

CUT ALUMNI NEWS

2022

7TH
EDITION



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Dear Alumni,

This final Alumni Newsletter also marks the end of my chapter as Deputy Vice Principle of the Central University of Technology, Free State. I am delighted to have had the opportunity to serve the CUT community in this capacity and pleased to make room for the next leader to steer this institution towards its vision 2030.

Being part of an alumni network gives you a sense of belonging, but also a responsibility. You are pivotal in providing mentorship, internships, and career opportunities to the students who follow in your footsteps. This collective drive provides economic progress and stability for the community that you serve, and also for the community that serves you in turn. It helps to keep knowledge and skills up to date and relevant to the market and the next generation's needs. These reciprocal inputs also allow institutions of higher learning to adapt curricula accordingly.

Hence, it is clear that as alumni of the CUT, you play a vital role in the overall success of the institution, and I am grateful for the sterling job that you have done so far. A university is the sum of all the great minds that walked its campus in some or other capacity – collectively, we have a responsibility to apply our knowledge and skills within our communities and beyond.

I will continue to keep up with CUT Alumni developments and be assured that I will always be tremendously proud of all of you.

Be blessed and safe.

Regards

Prof Ngowi



Message from the President of the Alumni Association



There is a legend about Bantu Biko that is instrumental to the challenges we find ourselves facing as the Alumni Association; as the Central University of Technology, Free State (CUT); and as society in general. We are told by those who had the honour to break bread with the great philosopher that the South African Students Organisation (SASO) branch at the then University of Natal, where Bantu Biko was studying medicine, was considering a strike that would shut down the university right on the edge of the final examinations. They all knew, without a doubt, that embarking on such action carried a risk of expulsion for the organisers. Biko was with them. Once they decided on the aims of the strike action, the only question left was if they were willing to sacrifice their studies for the furtherance of those aims. Before the question could be debated, Biko recused himself from that decision.

He told his comrades that he had not qualified for final examinations, and would be academically excluded anyway. Thus, he had nothing to lose if the strike went ahead. It would therefore be unprincipled of him to partake in that final decision that carried so much risk for everyone else, and none for him.

We are therefore enjoined to gauge our actions against this template of principled leadership. Especially now, with so much tension in our society; with different parties ready to tear at each other. There are genuine issues facing CUT, its students and alumni. It is only through principled leadership that these issues will find resolution without throwing people to the wolves for the sake of

self-aggrandizement. Principled leadership is not shouting from the rooftops, hogging media attention with irresponsible statements. It is collaborating with people, conversing with them, paying attention to their needs and ideas, learning from each other, and explaining your vision with intellectual humility. As the great philosopher Frantz Fanon put it: "Everything can be explained to the people, on the single condition that you really want them to understand".

We entered this term of office as the leadership of the Alumni Association with the broad aim of building the university into an institution all will want to be associated with. To do this, we had to get every alumnus and alumna on board. We therefore went to the ground, launched chapters across the country, and painstakingly explained our vision with graduates of CUT. Not only did they buy into our vision, but they also enriched it with new ideas and fresh vigour.

This year, we have continued to build the Alumni Association into a force to be reckoned with; a force for good. We have launched more chapters, and consolidated chapters launched in the previous years. We have also reached out to alumni in neighbouring countries, and launched international chapters in Lesotho and Botswana. We go into our last year of service immensely proud of the growth of the Alumni Association, which is a growth in active citizenry. This can only augur well for CUT and society at large. We will continue in this vein in the new year, building a force for good through principled leadership.

Greetings,
Mbuyiselo Frans



Ms Gloria Pule - Climbing the corporate ladder

The Deputy Director of the Central University of Technology, Free State (CUT) Welkom Campus, Ms Gloria Pule, started her career as a junior lecturer, before being promoted to a lecturer, and then Departmental Manager in the Accounting and Auditing Department. As a deputy director, she is responsible for many departments. "My phone is always on. Someone might call at any time. I love helping people; it is the best part of my job. My reward is being able to assist. That is all I want," she says.

Gloria's praises are sung by many as remaining dedicated, kind and humble, even after all the progress she has made in her career. She began her tertiary education at the CUT Welkom Campus as a student in the National Diploma: Internal Auditing programme, and then continued to pursue the BTech in Internal Auditing. She is currently completing the Master of Philosophy in Management Sciences: Internal Auditing.

Growing up in Hennenman, Gloria and her twin sister were raised in a very spiritual and prayerful home. They never missed a church service. That may be where her love for singing started. As a student, she was very quiet and reserved, until joining the CUT Choir. "It felt good to be part of something – I felt like I belonged there, and travelling a lot with the choir was a bonus!"

