

Honourable Buti Manamela gives UNIZULU BEd graduates salient advice

NALEDI HLEFANE

NEWLY qualified educators, whose degrees were conferred during the recent 2023 University of Zululand (UNIZULU) graduation ceremonies, were urged to become ardent professionals who perpetually seek innovative teaching methods and go beyond the call of duty.

Imploring the graduates was Honourable Buti Manamela, Deputy Minister of Higher Education, Science and Innovation, who was a guest speaker during the Faculty of Education's second graduation session.

Manamela encouraged the teachers to emulate the late Nokutela Dube, one of the pioneers in the struggle to liberate the black child through education. Dube founded Ohlange High School in 1901.

"Founding a school today may be one of the simplest acts one can achieve. But in 1901, being black, and being a woman, was no small hurdle. But with dedication and commitment, she pushed ahead with her dream of educating the black child. She gave her life into this trade when she realised that teaching is an essential profession which requires those who have heeded the call to understand the mammoth tasks and responsibilities it comes with. In the same way that the graduates were imparted knowledge, shaped to see the world and motivated to stay on course when faced with insurmountable difficulties by their lecturers, Manamela now asked them to assume their positions as soldiers in classrooms. "I want you to be a better type of a

teacher. The one who understands the children that they teach, their weaknesses and their strengths, what their family background is and who their parents are (if they have any), whether they do have a meal before they come to schools. Are they being bullied at home or at school which may affect their studies, can they hear or see, and if not is there a way in which we can help them so that this does not affect their studies? You need to contribute to revolutionising teaching," he said.

Touching on the issue of pedagogy, Manamela called for a new and exciting way of teaching mathematics, history,



Following his moving address on the essence of the teaching profession at UNIZULU's fourth graduation session for 2023, Buti Manamela, Deputy Minister of Higher Education, Science and Innovation, received a special gift from the institution. The token of appreciation was handed over by Professor Xoliswa Mtose, UNIZULU Vice-Chancellor. Picture: James Thwala

languages, science, art and technology. He challenged the current cohort of teachers to "redefine teaching and learning as we know it" by possibly incorporating new technologies.

Finally, Manamela reminded the graduates of the value of giving back to the community. Although fees have fallen, in the sense that graduates no longer have to pay back the money they were funded by NSFAS, Manamela said this education was not free.

"I am here to ask you to pay it forward. I am not only asking the students of oNgoye. I am asking students across

the country who are part of a privileged few – 1.2 million this year and costing the national fiscus an investment of more than R49 billion – to consider paying it forward even though the state does not expect you to. Go and contribute in eradicating illiteracy in your communities," he said.

Volunteering in an early childhood development centre for a year, filling in a gap at a school that has a vacancy but unfunded posts or teaching the disabled, the poor and destitute are some of the suggestions Manamela shared regarding the latter.

It was revealed through literature that

more women than men graduate for their undergraduate and postgraduate degrees, but very few of them are in managerial positions. My study has revealed that yes, there are women who have successfully landed themselves in leadership positions, through hard work. It is unfortunate that women still face certain hindrances. The fact that men and women are treated differently in similar positions in the workplace is astonishing. A man could be a father and have family responsibilities and still be treated normally in the workplace but if a woman is a mother with family responsibilities she is labeled as a "working mom" and could be put at a disadvantage because of these responsibilities," said Mngomezulu.

The reason for the poor representation of women in managerial positions in higher education, according to Mngomezulu, remains unknown. However, she is pleased that her study has shed light on the female/male leader ratio and the urgency to fill this gap.

She had three recommendations pertaining to the topic. First, she suggests holding gender equality workshops and women empowerment workshops that will be attended by both men and women. She also recommended that tertiary institutions introduce mentorship programs that will see women in leadership hosting seminars for female staff and students aspiring to assume leadership roles. Finally, she believes a similar study should be conducted with male heads of departments. This would provide a worthy comparison of the journeys male and female academics take to leadership.

"My master's journey taught me that nothing is impossible if you put your mind and efforts into it. When starting this journey, I personally had a lot of doubt about whether I would be able to even finish a Master's degree. The minute I started believing in myself, things became easier," the graduate shared.

Mngomezulu is currently serving in UNIZULU's Human Resources Department as a data capturer for the recruitment project. She sees herself as a PhD holder and working as an academic soon.

Master's graduate probes reasons for scarcity of female leaders in tertiary institutions

MBUYISELO B. MLABA AND NALEDI HLEFANE

THERE are no words that could effectively describe the excitement Noluthando Bongeka Mngomezulu felt when she finally obtained her Master of Commerce (Business Management) qualification during the recent University of Zululand (UNIZULU) graduation week.

