

VC's VOICE



A STEP CLOSER

This artist's impression of the Clinical Skills building on Missionvale Campus is one of those visited by the Health Professions Council of South Africa and the Council on Higher Education delegation as part of its accreditation visit late last month.

Official feedback on the findings of the accreditation panel will be shared with the University next year.



LIVING TRANSFORMATION

Our focus is on actioning our transformation goals in all areas of the University, and while there is much to do and many difficult, complex challenges to face, we celebrate the progress made to date. We are starting to experience the collective imagining and reimagining of our 21st-century African university.

I want to start with our Vice-Chancellor's Excellence Awards on 10 September, where 49 awards were received by staff members and teams. For the first time, we combined the recognition of academic and professional, administrative and support (PASS) staff, without whom academic excellence cannot be achieved.

Two special awards were made to Deputy Vice-Chancellor for Research, Innovation and Internationalisation, Professor Andrew Leitch and

Professor Denise Zinn, Deputy Vice-Chancellor: Learning and Teaching, who are both retiring this year (see below).

Medical School forges ahead

Contributing to the health of all our people and the education of our young people is the much-anticipated Medical School - the 10th in South Africa - situated on our Missionvale Campus.

It's very exciting to see buildings transforming into a fully operational Medical School. Our Executive

Dean of Health Sciences, Professor Lungile Pepeta, his faculty and academic, infrastructure and resource work streams have devoted a considerable amount of time and effort to getting us here.

Before we can open applications for the six-year MBChB degree, starting in 2021, the programme's curriculum, along with the infrastructure, equipment, funding and staff requirements, must be accredited. To this end the Health Professions Council of South Africa (HPCSA) and the Council on Higher Education (CHE) conducted an accreditation site visit late last month.

We are confident that we have moved a step closer to achieving this dream of offering relevant health care to those who need it most.

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ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE AWARDS

CAREER ACHIEVEMENT AWARD



Deputy Vice-Chancellor: Learning and Teaching, Professor Denise Zinn, was honoured with the Nelson Mandela University Career Achievement Award in recognition of her distinguished contribution to teaching, learning and pedagogy.

Prof Zinn has been deeply involved in initiatives related to curriculum design, review and renewal, as well as the building of a transformative institutional culture in educational environments.

Her undergraduate, honours and teaching degrees were obtained at UCT and her master's and doctoral degrees at Harvard University Graduate School of Education.

Professor Denise Zinn

DEPUTY VICE-CHANCELLOR:
LEARNING AND TEACHING

She taught in Port Elizabeth high schools before moving into higher education, holding various management positions. Her abiding interest is the area of teaching and learning, and her most recent research and publications explore the theory and praxis of a humanising pedagogy, and social justice, equity and diversity issues in education.

LIFETIME CONTRIBUTION AWARD



Deputy Vice-Chancellor: Research, Innovation and Internationalisation, Professor Andrew Leitch, received the Nelson Mandela University Lifetime Contribution Award for his contribution to research over a long and industrious career at the same institution.

Prof Leitch obtained his doctoral degree in Solid-State Physics in 1984. His focus was on semiconductor epitaxy and defects. Since then he has led a research group at the then University of Port Elizabeth, supervised / co-supervised no less than 22 master's degrees and 15 doctoral students, and published many papers in recognised journals and conference proceedings.

Professor Andrew Leitch

DEPUTY VICE-CHANCELLOR:
RESEARCH, INNOVATION AND
INTERNATIONALISATION

In 2001, he established the Optical Fibre Research Unit with no equipment and just one prospective master's student. To date, the Unit has produced 24 master's and doctoral graduates and received funding of about R22-million for bursaries and research equipment, thanks to telecoms industry partnerships.

EVERY DOEK TELLS A STORY

INGQONDO YAM YEYEGAZI LOBUKHOSI ESI ISITHSABA SAM*

*My mind is of royalty and this is my crown

“Cloths of wisdom” are positioning the University at the forefront of a global dialogue around the importance of indigenous languages.

Seven limited edition *doeks* (head wraps), whose textile designs were inspired by seven isiXhosa doctoral theses awarded by Mandela University to date, tell a rich story.

