

SPIRIT

SEPTEMBER 2021 - ISSUE NO. 3



The power of radio elevates MUT's State of the University address

Accreditation of the Engineering qualifications another feather in MUT's cap

Research Directorate hosts Indaba to invigorate research

HOW TO APPLY TO MUT

All first year applications to study at MUT are submitted through the Central Applications Office (CAO). This is a simplified way of applying for more than one programme, using one application form, and paying a single application fee. Apply online at www.cao.ac.za or by downloading an application form.

CHECKING THE PROGRESS OF YOUR APPLICATION

You can track the progress of your application by going to www.cao.ac.za and entering your CAO number, sending an email to enqgeneralcao@cao.ac.za or call 031 268 4444.

CLOSING DATES FOR APPLICATIONS

Faculty of Engineering	30 Sept
1st semester	31 May
2nd semester	30 Sept
Faculty of Natural Sciences	30 Sept
Faculty of Management Sciences	30 Sept

Applications submitted after 30 September accumulate a late application fee determined by the CAO.

APPLICATION DOCUMENTS

For South African applicants

- Grade 11 final results, grade 12 June exam results, National Senior Certificate or Statement of Results
- Identity document
- Students transferring from other universities should submit an academic record and a certificate of good conduct

Non-South African applicants

- Valid passport
- Valid proof of medical insurance cover
- Police clearance certificate
- SGCE, GCE, GCSE, IGCSE or Cambridge School Certificate

MINIMUM ENTRANCE REQUIREMENTS

- National Senior Certificate with a diploma pass or N3 with 50% pass in Mathematics and English
- A minimum of 6 subjects with level 4 pass for diploma study and level 3 for Access Courses
- English Home Language or First Additional language, level 4 pass
- Specific subject combination and pass level relevant to the qualification; and
- Minimum points as per faculty requirement and as listed in the CAO handbook

GENERAL ADMISSION REQUIREMENTS

Each faculty stipulates admission requirements based on points aggregate calculated from the best six subjects presented by the prospective student. Over and above the points system, some departments administer a compulsory entrance test.

ADMISSION POINTS CALCULATION GUIDE

National Senior Certificate		
NSC Level Rating	NSC %	Points
7	90 – 100	8
6	80 – 89	7
5	70 – 79	6
4	60 – 69	5
3	50 – 59	4
	40 – 49	3

Senior Certificate		
Symbol	Points	Standard Grade
A	8	6
B	7	5
C	6	4
D	5	3
E	4	2

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◆ Credits

- ◆ Editor-in-Chief: Mbali Mkhize
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From the Desk of the Editor-in-Chief

Impressed by the spirit of civic engagement

When MUT Radio was launched on 16 June 2021, Professor Marcus Ramogale drew attention to the spirit of selflessness and giving back. In this edition of our magazine, Professor Ramogale gives appreciation of the selflessness shown by staff in their support of Management. The radio station itself has been founded on the bedrock of selflessness in the form of volunteerism.

To date we have trained over 40 radio show presenters, producers, newsreaders, news researchers, and traffic reporters. All these are our students. The students do not get paid any amount, they demand no better services, and they give selflessly to make MUT Radio a success.

As an ardent radio listener, I am impressed by how far our students have come and I acknowledged the support that has been provided by the media agency that is working with us. Listening to MUT Radio these days has shown us that students need platforms where they can gain experience. These students, who come from all faculties, are quickly learning interview skills; they participate in group discussions, and are becoming more and more articulate in the spoken and written word.

Embracing the spirit of volunteerism in the present will go a long way towards creating a better future. There are many young people who are doing great things to empower communities, other students and the elderly. Unfortunately, these projects are often not included by the young people when they develop their curricula vitae (CV). We need to lobby for a bill for civic engagement hours to be part of the evaluation of inexperienced graduates. This will ensure that



Mbali Mkhize

employers get quality graduates who know how to give their time and who have hands-on experience. Nothing beats on-the-job experience!

We are excited that MUT Radio is allowing students to become creative, work independently and develop their professionalism. The amount of preparation that the studio presenters have to do is incredible when one considers the appropriate questions they ask their studio guests. Power to all our radio volunteers! Our students are writing their own future in our studio. They are changing not only their own lives, but those of the students who wake up every morning to tune into their shows.

Please support the MUT Radio crew by listening to their shows. Such support will make them better and better! Together, we can make MUT Radio a voice of change among our student body and listeners from across the globe that tune in every day.

“There are many young people who are doing great things to empower communities, other students and the elderly.” – Mbali Mkhize

From the Office of the Vice-Chancellor

“Ask not what your country can do for you – ask what you can do for your country” - John F. Kennedy, 35th USA President, 1961

Sixty decades later, this statement is still as relevant as ever. It resonates so much with me because it is also reflected in our core values, leadership capability expectations, and the goals of our MUT Strategy 2025.

An institution’s core values are a mirror of its highest priorities and guide its actions from the front and the back. If we revisit our core values of accountability, integrity, respect, and excellence, we can see that they define what we stand for and are an inspiration for us.

I am inspired by our people’s selflessness towards our institution. When I look at how many of you are propelling MUT forward, I am deeply heartened. I am also heartened by the overwhelming support that we as the executive management team are receiving across the University. While we may be constrained by resources, many of you are doing your best for MUT without asking what MUT should do for you.

I wish to salute all of you for the tireless work that you do, sometimes going many extra miles. In the end, your contribution is what makes MUT what it is and what it wants to be. We recently hosted the Research Awards, and the quality of research was astounding. Kudos to all the winners and most importantly, to Professor Babatunde Femi Bakare... together you continue to put MUT on the map.

Very soon, MUT will be hosting its two flagship conferences: the Teaching & Learning Conference



Professor Marcus Ramogale, Vice-Chancellor & Principal

from 17 to 19 November 2021. The organisers of both conferences saw a gap and have created world-class events that have taken on a life of their own. Both these conferences bring an element of national and international engagement to MUT, which is one of the five goals of MUT Strategy 2025. Representing a sum total of 15 years between them, they remind us that it pays to ask oneself what you can do for your institution.

There are many pockets of excellence across the University, and this journey need not end now. Let us elevate excellence, and be reminded that ‘excellence’ is embedded in our core values, leadership capability expectations (DEEDS) and in all the five University goals.

Always ask yourself: “What can I do for MUT?” The answer will be very easy: help the University in its effort to achieve Excellence.

◆ *“I wish to salute all of you for the tireless work that you do, sometimes going many extra miles. In the end, your contribution is what makes MUT what it is and what it wants to be.” – Professor Marcus Ramogale*



ON MUT AND ITS VALUES

The power of radio elevates MUT's State of the University address

For the first time in MUT's history, its annual State of the University (SOTU) address was delivered on radio – with no less than four stations taking it to the community and beyond on 16 September. These were MUT's own newly-launched radio station, MUT Radio, as well as Nongoma FM, Ugu Youth Radio and Ntokozo FM.

This is all part of a strategy to increase its accessibility to parents and the general public, which is part of MUT's commitment to being an anchor institution in the community. Broadcasting the SOTU on the three external stations was part of a collaboration between MUT Radio and its three community radio counterparts. This collaboration is aimed at overcoming the barrier that the Internet often creates, and increasing access for students and parents in remote areas.

The address itself was also a collaborative one, delivered by the MUT executive management team. Leading from the front, Acting Vice-Chancellor and Principal, Professor Marcus Ramogale, commented on the resilience shown by both staff and students. He observed that despite the gloom and uncertainty that continue to accompany the lockdown imposed by the government to deal with COVID-19, staff and students were going about their daily duties "quietly and attentively".

He thanked staff and students for complying with the COVID-19 protocols to save lives and secure the academic year. He also acknowledged the role played by the University's COVID-19 Task Team in raising awareness about the virus "and introducing the measures that ensured protection of all". One of these measures was the introduction of the vaccination site on the University main campus on 15 September 2021.

Professor Ramogale went on to acknowledge the role played by the University Council, labour unions NEHAWU and TENUA, and the Student Representative Council in bringing stability to the University.

He pointed out that a "huge milestone" had been achieved by the University, which had just finished its first semester of the 2021 academic year. "We are commencing our second semester on 4 October 2021. The faculty deans have informed me they have bid farewell to S4 students who are now going to begin their work-integrated learning," Professor Ramogale said.

The Acting VC appealed to the annual students to "keep your nose to the grindstone. By 18 December 2021, some of you will be done with your university studies; some of you will be moving to the next academic year. I wish you good luck," he said. He also thanked staff without whom the "journey would not have been possible."

