



2023

VICE CHANCELLOR'S

MESSAGE

Picture: James Thwala

On behalf of the University of Zululand (UNIZULU), it is my pleasure as the Vice-Chancellor and Principal to extend a warm welcome to all our new first-year students who have chosen the University of Zululand as their academic home in 2023. We also welcome returning students with open arms, and I encourage all of you to keep your eyes fixed on your studies because the qualifications you pursue are a gateway to life-changing opportunities. Our staff members (both academic and support) are a cornerstone that drives the success of students. Their commitment and loyalty is highly valued and appreciated.

Back to the first-year students. Your introduction to life as a UNIZULU student begins with registration whereafter the orientation programme for all first-year students is specially designed to familiarise you with your new environment and to guide you as you navigate the many opportunities that are opening up for you. The programme guides and assist you through the transition from your familiar school environment to the diverse challenges of student life at a comprehensive university, where you are expected to operate independently and take responsibility for your actions

and choices.

As the Vice-Chancellor, I assure you of my deepest commitment to carry on serving you. I am committed to dealing with the realities we face, the issues that you, our students, feel strongly about, and to work tirelessly with you to resolve them and make UNIZULU feel like home for each and every one of you.

I reassure you that I am here for your success. You are in many ways the heart of UNIZULU, the very reason for the existence of this university. Your success is our proudest offering to the world. I hope to create relationships with you that will be mutually respectful and supportive, and that we will share and enlighten each other to improve ourselves for the betterment of UNIZULU.

Our vision is to be a leading comprehensive university that thrives on quality and fosters collaborative and innovative cultures with its rural and urban campuses. This is a great vision, one that is important for South Africa and the continent. My promise is to advance this vision. I am certain that you will care for yourself, study smart and learn as if you will live forever. Enjoy your student journey and embrace your personal experiences, ask for

help when you need it, make your voice heard, and grow into the kind of a person you want to be and help make this institution the kind of place you want it to be. Ultimately creating lifelong relations for a sustainable future.

Please be assured that every decision I make collectively with the executive management as well as deans of faculties is to enrich your student life – not necessarily to make you feel good for now, but to make sure that you achieve an unimaginable level of success that sets you up for an excellent career path.

This is a great time for UNIZULU and a wonderful moment for you to be here. There are multiple opportunities on our campuses. Let us commit together to advance this wonderful institution, to transform it, to continue to transform ourselves, and to leave lasting legacies that will improve UNIZULU for future generations of students.

I wish you all the best in your journey.

Professor X.A Mtsose
University Vice-Chancellor and Principal

MEET YOUR DEANS

Faculty of Science, Agriculture and Engineering



Prof K. Lehloeny

Dean's Message

The Faculty of Science, Agriculture and Engineering boasts of the finest ladies and gentlemen of the academic profession in various fields of science, who are working together to develop skilled graduates for the private and public workplaces at home and abroad.

The faculty is known for its attractiveness to students from different countries although the majority are from South Africa. Besides being engaged in class and in practical activities, the students get opportunities to visit various relevant companies in the industry to apply knowledge and gain additional skills and exposure to solving real-life problems.

The faculty also organises several workshops to assist students in acquiring UNIZULU graduate attributes. The Faculty is proud to be home to one of the thriving research chairs in South Africa in addition to various other pockets of excellence in the Faculty. The Chair in Nanotechnology is hosted in our Department of Chemistry as UNIZULU's contribution to South African Research Chair initiative. The Centre of Excellence in Mobile e-services, hosted in the Computer Science Department is sponsored by two industry giants namely Telkom SA and Huawei Africa among Sixteen others in the Country. We are also proud of our relationships with iThemba Labs in Cape Town, Joint Institute for Nuclear Research (JINR) in Dubna, the Agricultural and Medical Research Councils, the National Research Foundation as well as the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research in Pretoria for significant support with research equipment, student sponsorships and collaborators as strategic backbones behind our postgraduate study programmes.

The partnership and assistance enlisted above are the reason why the research conducted in the faculty is so relevant to the communities that surround the University and beyond. We work in collaboration with institutions nationally and internationally with several exchange programmes in place. Our emerging mission is to develop programmes that will provide entrepreneurial skills to our graduates.

Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences



Prof A. Shokane

Dean's message

We aim to produce generations of graduates who can think with dexterity and reshape the current social, economic and political spaces and systems for Africa and globally.

Our programmes are geared towards scholarship that informs equity and inclusion, challenging historical systems of oppression and privilege on multiple levels. Our faculty is diverse in discipline and background. We come together through our commitment to thoughtful, critical and indigenous scholarship while exploring varied perspectives.

Faculty scholarship critically reflects on culture and produces work that develops the humanities and social sciences as repositories of knowledge, heritage, history, memory and meaning. Our quest is for peace, prosperity, security and socio-economic wellbeing. The faculty focuses on historiography, ontological frames, knowledge paradigms and thinking in terms of teaching and learning, research and innovation and community engagement.

Faculty of Commerce, Administration and Law



Prof L. Greyling

Dean's Message

The Faculty of Commerce, Administration and Law (FCAL) is transforming into a vibrant and dynamic faculty at the University of Zululand (UNIZULU). The faculty comprises the Office of the Dean, a faculty office and five academic departments, viz, Department of Accounting (including Information Technology), Department of Business Management (incorporating Human Resources Management), Department of Economics (incorporating BCom 4-Year extended degree), Department of Public Administration and Department of Law (incorporating the Centre for Legal Services).

