



VC's VOICE

Following in Mandela's footsteps across Africa

In 1962, Nelson Mandela, then the first commander-in-chief of Umkhonto we Sizwe (MK), secretly left South Africa.

He travelled across the African continent for seven months, meeting African leaders and seeking support for the anti-apartheid struggle. As he went, he also worked to find scholarships for Black South Africans to attend university in Africa and beyond.

Now carrying his name, Nelson Mandela University is following in these footsteps to expand our African footprint and forge stronger connections with the continent.

Of our more than 150 partnerships with universities across the world, more than 80% are with European and North American Universities, and less than 5% with African institutions.

The University sees these strategic visits as an opportunity to build relations and respond to the goals of Agenda 2063 and the UN Sustainable Development Goals in developing the African continent.

Meeting of minds

A delegation of 13 executive, academic and support staff took part in the Vice-Chancellor's African Engagements and Partnership Programme, starting in East Africa with engagements at universities in Ethiopia, Uganda, and Kenya.



FRIENDSHIP ACROSS BORDERS: Salale University's Dr Genew Goffe and Nelson Mandela University's Prof Sibongile Muthwa hold a portrait of General Tadesse Biru and former President Nelson Mandela, dating to when he visited Ethiopia in the 1960s



Director: Alumni Relations Paul Geswindt, left, at the Uganda alumni event

“A delegation of 13 executive, academic and support staff took part in the Vice-Chancellor's African Engagements and Partnership Programme, starting in East Africa with engagements at universities in Ethiopia, Uganda, and Kenya.”

These were important symbolic visits, as these nations are part of the “Mandela footprint”; that is, they are among the countries that Nelson Mandela visited in 1962, and where he found solidarities and support.

During the June and July visits, the University signed memoranda of understanding with the Universities of Addis Ababa, Salale, Ethiopian Civil Service, Makerere and Nairobi. The MoU with Addis Ababa Science and Technology University was signed upon return after successful engagement at their main campus in Addis Ababa.

The specific purpose was to establish and revitalise strategic partnerships with universities in other African countries through identifying areas for collaborative engagement, research, innovation and learning and teaching. In doing so, the University hopes to rekindle the spirit of collective responsibility for the problems on our continent.

Expanding our reach

Recruitment of, and marketing to, prospective international students was also a significant part of the programme.

This first leg of the African Engagements and Partnership Programme was highly successful in renewing existing institutional relationships and developing new ones.

Action points include how we use the Mandela name to enhance intra-Africa mobility, both in academia and beyond. There is great potential for growth and to drive a deliberate agenda which prioritises and imbues African scholarship and indigenous knowledges for the African and global audience.

The International Office is working on the second leg of the programme to advance Mandela University's African footprint, which will cover the West Africa, Central Africa and Southern Africa regions.

This will take place in 2023, and promises to be as rich in insights, relationship-building and intellectual connections as the first.



Nelson Mandela University engaging with the University of Nairobi.

Our programme to 'Advance Mandela'

To mark the fifth anniversary of the official renaming of Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University to Nelson Mandela University in 2017, we embarked on a year-long programme to reflect and engage on what this name means.

You may already have seen several events marking this.

The anniversary programme was launched with a Council event "Advancing Mandela: Five Years On" in September. This featured History Professor Nomalanga Mkhize addressing *The Mandela Name, the Person: Intellectual Legacies and Institutional Values*.

The Engagement and Transformation Portfolio (ETP) has been rolling out six months of programmatic and scholarly work as part of the broader University five-year name change celebrations.

It is mobilising the name Mandela in favour of the social justice, transformation and sustainability work being done by the various portfolio entities, research chairs, projects and units.

Vice-Chancellor Professor Sibongile Muthwa, Chancellor Dr Geraldine Fraser-Moleketi, Chair of Council Ambassador Nosipho January-Bardill and SRC President Pontsho Hlongwane also spoke at the event on South Campus.



