NELSON MANDELA
UNIVERSITY

Celebrating EXCELLENCE

Academic Achievers Awards & Vice-Chancellor's Excellence Awards

2026

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CONGRATULATIONS FROM THE VICE-CHANCELLOR

It is my great pleasure to congratulate you on being recognised at Nelson Mandela University's 2026 Celebrating Excellence Awards.

These awards provide an important opportunity to pause and celebrate the remarkable individuals and teams whose commitment, talent and contributions continue to shape our University and advance its purpose. Across our academic, research, professional, administrative and support environments, as well as among our students, excellence is expressed in diverse and meaningful ways through scholarship and innovation, dedicated service, leadership, creativity, perseverance, and an unwavering commitment to making a positive difference.

At Nelson Mandela University, excellence is more than an aspiration. It is one of the six core values that define who we are and guide how we serve society. It calls on each of us to give our very best, to continually enhance the quality and impact of our work, and to contribute meaningfully to our vision of being a dynamic African university recognised for its leadership in generating cutting-edge knowledge for a sustainable future.



Professor Sibongile Muthwa
Vice-Chancellor

"Your dedication, innovation, and commitment to excellence are an inspiration to our university community."

Your recognition through these awards is both significant and well deserved. It affirms not only your achievements, but also the dedication, discipline and sense of purpose that have brought you to this moment. Your accomplishments contribute to the collective excellence of our University and demonstrate what is possible when talent is matched with commitment and a desire to serve a purpose greater than oneself.

As a University that proudly carries the name of Nelson Mandela, we are continually reminded that achievement finds its deepest meaning when it contributes to the advancement of others and the betterment of society. I therefore encourage you to receive this honour not only as recognition of what you have accomplished, but also as an invitation to continue striving, serving, leading and inspiring.

We recognise, too, that excellence is rarely achieved alone. I extend my sincere appreciation to the families, colleagues, mentors, friends and communities whose encouragement and support have helped make these achievements possible. They share in the significance of this occasion.

On behalf of the Nelson Mandela University community, I offer my heartfelt congratulations on this outstanding achievement. May you take pride in what you have accomplished while continuing to pursue excellence with humility, courage and purpose.

Congratulations on your well-deserved recognition and thank you for contributing to the continuing story of excellence at Nelson Mandela University.

FIRST-YEAR UNDERGRADUATE DIPLOMA AND DEGREE AWARDS

First-Year Undergraduate Diploma and Degree Study Awards

These awards are made to students registered for their second year of study, on the grounds of academic achievement in their first year.



Atandwe Vuso

Faculty of Engineering, the Built Environment and Technology

Atandwe achieved 88% for her first year of the Diploma in Building and wants to become a professional Quantity Surveyor and build a successful career in the construction industry. She achieved the highest marks in Quantity Surveying, Construction Management and Construction Technology in her class. Atandwe wants to further her studies in the built environment and civil engineering, gain industry experience and develop strong leadership skills. Her long-term goal is to establish a construction and property development company that promotes sustainable development, creates employment, improves communities and inspires young people to pursue their potential.

"Challenges may shape my journey, but my determination shapes my future."



Kayleigh Stead

Faculty of Health Sciences

Through her research, Kayleigh hopes to understand how specific pathogens cause disease and the mechanisms underlying antimicrobial resistance. She wants to contribute to the development of effective treatments and solutions to combat the growing threat of antimicrobial resistance. Having achieved an average of 94% in her first year of the Bachelor of Health Science in Medical Laboratory Science, she plans to obtain her honours and master's degrees in either medical microbiology or clinical pathology. Her career interests also include working as a medical laboratory scientist or pursuing a career in the forensic laboratories within the South African Police Service.

"If you can dream it, you can do it."
- Walt Disney

FIRST DIPLOMA AWARDS

These awards go to the best initial diploma achiever in each faculty.



Jesmien Abrahams-Januarie

Faculty of Business and Economic Sciences

Jesmien currently works full-time in the Master Planning and Logistics Department at Schaeffler South Africa, while studying for an Advanced Diploma in Logistics. "Balancing work and studies have strengthened my discipline, resilience, time management, analytical thinking and problem-solving skills," says Jesmien, who achieved an average of 84% for her Diploma in Logistics. Real-life work has also enabled her to connect logistics theories with the world of work. She is committed to lifelong learning and aspires to become a leader who improves businesses, mentors others and eventually establishes her own business while inspiring her children.

"Aspire to Inspire before you Expire."
- Eugene Bell Jr



Mmasetshaba Rakgalakane

Faculty of Engineering, the Built Environment and Technology

"My dream job would be to become a software engineer, using my technical skills, creativity and problem-solving abilities to develop innovative solutions to real-world challenges," says Mmasetshaba. She achieved an average of 89% for her Diploma in Information Technology, (Software Development) and also passed her Higher Certificate cum laude. She is currently seeking opportunities to gain practical industry experience and further develop her skills and hopes to study for an Advanced Diploma in Information Technology, particularly expanding her knowledge of cloud computing and data. "In the future, I aspire to become a skilled technology professional and entrepreneur, creating innovative solutions, employment opportunities and positive change within my community."

"My past does not determine my future. With dedication, faith in myself and perseverance, I can turn my dreams into reality."



Tyrique Burger

Faculty of Health Sciences

Tyrique, who graduated with a Diploma in Sport Management, aims to contribute to making South African football more commercially attractive and sustainable, as well as create better opportunities and experiences for supporters, clubs and future players. He wants to build a career in sports business, focusing on marketing, sponsorship and football development. Currently studying for an Advanced Diploma in Sport Management at Tswane University of Technology, Tyrique plans to pursue a Master's in Sport Management or an MBA and also obtain practical industry experience. His long-term goal is to work within a leading professional football organisation and gain international exposure.

"Sport has the power to change the world."
- Nelson Mandela



Kamvelihle Kostile

Faculty of Humanities

Kamvelihle graduated with a Diploma in Music and is currently studying for a Bachelor of Music (Performing Arts) with contemporary voice as his first-choice instrument. He wants to become a professional musician, sound engineer and live sound technician. Kamvelihle also hopes to obtain a doctorate in music, with his dream career at Mandela University, or even Sony, Universal Music or in radio. "Having been in the music industry, as a recording artist, I fell in love with the sound engineering aspect of music and I want to start my own live sound company," he says. His second-choice instrument is piano, which supports his song writing and music production skills.

"Stay true in the dark and humble in the in the spotlight."



Comfort Munzhelele

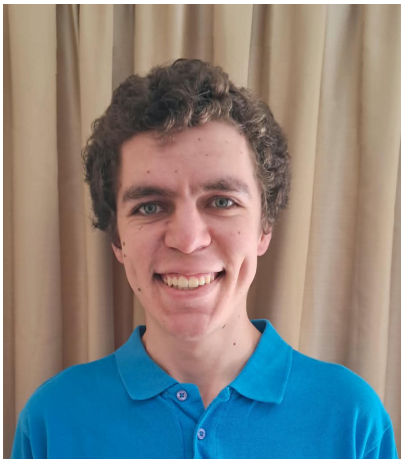
Faculty of Law

Comfort has achieved 81% for her Diploma in Law Enforcement, and her dream job is to become a senior crime scene investigator in the South African Police Service. She is currently studying for her Advanced Diploma in Policing at Tshwane University of Technology and she hopes to still achieve a doctorate in criminology. She calls Pretoria home.

"There's no reward without hard work."

FIRST DEGREE AWARDS

These awards go to the graduate who had the best degree performance in each of the seven faculties.



Tiaan Bouwer

Faculty of Business and Economic Sciences

Tiaan wants a successful career that challenges him and allows him to keep on learning and developing his skills. "I would enjoy furthering my programming knowledge in future and work in finance, business or software development," he says. Tiaan, who achieved an average of 80% for his BCom in Accounting Science (Computer Science and Information Systems), was also the top matric achiever in the Nelson Mandela Bay district and represented South Africa at the International Mathematics Olympiad. He is currently studying for a Postgraduate Diploma in Accounting. Tiaan's dream job would combine work that he enjoys with intellectual challenge, while giving him the freedom to pursue his interests and experiences that are important to him.

"You are defined by the choices you make in this moment."



