



VC's VOICE



State-of-the-art Science Centre launched

Minister of Higher Education, Training, Science and Innovation, the Honourable Professor Bonginkosi Emmanuel Nzimande, launched Nelson Mandela University's state-of-the-art Science Centre on Friday, 15 March.

On his visit he also officially opened the new residences funded by the Department of Higher Education and Training.

The Science Centre, on the Ocean Sciences Campus, displays our commitment to being an engaged institution, dedicated to using our resources in pursuit of building a social justice-oriented learning society. It is a dynamic hub designed to cater to learners, students, scholars, academics and the wider public.

The R54-million building, funded by the Department of Higher Education and Training's Infrastructure Efficiency Grant, aims to democratise the public's access to science. Scientists will share complex concepts with the public and engage in discussions with them, while the exhibitions will be interactive.

The Centre is the most sophisticated in the country to date, with only two other comparable ones in Cape Town and Bloemfontein. Its centrepiece is a 15-metre digital dome, or auditorium, which offers a unique immersive space for learning.



"It is a dynamic hub designed to cater to learners, students, scholars, academics and the wider public."

It is akin to an IMAX theatre, but on a grander scale, fully enveloping the viewer. School learners who visit will enjoy a comprehensive tour, including a 3D show featuring topics such as life under water, or the potential for life in outer space.

Minister Nzimande said the University's Science Centre will be an innovative hub of excellence, leveraging immersive technologies to support increased interest in learning.

"It will also seek to prop up interest in research and collaborative work within the

Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematical areas of research inquiry," he said at the launch.



"This science centre will expose learners to a multiplicity of careers in the sciences as the country looks into creating more pathways for young people to take this country into the future.

"We also see this science centre as making a significant contribution to raising the research profile of Nelson Mandela University. At the moment, you have four research chairs under the South African Research Chairs Initiative (SARChI). The hope is also that this science centre will spur other researchers into action, thus expanding your equitable share on the SARChI scheme.

"The launch of this Digital Dome today is truly a historic development, and a further illustration of our commitment to advancing science in South Africa."

This Centre will go a long way in making real the University's ambition of advancing science for society, and inspiring young people to



"This Centre will go a long way in making real the University's ambition of ... inspiring young people to become the next generation of scientists and innovators."

become the next generation of scientists and innovators.

It will offer professional development programmes and workshops for educators, researchers, and other stakeholders involved in STEAM education. It will also provide training on effective teaching strategies, immersive technology usage, curriculum development and assessment methods to enhance the quality of science education delivery.

The two-storey, 137-seater dome comes with extensive open plan exhibition space, a 100-seater interactive teaching laboratory, another 60-seater digital space, a boardroom and office space.

It will also be used to host guest lectures, conferences, exhibitions and transdisciplinary gatherings. It will not only benefit the institution in terms of additional teaching spaces across all its disciplines, but the Metro and province more broadly.

Message from the VC

It is that time of the year when we reconnect again. We are almost done with the first semester of this current academic year and what a busy time it has been!

We kicked off this year by welcoming 7 973 first-time entering students across all our seven faculties. Many of these students are the first generation in their families to pursue higher education studies and they came from local communities while others were from further afield. In total, we have enrolled 31 905 students, which is 2.9% above our enrolment target for 2024.

About a year ago, we announced two major infrastructure projects that were already underway. Firstly, the Science Centre will not only cater for the research, innovation and teaching needs of the internal scientific and student community, but will also serve as an inter- and transdisciplinary engagement hub. In this capacity, the Science Centre will facilitate engagement between the University and external publics.

It was indeed our pleasure to formally launch the Science Centre, with the Minister of Higher Education, Science, and Innovation, Professor Bonginkosi Nzimande presiding over this auspicious event. We are grateful to the Department for providing funding for this major infrastructure project.

Secondly, the other major infrastructure project was the construction of new student residences in Gqeberha, which the Minister also unveiled. As a result of this new development, we have added a further 772 bed spaces on campus, moving total available bed spaces on campus to almost 6 000. This is an important development in view of the general concerns about student safety and welfare on university campuses across the country. It is also our way of providing a more conducive living and learning environment for our students.