In addition to core academic programmes and qualifications, these departments also undertake research and provide certificated courses and training in a variety of related activities relevant to commerce, industry, government, civil society and the non-governmental sector. The faculty also offers certificates, advanced certificates, diploma, national diplomas at the Richards Bay Campus. All degrees and programmes of the faculty are accredited by the Council on Higher Education (CHE) and registered with the South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA). The Faculty also participates avidly in community outreach and development programmes.

Faculty Deans Secretary

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Faculty of Education



Prof S. Ntombela

Dean's message

Welcome to the Faculty of Education and I sincerely hope that you will enjoy your academic journey with us. Postgraduate students, we are excited that you want to further your studies in our faculty. The step you are taking aptly confirms what Dr Nelson Rholihlahla Mandela said that "after climbing a great hill, one only finds that

there are many more hills to climb". To first-year students and to everyone registered for the Postgraduate Certificate in Education, this is where your professional journey begins. We are truly excited that you want to become teachers and that you have chosen UNIZULU as the institution where you will learn all the ins and outs of education in your preferred specialisations.

If you are registered for the B. Ed or the PGCE, you will be expected to take part in all teaching practice sessions. During school visits, learn as much as you can from your lecturers as well as from school-based mentors. Overall, the faculty is committed to providing you with positive learning experiences that will equip you to become great teachers who can contribute to the much-needed transformation in our country.

On behalf of the Faculty of Education, I wish you success in your studies.



Picture: Samkele Sokhe

UNIVERSITY VICE-CHANCELLOR SPOTTED A RARE GEM

Emmanuel Hare (24), a newly registered University of Zululand (UNIZULU) student from Ntuzuma in KwaZulu-Natal, has proven that it is never too late to turn your life around.

Hare obtained five distinctions in matric last year. His is a moving story of rising from the ashes and defying the dark voices. He beat the odds after turning to drugs and dropping out of school. He then decided to go back to school in 2020 to study grade 10 and has not turned back. The decision to turn his life around is yielding big rewards and is marked by multiple achievements.

Hare has been accepted at the University of Zululand to study BCom (Accounting) on a full bursary which was presented by the University's Vice-Chancellor, Professor Xoliswa Mtose, upon coming across the plight of Hare. She was deeply moved and touched, and thereafter the University accepted Hare with

open arms and will be there on his journey which will shape his future for the better.

"We are familiar with stories like these because we are a rural university that deals with students from disadvantaged backgrounds. The Faculty of Commerce, Administration and Law will be assisting and giving him much-needed provision in various manners. We need to instill hope. Our job as educated people is to open opportunities and instill a sense of self that it is how you finish the race despite life impediments that matters," Prof Mtose alluded.

"I didn't think this day will come. I thank people who are close to me; they made this possible. I went to register and get my student card and my lecturers have already given me an Economics book to read," Hare said.

-Gcina Nhleko



Caption

From left: Professor Lorraine Greyling, Dean of the Faculty of Commerce, Administration and Law; Emmanuel Hare, first-year BCom (Accounting) student; Professor Xoliswa Mtose, UNIZULU Vice-Chancellor; and Deochund Mothilall, Registrar.

TIDE TURNS FOR DLAMINI WHO NEARLY TOOK AN INVOLUNTARY GAP YEAR

The University of Zululand (UNI-ZULU) registered the top 2022 matriculant in uMfolozi Local Municipality on Thursday, in February 2023.

Owami Nqobile Dlamini (22) from eSikhawini registered for the four-year Bachelor of Laws degree.

The high achiever had accepted that she would spend the year at home after her attempts to register for a law qualification at another institution had gone awry. She was then advised by her mother's friend to seek academic space in UNIZULU's Faculty of Commerce, Administration and Law - which she was granted.

"I only wanted to do law so now I am happy that my dream of becoming a lawyer will be a reality," Dlamini said.

The aspirant lawyer is eager to begin this chapter of her life particularly because she desperately wishes to change her family's dire financial circumstances. Her mother and stepfather are unemployed, so the family relies on social grants for sustenance.

Another reason for Dlamini's determination to succeed is the unpleasant experience she had while working in a retail store in 2019 - the year after she had first matriculated. She had only obtained 22 points, an outcome by which she initially was not perturbed since she had had no intention of ever furthering her

studies. She would later change her mindset due to the working conditions and menial pay on her job.

"Although I was not paying rent because I lived with my paternal grandmother, I got a real taste of what it is like to live on a minimum wage. I earned R3 500 monthly. The money was gone before I even knew it. I realised then that that could possibly be my life forever and it was not what I wanted for myself,"

Dlamini recalled.

She resolved to go back to high school to redo her matric. She was accepted in Mgezeni High School in Ntambanana, close to 50 km from eSikhawini. She was forced to repeat her entire senior phase because the school only accepts new learners entering grades eight, nine or 10.

