



EDSA

PRESTIGE AWARDS

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

VISION **130**
*Renew and Reimagine
for 2034*

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



UFS
STUDENT AFFAIRS
STUDENTESAKE
DITABA TSA BATHUTI



WELCOME MESSAGE

Foreword from Executive Director of Student Affairs, Temba Hlasho

On behalf of the Division of Student Affairs, it is my great pleasure to annually present the Prestige Awards, a flagship project that celebrates excellence, diversity and achievement within our vibrant student community. The EDSA Prestige Awards were established to recognise and honour students who embody the values of our institution, through academic excellence, leadership, community engagement and innovation. These awards seek to address the need for a platform that acknowledges and rewards students' outstanding contributions, both within and beyond the academic sphere.

As we gather to celebrate the achievements of our exceptional students every year, I am reminded of the immense talent, creativity and dedication that exists within our university community. The Prestige Awards are a testament of our commitment to nurturing and recognising excellence in all its forms. I extend my warmest congratulations to all nominees and winners of past and future award ceremonies and thank all the UFS students who support and attend our Prestige Awards.

Welcome to our inaugural EDSA Prestige Awards booklet. Enjoy the read. We look forward to your continued support of this initiative.



OVERVIEW

The EDSA Prestige Awards align closely with the University of the Free State Vision 130, reflecting the university's commitment to academic excellence, innovation, societal impact and inclusivity. Vision 130 aspires to position UFS as a research-led, student-centred and regionally engaged institution producing globally competitive graduates.

These awards celebrate students whose achievements embody the pillars of Vision 130. By recognising individuals who excel in academics, leadership and community service, the awards amplify the university's dedication to shaping graduates who are not only globally competitive but also deeply rooted in addressing regional and national challenges.

Purpose and origin

The EDSA Prestige Awards were established in 2022 to celebrate and honour students whose contributions align with the strategic goals of the University of the Free State (UFS) as well as the Division of Student Affairs (DSA).

The Executive Director: Student Affairs (EDSA) Prestige Awards aim to recognise students who contribute to the university's mission and objectives, as well as those of the Department of Student Affairs – through innovation, community service excellence, and/or sustained exceptional performance in an area or areas beneficial to UFS and its strategic objectives.

These awards are institutional, encompassing all three campuses (Bloemfontein, Qwaqwa and South Campus).

Due to the structure of the EDSA Prestige Awards, they are awarded in coherence with DSA departments, on all three campuses. These departments include:

-  KovsieSport
-  Housing and Residence Affairs –
Residence Life and Student Communities
-  Student Life
-  Centre for Universal Access and Disability Support (CUADS)
-  Student Governance
-  Student Counselling and Development
-  Health and Wellness Centre
-  Social Support Office



PRESTIGE AWARDS IMPACT

University

The awards align with the university's Vision 130 by promoting leadership, academic success and innovation as key pillars of student life. They elevate the institution's profile by showcasing student talent and commitment to societal impact, fostering a sense of pride and belonging within the UFS community.

Students

The awards encourage leadership, academic achievement and engagement in community service. Past winners have achieved milestones in academics, authorship, mentorship and activism, inspiring their peers and fostering a culture of excellence.



Award Categories

CUADS AWARDS

Best Performing First Year
Best Performing Overall
Breaking Barriers Award

RESIDENCE AWARDS

Best Day Residence Committee
Best Campus Residence
Committee Best Residence
Committee South Campus
Best College
Best RC of the Year: Male
Best RC of the Year: Female
Most Outstanding Residence

SPORT AWARDS

KovsieSport Stars: Male
KovsieSport Stars: Female
KovsieSport National Representatives
Club Sport Stars
KovsieSport Team of the Year

STUDENT LIFE AWARDS

Most Employable/Head-hunted Student
Most Professional Profile
Best Career Ambassadors
Student Media Star Award
KovsieACT Award
ACT Overall Winner: Best Men's Residence
ACT Overall Winner: Best Ladies Residence
Overall, Winner: Most Diligent Peer Mentors
Student Volunteer of the Year
Best Overall FLC 2024 Performer

STUDENT COUNSELLING AND DEVELOPMENT AWARDS

SCD Influencers
STUDENT GOVERNANCE AWARDS
CSRC Leadership Award
Best CSRC Portfolio Award
Organisation/Association of the Year Award

SOCIAL SUPPORT OFFICE AWARDS

Male Ambassador of the Year
Female Ambassador of the Year

EDSA STUDENT OF THE YEAR

2nd Runner-up
1st Runner-up
Winner

Student of the Year

The Student of the Year Award was added in 2023. This award is presented to a student who has exhibited a strong commitment to UFS in multiple areas of campus life. They are recognised for their academic excellence, leadership, contributions to their community, and exceptional achievements during their time at UFS.



TOP THREE

2023: EDSA Student of the Year

The panel underwent a rigorous process of adjudication to select one student who reflects the vision and objectives of the institution. The panel considered levels of engagement in leadership, community service, education and ‘star’ qualities among the applicants. Below are the top three winners.

1. Tlotlisang David Mhlambiso (Winner)

Tlotlisang is an embodiment of Vision 130, elevating the values of innovation, impact and excellence. He is a celebrated young author who has co-authored books that are aired on Lesedi FM and are archived in museums. The UFS has played a critical role in developing him as a writer through the UFS iCAN (Initiative for Creative African Narratives). The student’s focus area is promoting and preserving African language use in academic spaces, bridging the language gap (social justice) – a goal that he is achieving.

2. Thembile Mngomezulu (1st runner-up)

Thembile is engaged in a number of co-curricular activities and programmes and has demonstrated leadership achievements. Her co-curricular activities include community engagement in Qwaqwa (inclusive of high schools, through a ProMaths association she leads that teaches high school learners maths). Thembile has maintained a good academic average, and the panel found her to be a good all-rounder.