Brandon van Zyl

Faculty of Education

"One of my proudest achievements was completing my Bachelor of Education (Intermediate Phase) degree with an overall average of 84% and finishing first in my phase," says Brandon. His journey has been shaped by leadership, education and sport. From serving as a prefect and representing his school's first teams in rugby and cricket to teaching and coaching young learners, these experiences have developed his work ethic, leadership skills and passion for positively influencing others. Brandon currently teaches Intermediate Phase at Innes Primary School in Kariega. His greatest aspiration is to inspire learners, help them realise their potential and contribute positively to education in South Africa. He hopes to pursue postgraduate studies, grow into educational leadership and, ultimately, become a professional rugby coach.

"Success is not only about what you achieve, but about the difference you make in the lives of others."



Shabaaz Koodoruth

Faculty of Engineering, the Built Environment and Technology

Shabaaz, who hails from Plaine Magnien in Mauritius, achieved an average of 94% for his Bachelor of Engineering Technology in Marine Engineering. "My goal is to become a skilled and versatile engineer, who contributes to the maritime, energy and broader engineering sectors, by working on challenging projects, developing innovative solutions and ultimately be part of engineering and technological development in Mauritius and internationally," he says. Shabaaz is currently completing his Honours degree in Mechanical Engineering, and intends to pursue his master's, focusing on marine engineering. He hopes to take the knowledge and experience gained in South Africa and internationally back to his home country.

"Learn with purpose, build with passion."



Kyra Evans

Faculty of Health Sciences

Kyra's undergraduate research focused on burnout among intensive care nurses, strengthening her interest in evidence-based practice, research, quality improvement and patient safety. "Ultimately, I want to become a specialist nurse, educator, mentor and advocate for quality patient care," she says. Kyra achieved an average of 89% in her Bachelor of Nursing. She is currently working as a Professional Nurse (Community Service) in the Eastern Cape, focusing on strengthening her clinical skills and gaining practical experience. Particularly interested in critical care, Kyra hopes to pursue postgraduate studies in critical care nursing or nursing education and eventually combine specialist clinical practice with teaching.

"Growth often begins outside of your comfort zone!"



Jamie Peterseil

Faculty of Humanities

"My goal is to create a genuine, tangible impact, not just in surface aesthetics, but in the ways we shape communities and care for the environment," says Jamie. She is completing her Honours degree in Visual Arts (Graphic Design), researching how intentional design systems can support human thought in an increasingly automated world. Her research explores how gamified augmented reality can deepen engagement with physical spaces through an interactive, location-based experience. Jamie achieved an average of 81% for her bachelor's degree and hopes to work in multidisciplinary, international environments, such as the UN or WWF, where design, technology and strategy create global impact. She plans to pursue further studies in leadership and business strategy and eventually lead multidisciplinary teams or establish an impact-driven design studio or NPO.

"Perhaps you were born for such a time as this."
- Esther 4:14

HONOURS AWARDS

These awards go the best honours graduate in the broad fields of the Social Sciences and Humanities and within Science, Engineering and Technology.



Megan Coetzee

Honours Award: Social Sciences and Humanities

Megan graduated with an 87% average for her Honours in Business Management and hopes to combine her background in business, management and leadership with her passion for education. She is currently completing a Postgraduate Certificate in Education and plans to pursue a Master's in Business Management or further studies in education. Megan's goal is to become an inspiring teacher who helps learners achieve academically, while encouraging them to believe in themselves. "I hope to grow personally and professionally, embrace learning opportunities, and pursue leadership roles in education," she says. Her research focused on sustainable electronic waste management in South Africa, highlighting practices that reduce waste, protect the environment and promote responsible recycling and disposal.

"Keep learning, keep growing, and always leave things better than you found them."



Manapo Matsemela

Honours Award: Science, Engineering and Technology

Manapo aspires to build a career across construction, project management, property development, infrastructure and mining, with the goal of becoming a leader in the built environment. She hopes to lead major projects as a director of an established firm before launching ventures that create opportunities for others. Currently volunteering to gain practical quantity surveying and construction experience, Manapo plans to pursue a Master's in Property Studies followed by an MBA, with ambitions to work in South Africa or internationally. Her Honours research in Quantity Surveying explored the feasibility and cost of promoting decent work in construction, focusing on worker well-being and development alongside successful project delivery.

"Show up for yourself, even when it's difficult."

MASTER'S DEGREE BY COURSEWORK AWARD

These awards go the best master's degree by coursework graduates, inclusive of MTech candidates, in the broad fields of the Social Sciences and Humanities, and within Science, Engineering and Technology.



Michael Ferreira

Master's Degree by Coursework: Social Sciences and Humanities

Michael's Master's of Business Administration research investigated the factors influencing attorneys to adopt Artificial Intelligence (AI) in South African law firms and their willingness to use AI in their work. As AI becomes increasingly integrated into the legal profession, understanding these factors can help law firms implement AI effectively and appropriately. As a partner at Friedman Scheckter Attorneys in Gqeberha, he wants to pursue his doctoral studies, continue to grow as an attorney and business leader and contribute to his firm's growth. "I also hope to use my legal, business, and academic experience to create meaningful impact while maintaining a fulfilling family life and remaining true to my values," Michael says. His dream job would either be the CEO of a large multinational company or to serve as a High Court Judge.

"Work hard, do what is right, strive for excellence and enjoy the journey."



Josie Handman

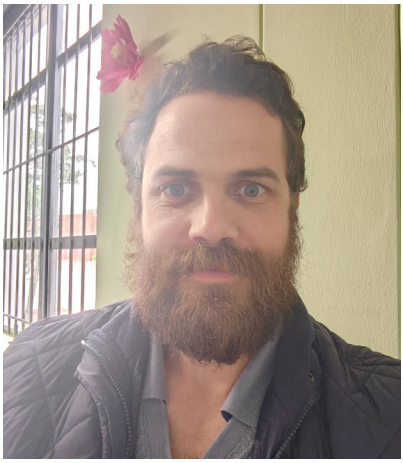
Master's Degree by Coursework: Science, Engineering and Technology

Josie is currently a Junior Architect at SAOTA in Cape Town and already working in her dream profession. Her Master's treatise in Architecture focused on designing a Khoisan Cultural Centre in Bethelsdorp, Gqeberha, creating a space that celebrates the heritage and identity of the First People of South Africa, as well as reclaiming the spiritually significant of Van der Kemp's Kloof. "I would love to open my own architecture studio that focuses on the craft of architecture and passing that on to future generations. I would also like to become involved in teaching, as I believe that mentorship is mutually beneficial and that both students and mentors learn from one another," she says. Josie hopes to broaden her perspective through travel, experience different cultures, and draw inspiration from diverse approaches to architecture and craftsmanship.

"Once you stop learning, you start dying."
- Albert Einstein

MASTER'S DEGREE BY DISSERTATION AWARDS

These awards go the best master's degree by Dissertation graduates, inclusive of MTech candidates, in the broad fields of the Social Sciences and Humanities, and within Science, Engineering and Technology.



Tiaan Fourie

Master's Degree by Dissertation: Social Sciences and Humanities

Tiaan achieved 88% for his Master's treatise in Business Management, which explored how informal traders coped with load-shedding to ensure the sustainability of their businesses. His research provided valuable insight into the resilience of informal traders, an important group that plays a significant role in South Africa's economy. "Informal traders are an interesting group of people and my research contributed to a better understanding of how they cope with the external environment, including load-shedding," says Tiaan. Now a lecturer at Emeris, he remains committed to furthering his academic journey and plans to pursue a doctorate. Ultimately, however, his dream job is to become an entrepreneur, to start or run a business and build a future as a successful business owner in South Africa.

"Continual learning is a privilege and should be pursued forever."

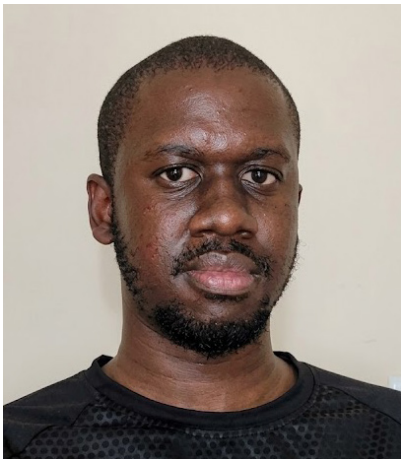


Shane Josephs

Master's Degree by Dissertation: Science, Engineering and Technology

Shane aims to contribute to healthcare through research into South Africa's indigenous plants and their medicinal properties, by also recognising and preserving the knowledge of communities who have long understood their benefits. He achieved 93% for his Master's degree in Chemistry and is currently pursuing a PhD focused on drug development and more efficient medicine production. His master's research developed a three-step method to produce olivetol, a precursor to cannabidiol (CBD), in 24 hours, significantly faster than existing methods. The approach could support more efficient and cost-effective CBD production and further research into its therapeutic potential. "My dream career is to become a researcher contributing to innovative drug development, gain international research experience and expertise in advanced techniques, and eventually establish my own laboratory," Shane says.