Taking the plunge proved beneficial for the top learner. She juggled eight subjects in matric and attained an astounding 44 points - seven distinctions for IsiZulu, English, Mathematical Literacy, Business Studies, Tourism, Dramatic Arts and Life Orientation. Dlamini credited this amazing performance to diligence and having a strong support base. She hailed her mother and

maternal aunt as her biggest supporters. The top student also acknowledged her Mathematical Literacy and Business Studies teachers.

"Last year, I asked to live close to school so that I could attend all extra classes. I knew this would be tough on my mom financially, but she agreed. Miraculously, two of my teachers, Miss Buthelezi and Mr Mpungose, volunteered to pay for my rent and groceries for the year. I can't thank them enough," she shared.

Dlamini's experiences in the past three years have taught her that turning one's life around is possible. All it takes is a willing heart, courage to begin the transformation process and determination to reach the goal. Her wish is that her story inspires anyone who may believe academic excellence is reserved for a select few. *"It's not the smartest people who make it in life, but those who are willing to work hard,"* she reckoned. Dlamini's mother, Zinhle Mbonane, is overjoyed by her daughter's achievement because it not only guaranteed her university entry but has set a new academic standard for her younger siblings.

-Naledi Hlefane



Picture: Mbuyiselo B. Mlaba



Picture: Mbuyiselo B. Mlaba

MTHEMBU SET ON IMPROVING HER ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE IN 2023

The year 2022 taught Nonjabulo Mthembu two important lessons: firstly, that when one deviates from their priorities, they are bound to pay a hefty price at the end, and secondly, that the road to academic success is not always smooth sailing.

Mthembu is a third-year student who is pursuing a BCom Banking and Business Management degree. She describes herself as a high achiever who has always been among the top 10 students in every class. At the end of 2022 however, she had a rude awakening when she discovered that she hadn't made the top 10. **"Reflecting on last year's performance, I can honestly say that I did not do as well as I had wanted to. I managed to obtain marks that were in the 60s, which is unlike**

me because I always get distinctions or just below 75%, especially with theory-based modules like Business Management and Banking. But because I was not fully focused on my studies last year, I did not get the results I wanted," Mthembu admitted.

A year of firsts for the 24-year-old, 2022 also saw Mthembu's introduction to Statistics – a module she had difficulty understanding all year round. **"I would often leave the lecture room feeling like I had not understood a single word the lecturer said. Even consultations with the lecturer didn't seem to help me much. I actually cried during my final exam because even though I had studied, I felt like I didn't understand any of the**

questions on the paper. Even afterwards, I cried and called my mom who comforted me. Miraculously, I passed it," she shared.

In 2023, Mthembu said she has learnt a great deal from her past mistakes and has devised a full proof plan which involves prioritising her studies more than her social life. She is also resolute on grasping the fundamentals of Statistics so that she can pass the module with higher marks. Mthembu said her biggest motivation is her four-year-old son, whom she wants to adequately provide for. She is also inspired by her mother who holds higher education in high regard and is in possession of three qualifications.

-Naledi Hlefane



Picture: Mbuyiselo B. Mlaba

PRINCE NDLOVU SHARES HIS STRATEGIES TO EXCEL

“University is refreshing because it indicates that one has closed the high school and childhood chapters and taken a step towards maturity. It is a period of finding oneself, learning things about yourself you never knew before.

You start to understand how things in the real-world work. Even if your classes may sometimes seem pointless, the amount of work you put into each course has to be outstanding. It's unlike high school where you could pull something together on the last minute, especially when it comes to exams. It's close to impossible to learn an entire semester's worth of content in one day - let alone an all-nighter. This was something I had to learn to adjust to: not procrastinating. To those going into first year, remember to take chances and break out of your

shell because sometimes the best outcomes come from a new step you are worried to take. Share your stories, whether you're worried or excited beyond belief. Consult with tutors or lecturers if anything is hampering your understanding – they are there to help you.

If you are experiencing difficulty grasping concepts or being confused by a topic, it will impact on your understanding of more complicated work later, so ask for help. Draw up a study timetable and take regular breaks. Your maximum concentration span lasts 35 – 45 minutes so don't study for too long without a break. Your mind doesn't absorb information effectively if you're tired which is why you need to take regular breaks after each study session. Real learning is in applying how well you've retained

or understood information. Past papers are a good way to check how much you know and how well you know it. Test yourself using these papers and mark them to gauge where you can improve. If you don't understand a question or how to get to the correct answer, ask your tutor or lecturer, or a friend who's good at the subject.

Manage your stress levels and try to keep calm.

In conclusion, work around load-shedding. By now we all have a load-shedding timetable. Plan everything and incorporate load-shedding.”

Narrated by **Prince Ndlovu** and written by **Precious Shamase**. Ndlovu is a final-year environmental planning and development studies student.

FHSS HIGHFLIER AIMING TO ATTAIN A DOCTORATE ONE DAY



Picture: Mbuyiselo B. Mlaba

Nonjabulo Nonkululeko Mkhize (20) from Escourt, KwaZulu-Natal is standing tall after emerging as the top second-year student in the Faculty of Humanities and Social Science for the year 2022. She achieved a commendable 86.6% aggregate.

Asked what motivated her to attain such an impressive overall mark, Mkhize, who is currently embarking on her third year of the BA Psychology degree, said her dream to one day assume the title “Dr Mkhize”.

