

CUT ALUMNI NEWS

13TH Edition

2024



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Editorial note

Dear Alumni

We are excited to share this latest edition of our newsletter with noteworthy moments, alumni achievements and celebrations that reflect the strength of our community. This issue highlights celebrations of women's month, a special time of the year when women come together to recognise the powerful contributions of women across various industries. Our "Women in the Workplace" High Tea was a pivotal moment in CUT's 20th anniversary celebrations as a University of Technology, uniting alumnae to forge connections and drive meaningful conversations in support of Vision 2030.

In this edition we are also proud to profile several of our alumni such as Dinah Moloja and Louis Ntuka, who have continued to shine in their respective fields. We are honoured to feature their journeys as their success reminds us of the diverse talents that make up our alumni community.

We also take a moment to reflect on the recent Spring Graduation Ceremony and the Samsung Innovation Campus (SIC) graduations, both of which were inspiring celebrations of achievements. These events showcased the hard work and dedication of our graduates.

We take pride in celebrating three of our distinguished alumni who have recently been honoured with the prestigious Mail and Guardian "200 Young South Africans" awards, further emphasising the excellence and impact of our alumni and institution in the wider community. Also in this edition we focus on the LGBTQIA+ dialogue which emphasised social cohesion and celebrating diversity at our university.

Another highlight of CUT's 20th anniversary, was the inaugural Alumni 10km Race and Fun Walk - a dynamic event that galvanised alumni, students, and the community in a shared celebration of health, fitness, and university spirit, despite the icy weather.

Your continued engagement is vital to maintaining our vibrant alumni community, hence we encourage you to stay connected with us.

We hope you enjoy this edition as much as we did in creating it.

Best regards
Jacqueline Pietersen
Deputy Director: Alumni Affairs



CUT Alumnae “Women in the Workplace” High Tea



Ms Lizelle Els, CUT alumna and Coordinator: Work Integrated Learning (WIL), SETAs, and Industry Liaison



Ms Tshiamo Mosiane, CUT alumna and Unit Project Coordinator Governance and Student Life

On a serene Saturday, 17 August 2024, the Hotel School at the Central University of Technology, Free State (CUT) was transformed into a scene of elegance and grace. Alumnae, dressed in their finest outfits, came together for the High Tea event in celebration of International Women’s Month and CUT’s 20th anniversary as a University of Technology. The day was about more than just catching up, it was a moment to reflect on the roles these remarkable women now play in the workplace, and their ongoing connection to their alma mater.

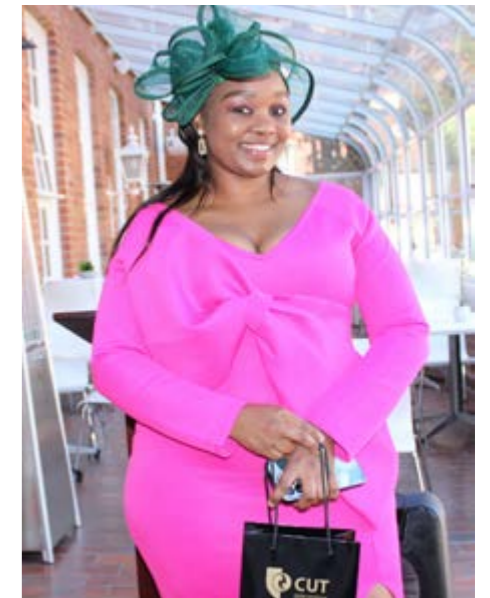
The event opened with a unique bread-baking demonstration led by Chef Tristin Rogers of the CUT Hotel School. As he skilfully kneaded dough, he shared tales of his culinary adventures, including stories of his Italian friend who had influenced his baking journey. Enthusiasm filled the air as the alumnae eagerly took their places at their baking stations. One woman, laughing with her friend, admitted she had never baked before, but that did not diminish her enjoyment. The atmosphere was lighthearted, and full of laughter and camaraderie as Chef Rogers guided the group through the process. After the baking session, the women moved to the Solarium for spread of treats, from mini honey

garlic chicken tartlets, to cinnamon roll cakes and white chocolate crème brûlée. The table was as beautifully decorated as the women themselves, with each alumna savouring the moment, both in terms of the delicacies on offer and the joy of reconnecting with old friends. As the afternoon unfolded, excitement buzzed through the room as the alumnae engaged in a lively competition for best dressed and best hat. Judging the ensembles was no easy task, as each woman exuded elegance and style.