"Be ashamed to die until you have won some victory for humanity."



Sithuliswa Mthembu

Master's Degree by Dissertation: Science, Engineering and Technology

Sithuliswa achieved 93% for his Master's research in Computer Science and Information Systems, exploring how AI can give low-cost robots a form of biological hearing, enabling them to navigate indoor environments by interpreting how sound interacts with their bodies. This work could make intelligent robots more affordable for applications in factories, mines and rescue operations. "For my PhD I want to research how we can use AI to build smarter, adaptive tutoring systems that help students learn better at their own pace. My goal is to build a lifelong career in academia, hopefully at Mandela University and to become a full professor," says Sithuliswa, who currently lectures in Computer Science at the University.

"Have the courage to use your own understanding and have the patience to teach others to do the same."

VICE-CHANCELLOR'S AWARDS FOR ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE

These special awards go to the best graduates and diplomates of the year. These are awarded to the:

- **Best first diploma student;**
- **Best first degree student;**
- **Best postgraduate (Science, Engineering and Technology) student; and**
- **Best postgraduate (Social Sciences and Humanities) student.**

The recipients are selected from the winners already honoured in the various categories.

VICE-CHANCELLOR'S EXCELLENCE AWARDS

PROFESSIONAL, ADMINISTRATIVE AND SUPPORT STAFF (PASS) AWARDS

Professional, Administrative and Support Staff (PASS) Awards

The People and Operations Division enables the institution to function with their foundational and support service to the academic project.

Individual Awards

These awards are presented to individuals who have excelled across the various Peromnes levels in terms of their performance in enhancing the success of the institution.



Kim Alexander

Administrative Assistant, Industrial and Organisational Psychology

Kim demonstrates strong initiative and innovation by developing and coordinating systems and processes that enhance operational efficiency within the faculty. Her effective management of ethics application administration streamlines workflows and facilitates timely submissions and approvals. She is a dependable and highly reliable professional with excellent project management and coordination skills and consistently ensures that projects and institutional activities are executed accurately, professionally and timeously. Her contributions enable colleagues and institutional structures to fulfil their responsibilities effectively. Kim consistently exceeds expectations and her professionalism, innovation, reliability and service orientation make her an invaluable institutional support.

"What drives me is knowing that the work I do helps people succeed and contributes to a greater purpose."



Charlene Dale

Executive Secretary, Faculty of Engineering, the Built Environment and Technology

Charlene exemplifies excellence through a combination of sustained high-quality performance, institutional knowledge, dependability, initiative, service and ownership. She has provided continuity for the faculty amid significant turnover in executive leadership, as well as consistently meeting the demanding requirements of her role. Charlene has also taken responsibility for substantial faculty projects and institutional initiatives that have resulted in visible and lasting improvements to the faculty's working and teaching environments, student services and institutional culture. Her excellence is not defined by a single achievement, but by the consistency and expanse of her contribution over time.

"I am driven by goals and results, but I measure true success by the people I uplift, value, and inspire."



Godfrey Damons

Supervisor, Horticulture

Godfrey consistently provides outstanding service to his clients, frequently going beyond the scope of his formal responsibilities. He exemplifies the University's values of dedication, integrity and service through his professional and committed approach. His reliability, passion and unwavering commitment to excellence have a positive impact on those around him and set a strong example for colleagues. Godfrey's willingness to go the extra mile demonstrates a genuine commitment to supporting others and contributing meaningfully to the University's objectives and culture of service excellence.

"Excellence is not a demand I meet for others; it's a promise I keep to my own potential."



Charlene Pieterse

Research Administrator, Faculty of Law

Charlene is diligent, dedicated and highly professional, and consistently goes above and beyond in fulfilling her responsibilities. She approaches every task with professionalism, enthusiasm and a genuine commitment to supporting both staff and students. Her proactive approach and strong initiative are evident in her effective management of administrative processes, as well as her willingness to initiate, coordinate and lead meetings. Charlene's commitment, reliability and service-oriented approach make her a valued contributor, who consistently adds value to the faculty and its stakeholders.

"I strive for excellence in everything, giving my best and making a positive contribution in the lives of others."



Tozama Mnonopi

Postgraduate Administration Officer, Research Development

Tozama consistently provides professional, responsive and solutions-focused service to clients, peers and subordinates. She is readily available to assist stakeholders and is committed to delivering excellent service, as well as fostering positive and collaborative working relationships. Tozama demonstrates strong leadership when guiding teams, coordinating events and managing projects within her area of responsibility. Her strong work ethic and leadership are evident in her effective execution of administrative processes. She consistently goes above and beyond to ensure that students receive the necessary support and contributes to a positive service experience.

"I find fulfilment in helping students grow and making a positive difference in their academic journeys."



Dr Denise Schael

Director of the Institute for Coastal and Marine Research

Dr Schael is dedicated and reliable and consistently ensures that work is completed to a high standard, as well as supporting departmental and staff objectives. She demonstrated innovation by transforming a largely virtual departmental structure into effective academic, administrative and physical arrangements. Her strengthening of governance and monitoring systems, together with her contribution to developing and implementing the South African Master of Ocean Sciences (SAMOS), reflects strong strategic leadership and institutional impact. Dr Schael is highly regarded by her peers and subordinates for effectively leading a multidisciplinary group of researchers and postgraduate students, demonstrating exceptional teamwork and leadership.

"A meaningful career connects people, creates opportunities, nurtures growth and builds something that will endure beyond ourselves."



Dr Mziwakhe Sibuqashe

Senior Manager Academic Planning, Teaching Excellence

Dr Sibuqashe consistently demonstrates exceptional performance in quality assurance and academic governance. His meticulous oversight and proactive approach enable clients to make their submissions confidently, particularly during demanding review periods. He transforms regulatory compliance from a purely administrative requirement into an opportunity for faculties to critically reflect on curriculum offerings and practices. This approach adds significant value, enhances efficiency and strengthens the quality and institutional impact of submissions. His outstanding performance has been highly commended by his line manager, peers and clients, who recognise his innovation, leadership, collaboration, professionalism and strong engagement.

"I have learnt that hard work and integrity are important attributes to carry for my profession."



Access and Enrolment

The Access and Enrolment Department exceeded performance expectations during the introduction of a new merit-based selection process and application system. The team developed procedures, conducted extensive testing, resolved system challenges with ICT and transitioned to active enrolment management. Through strong collaboration with faculties and service departments, they implemented an integrated readiness plan, supporting the achievement of the 2026 FTEN target. Their reflective, open and action-oriented approach provided faculties with confidence in student selection and quota management during a defining year. The team members are Nadia Azem, Sinoxolo Dlanga, Nwabisa Duma, Natalie du Plessis, Eleanor du Preez, Ayanda Fibi (Sithunda), Gift Mabulu, Sandra Mejanie, Johanna Messiah, Vuyelwa Maseti, Nobathembu Mwanda, Wilma Oliphant, Ndumiso Phakathi, Linda Qinga, Zoleka Ramncwana, Lynette Roodt, Johan Roth, Mandisa Sipamla and Veronique Whitebooi.

"We do so much more than process applications; we turn dreams into reality by connecting ambitious students to a life-changing future."



Institutional Events

Monalisa Allen and Charmaine Boukes consistently demonstrate exceptional professionalism, commitment and service excellence in planning, coordinating and delivering a diverse range of university events. Whether supporting high-profile ceremonial occasions, academic events, stakeholder engagements, student-focused initiatives or community activities, they approach every project with meticulous attention to detail, adaptability and a solutions-driven mindset. Their ability to respond effectively to diverse and evolving demands, together with their willingness to go beyond their formal responsibilities, has made them an invaluable source of support to the University and a key contributor to successful institutional events.

"We are passionate about hosting creative and inspirational events."

CREATIVE OUTPUT AWARDS

Awards are given for exceptional creative research outputs emanating from the fields of fine arts and visual arts; theatre, performance and dance; design; film and television and literary arts.