Acting Deputy Vice-Chancellor: Teaching and Learning, Dr Manyane Makua, who presented the state of teaching and learning, said: "As complex as the challenges of blended learning are, we cannot afford to be left behind. Our infrastructure needs to be up to scratch; students must be supported, but must also take responsibility for their own learning by taking responsible decisions and not allowing themselves to be misled by short-term interests of people pursuing personal agendas."

Professor Ramogale acknowledged that the University has had to deal with a difficult financial situation where students' debt is huge, while staff expect the University to maintain a conducive situation for them. "Our needs are greater than our financial resources," he said. He warned that everyone must brace for a tough 2022, and be prepared "to walk the difficult path."

This view was supported by the presentation of the University's Chief Financial Officer, Rodney Delomoney who said, "We need to take measures to build a financially sustainable university."

Another member of Executive Management who made a presentation was Dr Johan van Koller, the Acting Deputy Vice-Chancellor: Resources and Planning.

Follow the links below to listen to their speeches:

1. **Professor Marcus Ramogale** - <https://iono.fm/e/1101760>
2. **Dr Manyane Makua** - <https://iono.fm/e/1101765>
3. **Dr Johan van Koller** - <https://iono.fm/e/1101767>
4. **Rodney Delomoney** - <https://iono.fm/e/1101769>

MUT holds virtual prayers to re-invigorate its core values

The years 2020 and 2021 will go down in the history books as two of the most challenging in recent times. While the COVID-19 pandemic wreaked havoc across the world, residents of KwaZulu-Natal and Gauteng provinces endured devastating acts of civil unrest and looting during July 2021.

It was against this backdrop that MUT decided to host a series of virtual prayers to ask for divine intervention and to remind the university community of the significance of the institution's core values as a moral campus to guide behaviour.

Acting Deputy Vice-Chancellor: Resources and Planning, Dr Johan van Koller, said the prayer was a very important event, given the hard times the country was going through. "We are mortal beings. This is the time to remember God," he said.

Dr van Koller also entreated University staff and students to revisit MUT's values, which are accountability, integrity, respect and excellence. He said that this would steer everyone back to the right path.

The first prayer, which was led by Dr Tobius Thobile Poswa on 29 July, focused on accountability and integrity as moral virtues that we should espouse. Dr Poswa, who is head of the Department of Environmental Health, focused on what these core values meant for those in leadership positions.

"A person of integrity does not look at people, but they look at issues and understand. You need to be a person that refuses to accept bribes. We need to be people who are honest in every way possible. When we have done wrong, we must ask for pardon," said Dr Poswa.

The second prayer, held on 26 August, was dedicated to and led by women as part of MUT's Women's Month celebration. Pastor Zinhle Mabaso, who is also a lecturer in the Department of Communication, led the prayer and provided its main message.

Pastor Mabaso explained why women had to be accountable and responsible, and explained how the Bible gives guidance so that they can achieve these moral virtues.

Jade Mthiyane, the Events Coordinator in the Department of Marketing and Communications, said the theme of the prayer was accountability. The prayer focused on the following problem areas: domestic violence, sex for marks, rape, sexual assault, gender-based violence and other common plights faced by women in Africa. There was an individual prayer dedicated to each of these issues.

Ayanda Ngcobo, a third-year Office Technology student, prayed for the end of gender-based violence (GBV). Ngcobo explained the long-lasting negative effects of GBV, saying that children who witness a woman being beaten up by a man are traumatised and some may find it hard to have relationships due to fear of men.

Siziphiwe Dlamini, a third-year Civil Engineering student, prayed for the end of femicide and asked God to protect women from men who killed women. Femicide statistics are depressing. In 2019/2020, 2 695 women were murdered, some at the hands of people they know.

Both prayers were broadcast on MUT Radio.

Through the lens – “Selfie spots” acknowledge MUT core values



“A job well done” – MUT bids farewell to 2021 and 2020 retirees

American television host, author, producer and Presbyterian minister, Fred Rodgers, once said: “Often when you are at the end of something, you’re at the beginning of something else.” These words could not be more relevant for the 2021 and 2020 cohort of MUT retirees.

On Monday, 20 September, MUT bade official farewell to its 2020 and 2021 retirees in a virtual ceremony. Although it has become tradition for the University to host a face-to-face ceremony to celebrate their contribution and wish them well, the COVID-19 pandemic changed all of that. Interim Senior Director: Human Resources and Development, Nontsikelelo Mabona, acknowledged that the pandemic had deprived the 2020 retirees of an opportunity to have an official university celebration in their year of retirement. This made it all the more important that a celebration be held in 2021, albeit virtually.

Speaking during the online event, Professor Marcus Ramogale, Acting Vice-Chancellor and Principal of MUT, reassured retirees that their many years of contribution to the University did not go unnoticed.

“On behalf of management and Council, I would like to thank you for all the services that you rendered over many years. Some of you have been with MUT for 10, 15 years and some of you have been with MUT for over 20 years. Some have been with MUT for over 25 years. We really thank you for the dedication and all the contribution that you made to the institution over these many years,” said Professor Ramogale.

For Nondumiso Mayvis Mathonsi, one of the 19 retirees



Dr Malizo Buyeye



Professor Ewa Zawilska



Elizabeth Magwaza



Sizakele Ngcobo

who was speaking at the ceremony, retirement was an opportunity to look back at her journey through the University and recount how working for the institution had changed her life.

Mathonsi’s relationship with MUT was a symbiotic one that went beyond working and receiving a salary for her services. She took care of the University and it responded in kind. Mathonsi thanked all the people she had an opportunity to work with at MUT and expressed her gratitude for being treated as if she mattered by her colleagues and university management.

In an emotional speech, Mathonsi took the audience through her journey at MUT. The highlight came when she became a permanent employee of the institution, which enabled her to fulfil her lifelong dream of studying further.

“Being a permanent employee meant that I qualified for a study grant,” said Mathonsi. “I am glad that today I have a Master’s degree, thanks to MUT.”

For the ambitious Mathonsi, retirement marks yet another journey, echoing Rodgers’ words that the end of something is indeed “the beginning of something else”. Mathonsi wants to write a book – and if her loyalty to her dream of getting a Master’s degree is anything to go by, her dream book will become a reality too.

Professor Ramogale concluded that it was contributions made by employees like those retiring that changed the institution for the better.

“I am sure you will agree that the MUT you left upon retiring was a completely different institution from the one that you joined,” he concluded.

SPOTLIGHT ON FACULTIES

From the Desk of the Acting Dean: Faculty of Natural Sciences

Professor Roger Cooposamy

Human development continues to affect the environment where other species live. In some cases, encroachment of human activities on the natural environment leads to a collision between people and wildlife, including snakes. As we enter a new season, we need to reconsider how man behaves at the sight of a snake.

In the Faculty of Natural Sciences, both staff and students have been taking a leading role in raising awareness on various types of snakes and their behaviour. Like every other player in the ecosystem, snakes are part of the food chain: some are prey to other species like eagles and other snakes, and some are predators. Together they provide a balance in the ecosystem. For instance, they keep the numbers of rats in check. The Snake Awareness Week has been impactful in spreading the message that people should respect snakes as an essential part of our natural environment.

As we adapt to COVID-19 protocols, we are also very aware that as a faculty offering health sciences we have a responsibility to play a role in the safety of students and staff. The Department of Biomedical Sciences is busy arranging vaccination for Hepatitis B and COVID-19 and is also checking X-rays. Over and above that, the Department is busy setting up a skills laboratory and a training coordinator has been employed.

Our academics continue to participate in global conferences, and also serve as external examiners and curriculum assessors for various universities, both nationally and internationally. In addition, many staff serve as external examiners for Master's and PhD



dissertations and are supervising or co-supervising students from other institutions.

Further to this, staff are frequently consulted by the National Research Foundation (NRF) to serve as assessors for funding proposals and to chair evaluation and funding sessions. The municipality and NGOs also frequently consult our highly skilled staff that have expertise in ecosystem rehabilitation and degradation projects. During the year I was personally privileged to be appointed as the international subject expert to help the Department of Microbiology at India's Bharathidasan University to improve its offerings, including its MSc programmes, from 2022.

Recent scholarly activities in the faculty

Our scholarly output includes conference presentations and articles in peer-reviewed and publicly disseminated journals. Its scope is broad, encompassing the discovery of new knowledge;

development of new technologies, methods, materials, or uses; and integration of knowledge leading to new understanding.

Agriculture

Animal Production lecturers attended a South African Society for Animal Science conference which was hosted virtually.