Prof Nomalanga Mkhize

The use of institutional culture and symbols reflects the journey the University has been on since 2017. After all, we are no longer named after the metropolitan municipality in which we are located, but after the global icon's vision and values, and his commitment to a more socially just world.

In line with this, new names for 35 University buildings and places have also been unveiled. Each name has been carefully chosen in consultation with students, stakeholders and staff to symbolically signal Mandela University's commitment to transformation.

We have taken a phased approach as follows:

- Phase 1 (2018): Student residences in Gqeberha (completed)
- Phase 2: Started in 2019 but, due to the interruption caused by the global COVID-19 pandemic, was delayed until 2022. It has now continued with:
 - Faculty buildings and spaces in Gqeberha
 - George Campus buildings
- Phase 3: Administrative buildings and spaces
- Phase 4: Campus names will be unveiled at a later date.

To smooth the complex and potentially contentious process, a Naming and Renaming Policy Guideline directs decisions in keeping with the vision, mission and values of the University.

The University's strategic drive to revitalise the humanities, could, said Prof Mkhize, be likened to an estuary, or hatchery, that generated an ethos reflecting the values of Mandela.

Inasmuch as an estuary was a confluence of different streams of water uniting productively, the humanities also saw diverse contributions converge, but to build social cohesion and inclusivity.

The goal therefore was to "cultivate an African-rooted universalism, steeped in the varied humanising political and normative traditions of the country."

"As an African University, Nelson Mandela University is centred on African norms and values, as Mandela was," Prof Mkhize said. "Alienation gives way to a sense of home, ownership and accountability."

Congratulations to our NRF award winners!

Congratulations go to our Distinguished Professor in Information Technology, Professor Darelle van Greunen and Economics Professor Syden Mishi, both of whom won awards recently from the National Research Foundation (NRF).

The NRF honoured the two Mandela academics, along with other leading scientists and researchers, for excellence and achievement in knowledge creation and dissemination at the September awards function.

Prof Van Greunen, who is also Director of the Centre for Community Technologies, won the NRF Award for Public Engagement in Research. This recognises her outstanding contributions to public engagement with research over a sustained period.

This award aims to encourage academics, while teaching and researching, to enhance the public's engagement with sciences and understanding of the applications of science in society. It covers areas such as natural sciences, engineering, technology, innovation, the social sciences, humanities and indigenous knowledge.

The award will enable Prof Van Greunen to attend the next American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS) Conference in the United States.

Prof Van Greunen's work with the CCT integrates transdisciplinary research and innovation with community engagement. The development and implementation of apps and other smart technologies target education, health, rural and social development, particularly in low income communities.

Change-making research

Over the past five years, Prof Van Greunen and her team of change-maker researchers have won various awards and international acknowledgment.

This application development has taken place within the African context, thus realising her vision of "ICT solutions for Africa, by Africans, in Africa".

She is recognised as one of the leading academics in the space of advancing the 4th Industrial Revolution in education.

The NRF Awards also provide a platform for new and emerging researchers to be inspired and to experience first-hand what it takes to become a recognised scholar, as part of the transformation agenda. Given the current human capacity challenge faced by South Africa, the NRF remains focused on addressing human capacity development and knowledge generation.

The NRF's investment strategy is four-fold:

- Increasing the number of next generation researchers
- Improving student throughput
- Developing emerging researchers
- Growing the number of established researchers.

To this end, the NRF recently introduced new award categories to recognise Next Generation and Early Career/Emerging Researchers for exceptional research performance.



Prof Syden Mishi, Deputy Vice-Chancellor: Research Innovation and Internationalisation Dr Thandi Mgwebi, centre, and Prof Darelle Van Greunen at the NRF ceremony

Prof Mishi was awarded for Research Excellence for Early Career/Emerging Researchers in the Social Sciences, Humanities and Law category.

His areas of teaching and research are applied microeconomics; microeconomics theory; behavioural and experimental economics; game theory; industrial organisation; institutional economics, and finance.

