

NMMU offers debt, down payment relief to 6214 students

'Moral imperative' to assist transformation

NELSON Mandela Metropolitan University (NMMU) is committed to creating a better tomorrow for its students.

That's the word of NMMU Vice-Chancellor Prof Derrick Swartz who has been at the forefront of negotiations since the national student-led #FeesMustFall movement began at universities across South Africa from October last year.

"Transformation goals are a top priority," says Prof Swartz. "We are committed to ensuring that no academically-deserving but financially struggling student is denied the opportunity to study further."

Following an NMMU Council decision in November 2015, the University immediately:

- ▶ Introduced 2015 debt and 2016 down payment relief, thereby assisting 6214 students who met the criteria, to the value of R21m.
- ▶ Topped up the salaries of workers from contracted companies to a minimum of R5 000 cost to company, and committed to reintegrate them as NMMU employees.
- ▶ Offered these 826 workers staff study benefits and access to University's clinic services.

The University is also engaged with various student groups on matters of transformation within the academy, especially around decolonising the curriculum, as well as within sport. Sustainable solutions around food, accommodation and books are among other challenges.

"We have a moral and social imperative to assist. It cannot be a situation where working class and poor students only have access to classrooms, but are marginalised from sporting facilities and activities, any more than education cannot be limited to the mind, but the whole person," Prof Swartz wrote in an open letter to students.

SUCCESS... Heinrich Williams (right), with the aid of his service dog Viking, graduates with an NDip Industrial Engineering this April.

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SPECIAL AWARDS

Imtiaz Sooliman



FOR his contribution to society through his incredible humanitarian work and his substantial contributions in advancing the frontiers of scholarly knowledge, both nationally and internationally, through social engagement in the form of health and education, Imtiaz Sooliman (above) will be awarded the degree of Doctor of Philosophy (*honoris causa*).

The qualified medical doctor is the inspirational founder, director and visionary of Gift of the Givers, a South African NGO founded in 1992. He has been instrumental in changing the lives of millions of people in more than 41 countries around the world. Gift of the Givers is the largest disaster response NGO of African origin, delivering life-saving aid in the form of search and rescue teams, medical assistance, nutritional support, water and basic necessities. It is also the first such agency to be accredited by the Proudly South African foundation.

Sharanjeet Shan

IN recognition of her contribution to pioneering work in Mathematics Education in South Africa, and tirelessly championing poor and marginalised communities, Sharanjeet Shan (left) will receive the Chancellor's Medal in the discipline of Mathematics Education.

She completed a basic qualification in mathematics education, followed by an Open University course in developing mathematical thinking. Her interest in the role of pseudoscience in the enactment of slavery and colonialism then led her to complete a Master's degree in Social Science.

While at a Mathematics Education conference in South Africa in 1995 she was encouraged to apply for the position of Director of the Maths Centre for Professional Teachers. On being offered the position she made a brief tour of the country and, as she believed she could make a difference, she accepted.

Service dog assists student to achieve qualification Success against the odds

WHEN Heinrich Williams crosses the stage this graduation, his companion and study buddy Viking (right), donned in full graduation attire, will as usual be right by his side.

Viking, the four-year old Golden Retriever mix, attended all Heinrich's lectures and exams as a service dog, assisting Heinrich in achieving his NDip Industrial Engineering.

"He deserves to graduate with me, he was present in all my classes," said Heinrich, 45.

Both Heinrich and Viking's graduation attire were custom-made by Croft, Magill & Watson.

Sadly, Heinrich was not always paralysed and has learnt to adapt to life in a wheelchair.

In 2010, while working as a process engineer in China, Heinrich contracted a bacterial infection which resulted in an abscess pressing up against his spinal cord. The pressure damaged his spinal cord and left him paralysed from the neck down, a C6 quadriplegic.

2013, while sitting at home, bored, unemployed and frustrated, Heinrich took a friend's advice and registered to study. "Returning to a classroom after 20 years was daunting, I was older and disabled".

Heinrich is a qualified aircraft electrician and spent 12 years working for the air force.

Being disabled was a new challenge, an adjustment. "The first year was the hardest but my experience at NMMU has been great. Young, old and across all races, Viking and I were accepted and able to mingle very well."

Heinrich waited two years to receive his service dog from the SA Guide Dog Association, the non-profit organisation that matches the dog to the owner's lifestyle and personality.

The association covers all expenses which includes a trainer who trains the dog in its working environment for a period of three weeks.

Viking is trained to open and close doors, pick up objects, assist Heinrich with getting dressed, alert somebody if Heinrich is in need and he can even press the panic button for the alarm.

