



# VC's VOICE

Quarter 2: Graduation and Student Success



## A Season of Smiles!

After two years of virtual graduation ceremonies, the mask-to-mask Autumn 2022 Graduation season was a series of joyous events.

Although Mandela University did have a trial return to on-site graduation in December 2021, these were the first large-scale, in-person ceremonies.

From the first graduation in George, where three ceremonies were held on 7 and 8 April, to the final one of 23 ceremonies held in Gqeberha, stretching from 20 April to 5 May, it was an affirmation of our need for human connection.

The celebrations saw 7094 graduands capped, of whom 210 crossed the stage for a master's degree and 53 for a doctorate. This total also included 6024 undergraduate degrees awarded and 807 qualifications of honours up to master's level.

The congregation comprised institutional office bearers, graduates and their families, and we congratulate all the graduates for their success despite the challenges encountered over their period of study.

Our graduates of 2022 have proved their ability to succeed despite myriad difficulties, including the coronavirus pandemic, disruption of in-class learning, and the socio-economic

challenges we are facing in our country, and across the globe.

I am acutely aware that for many, the journey through university has been complex and, at times, difficult. Yet more than 7000 students triumphed at our autumn graduation ceremonies and I trust that their achievements with us at Nelson Mandela University stand as a beacon for a brighter future.

Our Chancellor Dr Geraldine Fraser-Moleketi also congratulated the graduates on the fruits of their labour.

"Hard work, no short cuts and dreams are also what epitomise and mark our celebrations at graduation," she said.

"Each of you has put in the hard work, which is the hallmark of every degree, diploma and certificate being awarded. It is the key ingredient of success. And your graduation symbolises the realisation of dreams, of completing your studies, and also of new future paths each of you will embark upon.

"As you live your dreams, you make real our rallying call as Nelson Mandela University to change the world."

Watch the ceremonies online on the [University's YouTube channel](#).



**"Our graduates of 2022 have proved their ability to succeed despite myriad difficulties ... "**



## Sharing graduation joy far and wide

What better way to share the joy of our graduates than by publicising their success stories far and wide?

The 2022 graduation season saw a marked increase in views and engagement compared to 2021, with social media posts displayed more than seven million times to users, and an engagement of 428 000.

This can probably be attributed to the fact that in 2020 and 2021 the graduation was virtual only, while in 2022 the excitement of a live event with online streaming generated a lot of interest on social media.

Our Communications and Marketing Department seized the opportunity to spread the news in both traditional and new media.

Internal communications specialists wrote 33 articles, many of which focused on the human element. Inspirational and poignant stories were shared with the media and featured in print, broadcast and online.

Print publications included regional newspapers such as The Herald and Weekend Post in Gqeberha, and nationally in City Press and the



**“Sithi huntshu kubo bonke abafundi bethu abaphumeleleyo! Nibahle!”**



Sowetan. News was also broadcast through television and radio stations such as the national SABC News, and Umhlobo Wenene FM, which has a weekly listenership of 4.6 million people.

Online publicity also grew exponentially, with at least eight outlets carrying reports and visuals.

Overall, this coverage reached an audience of close to 40 million readers, viewers and listeners.

### Nibahle!

The digital communication and marketing team covered social media channels that included Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, LinkedIn and YouTube.

Our highest performing [video clip](#) on Facebook ever reached 1.46 million people. Captioned “Sithi huntshu kubo bonke abafundi bethu abaphumeleleyo! Nibahle!” (“Congratulations to all our graduates! You are beautiful!”) it attracted 26 547 link clicks.

Instagram also showed incredible growth. Twitter showed a decrease in impression by 9%, but engagements, reactions, comments and shares showed increases while, on LinkedIn, although fewer posts regarding graduation were put out compared to last year, the metrics remained similar. YouTube Video Views increased 51% from 54 241 to 80 095.

Metrics showed that although most of our online audience was from Gqeberha, audiences tuned in from around the world, with the most international views coming from the US, UK, Australia and Nigeria. However, there were also digital visitors from far-flung corners of the world. Well done to all involved!