As a University, we are at times called upon to weigh in on matters outside of our purview, but which have enormous global geopolitical implications. It is for this reason that the University Senate and Council expressed

themselves on the need to support the peace-building and humanitarian effort in Gaza, amid the continuing war between Israel and Palestine.

We are also deeply humbled that three of the best minds that made up the legal team presenting South Africa's case to the International Court of Justice at the Hague on the Palestine/Israel matter, have a close association with our University, and in this Issue, we fittingly feature them and their respective roles.

As a highlight of our academic calendar, we welcomed families from across the country as they came to witness the graduation of their loved ones. This year's autumn graduation took place over 18 sessions, including two at our George Campus in the Southern Cape. In these 18 sessions, 5 815 students received their qualifications, including 93 doctoral graduates.

As one of our core values, excellence remains front and centre of all we do at Nelson Mandela University. In this regard, we congratulate Professor Pumla Gqola, our Chair of African Feminist Imagination from the Centre for Women and Gender Studies, for receiving an Honorary Doctorate of Literature degree from Stellenbosch University, for her outstanding contribution to academia in her fields of feminist and cultural studies.

Our congratulations are also due to Professor Janine Adams, from the Institute for Coastal and Marine Research, for receiving the Women in Science Award, from the Department of Science and Innovation.

Making our University equally proud, is Professor Richard Cowling, a distinguished professor in Botany, for being awarded a Gold Medal for his outstanding contribution to science, by the Academy of Science of South Africa (ASSAf).

Overall, we look forward to resuming the second semester of this academic year with renewed vision and energy. We appreciate your support and steadfast commitment as valued members of the Nelson Mandela University family.



A warm welcome to Mandela University

About 3 000 guests attended the Vice-Chancellor's Welcome in the Indoor Sports Centre on South Campus on Saturday, 3 February. Overflow venues were made available on South, North and Second Avenue Campus, and a section was created on the University's website to carry the welcoming address. This programme provides students and their families with an opportunity to interact with, or see, the institutional leadership, as well as the critical facilities that students will be using. The Dean's Welcome and Faculty Meet-and-Greet sessions were hosted as breakaway sessions on the same day across several venues on three other campuses, including George.



2024 Undergraduate enrolments on target

Although final figures will only be available later in the year, student enrolments at Nelson Mandela University have reached the overall target for 2024.

Inclusive of undergraduate, postgraduate and international students, the University has 32 829 students enrolled as of 6 June 2024, which is 2.9% above the target set of 31 905 for this year.

The University received a particularly high number of first-time entering students – 7 973 in total – which is 9.7% above the target of 7 270 students.

Undergraduate students also have reached the target set for 2024, with 29 754 UG students, 7.6% above the target of 27 650.

However, there has been a steady drop in the number of postgraduate (PG) and international student enrolments. PG student numbers in particular are low, and have thus far only reached 76.9% of the target.

The fact that such a large percentage of students at Mandela University depend on NSFAS funding, which is not available at PG level, means that a large proportion of students wanting to progress from UG to PG level cannot do so.

In addition, many of these students qualify for bursaries and scholarships which, due to historic debt, they cannot take up to register for PG studies.

Other reasons include a lack of supervisors, caused largely by the retirement of senior academics with doctoral qualifications.

In addition, international student numbers to date only have reached 62.3% of the target for 2024. Internationalisation is an important

vehicle through which Nelson Mandela University delivers on its academic missions and transformation agenda.

The University has ongoing initiatives to address these issues, including establishing a dedicated

PG and internationalisation task team under the auspices of the institutional Enrolment Management Committee in 2023. This task team's mandate is to develop strategies and interventions to reverse these trends.

2024 ENROLMENTS		
Current enrolments against 2024 enrolment plan targets		
ENROLMENT PLAN TARGET	ACTUAL	VARIANCE
Total students (Undergraduate, postgraduate and international)		
31 905	32 829	2.9% above target
First-time entering students		
7 270	7 973	9.7% above target
Undergraduate students		
27 650	29 754	7.6% above target
Postgraduate students		
3 999	3 075	76.9% of target reached
International students		
1 132	705	62.3% of target reached

Information supplied by the Office for Institutional Strategy as of 6 June 2024

Historic moment in the International Court of Justice

Top legal minds with a connection to the Nelson Mandela University Faculty of Law played a part in South Africa's recent application to the International Court of Justice (the ICJ) on genocide in Gaza.

