

CUT ALUMNI NEWSLETTER

15TH EDITION

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Editorial note



Dear Alum

It is with warmth and pride that we bring you this latest edition, rich with inspiring stories, cherished memories, and meaningful moments that remind us of the strength of our alumni community.

In this edition of our newsletter, we celebrate the remarkable journeys of our alumni, who continue to make us proud through their achievements, innovation and resilience. Their stories serve as a beacon of inspiration, reminding us that, with determination and a strong foundation, anything is possible.

A special highlight is the recognition of Dr William Hlakoane, a distinguished mechanical engineer and Denel Group Executive Landward, upon which an Honorary Doctorate in Mechanical Engineering was conferred – an exceptional honour for a proud CUT alumnus.

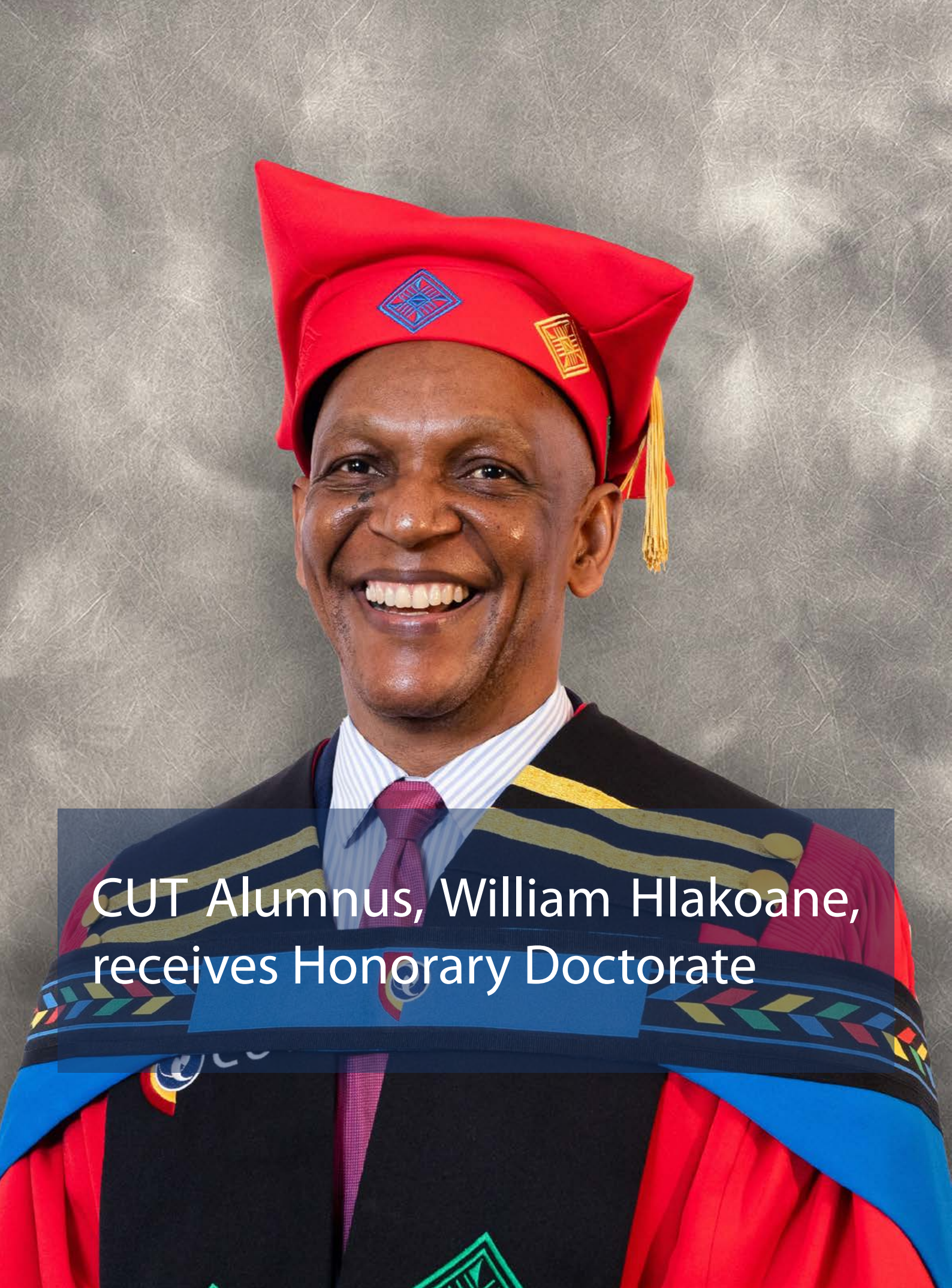
We shine a light on the work of Dr Choice Makhetha, the Executive Director in the Office of the Vice-Chancellor and Principal, whose commitment to academic excellence and leadership continues to uplift and inspire both students and colleagues alike. Her contributions reflect the values we hold dear as an institution: dedication, progress, and the pursuit of knowledge.