Noxolo Grootboom



Sindiso Mfenyana

# A Reason to Celebrate

## Our Eastern Cape honorary doctorates

It is a pleasure and inspiration to confer honorary doctoral degrees on exceptional members of our South African society each year at Nelson Mandela University.

In 2022 we were able to cap three individuals during our Autumn graduation ceremonies: media personality Noxolo Grootboom, struggle stalwart Sindiso Mfenyana and our former Dean of the Faculty of Health Sciences, the late Professor Lungile Pepeta.

All three were born on Cape soil, with Ms Grootboom born in Cacadu (formerly Lady Frere), Mr Mfenyana in Bholothwa (formerly Bolotwa) and Prof Pepeta in Bizana.

The first Gqeberha ceremony was on April 20 when a Doctor of Philosophy (*honoris causa*) was awarded to ANC veteran Mr Mfenyana during the Faculty of Business and Economic Sciences event.

Mr Mfenyana was recognised for his life-long struggle for South Africa's liberation, his outspoken stance against corruption and patronage, and his firm belief in constitutional democracy.

Ms Grootboom was recognised on April 25 during the first of four ceremonies for the Faculty of Humanities, where 1088 graduands were capped.

She received a Doctor of Philosophy (*honoris causa*) for her invaluable work and contribution to journalism, media and communication, as well as her upliftment of the linguistic heritage of South Africa.

Acclaimed paediatric cardiologist, the late Professor Lungile Pepeta, was posthumously

awarded a Doctor of Health Sciences (*honoris causa*) on April 29.

Prof Pepeta succumbed to COVID-19 complications in August 2020 and his widow, Dr Vuyo Pepeta, accepted the award on his behalf.

It was given for his contributions as a paediatric cardiologist, medical researcher, academic and activist, and for being a pioneer of

the medical industry in South Africa, particularly in child health care.

The degrees were awarded at the Gqeberha ceremonies.

Each of our three 2022 honorary doctorates have made immense contributions in their respective spheres of the humanities, public service and medicine.



Above: Chair of Council Dr Geraldine Fraser-Moleketi, Dr Vuyo Pepeta and Vice-Chancellor Professor Sibongile Muthwa. Right: The late Professor Lungile Pepeta

# Winning the Water War

Taking responsibility for managing this life-giving resource

Managing crises is now part of Mandela University's DNA, with a crippling drought across the Nelson Mandela Bay Metro the present focus.

In recent months, the University has also had to navigate a global pandemic, loadshedding, increasing costs, taxi and public transport strikes, mental wellness concerns and other challenges.

In mid-June the University was set to implement its emergency water support plans as the combined dam levels held just 11 days' worth of water when good rains provided a welcome reprieve to Day Zero.

The water crisis, however, is far from over.

The shortage of water, intermittent water disruptions, low water pressure and related infrastructure breakages are now part of our reality.

The University, through the Water Crisis Management Team and the Safe Campus Coordinating Team, is mitigating these challenges with its immediate (emergency water support) and medium-term water support plans.

This is to enable the institution to continue operating in support of the academic project without too much discomfort.

Interventions to cut back on water use by the different divisions, such as catering, cleaning, horticulture, Madibaz Sport, student residences and events, are in place, too.

Saving water, however, is everyone's responsibility.

And, as a water scarce continent, this means our appreciation for water and new usage behaviours should be entrenched for the long-term.

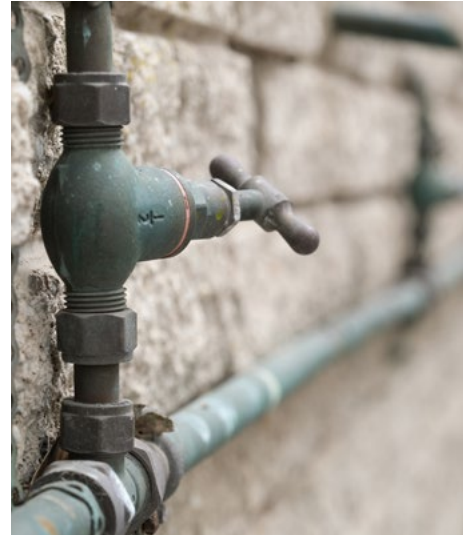
## PHASE



### Emergency plans

The following has been implemented should we find ourselves without Municipal drinking water:

- Portable toilets will be made available at key points on our Gqeberha campuses
- Additional water tanks are being strategically positioned across the University's campuses
- Drinking water will be trucked in.



