



## Multidisciplinary scientific conference draws global scholars

THE Department of Geography and Environmental Studies at the University of Zululand (UNIZULU) recently hosted its second International Geographical Union Commission on African Studies (IGU CAS) Conference at the Peermont Umfolozi Casino and Resort.

International academics descended on KwaZulu-Natal from June 17- 19 with an aim to engage and discuss relevant issues ranging from Africa and climate change, natural resources management and governance to environmental justice in Africa and other related issues.

The objective was to bring together geographical, multi and interdisciplinary scientific research and thought leadership on issues impacting on Africa. The conference responded to the need for globally competitive research and scientific innovation and seeks to translate it to the international academic community through the IGU CAS initiatives.

Further, the conference was held with an intention to promote internationally competitive research and innovation, which arises out of collaborations and engagements from within South Africa and beyond. The series of events ranged



Amos Theminkosi Mthembu, Acting Head of the Department of Geography and Environmental Studies, hands over a token of appreciation to Professor Richard Grant from the University of Miami, United States of America during the second IGU CAS Conference.

from plenary lectures, as well as oral paper presentations on the conference theme, "Africa in the global imaginary: Towards internationally Competitive Research and Science".

Speaking at the event, the Mayor of the City of Umhlatuze, Mduduzi Mhlongo, sang praises of the University

for Zululand as an institution that is a strategic partner in knowledge harvesting and community engagement initiatives.

He outlined his hopes that the conference discussions will assist the city to address the challenges that the continent is facing and make sure that Agenda 2063 is achieved. "This insti-

tution has played an important role in the development of the city. Shaping our democratic dispensation, there are many leaders who have been produced by this institution. We are proud that almost in every office and employment space in the land there is someone who is a UNIZULU alumnus.

"Today as the City of Umhlatuze, we want to applaud the university for shaping the future that our children and future generations will be proud of," he said.

The founding Chairperson of the Commission is Dr Innocent Moyo of Department of Geography and Environmental Studies. He thanked all attendees, adding: "Our academics, postgraduate students and even our undergraduates attended in their numbers.

"A special thank you goes out to the three keynote speakers, who are Professor Sabelo Ndlovu from the University of South Africa. The second keynote speaker was Professor Maano Ramutsindela from the University of Cape Town and Professor Richard Grant from the University of Miami in the US for their thought-provoking discussions, as well as all."

## UNIZULU pays tribute to noble culture enthusiast

DR KHENANI Lloyd Makhoba was a noble man who will forever be remembered for his worthy contribution to academia and literary space, as well as for his amazing sense of humour.

This was the view of many speakers who shared a few words about the late academic at his memorial service, held at the University of Zululand's (UNIZULU) KwaDlangezwa campus last month.

Dr Makhoba was a lecturer in the Department of African Languages and Culture in the Faculty of Arts. He joined the institution in 2014 and served diligently until the time of his passing.

A prolific writer and columnist, he had a number of short stories, poetry and other non-fiction books to his name. Among them is Amancoko Okuqala, a book that explored the genre of jokes, which he published in 2017.

UNIZULU Vice-Chancellor Professor Xoliswa Mtose referred to Dr Makhoba as a soldier of the university, who stood for the truth.

She said that through his passing, the academic's great influence was revealed. "Dr Makhoba's unparalleled legacy in higher education, especially at the University of Zululand, cannot be reduced to words.

"To say his presence will be deeply missed at UNIZULU, will be an understatement. Dr Makhoba's name will remain and come up in faculty meetings and student conversations. The fact that he is no more will remain a myth to most of us," said Prof Mtose.

Dr Makhoba's passing came a week after he was conferred with his doctoral degree at UNIZULU's King Bhekuzulu Hall.

His supervisor Professor Lincoln Zamokwakhe Mthokozisi Khumalo, an academic in the Department of African Languages



The late Dr Khenani Lloyd Makhoba.

and Culture, said he was deeply saddened by the news of Dr Makhoba's death. "A teacher has fallen. An advisor has fallen. A leader has fallen. A writer has fallen. A culture enthusiast has fallen. A comedian has fallen. A poet has fallen. A father has fallen," he said. He added that the loss was not only for UNIZULU, but also for the Department of Education.