John Andrews

Architectural Design

John's architecture student design build initiative, STUDIO MAKE, designed and built an Early Childhood Development classroom, using a 6m (13 m²) shipping container as its structural base. The container unfolds into a 32 m² classroom with an office, sick bay and fold-out kitchen. As a potential model for rollout, the project contributes to conversation in several ways. Contextually it reframes crèche architecture in informal settlements around insecure land tenure, crime, difficult access and complex community dynamics as core design generators. The project rethinks prefabrication, demonstrating how standardised materials can produce identity and dignity beyond function. Methodologically, it uses different building types to develop new and practical design solutions and as a pedagogical model, pioneers a South African student design-build model for creative research.

"I'm driven by architecture that extends discourse and creates life changing experiences to those who make and inhabit these buildings."





Prof Subeshini Moodley

Documentary Film

Prof Moodley's documentary, Postgraduate Alchemy, is the outcome of a collaborative project completed for the Teaching Advancement at Universities Fellowship 2025. The project brought together five senior academics from universities across South Africa. The documentary explores different stages of the postgraduate journey, examining the factors that support or hinder postgraduate access and success; the development of postgraduate skills and knowledge; mentorship, guidance and supervision; and the role of innovation, social responsibility and labour-market readiness. Drawing on perspectives from a range of disciplines, including business management, chemistry, nursing, history, media and communication, the film merges these perspectives around the broad theme of social justice in learning and teaching, specifically emphasising the postgraduate experience at South African universities.

"Journeys that challenge us, teach us the most."



Prof Vulindlela Nyoni

Fine Arts and Visual Arts

"Printmaking holds a very special place in my heart and life," says Prof Nyoni. Printmaking is all about transfer, with the basic principle to create an image, which can be reproduced repeatedly. Usually, several steps are needed to obtain a result, and the process requires one to think in terms of stages, planning and process. The techniques that Prof Nyoni teaches and practises, namely Lithography, Screen-printing, Intaglio, Linocut and Woodcut, have established histories and contemporary currency within South Africa, specifically in anti-apartheid and decolonial contexts. "Techniques like Woodcut are over a thousand years old and it gives me joy to teach them and use them today," he says.

"Be curious. Question everything."

ENGAGEMENT EXCELLENCE AWARDS

The Engagement awards are divided into individual projects and team awards.



Reetumetsi Malefane and his architectural solutions to real social and economic challenges

Reetumetsi reflects his ethos in his student project briefs, encouraging them to engage with marginalised communities and develop architectural solutions to real social and economic challenges, positioning them as agents of change. His engagement with the vision of a decolonial African university strengthened his commitment to the University's mandate of being "in service of society" under Vision 2030. Born in the former East London, raised in Zwelitsha, and later practising as a Professional Architect in the Eastern Cape, Reetumetsi has experienced the region's socio-spatial and economic challenges firsthand. This shaped his contribution to the 'Embedding Mandela' engagement, where he presented Architecture as a Civic and Transformative Practice reshaping the institution's architectural and institutional identity through campuses throughout the city.

"I believe Architecture can be the catalyst for social change by empowering students and the communities they serve."



Zandisile Masebe and his health and career engagement community activities

Through schools, churches, general communities, Mandela University students and colleagues, Zandisile, a pharmacy lecturer, contributes to a host of engagement initiatives. In schools, these include career guidance, motivation, drug-awareness education and positive masculinity, through his role as moral regeneration leader. Through churches, he collaborates with healthcare professionals to provide wellness programmes, health screenings and pharmaceutical care. These initiatives also extend to surrounding communities through local activations. University students benefit from work-integrated learning opportunities and research initiatives he conducts with industry partners. Zandisile also engages colleagues in collaborative initiatives, such as Mandela Day, with staff contributing to a full day of community service, honouring Nelson Mandela's legacy.

"We are all here to positively impact those around us, I choose to do it in service of communities."



Joshua Jacobs and his international knowledge exchange initiatives

Joshua's approach to engagement positions universities as links between global knowledge and local realities. He views engagement as a process where international research is adapted to local contexts, with community experiences contributing to broader academic conversations. Presenting his research at the International Conference on Education in Spain, he gained insights into emerging educational practices and technologies. Joshua also participated in the MOVE IT programme at the Technical University of Berlin, focusing on educational well-being, digital inclusion and technology-enhanced learning. He translated these insights into practical training by collaborating with the Eastern Cape Department of Education to conduct ICT workshops for teachers in Nelson Mandela Bay District schools, strengthening digital capacity and promoting knowledge exchange between local and international contexts.

"Technology transforms only when it speaks a teacher's language, honours their time and carries their wisdom back to the university."



Dr David Waswa and the Grade 11 and 12 YeboTutor STEM enhancement programme

By addressing academic challenges faced by high school learners in STEM subjects, particularly Mathematics and Physical Sciences, YeboTutor, with Dr Waswa as leader, reached more than 3 000 learners through online tutorials and provincial outreach programmes. Founded in September 2021, the programme started by supporting Grade 11 and 12 learners through livestreamed YouTube tutorials and in-person outreach. The platform now provides weekly curriculum-aligned lessons, supported by a WhatsApp group offering learning materials, updates and personalised assistance. Notable initiatives include reaching 184 learners at Little Flower High School in Mthatha (2022), over 900 learners across eight OR Tambo District schools (2023), 120 learners in iLembe District (2024), and 177 learners in Capricorn District (2025). By combining technology, tutoring, and community engagement, YeboTutor promotes accessible education and empowers learners to succeed.

"Knowledge multiplies when shared beyond the university gates and into our communities."



Prof Andrea Hurst and the ISCIA Horizon 2055 Project

The *Horizon 2055* Project (2025), inspired by the ISCIA Chair's Tributaries Project (2019), sought to foster social cohesion by bringing diverse academics together to reflect on Gqeberha's socio-ecological future through philosophy, art and experiential learning," says Prof Hurst. The project comprised three components, namely a weekly online multidisciplinary seminar that explored how art and philosophy can help imagine alternative futures. Secondly, immersive three-day city tours took approximately 12 participants at a time through sites including Brighton Beach, Fish Water Flats, Volkswagen, Coega Biomass, Motherwell, LoveLife and Van Stadens, encouraging critical engagement with contrasting social, technological and environmental realities. Finally, participants transformed their experiences into creative and academic works presented during a public programme featuring exhibitions, performances, a colloquium, poetry and film discussion.

"I love learning alongside others, discovering how philosophy, art, imagination and shared experiences can open possibilities for living differently, together."



Prof Magda Minguzzi and the Building a Matjieshut |Haru Oms, Building a Village Project

Building a Matjieshut: |Haru Oms, Building a Village under Prof Minguzzi's leadership promoted the preservation and cultural reappropriation of Indigenous building knowledge through a one-day seminar and three-day practical workshop focused on constructing a Matjieshut, one of South Africa's oldest Indigenous architectural forms. Organised by the School of Architecture under the Indigenous Knowledge Systems of the Built Environment Unit (IKSBEU), in partnership with Chief Jean Burgess of the Ghonaqua Peoples and community facilitator Jason Jacobs, the project brought together academics, staff, students, Knowledge holders, First Nations leaders and youth in a shared learning process. The completed Matjieshut on South Campus now provides a cultural space for Indigenous Knowledge Systems-based events, education and community reconnection, demonstrating how architecture can preserve heritage and strengthen community engagement.

"I am inspired by creating spaces where Indigenous Knowledge, community wisdom and education unite to shape a better future."



Jude Mathurine and the Khulani! Digital Youth Journalism Hub Project

Khulani! Digital Youth Journalism Hub, led by Jude, addresses the under-representation of youth voices in South African media by mentoring first-year students to produce professional, publishable feature articles on youth experiences, challenges and aspirations. It is a youth-focused, industry-aligned initiative integrated into the University's Writing for the Media curriculum. In 2025, the students produced 26 published stories, with more than half republished by partner platforms.

The project connects students with media partners, including Health for Mzansi, Yo! Magazine, StudentLivingSA, Kasi Voice and community newspapers. Their work also highlighted Mandela University research, scholars and initiatives, transforming teaching outputs into accessible science and research communication. *Khulani!* strengthens industry partnerships and empowers students as civic-minded content creators and amplifies youth perspectives in the media.