## PHASE

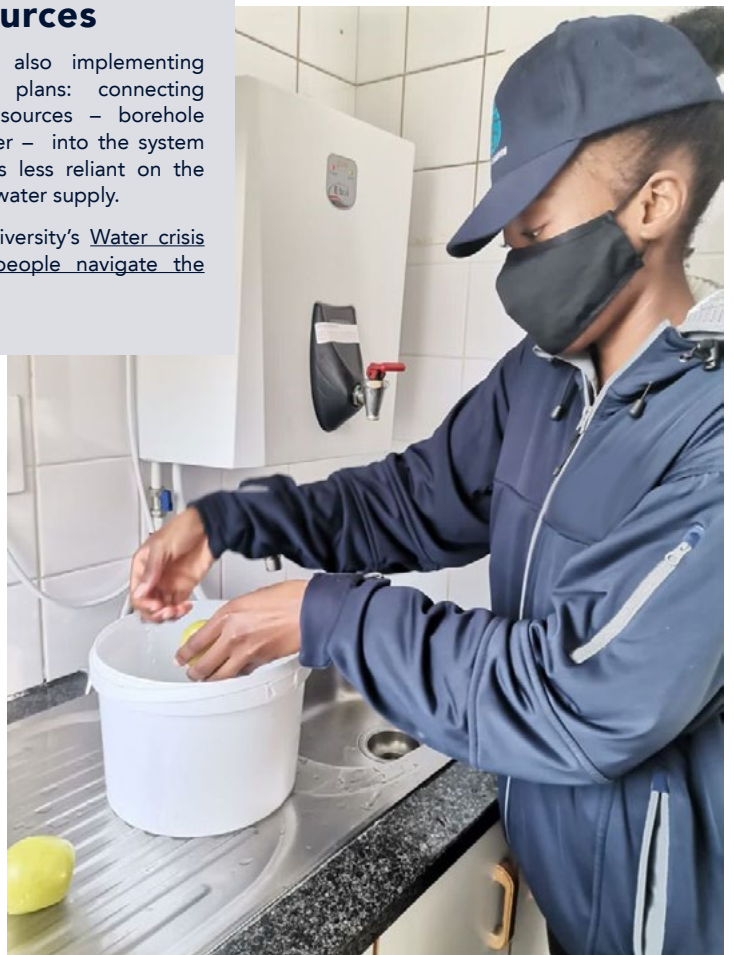


### Additional water resources

The University is also implementing its medium-term plans: connecting alternative water sources – borehole and reclaimed water – into the system to ensure that it is less reliant on the Municipality for its water supply.

Please visit the University's [Water crisis website](#) to help people navigate the present crisis.

**"The water crisis ... is far from over"**



# Crop of nine new professors deliver inaugural lectures

We are delighted to share news of nine inaugural lectures in 2022, with our new professors sharing expertise within and across a wide range of disciplines.

An inaugural lecture is an auspicious occasion when we acknowledge the appointment or promotion of new, full professors, introduce them to the academic and non-academic body of the University, and engage with the greater community.

It is a significant milestone in the academic career of a full professor, providing a platform to share past research and introduce new ideas to a diverse audience.

The first two inaugural lectures for 2022 are from the Faculty of Science: Prof Nel's "Sea Turtles as Ocean Ambassadors: Opportunities and Challenges" and Prof Van de Venter's "Exploring plants as medicine: an *in vitro* approach".

