

ONGOYE TERTIARY TIMES

MBALI Conference receives financial boost from Absa

GCINA NHLEKO

THE University of Zululand (UNIZULU) has received a R500 000 sponsorship from Absa for the hosting of the upcoming Management, Business, Administration and Legal Initiatives (MBALI) International Conference, scheduled to take place between August 2 and 4, 2022 in Richards Bay.

The 2022 MBALI International Conference is themed "Beyond the pandemic: Rejuvenation, Regeneration & Recovery Through Innovation".

The purpose of the conference has always been developmental – geared towards giving novice researchers and postgraduate students an opportunity to grow and hone their skills through interacting with experienced researchers. The event has burgeoned into much more than what the organising committee had initially expected, as it is now at a stage where insights are interrogated, and new ideas take their first breath. Absa has been the university partner since the inception of MBALI in 2016, and the relationship has grown stronger.

The handover event was attended by Absa's Managing Executive Keketso Motsoene, UNIZULU Vice-Chancellor Professor Xoliswa Mtsoe, the deputy vice-chancellors, various executives, and key personnel from both organisations. The event was smoothly presided over by Wandile Ngunane, the relationship executive at Absa.

"On behalf of the university, I thank Absa for this contribution," said Prof Mtsoe. "They have been generous sponsors and friends of the university, and we really appreciate the support



UNIZULU Vice-Chancellor, Professor Xoliswa Mtsoe accepts a cheque for R500 000 from Absa's Managing Executive, Keketso Motsoene. These funds will go towards hosting the institution's upcoming MBALI Conference.

they render to us. This funding will go towards hosting the international conference. It is one of the endeavours which will improve the quality of our research and the quality that we set for ourselves in rising to international standards."

Professor Lorraine Greyling, Dean of the Faculty of Commerce, Administration and Law, mentioned that the 2022 international conference has attracted a record number of rich abstracts from which the faculty has to choose. "This is not a departmental conference, but a faculty conference with people attending from interdisciplinary streams. We have a massive organising team and this conference showcases teamwork at its best. Through this cash injection boost from Absa, the students and staff will be able to engage in high-quality

research. This will assist in promoting research capacity development by exposing researchers to the national and international research terrain. This will put the university on the national and international map as a research-focused institution," she elaborated.

Motsoene said the main aim was to support students, develop and sustain relations with UNIZULU, as the relationship between the institutions traces back to the 1960s. According to Motsoene, Absa is responsible for helping to place researchers on the trajectory of developing innovative methods in the economy.

"We support this conference as it is fundamentally linked to our Shared Growth strategy which covers education and skills, as well as enterprise development," he said.

UNIZULU's VC honours newly-graduated doctors and recently promoted professors

PRECIOUS SHAMASE

THE University of Zululand's (UNIZULU) Vice-Chancellor, Professor Xoliswa Mtsoe recently hosted a prestigious recognition luncheon in honour and appreciation of staff members who recently obtained their doctoral degrees and those who were promoted in 2021.

The ceremony recognised and made an important landmark of the personal achievement of doctoral graduates who had reached the pinnacle of studentship. The event also acknowledged the graduates for their commitment and welcomed them as new members within the academic community.

The event was also a celebration of staff members who had consistently produced outstanding work and rendered great service to the university.

There was roaring laughter from guests of honour, faculty deans and university senior leadership as the event proceedings unfolded.

In her welcome address, Prof Mtsoe highlighted that the university thrives as a result of the role played by dedicated staff and PhD holders. She urged the guests of honour to continually strive for success and excellence. "I dedicate this event to all of you. I want to congratulate you for making it to the ranks of associate and full professor. What you have achieved today is an outcome of consistent application of the mind to complex issues confronting humanity and communities. It is my greatest honour to welcome you to the professoriate community of esteemed scholars. This also means that you have been



UNIZULU's Vice-Chancellor, Professor Xoliswa Mtsoe paid tribute to staff members who had obtained PhD qualifications in 2022 and those who have attained associate and full professorship.

recognised for making a unique contribution in your area of study. As UNIZULU, we want to celebrate with you and show respect to you for having earned that precious prize," Prof Mtsoe said.