She is determined to dedicate more hours to her schoolwork in her final year. Her passion for the psychology profession is bound to see her through the year with ease. *“I can’t say I was influenced by anyone to do psychology. I did this cause because I love assisting people. Being a psychologist will always keep me interacting with people,”* Mkhize said.

To make sure they improve their academic performance, Mkhize advised her fellow UNIZULU students to find a study method that works for them and stick to it. *“We are different. We [have] different IQs, meaning the techniques and tactics we use for studying are different. One must [therefore] do what they [works best for them],”* Mkhize emphasised.

She concluded that students should try by all means to overcome the problems they come

across and not allow their social life to interfere with their academics. They should only be pushed by the goal of changing their situations instead of making them what hinder them from achieving all they want to achieve in life.



-Mbuyiselo B. Mlaba

FTEN SABATHILE NTUNZELA HAS ACADEMIC SUCCESS ON HER AGENDA

Sabathile Anele Ntunzela is among the youngest first-time entering students (FTENs) at the University of Zululand (UNIZULU). The 17-year-old from Lamontville in Durban earned herself an offer to study towards a Bachelor of Arts in History and IsiZulu.

Unlike most of her peers, Ntunzela started grade one at the age of five. She progressed naturally until she completed matric at Lamontville High School at the age of 16. Upon receiving a firm offer from UNIZULU, Ntunzela could not wait to register at this “gigantic institution of higher education” and become one step closer to fulfilling her goal of possessing a university degree.

“I have completed my registration. It was smooth, thanks to the friendly and helpful people [I came across on campus]. I hope this journey I am embarking on is going to be good and productive,” she said.

The location of UNIZULU's KwaDlangezwa Campus is something the young FTEN considers an advantage. The rural setting, in her view, will help her to focus on her studies and obtain her degree in record time. Ntunzela swears by dedication to one's studies because this is a tactic she applied throughout primary and high school.

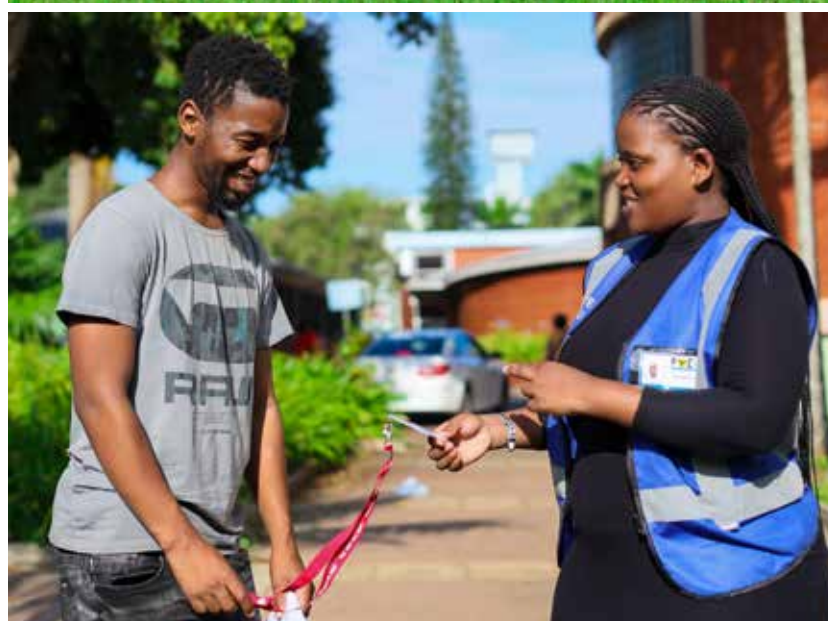
Her ultimate desire is to break the cycle of poverty in her family, hence her insistence on prioritising her studies.

-Mbuyiselo B. Mlaba



Picture: Supplied

LIFE ON CAMPUS





DLADLA TRIUMPHS OVER HEALTH CHALLENGES AND MAKES BSc CUT

A long with counts of students who sprang to register for various programmes at the University of Zululand (UNIZULU), Ntandoyenkosi Sphesonke Dladla from Mtubatuba was among the first FTENs (first-time entering students) to be officially registered at the university.

He enrolled in the Faculty of Science, Agriculture and Engineering for a Bachelor of Science (BSc) Agricultural Economics: Agribusiness Management.

At UNIZULU, there is an assortment of students whose lives vary from having plenty to severely lacking. Some students push through the most testing times and make something of their lives against all odds. Dladla's is a story of unmitigated triumph, a true testament to how success is guaranteed for those who actively seek it. The daunting sequence in Dladla's encouraging story includes an intellectual gift and the right attitude. He grew up in a family where the only sources of livelihood were the government



Picture: Mbuyiselo B. Mlaba

social grant and his mum's meagre income - earned from working as a domestic worker.

"One day, my mother bought me a pair of shoes and I complained because I did not like them. She told me to go and work so that I can see how difficult it is out there. As of that day, I stopped complaining and thought to myself that I need to work hard in school so that, one day, I change the status quo at home," Dladla recalled.

Dropping out of school and going to find employment to earn cash to support the family were some of the thoughts that used to visit the newly registered BSc student. This, more often than not, describes the life path of impoverished children. There were nights where he would go to bed on an empty stomach because there was nothing to eat. When he got to grade 10, he decided to work parttime to assist his mother at home. He would clean people's yards and wash cars to be able to earn money and put food on the

table as well as buying clothes for himself and his sibling.

