



# Vice-Chancellor's Covid-19 information-sharing sessions for staff

GCINA NHLEKO

COVID-19 is a growing concern all over the world. South Africa is no exception. The national Department of Health and the National Institute for Communicable Diseases remain on high alert and have stated that they are prepared adequately for early detection, case management and the prevention of onward spread.

With the first reported case in South Africa having been confirmed by the Minister of Health on March 5, the University of Zululand (UNIZULU) is taking the possible threat of infection in our community extremely seriously and aligning its response to Covid-19 with regional and national efforts.

UNIZULU, under the able leadership of Professor Xoliswa Mtose, on March 17, held an hour-long information as well as question-and-answer session for the Protection Services Department, Planning and Facilities Unit, as well as the Transport Department employees.

The aim was to share the latest information about the disease and how the University is responding to the pandemic. The sessions were held in the University's august Council Chambers for the KwaDlangezwa Campus employees and the Main Boardroom for the Richards Bay Campus staff.

The sessions were championed by a team of staff from the Campus Health

Clinic, Employee Wellness section, Communications and Marketing Division and the Human Resources Department.

In addition to UNIZULU Covid-19 interventions, the following topics were discussed:

- ◆ How best to protect oneself from getting infected;
- ◆ What to do if you think you have the virus;
- ◆ How to prepare for quarantine;
- ◆ How to address the anxiety that may arise because of the pandemic;
- ◆ How to care for senior citizens who may be quarantined;
- ◆ How to combat loneliness during quarantine and social distancing;
- ◆ How to manage a chronic illness during this pandemic;
- ◆ How to maintain your weight and physical activity.

To augment the information shared during the sessions, a video was played to help the attendees better understand the message of the day. In sharing the vision, Professor Mtose reiterated that her main concern was that the medical risks of Covid-19 are more severe in older people, who make up the majority of UNIZULU's workforce. Therefore, as a precaution, people who are more than 60 and/or have chronic medical conditions are advised to not travel to high-risk areas, unless it is absolutely essential and to still be cautious when travelling to low-risk areas.



UNIZULU Campus Health Clinic's Sister Hlengiwe Mkhwanazi shares critical information with employees about how they can best prevent contraction of Covid-19. Picture by Sphamandla Gumede

## UNIZULU faculties officially open doors for the 2020 academic year

PRECIOUS SHAMASE & NHLAKANI PHO NXUMALO

"YOU'VE got to get up every morning with determination if you're going to go to bed with satisfaction."

This George Lorimer quote was noteworthy during the recent official University of Zululand (UNIZULU) Faculty Opening ceremonies for the 2020 academic year. The events proceeded concurrently at the King Bhekuzulu Hall and Walter Gcabashe Chapel on the KwaDlangezwa Campus.

The deans of the various faculties welcomed first-time entering students (FTENS), reiterating that they had taken the best decision in making UNIZULU their university of choice.

The ceremonies were strategically

packed with programmes that focused on the well-being of students at tertiary level. The different speeches were aimed at assisting the newcomers acclimatise.

In her welcome speech, the Vice-Chancellor, Professor Xoliswa Mtose, urged all first-year students to use the opportunity and privilege of being a student at UNIZULU to their advantage in the same way that alumni such as Higher Education Minister Dr Blade Nzimande, Chief Justice Mogoeng Mogoeng and Deputy Chief Justice Raymond Zondo had.

"We at UNIZULU build and develop great leaders, leaders equipped with skills, knowledge and attitude to make a difference. Let the university be a launch pad for your bright future. I wish you a wonderful stay at the University of

Zululand," she said.

The first-year students were also introduced to the heads of department in their respective faculties and the various student governance structures.

Leo Sibiya, a Public Administration Department lecturer, assured the students that education was their pathway to change. "Historically, UNIZULU has welcomed many who were the first in their families to study in a university. I want to tell you that in just four years you can change your life, the lives of your family and the community at large," he said.

Faculty of Arts Student Council member Thuthukani Dobe informed FTENS that they have a body that represents them when it comes to airing students' issues to faculty management.



The four faculties of the University of Zululand recently held their official opening ceremonies to usher in the new academic year, while also orientating first-time entering students in their respective faculties. Picture by Mmeli Gwebu

## Empowering teachers to improve maths and science pass rate in district

NALEDI HLEFANE

IN A BID to help capacitate mathematics and physical science teachers in the King Cetshwayo District Municipality, the University of Zululand (UNIZULU) recently held its third Maths and Science Educators Seminar at the institution's Science Centre.

Held in conjunction with the UNIZULU Science Centre and the district Department of Education, the seminar is a UNIZULU drive that is geared towards improving the pass rate of maths and physical science in the district.

Gcina Nhleko, the Communications and Marketing Director, gave context to the inception of the workshop during the first day's plenary session. "We realised that the school liaison team, which is under our division, always participated in the Department of Education's career exhibitions and fairs. But there was always something that was bothering us. We wondered who was capacitating the teachers because the learner may be empowered, but who is looking after the educator?" she explained.

As a starting point, the University organised a seminar for principals in high schools around the district in 2017 in order to find out how the institution could be of service to them. The principals were unequivocal in their responses, saying that the dwindling pass rate of maths and physical science needed a quick intervention.

In response to the issue, the Maths and Science Educators Seminar was piloted in 2018. According to Nhleko, the feedback from both teachers and the various stakeholders has been positive, hence the continued annual engagements with teachers.

In his guest speech, Professor Siphon Seepe, the Deputy Vice-Chancellor: Institutional Support, emphasised that the importance of teachers in our society cannot be overstated.

"When we talk about relevance at



More than 100 maths and science teachers from the King Cetshwayo District Municipality schools attended the 2020 instalment of UNIZULU's Maths and Science Educators Seminar. Picture by Samkele Sokhela

university, we talk about total empowerment of our students, (but) the teachers play a greater role," he said. He urged the teachers to ensure that pupils get excited about maths and physical science in order to increase the number of black students in the maths and science professions.

Tony Moodley, a representative of the district Department of Education, alluded to the fact that the partnership with the University was crucial.

"As the district office, we are very concerned in particular about the performance of these two subjects. We had 7 500 pupils in Grade 11 last year who did mathematics. (A total of) 6 313 of them failed mathematics, but they are in Grade 12 this year. For science, we had 5 655 who passed Grade 11, but 2 415 failed science," he said.

Moodley added that although the district had a seemingly impressive matric pass rate of more than 70%, but when you look at the performance in individual subjects, you can easily realise that there is a crisis. It is interventions such as that of UNIZULU that will therefore help in alleviating the problem.

Nozipho Buthelezi, a teacher at Zakehahle High School, said it was her second time she had been attending the seminar and on both occasions, she really felt empowered by the facilitators.

This year, she said she learnt so much about the interpretation of graphs. She was previously not confident enough to teach this section, but she was now eager to go back to teach her learners.

The seminar was attended by more than 120 teachers from more than 100 schools.

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