

rhodos



HOW WOMEN ARE RESHAPING RHODES UNIVERSITY

Art
Music
Innovation
Achievements



RHODES UNIVERSITY
Where leaders learn

Conservation
Alumni
Research
Sport



THE CHALLENGE

It is becoming increasingly difficult for the University to meet the financial demands of a growing institution in a tumultuous climate of diminishing state support in the higher education sector. Our University relies heavily on student fees to maintain smooth operations, provide intensive support structures and a residential environment that is conducive to good scholarship and collegiality.

OUR SOLUTION

ISIVIVANE FUND is an integrated fundraising campaign which seeks to not only raise funds but to also maintain and build lifelong relationships with key University stakeholders. The name is inspired by the Zulu proverb “ukuphonsa itshe esivivaneni” meaning “to throw one’s stone on the pile or monument” to make a personal contribution to a great common cause.

KEY OBJECTIVES

- Increase funding for undergraduate students
- Increase funding for postgraduate intake
- Maintain residences and dining halls
- Grow university endowment to ensure sustainability

Just as Rhodes University will never stop attracting the best students, we must also constantly reaffirm our commitment to making Rhodes University education accessible to everyone. It is our hope that you will see value in supporting this campaign.

For more information on the campaign please visit www.ru.ac.za/isivivane or email development@ru.ac.za

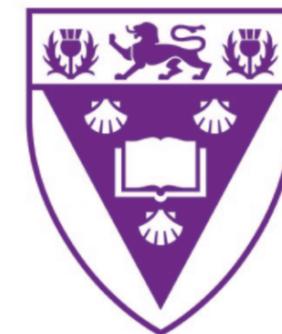
isivivane fund
STUDENT
FINANCIAL
AID CAMPAIGN
2016 -2026



RHODES UNIVERSITY
Where leaders learn

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Front page (from left): Jay Pillay (Deputy Director Residential Operations), Masago Mabaso (Manager Institutional Planning and Research), Katlego Mphahlele (2020 SRC President), Dr Mabokang Monnapula-Mapesela (Deputy Vice-Chancellor, Academic and Student Affairs), Professor Adrienne Edkins (Associate Professor, Biochemistry and Microbiology), Dr Adele Moody (The Registrar)

FOREWORD

Making waves in a male-dominated society

Creating an inclusive university reflecting the country's diversity

By Veliswa Mhlope

This edition is a special one in a number of ways. Not only does this issue of *Rhodos* cover stories about the Rhodes University community, it especially celebrates the women at the heart of the institution. In this edition, we explore transformation at the University through the prism of women advancement.

We delve into the lives of these women, profile their careers, and tell their stories of triumph. These stories range from our conversation with 2020 SRC President, Katlego Mphahlele about her victory in securing the role of SRC President leading a cabinet made up of mostly females. She shares with us her apprehension and excitement about the enormous responsibility she faces as she prepares to take over the reins in 2020.

You will also get to know Deputy Vice Chancellor Dr 'Mabokang Monnapula-Mapesela, as she shares the story of her journey and her thoughts on transformation.

We also chat to two of Rhodes University's leading researchers: Professor Adrienne Edkins about her ground-breaking research on cancer; and Professor Tally Palmer about the work she is doing in response to the water challenges facing Makhanda.

Building on the foundation of Rhodes University's three pillars of engaged research, teaching and learning and community engagement, we bring you a medley of stories that will not only reconnect our alumni with their *alma mater*, but also inform our community of academics, staff and students, and friends of the University about what is happening on our campus and beyond.

On a sombre note, this edition is published at a time when

This edition may be women-focused but also features others who have made their mark



Veliswa Mhlope: Rhodes University Marketing and Communications manager.

our country, South Africa, is going through one of the toughest periods in its post-democratic history. More and more women and children are losing their lives to senseless acts of gender-based violence.

As we share the stories of the women at Rhodes University in this edition, conspicuous by its absence is the story of Nomangwane Mrwetyana, Director of Student Affairs.

An interview with her was initially scheduled but had to be cancelled following the senseless murder of her daughter Uyinene. We hope to be able to feature this phenomenal woman in the following issue.

Uyinene's killing brought into sharp focus just how unsafe women are in both private and public spaces and the need to render our country a safe space for all women and vulnerable people – whether on or off campus.

As Rhodes University is a microcosm of society, Katlego Mphahlele tells us that safety for women at the campus is uppermost on her priority list as SRC president.

This edition may be women-focused but it also features stories of the broader Rhodes University community and the impact they make.

More importantly, this edition is an account of the strides that Rhodes University has made in its transformation journey to being an inclusive University that reflects the diversity of this country.

There are many inspirational individuals at Rhodes University who do amazing work and, as a result, it is always a difficult task having to choose who to feature in the *Rhodos* magazine.

We hope you enjoy the final selection of inspirational stories as much as we enjoyed putting them together for this edition. ●

THEATRE OF DREAMS a stage for academic excellence



Vice-Chancellor set on turning things around

Transformation is primary goal in 115-year-old institution

It was former United States Secretary of State, Condoleezza Rice, who famously said that people who end up as “firsts” in their respective fields do not necessarily set out to be the pioneers that they end up being.

Rather, said Rice, they “set out to do something they love and it just so happens that they are the first to do it”. As the first black woman to occupy that powerful position in US politics, Rice was more than qualified to make such an observation.

At Rhodes University the same can be said for the women who occupy various positions of influence ranging from the 23-year-old SRC president Katlego Mphahlele, the Registrar Dr Adele Moodly to the deputy vice-chancellor Dr Mabokang Monnapula-Mapesela.

The institution has taken great strides in transforming its management, making significant and also important appointments in key positions.

The university has previously been criticised for having an untransformed leadership structure.

This transformation project has seen the university attract talent from other institutions while also developing capacity from within.

When she was appointed, Moodly became the first black registrar of the 115-year-old institution. She refers to her appoint-

What we promised... to prove that women can take up issues and work together in that space



Vice-Chancellor Dr Sizwe Mabizela.

ment as having taken place at an “exciting time” of transformation.

But Monnapula-Mapesela (See Page 8) feels that being “first” should not be overstated, as the constant reference to it tends to overshadow the competencies of the pioneering individuals. She is the first black female Deputy Vice-Chancellor at Rhodes.

But the issue is a source of great debate in society and at the home of the Deputy Vice-Chancellor for Academic and Student Affairs, it is no different.

“I have two sons, one is more the outspoken one who said: ‘Yes mom, you deserve it, it’s black excellence. Let people just be happy because indeed this is a historic moment’. So he told me ‘there’s nothing you can do, you can’t run away from it. It’s just a fact,’” said Monnapula-Mapesela, who was appointed in July 2019.

Vice-Chancellor Dr Sizwe Mabizela has placed transformation at the top of his priority list. He has also made Monnapula-

Mapesela’s job to make sure that Rhodes is truly transformed.

“The VC told me when I got here that my most important function is to make sure that there is transformation in all aspects that affect the university.

“Demographically the picture is still gloomy. We are still mainly white, especially in terms of academics in the higher ranks. You will find mainly white males. We are still struggling with that. We have a lot of programmes that try to include black academics but I think it will take time,” said Monnapula-

We have a lot of programmes that try to include black academics but I think it will take time



Mapesela.

But she said Mabizela had done well in transforming the university.

And as Condoleezza Rice aptly put it, the 23 year old Mphahlele from Limpopo did not always set out to be an SRC president. She had always seen herself as an activist.

The 2020 SRC that she leads made history as 13 of its 15-member council are women - a major step for transformation on campus.

“I think my appointment is quite a huge move on transformation. I was running against four males and that is quite intimidating in itself. Me winning as a young black female is a statement that means we have representation of females where it was previously minimal.

“We are going to do what we’ve always wanted to do and what we promised to do... to prove that women can take up issues and work together in that space,” said the Master of Pharmacy student.

Another first for the university was the appointment, in June 2019, of Nomawethu Danster, as the new Director of Library and Information Services.

Rhodes University adopted its transformation plan in 2018 and four of the five recent senior management positions have been filled by women.

These include Moodly, Monnapula-Mapesela, Danster and Noma Mrwetyana as the Director of Student Affairs. Some of the appointments in other areas were equally crucial, although they did not attract as much attention as the firsts.

For instance, in addition to the senior appointments, 10 out of 12 support staff members for the directors were women, according to the Acting Head of Human Resources Susan Robertson.

“This is a much improved picture if one reviews the past five years. The picture has also improved drastically in terms of academic leadership as two out of the six deans at Rhodes are women. Prior to this all deans were men,” said Robertson.

“The attraction of staff to enhance the profile of the institution has required a review of strategy and investment in new advertising methods. In terms of transformation of staff and demographic profile, especially women, progress is evident,” said Robertson.

Vice-Chancellor Mabizela said Rhodes University has always prided itself in having exceptional women in various leadership positions.

“We pride ourselves in having extraordinary women, whose names and faces will never feature on the front pages of magazines or newspapers. They range from cleaners, cooks, administrative and support staff, academics, heads of departments, Deans, Registrars and Deputy Vice-Chancellors. At Rhodes University, we celebrate all women who defy the odds and break the metaphorical glass ceiling by assuming powerful and influential positions... positions that were previously and predominantly occupied by men.

“The success of these women serves as an inspiration to young girls and the youth to be ambitious and to pursue their dreams to the fullest,” said Mabizela. ●

DEPUTY VICE-CHANCELLOR

A big heart carries heavy burdens of leadership

Dealing with transformation, intergration and success rates

Rhodos No one would set out and say 'I want to be the DVC of a university'. What did you want to be? And how did you end up here?

Dr 'Mabokang Monnapula-Mapesela I wanted to be a medical doctor and that is still burning in my heart even today. It is a dream deferred. Unfortunately when I had to go to university I got a bursary that could only pay for teachers so I got into teaching by default. So when I got into teaching I said I will be a doctor there. That is how I eventually pushed to getting my PhD.

There are things that you would want to achieve, at the very least by the time you leave. What would those be?

Firstly, it is to make the student experience into a total experience where a child comes and leaves with what they came here to get. Some students are from poor families but still pay fees. They stay in the system for two or three years or so and then leave without a qualification. We've taken that money from poor parents and the student leaves without a qualification. Another one is making sure that we uphold quality teaching and learning, and that will be by putting in place structures and systems.

So in terms of the "first black" label - being the first black DVC in 115 years, that's no mean feat. It is understandable that this for you would have negative connotations.

At some point I really felt like that. I felt it was really about ticking a box ... whether you are whatever colour.

How do you balance the fact that your appointment is historical but also there is this negative connotation?

I must say, some articles tried to bring that aspect. I think they were trying to balance that. To say she is not just a black woman, she has her own academic record behind her. So I think a lot of people were trying by all means to do that, including my two sons.



Dr 'Mabokang Monnapula-Mapesela, Deputy Vice-Chancellor Academic and Student Affairs.

In fact you are helping the next woman after you.

Yes, a lot of other young women were happy. They said we are so proud, we can see that we can also do it. I think those kinds of debates made me relax a bit.

The narrative is that the institution is not transforming fast enough. What are your thoughts on transformation as Rhodes University?

What I like is that the institution acknowledges the fact that it needs to do a lot of work in terms of transformation. If you read the institutional transformation plan you will see that there are a lot of things that they really interrogated in terms of how transformation can be dealt with, and for me that gives

I wanted to be a medical doctor and that is still burning in my heart even today ”

me some comfort.

What is the one thing in your mind that you think needs to be transformed?

Rhodes University already has a very high success rate of students. About 84% success rate, but even when I came for the interviews I said to them that 84% is not good enough, there is still 16% failing. Why not all of them, if we get the best students? Something I don't like in higher education is exclusion of students. For me it is an issue of transformation. I am of the opinion that we all can succeed - not at the same time, not at the same level but we can. And I feel if we can support the students, that is one thing that I really want to work on.

We all can succeed - not at the same time, not at the same level, but we can ”

Is it racialised?

No, it's about a bigger issue. Remember most of our students are now black, so being black also means that some of them come from schools that did not prepare them well for university. We need to profile them like you are profiling me now, in order to know who they are, where they come from and what their needs are to ensure that we have early warning systems that can tell us that there is a problem with this particular student. We should have our own support and development programmes that are informed by this kind of profiling so that we are able to assist.

How have you found Rhodes University since you started?

I started on 1 July (2019). It's been like a marathon. It feels like I've been here for a long time... because I have had no time to sit and do nothing, I've had to step in and hit the ground running. I have done a lot of things during this time in terms of observing, in terms of listening, trying to understand a lot of things including the culture of the institution. But at the same time I have been actively involved in almost everything that a person in my position has to be involved in. I haven't been spared in any way. So I've been in committees, I've been in governance structures, I've been in meetings day in and day out, I've had interactions with students and with some academic staff. So I've been busy doing the job.

There are things that you would want to achieve in the time that you spend at Rhodes University. What would that be?

Coming to an institution like this makes you wonder, what is there to be done by you. It is only when you start to look around that you realise that there is so much that you can do. Firstly, its to make the student experience into a total experience where a child comes and leaves with (a qualification). Another one is making sure that we uphold quality teaching and learning and that will be by putting in place structures and systems. That is something that is open, because we didn't have much of that and we are already working on that. The VC told me when I got here that my most important function is to make sure that there is transformation in all aspects that affect the university.

I know you're worried about the water situation in Makhanda. How important is it to have the stakeholder engagement initiative to tackle such issues?

"I love the stakeholder circle of unity. The water issue is serious and is going to affect our enrolments. We're saying this is a great university but there's no water in town because of poor management of resources. So what role can we play as stakeholders to ensure that those who have to be accountable are accountable? It is really something we need to sort out." ●

ART GALLERY

Searching for talent in the hills and valleys

She juggles between the demands of being a single mom, final-year student and art dealer

The story of Samkela Stamper, a final year Fine Arts student at Rhodes University, is a roller coaster – a railroad track filled with steep slopes, sharp tight turns and scenic surroundings all at the same time.

Born in Dabhani village just outside Peddie to a migrant worker father and a single mother, Stamper and her siblings were brought up by their grandmother whom she described as a mentor and a role model to many in her village.

While her grandmother died when she was 21, Stamper still visits the village only once a year during the Christmas break.

After her grandmother's passing, they were forced to relocate to Port Elizabeth before she moved to Mpumalanga to join her mother who worked as a domestic worker. It was in Mpumalanga where Stamper's love for theatre grew, a hobby which saw her performing at several arts festivals in Mpumalanga as well as the National Arts Festival in Makhanda a few years later.

In 2008 she fell pregnant, which she regarded as a setback at the time. She described her experience of becoming a single mother as being "part of statistics. I lost my confidence, and so I decided to go back and write poems to tell my story".

She also registered the experience of being pregnant at such a young age in a diary, details of which she describes as "both beautiful and heartbreaking, because I viewed this as being tantamount to giving up on my dreams of being an artist and furthering my studies.

"Life was so hard. I was so depressed that is why I decided to record everything in a memoir. I was alone with no one to share my misery. It was at this point in my life that I realised that my granny meant the world to me for I had no one to talk

For two weeks, I had to depend on good Samaritans for a place to sleep at night



to and share my sorrow," said Stamper – seated comfortably on a colourful sofa at her newly established art gallery at number 10, Cross Street. It is her poetry which she believes opened the doors for her, as she got invited to take part of at various arts festival.

The highlight of her career as an artist was in 2013 when she was invited to an all-expenses-paid trip to the Edinburgh World Writers' Conference. Two months later she returned home and moved to Jeffreys Bay where she taught students how to write poetry.

She had to survive on a stipend as she had no formal qualifications to be hired as a full time arts teacher. She decided to go back to school and started searching for an institution where she could further her studies – having dropped out of school in Grade 11.

That is how she landed at Rhodes University in 2016. This was after the university credited Stamper for her work experience and allowed her to register for a BA in Fine Arts.

