



THE MERCURY

# TERTIARY Ψ π TIMES

## Arts Faculty Research output on the upward leap

THE University's Faculty of Arts is carving its excellence path as a research-focused unit as evidenced through the PhD graduates it produced during the 2017 graduation season.

This progressive achievement is remarkable because Faculty staff members were themselves successful, with the Faculty thus benefitting and shining as the leader and pioneer of staff development.

Six staff members obtained PhD qualifications from UNIZULU during the 2017 graduation season. The recipients are academics in the departments of Tourism and Recreation, Anthropology and Development Studies, Sociology, Communication Science and English.

Professor Gregory Kamwendo, the Dean of the Faculty of Arts at UNIZULU, said the Faculty was forging ahead with staff capacity development,

adding that "a PhD is the reputable academic achievement and a critical indicator for preserving the delivery of the refocused academic trajectory which is purposeful teaching and learning, research and innovation and community engagement".

Professor Kamwendo believes that these results speak well to the transformation agenda of the Faculty and employment equity targets.

"Female PhD holders are likely to inspire female students and learners to aim high in their studies. A nation of educated women is a nation whose bright future cannot be doubted", he said.

Dr Blade Nzimande, the Minister of Higher Education and Training, reiterated this focus when he hosted a Summit of Higher Education Transformation in 2010 and emphasised the issue of transformation with specific focus

on equitable access to higher education, quality of higher education as well as the role of higher education in national development.



Professor Gregory Kamwendo, Dean of the Faculty of Arts at UNIZULU.

two major conferences each year: one for the entire Faculty and another for the Department of Information Studies.

These conferences provided platforms for staff and students to present papers and establish networks with peers from other institutions locally and beyond.

After each conference, paper presenters are encouraged to publish more papers.

Another best practice at the Faculty is knowledge sharing. When a colleague publishes, the published work is circulated to all Faculty staff members via e-mail to open their eyes to further and/or potential research and publication avenues that could be pursued.

The Faculty is currently taking great strides with regards to the decolonisation of knowledge production and dissemination in research, and this is particularly prominent in the Department of African Languages, where some post-graduate students write their theses in IsiZulu; something that Professor Kamwendo finds "revolutionary and commendable".

"Our institutional language policy speaks to the development and promotion of an-

other language of scholarship in addition to English and I think we are doing well on that front," Prof Kamwendo said.

Although these achievements are regarded highly by the Faculty, Professor Kamwendo noted that there was still great room for growth in terms of research output.

He says that in growing a culture of research within the Faculty, it was important that exemplary leadership should be adopted and that leaders should be "research active". He further emphasised the importance of senior academic staff mentoring non-senior academic staff and students; elaborating that a supportive and intellectually empowering environment would then result in increased research by academics, especially those coming from the previously and historically disadvantaged groups.

## UNIZULU connects with school principals



Professor Mandla Hlongwane from the Faculty of Education delivers his address at the seminar.

THE University of Zululand (UNIZULU) recently invited high school principals to its inaugural School Principals Seminar.

The seminar – aimed at positioning the university with school leaders – encouraged educators to pursue post-graduate studies, as well as information sharing about entry requirements, course outlines and success tips for prospective students.

"This seminar is vital in establishing good relationships with the leaders of schools. It allows both parties-UNIZULU and principals-to identify the role that each has to play to equip the learner with career choices", said Professor Thandi Nzama from the Faculty of Arts at UNIZULU.

Educators learnt that in order for prospective students to apply for admission for undergraduate qualifications, they must apply via the Central Application Office (CAO) and must pay the required fee within the prescribed period.

When choosing subjects, they must also remember not to exceed two official languages and must also achieve a National Senior Certificate (NSC) rating of three or higher.

"It's imperative that learners pass a minimum of four 20 credits NSC subjects to qualify to their chosen programmes. Once an application via CAO is received, depending on the programme, applicants might need to undergo a selection interview or an aptitude test", said VW Maneli, the manager of Student Admissions.

Maneli stressed that one of the reasons applicants were rejected was because of outstanding official documents that were required.

"Prospective students must triple check that they have all the documentation needed. They should be stamped by an official of the law especially if it is a copy. These are usually

the learner's identity document and matric certificate," he said. Additionally, it was important that learners kept track of their application process via CAO.

