

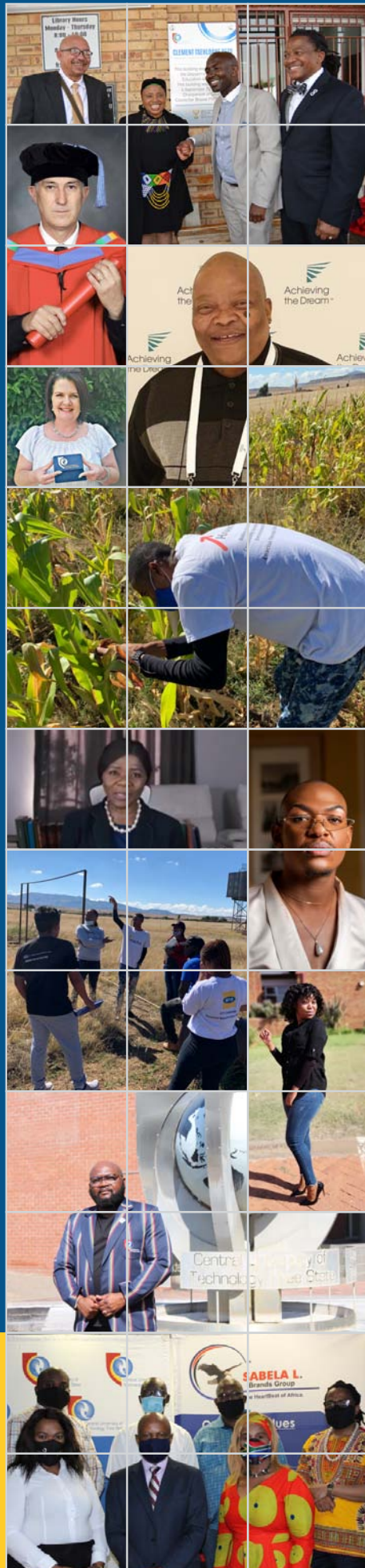


Central University of  
Technology, Free State

# CUT ALUMNI NEWS

2nd Edition

An alumnus (masculine, plural alumni) or alumna (feminine, plural alumnae) is a former student or pupil of a school, college, or university. Commonly, but not always, the word refers to a graduate of the educational institution in question



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## Editorial note

The first edition of the CUT Alumni Newsletter received a lot of positive feedback, and this showed just how much our alumni want to read about each other's life stories and accomplishments. We've taken your comments and constructive criticism to note and hope that you continue to engage us as the newsletter grows.

This edition is more focused on the Welkom Campus, featuring alumni who have grown through the institution and are accomplishing great feats. In this feature you can read all about Dr Maditsane Nkonoane's journey to becoming the newly appointed DUT Registrar; Mosa Dladla breaking the football glass ceiling and becoming the new provincial executive officer of the football federation in the Free State. We also talk to Nkosana Tshisa, who is helping to educate the CUT community about the LBTQIA+ community and introduce the newly elected CUT Alumni Association President, Mbuyiselo Frans.

We also look at the growth of the Welkom campus over the years, through innovative projects launched and infrastructure expansions that are working on ensuring that students and staff experience all that a top leading African University of technology has to offer.

We hope you enjoy a look back at the past few months, while getting to know some of our alumni a little better.

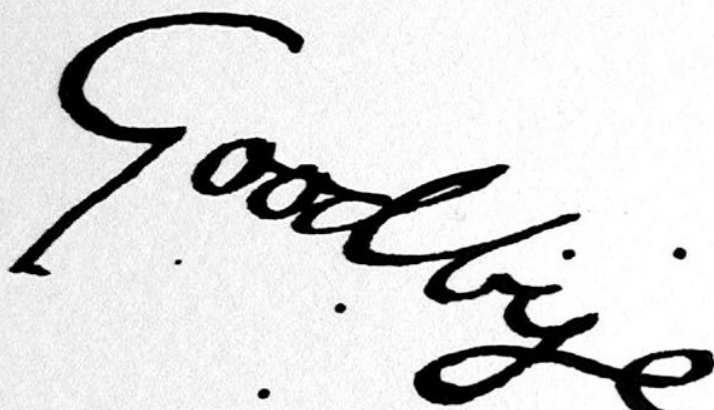
Happy reading!

# CUT bids farewell to the Vice-Chancellor and Principal

The Central University of Technology, Free State (CUT) bid farewell to the Vice-Chancellor and Principal, Prof Henk de Jager on 30 September 2021. Prof de Jager has been the Vice-Chancellor and Principal of CUT since 2017 and under his leadership, CUT has made significant strides, including increasing permanently appointed academic staff with

doctorates to 40 percent. CUT has also added numerous new academic, research and innovation programmes to its offerings.

Cllr. Matthew Rantso, Chairperson of Council commended Prof Henk de Jager, Vice-Chancellor and Principal, for his enormous contribution to the university throughout the years of his service at CUT.



"Prof de Jager has served CUT admirably in his role as VC under extraordinary challenges facing CUT and the sector. The CUT Council is proud of his contributions, especially his sustained efforts in building external partnerships with government, business, and industry," said Cllr. Matthew Rantso, Chairperson of Council.

"I will always be thankful for the work we, as a collective, have achieved at CUT and the meaningful relationships that we have developed over the years. I am optimistic that CUT will continue to impact the lives of all South Africans positively," said Prof de Jager.

"CUT wishes Professor de Jager every success with the future and hopes he continues to have a positive impact on education in this country," concluded Cllr Rantso.





Cllr. Matthew Rantso, Chairperson of Council getting ready to serenade guests at the farewell ceremony.



Mr Letsoalo Letsoalo, Junior Project Engineer: CRPM, who handed over a CUT 3D printed titanium trophy, Dr Gary Paul, Deputy Vice-Chancellor: Resources and Operations, Cllr Matthew Rantso, Dr Sally Dzingwa, Institutional Registrar, Prof. Henk de Jager (holding his trophy) and his wife, Dr Miemsie de Jager.

# Newly elected AA Exco President, Mbuyiselo Frans – encouraging CUT Alumni to embrace their alma mater



The newly elected CUT Alumni Association President, Cllr. Mbuyiselo Frans, has channeled his traditional township upbringing into a political activist career, striving to fight for the rights of those who can't fight for themselves.

"I was born in Bultfontein, where I spent the first 12 years of my childhood. Then my family moved to Odendaalsrus/Kutloanong due to economic reasons, that's where I spent my entire remaining childhood. Growing up in the dusty streets of a mining town introduced me to several African languages."

Mbuyiselo arrived at the CUT Welkom Campus when it was still known as Vista University in 2003, and enrolled for a Bachelor's degree in Psychology and Political science, Postgraduate Certificate in Education (PGCE) and Bachelor of Education Honours (BEdHons).

"A significant experience at CUT was when I got pulled into the political space due to the injustice, I experienced between the then Vista University, Welkom Campus students and then then Technicon Free State, Bloemfontein campus student. Which lead to several students protests in the Welkom campus. In one of these, I was then detained with other 23 students. Which it made me realise I want to fight for the rights of those who can't fight for themselves. Hence, I lead the Student Representative Council as the Deputy President and as Secretary General/ Sabbatical."