She also secured a bursary for her studies. However, there was another stumbling block. She could not afford to pay for a child minder for her daughter, Lonwabo, now aged six.

"I assumed I would be allowed to stay with her on campus while continuing with my studies, unfortunately not," she recalls. On her arrival on campus to register for the first time,



Final-year Fine arts student Samkela Stamper at her Cross Street gallery in Makhanda.

she was informed that the Rhodes University's policy did not allow for anyone other than registered students to live in the residences.

"I was very angry that the university was unable to accommodate the needs of an adult like me. I was angry that they wanted me to choose between furthering my studies and being there, full time, for my child. I was angry because I felt like I was forced to be an oppidan student because I can't choose between being a mother and a full time student. They are both important to me," said Stamper.

"I am juggling between dropping off my child at school, taking her to an after care centre and attending classes. I am almost there because this is my fourth year," she says. Stamper describes herself as a hustler.

But that setback and its attendant challenges did not stop her from pursuing her dreams. Not only does she stay with her

I view that gallery as a healing place and the only connection I have with my ancestors



daughter full time while studying, but she also runs two galleries –in Makhanda and another one in Peddie.

The Peddie gallery is located in Dabhani village and is named after her beloved grandmother Thandeka Stamper. She says she chose to launch her first gallery in Peddie because she wanted to bring about change at home. "Some of the best artists come from rural areas but they receive little or no support. There are more than 100 schools around Peddie but none of them teach arts.

This is so unfortunate in this day in age. I decided to launch this gallery in my grandmother's backyard, to help unearth talent," she said.

She also wanted to honour her grandmother, because "she would have wanted me to do this.

"This (Peddie) gallery has so much sentimental value because I decided to turn our homestead into an art gallery and it is the only constant reminder of how close I was to my grandmother. It was there where she taught me the importance of staying true to oneself, the ancestors and the importance of expressing oneself through art.

"I view that gallery as a healing place and the only connection I have with my ancestors," said Stamper. ●

WATER

Holistic approach to finding a solution to a local problem

A partnership of stakeholders and communities

When the water crisis at Makhanda worsened – with households, businesses and schools going without water for days on end – it was the Institute for Water Research that began research into the town’s old boreholes and their locations.

When the Gift of the Givers, a humanitarian non-governmental organisation came to Makhanda to help alleviate the problem. It was the Institute for Water Research (IWR) that furnished them with the maps of the boreholes around the city – their locations and the depths to reach the water table. The operation was successful as a number of boreholes were sunk – thus boosting the water-stressed town’s resources.

This is some of the work that IWR has dedicated itself to, under the leadership of Professor Tally Palmer.

With the town in crisis, Rhodes University was not going to fold its arms and wait for the political leadership to provide solutions. After all, as the biggest contributor to Makhanda’s GDP, Rhodes University understands that it cannot be a bystander while the university town falls apart. In May 2019 the IWR organised a first of its kind workshop which brought together stakeholders of the drought-stricken Makhanda under one roof to discuss how best to deal with the water crisis in the area.

The institute’s work is not limited to Makhanda, as it aims to contribute to the equitable, sustainable management and use of water resources in South Africa and across the continent.

“So we want to be able to enjoy and use water fairly and responsibly for human benefit. But when you say human benefit, it’s not to say you don’t value the resource. When I talk about the resource, I’m talking about the whole water cycle - the rain that falls.

“The rain that trickles down into the ground water. The rain that goes to the stream and the river. The rain that ends up in the wetland. And all those structures that fit together under the ecosystem,” said Palmer.

“So what we do is look at people and the society and water as the lenses. Water is our focus. But water permeates everything. The one thing you have in common with every human being is that every single human being lives in catchments. They live



Institute for Water Research Professor Tally Palmer with Research Assistant Ntombekhaya Mti.

on a piece of land that holds water because if you do not have water you do not live. So there has to be some access to water and a bit of land where you live and that is your catchment. And we are looking into one of the ways of saving water,” she explained.

For her work, Palmer was honoured with the 2018 Vice-Chancellor’s distinguished award for community engagement. It was in recognition of her ground-breaking engaged research in social-ecological justice and water sustainability.

The Award is a prestigious and competitive annual award which recognises meaningful and committed partnerships between members of the university and the wider public, for mutual benefit.

Palmer said when she was announced as the winner of the award, she thought the best way to make use of the award was to conduct research activity involving the community of Makhanda about water, the most pressing issue.

“I knew we were in a water crisis and my sense is that it was going to get worse. And when people are in a crisis, they get

There has to be some access to water and a bit of land where you live



angry and they blame and fear each other. Anger and fear fuel blame. What can defuse that is knowledge because if you know and understand, it helps you to act. And if you can act, you feel more in control of what is going on,” said Palmer.

“I thought if we share knowledge and get to understand the magnitude of our water challenge, we can find lasting solutions,” she added.

In attendance at the workshop were stakeholders such as Makana Municipality, Grahamstown Rate Payers’ Association, Makana Revive, Grahamstown Business Forum, local consulting engineers, the Department of Water and Sanitation, local farmers, the Unemployed Peoples Movement, and the Eastern Cape Water Caucus.

“We are lucky that we are working on water. I think the word ‘water’ carries a lot of weight. We have over the years been good at telling the story of the work that we do. But now our work contributes to local villages in rural areas,” she said.

The institute is part of the stakeholders’ forum that has the water crisis at the top of its agenda. ●

I knew we were in a water crisis and my sense is that it was going to get worse



Cracking the code: path to delivering cleaner water

Doctoral student finds ‘magic filter’ that could be game-changer

Rhodes University’s Biotechnology department has broken new ground with the invention by PhD student Aphiwe Mfuku who designed a unique filter to purify water.

If necessity is the mother of invention, as the age-old English-language proverb suggests, then that is exactly what prompted Mfuku to design his water filter as part of the various projects aimed at finding lasting solutions to the drought in the Makhanda area. His invention was one of the many projects undertaken by Rhodes University’s post-graduate level students to respond to the drought, not just in Makhanda but in other areas as a well.

Born and bred in the dusty streets of Dimbaza Township near King William’s Town, Mfuku was always a good student, if not a top one. He matriculated at Archie Velile High School with a distinction, and went on to study Biotechnology at Rhodes University.

His research at Masters level, sought to develop novel biotechnical ways that would lead to new technology that could clean water. He describes the process he had to follow while doing the study “as a lot of trial and error... until we discovered that ‘oh wait, this actually works’”.

The invention is now at a point where they are producing the filters using electrospinning. Electrospinning is described - by Nanoscience.com - as the use of high powered voltage where fibers and particles are made from a polymer solution. “We are passively and actively trapping bacteria and metals. So we are removing bacteria passively and actively and so we are deactivating the bacteria. By that I mean we are killing the bacteria because once it gets in contact with this filter which has some catalytic molecules... when it comes into contact with the membrane, it activates the catalytic molecules and kills the bacteria. They rupture,” said Mfuku.

Asked about the potential target market for his product, Mfuku said it would be the communities living in areas where water quality was a concern. He said that he >>



Dimbaza-born Aphiwe Mfuku invented a filter that cleans water enough for it to be safe for human consumption.

>> had interviewed a lot of people around Makhanda about the product.

“Upon speaking to the people I also identified a potential market and I also identified people who were receptive to the technology. Makhanda will be the first starting point. From thereon it will have a ripple effect in the Eastern Cape and eventually it will conquer South Africa,” he said.

Mfuku said the prototype has already gone through the different phases of testing. “Initially when we made the fibres, we discovered that we would need backing for them. And therefore we came up with a technology of laminating the fibres onto the backing. That is essentially to ensure the longevity of the membrane. “We first tested the prototype on a syringe and then used glass where we were going to house the fibres. We have now designed 3D printed models here at our laboratory. The 3D printed models will potentially be the final prototype for this. At the moment we are busy finalising the prototype. It’s 80% ready to go to the market but obviously we still need to do further tests to ensure that everything is still on point. We are working with engineers from Jo’burg. It’s a lot of team work,” said Mfuku.

His has been a long journey, which started with Mfuku thinking that he would study to become a pharmacist. But he ended up taking the biotechnology route upon his arrival at Rhodes University six years ago. Born as a middle child in a family of five, Mfuku said he had always been independent as “no one takes note of a middle child. The focus is always on the first and the last born”.

To get the attention from the adults, he would ask inquisitive questions from a very young age. “All I can say is that I have al-

ways been curious. So I have always been that child who needs extra information. Even when I order my pizza, I always ask for extra cheese,” he quips, with a laugh.

“I think that is how I got interested in things because I always wanted to know the fundamental information. That is how I gravitated towards science in my high school years,” he said.

Mfuku said he is proud of what he and his team have achieved so far. The invention is in line with the university’s focus on engaged research which involves finding solutions to problems facing communities around Makhanda.

“When I did Biotechnology I was just very interested in water-related research that would solve the people’s issues. Science research always ends up in journals and never reaches the people. But here at Rhodes we don’t just do science research, we do science to help the people because we are motivated by the problems around us,” said Mfuku. He quipped that his academic progress has also helped him get the attention he so wanted growing up as a middle child. “When my parents took me to varsity, it was just a case of ‘oh yes, he is at varsity now, let’s focus on others’. The support was there but was not enough. But now that they (parents) can see that I’m doing something for our people, they are interested in everything I do. That’s the attention I never received as a child. So I am very excited about this project,” he said. ●

Here at Rhodes we don’t just do science research, we do science to help the people



PhD student Thandiswa Nqowana.

Testing kits quickly discover the amount of impurities

Monitoring project fights back against contamination

Besides the major research on the water crisis in the city, students at Rhodes University are also making a difference in small but significant ways.

One such student is Thandiswa Nqowana, a PhD student in science who has developed hydrogen sulphide testing kits which are made available to schools around the city – especially in poor areas.

The kits enable the user to detect fecal coliform bacteria in water. Its presence in water points to contamination by sewage or animal waste.

Explaining how the kits work, Nqowana said: “These are not

Once one person gets sick then the whole community can get sick



the typical kits that you get from the pool section.

It’s kits that we make here. So we are able to make them accessible to the community through this water monitoring project.

“And so the learners would then go home with five kits, test their water at home and the record the results.

“How the kits work is that the learners are taking five kits home because with science you have to be repetitive about your results to make them right.

“So if you have five kits and then four of them change to a black colour or one to four of them change to a black color, you just have to boil the water. And then if it’s all five of them changing into the black colour then it just means that you have to stop using the water and put it to a municipal official or someone who can help you with the water.”

The university’s Community Engagement department coordinates the work done by the students at the three local schools where the university is involved.

With Makhanda experiencing serious water challenges, the risk of water-borne diseases is ever-present.

It is one thing to be without water, but to add a disease outbreak into the mix, then a disaster will unfold. That is exactly what the likes of Nqowana are trying to avoid.

“We are trying to make sure that people are aware that if you do drink dirty water there will be a consequence. And the consequence is water-borne diseases. It is also to avoid a pandemic...because once one person gets sick then the whole community can get sick (especially) if they are not aware that something like this is going on.

“So us being able to work with the community to test the water then just helps when it comes to making those learners agents in their own community to test their own water. Instead of us as scientists just going in there and testing the water for them, they become the agents and then they bring back these results to us,” said Nqowana.

The kits are available at the university and are distributed to the three high schools that have a relationship with Rhodes University. ●

WATER

Innovation and delivery: feeding 4 000 students

Drought-stricken town and area offers unique challenges

Jay Pillay's decision to leave Durban for Makhanda 20 years ago has not only been positive for her personal life, but has benefited Rhodes University and the town's community at large.

She was hoping for a new start after losing her six-month-old baby, and grabbed the opportunity to head Residential Operations at the institution in September 2009, a job that was later complicated by water shortages in the area.

The university was looking for someone to manage food services. Pillay was the perfect fit for the job with her qualification as a food technologist and food services background.

A few months after her arrival at Rhodes, she gave birth to her second son. Her career at Rhodes also took off. Having joined Rhodes with a diploma in food technology, she added a diploma in management and another diploma in labour relations as well as several higher learning certificates to her name. Pillay is now the university's Deputy Director of Residential Operations. She successfully completed her MBA at the Rhodes Business School is currently reading for her DBA in Higher



Jay Pillay is the university's deputy director of Residential Operations.

A water protocol at Rhodes, states clearly that water has to be saved and used efficiently ”

Education Management at Bath University - UK.

"At the time I was preparing meals for 3000 people but now the numbers have increased drastically," she says.

To help her team, Pillay and Residential Operations team were forced to come up with innovative ways to teach students housed in the 56 residences on how to save water when Makhanda started experiencing water shortages due to drought.

This saw Pillay's office introduce regular water saving updates and initiatives, something she says students lost their minds over because they did not know what to do. At one point there were also regular electricity cuts, as a result, food services was also asked to change the menu and prepare meals that do not require electricity.

Pillay says: "It's difficult. It (water crisis) challenges me every day. I have over 4000 students in residences. So we needed to make plans for our students."

As a result, the university introduced a water protocol, which states clearly that water has to be saved and used efficiently. These include:

- Placing a full plastic bottle in the toilet cistern to reduce the amount of water flushed;
- Showering for five minutes, using low-flow shower heads;
- Avoiding washing non-essential items such as cars;
- Doing laundry only when there is a full load and or use eco-friendly washing machine; and
- Re-using water from basins and showers to flush toilets and water plants, to mention but a few.

"We put together this water restriction plan, which guided students on water saving measures," she said. ●

Water tanks are rolled out at schools

A community rolls up its sleeves

The water crisis in the town has been a threat not only to business in Makhanda but also to the education sector, which is the mainstay of the town's economy.

Rhodes University alone contributes over 65% towards the town's GDP.

That is what prompted the university's community to partner with the private sector to intervene to ease the pressure on not just the university but also schools around Makhanda.

GBS Mutual Bank came on board and donated R200,000 which went towards the purchase and installation of rain-water tanks at 20 under-resourced schools.

Nosi Nkwinti of the division of Community Engagement said the donation was crucial for the town as water was a basic need, without which the schools could not function.

"We had the issue of water in Grahamstown and one of our committee partners at our reflection meeting mentioned that they don't have water, and sometimes they would turn kids away from schools because there was no water. So they came and said that as the forum/structure they would donate R200 each, each month to buy a tank for one school, and then accumulate funds for a different school the following month," said Nkwinti.

The idea was then shared with Pam Sandi, the Chairperson of the Makhanda Early Childhood Development Forum and Di Hornby, the Director of Community Engagement also came on board and wrote to various banks – with GBS being the only



Grade 4 pupil Philisa Qhomfa enjoys clean water from a water tank donated to Tanty Primary School in Joza Township.

one that responded positively. "Those tanks are now installed in 20 schools, and each school has two tanks, totalling 40 tanks in all. We're working with Makana Municipality to source water to these tanks," said Nkwinti.

The water shortage is also something the university's Deputy Vice-Chancellor 'Mabokang Monnapula-Mapesela a great deal. She said that while the university was ably led by Vice-Chancellor Dr Sizwe Mabizela and was stable, the water issue could turn away potential students.

"The only thing that worries me about being at Rhodes University and being in Makhanda is not having basic services like water.

"For me that is something that I don't want to get used to or accept, that my students have to go, sometimes for two weeks, without water in some residences or without laundries open for them to wash their clothes. For me, it is really something we need to sort out," Monnapula-Mapesela said. ●



Dr Iain Paterson talks to a crowd that gathered to see him release a new biological control agent into the field.

A natural solution to a thorny problem

Biological control agents used to combat invasive cactus species

Dr Iain Paterson recently made history in Namibia. He has been interacting with various NGOs and government departments in Namibia since 2016 about their alien invasive cactus species, which thrive in the arid country. In August 2019, Namibia finally gained a new method to fight against cacti.

These cactus species are some of the worst environmental and agricultural weeds in Namibia. None of the cactus plants in Namibia are indigenous to the country, they were all brought from either North or South America because they are easy to grow and do not require much attention in one's garden.