Community Extension

Dr Vince Ndou submitted an article titled “Yield Gains and Associated Traits in Tropical X Temperate Maize Germplasm Under High and Low Plant Density” to *Euphytica*, a journal accredited by the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET). <https://doi.org/10.21203/rs.3.rs-401021/v1>

Information and Communication Technology

Journal article:

Amoo O.T., Nakin M.D.V., Abayomi A., Umoh U., Mutanga M.B., Bilewu S.O. (2021) Assessing Impacts of Low Flow on Kainji Hydro-Power Generation. In: Abraham A., Hanne T., Castillo O., Gandhi N., Nogueira Rios T., Hong TP. (eds) *Hybrid Intelligent Systems. HIS 2020. Advances in Intelligent Systems and Computing*, vol 1375. Springer, Cham. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-73050-5_78

Conferences:

Jugoo, V., Mutanga, B.M. & Abayomi, A. (2021) Lecturers’ Reflections on Online Teaching in a Higher Education Institution during CoViD-19: A Case Study Approach. *Technology and Innovation International Conference 2021 (TECHON 2021)*, 14-15 September, Virtual Conference. Targeting journal publication in *Pertanika Journal of Science and Technology* (SCOPUS Indexed).

Khomo, F.E., Abayomi, A., Adetiba, E., Agbehadji, I.E., Mutanga, B.M. & Jugoo, V. (2021) Digital Innovations for Post-CoViD-19 Pandemic Recovery. 2021 International Conference on Artificial Intelligence, Big Data, Computing and Data Communication Systems (icABCD), 5-6 August.

Nature Conservation

Journal articles:

Naidoo, D., Kar, P., Roy, A., Mutanda, T., Bwapwa, J., Sen, A. & Anandraj, A. (2021) Structural insight into the binding of Cyanovirin-N with the spike glycoprotein, Mpro and PLpro of SARS-CoV-2: Protein–protein interactions, dynamics simulations and free energy calculations. *Molecules* 26(17):5114. <https://doi:10.3390/molecules26175114>

Pillay R.P. & Govender S. (2021) Exploring the quality of pre-service teachers’ critical analysis of cartoons within environmental contexts in the Life Sciences. *Journal of Transdisciplinary Research. S Afr.* 17(1), a863. <https://doi.org/10.4102/td.v17i1.863>

Pillay R.P. (2021) Group work and distance online learning in Higher Education – reflecting on the Covid-19 experience in the Natural Sciences. Preprint on Scienceopen.com at <https://doi.org/10.25159/UnisaRxiv/000007.v1>

Adeoye-Isijola, M., Naidoo, K., Coopoosamy, R. & Olajuyigbe, O. (2021) Anti-staphylococcal effects of alcoholic extracts of *Tetrapleura tetraptera* (Schum and Thonn) Taub. against multidrug methicillin resistant *Staphylococcus aureus*. *Journal of Medicinal Plants for Economic Development* (accepted 7 August 2021 – Ref No. 122).

Tshapa, L., Naidoo, K. & Naidoo, G. (2021) Morphological and physiological responses of *Arundo donax* and *Phragmites australis* to waterlogging stress. *Flora*, 279, 151816.

◆ “Our scholarly output includes conference presentations and articles in peer-reviewed and publicly disseminated journals. Its scope is broad, encompassing the discovery of new knowledge; development of new technologies, methods, materials, or uses; and integration of knowledge leading to new understanding.” – Professor Roger Coopoosamy

From the Desk of the Acting Dean: Faculty of Engineering

Professor Babatunde Femi Bakare

As the Faculty of Engineering, we have been able to navigate around the impact of COVID-19 on teaching and learning activities. This is evidenced by the fact that lecturers have swiftly adapted to blended teaching and learning approaches to ensure that academic programmes are completed with minimal disruption.



Although there were issues around digital resourcing, timeframes and adaptability, the faculty has moved in full force and made positive advancements in blended teaching and learning activities. As a faculty we view this new paradigm as a learning curve and most importantly we take time to reflect on and review best practices so that we are prepared for new challenges in the future.

Accreditation of the Engineering qualifications another feather in MUT's cap

The Faculty of Engineering takes pride in announcing that its programmes that were due for accreditation by the Engineering Council of South Africa (ECSA) have once more been accredited.

Having our engineering programmes approved by ECSA, a statutory body established in terms of the Engineering Profession Act (EPA), 46 of 2000, is both an affirmation and endorsement of the quality of MUT's engineering education. ECSA is the only body in South Africa that is authorised to register engineering professionals and bestow the use of engineering titles, such as Pr Eng, Pr Tech Eng, Pr Techni Eng, Pr Cert Eng, on persons who have met the requisite professional registration criteria.

With the accreditation process being conducted virtually due to the pandemic, academic staff members prepared all the required documentation electronically, and live streams of available resources and infrastructures that support all our programmes were shared with the accreditation team during their virtual visit. On 28 May the ECSA accreditation team duly recommended that the Advanced Diploma in Chemical Engineering, Diploma in Chemical Engineering, and Diploma in Electrical Engineering be fully accredited until the next Regular Accreditation Visit in five years' time.

Our faculty recently responded to the factual correctness of comments from the accreditation team, and awaits the official confirmation letter from ECSA. Accreditation for the Diploma in Civil and Mechanical Engineering was postponed till 2022 because no graduates had been produced from these two programmes. Students from this programme were affected by the unprecedented impact of COVID-19 related restrictions on industries where the students were supposed to be conducting their in-service training. Provisional accreditation of both programmes was extended till 2022.

Scholarly activities

Prof Babatunde Femi Bakare was recently appointed as Associate Editor for the SpringerNature Journal's "Discovery Sustainability".

The following research output was achieved in the period (May-August 2021) after previously reported to the Senate.

Articles published in peer-reviewed journals:

Squire M.M., Munsamy M., Lin G., Telukdarie A. & Igusa T (2021) Modeling hospital energy and economic costs for COVID-19 infection control interventions. *Energy and Buildings*, 242, 110948

Kusakaka, K., Phiri, S.F. & Numbi, B.P. (2021) Optimal energy management of a hybrid diesel generator and battery supplying an RTG crane with energy recovery capability. *Energy Reports* 7, 4769-4778

Adeyinka, G.C., Bakare, B.F. & Iwarere, S.A. (2021). Evaluation and risk assessment of heavy metals

in surface water collected along the Isipingo River, KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa. *International Journal of Environmental Analytical Chemistry*, [https://doi: 10.1080/03067319.2021.1947265](https://doi.org/10.1080/03067319.2021.1947265)

Afolabi, F.O., Musonge, P. & Bakare, B.F. (2021) Application of the Response Surface Methodology in the Removal of Cu²⁺ and Pb²⁺ from Aqueous Solutions Using Orange Peels. *Scientific African* <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.sciaf.2021.e00931>

Tumba, K., Jiyane, C.P. & Musonge, P. (2021) Production of Biodiesel from Croton gratissimus Oil using Sulphated Zirconia and KOH as Catalysts. *Frontiers in Energy Research* 9, 387

Lasich, M. (2021) Separating Binary Gaseous Mixtures of Ethene+ Ethyne Using Cement Hydrate: A Multiscale Computational Study. *ACS Omega* <https://doi/10.1021/acsomega.1c02902>.



Dr Papy Numbi



Dr Kaniki Tumba

- ◆ The Faculty of Engineering takes pride in announcing that its programmes
- ◆ that were due for accreditation by the Engineering Council of South Africa
- ◆ (ECSA) have once more been accredited.

From the Desk of the Acting Dean: Faculty of Management Sciences

Dr Bheka Ntshangase

The quest to be known for entrepreneurship is gaining traction in our faculty with the appointment of a coordinator for entrepreneurship programmes. Taking the cue from the Acting Vice-Chancellor whose leadership on entrepreneurship has been recognised by the Department of Higher Education and Training, we have designed more targeted programmes in order to open our students' minds to the fact that there are better avenues to pursue than waiting for jobs to come. It is often in waiting for employment that our students become demoralised.



We are therefore encouraged to see how students have been attending Master Classes on entrepreneurship and also participating in the Student Entrepreneurship Week. We do not take lightly the fact that we have a student who has been selected to pitch her business concept at this auspicious event.

Our academics have been elevating the profile of MUT both nationally and internationally, with wide-ranging civic duty appointments, participation in strategic planning meetings, policy development and academic conferences. We look forward to the Department of Accounting and Law jointly hosting a collaborative Southern African Accounting Association (SAAA) KZN & Central Region conference with accounting departments from University of Zululand, Durban University of Technology, University of KwaZulu-Natal, University of the Free State, Vaal University of Technology, Central University of Technology and North-West University. This virtual conference has been scheduled for 22 October 2021 and we have already received a number of academic papers for the event.