Heinrich is also supported by his wife who is the sole breadwinner and caregiver.

"I worked hard many long nights, but my wife is extremely encouraging and positive".

Heinrich who is currently completing his BTEch Industrial Engineering praises NMMU's Industrial Engineering department for all the support he receives. "Dr Ann Lourens and the team go out of their way to assist and accommodate us," he said.

Through NMMU's Innovation Office, Heinrich is also working with eNtsa and Clinical Care Sciences, thinking up ways to improve the lives of disabled people. His first two quad products, namely the Qbell™, an easy call button, and Qpark, a parking access system, are currently being developed.



EXCELLENCE RECOGNISED

A new award, the Chancellor's Medal, has been introduced in recognition of individuals who make a substantial contribution to both academic scholarship and society nationally. It is named in honour of the University's Chancellor, who is the titular head of NMMU.



WOMEN POWER ... Prof Miemie Struwig (centre) was the sole supervisor to four female graduates (from left) PhD Business Management graduates Amanda van den Berg and Heidi Janse van Rensburg, both lecturers at NMMU. Kwezi Lomso High School Tourism teacher, Erika Ferreira, and Vice-Principal at DF Malherbe Penny Vosloo are the first MPhil Tourism Management graduates at NMMU. They all started together and completed their qualifications in the minimal required time. "These women are all educators and education is very dear to my heart – I am very proud to have empowered them to make a difference by empowering those they will teach. I am nearing the end of my career and this is a great way to end a legacy," said Prof Struwig.

SUCCESSFUL SISTERS Emma (left) and Hannah Minkley will be graduating at the same ceremony this year. Emma 28, completed an MTech in Fine Art (painting) while Hannah 25, receives her MTech in Photography. Emma works part-time as a tutor in NMMU's Art Department and Hannah is currently self-employed. The sisters credit their parents Gary and Cheryl for influencing their artistic career paths and were encouraged to have a creative and unconventional outlook on life. ▶



◀ **JOINT CELEBRATION ...** Against all the odds mother and daughter Tandswa and Anda Ngxukumeshe (left) are looking forward to celebrating their graduation together this year. Tandswa 45, a lecturer in NMMU's Business and Economics Sciences Faculty completed her PhD in Business Management while daughter Anda Ngxukumeshe 21, receives her BSc in Construction Economics. The pair were challenged when losing four immediate family members in the space of two years just six months apart. "When God is at work, it is sometimes painful, and we tend to ask Him why. When His work is done, we give Him all the glory, because He knows why," says Tandswa. They are both continuing their studies this year- Tandswa is completing a degree in Theology and Anda an honours in Quantity Surveying.



Briefs

Summit scholarship

TWENTY honours students are benefitting from funds raised by Vice-Chancellor Prof Derrick Swartz through the #climb4nmmu campaign he undertook last year.

As part of the University's commitment to broadening access to higher education, the R1.1m raised on the back of Prof Swartz's ascent of Mount Fuji in August 2015 is going to academically-deserving but financially-needy postgraduate students.

The Summit Scholarship is also part of a bigger NMMU initiative to contribute to the growth of the next generation of academics.

Bill of Rights - 20 years

THE cornerstone of South Africa's fledgling democracy – its Bill of Rights – will be acknowledged and promoted by NMMU in 2016.

The Faculty of Law will be celebrating 20 years of the country's Bill of Rights with a series of events aimed at highlighting the rights of all people and affirming the democratic values of human dignity, equality and freedom. "In celebrating, we will also address the question of whether the rights of human dignity, equality and freedom have indeed been affirmed by the Bill of Rights," says Acting Dean of Law Prof Andre Mukheibir.

The Conversation Africa

IN 10 short months, The Conversation Africa, an independent news and commentary website produced by academics in partnership with leading journalists, has showcased the research, insights and opinions of 689 academic authors from 151 institutions around the globe in a way that the layman can understand and appreciate.

These articles, which have been republished everywhere from the Mail & Guardian to CNN and Time, have been viewed 6 702 153 times.

NMMU has had 30 articles published since The Conversation started in May last year, accounting for 233 000 reads, exclusive of those that were republished in the likes of The Huffington Post and Mail & Guardian. The Conversation website:

<http://theconversation.com/africa>

Briefs

Top Design Indaba prize

NMMU alumnus and Port Elizabeth designer Laduma Ngxokolo (below) was the winner of the Most Beautiful Object in South Africa at the recent Design Indaba in Cape Town. South African designers, industry insiders, fashionistas and the general public voted for his shawl as the winner.



