A MEAL A DAY - KEEPING HUNGER AT BAY

THE UNCERTAIN ROAD AHEAD

FOR HIGHER EDUCATION

POWERING THROUGH UNIVERSITY RANKINGS

UKZN’s 2020 Mail & Guardian Top Young South Africans

LEADING THE WAY IN AFRICAN CONTEMPORARY DANCE

INSPIRING GREATNESS

A PUBLICATION OF THE UNIVERSITY OF KWAZULU-NATAL
MAKING YOUR HEALTH A PRIORITY

Take advantage of our new Employee Wellness Programme brought to you in partnership with ICAS Southern Africa as our service provider. Also available to your immediate family members living in the same household as you, this service is a professionally-managed wellness programme which will assist you in achieving personal well-being - in your work and at home.

The following services are available:

- 24-hour telephonic counselling with a qualified counsellor
- Professional counselling in the area you live in (virtual for the COVID-19 national lockdown duration)
- Life management (legal, financial and family care) information and guidance
- Telephonic health and medical support services
- Access to an online e-Care service that provides a wealth of health and wellness-related information

We understand and place great importance on the holistic wellbeing of all our employees and as such, the UKZN Wellness Programme is there to help you prevent and mitigate whatever challenges you may face.

To access the service, call the UKZN toll free line on 0800 254 255 or via the chat facility on the ICAS On-the-Go App available on Google Play or the Apple App Store. The UKZN code is UKZ001.

Employees are encouraged to log onto the e-Care portal and complete the Wellness Assessment and access many articles on various wellness topics. e-Care services can be accessed via https://www.ecare4me.com/portal/Member/LogIn/ukzn

Group sessions will be organised as and when appropriate.
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Disclaimer: Information was collected at different times during the compilation of this publication.
WE had a vision - to create a publication that would highlight the identity and greatness of UKZN by digging deeper into the pockets of excellence situated all over the University. While we do well in terms of positive media exposure, we wanted to do justice to the people - and developments - that continuously cement the greatness of UKZN, and so In-Depth magazine was born.

We hope that this new window into UKZN will be informative and thought-provoking. The editorial and design teams were diligent in conceptualising and delivering quality content with a design that will inspire and awaken you.

The outbreak of the Coronavirus (COVID-19) has sent shockwaves across the globe, leaving behind a trail of destruction to the financial and social spheres. The Higher Education sector was not spared from this carnage. Our interview with UKZN’s Vice-Chancellor and Principal, Professor Nana Poku, gives us a glimpse into what possibly lies ahead for the sector, and this University this year and beyond.

The second lead feature, “A Meal a Day–Keeping Hunger at Bay” is another interesting read which speaks to UKZN’s ambitious goal of ridding student hunger within its campuses – a challenging matter that largely goes unnoticed in the Higher Education space.

This issue also features many of our talented and innovative people. From Professor Christina Trois who was recently knighted by her homeland for displaying excellence in her field, to Professor Ncoza Dlova whose collaborative research led to a world-first medical discovery, UKZN is clearly teeming with incredible individuals who continue to make us shine on local and global stages.

We are also proud of the fact that we continue to feature in leading global university rankings which pit our performance as a University against other Higher Education institutions on a global scale. We’ve unpacked this on page 9.

We had envisaged that the publication be published a few times in the year however, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, we will play this by ear. We want to hear from you, so do send us feedback via the email address provided under the acknowledgements section.

Until next time, happy reading!

Ms Normah Zondo

Acting Executive Director: Corporate Relations
The year 2020 saw the Higher Education sector face an unprecedented challenge – caught off-guard by the novel Coronavirus (COVID-19) as it made its historical debut around the world.

Given COVID-19’s massive effects on the social and financial fronts, the sector has confronted much uncertainty.

“Challenging probably counts as an understatement,” said Professor Nana Poku, UKZN Vice-Chancellor and Principal. “It’s probably a little early to get the full measure of the pandemic’s impacts, and besides, our responses have been a matter of first thing’s first; we’ve had to divert all the resources and managerial attention necessary to ensure everyone’s safety and to maintain our degree courses through online platforms.”

With strict national lockdowns implemented globally to curb the spread of the virus, teaching and learning (T&L) took the biggest knock in the face of social distancing. This saw increased use of and reliance on technological pedagogical methods to ensure the continuity of T&L. In June last year, UKZN implemented the Remote Multimodal Teaching and Learning Plan, a blended approach to T&L. Learning content was made available to all students via online and offline platforms (including preloaded flash drives, laptops or paper based interactive learning content).

Academic content was moved onto virtual platforms to enable students to successfully complete the academic year. Equitable access, and student centeredness and involvement were some of the principles at the heart of the Plan. The University later announced that online learning would be the primary T&L mode for the remainder of the 2020 academic year, with the exception of controlled laboratory/practical sessions. To ensure the safety of students and staff, there would be no contact lectures during the second semester of 2020.

“It seems likely that at least some of the innovations introduced under the pressures of the pandemic might serve us well once it is behind us. This has been the experience of many universities as teaching through online platforms becomes more familiar and sophisticated.

Our plan is to extend the online T&L experiences to suitable blended learning modes or in their entirety where appropriate. It is not possible to foresee the longer-term consequences of our COVID-19 adaptations, but the continuity and integrity of our degree courses and the quality and standing of our research will remain paramount. Any changes brought about by
The University’s finances have not been in a robust state for some considerable time. We are 93% reliant on the fiscus for our survival and 84% of all our current income immediately goes out the door in expenses. Over the past two decades, our third stream income has declined by 82%, while academic staff remuneration as a percentage of total remuneration has shrunk to 32% – a reduction of nearly 100% over the past two decades. Worryingly, our headcount for non-academic staff has nearly doubled since 2015; making our personnel expenditure ratio as a percentage of our government subsidy unsustainably high at 96%. In early 2020, we had to resort to requesting our student body to pay at least 15% as a contribution towards their historical debt to enable the University to have sufficient liquidity to meet basic commitments such as salary payments and payments to suppliers and service providers. Such was the already deteriorated state of the Institution’s financial condition prior to the additional financial requirements necessitated by our response to COVID-19.

“The initial analysis of the financial impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the 2020 financial year revealed that the University needed to identify immediate actions to mitigate the financial risks and to ensure that the estimated deficits did not increase. It is therefore necessary for UKZN to carefully review all its activities with a view to implementing the necessary changes to contain costs whilst also aggressively seeking ways to generate income to protect excellent scholarship. We have both limited options and limited time to effect the required changes. Some obviously outdated or wasteful expenditure has already been eliminated, but my preliminary studies reveal that the clearest road to greater efficiency and improved operational performance will come about through a comprehensive and detailed institutional review, based on which agenda-setting discussion and planning can begin,” Poku said, adding that part of the strategic thinking is to ensure the restoration of third stream income - that has been declining for a number of years - in line with the University’s intellectual prowess and creativity.

Asked about the possibility of a decline in first-time enrolments as a result of the pandemic, Poku said while this was not yet clear, the number of candidates writing the final National Senior Certificate exams (in 2020) had remained similar to that of previous years. “If there is a decline in enrollments, I expect it would be sector-wide, an outcome of the indirect effects of the pandemic. We cannot foresee the longer-term consequences of our COVID-19 adaptations, but the continuity and integrity of our degree courses and the quality and standing of our research will remain paramount.”

“We have contingency plans, but as the COVID-19 outbreak demonstrates, the unexpected can take large and threatening forms. However, our success in maintaining our operations through this once-in-a-lifetime health emergency should give all of us confidence in both our planning and our adaptability. We will face whatever 2021 brings with equal resilience, focus and determination,” said Poku.

Our plan is to extend the online T&L experiences to suitable blended learning modes or in their entirety where appropriate.

It is not possible to foresee the longer-term consequences of our COVID-19 adaptations, but the continuity and integrity of our degree courses and the quality and standing of our research will remain paramount.
A meal a day for every hungry UKZN student – that’s the ambitious goal of an initiative which hopes to eventually rid the Institution’s campuses of food insecurity.