Through his career, Mbuyiselo has always been attracted to the political arena. "I first started working as an educator in 2011 on a contract basis, and only became a full-time educator in 2013. The challenge in the sector that prolonged my trajectory to being

made a full-time employee sparked the unionist in me. I then joined SADTU [South African Democratic Teachers Union] in 2011, forming part of its political school in 2012. I then joined NAPTOSA [National Professional Teachers' Organisation of South Africa] in 2016 and became a full-time shop steward from 2017 until 2019, when I left NAPTOSA to go back to SADTU. Then became a SADTU full-time shop steward in 2020."

Helping, resolving people's problems, representing the rights of others, and advocating for fairness and good practices are some of the reasons Mbuyiselo has dedicated his time to the CUT Alumni Association. "I wish to see the Alumni Association as being an active and vibrant statutory body that is strategically positioned to improve the institution. My fellow CUT Alumni should know that we know the mandate given to us by them and we will continue to strive to champion all of them as promised. Our alma matar must have a great relationship with its graduates."

"Fellow Alumni, we as the executive will not rest until we see all graduates having their certificates with them. We will not rest until all the 3rd party debts collectors are no longer used for the collection of graduate debts. We will not rest until CUT graduates can make reasonable payments arrangement to pay back their outstanding fees without involvement of debt collectors. We will not rest Until we have CUT as an institution that has a welcoming relationship with its graduates. CUT that employs its graduates, CUT that does business with its graduates; lastly, graduates that will have a sound relationship with its institution, and graduates that will be part of CUT third stream income."



# CUT partners with Feenix to launch crowdfunding initiative

Central University of Technology, Free State (CUT), in partnership with Feenix, launches crowdfunding initiative to support graduates

Graduating is a wonderful moment at the end of several years of hard work. You have done it; you have your degree! However, in some instances, students also have the added stress of student debt.

For many years, universities have struggled with historical debt that cannot be recouped. As a result, institutions have been forced to implement budget cuts, and forgo projects and programmes for the current cohort of students in order to compensate for money lost. The money owed by one graduate may be a few thousand Rands, but combined, they equate to millions of Rands for the university – a truly crippling situation for all parties. All universities withhold graduates' certificates until student debt is paid, only availing students' study records to assist graduates to succeed in finding employment.

CUT, in partnership with Feenix, a public benefit organisation and online student crowdfunding platform, is proud to announce the launch of the #CrowdfundCUTGraduates campaign. Spearheaded by the CUT Alumni Association, [CUT | Alumni], #CrowdfundCUTGraduates is a crowdfunding campaign that will assist CUT graduates to clear their historical university debt and assist the university in its efforts to recoup much-needed funds.

Regarding the campaign, Prof. Henk de Jager, former CUT Vice-Chancellor and Principal, said: "I would like to encourage all CUT stakeholders and external partners to join hands with us to support the #CrowdfundCUTGraduates campaign, which is spearheaded by the CUT Alumni Association. The purpose of this campaign is to assist CUT graduates to clear their historical university debt, and to enhance the financial sustainability of the university. Let us all join forces to support the next generation of leaders in our country, by allowing them to enter the world of work without any hindrances. Your support is greatly appreciated!"

How much are we trying to raise through the campaign?

The #CrowdfundCUTGraduates campaign aims to fundraise R46 758 towards the debt of the current cohort of CUT graduates, in order to enable them to access their graduation certificates.

What is CUT's contribution?

In 2020, CUT wrote off R125 313 210.94 for students who registered for the last time prior to, and including, 2015. The institution is committed to assist graduates as much as possible and welcomes the Alumni Association's project to assist graduates.

How does it work?

The university invites the CUT community, businesses and industry partners, as well as alumni, to show their support for this initiative, and to donate towards the campaign.

The public can make donations from as little as R100 on Feenix's safe and secure online platform by visiting CUT's Feenix campaign page, <https://feenix.org/campaign/80>

#CrowdfundCUTGraduates aims to release engineers, teachers, technologists in medical fields, and entrepreneurs from a crippling burden, and allow them to take their rightful place in our society as contributing members of South Africa.

# CUT Alumni Association aims to revamp alumni experience

The Central University of Technology, Free State (CUT) Alumni Association Executive Committee recently held a two-day Strategic Planning Session aimed at revamping the university's alumni experience. The session was held on 1 and 2 October 2021 at the CUT Welkom Campus, and focused on re-evaluating the purpose of the association, and ensuring that it is aligned with the strategic objectives of the university.

The President of the Alumni Association, Mbuyiselo Frans, highlighted the importance of befriending the current alumni who have strayed from associating with the university. "Our strategic plan must be a turning point towards realising that we are part of the success of this institution. And, most importantly, as the brand ambassadors, as students who grew up in this institution, we understand the CUT culture, and it is important to maintain that CUT culture. As the Alumni Association, we are going to protect this brand; not only be brand ambassadors, but protect and maintain a CUT culture that has a good relationship between its graduates and their alma mater", said Frans.

Acting Vice-Chancellor and Principal, Prof. Alfred Ngowi, stated the important role played by the current alumni in growing the institution. "You have a big role to play. It starts firstly with recruiting students, and then later introducing them to industry. The CUT Vision 2030 has big room for you. This includes the role that you are going to play to make sure that our digital transformation is up and running. And in making sure that our student recruitment, their stay at the university, and their transition to industry are as robust as possible", added Prof. Ngowi.

Dr Sally Dzingwa, CUT Institutional Registrar, added that, as the Alumni Association Executive Committee has recently begun their term, it is imperative that they use this transition period to their best advantage. "There is a need for us as a university to reflect, regroup and reframe our position as we take on this transition. We need to understand and appreciate that we each have a role to play in how CUT is viewed. And I want you to remember that, despite the challenges, despite the transitions, we are here focused on the same vision, objectives and mission", said Dr Dzingwa.

The Chairperson of the CUT Council, Cllr Matthew Rantso, added that the CUT Council is there to strengthen the association's efforts in growing the CUT brand. "The Alumni Association is paramount to us branding the university; to us actually achieving the vision of becoming a leading African university of technology. We cannot do it if our alumni are not enshrined in that vision. I want to encourage the Alumni Association to have confidence in the fact that you are a statutory structure at CUT, and that as Council, we are aware of your challenges; we are listening to you; and we are doing something about it. This must be a joyful experience. The alumni are very critical for any university. There is a place where we need to go with the Vision 2030, and the alumni is squarely a strategic partner in us achieving that", concluded Cllr Rantso.



The two-day Strategic Planning Session focused on re-evaluating the purpose of the Alumni Association, and ensuring that it is aligned with the strategic objectives of the university.





The CUT Alumni Association Executive Committee. From left to right are: Lekhooa Seleke (Additional Member); Natasha Lethola (Additional Member); Tshidiso Sebogodi (Additional Member); Mojobeng Khukutli (Treasurer); Cllr. Mbuyiselo Frans (President); Lebohlang Khutlang (Deputy President); Keneiloe Mogorosi (Additional Member); and Itumeleng Matete (Additional Member).

### About CUT

CUT is the foremost higher education institution in the heartland of South Africa, dedicated to quality education and training in science, technology, engineering and mathematics. CUT boasts pockets of excellence, including a premier Hotel School, and leading research and innovation platforms, e.g. world-class medical product development through 3-D printing technology.