Scholarly activities

Publication in peer-reviewed, DHET-approved journals:

Fuyane, N., Xaba, M.E. & Sikwela, M.M. (2021) Airline Preference and Choice Factors in the South African



Dr Courage Mlambo



Dr Hloniphani Ndebele

Domestic Passenger Market: An Exploratory Study. *International Journal of Business and Management Studies*, 13 (1),1-24. <https://doi:10.48080/ijbms.20210101>

Loki, O., Aliber, M. & Sikwela, M.M. (2021) Assessment of socio-economic characteristics that determine farmers' access to agricultural extension services in Eastern Cape, South Africa. *South African Journal of Agriculture Extension*, 49 (1), 198-209.

Papers accepted for publication:

Mlambo C. & Ntshangase, B. (2021) The Nexus Between Remittances and Mobile Technology: Evidence from Southern Africa. *Academy of Accounting and Financial Studies Journal*.

Ngcobo, S., Ndebele, H., & Bryant, K. (2021 in print) Translanguaging: A tool to decolonise students' experiences of learning to write for academic purposes in the South African university context, *Journal of Language Teaching*.

Conference presentations:

Mlambo C. (2021) *The Impact of Port Performance and Trade: The Case of Selected African States*. Southern African Transport Conference (Virtual): Sustainable Transportation Through Enabling Partnerships, 5-7 July.



Staff that attended the Research Indaba. Dr Anette Mienie, Director: Research (third from right, front row)

CREATING KNOWLEDGE THROUGH RESEARCH

Research Directorate hosts Indaba to invigorate research

Inspired by Strategic Goal 4 of the MUT Strategic Plan – targeted national engagement and internationalisation – and by the prevailing emphasis on collaboration and cooperation, the Research Directorate held its annual Research Indaba off campus from 6 to 7 September 2021. The event will result in the improvement of MUT’s research output and quality in coming years for several reasons. In the first place, staff were satisfied with the report that Dr Anette Mienie gave, which showed that the Research Directorate was paying attention to the needs of staff members doing research.

On the first day of the event, Dr Mienie gave feedback on the initiatives agreed upon during the previous Research Indaba, which included the revision of the policy and procedures on trust funds, in terms of which staff members must be allowed to buy computers from their trust funds in consultation with the Department of Information Technology and Networks. These computers must be compatible with MUT’s IT systems

and will be the property of MUT. Dr Mienie reported that researchers will also be allowed to buy data from the research trust funds.

Another important aspect of Dr Mienie’s report was a development affecting personal trust funds. Dr Mienie reported that the amount available in the personal trust funds will now be increased, while amounts allocated

- ◆ *Researchers were happy about changes in the procurement processes and procedures. In terms of the approved Procurement Policy, the procurement procedures will now be revised and simplified.*

to departmental trust funds will be decreased. “It is suggested to increase the amount (per output unit) allocated to personal trust funds from R15 000 to R20 000. Further, the amount allocated (per output unit) to departmental trust funds can be decreased from R10 000 to R5 000,” said Dr Mienie.

Researchers were happy about changes in the procurement processes and procedures. In terms of the approved Procurement Policy, the procurement procedures will now be revised and simplified. According to the report, the major issue was that the time taken to purchase consumables, as well as equipment, has been a “major limiting factor as researchers wait for many months to receive the necessary items to engage in research activities.”

Also on the topic of procurement was a presentation by Siboniso Mthembu, the Acting Head of the University’s Procurement department. Mthembu emphasised the need for staff to know about MUT Procurement procedures, and what their role should be in them. Staff should also inform Procurement of their needs, Mthembu said. Procurement holds a strategic position as it provides the whole University with the required infrastructure.

Staff also appreciated a talk that was given by a guest speaker from Carleton University in Canada. Heloise Emdon, Manager of International Sponsored Research, gave an update on what is happening on the research front. Speaking of new dynamics in the research arena, she said that it was no longer enough to gauge the impact of academic research papers based only on the journals they are published in. Other indicators are also now being used to measure the impact of research papers. One of these is the impact the research will have on the society – an indicator that dovetails with the University’s philosophy that the Institution should uplift the immediate society. This was the central point of our Public Relations and Brand Management Director, Azwi Mufamadi’s presentation to staff during the event. Another staff member who supported this view was Professor Theo Davies, a Research Professor in the Faculty of Natural Sciences. Staff also raised their own views on what elements should be considered when measuring the impact of research.

The second day focused on the Research Strategic Plan. Dr Mienie said that the activities and targets were realistic and achievable. “It is my hope that going forward we will make great strides towards meeting and even exceeding the objectives captured in the MUT Strategic Plan 2020 – 2025,” concluded Dr Mienie.



Dr Mienie

MUT hosts Research Awards to recognise research excellence



Staff members that took part in the event. Dr Mienie is seated, third from left

Like all universities in the country, MUT has three pillars – Teaching and Learning, Community Engagement, and Research – and it highlights the importance of these in different ways. The institution advocates for research by encouraging staff to conduct research and publish in recognised journals.

This year, MUT held its annual Research Awards on 17 September 2021 at the Coastlands Hotel in Umhlanga to celebrate and recognise staff who have made positive strides in research. Speaking at the event, Acting Deputy Vice-Chancellor: Teaching and Learning, Dr Manyane Makua, said: “We are gathered to congratulate colleagues who have excelled in their research. We cannot over-emphasise the importance of Research. Every academic must do research.”

The star of the event was Professor Babatunde Bakare, Acting Dean of the Faculty of Engineering, who bagged two awards. Professor Bakare received the Most Productive Researcher Award for the Faculty of Engineering, along with the Senate Prize. The runner-up for the Most Productive Researcher in the Faculty of Engineering was Dr Matthew Lasich.

Professor Bakare’s research focus area lies within,

but is not limited to, water and wastewater treatment processes, municipal solid waste management, faecal sludge management from onsite sanitation systems, and renewable energy. He published nine accredited journal articles, five peer-reviewed conference proceedings and graduated one PhD candidate during the reporting period. In receiving the award, Professor Bakare said he was prompted to ask himself, “Why and how was this possible?”

“In the year 2020, I had to make a difficult career decision. I had thought my research productivity would be significantly impacted. Actually, these sentiments were shared by colleagues when I took up the position of Acting Dean in the Faculty of Engineering. I have come to believe that if you want to go fast, go alone. But if you want to go far, go with a team. Any success I’ve had is attributed to my extensive collaboration with colleagues, without whom some of these accolades might have been difficult to achieve,” said Professor Bakare. The Acting Dean acknowledged the following colleagues: Thobeka Makhathini (Lecturer, Chemical Engineering); Dr Sphesihle Mtsweni (nGap Lecturer, Chemical Engineering) and Dr Gbadebo Adeyinka (Postdoctoral Fellow, Chemical Engineering) for their continued collaborations.

Dr Lasich attributed his success to going the extra mile. "I try to read new work and preprints, not just in Chemical Engineering, but also in adjacent fields such as Physical Chemistry, Chemical Physics and Condensed Matter Physics. Sometimes you pick up on something that could transfer from one discipline to another, and then an avenue of scientific interest can develop," said Dr Lasich.

Dr Taurai Mutanda was awarded the Most Productive Researcher in the Faculty of Natural Sciences. Dr Mutanda also holds the title of being the most cited researcher in the University.

For the period under review, Dr Mutanda secured two prestigious research grants: the NRF South Africa-Austria Joint Technological Cooperation Bilateral Grant and the NRF Thuthuka Rating Track Research Grant 2021-2023. He also published eight DHET-accredited journal papers, one book chapter, and two peer-reviewed conference presentations. He also successfully graduated one Master's candidate. "It feels good and energising to be recognised and acknowledged for the hard work," he said. "It is important to stress that some of the outputs are

from efforts of my collaborating partners as well," concluded Dr Mutanda.

The contribution of retired research professors was also recognised at the Research Awards. Evan Mantzaris, a professor in the Faculty of Management, and Professor Aroonkumar Beesham, a professor in the Faculty of Natural Sciences, walked away with the Most Published Retired Research Professors.

The University also acknowledged nine staff members who recently obtained their PhDs, and 10 staff members that have secured external funding ranging from R100 000 to R1 million. Dr Bheka Ntshangase, Acting Dean of the Faculty of Management Science, and Professor Theo Haupt, DST/SARChI Chair for Sustainable Work, Education, Environment & Transformation (SWEET), were recognised for having secured funding ranging from R1 million upwards. The event would not have been complete without acknowledging the University's four NRF-rated researchers.

