

UNIZULU hosts groundbreaking conference for women researchers in humanities and social sciences

PAMELA MLABA

THE Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences (FHSS) within the University of Zululand (UNIZULU) recently held a two-day conference for women researchers in the humanities and social sciences at the Premier Hotel, Richards Bay.

The inaugural conference was a collaboration between Women Researchers in Humanities and Social Sciences (WoRiHSS) at UNIZULU and Woman Researchers in The Humanities (WoRiTH) at the University of Free State (UFS). It was themed “Lactation Politics in Higher Education – Sithini Thina? As Women in the Humanities and Social Sciences Space!”

The event celebrated the groundbreaking work done by women researchers, scholars and practitioners across various disciplines in the humanities and social sciences fields – with the aim of forging a key to unlock women’s success in academia.

Distinguished guests, staff and students from UNIZULU and UFS attended the conference physically and virtually.

In her welcome address, FHSS Dean, Professor Lulu Shokane highlighted that attendees would engage in thought-provoking discussions and debates to unpack “lactation politics”, while also creating networking opportunities.

“However, with every challenge comes an opportunity for growth and improvement. It is essential for us to be organised and make time for both our academic responsibilities and per-



Some of the UNIZULU and UFS delegates who attended the inaugural Women Researchers in Humanities and Social Sciences conference. Picture: James Thwala

sonal obligations. Balancing teaching, publishing and family responsibilities requires careful planning and support,” emphasised Prof Shokane.

The discussions delved into various obstacles, such as competition among women, lack of networking and absence of strategic approaches to overcoming

challenges that can impede progress. Additionally, the talks leaned towards acknowledging the structural barriers which persist within institutions of higher learning and institutional frameworks that often reinforce obstacles that women face – perpetuating an imbalance between men and women, par-

ticularly in higher education settings.

During the breakout sessions, women in research shared their presentations in lactation politics, followed by questions and answers. Professor Mpume Zondi, Deputy Dean of Research and Innovation at UFS, expressed that when people come together, they can

mend even a crack in the sky.

“I think it has been one of those very inspiring, empowering conferences – (especially given that this was) the inaugural WoRiHSS, WoRiTH conference. We really touched on important issues that will help us as women in the humanities and social sciences,” Prof Zondi said.

In closing, Banikele Mashiyane, the faculty officer of FHSS, expressed gratitude to the organising team consisting of WoRiTH members from UFS and WoRiHSS members of UNIZULU.

“We are looking forward to the publications that we will surely see from this engagement,” said Mashiyane.

Alwande Khuzwayo – riding the waves to global recognition

SBAHLE DUMAKUDE

ALWANDE Khuzwayo, a second-year student in the Creative Arts Department at the University of Zululand (UNIZULU), is making waves both academically and athletically. At just 20 years old, Khuzwayo has already achieved what many can only dream of: a coveted spot representing South Africa at the surfing world championships in California, USA.

The tournament will take place from November 3 to 9, 2024.

A dedicated surfer, Khuzwayo faces the unique challenge of visual impairment. She has poor vision in her left eye, and is completely blind in the right. While she can see clearly in the water, the shore remains a blur – adding an extra layer of difficulty to her surfing experience. Despite her constant challenges, Khuzwayo’s perseverance and love for the sport remain strong.

Growing up on the Bluff in Durban as a twin meant she always had a best friend by her side. “My sister and I shared everything, from our love for wrestling and soccer to our disdain for what we considered ‘girls’ things,” Khuzwayo reminisced.

Their bond was unbreakable, forged through countless hours of play and shared experiences. Their mother, who had to raise them alone after their father passed away when they were just a year old, was strict but loving. She instilled in them the values of discipline and hard work, ensuring they grew up strong and resilient. Despite some challenges, their childhood was filled with laughter, adventure and an unshakeable sense of camaraderie, Khuzwayo said with a loving expression.