For more information about CUT, visit [www.cut.ac.za](http://www.cut.ac.za).

# Dr Maditsane Nkonoane

## “Thinking beyond” encouraging future leaders



Born and bred in Welkom, CUT alumnus and Durban University of Technology (DUT) Registrar, Dr Maditsane Nkonoane, enjoyed a respectful career in academics, which has most recently led to him being the newly appointed DUT Registrar.

After completing his undergraduate teacher education studies at the University of Zululand (Ongoye), Dr Nkonoane returned to Welkom to begin his teaching career. “While working as English and history teacher at Lephola Secondary School, I enrolled as a part-time student at the Welkom Campus of the erstwhile Vista University for my BEd (Hons), which I completed in 1993, followed by the MEd in 2000 and my PhD in 2014 at the same campus, which had by then become CUT after the 2004 mergers and incorporations of HEIs (higher education institutions) in South Africa.”

His career trajectory has been filled with growth and accomplishments. After working as an English and history teacher at Lephola Secondary School from January 1990 to December 1994, Dr Nkonoane worked as a lecturer in the Faculty of Education at the Welkom Campus until October 2001. In November 2001, he became an Academic Development Practitioner, a position he held until December 2003. From January 2004 to January 2010, he worked as the Manager: Student Affairs, before becoming the Deputy Director: Welkom Campus. In February 2019, Dr Nkonoane left CUT to become the Dean of Students at DUT, where he was most recently promoted to Registrar, with effect from September 2021.

During his tenure at CUT, he also served in the Institutional Forum (IF) as Welkom Campus' representative, and the CUT Council and Senate, representing non-academic staff.

“Although there were a number of usual professional challenges, which were not insurmountable, such as having to deal with student unrest both at CUT and DUT, I have had a highly rewarding tenure. On the eve of my last day at CUT on Thursday, 30 January 2019, I became part of the launch of the university blazer, which was my brainchild, together with the support of colleagues in CUT Communications and Marketing. This continues to represent the legacy I left at CUT, which also included the coordination of the naming of a number of campus buildings.”

In 2020, Dr Nkonoane was awarded an honorary membership of the prestigious Golden Key International Honour Society by the DUT Chapter in recognition of his efforts towards leading student services, and stabilising what has been a historically volatile campus life fraught with violent student strife.

“I owe my achievements to my late parents, Cornelia and David, who remain my main source of motivation. I have also been blessed to have worked with very wonderful colleagues, who inspired me to strive for greatness, like my PhD promoter, Dr David Selaledi; my predecessor and retired DUT Registrar, Dr Thiru Pillay; and my coach and mentor, Dr Nothemba Mrwetyana, who also recently retired as CUT Registrar. These three former senior colleagues continue to be my greatest source of inspiration.”

Hitting the road running as Registrar, Dr Nkonoane states that his strength and passion within the registry portfolio remain student affairs, with special reference to student governance. “Under my stewardship, we have just launched the VUNA Leadership Academy, which is set to be our flagship vehicle through which we can enable our student leaders to achieve greatness and ethical leadership. To this day, after more than 30 years of my initial undergraduate studies, I continue to be inspired by the motto of my alma mater, University of Zululand, ‘Diligentia Cresco’, meaning ‘Through Diligence We Shall Lead.’”

Dr Nkonoane reiterated that the main function of registry is custodianship of the student life cycle. “We remain the first point of call upon enrolment, and the very last point of call upon graduation and beyond through the alumni/convocation. I wish to encourage future CUT graduates and fellow alumni to strive to live by our shared motto, ‘Thinking Beyond’ the limits of space and time.”



# Olga Ndlovu and Luthando Mphele – keeping it in the family



**Daughter, Luthando Mphele and mother, Olga Ndlovu on their historic graduation day.**

After graduating together in 2018, mother-and-daughter duo Olga Ndlovu and Luthando Mpele have been honing their skills and continuing to expand their knowledge at the Central University of Technology, Free State (CUT).

Olga Sizakele Ndlovu was born and raised in Petsana, a small dusty town in Reitz in the Eastern Free State, where she completed Grade 12. A very shy, yet inquisitive child, Olga was raised by her grandmother, then later by her mother. "My late mother, Nozizwe Margaret Ndlovu, instilled in my siblings and myself the spirit of assiduousness from a tender age. She was a seamstress, yet she encouraged us to get an education. I am the firstborn of four – three girls and one brother. My late grandmother was a domestic worker, and as her first grandchild, she taught me sophistication."

"No words can describe the feeling of graduating on the same day with my daughter, especially since Luthando and myself graduated on the same day. Luthando graduated with me in 2018. She was graduating with the National Diploma: Language Practice, and myself with the Doctor of Education. CUT made me grow professionally, and I am currently receiving training in the Next Generation Women in Leadership Programme with Dr Mrwetyana and Prof. Bowden from Uppsala University as my mentors," added Olga.

Before enrolling at CUT, Olga worked as a domestic worker for a few years. "I started as a Supplemental Instructor at the then Vista University, while I was completing the third year of the BA degree; got a job as an educator at Ed U College, while studying towards the PGCE. I later moved to Welkom High, then to a TVET college, and have

been at CUT since 2012. I started as a junior lecturer, then became a lecturer, and have been a departmental manager in the Department of Educational and Professional Studies, as well as Language and Social Sciences Education", she said.

Although her academic journey has not been easy, Olga has always focused on the goal. "The challenges I faced were first losing my mother, who was my rock, while doing the second year of my BA degree, and getting divorced from the father of my kids while doing the final year of my master's degree. However, with God's mercy, I managed to complete my BA cum laude, and master's with 70%. However, I got remarried to a very loving, supportive and matured man. Luthando, like myself, started as a Supplementary Instructor at CUT, and is now an educator at Welkom High School, where I also taught, and is currently doing her honours degree at CUT. I should mention that she got two distinctions in Grade 12 in the same year I got divorced from their father."

The family are all about getting educated at CUT. "Two of my younger sisters, their husbands and my son-in-law graduated at CUT as well. Both my younger sisters studied at the CUT Welkom Campus, and one of them, Thandi, received a Bachelor of Education: Economic and Management Sciences cum laude. My other sister, Zandile, received her Bachelor of Education: Economic and Management Sciences with the average of 74%."

Driven by the same positive impact that some of her teachers had on her, Olga aims to always perform her job with passion, to teach from the heart, to have empathy, and to practise discipline and professionalism. "Prayer and meditation, my grandchild and my kids, my siblings, the teachings from my late mother and grandmother, things that money cannot buy, and my keep me focused and motivated. I have two kids, a daughter and a son, Luthando and Lwazi, who are young adults. Lwazi is studying Diesel Mechanical Engineering. I am also a grandmother, as Luthando recently got married and has a daughter, Mpilo."

"Your past does not determine your future; the most successful people have had most failures, and that pain teaches you strength. CUT is a cut above the rest!"



# Transformation in higher education highlighted at CUT's 3rd Annual Transformation Summit



and students' perspective on the decolonisation of the curriculum.