Her road to Deputy Director: Welkom Campus was not always easy, and there were times when she felt like giving up. She credits the support from her colleagues and learning from her predecessors for getting where she is today, especially the likes of Prof. Solomon Makola and Prof. Freda Van der Walt, who believed in her when she herself did not.

As a leader, Gloria believes it is important to find quiet time. "Remember, you are still your own person, despite your role. You need to take care of your emotional and mental well-being," she says. Being a woman in a male-dominated space also has challenges, and one should be strong and stand up for what you believe in. She wants to see more women taking up space and moving to high positions in their careers. Gloria says God made women different, and although women must work harder to prove themselves; they should not lose sight of their uniqueness.



Alumni Seniors Club Breakfast



The Alumni Affairs Office hosted an Alumni Seniors Club Breakfast on 11 November 2022. Excitement showed on the faces of the senior alumni as they arrived. They shared their experiences and reminisced about their varsity days. Joy filled the room as they saw their fellow alumni when they had not seen in a long time. This was the first alumni seniors club launch. The purpose of this club is to forge close ties with the senior alumni and to interact with them more intimately. "We thought of setting up this club to use it as a vehicle for our alumni to contribute to the strategic goals of the university, to bring back the senior alumni who are 50 years and older and create a platform for them to reconnect to their alma mater," said Prof Makola, Campus Director: Welkom Campus. "In the course of your studies here at CUT, you made a significant contribution to our university and gained a wealth of experience. We are indeed proud of the contribution you are making in your respective careers," said Prof Ngowi, Acting Vice Chancellor and Principal in his State of the University Address.

This club will play an important role in connecting alumni who are experienced and established in their careers with the university. They will share knowledge and give guidance on the curriculum and activities offered to make students workplace ready. They could also be taking some students for Work Integrated Learning (WIL). Dr Brenton Fredericks, alumnus and Head of Department: Communication Sciences in the Faculty of Humanities said that CUT needs inclusivity and involves more alumni in projects for the institution to grow. "As alumni, we form part of the social responsibility towards not only

society, but to each and every one of ourselves and future graduates," he said. The priorities set for this club include encouraging professional development, specialized mentorship programmes, alumni fundraising, build positive relations between the university and business, in service training, brand ambassadorship, guided and self-paid tours, and student recruitment. Dr Sally Dzingwa, Registrar, expressed the importance of connecting to the institution. The seniors have been here before, they can see what has changed and what still needs to be worked on. "Share resources with your alma mater and form strategic engagements. Be intentional about how you want your institution to change. Privilege is not known to 90% of our students. They need role models like you, people who have run the race they are on and have been victorious. They need to be you, multiplied," she said.

Mr Qondile Khedama, alumnus and Mangaung Metropolitan Municipality (MMM) Spokesperson, mentioned that the municipality has seen CUT's contribution to the community through research and outreach programmes. He also added that the Metro has provided WIL opportunities to the Communication Sciences Department in the office of the MMM General Manager: Communications. Dr Elvina Smith, alumna and lecturer expressed that the university's original mandate is to provide for the needs of the industry and alumni should be a bridge between the institution and industry. A Working Committee of the CUT Alumni Seniors Club was established to take forward the discussions and implement programmes to assist the institution in its quest to realise its vision.



Xoli, the master of ceremonies



After matric, he enrolled for a National Diploma in Language Practice at the Central University of Technology, Free State (CUT) Welkom Campus, and also obtained the BTech Language Practice cum laude. He worked for a local magazine called Face Impression, and was a presenter at Rock FM while studying. CUT afforded him the amazing opportunity to conduct part of his research at Thomas More University in Belgium. When he returned, he enrolled for his postgraduate studies in Language Practice, graduating cum laude. He says one of the things he is most grateful for, is CUT giving him the freedom to express his sexuality.

Today, Xolani is an English teacher at Geelhoutpark Secondary School, where he strives for academic excellence, and finds joy in seeing his learners grow and do well. During holidays and weekends, he works as a master of ceremonies, social media influencer, motivational speaker, presenter and actor. He also hosts large events in Gauteng and North West. He says these events are mostly about female empowerment, which is something he feels strongly about.

Xolani is one of a kind – talented, dedicated, and an advocate for social change. He says South Africa should look out: one day, we will see him on our screens having his own reality show and being a lead character in a telenovela. He has proven multiple times that he pursues his dreams.

For fear of judgement and bullying, Xolani Dladwa hid his identity from family and friends for many years. Today, he aims to be influential in the LGBTQIA+ space, and wants to be able to advocate for queer teachers who cannot be themselves freely. He also wants to build a healthy and inclusive school environment for queer learners.

As a child, Xolani spent all his time involved in extramural activities to keep busy. When he was in primary school, he joined a group called “Reabetswe Youth Centre” in Welkom, where he participated in poetry, drama and public speaking. In high school, he took part in an oral history project, which landed him an opportunity to film a documentary about Welkom, in cooperation with learners from different schools.