We also introduce the newly appointed Director: Institutional Advancement, Mr Qondakele Sompondo, whose vibrant vision and strategic direction aim to elevate CUT's profile, strengthen alumni engagement, advance institutional fundraising, and spotlight the remarkable achievements of our graduates across various industries.

Additionally, we reflect on a range of memorable moments, including exciting alumni networking events like the CUT Alumni Stakeholder Breakfast and the vibrant Alumni Karaoke Cocktail Evening, both offering wonderful opportunities to reconnect, build new bonds, and celebrate shared experiences.

We hope this edition leaves you feeling uplifted. Enjoy the read!

Warm regards
Jaqueline Pietersen
Deputy Director: Alumni Affairs



CUT Alumnus, William Hlakoane, receives Honorary Doctorate

In a historic milestone for the Central University of Technology, Free State (CUT), industry expert William Hlakoane has been awarded an Honorary Doctorate in Mechanical Engineering (honoris causa). Conferred by the Faculty of Engineering, Built Environment, and Information Technology (FEBIT), this prestigious recognition celebrates Hlakoane's outstanding contributions to the engineering sector and cements his place in the university's legacy. Dr Hlakoane, a highly respected mechanical engineer and the current Denel Group Executive Landward, hails from Thabong in the Lejweleputswa District, Welkom.

His journey with CUT began decades ago, where he earned both a National Diploma and a Bachelor of Technology (BTech) degree in Mechanical Engineering. Now, he has made history as the first CUT graduate to receive an Honorary Doctorate from his alma mater, further distinguished as the first honorary graduate to don the university's newly designed graduation regalia. Reflecting on his early years, Dr Hlakoane shared how his fascination with engineering was sparked during childhood, crafting wire cars and dismantling objects to understand their mechanics. "I was always a curious child, constantly taking things apart and putting them back together. If circumstances had been different, I might have been the first person to invent a car made of aluminium or zinc plates," he reminisced with a smile.

His academic journey at CUT, then known as Technikon Free State, was not without obstacles. Initially aspiring to study electrical or civil engineering, he had to pivot to mechanical engineering due to space constraints. Another hurdle was the language barrier, as he had to transition from English to Afrikaans instruction. However, his perseverance led him to forge a strong bond with Prof. Deon de Beer, who was the Head of the Mechanical Engineering Department at the time and played a crucial role in his success.

"It was a special relationship. Prof. De Beer was one of the few lecturers who taught in both English and Afrikaans. His books were in English, so he made an effort to ensure that all students could follow along," Dr Hlakoane explained. "I was always eager to learn, and perhaps my curiosity brought us closer."



Dr William Hlakoane, Denel Group Executive Landward, CUT alumnus, and his family

Determined to overcome linguistic challenges, he diligently translated his study material, gradually mastering Afrikaans. His efforts didn't go unnoticed - he soon became a translator for fellow students and even served as a lecturer's assistant. His dedication earned him a bursary, easing the financial strain of his studies. "I had big dreams as a child - a successful career and a beautiful home - so I was determined to succeed. I knew that perseverance was key," he reflected.

Receiving the Honorary Doctorate was an emotional moment for Dr Hlakoane. "I was in tears. It took me back to where it all began, the relationships I built at CUT and the milestones I've reached in my career. Out of everything I've achieved, this honour stands out as something truly special for my family and I." On his leadership philosophy, Dr Hlakoane underscored the importance of continuous learning. "I never wanted to limit myself to a single role. I've always sought to expand my knowledge and apply engineering principles in diverse business environments. People often ask how I know so much, and my answer is simple - curiosity."

His adaptability has been a key driver in his success. "Formal education provides a foundation, but it's up to you to build on it. Use what you've learned to push boundaries and acquire knowledge beyond the classroom." Expressing his pride in CUT, Dr Hlakoane remarked, "I am honoured to be a CUT graduate. Seeing how the university has grown makes me incredibly proud, and I wish all students here the success they deserve." His journey from a curious child in Thabong to a pioneering engineer, and now CUT's first Honorary Doctorate alumnus, serves as an inspiration to aspiring engineers and students across South Africa. Dr Hlakoane's story is a testament to resilience, determination, and the boundless possibilities that come with an insatiable thirst for knowledge.