## Inaugural Lectures

Prof Ronel Nel, Zoology

Prof Maryna van de Venter, Biochemistry

Prof Zenixole Tshentu, Chemistry

Prof Brenda Scholtz, Computing Sciences

Prof Gerrit Crafford, Quantity Surveying

Prof Cheryl Walter, Human Movement Science

Prof Janine Kruger, Business Management

Prof Stephen Mago, Development Studies

Prof Lyn Snodgrass, History and Political Studies

"It is a significant milestone in the academic career of a full professor, providing a platform to share past research and introduce new ideas to a diverse audience."

## Turtles take us back in time

"Watching a sea turtle nest is like looking back through a window into deep time," is how Prof Nel views her research.

"This appearance and disappearing act of sea turtles creates an enigma that elicits a multitude of disciplinary, inter-, and intradisciplinary teaching, research and engagement opportunities ranging from archaeology to social sciences, including tourism, biology and ecology, conservation and policy.

"In these different spheres, I operated over the last two decades to understand sea turtles, their biology and behaviour to affect their conservation."



## Plants as medicine

Prof Van de Venter has an equally fascinating subject matter, delving into how plants were the first medicines available to mankind.

"Archaeological evidence for the use of plants as medicine dates as far back as 60 000 years ago and the first written records are from 5000 BC," says Prof Van de Venter.

"In this lecture, I explain how we use quantitative, high-throughput fluorescence imaging techniques to test samples for anticancer and antidiabetic activities.

"The difference between normal- and cancer cells and how cancer chemotherapy targets those differences, is explained."



Visit the [Inaugural Lectures](#) website for the abstract or full text of each lecture. A video recording of each inaugural is published on the University YouTube channel.



" ... giving prospective students a more in-depth look into what studying in a particular faculty is all about."

## Prospective students press 'play' in virtual Open Days

This year, thousands of students took a 21<sup>st</sup>-century approach to their possible future studies at Nelson Mandela University.

Our Student Recruitment team hosted seven Open Days – all online – in collaboration with faculties and support services between 23 May and 29 June.

Every year in April and May, the University offers prospective students an insider view on what they can expect when they study with us.

Before COVID-19, the annual Open Day took the form of a large exhibition with stalls from all departments and faculties showing what they offer, in George and Gqeberha.

However, in April 2022 there was still uncertainty around COVID-19 restrictions, along with concerns about water shortages in Nelson Mandela Bay.

Hence, instead of face-to-face encounters, our staff devised a series of seven digital Open Days to light on the Mandela YouTube channel.

The 2022 focus was faculty-based with a view to giving prospective students a more in-depth look into what studying in a particular faculty is all about.

These videos showcased the best of each faculty, including additional information on admission,

financial aid, sport, student housing, arts and culture and so much more that Nelson Mandela University can offer prospective students.

The Executive Dean of each faculty, and George Campus principal Dr Kaluke Mawila, showcased our diverse offerings at under- and postgraduate level, including interviews with staff, students and alumni.

They have been well received, leading to thousands of views, with the Faculty of Health Sciences video proving especially popular.

You can watch the recorded events on the [MyFuture@Mandela website](https://www.nelsonmandela.ac.za/MyFuture@Mandela).



## Meet our new Council members

The University has welcomed three new members of Council, the governing body, which exercises oversight of our institution.

The new members are Judge Nambitha Dambuzza, Mr Mzinwabantu Dayimani and Professor Liz Lange.

The appointees, like all members of Council, were selected for their expertise and good standing to serve the best interests of the University as a whole.

We are also bidding farewell to several valued members: Deputy Chair of Council Mr Siyabulela Mhlaluka, who has served four terms and Professor Mala Singh, who has served two terms.

Others leaving Council with one term under their belts are: Senate representative Dr Kwezi Mzilikazi, Academic Employee representative Mr Deroul Chauke and co-opted member Professor Darelle van Greunen. We thank and acknowledge each for their service.