Ten years ago, Dr Nozuko Zukiswa Gxekwa made history at the institution when she became the first person to complete her doctorate in isiXhosa.

Six others have since followed, and another six are registered and conducting their PhD research in isiXhosa.

“Our hope is to engender African aesthetic with academic scholarship – by using visuals to make scholarship more accessible in an authentic way,” says Arts Faculty lecturer Senzo Xulu, who worked with a team of students and staff in conceptualising and realising the *Amalaphu Obulumko* (“Cloths of Wisdom”) project.

Aimed at recognising the vast diversity and complexity of humanity, each head wrap has taken its inspiration from the research concepts embedded in each thesis and is supported by vernacular posters

and beautifully branded packaging. The textile work was led by Mandela BTEch Textile Design student Thandazani Nofingxana, who was a 2018 Design Indaba Emerging Creative. Visual Arts, Public Relations and Media students assisted in creating photographic portraits for the *doeks*.

“We wanted to bridge the gap between academia, language and creativity after we were challenged by our Dean, Professor (Rose) Boswell, to give creative expression to important academic work, thereby making it accessible in a humanising way,” explains PR lecturer Anele Mvazana, who worked with Xulu on the project.

“We’ve had calls to expand the range and make it available for sale.”

The result: a new, sought-after textile brand that turns indigenous text into textiles.

In the interim, however, the team is hosting exhibitions and plans pop-up shops to further educate learners about the value of their mother tongue – a fitting celebration as the Department of Language and Literature recognises the 10-year milestone of awarding ground-breaking doctoral theses written entirely in isiXhosa.



This being the International Year of Indigenous Languages and the 10-year anniversary of the University's first doctoral thesis written entirely in isiXhosa, the Faculty of Arts is using textiles to do the talking in making mother tongue scholarship more accessible to all.

LIVING TRANSFORMATION

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If the MBChB is accredited, the first intake of medical students will be selected for admission in 2021. Our first choice will be matriculants from the Eastern Cape with a matric pass rate of 60% and over, and we require maths, physical science, life science and English. BSc students wanting to switch over to medicine must have a pass rate of 60% and over.

Reigniting intellectual vibrancy

We hosted a group of 30 leading scholars from Ghana, Uganda, Kenya, South Africa, the United Kingdom, India, Ireland, Canada and Germany, and working groups have been established to build intellectual collaborations. The Chair of Critical Studies in Higher Education Transformation, in collaboration with Queen's University Belfast, held a Winter School on campus to consider alternative, emancipatory imaginations for higher education.

Cultivating critical scholarship among students

In March, in partnership with the Dean of Students and the Department of Student Governance and Development, CriSHET launched The Perspective Online, an online student journal providing a space for students to think critically, develop ideas and advance their academic writing skills.

In July, we held the second annual two-day Nelson Mandela Youth Convention and the keynote address was delivered by former President Kgalema Motlanthe. The Youth Convention is a pioneering initiative in the higher education sector.

Student accommodation

Another much-anticipated development and cause for celebration is the commencement of the construction of the 1800-bed student accommodation on our North Campus. Please see page 4 for more exciting developments in our journey to expand on-campus student accommodation - a massive challenge faced by all South African universities.

Digital connectivity

With the advent of the Fourth Industrial Revolution, it is critical that we progressively ensure that all our students and staff are digitally connected. To this end, we continue to invest significant resources in expanding and densifying Wi-Fi access across all our campuses (see page 4).

Getting to grips with gender-based violence

Our country has fallen horribly short in transforming gender relations and eliminating gender-based violence (GBV) and xenophobia.

The University, as a microcosm of society, is not immune to the scourge of GBV. In September, hundreds of our students and staff, dressed in black, marched from North to South campus and on our George campus in solidarity against gender-based violence, femicide, xenophobia and violent crime.” (See page 3).

Safety first

It is of utmost importance to Mandela University that all students, staff and visitors feel safe and secure. We are working hard on upscaling our integrated safety and security strategy, which includes the effective use of technology, and collaborations with communities and crime prevention forums around the Nelson Mandela Metro.

In all spheres of transformation, it is up to us to define the trajectory we take into the future in the context of local, national, continental and global challenges such as deepening inequality, rising unemployment and resource scarcity.