Prof. Deon De Beer, SARChI Chair Medical Product Development: Centre for Rapid Prototyping and Manufacturing (CRPM) and Dr William Hlakoane, Denel Group Executive Landward, CUT alumni and the newly awarded Honorary Doctor. Prof. Masinde Muthoni, Dean: Faculty of Engineering, Built Environment and Information Technology (FEBIT)

Dr Kelebogile Choice Makhetha - A trailblazer in Education, Politics, and Transformation



Dr Choice Makhetha, Executive Director in the Office of the Vice-Chancellor and Principal

Dr Kelebogile Choice Makhetha is a distinguished academic, leader, and advocate for transformation in higher education. Born in Thaba 'Nchu, and growing up between Thaba 'Nchu and Mafikeng in a dynamic and intellectually stimulating environment, she was raised in a family that valued education deeply, with relatives who pursued careers in medicine and politics. Her grandfather, a former Minister of Education in Bophuthatswana, played a significant role in shaping her belief in the power of education.

Attending Mariasdal Secondary School, a Catholic boarding institution, she was provided with a structured and disciplined environment that allowed her to focus on her studies. This early exposure to rigorous academics prepared her for the challenges and opportunities that lay ahead in higher education. Dr Makhetha's path to political science was unplanned, but ultimately transformative. After applying to multiple universities, she took a gap year, before enrolling at the University of Bophuthatswana. Initially interested in industrial psychology, she adjusted her academic focus due to course availability, and found herself drawn to political science – a field that quickly ignited her curiosity and passion.

Despite facing academic setbacks, she remained determined, and ultimately completed her bachelor's, honours, master's and PhD in political science at the University of the Free State.

Dr Makhetha's life has been shaped by personal and professional challenges that strengthened her resolve. Becoming a mother at a young age pushed her to work harder and strive for financial independence, to ensure that she could provide the best for her daughter.

As the Executive Director in the Office of the Vice-Chancellor and Principal, Dr Makhetha plays a crucial role in overseeing Institutional Advancement, Student Affairs, Institutional Planning and Quality Enhancement, Institutional Renewal and Transformation as well as providing operational support to Risk and Audit. She ensures that the university creates an environment where students, especially first-generation learners, receive the support they need to succeed.

Dr Makhetha has also taken personal steps to support struggling students by paying for their education out of her own pocket. Recognising the financial hardships many students face, she took out personal loans to cover tuition fees for those in need. However, she acknowledges that this approach was not sustainable in the long term.

"I've paid for a lot of students, especially when I was at the University of the Free State," she says. "I would take loans because I would say I have the capacity to take the loan, and I would use it to pay for students. But in the end, I found myself with a lot of debt. Now, I've stopped for a while, to raise money and build a proper system, so that when I support, I support from strength."

Her goal is to establish a foundation that can provide structured financial support to students without relying on personal debt. By building a long-term funding model, she hopes to continue assisting students in a way that is both impactful and sustainable.

Dr Makhetha is preparing to publish her first book, a deeply personal and professional reflection on her experiences. Writing has always been a passion for her, and this book represents her unfiltered perspectives on leadership, transformation, and personal growth. She chose to self-publish in order to maintain full control over her narrative, ensuring that her story is told in her own words.

At the heart of Dr Makhetha's philosophy is respect, integrity, human dignity, and self-love. She believes in treating people with kindness, standing up against injustice, and creating boundaries that protect her peace. Her advice to her younger self is simple, yet powerful: "Take life as it comes, be patient, and love yourself deeply. The world will always challenge you, but knowing yourself will keep you grounded."

Beyond her professional commitments, Dr Makhetha enjoys reading, running, and spending quality time with her daughter. She is deeply invested in mentoring young people, particularly those from disadvantaged backgrounds, ensuring that they receive the guidance and support needed to navigate higher education successfully.

Dr Makhetha reflects a deep commitment to education, transformation and advocacy. Through her leadership and dedication, she is not only breaking barriers but also creating opportunities for future generations to thrive in academia and beyond.



Meet Mr Qondakele Sompondo, CUT's newly appointed Director for Institutional Advancement



The Central University of Technology, Free State (CUT) is excited to welcome Mr Qondakele Sompondo as the university's new Director for Institutional Advancement. With a career spanning fundraising; communication, and alumni relations, he brings fresh energy and a dynamic vision to strengthen CUT's engagement with its alumni and broader stakeholder community.