In December 2023, South Africa instituted proceedings against Israel, alleging that it had violated its obligations under the Genocide Convention by failing to prevent a genocide of the Palestinian people.

On 26 January 2024, the ICJ delivered its judgment in the Application of the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide in the Gaza Strip (South Africa v Israel).

By a majority of 15 to two judges, the ICJ ordered Israel to take all reasonable measures within its power (so-called provisional measures) to prevent a genocide against the people of Palestine in the Gaza Strip.

Professors Tembeka Ngcukaitobi and Max du Plessis, two of South Africa's legal representatives in the case, are adjunct professors in our Faculty of Law.

A third role-player, retired Constitutional Court judge, Dikgang Moseneke, was the judge nominated by South Africa as its representative in the application.

In 2018, our Faculty of Law conferred an honorary doctorate on Judge Moseneke. This means that three of the role-players involved are closely linked to the Faculty of Law at Mandela.



Prof Tembeka Ngcukaitobi



Prof Max du Plessis

"By a majority of 15 to two judges, the ICJ ordered Israel to take all reasonable measures ... to prevent a genocide against the people of Palestine ... "



Former Deputy Chief Justice Dikgang Moseneke

African partnerships for Education Collaborative

The University is preparing its submission to join the Education Collaborative, a consortium of African higher education institutions committed to driving high-impact education innovations to catalyse transformation in Africa.

In February, Nelson Mandela University hosted a delegation from the Education Collaborative, and in March a delegation from our institution made a reciprocal visit to Lagos, Nigeria. The delegation from the Education Collaborative included:

- Rose Dodd, Executive Director of The Education Collaborative
- Vanessa Sam, Senior Partnerships manager
- Dr Priya Iyer, Pro-Vice Chancellor, Botho University.

Presentations were made by the Student Entrepreneurship Centre, Centre for Women and Gender Studies, Engagement Office,

" ... the Education Collaborative convenes ... to share innovations, programmes and strategies to advance higher education, graduate development, employability and entrepreneurship on the continent."

Africa Engagement Initiatives Centre, and the Emthonjeni Student Wellness centre to the Education Collaborative team.

The delegation visited InnoVenton, The Downstream Chemicals Technology Station and Propella Business Incubator, where small businesses showcase their work and are helped to grow.

Started by Ashesi University in Ghana, the Education Collaborative convenes in June each year at Ashesi University to share innovations, programmes and strategies to advance higher education, graduate development, employability and entrepreneurship on the continent. Participants include public and private colleges and universities across Africa, as well as a select group of secondary level institutions in East and West Africa.



Pola Maneli

International fame for Fine Art graduate

An illustration by MA Fine Art graduate Pola Maneli not only was the cover image for a top American magazine, but has also been bought by an Academy Award-winning film director.

Gqeberha freelance illustrator Pola Maneli, who graduated at Nelson Mandela University in 2020, posted work from his MA portfolio to his Instagram profile, where it was noticed by staff at the influential New Yorker magazine.

They contacted Maneli and later commissioned him to draw the magazine's annual Martin Luther King edition cover in January 2023.

After publication, Maneli was thrilled to hear that Spike Lee – who directed films such as *Malcom X*, *Do the Right Thing* and *BlacKkKlansman* – wanted to speak to him about his art.

Lee then bought the original drawing of Dr Luther King and his family, and included this in an exhibition at the prestigious Brooklyn Museum in New York.

These high-profile accolades are only one aspect of Maneli's career as a professional artist. He has also worked for *The Atlantic*, *The New York Times*, *New Statesman* and the *New York Review of Books*, among other prestigious titles.



Pola Maneli's illustration of Dr Martin Luther King for The New Yorker magazine.

Other high-profile clients include Brown University in the US, Germany's Goethe Institut, and the Nelson Mandela Foundation and Constitution Hill in South Africa.

Maneli also created a Google doodle in 2022 to mark the 151st anniversary of the birth of Charlotte Maxeke, a trailblazer for Black South African women's rights.