Prof Mishi supervises students and holds various research grants in this area. He also started a reading and research group: Research in Behavioural and Experimental Economics (RiBEE) and has been especially active lately in behaviour change methodologies around water usage in drought-stricken Gqeberha.

Addressing maintenance, loadshedding and other challenges

Running and maintaining a large, multi-campus institution such as Nelson Mandela University is like running a small municipality.

In addition, the Infrastructure Services and Space Optimisation (ISSO) team faces challenges such as the ongoing water crisis, loadshedding and acts of vandalism.

The latter, along with support provided during two years of the COVID-19 pandemic, and the recent return of all staff to campus, means maintenance teams are hard-pressed to keep pace with demands.

It continues, however, to play a leading role in ensuring the University's long-term sustainability.

Positive outlook

In spite of the many challenges, plans are in place to ensure that the University is able to function for the medium-term, thanks to the implementation of alternative water supplies.

The introduction of borehole water and reclaimed water means the institution will become less reliant on the local municipality.

Various student residences and other buildings already only use borehole water for flushing of toilets.

This is a trend that is mirrored across the country as the higher education sector seeks solutions to various challenges, including loadshedding.

Loadshedding

While Mandela University has generators in key areas to ensure that work can continue when the power goes down, these generators need to be constantly refuelled and it is expensive to do so.

Apart from the R1.6-million needed annually to insure and ensure these generators are optimally maintained, the projected cost of diesel for the generators, using the Stage 2 to 4 scenario for 2023, will be R3.6-million.

Planned improvements

Batteries will be installed to offer an extra layer of protection. While power is switched between Eskom and the University generators during loadshedding, these will provide interim power to support equipment.

However, very few of our installations have this protective measure, which increases the risk of equipment failure at these sites. We are investigating how to mitigate this risk.

Budget has been set aside for two additional generators in 2023. In addition, the team is examining how to improve its positioning of generator mix for maximum benefit.

Several ablution sets, especially on North Campus, are in the process of being totally refurbished.



New entrance to South Campus

Nelson Mandela University has a new entrance which will help to alleviate traffic congestion at other entry points. The new entrance is at the end of the Strandfontein extension road and runs along the edge of the nature reserve. It allows for easier access to South Campus.



Revitalising the Humanities forges ahead

The transformative work taking place at Nelson Mandela University in the area of Revitalising the Humanities is forging ahead.

This is part of the planning and decision-making roadmap of our Vision 2030 Strategy passed by Council in 2021. Revitalising the Humanities is one of our future-focused strategic priorities and enablers embedded in Vision 2030, advancing the praxes of a transformative, engaged university.

The Faculty's Curriculum Conversations, drawing from the priority theme of African Vernacular Archive and Heritage Studies (Origins, Culture, Heritage and Memory), contribute to this. The most recent Curriculum Conversation was on 29 July when, in collaboration with the National Institute for the Humanities and the Social Sciences, we presented a transdisciplinary conversation on 200 years of the isiXhosa written word in the Eastern Cape.

The Faculty of Humanities has formally handed over the Dr Hlophe Brigalia Bam Archive, the first archival project in the Women's Digital



“The Faculty of Humanities has formally handed over the Dr Hlophe Brigalia Bam Archive, the first archival project in the Women's Digital Archive and Gendered Histories research project, to the University.”

Archive and Gendered Histories research project, to the University.

There were also several public lectures during this period that reflect the work being done in this area, including the Sizwe Kondile Memorial Lecture, the Raymond Mhlaba Memorial Lecture and the Phyllis Ntantala and Prudence Mabele Memorial Lecture.

The first two lectures were organised through the relaunched Raymond Mhlaba Centre, and the third by the Centre for Gender and Women Studies and the SARChI Chair on African Feminist Imagination, in collaboration with the University of Fort Hare.