Over and above achieving one of her academic goals, the graduate also celebrated attaining a distinction for her Master's degree.

Thirty-year-old Mngomezulu from Esikhwini in Empangeni commenced her Master's journey in 2020, her study focusing on an issue she feels strongly about: women leadership. Her dissertation is titled "Poor Representation of women in managerial positions in Tertiary institutions in KwaZulu-Natal: Focus on Female Head of Departments".

"I am a feminist at heart and seeing women lead really excites me," she said, adding that she was motivated to select her topic by her supervisor Prof Zezi-Magigaba's rise to the top. "When I arrived in UNIZULU in 2014, Prof Zezi-Magigaba was just Mrs Magigaba. Seeing her become a doctor and then Head of Department made me inquisitive about other women in leadership positions," Mngomezulu said.

Her study was qualitative in nature and utilised the interpretivist paradigm (which relates to the understanding that one's reality can only be fathomed through that person's experiences of that reality, which may differ from another person's due to the individuals' historical or social perspective). Semi-structured interviews were conducted as a data collection instrument.

From the interviews, the graduate gathered that there are multiple reasons why women are poorly represented in managerial positions in tertiary institutions. The responses varied from feelings of inferiority (sometimes attributed to one's assumed leadership incapability constantly being raised by their counterparts) to family responsibilities, fear of the unknown and no interest in occupying a managerial position.

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Noluthando Bongeka Mngomezulu, Master of Commerce (Business Management) graduate. Picture: James Thwala

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NALEDI HLEFANE

THE University of Zululand (UNIZULU) Science Centre, rated as one of the best in Africa, now boasts a new robotics laboratory which has been sponsored by Sasol Foundation in partnership with Sifiso EdTech, a company founded by Sizwe Nxasana and Dr Judy Dlamini that provides turnkey educational robotics solutions to schools.

The fully equipped lab was recently handed over to the science centre in an event attended by representatives of UNIZULU, Sasol Foundation, Sifiso EdTech, the Department of Trade, Industry and Competition and the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education.

The establishment of this facility is linked to Sasol Foundation's broader drive, in conjunction with the Department of Basic Education (DBE) and other stakeholders, to develop STEM education and careers. Noxolo Kahlana, Head of Sasol Foundation, explained that the Sasol Foundation-DBE partnership contributes to building relevant skills while "reducing the digital gap that currently exists between well-off schools and low-income and rural schools".

Kahlana observed: "We contribute a lot to the coding and robotics curriculum. So, this curriculum will enable learners to transition to the new world of work with ease as they get an opportunity to create, innovate, problem-solve and collaborate early in schools. The acquisition of these skills by learners will transform industry; contribute to the growth of business and competitiveness of our country."

Through its partnership with DBE, Sasol Foundation has contributed to the development of the draft curriculum which was approved by Umalusi in 2021 and is currently awaiting final approval.

Sasol Foundation and Sifiso EdTech launch robotics lab at UNIZULU Science Centre



Excitement is a shared sentiment as the Sasol Foundation sponsored robotics lab is launched at the UNIZULU Science Centre. Picture: James Thwala

The partnership has seen approximately 450 provincial training teams supported, with 3 100 grade R to grade 8 teachers trained nationally in the past two years. To support the implementation of the practical component of the curriculum, the foundation further partnered with Tshikululu Social Investments and Sifiso EdTech to establish seven coding and robotics laboratories around the country. The UNIZULU lab is the first to be

launched and is intended to advance technology and innovation in the Zululand region.

The project creates a platform for DBE to test different coding and robotics teaching and learning resources. The centres will thus be used as training facilities for teachers and learners when the curriculum is fully implemented by the department.

Sizwe Nxasana highlighted that this

multi-stakeholder partnership is geared towards helping DBE to truly realise Sustainable Development Goal 4, which is about quality and accessible education. "We are here in Richards Bay and not the big cities because starting with schools that are under resourced is very important. We are working with the King Cetshwayo District which covers a lot of quintal one, two and three schools which otherwise would not have the opportunity to be exposed not only to coding and robotics, but also artificial intelligence," he said.

Professor Nokuthula Kunene, Deputy Vice-Chancellor of Research and Innovation, expressed appreciation to the project partners. She added: "As we all know, the field of robotics has countless benefits which are important to strive for in the 21st Century, from manufacturing and healthcare to transportation and education. The introduction of this laboratory is also in line with the National Development Plan."