Mandela University believes that higher education plays a major role in the development of a socially just, equitable and vibrant society through the pursuit of knowledge that enhances the quality of life of all citizens.

LANGUAGE INDABAS BEAR FRUIT

Language should be owned, used and known by all.

That's the hope of the Language Policy reference group at Nelson Mandela University.

Through courageous language conversations with key stakeholders on campus, the reference group continues to gather insights into language experiences on campus and explore the possibilities of a multilingual environment.

Applied Languages department head, Dr Jacqui Luck who, along with Education Faculty Deputy Dean Nokhanyo Mdzanga, is leading the process, says that

“ It has been a rewarding journey ”

The bottom-up, humanising approach has been singled out by language policy experts as progressive and worthy of emulating.

Much work lies ahead before a new policy can be drafted.



MAKING A STAND

UNIVERSITY PIONEERS GENDER STUDIES CENTRE IN EASTERN CAPE

Discussions on how women and gender-based matters could be mainstreamed into Nelson Mandela University have culminated in the launch of a Women and Gender Studies Centre at the institution – the first of its kind in the province.

Underpinned by an inclusive 'gender agenda' approach, and based on the University's broader transformation project, the centre was launched last month with sociologist Dr Babalwa Magoqwana as interim director.

Vice-Chancellor Professor Sibongile Muthwa says the centre reflects the institution's efforts to fight structural violence that defines people's movement, opportunities and life chances.

"The University hopes to create a space for (both) Nelson Mandela Bay citizens and the institution to deal with issues relating to gender, sexuality, inequality and structural violence at large. "This centre is integral in celebrations of diversity in gender identity and expressions, sexual orientation, religion, age, national origins, ancestry, disability, race, class and language."

The centre's aims include:

- mainstreaming the gender agenda in teaching and learning
- developing a research and scholarship agenda informed by the centre's key principles
- providing space for collaborative, proactive advocacy programmes dealing with gender-based violence on campus and beyond



In the aftermath of the murders of UCT student Uyinene Mrwetyana and UWC student Jesse Hess, and the mounting number of rapes and murders of women and children, the University community and South African women across society are crying "Enough!". In September, University staff and students joined hands in solidarity against the scourge gender-based violence, xenophobia and crime.

- influencing policy formulation across the province and within the higher education sector regarding gender and dignity of women, and other sexual minorities.

The work of the Centre will be complemented by the efforts of our representative gender and sexually based violence (GSBV) task team to develop a comprehensive gender transformation strategy and to accelerate turnaround times in dealing with reported cases of GBV.

Key partnerships will strengthen the centre's voice and include other provincial higher education institutions, local community groups, Mandela University student groups, campus support services, academic departments and non-governmental organisations. The 'gender agenda' will be intersectional but rooted

within the African intellectual histories of the region. "It is our vision that this centre will contribute towards developing key policies and short learning programmes that will contribute towards women empowerment and gender equity through research, education and community engagement," says Prof Muthwa.

Ultimately, we hope (it) will serve as a catalyst in the continued restructuring of the University's institutional cultures towards a better and richer understanding of diversity.

PROFESSORIAL INAUGURAL LECTURES



Prof Paul Poisat
FACULTY OF BUSINESS AND ECONOMIC SCIENCES

"Demystifying leadership connectivity: rediscovering the soul of leadership"

12 August 2019



Prof Andrea Hurst
FACULTY OF ARTS

"Philosophy as laughter"

26 August 2019



Prof Sindiwe James
FACULTY OF HEALTH SCIENCES

"Confinement and labouring women: a persistent struggle against nature"

21 October 2019



BE THE CHANGE

How far have we come and what shifts have taken place within the current decolonisation and digitalisation transitions and transformations in our University and the higher education sector?

To explore this, the University community participated in an inspiring Knowledge and Pedagogy symposium and exhibition at the North Campus Conference Centre on 19 and 20 September.

Student Luke Rudman with his visual statement around plastic pollution was part of the symposium.

"The symposium offered an opportunity to 'check in', gauging and charting the transformation of the academic project over the past few years, and the impact of our work, undergirded by a humanising pedagogy," explains Deputy Vice-Chancellor: Learning and Teaching, Professor Denise Zinn.