Judge Nambitha Dambuzza



Mzinwabantu Dayimani



Professor Liz Lange

# A Clean Slate

## University undergoes institutional audit

Just as our students face assessment as part of their educational experience, so too are we, as a university, examined in the shape of a Council for Higher Education (CHE) institutional audit.

The CHE undertakes regular reviews of institutions of higher learning in South Africa and in 2021 asked Nelson Mandela University to reflect on and evaluate its pursuit of quality and excellence. This was captured in a Self-Evaluation Report (SER), submitted to the CHE earlier this year.

An external audit panel will now visit the University for the next step of the institutional audit, which is to further explore issues outlined in the report.

As the University embarks on its Vision 2030 strategic framework, the SER has provided an opportune moment to audit itself across four focus areas and 16 standards from 2017 to 2021.

The review period chosen for self-reflection includes the significant strategic trajectories that emanated from the 2017 renaming of the University, my inaugural address as Vice-Chancellor, the subsequent listening campaign in 2018, the organisational redesign processes during 2018/19, the decadal review of our Vision

**“The timely strategic, reflective exercise allowed us to focus on our quality management and enhancement systems ... ”**

2020 strategic framework, and the development of our Vision 2030 strategic framework.

The timely strategic, reflective exercise allowed us to focus on our quality management and enhancement systems, including our praxes and how they advance student success.

We have gained insight into our comprehensive and integrated student success ecosystem that includes a range of initiatives and services to optimise student success and enhance student and staff experiences.

Reflections in the report will be invaluable for further development and improvement of quality management systems.

We hope that the report will give the CHE and its Audit Panel an overview of the extent of our University's quality management system and aspects that we intend to enhance.

We expect that the report and its accompanying portfolio of evidence will provide insights and assist the panel due to visit us in August 2022.

The work involved in preparing the SER has been enormous, and I wish to express my sincere gratitude to all the Mandela University staff, students and stakeholders involved in preparing the report, especially the steering committee, working groups, those who shared information, the LT Collab, and the LT Portfolio, which played a pivotal role in coordinating and managing the institutional audit process. Special thanks must go to the DVC: Learning and Teaching Prof Cheryl Foxcroft and Dean: Learning and Teaching Dr Phumeza Kota-Nyati for leading the process.

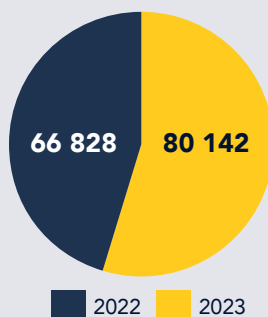
Balancing their workloads and commitments and overseeing the working group's contributions required patience and a unique way of encouraging colleagues to submit the required information.

# Strong increase in student applications for 2023

Student Recruitment has reported a strong increase in both under- and postgraduate applications for the 2023 academic year. The pie charts below show the comparison between 2021 applications for 2022, and this year's applications for 2023.

### Undergraduate applications

Year-on-year, from 27 July 2021 to 2022, undergraduate applications have grown by 21.16%. There were 66 828 applications this time last year for 2022, and by 27 July 2022 there were 80 142 applications for the 2023 year.



### International applications

Combined under- and postgraduate applications have grown by 18.37% for 2023. There were 2 063 applications for the 2022 academic year, compared to 2 442 for 2023.

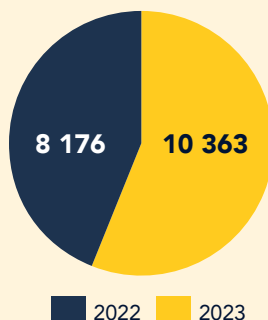
2 063

2 442

2022 2023

### Postgraduate applications

Year-on-year, from 27 July 2021 to 2022, postgraduate applications have grown by 26.74%. There were 8 176 applications this time last year for 2022, and by 27 July 2022 there were 10 363 applications for the 2023 year.





**"The Fireside Chat and the Africa Engagement tour are both significant steps in taking Nelson Mandela University to a wider international audience"**

## How we are expanding our African footprint

As a dynamic African university, we are part of a vast and exciting continent. And, as a university named after Nelson Mandela, we recently retraced his footsteps on a multi-leg Africa Engagement Tour that visited Ethiopia, Kenya and Uganda.