They have jumped the fence of the gardens where they were originally planted in home gardens these cacti are now growing in dense thickets all over the country. This is a serious problem, because indigenous plants and animals are being threatened by the cactus. Agricultural land becomes devalued because the cactus reduces its grazing capacity. Wildlife and livestock are also both injured by the spines of the cactus, adding to the problem. Two of the worst cactus invaders in Windhoek and the surrounding areas are the Devil's Rope Cactus and The Lady of the Night Cactus. Both form dense and impenetrable thickets in much of the veld surrounding Windhoek. NGOs, such as the Cactus Clearing Team, have done a fantastic job manually removing cactus, however with the assistance of biological control agents, they can sustainably manage the invasion of the cacti. The Namibian Chamber of Environment (NCE) and the Botanical Society of Namibia, in collaboration with Rhodes University's Centre for Biological Control (CBC), South Africa, released biological control agents to

CONSERVATION

combat both of these cactus species. Consent was given by the Ministry of Agriculture, Water and Forestry following an extensive Environmental Impact Assessment. Biological control agents are host specific natural enemies of the cactus that come from the Americas where the cactus is indigenous. In this case, both agents are insects, one is a cochineal insect and the other is a mealybug. They feed on the cactus and slowly kill it, but they can't feed on any other plant species, so when the cactus dies, the biocontrol agents will die too. Many years of research has been conducted in Australia and South Africa to prove that both these agents are host specific (meaning that they feed specifically on the cactus weed and nothing else). They have both been released in Australia and South Africa for decades, where they have successfully controlled the invasive cactus. Biological control takes time to control the target plant and the plant will never be fully eradicated but under control. Biological control is therefore an environmentally safe, effective and sustainable method of controlling cactus weeds in Namibia. These two agents are the first biological control agents to be released in Namibia for over 30 years, so it is a significant step that will hopefully result in other biological control projects to be considered. The CBC and the Cactus Clearing Project will continue to work together to control cactus infestations around Windhoek, improving our ecosystems and allowing our indigenous biodiversity to thrive. The release of biological control agents in Namibia, the first in almost 30 years, is a significant move that will help create opportunities for other biological control projects in the country. "The Centre for Biological Control and the Cactus Clearing Project will continue to work together to control cactus infestations around Windhoek, improving our ecosystems and allowing our individual indigenous biodiversity to thrive," said Paterson. ● (By Dr Iain Paterson)



Dr Iain Paterson releases the new biological control agent in the field.



Grahamstown-born Sibabalwe Zwakala, 23, was among the first students to join the GADRA programme which gives matriculants a second chance to qualify for university.

Doing badly in matric not always end of the road

Bridging programme helps get over the tricky hurdles

When Dr Sizwe Mabizela took over as Rhodes University's Vice Chancellor he made an important pronouncement in his maiden speech - no academically deserving student will be turned away from Rhodes University simply because they cannot afford to pay fees.

Those words set in motion a number of new initiatives intended to not only support poor students but also work with under-resourced schools around the university town.

One of those was the Nine Tenths mentorship programme which pairs Rhodes students with matriculants at selected local schools to prepare for their exams and to pass to their full potential.

Three participating schools, Ntsika, Nombulelo and Mary Waters have their top-half learners given one-on-one attention by Rhodes students through "nine guided and structured contact sessions".

The programme is overseen by the Community Engagement division, and has about 150 learners at any given time.

Gadra had to find the money... because these kids are coming from disadvantaged backgrounds



SECOND CHANCES

Another similar initiative is the GADRA Matric School which is a partnership with the university to give a second chance to learners who pass matric with university passes, but do not have enough points to be admitted to the courses of their choice.

Among the Makhanda learners who took advantage of the opportunity was Sibabalwe Zwakala, 23, who was among the first students to join GADRA when it accepted its first intake in 2017.

Not only did he pass Psychology 1, the course he did as part of the bridging programme, with a distinction, he is now a tutor of the current batch of second chance students. Zwakala was doing his third year towards a BA at the university in 2019. He said he joined the Gadra programme because he knew it would equip him with the necessary knowledge he needed to make it at Rhodes University.

The Gadra programme focuses on two groups of students, those that failed Matric and needed a "second chance" and others like Zwakala who received Bachelor passes but not enough points to pursue their intended courses. The brains behind this programme are Dr Ashley Westaway and Nolubabalo Makombe.

Zwakala, who matriculated at Mary Waters High School, described his journey through the programme a "wonderful" experience which gave him so much confidence in his academic abilities as that he later secured a job as a tutor at GADRA. Since he started tutoring at GADRA, all of Zwakala's "tutlings" have managed to pass Psychology 1 with flying colours.

Westaway identified Zwakala as one of the programme's success stories. "Sibabalwe got a distinction for his course here at Gadra, and went to pass with flying colours at university. That is why he is back here as a tutor," said Westaway.

He has one piece of advice to current "second chance" students and future ones - keep your heads down and focus more on your studies.

"I say so because a lot of people think that as they are at Rhodes University they can do as they please. But they should actually push and pass very well," he said.

Records show that since the launch of the Nine Tenths mentorship programme in 2010, 52 matriculants who were mentored by Rhodes University students had since received bachelor passes.

Westaway praised Dr Mabizela as someone who was "very passionate about the bridging programme, partially because it was kind of his brain child. We are able to take it to the next level (in 2020) because we now have funding for it from Nedbank Eyethu Foundation which is then going to cover the occasional student fees because that has been an issue up until now.

"We as Gadra had to find the money to bridge the gap because these kids are coming from disadvantaged backgrounds, so they don't have money. Now Nedbank is providing for that. So it is a very financially advantageous programme.

"They do one or two subjects on Matric schooling. They do a course on campus and we also upgrade their skills," said Westaway. ●

ACHIEVEMENT

Honorary
Doctorates for
leading lights
in their fields

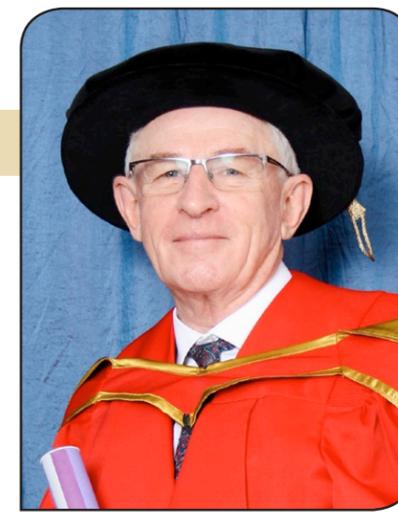
Professor George Ellis



Professor Pumla Gobodo-Madikizela



Professor Glenda Gray



Professor Ian Scott



Chief Nike Davies-Okundaye

Rhodes University honours
five of Africa's best

Five remarkable individuals received Honorary Doctorates from Rhodes University during its 2019 annual graduation ceremonies.

Professor Emeritus George Ellis, Professor Pumla Gobodo-Madikizela, Professor Glenda Gray, and Professor Ian Scott were each conferred with a Doctor of Laws (LLD) (hc), while Chief Nike Okundaye-Davies received a Doctor of Fine Arts (DFA) (hc).

Dr Sizwe Mabizela, Vice-Chancellor for Rhodes University, said it was a sign of honour and distinct privilege for the university community to bring these outstanding people into the family.

"We show gratitude to them for their notable achievements, which have all, without a doubt, changed our world for the better. Humankind is that much the better and human experience is that much the richer for their contribution.

"Each one of them is a role model for our students and staff, and we will continue to celebrate and promote their legacy to humanity for many generations to come," said Mabizela.

Professor George Ellis, an internationally-renowned academic, researcher and author, was honoured for his stellar scholarly contributions in general relativity, cosmology, theoretical physics, and policy. He has authored and co-authored 16 books, including the book "The Large Scale Structure of Space Time" which he co-authored with the late great physicist Stephen Hawking.

Professor Ellis also took up policy research in his efforts to

influence and shape public policy for the better.

His areas of focus in this regard have been the housing policy, the science policy, mathematics education, and quality of life measures.

He is also well-known for his exemplary work on the philosophy of cosmology and the philosophy of science, having been one of the main writers on the philosophy of cosmology in recent decades. He has written or co-authored about 450 papers and 16 books, with over 36,000 citations and has an h-index of 80. He has received numerous awards in recognition of his many and diverse contributions to humankind. These include the Templeton Prize and the Order of the Star of South Africa awarded by the late former President Nelson Mandela in 1999. This is his seventh honorary degree.

Professor Pumla Gobodo-Madikizela, author and research chair for Historical Trauma and Transformation in the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences at Stellenbosch University, has been primarily focusing on two strands of research.

These are: exploring ways in which the impact of the dehumanising experiences of oppression and violent abuse continue to play out in the next generation in the aftermath of historical trauma; and remorse and forgiveness in the context of the interconnected relationship between empathy, ubuntu and the embodied African phenomenon of *inimba*.

Her critically-acclaimed book "A Human Being Died that Night: A South African Story of Forgiveness" won the Christopher Award in the United States in 2003, and the Alan Paton Award in South Africa in 2004.

This book provides a gripping recount of the interviews that Professor Gobodo-Madikizela had with the apartheid's ruthless murderer and head of the state-sanctioned assassination unit, Eugene de Kock, also dubbed the "Prime Evil". The book has been published seven times, and has been translated into Dutch, German, Italian and Korean.

In 2010, Gobodo-Madikizela was awarded Rhodes Univer-

sity's Social Change Award, which is awarded to leading psychologists that make significant contributions to social change in South Africa. In 2017, she was awarded the Rhodes University Distinguished Old Rhodian Award.

She has also been a recipient of the Eleanor Roosevelt Medal and received a Peace Fellowship from Harvard University.

Professor Glenda Gray, president of the South African Medical Research Council (SAMRC), was bestowed an honorary doctorate for her unwavering dedication in the field of paediatrics.

Currently a Professor in Paediatrics at Wits University, Gray has been instrumental in researching the prevention of post-natal mother-to-child transmission (PMTCT) of HIV-1.

Her work in a PETRA (PERinatal TRANsmission) study, helped establish South Africa as a global research player in PMTCT. This research supported the roll-out of PMTCT interventions resulting in a staggering reduction in PMTCT transmission of HIV-1 from 25% to 2%.

Professor Gray has been awarded the Nelson Mandela Health and Human Rights Award and the Order of Mapungubwe, which is the highest honour given by the President for achievements serving South Africa's interests.

Professor Ian Scott was deservedly recognised for his tireless work and immense contribution in higher education.

Among other things, his work has included designing national policy related to teaching and learning and higher education curriculum design, particularly focused on catering ef-

fectively to student diversity, and the role of educational and professional development in addressing effectiveness, equity and quality in higher education.

His many years of industry experience have included involvement in several research groups, projects, publications, papers, conference presentations (local and international), lectures, review panels and national policy development and implementation.

Professor Scott has received a United States Information Service International Visitor, a UCT Staff

Development (Mellon) award and Kellogg ASP Research Fund award.

Chief Nike Davies-Okundaye, who is affectionately known as "Mama Nike", was born in a very small village in Nigeria. As a young girl, she was a stage dancer and later became lead actress in a local Yoruba film, called *Ayaba*. She has since featured in documentaries including *Kindred Spirits* (Smithsonian Museum) and *African Voices* (CNN).

Mama Nike is principally a social entrepreneur and a well-known philanthropist championing the cause of the neglected Nigerian rural women through using art as a tool.

She is the managing director of Nike Centre for Art and Culture (established in 1983), owner and curator of the Nike Art Galleries in Lagos, and established the Nike Art and Culture Foundation with the aim of fostering Nigerian cultural heritage.

Over the years, Mama Nike has received several awards for her remarkable contributions to society, including an honorary certificate of merit by the Nigerian Union of Journalists in recognition of her contribution to the advancement of Nigerian cultural heritage. She was also awarded a golden plaque of excellence for being a leading Patron of Art and Culture in the United States. ●

Remorse and forgiveness
in the context of empathy,
ubuntu and *inimba* ”

Championing the cause of
neglected Nigerian rural
women using art as a tool ”

FINE ARTS

Putting the world into focus on stage

Empowering arts students to tell their own stories

Not only does the Western world dominate and influence the arts but it is almost undeniable that it also sets the standards by which artistic work is mostly viewed.

For most this fact alone – which is as a result of the dominant geopolitical and economic muscle that the West and Europe possesses over the Global South – would be enough to see them sit back and accept the status quo for what it is.

But in the little town of Makhanda, Eastern Cape there is important research that is coming out of the Fine Arts department at Rhodes University, under the leadership of Professor Ruth Simbao. It is here that the Arts of Africa and Global South research programme is housed. The programme seeks to challenge the dominant narrative and also “initiate, formulate and drive knowledge” from the African continent and the global South. Simbao is challenging the dominant narrative – pushing the work of African artists and scholars into the centre of the global artistic stage.

“We are looking at the world and how arts, in terms of history, is created and produced in university. Currently it is from the European perspective. One of the things we do is to shift that perspective and look at what some call the Global South. We have to find out what does it mean to be creating or pro-

We are looking at the world and how arts, in terms of history, is created and produced



Professor Ruth Simbao is the National Research Foundation SARCHI Chair in Geopolitics and the Arts of Africa.

ducing arts in the Southern hemisphere context, specifically in the African continent. It’s about truly empowering us on the African continent to talk about our own arts and not be creators of arts and have people from America writing about our arts,” said Simbao.

It is this work that earned Simbao the South African Research Chairs Initiative (SARCHI) chair for Geopolitics and the Arts of Africa. She is one of the 15 SARCHI holders at Rhodes University. This accounts for approximately 70% of the total awarded nationally in South Africa, a significant portion given the university’s small size.

The research programme, according to its website, works with “collaborators to situate the South at the forefront of contemporary scholarship and shift the centre of gravity of the global academy”.

Simbao has 12 post graduate students under her wing, including post Doctoral fellow Dr Jimoh Ganiyu.

Simbao says the programme began in 2011. “We run a publishing consortium for the international journal, African Arts. It was in 2017 that the program also launched Art POWA network, writing and publishing support network for Africa based scholars, writers and thinkers alike,” she said.

In 2018 Simbao and her team launched the *Arts of Africa* and Global Souths Arts Lounge and the RAW Spot Gallery.

“The arts lounge is where all performances and host talks and conversations and screenings are held. We have exhibitions at

the gallery and that is where students perform. I push the students so that the programme is student-led and enables us to link such performances with the National Arts festival,” she said.

One of the highlights from the 2019 performances at the National Arts Festival was a performance presented by Viwe Madinda, a Makhanda-born BA Fine Arts Honours student. She fused Sci-fi with Avant Garde methods to narrate her interests and experiences in dreams and folklore.

Simbao said Madinda did “a powerful performance” where she and her mother walked together painted black with a red cloth covering her body. As part of her performance, Madinda wanted to depict her hard and painful path, coming from Joza, to finally getting her BA Fine Arts degree at Rhodes University. The two walk together but when they reach the Art Gallery, Madinda leaves her mother and continues to walk up the hill. Holding high a stick painted white, she points at Joza and turns to the direction of Rhodes University’s admin building.

“Basically she was showing the audience how extremely dif-

ficult her journey through Rhodes had been, by remembering her family and home where she comes from. She was linking the two worlds and showing how she would use her degree to contribute to her community. It was a very powerful performance,” said Simbao.

Simbao joined Rhodes University in 2006. The Professor who has a PhD from Harvard University’s department of History of Art and Architecture is also a recipient of the Vice-Chancellor’s Distinguished Research Award. She curated several award-winning projects including the SLIP along with Azu Nwagbog, which was performed at the Cape Town Art Fair in 2016. It was in the same year that Simbao also joined the editorial consortium of the African Arts journal.

