We also went to the local auction to purchase cattle, providing the students with a first-hand experience of how cattle marketing operates. This practical learning experience is aimed at preparing them for the real-world challenges of the industry.

Brent Jammer





Sonja Dlamini

Mrs Petro Swart



Her lessons are dynamic and ever-evolving, taking into account the opinions and voices of each individual student and allowing us the room and liberty to experiment, fail, and grow...

Among many of God's beautiful works, the sunset is one of the best. At the end of the day, God creates masterpieces that signify completion and bring everything to a close, much as how each lesson with Mrs Petro Swart moved us closer to obtaining our degrees. The comforting feeling that the sunset offers is very similar to the comfort we experienced from Mrs Swart on a personal and academic level.

"Sunsets are proof that endings can often be beautiful too," as Beau Taplin famously observed.

Mrs Petro made sure that we, as her students, witnessed the happy conclusion of obtaining our degrees.

Our consumer science instructor, Mrs Swart, is an amazing lecturer who has had a profound influence on many students' lives. Her enthusiasm for teaching is infectious, and she has an amazing ability to establish a personal connection with each of her students. Mrs Swart's lectures are engaging and educational because of her contagious excitement and kindness, which greet students as soon as they enter the room.

Mrs Swart is different from other lecturers in that she not only teaches the course subject but also imparts important life skills that we may apply outside of the classroom. She would inquire not only about our academic performance but also about how we were handling our personal lives.

She encourages students to challenge themselves to realise their full potential, think critically, and confront their beliefs. Her advice has helped me in my academic endeavours as well as in my personal and academic

lives. She is the most dedicated teacher I have ever met. She goes above and beyond to make sure we get the tools and assistance we require for success, whether it's staying after class to address concerns or offering more resources to aid in our comprehension of the subject matter.

She is an alchemist, and I know an alchemist when I see one. She is a nurturing force that always pushes us to go down new paths, take chances, and think creatively. Her classroom has the atmosphere of a secure space where invention and originality are valued and rewarded, and failing is just another chance to improve. She is a visionary who can help every one of her students find their way by seeing their potential. Her lessons are dynamic and ever-evolving, taking into account the opinions and voices of each individual student and allowing us the room and liberty to experiment, fail, and grow from our own experiences. The options are infinite, and our potential is boundless when she serves as our guide. I showed her the things I had made with her instruction after class. This encouraged me to keep going and launch a business, which I am currently doing.

As I look back on my time in university, I am truly grateful to have had the privilege of learning from her. She is not just one of the best lecturers I have ever had, but a mentor who inspired me to reach for the stars. Her exceptional teaching and positive influence have made a significant difference in the lives of so many students, including mine. Thank you, Mrs Swart, for being an exceptional teacher and for your invaluable mentorship.





“

I am deeply grateful for this recognition and for the opportunity to make a positive impact on your life. I actually just did my job to the best of my ability, but you, as an individual, grabbed the opportunity with both hands.

Dearest Sonja,

I am deeply honoured and moved to receive such a heartfelt nomination from you. Your kind words about my enthusiasm and ability to connect personally with each individual reaffirm my belief in the importance of building strong relationships in the classroom. This highlights the essence of my teaching philosophy, which centres on creating a supportive and inspiring environment for all students. The class should also be a home away from home.

I firmly believe that education extends beyond the mere transfer of knowledge; it involves nurturing the whole person. By understanding and addressing both the academic and personal aspects of students' lives, I aim to create a holistic learning experience.

Encouraging students to challenge themselves, be passionate about the subject, think critically, and confront their beliefs is at the core of my teaching approach. I am passionate about empowering students to realise their full potential, both inside and outside the classroom. Passion for a subject can only be fulfilled if you are also passionate about life.

Your recognition of my efforts to teach important life skills alongside academic content is particularly

meaningful. I strive to create an environment where students feel supported not just in their studies but in their overall well-being. By inquiring about their personal lives and offering guidance, I hope to provide a foundation for their success beyond the classroom. I believe that every student has unique strengths and potential, and my goal is to help them discover and develop these qualities. I also aim to prepare them for the challenges and opportunities they will encounter in their future careers and lives.

You are headed to a big future with your ever-smiling, excited, daring, and happy personality. It was such a pleasure to have you on our tour to Cape Town. Unfortunately, I do not think that we'll make that trip to Italy together, but please go and send me a photo of the gelato you are going to enjoy!

I am deeply grateful for this recognition and for the opportunity to make a positive impact on your life. I actually just did my job to the best of my ability, but you, as an individual, grabbed the opportunity with both hands. Life is too short to do anything half-hearted. Go all out for it!

Warm regards,

Petro Swart









Mpho Mndaweni

Mr Khanya Motshabi



With his profound insights and passionate advocacy for human rights, he not only deepened our comprehension of law but also ignited a spirit of activism in numerous individuals, myself included.

In our academic journey, we invariably encounter lecturers whose impact transcends the confines of conventional learning. Among these remarkable intellects stands Mr Motshabi, an exemplar of academic excellence and unwavering commitment to student development.

I had the privilege of being taught by Mr Motshabi in advanced human rights law. While my academic performance may not have soared to the heights of distinction, Mr Motshabi's influence permeated far deeper than mere grades.

Through his meticulous guidance, Mr Motshabi instilled in me the capacity to dissect and analyse complex subject matter with precision and depth. Beyond the realm of law, he imparted invaluable insights that transcended disciplinary boundaries, nurturing a holistic understanding of the socio-legal landscape.

Yet, it was not solely his scholarly acumen that left an indelible mark. Mr Motshabi embodied integrity and authenticity in all facets of his lectures. His unwavering dedication to his vocation and the pursuit of truth served as a beacon of inspiration, illuminating the path for aspiring scholars like myself.

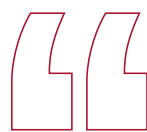
Moreover, Mr Motshabi's commitment to student welfare was unparalleled. Ever approachable and receptive, he fostered an environment of open dialogue and constructive critique. His door was always open, welcoming students with warmth and encouragement, regardless of their academic standing.