The Research Awards were broadcast live on MUT Radio (www.mut.ac.za/mutradio).

MUT academic selected to be part of the Future Professors Programme

The Acting Head of the Department of Public Administration and Economics at MUT, Dr Bongekile Yvonne Charlotte Mvuyana, has been selected to take part in the 2021/2022 Future Professors Programme (FPP), Phase 2 Cohort 1. Dr Blade Nzimande, Minister of Higher Education and Innovation, recently communicated the good news to the Acting Vice-Chancellor and Principal of MUT.

"I trust that she will take full advantage of the opportunity that has been afforded to her and I look forward to the contribution she will make as a leading academic in higher education in South Africa and beyond," said Dr Nzimande in a letter. "I also encourage the University to support her fully to



Dr Bongekile Yvonne Charlotte Mvuyana

ensure her successful completion of the programme."

Reacting to the good news, Dr Mvuyana said she was thrilled to have been chosen. "I am over the moon. The programme is going to open new doors for me. I did not see myself being part of this elite future professors programme funded by the Department of Higher Education and Training. Only 29 candidates from 26 universities in South Africa were nominated," said Dr Mvuyana. She also expressed her deep

commitment to the advancement of the scholarship of teaching and learning, research and innovation, and community development. The Future Professors Programme starts in November 2021.

Public Administration and Economics public lecture debates municipal good governance

Good governance at local government level has been under the spotlight in South Africa for years now. Every year, the Auditor-General of South Africa conducts audits of municipalities across the country, which is always accompanied by newspaper headlines bemoaning irregular expenditure.

With this background, the Department of Public Administration and Economics hosted a public lecture to interrogate governance issues at municipality level. The guest speaker of this public lecture was Nkosenye Godfrey Zulu, Municipal Manager at Ulundi Local Municipality, and he spoke on the topic of “Oversight structures and corporate governance: a local government perspective.”

Addressing a virtual audience of over 375 individuals on 6 September 2021, Zulu said his presentation was meant to provide a platform where the audience could discuss the intricacies of good governance and issues of municipal oversight structures, which frame debates for policy makers in both developing and developed countries.

“Good governance concerns the presence of all structures and systems necessary to enable government to function properly, and it is an important tenet that supports democracy,” he explained.

Zulu, who is a Doctor of Philosophy candidate at the University of KwaZulu-Natal and holds a Master of Law degree in International Commercial Law from the United Kingdom, said it was important to focus on municipalities because of the constitutional responsibilities bestowed on them.

“This sphere of governance is unique in that the Constitution vests both legislative and executive authority within the council, which is not the case in the other two spheres of government,” explained Zulu. “Councils have a right to govern on their own initiative in matters affecting communities, subject to provincial as well as national legislation.”

The biggest challenge municipal administrators



Nkosenye Godfrey Zulu, Municipal Manager at Ulundi Local Municipality

face when implementing policies and delivering services to their communities is the lack of education of those entrusted with oversight. These are municipal councillors and oversight committees. For starters, explained Zulu, councillors have a lot of work to do that requires a fair level of understanding of the legislation and policy, and decisions are not so easy.

“The legislation does not make provision for any minimum level of education. Councillors find themselves confronted by issues that are serious, and quite often issues

they do not understand. They have to rely on their administration to take decisions that are correct,” said Zulu.

This lack of a minimum level of education as a requirement extends even to mayoral level. This could become the biggest stumbling block given the fundamental role of the mayor in carrying out executive functions.

“Some of the challenges that have to do with the Executive and Finance Committee, which is chaired by the mayor, are that mayors are elected by councillors on the direction from the majority party,” Zulu said. “A mayor is not the brightest of all councillors within council.”

This lack of educational requirements often means that councillors often do not understand their roles and responsibilities and how far their powers legally extend.

“You would have someone who is a taxi operator, someone who is a pastor, and so on, and you have to try to explain even the most basic principles,” said Zulu. “That is why you find that the situation lends itself to interference which is forbidden in terms of the Municipal Finance Management Act.”

The situation is not any different for Section 79 structures, which are oversight committees aligned to departments in a municipality. These are committees such as the Municipal Public Accounts Committee, which is the equivalent of the Standing Committee

on Public Accounts (SCOPA) at national government level. These committees perform oversight of municipal departments and exercise supervisory roles on service delivery. They are also required to submit monthly reports to the Executive and Finance Committee.

According to Zulu, the low levels of education of members of this committee undermine robust debate, while the part-time status and/or absenteeism of members undermine the committee's oversight responsibilities.

The Department of Public Administration and Economics could not have chosen a better speaker for the topic at hand. As pointed out by Acting Dean of Management Sciences, Dr Bheka Ntshangase, in his introduction of the speaker, Zulu is a highly decorated municipal administrator. He has achieved numerous

governance service excellence awards over his 20-plus years in municipal governance. The most recent of these awards was being chosen by the Premier of KwaZulu-Natal (KZN) as the KZN Best Municipal Manager for 2016/2017 and recognised for managing the Best Run Municipality in 2016/2017.

"During his tenure," explained Dr Ntshangase, "his municipality has also won national awards for its housing projects in the Govan Mbeki National Awards, as well as a several IDP, PMS and other good governance accolades."

The lecture was facilitated by Acting Head of Department of Public Administration and Economics, Dr Bongekile Yvonne Charlotte Mvuyana, who was recently selected to be part of the Department of Higher Education and Training's Future Professors Programme.

Nature Conservation department teaches staff and students about snakes

Human development continues to affect the environment where other species live. In some cases, the encroachment into where other species live leads to a collision between human beings and species that are losing their natural habitat. Some of the species affected by human development are snakes.

It was for this reason that the Department of Nature Conservation had a snake awareness campaign on Wednesday, 1 September 2021 on the MUT main campus.

Sithembile Nkosi, a lecturer in the department, said it was important to understand the role played by snakes in the ecosystem. Instead of seeing them as a nuisance that needs to be eliminated, she said that like every other player in the ecosystem, snakes are part of the food chain. Some are prey to other species, like eagles and other snakes, while others are predators and provide a balance in the ecosystem, like keeping the number of rats in check.

As for MUT, Nkosi said the University is built alongside a stream and forest, which makes for a good habitat for



A student holding a snake. Behind her is Sithembile Nkosi

a variety of snakes. As a result, staff have often encountered snakes in their offices and cars. She advised that staff report to professional snake handlers if they find snakes in their offices. She encouraged staff to look carefully at the colour and shape of the snake so they can describe it if they need to. Nkosi also requested staff to keep their car windows closed, and to be on the lookout for snakes.

Her message was that we need to find ways to co-exist with snakes; and this can only

happen successfully if people have enough knowledge about snakes. To drive the message home, the department brought in professional snake handlers, Sicelo Sibiyi and Sabelo Gumede who brought a ball python, puff adder and cobra with them.

Sibiyi gave a lecture on snakes in which he told staff and students how snakes behave, and what they need to do when encountering a snake. Staff and students also got a chance to touch and hold snakes, under the supervision of the professionals.

SWEET Chair selected for Innovation for African Universities Programme, and publishes a book

Theo Haupt, the DST/SARChI Chair: Sustainable Work, Education, Environment & Transformation (SWEET) and Research Professor in the Faculty of Engineering, has been selected to be part of the Innovation for African Universities Programme.

Evarita Kamau, the Communications Officer of the Innovation for African Universities team, said the programme would be managed by the Centre of Excellence team that comprises Change School, University of London and University of Nairobi. Professor Haupt said the achievement demonstrates that MUT is being noticed, and is growing a reputation as a research partner that international universities want to work with to solve societal challenges.

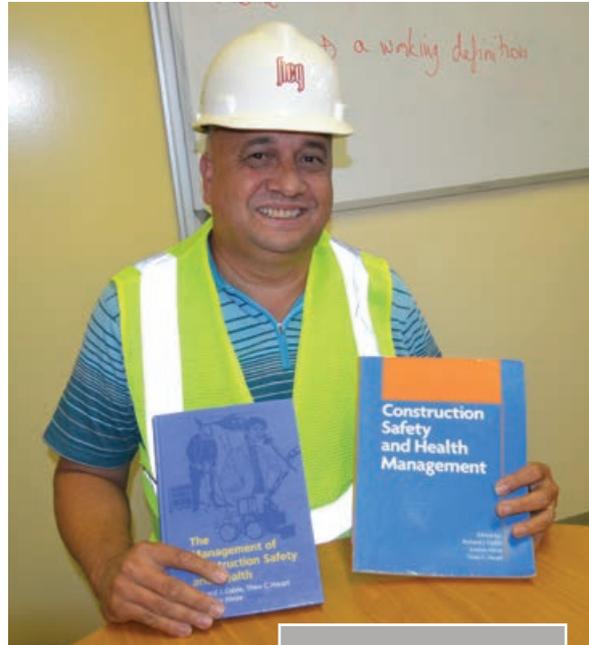
Professor Haupt added that MUT has been successful in its bid to participate in the prestigious Innovation for African Universities (IAU) Programme with a project that has entrepreneurship education as its focus.