All three addressed the themes of origins, culture, heritage and memory, as well as public management, governance and leadership.

Together, these various inter- and transdisciplinary ventures help Mandela University to re-centre Africa and develop the next generation of African scholars and academics to advance excellence through their scholarly contributions.

International conferences draw strong contribution from Africa

Nelson Mandela University has again become a destination for international conferences, having been a co-organiser of the Western Indian Ocean Marine Science Association (WIOMSA) symposium in October, and hosting the Biennial African School of Fundamental Physics and Application (ASP2022) in November.

Ocean and marine science practitioners, academics, researchers and students came together for WIOMSA's week-long scientific symposium in October in Gqeberha.

Under the theme "A New Decade of Western Indian Ocean Science", they shared knowledge, experience and solutions to the challenges experienced in our coastal and marine environment.

The symposium was geared to help guide international policies and improve management of our oceans, with a specific focus on the Western Indian Ocean, which extends from South Africa all the way up the east coast of Africa.

More than 800 delegates from a wide range of countries attended the conference, which was organised by WIOMSA, the Sustainable Seas Trust (SST), and the Nairobi Convention.

It was preceded by a workshop hosted by the University's Centre for Coastal and Marine Research (CMR), where scientists from numerous countries, including several from Africa, tried to tackle a predicted crisis along the east coast of Africa as a result of climate change.

ASP2022 also will bring together international authorities, albeit on a smaller scale, at Nelson Mandela University from 28 November to 9 December.

Mandela University is only the second South African institution to host the ASP, which is now in its seventh edition, after Stellenbosch hosted the first one in 2010.



Teacher session with visiting American scientists at the African School of Fundamental Physics and Application (ASP 2022)

“Mandela University is only the second South African institution to host the Biennial African School of Fundamental Physics and Application, which is now in its seventh edition ...”

Fulfilling our mandate

The ASP also aligns with Vision 2030 in its outward-facing orientation of serving society. Its programme expresses this tangibly by including outreach activities to schools, public lectures, and a Forum Day to engage policy makers and the private sector.

Our Faculty of Science, likewise, has a strong emphasis on "science for society", which emphasises the need for, and impact of, science in our everyday lives.



Professor Lorien Pichegru

The continental school is held in a different African country every two years and this time it will host about 80 postgraduate students from all over Africa, including South Africa.

The University is hosting the ASP at a significant time, as 2022 is the International Year of Basic Sciences for Sustainable Development. It is also a precursor to the Biennial African Conference of Fundamental Physics and Application (ACP2023) next year.

The ethos that physics is an engine for development in Africa is driving a full programme of actions and events at ASP2022.

Expanding our African footprint is also a key part of Mandela University's Vision 2030 strategic framework. We aim to increase our postgraduate student numbers, in particular those from this continent, and welcome conferences and symposia of this nature.

Both WIOMSA and ASP were planned as hybrid virtual and in-person events.



Drone unit team members include, from left, Damian Mooney, Mervin Knoesen, Karl du Preez and Jan Hendrik de Jongh

Mechatronics team fly high with new drone licence

In a strategically important breakthrough, our Advanced Mechatronic Technology Centre (AMTC) engagement unit has secured a coveted civil aviation remote operating certificate, enabling our University to operate drones legally for the first time in several years.

This will enable our School of Engineering to provide both under- and post-graduate students with the opportunity to gain specialised skills that will support not only the South African community, but also the niche market of drone operations.

AMTC Director and Principal Lecturer Karl du Preez explains why this is so significant.

"We now have the ability to collect data in the form of aerial imagery at a much higher rate than ever before," said Du Preez. "This enables us to understand and manage large scale projects that are linked to the community, much faster.

"Fisheries, illegal poaching, whale populations, forestry and fire control are a few examples of what will benefit from having a bird's eye view."

Mandela University had to follow a rigorous three-year application process with strict guidelines to secure its new Remotely Piloted Aircraft System (RPAS) Operating Certificate (ROC) from the South African Civil Aviation Authority.