"We connect students and the media through bold ideas, conversations and powerful partnerships addressing issues that matter to young South Africans."



Dr Ayanda Simayi and the Sustaining Heritage: Decolonising Science and Mathematics classrooms Project

The IKS (Indigenous Knowledge Systems)-STEM Heritage Celebration Project, conceptualised by Dr Simayi, links cultural practices with Western scientific concepts, it promotes decolonised, contextualised learning and preserves heritage. The initiative, which started in 2023, has expanded across Nelson Mandela Bay schools, strengthens community participation and equips future teachers with culturally responsive STEM teaching strategies. In 2024, collaboration with Dr Makhosi Madimabe-Mofokeng expanded the project to integrate African IKS into STEM education. Final-year BEd and PGCE student teachers work together with learners, teachers, parents and School Governing Bodies to explore culturally relevant approaches to teaching science and mathematics. Activities include demonstrating traditional umqombothi fermentation to connect Xhosa knowledge with scientific principles of bacterial growth, while Sotho games, such as Difaha and Kgati teach geometry and sine graphs.

"From the village to the world: let us show how abstract science concepts can be grounded on Indigenous Knowledge Systems."



Edem Foli and the AIDC-EC E-mobility Awareness Campaign Team

Through the uYilo E-Mobility Programme, eNtsa partnered with the Automotive Industry Development Centre Eastern Cape (AIDC-EC) to deliver the Eastern Cape E-Mobility Awareness Campaign from April 2025 to March 2026. The programme provided government officials and stakeholders across the province with accessible knowledge on electric vehicles, including technology, efficiency, costs, emissions, safety, charging infrastructure and grid integration. The campaign trained 168 participants, exceeding its target of 100. Of the 102 participants who completed evaluations, more than 90% rated the programme positively for relevance, facilitator expertise, organisation, pacing and overall quality. The partnership continues through practical training for mechanics and technicians in Nelson Mandela Bay, Mthatha and Buffalo City, equipping them to work safely with EV powertrains, high-voltage systems, and fault diagnosis. The team members are Zinia Bunyula, Edem Foli, Nadine Marupen, Lona Mashalaba, Vukile Mnyande, Cornel Nkuna and Bryndan Roberts.

"We are driven by helping people build the knowledge, skills and confidence to shape South Africa's transition to electric mobility."



Dr Nosiphiwo Delubom and the Bridging Pedagogical and Digital Gaps in Mathematical Literacy Team

Mandela University improved its access, admitted its first Deaf student in 2025 and five students with visual impairments in 2026, thanks to a Universal Accessibility and Disability Services (UADS) sustained engagement initiative, developed in partnership with YeboTutor, mathematics students, Physics researchers and educators. It improves access to Mathematical Literacy for learners with hearing and visual impairments in rural South African special schools. Community engagement, teaching and research address barriers in under-resourced and special schools and engagements identified challenges and informed educator workshops on inclusive pedagogy, accessible resources and appropriate digital technologies. Practical approaches include tactile materials, South African Sign Language-supported instruction, practical activities and low-bandwidth tools. The initiative promotes reciprocal knowledge-sharing, strengthens school partnerships and advances equitable education. The team comprises Dr Nosiphiwo Delubom, Olwethu Deliwe and Siyabulela Mali.

"Despite attitudinal barriers to diversity, access, inclusion and belonging for persons with disabilities, progress and equity will ultimately prevail."

INNOVATION AWARDS

These awards recognise innovation excellence during 2026 but which may also be the culmination of a period of sustained innovation excellence over a number of years.



CBC-Fiber Optics Team

"We developed a compact optical fibre delay line that helps keep signals accurately timed and synchronised in sensitive electronic and telecommunications systems," says Dr Victor Agbakoba. The goal was to create a smaller, more durable and affordable alternative to imported products using local materials, 3D printing and expertise available at the University. The technology has been successfully used at scale in radio astronomy, with more than 100 units installed at the Hydrogen Epoch of Reionisation Array (HERA) low-frequency radio telescope. The project also trained local technicians to maintain the system, building local skills and reducing dependence on imported technology. The other team members were Sandisiwe Bangani, Dr James Jena, Lilian Mutia and Dr David Waswa.

"Great impact often begins with a small idea nurtured through hard work and perseverance."





The Studio MAKE Team

CrècheZA reimagines early childhood development infrastructure as a portable, adaptable asset. Developed through Studio MAKE at Mandela University, under the leadership of senior lecturer in Architecture, John Andrews, the project transforms a compact, shipping-container-sized unit into a fully functioning 32m² classroom. It is complete with furniture, water catchment, micro-solar power, an integrated administrative office, and a fold-up kitchen and wash-up area. Purpose-designed folding systems enable rapid deployment and assembled in approximately four hours. Using accessible materials and simple mechanical principles, CrècheZA rethinks mundane prefabricated infrastructure to bring architectural delight and dignity to communities where permanent construction is difficult or insecure. It proposes a repeatable rollout model for essential Early Childhood Development Learning infrastructure, adaptable to different sites, with the potential to reach communities across South Africa.

"In Studio MAKE, constraints drive innovation, turning standardised materials and technologies into delightful, creative solutions for complex challenges."

FACULTY EMERGING EXCELLENT TEACHER OF THE YEAR AWARDS

These awards recognise excellence in the previous calendar year but acknowledge that excellence evolves. As such, lecturers with a record of ongoing progress are also considered and recognised in these awards.



Adriaan Andrews

Faculty of Business and Economic Sciences

"As an academic, I believe teaching begins when we see the person behind the student," says Adriaan, a lecturer in industrial psychology and human resources. His approach to teaching is grounded in three principles: Humanise, Listen and Enable. This means looking beyond marks and classroom behaviour to understand and support students as individuals, to create spaces where students feel seen, heard and valued, even when they choose to remain silent. He creates opportunities for students to participate, develop and succeed. "I see learning as a shared journey built on care, dialogue and mutual respect, while connecting my teaching to my scholarship and professional practice," Adriaan says.

"I want every student leaving my lecture to feel seen, heard, valued and confident in their voice, abilities, and potential."



Lukhanyo Boligello

Faculty of Education

Lukhanyo's teaching is grounded in humanising, contextually responsive and reflective pedagogy, recognising the discipline as an intellectual, ethical and transformative practice. He creates high-challenge, high-support learning environments that value students' linguistic, cultural and intellectual identities, as well as demanding critical engagement and cognitive independence. As a lecturer in education, his approach integrates theory, context, pedagogical design, enactment and reflection to develop socially conscious, critically reflective teachers. These teachers could exercise informed professional judgement and translate disciplinary knowledge into relevant educational practice across diverse South African classrooms.

"The teacher I am is inseparable from the teaching I practise: humanising in purpose, rigorous in thought, transformative in impact."



Reetumetsi Malefane

Faculty of Engineering, the Built Environment and Technology

Reetumetsi encourages his students to envision architecture as more than a profession, but as a transformative practice and a catalyst for the change they wish to see in the world. As lecturer in architecture, his teaching is shaped by the institutional mandate, "In service of society." Through the curriculum, students are empowered as active agents of change, collaborating with communities to co-create climate-responsive solutions within the built environment. His pedagogical practice is grounded in decolonisation, challenging the explorative methodologies that integrate Indigenous Knowledge Systems into the architectural curriculum. This approach challenges dominant and established knowledge production in architectural education.

"Architecture can be more than a profession, but an instrument for societal change. Let us CREATE!"



Kagiso Dikgomo

Faculty of Health Sciences

"My teaching philosophy is grounded in Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory, which highlights the importance of observational learning. It also emphasises the role of students' personal, behavioural and environmental factors," says Kagiso, a lecturer in medical communication. This approach is supported by a commitment to evidence-based practice from both pedagogical methods and the content that he brings to the classroom. What distinguishes his approach is the integration of theory-informed educational development with research-based evaluation to inform teaching practice, he says. By examining students' learning experiences, these evaluations provide valuable insights that guide the ongoing refinement and continuous improvement of teaching and learning.

"My commitment to evidence-based practice allows me to refine my approach to teaching, thus validating my role as a lecturer."

FACULTY EXCELLENT TEACHERS OF THE YEAR AWARDS

The recipients of these awards are recognised for their significant, sustained and rigorous commitment to teaching; their innovation, creativity and imagination and the positive and humanising impact of their teaching on students. In short, these teachers embody excellence of the profession and calling.