According to Haupt, the project aligns with MUT's commitment to expose students to entrepreneurial thinking and approaches, and the decision by the MUT Senate to incorporate entrepreneurship education in all academic programmes offered at the University.

"This particular project contributes to realising the vision of MUT to be a transforming, equitable, sustainable and academically excellent University of Technology anchored in its communities," said Professor Haupt.

Theo's newly published book

Professor Haupt has also written a book titled Management of Safety, Health and Environment in South Africa, published by Cambridge Scholars Publishing. This comprehensive text is important, considering that there are very few such texts available. Professor Haupt, an expert in safety in construction, said: "A health and safety handbook of this magnitude will change the way that South African and African safety, health and environmental practitioners see the subject. A very necessary addition to all practitioners and academic reference material when navigating the safety, health and environmental space."



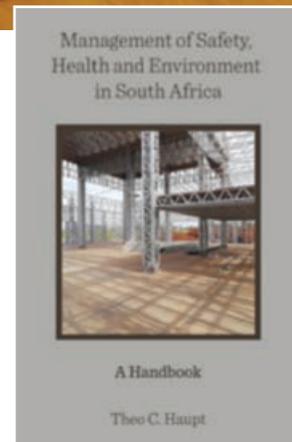
Professor Haupt with two of his books

Although the book is set up for the South African industry, it can be used internationally. It provides a mix of theory and practical approaches that will assist in meeting good standards in the workplace for those just entering the field

after graduating from university. The book is also for a seasoned practitioner who needs to brush up on their practices.

In its 26 chapters, the book covers current topics that include COVID-19, disaster management, current technology and risk management, among others.

Professor Haupt says that areas that are generally not well-managed, specifically in his field of occupational health, will be extremely important in managing employee wellbeing, primary healthcare and limiting occupational diseases.



Professor Haupt's new book

FOCUS ON STUDENTS

MUT SRC launches a Trust Fund for students in need

“Burning tyres and protesting do not work.” These very powerful words were uttered by the 2020-2021 Student Representative Council (SRC) President, Mthokozisi Gumede on 23 September 2021 as the University management and the SRC were launching the history-making SRC Trust Fund. This is an unprecedented initiative by the student leadership to help fellow students in need.



Professor Marcus Ramogale, Acting VC, right, Gumede, middle, and Dr Thembi Kweyama, Dean of Students at the launch of the Fund

Gumede said that the Trust Fund came from the realisation that a large number of students in the University could not register because they owed money to the University. The situation is getting worse as breadwinners lose their jobs because of the COVID-19 pandemic. The yearly protest action by students, demanding financial assistance and concessions from management, only result in the destruction of property, he said.

The SRC's solution was to create a fund that will assist students to deal with their finance-related problems. In setting up the Trust Fund, they had several people to thank – the executive management team for encouraging them to forge ahead with what seemed 'impossible' to others, and the Department of Student Affairs trusting and guiding them.

Gumede said launching the fund was just the first step. “The next step is encouraging interested parties to make contributions,” said Gumede. “We are aiming for a million rand.”

The University's Chief Financial Officer, Rodney

Delomoney, was the first to pledge his contribution. “I will put in the box a R1 000,” said Delomoney, who described the launch of the Trust Fund as a “step in the right direction.”

Staff members who wish to contribute will have their contribution deducted from their salaries. Dr Mthoko Ntuli, the Student Development Officer in the Department of Student Affairs, appealed to all stakeholders to contribute to the Trust Fund for it to be sustainable.

The event was livestreamed for students to watch from wherever they are. MUT Radio also broadcast the event.

◆ “The SRC's solution was to
◆ create a fund that will assist
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finance-related problems.”

Raising awareness on South Africa's suicide and mental health epidemic

South Africa is at the centre of a suicide and mental health epidemic. According to a Sunday Times report, it is estimated that there are 23 suicides per day in South Africa – and for every one of those, there are at least 20 attempted suicides. Experts believe these figures are modest compared to the actual reality. Men are four times more likely to take their own lives than women. Perhaps the most chilling of these statistics is the fact that the youngest victim was a six-year-old boy who took his life at school.



Fikile Gumada

Mental health has been one of the greatest casualties of COVID-19, driven by insecurity, uncertainty and hopelessness. The South African Depression and Anxiety Group (SADAG), Africa's largest mental health support and advocacy group, is now receiving an average of 1 400 calls per day. This is a far cry from the average of 600 calls per day it used to receive before the COVID-19 lockdown.

This grim picture makes awareness-raising a necessity, such as through World Suicide Prevention Day (WSPD) which is held on 10 September each year. The theme for 2021 is "Creating hope through action", which highlights the need for collective action to tackle suicide and mental health challenges. Fikile Gumada, Psychologist at MUT's Student Counselling Unit, took up this initiative in a bid to reach out to students experiencing mental health challenges and to raise awareness on this critical health issue as part of WSPD.

"Depression often leads to suicide. Because of what you experience, you might then have suicide ideation where you think about committing suicide or even attempt suicide," said Gumada.

He said that it is important for students to seek help and support when they are unable to cope with life events. The Student Counselling Unit is always available to provide support and assistance during these difficult moments. Gumada cautioned against drug and substance abuse as a relief from one's problems.

"When people abuse drugs and substances and they self-medicate, they think that whatever challenges they have will go away," warned Gumada. "At the time of indulging in drugs and other substances, they will take your mind away, but the issue will always be there."

When it comes to suicide and mental health, collective support can make all the difference. This means that each one must take responsibility for the mental health of those they are close to. In practical terms, this entails being on the lookout for often subtle signs such as behaviour changes.

Gumada explained that it is easier to notice symptoms of mental health challenges and potential suicide cases amongst friends. "For someone that you interact with, it is easy to pick up. They will suddenly have an unusual behaviour pattern. They will be withdrawn, they will tend to isolate themselves and you will find them to sometimes have aggressive behaviour, which is a completely different behaviour from what you know," said Gumada.

He added that other symptoms include difficulty with sleeping, oversleeping, loss of appetite, emotional detachment (being cold towards others) and hopelessness. Gumada said the Student Counselling Unit had dealt with cases of suicide attempts and ideation at MUT, which emanated from depression and anxiety, mental illness, chronic illnesses and bullying.

"What you will find is that when students have challenges with academic progress, that is when the depression starts kicking in because they have poor coping skills," he said. "Sometimes they have relationship issues. Relationships are on top of the list for university students. Even though students came to MUT to get their diplomas, relationships are a priority."

Gumada explained that relationships often do not work out, but advised students rather to focus on building up their personal spaces and strengthening their interpersonal relations to prevent depression.

For those that need help with depression and mental health, the Student Counselling Unit offers treatment in the form of counselling and therapy.

MUT student flies university flag at national EDHE competition

An MUT engineering student is heading for the national leg of the Entrepreneurship Development in Higher Education (EDHE) annual competition. Wandile Sihiya, a final-year Quantity Surveying and Construction Management student, will represent MUT on the national leg of the competition after winning the EDHE's regional round that was hosted by the University of Zululand from 23 to 27 August 2021. Sihiya won the Existing Tech Business category. Sihiya said he felt "great and really surprised" about winning the regional leg of the competition.

"It was mainly sharing ideas with my team that contributed to my victory," said Sihiya. "My business uses high-pressure water guns to clean house roofs." Sihiya said his business will be using drones to do the actual washing at a later stage. Ntombifuthi Mthembu, the Entrepreneurship Coordinator and a Lecturer in the Department of Human Resources Management at MUT, said she was "super excited" that an MUT student had won the regional leg.



Wandile Sihiya

This will be the first time that MUT participates in the national level of the EDHE competition, which will be hosted by EDHE and Universities South Africa (USAf) in Johannesburg from 17 to 19 November 2021. All participants from the 26 universities will be physically there. The other categories of the competition are the Innovative Business Idea category, the Existing Social Impact category, and the Existing General Business category.