It had been illegal to fly a drone (except for sport) for several years, which meant that all drone activity at the University had to stop. The certificate now clears the way for our drones to take to the skies.

Our highly-skilled staff are key

"The AMTC is fortunate to have two commercially licensed pilots, Prof Russel Phillips and Damian Mooney, who played a vital role in the acquisition of the ROC," said Du Preez. "Four dedicated post holders are required to continuously drive and monitor the process."

The University invested about R400 000, plus the time of four people over three years. The AMTC invested more than R200 000 to acquire off-

the-shelf rotary drones and more than R1-million in the development of prototype autonomous vehicles.

"Drone" is a broad term initially used to describe a flying target for artillery practice. More recently, and when not used for sport flying, they have been renamed "RPAS" (remotely piloted aircraft system).

As Du Preez says, they "give human beings the power of accessing previously inaccessible places – unlocking a whole new world."

Internally, the drone unit can support other parts of the University, from Ocean Sciences to Technical Support Services. University researchers and staff now will have access to professional drones and crew, without the related expenses, and the AMTC will benefit with a new discipline in its teaching and research portfolio.

Impact for our stakeholders

Externally, there are potential impacts for our stakeholders, the South African community and also the world.

"Through collaboration with industry, we will help to grow drone technology in South Africa, contributing to economic growth," said Du Preez, noting that there were patents in place.

"Our focus on real world drone solutions means that we are able to offer products that can be commercially produced and used in world relevant research and support.

"The ROC allows us to operate within all South African airspace, including controlled airspace or airports. This means that the flights will occur where they are needed to support researchers and students."

A major partner in achieving accreditation was the merSETA, which provided the necessary funding.

The accreditation will allow the University to operate drones for corporate operations only, in a very controlled environment. The certification does not allow drone flying on an ad-hoc basis.

Looking forward to our graduation recognition ceremonies

We are excited to announce that Nelson Mandela University will be hosting a series of graduation recognition ceremonies for the 2020 and 2021 graduates who graduated in absentia and virtually due to the global COVID-19 pandemic.

The recognition ceremonies will form part of the forthcoming Summer Graduation season for Master's and Doctoral graduates.

The Management Committee of the University approved the hosting of these events, which will take place at the Madibaz Indoor Centre from 12 to 15 December 2022.

2020 and 2021 graduates who completed their studies at George Campus will form part of these ceremonies in Gqeberha.

Registrar Edgar de Koker echoes the thoughts of many staff in his words: "We are very excited to acknowledge our graduates who, through no fault of their own, did not have the opportunity to wear a gown and walk across the stage to receive their qualifications." We have been in touch with as many of our 2020



BELATED CELEBRATIONS. About 4000 graduates will have the opportunity of crossing the stage in the Graduation Recognition Ceremonies from 12 to 15 December.

and 2021 graduates as possible to confirm their attendance, so that we can plan appropriately for the number of ceremonies to be held.

We are so looking forward to celebrating with our graduates and their loved ones during these few days in December.

From the treasure troves of Africa to the top of the world

Phytochemist and researcher, Dr Nehemiah Latolla was awarded first place in the International FameLab 2022 competition, the biggest international competition that seeks and supports science communication talent.

Dr Latolla had judges hooked from the start of his talk about looking to indigenous knowledge to develop new drugs to treat diabetes.

Taking first place amongst six finalists he said: "This has been an incredible journey realised by sharing the indigenous knowledge systems of South Africa and their possibilities to address drug discovery. I am carried on the backs of amazing local and international young scientists who were brilliant in the delivery of all their research. I look forward to engaging more in this journey with FameLab."

As part of his win, Dr Latolla will have the opportunity to travel to the UK for the Cheltenham Science Festival in June 2023.