Hailing from the Eastern Cape, Mr Sompondo completed his undergraduate studies at Nelson Mandela University (NMU), before pursuing postgraduate qualifications at Rhodes University (RU). His professional journey has taken him through impactful roles at Ubuntu Pathways; United Through Sport; Rhodes University, and Sol Plaatje University (SPU), where he specialised in fundraising, communications, alumni engagement and institutional advancement. Now, he is ready to make a difference at CUT.

A firm believer in mentorship and lifelong learning, Mr Sompondo's MBA research focused on first-generation university students and the unique challenges they face. His passion for vocational education and skills development is driven by a deep understanding of how education transforms lives. He wants to ensure that students not only graduate, but also step confidently into their careers, fully equipped for success.

But it is not all work and no play, Mr Sompondo is a sports enthusiast. From rugby and football to squash and golf, he has always embraced the teamwork and discipline that come with being an athlete. He credits his involvement in sports for shaping his leadership style, emphasising resilience, strategy and teamwork.

In his new role, Mr Sompondo is committed to building strong connections with alumni and elevating CUT's profile. "One day, South Africa will wake up and recognise CUT as a leading institution at the heart of the country," he says with belief. His goal is to position CUT, strengthen alumni relations, drive institutional fundraising endeavour, and showcase the success stories of CUT graduates who are making an impact in their industries.

Mr Sompondo Qondakele, Director: Institutional Advancement, Office of The Vice-Chancellor and Principal

John Antunes - A visionary in technology and business



John Antunes' story is one of perseverance, passion and innovation. Born in Benoni, Gauteng, he grew up in a family that valued discipline and hard work. After completing high school at Grey College in Bloemfontein, he knew he wanted to pursue engineering, but was uncertain about which path to take.

In 1997, he enrolled at the Central University of Technology, Free State (CUT) to study mechanical engineering. During his studies, he became involved with the Centre for Rapid Prototyping and Manufacturing, where he was exposed to cutting-edge technology such as 3D printing and computer numerical control (CNC) milling. "I fell in love with prototyping, because I was always curious about how things worked and how to improve them," he recalls. This experience sparked his interest in problem-solving, leading him to explore opportunities beyond traditional mechanical engineering.

While still a student, John developed an interest in information technology (IT), which led him to launch his first business, Paracam, in 2002. Initially juggling multiple roles, including being an assistant lecturer at CUT, he eventually chose to focus entirely on entrepreneurship. In 2008, he co-founded Iclix, a company specialising in fibre and internet services, which has since grown into a successful enterprise.

John credits his achievements to the strong partnerships he has built over the years. He emphasises the role of his business partners, David, Gerad and Rowen, in shaping Iclix's success. "I don't do this alone," he says. "Without the dedication of my partners and the incredible support from my wife, none of this would have been possible." He also acknowledges his wife's unwavering encouragement, which has been instrumental in maintaining balance in his life.

Despite facing many challenges, John believes resilience and adaptability are key to success. He encourages young entrepreneurs to remain curious, work hard, and seek mentorship from those who have walked the path before them. His focus is now on giving back by mentoring others and fostering innovation in the business world.

For John, success is not just about personal achievements, but also about building a lasting legacy that benefits those around him. His journey continues, driven by a passion for technology; a commitment to excellence; and a desire to uplift others.



Dr Drude's journey of resilience, education and empowerment

Born and raised in Bronville, a close-knit community in Welkom, Dr Nicole Drude's early life was shaped by strong family values and a deep sense of community. In a neighbourhood where everyone knew each other, she grew up surrounded by resilience, warmth, and a spirit of togetherness, which left a lasting imprint on her identity.

One of her fondest childhood memories is of Sundays spent with her family, filled with laughter, good food, and playful re-enactments of church moments with her cousins. "Sundays were always for family," she recalls, highlighting how those joyful gatherings helped shape her love for connection and belonging.

However, life was not without hardship. One of the most defining and painful moments of her life was losing her sister – an experience that left a lasting impact. "It taught me the value of treasuring loved ones and making the most of the time we have," she reflects.

Raised by parents who may not have had formal degrees, but who were rich in wisdom, Dr Drude was taught the values of hard work, resilience, and unconditional love. Her father's tireless work ethic, and her mother's ability to stretch every resource in order to ensure their well-being, served as her early inspiration. "From them, I learned the importance of education, integrity, and always striving to be better."

Her journey into academia began in 2006 at North-West University (Pukke), where she started her teacher training. It was not long before her path led her to the Central University of Technology, Free State (CUT), where she completed her BEd Honours in 2012, followed by a master's degree in 2017. Her academic crown came with a PhD focused on inclusive education – an area close to her heart. "I'm passionate about making education accessible and meaningful for all learners," she says.