Special prizes were awarded to the winners, adding a festive element to the event. Each attendee also received thoughtful gifts – a memento of a day filled with connection and celebration. The CUT Alumnae High Tea was not just about celebration, it was also about reflection. Dr Sally Dzingwa, the Institutional Registrar, delivered an empowering address. “You are part of an institution that strives for excellence,” she reminded the women. “Never tolerate mediocrity. We bond not just in tears, but in love together. We stand on the shoulders of the women who fought before us, and we unapologetically take up the spaces once reserved for men.” Ms Tshiamo Mosiane, Unit Project Coordinator: Governance and

Student Life, highlighted the university’s continued commitment to its students, particularly those struggling with hunger. “We see students every day who wake up rattled by their empty stomachs, but refuse to give up on their thirst for education,” she shared. “As a woman, I find great joy in seeing even one person smile. We need your support for the wonderful initiatives launched by the university and its student leaders.” Ms Lizelle Els, Coordinator: Work-Integrated Learning at CUT, spoke passionately about her role in helping students find placements and funding for their work-

integrated learning. “This is not just a job. The students that come to me are like my children. I have the funding, and you have the resources. Together, we can make a difference in their lives.” The event concluded with a strong sense of unity, purpose and pride. CUT alumnae continue to make significant contributions to their communities and workplaces, and this high tea served as a reminder of their enduring bond with the institution that helped shape their futures. As CUT celebrates its 20th anniversary, its alumnae remain at the heart of its growth, success, and ongoing legacy.



Ms Yvonne Nhlapo from CUT Institutional Planning who won the prize for “Best Hat”



Dr Sally Dzingwa, CUT Institutional Registrar



Ms Natasha Lethola, Interim Treasurer: Alumni Association and Ms Kenalemg Sedikelo, Senior Training Specialist at Transnet



Alumnae ready to rise to the bread-baking occasion



Chef Tristan Rogers, CUT Hotel School shares the art of bread-baking



Celebrating Excellence - Central University of Technology Alumni shine with Mail & Guardian 200 Young South Africans Awards

The Central University of Technology, Free State (CUT) proudly celebrates three of its distinguished alumni who have been honoured with the prestigious Mail & Guardian 200 Young South Africans Awards. Masello Mokhoro, Eben Proos, and Lekhooa Seleke, each an outstanding example of dedication and innovation, have made remarkable contributions to their respective fields, bringing recognition and pride to the university and their communities.

Masello Mokhoro, a testament to resilience and entrepreneurial spirit, started her journey with Starlicious Enterprises from humble beginnings. With just 50 chicks and four pigs in her family's backyard, Masello faced skepticism and doubt from those around her. Her unwavering determination and passion for farming led her to grow her business into a thriving enterprise, managing more than 100 chicks and over 50 pigs within just two years. Her efforts culminated in securing a two-hectare land lease, allowing her to expand and enhance her operations. Despite facing significant challenges, including the impact of COVID-19 and theft, Masello's perseverance has been remarkable.

Her achievements, which include being recognized as one of the Free State's top 50 most influential youth and participating in the Graca Machel Foundation's Women Creating Wealth programme, reflect her commitment and hard work. Her background, shaped by the need to support her family during difficult times, has only fuelled her drive. "This is what built the entrepreneurial spirit in me," she states, embodying the true essence of a CUT graduate. "Through all the storms, it has taught me that giving up is not an option, no matter what."

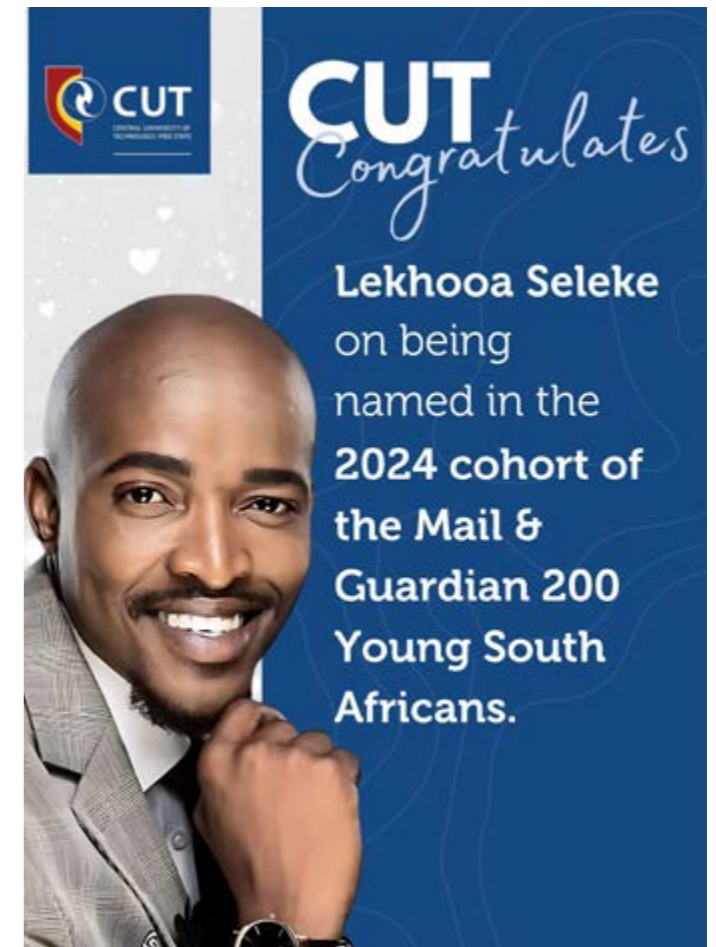
Eben Proos, a senior lecturer in Tourism Management at CUT, has made significant strides in the academic and research spheres of tourism. His research into niche and dark tourism, combined with his dedication to community engagement, has positioned him as a leading figure in his field. Eben's contributions have earned him numerous accolades, including the Vice-Chancellor's Excellence Award and the Faculty of Management Sciences Early Career Researcher and Innovation Awards. Eben's enthusiasm for niche tourism stems from his belief in its potential to shape the future of the industry. "I know that it could have an impact on the future of the tourism industry," he says.