The Deputy Minister of Women, Youth and Persons with Disabilities, Prof. Hlengiwe Mkhize, highlighted that the representation of women is about more than numbers. "As women, hopefully we are not going to be stuck in numbers of representation, but the value we add, the courage we display, the position we took against real issues. At a higher education level, this is clearly manufactured in how women are in leadership positions in our institutions. How many women are lecturers, in research positions, and in which fields of study do female learners tend to graduate? It results in

Former CUT Vice-Chancellor and Principal, Prof. Henk de Jager, and Member of Parliament, Mr Nqabayomzi Kwankwa, at CUT's 3rd Annual Transformation Summit. Deputy Minister of Women, Youth and Persons with Disabilities, Prof. Hlengiwe Mkhize, and Prof. Thuli Madonsela, The Law Trust Chair in Social Justice, University of Stellenbosch, attended virtually.

The inadequate representation of women in leadership roles within CUT, and the participation of Black African women in strategic leadership roles, were the leading themes at this year's 3rd Annual Transformation Summit held by CUT on 9 and 10 June 2021 at the Welkom Campus.

The summit delved into an informative discourse around the subthemes, namely: digital transformation in higher education; decolonisation of the curriculum within the CUT context; transformation of the curriculum from the lens of internationalisation in higher education;

why certain fields are historically dominated by men, so we need to go back to basics, and think very deeply about the empowerment of women", she said.

"From the onset, it's important for us to come clean, and acknowledge that 26 years into the ushering in of the democratic dispensation, we are still shamefully existing side by side with patriarchy in all its toxic and deadly dimensions. The dominance of patriarchy really talks to the tackling of transformation. It's an absolute shame that woman, the very backbone of the community, continues to endure systematic discrimination, indignity, and blatant marginalisation under the constitutional democracy that they gave birth to", added Prof. Mkhize.

Prof. Thuli Madonsela, The Law Trust Chair in Social Justice, University of Stellenbosch, added that not enough has been done to disrupt patriarchal culture and toxic masculinity. "One of our problems, is we think



we can solve things with one transaction, and we need to be patient, and not have a system thinking approach but a long-haul approach, with one thing leading to the next one, and, of course, we must double-up on accountability; on consequence management. I believe we can do this. We need a solutionist leadership and an engaged citizenship with greater collaboration that leverages the transformative power of education, to approach the structural and systemic pillars of gender inequality and its GBV dimensions.”

Member of Parliament, Mr Nqabayomzi Kwankwa, reminded civil society that leaders should be held accountable. “As a member of parliament, I have to admit to our failures, and say we have not held government departments and institutions of higher learning to account enough on driving the transformation agenda. Why? Probably because there are many people still appropriating public funds for private use. We’ve been running after the Rands and cents, and not looking at all the governance issues or other objectives that we’ve set for ourselves holistically. It is the reason why even though South Africa has been having problems with gender-based violence, that parliament is only waking up now, saying let’s form cluster committees to



**Deputy Minister of Women, Youth and Persons with Disabilities, Prof. Hlengiwe Mkhize delivered the keynote address virtually.**

deal with this issue. Because the very same civil society also does not hold us accountable enough”, said Mr Kwankwa.

The two-day summit presented an opportunity for the CUT community to identify achievements and shortfalls in achieving transformation at the institution, whilst living by the university’s definition of transformation, namely: “A dynamic, continuous process of change and adjustment that impacts on all facets of

university life, as encapsulated in the three missions of a university, and all attendant policies, systems and practices that constitute the day-to-day life of a university. It is also the intelligent design of the university’s processes, engagements and activities, such that students and staff are encouraged, supported and stimulated through participation to become more competent, accepting of difference, caring, and engaged citizens of the university, and society as a whole”.



**Prof. Thuli Madonsela, The Law Trust Chair in Social Justice, University of Stellenbosch, attended the summit virtually.**

# Nkosana Tshisa – passionate about education, research, and the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer/ questioning, intersex and asexual (LGBTQI+) community

When first arriving at the Central University of Technology, Free State (CUT), Nkosana had a dream of becoming a journalist. However, the course he wanted to enrol in, was full. They then chose another career path, and have not looked back since.

"I first came to CUT back in 2013. At the time I was fresh from high school, and I had originally intended to study Language Practice and Media Studies, but then found out that the programme was full. I then enrolled for HR instead, and thus completed my degree in this field, as over time, I grew to love it. The one significant experience that I can think of about my time at CUT, was the years I spent as a member of the Debate and Public Speaking Society. We got to travel a lot (which I love!), and the sport honed a lot of skills in me that I've come to use and excel in within my current line of work."

During Nkosana's second year at the university, they worked as a student assistant. "This was back in 2014, during my second year in university. I learned a lot from that first job. The following year, I was appointed as a Supplementary Instructor in Business Management. That's where I fell in love with training and facilitation. After I completed my BTech degree, I was offered a part-time lecturing position by my alma mater, and decided to spend my early lecturing years perfecting my skills in facilitation, travelling the world, and getting my master's degree."

In 2019, Nkosana had the honour of presenting their research study at a conference hosted by the South African Institute of Management Sciences (SAIMS), a personal career highlight. "Earlier this year, my work was also published in the South African Journal of Industrial Psychology. That for me was positive validation for all the work and time I've invested in my craft. Often, it's not easy making it in this world as a young, Black and queer professional. You work twice

as hard to be able to have even half of the piece of the pie that everyone else is enjoying – a unique challenge that is often faced by many members from Black and queer communities."

Born and raised in Mafikeng, North West, Nkosana is the eldest of three children who grew up in a small village called "Magogoe Tar". "Growing up I had the most wonderful childhood, with a big family that consisted of many aunts and cousins whom I all considered as my mothers and siblings. It took a literal village to make me the person that I am today."

As a member of the LGBTQIA+ community, Nkosana has been helping to further educate the CUT community. "It has honestly been one of my favourite things to do – being able to change the narrative on how queer individuals are perceived, working towards creating a more positive understanding is progress, to say the least. My hope is that in my research, companies begin to treat queer individuals just as everyone else. In focusing a large part of my work in queer research, with the aim to squash the stigma, and ensure the representation of Black and queer individuals in all layers of the organisation, because that's when true change will take place. As a lecturer, if I get to influence even one mind to realise that we are the captain of our own ships and the CEO of our lives, I'll die a happy soul. It is on us to be the best version of ourselves and dare to exist, especially in a continent that continues to tell us that we are a taboo to society."

Nkosana's message for future CUT graduates is simple: "Enjoy student life and university. These are the best years of your life! Make connections, and be careful of how you treat other people, especially ones you may think you do not need. You never know if they might be a panellist at your next interview, or a potential investor for a future business venture."



# Puleng Serame – a true believer in oneself

Obtaining a tertiary education came with many challenges for CUT alum and IT Lecturer, Puleng Serame. However, a true believer in self-belief, she has invested in herself and is realizing her dreams.

"My journey at CUT Was never easy from the onset, I did not have funding for registration and fees for the first year as my mother is a pensioner and widow. The expenses were just too much for her. My Brother had to step in and assist me with money for registration and fees. I later qualified for NSFAS funding the following year."

She then enrolled for a Diploma in Information Technology Software Development Extended Programme, and later enrolled for a Post Graduate Certificate in Education specializing in Computer Applications Technology (CAT) and Information Technology (IT).