Travis Trower

Ubuntu Award for Rescue SA and Emergency Medical Care

Nelson Mandela University's Department of Emergency Medical Care (EMC), represented by lecturer Travis Trower, accepted a prestigious Ubuntu Award on behalf of Rescue South Africa.

This recognition highlights individual and collective achievements as well as the robust partnership between the University and Rescue South Africa, said EMC Department head Paul Allen.

The annual Ubuntu Awards, presented by the Minister of International Relations and Cooperation Dr Naledi Pandor, emphasise the importance of honouring those who tirelessly

work to elevate South Africa's national interests and values across the world.

The ceremony was held in conjunction with the opening of Parliament in Cape Town on 8 February 2024.

The Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between Mandela University's Department of Emergency Medical Care and Rescue South Africa, has been pivotal in advancing search and rescue operations and disaster response initiatives, domestically and internationally.

These responses were tested as recently as 2023 and 2022 when the University, alongside Rescue South Africa, attended to disastrous flooding in KwaZulu-Natal and Malawi. It also supported firefighting efforts in Gqeberha, saving lives and infrastructure.

The awards recognise outstanding contributions to South Africa's global presence and values, and was attended by industry leaders, civil society advocates, members of the Cabinet, and the High Commissioners accredited to South Africa.



This year's winners also included Mandela University honorary doctorate John Kani, far right, the MaXhosa Africa brand of Mandela University alumnus Laduma Ngxokolo, second from left, Springbok rugby captain Siya Kolisi and Banyana Banyana captain Janine van Wyk, second from right.

Honouring the legacy of Sobukwe and Brutus

Nelson Mandela University stages a series of Institutional Public Lectures biennially hosted by the Vice-Chancellor and aligned to its identity and ethos as an institution in the service of society.



Robert Sobukwe

The Faculty of Education hosted the second Robert Sobukwe Institutional Public Lecture on 27 February, 100 years after the birth of Sobukwe in 1924.

Activist scholar and political economist Lebohang Liepollo Pheko presented an address titled "Defying the Undeifiable: A Meditation on Reparative Memory".

The Sobukwe family, the University's staff and students, high school students, Azanian People's Organisation (AZAPO) representatives, as well as members of Sobukwe's political home, the Pan Africanist Congress of Azania (PAC), attended the lecture.

Former Mandela University lecturer, Prof Simphiwe Sesanti, responded to points made in Pheko's address.



Lebohang Liepollo Pheko



Dr Nomathamsanqa Tisani

Dennis Brutus

The role of literature in addressing issues of racism and democracy in South Africa today was the theme at the recent Dennis Brutus Institutional Public Lecture hosted by the Centre for the Advancement of Non-Racialism and Democracy (CANRAD).



The lecture at the South End Museum on 18 March, reflected on the work of the anti-Apartheid activist, educator and poet, who literary scholars often defined within the movement of "protest literature".

Keynote speaker Dr Nomathamsanqa Tisani responded to the critical question, proposing "Phutuma ngosiba", meaning to "fetch your treasure with your pen".

Mandela University PhD candidate Fortunate Jwara responded to the keynote speaker, noting how "words can both build and destroy".

Prof Brutus was conferred an honorary doctorate by the University in 2009. The audience included the University staff, students, high school learners, chiefs from the Griqua and Nama ethnic groups, as well as family and friends of the late Professor Brutus.

eNtsa engagement facility launched

Nelson Mandela University's engagement institute, eNtsa, launched its new engagement and innovation facility in a significant milestone in the Eastern Cape's automotive component and marine manufacturing industries. Those present at the launch on 15 March included collaboration partners from Nelson Mandela University, through eNtsa, and the Automotive Industry Development Centre Eastern Cape (AIDC-EC). The picture features, back from left, Riccardo Temmers, Executive Manager: Future Skills and Sustainable Energy; Professor Danie Hattingh, eNtsa Director; Edem Foli, uYilo Programme Manager and Thabo Shenxane, CEO, AIDC-EC. Front, from left, Dr Martin Sanne, Nelson Mandela University/AIDC-EC Automotive Chair; Professor Marshall Sheldon, Executive Dean of the Faculty of Engineering, the Built Environment and Technology; MEC Mlungisi Mvoko; Professor Sibongile Muthwa, Nelson Mandela University Vice-Chancellor; Phumzile Zitumane, AIDC-EC Board Chairperson and Julien de Klerk, eNtsa Engineering Engagement Director.