Championing the drive is Professor Albert Modi who estimates that when the University is operating at its full capacity – without COVID-19 restrictions – up to 75% of the total UKZN student complement of nearly 50 000 arrive on campuses hungry, causing a variety of problems. Students who suffer from food insecurity can experience psychological and emotional stress which negatively affects their health, motivation and academic potential.

While UKZN has arrangements in place to assist food insecure students, clearly a lot more needs to be done; and that is where Modi and his team are determined to make a significant difference in the future when hopefully the Coronavirus is less of a threat.

Modi, who is the Deputy-Vice Chancellor and Head of the College of Agriculture Engineering and Science, and Director of the UKZN Pietermaritzburg campus, defined food security as a situation where adequate quantities of food of an acceptable standard are distributed correctly. “South Africa is seen by many as having food security, however, the reason why there is still insecurity is because the food is not distributed correctly. At UKZN, both access to food and food quality are major challenges for our students,” said Modi.

About 60% of UKZN’s students are funded by the National Student Financial Aid Scheme (NSFAS) grants which give them about R77 500 a year to cover their study costs as well as food. In reality, the income does not cover all their expenses and they go short on wholesome food, often spending on non-essential items and entertainment.

Another 15%, termed the “missing middle”, do not qualify for NSFAS funding as they are regarded by the State to be from homes able to afford university education when in reality are struggling financially. “The danger in the “missing middle” category is that there is a ‘hidden hunger’ situation among students because they are battling financially, their parents are struggling, and no-one can define it clearly.

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**KEEPING HUNGER AT BAY – COLLECTIVE EFFORT NEEDED TO CONQUER FOOD INSECURITY**

Words by Greg Dardagan
Thus, “missing middle” students also go short on food,” said Modi.

“In my estimation and sticking strictly to the definition of food security, only about 25% of our students arrive on campus with full tummies.”

Modi said UKZN did not have the correct or adequate facilities in place to provide hungry students with food. “We only respond to instances where a person goes to the student support section and reports they are hungry and need a meal. The problem here is that social stigma is linked to food insecurity, so students prefer to keep their situation relatively confidential.”

Currently, UKZN provides hungry students with food parcels as well as food vouchers with a value of between R20 and R150.

“Clearly what is being done at present is not sufficient and I am therefore championing a plan to provide a meal a day for all hungry students which will start in 2021. It is a big assignment and we will begin slowly but I am determined to see it implemented,” said Modi, who at the time of this interview said he was putting together task teams of experts from all four UKZN colleges “so we will have specialists in all fields working together on the initiative.

“We will also approach our stakeholders to assist with sponsorship in whatever way they can and are also determined to make students part of the initiative wherever possible.”

“We still have to decide whether the meals will be prepared off campus and supplied to us or whether we will create facilities here to cook the food. In the old days of university study in South Africa, there were dining halls where prepared food was served, similar to what is done at boarding schools, so maybe that is an option for us,” he said.

Modi said they planned to introduce soup kitchens run by sponsors and would encourage students to use modern innovations such as vertical farming to grow their own vegetables. Another idea was the large-scale production of vegetables on UKZN’s Ukulinga Research Farm near Pietermaritzburg.

“So, imagine a situation of a meal-a-day scheme at the core of the fight against food insecurity supplemented by effective and sustainable initiatives such as food parcels, meal vouchers, soup kitchens and vegetable gardens. This is possible with the support of our alumni and other stakeholders.”

Modi said some of the finance for the initiatives would be available from the fairly new UKZN Hardship Fund to address food insecurity and other issues during the COVID-19 pandemic.

“We will also coach students on how to budget and spend their money wisely as well as educating them about the importance of a diet of wholesome food. They need mentorship on how to use money efficiently and effectively. We will popularise this endeavour using social media in a campaign called #StretchMyNSFASFundRand.

“This campaign will help students realise that they could solve a significant amount of their food security problems if they spend their money wisely,” he said.

Modi said the campaign will start gradually this year (2021) and grow with the help of all parties. “On 16 October 2021 when we celebrate World Food Security Day, I want to be able to brag about all the successes we have had at UKZN,” he said.”
UKZN makes CWUR Global 2000 List

In April 2021, UKZN was announced as one of the top 2.5% universities out of 19,788 worldwide as the Centre for World University Rankings (CWUR) released its 2021-22 Global 2000 List. Nationally and regionally (South Africa and Africa respectively), this puts UKZN in fourth place.

The CWUR - which publishes the largest academic rankings of global universities - is a leading consulting organisation providing policy advice, strategic insights, and consulting services to governments and universities to improve educational and research outcomes. CWUR publishes authoritative global university rankings, known for objectivity, transparency, and consistency, which are trusted by students, academics, university administrators, and governments from around the world.

UKZN tied for #332 in the world’s top universities in the 2021 US News & World Report’s Best Global Universities rankings. The Best Global Universities rankings measure academic research performance, such as highly cited research papers, and the global and regional reputations of nearly 1,500 of the world's top universities from more than 80 countries. The University placed fourth out of 57 institutions in Africa and ranked #61 out of 250 institutions for space science, based on research performance in the field.

Sunday Times Gen Next Awards

UKZN made it into the 2020 annual Sunday Times Gen Next Awards, taking the fifth spot in the Coolest Universities 2020 category. The Sunday Times Gen Next survey has established itself as the leading barometer of what South African youths find on-trend and delivers insights that are valued by brand managers, advertising, and marketing professionals. Brands that made it onto the this year’s list include Capitec, Avon, WhatsApp, Apple, Uzalo, Always, DStv, Engen and Woolworths Food.
UKZN ranked fourth in South Africa, after the University of Cape Town, the University of the Witwatersrand and Stellenbosch University. The seventh annual US News & World Report Best Global Universities Rankings compare how universities perform globally, providing insight for prospective international students looking to study abroad. The 2021 Best Global Universities rankings are based on data and metrics provided by Clarivate, a research and analytics firm.

UKZN - for the first time ever - ranked among the top 400 best performing universities in the world according to the latest 2020/2021 Times Higher Education (THE) rankings. UKZN was placed in the 351-400 band, a significant improvement from its previous ranking in the top 500 (401 – 500) in the 2019/2020 cycle. This achievement places UKZN in fourth position among South African universities. More than 1 400 universities in 92 countries were assessed in the Times Higher Education (THE) World University Rankings 2020/2021 for research-led universities. THE uses 13 calibrated performance indicators that measure an institution’s performance which include teaching, research, citations, industry funding and international outlook. UKZN scored at the top of the comparable scale for research and citations.

UKZN secures number one spot in Africa on the Times Higher Education (THE) Young University Rankings which list the world’s best universities that are 50 years old or younger.

UKZN ranks 49th in the Times Higher Education (THE) Emerging Economies Rankings which rate universities in 43 countries classed as emerging economies. It uses the same 13 performance indicators as the World University Rankings, measuring teaching, research, research impact, industry income and international outlook, but the weightings are adjusted to reflect the characteristics of this group of universities.

UKZN features in the 401+ band of the Times Higher Education (THE) Arts and Humanities Subject Rankings which list the top universities in arts and humanities around the world and are based on the same range of 13 performance indicators used in the overall World University Rankings 2020, with the methodology recalibrated for each subject.

UKZN’s Graduate School of Business and Leadership (GSB&L) is ranked second overall in the Professional Market Research Africa (PMR).africa annual national survey of Accredited Business Schools offering MBA degrees in South Africa.
UKZN’S LATEST M&G TOP YOUNG SOUTH AFRICANS LIST

Each year in its prestigious Top 200 Young South Africans list, the Mail & Guardian (M&G) profiles fascinating young people – under 35 – who have stood above the rest in showing us what the country can expect in its future. A number of UKZN alumni are listed in the latest list.
It seems as if every day we take the wonders of modern medicine for granted but, as the world is gripped by the COVID-19 pandemic, we’re reminded of the need for talented researchers behind medical advancements. Minds like that of Ms Afsana Kajee, who works at the National Health Laboratory Services, the largest diagnostic pathology service in South Africa that supports the national and provincial health departments.