Nonkululeko Khumalo

Faculty of Business and Economic Sciences

Nonkululeko believes that higher education should be transformative, humanising and empowering. As a business management lecturer, she creates learning environments where students engage actively with theory, practice and real-world challenges, also drawing on their experiences, identities and perspectives. Her goal is to develop confident, critical, ethical and lifelong learners who are equipped to make a meaningful contribution to society. Guided by humanising and dialogic teaching approaches, she fosters mutual respect, dialogue and collaborative knowledge creation, positioning students as active partners in the learning process. Through innovative curriculum design, authentic assessment, industry engagement and inclusive teaching practices, she connects academic learning to professional relevance and societal impact.

"Every student carries untapped potential; through dialogue and discovery, I create conditions for confidence, growth and transformation."



Dr Sanet Deysel

Faculty of Education

"New knowledge is built on prior knowledge, as all students enter the environment with prior experiences that should be acknowledged and used as a foundation for developing new knowledge," says Dr Deysel, an education lecturer. Students learn through active engagement and in-depth insight, including temporary support to help them to master concepts or tasks, gradually withdrawing it as their independence grows. Learning is co-constructed through multiple ways of knowing, including lecturer facilitation, and collaboration with others or peers. She believes that learning is reciprocal, as the lecturer gains knowledge through interaction with students. Equally important is students' psychological well-being, supported through a nurturing and inclusive learning environment that promotes personal growth, builds confidence and empowers each student to reach their full potential.

"I teach to ignite critical thinking, inspire meaningful change and empower every student to find their voice and shape tomorrow."



John Andrews

Faculty of Engineering, the Built Environment and Technology

Studio MAKE is a personal pedagogical experiment centred on MAKING architecture TOGETHER. "Since 2018, second-year Bachelor of Architecture students and I have collaborated with communities to design architecture and, on three occasions, construct crèches supporting early childhood development," says John, a senior lecturer in architecture. These projects reflect his evolving journey as an educator, exploring how making architecture in service of society transforms learning, while also contributing to the University's wider purpose. Studio MAKE cultivated lifelong experiences for students, staff and communities, encouraging critical dialogue, and becoming better socially conscious advocates and better architects. Ultimately, Studio MAKE reimagines the traditionally insular architectural design studio as a shared platform where learning, community engagement, creative research and innovation converge through the shared act of making within a single academic project.

"Teaching is the ongoing pursuit of learning together, creating conditions for discovery and testing the limits of our individual and collective potential."



Nicole Worthington

Faculty of Health Sciences

Nicole uses authentic scenarios, industry stories, visualisation, interactive activities and feedback to help students move from exposure, to understanding, to participation and professional judgement. "My teaching grew from 13 years as an industrial pharmacist and from remembering how difficult it was, as a student, to imagine a workplace I had never seen. I now seek to enable learning by making that invisible workplace visible," says Nicole, a lecturer in pharmacy. She believes her approach is different because she looks for innovative ways to make complex professional knowledge accessible, helping students connect abstract principles with the realities of practice. In the end, she wants students not only to understand how medicines are made, but to see themselves as patient-centred pharmacists within that professional world.

"I endeavour to make the invisible workplace visible, so students can begin to see themselves as capable participants within it."



Cindy Preller

Faculty of Humanities

"Students bring valuable experiences to the classroom and I like to actively engage them in case studies, group activities, debates, discussions and peer interaction to promote social learning and knowledge-sharing," says Cindy, a lecturer in media and communication. Her teaching approach focuses on designing activities that require students to think, practice creative problem-solving and make informed decisions, rather than simply reproduce knowledge. By incorporating relatable case studies, memes in exams, practical activities and industry-related scenarios, Cindy helps students connect academic concepts with real-world applications. She tries to encourage students to question assumptions and consider alternative perspectives and enjoys working together with her students in hosting and organising departmental events.

"My greatest motivation is seeing the Mandela student graduate, knowing that they are ready to go out and 'change the world'."



Dr Marc Welgemoed

Faculty of Law

"My teaching philosophy emphasises practical training and preparing students for the realities of the working world. I strive to bridge theory and practice by using real-world examples to demonstrate how the law operates in society and to foster social consciousness," says Dr Welgemoed, a lecturer in criminal and procedural law. He also encourages independent learning by creating opportunities for students to engage in self-study, develop legal drafting skills and apply legal principles to practical scenarios. Through this approach, Dr Welgemoed aims to equip students with the knowledge, skills and confidence needed to navigate the legal profession effectively.

"Learn today; live tomorrow. Never stop developing."



Dr Muedanyi Ramantswana

Faculty of Science

Drawing on his experience as a student, forestry professional and lecturer, Dr Ramantswana connects theory with forest-engineering practice. As a senior lecturer in forestry, he promotes clear communication, active participation and reflective learning to encourage student engagement and ownership. He introduces complex concepts through structured instruction, student-centred activities, field excursions and digital simulations. For advanced learners, he incorporates flipped classrooms, problem-based learning, hybrid teaching and industry-based activities. His approach also integrates current research and adapts teaching to students' developmental needs. "Recognising that students learn differently, I provide support through consultations, tutoring, recorded lectures, catch-up sessions and a variety of outcome-based assessments," he explains. Through this inclusive, practice-oriented approach, Dr Ramantswana equips students to apply knowledge, think critically and contribute to society.

"Teach every student as you would your own child: prepare them for the world and nurture a commitment to excellence."

FACULTY EMERGING RESEARCHER OF THE YEAR AWARDS

These awards seek to promote, recognise and reward research excellence among new, emerging researchers across the faculties.



Dr Ezekiel Majola

Faculty of Education

Dr Majola's research explores what happens to young people after they study at South Africa's technical and vocational colleges. "By listening to students and graduates, I examine why a qualification does not always lead to work or further study. Their experiences reveal barriers, such as poverty, limited opportunities and education systems that do not respond to their needs," says Dr Majola, a lecturer in education. He uses these insights to help rethink vocational education so that it offers young people greater dignity, meaningful choices and a stronger chance to shape their futures.

"Young people's experiences should shape the education and opportunities meant for them."

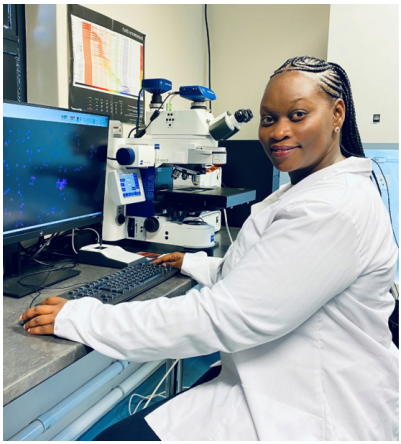


Dr Kumeshan Reddy

Faculty of Engineering, the Built Environment and Technology

Dr Reddy's primary research interest lies in applying computational intelligence and machine learning to optimise the operation and control of electrical power systems. His doctoral research focused on the control of wind energy conversion systems using swarm intelligence, reflecting his commitment to advancing intelligent and sustainable energy technologies. As a principal lecturer in electrical engineering, Dr Reddy maintains continuous collaborations with industry partners, ensuring that his research delivers practical and relevant outcomes. Through this industry engagement, he equips postgraduate students with the skills needed to thrive in industry. His research is particularly relevant to the rapidly expanding electrical grid, driving innovation in modern power systems.

"Intelligent control and industry-driven innovation can build a resilient, sustainable energy future for everyone."



Dr Sanelisiwe Nzuza

Faculty of Health Sciences

"My research investigates how HIV medicines affect the placenta, an essential organ that supports a baby's growth and development during pregnancy," says Dr Nzuza, a pharmacy lecturer. She seeks to understand how these medicines may disrupt placental function and contribute to adverse pregnancy outcomes. By uncovering the mechanisms behind these effects, her research aims to inform safer treatment strategies for women living with HIV. In the end, Dr Nzuza's work contributes to protect maternal health, support healthy pregnancies and improve outcomes for mothers and their babies.

"My passion lies in turning scientific discoveries into solutions that improve the lives of mothers and their babies."



Obakeng Van Dyk

Faculty of Law

Through his research, Obakeng, a lecturer in public law, seeks to promote lawful, reasonable, and transparent decision-making by government and public institutions. He also wants to ensure that people have a fair opportunity to question or challenge decisions that negatively affect them. Obakeng's research also contributes to a more equitable and accountable public administration system in which everyone, regardless of their circumstances, is treated fairly by the government and has access to affordable, effective mechanisms for challenging decisions that adversely affect their rights and interests.

