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UNIZULU launches Engineering Advisory Board forum

GREAT minds met when the industry think tanks converged at the University of Zululand's Richards Bay Campus for the inaugural UNIZULU Engineering Faculty Advisory Board meeting.

The key purpose of the Engineering Advisory Board will be to serve as a liaison between the University and industrial sector while incorporating civil society. Members of the Engineering Faculty Advisory Board bring important insights and expertise to assist the Richards Bay Campus in initiating and reviewing critical issues.

The Board's mission is to provide candid and constructive advice, based on insights and expertise, on issues critical to the establishment and success of the UNIZULU Engineering Faculty. It also serves as an advocacy arm of UNIZULU, industry and



Pictured from left: Emeritus Professor Barry Downing, UCT; Sabelo Hlelo, uMhlathuze Municipality Deputy Manager: Infrastructure and Technical Services; Musa Xulu, FOSKOR; Professor Muzi Ndwandwe, UNIZULU Richards Bay Campus Director; Emeritus Professor Gerald Nurick, UCT; and Phiwu Thango, Morecare Engineering Services.

government by informing these stakeholders of educational and research opportunities through the increase of the Engineering

Faculty's resources and support.

The specialists roped in are respected and seasoned engineers from the industry who are

representative of the industry counterparts. Amongst the giants represented is Isizinda Aluminium, MoreCare Engin-

eer, Foskor, Umhlathuze Municipality, RBCT as well as academics from the University of Cape Town.

"There was a call for the University of Zululand to undergo a transition from its standing as a traditional University into being a Comprehensive University in 2002 when higher education institutions were merged," said Professor Muzi Ndwandwe, Executive Director of the UNIZULU Richards Bay Campus.

"In 2009 when the Richards Bay Campus opened its doors, it was earmarked as the University's flagship campus due to its proximity to major industrial hubs and the mining sector in Richards Bay. This is clearly defined also in the University's Strategy 2016-2021," he said.

Prof Ndwandwe further mentioned that the targeted engineering qualifications which

the University is anticipating to roll out are four diplomas in Electrical Engineering (Electronics Communication Systems), Electrical Engineering (Computer Systems), Mechanical Engineering (Process Instrumentation and Control) as well as Mechanical Engineering (Mechatronics); one Diploma and one BSc in Marine Engineering; two Higher Certificates in Engineering Technology and Marine Engineering; as well as six BSc degrees in Electrical Engineering, Mechanical Engineering, Computer Engineering, Chemical Engineering, Civil Engineering as well as Mechatronics.

In order to successfully roll out such programmes, infrastructure requirements in terms of the appropriate building to house these studies as well as manpower to service the facility must be provisioned. Board

member Emeritus Professor Barry Downing from the University of Cape Town's Department of Electrical Engineering highlighted that housing an engineering faculty which would be a multimillion investment, however advising that the University can explore short term measures.

He mentioned that the complete curriculum for the first two programmes to be offered at the Faculty will be completed by the end of September 2017. Thereafter, the courses will have to undergo the UNIZULU Faculty Board approvals and be accredited by the Engineering Council of South Africa.

The proposed UNIZULU Engineering curriculum will be benchmarked using the UCT curriculum with refined improvements.

The complete Engineering Faculty roll-out is scheduled for

2019 when the first intake of students will be admitted.

"The high cost of establishing and offering engineering courses requires massive investment," said Prof Downing.

"In South Africa, 70 percent of university costs are staffing costs. An engineering degree requires 576 credits/32 credits which equals 18 teaching staff + Admin Staff + technical officer staff. There is an extensive economy of scale in filling the classes," he added.

Phiwu Thango, Morecare Engineering Services Group Managing Director alluded to the fact that newly qualified engineers are lacking key skills such as welding. In response to this, it was mentioned that all qualifications have a practical component which is where the industry affiliates should offer students job training opportunities for practical and relevant exposure.

All set for BCom in Accounting Science accreditation



UNIZULU Accounting and Auditing Head of Department, Sphelele Khomo, during the BCom in Accounting Science degree SAICA Accreditation Awareness Campaign.

THE University of Zululand (UNIZULU) held the two-day SAICA Accreditation Awareness Campaign this month (September 2017) in preparation for the highly-anticipated accreditation process of the University's BCom in Accounting Science degree by the South African Institute of Chartered Accountants (SAICA).

The accreditation process will take place next month (October) from the 3rd to the 5th.

SAICA is a professional accountancy body in South Africa that provides support, advice and services to its member Chartered Accountants (CAs) throughout their professional lives. In order for an institution

of higher education to offer a professional degree, the programme must be accredited by a professional body. In this case, it is the duty of SAICA to ensure that the BCom in Accounting Science degree at UNIZULU meets the qualitative criteria to be offered as a course.

"We are thrilled that our first undergraduate degree is in the process of getting accredited," said UNIZULU Accounting and Auditing Head of Department, Sphelele Khomo. "We are hopeful that when SAICA visits us, the organisation will be impressed by our work and accredit our programme," she said.