One of Dr Makhoba's students, Sithemiso Mthembu, shared the same sentiment, saying the late academic was more than a lecturer to his students. "We called Dr Makhoba 'doctor' before he even obtained his doctorate. That's because he was so knowledgeable and we admired him for that.

"He was a lecturer, friend and life coach to us. He used to motivate us to write books and he'd guide us in terms of how to write for publishing. He was very strict when it came to literature because he was a man of high standards," Mthembu recalled.

Dr Makhoba was due to retire next month.

## Law academic on the rise

THE University of Zululand (UNIZULU) is on a growth trajectory, which is evidenced by the distinct high calibre of both the academic and support staff recognition in various audiences locally and abroad.

Professor Desan Iyer, an associate Professor in the Law Department and the Deputy Dean: Teaching and Learning in the Faculty of Commerce, Administration and Law, has made giant strides in academia.

He joined UNIZULU as a full-time lecturer in 2006. Gradually, he moved up the ranks from lecturer to senior lecturer and eventually associate professor.

He is hoping to go the full cycle, having applied for promotion to full professor in 2019. Having been appointed to Deputy Dean: Teaching and Learning in 2015, Professor Iyer has successfully managed to juggle his activities as a teacher, researcher and manager in the faculty.

He said the transition to academia was exciting, but challenging. "Coming from a legal practice background and having practised the law as an attorney prior to joining academia, I entered academia without any professional training in education. Establishing an identity in academia took me a few years as I found it difficult to dissociate myself from my professional affiliations.

"However, once I established my identity in higher education, my mindset changed to searching for excellence in teaching and research, and being that catalyst for social and economic transformation.

"The joys of teaching cannot be underestimated and it gives me great pleasure to bump into my students who are now successful judges, magistrates and legal practitioners.

"One of the reasons for remaining at UNIZULU was coming across so many 'rough diamonds', who needed a bit of shining and polishing to truly become spectacular. I have always treated my students with respect and that respect is almost always reciprocated."

Professor Iyer's research interests extend to the scholarship of teaching and learning, improving communicative legal skills and promoting legal consciousness within our communities.

His paper titled "Improving the Communicative Nonverbal Skills of Law Students" was well received at the World Academy of Science, Engineering and Technology (WASET) in Paris a few years ago.

Last year, he received the best paper award at the ICSSH International conference in Mauritius for his presentation on "Preparing Law Students for Practice: A Nonverbal Skill Developmental Approach". The paper has been accepted for publication in the SAPSE

accredited journal, Obiter.

In addition to receiving numerous awards at institutional level over the years, such as Faculty Researcher of the Year, research productivity and output, as well as creative work, Professor Iyer has gained international recognition in recent times.

This year, he was appointed on the editorial board for the international journal Teacher Education and Curriculum Studies and will be responsible for the reviews and quality of the research papers.

In addition, he has been appointed a life-time member of the internationally recognised scholarly association Scientific and Technical Research Association.

The year 2019 is a busy year for him. He has been invited to present his work on legal communication at the ICSTR Conference in Malaysia this month.

He has also entered into a collaborative project with the University of Mauritius to promote legal consciousness both in South Africa and Mauritius.

The Middlesex University in Mauritius has also invited him to conduct a number of teaching and learning workshops for its academic staff in the latter part of the year.

He hopes to have his book focusing on legal skills published next year. Iyer's prowess extends beyond legal



Professor Desan Iyer.

writing. He has in recent times had a number of poems published in local and international journals, although for him, poetry writing is just a hobby.

"UNIZULU and its management have provided me with an opportunity to grow as a person and an academic, and I believe that it is important to give back to the university in whatever form I can. I am proud of the fact that three of my colleagues obtained their doctoral degrees under my supervision in 2018 and two more of my students."

He firmly believes there is no replacement for hard work. "If we reach for the stars and constantly raise our goals, someday, sometime, we can all sparkle in ways that we may never have known existed," he concluded.