"I am committed to contribute to a legal system that promotes fairness, accountability and equal access to justice for all."



Dr Tim Kuiper

Faculty of Science

As a senior lecturer in biodiversity and statistics, Dr Kuiper's research focuses on finding ways for humans and the natural world to thrive together. In collaboration with Kruger National Park and surrounding private reserves, Dr Kuiper led research to evaluate the effectiveness of rhino anti-poaching efforts. It was found that dehorning rhinos drastically reduced poaching with the research results published in the prestigious journal Science. He is now working with collaborators at the University of Oxford to quantify synergies and trade-offs between human development and biodiversity intactness across Africa's future development pathways.

"My science is grounded in faith, a deep love for people and nature and a conviction that science can change the world."

FACULTY RESEARCHERS OF THE YEAR AWARDS

These awards seek to recognise and reward the top researchers within each faculty for their research excellence in 2026.

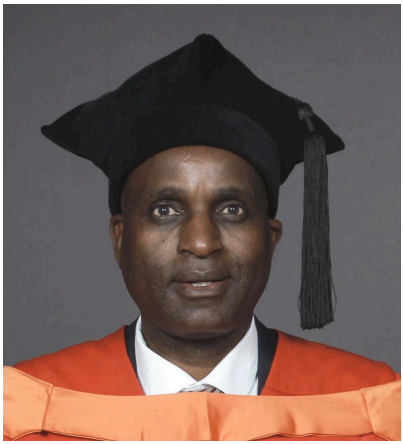


Prof Leward Jeke

Faculty of Business and Economic Sciences

"My evidence-based research supports governments, businesses and communities in shaping policies that foster sustainable growth, inclusive finance and improved livelihoods," says Leward, a professor of economics. This research applies data and econometric modelling to address real-world challenges facing South Africa and the continent. Specialising in financial economics and econometrics, Prof Jeke investigates how to advance economic growth while safeguarding the environment, focusing on how financial inclusion, green technology, investment and tax policy influence employment, growth and well-being. His work explores bank stability, manufacturing, trade and foreign direct investment, examining how access to credit, digital innovation and investment can stimulate job creation and alleviate poverty.

"I translate data into policy solutions that grow economies, protect our planet and uplift livelihoods."

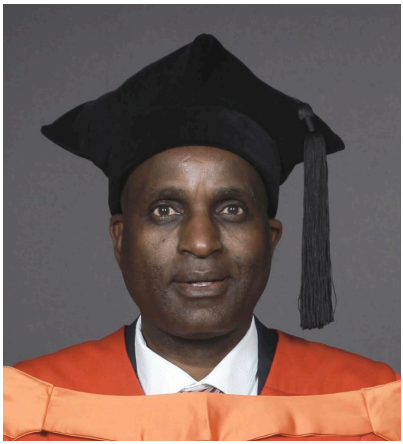


Prof Stephen Mago

Faculty of Business and Economic Sciences

The research of Stephen, a professor of development studies, explores practical ways to address poverty, unemployment and inequality by strengthening entrepreneurship, improving access to finance and promoting sustainable development. He explores how individuals, communities, businesses and institutions can work together to create opportunities, build resilient livelihoods and improve people's quality of life. "My integrative research connects ideas and expertise across disciplines to develop solutions to complex societal challenges," Prof Mago says. He is equally passionate about research ethics, promoting integrity, responsible scholarship and the protection of research participants. "Ultimately, my work seeks to translate knowledge into ethical, practical solutions that advance inclusive prosperity and a sustainable future for present and future generations."

"Research must not only explain the world but ethically transform lives, unlock potential and build a greener, more inclusive future."



Prof Stephen Mago

Faculty of Business and Economic Sciences

"My research explores practical ways to address poverty, unemployment and inequality by strengthening entrepreneurship, improving access to finance and promoting sustainable development," says Stephen, a professor of development studies. He explores how individuals, communities, businesses and institutions can work together to create opportunities, build resilient livelihoods and improve people's quality of life. "My green and sustainability research examines how development can create jobs and improve economic wellbeing, while protecting the environment and responding to climate change." Prof Mago is equally passionate about research ethics, promoting integrity, responsible scholarship and the protection of research participants. Ultimately, his work seeks to translate knowledge into ethical, practical solutions that advance inclusive prosperity and a sustainable future for present and future generations.

"Research must not only explain the world but ethically transform lives, unlock potential and build a greener, more inclusive future."



Prof Deidre Geduld

Faculty of Education

Deidre, a professor of education, is driven by a commitment to making education more humanising, inclusive and responsive to the realities that children, teachers and communities experience. Through collaborative research with schools and communities, she explores how indigenous knowledge, environmental learning and everyday experiences can transform teaching and learning. A central focus of her work is on reconnecting young children with nature through school gardens, storytelling and significant community participation. Prof Geduld's research addresses pressing societal challenges, including educational inequality, environmental degradation and the marginalisation of local knowledge. "Ultimately, my work seeks to empower teachers, amplify children's voices and contribute to more just, caring and sustainable educational futures."

"Meaningful research honours people's lived experiences, restores dignity and creates possibilities for a more just and caring world."



Prof Tirivavi Moyo

Faculty of Engineering, the Built Environment and Technology

"Construction is one of the world's largest employers, yet it remains among the most dangerous, wasteful, and unequal industries," says Tirivavi, a professor of construction economics. His research advances social justice, sustainable livelihoods and environmental stewardship through sustainable construction. Through their research unit, Prof Moyo and his colleagues work to address these deficits from the inside out: making construction safer for workers, fairer for women and young people, more accessible for small businesses to succeed, and gentler on the environment. "When construction works better, everyone benefits, because we all live in buildings, travel on roads and depend on the people who build them," Prof Moyo says.

"Building justice, livelihoods and a sustainable future."



Prof Ilse Truter

Faculty of Health Sciences

"Drug utilisation research analyses how, by whom and when medicines are used, including the economic aspects of healthcare and medicines," explains Ilse, a professor of pharmacy. Pharmacoepidemiology focuses on studying the effects of medicine in large populations. Her research also explores the role of pharmacists in, for example, vaccination, wound care and other applied clinical pharmacy practice. These areas of research address both patient healthcare and health system management. Methodologies used include, for instance, the analysis of large electronic databases ("big data"), patient or consumer surveys and carrying out interviews. Prof Truter's research ultimately aims to improve patient outcomes.

"Be curious, courageous and adventurous … research is a journey – to venture into the unknown, hoping to experience rewards at the destination."

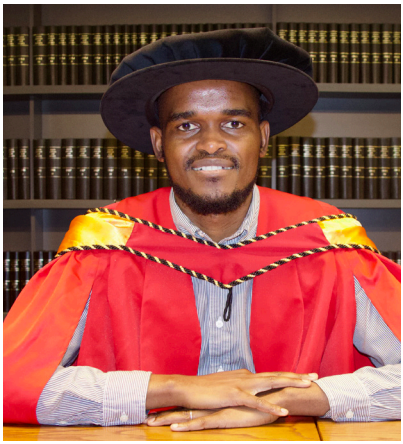


Prof David Bogopa

Faculty of Humanities

"My research is centred on advocacy and on raising fundamental questions about issues that affect communities every day. These include questions about how women, girls, persons with disabilities and other vulnerable groups are treated differently within soccer structures," says David, a professor of sociology and anthropology. His published research highlights persistent inequalities within soccer, particularly the continued marginalisation of these groups. Through his applied research, Prof Bogopa also challenges sport policies and practices that perpetuate patriarchal dominance, even 32 years into South Africa's democracy. His 2026 publication, The Impact of Age-Cheating in Soccer on the African Continent, further demonstrates how issues such as age-cheating can affect the development and integrity of soccer across Africa.

"As an academic and unionist, I'm inspired by seeing students graduate and giving a voice to the voiceless."



Dr Mahlubandile Ntontela

Faculty of Law

Dr Ntontela's research addresses societal challenges within the criminal justice system, with a particular focus on procedural law, the presentation of evidence by witnesses with communication disabilities and access to justice. His work also examines the role of courts in upholding the constitutional rights of vulnerable and marginalised members of society and the constitutional standards that should guide the exercise of judicial functions. According to Dr Ntontela, a lecturer in law, society regards the courts as one of the yardsticks for measuring the proper functioning of South Africa's justice system.