With COVID-19 restrictions lifted, Mandela University staff can gather on the netball court, and pick up on other pre-pandemic activities

IMPORTANT DATES

28 November to 9 December

African School of Physics Symposium

7 December

End-of-year and Long Service Awards

12 December

Summer Graduation

12-15 December

Graduation Recognition Ceremonies

Public lectures open our doors to the wider community

At any university, public lectures play a critical engagement role and also serve to bridge the gap between “town and gown” by opening its doors to a wider audience.

It was therefore our pleasure to welcome firstly our Chancellor, Dr Geraldine Fraser-Moleketi, then international educator Prof Jeanine Ntthirageza, followed by Gift of the Givers founder Dr Imtiaz Sooliman and most recently former Deputy Finance Minister Mcebisi Jonas to present public lectures on our campuses.

Ray Mhlaba Centre for Governance and Leadership

We relaunched our Raymond Mhlaba Centre for Governance and Leadership in September with a public lecture headlined by Dr Fraser-Moleketi.

Hosted by the Faculty of Humanities, this lecture was a response to the Vision 2030 strategic focus areas on transformative engagement, and the revitalisation of the humanities.

In her keynote address, *Asinakuthula Umhlaba Ubolile: Amplifying the Call to Action*, Dr Fraser-Moleketi focused on migration patterns on the continent, and more specifically, Afrophobia.

She said her lecture was influenced by the centre’s purpose of reinvigorating engagements on good governance, accountability and ethical leadership in the region by focusing on the role of struggle heroes and heroines.

Dr Fraser-Moleketi addressed several challenges facing South Africa, such as poverty and inequality, as well as social aspects and Afrophobia.

Centre acting director Professor Luvuyo Ntombana said Afrophobia had gained ground since the end of apartheid, and the Chancellor’s address advocated for the protection of human dignity.



Nelson Mandela University Chancellor, Dr Geraldine Fraser-Moleketi



12th Steve Biko Annual Public Lecture

International multi-lingual educator and genocide survivor Prof Jeanine Ntthirageza was guest speaker at our 12th Steve Biko Annual Public Lecture in September.

Prof Ntthirageza is the founding director of the Centre for Genocide and Human Rights Research in Africa and the Diaspora at North Eastern Illinois University (NEIU), Chicago, where she is a professor and TESOL programme coordinator.



Prof Jeanine Ntthirageza

Former Azanian People’s Organisation President, Professor Saths Cooper, was the respondent for this incisive look at how the legacy of Biko resonates today.

Prof Ntthirageza titled her address *Building Bridges among the Wretched of the Earth*.

This is the second-longest-running Steve Biko lecture, apart from the Steve Biko Foundation/ UNISA lecture. It is also the only one hosted in the late South African activist’s home province of the Eastern Cape.

Dr Imtiaz Sooliman

The Faculty of Business and Economic Sciences presented a glimpse into the spirit of ubuntu, for which our namesake Nelson Mandela was so well known, in a well-attended Public Lecture in October.

The Faculty invited Gift of the Givers founder Dr Imtiaz Sooliman – who holds an honorary doctorate from Mandela University, among others – to speak on *I am Because of Others* at the Business School.



Gift of the Givers founder Dr Imtiaz Sooliman

Faculty Executive Dean Prof Hendrik Lloyd said Dr Sooliman “strongly represents the university values of excellence, integrity and respect – he lives our way of being in service to society.”

Govan Mbeki

The Centre for and the Chair for Critical Studies in Higher Education Transformation (CriSHET) presented the inaugural Govan Mbeki Public Lecture in October at the South Campus Auditorium.

Former Deputy Finance Minister Mcebisi Jonas spoke on *Navigating global and domestic turmoil: the urgent need for visionary collaborative leadership*.

Jonas posed the question: what would a visionary like Govan Mbeki be doing? He argued that although our collective despair tends to foster paralysis, we should not let this get in the way of fixing the country.

Faculty of Education Executive Dean Dr Muki Moeng facilitated the programme.