MUT is one of a few higher education institutions that are actively promoting student entrepreneurship. The MUT Acting Vice-Chancellor and Principal, Professor Marcus Ramogale, has on several occasions stated the importance of universities including entrepreneurship in their academic programmes. This will enable students to create their own businesses upon graduating, rather than preparing only to become employees.

- ◆ *Sihiya won the Existing Tech Business category. Sihiya said he felt*
- ◆ *"great and really surprised" about winning the regional leg of the*
- ◆ *competition.*

Co-op tackles South Africa's ticking youth unemployment timebomb

The COVID-19 pandemic has hit global economies hard. While developed economies have started recovering from its effects, aided by quick mass vaccine rollouts, developing countries will feel the pinch of the pandemic over the next few years.

For South Africa, the pandemic was the equivalent of kicking a dog when it is already down. The country was already struggling with a rising unemployment rate, a dwindling tax base, and a rise in the number of households which rely on government grants for survival. Unemployment, of the youth in particular, is the most critical of these challenges.

According to Statistics South Africa, the official unemployment rate among the youth of South Africa was 46.3% for the first quarter of this year. This means that almost half of all young people of working age who are not studying are unemployed. Equally concerning is the fact that 9.3% of these unemployed youth are university graduates.

The Directorate of Co-operative Education at MUT is working tirelessly to ensure that MUT students do not become statistics by placing them in Work-Integrated Learning (WIL) opportunities with various organisations. WIL enhances the employability of the University's students and increases their chance of competing successfully in the job market.

"MUT believes that the best way to ensure that a person internalises learning is through the application of the learning in practical setting," said Dr Fundiswa Nofemela, Director of Co-operative Education at MUT. "This allows for deep learning to take place."

But finding WIL placement for students is a complicated affair that requires the students to play their part. With the help of consultative CV-writing clinics run by the Co-operative Education Directorate, students have to prepare a compelling CV that the directorate then sends to WIL placement partners that they have worked with over the years.

"The clinics are designed to offer small group interactions with those students that need help with applying for jobs," Dr Nofemela said. "These are run on Fridays."



Dr Fundiswa Nofemela

The Co-operative Education Directorate's star attraction for both students and employers has always been the WIL Indaba, where the directorate hosts potential employers on campus to give students an opportunity to interact with them. This week-long networking opportunity was not spared by COVID-19 and its restrictions on gatherings. To bridge this gap, the directorate has a weekly Careers Show on MUT Radio where important career-related topics are discussed. Students also participate in the live broadcast.

The Careers Show has so far hosted representatives of the directorate's employment partners including Mondli Ngesi, Human Resources Officer at Wentworth Hospital; Nqobile Bokveldt, Talent Acquisition Specialist (Coastal Region) at Coca Cola Beverages South Africa; and two MUT graduates, Sdudzile Ndlovu who owns Sdudzile Development Centre, and Lindile Tshona who owns Tshona Electronics. The two MUT alumni featured on the show discussed entrepreneurship as a viable alternative to seeking employment that students can pursue.

Dr Nofemela said her directorate is working on connecting more potential employers with students and creating more opportunities for the two to interact.

Student Counselling Unit and KZN Network on Violence run workshop on GBV

Rampant femicide and gender-based violence (GBV) incidents continue to dominate the news headlines and social media platforms. Alarming reports of GBV incidents among university students have been of concern to the MUT Student Counselling unit, the most recent case being the brutal murder of a University of Fort Hare student in August, a month dedicated to women. These and other similar incidences have spurred the Student Counselling Unit to take action.

In collaboration with the KwaZulu-Natal Network on Violence, the unit hosted a GBV workshop on 27 and 28 August 2021 for students at the University's Executive Hotel residence. In line with COVID-19 regulations, a maximum of 50 people were permitted. The "intensive" workshop covered various aspects of GBV, including understanding what constitutes it, gender stereotyping and misconceptions that perpetuate the cycle of violence, cyber bullying, the complexities of remaining in toxic relationships, important GBV and domestic violence legislation, as well as internal and external support resources at students' disposal.

Dr Paulette Naidoo, Director of the unit, stated that initiatives like this workshop were necessary due to students' limited knowledge of GBV and how to respond to incidents of this nature.

"There is also a lack of awareness around gender stereotyping and gender norms which perpetuate GBV," said Dr Naidoo. She made students aware of the MUT GBV Policy and GBV Standard Operating Procedures, which are in place to inform and guide the MUT community on issues relating to the scourge. She urged students to familiarise themselves with this



Dr Paulette Naidoo

important policy document, which would empower them. Dr Naidoo stated that she was encouraged by active student participation in the workshop.

"We look forward to extending the workshop to other residences in our quest to combat GBV at MUT," said Dr Naidoo. She further commended the Executive Hotel Residence Assistant, Nombulelo Ncube, and House Committee Chairperson, Lindo Nikwe, for their commitment and dedication to the GBV project and student support.

- ◆ *There is also a lack of awareness around gender stereotyping and*
- ◆ *gender norms which perpetuate GBV. She made students aware of the*
- ◆ *MUT GBV Policy and GBV Standard Operating Procedures, which are in place to inform and guide the MUT community on issues relating to the scourge.*

FIGHTING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

On-campus vaccination site draws students to get the jab

As higher education institutions mull over compulsory vaccination as a requirement for students who want to return to universities for face-to-face learning, MUT opened an on-campus vaccination site at the computer labs next to the student dining hall to encourage students to take their jab.

The on-campus vaccination site initiative is a result of a collaboration between MUT and the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Health. Acting Vice-Chancellor and Principal at MUT, Professor Marcus Ramogale, said that the vaccination site was part of the University's efforts to ensure that staff and students protect themselves and their loved ones against the COVID-19 pandemic.

"As we know, September is the beginning of Spring. Spring symbolises the beginning of a new life," said Professor Ramogale. "In an attempt to ensure that we have this new life, the University has decided to open a new vaccination site on campus. We request all staff and students to use this vaccination site so that we can all be vaccinated to combat this pandemic. In this way we can contribute to ensuring that there is indeed new life on our campus," said Professor Ramogale.

Professor Ramogale's words did not fall on deaf ears. As if to assure the University that bringing vaccination to campus was the correct move, over 110 individuals were vaccinated in the first two days of the site's opening.

Speaking after the launch, Acting Deputy Vice-Chancellor: Resources and Planning, Dr Johan van Koller, expressed his gratitude to Prince Mshiyeni Hospital for making MUT's wish of having its own dedicated vaccine site a reality.

"This shows how much Prince Mshiyeni Hospital values the safety and health of our staff," said Dr van Koller. "The opening of the vaccination site on campus will make it possible for all our students to get vaccinated within a short period of time."

Sister Nomusa Mkhwanazi, the Convenor of the COVID-19 Task Team and Head of Clinic at MUT, said the site was meant to make it convenient for students to vaccinate in a familiar place without having to wait in



Ray Zulu, left, and Nikela Mchunu, were the first staff members to vaccinate.

long queues. The site has both the Johnson & Johnson and Pfizer vaccines to offer staff and students. MUT has over 14 000 students and priority is to have all of them vaccinated. This has meant vigorous campaigning by the Department of Marketing and Communication at MUT, targeting students and setting up vaccine registration drives on campus.

"Having a vaccination site on campus is a bold move by the university to show our students and staff that the institution cares about their well-being," said Mbali Mkhize, Senior Director: Marketing and Communication. "We are confident that our staff and students will take advantage of the proximity and convenience of a vaccination site on campus to protect themselves and their loved ones. The COVID-19 vaccine is a passport to our future; it is the only way students can protect themselves and their dream of graduating with a qualification from MUT."

Leading by example, Student Representative Council (SRC) President, Mthokozisi Gumede, took his jab at the site and encouraged others to do the same.

Staff vaccination stories

Professor Roger Coopoosamy – Acting Dean: Faculty of Natural Sciences

There are many misconceptions regarding the current vaccines and their administration. In SA we are being offered the Pfizer (two-dose vaccine) or the Johnson and Johnson (single dose vaccine). Irrespective of which is taken, the ultimate aim is for one's body to be prepared for a potential infection from COVID-19 and its variants. While the vaccine works to protect the body, "keyboard medics" who don't have a clue of virology, microbiology and biochemistry are using social media to dictate the perceived shortfalls of the vaccines to the public. To those who question the short-term vaccine and its effectiveness, I ask: how long has the flu virus been around? Don't we protect ourselves every year with a flu shot or other immune-boosting treatment or supplement? This is because the flu virus comes in different forms every single year.