Major concerns were raised at the seminar about the limping education curriculum status in KwaZulu-Natal and how this negatively impacted on the development of the student who entered an academic environment.

"Learners who are passing with an aggregate of 60 percent in high school find it difficult to cope with first year maths and science. We need to assess what is being taught in schools and how to align it with first year university level. Otherwise, students will continue to drop out of maths and science courses because they simply cannot cope," said Professor Vivier from the Faculty of Science and Agriculture.

This growing pandemic was largely due to inadequate support given to teachers and inadequate material that did not coincide with the content taught in university.

"As UNIZULU, we have a responsibility to make a difference in the life of learners by providing them with the best education. We have a writing centre in place to assist current students to sharpen their academic writing," said Professor Mandla Hlongwane from the Faculty of Education.

"We are also involved in community engagement activities through initiatives such as the annual winter schools programme. This is our way of assisting local school learners and educators." At the end of the seminar, one resounding message was clear: in order to produce excellent learners, a strong positive partnership between universities such as UNIZULU, and school educators must exist. In this way, learners will be fully prepared for higher education.

## Teachers reminded about the sanctity of their profession

THE University of Zululand recently held its inaugural Life Orientation Teachers Seminar which was an exercise to meaningfully engage with LO teachers who have influence in the lives of learners on subject and career choices.

The two-day event was held in the Ugu District (Margate and Umzinto) and attended by the District's teachers, high-profile guests from the District's education department as well as the municipality.

Teachers were told about academic programmes offered at the university's four faculties, the application process required for first year study, bursaries and financial aid as well as other important information relating to the wellbeing of students, such as disability.

Delivering her keynote address, Nokuthula Ndaba from UNIZULU's Student Teaching Practicum, reminded teachers that teaching was a noble profession.

"But when we say this, we don't mean that the profession itself is noble. We are referring to a person who is in the profession. When we talk of a noble profession, we are talking about a person who is honest. As a teacher, honesty is one of the essential ingredients to your character as a person.

"Teachers also need to be righteous. They need to be upright morally," she said.

"We've got a decay of morals in our society. If our morals as teachers were to be correct, I know that this would in turn transfer to our learners."



Nokuthula Ndaba, keynote speaker at the UNIZULU inaugural Life Orientation Teachers Seminar.

She expressed concern about the fact that the teaching profession no longer enjoyed the respect it used to command. However, she said that teachers themselves had played a role in downgrading the image of the profession.

"Teachers are no longer honoured in society and it's because of how we behave in society (as teachers).

"A teacher has to be a person of virtue; a person of good ethics. You must be an ethical and honourable person.

"Teachers are a precious component in society. They are second to parents. You will recall that we were told, as teachers, that we act in loco parentis (in the place of a parent).

"When you stand in front of your learners, you have to understand that you've now been given that authority of being a parent and you must deliver and nothing less. We

want authority from you and we want you to be able to manage our children," she said, urging the audience to remember that their profession was the bedrock of all professions.

"Without us, there would be no doctors, accountants, etc. We are the custodians of professionalism as teachers. People must learn from us how they should behave in their workplaces."

She further urged teachers to look after themselves in order to serve their profession well and be good examples to their learners, saying that people are tripartite beings who are made of the body, spirit and mind.

"We as teachers tend to neglect the spirit. Spiritually, the teacher is dead. That's why you find the teacher stealing at the school. You even find some (teachers) in inappropriate romantic relations with their learners.

"Some of the things that you do, especially in your youth, will catch up with you, which is why it is so important that as a Life Orientation teacher especially, you must guard yourself because you must practice what you preach.

"As a teacher, you must read extensively. When you teach, learners must be inspired by your knowledge. We have teachers who are shallow when they give lessons; and what makes them shallow is their lack of knowledge as a teacher. We have teachers who don't even read newspapers. You cannot find wisdom where ignorance thrives," she said.

## Instilling a Green Culture at UNIZULU

THE Department of Consumer Sciences at the University of Zululand is determined to instill in the UNIZULU community the value of environmental conservation through recycling.

The Department recently partnered with Nokulunga Mnyango, the owner of a Ngwelenzane-based waste collection company called Uthando Recyclers, as well as PETCO, to initiate a waste collection entrepreneurship movement focusing on collecting recyclable material in and around the University community.