With a distinguished career spanning academia and the private sector, Mr Motshabi has imparted knowledge at prestigious institutions, and his extensive research,

showcased in leading legal journals and collaborative publications, underscores his expertise in areas including human rights, dispute resolution, and business law. Additionally, Mr Motshabi's contributions to principles, ideal models, and financing of Black Economic Empowerment have been recognised through expert insights commentary in esteemed publications like The Financial Mail and The Breakwater Monitor.

Mr Motshabi's ability to make you understand human rights and apply them into your everyday life was captivating, his eagerness and passion for human rights was visible outside the lecture hall. Mr Motshabi's lectures spark a newfound sense of purpose within me. They serve as a catalyst for introspection, knowledge, and empowerment, prompting me to evaluate my values and priorities. Inspired by his dedication and unwavering commitment to a cause greater than himself.

Mr Motshabi exemplifies the transformative potential of knowledge. With his profound insights and passionate advocacy for human rights, he not only deepened our comprehension of law but also ignited a spirit of activism in numerous individuals, myself included. As I continue my intellectual journey, his words will serve as a guiding light. He is, all things considered, the embodiment of an ideal lecturer—a model of diligent scholarship, moral integrity, and patient guidance. His impact is felt far beyond the lecture hall, influencing the moral compass and intellectual paths of those who are lucky enough to come into contact with him. I am incredibly appreciative that I had the opportunity to gain experience from such a brilliant person, whose legacy will inspire future generations.



I treasure and welcome the affirmation, but it troublingly demands the embodiment of high principles. Teachers are quite powerless marginals caring for independent adults.

In Response Mpho Mndaweni

This Khothatsa Award nomination is agreeably bound to surprise. It is a magnificent and precious gift. I am deeply honoured by Mpho Mndaweni's attention, altruism, and effort. You could have easily spent your academic break differently.

The weight of this nomination has conflicting pushes and pulls. I treasure and welcome the affirmation, but it troublingly demands the embodiment of high principles. Teachers are quite powerless marginals caring for independent adults. But we have some influence and authority. So, our example matters, causing significant moral burdens. Still worse is that we hardly deserve the beaming accolades. If we did, I would ask what makes us worthy. Is it luck, location, or timing?

Advanced Human Rights Law (LAHR) is among my best classes ever. Such inspired, intense, and challenging interchange is rare. There is great discursive and perspectival power. Contextuality prevails. We engage in translanguaging. We address students by their titles for professional identity development. Graceful analysis goes with satirical commentary. We laugh. We play. We play silly. We are ridiculous. LAHR rests on a kind of relationality. Something happens there. We connect. There is debate. Energy grows. Something else happens. And there is magic.

James Boyd White may be right: community is conversation, and conversation is community. This may explain the shared journey of Counsellor Mndaweni, LAHR, and me.

For Oliver Wendell Holmes, law is not a 'brooding omnipresence in the sky.' Law is socially founded, connected and purposive regulation. My gross oversimplification is that the law is both text and context. 'Law as text' mostly contains legal propositions. 'Law as context' largely contains social propositions. Legal propositions mostly require intense, technical, and inside-out thinking. Textual thinking tends to deconstruct wholes into constituents. It mostly drives renovation. But detail can hide the big picture. Contextual thinking tends to be socially situated, outside-in, broad, and inventive. Its approach is systemic, constructive, and innovative. Contextuality entails a broad disciplinary concept. Joined-up, textual, and contextual thinking offer borderless, rounded, differentiated, and advantaged insights.

Mobilisation for innovative construction or activism follows when law is viewed as both text and social context. Then, scholarship and activism travel together. We must think about what to do. We must do something about what we think. So, engaged scholarship is the mantra. Our best ethical understanding must, of course, guide us. Mr Mndaweni kindly mentions legacy. Some might view legacy as a narcissistic concern. For others, legacy offers the best account of our earthly existence. I suppose mortality alone does not drive thoughts of legacy. Grand ambition also informs legacy. Grand ambition compels thought beyond our material impermanence. The long view is *de rigueur*.

I dedicate this award to Counsellor Mndaweni, LAHR, and the admired teachers in my family and beyond.

Khanya B Motshabi





Realeboga Makgeledise

Prof Theodore Neethling



I hold Prof Neethling in high regard as a lecturer. It's only fair to acknowledge his contributions and recognise his dedication to our academic development.

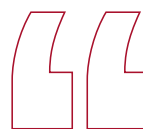
When I look back at my second and third years of studies, one lecturer who stands out as profoundly impactful on my academic journey is none other than Prof Theodore Neethling, my Political Science lecturer (POLS). His remarkable teaching and mentorship not only deepened my understanding of Political Science but also spurred me to strive for excellence and reach my full potential. Prof Neethling fostered a vibrant and supportive learning environment, where his contagious enthusiasm for Political Science and knack for unravelling complex ideas made even the most daunting topics accessible. What truly set him apart was his ability to link our theoretical studies with current affairs and real-life examples. He exhibited genuine concern for each student's progress, often going above and beyond to ensure our comprehension of the material. I recall his excitement when South Africa hosted the BRICS Summit while our class was studying the Global Political Economy and how various international bodies play a role. Prof Neethling could not stop smiling as he practically explained how the BRICS collective was driving multipolarity to the detriment of imperial global states. During that time, he helped us connect how the global political economy is linked to our daily lives and why geopolitical changes brought by entities such as BRICS or the Ukraine war influence us.

Beyond the classroom, Prof Neethling enriched our learning experience with captivating tales of his travels abroad for research and conferences. His wealth of knowledge on geopolitics and issues such as BRICS+, AU, and other international bodies piqued my interest in international relations and security studies. Despite occasional disagreements with his personal views and the challenge of achieving top marks in his tests and exams, I hold Prof Neethling in high regard as a lecturer.

It's only fair to acknowledge his contributions and recognise his dedication to our academic development.

