



Lusanda Madikane, Research Assistant in the Office for International Affairs

The University of the Free State proudly celebrates a double honour as two of its own, student leader **Lusanda Madikane** and sport manager Kesa Molotsane, were named among *the Mail & Guardian's 200 Young South Africans for 2025*.

The prestigious annual initiative recognises trailblazers under the age of 35 who are making meaningful contributions across diverse fields, showcasing the depth of talent and leadership shaping South Africa's future. Representing different spheres but united in their drive to inspire and lead, both women are carrying the UFS name with distinction on the national stage.

Madikane, a Research Assistant in the **Office for International Affairs** and a master's student in Communication Science, leads three community-based organisations: The Nozizwe Foundation, The Woman Sorrows, and Iqhayiya LeMveli Institute. Her initiatives range from hosting annual Christmas luncheons for underprivileged children in Mqanduli, Eastern Cape, to empowering women economically and preserving indigenous languages through the African Languages Students Association, which she chairs at UFS.

"UFS gave us space to celebrate Women's Day with the Xhosa Student Association," Madikane said. "The institution has sharpened my leadership skills, both theoretically and practically, enabling me to reflect strong leadership in my community and on a national level."

For Molotsane, Athletics Manager at KovsieSport, sport has been both a career and a calling. Having joined UFS as a student in 2010, she steadily progressed from student administrator to management. "I have always loved breaking stereotypes," she explained. "Although I work in a male-dominated field, I have never felt disadvantaged because of my resilient spirit. In sport, intelligence, knowledge, skill, and experience are what truly matter."

Her career combines athletic excellence – she is a former professional middle-distance runner and qualified coach – with a strong sense of social responsibility. Through charity drives, she empowers children, youth, and mothers via sport and education, while also serving in leadership roles nationally. "My credit goes to the University of the Free State for moulding and building me into what I am today," she added. "The Chancellor, top management, departments, and students have all been part of my growth."

Though their fields differ, both Madikane and Molotsane share a common mission: to inspire women to step into leadership roles. Madikane is expanding her empowerment work and launching a children's academic awards programme in her home community. Molotsane, meanwhile, encourages women to embrace courage and ambition. "There is very little growth in comfort. We need to be bold, fierce, and loud about the intelligence we possess, the skills we have acquired, and the knowledge we have gained."

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For UFS, this double recognition reflects the institution's commitment to providing platforms where students and staff can thrive. Both women embody the principle that leadership is not defined by where you begin, but by the extent of your influence.