"The Consumer Sciences programme curriculum offers a third year module called Appropriate Technology and Gender Planning which requires students to be innovative and develop technology that could generate livelihoods or create job opportunities," said module lecturer Ngwanamoelo Ndwandwe.

The module was previously limited to theory and was therefore not satisfying its expected outcomes, Ndwandwe explained. Mnyango is now a guest lecturer and will introduce the practical aspects to the module.

As the Department of Consumer Sciences aims to contribute towards UNIZULU becoming a recycling conscious institution, Ndwandwe and Mnyango recently hosted a two-day waste management and recycling workshop that was facilitated by PETCO.

This saw the University's staff and students educated about the importance of reducing, reusing and recycling waste while also being awakened to the entrepreneurial as-



From left, Professor Unathi Kolanisi, Head of Consumer Sciences Department at UNIZULU; Jacques Lightfoot, Plastics SA representative; Ngwanamoelo Ndwandwe, lecturer in the Consumer Sciences Department; Belinda Booker, PETCO representative and Nobonga Mnyango from Uthando Recyclers.

pects of such activities.

Held at one of the Department's lecture rooms, the first day featured presentations by four industry role-players. Belinda Booker and Jacques Lightfoot, facilitators and trainers at PETCO and Plastics SA, respectively, shared valuable information about recyclable and non-recyclable materials, the processes involved in recycling and viable entrepreneurship opportunities as well as the support available for aspirant and budding entrepreneurs in this field.

PETCO aims to improve the management and recycling of post-consumer polyethylene terephthalate (PET) products like used plastic cooldrink bottles while Plastics SA represents all sectors of the plastics industry.

SMME presenters Mnyango and Mzolis Madikizela of Voli Petroleum, a biodiesel enter-

prise run in Bizana in the Eastern Cape, gave business advice based on their personal experiences.

Mnyango's business has, so far, created jobs for five people, with whom she collects used paper and plastic in the KwaZulu-Natal regions of Ngwelenzane, Esikhaleni, Eshowe and Mbazwana.

Day two of the workshop concentrated on practical experience. Jabulani Mbatha, an electrician from Esikhaleni, who has a great passion for waste collection and recycling, demonstrated and showcased his state-of-the-art work. He will be mentoring some of the Consumer Sciences students to "change trash to cash".

The workshop is to be followed by an awareness campaign and an exhibition of recycled arts and crafts at the University in October.

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## R70 million Infrastructure upgrades for UNIZULU

**T**WO key infrastructure projects—a 288-unit residential facility and the complete reconstruction of the campus electricity substation—have been completed at the University of Zululand's main KwaDlangezwa Campus.

Professor Xoliswa Mtose, UNIZULU Vice-Chancellor, said that the upgrades, which have a combined worth of more than R70 million, helped the university to deal with key challenges en route to creating a quality teaching and learning environment at the university.

Professor Mtose said that the infrastructure upgrades form part of the university's six strategic priorities for the period 2016-2021.

"Investment in post-secondary infrastructure is an investment in South Africa's next generation of students and researchers. Improving the spaces where students live and where innovation takes place will fuel prosperity for years to come," she said.

UNIZULU Facilities Management Department Director, Richard Dlongolo, said the completion of the student residence was a precursor to building further residences on campus to address the critical shortage of student accommodation.

Currently, only 5 000 out of 17 000 students can be accommodated on campus. Unlike



The newly built student residence at UNIZULU.

many universities which are located in busy cities, UNIZULU is situated 19km south of Empangeni and 160km from Durban, resulting in limited alternative accommodation.

As a result, many young people travel long distances or live in the nearby Vulindlela Village where rudimentary housing and shacks lack basic

services and do not provide a suitable environment for study. Dlongolo said the latest student residential addition, which began construction in 2015, is an extension of facilities that were completed in 2008.

The new units are arranged in four and six sleeper combinations and come with hot water; bathroom facilities, furniture

and kitchens that are equipped with refrigerators, stoves and individual lockers for students to store their groceries. Creature comforts include a lounge area and television.

The reconstruction of the campus electricity substation cost some R26 million and addressed the protracted electricity outages that had plagued

the university. As the campus was located in a remote area, the university had not been included on the municipal power grid when it was established during the 1960s. It therefore required its own high voltage electricity substation.