Following years of adversity, the worst happened - which almost derailed his dreams. Dladla got poor in health and there was no money to take him to see medical doctors. He could only visit the local clinics. The sickness that he had affected his brain and he could not concentrate in class. He would get severe headaches; even his speech got affected.

"This went on up until I finished matric. I ended up with 32 points. I would have achieved far better results if it was not for the fact that I was unwell. The lesson that I learnt from my own story is that people should recognise their potential and not settle for anything less," Dladla advised.

The BSc student is now more determined than ever and is gearing for the 2023 academic year.

-Precious Shamase

ASPIRANT COMPUTER SCIENTIST DELIGHTED TO JOIN UNIZULU'S STUDENT COHORT

Tumelo Mtshali, a 19-year-old who went to Sarel Cilliers Hoërskool in Glencoe, KwaZulu-Natal, has chosen to embark on his journey towards becoming a computer scientist with the University of Zululand (UNIZULU).

The first-time entering student enrolled for a Bachelor of Science (Computer Science) degree and couldn't be happier that he chose to study at an institution that prioritises him and is close to his hometown. What Mtshali also loves about UNIZULU is its top-quality academic programmes.

"I would like to advise the youth to enroll with UNIZULU because it is an institution that can help one [obtain their desired degree or diploma – and eventually start a career in their chosen field]," he said. The aspiring computer scientist mentioned that he is inspired by the one and only Bill Gates, a well-known

a billionaire who started doing pre-law major but took mathematics (including Math 55) and graduate-level computer science courses in Harvard University after which he became the father of the Microsoft company.

"My role model is Bill Gates because of his success and the way he started his small companies, [turning them] into big companies such as the likes of Microsoft [that produce software] that make people's lives easier," Mtshali said.

He swore to keep excelling in his studies so that he can obtain his qualification. He plans to start by working in one of the big tech companies while building his own small business of developing several software that will align to the demands of the 4th Industrial Revolution.

-Mbuyiselo B. Mlaba





Picture: Mbuyiselo B. Mlaba

TOP ENGINEERING FTEN PLANS TO CONTINUE ON PATH OF GREATNESS

Slungile Ncwane is an 18-year-old top achiever from Sivelile Junior Secondary School in Umkhunya, KwaZulu-Natal. She attained a staggering sum of 40 points in her matric.

The go-getter secured herself space to study at the University of Zululand (UNIZULU) and has registered for the Bachelor of Engineering in Electrical Engineering degree. According to the director of the engineering programme, Dr Betty Kibirige, Ncwane has the highest matric points in the Department of Engineering.

Excited to begin her journey to becoming an engineer, Ncwane said: ***“I chose this course because it's unique and many people believe that engineering is not for women; I want to prove them wrong.”*** Beating the odds has become second nature for Ncwane who also triumphed over the challenges she faced in

2022. Due to some family issues, she had to leave home and find accommodation near her school while she was still in grade 11. She acknowledged that although the relocation affected her matric year, it also worked in her favour because she gained some valuable life skills during this time.

Ncwane's motivation to excel in her academics came from being mindful of the difficult situation she grew up under. “I was motivated by my home situation. I told myself that I must work very hard to obtain anything that I desire,” she said.

She draws inspiration and strength from her single mother, who is her role model. Seeing her resilience and the lengths at which she goes to make sure that her family of six is well taken care of gives Ncwane the assurance that she too can conquer anything.

“I'm proud to say that my mother is my role model because she taught me to be independent. I want to be exactly like her and am inspired whenever I think about the challenges she conquers,” Ncwane said.

On her decision to study at UNIZULU, Ncwane asserted that there was simply no institution more prestigious that she trusted with her future.

She stated that she lives by the motto: “The future belongs to those who believe in the beauty of their dreams”. She promised herself and family to continue attaining excellent marks.

Ncwane concluded by appealing to the matric class of 2023 to aim to obtain very high points as they will be competing with many other hopeful matriculants.

-Mbuyiselo B. Mlaba

ZIBUYISILE HOPES TO CHANGE THE GAME FOR FEMALE ENGINEERS

According to an article by Chantelle van Staden and Karen Garner (published on 8 August 2022), “both men and women find the engineering field to be hard and difficult, however, some difficulties are more noticeable for female personnel. These include to name a few, self-imposed limitations, sociocultural restrictions, marital and parental constraints, and gender discrimination.

“Many female engineers have voiced concerns about feeling excluded at work, having little possibilities for professional progress, and receiving insufficient assistance for advancing their careers”.

None of these facts seem to move Zibuyisile Mkhwanazi, a young and vibrant matriculant from Stanger, who completed her matric at Tshelenkosi High School in Shakaville. She successfully completed her registration for a Bachelor of Engineering in Electrical Engineering at the University of Zululand’s (UNIZULU) Richards

Bay Campus. Coming from humble beginnings, Mkhwanazi shared how she had to adjust to being independent at an early age as she had to look for private accommodation to be closer to school. **“I was raised by both parents, but I had to move to another school that was not close to home. This taught me to be stricter and independent. I had to adjust quickly to juggle between house chores and school. At school they introduced extra classes, and I made sure that I was on top of my game because I knew what I wanted in life,”** she said.