His work aims to inspire the next generation of tourism professionals and open their eyes to the myriad opportunities within the sector. He credits his achievements to the inspiration he received from the late Dr Johan Hattingh and remains committed to making a meaningful impact both locally and beyond. "Through hard work and dedication anything is possible," Eben adds.

Lekhooa Seleke, an educator at Grassland Secondary School, has been recognised for his exceptional contributions to education and community service. As a business studies and tourism teacher, Lekhooa's influence extends beyond the classroom. His involvement in the school safety steering committee and as the Interim President of the CUT Alumni Association highlights his dedication to improving educational opportunities and supporting graduates. Lekhooa's commitment to social causes is evident in his "Food on Wheels" project, which provides meals to men seeking employment, and his drug reduction programme aimed at combating substance abuse among students. His receipt of the National Teaching Awards in the category of Kader Asmal Excellence Awards underscores his dedication to education and community service. "I am inspired by the prospects of shaping learners' minds in such a way that they understand that their material conditions do not define their future potential," Lekhooa says. His work is driven by a philosophy inspired by his father's legacy of generosity and service which Lekhooa believes are unmatched.

The recognition of Masello Mokhoro, Eben Proos, and Lekhooa Seleke in the Mail & Guardian 200 Young South Africans Awards is a proud moment for Central University of Technology, Free State. Their achievements not only reflect their personal dedication and excellence but also highlight the university's commitment to nurturing leaders who make a positive impact on society. CUT congratulates these exceptional alumni and looks forward to witnessing their continued success and contributions to their fields. Their stories serve as a powerful reminder of the university's role in shaping individuals who drive change and inspire others, reinforcing CUT's reputation as a university of excellence and innovation.



Women's Month Commemoration - Honouring and empowering women in leadership

On 13 August 2024, the Central University of Technology (CUT) hosted a significant event at the PACOFS Hall to commemorate Women's Month. This event was dedicated to celebrating and honouring the contributions of women, providing a platform to recognise their achievements and the impact they have made in various fields.

The event commenced with a warm welcome, including a registration and breakfast session, setting a positive tone for the day. In her welcome address, Prof. Pamela Dube, Vice-Chancellor and Principal, highlighted CUT's ongoing commitment to gender equality and women's empowerment. She reflected on the institution's 20-year journey in advancing these principles, connecting them to the broader historical struggle for women's rights in South Africa. She passionately stated, "Our journey has been one of persistence and dedication, recognising that gender equality is not just a goal, but a continuous effort that requires commitment from all of us." Her speech emphasised the

importance of transformation within the CUT community and beyond, recognising the challenges that remain in achieving true equality.

The keynote speaker, Ms Mags Shivanda, a proud CUT alumna and CEO of Digital Shero Media Group, shared her inspirational journey. She grew up in challenging circumstances, she acknowledged a powerful inner voice for guiding her to overcome obstacles and achieve success. "I remember this voice coming at me as a nine-year-old and said to me, this is not your reality, this is the best that your mom could do for you at this time. But you are going to do better for yourself, you're going to do better for your mom, and somehow find a way to do better for your community. That voice carried me for years, encouraged me, and pushed me to rise above my circumstances," said Mags.

Her story emphasised the importance of creating inclusive environments and supporting women in the workplace, particularly through policies that prioritise well-being. Prof. Frida Van der Walt, Assistant

Dean in the Faculty of Management Sciences, introduced the concept of "work-life harmony," advocating for a more integrated approach to balancing professional and personal responsibilities. She urged women to focus on living with purpose, rather than striving for an unattainable work-life balance. "Work-life balance is a myth," she explained, "but work-life harmony is achievable when we align our lives with our core values and priorities." Her message highlighted the importance of self-care, positive energy, and intentionality in daily life.

Prof. Muthoni Masinde, the newly appointed Dean of the Faculty of Engineering, Built Environment, and Information Technology, shared her experiences as a woman in leadership. She discussed the concept of the "glass cliff," where women in leadership often face significant challenges and risks. She shared, "The glass cliff is a real phenomenon where women are placed in leadership roles during times of crisis, making their success more challenging but also more rewarding when achieved." Her speech emphasised the value of

storytelling in inspiring and uplifting others, and she encouraged women to own their achievements and support one another.

Ms Mannehileng Letuka, an accomplished engineer and media personality, focused on the importance of recognising one's worth and supporting fellow women. She urged the audience to pursue their dreams with confidence and resilience, stating, "We must stand together as women and lift each other up, for when one of us succeeds, we all do." She advocated for positive change and empowerment within communities.

