



THE MERCURY

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UNIZULU gets accreditation to produce CAs

EARLIER this month, the South African Institute of Chartered Accountants (SAICA), together with the University of Zululand (UNIZULU) and the Banking Sector Education and Training Authority (BANKSETA), celebrated the SAICA accreditation of the university's BCom (Accounting Science) undergraduate degree.

The accreditation granted to the university in April 2018 means that, as of 2018, any student with a UNIZULU BCom (Accounting Science) undergraduate degree is eligible to study for a postgraduate degree (the CTA or its equivalent) without needing to complete a bridging course or programme at a university that offers such SAICA-accredited programmes, provided they meet the entry requirements of that university.

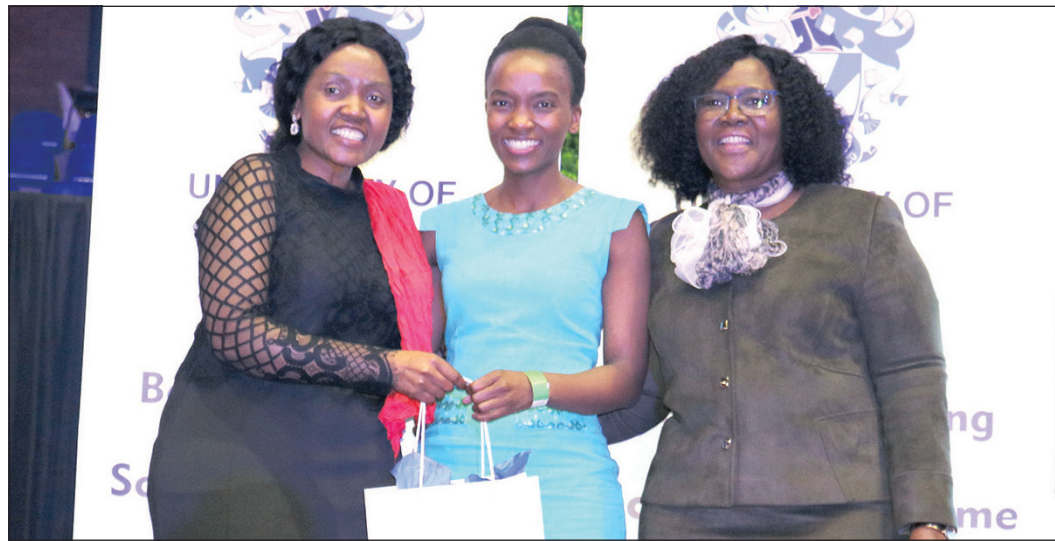
SAICA, South Africa's pre-eminent accountancy body, is widely recognised as one of the world's leading accounting institutes. It provides a wide range of support services to more than 40 000 members

who are chartered accountants (CAs).

Speaking at the university's celebration event at UNIZULU's KwaDlangezwa Campus, Chantyl Mulder, the SAICA Executive Director: Nation Building, expressed her pride and excitement at the institution's achievement, congratulating the team who made the accreditation possible through collaboration, partnership and hard work.

She said: "UNIZULU's undergraduate degree accreditation would not have been possible without the partnership entered into between UCT and UNIZULU to provide the appropriate capacity-building support and development of staff. Staff from both universities must be congratulated on this achievement as it is a direct result of their willingness to collaborate and learn from each other that accreditation has been achieved."

"It is also worth noting that projects like these do not come cheap. This project would not have been possible were it not for the continued financial



Pictured from left: Sphelele Khomo, the Head of UNIZULU's Accounting and Auditing Department; BANKSETA Chairperson Mia Nosipho Makhanya and Professor Xoliswa Mtose, UNIZULU Vice-Chancellor and Rector.

support of the BANKSETA investing R95 million in this project over a seven-year period. Finally, I must also give credit to UNIZULU's leadership, whose vision and continued support in the implementation of this capacity building project made all of this possible," Mulder added.

Prof Xoliswa Mtose, Vice-Chancellor and Rector of UNIZULU, said: "UNIZULU has its metaphorical 'feet' firmly on the ground and I trust that you will leave UNIZULU today, with lasting memories that this success shows that, with support systems in place, the quality of

education at the previously disadvantaged universities can be as good as in any other institutions."

BANKSETA Chairperson Mia Nosipho Makhanya echoed Prof Mtose's sentiments. She said: "UNIZULU, today we all celebrate with you. As

BANKSETA, we are very proud to partner with initiatives like these- that develop the skills of our youth, leads to economic inclusion for all and help work towards the goals set out in the country's National Development Plan.