Through individual attention, constructive feedback, and unwavering support, Prof Neethling nurtured confidence in my abilities and sparked a genuine passion for Political Science, especially as a female student leader in such a male-dominated space. This was particularly evident during my involvement in the EFF Student Command and later in the Student Representative Council. His engaging attitude in class and willingness to engage in discussions and offer guidance proved invaluable as we were able to debate certain topics among ourselves and with him. Prof Neethling's impact transcended academic boundaries, inspiring us to become critical thinkers, problem solvers, and empathetic individuals. He fostered curiosity and a thirst for knowledge, encouraging us to explore new concepts and ideas.

Prof Neethling's influence on my academic and activist journey has been profound. He instilled in me a growth mindset, urging me to view challenges as opportunities for growth and perseverance. I am immensely grateful for the privilege of learning under Prof Neethling's guidance. His passion, expertise, and unwavering support have been instrumental in my academic success and personal growth. Prof Neethling exemplifies the essence of the Khothatsa project, inspiring and empowering students to reach their full potential. I am honoured to share my story, which is a testament to the transformative influence of exceptional educators like Prof Neethling. With his mentorship, I have come to understand that education encompasses not only the acquisition of knowledge but also the development of character, resilience, and a lifelong love for learning.



Good academic work needs a solid theoretical foundation, but it must also relate to practice, especially in the South African context with its peculiar challenges. I am glad you understood and appreciated this aspect of my teaching.

In Response To Realeboga Makgeledise

Thank you very much for your letter. It came as a wonderful surprise to me. Every lecturer receiving such a letter can only look back with great satisfaction on the classes into which they invested much preparation and energy. For me, your words serve as an inspiration to continue building on what I strive to do and achieve as a lecturer because they confirm that there are always students who take something valuable from the classes into their future endeavours.

Students may not always realise the various pressures lecturers face. We are tasked with teaching (often large) classes of undergraduate students, supervising postgraduate students, and serving on faculty or university committees. Additionally, we must contribute to departmental activities and administration and be involved in community engagement of some kind. This often makes lecturers feel trapped by a multitude of responsibilities. Therefore, when a student expresses gratitude for our effort in the classroom, it is deeply appreciated. It makes all the hard work worth it.

As an academic, scholarship and research are very important to me because they allow us to stay at the forefront of new knowledge development. Being able to pass that knowledge on to students in an educational context and instil in them a love for the subject is incredibly rewarding. I still remember what some of my lecturers conveyed to me many years ago in my undergraduate classes, shaping my future journey. Knowing that my classes have educational and academic value, and that they have honed your skills and encouraged critical thinking, makes me very happy.

Honing skills is crucial for success in today's dynamic modern world. In my classes, I often emphasise that skills are key to every student's future. I am also glad you mentioned that I inspired you and others to become critical thinkers, problem solvers, and empathetic individuals. Your recognition of this is truly gratifying.

While research at universities is vital, we as academics must never forget that we chose to work in higher education, where students are of utmost importance. As one academic from another university recently wrote in a newspaper, universities are more than just buildings, facilities, and staff; students form an indispensable part of our institutions. Your letter is a reminder of this and inspires me to continue growing alongside my students in my teaching.

Lastly, I am also grateful for your acknowledgement that I succeeded in connecting theory and practice. Good academic work needs a solid theoretical foundation, but it must also relate to practice, especially in the South African context with its peculiar challenges. I am glad you understood and appreciated this aspect of my teaching. Your words, "he helped us connect how the global political economy is linked to our daily lives and why geopolitical changes brought by entities such as BRICS or the Ukraine war influence us," are very special to me.

Thank you once again for your much-appreciated feedback. Your nomination is as inspiring and energising as you say my classes were to you.

Theo Neethling





Nelisiwe Mkhomazi

Mr Lyle Markham



learned that I should not look down on myself or criticise myself if I encounter any failure but view failure as an opportunity to begin again more intelligently.

Lyle Markham, one of my unforgettable favourite lecturers at UFS who taught me EHRM in my second year, left an ever-lasting impact on my academic journey. I know most people's stories with favourite lecturers are those where they would interact with their lecturers, seek advice, constantly visit their lecturers' offices, etc. You all know how it goes. But mine is a bit different because I did none of those things, and this lecturer might not know me. He inspired me during his classes, and most of his students can testify to that.

Mr Markham inspired me mostly during our classes. His classes were more than just academic sessions; they were inspiring, motivating, and unforgettable experiences. Mr Markham's passion for teaching made him stand out as a lecturer who genuinely cared about his students' growth and well-being. One of Mr Markham's greatest strengths was his ability to connect with his students on a personal level.

He used to share relatable stories and jokes, including ones about load shedding, which earned him the nickname "Mr Loadshedding." His humour was contagious, often breaking the ice and creating a relaxed atmosphere that allowed us to absorb the material more effectively. Moreover, Mr Markham was not afraid to show his vulnerable side, sharing stories of his own struggles and failures, which made him more relatable and endearing to us.

I remember how he repeatedly reminded us that failure

is not the end but rather an opportunity to learn and grow. His words of encouragement are still in my mind, motivating me to push beyond my limits, even when faced with challenges. Mr Markham taught us that it is okay to make mistakes and that every experience, whether successful or not, is a valuable learning opportunity. I learned that I should not look down on myself or criticise myself if I encounter any failure but view failure as an opportunity to begin again more intelligently.

His passion for teaching and his commitment to his students were evident in every class. I remember one time when he was seriously ill, so much so that he even had a cast on his hand and could not move part of his body, but he still came to teach us. I was really touched at that time because I myself was going through some serious issues at home, and I was even thinking of dropping out because everything was just too heavy and disturbing for me. I felt like I could not do it anymore. But seeing him at that stage gave me the motivation not to let my situation define me or make decisions for me. In my mind, I thought, "If he was able to get up on that stage in his critical condition, then that means I can also do this."

Though he might not remember me, I hope he knows that his teachings and inspiration have had a lasting impact on my life. I am in my final year now and will always be grateful to him. May the Lord continue to bless you, Mr Markham.