Dr Reynell van der Ross, the Deputy Director for HR Specialist Services at CUT, emphasised the role of leadership in service to others. She highlighted CUT's Next Generation Women in Leadership Programme, which aims to increase the number of women in leadership roles. "Leadership is not about titles or positions, it's about making a difference in the lives of others" she stated. Her speech celebrated perseverance, faith, and the importance of pursuing one's dreams at any age.

Princess Dina Maloja Mini, known as Princess D, the founder and Director of the non-profit organisation,

"Heart of Joy", critiqued the competitive nature often found among women, advocating for mutual support instead. "We must stop seeing each other as competition and start working together to break the barriers that hold us back," she emphasised. She discussed the ongoing struggles faced by women in STEM fields and emphasised the need for broader access to opportunities based on merit. Princess D called for comprehensive strategies to ensure that transformation efforts benefit all women, particularly those in challenging circumstances.

The event concluded with a summary of the day's discussions, emphasising the importance of work-life harmony, positive energy, and effective leadership. Attendees were encouraged to continue striving for transformation while maintaining a balance between their personal and professional lives. This commemorative event at CUT was not just a celebration of women's achievements but a powerful affirmation of collective strength, resilience, and the ongoing journey toward gender equality.



Ms Dina Maloja Mini, CUT Alumna and Founder of Heart of Joy



Ms Mannehileng Letuka, CUT Alumna and Lesedi FM Host



Prof. Pamela Dube, CUT Vice-Chancellor and Principal



Ms Mags Shivanda, CUT alumna and CEO of Digital Shero Media Group



Prof. Masinde Muthoni, Dean: Faculty of Engineering, Built Environment and Information Technology (FEBIT)



Prof. Frida Van der Walt, Assistant Dean: Faculty of Management Sciences



Dr Reynell Van Der Ross, Deputy Director: Specialist Services, Human Resources Section

LGBTQIA+ dialogue at Central University of Technology - Honouring unity and diversity



From left to right: Cleo Maluka, Wellness Centre, Karabo Sands, CUT FM Programming Manager, Tankiso Moea, Chairperson of the Gabion Student Organisation: CUT, Siyanda Magayana, Senior Officer, Equality and Anti-Discrimination Office Unit for Institutional Change and Social Justice: UFS, and Buti Bungalipeli, Unit for Institutional Renewal and Transformation: CUT

On 23 July 2024, the Central University of Technology at the Japie van Lill Auditorium, Bloemfontein Campus held a LGBTQIA+ event. The Wellness Centre, in collaboration with the Institutional Renewal and Transformation (IR&T) Unit, organised the event under the theme “Reflecting, Empowering, and Uniting our Communities,” emphasising the importance of social cohesion and celebrating diversity within the LGBTQIA+ community.

The Programme Director, Karabo Sands, greeted everyone pleasantly and explained the reason for the meeting. He introduced the LGBTQIA+ acronym in detail, laying the groundwork for an insightful day of conversations and introspection.

Prof. Solomon “Oupa” Makola, the visionary Director of the Institutional

Renewal and Transformation (IR&T) Unit, ignited hope with his formal opening message of the importance of inclusivity and the empowering power of togetherness within the LGBTQIA+ community.

“Today, we gather at this esteemed university to celebrate our diversity, reflect on our shared journeys, and empower each other to forge a brighter future,” Makola said. He emphasised the significance of recognising the courage and tenacity of individuals who have led the path for equality and acceptance, motivating continuing activism within the community.

Engaging panel discussions followed Prof. Makola’s opening address, Sands introduced distinguished speakers, including Siyanda Magayana, Senior Officer for Gender Equality and Anti-Discrimination at the University

of the Free State (UFS), and Akhona Komeni, a seasoned campaigner with Free State Rainbow Seeds. Magayana enthralled the crowd with her impassioned address, emphasising the need of having open and casual talks about discrimination, harassment, and violence against the LGBTQ community.

She emphasised the ongoing problems in the African setting and the significance of tackling these concerns both inside and beyond the LGBTQIA+ community. “It pains me that in this day and age, we still have to gather and talk about discrimination, harassment, and the homophobic violence that the queer community experiences,” Magayana said. She emphasised the value of harmony and solidarity among all members of the community while urging them to consider internal concerns of privilege and violence.

The event’s theme, “A call to reflect, empower, and unite”, was expanded upon with conversations about the history of Pride Month, beginning with the 1969 Stonewall riots and ending with the first pride march in 1970. Sands emphasised the continual need to examine the successes and problems encountered by the LGBTQIA+ community, notably in providing safe places and battling prejudice.