Kajee completed her Master’s in Medical Science at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, overcoming many obstacles and trials.

"Do not limit yourself. You can be anything that you want as long as you stay passionate and dedicated to your goals," she says, adding that there is value in breaking big goals into smaller ones, which brings a better perspective and a sense of accomplishment.

Kajee wants to help humanity through science, and recognises that every small bit is a contribution, even if it is a failure. Having thick skin against criticism, failure and rejection is her recipe for success.

Kajee’s career is littered with a host of acknowledgements of her work, among them when she was chosen from a group of the most promising local scientists to be trained by international scientists.

She is driven to excel by the satisfaction of making her mother proud. She hopes her research will translate into shorter diagnosis times for tuberculosis and finding the best treatment for TB using novel drugs that expose people to the least toxicity.

During the early stages of the COVID-19 pandemic, Dr Angela Hartwig was the only doctor on duty at Adelaide Hospital in the Eastern Cape. Though pregnant, she continued to treat patients and assist nurses — giving direction from afar, even after she tested positive for the virus — shortly before she gave birth. Now on maternity leave, she is very much still present, assisting telephonically wherever she can.

Her most memorable moment over this period? When the hospital staff came to stand outside her window with a message of support after she tested positive. Throughout this period, Hartwig was also working tirelessly behind the scenes: preparing the hospital for patients, and attempting to mitigate the spread within the clinic, as well as educating and motivating the hospital staff to help them cope during these difficult times.

“I want to not only inspire but empower people to bring change to their workplaces and communities, to know that everyone doing their part together can make a difference.”

If her tenacity over the past few months hasn’t left you feeling misty-eyed, perhaps her words of advice in the midst of trying times will. “Don’t let yourself become frustrated by things out of your control: you may not be able to change the circumstances around you, but work to make a difference in the areas you can control. Do what you can with what you have, do it with joy, and don’t feel bad about what you can’t do.”

Rosie Goddard | mg.co.za
The staff of the small, rural Manguzi Hospital near Kosi Bay in KwaZulu-Natal has become skilled in caring for COVID-19 patients, thanks to dedicated professionals such as Dr Lionel de Gouveia.

It received its first case of the virus in March, when de Gouveia was already planning and implementing its pandemic response strategy. “I had to write the protocols for the nurses and clinics because the concept of a pandemic was strange to them,” he says. Manguzi suffers the usual problems afflicting rural hospitals, but it was well equipped with protective equipment, as it was already the district’s specialist isolation centre for diseases such as Ebola.

De Gouveia arrived for his community service in 2015 and never left. “I’m very paediatric-centred, so you grow up with these children and become part of the family,” he says. He’s a Grade 1 Medical Officer with additional diplomas in Paediatrics, HIV and Family Medicine. He was already taking a diploma in Tropical Medicine when COVID-19 struck. “Now the thing I’m studying is the thing I’m dealing with every day,” he says.

De Gouveia expanded the hospital’s four-bed isolation unit to include 24 adult beds, 20 beds for patients under investigation and eight paediatric isolation beds.

He also ensured the medical teams were trained to screen, test and manage COVID-19 patients and implemented proper record keeping for test results and contact tracing. He worked with community testing teams to test, teach and allay anxiety, and is a constant source of up-to-date information.

His responsibilities also include manning the Respiratory/Fever Clinic, overseeing suspected and positive COVID-19 patients, and liaising with the National Institute for Communicable Diseases and other hospitals that refer COVID-19 patients to Manguzi.

His mother is a microbiologist managing a COVID-19 laboratory at the NCID, so medical expertise runs in the family.

Not many people even know what catalysis and organometallic chemistry are, but Dr Mzamo Shozi is an expert in the field, and his knowledge will help push us into a green energy future.

His work involves the conversion of sugar alcohols found in plants to valuable chemicals used in the fuel industry.

This wasn’t what Shosi first decided to learn: he applied to study Medicine at the University of KwaZulu-Natal. But when he was accepted, he turned it down and decided to study Chemistry instead.

“Over the years, I came to realise that my passion was actually Chemistry, which saw me progress all the way to a PhD. I had only wanted to do Medicine because it is one of the more sought-after degrees.”

In 2018, Shozi was awarded a Fulbright scholarship to conduct research at the University of California in the United States — a long way away from where he grew up in Umlazi, KwaZulu-Natal.

He says: “I grew up in a township, and I guess I see myself as one of the examples of ‘it doesn’t matter where you come from’. You can be what you want to be when you work hard for it.”

Shozi says the future South Africa he wants to see is one in which “young, Black candidates in the fields of STEM [science, technology, engineering and mathematics] are not only afforded more career opportunities, but are also taking up more senior positions”.

To that end, he is working towards becoming a professor before he turns 40. “I know what is required of me to get there. So every day I’m driven to achieve this and continuously work towards it.”

Sarah Smit | mg.co.za
According to Murphy’s Law, anything that can go wrong, will go wrong and Mr Jhono Bennett and his fellow students learned that lesson the hard way. In 2010, led by the Slovo Park Community Development Forum (SPCDF), Bennett, his colleagues and a group of Slovo Park residents spent a university term upgrading an abandoned 1994 voting structure into a co-designed multi-function community resource as part of their final year in architectural studies.

Weeks later, alongside the Slovo Hall build team that included Jacqueline Cuyler and SPCDF leader Mohau Melani, Bennett founded the non-profit design-led social enterprise: 1to1 – Agency of Engagement. The organisation aims to support the various grassroots and national level forces that are addressing the post-1994 symptoms of spatial inequality in South Africa through socio-technical design support and projects.

Bennett says his practice works towards spatial justice and aims to critically address the legacy of apartheid spatial planning that deliberately kept South African society not only economically unequal, but spatially separate.

“I believe in the power of our urban spaces to address patterns, and provide a platform to develop new and inclusive patterns of sharing, making and growing together as a nation,” he says.

Bennett is reading for his MPhil/PhD in architectural design at the University College London. He obtained his Bachelor of Architectural Studies at the University of KwaZulu-Natal and his honours and master’s at the University of Pretoria.

Thando Maeko | mg.co.za

His growing list of accomplishments is impressive on its own, but it’s his drive and forward-thinking that make Berlin-based Mr Keshin Govender stand out. His job as Creative Director, Head of Strategic Initiatives at German multinational conglomerate Siemens brings with it the unique ability and responsibility to shape the future — not only through the ways technology is used, but also through the transformation of Siemens’ content from a global perspective.

Govender is among a growing number of South Africans working in markets overseas but in an age where a global perspective is paramount to business success, the unique worldview and experience offered by talent from Africa is becoming more valuable.

Early in his career, he realised that it’s difficult to make a positive contribution by maintaining the status quo or only speaking when spoken to: “To reinvent my environment I needed to bring diversity of thought and action to the boardroom,” Govender says.

The lessons learned in a cutthroat office environment informed him of the things that needed changing, both about the world of business and his personal development. He believes that by avoiding the trap of seeking perfection or validation, people give themselves continuous opportunities to learn. He suggests, “acknowledge that what you know today is not as much as what you will know tomorrow”.

Speaking of tomorrow and shaping the future, Govender grasps the responsibility he has in sowing the seeds for a better world in which his daughter can grow up. “My hope is that the South African spirit of collective wellbeing and inventiveness is unleashed for the world to learn from. We have more to offer the world than we realise.”

Scott Dodds | mg.co.za
Asked what her biggest surprise has been on her personal journey, Ms Malangu Blose says, “Being a PhD candidate was never really part of the plan. So I could say that that on its own has been quite the surprise for me.” Blose’s surprise will benefit the Medical community when she completes her research into vaccine-induced immunity from HIV.