Explaining how her passion and love for surfing began, Khuzwayo said: “Originally, I played chess; I like all sorts of mental games. My friends used to surf, and I thought, ‘That’s interesting. It is outside, out of my comfort zone, why



Second-year UNIZULU student, Alwande Khuzwayo will be representing South Africa at the surfing world championships in California in November. Picture: Supplied

shouldn’t I give it a try?”

“I went (to one training session) – and have never looked back since.”

Securing a slot to compete in California is a testament to Khuzwayo’s hard work and talent. The competition will bring together the best surfers from around the globe, and the young surfer is thrilled to showcase her skills on such a prestigious platform.

As she prepares for this international tournament, the surfing fanatic remains grounded and focused. She credits her family, friends and her supportive coaches for her success. According to Khuzwayo, coach Dave Jennings has been her rock throughout her surfing career – though she jokingly mentioned that he often yells at her. Her two other coaches provide strength. She went on to say that having support feels wonderful and that it’s always reassuring to enter the water

with the knowledge that your family is there to support you.

Jennings said he is proud of what Khuzwayo has achieved in a short period of time.

“The world championships are a big stepping stone or platform to surf for your country and to surf against the best in the world. I trust she doesn’t have anxieties against her opponents but is able to showcase her skills and bring back to South Africa another level of surfing that can encourage and develop other athletes to believe, have faith and determination in growing as a surfer,” said Jennings.

Khuzwayo’s journey exemplifies what can be achieved with passion, perseverance and a supportive environment – regardless of any disability. As she heads to California, the entire UNIZULU community and her hometown of Durban will be cheering her on.

Transforming communities – KZN social entrepreneurs demo day 2024

NOMVELO XULU

THE KwaZulu-Natal Department of Economic Development, Tourism and Environmental Affairs (EDTEA) – in collaboration with the University of Zululand (UNIZULU), University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN), Durban University of Technology (DUT) and Magothuthu University of Technology (MUT) – recently held a demo day for the 2024 group of social entrepreneurs who were mentored under the Social Entrepreneurs Development Programme (SEDP).

The SEDP is a social entrepreneurship intervention intended for social entrepreneurs who operate social enterprises within KZN. The initiative has evolved since its inception 10 years ago when it was implemented as one of five components of the Regional Local Economic Development Initiative (RLEDI).

The demo day, held at Indaba Lodge in Richards Bay, was opened by Dr Xoliswa Majola, a UKZN senior lecturer in the Postgraduate Diploma in Local Economic Development and Postgraduate Diploma in Business Administration academic programmes. In her remarks, Dr Majola emphasised the critical role that social entrepreneurs play in driving sustainable development and making a positive impact in communities.

The event was attended by KZN MEC for Social Development, Cynthia Mbali Shinga. She emphasised the importance of connecting and communicating with other champions for greater impact and collaboration. She also highlighted the programme’s success in identifying and nurturing



Some of the UNIZULU-mentored social entrepreneurs who attended the 2024 SEDP demo day. Picture: Xolani Ncube

talented individuals, citing her own experience as a testament to its effectiveness.

“The success of the Champions Programme is a testament to the power of social entrepreneurship. My experience in the 2018 championship was a turning point for me and I am honoured to see how this platform continues to nurture talented social entrepreneurs.”

The 2024 social entrepreneur cohort consists of 11 men and 19 women, with 19 participants falling in the youth category and 10 being mentored by UNIZULU. The participants come from various regions within KZN, including uMkhanyakude, King Cetshwayo, Ilembe, Ethekwini, Zululand, Ugu, Amajuba and Harry Gwala districts.

Once the keynote addresses were

completed, the event moved to the exciting segment of the programme where the social entrepreneurs presented their businesses. They each showcased their groundbreaking skills and unwavering dedication. One of the noticeable presentations was by Cebo Hlubi, a UNIZULU candidate who owns CNH Driving School, which teaches disabled people how to drive using specialised vehicles.

Before the close of the event, Dr Simon Taylor, UKZN Regional and Local Economic Development Project Manager, shared a few words. “Together we continue to lay a solid foundation for a vibrant social economy in KZN. As we look to the future, we remain inspired by the impact we’ve created and we are excited about the continued journey ahead,” he said.