“My current research project is a project on Africa and China. If you look at China and Africa relations there is a scale top down in politics. Most of it is driven by men who are economists or politicians or state leaders. But our students are using a different approach. They focus on creative stories which are more powerful. Some of them are personal stories about their own experiences as is the case with Viwe (Madinda).

When you start that kind of research, a lot of it kind of flies on the face of the big stuff that is being thrown in the media and it tells much more accurate stories,” said Simbao. ●

Our students are pursuing a different approach. They focus on creative stories



BIOTECHNOLOGY

The link between words and science

Seeking mutually beneficial solutions in a modern world

The media is one of the industries most affected by the disruption of the digital age. This has necessitated media houses to evolve – embrace a digital first approach while also trying to hold on to declining traditional advertising revenues in print and broadcast media.

But the disruption has also presented an opportunity for new, albeit smaller, media voices to emerge and has also forced journalism schools to re-look the relevance of their offerings.

Fortunately Rhodes University is already ahead of the curve, with the collaboration between the departments of Journalism and of Biotechnology which has given birth to a new MA level research which fuses journalism with biotechnology.

Biotechnology pertains to the use of living organisms - mostly in medicine, food science and agriculture - to produce new materials and products.

Spearheading the project from the Biotechnology department is Professor Janice Limson who also heads the Rhodes University Biotechnology Innovation Centre (RUBIC). Limson's passion for science and journalism was cemented when she founded and published the award-winning *Science Africa* online magazine.

"The focus of the research will be on science engagement and science communication. I am a scientist and I have always been interested in science communication and science writing and reporting simply because we didn't have anything. That's why I started a science magazine called *Science Africa* in 2000," said Limson, who works closely with Professor Harry Dugmore, who heads the Journalism School at Rhodes.

Limson believes that science needs to be more engaging and be relevant to the community it serves. This is in line with one of the pillars of the university: engaged research.

"A lot of science research happens in a vacuum. We have this idea of what the public is and what the public needs, but our students or even ourselves do not necessarily meet that person or that group of people. I think that's something missing in higher education research, especially in higher technology re-

We have this idea of what the public is and what the public needs



Prof Janice Limson: Director of Rhodes University's Biotechnology Innovation Centre.

search. It's actually meeting and engaging with the people on whom we are ultimately doing research. In doing research in South Africa, we are doing research for social good and our entrepreneurial activities are social entrepreneurship," she said.

Working with the South African Sugarcane Research Institute (SASRI), the university will send its Masters students to the sugarcane farms of KwaZulu-Natal to interview and interact with the growers on the effects of global warming and their attitudes towards a genetically modified seed which is resistant to most diseases and deficiencies.

Said Limson: "We utilise existing communities and networks at Rhodes University. Our students do research in products that our people want and need. We want our students at MA level to engage with sugarcane growers in order to understand what their challenges are. They are going to start working as journalists between the scientists and the growers. First the growers, then move onto the public (sugar consumers)".

Limson explained that research seeks to demonstrate how journalism can be used to "broker communication between scientists and the growers and why it's necessary to go that route".

"It's about looking at the space between scientists and the end-users themselves. Engagement is not just one-dimensional anymore. It's got to be bi-dimensional in order for it to work in science," she said.

She explains the relationship between scientists and the public as one that should be mutually beneficial.

"What we are trying to move away from as scientists is that we don't engage with the public on a 'we have the knowledge, you don't, so we are going to give it to you' basis. We want to view the public as people with knowledge that we can use. So we want to hear from the public and the public wants to hear from us. It's a two-way relationship. We've needed media for so long to help us convey our message, and now there is an opportunity to forge a new kind of a relationship and we don't have anyone in that space to help us speak to each other. So journalism has helped us in one way. Can journalism help us in another way?" she said.

Two students will be doing research – with one focusing on developing the message and crafting the engagement, while the second one will conduct the research on the engagement itself and produce a documentary. ●



Rhodes University's 2020 Student Representative Council.

Credit: Lyon Media

Women state their case on student council

Finally a real chance to deal with female issues from power base

It wasn't until the last hour that Rhodes University SRC president Katlego Mphahlele submitted her form to begin her run for the ultimate student leadership position. That's how afraid she was of leadership.

The 23-year-old from Ga-Mphahlele in Limpopo agonised over her decision to run for office until the closing day, although her forms were filled and the necessary signatures obtained.

"I had to look in the mirror and tell myself that 'you are scared of the potential that you have, and that's when it clicked that I could do this'. I think what scared me the most was winning. I didn't have the question of losing in my mind, instead I asked myself 'what if I win?'. I was just so scared of putting it out there that I am running to be your president."

She only started campaigning a few days before closing because she was scared of telling students she was running for president.

She had an epiphany when she gave herself an analogy of a flower in front of a mirror. "I said to myself that I'd been nurtur-

I don't want to disappoint. That's what I was scared of, but I'm no longer scared



ing this flower ever since I got to Rhodes four years ago, and this flower is me in leadership. I've presented it to different people and stakeholders and they've loved it. This flower has grown so much that it's time to present it to a bigger platform now."

Mphahlele said women were often scared of reaching for such "tough" positions because of all the obstacles stacked against them. She was up against four males.

Safety of students on and off campus, including the eradication of gender-based violence, will be a priority for Mphahlele. "We had a lot of students complaining about safety and it's not something new. We want to show up and make students feel safe.

"The university has brought in South African Police Services (SAPS) to patrol areas where students frequently are. There are a lot of robberies happening outside of campus. We mainly focus on campus and it looks like the off-campus students are not catered for so there needs to be a collaboration with SAPS so they can monitor places students are using," she said.

Lighting on campus was another issue that was taken for granted. Although students had SOS panic buttons, a lot of people claimed they were not working, Mphahlele said. "We are looking into converting the Campus Protection Unit number into a toll-free. You can't access a lot of things if you don't have airtime."

An overwhelming 13 of the 15 members elected to the council were women, something Mphahlele said was a statement that meant there was representation of females where it was previously minimal.

"The reason I'm saying it's powerful is because one of the issues females face is they are not brought on the table for leadership roles. Prominent positions are mostly occupied by males. Now, all issues are female issues."

Mphahlele always wanted to tackle issues from the forefront to give them the attention they required. She credited Rhodes for nurturing her leadership potential and bringing about her self-realisation.

"Rhodes as a community gives a platform for students to take leadership positions. Their motto, 'where leaders learn' is rightly so because they provide that space for us to take up positions of leadership and authority. I know the reason I was scared now - it's only unfolding now.

"There is a lot of hope that is placed on me, so I don't want to disappoint. That's what I was scared of, but I'm no longer scared. The support I've received is overwhelming." ●

Six of the best take a bow for achievements in their fields

Recognising former Rhodes University students who have excelled in their areas of expertise

Where leaders learn, is Rhodes University's motto. The number of Old Rhodians who are leading in their respective fields has proven that, indeed, Rhodes students do not only focus on academics, but are groomed to serve society while their leadership skills are also harnessed.

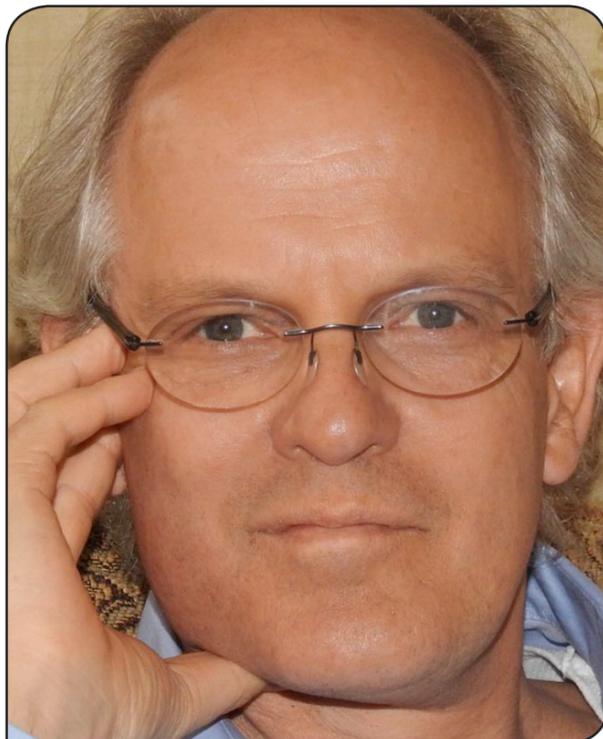
Every year, the university recognises and honours former Rhodes students who have achieved excellence in their careers and who, through their individual actions and achievements, have enhanced the reputation of the university.

The Vice-Chancellor presents the Distinguished Alumni Awards to the recipients at a luncheon prepared especially for them and their chosen guests.

The 2019 Distinguished Alumni Awards luncheon was presided over by the Old Rhodian Union vice-president, Professor James Gambiza, Vice-Chancellor Dr Sizwe Mabizela presented three of the Distinguished Alumni with their awards. Those were Dr Clive Shiff, whose award was for 2018, Mr Popo Mfubu and Mr Zukisa Pityana, whose award was accepted by Ms Buhle Mazosiwe.

The other recipients for 2019 are Professor Roger Brooke, Johanna Mukoki, Mr William Smith and Justice Kathleen Satchwell.

The Distinguished Alumni Awardees for 2019 are:



Professor Roger Brooke

Professor Roger Brooke has been Professor of Psychology at Duquesne University, Pittsburgh, USA, since 1994. He is the founding Director of the University's Military Psychological Services.

Professor Brooke is a Board Certified Clinical Psychologist with the American Board of Professional Psychology, for which he has served as an examiner, and he was elected for two terms to the Board of Directors of the American Academy of Clinical Psychology, which is the Board's members' association.

Born, raised and educated in South Africa, Professor Brooke received his PhD at Rhodes University in 1989, during which time he worked with victims of violence on both sides of the political conflict at the time: black teenage victims of State violence and young national servicemen returning from the war in Angola. He also served as Director of Clinical Training at

Professor Brooke has focused much of his attention on military veterans and their families



the Rhodes University Psychology Clinic before moving to the United States, where he was appointed Director of Clinical Training and tasked with building and getting accredited Duquesne's doctoral clinical psychology programme.

Although well-versed and experienced in various clinical and therapeutic issues such as depression and anxiety, self-destructive patterns and trauma, especially from Jungian and psychoanalytic perspectives, Professor Brooke has, over the years, focused much of his attention on military veterans and their families.

His book, "Jung and Phenomenology", which was originally published by Routledge in 1991 was republished in 2015 as a Classic Edition. His tireless work to provide support to those affected by war and to help them heal makes Professor Brooke the ideal candidate for a Distinguished Alumni Award, and Rhodes University is proud to bestow this honour on him.

Johanna Mukoki is an exemplary local businesswoman who has proven to be an excellent role model for young people, especially young black girls.

Johanna was the first black female to tutor in accounting at Rhodes University. After she graduated with a BCom degree, she started a travel company called Travel With Flair (TWF) in 1996, of which she remains the Group CEO. The company, which started with only three employees, currently employs over 750 people, mostly black women, across the country. The travel agency also has nine other business partners in Africa.

TWF has enjoyed significant growth year-on-year since its inception, growing as much as 40% in some years, which far exceeds industry growth. It currently has a turnover just over R2-billion annually.

Her personal awards including the South Africa's Most Influential Woman in Business and Government; Ernst & Young's Emerging World Entrepreneur Winner; Top Woman of the year in Business; Top young Woman Entrepreneur; a finalist for the International Woman of the Year – representing South Africa (by the World Forum). She is also the current Businesswoman of the Year, awarded by Business Woman Association of South Africa and she is also the current Most Stylish Business Personality, awarded by SA Style awards.

At the tender age of 24, she conceptualised, presented and was executive producer of SABC 2's Women on the Move, a programme which highlighted successful businesswomen around the country.

Her hard work, entrepreneurial spirit and most of all, her relentless drive to inspire the young women of South Africa makes Johanna a perfect candidate for receiving this award. >>

She conceptualised, presented and was executive producer of SABC 2's Women on the Move



Johanna Mukoki

ALUMNI AWARDS



Justice Kathleen Satchwell

>> **Justice Kathleen Satchwell** is a retired Judge of the High Court.

For over four decades, Justice Kathleen Satchwell has been a diligent champion of human rights, and a resilient fighter on behalf of those denied such rights. This includes the rights of political detainees, conscientious objectors, victims of the pass laws and more recently, the rights of same-sex partners, or rape victims, among others.

This passion for human rights activism began during her time in Grahamstown from 1969 to 1978. First as a Rhodes University student while studying African languages and anthropology; reading and discussing banned books; joining the liberal national student organisation, NUSAS, and becoming Students Representative Council (SRC) president in 1971 – a position she resigned from, in protest, along with the entire SRC a year later.

During her final four years in Grahamstown, Justice Satchwell was involved in a large variety of activities including working at the university library, teaching during the day at the Diocesan School for Girls, and at the town's technical college in the evening; serving as a volunteer and then as co-ordinator in the local Black Sash office; and in 1978, running a programme of support for detainees in Eastern Cape prisons.

While fully engaged in all these activities she studied part-time, through UNISA, for a law degree – the foundation of her

eventual position as a high court judge. Human rights issues continued to occupy much of her time when working as an attorney in Johannesburg in the 1980s and 1990s.

She represented persons detained under security legislation and emergency regulations; acted on behalf of young men refusing to perform military service; appeared before the Publications Appeal Board to challenge censorship; and served as an attorney in high-profile political trials, such as representing Jeff Radebe when he was on hunger strike on Robben Island, and the prisoner exchange that led to the release of Dutch anti-apartheid activist Klaas de Jonge. During this time, she was active in two important anti-apartheid legal organisations: Lawyers for Human Rights, and the National Association of Democratic Lawyers.

Since late 1996, she has been a high court judge in the Transvaal Provincial Division – the first woman to be appointed to the position in this division. The same year, she gave evidence to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) on the role of the legal system in contributing to violations of human rights under apartheid.

About 50 of her judgments have been written up in various South African law reports. President Mandela in 1999 appointed Judge Satchwell to chair a commission of inquiry into the operation of the Road Accident Fund – a massive undertaking that involved extensive research, widespread consultations across the world, and writing up a comprehensive 1500-page report. This eventually came to be known as the Satchwell Commission.

In 2001, the year she was appointed a judge, she brought a landmark case that ensures equal treatment for same-sex couples in the judiciary. The Constitutional Court ruled in her favour, granting this right, thereby according such benefits to her partner, Lesley Carnelley.

In 2010, Justice Satchwell was conferred a degree of Doctor of Laws, *honoris causa*, from Rhodes University, and appointed a trustee of the Nelson Mandela Children's Fund.

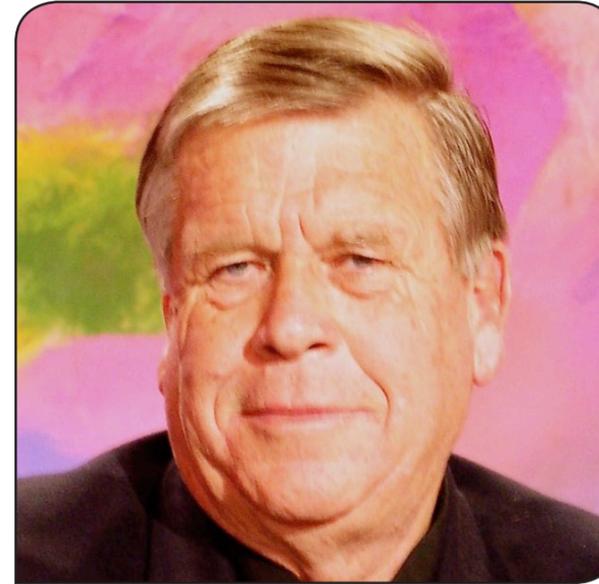
William Macdonald Smith is a mathematics teacher that has made education more accessible to children over the world.

