

UNIZULU honours Apostle Mandlenkosi Dhlomo for social contributions

NALEDI HLEFANE

THE University of Zululand (UNIZULU), during its recent 2024 graduation week, conferred a degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Development Studies (Honoris Causa) to the esteemed Apostle Mandlenkosi Collins Dhlomo – the founder, senior pastor and leader of the Covenant Fellowship Church International (CFCI).

Dr Dhlomo received his degree during the second graduation ceremony of the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences (FHSS). This was in recognition of the great strides he has made in pursuit of community upliftment throughout his career in the clergy.

Providing the rationale for Dhlomo's conferment, FHSS Dean Professor Allucia Shokane said his work contributes significantly to higher education, the field of community development and development studies. "Interestingly, all the pillars of higher education are here – teaching and learning, research, community engagement, as well as service and administration", said Prof Shokane.

One of the ways in which Dr Dhlomo has affected positive change in society is through an outreach project named HOPE. This programme is based on four pillars: healing, outreach, people development and evangelism (HOPE). It provides social and health support to more than 600 people infected and affected by HIV/Aids; as well as to more than 2000 orphaned and vulnerable children. The programme is facilitated through 32 volunteers, who run garden projects in chosen communities as well as three feeding schemes for needy families.

Since its inception, HOPE has led to the establishment of clinics in rural areas like Nkandla, Mpembeni and Port Durnford. These clinics are administered by CFCI, in collaboration with the KwaZulu-Natal Health Department. HOPE also operates a mobile clinic that is voluntarily run by CFCI members who are medical practitioners.

Dr Dhlomo has a vested interest in the spiritual development of the youth and a dedicated focus on assisting youth entangled in drug addiction. He runs several interventions that spur the youth to achieve academically and professionally, and attain entrepreneurial skills.

On receiving his honorary doctorate,

Dhlomo could not contain his excitement.

"I feel humbled and blessed by this gesture carried out by this prestigious institution. What an honour to be recognised for my determination, dedication and perseverance. Thank you, University of Zululand. I salute you."

He also clarified that his recognition was a result of support he had received from multiple individuals in his life. Among the key role players who he dedicated the award to were his late parents, late parents-in-law, family and CFCI brethren. He also singularly expressed gratitude to his wife, Prophetess Nomusa Dhlomo, for her unmatched faith in his abilities and constant words of encouragement.

"I grew up in the fear of the Lord; giving God my unrivalled awe and living a life guided by God. All this tutelage instilled in me a passion to lead by example and make significant strides within the humanities, while ultimately leaving a legacy for future generations to come," Apostle Dhlomo added.

He noted that there was a necessity to "turn the wheel" to reinstate a culture of hope, accountability, responsibility, care, excellence, honesty, resilience and self-love.

Dr Dhlomo urged the audience to join him in contributing their bit to the reconstruction of their communities for the benefit of all, "as God has placed each of them on Earth to live a purpose-filled life".

He concluded by quoting the late Mother Teresa, saying: "Together, we can do great things".

FAMILY AND EDUCATION

Dr Dhlomo and his wife are blessed with four children. He holds a Senior Secondary Teaching Diploma and B Paed Degree (Maths and Music) from UNIZULU; a Diploma in Ministry from Rhema Bible School; a Bachelor in Ministry from Heritage of Faith Bible College in Florida, United States; and a Post-graduate Diploma in Leadership Development from the University of Stellenbosch. In addition, he has obtained multiple other qualifications from across the globe and has held many leadership roles in various structures.



Dr Mandlenkosi Dhlomo reflected on his journey as a minister of the Word of God during his honorary graduation at UNIZULU. | James Thwala

Joy as Dr Sandile Khoza obtains his PhD



Dr Sandile Khoza, left, who recently graduated with a Doctor of Philosophy (Chemistry) degree from UNIZULU, looks forward to his future in academia. | James Thwala

PAMELA MLABA

GRADUATING with a PhD and changing your title is one of the most memorable and significant experiences one can go through. Dr Sandile Humphry Khoza (36), who received his Doctor of Philosophy (Chemistry) degree from the University of Zululand (UNIZULU), can testify to this.

Receiving his degree during the recent Faculty of Science, Agriculture and Engineering graduation ceremony, Dr Khoza was simply overcome with emotion. One of the triggers for this rush of emotions was the memory of a significant hurdle he had faced while pursuing his Master's degree at UNIZULU. He suddenly lost his co-supervisor – an ordeal that left him feeling so heartbroken that he eventually took a gap year. The graduate says he owes gratitude to a friend who encouraged him to continue with his studies despite the anguish he felt from losing his co-supervisor. He successfully completed his degree and registered for a doctorate.