These public lectures gave the University the opportunity to share the spirit of African intellectuals such as our namesake Nelson Mandela, Steve Biko, Oom Gov and Oom Ray, as filtered through the words of significant thought leaders of today.



Former Deputy Finance Minister, Mcebisi Jonas



Library services transformed over the pandemic

Nelson Mandela University's Library and Information Services (LIS) is going through a transformation phase with significant adjustments in services, staffing, collections and spaces.

Among other developments, service models have moved toward self-service, online and independent access to information for users.

The pandemic had the side-effect of fast-tracking digital transformation, helping LIS to move towards institutional transformational goals in the form of making more textbooks available free of charge, and reimagining platforms such as the institutional repository and other services.

Post-pandemic, access to all on-campus libraries has not only been reinstated but also been improved to enhance the user experience.

Digital developments include a new library app, training in the Figshare research data management repository platform, and use of the LibGuides content management system that includes research support tools.

Increased digitalisation also has led to more online access to resources and services, including online library training sessions using platforms such as Zoom and MS Teams.

Academic libraries have had to adapt and respond to needs in the learning and research environment and support digitisation of scholarly content and the increasing influence of relevant technologies that have impacted on the transformation of services.

"In the transformed library, managers now serve as team leaders and technical knowledge is more diffused."

The profound positive "fast-tracking" impact brought about by the pandemic has affected almost all sections.

Easier access to resources

LIS has been broadening and better understanding students' diverse needs, particularly those with disabilities, to improve their success and throughput.

South Campus Library has a self-check unit that will assist students to issue books without having to be assisted at the issue desk.

All campus libraries have disability transformation leaders, who are not campus libraries' senior staff members, but everyday, hands-on staff members. They form a team for further engagements with the Disability Unit and report to strategic leaders where needed.

Today, a librarian mingles freely within the library, interacting with, and assisting users. Furthermore, they might be an expert embedded at faculty board meetings.

Librarians are becoming tech-savvy and continuously learning about new technologies, working collaboratively with users to solve problems, answering questions, and assisting in fashioning user-created content.

In the transformed library, managers now serve as team leaders and technical knowledge is more diffused. Librarians who create and participate in conference programmes, publications and online learning know that sharing innovative and best practices is a core function of their field.

"Post-pandemic, access to all on-campus libraries has not only been reinstated but also been improved to enhance the user experience"

Drive to boost youth development and entrepreneurship

Mandela University must not only be known for excellence in the core pillars of learning and teaching, research, and engagement. We must also be known for our drive to develop an entrepreneurial environment and ecosystem that enables youth development and entrepreneurship.

Our fifth Nelson Mandela Annual Youth Convention in September was an example of this, with its theme *Re-creating Ecosystems for Youth Development: Liberating the Power of the Youth to Remake their Futures*.

Likewise, the Entrepreneurship Development in Higher Education (EDHE) Lekgotla, hosted by Nelson Mandela University in July, reflected on aspects that can empower students, youth and entrepreneurs to contribute to socio-economic transformation in South Africa.

Steps to empowerment

There are many Mandela University initiatives which focus on developing and growing youth entrepreneurship in economic priority sectors, and they do not all only focus on our student body. Staff, for example, attended the launch of Student Entrepreneurship Week at the University of Venda on 18 and 19 August, which included capacity-building workshops.

The convention, organised by our Division of Student Life and Development as a catalytic project, however, drew together a wonderful blend of students, staff and other stakeholders.

They discussed issues that affect not only young people, but also society at large in the area of policy and pathways for integrated development in meeting objectives of the National Development Plan 2030, and African Agenda 2063 respectively.

One panel discussed "Co-creating Innovative Pathways for Youth Development: How do we collectively respond to the Existential Crises of Youth Exclusion?" This is a question which all of us at Mandela University can reflect upon.

Leaders from the #FeesMustFall shared reflections of how to cultivate youth agency for positive and integrated youth development, and this was met with a response from the current cohort of students who presented their generational mission.