Blose started as a National Research Foundation intern at the University of the Witwatersrand, where she attained her MSc degree in Biochemistry and Cell Biology. She subsequently worked as a research associate in multiple research projects involving stillbirth, and child and maternal health at the Respiratory and Meningeal Pathogens Research Unit at Chris Hani Baragwanath Academic Hospital and Royal Bafokeng Yeast Project.

Her current research aims to provide insight into vaccinating schedules for HIV-exposed individuals to ensure long-term vaccine induced protection. This study seeks to fill a knowledge gap in South Africa on the importance of vaccinating teenagers and infants infected by or exposed to HIV.

She says, “It is my wish that our health system can get to a point where effective vaccines offering long term protection are available. The world is currently fighting a pandemic and the search for SARS-Cov-2 vaccines is high at the moment. I hope that through our work, working together with other departments, South Africa as a country can be better equipped to improve the quality of life by improving immunity.”

One would assume her proudest memory would be a recent one. Instead, she takes us back to school, saying: “(Winning) the first prize for a Maths Olympiad back in Grade 8. The look on my grandma’s face as I went up on stage to receive my award was priceless.”

Max Dylan Lazarus | mg.co.za

Mr Philani Potwana is the person to thank for giving people the ability to withdraw money from their bank accounts without using their bank cards. The cardless cash withdrawal system led to FNB being named the most innovative bank in the world in 2012.

Having led the team that came up with the innovation, Potwana says he learned one of his most important lessons, “acknowledging the team of people around me and that we are stronger together”.

He started his career at FNB straight after completing his Bachelor’s degree at the University of KwaZulu-Natal and was chosen for the bank’s graduate programme. At the age of 20, he was appointed as a trainee systems analyst.

Potwana is FNB’s youngest chief executive and looks after the bank’s feeder base of customers earning up to R120 000 a year. He believes that growing up in the rural Eastern Cape puts him in the best position to understand the needs of the bank’s customers. “We have an incredible opportunity to educate and help them with their finances. This is not just a job for me,” he says.

He is interested in development and imparting financial management principles to consumers, and mentors learners in Alexandra, Johannesburg.

Thando Maeko | mg.co.za
“Striking a balance and integration of my intelligence, spiritual and emotional quotient has been very important to me,” says Ms Preshanthie Naicker-Manick. The deputy director at the Department of Environment, Forestry and Fisheries also has her hands full as a mother and a Master’s candidate in environmental microbiology at the University of KwaZulu-Natal.

Naicker-Manick credits her experience as a mother for augmenting her already established and extensive academic experience. “Being a leader is an innate trait for me. However, being a mom has shaped me to create my leadership blueprint based on the principles of self-confidence and empathy,” she explains. The balance that she’s established allows her to use her life experiences and advanced knowledge in sciences to provide a service for the benefit of all life forms. Spiritual experiences are vital for a well-rounded self, and have allowed her to establish the direction of her spiritual compass.

“Being on pilgrimage in India with my parents, and singing Christmas carols with my guru has certainly been my proudest moment for my mind and soul,” she says. “My spiritual experience during the pilgrimage has set my true North in my spiritual compass.”

While a five-year plan is effective as a goal-oriented guide, Naicker-Manick suggests that living in the moment and riding the right wave can benefit your career and personal life in ways you might not expect. She believes it’s her responsibility to serve South Africa through her knowledge and experience in the environmental and small business sector. Focusing on inclusive development for women, youth and those with disabilities gives Naicker-Manick the drive to excel, and ensures her impact will be felt across generations.

Dr Sandika Baboolal is a consultant ophthalmic surgeon, lecturer and PhD candidate, as well as the first South African to be accepted into the Glaucoma Fellowship at Moorfields Eye Hospital in London, a prestigious and internationally renowned institute in the field of eye care.

“Glaucoma is the leading cause of irreversible blindness globally and most severely affects those of African descent,” Baboolal explains. “I was inspired to apply as a consultant in South Africa, treating advanced and complex glaucoma patients with limited options. There are no similar programmes offered in South Africa or on the African continent.”

Most surgical fields are male-dominated, and ophthalmology is no different. Baboolal’s presence as a researcher, practitioner, and teacher has inspired many other young women of colour to enter surgical specialisations, and she has directly helped many of them along their path. “My proudest moment is being able to return to my undergraduate university, ten years after I graduated with my first Medical degree, as a consultant ophthalmic surgeon and lecturer,” Baboolal says. “This position helped me mentor other female surgeons of colour en route to becoming specialist eye surgeons. It is not an easy road.”

Upon her return from the fellowship in London, Baboolal aims to work on improving the academic and clinical resources for surgical trainees. She also hopes to work in the public sector, saying: “With the skills learnt, I also aim to improve the outcomes of advanced and complex glaucoma patients, helping to more effectively preserve their sight.” What drives her to work so hard? “Being able to make a meaningful contribution to the lives of others through striving to heal, being kind, mentoring and inspiring definitely drive me towards excellence.”

Scott Dodds | mg.co.za

Dr Sandika Baboolal | mg.co.za
Mr Sicelo Bhengu was deputy head prefect of a prestigious school and, naturally, when he matriculated there were expectations about his career choice. It came as a disappointment to some when he chose teaching. This did not deter him from fulfilling his purpose and doing what he is passionate about. Today, Bhengu is Deputy Headmaster at one of the most prestigious schools in the country, Southdowns College.

His wish is for young people to take their education seriously. His belief in education as a tool to unlock one’s potential was why he co-founded Linking Notes in 2011, a finishing school that helps young people to improve their matric results. In 2015, he also co-founded Catholic Youth Development, which fundraises to pay the registration fees of young people wishing to study at university.

“To a person younger than me: choose a career that you are passionate about and not one that people believe is the right fit for you … Don’t let expectations from the people around you deter you from fulfilling your purpose,” he says.

After all, if Bhengu had dwelled on others’ disapproval of his career choice he would have ended up in a job that he did not like and would be miserable. He says even though he is confident that he has worked hard to be where he is, the biggest surprise of his career is holding such a senior management role at a relatively young age, in an environment where he thought all obstacles were against him. Bhengu is currently completing his Master’s degree in Leadership and Policy Education at the University of the Witwatersrand.

Dr Sulaiman Patel says that being one the youngest ever doctoral graduates in Electronic Engineering from the University of KwaZulu-Natal counts as a proud but humbling moment. What made the moment more special was seeing how his achievements were inspiring and motivating his community.

Thinking of himself as representing more than himself but also his family, community and religion is something that gives Patel the motivation to excel.

Getting to where he is wasn’t an easy journey but Patel had support and encouragement from the people around him. At the end of his master’s, he experienced personal problems but with support from his supervisor, he was able to produce work that was presented at a conference in Europe. His paper also received an award at the conference.

“Knowing the personal challenges that I had to overcome, receiving this award was both the biggest surprise of my career and one of my proudest moments,” he says.

One of the things Patel has learned is to never be afraid of making mistakes. He believes mistakes should be used as opportunities to grow and improve.

Patel doesn’t just want to use what he knows to get ahead for himself, but to make a difference in the world.

“I believe that technology is the greatest tool for uplifting our country, which has really been highlighted during the national lockdown,” he says.

Fatima Moosa | mg.co.za
CHEERS!
BOOZE
THAT
COULD
BOOST
YOUR SEX
LIFE

Words by Taschica Pillay

“IT provokes the desire, but takes away the performance,” said William Shakespeare 400 years ago in Macbeth of alcohol’s impact on sexual performance.

While this statement holds true, especially when one imbibes heavily, research undertaken by Professor Shahidul Islam, an associate professor in the Department of Biochemistry at UKZN, and postgraduate students, Ms Rebecca Reddy and Dr Ochuko L Erukainure of the Federal Institute of Industrial Research, Lagos, Nigeria, has shown that Raffia Palm wine could make erectile dysfunction and impotency in diabetic men a thing of the past.

