

# Infrastructure oversight visit by DHET

GCINA NHLEKO

THE Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET) visited the University of Zululand (UNIZULU) on Thursday, September 15.

In his welcome to delegates, Thabani Mncwango, Executive Director: Infrastructure remarked that this was the first visit to have taken place post Covid-19.

UNIZULU has responded to a range of imperatives – stimulated by government funding and internal financial resources – aimed at accelerating and advancing its vision to be a leading comprehensive university that thrives on quality and fosters collaborative and innovative cultures with its rural and urban campuses.

UNIZULU has embarked on a programme of infrastructure expansion that has so far exceeded expectation. A number of factors underpin the mobilisation of this multibillion programme, including:

- ◆ The vision of an improved campus for students, staff and society;
- ◆ A leadership focus on fundraising and alternative financing mechanisms;
- ◆ Optimism tempered by rigorous budget control and cash flow management;
- ◆ A programmatic approach to delivery, supported by governance structures to integrate diverse stakeholder objectives within an overarching academic and spatial vision;
- ◆ Dedicated project management ensuring consistent delivery, monitoring and reporting;
- ◆ A commitment to innovation and value-based contractual arrangements that reward performance, promote collaboration, long-term relationships and improving delivery;
- ◆ A culture of continuous value



Representatives of the Department of Higher Education and Training recently visited the University of Zululand to assess the progress of new and refurbished infrastructure as well as hold further discussions.

engineering to ensure that all projects remain within budget.

Chairing the session, Mncwango further zoomed into UNIZULU's vision 2027 strategic goal 5, which entails accelerating the rehabilitation and development of UNIZULU infrastructure.

Key infrastructure includes classrooms,

laboratories, equipment, student residences, security facilities and systems, and the full range of underlying infrastructure to support digital systems. The project delivery structure was unpacked and presented. Key milestones, a progress update on active IEG-funded projects as well as the whole project scope and description

were all unpacked.

Some infrastructure is funded by the university's internal resources, including the fourth floor, Council Chambers and all floors in the admin building.

There are also priority infrastructure projects, which include the Multipurpose Dome facilities.

# 22nd Annual Information Studies Hybrid Conference

PRECIOUS SHAMASE

THE Department of Information Studies under the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences at the University of Zululand (UNIZULU) hosted its 22nd Annual Information Studies (IS) Hybrid Conference from September 6 to 8, 2022.

The theme for this year's conference was "Library and Information Science Research Matters for Sustainable Development Goals".

The conference was opened by Professor Lulu Shokane, Deputy Dean: Research and Innovation in the faculty who wished the delegates well in their radical systematic and decisive action towards realising the sustainable development goals to improve research in the field of library and information studies.

The keynote address was delivered by Dr Naresh Sentoo from the Durban University of Technology. His topic was library and information studies education and practice, looking at balancing the needs for sustainability and the demands for 4IR. Prof Sentoo identified the technologies that drive 4IR that LIS graduates will be working with, if employed, and the relevant skills needed for functionality in this era.

According to the Head of the Department of Information Studies, Dr Neil Evans, the conference was attended by impactful researchers from sister institutions. The topics

that were covered included innovative marketing of library services and resources, knowledge management systems, and academic effects to counteract cyberbullying on Facebook experienced by undergraduate students in Kenya. He thanked everyone who attended, both physically and online, for the support and their input in the library and information systems discipline.

He explained that the conference is intended to add to the developmental process of UNIZULU students, "to see them grow and become the individuals who can stand up and present their research and tell their stories".

Dr Evans was evidently excited when speaking about how the IS conference had developed from being a small campus event to an "internationally flavoured" one. The conference is also in the process of receiving Department of Higher Education and Training accreditation. Delighted, Dr Evans said this accomplishment was a bonus to the string of achievements the conference had enjoyed over the past 22 years, such as the turnout of delegates coming from different universities from as far as the United States and Germany.

The conference ended on a somewhat sombre note when the retirement of UNIZULU academic Prof Dennis Ocholla was announced. Prof Ocholla has been instrumental in the planning of the conference since its inception.

# UNIZULU instrumental in KZN social entrepreneurship development drive

NALEDI HLEFANE

THE University of Zululand (UNIZULU), together with three partners in KwaZulu-Natal, is making a valuable contribution to the province's economic development agenda through equipping local social entrepreneurs with key business management skills.

In August 2021, the university's Department of Business Management joined forces with the Department of Economic Development, Tourism and Environmental Affairs (EDTEA) and the University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN), which had a longstanding partnership to implement the KZN Social Economy Development programme. A training-intensive initiative, the programme seeks to bolster social entrepreneurship in the province by exposing social entrepreneurs, also known as local economic development (LED) champions, to holistic business administration education.

Providing more context to the programme, Dr Simon Taylor, a UKZN academic who heads the project said: "The main purpose of the project is to develop, create and empower social entrepreneurs within KZN; to encourage skills development for them to become more resilient in their businesses. The social entrepreneurship drive aligns with government policy on social development. It's driven by the president's National Development Plan 2030."

He added that the 2022 cycle was the first time that EDTEA and UKZN had worked with other universities. "This year, we had UNIZULU, Mangosuthu University of Technology (MUT) and the Durban University of Technology (DUT) - so that is a step up. Now the reach is much wider because UNIZULU goes right up to Pongola, Vryheid, Kosi Bay. We can reach more people," Dr Taylor said.