"I feel extremely honoured as there are more than 100 000 designs being created yearly in South Africa and having mine singled out is the greatest honour of all,"

Laduma said before flying back to Italy to continue his design studies in Milan. Ngxokolo describes his mohair and wool shawl – which used fibre from his home province – as adaptable with a versatility that complements its beauty.

Sporty achiever

Former Madibaz rugby player Enrico Acker (below) 25, combined his love for rugby and interest in financial management to complete his MCom in Business Management. In his thesis titled: The personal financial management attitudes and practices of South African rugby players, he worked closely with rugby players to find out what their views are towards financial planning. Enrico completed his masters while studying and playing rugby for both NMMU and the EP Kings in a full-time capacity.



Maritime qualification to develop communities

UNEMPLOYED and still emotional after being newly widowed, Nosipho Sunduza, 62, took a giant step and started her Postgraduate Diploma in Maritime Studies. It was her first step back into the classroom in 22 years.

"I was an emotional wreck, 1991 was the last time I studied when I did a one-year Diploma in Retail at Fort Hare Institute of Management. I didn't know where to begin, but I viewed this as an opportunity for a fresh start and I told my classmates life begins at 60," says the mother of four.

Her research investigated marine harvesting, subsistence poverty alleviation in the Hamburg villages and the villagers willingness to consume marine resources.

"I enjoyed the research part of my studies, especially how it can help my interest in community development. I want to use the gained knowledge to educate rural communities about the sea."

Nosipho (right) is currently working towards her Masters in Development Studies at NMMU.

"You must never underestimate the skills you have. I want to encourage all the grannies to come and study at NMMU," says the grandmother of five.

Nosipho's qualification forms part of the university's focus on marine and maritime studies and coincides with the government's blue economy drive, Operation Phakisa, aimed at optimising economic benefits from the country's vast coastline. A 2013 Department of Environmental Affairs study estimated that the country's oceans have the potential to contribute an additional R177-billion to the GDP, and an additional 800 000 to one million jobs by 2033.

New marine programmes

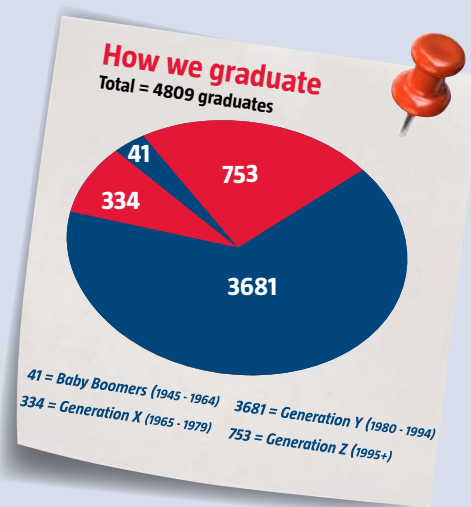
In a major boost to the developing ocean economy in South Africa, merSETA is to provide R30-million over the next three years to NMMU to, among others, establish a Bachelor of Engineering Technology in Marine Engineering degree. "Not only will this agreement allow for the generation of

new qualifications in the developing sector of marine engineering, but it also allows for the development of TVET curricula as well as creating progression for TVET learners to university in the marine sector," says merSETA CEO Dr Raymond Patel.

"The investment by merSETA demonstrates their confidence in NMMU and will enable the university to source top experts in the marine engineering field to teach,

support and grow students in the maritime industry, increase research for naval architecture and ship engineering, as well as establish NMMU as a world class maritime university," says Vice-Chancellor Prof Derrick Swartz.

NMMU has completed the initial design of the academic programme for the new Marine Engineering degree. The university has also signed an offer to buy the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR) buildings near North and South Campus.





ELECTRIC WHEELS ... Engineering's Hiten Parmar (left), Deputy Director of the national uYilo eMobility Programme, based at NMMU, gives mechatronics student intern Unathi Mabi a demonstration on how to use the new shared fleet of solar-charged electric bikes at NMMU. Ten e-bikes, all part of a shared fleet, have been launched as part of this unique green transport pilot project and is a first for a South African university. The shared e-bikes can be collected and dropped off at custom-designed docking stations on two campuses. Each bike, which weighs about 35kg and can reach a top speed of 25km/h, has an on-board tracking unit for data capturing. uYilo will be monitoring usage to test effectiveness of the pilot project which runs until December 2016.

New deans for NMMU



Theoretical physicist Professor Azwinndini Muronga (left) has been appointed as NMMU's new Dean of Science.