I believe that education is a two-way street. While I strive to impart knowledge and inspire curiosity, students like you bring the lessons to life with your enthusiasm, engagement, and dedication.

Dear Nelisiwe Mkhomazi,

I hope this letter finds you well. I was delighted to receive your recent letter of appreciation and wanted to take a moment to thank you for your kind and thoughtful words. It is not every day that one gets to hear such heartfelt feedback, and your kind words truly made my day. Thank you for taking the time to share your reflections and for expressing your gratitude so eloquently.

Reading your letter reminded me why I chose to pursue a career in teaching. Students like you make the challenges and efforts of academia worthwhile. It is incredibly gratifying to hear that you have found EHRM1514 meaningful and beneficial. Teaching is a journey filled with challenges and rewards, and your feedback truly highlights the positive impact of our efforts in the classroom. I believe that education is a two-way street. While I strive to impart knowledge and inspire curiosity, students like you bring the lessons to life with your enthusiasm, engagement, and dedication. It's gratifying to know that my approaches and methodologies resonate with you and make a difference in your academic journey.

I particularly appreciate your comments about my humour, the self-named Mr Loadshedding (smiling). Your reflection about my struggles and failures that I shared with you and their influence on your learning experience was insightful and deeply rewarding to read. I know I made myself vulnerable when I shared these stories with you, but I never felt humiliated when I did. I knew there were students who needed to hear these stories to be uplifted and inspired by them. Lesson for

you: Don't be afraid to make yourself vulnerable, as people will see the "authentic you."

Thank you, too, for reminding me about when I was ill and came to teach you. I had to do that because I did not want you guys to be left behind. As I write this letter, I am preparing myself as I'll be having surgery tomorrow (Tuesday, 30th July 2024) on my right wrist. This surgery will, however, not stop me from continuing to teach my Honours class on Thursday evening. Teaching is in my blood, and I enjoy imparting my knowledge to you.

Thank you once again for taking the time to share your appreciation. It means a great deal to me to hear that my efforts have positively impacted your academic experience. Your success and satisfaction are among the most significant rewards of my career. I encourage you to continue pursuing your goals with the passion and dedication you have shown in EHRM1514. Hearing from students like you reaffirms my commitment to this profession.

If you ever need further guidance or support or want to discuss ideas related to Industrial Psychology or Human Resource Management, please don't hesitate to reach out. I am always here to support your continued growth and learning.

I wish you all the best in your academic and personal pursuits. I look forward to hearing about your future achievements and hope our paths cross again.

Warmest regards,

M Markham (Mr Loadshedding)





Danelle Fisher

Mr Anathi Nyadu



A class that once only saw each other as classmates started seeing each other as family. He helped build our portfolios as journalism students, he kept our heads in the game...

There are many words one can use to describe the character of Mr Anathi Nyadu, a newsroom lecturer in the Communications Department. The word that stands out the most is “home.” The Journalism class of 2023 went into our third year, expecting it to be hell, as it was our final year. We expected our lecturer to be strict and very cold towards us, not caring for our issues or even us as individuals—someone who was only there to do his job.

Stepping into his class on the first day, one could feel the tense atmosphere. No one knew what was in store for them. However, Mr Nyadu started speaking and with each sentence that flowed from his mouth, we slowly loosened up, still treading lightly around him out of respect. With each class we had, each practical session, and each feedback appointment, we started becoming closer, not just as a class, but as children to someone they considered their father.

He gave us the platform to be ourselves, speak our truth, and express our opinions. It was not just a class; it felt like a family meeting at times. There was never a dull moment. We shared our moments of complaint, we shared our laughs, and it was a painful final class we shared with him. The pure excitement we felt when we

saw him at the graduation ceremony is something one cannot easily explain in words.

He allowed me to use his laptop to book appointments with OFM for shadowing. He was part of planning and ensuring the success of the 2023 Gwijo festival, where many students were able to come together and celebrate something so important to us. He did all that without even knowing how much it meant to us. He treated us as his own.

He brought together total strangers. A class that once only saw each other as classmates started seeing each other as family. He helped build our portfolios as journalism students, he kept our heads in the game, and he unlocked the passion for journalism within us. Personally, I never knew why I had taken Journalism as a course. All I knew was that I enjoyed writing, but more fictional writing. Mr Nyadu helped me find my love and my vision in Journalism. For that, he will forever be the lecturer for whom I will be grateful until the end of time.

Thank you, Mr Nyadu, for not just being a guide but being a life jacket for us when we felt like we were sinking to the bottom of the ocean. Thank you for helping us create bonds that we never knew we needed and for creating an environment where we felt heard.





I saw my role as one of facilitating their learning and making sure that once they graduated, they would know how to produce journalistic content that is of good quality and a high standard.

In Response to Danelle Fisher

The Newsroom module that I teach is intended to simulate a real-world newsroom. In this newsroom, I am the Editor-in-Chief of an imaginary news organisation. My students are the ‘journalists’ I assign stories to. To prepare for this role, I took time to read a book titled *Remembering Mr. Shawn’s New Yorker* by Ved Mehta. The Mr Shawn referred to in the title is William Shawn, editor of *The New Yorker* magazine from 1952 to 1987.

What stood out for me about Mr Shawn was the support he gave to his writers and those who worked under him. This is what I set out to do as well. This is what I set out to do as well. I wanted my students to feel free to talk to me and to know that despite the different roles we occupy in the lecture room—lecturer and student—we still want the same thing: for them to do well in their academics and journalistic careers.

I saw my role as one of facilitating their learning and making sure that once they graduated, they would know how to produce journalistic content that is of good quality and a high standard. This often put me on a collision course with some students, but I always reminded them that journalism must get the small details right for it to be effective in society. As their guide, it would be remiss of me to allow sloppy writing to pass as good writing. It was my responsibility, as Editor-in-Chief, to make sure that the projects that my ‘journalists’ produced were work that we could be proud of. This was done through feedback sessions. During these feedback sessions, we would have one-on-one discussions about the writing that the students had produced and look at ways it could be improved and

things that did not work in the piece. But I always made sure to dish out dollops of encouragement, praising the things they got right.