He was born in Grahamstown, the only son of Professor J L B Smith and Professor Margaret Smith, the world-renowned Ichthyologists. After matriculating from Union High School in Graaff-Reinet in 1956, he completed a BSc (Hons) degree with distinction at Rhodes University. He then completed an MSc degree within only five months at the University of Natal in 1962, and began his PhD.

It was while doing his doctorate that Mr Smith decided that research was not for him – he had found his true calling in teaching.

He first provided assistance to university students, but this quickly evolved into a unique approach to supplementary education for high school learners – an initiative he called 'Star Schools'. During 20 years with Mr Smith at the helm, Star Schools was responsible for some of the most innovative advancements in education ever seen in South Africa, including the Pre-University School, which prepared first-year students and was adopted by universities across the country.

About 50 of her judgments have been written up in various South African law reports



William Macdonald Smith

Mr Smith pioneered SABC broadcast education with audio-visual backup, started the Let's Speak Afrikaans radio programmes, authored several study guides in Physical Science, developed a world-first in a TV studio to produce educational video-tapes, and his Basic Mathematics video series was rated the best educational programme on video in the world in 1984 in the United Kingdom.

Over the years, Mr Smith's personality and carefully-structured lessons led him to become one of the most popular Science teachers with about 12 000 students passing through his hands per annum. He has lectured in Japan, the United States of America and Europe.

In 1970, Mr Smith ran the first multi-racial school, despite problems with authorities, and four years later, audio-cassette tapes were used for the first time in The Tape Tutoring Service and were later replaced by video as technology advanced. UNISA studied Mr Smith's methods and introduced audio-cassettes into their correspondence courses.

By 2000, Mr Smith pioneered educational broadcasts into 28 countries in Africa reaching over 100 million viewers through their regional ground stations.

Popo Mfubu is an attorney and lecturer at the University of Cape Town's Refugee Rights Unit, which provides legal assistance

Mr Smith pioneered SABC broadcast education with audio-visual back-up



Popo Mfubu

to refugees and asylum seekers in Cape Town. Upon completion of his BCom and LLB degree at Rhodes University in 2011, Mr Mfubu applied for and later completed his articles at UCT.

He was admitted as an Attorney of the High Court of South Africa in 2014 and obtained his rights of appearance in the Western Cape High Court in 2017. Mr Mfubu feels his time at Rhodes University largely defined him, as it provided an environment that was conducive to his growth into a confident and inquiring lawyer. It was at Rhodes University that he discovered his passion for protecting and assisting vulnerable members of our society and where he developed his sense of social justice.

His undergraduate degree led him to become a Legal Researcher and Paralegal at the Equal Education Law Centre where he advised children and their parents about their right to education.

He travelled to rural schools in the Eastern Cape and schools as far as KwaZulu-Natal to render legal assistance to those most in need.

After completing his articles at UCT in 2014, Mr Mfubu was intrigued by the manner in which funding is allocated to various social justice NGOs and with a belief that involvement in these funding models and decisions would make a major impact on the work of these organisations, he joined the non-profit Open Society Foundations for South Africa (OSF-SA).

Here, he grew to understand funding models, the non-profit environment and various cultures as he travelled around the world.

Through OSF, he grew to understand regional and global perspectives on funding of social justice initiatives. >>

ALUMNI AWARDS



Buhle Mazosiwe, pictured, accepted the award on behalf of Zukisa Pityana.

>> After having acquired knowledge in various sectors, his work at the Refugee Rights Unit proved to be the most meaningful and rewarding type of work so, in 2016, he re-joined the Unit as a Senior Attorney.

His teaching includes a course at the University of Cape Town on Strategic Impact Litigation, which is aimed at enabling fourth-year LLB students to better understand impact litigation and strategies in South Africa.

He is currently completing his Master in Law, specialising in Criminology at UCT. Since Mr Mfubu perfectly embodies the three pillars of Rhodes University, namely teaching and learning, research and community engagement, he is without question a very deserving recipient of the Distinguished Alumni Award.

Zukisa Pityana is an Equity Analyst at Old Mutual Investment Group, and holds the position of Forum chairperson of the Old Mutual Wealth and Investments Employment Equity Committee, where he helps to create and implement strategies to promote a sustainable diverse environment at the organisation.

Mr Pityana was a very active student, having served as Projects Executive and later deputy chairperson of the Black Man-

agement Forum, Rhodes University Chapter. He was also the Head Student at the De Beers Residence while he attended the University.

During and upon completing his BCom in Accounting and Economics at Rhodes University in 2013, Mr Pityana gained experience at several distinguished South African corporates including Anglo-Gold, Ernst & Young, SCAW South Africa, MMI Holdings, and Nozala Investments, before settling on Old Mutual Investment Group, where he has been employed since 2017.

It is Mr Pityana's passion for equality that led him to found the Ntombesizwe Scholarship, in which he leveraged his personal Rhodes University alumni network to fund holistic scholarships for Makhanda-born female students to study a degree with a professional roadmap. The scholarships will also include holiday employment and continuous mentorship from the alumni base.

Beyond the Foundation, Mr Pityana has always strived to "pay it forward" and participates in speaking engagements that contribute to shaping the landscape of South Africa by encouraging young professionals to become thought leaders and look at the world from a perspective that encourages social change and justice.

One of his more recent achievements include being elected as an Advisory Council Member of the Construction Management Foundation, along with 15 other highly-qualified individuals from business, academia and government.

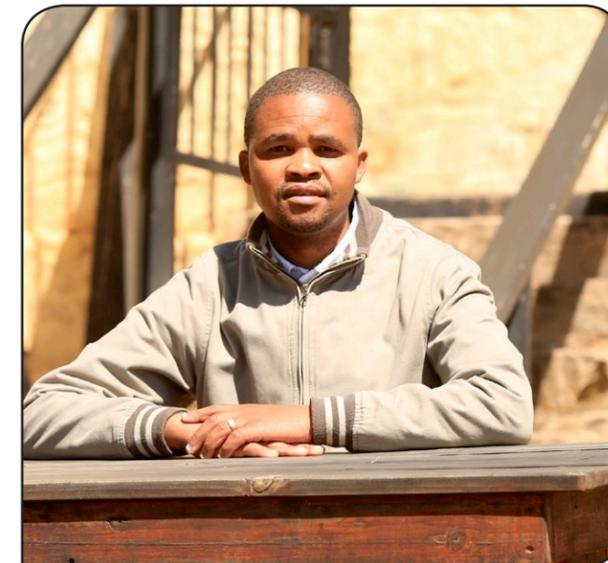
Mr Pityana's constant drive to elevate and encourage those less fortunate than himself and to share his passion for justice, inclusivity and social change makes him an ideal recipient of a Distinguished Alumni Award. ●

Mr Pityana's passion for equality that led him to found the Ntombesizwe Scholarship ”

INNOVATION

Helping pupils get up to speed with maths and science

Projects that teach children while they play games



Rhodes University's lab technical officer, Luyolo Mapekula, volunteers his services to assist learners from poor high schools around Makhanda, with maths and science classes.

Having to study science in a high school without a laboratory or a library is what spurred Luyolo Mapekula to get involved with the Masiphumelele Family Support Centre in Makhanda.

Mapekula works as a lab technical officer at Rhodes University and through Masiphumelele, Mapekula assists local schools with critical subjects such as Maths, Science and Technology, from Grades 7 to Matric.

The Lusikisiki-born Mapekula knows all about the hardships of learners in under-resourced schools – having attended Ntafufu High school, a rural high school with neither a science laboratory nor a library.

But despite his struggles at high school, Mapekula managed to pass his subjects then went through university and all the way to post-graduate level. His efforts to improve the experience of learning in poor schools do not end with him teaching Maths and Science.

Recently Mapekula, who works in the Department of Microbiology, got together with the Biotechnology Innovation Centre (RUBIC) Head of Department, Dr Earl Prinsloo to secure a 3D printer donation to DD Siwisa Primary School in Joza Township. The printer was donated as part of the General Electric (GE) Additive Education Program - where 600 printers

were distributed to various schools all over the world. Over 3 000 schools from 41 countries had applied for the printers.

Said Mapekula, "We teach pupils how to use computers so they may know how to assemble them in the future. We want them to understand that they can do design on a computer and they too can do engineering. This is in line with coding".

There are other schools that have benefited from Mapekula's efforts. They include Ntsasa High School and Kutliso Daniels High School. "There are laptops in Kutliso High. We have organised more laptops and so we also train teachers and students during weekends on how to use the 3D scanners," said Mapekula.

Mapekula, 35, obtained his BSc Honours in Chemistry from Walter Sisulu University in 2011 and joined Rhodes University a year later.

His efforts have not gone unnoticed as he was honoured as one of the 12 finalists for the Daily Dispatch and Johnson & Johnson Local Heroes Award in 2018. The judges there were impressed with Mapekula's initiative to write his own isiXhosa Maths study guide *Isisekelo sezibalo ngolwimi lwenkobe*.

He said his tough schooling made him want to make a difference. "A lot of high school pupils are doing Maths and Science but don't understand the basics of the subjects. So it is my mission to help those students to understand the subjects the best way I know how. I did it in the Mthatha area during my university years. I then asked the university to allow us to do a similar project in Makhanda. Masiphumelele is part of that," says Mapekula. ●

A lot of high school pupils are doing maths and science but don't understand the basics ”

RESEARCH

The challenges of digging deeper, and transformation

Study of reproductive health a real success story

With their research-funding figures having more than doubled between 2008 and 2018, Rhodes University prides itself on being a leader in research output.

Under the watchful eye of Deputy Vice-Chancellor for Research and Innovation, Dr Peter Clayton and Director for Research, Jaine Roberts, research at the University has seen phenomenal growth over the years and continues on this upward trajectory.

Roberts attributes this strong growth to “a combination of a lot of different things. I have to first credit to DVC research (Dr Clayton). He is a good research DVC”. She says the mission of the research office “is to remove project management from academics to allow them to do research.

“They are scholars. They must be left free to do their research and to publish. So as we get more and more external grant from international funders and government bodies, we have a higher productivity rate relative to our small number of staff,” said Roberts.

The office has a staff complement of 14, made up of mostly females. Half of the staff is grant funded because they are not permanent posts but are council funded posts. The staff complement in the Research Office is directly proportional to the research funding that comes into the University - the more grant funding the University secures for researchers, the more staff is needed to support the academics in their research efforts. “As we receive more funds from grants such as the National Research Foundation and more rated researchers, so has the number of staff needed to support the academics,” Roberts said.

She says it’s as a result of “a combination of a lot of different things. I have to first credit to DVC research (Dr Clayton). He is a good research DVC”. She says the mission of the research office “is to take away project management from academics to get back to research.

“The way things are at the research office shows that the more grant funding the university secures for researchers, the more staff complement is needed, and so “as workers have grown and so do the staff. And when there is more staff, there is more



Deputy Vice-Chancellor for Research and Innovation, Dr Peter Clayton.

work as we get more money from grants and the National Research Foundation and therefore more rated researchers.

“Every year we put in more effort to ensure that there are more researchers. The current major funders for the research unit are the European Union, the British Union, Danish and Swedish funders. There are a lot of grants coming from there,” she said.

Roberts credited Rhodes University academics for holding the rural university’s flag high through securing grant funding. “We need to emphasise that a lot of those grants are initiated by academics. They bring them. It’s because of who they are and the work they are doing and the proposals they write. So the credit in the end for the increased funding must go to academics,” she added.

The research office is there to give support by managing grants and overseeing them by ensuring there is due diligence, good governance and ethics. “The difference between our office and departments is that departments provide academic

support while we are like a business unit. We are more like fundraisers. We can write proposals to get more money in. We are able to go to the Head of Faculty or the Dean and say we can bring some money. Rhodes’ research unit operates differently because we are spread. You have the core research unit, and there is post-grad which encompasses scholarships, bursaries and loans. We also have contracts section and technology transfer which includes intellectual property rights,” she says.

Among Rhodes University success stories in 2019 was the nomination of Distinguished Professor of Psychology Catriona Macleod for her outstanding research on reproductive health.

Health systems, sex and reproductive health. There’s a dire need for more research



Macleod is also the editor in chief of the international journal called “Feminism and Psychology” as well as SARChI chair of the critical studies in sexualities and reproduction research programme. Roberts described Macleod’s award-winning research as an engaged and relevant research. “It’s health systems, sex and reproductive health ... there’s a dire need for more research in that field.” Macleod is sole author of a book entitled “Adolescence, pregnancy and abortion: constructing a threat of degeneration”.

The book published in 2011 and also received Rhodes University Vice-Chancellor’s book award. “She (Macleod) is doing great work and supervising a lot of graduates,” says Roberts.

According to the 2017/18 research output figures, Rhodes University is ranked among the top three universities in South Africa, along with Stellenbosch University and the University of Cape Town. “It’s always intense among those three universities because of the amount of research they do. But there are always speculations about why Rhodes is so good at research. Some say it’s because it’s a small town and rural and so it’s very easy to do research,” says Roberts.

But there are also challenges, as most of the seasoned researchers are nearing their retirement age.

“We are concerned about the category which will soon retire, and those are mostly white males. It’s a historical deficit. So this office spends a lot of money trying to support that transformation of researchers,” said Roberts.

She said the institution is battling to replace these seasoned academics because of the slow pace of transformation. But the university is changing its fortunes. “There are ageing cohorts and we are not quite transformed enough to be able to replace them. This office does a lot of work to ensure we transform and there is development programme and thereby trying to accelerate transformation and development of staff,” she says.

The university’s demographics show that the majority of the students are black South Africans, however at postgraduate level, there are more white students than blacks and Roberts said this picture has to change. “We’ve got to transform the university. In order to be able to transform the staff complement, you have got to transform and have more PhDs who are going to become academics. There are lots of options for PhD graduates so we need to increase them to saturation point so that more are choosing to become academics so that they don’t want to work for the science council, or government, or an international donors,” she added.

Roberts says another challenge facing all universities was that academics are quite a mobile group.

“We get someone from Wits and lose someone to the North West University. But a lot still want to come back because it’s a small university which is well-run. I think that’s normal. It’s not something intense. It’s not a lot. We are gaining a lot of young academics. So I don’t tear my hair about that.

“Our view is that if we put someone through an accelerated development and they go to UWC, that’s fine. It’s another university. It’s investment in the sector. It’s a loss for us but we will carry on our transformation efforts,” added Roberts. ●

A little financial help that can change a person's life

Isivivane Fund assists in securing bursaries for hundreds of grateful students



Dimakatso Pitja of Midrand is one of the beneficiaries of the Isivivane Fund.

In 2018 Dimakatso Pitja was on the verge of dropping out of Rhodes University as she ran out of funds to study further, while she also owed the institution outstanding fees.

She had left her home in Midrand, the year prior, and headed for Makhanda to begin her studies towards a degree in Pharmacy.

The 27 year old student solely depended on her mother, who was the sole breadwinner at home, for her fees.

"I kept knocking on doors looking for a bursary. Some companies would tell me I was too old while state-funded financial aid said I do not qualify because my mother is employed and so I am not that poor," said Pitja.

Her first year was funded through personal loans that her mother had acquired and it became difficult for her to do so for the second year. Fortunately she received a merit award in 2018, which resulted in her receiving a 50% discount towards her tuition fees. But her problems were far from over.

"I knew that I would not be able to register for my third year

this year (2019), not unless if I had a bursary," she recalled.

She was advised to approach the office of Alumni Relations and Fundraising and enquire about the Isivivane Fund. Through the assistance of the latter office, Pitja managed to secure a bursary, for 2019, which settled her R120 000 debt for tuition and accommodation. Aspen Pharmicare committed to pay R75 000, while the Hillensberg Trust settled the outstanding R35 000.

"I could not believe it when (Development Fundraiser for Student Financial Aid) Luyanda Bheyile told me that I had secured a full-cost bursary," she said – with the excitement still palpable on her face.

Pitja is one of hundreds of Rhodes University's students who are beneficiaries of the Isivivane Fund, which is run from the office of Alumni Relations and Fundraising, under Qondakele Sompondo.