Becoming a teacher marked a defining moment in her life. "Walking into my first classroom made me realise the impact I could have. I understood the responsibility and privilege of shaping young minds," she says. That realisation only strengthened her commitment to education, not just as a personal mission, but as a tool for uplifting communities.

Despite the demands of her academic and professional life, Dr Drude remains grounded in her community and family. Her son's sport matches, quiet time at home, and being surrounded by loved ones are what bring her true joy. "Watching him grow and being present in every moment brings me so much joy, she shares. Her advice to aspiring teachers and lecturers is as heartfelt as it is practical: "Just start. Don't overthink it. Once you do, you'll find so many reasons not to. Never stop learning, and always lift others as you rise."

Dr Drude dreams of one day earning the title of professor, but more than that, she wants to be remembered for her kindness and her impact on others. "I want people to say I made a difference, that I uplifted those around me, and that I put my family first."

With her eyes firmly set on the future, she hopes to continue advocating for inclusive education and mentoring postgraduate students. However, her greatest goal is to inspire the next generation, especially young girls from the coloured communities, to believe in their potential and to pursue their dreams fearlessly.

"If you want to be somebody, and you want to go somewhere, you better wake up and pay attention," she says, quoting a movie line that has stuck with her over the years. And if her journey is anything to go by, Dr Drude is someone who has not only paid attention, but who has also shown others the way.



Alumni Affairs shines at the Marketing, Advancement and Communication in Education (MACE) Excellence Awards

The Central University of Technology, Free State (CUT)'s Alumni Affairs Unit attended the prestigious Marketing, Advancement and Communication in Education (MACE) Excellence Awards in Cape Town on 28 November 2024, where they were recognised for their outstanding contributions to the higher education sector. The event brought together top professionals in the marketing, communication, alumni and institutional advancement environment to celebrate excellence and innovation.

CUT's Women in the Workplace High Tea event earned a MACE Excellence Award – a recognition that highlights the institution's dedication to fostering inclusive conversations and empowering women in professional spaces. The award underscores the impact of CUT's initiatives in advancing workplace dialogue and creating platforms for networking and mentorship amongst CUT alumnae.

Staff from the Communications and Marketing Section were also in attendance and proudly received Excellence Awards for outstanding university news writing and their impactful CUT 20th Anniversary campaign. These accolades were presented as part of the MACE Excellence Awards, which serve as a benchmark for best practices in the fields of marketing, communications, and advancement within the higher education sector.



Mr Charles Mothibenyane, Graphic Designer: Alumni Affairs, Ms Thembu Tiale, Deputy Chairperson: MACE, Ms Jacqueline Pietersen, Deputy Director: Alumni Affairs, Ms Nokuzola Ngophe, Social Media Coordinator: Communication and Marketing, Ms Lesego Modisenyane, Communications Officer: Communication and Marketing and Ms Makgotso Kgosana, Database Admin: Alumni Affairs

Alumni Affairs Internal Stakeholder Engagement Breakfast



Mr Victor Barends, Sesotho Language Practitioner: Language Services

On the morning of 15 November 2025, members of the university community gathered for the Internal Stakeholder Engagement Breakfast, hosted by the Alumni Affairs Unit. The event provided a welcoming space for colleagues to connect, reflect on shared efforts, and explore opportunities for deeper collaboration.

At the heart of the gathering was a clear purpose - to bring together everyone who had collaborated with the Alumni Affairs Unit throughout the year. It was a chance to celebrate joint efforts, strengthen internal connections, and highlight the diverse roles, responsibilities, and operations of units, sections, and departments across the institution. Insights were exchanged, new understandings emerged, and a shared spirit of collaboration took center stage.

The Deputy Director of Alumni Affairs, Ms Jacqueline Pietersen, delivered a presentation that outlined the strategic goals of the Alumni Affairs Unit, key alumni projects, and new alumni initiatives for 2024. She also elaborated on the unit's role within the institution, emphasising its collaborations with faculties, departments, and various units. Furthermore, she detailed the services that the unit provides to both internal and external stakeholders.

The Sesotho Language Practitioner from the Language Services Unit, Mr Victor Barends, provided an overview of the unit and emphasised their commitment to promoting language diversity within the institution, with their core responsibilities being translation, editing, and policy development. He also outlined their key projects for 2024, which included the promotion of multilingualism, translation of theses abstracts from English into Sesotho,

and commemorating important language days. Barends also clarified the do's and don'ts of the Language Services Unit. In his concluding remarks, he expressed enthusiasm about collaborating within the institution, stating, "We are very glad to be part of these and we hope that every staff member will also collaborate with us. However, please use us but do not abuse us as the Language Services Unit," he requested with a smile.