Akhona Komeni, a seasoned campaigner of Free State Rainbow Seeds, spoke passionately on accepting one’s sexuality and gender identity. Komeni explored previous conflicts, such as prejudice and brutality, and addressed topics like “corrective rape” of lesbian women. The presentation also addressed educational difficulties, emphasising the importance of sensitising educators and the exploitation of religion and culture to excuse prejudice. Komeni urged the

LGBTQIA+ community to overcome preconceptions and biases shaped by cultural and religious beliefs. The practical obstacles of access to health care and justice were also addressed, along with a strong appeal to reflect, empower, and unite.

Tanki Moea, Chairperson of the Gabion Student Organisation at CUT, emphasised social cohesion, equality, and human rights. He discussed health and mental well-being, education, and awareness, pointing out specific issues that need improvement around the campus, such as bathroom facilities and residence accommodations. He also touched on his personal experiences with the discrimination of the queer people and how he was affected as a gay man. “I remember my first day arriving at Res, there was already another guy in the room we had to share. The minute he noticed me, he said, “Yoh imofu le,” translated as, this one is gay.

His face expressed his utter disappointment,” Moea recollected. He described feeling so intimidated by his roommate’s behaviour that he avoided returning to his room for fear of encountering him. Moea appealed that CUT develop a strategy to place queer people in safe residences.

Tshepo Hokoane, Peer Educator at the Wellness Centre, Bloemfontein Campus, concluded the panel discussion by focusing on queer rights, providing a comprehensive overview of the ongoing efforts and challenges faced by the community.

The event closed off with a question-and-answer session which allowed guests to interact with the presenters. During this discussion, personal stories were exchanged, and strategies were examined to create a more welcoming and encouraging atmosphere for the LGBTQIA+ community at CUT.



Prof. Solomon “Oupa” Makola, Director: CUT Institutional Renewal and Transformation Unit



Tanki Moea, CUT alum and Chairperson: CUT Gabion Student Organisation



Siyanda Magayana, Senior Officer: Equality and Anti-Discrimination Office Unit for Institutional Change and Social Justice, UFS



Tshepo Hokoane, Peer Educator: Wellness Centre (Bloemfontein Campus)

Louis Mokone Kutlwano Ntuka - A journey of resilience, passion, and perseverance

In the dusty street of Thaba Nchu a young boy named Louis Ntuka dreamed of a future beyond his humble beginnings. That dream would eventually lead him to a career at Eskom. After his parents divorced, Louis moved to Christiaan De Wet High School in Dewetsdorp. He faced the daunting experience of attending boarding school at a young age as his mother received a job offer in Chicago, USA. Despite these early challenges, Louis found solace and purpose in sports, particularly rugby and athletics, which became the foundation of his identity.

Louis' athletic talent soon caught the attention of the Louis Botha Technical High School, which offered him a rugby scholarship. This opportunity brought him to Bloemfontein, where he excelled in both academics and sports. His rugby competence led to a contract with the Free State Rugby Union and a bursary at the Central University of Technology, Free State (CUT), where he studied for a diploma in Human Resource Management. Injuries dealt a devastating blow to Louis' rugby career, forcing him to undergo multiple ankle and knee surgeries. Despite the setbacks, he remained focused on his education, completing a diploma and BTech degree in Human Resources (HR) in record time. Realising that his rugby career might not sustain him in the long term, Louis shifted his focus to his academic ambitions. His professional journey is a reflection of his adaptability and ambition. After his rugby career, he transitioned into the role of HR Coordinator at First National Bank (FNB). His natural affinity for problem-solving and his people-oriented approach allowed him to excel in this position. Over the years, he held various roles in HR and Industrial Relations, including positions at LabourNet, ShopRite, and eventually PepsiCo, where he was responsible for managing HR across multiple regions.

In 2022, Louis took on a new challenge at Eskom as a Senior Advisor in Industrial Relations, a role that demands a deep understanding of both trade unions and political dynamics within the energy sector. His journey to this position was paved with obstacles, including a difficult divorce and the responsibility of raising his children. Yet, Louis never wavered in his commitment to his personal and professional growth. Louis' life has been about overcoming hardships but also about the importance of self-reflection and continuous learning. Despite having gone through all of that, he is currently pursuing a Bachelor of Laws (LLB) degree, and he attributes much of his success to his ability to analyse situations, maintain a balance between his passions and responsibilities, and stay true to his values.

His journey serves as an inspiration to others, particularly young athletes and professionals who may face similar challenges. When discussing the advice he would offer to others, Louis stressed the importance of self-reflection and steadfastness. "Concentration within where you see yourself in this sport fraternity and also steadfast in assertiveness is of utter importance. Do not go with the wind. You will learn your lessons along the way, but remain assertive, remain steadfast, have self-reflections," he advises.

When reflecting on his proudest moment, he explained the importance of being a good role model to his children. "The one thing that I am proud of is that I never gave up. What I'm also proud of is the lessons and value of hard work that my parents instilled in me, my grandparents displayed upon me and God as well, have been passed on to my children," he says. Beyond his professional achievements, Louis is also a talented pianist, a skill he developed during his childhood. He is a Grade 4 pianist. Playing the piano remains a source of relaxation and emotional expression for him, allowing him to connect with his softer side and manage the stresses of life. Today, Louis continues to balance his demanding career with his passion for sports and family life.