Following the success of

the pre-accreditation event, UNIZULU's Quality Assurance Manager, Thembi Ndimande, said the aim of the new programme was to have students who have qualified for the BCom in Accounting Science degree be able to practise as Chartered Accountants.

"We do have a three year degree which is an unprofessional degree, hence the University felt that it was very important to have this one (new programme) the Accounting degree, said Ndimande. She added, "We want our students to be registered accountants. So for them to be registered Accountants, their programme needs to be accredited by SAICA. It's a must

that we get full accreditation because if we don't, this will mean that our programme will not be a professional degree and the University will not be able to continue to offer it. So, the main aim at the end of the day is for our students to be registered Chartered Accountants since there is a shortage of black Accountants in South Africa," said Ndimande.

In conclusion, Khomo disclosed that the department's next move – hopefully after getting the accreditation – is to maintain the standard as well as to offer a Certificate in Theory in Accountancy (CTA) which is the course's second degree.

Addressing pertinent small business issues through MBALI Conference



Dr Thami Mazwai, Special Advisor to the Minister of Small Business Development, with Professor Dev Tewari, Dean of the Faculty of Commerce, Administration and Law at UNIZULU, during the MBALI Entrepreneurship Symposium.

Universities urged to conduct research to help society prosper

THE annual Research Awareness Week at the University of Zululand recently got underway, with this year's event placing strong emphasis on the necessity for universities to conduct research in order to ensure that society forges ahead and prospers.

The packed weeklong programme featured workshops, keynote addresses as well as an Open Day event where UNIZULU research staff as well as researchers interacted with interested parties such as students on the subject of research.

During this year's launch event, Professor Sibusiso Moyo, Deputy Vice-Chancellor: Engagement at DUT, urged researchers to engage in research projects "that talk to the community".

"It's important to build those types of relationships because the impact of your work and where you publish is very important. When we design, we must think long term," urged Prof Moyo.



UNIZULU Hydrology Honours students, Bongani Cyprian Mkhize and Siyabonga Goodman Zulu, during the Open Day segment of the 2017 UNIZULU annual Research Awareness Week. Here, Mkhize and Zulu are seen at the Hydrology Department's exhibition stand.

Elaborating on research that "speaks to communities" as well as why universities should conduct research, Prof Moyo listed poverty alleviation, the expansion of global knowledge, economic empowerment, improvement

of African challenges as well as transformation, equity and gender equality as some of the areas that can benefit through research production.

With research feeling the pinch of limited funding and resources, Prof Moyo said col-

laborations, the creation of research focus areas as well as mentorships are some of the solutions to the problem (of a lack of funding).

The Open Day leg of the annual Research Awareness Week was the most interactive

part of the event. Research Awareness Week Open Day aims to stimulate interest in research through an "up close and personal" approach.

Open Day – the featured departments from the Faculty of Science and Agriculture displaying their research to keen students; the exploration of the wide range of study options available at the University; as well as an opportunity for students to find out exactly what certain fields of study entail.

"This is our first year having the Open Day part of the event outside and as a result, more people responded to the call. Normally we have it in the Library," said Daniela Viljoen, Chief Research Administrator at the UNIZULU Research and Innovation office.

For many students, the experience of being up close and personal with equipment used in the Hydrology Department was "mind blowing". Professor Jean Simonis, Hydrology HoD (acting), said

the aim of the Department's exhibition at the event was to "create awareness with a purpose". Prof Simonis said the Department also wanted to ensure that its students are employable; not only in South Africa but the world as well. Amongst the things that the Department has done in order to realise this vision is the signing of Memorandum of Understandings (MoU) with industry for the benefit of its students.

Viljoen urged current and potential students to visit the University's research groups in order to see what's on offer in terms of research opportunities at UNIZULU. "As long as there are researchers willing to put in the work and bend their intellects and imaginations to approaching some of the great challenges facing humanity, research can change the world ... many of those tireless researchers can be found at the University of Zululand," said Viljoen.

IN a bid to develop entrepreneurship in the northern Zululand region and the country, the Faculty of Commerce, Administration and Law at the University of Zululand hosted its flagship MBALI Entrepreneurship Symposium.

Representatives from the ministries of Small Business Development as well as Economic Development, Tourism and Environmental Affairs were among the attendees.

Now in its second year; this year's Symposium has immensely transformed from its inaugural event; with the focus having shifted from presenting research papers to deriving practical solutions to address challenges faced by small business owners in the northern Zululand region and South Africa.

Professor Dev Tewari, the Dean of the Faculty of Commerce, Administration and Law at UNIZULU, said that the Faculty's objective was to establish a network comprised

of national, provincial and local government; Zululand Chamber of Commerce; private companies; community formations; emerging and established local entrepreneurs as well as the University. This body, elaborated Prof Tewari, would exchange ideas, transfer knowledge and eventually work towards the development of small businesses in the region.

Among other objectives of the symposium is to see the establishment of an entrepreneurship centre within the University.

Dr Thami Mazwai, Special Advisor to the Minister of Small Business Development, said that the higher education sector has the necessary academic pool to effect changes required by society. Owing to the high fatality rate of small businesses in South Africa in the past, Dr Mazwai said his Ministry has since its development in 2015 been working on altering this.

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