I have taken the Pfizer vaccine and I am due for my second shot within the next two weeks. The symptoms I developed were similar to mild flu symptoms which disappeared over two days with the exception of

a slightly painful arm. The reason for the symptoms was due to the body making attempts to recognise the foreign body injected into my anatomy, and developing a protection in the form of an antigen to rid the body of this foreign invader. Since the vaccine was developed to resemble the spike protein of COVID-19 and its variants, my body now recognises the so-called spike protein assemblage. If in the future the COVID-19 virus decides to invade my body, my defence mechanism is immediately triggered to act fast and eradicate this invasive bug. So, in a way I am protected as much as 95.2%, with the same chance of survival from any infection of COVID-19.

I say VACCINATE...your body needs to be prepared.



Professor Roger Coopoosamy

Dave Pons – Lecturer: Department of Agriculture

As a scientist, I have followed the process and results of the development of the vaccine and after considering both sides of the story, I do believe that it is essential for all adults to accept the vaccine for the following reasons:

- Vaccination will reduce the chance of death by COVID-19.
- Vaccination will reduce the severity of a COVID-19 infection.
- Vaccination will reduce the longevity of a COVID-19 infection.
- Vaccination will hence reduce the infection of others by COVID-19.
- It is free.
- It will allow you to travel internationally in the

future.

- You have already had many other vaccinations.

Unfortunately, it is not quite so simple, and this is where my vaccination story becomes complex. My spouse is an anti-vaxxer! This develops debates and arguments within the family.

I believe in freedom of speech and freedom of knowledge. So, I will not force my spouse into anything. This is good and well.

The complexity increases when considering the vaccination of our children: I say yes and my spouse says NO. So, NO it is!



Dave Pons

Dr Festus Adejoro – Department of Agriculture

I got vaccinated at the King Edward VIII Hospital. The whole process took less than one hour from entering the hospital to the end of the post-vaccination waiting period. There was an accreditation protocol that involved me presenting my identity document and answering a few personal questions. Thereafter, I was told I would be receiving the J&J vaccine. I got inoculated on the left arm and was then made to sit for 15 minutes before leaving the premises, without any

obvious change in my body. I had only slight pain in the arm where the vaccine was injected; I did not experience any side effects at all.

I had anticipated a more adverse reaction considering the fears and anxieties expressed across media platforms. I encourage people to get vaccinated.



Dr Festus Adejoro

MUT'S ANCHOR MISSION

MUT celebrates National Wills Week in September with free will-drafting services for Umlazi residents



Ally Akbar, middle, from the Accounting and Law department, with an intern, left, assisted Professor Sma Lubbe, Retired Research Professor - Faculty of Management Sciences.

Residents of Umlazi Township and MUT staff members are now breathing a sigh of relief after consultations with legal experts enabled them to draft their last will and testament from 14 to 16 September.

Azwi Mufamadi, Director: Public Relations and Brand Management, said the University chose will-drafting services as an area of assistance to Umlazi Township residents as part of its Anchor Strategy.

“In the first place, as an anchor university, MUT wants to partner with its immediate communities in a bid to improve the well-being of its surrounding communities. Drafting a will can be expensive for many in our communities, and there is a misconception that you need to have a lot of money or a large estate to have a will. Yet, having a will is important for protecting one’s legacy and ensuring that one’s assets are left in the right hands. Our accounting and law colleagues partnered with law firms to dedicate their time to assist communities with free will-drafting services,” said Mufamadi.

The central message from the legal experts was that

a will is an official document that makes it clear who inherits the possessions of the deceased. Mufamadi said having a will was essential for preventing fights over the deceased’s estate, which is prevalent in the townships and other places where word-of-mouth rules. This view was supported by Noluthando Ndlovu from Qomazitha Zikode Attorneys.

Bongekile Mthembu, from Umlazi ‘S’ Philani Valley, made use of the services because she was worried about what would happen to her house when she passed away. Mthembu said the legal experts “were God-sent”. Mthembu lives with three grandchildren. On 15 September, she again visited the University to have her will drawn up by the legal experts.

Retired Research Professor in the Faculty of Management Sciences, Sam Lubbe, also benefited from the free legal services provided. He discussed his inheritance matters with Akbar Ally, a Lecturer in the Department of Accounting and Law. Ally is also an attorney. MUT maintenance staff were also some staff members that benefited.

The free will-drafting services were offered by staff members from MUT, ProBon.Org, and Qomazitha Zikode Attorneys.

MUT shines the spotlight on domestic violence as part of Women's Month

In its Strategic Plan 2025, MUT identifies itself as an institution anchored in its community. This is a commitment to playing a role in the upliftment of Umlazi Township. When national Women's Month came, MUT chose to highlight the plight of women who are victims of domestic violence through a special MUT Radio broadcast on the eve of Women's Day.

"The purpose of the show was to provide as much information to our community as possible on domestic violence," said Mbali Mkhize, Senior Director: Marketing and Communication at MUT. "Many women who are victims of domestic violence are not aware of the process they can follow to seek justice; while others dealing with subtle forms of domestic violence are not even aware that they can seek legal protection."

The star of the show was Nozipho Mvulane, Attorney and Partner at Rajaram Mvulane Attorneys, who took listeners through the legal definition of domestic violence and offered advice on the process that victims can follow to get redress. For starters, Mvulane stated that domestic violence has its own legal definition which sets it apart from other forms of violence and abuse.

"It is any abuse that is committed by someone that you are in a relationship with, that then becomes domestic violence," she said. "The court categorises it as domestic violence because it is a separate type of violence that has its own awful effects that a person would suffer by someone who is meant to love them."

Mvulane advised that it was important for women to leave relationships or seek help by telling other people before the violence escalates. "Unfortunately, after domestic violence comes femicide," she said.

But Mvulane also acknowledged that while leaving the relationship was the best solution, it was not always practical or feasible for victims to leave abusive relationships.

"It is difficult to leave because you are in a romantic relationship with this person, and what abusers would do in most instances is that they are not always abusive. You get those moments where they are romantic and loving, and as women we hold on to



Nozipho Mvulane

that, we hold on to the idea of who they are or who they would become. In other instances, it is difficult to leave for financial reasons. If you are financially dependent on that person, it makes it difficult for you to leave because you wonder where you will go and if your family will want you back if this was your husband," explained Mvulane.

Mvulane emphasised the significance of offering support to women in abusive relationships. Where kids are also abused, Mvulane advised members of the community and family to report such cases.

"If you know someone who is in a situation where children are being abused or harmed, report it to the social worker, report it to the police or attorneys, because that child needs assistance and that child must be protected by both parents. If it is not happening, someone in the community or someone in the family needs to step up for those children," she said.

Mvulane stressed the significance of reporting domestic abuse to relevant authorities as the all-important first step towards getting justice.

ON STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT & PARTNERSHIPS

MUT takes student recruitment to the Eastern Cape

From the time Mangosuthu University of Technology was founded more than 40 years ago, it has always had students from outside KwaZulu-Natal. Some students came from as far as Eswatini, while others came from the Eastern Cape. The Department of Marketing and Communications continues to maintain this tradition and to strengthen relations with countries beyond the country's borders.

Sithembile Maphumulo, a Schools Liaison Officer in the department, said the recent weeklong visit to the Eastern Cape was meant to solidify the University's relationship with the region by getting learners to apply to further their studies at MUT.

"The Eastern Cape is one of our focal areas. The main goal of the visit was to remind the schools and parents that they are still welcome to send their learners to MUT where their future could be moulded," said Maphumulo.

Maphumulo described the visit as "fruitful as there is no other institution that visits the region. In total, we addressed more than 2 500 grade 12 learners. There is always a great chance that most of these learners

will consider furthering their studies in one of the KwaZulu-Natal universities post matric, given that the Bizana area, under the Alfred Nzo District, where we went, is in the middle of nowhere; all the Eastern Cape universities are quite far from the district," observed Maphumulo. "The "excited" District Coordinator Mr. V Dumela said that most of their learners enrol with MUT, as it is the nearest institution."

Maphumulo said the main message for the visit was to give the learners the information they would need to plan for studying further. "We were encouraging them to apply as soon as possible as the Central Applications Office's (CAO) closing date is approaching. We explained to them the whole process of applying and told them the reasons for choosing MUT as their first choice when they apply. We also gave them details on MUT academic programmes, as well as the admission requirements," said Maphumulo.

Maphumulo added that the "excited" learners "asked endless questions" on how to apply to MUT as well as about the NSFAS funding.



Sithembile Maphumulo, front, standing, addressing one of the schools they visited



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