CUT gives assistive devices to students and community members



The Central University of Technology, Free State (CUT) Disability Unit (DU), in collaboration with the Product Development Technology Station (PDTs) and Unit for Development (UD), donated seven assistive devices to differently abled students and members of the community. The assistive devices included automatic wheelchairs, three-in-one wheelchairs, and a custom-made cranial protector.

Mr Schalk van der Merwe designed the three-in-one wheelchairs, and collaborated with the PDTs to realise his vision. After losing his leg in a car accident in 1991, he discovered the value of mobility and independence that a wheelchair can bring. During a visit to Soweto, Schalk noticed how children in wheelchairs struggled to get around, as normal wheelchairs are not suitable for rural areas. This is where his idea for the three-in-one wheelchair – a multifunctional chair adapted for rural areas and rough terrain – was born.

CUT is grateful for such collaborative opportunities that are focused on changing lives and the community at large. At the handover event, Acting Vice-Chancellor and Principal, Prof. Alfred Ngowi, highlighted that CUT is an inclusive institution who puts the needs of its students first.

“We want students and members of the community living with disabilities to be afforded the same opportunities, and to be able to partake meaningfully in their activities. What is happening today aligns with Vision 2030. We are also working on developing wheelchairs suitable for sports, to encourage differently abled students to take part in it,” he said.

CUT stands for an inclusive and healthy environment for all, and is committed to creating a harmonious environment that is conducive to learning. We will continue to invest in the lives of the marginalised, and are grateful for all the partnerships, sponsorships and donations.





Born to lead



Nneile Nkholise, who was born in Lesotho and grew up in South Africa, has always believed in developing herself holistically. She enrolled at the Central University of Technology, Free State (CUT) to study Mechanical Engineering, and also joined the debate team. As a member of the debate team, Nneile got the opportunity to go to the National Debate Championships held at Nelson Mandela University (NMU) in 2010.

Debating allowed her to expand her view of the world to a multisided interpretation. She also served in different organisations, such as football, the Students' Representative Council (SRC) and athletics. "I was just giving my time to serve. Little did I know the greatest experiences that helped shape my career path came from my service in all those different organisations," she says.

As an extension on the research she did at CUT, her first start-up, iMed Tech, explored additive manufacturing to scale the manufacturing of medical prosthesis. She discovered that there could be an opportunity to apply some of the learning and product development methodologies that were used to create maxillofacial prosthesis (her research area) in creating artificial breasts for women who had undergone a mastectomy due to breast cancer.

Nneile also founded a second start-up, Thola, based in San Francisco. Thola is building a "pay now, pick later" application to help streamline pre-ordering for small businesses. It offers an e-commerce plug-in that small businesses can use to get their customers to pre-order and pay for products, giving the businesses actionable insights into pre-orders, by who they were done, and the delivery time. "We work with so many immigrant small businesses, which are mostly led by women from countries such as Mexico, Guatemala, Nigeria, Senegal and China. Offering them the ability to increase sales by enabling product pre-ordering has allowed me to see their companies grow, and they equally grow as entrepreneurs," she says proudly.

Nneile has found her niche. She loves the customers she serves, and believes that entrepreneurship goes beyond just making money – it is also very much about service. Ultimately, she wants to see small businesses thrive despite a lack of capital resource support, and wants Thola to be globally recognised.



Winning on the field and on site



Chris works as a Quantity Surveyor at Remey Construction in Stellenbosch. He is site based and currently managing all costs, appointments, tenders, and payments involved with the current project. They are building a five-star hostel in the middle of the winelands.

Chris remains very humble even with all he has achieved. He builds furniture as a way to relax. If you are ever in need of a carpenter, you know who to call. He implores young people to have a ten-year plan and work towards it. He says fear should not stop people from taking up challenges. “It is never too late or too early to start. Everyone has the potential to be a good influence on their company, community, and environment. Treat everyone the same” he concluded.



It is sometimes difficult to maintain studies and sports. Chris Dry is one determined individual who was able to go through this seamlessly. He enrolled at the Central University for a diploma in Building Environment at the Central University of Technology, Free State (CUT) in 2016. Thereafter, he completed his degrees in Quantity Surveying and Construction Management at the Cape Peninsula University of Technology. He says he has always loved building trade and development.

He says he will always cherish the chats under the tree with his friends and just playing rugby on Fridays. He considers those to be the best memories he has of CUT. He made his first appearance in 2010 in Adelaide, Australia, and went back on to represent the Springbok Sevens team in 74 HSBC Hongkong and Shanghai Banking Corporation (HSBC) World Cup Series tournaments. He scored 98 tries. He won a gold medal twice in the World Series Team in 2017. He retired his jersey in 2021 after an incredible career. He counts himself very blessed to have had such a victorious journey and meet amazing people.