She further mentioned that in response to the Department of Basic Education's call for the inclusion of robotics and coding education into the curriculum, UNIZULU has infused these two learning areas into its education programmes to ensure that the student teachers will be trained in this regard. The new lab will, therefore, augment this knowledge transfer process, she said.

Promoting women's research in the Humanities and Social Sciences

FRANCES RINGWOOD

A TOTAL of 32 members of the University of Zululand's Women of Research in the Humanities and Social Sciences (WoRiHSS) recently attended a research workshop on decolonising academic publication at the Umfolozi Convention Centre.

WoRiHSS is an initiative promoting women's research in the humanities and social sciences. The Umfolozi workshop was generously funded by Professor Nokuthula Kunene, Deputy Vice-Chancellor of Research and Innovation.

Visiting scholar, Anne Heffernan, from the History Department at the University of Durham in England was the main speaker at the event. Heffernan's research interests include youth protest strategies in South Africa and the global South. During her presentation, Heffernan quoted American Academic Angela Davis who once said: "I have a hard time accepting diversity as a synonym for justice. Diversity... is a strategy designed to ensure that the institution functions in the same way it functioned before, except now that you have some Black and Brown faces. It's a difference that doesn't make a difference."

Heffernan then encouraged the WoRiHSS members to reflect on the ways that their own research contributes towards making the word 'decolonisation' meaningful. During the question-and-answer session, it was apparent that WoRiHSS

members are committed to answering structural inequalities through their research. There were also cross discussions on the ways that women could mobilise dissatisfaction with current representations of rurality in order to contribute to a better understanding of the field.

"I was not expecting such a wonderful turnout and so much active participation. Given that the event was prepared in less than a week, I was impressed with WoRiHSS," commented Heffernan following the event.

The University of Zululand's former dean of the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences (FHSS), Professor Mogomme Masoga, was also in attendance as an avid supporter of WoRiHSS. He took to the podium to announce his continued commitment to the aims of the initiative, saying that he would be setting up a similar platform for collaboration in his new role as Dean of Humanities at the University of the Free State.

Every member of WoRiHSS who was present on the day shone in their individual capacity and reported advancement in their research. The acting FHSS Dean, Professor Lulu Shokane, also made special mention of the achievements of Delarise Mulqueeny from the Social Work Department. Mulqueeny is one of the outstanding women featured in the recently published coffee-table book: Women Who Build a Better Future for South Africa – Sixty-Six Years Later (2022).

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UNIVERSITY OF ZULULAND

Vice-Chancellor's public lecture explores 'true multidisciplinary' as a node for African thought

GCINAH NHEKO

THE Office of the Vice-Chancellor of the University of Zululand (UNIZULU) recently hosted a webinar featuring Dr John Ayotunde Isola Bewaji of the University of West Indies in Jamaica.

The topic was "true multidisciplinary – UNIZULU as a node for African thought".

Professor Sipho Seepe, chairperson of the public lecture, opened the webinar by reminding the audience that they were amid greatness, not only because of the visionary Vice-Chancellor Professor Xoliswa Mtose, but also because the Africa Day prelude talks featured the distinguished guest speaker, Dr Bewaji.

The public lecture series is the current vice-chancellor's brainchild and was conceived to achieve a number of goals. This also positions UNIZULU as a home for intellectual deliberation to ensure the institution continues to advance, and most importantly, to reposition the university as a node for African thought. This is critical and comes at a time when UNIZULU has decided to position itself as an authentic African university.

The university is aware of the terrain in which it operates, as well as the myriad challenges presented. Hence, it is always inviting diverse speakers with an aim to define academic practices.

In her opening remarks, the Vice-Chancellor reiterated the importance of the webinar series topic and outlined its intention to map the power dynamics



UNIZULU's Vice-Chancellor Professor Xoliswa Mtose presents Dr John Ayotunde Isola Bewaji with a token of appreciation.

embedded in the colonial configuration of knowledge; and by extension to point to lines of struggle leading to alternative decolonised knowledge.

"It is important to understand disciplinary and map the power dynamics

embedded in the systems. Disciplinary means various mechanisms, which include conceptual frameworks to legitimise positions and the roles of members of disciplines. Disciplines are typically sustained by a network of academics or

a community of scholars, who are drawn together by a commitment to invest in various specialities.

"Scholars have claimed that most academic disciplines were established in the nineteenth and twentieth century in Europe and that these can be taken for granted, almost as a national way of ordering university language. Yet across different universities and academic activities, these reveal tensions, contradictions and possibilities," Mtose highlighted.