Palm wine is an alcoholic beverage created from the sap of various species of palm trees such as Date Palms and Coconut Palms. Known as Oguro and Ngwo in the Nigerian Yoruba and Igbo languages, Raffia Palm wine, which is produced from the sap of Raphia hookeri, is a natural beverage commonly consumed in West Africa and some parts of Asia. Sweet in taste, it has many bioactive chemicals such as minerals, vitamins, nutrients and carbohydrates. While it has been used socially and in folkloric medicinal plant treatments for several ailments such as measles and to boost libido and breast milk production, its effect on diabetes-associated oxidative testicular injury had not been previously investigated.

“In Nigeria, Raffia Palm wine is used as a traditional drink but it is also claimed by traditional healers to have many health benefits. We conducted the study to see how the beverage would perform in diabetic conditions,” said Islam who has a PhD in Nutritional Science and has continued research in nutrition and metabolism, with a focus on diabetic metabolism.

The drink was administered to two groups of diabetic rats at doses of 150mg and 300mg/kg body weight. The research was conducted in accordance with the strict guidelines and approval of UKZN’s Animal Ethics Committee. An untreated diabetic group was used as a negative control while a metformin (prescription medication to treat diabetes) fed group served as a positive control. The rats were sacrificed after five weeks of treatment, and their testes were harvested thereafter.

The study found that treatment with Raffia Palm wine reduced blood glucose...
levels and that there was less evidence of oxidative stress on testicular tissue.

The results, which were published in the *Journal of Food Biochemistry*, suggest that Raffia Palm wine has the therapeutic potential to protect against the effects of Type 2 diabetes on testicular functions and morphology as well as against diabetes-induced testicular injury in Type 2 diabetic rats.

“Damage to the testes, the organ that produces sex hormones and sperm, has been recognised as one of the complications of diabetes. If left untreated, it will lead to sexual problems ranging from poor libido to erectile dysfunction, followed by infertility. If you don’t control your blood glucose levels optimally, complications for men are erectile dysfunction. Raffia Palm wine is available throughout the year and it may be of great benefit in managing diabetes associated with male infertility,” said Islam.

The research team has identified a Raffia Palm forest on the KwaZulu-Natal north coast and plans to conduct further research on the benefits of the drink. “The plan would be to commercialise the product,” said Islam.

However, they cautioned against excessive consumption of the alcoholic beverage. “We still need to investigate the optimum and safer effective dose of palm wine,” cautioned Islam.

Islam, who was chair of UKZN’s Animal Research Ethics committee for four years, is also developing animal models for research purposes.

"Damage to the testes, the organ that produces sex hormones and sperm, has been recognised as one of the complications of diabetes. If left untreated, it will lead to sexual problems ranging from poor libido to erectile dysfunction, followed by infertility. If you don’t control your blood glucose levels optimally, complications for men are erectile dysfunction."
RISE DAME TROIS!
A KNIGHT WHO SHINES
WITH DISTINCTIONS

Words by Colleen Dardagan

With a raft of remarkable achievements already under her belt, UKZN Professor of Environmental Engineering and a Knight of the Italian Republic, Cristina Trois is now focused on developing unique answers to Durban’s waste management crisis using the intersect between research and the creative arts.

“I have started the Neptune Project in partnership with Umcebo, the Waste to Art gallery, the Durban University of Technology’s Fashion Design Department, and Durban’s Green Corridors programme to respond to calls, particularly by young people, that governments, academia and industry act against plastic pollution while creating wise cities that use the feedback from their citizens to implement smart solutions to the climate crisis,” she said.

Trois who was born in Sardinia – the second largest island in Italy – and is the South African Research Chair (SARCHi) in Waste and Climate Change was the first female Dean and Head of UKZN’s School of Engineering where she served for over a decade.

During late 2019, she was awarded a Knighthood and the attendant title of Cavaliere del Lavoro for receiving the Ordine al Merito del Lavoro (Order of Merit for Labour), which is the highest honour the Italian Republic bestows on its citizens. Trois’ achievements also include engineering innovation around waste management and wastewater treatment in the eThekwini municipality, starting the ‘Engineering is a Girl Thing’ initiative, and being named first runner-up in the 2016 Department of Science and Technology’s Women in Science Awards.

Further triumphs include the multinational research project: The Hub for the African City of the Future and the World Bank-funded ‘landfill-gas-to-electricity project’ from which the eThekwini metro produces 10MW of electricity from waste.

Trois said that her appointment as SA research chair offers the scope to ‘play’ in what she describes as her life’s passion. “Research is not to serve just one person, but to serve us all, and what I want to see now is science and research becoming a bridge between the private and public sector to create progressive and responsive solutions to the impact of climate change,” she said. And, judging by her history, Trois usually succeeds in getting what she wants.

Raised by parents who were both steeped in academia, Trois’ love affair with Durban started in the early 1990s when she decided to complete her PhD in mining engineering rather than in waste management.

“I was able to study bio-hydro metallurgy which dealt with techniques to purify and treat acid mine drainage. I had a choice, I could either complete my PhD at the University of Cape Town or at the University of British Colombia in Canada. I chose South Africa,” she said.

Instead of Cape Town though, Trois headed for Durban, drawn by the reputation of Professor Ken Knight who was a leader in geo-technical engineering at the time.

Trois completed part of her PhD at what was then the University of Natal and for the second half applied for a position in the School of Geo-Technical Engineering. She was appointed early in 1999 and set about introducing environmental engineering to the Institution.

“It took years, but it is my most important achievement. When I arrived here, environmental engineering was viewed...
with great suspicion. And I believe I was brave and passionate enough – while at the same time having a lot of fun – to start introducing the curriculum, doing more research and establishing a state-of-the-art laboratory which is now fully equipped," she said.

On her legacy, Trois said she started out with the idea of changing her own world but in reality had changed the worlds of many.

"Many of my students are first generation graduates and I feel the responsibility of being a role model to them. My students – from so many different backgrounds – can be found all over the world. Some have become engineers focused on environmental issues, some are researchers and others completed their masters under my supervision. I even have some who have become bankers and priests!" she laughed.

Recently inaugurated as a member of both the Academies of Science of South Africa and Engineers of South Africa, Trois described environmental engineering as a multi-disciplinary science capable of driving social cohesion.

"If you look around Durban there is massive disparity in infrastructure development between the poor and the rich. During my time as Dean I reflected on what it is to be an engineer and how the discipline can be used to bring about change. My reflection made me determined to form engineers who are sensitive to the environment and to the needs of humans and who put aside any elitist tendencies which I believe are sometimes inherent in the engineering profession," she said.

"Many of my students are first generation graduates and I feel the responsibility of being a role model to them."

UKZN Professor and a Knight of the Italian Republic, Cristina Trois adjusts the seascape mural outside her office which was made from waste by Durban artist, Robin Opperman of Umcebo Design.
GETTING TO THE ROOT OF PERMANENT HAIR LOSS AMONG AFRICAN WOMEN

Words by Colleen Dardagan

Steeped in the value of community and education from when she was a little girl growing up in the foothills of the great Amatola Mountain Range in the Eastern Cape, Professor Ncoza Dlova’s passion for medicine, service and the wellbeing of South Africa and its people, seems woven into the fabric of her very being.

It would be that same passion which would lead to a major breakthrough in permanent hair loss among African women when she, in collaboration with scientists in Israel, USA and France, discovered the root cause of Central Centrifugal Cicatricial Alopecia (CCCA), one of the most common causes of scarring alopecia amongst this group of women. This discovery not only topped Dlova’s long list of achievements, but finally cracked the puzzle to an elusive age-old condition previously attributed to the use of damaging chemical hair products as well as the application of heat brushes, hot combs or straighteners. Those who suffer from CCCA experience hair loss starting from the crown of the scalp, radiating outward in a circular pattern resulting in scarring or permanent hair loss. According to the research by Dlova and

Professor Ncoza Dlova, UKZN academic and trailblazer in dermatology.
her colleagues, the condition is linked
to genetics and is often triggered and/or
worsened in pre-disposed people by
the use of mechanical and damaging
chemical hair grooming practices. The
discovery is a world first and is considered
the “biggest ever breakthrough” in
South African dermatology research.
Hopefully, it will kick-start exploration of
therapeutic options.