Sompondo and his team have set themselves an ambitious target to source R1 billion in donations and grants over the next 10 years.

"In 2016/17 we were setting up systems. We only gained momentum in 2018/19 when we employed (Bheyile) to fundraise for us.

"The campaign has a beginning and an end but we are currently also running an annual fundraising programme concurrently (with Isivivane," said Sompondo.

The funds go towards helping needy and academically de-

Some companies would tell me I was too old while state-funded financial aid said I do not qualify



Qondakele Sompondo, of the office of Alumni Relations and Fundraising.

serving students. The Isivivane Fund aims to ensure that poor students who are academically-deserving receive funding to study at the university.

Launched in 2017, the fund's name is derived from the isi-Zulu proverb, "Ukuphosa itshe esivivaneni"- which means to contribute towards the greater good. It is one of the several projects that Vice-Chancellor Dr Sizwe Mabizela launched since taking over as the principal in 2014.

The university's Bheyile said they were making good progress with the fund, with 2019 showing "a 50% increase in funding compared to the previous year".

For Pitja and many other students who make up the so-called "missing middle", the bursary could not have come at a better time.

"My only dream is to be a pharmacist and Rhodes University opened those doors for me by giving me this bursary. I appreciate the work that the bursary office is doing for us because we get rejected everywhere," said Pitja. ●

My dream is to be a pharmacist and Rhodes University opened those doors for me



The funds for Isivivane come through various sources, including:

The Rhodes University Governors Fund, which assists disadvantaged learners who attend secondary schools in the poor areas of Makhanda.

The Jakes Gerwel Scholarship Fund, which was established to attract talented financially-needy students to Rhodes University.

The Sports Foundation, which focuses on maintaining sports facilities to attract talented young people to Rhodes University.

Sandisa Imbewu, which supports postgraduate students and academic staff in their research endeavours.



Rhodes University drama student Noluthando Sibisi's play 'Salt' won her the Best Student Theatre Festival Award at the 2019 National Arts Festival in Makhanda.

Drama student critiques scripture interpretation

Modern take on Biblical tale of Sodom and Gomorrah

Growing up in a religious home in KwaThema in Gauteng, Rhodes University Drama student Noluthando Sibisi has always been an avid reader of the Bible.

The 22-year-old was the "perfect child" who went to church every Sunday, attended church youth camps and even led the Students' Christian Organisation as a teenager.

Rhodes University has been dominating the Student Theatre Festival since 2014 when it won the Best Overall Student Production Award.

Sibisi's production, *Salt*, won her the coveted Best Student Theatre Festival Award and Best Director in the same category at the 2019 National Arts Festival in Makhanda. Rhodes University has been dominating the Students Theatre Festival, winning the Best Overall Student Production since 2014.

The Student Theatre Festival is the student section of the National Arts Festival, where students from university drama departments across the country compete for prestigious awards.

It is the only student theatre festival of its kind in the country, and each university showcases one play which is eligible for various award categories.

Salt was produced as part of Sibisi's Directing class for her Honours course, where Drama students pitched plays they would like to direct.

Sibisi says she was a "good Christian girl" until Grade 10 when she started questioning everything around her, which included the way some Bible stories were being told in church.

The story of the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah in Genesis 19 stood out for her, as she had questioned how preachers relayed the story of Lot's wife.

"We tend to pick and choose what we want congregants to hear. We do not read critically and in context, especially in this story which I have heard many times."

In *Salt*, Sibisi deals with what she terms the "bizarre and tragic" biblical story of Lot, his wife and two daughters, which



shows writers' patriarchal inclinations and how little they thought of the female body. "Everyone who relates the story emphasises the homosexuality that led to the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah. They ignore the incestuous rape, violence, betrayal and misogyny because it will show males in a negative light.

"I interpret the attitude towards homosexuality as outrage at what is seen as feminisation of the male body," Sibisi says.

She finds it absurd that Lot would protect two male strangers from the men of Sodom, but easily offer his own underage virgin girls to the same men to have sex with them. "No one asks what kind of father would do that. It shows disregard for the female body."

She says: "Lot's daughters, at a young age managed to conjure up a plan to make him drunk and seduce him to procreate, according to the story, and he was not aware of what was happening. Also, his wife turned into a pillar of salt for being

disobedient by looking back when she was told not to - again showing women in a negative light. How was Lot not reprimanded for his actions?"

These questions led to the idea of telling the story from the perspective of Lot's wife and daughters, and that's how *Salt* came about. "I put the biblical story in 2019 South Africa for a different perspective because we still deal with the same issues today. We still hear stories of fathers and pastors sleeping with children. Patriarchy still reigns like the Bible times.

"In *Salt*, one daughter seduces her father while the other is forced to have sex, to express that there was something wrong with Lot sleeping with his daughters."

Sibisi interprets Lot's wife's looking back as an act of defiance. But in *Salt*, she commits suicide instead of turning into a pillar of salt, and with that Sibisi shows that she took hold of the situation and ended things her way.

About winning the Best Student Production at the arts festival, Sibisi said it was "confirmation that I am on the right path. People came out with questions and that's what I was aiming for".

Sibisi, who's belief in God never changed, cautions believers to carefully analyse what they read in the Bible and how it applies in 2019.

These are some of Rhodes University's awards:
2014 – Winner of Best Student Theatre Production for *Solo*

2015 – Winner of Overall Best Student Production for *Void*; Special Merit Certificates for design

2016 – Winner of Best Production Award for *Nyangga*; Nominated for the Most Promising Playwright of the Year Award; Winner of the Most Promising Director Award

2017 – Winner of Best Original Work for *Cult Clit*; Best Stage Manager

2018 – Best Ensemble for *Seeing Red* ●





Sexuality and culture: do's, don'ts and taboos

Unbundling the narratives of sexual and reproductive health

Distinguished professor Catriona Macleod's warm smile and welcoming nature is the first thing one notices when stepping into her office – perched on the top of Lucas Street, overlooking the town of Makhanda.

As the head of Rhodes University's department of Critical Studies in Sexualities and Reproduction (CSSR), Macleod's department delves into the issues that are considered taboo in most communities, particularly in rural Eastern Cape.

Perhaps, this explains why she is highly regarded and is decorated as one of the best researchers in her field. She was recently honoured at the 2019 SA Women in Science Awards (SAWiSA) as the first runner-up in the category of Distinguished Women Scientists – Human & Social Sciences.

It does not take long to realise just how passionate she is about her work.

"The main aim of the research we do here is to open up a dialogue with more kind of public health understandings of sexual and reproductive health and to insert narratives that speak to feminist, decolonising, anti-racist, sexual and reproductive justice and citizenship," she says.

Theirs is not just research that remains buried in dissertations and thesis to comply with academic expectations, but rather is implemented to provide solutions to the ills bedeviling the



Professor Catriona Macleod

public health system.

Said Macleod: "We do a range of projects... We look at sexuality education, youth sexuality programmes, queer youth in policies in particular, reproductive decision-making, pregnancy and pregnancy support. We have a whole range of research projects in those various kind of topics.

"We do the research and we publish using these theoretical frameworks but we also try to partner with NGOs so that the kind of work that we do is taken up in interventions, and our work can inform these interventions".

The work of the CSSR has seen it partner with the Eastern Cape Department of Health on a number of projects.

Macleod understands that for a poor and an under-resourced province like the Eastern Cape, the need for quality research is crucial if the public health system is to be fixed.

More kind of public health understandings of sexual and reproductive health ”

"We are now working on a pregnancy supportability project in which we are designing quantitative and qualitative research instruments which we hope will be used at health district level to improve maternal mortality rates and maternal morbidity. In public health one of the notions they work with is the notion of unintended pregnancies.

"To say that the consequences of unintended pregnancies are because they are unintended as opposed to a whole lot of other factors is quite difficult. We know from research that's done globally that in fact 1-in-2 to 1 -in-3 pregnancies are unintended," she said.

The "supportability" project, said Macleod will result in them designing an instrument which will look at whether pregnancies are supportable or not, but also what the support systems surrounding pregnant women are.

We know from research... that in fact 1-in-2 to 1-in-3 pregnancies are unintended ”



Their partnership with the Department of Health has also seen them look into issues surrounding abortion.

"Some of the research done has shown that abortion counselling is conducted in a directive and anti-abortion manner and in a way that impedes on women's rights and overemphasises the negative consequences of abortion. So we are pulling together a short course that we want to offer to nurses within particular districts... with the insertion of a more feminist approach using reproductive justice approach... to highlight inequities that happen in reproduction and how we can correct these," she said.

Macleod also delved deeper into the pregnancy project that the CSSR has initiated in partnership with the Eastern Cape Liquor Board and a local NGO.

The project explores the interventions around drinking during pregnancy.

"We've done work on a project of pregnant women and their partners or family members to hear their stories about drinking during pregnancy. We asked them just to tell their stories... and some of the stories they told are absolutely interesting and fascinating.

"Drinking is associated with the stresses... people self-medicate as an aid against many stresses in life, including coping with death of family members through violent means, rape, intimate partner violent socio-economic precarity.

"What's important to note is that (the drinking is) not out of a lack of public knowledge... A lot the people we interviewed in the Buffalo City, in low-resourced areas of Mdantsane and Gonubie township (Mzomomhle). What was very interesting is that they spoke about how drinking is something considered wrong in Xhosa culture. It is not knowledge that is the problem but the stresses. One of the stresses was getting an HIV diagnosis during pregnancy.

"Some of them were trying to drink enough to abort. This is an interesting thing because in South Africa, we have legal termination of pregnancy... why would they do that? (We know that) with those women they did not feel like going to a local termination clinic," said Macleod, who is a professor of Psychology.

The research done with the Eastern Cape Liquor Board will be released towards the end of 2019 or early 2020. ●

GENDER

Taking control and understanding notion of consent

Reaching out and finding solutions from different cultures

After returning from an exchange programme in the United States, Siphesihle Ndaba started working on a theatre production to sensitise pupils about the importance of consent before they reach the university level.

Titled *Consent* the production features pupils from a Makhanda high school.

She said the programme was community service, leadership and entrepreneur based. "We were taught how to write proposals, how to start up NGOs and getting involved in community services," she said.

The 22-year-old honours student in dramatic arts said, her idea was inspired by the high rate of rape statistics in the country as well as gender-based violence at institutions of higher learning.

"I then decided to work on a project that will educate high school pupils that being in a relationship with someone does not mean you own them. We will always emphasise that no means no, whether it's loud or soft," she stated.

She said she felt it was important to teach young people about what consent was, from a young age, "because if we do not start these conversations now, then people carry these thoughts and mentalities to universities and we have universities where rape culture is so prevalent and people have normalised it so much that when you say no that is not consent they look at you as if you are saying something wrong," she said.

Her academic excellence saw her become one of the beneficiaries of the Oprah Winfrey Leadership Academy for Girls



Before the Oprah Academy I did not even think about going to university



Rhodes University student Siphesihle Ndaba.

(OWLAG).

"Before the Oprah Academy I did not even think about going to university, it was not even a thought on my mind. For me it was just like passing matric and getting a job, because of the situation around me, because I am the first one out of my immediate family to get a degree," she said. She noted that it was during her time at the OWLAG that she discovered her love for arts.

Ndaba said arts was one of the compulsory subjects at the school. "Before that I did not take arts very seriously. If it was not for the Academy, I would not have discovered my love for the arts," she said.

The Soweto-born Rhodes University student will soon be travelling to Ethiopia and the United Kingdom, on yet another exchange programme.

She said she applied for the programme after receiving an email from one of her lecturers about the programme.

"She always forward us these emails about everything from scholarships to exchange programmes. I read the email and I got interested in being part of it. I then applied because it was linked to what I am doing," she said.

She said the scholarship is based on open debate and discussion about social issues.

"I told myself that this is a perfect space for me to be in as well as to travel," she said.

Ndaba said during the interview for programme, the panel included Rhodes University Vice-Chancellor Dr Sizwe Mabizela, and participants were asked about current affairs issues and how they think they would come up with solutions.

"Basically they were testing our awareness of social issues and ability to respond to them," she explained.

Ndaba promised to find new ways of teaching young people about consent and issues around gender-based violence. ●

LONG SERVICE

Celebrating four decades of devotion to printing

Stalwart has served under five Vice-Chancellors over 43 years

After 43 years of service at Rhodes University, Mpumelelo Rala will bid goodbye to the university at the end of 2019.

The 65-year-old started working for the institution as a junior machine operator on June 14 1976 at the university's then Accounts Department. When one of the senior operators retired the following year, he was promoted to senior machine operator.

Printing in the 1970s was different. It was much slower and harder than it is today. Rala remembers how tedious the process was back then. "When I started, it was so primitive. We were working with letterheads, university documents, daily printing for students, among other things. If we were printing documents, we had to wash the printing plate to remove the ink. We would then go to the darkroom to make negatives and put them on the plate. It was very expensive too," recalled Rala.

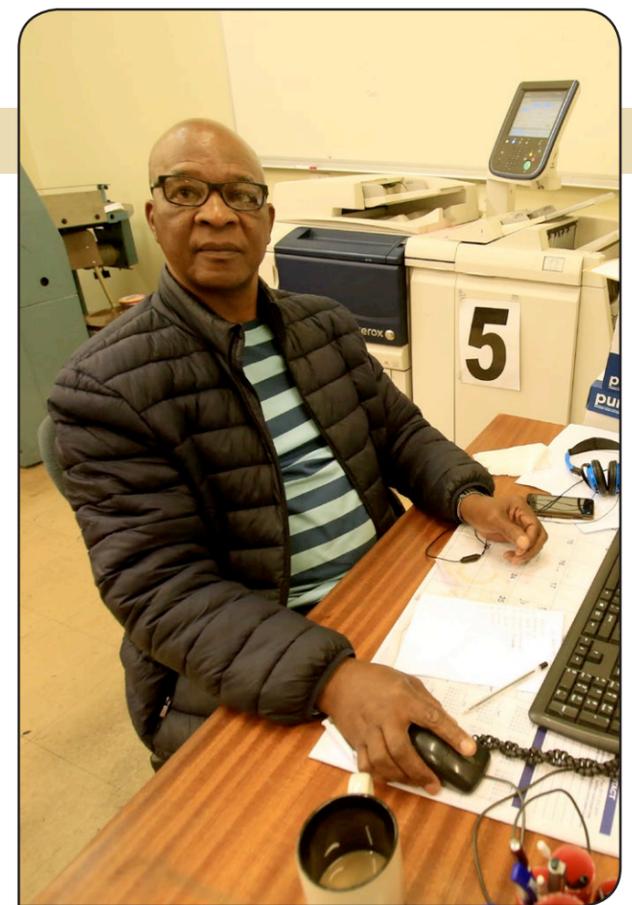
Everything was done manually. "The machines were not colating, so we had to do everything by hand. I would be exhausted at the end of the day."

Things changed for the better for Rala's unit when digital machines were introduced around 1985.

"The Xerox machine we were using worked like a photocopier, but its lighting was blinding. It almost damaged my eyes. It was much faster and we could programme it, so many copies could be stapled at the same time. We didn't have to staple documents ourselves any more. It made work easier."

The unit later moved to a new building where the team of six had computers and everything was digital. Rala was supervisor at that point. One of his most important jobs was printing of examination papers for students. "When it comes to exams, no one else could print them. I had to go to the Vice-Chancellor

If we were printing documents, we had to wash the printing plate to remove the ink



Mpumelelo Rala worked at Rhodes University for 43 years.

to sign that we would not leak the exam papers."

When the unit's manager left in 2006, he acted in that position until 2008, until a new manager was appointed.

Rala, who served under five vice-chancellors and six managers, said the biggest change he witnessed was the number of black students who were admitted to the university in the latter years compared to the 1970s, when he started working for the institution.