"To the youth, we look to you to create active solutions to shape the future of South Africa to ensure that there is growth and economic inclusion for all."

The benefits of UNIZULU's accreditation extend far beyond just the university and its students.

"Through this capacity-building project, not only are the young people in the province being provided with quality education and the chance to become a CA, but we are contributing towards the National Development Plan's transformation initiatives by increasing the number of black CAs in South Africa," Mulder added.

Now that accreditation has been achieved at both KwaZulu-Natal's universities (UNIZULU and the University of KwaZulu-Natal), the province's aspiring

CAs no longer have to move to other provinces to pursue a degree in chartered accountancy. This will minimise the migration rate of talented individuals to other city centres to find work while also assisting to boost KZN's economy.

Mandi Olivier, a Senior Executive for Professional Development at SAICA, said: "For a programme to achieve accreditation from SAICA, we undertake a rigorous academic review process to assess whether the university's specific programme(s) leading to the CA(SA) designation have the necessary resources (financial and other) in place to deliver a quality programme."

"The purpose of the accreditation process is to establish that the criteria for an accredited academic programme are being met, and that they also meet the Council of Higher Education's (CHE) definition as being a 'purposeful and structured set of learning experiences that lead to a qualification'. Accreditation by SAICA is over and above other regulatory requirements from the Depart-

ment of Higher Education and Training that first need to be met by these providers.

"In so doing, SAICA seeks to establish whether or not the programme meets the appropriate national and international educational standards of the chartered accountancy designation, and ensures the delivery of competent CAs with relevant skills to the market place. Having undertaken the formal accreditation process, we are satisfied that UNIZULU's undergraduate degree has the necessary resources to enable it to meet the required standards."

According to Gugu Makhanya, the SAICA Senior Executive: Transformation and Growth, the process of accreditation usually takes between five and seven years.

With UNIZULU's accreditation, five of SA's six historically disadvantaged institutions have now achieved accreditation for their undergraduate BCom CA-stream degree, with three of them also receiving accreditation for the postgraduate programme, Makhanya concluded.

Money-savvy quintet makes semi-finals of Budget Speech Competition

FIVE students from the Economics Department of University of Zululand (UNIZULU) are overjoyed after reaching the top 20 in the Nedbank and Old Mutual Budget Speech Competition 2018.

The annual competition, which has been running for 46 years, is open to undergraduate and postgraduate students registered for an economics course at any recognised South African institution of higher education. Entrants are tasked with researching and writing compelling essays on a given topical economic subject.

This year's undergraduate entrants had to tackle the much-debated issue of bitcoin/crypto currencies, looking at its risks and whether regulators had been sufficiently aware of these.

Postgraduate entrants were challenged to think of innovative ways to restore fiscal credibility if they were the incumbent Minister of Finance.

Third-year student Khayelihle Madlopha, who bagged the R60 000 cash prize in the 2017 leg of the competition, has once again met the requirements to be selected for the first round and is the only student representing the institution in the undergraduate category.

In the postgraduate category,

UNIZULU has a far stronger presence with four students, namely Lungelo Khayelihle Ngema, Thobani Gwala, S'bonelo Majola and Lwayiphi Mpungose.

The top 20 entries, which were selected by a filter panel, will now be marked by the adjudication panel, which will select the best 10 essay submissions.

Thereafter, the 10 finalists will be interviewed by the adjudication panel, after which they will participate in a variety of activities in Cape Town leading up to the broadcast of the 2019 Budget speech, where the winners and runners-up will be announced.

The news of the five students' progress in the competition has been received with excitement by Prof Sandile Songca, the Deputy Vice-Chancellor: Teaching and Learning, who said he was "extremely proud" of the students.

Head of the Department of Economics Prof Lorraine Greyling said she was impressed by the students' performance in the competition thus far.

"I am extremely proud of the students. Now, we have to wait and pray for the announcement of the finalists who will go to the Budget speech next year," she added.



Khayelihle Madlopha, a third-year BCom Economics and Banking Management student who won first prize in the undergraduate category of the Nedbank and Old Mutual Budget Speech Competition 2017, congratulated by UNIZULU Vice-Chancellor Prof Xoliswa Mtose.

Institution does its bit to bridge the maths and science gap

IN A bid to tackle the national crisis of poor performance of learners in maths and physical science, the University of Zululand (UNIZULU) recently held its inaugural Maths and Science Teachers' Seminar targeting King Cetshwayo District Municipality high school educators.