At 35-years-old and technically obsolete, the substation was "past its sell by date". The university had relied on a single transformer for two years and electricity outages that stretched for days, impacting on laboratories, IT facilities and made teaching and learning difficult at a university where air-conditioning was a must in the hot summers.

The completed power substation has been built to international standards and modern hybrid technology delivered a compact installation that required minimal maintenance.

The facility can be remotely controlled and supervised and was extremely operator friendly. It also had additional spare capacity for another 20 to 25 years and will easily accommodate the expansion of the university.

The high voltage switch gear—which is the first of its kind in South Africa—is central to the integrity of the new system.

Security around the substation has been beefed up with CCTV cameras to help combat cable theft. A new fence also deters monkeys.

## UNIZULU's dynamic Dean and astute female researcher

**PROFESSOR** Nokuthula Winifred Kunene, the Dean of the Faculty of Science and Agriculture at the University of Zululand, was born and bred in Mahlabathini, KwaZulu-Natal.

She holds a PhD in Agriculture (Animal Science) which she obtained from the University of KwaZulu-Natal in 2010. Prof Kunene was exposed to farming from a young age as her mother was a livestock farmer and it was from observing her mother's work that she believes her love for agriculture was cultivated.

After completing her Bachelor of Science in Agriculture, Professor Kunene was intent on becoming a researcher so she studied towards a Master's degree and thereafter secured employment as a lecturer. She was delighted that the requirement of an academic was to do research as she could now fulfil her aspirations.

She taught Animal Science modules to students in levels two to four. She believes that she made a significant contribution during her tenure as a lecturer as her teaching technique was to connect students with the world outside the classroom.

She always encouraged them to conduct their practical work in rural and commercial farms. As a result, she said UNIZULU Animal Science students have competed with others in "privileged" institutions.

A number of her students also got bursaries to further their studies in urban institutions while others have won national competitions in animal science.



Professor Nokuthula Winifred Kunene, the Dean of the Faculty of Science and Agriculture at the University of Zululand.

When she headed the Agriculture Department at UNIZULU, she was instrumental in upgrading the various programmes from NQF level seven to level eight. As these were four-year degrees, Professor Kunene said her aim was to ensure that students would be able to seamlessly enrol for Master's degrees upon obtaining their undergraduate qualifications.

Although her teaching duties have decreased since 2016, she still supervises the fourth year student research projects, as well as the Master's and PhD students.

For her PhD research, Professor Kunene focussed on the Phenotypic and Genetic Characterisation of Nguni (Zulu) Sheep. She was prompted to explore this topic as most of the exotic breeds had been studied extensively, but not much had been done about Zulu sheep.

There was an indication that the indigenous Zulu sheep num-

bers were declining due to cross-breeding and being replaced by exotic breeds.

According to Professor Kunene, indigenous breeds usually adapt to the environment they are in and, in the case of Zulu sheep, they require less input. This makes them affordable to keep by communal farmers.

Her findings revealed that Zulu sheep have adaptation traits depending on the environments in which they are kept.

The Zulu sheep study has been extended by postgraduate students who studied more sheep populations in 11 areas in KZN.

Professor Kunene has been a member of the South African Life Science and Agriculture Deans Association since it was initiated through the National Research Foundation in 2013. This association, along with other regional associations, are members of the Global Confederation of Higher Education Associations for Agricultural and Life Science (GCHERA), a body which aims to encourage mutual understanding and global co-operation of higher education associations and their institutions in supporting innovation and providing leadership in education, research and outreach in agricultural and life sciences.

As a leader, Professor Kunene believes in team work and being open to suggestions and constructive criticism. She said the hard work of her colleagues in ensuring that the Faculty graduates students who are relevant to the science industry is what she finds most rewarding about her current position.

## UNIZULU collaborates with China in hosting Symposium on Nuclear Physics

THE University of Zululand, Stellenbosch University and iThemba LABS recently collaborated to host the 4th China-SA Joint Symposium on Nuclear Physics where leading nuclear physicists from South Africa and China interacted and the latest research results in the field were presented.

The Symposium, which is held every two years, was held at the iThala Game Reserve, northern KwaZulu-Natal, and is supported by both the Chinese and South African governments.