The VC further expressed her appreciation to the new doctors, saying: "As executive management, we thought we should bring you all together to express our appreciation to you for having confidence in this university. Your graduation was proof that you have satisfied the requirements expected to qualify for the highest qualification in academia. You have done us proud."

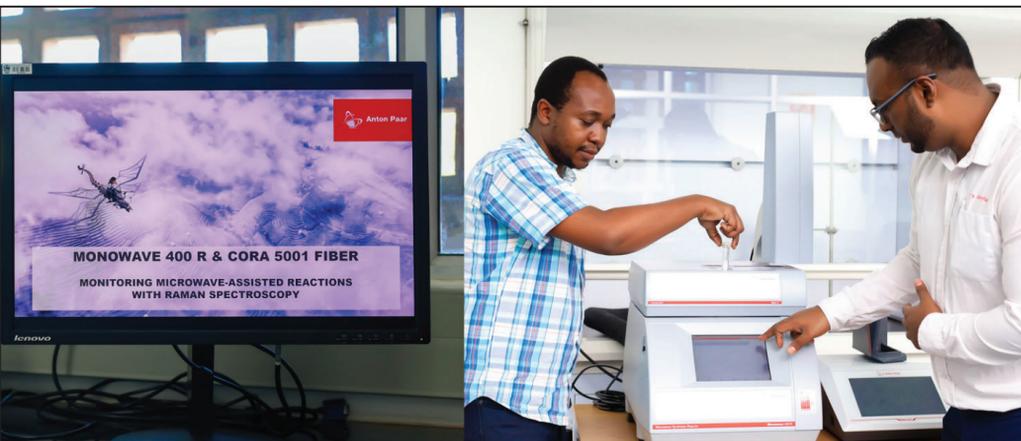
During the celebration, numerous members of UNIZULU's high-level governance structure took to the podium to deliver compliments and dedications. These included messages from Professor Vuyokazi Nomlomo, Deputy Vice-Chancellor: Teaching and Learning; Prof Siphoo Seepe,

Deputy Vice-Chancellor: Institutional Support; Reynolds Ngcobo, Executive Director: Human Resources; and Nhlanhla Cele, Executive Director: Institutional Planning.

Speaking on behalf of the newly graduated doctors, Dr Admire Chibisa, an academic in the Maths, Science and Technology Education Department, thanked the university for granting staff the opportunity to study.

With regards to promotions, Prof Cornelia du Preez shared: "What an honour to receive this recognition. We are grateful vice-chancellor. We don't stand here on our own; it is because of our colleagues. This university offers opportunities, I am proud to be associated with UNIZULU. It is through our roles that we will be able to take this university forward. I am excited about the direction that the institution is taking – the node for African thought."

State-of-the-art equipment for Chemistry Department



PRECIOUS SHAMASE

THE Department of Chemistry within the University of Zululand (UNIZULU) recently acquired and installed new high-quality equipment that will significantly contribute to the research production and skills development in the department.

The Monowave 400R Microwave and Cora 5001 Raman Spectrophotometer were purchased from Anton Paar, South Africa. This remarkable system, valued at R1.9 million, was funded by the Royal Society-FCDO Africa Capacity Building Initiative (ACBI) programme. This new piece of equipment will add to the capabilities of the university's Nanotechnology Research Group, which is well known for work on the synthesis of nanomaterials for energy applications.

According to Prof Neerish Revaprasadu, who is a senior lecturer in the Chemistry Department, the Microwave-Raman system is the first of its kind in South Africa.

"Researchers will be able to prepare novel nanomaterials using an efficient and quick method, while studying their growth kinetics in situ using the Raman capabilities. The new system will make a significant contribution to the research output and skills development in nanotechnology research at UNIZULU. The novel nature of the equipment will also attract new collaborators and partners. UNIZULU is grateful to the Royal Society in London for the funding," said Prof Revaprasadu.

Congratulating UNIZULU on this key purchase, sales specialist Theolyn Pillay said that the successful installation had put South Africa on the map by being the first institute in Africa to obtain the Raman spectrometry and microwave synthesis in situ combination.

"We are excited to see the new discoveries and publications that will come from the nanotechnology research group at UNIZULU, led by Professor Neerish Revaprasadu, using this unit. This system allows for the real-time monitoring while the synthesis reaction is conducted, and will open doors to the intermediates formed, previously unknown and termed as the black box,"

added Pillay.