3. Lerato Mamobolo (2nd runner-up)

Lerato’s strength is her service to the local community of Qwaqwa, where she had vast experience in community engagement. Although she did not lead any initiatives, she participated in various organised team projects.

2024: EDSA Student of the Year

1. Siphilangenkosi Dlamini (Winner)

Siphilangenkosi clearly demonstrated and embodied the DSA strategies and Vision 130 goals, meeting all the criteria as an active and engaged student. His significant contributions to UFS enhanced student success and well-being, aligning with the university’s strategic objectives. Through his leadership in the Initiative for Creative African Narratives (iCAN) and the United Nations Association of South Africa (UNASA), UFS Chapter, Siphilangenkosi has fostered an inclusive environment that supports both academic achievement and personal growth.

2. Lebohang Mateka (1st runner-up)

Lebohang embodies strong leadership and mentorship and is involved in various university activities. As a dedicated peer mentor and class representative, she demonstrates a commitment to supporting fellow students. Her active participation in the Centre for Academic Advising Learning Community (CAALC), and leadership roles in organisations such as the Diamond League, Kvsie Pulse (as social media manager) and KvsieAct (as an executive member) showcase her diverse skill set and dedication to holistic development. Her contributions in media, marketing and student engagement made her a standout candidate.

3. Mookgo Khumalo (2nd runner-up)

Mookgo demonstrated strong leadership as President of the Golden Key and Treasurer of the Faculty Student Council, contributing to academic success and student well-being. Her roles as a tutor and teaching assistant reflect a commitment to mentoring students, aligning with the university’s mission of nurturing responsible, high-achieving students.



Life after winning: 2023 EDSA Prestige Awards WINNER

2023: EDSA Student of the Year

When you make your debut at the University of the Free State as a first-year student or in any tertiary institution, it is very important that you not only focus on obtaining your degree but that you also aim to develop yourself personally and professionally. This can be done through finding what interests you the most outside of your academic programme; find your talent and work on it with all the support you can get from different facilities on campus and around the community. Through participation in extra-mural activities, one is able to develop all nine UFS graduate attributes, which can also lead one into “community engagement”. It is also very important that one should not only focus on developing themselves but also impact the Free State community through working with NGOs or any other structures that are in place to support youth initiatives and make change in society. When there are no structures existing, visit schools, the NYDA offices, libraries and other community-based settings to offer support where needed and innovate new ideas.

Remember Vision 130 of the University of the Free State; the university is not aiming at merely producing graduates, but it wants to ensure that the graduates that it produces make an impact in their communities, not only locally, but nationally and internationally. For any community engagement that one takes part in, one should ensure that they contribute with solutions toward addressing any challenges; new ideas that excellently support social development and ensure sustainability and social justice within South African communities.

As a person who is passionate about writing and language education, through the support of the university (Academy for Multilingualism and African Languages Press), I am hoping that I will be able to visit more schools, not only in the Free State but also in other provinces that I happen to be situated in, because the aim is not only to impact locally, but also nationally and internationally. I hope to initiate talks about the importance of mother tongue, bilingualism, multilingualism, translanguaging and literacy and donate books whenever they are available. Meanwhile, I am also planning to write more books in indigenous languages, such as a recent publication of the fourth book, *IsiXhosa poetry book* by the National Library of South Africa (NLSA) and a recent reference of the second book:

<https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/30333962241288441> &

<https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/30333962241288330>

The plan is not only to publish but to also go out and present literacy work to students, learners and other interested parties to ensure that the dire levels of literacy within our South African communities are dealt with and combatted.

Tlotlisang Mhlambiso, 2023 Winner.



Life after winning: 2024 EDSA Prestige Awards WINNER

2024: EDSA Student of the Year

I am inspired by the words of Imagine Scholar founder Todd Silvers, who said, “Dream more than others think is practical, expect more than others think is possible”. This quote encapsulates the advice I would like to offer to future nominees. As they pursue their journey at UFS, I hope these words will guide them to dream boldly, aim high and persevere in the face of challenges.

Wherever they go within UFS and beyond, I encourage them to empower the communities they become a part of through transformational leadership. Transformational leadership is the glue that holds societies together. It is far easier to divide than to transform, yet the courage to transform is what creates lasting impact.

Future nominees must remember that the journey is never easy. However, they should focus on the difference they want to make, letting their vision and purpose drown out the noise of detractors. Stay anchored in the values that inspire your work and embrace the lessons learned along the way.

Lastly, I urge them to let faith guide their journey. May the wisdom of our ancestors light their path and the might of God inspire their passion and drive. Faith, combined with resilience and purpose, will carry them through the most challenging times.

In my new role as President of the South African Youth Business Chamber and as a proud Kopsie alumnus, I will continue to embody UFS’s Vision 130 everywhere I go. This vision of building impactful, transformative communities aligns deeply with my mission to drive positive change and create opportunities that benefit society at large.

As for me, I plan to continue making a difference by championing initiatives that address critical societal challenges, both within the university and beyond. I aim to use my platforms to foster inclusive growth, empower young leaders and uphold the spirit of transformational leadership wherever I go.

Siphilangenkosi Dlamini,
2024 Winner.



FUTURE ASPIRATIONS

The EDSA Prestige Awards are more than just accolades; they are a driving force for personal and institutional growth. By inspiring students to reach their full potential, and by demonstrating UFS's commitment to excellence, these awards ensure a legacy of impact that resonates far beyond the ceremony.



FOR MORE INFORMATION:
Scan or click the QR Code

Celebrating Excellence. Shaping the Future.