In his address, Bewaji emphasised the importance of the university embracing its heritage in a way that also recognised its evolution. He clarified that because he studied philosophy, he would pose more questions than provide answers. Bewaji was honoured that the respondent was Professor Morgan Ndlovu, who is more involved with the study of anthropology.

"As people, we are coming from a wide base which then narrows to the top. There you become so good at one thing and you can only see that time, your little object without knowing that there are other pyramids nearby that require our understanding.

He emphasised the importance of collaboration, saying: "We can be effective as teams if we could all look at things jointly; irrespective of background, education and perspectives". UNIZULU's possibilities mean moving away from what is obsolete. However, the curriculum to be implemented for ontology should speak to UNIZULU stakeholders, mostly students and the community.

Distinguished nGAP academic receives special recognition from Higher Education Minister



UNIZULU's Dr Mandisa Makhaye distinguished herself in the New Generation of Academics Programme (nGAP) and earned herself special recognition from Dr Blade Nzimande, Minister of Higher Education and Training.

PRECIOUS SHAMASE

AN academic from the University of Zululand (UNIZULU), Dr Mandisa Makhaye, was recently congratulated by Higher Education Minister Dr Blade Nzimande for successfully completing the New Generation of Academics Programme (nGAP).

Dr Makhaye, who works in the Criminal Justice Department, was among the top 10 candidates who received awards from the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET).

Unpacking how she felt about being among the top 10 who were recognised by the minister, Makhaye said it felt amazing to be recognised and appreciated for the achievements obtained through nGAP.

"Receiving the award was reassurance that I am doing something right, not only in my line of employment, but also in contributing to my own career goals and vision. Furthermore, the award came as encouragement for me to continue working hard and being dedicated to building my profile as an academic," she said.

nGAP recruits young academics with the goal to support them through academic developments, while they are employed lecturers. The primary requirement of nGAP is that one should complete their PhD within the stipulated time. This is achieved through a decreased workload with the provision of financial and developmental resources.

UNIZULU has 22 academics supported through the programme. Professor Maria Mabusela, director of teaching and learning, said that nGAP is one of the National Staffing South Africa's University Framework (SSAUF) programme within the University Capacity Development programme. It is driven by a transformative staff development programme that allows newly recruited lecturers to benefit from teaching and research development opportunities.

"The academic staff members are employed in departments and faculties. The teaching and learning centre facilitates opportunities for development of the academics. UNIZULU is currently in phase eight," said Mabusela.

According to Mabusela, Makhaye's presentation was among the most interesting papers that made everyone lend their ears in the colloquium – the first since the inception of the SSAUF. Her presentation was a brief highlight of her PhD journey and findings of her study.

"My PhD journey proved very challenging but because I believe in starting things to finish them, I made it through. Findings on my study address the problematic nature of sexual victimisation in institutions of higher learning, and provide solid interventions that institutions of higher learning could implement.

"Furthermore, in 2022 I undertook a research collaboration funded by the British Council which supported an extension of my study in a form of an international collaboration. This collaboration was hosted by the University of Lincoln, where much work was and is still being done on analysing policies of gender-based violence (GBV), paying attention to South Africa and the United Kingdom. The presentation highlighted the successes of the collaboration, as well as future endeavours. GBV is a serious concern, much of my research seeks to address this societal ill," said Makhaye.

The academic encouraged emerging academics like her to make goals and commit to achieving them. She said one of the key things that helped her on her journey, and which she finds is still beneficial, was being in the company of people who had more achievements than her and who, either directly or indirectly, mentored her. Working in isolation is counter-productive, however, seeking support and mentorship from seniors and those ahead is what Makhaye swears by.

"In Isizulu, we say 'Indlela ibuzwa kwabaphambili' – I am a living testimony of this. I would further like to acknowledge support from my HOD Prof Steyn and nGAP manager Prof Mabusela. Much of my progress has been mentored and supported by them both. Lastly, a very profound statement I heard a week ago that I have adopted going forward, while making future goals, is 'your last success is the enemy of your progress'."

Council on Higher Education's institutional audit underway at UNIZULU

NALEDI HLEFANE

IN a bid to ensure the utmost quality in its teaching and learning, research and community engagement practices, the University of Zululand (UNIZULU) recently overhauled its quality management system and processes as part of the Higher Education Quality Committee's (HEQC) second cycle of institutional audits.

The HEQC is a sub-committee of the Council on Higher Education (CHE), which is tasked with driving quality promotion, institutional audit and programme accreditation projects. In its framework for institutional audits document, HEQC states that audits "focus on an institution's policies, systems, procedures, strategies and resources for the quality management of the core functions of teaching and learning, research and community engagement, including the relevant academic support services". The document further cites that audits aim to evaluate the alignment of quality management processes of institutions to their mission statements, goals and objectives, as well as whether these meet

the expectations and needs of the various internal and external constituencies.