DVC: Engagement and Transformation Professor André Keet explained the rationale behind choosing these three nations to kick off this campaign.

"Our initiative to expand our African footprint has been conceptualised around Nelson Mandela's footsteps as he travelled the continent from 1962 seeking support for the liberation of South Africa," said Prof Keet.

In addition to this historical link, the tour sought to harness the collective scholarly wisdom our continent offers to address Africa's challenges.

Addis Ababa in Ethiopia was the first stop, the city where 60 years ago Mandela received military training.

The Office of the Prime Minister welcomed the Mandela delegation on a tour of the country's largest library, the Abrehot Library, as part of the South Africa/Ethiopia cooperation on Grow the National Library Project.

The Abrehot Library will have a dedicated South Africa section and Nelson Mandela University branding, enhancing our visibility in spaces of learning.

The Mandela team were hosted at the South African Embassy and given a diplomatic brief by Ambassador Edward Xolisa Makaya.

We also signed an MoU with President of Salale University, Dr Genanew Gofe.

The second leg of the tour was to Uganda, where we held constructive discussions with representatives from Makerere University.

An Alumni event in Kampala drew more than 60 alumni and friends, and several universities also sent representatives. The SA High Commissioner to Uganda, her excellency Ms Lulu Xingwana, addressed the group.

Our doctoral graduates here have also been at the forefront in driving the Uganda chapter and engaging with Mandela University. Its commendable chapter model has a special relationship with the South African High Commission in Uganda.

From there, the Mandela group travelled to Kenya where Prof Keet led our delegation in talks with the University of Nairobi, a major partner in realising our African footprint.

A framework is in place to collaborate in key strategic areas such as research partnerships and joint projects.

More than 30 alumni attended an Alumni event in Nairobi, with support evident to establish a formal chapter.

"Our presence in Kenya is recognition of the leading role of higher education institutions in the country and the role our alumni can play in helping us develop linkages and network," said Prof Keet.

The first leg of the Africa Engagement Tour builds on the Africa Day celebrations which introduced a global partnership through a virtual "Fireside Chat".

This new partnership, with the King Baudouin Foundation United States (KBFUS), Candid, GivingTuesday and Myriad Alliance for Borderless Giving is being developed in close collaboration with the International Social Impact Institute® to create an innovative online fundraising platform for our University.

The Fireside Chat was an opportunity to showcase Nelson Mandela University's purpose and strategic intent as an embedded university committed to promoting social justice and its impact as the academic expression of Nelson Mandela.

This event coincided with the date and mission of Africa Day, namely, to celebrate accomplishments and advancements throughout the continent.

KBFUS, which hosted the conversation, serves as the fiscal sponsor in the United States for Nelson Mandela University, helping to facilitate philanthropic giving from US donors to support the University.

The Fireside Chat and the Africa Engagement tour are both significant steps in taking Nelson Mandela University to a wider international audience.

View the [Fireside Chat online](#).





Mandela's new Human Settlement Development qualifications include socially engaged research, such as on this PV solar system in Ndlambe EcoSUN Green Village in Ekuphumleni Township, Kentson on Sea.

## New programmes in education, marine science and human settlements

This is designed to empower a new generation of leaders to grow the maritime sector in the African region. It will also assist them in navigating the challenges of the ever-growing global maritime industry.

Benchmarked against the best in the world, our MMM degree will provide strategic business skills and knowledge for maritime professionals working in the sector and related supply chain industries. It will include offshore and land-based activities.

Mandela University Graduate School Director Dr Sam February sees the MMM programme as coming at the right time to deal with the Fourth Industrial Revolution, as it will enable organisations within the maritime industry to remain at the forefront of development.

Mandela University serves a province with a huge housing problem, leading to a need for knowledgeable and competent innovators in the field of human settlement development.