Every year, the institution commemorates its dedicated retiring staff by planting a tree in their honour. Rala was among those who were honoured. He said he cherished the years he spent at the university as he witnessed the changing face of the institution.

"Even in administration positions, there were more black people coming in as the country moved away from apartheid laws," he said.

He remembered the current Vice-Chancellor, Sizwe Mabizela, when he arrived as a lecturer at the university. "He would ask me to print some papers for his classes. He has always been kind. Seeing him grow from being a lecturer to Vice-Chancellor gave me hope for the institution."

Rala has seen a lot of transformation and commends Mabizela for the work he has done. "It will take time, but there has been some transformation."

In his farewell speech, Rala lamented the high unemployment rate in Grahamstown and urged Mabizela to ensure that the university helped unemployed graduates in the community. ●

MUSIC DEPARTMENT AND CHOIR

If music be the food of love, play on...

Singing talent has opened doors to producing and directing

For many youngsters, especially in rural South Africa, music is just a talent that goes no further than local entertainment. However, Asakhe Cuntsulana of Qwaninga Village in Willowvale knew when he was in Grade 10 that he wanted to pursue music as a career and recognised the various opportunities available to him.

Cuntsulana is one of the hundreds of students who chose to study Music and Musicology at Rhodes University. The love of music propelled young Cuntsulana to search for a career path that will not only fill his hunger for singing, but also sustain him and his family.

The 22-year-old Cuntsulana, who realised his passion for singing in 2003 at a primary school in rural Willowvale, found a home with the Rhodes University Music Department. He is now doing his Honours in Music at Rhodes.

At the time, he did not know that he could use his talent as a career. It was at Cowan High School in New Brighton in 2013 that Cuntsulana was exposed to opportunities in the music industry and decided to pursue this career path. He enrolled at Rhodes and, in 2016, commenced his studies towards his junior degree. His lecturers, Jo-Nette Lekay and Dr Boudina McConnachie, were a big influence in his first year at Rhodes. "As a black child from rural Willowvale, I was not confident in my career choice, but the lecturers here encouraged me from the first day," he recalled.

Initially, his family was also not sold on his dream of studying music. Cuntsulana remembers his parents, who were not exposed to some career paths, asking him how he would make money after studying music. "I explained that the course was not only about singing. I can be a music teacher, producer, arranger or film music director. The opportunities are endless, we just need to remove the blinkers."

A Rhodes music qualification can lead to career opportunities in many diverse areas of the music industry. Most music

I was not confident in my career choice, but the lecturers here encouraged me from the first day



Asakhe Cuntsulana has big dreams of helping talented young people from disadvantaged backgrounds when he finishes his Honours in Music and Musicology.

graduates create their careers from more than one of these options: teaching, either privately or at a school; lecturing at a tertiary institution; ethno/musicological research; performing; conducting; composing and arranging; sound engineer (studio or live); arts administration, management, and publicity; music publishing and arts journalism.

Cuntsulana's short-term dream is to teach music at the same university after graduation. His ultimate dream is to use what he has learned at Rhodes to open an art and music school to help pupils, particularly those from disadvantaged backgrounds. "There is an abundance of musical talent in the Eastern Cape, but those youngsters do not know the kind of opportunities they have," he said.

Above learning more about music academically and impressive voice and performance training, Rhodes University has taught him to play difference instruments which include the piano, Djembe drum, Marimba, recorder, Adungu and guitar.

He is part of the university choir which performs at graduations, concerts and competitions. He is pleased to see growth and transformation in the choir with the introduction of more traditional songs and inclusion of some students who do not study music but are talented enough to go through the auditions and joined the choir. "The choir is now more versatile. We can do Western and African music very well and I love that."

Cuntsulana is working with some choir members on an outreach programme that will target poor schools around Makhanda, where there are talented singers and choirs. The project, which is expected to start in 2020, will help schools and students learn more about opportunities in the music industry and showcase the university's courses. ●

HISTORY

Getting to know our campus better

Exploring commonly misunderstood symbols

Although the historical significance of symbols can change over time, it is important to understand the original story and original symbolism of an artefact, and how and why the meaning of it has changed.

There are some physical objects around campus that are said to cause offence to students in their current interpretations. Here is an analysis of two of the most popular ones, including their history, what they stand for, and what they should not be misconstrued as.

The Great Hall statue

In front of the Great Hall, there is a bronze statue of a person wearing armour and holding a sword. It is mounted on sandstone plinth with a plaque that reads "1914-1918" and another that reads "1939-1945".

What it is not

Although the statue does bear a resemblance to the legendary French heroine Joan of Arc, known by images of her bob haircut, suit of armour and sword, it is not a representation of her. Joan of Arc was burned at the stake in 1437.

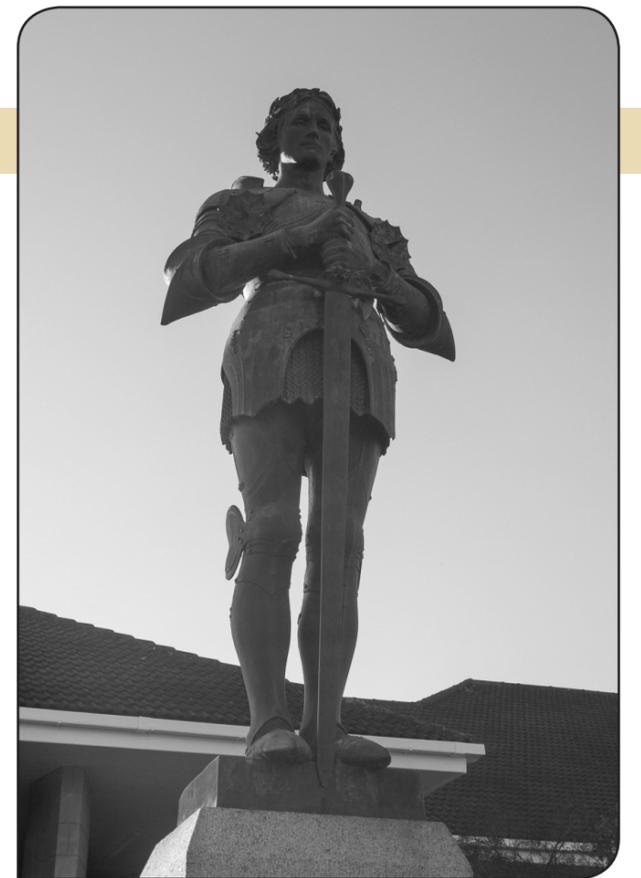
It is also not a statue of Cecil John Rhodes or any other figure of black oppression. Although it is understandable why this association would be made, the statue does not depict Rhodes, who died 12 years before the start of World War I.

What it is

The statue is a bronze memorial to the Rhodes University soldiers who died during World War I (1914-1918) and World War II (1939-1945). The statue depicts Saint George, who is one of the most venerated saints and megalomartyrs in Christianity, and he has been especially recognised as a military saint since the Crusades.

Out of about 260 past and current Rhodes University students and staff who served in WWI, 44 were killed. During WWII, 70 students and staff lost their lives in military service – including one woman.

The statue is a bronze memorial to the Rhodes University soldiers who died during World War I



The Great Hall statue.

Credit: Waldi Hoon

The statue was sculpted by Alfred Briscoe Drury in 1923.

St Peter's upside-down cross

The St Peter's Building, which houses, among others, the Dictionary Unit, the Institute for the Study of English in Africa (ISER), and the Rhodes University Mathematics Education Project (RUMEP), has a large upside-down cross on its front gable.

What it is not

The upside-down cross of St Peter is not a satanic or demonic symbol. It is true that through the years, an upside-down cross has come to be appropriated as an anti-Christian symbol, as is often seen in popular culture, but the original story is wholly different.

What it is

The cross of Saint Peter, as depicted on the front gable of the St Peter's building, is an inverted Latin cross, associated with the martyrdom of Peter the Apostle. When Peter was sentenced to death, he asked that his cross be upside down, since he felt unworthy of being crucified in the same manner as Jesus. As such, many Catholics use this cross as a symbol of humility and unworthiness in comparison to Jesus.

In 1974, due to a large increase in student numbers, Rhodes University acquired St Peter's campus from the Community of the Resurrection, who had housed a divinity training college there. Many of the buildings on St Peter's campus, including Bangor House, the St Peter's Building, and the Chapel of St Mary and All Angels were all acquired from the Community of the Resurrection. These iconic buildings were built between 1915 and 1916. ●

IT TECHNICIAN

Dream comes true after getting his hands on a PC

A lesson of goals, and a lot of honest hard work to get there

For more than 15 years, Xolisile Tyotha watched enviously as Rhodes University employees worked with computers at their workstations while he took care of plants and flowers around campus. He knew that one day, he would be on the other side of the desk.

The 45-year-old who grew up in Makhanda started working in a nursery at the university in 2003. He had struggled for years after passing his matric in 1994, working as a part-time barman. In 2000, he was employed in a nursery for the Working for Water project where he gained experience with working with plants.

In 2003, he was employed by Rhodes University as a nurseryman in their Grounds and Gardens Section where his job was to plant and maintain flowers and trees on campus.

"I used to watch people using computers on their desks. I developed an interest in computers and knew I was going to find a way to get to where they were," said Tyotha.

He understood there were limited growth prospects at the Ground and Gardens Section due to the small number of senior positions. When he heard about in-house short courses on basic computer studies, he grabbed the opportunity. "The university allowed me to study Introduction to Computers, where I learned all the basics."

Always eager to learn, he subsequently, did several short courses on computer literacy offered by the university and learnt to use a computer. In 2006, Tyotha did a 12-month supervisory course which was also offered by the university. "There were only secretaries and administrators doing the course. I was at the lower level, and when I passed, I gained confidence and I realised that we all have a chance in life," said the husband and father of two.

A position for a courier opened at the university's IT Department, for which Tyotha applied. "They were looking for some-



IT network technician Xolisile Tyotha started as a nurseryman at Rhodes University.

one with matric, a driver's license and computer literacy, so I applied. I got the job in 2013 and I started delivering computers around the campus, fetching those that needed to be fixed.

"I learned from the technicians as they were fixing computers. I started helping them with loading programs to new computers. I was later responsible for loading programs onto second-hand computers that were sold to students and staff. The technicians were very helpful."

Tyotha started fixing minor issues with computers and printers. When he could not fix the problems, he brought them back to the IT department for technicians to work on. "I was very eager to learn and pushed myself because of the love I had for my job. This helped me when the network technician position was advertised," he said.

He applied for the network technician job and started the job in July 2019. "It was a dream come true for me. Finally, I was sitting confidently in front of a computer. There are more IT courses here that I am still going to study.

"My journey has taught me that we should have goals and visions for our lives. We must always aim for bigger goals and work hard to reach those goals. Everything is possible if you want to get better in your life."

His wish is to get to director level for the university's IT department. ●

My journey has taught me that we should have goals and visions for our lives



REGISTRAR



Rhodes University's first black female Registrar Dr Adele Moodly.

Up through the ranks and finally happy at 'home'

Former academic who now thrives on reviewing education policies

Rhodes University made history in 2017 with the appointment of Dr Adele Moodly, the first black woman to take on the position of registrar.

A Rhodes University graduate, Moodly grew up in what is now known as the Northern Areas of Port Elizabeth, completed her Bachelor of Arts degree in English and Psychology at the University before spending more than 20 years in higher education and then coming full circle to join the University as a Registrar in October 2017.

She still describes herself as an academic but says she doesn't regret venturing into administration, now that she is a Registrar because "I have come here at a very exciting time when Rhodes is very focused on transformation and within the office

there are many opportunities to be part of that driving in terms of transformation".

"This includes looking at University's policies. This involves looking critically at our policies and deciding if they still make sense in the current environment in which we operate, and that is something that excites me," says Moodly.

She views taking up the position as a positive decision, having also being familiar with Rhodes University as a student.

The former University of Fort Hare deputy dean of education, also served as an academic at the Walter Sisulu University and in Saudi Arabia. She has since decided to come "home" to Rhodes where she was conferred with her first university degree.

She grew up in Korsten with two other siblings before her parents decided to relocate to Chetty (also in PE's Northern Areas). She described her parents as very strict, and they had expected her and her siblings to excel academically from a very young age. To instill the culture of reading, she says her parents encouraged her to go to the library.

"The Korsten library was far away from home, and so we had to take a 30-40 minute walk," she says.

Dr Moodly gives credit to her parents for instilling the culture of reading at a very young age. She says this allowed her to excel academically - both at school and university. At the time she was only exposed to two career options and these were nursing and teaching. She chose the latter.

"It is no surprise that I did BA and later Education, because as early as my schooling years I knew I wanted to follow teaching as a profession. That was the driving force during my schooling years at Frankenburg Primary School and Bethelsdorp High School. Our teachers used to say we should focus on education and the options were teaching, nursing and becoming a medical doctor. Those were the types of aspirations we had," says Moodly.

Owing to her good marks in matric, Moodly was able to secure bursaries and scholarships to pay for her university education. She also holds two masters degrees - one in Education and another in Business Administration. In addition, she has completed a doctor of education qualification with Unisa in 2001.

Asked whether Rhodes University was transforming fast enough, she said: "Whenever we want something we want it at a faster pace than it actually happens. But transformation is a process that you cannot speed along. We have a common understanding that it's a process that takes time. "Rhodes is a small institution and it has its own character. It is going to take time to transform fully. So far, I am very comfortable that the institution is on the right track," says Dr Moodly.

Asked whether there is any quote from any book that guides her every move, she says she "survives by the grace of God. That's what always gets me up. All I do is stay positive and hope to have a positive impact on the students, the rules and regulations of the University.

"I'm grateful for my life. It's important therefore to know that whatever I have achieved, I have achieved through God's Grace and so I must do the best I can." ●

STAKEHOLDERS



Rhodes University Vice-Chancellor Dr Sizwe Mabizela

We cannot allow our town to be threatened by provision of water ”



The 'Circle of Unity'

'Circle of unity' takes destiny of a town in their hands

Water crisis galvanises local brain-trust to take action

Until the taps in Makhanda literally ran dry earlier this year, civil society formations, academics, business and politicians spoke past each other and at each other but seldom to each other.

It was the collapse of infrastructure in the town that has galvanised a group of stakeholders to come together to collectively seek solutions to the town's problems through the Makhanda Stakeholders Imbizo (We are building Makana).

Organised by Rhodes University, the platform has brought together formations that would ordinarily be on opposing sides of either the political or ideological divide. But despite

their differences, the participants are motivated by one issue: their love for the town famed for its donkeys and potholes.

Speaking to *Rhodos*, Rhodes University's Director of Communications and Advancement Luzuko Jacobs explained the concept. "The project is called Civic Society Forum - it is not an extension of municipality or political projects but we don't seek to exclude political institutions. This is a purely civic society initiative which is not based on any ideology. We want to be able to relate uniformly as the citizens of Makhanda to a cause that serves the interests of our town across the colour lines, across the spatial design that we've inherited from apartheid, across gender lines, we want to create a platform for people to work in the service of Makhanda," said Jacobs.

Speaking at the Makhanda Stakeholder Imbizo in September 2019, Rhodes University Vice-Chancellor Dr Sizwe Mabizela said the time for fine words and eloquent speeches was gone. "I will be approaching the Rhodes University Council for funding to appoint a suitably qualified individual to oversee the programme of this multi-stakeholders forum. Failure is not an

We want to create a platform for people to work in the service of Makhanda ”



Rhodes University's Director of Communications and Advancement, Luzuko Jacobs.

option."

Makana Executive Mayor Mzukisi Mpahlwa shared several key strategic plans for the city, including the CBD regeneration business plan, sanitation improvement plan and the Makhanda airport concept. Mpahlwa said the plans had been researched and feasibility studies carried out.