He started his tertiary education at the University of Venda. He then completed a PhD in Physics at the University of Minnesota in the United States and did his postdoctoral training at the University of Frankfurt and at GSI Helmholtz Centre for Heavy Ion Research in Germany.

Apart from his own research interests, Prof Muronga is also an outstanding and recognised science educator, with a strong passion for, and interest in, taking science to society, particularly to rural and disadvantaged communities.

Besides being elected as President of the South African Institute of Physics (SAIP) he has received numerous awards for his outstanding contributions to science education and leadership.



Dr Ismail Lagardien (left) – who has two decades of experience in an academic and policy environment, and 15 years' experience as a journalist – is NMMU's new Dean of Business and Economic Sciences.

"I am proudly joining NMMU at a time of quite magnificent global systemic changes. These changes present significant challenges to the way we organise economies, how we do business [and] how we teach."

Dr Lagardien obtained a master's degree in international political economy at the London School of Economics, and a doctorate from the University of Wales (Aberystwyth).

From 2011 to 2015, he worked at the National Planning Commission, under the leadership of former Minister Trevor Manuel.

Prior to this, he held several academic positions, and worked as a journalist.

Sport In Brief

Top honours

MADIBAZ Football Sportsman of the Year and masters student in Chemistry, Clodius Sagandira (right) played an important role in the team's success in 2015, leading to them winning the Pefa league title for a second consecutive year.



The Madibaz premier side successfully defended their Pefa league crown, while the premier reserve team took home the title in their division for a third consecutive year.

Master mind

SECOND-YEAR BCom Accounting student Jesse February (right) was recently named as the International Young Chess Player of the Year. She has also been included in the team to play in the International Olympiad in Azerbaijan in September.



Cheerleaders do it again

THE NMMU Cheerleaders recently won the annual National Cheerleading Championships for the second year in succession. Arts and Culture's Nicki-Anne Rayepen coached the team as their head choreographer.

Team manager

MADIBAZ Sport Deputy Director Riaan Osman (right) was appointed team manager of the SA U19 cricket team that recently competed in the ICC U19 World Cup in Bangladesh.



Top of the log

THE Billabong Madibaz Surf team recently participated at the SA Interclub Contest where they were the first overall University Club and fourth overall from 18 clubs that participated.

TAILOR-MADE... The new Foundation Phase building, which was officially launched on 4 April, provides ultra-modern, airy lecture rooms which can accommodate 400 students.



New Science, Education facilities built to order

Meeting future needs

NMMU's latest world-class facilities – a Science block and an Education building – have been custom-made to meet the changing needs of those professions.

The R56m Science block on South Campus was inspired by science buildings at top universities overseas and adapted for the African environment, while the R54m Foundation Phase building at Missionvale Campus was built to embrace a humanising style of teaching.

Both buildings are part of new university infrastructure worth over R200m developed over the past few years.

Science block

The new Science block has three state-of-the-art lecture theatres, including a circular 250-seater auditorium, that collectively seats 420 students. It has two new laboratories equipped with the latest microscopes and audio-visual equipment, seating 60 and 180 students respectively.

The auditorium, a high-ceilinged, fully-enclosed circular structure, has comfortable seats and fold-down desks and all the latest audio-visual

equipment, including visualisers – the modern-day equivalent of overhead projectors, and a hearing loop to accommodate students with hearing disabilities.

Foundation Phase building

The new Foundation Phase building has been designed around the Education Faculty's new curriculum and teaching philosophy, as part of NMMU's vision to become part of the solution to the many challenges facing the country's present basic education system.

The re-circulated Foundation Phase programme is a benchmark approach in the country's Grade R to 3 teaching phase.

The building, which was officially launched on 4 April, provides ultra-modern, airy lecture rooms where desks can be arranged in groups or otherwise, modelling the ideal modern-day classrooms. It can accommodate 400 students.

"Its situation complements the Foundation Phase programme's practice of partnering with schools that provide the challenges we need to address in South Africa if education and teacher education is to make a real difference," says Dr Tulsi Morar, Operations Manager of the Faculty of Education.

Computer lab for Central students

STUDENTS living in Central now have access to their own computer lab at the University's Bird Street Campus.

With 3 400 students living in accredited off-campus facilities in Central and many others living in private homes in the area, the 24-hour lab should make their studies easier.

The University also handed over 250 tablets to students using agreed-upon criteria as a further intervention in widening access and enabling students to take advantage of the growing emphasis on blended learning at NMMU.

The new lab in the Felsted building offers free WiFi, facilities for students with disabilities and electrical points for charging mobile devices.