2022 is the first year that the University is offering a Master of Human Settlement Development. This is a research-based master's degree programme offered on a full-time and part-time basis, to be completed at NQF Level 9 with a dissertation that comprises 180 credits.

The Department of Buildings and Human Settlement Development is offering the programme in the School for Built Environment and Civil Engineering.

More recently, in April 2022, the NQF has approved a new Higher Certificate in Human Settlement Development, which will be a one-year full-time course on North Campus.

This certificate aims to provide theoretical and practical knowledge to give practitioners the skills and attributes needed to operate in the three tiers of government related to human settlement.

Each of these three areas reflects significant steps towards further embedding Mandela University as a dynamic African university in service of society.

Nelson Mandela University launched significant new courses in June and July in the faculties of Education, Business and Economic Sciences, and Engineering, the Built Environment and Technology.

The Faculty of Education is introducing a part-time offering of Postgraduate Certificate in Education (PGCE) programmes, while the Business School is bringing in a new Master of Maritime Management (MMM) postgraduate degree.

EBET started to offer its new Master's in Human Settlement Development this year, and the National Qualifications Framework recently approved a new Higher Certificate in Human Settlement Development. Our analysis of the daily reality of educators is that many have a thirst to further their studies yet need to continue working as funding for postgraduate studies is not readily available.

We also discovered that people working in a range of other economic sectors feel drawn to teaching and wish to switch careers. Hence, we are introducing this PGCE, specifically designed for part-time delivery.

The two-year PGCE part-time programmes will be offered from 2023 on South Campus, with late-afternoon lectures from Monday to Thursday.

We also hope this format will allow us to broaden the accessibility of the programme.

Also in June, the University launched the Master's in Maritime Management (MMM) postgraduate qualification.

“Each of these three areas reflects significant steps towards further embedding Mandela University as a dynamic African university in service of society”



# Changing Spaces

## Naming and renaming to make Madiba proud

The fifth anniversary of the renaming of our institution from Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University to Nelson Mandela University is an opportune time to look within and reflect on what this famous name means to each of us.

There have been many changes over these five years, not least of which are our organisational redesign and the launch of our Vision 2030 strategy. The University has been moving towards an increased focus on engagement and transformation, setting up a new Engagement and Transformation Portfolio with a status equal to other core academic missions of Learning and Teaching, and Research.

At the same time, an ongoing Naming and Renaming programme is symbolically signalling our commitment to transformation in naming places, spaces and buildings that enhance the Mandela name and entrench our growing intellectual identity.

Part of the celebration this year therefore will see Phase 2 of the programme that started in 2017 by renaming Gqeberha campus residences, with an additional 41 names of buildings across all seven University campuses unveiled.

As the Naming and Renaming process continues to unfold over the next 12 months, you will see many changes across all campuses. Instead of being known by number, buildings will be given a name that resonates with their purpose.

For example, Building 35 in the Faculty of Humanities will be renamed after Gqeberha



**“Instead of being known by number, buildings will be given a name that resonates with their purpose.”**

across Nomhle Nkonyeni and Building 13 in the Faculty of Sciences will become the Katherine Johnson Building in honour of the NASA mathematician.

Likewise, many buildings known by their function will gain meaningful new names, such as the Law Service Building which will be renamed Dulcie September. On the George Campus, residences and other spaces are named after similarly well-known figures such as the late Johnny Clegg, Reeva Steenkamp, Fatima Meer and George Bizos.

The kick-off event in the Mandela month of July launches a year-long series of engagements across faculties, schools, entities, units, and the in-between spaces.

These festivities aim to not only reflect on bearing the Mandela name, but to catalyse deeper discussions. After all, the significance of the name goes deeper than switching from referencing a geographical area in the Eastern Cape to commemorating an influential public figure.

As the only university in the world to be named after the late President Nelson Mandela, we are mindful of the responsibility to promote social justice and equality while also contributing to long-term sustainability.

It gives further impetus to institutional values such as ubuntu, social justice and equality, and environmental stewardship. Let us make uTata Madiba proud!