Having now registered, Mkhwanazi added that she hoped to change the game in the male-dominated engineering industry, especially within the electrical engineering space. She also shared some interesting facts about how she fell in love with the industry: **“I loved to play with electric toys and recreate some of their styles [while] growing up. I felt I needed to venture into**

the engineering space. This industry is laying the foundation for the future of humanity, from designing electric power plants to developing cutting-edge computer software”. While she hailed the industry’s pivotal role in society, she also raised a few concerns that she felt may scare females away. These are the scarcity of female role models in the field and lack of knowledge about the various alternative career opportunities when one is in possession of an engineering degree. She also highlighted that gender discrimination, self-imposed limitations and exclusion in decision-making are other issues said to be affecting women in the industry.

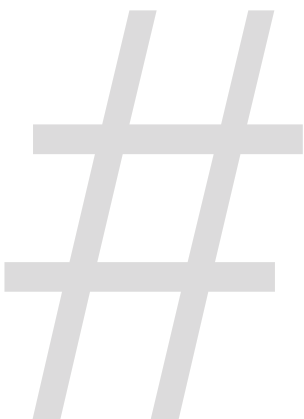
Her mantra in life is:

“DO WHAT YOU CAN WHEN YOU CAN, AND THE SKY WILL BE YOUR LIMIT”.

-Siyanda Mntambo



Picture: Mbuyiselo B. Mlaba





TRAILBLAZING A PATH IN THE ENGINEERING SPACE

Picture: Supplied

Sibongakonke Hadebe, a first-year mechanical engineering student at the University of Zululand (UNIZULU) is one of the top achievers from Buhlebethu High School. Hadebe managed to scoop 38 points.

“Growing up in a family where education was just a desire (particularly furthering schooling to obtain a university degree), I never believed I would end up where am I today. I was brought up by a single mother who works as a hospital cleaner,” Hadebe said.

She is the first person in her family to set foot at a university. She is hoping that she will not find it difficult to navigate her way through the higher education system - since the journey is said to be considerably more complicated for first-generation students. Sharing how she ended up choosing a course in mechani-

cal engineering, Hadebe said that she has a passion for mathematics and physics, both subjects that are critical for those who intend to pursue a career in the engineering space. She also had an interest in the design, research and manufacturing of equipment, aircrafts, and other vehicles. She then chose the UNIZULU mechanical engineering programme because its curriculum is geared towards developing students’ knowledge in a wide variety of fields, including chemistry, physics, structures, electricity, and computer applications. In this way, a graduate becomes a multi-faceted professional.

Growing up, Hadebe recalls hearing about UNIZULU and eventually falling in love with it. *“It was a very foreign and alien concept to me at first. It was something I considered out of my reach,”* she admitted. Hadebe’s mother, Hlengiwe, acknowledged the diffi-

culty in single handedly raising her daughter. She is very happy with the matric results and ecstatic that her daughter is getting an opportunity to further her studies.

“I thank God for Sibongakonke. Truly, I am grateful for everything. I did not get an opportunity to further my studies. At least my daughter is breaking that curse,” Hlengiwe proudly said.

Hadebe’s message to high school learners who come from backgrounds like hers is that one’s dreams are valid and that not even the sky is the limit. “May you always dare to do great things with your life!” she said as a parting shot.

-Precious Shamase

SHINGA'S HARD WORK EARNS HIM AN OFFER IN THE ENGINEERING PROGRAMME

Andile Shinga, one of the 2022 top matriculants at Bongu-zwane Secondary School in rural Mtwalume, KwaZulu-Natal is overjoyed by the news of his stellar performance. He attained an impressive 34 points.

Adding to the young overachiever's excitement is the fact that he qualified and has registered for the Bachelor of Engineering in Electrical Engineering degree at the University of Zululand (UNIZULU).

Considering that his senior years were full of many challenges brought upon by the Covid-19 pandemic, Shinga said he felt even prouder of his results. He vouched to continue on this path of academic excellence for the duration of his course.

Shinga lost his mother at a young age and was therefore raised by his grandmother, the sole provider of the family of five. He admits that his upbringing has been challenging, mainly because of his impoverished background. To be closer to his high school, he stayed in rental accommodation. This put a strain on his grandmother's income and as a result, he would sometimes struggle to pay rent.