The first African female Dermatologist in
KwaZulu-Natal and the second African
female Dermatologist in South Africa,
Dlova is the first African Dean of UKZN’s
School of Clinical Medicine. She has also
conducted extensive research on the
effects of skin bleaching which can lead
to irreversible skin thinning, darkening,
acne, infections and skin cancer.

She says that bleaching is very popular,
especially among African and Indian
women and some men who want to
lighten their skin or to create the look
known as “yellow bone”, a new-age
term used to describe light-skinned
African men and women. Dlova is
clearly comfortable in her own skin
and plain in her speech when she talks
about her passion for a more integrated
South African society that will promote
the wellbeing and health of women in
general. As a result, she has launched a
boutique health clinic “Multimedics”
close to her home in Umhlanga, where
she can be found on weekends and
during times when she is not busy with
her academic work at UKZN. The clinic
offers a range of health treatments
specifically aimed at women, under the
guidance of skilled specialists.

“I want to try and break the habit that
we have in South Africa where practices
are developed along ethnic lines. This
facility epitomises unity and diversity
in medicine - it is where women and
men can feel comfortable and receive
treatments that are really diverse,” she
said Like so many of South Africa’s iconic
women leaders, Dlova was schooled
at the 150-year-old Inanda Seminary
situated in one of the most historically
significant districts of KwaZulu-Natal.
However, her academic journey and
attitude to life started in the small village
of Mtolo near King Williamstown in the
Eastern Cape where her parents were
both teachers. “My mother, Nonqaba
Magatyeni Dlova died at the age of
94 and was a great inspiration to me.
She said I should never give anyone
permission to undermine what I am
capable of and that no matter where
I am, I should try to make a positive
difference in the lives of those around
me. My elder sister Xolie has also been
my hero, with her positive and selfless
attitude towards life.” While it was her
mother who encouraged Dlova to
become a medical doctor, the untimely
death of her 35-year-old brother and
father figure Mluleki, who was working
on his PhD prior to his death, provided
the impetus for her PhD.

Paying tribute to her family and
professional colleagues who helped
make her achievements possible
through their confidence in her ability
and support during her journey, Dlova
said helping others to achieve more
than she had is close to her heart.

“There have been so many highlights in
my career and in my life, but probably
the two moments that really stand out
are when I qualified as the first Black
woman dermatologist in KwaZulu-Natal,
and then later when I was able to train
30 young women studying to become
dermatologists. I always say that if you
are the first in anything in life, you have
a huge political and social responsivity
to nurture and train more people who
will surpass your achievements. As one
of my favourite sayings goes: lift as
you rise,” she said.

Dlova has also run workshops in
partnership with the KZN branch of
the Albinism Society of South Africa to
increase awareness and understanding
of albinism and to fight discrimination
and stigmatisation of people with the disorder.
Words by Greg Dardagan

Led by energetic and dedicated words which aptly describe Dr Lliane Loots. She exudes enthusiasm and radiates commitment. No doubt about it, this woman is in the right job!

Loots has her hands full at the moment, which is how she likes to operate. She is the Artistic Director of the renowned JOMBA! Contemporary Dance Festival which she established 23 years ago; Head of the Flatfoot Dance Company which she founded 24 years ago; and a lecturer in Drama, Dance and Performance Studies at the University. She also conducts yoga classes.

Where does Loots find the energy? “I talk fast, think fast and walk fast – I have a huge amount of energy to burn,” she explains.

Her work in drama and dance has won many accolades. Pressed to name those topping her list, she highlights being awarded the Ordre des Arts Lettres from the French Government in recognition of her significant contributions to the Arts. Considered a knighthood by the French Government, the medal is given to those who, through their on-going work, have supported the partnership with French and Francophone African artists.

Loots’ belief in dance education as a tool for profound social change has seen her through Flatfoot - use dance and arts to address Gender-Based Violence, HIV/AIDS, and for environmental education in South Africa, in several African countries, and also overseas.

So where did it all begin? Loots spent most of her early life in Durban and grew up during the height of apartheid. “I clearly remember news about the Sharpeville massacre in 1966. I was 10 years old and it was my first moment of racial consciousness. Through all the strife, I was always interested in theatre – it was a voice, a way of speaking what could not be spoken, and also a bit of an escape.”

Loots bemoans the lack of kindness and truth in the contemporary world and adds that to get a good sense of the discourses of resistance, “go to dance festivals like Jomba! or watch theatre happening in the townships. There you see truth telling, you see bodies resisting in different ways which is why art can be so real and is viewed as dangerous by some.”

Dr Lliane Loots whose work in dance and drama has earned her international acclaim.

LEADING THE WAY IN AFRICAN CONTEMPORARY DANCE

Dr Lliane Loots whose work in dance and drama has earned her international acclaim.
For 41 years, the Durban International Film Festival (DIFF) has continued to bring filmmakers into the city of Durban in droves and make waves in the industry.

For the first time in its history, the festival went virtual in 2020 as the COVID-19 pandemic wreaked havoc across the globe.

DIFF has cemented itself as one of the premier events in Durban, a beacon of hope for up-and-coming filmmakers, and a melting pot of film, shorts and documentary productions from around the globe.

Locally, the festival continues to be a gateway to the continent’s film industry and the premiere platform for the launch of African films. The Durban FilmMart – a DIFF and Durban Film Office collaborative film finance and co-production forum – served as testament to this when it showed unparalleled growth within two years of inception.

Housed in UKZN’s Centre for Creative Arts (CCA), the DIFF was founded in 1979 by then festival director, Ros Sarkin. After its third run, it moved to the Elizabeth Sneddon Theatre in 1982 and two years later, was presented for the first time by the former University of Natal (now UKZN). By its fifth hosting in 1983, festival organisers were struggling to acquire films as commercial distributors that were unaccustomed to film festivals refused access to films. The organisers were even threatened with the denial of cinema space to companies who supplied the festival with films. However, nothing could stand in the DIFF’s way. In 1985, it expanded to other venues across the city as well as to Umlazi and other township areas. In 1986, for the first time,
In-depth: Diff's 41st Edition

A section was devoted to South African cinema with 10 local documentaries. In 1994, a schools programme was initiated when the festival celebrated the ushering in of South Africa’s democracy. Screenings were also expanded to rural areas around Durban.

By 2012, the DIFF presented a programme of 175 films compared to the 30 screened in 1999. Last year – in its 41st year and “saddened” to be presented in a virtual event - the festival team adapted to new realities and partnered with Festival Scope (in partnership with Shift 72) to facilitate the screenings. The festival hosted yet another successful edition and as much of a full festival experience as it could offer despite the challenging realities of COVID-19.

In August 2019, the DIFF flew the UKZN flag when it clinched the prestigious MEC Special Award at the Simon Mabhunu Sabela Film and Television Awards. Awarded to an outstanding individual, group or particular initiative that contributed significantly towards developing the film and television industry in the province, the MEC Award was bestowed upon UKZN for pioneering South Africa’s longest-running film festival for the past 40 years. At its 40th anniversary, former CCA Director, Peter Rorvik, was the highlight when he received the DIFF Legacy Award. Rorvik was a steady hand at the helm of the festival for more than a decade. He shared the award with Sarkin and the late Moosa Moosa, who co-founded the festival, as well as with Julie Frederikse, producer of the film: Izulu Lami, and its director, Madoda Ncayiyana.

DIFF Festival Manager, Ms Chipo Zhou, said the festival has evolved in many different ways over the past few years, especially with respect to the deliberate efforts made to include women in what has been, and still is, a predominantly male-dominated field. This includes the festival joining leading international fests such as Cannes and the Berlin International Film Festival in signing the 50/50 by 2020 gender parity pledge which commits them to the goal of equal gender representation, both in management and on screen.