Once she had secured funding, Puleng faced another life challenge. "During my second year at CUT I got sick with flu and later discovered that it was in fact Pulmonary Tuberculosis. It had affected me very badly as I ended up missing a lot of classes and ended up failing 50% of my modules for that year. I lost my NSFAS funding, and everything was bad."

Puleng knew what she was working towards and didn't lose sight of her dreams. "I regained my strength and finished my treatment and managed to pass all of my subjects the following year. It was not easy but with God, I persevered."

Finding employment after graduation meant that she would have to think out-of-the-box to stand out from other graduates. "I struggled to get a job in teaching after I graduated, I had gained experience working temporary maternity posts for 2 primary schools respectively, after the contracts ended, I then wrote a lengthy Facebook post asking friends to assist and share my job seeking post. The response was overwhelming as I received teaching posts from people I did not even know, which led to me getting a small offer to teach CAT, reading and Life Orientation at a private school in Kroonstad. Because the position was small, I kept on applying for other jobs and then two months later I received an interview from a TVET College for ICT lecturer, and I got the job."

Driven by the ability to wake up each day with the chance to play a role to in changing the lives of her students, Puleng lives for sharing her love for software development. "I wish to be an inspiration and develop many girls to become software developers. I wish to be able to aspire many more young people to follow

a career in software development, becoming software engineers and successful entrepreneurs in the IT industry."

"Life will throw curve balls at you every now and again, never give up on your dreams. Everything is possible only if you put your mind to it," she adds.



# Women in the workplace – from victimisation to victory

The Central University of Technology, Free State (CUT) held a “Women in the Workplace: from Victimisation to Victory” webinar on 27 July 2021, to usher in conversations regarding issues that affect women, leading up to Women’s Month in August. A team of experts addressed questions often deemed difficult to ask or answer in the working environment. The event laid the foundation for further discussions and actions needed to ensure a safe, healthy and dynamic workspace for women. The webinar was attended by working women, individuals working with women, and those who have women working for them.

The panel consisted of Dr Nothemba Mrwetyana, the former CUT Registrar; Mags Shivanda, founder and owner of Digital Shero; Dr Mantoa Molete, a lecturer at CUT; and Ms Busi Matube, CUT’s Director: Information and Communication Technology (ICT) and Chief Digital Officer.

In his welcoming address, CUT Vice-Chancellor and Principal, Prof. Henk de Jager, stated the importance of men attending and truly listening to the challenges faced by female colleagues in the workplace. “We have a small group of men present today. They are the ones who should be here that should become aware of the challenges and the discrimination that our female colleagues are experiencing in the workplace. We treasure the value that our female staff bring to the

institution, and therefore also celebrate the value that our female alumni bring to the world of work and society at large”, said Prof. De Jager.

Dr Mrwetyana shared her three key victories for women in the workplace: “Equal pay for equal work. Young people have not experienced that. I’ve worked with men – same position, same qualifications, but the salaries are different. Secondly, women had to remain at work for nine months whilst they were carrying their babies, and they would be on unpaid leave just for a few days to heal. Now women do have maternity leave and other benefits, which are a great victory for women juggling their lives between home and the workplace. Organisations have also introduced professional development programmes such as the CUT Next Generation Women in Leadership (NGenWiL) programme, which is affording women an opportunity to develop themselves, and to be ready to compete with men for positions that they aspire to”.

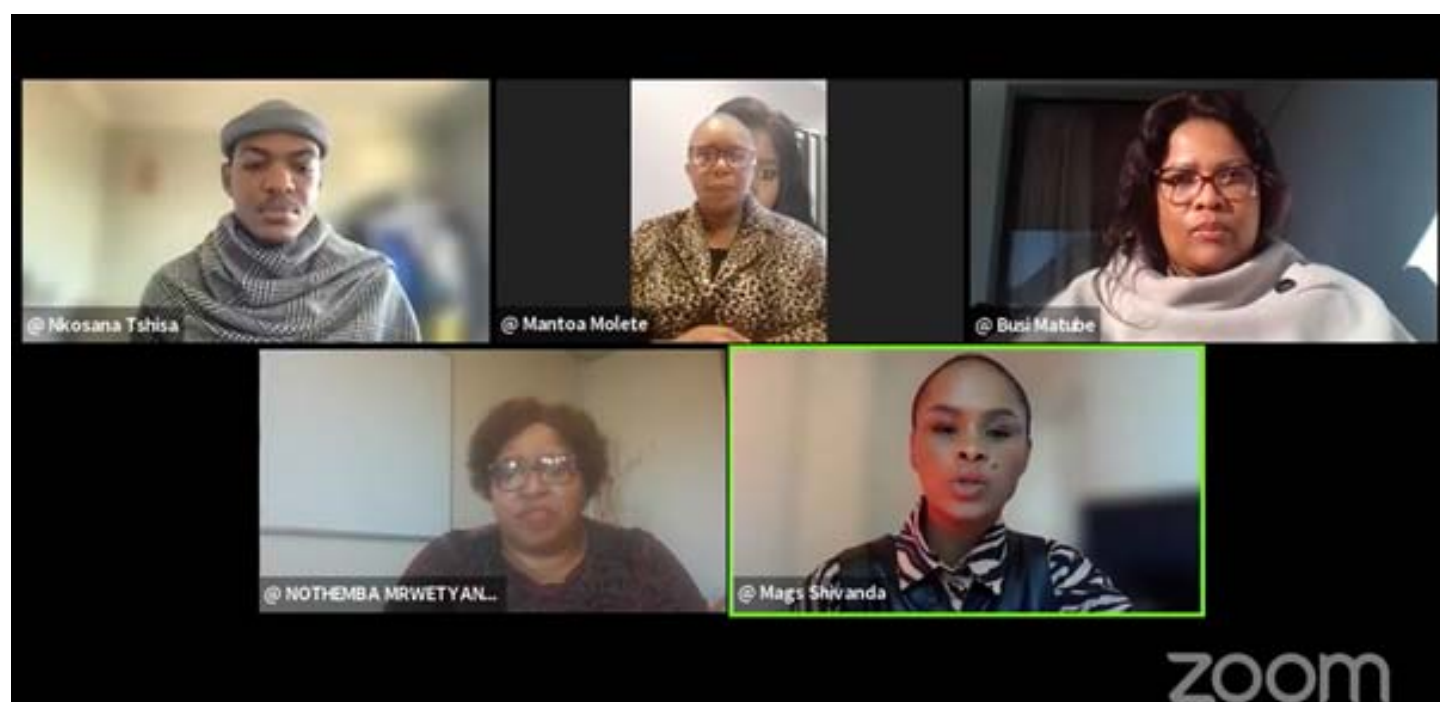
She added that the pandemic has dealt a blow to these victories, as working from home blurred the boundaries between work and home, and that some women had been laid off, which is stalling and delaying their career trajectories.

Shivanda addressed the issue of new incentives in job descriptions to attract women to roles. She focused on the fact

that she became her own boss out of frustration at the way things were and realised that she had to “be the change that she wanted to see in the world”, based on the things that I had to implement in my own company to make sure that women realise their power and actually become effective in their roles in the company. As a woman who struggled with menstrual issues, I made sure that when my team is on their cycle, they get a day off. Those are the type of things that people don’t realise that the incentive increases creativity, and this becomes beneficial to the company”, she said.