Nuclear reactions, nuclear structure, chirality in nuclei, nuclear physics with Radioactive-Ion Beams, neutron physics, nuclear astrophysics, accelerator physics, neutrino physics as well as environmental radiation and applications were the main topics of discussion at the Symposium which mainly aimed to strengthen the existing collaboration and promote new collaborations between the South African and Chinese nuclear physics communities, thereby enhancing the development of nuclear physics and its



Attendees from the University of Zululand, Stellenbosch University and iThemba LABS at the 4th China-SA Joint Symposium on Nuclear Physics.

applications on both sides.

The programme included speakers from both South Africa and China as well as experts from the field from other institutes.

"I must say that collaborating in hosting this conference really put us (UNIZULU) on the map. It was a great thing for us," said Dr Sifiso Ntshangase, UNIZULU Department of Physics and Engineering Senior Lecturer, who

attended the conference as part of the UNIZULU delegation.

"Not only was this symposium helpful in the exchange of new ideas, sharing of information and presentation of latest research results, it has further implications for cooperation among physicists as well as students in this field from China and South Africa.

"The Chinese are very interested in nuclear physics so this

collaboration is very important.

"UNIZULU has already published a number of papers with the Chinese through this collaboration. Four students also presented papers at this year's conference. A number of people are now interested in collaborating and working with UNIZULU and these collaborations come with many things; one of them being student exchanges," Dr Ntshangase said.

## UNIZULU women urged to 'be bold for change'

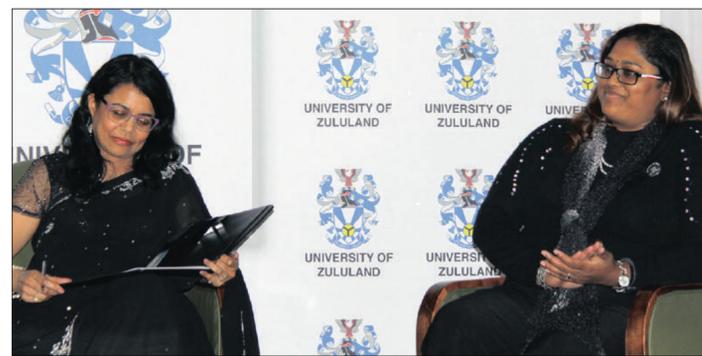
THE University of Zululand recently held its Women's Day celebrations in honour of the incredible women who have changed the course of history for the better throughout the ages, as well as its own female staff who work hard to ensure that the university continues to deliver on its mandate of providing quality education.

The celebrations, held at the Umfolozi Casino, Empangeni, discussed the ongoing scourge of gender-based violence, with the attending women being urged to be "bold for change".

The women were exquisitely dressed in black with a touch of "bling", which was a strategic continuation of the dress code for the university's Black Thursdays campaign which aims to unite the UNIZULU community in the fight against women and child abuse, as well as create awareness about gender-based violence.

Beyond the glitz and glamour however, the message was clear: society needs to be bold for change where gender parity is concerned.

Speaking on behalf of Professor Xoliswa Mtose, the Vice-Chancellor at UNIZULU, Dr Yasmin Rugbeer,



Dr Yasmin Rugbeer, the Director in the Office of the Vice-Chancellor at UNIZULU, and Michelle Jewlal, the Director of Lifeline Zululand, who delivered the keynote address at the University's Women's Day event, which was also attended by UNIZULU female staff.

the Director in the Office of the Vice-Chancellor said:

"Women's Day was a collective day of global celebration and it calls for gender parity," adding that "No one in government, no women's network, no NGO is the sole custodian of this day. It belongs to everyone."

She said that violence against women and children remained "one of the most tolerated violations of human rights" but that it was up to each and every individual to change this status quo by taking actions against all

forms of abuse.

One way in which society can achieve gender equality was if parents raised girl children to be brave, bold and confident about sharing their great ideas, she said. When society did this, an "I can" attitude would be planted in young girls' minds and would thereafter thrive in everything they set out to achieve.

In her keynote address, Michelle Jewlal, the Director of Lifeline Zululand, discussed emotional wellness/intelligence;

mentioning the four factors which contribute to it. These were: self-awareness, empathy, social relationships and personal influence. Without a balance in these areas, chaos was created, resulting in social ills, she said.

She encouraged women to make hard work and determination their "chronic illnesses" as that would guarantee their success in life.

"Ignite who you are and become that fire and spark for yourself and for others to see," she advised.

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