The former Strategic Projects Coordinator, Mr Shaun Seseane, now Manager in the Risk Management and Strategic Projects Unit, provided an overview of his unit's functions. He emphasised the unit's role in promoting sound risk governance, identifying and mitigating risks, exploiting opportunities, ensuring compliance with health, safety, and environmental sustainability (HSES), fostering an ethical culture, CUT insurance policies and claims, monitoring strategic projects, conducting investigations, strengthening institutional resilience, Business Continuity Management (BCM), and enhancing overall institutional effectiveness and efficiency.

As the programme concluded, Ms Pietersen thanked all attendees for their presence. She also extended a special word of gratitude to Dr Clifford Nxomani, the former Interim Special Adviser: Office of the Vice-Chancellor and Principal, and Prof. Oupa Makola, Director: Institutional Transformation, in their absence for facilitating the engagement. Lastly, she acknowledged the dedication of the Alumni Affairs team, indicating that they are the wind beneath her wings.



Mr Shawn Seseane, Manager: Risk Management and Strategic Projects

Memories mixed and music flowed at the CUT Alumni Karaoke Cocktail Evening



Dr Choice Makhetha, Executive Director in the Office of the Vice-Chancellor and Principal

The Alumni Affairs Unit of the Central University of Technology (CUT) hosted a memorable event at the Reception Hall of the ZR Mahabane Building on 14 March 2025. The evening was dedicated to celebrating and honouring alumni for their dedication to reconnect with the alma mater, fellow alumni and friends.

The event kicked off with a warm welcome by Ms Jacqueline Pietersen, Deputy Director of Alumni Affairs, who graciously thanked the guests for their attendance and emphasised that the evening was dedicated to them. "This evening is all about you. We are honoured to have you here tonight, and we look forward to strengthening these bonds in new and exciting ways," she said with heartfelt sincerity. Pietersen noted that the gathering was more than a social occasion - it was a meaningful opportunity for alumni and friends to reconnect, relive cherished memories, and look ahead to the future together.

The event commenced with sublime refreshments, setting a positive tone for the night. In her welcome address, Ms Jacqueline Pietersen, Deputy Director of Alumni Affairs, expressed gratitude to the guests for taking the time to attend. She assured them that the evening was about enjoyment and camaraderie. "Ladies and gentlemen today is all about you," she stated. She further emphasised that the event was not just a gathering but an opportunity for alumni and friends to reconnect, reminisce and network.

Dr Choice Makhetha, Executive Director, introduced Mr Qondakele Sompondo as the new Director of Institutional Advancement. She expressed excitement about his appointment, noting the difficulty of finding the right person for such a specialised role. "I sleep well every day, smiling, knowing that while other institutions lost, we gained an asset in Mr Sompondo." She reiterated that his introduction was about strengthening connections with alumni, engaging with them, and reaffirming their value to the university. "We declared 2025 as the year of fixing, and while we are working on many improvements, we want you to know that we genuinely appreciate you - it's not just for show," she said.

Mr Sompondo shared his enthusiasm about joining CUT, emphasising that the strength of the university lies in those who create a ripple effect, not just those who tell the story. "The alumni community is the most important part of the university," he stated. He encouraged alumni to communicate their needs and aspirations for CUT, as their degrees and certificates contribute to advancing the institution's reputation. Drawing from his decade-long experience working with alumni at another university, he expressed his commitment to fostering alumni engagement. Dr Makhetha concluded the event with a heartfelt vote of thanks, acknowledging the alumni, and everyone involved, for their contributions. She highlighted that their presence and support were instrumental in making the event a resounding success.

Click the link to watch the video: <https://www.facebook.com/share/v/1ASRSMMnFT/>



Mr Sompondo Qondakele, Director: Institutional Advancement Office of The Vice-Chancellor and Principal



Central University of Technology, Free State celebrates academic excellence with Golden Key induction



Prof. Pamela Dube, CUT Vice-Chancellor and Principal

On 22 October 2024, the Central University of Technology, Free State (CUT) celebrated a momentous occasion as it hosted an exclusive induction ceremony in partnership with Golden Key. This prestigious event welcomed outstanding students into the Golden Key International Honour Society, a global organisation dedicated to recognising academic excellence, leadership and service. Golden Key, the world's largest collegiate honour society, spans over 400 universities worldwide, and provides its members with unparalleled opportunities, including scholarships, travel programmes, and study-abroad experiences. Membership is reserved for students ranking in the top 15% of their class, marking their commitment to excellence in their academic journey.