She added that masculine words used to describe a job, such as “expert”, often discourage women from applying for positions. “You will pick up that when it comes to job descriptions, some roles are quite different now, because women often experience imposter syndrome a lot of times where you just think that maybe you are not capable of doing something. When women usually apply for a job, they know that they are 100% qualified to do the job, unlike men, who could be only 60%, and they will go for it.”

The sentiment shared by all who attended, is that although women have come far in achieving equality in the workplace, more education and implementation of resolutions need to take place to truly have equality in the workplace.





# Dr Sheetal Liz Tom – embracing meaningful educational experiences

A recent Central University of Technology, Free State (CUT) information technology (IT) doctoral graduate, and IT lecturer at the Cape Peninsula University of Technology (CPUT), Dr Sheetal Liz Tom believes in setting goals and working towards achieving them – this while embracing new experiences that accompany life.

"I was born in India. My dad, a Chartered Accountant, had a transferable job, so we kept moving every five to six years. However, getting transferred from one place to another (Greece, Saudi Arabia, India, etc.) helped us to get to know most of the cultures and languages of the various places we visited. It was an amazing experience to meet new friends and learn so many new things that are completely different from the place you last were stationed."

Arriving at CUT meant experiencing another new culture. "CUT gave me the most meaningful educational experience. CUT provided me with an opportunity to enhance my willingness to participate in daily life as both a student and a lecturer. My sincere and heartfelt gratitude and appreciation goes to two wonderful supervisors: Dr Noluntu Mpekoa and Prof. James Swart. They have

always been supportive of all my efforts and struggles. Working under their supervision has been very enjoyable, and I have learned and grown a lot."

She is working towards being involved in more IT research projects in the future that will contribute, benefit and influence society, culture, our environment and the economy. "Through my work experience, I was fortunate enough to have served as an assistant professor and a lecturer for undergraduate and postgraduate IT students. I found that my professional experience as a software engineer provided me with a broad view that is useful in assisting students with projects, research and assignments. So far in my career, I have maintained the highest performance standards within a diverse range of lecturing IT students and have been successful in producing positive results."

Dr Tom believes that you are likely to stay motivated if you are working towards something that you genuinely want to do or achieve. "Setting goals gives me a direction to focus on, and that keeps me motivated. I am so proud of my fellow alumni! I hope you have had a wonderful experience while attending CUT. Best wishes to you in all your future endeavours!"

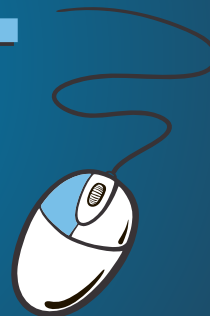




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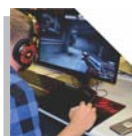
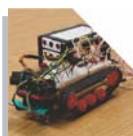
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# Dr Danie de Bruyn – all for studying at the Central University of Technology, Free State (CUT)

When he matriculated, CUT, then the Technikon Orange Free State (OFS), was the nearest institute of higher learning for Dr Danie de Bruyn. And once he began his studies, he realised he had found his higher education home.

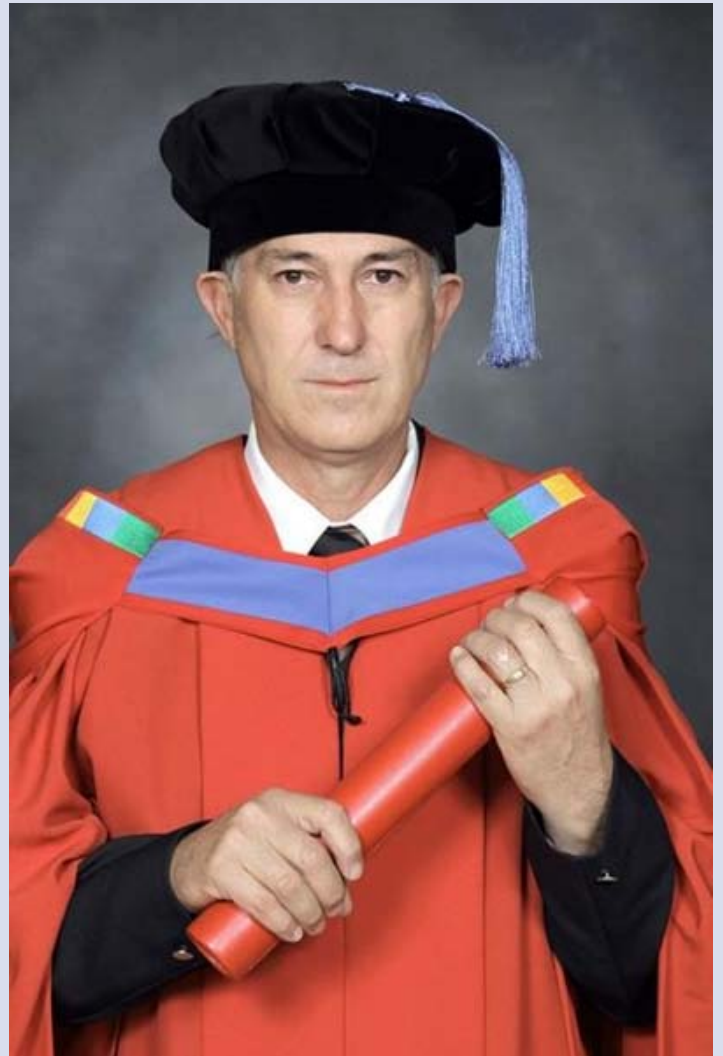
Although he was born in Kroonstad, Dr De Bruyn grew up in Bloemfontein, so it was no surprise that he would continue his education in this city. "CUT became more than just a place you study. It changes you, and becomes part of your DNA. That is why I decided to do my master's and doctoral degrees at CUT, even after I moved to Gauteng."

He enrolled for a National Diploma (NDip) in Electrical Engineering. "While busy with my NDip, everything changed, and I had to convert my studies to a Bachelor of Technology degree. After getting my qualification, I had been bitten by the academic bug, and I could not stop studying. I later did my Master of Technology (MTech) and Doctorate of Engineering, both at CUT."

His career journey began in 1990, when he started working at the Post Office (now Telkom). "In 1996, I joined the First National Information Technology Team, where I still work today, managing the national backbone. Working for such a great company, there has been so many achievements, but the one that stands out the most, is the building of its own fiber network, having an impact how corporate clients, etc. interconnect."

He encourages his fellow alumni to apply this to their lives. "Never give up; it's no easy journey. Ensure you have a good balance between work, study, family and friends and your religion. If you neglect one, all other sections will be impacted."

Motivated by his loved ones, Dr De Bruyn always works towards making South Africa a better place. "First set your long-term goal. What do you want to achieve in life? That will help you with setting your short-term goals, reaching your ultimate goal."



Dr Danie de Bruyn and Dr Ben Kotze who was his lecturer from 1991 during his second year and his study leader during his Masters and Doctoral Degrees.

# ENACTUS CUT performing valuable community engagement

ENACTUS is a student body that performs valuable community engagement in various communities. The Central University of Technology, Free State (CUT) chapter has entrenched themselves in Free State communities, seeking to help improve lives.