The seminar was held at the university's prestigious Science Centre in Richards Bay. It was designed to be a platform through which educators could engage on critical issues that hinder their learners from performing well while also gaining insight into alternative teaching methods from expert facilitators, who were in parallel sessions.

Speaking on the rationale behind organising the meeting, Geina Nhleko-Mdluli, the Director of Communications and Marketing, said that because the majority of students who enrolled at the institution came from high schools in the district, the institution had seen it appropriate to forge strong links with the schools as they were among the university's key stakeholders.

"Last year, we held the Principals' Seminar which targeted headmasters in the district. That event allowed us to lay

the foundation for this seminar. We hope today will be a life-changing experience that will eventually impact on the lives of learners," she said.

Prof Nokuthula Kunene, the Dean of the Faculty of Science and Agriculture, said that holding the seminar with teachers was a great start towards improving the dismal maths and physical science pass rate in the district.

She added that the lowering of university entry level points had had negative consequences for students who later struggled to attain the minimum pass marks for their modules, however one seminar would not be enough to tackle the crisis. The university, together with high schools and the provincial Department of Education, had to "continue working together until the impact on learners could be assessed".

Nkosinomusa Ngcobo, a maths teacher and principal at Ehawini High School, said there were many issues that were barriers to good learner performance in maths and physical science. Among them were learners' negative attitude towards the subjects, parents coercing their children to choose the subjects and the



Mathematician Professor Poobhalan Pillay talking mathematics with teachers during a maths parallel session.

fact that in some cases, learners did not have a solid foundation on the subjects from the lower grades because of ill-qualified teachers.

Ngcobo believed that educators needed to employ teaching methods tailor-made for individual learner needs as opposed to using a "one-size-fits-all" approach.

Faculty of Education Dean Prof Mncedisi Maphalala shared Ngcobo's sentiments on the contributing factors to the low pass rate.

He said there were four key areas that could enhance teaching in maths and physical science, namely learners, teachers, the learning environment, and teacher education and development.

"We need to cultivate (a) love for maths and science from the early childhood development stage. This will ensure that learners take the subjects up to grade 12," Prof Maphalala said.

He also noted that the education system required qualified and competent educators to



Physical science educators captivated as the facilitator conducts an experiment.

teach the two subjects. Equally crucial to resolve, Prof Maphalala said, was safety, inadequate resources, poor infrastructure and the lack of quality and relevant teaching materials in some high schools.

"Lastly, teacher education programmes need to have strong pedagogical content responsive to school curricula needs and must be informed by research," he concluded.

Following parallel sessions with facilitators, teachers had the opportunity to reflect on the

activities of the seminar and give feedback.

Ntombifuthi Luthuli, a physical science teacher from Mgitshwa High School, said the highlight of her day was being introduced to PhET Simulations, an online and downloadable programme with research-based interactive computer simulations for teaching and learning physics, chemistry, maths and other sciences.

Luthuli added she could not wait to use the programme in her classes.

UNIZULU and CSIR join forces in spectrum usage patterns monitoring

A RECENT collaboration between the Department of Computer Science at the University of Zululand (UNIZULU) and the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR) is set to reveal spectrum usage patterns in the country.

Together with 15 other universities in the country, UNIZULU was approached by the CSIR to become a national node for the spectrum monitoring project. Following the signing of a memorandum of understanding, the Department of Computer Science received a spectrum-sensing unit to install on the KwaDlangezwa Campus premises.

The infrastructure has been built using CSIR's wide-band, low-cost spectrum analyser technology integrated with an online management platform.

Prof Matthew Adigun, the Head of the Department of Computer Science, said: "We are excited to be a part of this project. Being a node means that University of Zululand can participate in the mainstream South African technology innovation and development usually attributed to historically white institutions."

The project will take place over three years. Upon completion, the technology will be able

to show near real-time and historical spectrum usage patterns across the country. This data will be useful to policymakers, the Independent Communications Authority of South Africa and network operators for decision-making purposes.

Pragasen Mudali, a senior lecturer in the Computer Science Department, said that because the nodes had been strategically selected, they got good coverage of their respective geographical areas. The data received from the devices is being continuously fed back to CSIR.

This project has received positive feedback from the university.



Pictured from left: Computer Science Department lecturer Paul Tarwireyi, CSIR Meraka Institute's Dr Luzango Mfube, Computer Science Department senior lecturer Dr Pragasen Mudali, Head of the Computer Science Department Prof Matthew Adigun and CSIR Meraka Institute's Dr David Johnson.

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