



UNIZULU graduation ceremonies are the pinnacle of academic success

"GRADUATION ceremonies all over the world are occasions for acknowledging and celebrating achievements and success. They are formal occasions with a festive mood; auspicious occasions that mark years of determination and effort of students. This graduation reflects your success in taking the great strides required to earn your qualifications."

This was the sentiment of Professor Xoliswa Mtsoe, the University of Zululand (UNIZULU) Vice-Chancellor, when she addressed graduates during the 2019 UNIZULU Graduation Ceremonies that took place between May 13 and 17.

The ceremonies were a magnificent display of academic excellence characterised by celebrations as graduates were conferred with degrees, diplomas and certificates at the King Bhekuzulu Hall at the KwaDlangezwa Campus.

During the recent graduation period, more than 4 000 graduates were awarded with qualifications. Of this total, 1 400 were from the Faculty of Education, 1 000 from the Faculty of Arts and 1 000 from the Faculty of Commerce, Administration and Law, while 700 were from the Faculty of Science and Agriculture.

Among the graduates was Brumelda Esserina Shoran-renee



Nontobeko Zulu, UNIZULU SRC administrator, is congratulated by former president Jacob Zuma on graduating with her Bachelor of Laws degree

Zuma, the daughter of former South African president Jacob Zuma, who graduated with a Bachelor of Public Administration, KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education District Director Dr Sbonakaliso Chonco who received a Doctor of Education in Educational Management degree and UNIZULU SRC administrator Nontobeko Zuma who was conferred with a Bachelor of Laws degree.

The 10 graduation sessions were also graced by exceptional guest speakers who expressed words of encouragement and motivation to the graduates.

They included storyteller and poet Dr Gcina Mhlophe, social entrepreneur and chartered accountant Sizwe Nxasana and advocate of the High Court of South Africa and the Courts of Lesotho Prof Bonke Dumisa.

Academic makes strong case for inclusion of rural women in 4IR

THE University of Zululand (UNIZULU) recently hosted its sixth inaugural lecture, where Department of Information Studies academic Professor Velile Jiyane questioned South Africa's status in the much-talked about Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR).

The phenomenon of 4IR is the current and developing environment in which disruptive technologies and trends, such as the internet, robotics, viral reality and artificial intelligences, are harnessed with the aim of improving the way people live and work. The goal of the systemic change is to create an inclusive and human-centred future.

During her presentation at the Council Chambers at the KwaDlangezwa Campus, Prof Jiyane highlighted that the status of empowerment of rural women in the distribution and access of information and knowledge is poor due to various factors. They include failure of proper service delivery of modern tools, technologies and easy access to information and knowledge. The academic reckons that the end result is the delay of rural development.

She said: "From the research, I wanted to trace the progression of rural women in the 4IR, regarding empowerment and benefits. Rural women are still left behind in terms of being beneficiaries of technology and other modern tools. Rural women also need and deserve to benefit from all the progression, evolution and modernisation that is being implemented and talked about." Prof Jiyane used mobile devices as an example, saying that while more than half of the rural population has smartphones that can access search engines such as Google, it is completely oblivious to this fact.

She added that rural people are not properly informed and trained on how to search for information that can assist them in their daily lives or small private businesses.

As a means of addressing these issues, Prof Jiyane called on all relevant organisations and stakeholders to intervene, as she believes that avoiding the challenge could have a direct negative impact on the economy.

Prof Jiyane expressed her utmost gratitude to the university for the opportunity to join the list of inaugurated professors at the institution.

Also, she thanked her family, supervisors and the entire UNIZULU community for the support.

Professor Dennis Ngong Ocholla, the Deputy Dean: Research and Internationalisation in the Faculty of Arts, said: "On behalf of colleagues and students, I wish to congratulate Prof Jiyane for the well-prepared and delivered inaugural lecture, and wish her and her family a memorable celebration for this important occasion at the University and among the academic community."



Professor Velile Jiyane.

Striving for an entrepreneurship-focused society



Key stakeholders of the Innovation Roadmap for Entrepreneurs in KwaZulu-Natal, which was recently hosted by the Faculty of Commerce, Administration and Law at UNIZULU in partnership with the Moses Kotane Institute at UNIZULU's KwaDlangezwa Campus.

ISSUES of entrepreneurship and innovation took centre stage during the recent Innovation Roadmap for Entrepreneurs in KwaZulu-Natal which was hosted by the Faculty of Commerce, Administration (FCAL) and Law at the University of Zululand (UNIZULU) in conjunction with the Moses Kotane Institute (MKI), a research and innovation focused entity of the Department of Economic Development, Tourism and Environmental Affairs (EDTEA).

Held at UNIZULU's KwaDlangezwa Campus, the event was aimed at promoting the culture of innovative entrepreneurship. It was attended by UNIZULU staff and students, as well as representatives of MKI, Richards Bay Minerals, the Durban University of Technology and EDTEA.