Their recent project is situated in Gladstone in Thaba 'Nchu, a small village in the Free State province with a population of approximately 800 people. Within the community, there are two corporations that are currently functional, which are the Youth Corporative and the Village Fa Global Parliament Cooperative, operating in crop farming. Enactus CUT conducted a needs assessment, and various challenges were divulged. These included poor soil conditions; negative climate effects; a high unemployment rate; a lack of capital for local economic development activities; a lack of basic business and financial management skills; a lack of awareness about the environmental sustainability practices of reducing, reusing and recycling; a lack of youth participation in agriculture; and the poor involvement of women in the community.

Nonetheless, the beneficiaries were in possession of livelihood assets, which included vast amounts of land, JoJo tanks, windmills, water, livestock waste, and trees. The team used this evidence to develop further insights and intervention strategies. Firstly, the team introduced the crop farming component of the project to the community, to stimulate employment, reduce inequality, encourage youth and female participation, and guarantee a sustainable community. The crop farming sector thrived. However, Enactus CUT realised that crop production in Gladstone Village was not meeting the commercial market standards. Hence, the team strategised on various innovations that can improve the quality of crop yield in the village. Enactus CUT decided to incorporate the bee farming sector, to ensure crop pollination and to repel insects.

In addition, from the bee farming sector, natural honey will be packaged, and beeswax utilised in the production of candles and soaps. This will increase nutrition, and reduce diabetes, dyslipidemia and skin lesions. Furthermore, to combat the challenge of poor soil, the team further suggested the inclusion of the worm farming sector to enhance the nutrient content in the soil to ensure proper crop yields. These worms, or vermicompost (a by-product of worms), will be supplied to the beneficiaries in Thaba 'Nchu and other farmers to nourish the land. In this way, quality crop production that meet the required standards of the commercial market will be ensured, thereby realising the goal of sustainable cities and communities.

In the project expansion phase, the vegetables will be used in secondary production. For example, tomato sauce will be manufactured from tomatoes, and crops such as garlic will be processed into various medicinal products (such as packaged garlic water to prevent heart disease) and insect-prevention products (i.e., organic pesticides). Moreover, honey from the bee farming sector will be packaged for sale. Candles and soaps will also be produced from the beeswax. Consequently, worms and vermicompost will be packaged for sale to the market. This will ensure business for the Youth Corporation, Enactus CUT, and Village Fa Global Parliament; and promote the United Nations (UN)'s sustainable development goals (SDGs) of good health and well-being; decent work and economic growth; and industry, innovation and infrastructure.

From the revenue streams generated from the above-mentioned

projects or businesses, the team will be able to support other struggling communities through enterprise development, employment, skills enhancement, and sustainable income generation.

Enactus CUT created several partnerships with businesses, organisations and institutions to guarantee SDG 17 and the success of this project. Partners in the project included CUT Community Engagement, Prof. Johan Van Zyl from the CUT Entrepreneurship Development Programme, Roger Moffat (a bee farmer), Bloemfontein Bee Removers, DIY Superstore, AKB Poultry Farming, and Crop Science Solutions.

Enactus CUT, in partnership with Prof. Van Zyl, has also trained community members in good farming, and the sustainability practices of reducing, reusing and recycling. For this reason, egg trays and plastic bottles will be reused to prepare seedlings, livestock waste will be utilised as compost, and various waste or natural materials will be used in the project.

Regarding the Village Fa project, the team anticipates establishing a self-sustaining community, protect the environment, provide employment, and produce high-quality crops and products that meet commercial market standards. This year, Gladstone Village experienced a storm, which flooded the crops, and affected the quality and quantity of the harvest. Nonetheless, the Village Fa Global Parliament managed to generate income from the sale of the first harvest of tomatoes. This amount will be reinvested into the business, for the procurement of seeds to be planted this season.





Money from the harvest of watermelon, butternut and pumpkin by the youth corporatives has been reinvested in the business, and they have planted chicken food (which has a good market in Thaba'Nchu) on another plot.

As the village becomes economically active, urbanisation will decrease, the rural economy will expand, and cities/urban areas will be able to support a reasonable population rate.

Enactus CUT believes that they will achieve all their objectives with the project, as they exercise their values of integrity, passion, innovation and collaboration in all they do.





# CUT Welkom Campus

CUT's Welkom Campus is situated 160 km north-east of Bloemfontein and is in the hub of the Free State goldfields, with several gold mines – a thriving industry in South Africa.

The Welkom Campus' facilities for students include library and information services; a student cafeteria; computer laboratories; equipped laboratories for programmes offered; a Wellness Centre that provides staff and students with psychological support and counseling; supplementary instruction; social services; and a wide range of sport facilities. Various student organisations, cultural activities and health services are offered, to advance access to quality education and support students during their university years.

The university has been moving towards upgrading the campus, to make the educational experience more advanced. These upgrades include the renaming of buildings, and the opening of a new cafeteria, healthcare clinic and Idea Generator (i-Gym).

## CUT honours former leaders

The following buildings were unveiled: Lemmy Mule Building (formerly known as "O Block"); Alwyn Louw Auditorium (formerly known as "Auditorium O3"); Thutong Building (formerly known as "Academic Student Support Centre"); Mangaliso Robert Sobukwe Building (formerly known as "P Block"); Clement Tsehloane Keto Library and Information Services (formerly known as "Library and Information Services"); Hugh Africa Building (formerly known as "A Block"); and Maipato Mokatsanyane House, the newly built student residence, which consists of five wings, namely: Unity House, Ikaya Lethu House, Maya Angelo House, and the Protea East and Protea West houses.





## Partnerships and improving lives

The Central University of Technology, Free State (CUT) and the Matjhabeng Municipality signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) on 14 October 2020 at the CUT Welkom Campus. CUT strives to be engaged in solutions and make a meaningful impact through social and technological innovations. Both the Mayor of the Matjhabeng Local Municipality, Mr Nkosinjani Speelman, and the Municipal Manager of Matjhabeng, Ms Zingisa Tindleni, are CUT alumni, which made the occasion extra special.

CUT has also signed an MoU with Sabela L Brands Group on 29 October 2020 at the CUT Welkom Campus, as part of CUT's initiative to position itself as a leading African university through partnerships. The Sabela L Brands Group pledged to fund campus projects in both Bloemfontein and Welkom aiming to make an impact in the community.



Front: Lindiwe Nyamsi, CEO of SABELA L Brands Group; Prof. Alfred Ngowi, CUT Acting Vice-Chancellor and Principal; Cllr Nomsa Mosuwe, CUT Councillor.  
Back: Mr Norbert Nyamsi, SABELA L Brands Group; Dr Johnson Lulua, Chairman of Sabela L Brands Group; Mr Molefi Motsoeneng, CUT Technical Officer: Technology & Innovation and Prof. Solomon Makola CUT Welkom Campus Director.

## Idea Generator (i-Gym) and Fabrication Laboratory (FabLab)

The i-Gym and FabLab facilities are a major boost in the university's efforts to strengthen the innovation and entrepreneurship ecosystem, in support of socio-economic development in the region. The i-Gym and FabLab will assist employees; students; high school learners; small and medium enterprises (SMEs); and the broader Welkom community with the ideation and prototyping of new ideas. These facilities will also serve the broader Higher Education sector, including Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) colleges, and Community Education and Training colleges in the region.