The second thing I set out to do was to make sure that my students understood the importance of using their time at university to grab as many opportunities as possible. I encouraged them to start working on their portfolios, to practise journalism whilst still at university, and not wait to graduate first. This was important to me because job opportunities in South Africa often require graduates to have prior experience.

As a result, some of the students had an opportunity to participate in a Work Integrated Learning programme sponsored by MICTSETA and organised by the Unit for Institutional Change and Social Justice. Others were part of the media structures on campus, such as Kovie FM. In addition to this, some worked with UFS Communication and Marketing to write news stories for students. This practical experience also boosted their academic performance. In their writing, one could sense confidence where doubt was before, and they understood better the role and impact that journalism has on people.

Lastly, though we discussed serious issues in class, the class itself was never ‘serious.’ I believe that I tried to have fun and enjoy myself whilst delivering the lecture, using examples they could relate to and using the language they used in their daily lives. Phrases such as: “It’s giving...” or “10 past 4! *Indluyawa...*” had us all laughing and learning about news in South Africa and around the globe.

Anathi Nyadu





Promise Mazibuko

Mrs Sebatatso Tsaoane



She serves as both a preceptor and a lecturer to us. She would inquire about our well-being, which is the least common question we get asked.

I am a fourth-year student and have encountered a variety of lecturers, each of whom has had a major influence on my academic career, and it can be challenging for me to pinpoint just one. When I reflect, my third year sticks out in my memory.

In our midwifery module, we have a young lecturer who is very passionate about midwifery. Where I am from, most people view midwifery as a route that bitter and older nurses often take. I have always wanted to be a midwife, and I regard such opposing perspectives as unpleasant. A midwife is a trained health professional who helps healthy women during labour, delivery, and after the birth of their babies.

One of the lecturers who gave us an introduction to the module was Mrs Tsaoane. I had the opportunity to get to know her better during our one-on-one meeting in the clinical setting. Mrs Tsaoane is a lecturer and a midwife and has her own practice in Bloemfontein. She motivates me with her approach to women and her

explanation of each step involved in a procedure. As for us students, she inspires us to become competent by learning new things, trying new things, and being willing to make mistakes. Despite being aware that part of the material was covered and clarified in the theory class, she will nonetheless repeat the explanation in the clinical setting, thus allowing us to ask questions where we are uncertain. She serves as both a preceptor and a lecturer to us. She would inquire about our well-being, which is the least common question we get asked. She additionally allows us to vent about the uncomfortable interactions we have come across in the clinical setting and eventually find a resolution or an understanding.

Mrs Tsaoane gives me the confidence to pursue my goals and to be the greatest version of myself. I want to be like her and inspire others, and I still firmly believe that becoming a midwife will fulfil my dream of becoming an enthusiastic advocate for women, providing assistance, empowering them, and enabling them during many of life's most amazing times.



“

I am touched by your kind words about how I approach teaching and mentoring. It is my goal to not only impart knowledge but also to inspire and empower my students to reach their full potential.

Dear Promise Mazibuko,

I am deeply honoured and touched by your nomination for this award. Your kind words mean a lot to me, and I truly appreciate you taking the time to write such a heartfelt recommendation.

Your kind words mean a lot to me, and I truly appreciate you taking the time to write such a heartfelt recommendation.

It is wonderful to hear that my passion for midwifery has resonated with you and has inspired you in your academic journey. Your dedication and enthusiasm for becoming a midwife are truly commendable, and I am grateful to have had the opportunity to be a part of your educational experience.

I am glad that our one-on-one meetings in the clinical setting have been beneficial for you. It is important to me that you feel supported and encouraged to learn

and grow in your skills and knowledge. Your willingness to embrace new challenges and learn from your experiences will undoubtedly make you a competent and compassionate midwife in the future.

I am touched by your kind words about how I approach teaching and mentoring. It is my goal to not only impart knowledge but also to inspire and empower my students to reach their full potential. I believe that every individual has the capacity to make a positive impact in the lives of others, and I have no doubt that you will be a wonderful advocate for women in your future career.

Thank you once again for your nomination and for allowing me to be a part of your journey to becoming a midwife. I am truly grateful for the opportunity to support and guide you along this path.

Warm regards,

Mrs Tsaoane





Khoza Lizbeth Prevelege

Dr Sammy Mokoena



It's okay not to know everything, good doctor. We are humans, we learn every day. Even I learn a thing or two from my students every day.

As a first-year medical student, I had the privilege of learning from incredible and talented educators this year. However, Dr Sammy Mokoena stood out to me personally. This is due to the kindness, respect, patience, and effort he shows towards his students. Dr Mokoena's passion for his job and enthusiasm motivate me to engage with my academic studies on a deeper level.

He incorporates various teaching methods, such as asking questions during lessons and using real-world examples, making the whole experience more engaging, fun, and memorable. These experiences have helped me develop a willingness to learn and prepare for my lessons in advance because I do not know who he will question in class. They have also assisted me in understanding my other modules and enhanced my critical thinking skills.

Furthermore, he goes above and beyond to support his students' academic success. This is through one-on-one self-explanatory sessions after class and giving us the platform to object and ask questions about his content. There was another time when I needed help

with a topic about the frameworks of health, and he was more than willing to assist me. He broke down the content in such a way that it was much easier for me to understand.

His innovative teaching methods inspire me to strive for excellence in my academics and gracefully accept failure along the way.

My everyday affirmation from him is, "It's okay not to know everything, good doctor. We are humans, we learn every day. Even I learn a thing or two from my students every day."

This changed my academic mindset, making me realise that each day is an opportunity to learn something new.

Overall, Dr Mokoena had a significant impact on my studies and academic success. I am grateful for the opportunity to learn from such an inspiring lecturer and for gaining the life lessons that will continue to benefit me even after my academic journey at the University of the Free State.