He plays indoor soccer regularly, spends quality time with his children and enjoys traveling, often with his loved ones by his side. In a powerful statement, Louis declared consistency as the cornerstone of his life philosophy and the defining characteristic of a true champion.





Central University of
Technology, Free State
Spring Graduation



The Central University of Technology, Free State (CUT) marked a momentous occasion on 6 September 2024 with the Spring Graduation Ceremony, which saw the conferral of 28 doctoral degrees, 39 master's degrees, and a wide range of other qualifications. The institution also achieved a new milestone, as the university conferred the largest number of doctorates at a single graduation ceremony in its history, showcasing CUT's dedication to inclusivity and its expanding global impact.



The ceremony also celebrated a significant leadership moment as Dr Vincent Maphai, CUT's new Chancellor, conferred degrees for the first time. His presence added an air of fresh inspiration, embodying the university's forward-looking vision.

In her congratulatory address, Prof. Pamela Dube, CUT Vice-Chancellor and Principal, gave a special recognition to Prof. Dennis Dzansi, Director of the Entrepreneurship Development Unit (CUT-EDU), whose relentless efforts in fostering international partnerships were instrumental in expanding opportunities for students and faculty alike. CUT's collaboration with universities in Ghana was highlighted as a significant success, resulting in the conferral of 13 doctorates from the Faculty of Management Sciences alone. "Our collaboration with universities in Ghana has been instrumental in creating opportunities for our university. We proudly conferred 13 PhDs from the Faculty of Management Sciences alone," said Prof. Dube. She also encouraged the graduates by, adding, "As you embark on your professional journey, this university will forever remain your intellectual home, providing opportunities for demand-driven postgraduate programmes. With the valuable skills you have acquired, tailored to meet societal needs, your communities eagerly await your input, energy, and expertise". Prof. Dube reminded graduates of their crucial role and the ability to contribute significantly to uplifting communities. "Our commitment to your success extends far beyond this day. Wherever you go, always remember where you come from", she concluded.

The day ended with the prestigious Doctorandi Dinner, celebrating the exceptional achievements of the doctoral candidates alongside their families. Amongst those who were honoured was Dr Itumeleng Phage, a CUT Council member, who also received his doctorate degree.

This historic graduation serves as a proud reminder of CUT's role in shaping future leaders, and its steadfast commitment to academic excellence and societal upliftment.



CUT Alumni hosts first inaugural 10 km Race and Fun Walk



10km Open Race Male Winners are from left to right: Mapasela Mahloko, 2nd Place, Thabang Masihleho, CUT Alumnus: Welkom Campus, 1st Place, and Tebogo Mofolo, 3rd Place

On Saturday, 21 September 2024, the Alumni Affairs Office and the Seniors Club of the Central University of Technology (CUT) hosted their first-ever inaugural 10km race and fun walk in celebration of CUT's 20th anniversary as a University of Technology, whilst promoting health and wellness. The event was held at the CUT Rugby Stadium Bloemfontein Campus, with participants braving chilly and rainy conditions to complete the course.

Despite the overcast skies and cold drizzle that persisted through much of the day, the weather shifted as the prize-giving ceremony approached, with the sun finally breaking through. This change in conditions uplifted the spirits of attendees, making the conclusion of the race even more celebratory.

The event featured various stalls, including the CUT Spa, and a special attraction – Standard Bank's free popcorn machine, which was a hit among participants. Proceeds from the event will be donated to the CUT Student Nutrition Programme, ensuring that the race not only promotes fitness but also contributes to a worthy cause.

The CUT Athletics Club dominated the 10km Open Race with Thabang Masihleho, CUT alumnus from the Welkom Campus, and Thobile Mkhize, a third-year student from the Bloemfontein Campus claimed first place in the male and female categories, respectively.

Athletes and Fun Walk participants were kept entertained by the infectious energy of CUT's netball teams who volunteered their time to assist at the event. They created a lively atmosphere captivating everyone with their contagious enthusiasm.

Anyone interested in joining the CUT Athletics Club can contact Operational Sport by emailing tmboxwan@cut.ac.za



10km Open Race Female Winners are from left to right: Michelle Dykman, 2nd Place, Thobile Mkhize, third-year student in Office Management and Technology, Bloemfontein Campus, and Maryna Swanepoel, 3rd Place



Rising from humble beginnings

Not defined by the challenges she met, but shaped by how she overcame them, Dina Moloja's journey from the streets of Kutlwanong to global recognition in Information Technology, is nothing short of inspirational. Growing up in a modest household in Kutlwanong, Dina faced many obstacles. After completing her matric, she took on a job as a cleaner in Pretoria to help support her family. Reflecting on those early years, she shares, "My upbringing was difficult, as we faced financial hardships. After completing my matric, I needed to find a job to support my family. My life took a positive turn when two gentlemen I knew, introduced me to the possibility of becoming a student at the Central University of Technology, Free State (CUT). With the support of Dr Nkonoane, who was the Deputy Campus Director at the time, I was able to pursue my studies at CUT."