Professor Khoboso Lehloeny, acting Dean for the Faculty of Science, Agriculture and Engineering, said that the faculty was proud of training students through the novel nanotechnology research. She believes that obtaining the equipment will not only strengthen nanotechnology research, but also broaden its scope to accommodate more students in this kind of research.

"The instrument did not exist in South Africa (previously) – and its purchase makes UNIZULU the sole host of such equipment. This will allow UNIZULU to remain at the forefront of nanotechnology research and innovations originating from the utilisation of the instrument. The acquisition of the instrument also enhances the attractiveness of UNIZULU to postgraduate students and post-doctoral fellows as well as other national and international collaborators. Therefore, having the instrument emphasises the standing and quality of nanotechnology research in the university, South Africa and globally," said Prof Lehloeny.

UNIZULU's IQHUDE troupe set to take National Arts Festival stage

MBUYISELO MLABA

THE cast and crew of IQHUDE from the University of Zululand's (UNIZULU) Department of Creative Arts in the Faculty of Humanities and Social Science (FHSS) are excited to represent the institution with their captivating show at the annual National Arts Festival (NAF) in Makhanda (formerly known as Grahamstown), Eastern Cape.

One of the major performing arts events on the South African calendar, the NAF commenced on June 23 and will conclude on July 3, 2022. It is a showcase of new work from some of South Africa's best and most well-known artists, as well as that of creatives from around the world.

The university troupe consists of 22 students and eight staff members – all eager to stage their play titled IQHUDE from June 29 until the end of the festival.

Translated to "The Cock/Rooster", the play is derived from a famous folklore song "Iqhude sekusile amanzi-awekho". The concept is inspired by and explores a political misplacement. It shows the interface between apartheid and democratic South Africa, in terms of physical and mental dimensions.

According to Masedi Manenye, Creative Arts Department Dance Lecturer and Director of Iqhude, the apartheid spatial planning condemned and confined black people to "physical" spaces of inadequate and inhumane conditions in the villages and townships. Though most people own the land in the villages, the areas are dry and uncultivated.

"Democracy continues the same conditions, on a mental level, through multiple violations of socio-economic rights, basic human rights, corruption and land stealing disguised as land development. All these have continued the wounding and bruising of the black body, life and soul. There is a need for healing, remembering, returning and repairing. The performance seeks a breakthrough, a healing of both the



Students rehearsing a scene from the thought-provoking play, IQHUDE.

black body and soul. It is a call for a reawakening of the people of the land," said Manenye.

Professor Xoliswa Twani, Head of the Department of Creative Arts, believes that the university's involvement in the festival is a big opportunity – specifically for students, who stand to gain the most out of it.

"This is an opportunity for the students and staff to demonstrate their capabilities and to network with industry leaders. Also, it is an opportunity to ensure that the programmes we offer at UNIZULU relate to the employability of students upon graduation – performing at the NAF will give them exposure and experience on how the industry operates so that they are better prepared when they complete their studies," said Prof Twani.

She encouraged both staff and students to continue working hard and flying the UNIZULU flag high. The professor singled out Manenye and music lecturer, Dr Bhekani Buthelezi for their dedication to the play.

She also expressed her gratitude to those within the university structure who had played pivotal roles. "It is gratifying to work in an institution

that is supportive of the creative arts field. Let me take the opportunity to appreciate our VC, Prof Xoliswa Mtsoe and her DVCs, Prof Nomlomo, Prof Seepe and Prof Kunene. And last but not least, the Dean of FHSS, Prof Masoga and his deputy deans," said Prof Twani.

Sindiswa Mkhize, who plays one of the protagonists, said the cast felt honoured and humbled to have been afforded an opportunity to be part of the festival. She says that being involved in the production has enabled them to "truly comprehend the importance of encouragement, patience, synergy and diligence".

Isaac Luyanda Gumede, another cast member, believes his participation in the NAF is opportune since he is doing his final year. On behalf of the cast, he pledged to make UNIZULU proud. "We go by the motto 'We are artists, we give life to art' and that is exactly what we will be doing in Grahamstown."

Manenye said that their aim is to create work that questions and provokes. Although they can't dictate the impact of the show, they hope it will challenge the audience to be better members of their societies and active in realising ubuntu.

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