The well-known expression about persistence being the key to success is particularly relevant to Dr Khoza's story, as the road to completing his PhD had its fair share of ups and downs. However, with guidance from his supervisor, Professor Neerish Revaprasadu, Dr Khoza attained his final qualification.

Titled "Chalcogenocarboxylate Complexes for the Synthesis of the Corresponding Binary, Ternary, and Quaternary Nanomaterials for Energy Applications", Dr Khoza's thesis sought solutions to the global energy crisis. The study explored different approaches to improving the properties of selenide nanomaterials, including sone-pot solid solution (varying concentrations) and doping (anionic and cationic) techniques.

"I'm grateful to everyone who supported me from the beginning until now - from friends to family, colleagues, the UNIZULU Department of Chemistry, and my supervisor," Dr Khoza said.

Asked about his future plans, he shared that he aspires to obtain a post-doctoral degree before becoming a lecturer.

Dr Khoza's family is overjoyed by his success. "I am proud of my brother's achievement," enthused his sister, Samukelisiwe Khoza.

NALEDI HLEFANE

THE cyberworld is popularly hailed as a space that has completely revolutionised society; giving expression to notable advancements witnessed in information communication technologies, international communications and banking, among other sectors.

While this is indisputable, there are also glaring disadvantages of cyber space which can pose a variety of threats to individuals and organisations. "Black hat" hacking is a key example of this. A black hat hacker, according to the Tech Target website, "typically engages in cybercrime operations and uses hacking for financial gain, cyber espionage purposes or other malicious motives, like implanting malware into computer systems".

University of Zululand (UNIZULU) graduate Nkanyiso Mvelase, who received a Bachelor of Arts Honours degree in Criminology during the institution's 2024 graduation season, was unsettled by the increasing prevalence of this crime against South African businesses - and subsequently made it the focus of his Honours study.



UNIZULU graduate Nkanyiso Mvelase feels proud after accomplishing outstanding results for his Honours research study. | James Thwala

Titled "An explorative study on the nature and extent of black hat hacking on commercial businesses in South Africa", Mvelase's study investigated the complex dynamics of cyber threats facing

businesses, with implications extending both nationally and globally.

"Through a qualitative desktop study employing content thematic analysis within an interpretive framework, I

aimed to uncover the underlying motivations, tactics and impacts of black hat hacking activities targeting commercial enterprises in South Africa. By examining a diverse range of sources such as case studies, industry reports and expert analyses, I sought to discern patterns and themes that shed light on the evolving nature of cyber threats within the local business landscape," Mvelase explained.

His research findings revealed a spread in sophisticated hacking techniques, ranging from ransomware attacks to data breaches, with profound financial stability, reputation and data security implications for businesses. In his view, the "evident interconnectedness of cyber threats highlights a need for collaborative efforts among businesses, government agencies, and cybersecurity experts" to mitigate risks effectively.

Mvelase's keen interest in the topic of black hat hacking motivated him to invest considerable time into probing this topical matter by developing a rigorous, goal-oriented study schedule. While he encountered roadblocks during the data analysis process, this did not impede his eventual academic

excellence. He also contended with limited comprehensive and up-to-date data on cyberattacks targeting South African businesses, complications with accessing sensitive information and industry-specific data on cybercrime incidents, and the ever-changing nature of cybercrime trends and technologies that required constant vigilance and engagement with industry experts and thought leaders. Amid these obstacles, Mvelase attained an impressive 80% for his research.

"It's a validation of the countless hours of hard work, dedication and perseverance that I invested in the research process. Moreover, the support and encouragement of my family, friends, mentors and educators have played a significant role in my academic journey. Their guidance, advice and unwavering belief in my abilities have motivated me to strive for greatness and overcome challenges along the way," a delighted Mvelase said. He particularly acknowledged his supervisor, Prof Jean Steyn, whose guidance - "akin to that of a father figure" - bolstered his confidence and propelled him towards academic excellence.

On the day of his graduation, Mvelase

was accompanied by his mother Thobisi, sister Zodwa and brother Khethukuthula. Although the graduate's other four siblings missed his moment on stage, they got to experience it vicariously through those who attended.

Mvelase's family hails from Osindisweni in Verulam, KwaZulu-Natal. After the passing of her husband in 2002, Mvelase's mother single-handedly raised her seven children on her meagre salary earned from her employment as a domestic worker.

With his qualifications, Mvelase envisions a better future for him and his family. He first registered at UNIZULU in 2019 and obtained a BA in Correctional Studies in 2021. Following his graduation with his Honours degree, the criminal justice enthusiast will gear up for his next graduation in 2026, when he hopes to be conferred with a Master's qualification in Criminology.

While acknowledging that his current academic journey is demanding, with the guidance and support of his supervisor, Dr Kanagie Naidoo, Mvelase feels empowered to navigate the complexities of his research with confidence and determination.

A NODE FOR AFRICAN THOUGHT



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