In his welcome speech, Prof Irrshad Kaseeram, FCAL Deputy Dean: Research and Internationalisation, conceded that because of the way in which the Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR) will transform society, most of the jobs

in existence now will become largely redundant or non-existent in the near future.

"As academics, universities and students, what should we do? I think the best strategy we can adopt is to have an entrepreneurial mind set – to become an entrepreneurial university. Why? Because entrepreneurs look for opportunities. They look for things that ordinary people cannot see and they bring it together in a unique, creative way to create value," said Prof Kaseeram.

He added that the world needs a new wave of entrepreneurs who will meet the demands of the new technological phase by employing specialised skills to establish businesses, even in the absence of capital.

In trying to equip the KwaZulu-Natal community for 4IR, Dr Sakhile Ngcobo, the Chairman of MKI, said the institute aims to be a think tank in research and innovation in the province.

He said that MKI has identified townships and rural economies, agriculture and maritime as focus areas of research and innovation.

"There are many opportunities in agriculture, but we continue being told that chicken is imported.

"Almost all of us here have a view of growing chickens. We need to ask ourselves why we continue importing chicken. In fact, we can grow our own chickens. We need to ask ourselves as leaders of tomorrow how best we can harness other opportunities for ourselves," he challenged.

The Head of Research at MKI, Dr Simphiwe Buthelezi, took to the podium focusing on the four innovation stages, namely fundamental, incremental, breakthrough and disruptive processes.

She spoke about the key ingredients of establishing an innovative business. This included conducting market research, considering what the value-add will be in one's business and marketing strategy.

A passionate academic driven by research and teaching

DR Neil Evans, a senior lecturer and Head of the Department of Information Studies at the University of Zululand (UNIZULU), has come a long way in academia.

Evans, 47, holds a Postgraduate Diploma in Higher Education from the University of KwaZulu-Natal obtained in 2018, a PhD in Library and Information Science and Master of Arts in Communication Science from UNIZULU received in 2013 and 2006 respectively, as well as a Bachelor of Science degree, majoring in Biochemistry and Chemistry received from the University of Port Elizabeth in 1994.

He has more than a decade of higher education teaching experience in the fields of chemistry, communication science and information studies, where he now specialises in teaching multimedia, and information and communication technology-related courses at both undergraduate and postgraduate levels.

His research interests encompass the fields of electronic learning, predicting the acceptance of new technologies, Cloud computing, multimedia, clinical informatics and school libraries. He has contributed to 10 Department of Higher Education and Training-accredited articles in the past nine years.

The latest three papers involved modelling clinical informatics research with his first PhD student. Two have covered electronic learning and predicting its acceptance in higher education, two proposed using Cloud computing in secondary education to bridge the digital divide, while another two involved promoting literacy and school librarianship in primary and secondary education. The last paper examines the multimedia capabilities of HTML5.

"I believe the link between my research and my teaching is very



Dr Neil Evans, a senior lecturer and Head of the Department of Information Studies at UNIZULU.

important as one feeds into and informs the other. Thus, my research has covered mostly technology-related topics that I can then use in my teaching," said Dr Evans.

He has initiated various community outreach projects including helping to set up a school library in Mandeni, establishing a recycling co-operative and buy-back centre in Mtunzini and facilitating environmental education lessons in Obanjeni.

His teaching and learning, as well as research work has received recognition at national and international level. In 2017, he received the UNIZULU Vice-Chancellor's Excellence in Teaching Award in recognition of being an emerging academic.

He was also awarded the Best Curriculum and Academic Leadership paper of the International Higher

Education Curriculum Design and Academic Leadership Symposia Programme in New Zealand in the same year.

In 2018, during the Faculty of Arts academic awards ceremony, Dr Evans was awarded certificates in recognition of his outstanding contribution in the Faculty of Arts.

"When you work in academia, (you have) the freedom to choose the research problems that (you are) interested in solving, which (you) seldom get the opportunity to do in mainstream industry," said the academic.

His first book chapter, titled *Connecting Higher Education Learning Spaces in a Blended Zululand Teaching and Learning Ecology. Handbook of Research on Blended Learning Pedagogies and Professional Development in Higher Education*, was published in 2019. It is dedicated to Professor Gregory Kamwendo, the late dean of the Faculty of Arts at UNIZULU, for his encouragement and motivation.

Apart from his teaching and learning, research and community engagement work, Dr Evans supervises four PhD and eight Master's students, while running Satcom Networks, an internet service provider business with web, email and domain name servers. He will complete the Teaching Advancement at Universities fellowship programme in 2019.

Also, he is the organiser of the annual Information Studies Conference, which is hosted by the Department of Information Studies at UNIZULU.

Dr Evans is originally from Port Elizabeth, in the Eastern Cape, where his mother, brother and his family still live.

He lives in Mtunzini with his partner. To unwind, he loves travelling both within and out of Africa, surfing, rock climbing, fishing and hiking, among other pastimes.

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