The convention was also a chance to showcase our Madibaz YouthLab, which drives youth social innovation and aims to establish an environment that supports youth life-changing experience.

A gathering of greats

We also were the hosting university for the EDHE Lekgotla in July, an annual gathering of leaders in entrepreneurship development at South Africa's 26 public universities. This national event takes place in collaboration with Universities South Africa (USAf) and the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET).

Its theme of #movetomarket was informed by the importance of the commercialisation of research. However, it also highlighted the need to position student entrepreneurs to actively participate in the economy by entering the market with their products and services.

The EDHE's Student Women Economic Empowerment Programme (SWEEP), aimed at female student entrepreneurs, launched a student chapter at the Lekgotla. Mandela University established the first chapter in the country and will now provide support to other universities to establish their chapters.

The Lekgotla was also a platform to introduce and demonstrate a Student Entrepreneurship Support (SES) Self-Assessment Tool currently under development. This is part of a collaborative partnership between Nelson Mandela University, the University of Pretoria and Ghent University in Belgium.

Student entrepreneurship is a key focus area for our University and is critical in light of the untenably high youth unemployment rate in South Africa.



The national EDHE Lekgotla drew delegates from around South Africa and many of our students attended the Nelson Mandela Annual Youth Convention



Farewell to our wisdom-keepers

This year, the University bid farewell to 42 retirees, or wisdom-keepers, as Vice-Chancellor Professor Sibongile Muthwa now refers to them, 23 of whom attended a farewell tea at the institution. They are (back from left): Grimine Yoyo, Koos van Rensburg, Robert van den Berg, Estelle Broekhuizen, Dr Christo Pienaar, Prof Peter Freere, Dave Jenkins and Dr Denver Webb. Middle: Chandrika Heera, Prof Cheryl Foxcroft, Maxie Calitz, Dr Christina Jordaan, Annaline Vermaak, Dr Vukile Tshazibana,

Marion Murphy, Prof Kwame Asmah-Andoh and John Bawushana. Front: Prof Zelda Potgieter, Prof Charmain Cilliers, Yolisa Beta, Prof Sibongile Muthwa, Prof Andre Calitz and Beverley Brikkels.

Other retirees include: Susan Brummer, John de Lange, Donald Flint, Zamekile Hanabe, Prof Sihaam Jardien-Baboo, Nomhle Kawe, Elroy Sam, Chris Sharp, Xolile Tete, Charmaine Seaman and Salome van der Riet.

Staff receive VC's Excellence Awards

Under the umbrella of celebrating excellence, Nelson Mandela University recognised its top academic, professional, administrative and service staff in the categories of research, teaching, engagement, creative outputs and institutional support on 28 November.

The event was held together with the student academic achievers' awards at the Boardwalk Convention Centre.

Vice-Chancellor Professor Sibongile Muthwa congratulated staff and students for their excellence at the first in-person joint awards function. Staff and students are interdependent on each other, and it was inspiring for both to share their celebrations and reasons for excellence.

Prof Muthwa encouraged the audience to be passionate and the best at what they do. "Every job is a self-portrait of yourself, autograph your work with excellence", she said.

In addition, she thanked the support networks of staff and students who were there for them through difficult times, especially the past two years. See the full story on the University website.



From left, Deputy Vice-Chancellor: Learning and Teaching Professor Cheryl Foxcroft, who received a Career Achiever's Award, with Nelson Mandela University Teacher of the Year Dewald Koen and Vice-Chancellor Prof Sibongile Muthwa.



Successful first Research Week

Among those actively involved in Nelson Mandela University's first Research Week from 7 to 11 November were (from left) Deputy Vice-Chancellor: Research, Innovation and Internationalisation Dr Thandi Mgwabi, Natasha September from the International Office for Education and Director of the Centre for Community Technologies, Professor Darelle van Graunen. Recordings of all sessions can be found on [YouTube](#).