This pivotal moment set Dina on a path that would ultimately see her earn her Master's degree in Information Technology, specialising in Cybersecurity, Cloud Computing, and Technology in Education. Her academic pursuits have taken her across the globe, presenting research papers in places such as Namibia, Botswana, Dubai, Dublin, Paris, Spain, and beyond.

While Dina initially dreamed of studying Psychology, her financial situation guided her to the Welkom Campus of CUT, where Information Technology was the course that captured her attention. "It feels like the course chose me rather than the other way around," she says.

She embraced this decision fully. Now, Dina is flourishing in the IT world, with a passion for technology that grows with each passing day. Reflecting on her time at CUT, Dina fondly recalls her travels with colleagues to Botswana for the South African Society for Education (SASE) conference. "That trip made me realise that CUT is a home away from home," she says. These experiences cemented her connection to the university and her sense of belonging in the IT field.

Today, Dina is an impactful networking lecturer at the Central University of Technology in Welkom. Her role involves much more than teaching, she is engaged in student support, curriculum development, research, community engagement, professional development, and administrative duties. "The best thing about my job is the personal fulfilment I get from making a positive impact on students' lives and careers. I also enjoy continuously learning and growing as a lecturer and a professional in the IT field," she shares. Dina also appreciates the opportunities her job provides, such as attending conferences and workshops that enhance her professional development.

Dina's impact extends beyond the classroom. Through initiatives like "Women in IT," "Varsity Connect Tour," and computer literacy training, she is advocating for gender diversity in technology roles and leadership positions. She is dedicated to mentoring and supporting women in IT, developing an inclusive workplace culture, and leading projects that

improve society. "I want to be an example other women refer to when they talk about a successful black woman in IT. I want to show that it is possible to be young, Black, gifted, and successful in this field," Dina asserts. She is also passionate about outreach programmes that encourage girls and young women to pursue science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) education and careers. By actively challenging stereotypes and biases, Dina is paving the way for future generations of women in technology.

Looking ahead, Dina's goals are clear. She plans to obtain her PhD in Informatics, secure funding for her NPO, "Heart of Joy", which assists with personal development programmes for the youth. They also go around different schools and motivate learners and help matriculants with university applications. To those pursuing a career in IT, her advice is simple, "Have faith in yourself and your abilities. The fact that you've embarked on this path shows that you are more than capable. Keep upgrading your skills and stay informed about industry trends."





Samsung Innovation Campus celebrates empowered graduates

The Samsung Innovation Campus graduation ceremony, held at the Central University of Technology, Free State (CUT) on 10 September 2024, was a momentous occasion, full of pride, optimism, and the promise of an innovative future.

Mr Simon Lee, the President and Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of Samsung Africa, His Excellency, Ambassador Dong-han Yang and senior executives from CUT were amongst the distinguished visitors and important stakeholders at the event. The Programme Director, Mr Leon Grobbelaar, delivered the opening speech for the ceremony, emphasising the value of the relationship between Samsung and CUT.

With the signing of the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) in 2022, the partnership was established with the goal of giving young people the tools they need to succeed in the Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR)'s rapidly changing technology environment. Establishing a personal connection between the world that the graduates will inherit and the technical advances they would contribute to, Grobbelaar mentioned that his son had been born the day before the event. He underlined that although technological development may

be accompanied by uncertainty, it also presents enormous potential as seen by the accomplishments of the graduates in attendance.

Following with a hearty welcome, Prof. Pamela Dube, CUT Vice-Chancellor and Principal, expressed her delight at the occasion. She emphasised the importance of Samsung and CUT's partnership, which has effectively connected research and business. With its emphasis on cutting-edge abilities such as programming, artificial intelligence (AI) and coding, the Samsung Innovation Campus gave CUT students an avenue to acquire vital 4IR skills. CUT has long been a leader in the field of science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) education, and its collaboration with Samsung has helped to solidify this status. Prof. Dube underlined that the university's mission is in line with the national aim of using education to combat unemployment amongst the youth, and the collaboration has had noticeable outcomes. Two-thirds of the students resumed further studies while the rest found employment or ventured into the entrepreneurial space.

In his motivational address, Mr Lee expressed his satisfaction with the

graduates and the advancements made by the Samsung Innovation Campus at CUT. He emphasised the company's dedication to supporting national priorities by training a cohort of students who are prepared for the workforce and have a strong foundation in programming, big data, the Internet of Things (IoT) and AI.

Mr Lee emphasised that the programme has grown by 30% since the signing of the MoU, with a 50% increase in female involvement. He mentioned that 46 graduates were receiving their certificates during the event, whilst a large number of them had already started working or going back to school. During his remarks, he reiterated Samsung's commitment to reducing inequality in South Africa by equipping children with skills that are relevant to the future. As he ascended the platform, Ambassador Dong-han Yang congratulated the graduates, and emphasised the value of education for the advancement of the country. He considered how South Korea's emphasis on education helped the nation go from being amongst the world's poorest in the 1950s, to having the 14th largest economy in the world. He urged the graduates to push South Africa's progress and contribute to its advancement in the 4IR domain

with their newly acquired abilities. Ambassador Yang also emphasised how improving bilateral ties between South Korea and South Africa is made possible by the Samsung Innovation Campus. He conveyed his belief that the graduates will not only be successful in their career pursuits, but also serve as technical and cultural linkages between the two countries.