# Mosa Dladla – making history in South African football

What started as a volunteer position at the South African Football Association (SAFA) Motheo, has led to the historic appointment of Mosa Dladla in an influential administrative position. She was appointed as the new Provincial Executive Officer of the Football Federation in the Free State.

"I started as a volunteer at SAFA Motheo, before the demarcation that saw the association aligning themselves and being renamed 'SAFA Mangaung Metropolitan'. Soon after joining Mr Moremi Klip's office, I was appointed to lead the ABSA Women's Regional League. I then continued to go up the ranks within the association, which led to me being appointed as SAFA Mangaung Metropolitan's Regional Executive Officer in 2014."

Although born in Bloemfontein, Mosa grew up in Wesselsbron, a small maize farming town in the Free State, and later moved to Welkom. She holds a diploma in sports management from the Tshwane University of Technology (TUT), and a BTech in Project Management from the Central University of Technology, Free State (CUT).

"When I arrived at the CUT Welkom Campus, I experienced a community of students who were just as eager as I was to build and provide a brighter future for themselves and their families. The lecturers were always ready and available when and if needed. One of the lecturers even went as far as organising one extra class to ensure that everyone was on board with the module."

Mosa also has a FIFA Administration Certificate, and hopes that the experience she has gained as secretary will enable her to add value to the development of football in the province. "My wish is to see all of our regions in the Free State being able to continuously produce players of the highest caliber; coaches worthy of being recognised all over the world; and administrators who can lead and execute their duties with extreme pride, because development is what they are passionate about. Most importantly, I would like to see women's football growing from strength to strength, and we have leaders that are just as passionate. I also want women in general to be recognised for the contributions and impact they can make; not just because they are women, but because they are capable."

Dedicated to seeing her dreams come true, Mosa knows that she must put in the work. "Motivation alone will not get you far, but that, coupled with discipline, will ensure that you go that extra mile. Vusi Thembekwayo puts it way better than I can, but that moved something in me when I heard it, because we tend to live for now and brush off tomorrow. My passion keeps me going; development is what drives me. If I can contribute in any way towards a child's or player's future so much so that they are able to provide for themselves through football, then I am satisfied."

Her reminder to fellow alumni is: "The fact that we reached the level that we did, means that there's a desire to provide and have a brighter future. Our paths will not always be straight, but it's possible to reach that goal; that dream. Discipline is key, and I will always be a student of life."





# CUT's Prof. Makola releases third book, 70 Women and One Man

The Director of the CUT Welkom Campus, Prof. Solomon Makola, has launched his third book, titled 70 Women and One Man. Described as relevant, inspirational and healing, Prof. Makola has returned with a provocative work on seeking the ultimate meaning of life, following the success of his two academic books, Find meaning, stop wondering and Pimp the pain.

This year, Women's Month is celebrated under the theme, "The Year of Charlotte Maxeke: Generation Equality: Realising Women's Rights for an Equal Future", making the launch of the book fitting, as it details Prof. Makola's experiences with women, and how they have contributed to and affected his life. In this book, Prof. Makola shares divine narratives about 70 significant women he met on his journey to discover the ultimate meaning of life, integrating humanity (human spirit) with divinity (holy spirit).

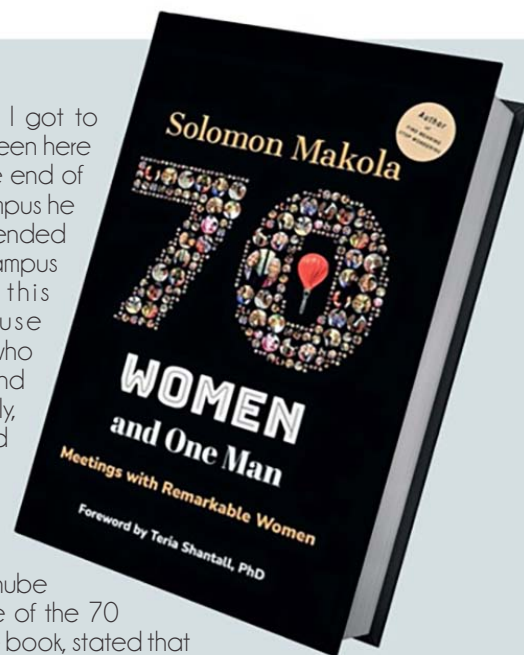
The inspiration for the book came after Prof. Makola received an invitation to address a women's seminar in Welkom in 2012. "I was pondering what to say to them when God deposited a vision in my heart to talk to them about significant women in my life. At the end of the presentation, there was a euphoric state in the room, and I knew that I had struck the right chord. I had only mentioned 12 women, but God revealed more in subsequent years", described Prof. Makola.

Prof. Makola added that he is privileged to have had the wonderful opportunity to be mentored by a great man, Archbishop Daniel Legoabe. "He was a man of God, but he also loved reading books each and every day, and these are some of the things that inspired me, and I knew that someday I also wanted him to read books written by me. He was sending two of his children to come and study here at this campus, Vista University, and it so happened that I had passed my matric so well that he said, 'By the way, I'm sending my children to Welkom on Monday, and therefore you can

also go'. That is how I got to Welkom, and I have been here ever since. And at the end of the day, the same campus he sent me to, is where I ended up becoming the Campus Director. All of this happened because there was one man who believed in me, and nurtured me physically, emotionally and spiritually", Prof. Makola said.

CUT Chancellor, Madam Justice Mahube Molemela, who is one of the 70 women featured in the book, stated that this was a moment to be celebrated. "That a man will publicly acknowledge the influence of women in his life is indeed admirable. This attests to the fact that you, Prof, recognise the important role played by women in society, and that you respect them. The book is the perfect illustration of the far-reaching power of therapy. I realise now just how apt the Chinese proverb is which states, 'A single conversation across the table with a wise man (or woman) is better than 10 years of study'", said Madam Justice Molemela.

70 Women and One Man describes Prof. Makola's journey in his search for the ultimate meaning of life, and book reviewers have described it as a book that offers inspiration and healing through its pages.



CUT Chancellor, Madam Justice Mahube Molemela, who is one of the 70 women featured in the book and has impacted the life of the author, Prof Solomon Makola.



CUT Welkom Campus Director, Prof Solomon Makola has launched his third book, 70 Women and One Man.

# Competition Winner



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I would like to thank CUT for giving me the opportunity during their selection process to register and study on their campus.

CUT gave me the opportunity to qualify and finish my course as Diagnostic Radiographer and receiving my National Diploma in 1995.

As a single mom this qualification helped me to be in the position to live a life with high standards, especially during the Covid pandemic.

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Melinda du Toit

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**Contact the Team:**

Jacqueline Pietersen – Deputy Director: Alumni Affairs, [jhpietersen@cut.ac.za](mailto:jhpietersen@cut.ac.za)

Thabo Mzamani – Alumni Officer: Alumni Affairs, [mzamani@cut.ac.za](mailto:mzamani@cut.ac.za)

Seithati Semenokane – Journalist/Media Liaison: Department of  
Communications and Marketing,  
[ssemenokane@cut.ac.za](mailto:ssemenokane@cut.ac.za)

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Private Bag X20539

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Tel: +27 (0) 51 507 3791



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