Gaborone Alumni Chapter Launch

A second International Alumni Chapter was successfully launched in Gaborone, Botswana, on 10 September 2022. The first international chapter was launched in Lesotho earlier this year. These chapters are launched to bring CUT alumni closer to their alma mater and to build relationships with one another. “Today is a great day for CUT because it is the first time the Alumni Association is coming to Botswana to follow you, the ambassadors of CUT. I cannot stress the importance of this event enough. You are the people that market CUT out here, you are representatives of your alma mater, and the role you play is very significant,” said Prof. Ngowi, Acting Vice-Chancellor and Principal.

It is often not recognised how important the involvement of alumni in African universities is. In many institutions, the alumni give back to the institution to help those coming after them. Prof. Ngowi mentioned all that has changed at CUT since the alumni had been studying at CUT. Some faculties have changed from what they were. They are new and improved with new courses.

There are also centres for multidisciplinary research and various entrepreneurship programmes. CUT is working towards Vision 2030, which states that it should be the best university of technology in Africa by then.

Technology as we know it has changed over the years. The first industrial revolution was the era of the water stream pipelines, followed by phones and then computers. Now we are in the Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR). 4IR is a media of technologies coming together to produce one product. CUT has been involved in 4IR through sustainable smart cities, the CUT Agri-farm, smart farms and the Peaky Pear Project.

Dr Modise talked about two kinds of people in this life. The educated and the learned. The educated hold a qualification, but the learned hold a qualification and have mastered certain skills, and that is what our graduates are, learned. It is evident from the fact that 80% of the alumni in attendance are employed in their field of study. “Things have changed since you last obtained your qualification. Competition gets tough every five years.

Go back and reskill yourself, enrol in another course that will give you a new set of skills in your field,” he challenged the alumni. CUT as a stakeholder must take care of and nurture its students and alumni. “We will be profiling you because we want to brag about our graduates and inform CUT’s internal and external stakeholders about the great work that you have been doing,” said Ms Jacqueline Pietersen, Deputy Director: Alumni Affairs.

“It is a great honour to witness how all of you have done so well for yourselves. You will be electing a committee to represent you. It is the job of the Alumni Association to support the programmes you will outline. We are eager to hear your new ideas, and we are willing to go the extra mile to support your needs,” expressed Lebohlang Khutlang, CUT Alumni Deputy President. In attendance was Mrs Jubee Mawoyo, Assistant Registrar: Academic Structure and Student Enrolment. She gave guidance to those who wish to further their studies, and answered all questions related to admission and funding at CUT.

The newly elected members are the Coordinator- Mildred Baikakedi, Convenor- Phemelo Ditau and the members – Khupukani Laimon, Mmoloki Taweale, Oteng Haward, Kenannao Thuthunyane, Oteng Kgari and Baboloki Chilisa. Midred expressed her gratitude for this launch. “Today has been wonderful, I got to see friends whom I have not seen in ten years. It is important that we keep the CUT flag flying high. We are a family and we will support each other. Our new motto is “*Keep this alive.*”



Contact the following people to join an Alumni Chapter in your area

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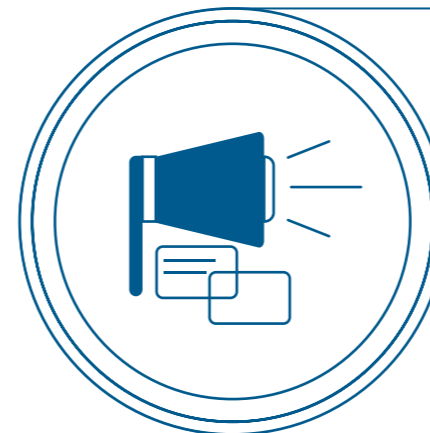
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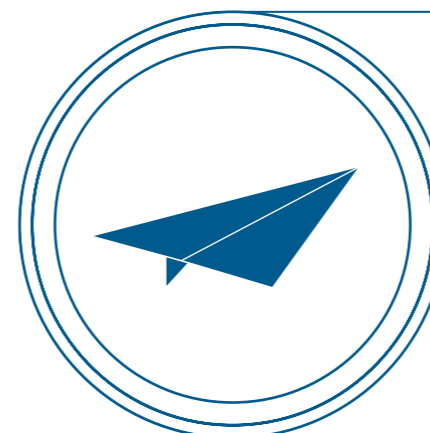
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SHARING IS CARING

Share your own (or fellow alumni's) achievements/journey to success with us.
Click here: jhpietersen@cut.ac.za



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Central University of Technology,
Free State



www.cut.ac.za/the-alumni



On behalf of the university, I would like to wish you and your loved ones a happy and peaceful holiday season

Prof. Alfred Ngowi
Acting Vice - Chancellor and Principal

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