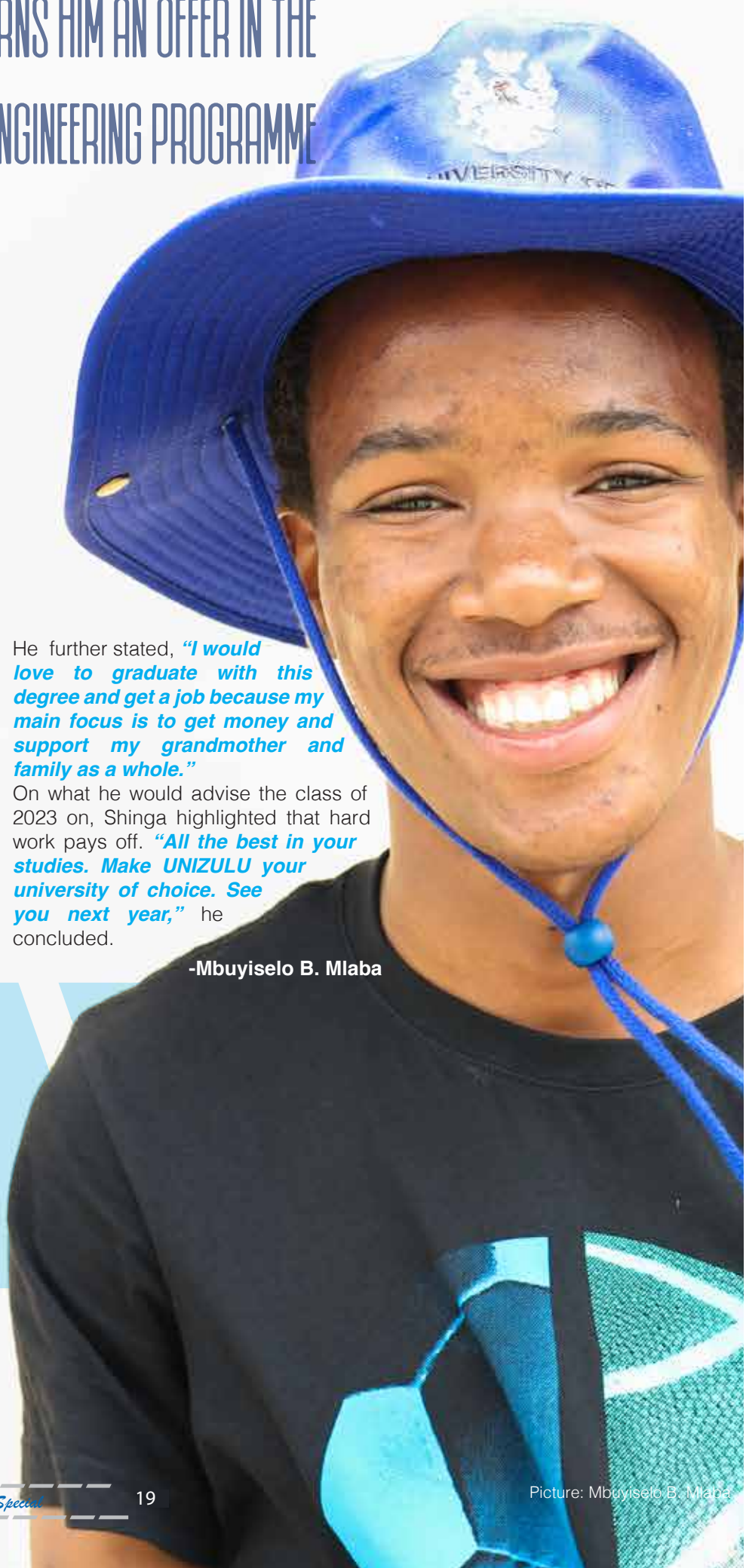
Shinga's motivation to excel in his studies comes from his dream to give back to his supportive grandmother, his wish to honour his late mother and his desire to change the situation back home when he completes his degree.

"Due to the fact that at home we are not that wealthy - we depend on my grandmother's pension grant- I thought the University of Zululand environment will be economically friendly so I made it my university of choice," Shinga alluded.

He further stated, **"I would love to graduate with this degree and get a job because my main focus is to get money and support my grandmother and family as a whole."**

On what he would advise the class of 2023 on, Shinga highlighted that hard work pays off. **"All the best in your studies. Make UNIZULU your university of choice. See you next year,"** he concluded.

-Mbuyiselo B. Mlaba



KWENZEKILE NHACA: BORN TO BE A TEACHER



Picture: Wandile Mathonsi

The University of Zululand (UNIZULU) received over 140 000 applications for programmes offered in both campuses (KwaDlangezwa and Richards Bay) for the year 2023. Among these hopefuls was seventeen-year-old Kwenzile Sipehelele Nhaca from Mpembeni area in Manguzi, who was accepted to study towards a BEd. Intermediate Phase Teaching (Languages and Humanities) qualification.

Nhaca is thrilled to acquire knowledge of a field she feels passionate about and is certain she was destined for. She said she is happiest when she assists others to reach their full potential. She realised this in high school when she would tutor some of her classmates. It was at that point that it dawned on her which career path she should follow. *"I did my research about the best university in KZN and found out that UNIZULU is one of the best universities which produces the best educators. So, I chose it because it is also near my home,"*

Nhaca said. Considering these factors, she willed her wish to study at UNIZULU to existence. But it wasn't only by the universe's orchestration that the prospective teacher received her firm offer from the institution, her high matric marks also worked in her favour. She obtained three distinctions in Isizulu, Mathematical Literacy, and History. She also attained over 70% for Consumer Studies, Life Orientation, English and Geography.

A self-proclaimed hard worker who stops at nothing to reach her goals, Nhaca formed a study group with her friends in matric. The collective used to study during the early hours of the morning. This practice expanded her knowledge of her subjects and saw her marks significantly improving. Therefore, obtaining 38 points did not come as a surprise to Nhaca. Having the backing of her family and teachers also eased Nhaca's matric experience. *"Fortunately, in my matric journey, I didn't experience*

any challenges. My family gave me abundant support. My teachers and family played a life-changing role in my journey towards obtaining my senior certificate," she said.