The induction ceremony was a proud milestone for the newly inducted members, acknowledging their dedication and hard work. Ms Gillian Cloete, Regional Director of Golden Key Southern Africa, expressed her enthusiasm in welcoming the new members, and highlighted the incredible opportunities awaiting them. She encouraged the inductees to view this achievement as a stepping stone towards a future filled with possibilities. "Being part of this society connects you with like-minded individuals who share your drive for success. Take advantage of this opportunity, seek mentorship, embrace leadership roles, and face challenges head-on," Cloete advised. She also reminded students that their potential is limitless and that their journey towards making an impact is just beginning.



Prof. Pamela Dube, Vice-Chancellor and Principal of CUT, delivered an inspiring keynote address, commending the students for their achievements, and welcoming them into this esteemed global society. Reflecting on the university's Golden Key chapter, she shared its remarkable growth since its launch in 2023, with membership rising from 349 members to 473 members, including the 124 new inductees. "We celebrate your accomplishments today, but we also acknowledge the responsibility that comes with them. Strive for continued excellence, and let your achievements serve as motivation for yourself and inspiration for others," Prof. Dube encouraged.

The event underscored CUT's commitment to fostering a culture of academic excellence and leadership, reinforcing the university's position as a hub for high-achieving scholars. As these newly inducted members embark on this prestigious journey, they carry with them the promise of future success and the responsibility to make a meaningful impact in their respective fields.



CUT Alumni Affairs supports student wellness with sanitary towel donation



Ms Makgotso Kgosana, Database Admin: Alumni Affairs, Ms Nthabiseng Afrika, Manager: Wellness Centre, Mr Maluka Cleo, Student Assistant: Student Affairs, Ms Jacqueline Pietersen, Deputy Director: Alumni Affairs and Ms Katleho Makhetha, Media Liaison: Alumni Affairs

In a heartfelt act of giving, the Alumni Affairs Office at the Central University of Technology, Free State (CUT) donated a collection of sanitary towels to the university's Wellness Centre in Bloemfontein on 06 March 2025, ensuring that students in need have access to essential hygiene products. The donation, made possible through the generosity of CUT alumnae, reflects the institution's ongoing commitment to student wellbeing and support.

The Deputy Director: Alumni Affairs, Ms Jacqueline Pietersen, officially handed over the donation to Ms Nthabiseng Afrika, the Wellness Centre Manager, who expressed deep gratitude for the contribution. "We are very grateful to have partners like you, who always think of our CUT students and remember that there are some young women who need products, and provide them for us. This will go a long way, because there is a huge need for sanitary towels in our residences," said a grateful Ms Afrika.



Ms Retlotlilwe Mtimkhulu, Social Worker: CUT Wellness Centre

Further emphasising the importance of the donation, Wellness Social Worker, Ms Retlotlilwe Mtimkhulu, shared a touching moment, revealing that on the very day of the donation, a student had approached the Wellness Centre in need of sanitary towels. The timely contribution was a true blessing, she said.

The initiative highlights the significant role that CUT alumni continue to play in supporting current students, ensuring that financial and personal challenges do not hinder their academic success. The Alumni Affairs Office remains committed to fostering a culture of giving back, strengthening the connection between graduates and their alma mater in meaningful ways.

With increasing awareness of menstrual health challenges faced by students, CUT's Alumni Affairs Office hopes to inspire more alumni and stakeholders to contribute towards student wellness initiatives in the future.

CUT students and graduates get an empowerment boost from the Kgolo Community Development Trust



Mr Onthatile Gondwe, a beneficiary who studied Mechanical Engineering, Lumka Tshiki, Kgolo Community Development Trust, Dr Oupa Nkgaisang, Kgolo Community Development Trust, Prof. Pamela Dube, Vice-Chancellor and Principal, Mr Millingoni Nmutshili, Chief Financial Officer and Ms Dimpho Sechogela, a beneficiary who studied Office Management

On 22 October 2024, the Central University of Technology, Free State (CUT) and the Kgolo Community Development Trust came together in a heartfelt ceremony at the ZR Mahabane Reception Hall to celebrate a transformative partnership aimed at empowering students through financial support. The Kgolo Community Development Trust's generous donation of R2.4 million will relieve the historical and current debt of CUT graduates from the John Taole Gaetsewe District in the Northern Cape, providing a lifeline for students from disadvantaged backgrounds and creating opportunities for academic and professional advancement.