The ceremony concluded with the presentation of certificates and prizes to the students who demonstrated exceptional performance. Prof. Alfred Ngowi, CUT's Deputy Vice-Chancellor (DVC): Research, Innovation and Engagement, delivered the closing remarks, expressing his enthusiasm for CUT's continued relationship with Samsung. He discussed the university's objective of developing a research-intensive atmosphere that emulates Samsung's ongoing international research strategy. AI, digital health, smart manufacturing, and precision agriculture are some of the areas in which CUT sees itself leading in the 4IR.

In addition to celebrating academic success, the Samsung Innovation Campus graduation ceremony served as a potent reminder of the transformational potential of education and technology in influencing the future. With their knowledge, abilities and vision, the graduates are poised to lead South Africa and the rest of the globe into the next phase of the technology revolution as they begin their professions. The future does appear bright when there are solid alliances like the one between Samsung and CUT.



Prof. Pamela Dube, CUT Vice-Chancellor and Principal



His Excellency, Mr Dong-han Yang, Ambassador of the Republic of Korea



Mr Simon Lee, Samsung President & CEO



Mr Leon Grobbelaar, Programme Director



Prof. Alfred Ngowi, CUT Deputy Vice-Chancellor: Research, Innovation and Engagement



Some of the students who completed the Coding and Programming Course of Samsung Innovation Campus

CUT and SASAE Co-Host 57th Annual Agricultural Extension Conference - Fostering Collaboration and Innovation in the Sector

The Central University of Technology, Free State (CUT), in partnership with the South African Society for Agricultural Extension (SASAE), recently co-hosted the 57th annual Agricultural Extension Conference. Held from 26 to 29 August 2024, the event focused on "Bridging Collaborative Initiatives for Strengthening the Research, Training, Extension, and Farmer Nexus," highlighting the importance of collaboration in advancing the agricultural sector.

The four-day conference, attended by 396 delegates from all nine provinces, explored collective collaborations, devised innovative solutions, and shared best practices to aid farmers' challenges. Furthermore, researchers showcased six top academic papers, shared 36 research topics, and presented six inspiring success stories in agriculture. Those success stories, along with over 100 posters, served as a beacon of hope for the sector's future, inspiring all in attendance to continue their efforts in the agricultural sector.

In her opening remarks, Free State MEC for Agriculture and Rural Development, Elsabé Rockman, emphasised the vital role of collaboration in improving agricultural practices. "This conference brings together our agricultural extension professionals to reflect on the theme 'Bridging Collaborative Initiatives.'" It provides a much-needed platform for professionals to share their research, knowledge, and ideas. As always, we must recognise that without farmers, we are nowhere. Our work must impact the fields they till," stated MEC Rockman.

CUT Acting Vice-Chancellor and Principal, Prof. David Ngidi, reaffirmed the university's commitment to strengthening research collaborations. "Research should not be confined to the walls of academic institutions. It must spill over into practical applications that benefit farmers. By collaborating on research initiatives, we can ensure our findings are relevant and useful, helping farmers adopt innovations that will enhance their productivity and sustainability," he said.

SASAE President, Thulani Masondo, echoed the sentiment, encouraging delegates to take the lessons learned and apply them to real-world challenges. "We must equip our farmers with the knowledge, skills, and resources they need to thrive in an ever-evolving agricultural landscape.



Honourable Elsabé Rockman, MEC: Department of Agriculture, Rural Development and Environmental Affairs

Together, we can address the pressing issues of climate change, food security, and economic disparities," Masondo urged.

As the conference came to a close, delegates were called to action, encouraged to translate the insights gained into tangible changes within their communities. "Let us advocate for policies that support extension services and commit ourselves to sustainable agricultural practices," concluded Masondo. The annual conference remains a vital source of inspiration and progress for the agricultural sector, with CUT and SASAE leading the charge in fostering collaboration, research, and development for a more sustainable future.



Mr Thulani Masondo, SASAE President



Prof. Pieter Fourie, CUT Head of Agriculture

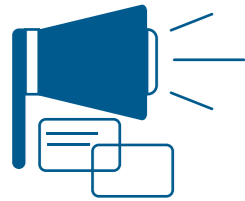


Prof. David Ngidi, CUT Acting Vice-Chancellor and Principal



Prof. David Ngidi, Acting Vice-Chancellor and Principal; Dr. Zenzile Khetsha, CUT alumnus and Mr Thulani Masondo, SASAE President

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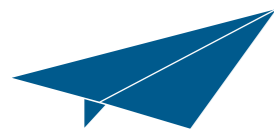
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