Thembisile Ndimande, who heads UNIZULU's quality assurance office (QAO), defined quality management as "an integrated quality assurance system that includes quality support, ongoing quality development and enhancement, and concomitant quality monitoring". She added that the latter is undertaken with the goal of improving student experience and maintaining an environment that supports students' efforts to achieve success.

According to Ndimande, the second audit cycle has come at an opportune time and has been met with excitement by the UNIZULU community. Since the last audit took place in 2010, the institution has undergone tremendous changes which include rebranding as a node for African thought. Understanding the magnitude of the project, all the academic and support departments have worked alongside QAO to fulfil the requirements of the first stage. This entailed a self-evaluation and self-reflection, by the institution, on its quality management processes and practices in

relation to the HEQC audit standards. The university thereafter submitted a self-evaluation report (SER) and portfolio of evidence to CHE.

"The process of developing the SER was developmental as the university reflected on practices, while focusing on the institutional audit standards. At each juncture of SER development, the university paused to reflect on embedding quality across all systems and this was highlighted in the narrative areas of the SER that require improvements. The university's commitment to the audit process has been viewed as a process of telling our story about our quality management system," Ndimande said.

After receiving the SER, the CHE appointed an audit panel which is currently conducting a five-day site visit at UNIZULU to interview various internal and external stakeholders, and view some of the campus facilities.

When the site visit concludes on June 2, the institution will receive an audit report endorsed by the HEQC Institutional Audit Committee with SMART recommendations to allow the university to develop an improvement plan,



Thembisile Ndimande, Director of Quality Assurance, making her mark at the institutional audit build-up event held at the KwaDlangezwa Campus.

based on the recommendations, with timeframes. Subsequently, there will be regular reporting to the CHE.

UNIZULU crowned champions of Inter-varsity Sport Games

THE University of Zululand (UNIZULU) made history at the recent Inter-varsity Sport Games, where it beat its KwaZulu-Natal university counterparts in seven sporting codes – ultimately being crowned the overall champions in the tournament.

The one-day sporting event was hosted by the University of KwaZulu-Natal's Edgewood campus. It saw teams going head-to-head, testing their strength and endurance in a variety of sporting codes.

"The University of Zululand went into these games with the intention to conquer in sports and build a university that can pride itself with sporting and other extramural activities," said Lucas Ledwaba, sports administrator at UNIZULU's Sport and Recreation department.

"As the Sport and Recreation depart-

ment, we would like to express our heartfelt gratitude to all the participants," he added.

The teams brought home a total of 90 medals – 20 for football; 28 for rugby; 12 for Netball; 14 for bodybuilding; 12 for chess; and four for athletics.

Nondalo Shezi, a second-year BCom: Business Management and Economics student said on behalf of the netball team that their victory felt surreal. The majority of the team members graduated this year and no longer participated, so the remaining team members had to recruit new members and teach them the tricks of the trade, while also rigorously preparing for the tournament.

Third-year agronomy student Khethelo Dlodla said the rugby team went

into the tournament with victory as the end goal.

"We received a lot pressure as well as support from the veterans – those who were here before us. We had to do it for them. We had to do it for our school badge as we were the underdogs. We had to do it for our brother who got injured. There was absolutely no room for disappointment," he said.

On receiving the news of the institution's success, Professor Vuyokazi Nomlomo, Deputy Vice-Chancellor: Teaching and Learning, congratulated the winners.

"We are so excited as the institution. This is actually part of their learning because sports are part of learning. It's something that we have to instil because it has to do with so many aspects of

learning – cognitive, physical, emotional, and so on. It instils discipline in them. We are proud that we are producing well-rounded individuals for our communities and our country. We can only say congratulations to all of them," he said.

Dean of Students, Dr Tebogo Ncokezi, was equally proud of the students for their stellar performance. He partly attributed their success to the investments made by the institutions into the different sporting codes. He further encouraged the students to "keep the momentum" by working even harder than before.

Thandokuhle Manukuza, a final year BSc Computer Science and Hydrology student, said his chess team has decided that continuous training would set them even further apart in other tournaments.



Professor Vuyokazi Nomlomo, Deputy Vice-Chancellor: Teaching and Learning, together with Dr Tebogo Ncokezi, Dean of Students, celebrate the university's recent victory at the Inter-Varsity Sport Games.

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