"I am driven by a deep sense of duty and service, to do my very best in whatever task my hands find to do."



Dr Adeniyi Ogunlaja

Faculty of Science

Adeniyi, a professor of chemistry, designs advanced materials, including heterojunctions and perovskites, special crystals that capture light and drive chemical reactions. These specialised materials act like tiny solar-powered engines, enabling him to transform carbon dioxide into fuels, such as methanol, convert nitrogen into green ammonia and break down industrial waste dyes in water. Their luminescent properties also serve as built-in sensors, providing real-time feedback on reaction efficiency and enable precise optimisation of these processes. By turning harmful substances into valuable resources, Prof Ogunlaja's research contributes to cleaner air, greener fuels and reduced pollution, helping address the urgent need for sustainable energy and a healthier environment for future generations.

"A scientist's role is to mend the world's problems and give people hope for a better future."

TEACHING EXCELLENCE TEAM AWARDS





Building A Matjieshut - |Haru Oms, Building a Village

Engineering, the Built Environment and Technology, Humanities & Horticulture

The team's teaching philosophy is grounded in the belief that meaningful learning emerges through experience, dialogue, and the application of knowledge within authentic social and cultural contexts, when education contributes to the public good. Student success extends beyond academic achievement to include cultural competence, critical consciousness and ethical citizenship. Drawing on contemporary African scholarship on higher education transformation, decolonisation, and humanising pedagogies, we create inclusive learning environments that value diverse knowledge systems and ways of knowing. Central to our approach, the First Peoples' philosophy emphasises interconnectedness, mutual respect, relational learning, and collective responsibility. Through engagement with Indigenous Knowledge Holders, Indigenous leaders, and youth, students are provided with opportunities to connect disciplinary knowledge with lived experience, fostering deeper, transformative learning.

The team members are Prof Magda Minguzzi, Lucy Vosloo, Prof Subeshini Moodley, Jennifer Clark and Godfrey Damons.

"The most powerful learning occurs through relationships, sharing knowledge, engaging critically and applying it in service of society."



Cultivating Planetary Citizenship through Collaborative Eco-Pedagogy: A Sustainable Model of Team-Based Teaching

Education

"Our team understands teaching as a shared journey of learning, discovery, and growth, where educators and students learn from and alongside one another," the team from the Faculty of Education says. Informed by humanising pedagogy and the values of Ubuntu, they recognise students as socially situated individuals whose diverse experiences, knowledge and perspectives enrich the learning environment. Their approach moves beyond traditional teacher-centred instruction by fostering dialogue, collaboration and the co-creation of knowledge. The team intentionally cultivates inclusive, respectful and intellectually engaging spaces where authentic relationships, critical reflection and a sense of belonging empower students to develop personally, academically and professionally. The team members are Dr Noluvo Rangana, Prof Deidre Geduld and Natalie Gill.

"Teaching is not merely sharing knowledge, but nurturing humanity, embracing diversity, and growing together through meaningful relationships and shared learning."



Khetho Tshipala

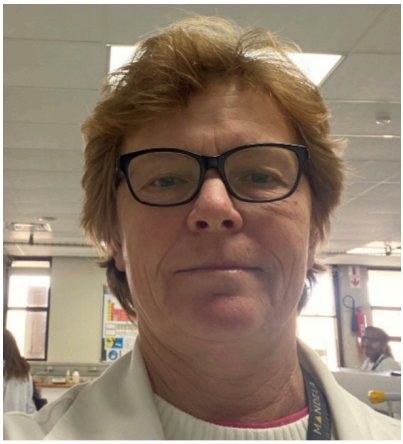
Economic and Business Sciences

Khetho, a lecturer in accounting sciences, believes his teaching is grounded in what he conceptualises as Cinematic Education: Taking Students to the Scene. He believes students should not merely learn about the professional world; they should experience it. Guided by three principles, humanise, integrate and immerse, he creates inclusive learning spaces where students feel valued and connect taxation to their practical experiences. "Through real-world stories, documentaries and simulated professional dilemmas, I immerse students in authentic contexts before introducing technical analysis," he explains. He integrates knowledge across disciplines, encouraging students to question assumptions, collaborate and exercise professional judgement. Khetho's end goal is to develop graduates who are not only technically competent but also critically engaged, socially conscious and capable of navigating the complexities of professional practice.

"I do not simply prepare students for the professional world. I bring that world into the classroom for them to experience."

RESEARCH EXCELLENCE AWARDS





Prof Benita Barton

Chemistry

"Our research aims to provide the chemical industry with greener and more sustainable ways of separating chemicals that occur as mixtures. These include compounds, such as xylenes and ethylbenzene, one of which is essential in the manufacture of food and beverage containers," says Professor Barton. At present, these separation processes rely heavily on fossil fuels, a finite and depleting resource. As the world seeks to reduce its dependence on fossil fuels, there is an urgent need to develop more sustainable alternatives. Her research therefore focuses on finding simpler, more cost-effective separation methods that generate less waste and, importantly, use recyclable materials. "By developing these greener approaches, we hope to contribute to a more sustainable and resource-efficient chemical industry."

"Helping postgraduate students grow into effective scientists is a privilege and deeply rewarding."



Prof Farouk Smith

Mechatronics

Professor Smith's research focuses on improving the reliability of electronic systems operating in harsh radiation environments, particularly those used in satellites and other space-based technologies. High-energy particles in space can disrupt or damage microelectronic devices and field-programmable gate arrays (FPGAs) that control critical systems. His research examines the mechanisms through which radiation affects these technologies and develops practical techniques to detect, tolerate and reduce these failures. This work contributes to more dependable and cost-effective space systems, which are increasingly important for communications, navigation, Earth observation, disaster management, agriculture, and environmental monitoring. By improving electronics resilience, Prof Smith's research strengthens South Africa's ability to develop and operate advanced technologies while supporting the broader societal benefits that flow from reliable space-based services.

"Turning scientific challenges into practical technologies that make complex systems more reliable and useful to society is my passion."

NELSON MANDELA UNIVERSITY EMERGING EXCELLENT TEACHER OF THE YEAR AWARD

NELSON MANDELA UNIVERSITY EMERGING RESEARCHER OF THE YEAR AWARD

NELSON MANDELA UNIVERSITY EXCELLENT TEACHER OF THE YEAR AWARD



NELSON MANDELA UNIVERSITY DISTINGUISHED TEACHER AWARD



Prof Subeshini Moodley

Media and Communication

Professor Moodley views teaching, research and engagement as inextricably linked and deeply embedded in the theoretical framework of scholarly activism. "Emerging from a postcolonial perspective, it questions the role of the scholar and the emphasis on textualism that has characterised Western approaches to academia," she says. Scholarly activism argues for an engaged scholar, who focuses the application of knowledge generated through the academy, in marginalised spaces and amongst individuals falling outside the lines of representation, to address issues of social justice. Prof Moodley's teaching philosophy is therefore grounded in a transformative learning and teaching practice that prides itself on the critical training of vocationally prepared and socially responsible scholars and agents of change.

"Success is not defined by accolades, but by the positive impact you've had on those around you."

NELSON MANDELA UNIVERSITY RESEARCHER OF THE YEAR AWARD



Prof Janine Adams

Botany

The research of Professor Adams focuses on the conservation and management of estuaries, working across the science-policy-practice continuum. "We investigate blue carbon ecosystems, including salt marsh, mangroves and seagrasses, as well as responses to climate change, coastal water quality management and harmful algal blooms. Through action-oriented research, I contribute to the restoration of estuaries to enhance the delivery of multiple ecosystem services and strengthen their resilience to environmental change," she says. Prof Adams places particular emphasis on communicating scientific knowledge about aquatic environments in ways that are relevant and accessible to managers and policymakers, supporting evidence-based decision-making and effective environmental stewardship. Her research is aligned with the transformative goals of the UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration and the UN Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development (2021–2030).

"Our transdisciplinary research turns knowledge into action for the sustainable management of estuaries, where rivers meet the sea."

OUR VISION AND MISSION

Our vision and mission define our long-term aims and purpose for existence.

Vision

To be a dynamic African university, recognised for its leadership in generating cutting-edge knowledge for a sustainable future.

Mission

To offer a diverse range of quality education opportunities that will make a critical and constructive contribution to regional, national and global sustainability.

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