In the 2021/22 period, more than 50 entrepreneurs were mentored in the programme, with UNIZULU mentoring 10. Dr Sheunesu Zhou, one of the mentors,



UNIZULU joined hands with the Department of Economic Development, Tourism and Environmental Affairs and three KZN universities in a project geared towards advancing the skills and knowledge of social entrepreneurs in the province. Picture: James Thwala

explained that the social entrepreneurs were selected through an application process, and the interviews took place in November 2021. The mentors sought businesses that were operational and that either had a social impact or the intention of making a social impact.

"The training focussed on social entrepreneurship – who is a social entrepreneur, what do they do, basic business management, tips, and basic manager skills. The entrepreneurs had to redraw their business plans. We put a lot of emphasis on the social and environmental impact that the entrepreneurs' businesses would make," he said.

In his view, Dr Zhou believes the six-month interactions between the mentors and entrepreneurs were fruitful as the mentors were not only able to impart new knowledge, but also tackle most of the common problem areas of the businesses. These were improper drawing up of financials and internal business management,

as well as total neglect of utilising marketing tools to increase the visibility of the businesses. Beyond this, Dr Zhou said the experience was life-changing for mentors too, as they dealt with individuals from varied business and personal backgrounds.

## UNIZULU AND MUT CHAMPIONS DEMO DAY

On September 2, LED champions who were trained by UNIZULU and MUT attended the Champions Demo Day at The Royal Hotel. Here they presented their businesses in front of a judging panel, investors and fellow social entrepreneurs.

Dr Ayansola Ayandibu, the second UNIZULU mentor who was also on the judging panel, explained that the champions were judged mainly according to the social impact elements of their businesses.

At the end, two champions were chosen as the overall winners – one from each university group. They each received a R5 000 cash prize from Nedbank.

# Seminar brings engineering students closer to potential employers

NALEDI HLEFANE

UPON completing their higher education studies, graduates often encounter challenges with securing employment. This is often due to them not adequately expressing their capabilities in their CVs, not possessing suitable interpersonal skills or not being aware of available opportunities outside of mainstream workplaces.

Against this backdrop, the University of Zululand's (UNIZULU) Teaching and Learning Centre (TLC) recently held a seminar wherein first-year mechanical and electrical engineering students were afforded the opportunity to engage with seasoned professionals in their respective industries.

Professor Maria Sewela Mabusela, the Director of Teaching and Learning, said the purpose of the engagement was manifold. Firstly, it was to make "learning more practical" and broaden the students' textbook knowledge of their fields by connecting them to industry workers. It also exposed students to possible funding and work-integrated learning opportunities.

"Another objective of the seminar is to offer first-years an opportunity to connect with companies, connect with organisations, to enhance their diversity in terms of career prospects. It doesn't mean that because you are doing mechanical or electrical engineering you will end up working in those fields. Some can go to teaching – do their PGCE, animation, or other related industries which may be able to absorb you," Prof Mabusela added.

The centre invited a diverse group of professionals who shared their lived experiences of working in the engineering industry as well as advice on how to enter and succeed in these spaces.

The first to address the students was Senamile Masango, a UNIZULU alumnus who holds many titles including nuclear scientist, entrepreneur and founder of Senamile Masango Foundation. Her address was largely centred on personal and professional growth. She urged students to constantly seek growth in order to remain relevant in the industry.

"Be solution bringers. We can't let professionals from other countries come solve problems here in South Africa when



In a recent seminar organised for first-year engineering students at UNIZULU, various engineering professionals shared their experiences of working in these fields. Image: Samkele Sokhela

First-year engineering students at UNIZULU had the opportunity to interact with professional engineers during a seminar organised by UNIZULU's Teaching and Learning Centre. Image: Samkele Sokhela

we are here as engineers," she told the future engineers. In her final points, she challenged the attendees to develop a strategy for their career progression. Masango emphasised the importance of conducting research to contribute to the body of knowledge.

Speaking from a holistic perspective, Nokuthula Ndaba, a lecturer in the Student Teaching Practicum Department, reminded the future engineers that their paths have been preordained by God.

"I want you to understand that God would not have allowed you to register to be in this profession if he had no plans or a purpose for you. I have no doubt that God created me to be a teacher. Therefore, in all my dealings, I make sure that I raise the flag of teaching very high, and I do not allow any person to despise my profession," said Ndaba, stressing that the students should hold their profession in high regard as well.

She further urged the attendees to be purpose-driven, to constantly strive for excellence and remain professional at all costs.

Other speakers were Minenhle Nzama, Product Designer at ETT SA, and Hope Baloyi, Senior Quality of Supply Engineer at Eskom. Nzama spoke about being resilient and creative in the workplace, while Baloyi highlighted the essence of possessing strong verbal communication skills.

Reflecting on the day's events, Ntokozo Mzinyane, an electrical engineering student, said he was deeply moved by Ndaba who touched on the point of believing in oneself as well as Masango's stance on goal-setting as a recipe for success.

For mechanical engineering student Nonhle Thabethe, what captured her the most was that she should be a change agent in her field.

## A NODE FOR AFRICAN THOUGHT



Join our facebook page & follow us on Twitter

www.unizulu.ac.za

# I ♥ UNIZULU



UNIVERSITY OF ZULULAND