“We have also committed to showcasing more African talent in a bid to encourage excellence and collaboration within the continent,” she said.

Zhou was also excited to note the official branding and launch of Isiphethu, a space for emerging, local filmmakers to develop their craft. “This grew to include our first isiZulu scriptwriting residency which was a partnership with the Mellon Foundation and the KwaZulu-Natal Film Commission.” She added that the festival also bestows its own awards: “Currently, the DIFF is one of two festivals on the continent with an Oscar Qualifying designation which we received in 2018. That is an honour that challenges us to be on the lookout for the best films the continent has to offer.”

She noted that the DIFF is growing beyond the Durban Metro and is connecting more with KwaZulu-Natal. As the current custodian, Zhou feels that it is her responsibility to look back, preserve and uphold the history. “I also strongly feel that in order to ensure that future curators of the DIFF have something worth holding on to, I have a responsibility to evolve and grow within the current technological and socio-political contexts,” she said.
UKZN VICE-CHANCELLOR APPOINTED CHAIR OF THE FRONTLINE AIDS BOARD OF TRUSTEES

UKZN Vice-Chancellor and Principal, Professor Nana Poku continues to put the University on the map following his appointment as Chair of the Frontline AIDS Board of Trustees effective June 2021.

Frontline AIDS is the world’s leading global partnership of more than 60 locally-based civil society organisations working in almost 100 countries around the world to curb the spread and impact of HIV and AIDS.

Delighted to have joined Frontline AIDS as Chair of its Board of Trustees, Poku said that now more than ever, the world needs a re-energised and refocused commitment to eliminating AIDS as a global public health threat.

Words: NdabaOnline

MSIZI CHATBOT LAUNCHED

UKZN developed the Msizi Chatbot to enhance the student and visitor experience for 2021 online registrations.

Launched at the beginning of February, the Chatbot is a computer programme designed to mimic human conversation and provide predetermined answers by interpreting words given to it in the chat interface.

Named Msizi - isiZulu for “helper”- the Bot was developed to assist those accessing the UKZN website. It is found in the bottom right-hand corner of the screen, appearing as a blue icon.

Words: Hlengwe Khwela
HYBRID ROCKET BUILT BY UKZN TEAM SMASHES AFRICAN ALTITUDE RECORD

UKZN’s much anticipated Phoenix hybrid rocket test flight at the world-class Denel Overberg Test Range in the Western Cape was a resounding, record-breaking success.

The successful flight took place on 8 March when a gap in the weather provided suitable launch conditions and the Phoenix-1B Mk IIR vehicle soared to a new high altitude mark for hybrid rockets, beating the previous African record of 10.3km.

‘The team was delighted to see all of their hard work come to fruition with a picture-perfect flight, which exceeded our expectations,’ said Dr Jean Pitot, leader of UKZN’s Aerospace Systems Research Group (ASReG).

Words: Sally Frost

PRESTIGIOUS 2020 CHRISTOPHE MÉRIEUX PRIZE FOR PROF ABDOOL KARIM

UKZN infectious diseases epidemiologist, Pro-Vice-Chancellor for African Health and CAPRISA Associate Director, Professor Quarraisha Abdool Karim, was awarded the prestigious 2020 Christophe Mérieux Prize in the field of infectious diseases in developing countries at a hybrid event hosted by the Centre for the AIDS Programme of Research in South Africa (CAPRISA).

On behalf of the Fondation Christophe et Rodolphe Mérieux-Institut de France and the French Academy of Sciences, His Excellency Mr Aurélien Lechevallier, French Ambassador to South Africa bestowed the certificate and medallion on Abdool Karim in recognition of her pioneering research work ‘resulting from the use of antiretroviral drugs to prevent the sexual transmission of HIV infection in women’.

Words: Smita Maharaj
**UKZN MEDICAL ALUMNUS APPOINTED SANDF SURGEON GENERAL**

Major General Ntshavheni Maphaha, known by his UKZN peers as “Peter” has been appointed Surgeon General of the SANDF with effect from 1 November 2021.

Maphaha is a proud UKZN alumnus who studied for his MBChB degree at the then University of Natal Medical School from 1985 to 1990.

‘It has been always my dream to ascend through the ranks of the South African Military Health Services (SAMHS). I was a bit apprehensive when I started realising the magnitude of the responsibilities which come with the position. However, I believe that I can deal with the challenges and responsibilities as my experience and training in and outside the military, have equipped me for them,’ Maphaha said.

Words: Lihle Sosibo

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**A1 NRF RATING FOR UKZN SCIENTIST**

UKZN’s Professor Steve Johnson has obtained an A1 rating from the National Research Foundation (NRF). This is the highest rating that the NRF awards to ‘researchers who are unequivocally recognised by their peers as leading international scholars in their field for the high quality and wide impact (ie beyond a narrow field of specialisation) of their recent research outputs.’

Johnson is a professor in the School of Life Sciences on the Pietermaritzburg campus and the Director of the UKZN Centre for Functional Biodiversity. He also holds the South African Research Chair (SARCHI) in Evolutionary Biology.

‘The School of Life Sciences is particularly proud to have such a high calibre researcher in our team,’ said Dean and Head of School, Professor Ade Olanarin. ‘His continued contribution to the school, especially in the areas of mentorship and capacity building, through the activities of the NRF-funded community of practice linked to the Centre for Functional Biodiversity, is very much appreciated.’

Words: Sally Frost
HUMANITIES ACADEMIC WINS NICOLÁS CRISTÓBAL GUILLÉN BATISTA LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT AWARD

Professor Rozena Maart, academic in the College of Humanities, won the 2021 Nicolás Cristóbal Guillén Batista Lifetime Achievement Award for her contribution to literature and philosophy, awarded by the internationally renowned Caribbean Philosophical Association (CPA).

The committee, headed by CPA President Dr Hanétha Vété-Congolo, said: 'Professor Maart was selected for this award for the philosophical, political and literary richness of her writings and her contribution as an institution-builder in education and her work as a psychoanalyst and social worker.'

Words: Melissa Mungroo

ARTS STUDENT PUBLISHES FRENCH-ISIZULU MANUAL OF CONVERSATIONS

Master of Arts student in isiZulu Studies, Mr Mongezi Bolofo recently published a French-IsiZulu Manual of Conversations - a first of its kind in which French meets isiZulu!

Bolofo collaborated with Dr Michel Lafon, a retired scholar of African languages, in producing the manual.

The book contains a socio-historical introduction to isiZulu; a brief grammatical description of isiZulu which itself is divided into a grammatical introduction to central aspects of the isiZulu system highlighting some specific contrasts between French and isiZulu; and a compilation of short possible conversations detailed under topics and situations a visitor may encounter.

Words: Melissa Mungroo
**UKZN Press Books Win 2021 NIHSS Awards**

UKZN Press is proud of its authors who were presented with 2021 NIHSS Human and Social Sciences (HSS) awards at a ceremony at Maropeng Cradle of Humankind.

*Our Words, Our Worlds: Writing on Black South African Women Poets, 2000–2018* edited by Makhosazana Xaba was a joint winner in the Best Non-Fiction - Edited Volume category, while *Wentworth: The Beautiful Game and the Making of Place* by Ashwin Desai was the winner in the Best Non-Fiction Monograph category.

The HSS awards are bestowed annually by the National Institute for the Humanities and Social Sciences (NIHSS) in honor of outstanding, innovative and socially responsive scholarship in the humanities and social sciences.

*Words: Adele Branch*

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**College of Law and Management Studies Top Choice for High Flying Matric Students**

KwaZulu-Natal’s top achievers in the 2020 National Senior Certificate (NSC) matric exams Ms Jetaria Moodley, Ms Zen Olivier, Mr Kiash Baldeo, Mr Keshav Govender, Mr Kganya Molefe and Mr Akhil Harrydhasret have joined UKZN’s College of Law and Management Studies.

Despite the challenges of studying during the COVID-19 pandemic, the top achievers who each achieved between six and eight distinctions, say that deciding on UKZN as their institution of choice was a no-brainer.