Presentations and exhibitions showcased examples of good practice taking place at the University, while attendees also developed a 'topography' of how faculties, programmes and entities are transforming and decolonising 'knowledge' and 'pedagogy' – particularly within the digital revolution landscape.

"We are increasingly dependent and interdependent on digital technologies to assist us in our work, and to prepare our students for the future world of 'life and work'."

For more, go to Learning and Teaching website on tl.mandela.ac.za

EMBRACING THE BENEFITS OF DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION

In line with the University's digital first transformation strategy, a wide range of projects are underway towards improving efficiencies through access to online opportunities.

Whether it is improving safety or expanding educational opportunities, the University is set on embracing the benefits of digitalisation.

It has invested time, money and expertise to improve the way we work so that we work smarter and enhance our sustainability. These efforts are also aimed at ensuring that we live the value of social justice and equality so that everyone benefits from digital connectivity.

Access for all employees

In addition, over 800 non-office bound staff now have now benefit from digital access, enabling them to access emails, the staff portal, the ITS system and printers via their new cellphone devices.

The fit-for-purpose technology intervention further seeks to address the digital divide and build social cohesion.

Staying in touch

The Off-Campus Connectivity project, for example, which began in August, is aimed at improving the connectivity strength of about 5000 students living in the 36 biggest accredited off-campus residences across the Metro, as these residences were unable to meet capacity needs through the usual broadband suppliers.

ICT Services has installed 1282 access points to date, providing 1,172,200m² of uncapped Wi-Fi coverage in learning and teaching, living and general social spaces on campus. It is also investing in various off-campus projects to enable improved free access to the Internet for all students, including the hospitals and clinics where our Health Sciences are working already.



EQUAL ACCESS ... George Campus employees (centre from left) Juanita Heynse, Shumaya Ambraal and Desiree October are among 800 staff members recently recently a cell phone affording them the same digital access opportunities as their desk-bound colleagues.

This is all in line with the long-term goals of offering education anywhere and at any time.

Safety and security

The University is consistently investing in the benefits of technology to create a safer environment for staff and students.

It has introduced several interventions, including campus access control for motorists, student

biometric access into residences, additional cameras, upgraded control rooms (now known as Operation, Monitor, Analysis and Response Rooms (OMARR) and the implementation of a merged online intelligence system enabling the integrated capture and management of information related to incidents, risk management and other matters.

Enhanced digital support to counter crime is being implemented on all campuses, including Missionvale.

EXPANDING STUDENT ACCOMMODATION

Addressing a national challenge for the Higher Education sector

An innovative funding model is being used by the University to tackle the critical student housing shortage in Nelson Mandela Bay.

New funding model

The new approach, a pilot project for the (HE) sector, saw the University combine its infrastructure funding grants from the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET) (received every three years) and then supplement it with loan funding to expedite the process

of building a greater number of beds.

As a result, another 2000 beds will be introduced on the University's Port Elizabeth and George campuses in the next 18 months.

George Campus

In the interim, construction of a 200-bed residence for George Campus has reached the halfway stage. This R54-million development (artist's impression in bottom picture) began early this year and should be completed

by the end of April 2020. The triple-storey residence is in addition to the 430 beds presently available on campus.

Port Elizabeth residences

Contractors for the 1800 beds to be built at two sites on North Campus (bottom picture) are expected on site in November.

The three-phased building process with completion dates in brackets is as follows:

- Phase 1 - 500 beds at Sanlam Student Village on North Campus (May 2021)
- Phase 2 - 300 beds at Sanlam Student Village on North Campus (December 2021)
- Phase 3 - 1000 beds on North Campus opposite the large car park (July 2022)

This will be in addition to the 3000-plus beds presently available on the Port Elizabeth campuses.

Accredited off-campus accommodation

The University has also invested in fast-tracking its external accredited off-campus accommodation project.

Since 2015, the University has proactively sought to increase its accredited off-campus accommodation options.

This year, the University has increased the number of off-campus beds to 9000, up from 6000 last year. Plans are in place to increase this number to 12 000 beds in 2020.