My goal has always been to not only enhance your knowledge but also to impart life skills through the application of my personal practical experience.

Hi, Good Doctor, Khoza Lizbeth Prevelege,

I am deeply humbled, grateful, and honoured to have received your commendation regarding the lectures we provide in the first-semester class, and I do not take it for granted. The pressure of the workload, particularly in the first semester, does not allow sufficient time to gather feedback from students about the support or offerings we provide. Consequently, this feedback from you provides me with the opportunity to reflect and learn from you concerning the teaching methods that I employ. I was not prepared for nor anticipated receiving such inspiring feedback; therefore, I am deeply grateful for your courage and dedication in offering such a compelling evaluation of my lectures.

I still regard myself as a student, particularly in the context of lecturing in this discipline. My experience as a student has provided me with a unique perspective and an advantage in the delivery of my lectures. In addition, I must acknowledge the significant contributions of my department's Head, Professor Willem Kruger, who recently retired. The majority of my lectures are predicated on the groundwork that he has already established. Public health or community health medicine has not received the recognition it merits in the field of clinical medicine. Consequently, our module is not considered significant by a large number of students. This situation provided my colleagues and me

with an opportunity to devise a method of presenting this module that would both educate and motivate others to explore the field of medicine known as Community Health.

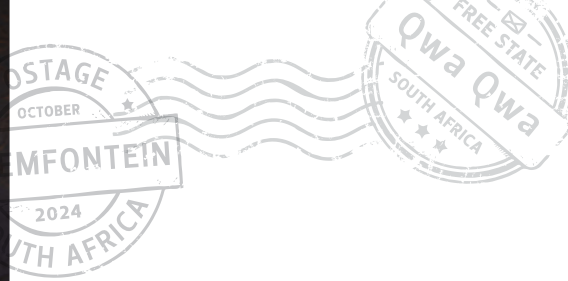
It is truly inspiring that you were able to observe and identify the integration of a variety of innovative teaching methods, particularly the willingness to share personal experiences. My goal has always been to not only enhance your knowledge but also to impart life skills through the application of my personal practical experience. The objective is to enhance your professional development by providing you with practical experience in the real world in addition to the theoretical knowledge that we impart in the lecture room. Ultimately, this will result in the provision of higher-quality healthcare services to our community.

We would like to express our gratitude and appreciation for your initiative and the motivational feedback you gave on behalf of the Department of Community Health. We are motivated and encouraged by your response and extend our best wishes for your future endeavours. We look forward to your return in the subsequent semesters of your career path.

Shalom,

Dr RS Mokoena





Aylene Alexander

Dr Hanli Joubert



Due to her guidance and support, I managed to raise my average for the module from 43% in the first quarter to above 60% by the end of the semester.

Relocating to a different province to attend university was a very daunting prospect, filled with uncertainty and the challenges of adapting to a brand-new environment. As a student venturing far from home, I was seeking stability and guidance in the unfamiliarity. It was in the midst of this period that I met Hanli Joubert, my Accounting lecturer. Her influence has shaped not only my academic journey but also my personal growth. Her excellent way of teaching, unwavering support, and inspirational mentorship have been instrumental in my development, making her a cornerstone of my university experience.

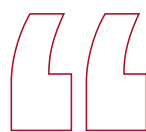
One of the most memorable instances for me was when I first struggled with understanding certain academic terms and contexts because of the background I came from. We did not do very well in English, nor did we have the resources to fully immerse ourselves in academic literature and academic styles of studying, reading, and understanding. I recognised my struggles early on and reached out to Dr Joubert, who offered to help me through personalised tutoring sessions. Every Wednesday, we would meet for these one-on-one consultations. These sessions were invaluable, as they were tailored specifically to address my individual needs and learning gaps. Dr Joubert took the time to break down complex accounting concepts into more digestible parts, using examples and analogies that

were easy to understand.

Her method of teaching went beyond just imparting knowledge. She patiently explained academic terminology that was foreign to me, ensuring I grasped both the language and the context of the subject matter. This personalised attention helped build my confidence and competence in a subject that had initially seemed insurmountable. Through her tutoring, I not only gained a better understanding of accounting principles but also learned effective study techniques and academic practices. Dr Joubert's dedication to my success made a significant difference in my academic performance. Due to her guidance and support, I managed to raise my average for the module from 43% in the first quarter to above 60% by the end of the semester. Her mentorship has inspired me to approach challenges with determination and resilience. Her support has been a critical factor in my ability to adapt to university life and excel academically, making her guidance an integral part of my journey.

Dear Dr Joubert, thank you for believing in me and helping me believe in my academic journey. You have had a huge impact on my academic journey and personal growth. Your amazing teaching, dedicated support, and inspirational mentorship have been influential in my success as a student and as an individual adjusting to a new environment.





In classes of 900 or more, students miss personal contact with the lecturer. I encourage students to consult with me individually because I do not get to know them in class.

In Response to Aylene Alexander

It is a very big honour and privilege to be nominated for the Khothatsa Awards. Thank you very much for the time taken to do so.

My teaching philosophy can be summarised in the words of William Arthur Ward, who stated, “Teaching is more than imparting knowledge; it is inspiring change. Learning is more than absorbing facts; it is acquiring understanding.”

During my years of teaching first-year university students, I have found that first-year students face numerous uncertainties. It is a big transition from school to university; for many students, it is their first time away from home, and many come from previously disadvantaged schools and low-income families. At university, students sit in classes numbering up to 900, where they must take responsibility for their own learning.

One main concern most students have is that they will be unable to master the content of the modules. The best starting point for mastering the content is to first understand the language of instruction, terminology, and the “subject language” of Accounting, which is an international business language. I try to decolonise the accounting module so that students from all cultures and backgrounds can understand the examples used by the lecturer.