Her plan going forward is to apply the same study method as she forges ahead on her tertiary journey. Should she face academic challenges along the way, she vouched to consult with her lecturers or seek assistance from any of the support structures offered by the University. The University has undoubtedly gained a studious and passionate student in Nhaca. She does not give in to peer pressure – a trait that will come in handy throughout her university period.

The young lady is not all-study-and-no-play though. To unwind, she plays sports or listens to music.

-Naledi Hlefane

PERSISTENT GINA COMPLETES MATRIC WITH 39 POINTS

Sinegugu Sibahle Gina (19), a first-year student in the Faculty of Education, is a classic example of the level of success one can enjoy when they possess a resilient spirit.

Swaziland-born Gina termed her matric year “a hard grain to grind” as it was fraught with multiple health challenges which tested her character.

In May 2022, she was hospitalised for approximately two weeks due to an inexplicable illness that led to her being unable to walk. She was wheelchair bound throughout her hospital stay. After being discharged, she travelled to school on crutches for a short period before she could independently walk again. Four months after this ordeal, Gina suffered yet another health blow.

“I had a mild stroke, and I was hospitalised again. Hospital had become a part of my life in matric. I became mute as well during this time,” Gina told. Doctors soon after discovered a problem with the position of her spine. Owing to this condition, she was barred from wearing heels

Although persistent by nature, Gina acknowledged that she started to lose heart at some point because of her ill health. During this time, her uncle and Geography teacher were extremely supportive, giving her much-needed motivation. She went to great lengths to pass her matric - going as far as writing some of her matric papers from her hospital bed. Eventually, she attained 70% for Maths Literacy, 78% for English, 78% for isiZulu, 91% for History and Life Orientation, 78% for Tourism, 92% for Business Studies and 71% for Geography.

“I don’t know how I got 39 points, really,” the astonished student admitted. There were some papers which she wrote in a fraction of the exam allocated time because she had had one of her fainting spells.

Her will to turn her family’s financial circumstances around also kept Gina in focus. **“My mom is currently unemployed. She used to be a domestic worker and she really had a hard time because she was not treated well where she worked. My poor background pushed me to pass as well as I did,”** she said.

Gina describes herself as an ambivert who loves being of service to people and generally being amongst a crowd. She loves children as well; hence she chose to become a teacher. For her, teaching is **“about raising kids”** - grooming them for a bright future. Her mom encouraged her to apply at the University of Zululand (UNIZULU) because she knew of people who studied here. Gina did her research and discovered that the institution has a great reputation for producing highly skilled teachers. Ultimately, she developed a love for the institution and applied to study BEd Intermediate Phase (Languages and Humanities). Thus begins the race to the finish line.

-Naledi Hlefane





Picture: Wandile Mathonsi

INSPIRATIONAL, DILIGENT AND TALENTED MAJOLA

To some, university is traditionally seen as the next step after completing high school. Deciding on what one should do after matric is dependent on several factors, with finances and career ambitions being the two most important aspects. When there are many options, it calls for one to seriously think about the road they should tread. For lucky matriculants, it is a matter of choosing between working, furthering their studies, or taking a gap year.

This was not the case for Talent Majola. Due to financial constraints, immediately after passing matric in Sibanisakhe High School in 2005, Majola had to go to Durban to seek employment. ***"To me, going to university was too far-fetched because even if registration required five hundred rands, I would not have been able to afford it,"*** said the thirty-five-year-old.

Majola, who hails from uLundi and considers himself a late bloomer, is now a second-year registered student in the Faculty of Education. Finishing his matric was an achievement, especially walking away with an exemption in his hand. He managed to get an A for Mathematics and a C for a Physical Science. Speaking of his life

immediately after matric, Majola said he sought employment without any luck for the whole of 2006 while staying in a hostel in Jacobs, Durban. In 2007, he got hired by a contracting company, where he used to get paid R7 an hour (R49 a day and approximately R250 per week).

In 2008, while Majola was working for the roofing company, a good Samaritan asked for his CV. There was an opening in one of the schools and they desperately needed a maths teacher. ***"I got a call from a school principal and he told me that they needed a maths and science teacher,"*** shared Majola.

He worked as a teacher from the age of 20 years. He started teaching in August and taught maths, physical science and natural science in grade eights to twelve, grade eight to 10 and grade eight to nine, respectively. It was difficult at the time considering that it was closer to exam time.

"I managed to eventually get a 100% pass rate. Even though none of my students got an A, my highest symbol was a B," Majola boasted. He once registered to study at UNISA but due to his enormous workload at the time, it was difficult for him to study further. Unfortunately, after

some time, the Department of Education released a statement citing that teachers who were teaching without qualifications had to be removed from the system as there were too many unemployed qualified teachers.

Now it was time to face the real world. After teaching for ten years, it was difficult to get into university because he had an old matric. He finally managed to start studying in 2022. ***"I jumped into work at the age of eighteen instead of going to university like most of my friends, but that decision helped me to fall in love with being a teacher a decade later. That work experience paid dividends, not only because it secured my spot in lieu of an undergraduate degree but because I already have self-discipline, independence and a good work ethic,"*** explained Majola.

Majola lives with a disability because of an accident he was involved in. He is a father of six children and has a fiancée. Going back to university full time is the biggest leap of faith Majola has ever taken.

-Precious Shamase