All the students attributed their success to their parents, relatives, teachers and mentors who played an integral and supporting role, especially during a pandemic when they had to adapt to the new norm of online learning.

*Words: Lungile Ngubelanga*

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**Clockwise from left: Ms Jetaria Moodley, Ms Zen Olivier, Mr Kiash Baldeo, Mr Akhil Harrydhasret, and Mr Kganya Molefe.**
DEAN OF MEDICINE HONOURED WITH THE MARIA DURAN MEDAL 2020

Professor Ncoza Dlova, the Dean and Head of the School of Clinical Medicine at UKZN, is the recipient of the Maria Duran Medal for 2020.

This prestigious international award is bestowed on women leaders in dermatology, particularly those who have made significant contributions to the treatment of dermatologic conditions affecting women and children.

In 2019, Dlova and colleagues identified a gene that is a major cause of permanent hair loss amongst women of African descent. She collaborated with scientists in the United States and Israel to identify the root cause of Central Centrifugal Cicatricial Alopecia (CCCA), one of the most common causes of scarring alopecia amongst African women. She is a strong advocate for natural skin and hair and has conducted extensive research on the abuse of skin lighteners amongst Africans and Indians in South Africa.

Words: Lihle Sosibo

TOP-RATED UKZN RESEARCHER AND HUMAN RIGHTS ACTIVIST
PROFESSOR DAVID MCQUOID-MASON CELEBRATES 50 YEARS IN ACADEMIA

Advocating for social justice inspired by his meetings with Nelson Mandela; establishing one of the first university law clinics in South Africa; being an A-rated National Research Foundation researcher; and teaching some of South Africa’s best legal minds are some of the iconic achievements for which Law Professor David McQuoid-Mason of UKZN’s Centre for Socio-Legal Studies will be honoured for.

In celebration of his legacy, UKZN will launch an investment fund which will disburse bursaries to financially deserving LLB students who excel in Human Rights Law in June. An international webinar themed: “Clinical Legal Education: International Best Practices Pre–Present and Post–the COVID-19 Pandemic” will be hosted in September. The celebration of his achievements will culminate in a commemorative publication which will feature research papers from top clinical legal education teachers from all the continents.

Words: Hazel Langa
UKZN’s Chair of the South African Research Chairs Initiative on Sustainable Local (Rural) Livelihoods, Professor Betty Mubangizi, and Principal Investigator for the project, chaired a virtual inception meeting with local partners to design the implementation strategy for a new study that is hoped will provide insights into understanding the COVID-19 pandemic from a variety of perspectives with the focus on rural livelihoods.

The two-year project being undertaken by the team of researchers who were awarded the COVID-19 Africa Grant to help fund their investigations is titled: Understanding the Interplay Among Vulnerabilities, Livelihoods, and Institutional Dynamics in the Context of COVID-19: A Case Study of Selected Rural Communities in South Africa.

Words: NdabaOnline

The virtual Graduation ceremonies were broadcast online by the University between 25 and 28 May. Degrees were conferred on graduands who succeeded in fulfilling relevant academic requirements and whose names appear on the graduation programme, including those whose qualifications are being awarded posthumously.

UKZN conferred 7 399 undergraduate degrees and 2 914 postgraduate degrees, of which 362 were master’s (thesis) qualifications and 257 doctoral degrees. The University is incredibly proud of the achievements of 90 students with disabilities, 26 of whom completed postgraduate studies as well as three exceptional achievers who will graduate with PhDs and six with master’s qualifications,’ said UKZN Corporate Relations Division Acting Executive Director, Ms Normah Zondo. Included among the graduates are 245 international students, 200 of whom will receive postgraduate degrees.

Words: Sithembile Shabangu and Indumathie Moodley

Of the 10 313 graduands awarded degrees and diplomas during the 2021 UKZN Autumn virtual Graduation ceremonies, 381 graduated cum laude and 148 summa cum laude - with women making up 68,32% of the top achievers!
ALUMNUS AWARDED PRESTIGIOUS NEW ZEALAND ORDER OF MERIT

A UKZN alumnus, who graduated from the Medical School in 1978 and immigrated to New Zealand in 1982, was awarded that country’s Order of Merit for services to health.

He is Dr Gagrath Pradeep Singh, fondly known as Joe, who is now a specialist geriatrician at North Shore Hospital in Auckland. The New Zealand honours system was established by royal warrant on 30 May 1996 by the UK’s Queen Elizabeth II ‘for those persons who in any field of endeavour, have rendered meritorious service to the Crown and nation or who have become distinguished by their eminence, talents, contributions or other merits, and to recognise outstanding service to the Crown and people of New Zealand in a civil or military capacity.’

According to the Prime Minister and Cabinet of New Zealand, Singh co-established and led Shore Trials and the Research Unit (STAR Unit) since 1996. Under his voluntary leadership, more than 60 clinical trials took place, allowing local patients in the Waitemata District Health Board area access to new medications and best practices care that would have otherwise not have been possible through the health system.

UKZN alumnus, Dr Joe Singh has received the highest honour in New Zealand for his services to health.

Words: MaryAnn Francis

TOP-RATED UKZN RESEARCHER AND HUMAN RIGHTS ACTIVIST PROFESSOR DAVID MCQUOID-MASON CELEBRATES 50 YEARS IN ACADEMIA

UKZN clinical sociologist Professor Mariam Seedat-Khan was nominated for the My Pink Stilettos Amazing Women International Award that recognises women around the world who are doing extraordinary things to uplift communities and improve society.

Seedat-Khan is one of only 40 certified clinical sociologists in the world, making her among just three on the African continent who are certified by the Association for Applied and Clinical Sociology (AACS). With 20 years of teaching, training and research experience at UKZN, the University of Johannesburg and the University of Witwatersrand, Seedat-Khan remains passionate and committed to applied and clinical research processes which facilitate an intricate understanding of human relationships, neuroscientific responses and innovation in learning.

She was applauded by the committee for her work on the SMART (Simply Managing Academic Related Tasks) community engagement initiative in which she developed teaching and learning interventions over a 10-year period, resulting in an academic management tool that provides individuals with learning systems and techniques.

Words: Melissa Mungroo
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INTERNAL UKZN NUMBERS
Risk Management Services (RMS) Westville 031 260 7133 | Howard College and Medical School 031 260 3777 | Edgewood 031 260 3493 | Pietermaritzburg 033 260 5211

UKZN CAMPUS HEALTH CLINICS Pietermaritzburg 033 260 5208 | Westville 031 260 7302 | Edgewood 031 260 3252 | Medical School 031 260 3252 | Howard College 031 260 3284

COLLEGE/ DIVISIONAL HUMAN RESOURCES (FOR STAFF) CAES 031 260 6229/ 6776 | CHS 031 260 4450/ 7169 | CLMS 031 260 8211/ 8288 | CHUM 031 260 2355/ 3063 | Professional Services 031 260 2229/ 2295

TIP OFFS ANONYMOUS 0800 203 285

ADVICE DESK FOR THE ABUSED 0800 204 321/ 031 262 5231

SUPPORT CARE CENTERS
RK Khan Thuthuzela Care Center | 031 401 0394
Edendale Thuthuzela Care Centre | 033 395 4325
Addington Crises Center | 031 327 2843
Northdale Crisis Care Center | 033 387 9000
St Augustine’s Hospital Emergency | 031 268 5000
Jes Foord Rape Crises Centre | 0861 333 449

EXTERNAL NUMBERS
South African Police Services (SAPS): Nationwide Emergency Response | 10111 112 (from a cellphone)

NATIONAL SOUTH AFRICAN NUMBERS
GBV Toll-free Helpline | 0800 150 150
National Counselling Line | 0861 322 322
People Opposed to Woman Abuse (POWA) | 083 765 1235
South African Anxiety & Depression Group Helpline 011 262 6396 (8am – 8pm, seven days a week)
Emergency Contraception Toll Free Call Centre | 0800 246 432