I believe that a lecturer should facilitate students in such a way that their primary goal is not only to pass a module or obtain excellent marks but to get involved in the subject matter, gaining a deeper understanding and love for the field of study. Critical thinking forms part of gaining a more inclusive understanding. In a rapidly changing world with new levels of development and a generation of expanding knowledge, it is of utmost importance that students develop the courage to delve

into the subject matter on their own. Hence, students should be guided on how to deal with the subject matter and new information in such a way that they become critical thinkers and lifelong learners.

In classes of 900 or more, students miss personal contact with the lecturer. I encourage students to consult with me individually because I do not get to know them in class. I believe that if a lecturer is available to guide students during their studies with encouragement, praise, and acknowledgement, they will gain self-confidence regarding their competence and consequently be more motivated to attempt new challenges.

Not all students, however, feel comfortable interacting with the lecturer on a personal basis, and I encourage these students to consult with the teaching assistant and tutors, where they will feel more comfortable. Students are given group work and opportunities to explain or discuss specific topics with fellow students. Working in groups promotes critical thinking, hearing other opinions, and discussing, explaining, or motivating their individual answers. This also builds confidence in their ability to engage with the study material and study independently.

Students have different personalities, learning styles, and backgrounds. Some are visual learners, some are auditory learners, some are more receptive to reading and writing, and some are kinesthetic learners. When explaining the content of the module, I endeavour to use teaching aids and methods that address all these learning styles.

Helping students not only gain knowledge, understanding, and critical thinking skills but also become lifelong learners makes my work fulfilling.

Hanli Joubert





Sharianne Davids

Dr Glen Legodu



One of the lessons I learned from him was never to focus on your problems but to shift your focus to solutions and how to solve the problems.

Optimistic, enthusiastic, and kind are the first few words that come to mind when I think of Dr G. Legodu. I met the above-mentioned lecturer last year as he was the lecturer responsible for CURS3502. I am still so amazed by his energy and his positive outlook on life.

Dr Legodu is very passionate about teaching; he managed to make a whole hour feel like 20 minutes while he taught. Throughout the one hour we had with him weekly, we not only learned the content knowledge, but also he taught us a few life lessons along with tips and tricks we could use as prospective teachers. One of the lessons I learned from him was never to focus on your problems but to shift your focus to solutions and how to solve the problems.

The qualities that make Dr Legodu an exceptional lecturer are his profound understanding of the subject matter as well as his ability to break down difficult concepts, ensuring that we all understand. Dr Legodu always had this bright smile on his face throughout the lecture; I sometimes wondered if his cheeks didn't hurt from all the smiling.

Along with his bright smile, Dr Legodu managed to create a welcoming and inclusive environment for us as students where we had a voice and felt respected by him. He always supported and motivated us to work hard and always do our best. He created a safe space

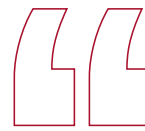
and encouraged us to have open discussions and to think critically before we answered.

To be honest, I never liked Natural Science and Technology, but after attending Dr Legodu's classes, I gained a different perspective on the subjects and learned that your mindset will determine your outcome. He gave an example in class once: "If you think negatively about a subject in school, your behaviour will be negative towards the subject, and that will result in a negative outcome."

I then realised that if I think negatively about a subject I will teach one day, my learners will adopt that negativity, and it will negatively affect their grades. I changed my mindset and tried to be positive about everything I encountered.

Outside of the classroom, Dr Legodu also provides us as students with academic support and always reminds us that his office is available if ever we need assistance or guidance, and for that, I will always be grateful.

Dr G. Legodu is more than just a lecturer; he is a confidant, an inspiration, and an ideal role model. I believe that every student who had the opportunity to be in his class will always remember him for his bright smile, his abilities, and his genuine concern for the students he teaches.



Using modern tools and platforms makes it easier for me to engage students and ensure that our teaching methods align with contemporary educational standards.

Dear Sharianne Davids,

I hope this message finds you well. This recognition caught me entirely by surprise, especially considering the CURS 3502 module comprises over 350 students. Given the large number of students, it is challenging for me to connect the name of the student who nominated me with a specific face. Nevertheless, this nomination makes me feel incredibly honoured and privileged. It reassures me that my efforts are making a positive impact, even in ways I had not anticipated.

This nomination reminds me of the University of the Free State's (UFS) vision 130 regarding the strategic intent to reposition the institution for 2030. In particular, our ambition to be a university with a consistent outward focus, profound in our delivery, building on past achievements while transforming ourselves to stay relevant in the dynamic international higher education sphere. The tenets of the university – excellence, innovation and impact, accountability, care, social justice and, lastly, sustainability – align closely with my teaching philosophy and approach.

As a lecturer, my primary goal is to provide the best possible education to my students. I strive to create an environment where each student feels valued and recognised, embodying the tenet of care. Even in a large class, I ensure that my students believe I know them personally, which makes it more difficult for them to skip classes. Winning students' hearts through my teaching practices is something I take great pride in. I make concerted efforts to remember as many students as possible and often mention a student's name back at the beginning of a class to check if they are listening. I use diverse teaching tools and teaching aids to emphasise what we are discussing. The WhatsApp groups and blackboard engagement features, such as collaboration in class, demonstrate excellence in engagement.

I also remind my students that my office is their second home and encourage them to talk to me about both their academic and future endeavours. Through these interactions, I have learned a great deal from my

students, and this process has proven to be effective even in large modules. This approach highlights the tenet of social justice, as it ensures that all students have access to support and guidance.

Regarding communication and maximising student engagement, I make a great effort to respond to emails from my students within 48 hours. This prompt communication helps maintain a strong connection with my students and supports their academic progress, reflecting accountability in my professional duties.

I am well aware of student diversity and understand that our country is complex. I always ensure I am well-informed about local imperatives while being sensitive to global knowledge. This approach helps me remain relevant and responsive to the needs of my students, aligning with the tenet of sustainability in education.