All seven faculties take part in Africanisation-Decolonisation Indaba

The Research Chair for Critical Studies in Higher Education Transformation organised the highly successful Africanisation-Decolonisation Indaba on 7 and 8 March 2024. It was jointly hosted by the University's Africanisation-Decolonisation Working Group and the Transdisciplinary Institute for Mandela Studies, and all seven faculties showcased their work, creating a platform for collaboration. Participants included, from left, Vice-Chancellor Professor Sibongile Muthwa, Deputy Vice-Chancellor People and Operations Luthando Jack, Deputy Vice-Chancellor Learning and Teaching Dr Muki Moeng and SRC President Student Representative Council President, Yiva Makwede.



Recognition and awards

Professor Pumla Gqola

The Chair for African Feminist Imagination and research professor at Mandela University's Centre for Women and Gender Studies, Pumla Gqola, received an honorary doctorate, Doctor of Literature (DLitt), *honoris causa*, from Stellenbosch University at its December graduation on Monday 11 December 2023. Prof Gqola was honoured for her outstanding contributions to academia and the impact that her work in literary and cultural studies has had on social transformation in the higher education sector in South Africa.



Professor Richard Cowling

Distinguished Professor in Botany Richard Cowling has received a Gold Medal from the Academy of Science South Africa (ASSAf). This apex award of the Academy and the South African science system is conferred in recognition of outstanding achievements in scientific thinking for the benefit of society by individuals. A maximum of two gold medal awards are made each year. Prof Cowling's internationally recognised research in the fields of plant diversity and evolution, conservation science, restoration ecology and paleoecology, has been ground-breaking and significant.



Professor Janine Adams

The Deputy Director of the Institute for Coastal and Marine Research, Professor Janine Adams, won the Department of Science and Innovation South African Women in Science Award 2023 as a distinguished researcher in the Natural and Engineering Sciences category. Minister of Higher Education, Science, and Innovation Blade Nzimande presented Prof Adams with the award for her outstanding contribution to building South Africa's scientific and research knowledge base.



Olwethu Poswayo

Nelson Mandela University Chemistry doctoral student Olwethu Poswayo won an international award from the Global Challenges University Alliance (GCU) in the last quarter of 2023. She was honoured with the 2023 GCUA 2030 PhD thesis award for her proposal titled "Optimisation of utilisation of biomass for production of bio-oil and its hydro-processing to produce quality biofuel". Poswayo won the first prize of €3 500 (around R72 000) and was invited on an all-expenses-paid trip to attend the GCUA 2030/STINT meeting in Sweden.



COVID classes culminate in Graduation

The 5600-plus students, inclusive of 48 doctoral recipients, who crossed the stage to be capped in George and Gqeberha during the Autumn 2024 Graduation season are mainly those who completed their studies during the uncertainty of the COVID-19 pandemic.

It made the 18 ceremonies – two in George and the remainder at the Indoor Centre on South Campus in Gqeberha – all the more sweeter knowing the difficulties that students had endured to complete their qualifications.

Innumerable tales of students adapting to online learning and persevering with their studies in trying circumstances emerged during the sessions on 5 April in George and from 12 to 23 April in Gqeberha.

This year saw the first cohort of a new Honours Degree in Natural Resource Management qualification cross the stage in George.

The success of the 24 students, along with so many other Graduation success stories, can be viewed on our news page, as well as our Staff Bulletin.



Student-centric support is a golden thread

Inclusive student access for success is a key strategic area and a golden thread that runs through Nelson Mandela University's Vision 2030. This entails supporting students as and where we can, from application to graduation, to enrich their university experience.

However, student financial challenges are a perennial concern for the successful start of our academic year. Additionally, NSFAS delays in awarding funding to students and to timeously respond to enquiries from the University have caused anxiety among the student community.

To counter these challenges and support students through this difficult period, the University has implemented temporary and emergency measures as outlined below.

Concessions

Mandela University has made substantive strides with concessions to exempt students from the usual down-payment on registration. This serves as a relief mechanism to ensure access to academic and on-campus registration for academically deserving students. However, this relief does not cover allowances and off-campus accommodation, nor does it constitute a reduction in debt of the student.