The ceremony highlighted the profound impact of the partnership on students' lives and the broader community. In her address, Vice-Chancellor and Principal, Prof. Pamela Dube, expressed deep gratitude for the Trust's contribution, emphasising the critical challenges facing higher education funding. "The rising cost of education and budget cuts have placed immense pressure on students and their families, particularly those from disadvantaged backgrounds," she said. "This donation is not just a financial contribution, it is a beacon of hope for our graduates from the Northern Cape, enabling them to pursue their dreams and contribute meaningfully to society."

Prof. Dube also highlighted her recent personal contribution of R188,800 to the Student Representative Council, which will establish a food bank providing meal tickets and vouchers to students in need. "This initiative reflects our commitment to addressing the immediate challenges students face, ensuring their welfare and academic success," she added.

The emotional core of the event came from the heartfelt testimonials of CUT alumni, Mr Onthatile Gondwe and Ms Dimpho Sechogela, both from the Northern Cape. Mr Gondwe, who received R294,000 in debt relief, shared how the support enabled him to secure his first job as a graduate intern. "I am deeply grateful to the Kgolo Community Development Trust and CUT for paying my school debt. Next month, I will begin my professional journey, and I owe it to this incredible support," he said. Ms Sechogela, whose R223,000 debt was cleared, spoke of the relief and hope the funding brought her. "As a girl from humble beginnings, I am profoundly thankful for this opportunity. I now hold a qualification and aspire to give back to future generations, especially in my hometown," she said with a voice filled with determination and gratitude.

Dr Oupa Nkgaisang, representing the Kgolo Community Development Trust, shared the Trust's vision of uplifting communities through education and infrastructure initiatives. "Our mission is to create lasting, impactful change," he said. "We believe that by empowering individuals, we can inspire brighter futures for generations to come. Each of us has the potential to be a light that shines and impacts others. Let us leave a legacy that continues to uplift and transform lives." The ceremony concluded with a symbolic cheque handover, led by Dr Nkgaisang, and closing remarks by Dr Clifford Nxomani, Special Advisor to the CUT Vice-Chancellor and Principal. Dr Nxomani thanked the Kgolo Community Development Trust for their unwavering dedication to community growth and student empowerment. "This partnership is a testament to the power of collaboration in creating opportunities and transforming lives. Together, we are building a brighter future for our students and our society," he said.

The event not only celebrated the financial support provided but also underscored the shared commitment of CUT and the Kgolo Community Development Trust to fostering education, empowerment, and hope. As the beneficiaries prepare to embark on their professional journeys, the impact of this partnership will continue to ripple through communities, inspiring change and creating opportunities for generations to come. Several units and sections in CUT coordinated efforts to make the event a memorable one, underscoring the importance of partnerships in advancing education. The ceremony left a lasting impression of gratitude, community spirit, and shared vision – a testament to the power of collaboration in shaping brighter futures for South African youth.

Audit Renaissance - Shaping the Future of Internal Auditing



Mr Banele Police (wearing a CUT blazer), Chief Audit Executive, together with members of the Internal Audit Unit

The Institute of Internal Auditors South Africa (IIASA) is the professional body governing the internal audit profession, and is part of an international network representing the interests of internal auditors worldwide. As a part of this international network, the institute supports the profession by providing a wide range of services dedicated to the education and advancement of internal auditors, and dynamically promoting and developing the profession in South Africa. The institute's objectives are to build the profession, its credibility, and a thriving business environment in South Africa. The institute serves internal auditors in South Africa by offering technical guidance, professional training programmes, certification programmes, continuing professional development opportunities, conferences, and networking opportunities.

The institute also offers the Siyakhula Student Membership Programme, which seeks to connect CUT's Internal Auditing students to the profession. The IIASA achieved its mandate through the Central Region Committee, which hosted a two-day summit in Bloemfontein on 24 and 25 October 2024. "This was a flagship event for internal auditors, primarily those in the Free State region, and attracted delegates from all spheres of the government and private sectors, with attendance of more than 150 delegates, and with speakers coming as far as Johannesburg and Cape Town," said Mr Banele Police, Chief Audit Executive of the CUT Internal Audit Unit and CUT alumnus. The majority of Central Region Committee members are CUT graduates who studied Internal Auditing. The theme for this year's summit was "Audit Renaissance: How does today meet tomorrow?", with topics that were presented by esteemed speakers.



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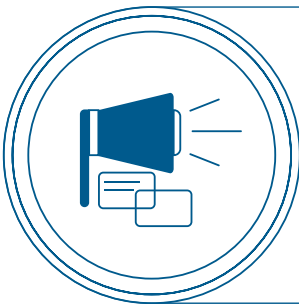
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