## Nanotech academic off to attend prestigious international institution

JULY promises to be an educative period for Dr Malik Khan, a research fellow in the Department of Nanotechnology at the University of Zululand (UNIZULU). He will attend the 8th International School for Energy for Materials and Sustainability at the California Institute of Technology (Caltech) in Pasadena, California.

He will join 24 other participants from Harvard University, Imperial College and other top institutions in the US, whose applications were accepted in the week-long school holding from July 21 to 27.

ISMES is an international school on energy and sustainability organised by Caltech, Stanford, Colorado School of Mines, the National Renewable Energy Laboratory, the European Materials Research Society and the Materials Research Society.

It provides graduates and postdoctoral scholars with the opportunity to learn about state-of-the-art equipment and future trajectories of materials in relation to how they can be applied to energy



Dr Malik Khan, left, with research partner Professor Neerish Revaprasadu during one of their lab sessions.

generation and storage for sustainable energy technologies.

During the school, participants attend

lectures conducted by experts in a variety of areas ranging from climate change to renewable energy to manufacturing.

Also, there are individual student exercises designed to broaden the students' knowledge of the energy and sustainability landscape.

Lastly, participants engage in team exercises, where groups of international students explore challenging scenarios.

This year's topics will include global warming, conventional and sustainable technologies, solar energy conversion (PV and thermal) and solar chemical conversion.

Professor Neerish Revaprasadu, a lecturer in the Department of Nanotechnology who works closely with Dr Khan on many projects, is excited by the news of his colleague's selection. He believes the experience will benefit the pair's proposed patent on energy.

Professor Gideon de Wet, the Deputy Vice-Chancellor: Research and Innovation, said: "This is such fantastic news! Well done to Dr Malik Khan for this wonderful achievement! This is a from Zululand-to-Hollywood situation."

## Waterless toilet prototype design on track

DR LINDA Linganiso, an academic at the University of Zululand's (UNIZULU) Department of Chemistry, is working with three postgraduate students in addressing the lack of proper sanitation facilities in rural South Africa by designing a unique waterless toilet prototype.

It is set to be piloted in the City of Umhlatuze Municipality after September.

The project is funded by the Department of Economic Development, Tourism and Environmental Affairs (EDTEA). The team began working on the design in April and expects to have a "working prototype" by the end of September.

Dr Linganiso acknowledged that amid minor challenges, the project was progressing as planned. The team has spent the past two years conducting research on the design, materials and machinery required for prototyping and are using the EDTEA capital to source these.

Explaining the rationale behind this project, the academic said she was deeply touched by the "devastating" statistics of South Africans who do not have access to toilets.

"In line with the Sustainable Development Goals sanitation targets, it is estimated that about 32 million people in South Africa will require safely managed toilets from 2015 to 2030. To end open defecations, close to 1 million people will need toilets, which is the most urgent problem. The challenge is that many people perceive the flush toilet system as the only acceptable sanitation solution.

However, it is well known that South Africa is among highly (greater than 80%) water-stressed countries. The recent severe droughts, especially in the Western cape, Free State, Limpopo and KwaZulu-Natal, are evidence of this."

"Dry sanitation is the way forward in the Fourth Industrial Revolution. It is a system that will eventually be the norm throughout the world as it is a safe, sustainable, cost-effective and environmen-



Dr Linda Linganiso, an academic in the Department of Chemistry, is leading a team designing a prototype of a waterless toilet.

tally-friendly solution that is immune to climate, geography and topography, as well as culture. If fully embraced, South Africa can start generating value from human waste and industrialise since biogas and organic fertiliser can be produced in municipal plants," she said.

Once the prototype is ready, the next step will be prototype testing, which is to perform a field study, within UNIZULU. This will give guidance on whether there is a need for further improvements on the prototype and allow the team to patent the toilet design and start the piloting stage.

After that, Dr Linganiso envisions establishing a small factory, which will be a spin-off company.

Because the Chemistry Department has a memorandum of understanding with Umhlatuze Municipality, the intention is to pilot the project in an area under management of the municipality.

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