More than 9 500 students had applied for concessions by mid-February (check figure end of March), of whom 5 053 were cleared to register. This is already more than double the number of students who received such support last year.

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“Students have access to free Wifi on campus and the University has linked several accredited off-campus residences to its grid.”

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Laptop support

Approximately 2 500 National Student Financial Aid Scheme funded first-time-entering students have opted in for the 2024 round of the Student Device Initiative, giving them an opportunity to procure a laptop over two years at a cost of R5 400.

Student nutrition

Over and above long-term sustainability goals to ensure no student goes hungry, University stakeholders have implemented a number of nutrition initiatives. However, a nutrition donation from Tiger Brands was decreased

from 1 100 packs per month to 600 packs for 2024, and delays in disbursing NSFAS living allowances have added to this difficult situation. Student hunger is a reality on campuses across South Africa.

In addition to the 600 monthly food parcels that SHS provides, the SRC has been providing 300 meals daily and the institution is complementing these efforts with a further 250 meals daily. Several faculties also have nutrition support plans in place as part of integrated efforts to address this ongoing challenge.

Student accommodation

To further the removal of silos and encourage collaboration, the Social Worker at Emthonjeni Student Wellness has provided psychosocial support to students facing accommodation challenges, working closely with Student Housing and Student Representative Council members to address housing needs.

Connecting our students

Unfortunately, issuing monthly data bundles to all students has proved to be financially unsustainable and, with effect from the start of 2024, the University is no longer providing these. However, we have stepped up efforts to densify and expand wireless connectivity across campuses. Students have access to free Wifi on campus and the University has linked several accredited off-campus residences to its grid. Student computer laboratories also offer spaces for access and collaborative learning.

NEHAWU strike concerns

The volatility of the three-week strike started on 21 February by members of the National Education, Health and Allied Workers Union (NEHAWU) raises many questions for the institution.

While a settlement was eventually reached, the impact of the strike on the academic project, staff and student wellbeing, its financial sustainability and the reputational damage cannot be understated.

What should have been a protected strike as sanctioned by the Commission for Conciliation, Mediation and Arbitration (CCMA) following a dispute over 2023/24 salary negotiations, quickly became a full-blown strike that, at times, degenerated into lawless behaviour.

Striking members blocked entrances, prohibiting staff and students' entry, disrupted classes, intimidated others from working, blocked and flooded bathrooms, filled venues with trash, allegedly vandalised lifts and started up to seven fires.

An interdict prohibiting such practices was secured, while private security and other external service providers were utilised to enable continuation of operations.

NEHAWU's membership at Mandela University, comes mainly from Support Services' staff to the greatest extent in(catering, cleaning, horticulture and protection services staff). Absenteeism at this time among the same cohort was at about 25% to 30%.

All line managers were asked to submit strike registers capturing attendance and/or behaviour challenges to give the institution a holistic view of the status on the ground.

The institution is presently assessing the impact of the strike, along with the lessons learnt to pro-actively mitigate against such action going forward.

Branding the Missionvale Campus

New campus-specific imagery and other collateral that is in keeping with the overall Nelson Mandela University brand has been well received at Missionvale Campus since it was implemented late last year.

Visuals and other branded elements that reflect the essence of the community-centred campus can be seen on walls, on the adjacent Uitenhage Road billboard, wayfinder signage and welcome pylons across the campus and within the buildings.

The proposed creative look and feel for Missionvale Campus originally focused on its Medical School but was adjusted to reflect the entire campus and its surrounds – ultimately, offering a balance of traditional and contemporary visual elements.

"We have images that are unique to Missionvale Campus and its surrounds. Those who live and work here have expressed satisfaction with the end result," says Communication and Marketing brand manager and project lead Allison Olivier.

The team worked closely with Senior Director Sharon Masiza who oversees Bird Street, Second Avenue and Missionvale campuses, along with other Missionvale Campus staff, the campus's neighbours and Infrastructure Services and Space Optimisation (ISSO) colleagues throughout the three-year long project.

Signage overhaul

Apart from the new signage erected on Missionvale Campus, the University is presently engaged in a complete overhaul of all signage across all campuses. This project will be completed by the end of 2024. It will also include the removal of any old branding.