My teaching philosophy centres on participatory action research (PAR) and critical emancipatory theory. These approaches emphasise student participation and the co-construction of knowledge, which bring students together and foster a collaborative learning environment. This philosophy highlights the tenets of care and impact by creating a nurturing and effective educational experience. I also utilise technology effectively to address 21st-century skills. Using modern tools and platforms makes it easier for me to engage students and ensure that our teaching methods align with contemporary educational standards.

In conclusion, this nomination is a testament to the positive impact we can have as educators when we focus on creating meaningful connections with our students. I am grateful for this recognition and will continue to strive for excellence in my teaching practices.

Thank you once again for your kind words and appreciation.

Warm regards,

Dr Glen Legodu





Nthabiseng Zandisile Sibande

Ms Ntombizodumo Shezi Radebe



I had always aimed to get the highest marks on the first-semester test, and Miss Shezi always encouraged us to do our best. Miss Shezi was very professional towards her students.

Not all heroes wear capes; mine wears an Honours regalia. Allow me to tell you about the person who made me see that even in turbulent times, kindness and compassion still exist. In this essay, I will lead you through a series of events that led to my decision that this person is my hero.

Let me take you back to my first year at the University of the Free State. A young fresher me was terrified of how she was going to perform at this new prestigious school that she worked her bum off to get into. The first lecture I attended was that of GEOG 1512. I went there with the expectation of meeting a huge, tall man with a long scruffy beard, carrying a huge briefcase with a deep baritone voice. To my surprise, I got to my geography lecture and saw a beautiful, soft-spoken lady who assured us at first glance that she was not to be feared. This first encounter with her brought a certain warmth to my heart, showing that not all lecturers are as mean and strict as students say they are.

I was having financial problems during my first year of university, which no one knew of. I was determined to get good marks so that I could prove to my parents that they were not wasting their money on my tuition fees and that it was all worth it.

Even though I am enrolled in a course that I am passionate about, I try my best to show it through my marks, specifically my major, which is geography. I had always aimed to get the highest marks on the first-semester test, and Miss Shezi always encouraged us to do our best. Miss Shezi was very professional towards her students. When the results were released, she would always share the list of the top three students. I made sure that I appeared on the list, not once but twice. What she did next was totally unexpected.

A few days after the final semester marks were released,

she individually emailed the top achievers of the module to come to her. We all showed up, wondering what she had to say to us. We went into the venue she had called us to. She came in with a big plastic bag. She started by congratulating us on our achievements. After that, she took out snacks and diaries labelled “2024” and started handing them out. I was in awe because I had never been rewarded by an educator in the past, let alone by my own parents. This was very emotional for me since I work very hard, and all my hard work goes unvalidated, except for this one time when this kind stranger took it upon herself to let me know how well I was doing. For this reason, I thought she was very kind.

As a student of the Natural and Agricultural Sciences faculty, I am passionate about fostering the wellness of the environment, which is why I applied to be a part of the delegation to the Russian Model United Nations in the first semester of 2024 through the United Nations Association of South Africa (UNASA). We only had a week to send in our applications, and one of the requirements was a recommendation letter from a staff member of the UFS. This was stressful because I had no personal relations with any staff member, and it was very difficult to ask a person to write a recommendation letter for someone in the short span of a week. I tried my luck with a few lecturers who later turned down my request because of time constraints, which was understandable. Apart from one lecturer, Miss Shezi. She responded just in time and wrote an outstanding recommendation letter for me, even though she did not know me all that well. This led me to see how compassionate she is.

Even if this essay does not reach Miss Shezi, I will forever be grateful for crossing paths with such a wonderful soul. She has changed my perspective of lecturers because of the way she treats people and her humbleness.



This nomination I have received from one of my esteemed students reassures me once again that I am on the right path...

Greetings Nthabiseng,

I am delighted to hear such wonderful words from one of the students I have taught. It is an honor to know that my efforts as a lecturer have a positive impact on students. Being recognized as one of the UFS Lecturers who has gone the extra mile makes me very emotional as I strive to be a dedicated and committed lecturer.

My passion for teaching and love of interacting with students as we share knowledge made me ensure that I humble myself and interact with students without making them feel intimidated. This allowed them to feel free to consult me with anything academic-related. My aim is not just to deliver knowledge but also to cultivate critical thinking, and produce inquisitive students with lifelong love for learning. My motto as a lecturer is “*not about me but the needs and growth of my students*”. This nomination I have received from one of my esteemed students reassures me once again that I am on the right path, and it motivates me to continue improving and innovating my teaching techniques.

However, I would like not to take all the credit. The students I taught last year of which you were part, made it very easy for me to be this humble and committed lecturer. You all made sure that you attended every class and completed every task. As much as I am a young lecturer, the respect I received from you was beyond what I expected. As the smart student that you are, the

day you impressed me the most was when I asked a few of you to do some research on the questions that were raised in class. You were able to provide the class with relevant and reliable information with confidence while also providing examples to further elaborate. This shows how diligent you are with your school work and proves the dedication you have for education and doing your best in everything you do, not merely doing it for the sake of being done with it.

It is a privilege to see you strive to do well outside of the classroom. It is a confidence booster to produce students who challenge us as they request recommendation letters to embark on great academic journeys and work on upskilling. My goal has always been to encourage and support people like you in achieving their academic and personal goals. I am very glad you were the first group I had to teach as a lecturer because that gave me the head-start I needed in my career to not go weary in doing my best, inspiring students, and striving to create a fun learning experience for my students.

Thank you once again for this incredible nomination. Your acknowledgment will always hold a special place in my heart, providing motivation and encouragement in my ongoing pursuit of teaching excellence.

With sincere appreciation,

Miss Ntombizodumo Radebe





POSTAGE
OCTOBER
BLOEMFONTEIN



FREE STATE
Qwa Qwa
SOUTH AFRICA



2024

SOUTH AFRICA

POSTAGE
OCTOBER
BLOEMFONTEIN
SOUTH AFRICA



UFS
UNIVERSITY OF THE FREE STATE
UNIVERSITEIT VAN DIE VRIESTAT
YUNIBESITHI YA FREISTATA

KHOTHATSA

TO INSPIRE

© 2024