Six of the seven envisaged work-streams were constituted as follows:

- 1: Process cluster to develop a constitutive framework for the Forum. This includes the basis for consensus building and to formalise structures and provide for a governance system;
- 2: Accountability cluster to address monitoring and reporting for citizenship campaigns and to improve citizens monitoring and oversight over the municipality;
- 3: Local Economic Development cluster to enable an effective marketplace for ideas, products and services and find the best options for job creation;
- 4: Community Engagement and Marketing cluster to create and sustain platforms for messaging, promotion of cohesion,

It's not like there is scarcity, there is water. It's a matter of provision of these resources ”

Makhanda brand development and community involvement;

5: Safety and Security cluster to focus focus on by-laws, prevention and education; and

6: The Big City Project cluster to strengthen Makhanda as the heartland for education, creativity and tourism.

The seventh work-stream for Operations Management will be consolidated within the other six clusters.

The stakeholders, said Jacobs, had realised that "as Makhanda we can't externalise about our problems as a community. Working in isolation without a clear front that will create socio-economic development, our voice is not heard. So we've created this 'Makhandian' circle of unity to take our destiny in our hands and realise that the municipality is not going to do anything for us, but we as the citizens of Makhanda, working in conjunction with government, the municipality and businesses can do something for Makhanda".

The water crisis in the town was one of the reasons that prompted the civil society get-together. "We cannot allow our town to be threatened by provision of water. The problem is not scarcity but provision. The Fish River Scheme should have taken off decades ago but it was not implemented. The kind of hope, involvement and by-in that we've managed to garner from the people of Makhanda means that this initiative cannot fail.

"If this initiative fails it means we would have destroyed the hopes of the people of this town for years to come. At the same time if we succeed, this is an exportable model," said Jacobs. ●

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

University builds partnership with local schools

Opening up the gates of learning for every deserving student

Rhodes University is like no other institution of higher learning. Not only is it a top performing university in a rural province but it is also a university without walls, literally. While visitors sign access-control registers and have to present themselves at “main gates” elsewhere, Rhodes is the complete opposite as anyone can just walk through the campus which lies at the heart of the heritage-rich town of Makhanda.

That is why Rhodes University has placed itself at the centre of the challenges facing the city and, through its Community Engagement Division, is determined to be part of the development of the town.

“Rhodes is not only geographically located in Makhanda, but it is of and for this city,” says Di Hornby, the Director for Community Engagement.

Rhodes University is inextricably intertwined with the city. The university contributes about 65% to the town’s GDP, hence it makes perfect sense that Makhanda is referred to as a university town. It is almost unimaginable what the town would be without the university. “You can’t live in a bubble and think that you are going to be okay. Sooner or later you are going to be affected by those around you.

“Community engagement is the third aspect of the University’s pillars which are research, teaching and learning with community engagement being an essential part of how the University interacts and engages with the wider Makhanda community,” says Hornby.



Di Hornby puts her views across.



Di Hornby, director for Community Engagement

Hornby says that not only is Rhodes University a research-intensive institution but it is also at the forefront of engaged research. Rhodes University’s growing number of engaged research outputs has positioned the institution a national leader in the scholarship of engagement discipline. The number of research outputs from Community Engagement has grown exponentially over the last few years.

Out of its student population of over 8,000, about 10% of them are involved in some volunteering service one way or another.

“We are the poorest province, so there’s a lot to be done. It’s about community engagement for community development. What are the priorities of the various community groups you are working with and how do you use the research resources of this university, the social capital of students... how do you use all that to partner with the community and turn the city around because a city with educational opportunities like this one needs to be smartly marketed. We don’t have industry here,

Fast Facts

In 2015 Mabizela sets up an education team to turn public education around Makhanda.

In 2016 only nine students came from the no-fee schools in Makhanda, to 120 in 2019.

In 2018 the highest number of Grade 12s entered and passed matric in the no-fee paying schools that Rhodes is involved in.

The VC’s education project involves 3 high schools, 6 primary schools and an early childhood development centre.

800 volunteers out of a student population of 8,000.



Rhodes University Vice-Chancellor Dr Sizwe Mabizela and student volunteers who are part of the Nine-Tenths Mentoring Programme.

We don’t have industry here, but our economy is an education economy



but our economy is an education economy and we’ve got some schools that can compete internationally right here. But not even 10 minutes away from those are dysfunctional schools. That is unacceptable and unsustainable in our democracy”.

Community engagement, she said, was about enhancing the teaching and learning project and about building partnerships.

Hornby’s department was born out of a vision espoused by the Rhodes Vice-Chancellor Dr Sizwe Mabizela who – in his in-

augural speech as principal - shared a dream of a Rhodes that is integrated with the community that surrounds it.

Its flagship programme is the education programme which is a partnership between the university with local high schools where they pair students with learners on a face-to-face, intervention programme which aims to not only deepen their understanding of the subjects but also improve their marks. They have started reaping the rewards.

“We started straight after (Mabizela’s) announcement. In three years we’ve turned public education around and Rhodes cannot take the credit on their own. In those three years those three high schools we worked with all got over 80%, and that’s the first time in the history of Grahamstown. We’ve gone from nine kids who came from our local community to Rhodes, to 120 in 2019. The VC made a commitment to (Makhanda) that no academically deserving child will be left out. He’s kept his promise. This 120 has come from these schools,” she said. ●

Amanzi for Food Project

The Amanzi for Food project is a perfect example of engaged research, which was done by the Environmental Research Unit.

Working with the Fort Cox Agriculture and Forestry Training Institute, the Eastern Cape Department of Rural Development and Agrarian Reform and emerging farmers, the researchers were looking at water usage in the face of drought.

“They brought all these teams together and it was so incredibly impactful that some of the incredible initiatives that came out from that are still going on. The agriculture college (changed) their programmes. They had been

teaching things that were not relevant to our landscape. All the impactful strategies that were used during the research project were brought back into the curriculum at the college, and the farmers who were involved in the research designed an App for farmers to sell their products there.

When those PhDs were marked, all those farmers and people who worked on these projects were recognised,” said Di Hornby, the director of Community Engagement.

Different strategies to raising the game on different fields

New sports head bringing in new players and giving facilities a boost



Rhodes University appointed Frans Mamabolo as its sports manager eight months ago.

Newly-appointed Head of Sports Administration Frans Mamabolo's passion for all sporting codes is already bearing fruit for Rhodes University, and he promises to deliver more.

When Rhodes University recruited him, he decided he was going to join the institution to restore it to its former glory of sporting prowess. He has adopted a radical approach to improve rugby, the university's most popular sport, by recruiting students from other universities. Mamabolo has also committed to change the fortunes of five sporting codes - hockey, cricket, basketball, karate and rugby - in the next three years.

As things stand, the only success stories among sporting codes at the Makhanda-based university are karate and rowing, with the latter being among the top four, along with the University of Cape Town, University of Pretoria and Wits Uni-

versity. Karate has also done well with award-winning Rhodes athletes Lutho Singata and Brent Smith jetting off to Slovakia in 2019 to represent United Shotokan-Ryu at the WUKF World Championship.

"We dominated rowing for 10 years straight. Other teams such as UCT started catching up four to five years ago but we are still ranked among the top four in SA," says Mamabolo.

I don't know where these students get such dedication but they are quite serious ”

"I don't know where these students get such dedication but they are quite serious about the sport," he adds.

The Soweto-born Mamabolo joined Rhodes as head of sports in January 2019 after spending 20 years at UCT - initially as student, only to rise through the ranks to become second-in-command for sports and recreation.

He says rugby remains the campus' most popular code, how-

We can't put our eggs in all baskets. We have to be able to choose a few that we can push up ”

ever the university has been struggling to qualify for competitions such as the Varsity Cup.

His radical approach in improving rugby has seen Rhodes recruiting and offering a bursary to Sandile Mantantana, who was a success at Nelson Mandela University. "They have not been winning anything in Varsity Cup. I came in and said 'we need to win at least one game', and they did.

"The target next year is to win two games which will bring us closer to the semifinal. Earlier this year I said 'coach, we need to go and recruit players'. We went all out. Among first years, there were players who were on the border-line of being accepted. We got hold of those players. At least eight of them. We negotiated with the university to accept them. They are now part of the mix. We managed to get Sandile from Nelson Mandela. We offered him a bursary. He is now one of our key players," says Mamabolo.

"My main concern is not just rugby but the identified sporting codes. I would like to improve our visibility everywhere and have more success stories. The approach is to try and assist most of the clubs. We are going to pump more resources into these clubs and when we see that they are producing fruits, we will concentrate on more sporting codes. We have to be able to choose a few that we can push up," says Mamabolo.

A similar recruitment drive was also adopted for basketball earlier in 2019, which saw three women - two from the Western Cape and one from Durban - join the university.

Mamabolo says this has also produced positive results. "We brought in these three women and the performance of the team improved. They have won provincial championships for the first time in years," he says.

Mamabolo, a karateka with a black belt himself, says: "In the next three years we should be able to say we now have teams that are competing in high level sports competitions. "Rhodes for me is an opportunity for growth and a chance to implement what I have learnt over the years. I can implement what I know worked at UCT.

"I know it will work at Rhodes definitely by virtue of Rhodes being so small compared to UCT, which is four times bigger. It's that kind of growth that drove me to Rhodes," says Mamabolo.

Sports Administration is crafting the 2020 to 2024 strategic plan which states clearly that Rhodes will be amongst the top eight universities in sport. This vision will start with bring the university's sports facilities to world class standards.

"We are working towards making these facilities world-class by improving and bringing new technology. One of the plans is to bring in LED lights for the rugby stadium so that we can have night games. We are also erecting some scoreboards that are of international standard.

"We also need to revamp netball, the basketball wall and tennis courts, in line with the updated standards so that we can host national and international tournaments if, one day, any code wants to come to Grahamstown," he says.

"My colleagues are giving me all the support. Rhodes knows why they brought me here. I need to change the face of Rhodes sports," he adds. ●

Flanker comes in from cold, adds heat to rugby team

University sets its sights on lifting fortunes of its sporting codes

The collapse of the Eastern Province Kings Academy in 2017 spelt doom for scores of youngsters who still dreamt of making it big in the world of rugby.

But for Sandile Athenkosi Mantantana, the proverbial light at the end of the tunnel came in the form of a call from Rhodes University offering him a scholarship – provided that he would join their rugby team.

The 22 year old was among the group of young athletes that Rhodes University recruited in 2018 to help turn around the fortunes of different sporting codes.

The Mthatha-born Mantantana is now the number one flanker for the university's rugby team.

At the time that he received the phone call, inviting him to Rhodes, Mantantana was studying towards a Bachelor of Science degree in Construction Management at Nelson Mandela University in Port Elizabeth.

He was on the verge of dropping out of university as he was not coping financially.

"I was faced with this dilemma when I received a call in late 2018, which informed me that Rhodes University wanted to offer me a bursary on condition that I take part in the Varsity Cup.

"It was as if I was dreaming because I was in a very tight spot financially and I was even considering dropping out of varsity," said Mantantana, who matriculated at Cambridge High school in East London. With the help of the Sports Manage-



Sandile Athenkosi Mantantana of Rhodes University's rugby team.

ment team, he applied to Rhodes and was accepted. The rest, as it is often said, is history. The head of Sports Administration Frans Mamabolo sang the praises of Mantantana - saying he brought with him the much needed boost to the Rhodes' rugby team.

"Not only is he a good flanker, Sandile has also helped the team win a game this year. I am very positive that his contribution will help us reach the target of making it into the top eight next year," says Mamabolo.

The decision to leave the friendly City for the City of Saints at the beginning of 2019, also resulted in Mantantana changing his career.

He is now pursuing a BA in Psychology, a path which he believes will eventually lead him to a career in sports management at a later stage.

"I don't regret anything about changing my career choice because I view this as a life changing decision," he said.

The change in Mantantana's life also came at a time when he was facing serious challenges at home - with his younger sister hooked on drugs. This led to his mother suffering from depression.

"The course I'm doing is helping me a lot. I'm not only studying towards something I am going to enjoy for the rest of my life, but it is also helping me heal.

"What is happening at home nearly destroyed me, but now I know that my mother does not have to worry about funding my studies. Psychologically I'm also being empowered to help my mother heal. This is a life changing journey," said Mantantana. ●



Now that I know that my mother does not have to worry about funding my studies



SA visa restrictions make it tough for foreign spouses

Lifting the lid on a maze of legal complications

Motivated by the struggles of those around her, Rhodes University lecturer Silke Joseph was drawn into researching the South African immigration laws.

This led her to focus on this issue for her LLB final year research paper at the university.

She then decided to submit a condensed version of the research – about 6,000 words – to the South African Law Reform Commission, which runs an annual legal essay writing competition for LLB and LLM students who are interested in championing law reform issues.

Joseph and Sarah Jane Goldman of the University of the Free State were declared joint winners in the LLB category for the 2019 competition at a gala dinner awards ceremony which took place in Centurion, Gauteng.

A group of professors from universities across the country were brought in to read the essays and select finalists. The winner and their supervisor received cash prizes, while their university's law faculty received a book voucher from Juta, one of the main sponsors of the competition.

Joseph, who lectures Legal Theory and Commercial Law at Rhodes University, said immigration was very topical both locally and internationally but there was so much focus on the "us versus them" approach.

"I'd heard of a lot of struggles and heartache that South Africans wanting to live in the country with their foreign spouses face and what happens in practice versus what is on paper. The more I read about it, the more I realised there was a huge gap in research and writing on this issue. There's a lot on immigration laws but not involving spouses of South African citizens," she said.

"Their foreign spouses have to go through the immigration processes to apply for temporary residency. They have to be married for five years before they can get permanent residency – which would be fine - but they have to renew it every 18 to 24 months."

She said there were many costs involved in the processes, including a large number of documents requirements. "They



Rhodes University lecturer Silke Joseph

have to go through the Visa Facilitation Services for processing then submit to the Home Affairs Department, but there are only 11 offices in South Africa processing these particular applications," Joseph said. The only office in the Eastern Cape is in Port Elizabeth.

"It is very inaccessible and expensive. Everything happens online. It doesn't make sense in the South African context. If you look the economics of it, most people can't provide the financial assurance which most people do not have. It is not only bureaucratic barriers but very real economic and social challenges too. Also, with the temporary visa, a spouse can't work with a temporary visa. They have to apply for a work visa which is hard to come by if they don't have critical skills."

While looking into the law, Joseph discovered that the Constitutional Court had ruled in two cases in the early 2000s that restricting people in such marriages in the way legislation had before was unconstitutional. Shortly afterwards, the Immigration Act was introduced and a lot of the barriers were still maintained. This is despite the Constitutional Court ruling that there should be differentiation between someone who comes to the country to just work for themselves and someone who is working to provide for their family.

"But that's not really the case, sometimes couples get to a point of wanting to leave the country, but it's not an option for some. It's heartbreaking because children are involved. At the award ceremony, it was very inspiring to be in the presence of the judges and exciting to win the competition as I always wanted to do social justice work."

Joseph was placed on the Dean's list for academic merit for 2018 and was also awarded the Thompson Date Cong Award for 2018 for the student who makes the greatest contribution to the Rhodes University Law Clinic during their penultimate and final years of the LLB.

"I plan on doing my LLM in international human rights in 2020 in the Netherlands if all goes well." ●

Children's book delves into roots of colonial trauma

She conquered her fears after putting emotion on paper

When Mathabo Tlali dropped out of Rhodes University six years ago, she never expected she would have the courage to go back to university.

This was after she failed her final year twice for her Bachelor of Arts in drama and sociology degree, and was academically excluded. But that's history.

Tlali is back on campus to finish her three-year degree. It is thanks to her high school friend Sihle Nontshokweni, the co-author of their newly published book called *Wanda*.

The King William's Town-based Tlali was battling to cope with severe depression for more than four years after dropping out of Rhodes University when Nontshokweni suggested that they write a children's book.

This was the same year when Pretoria Girls High School parents and learners were up in arms, demanding a review of the school policy on African hair.

It was in August 2016 that black pupils at the school protested against the school's code of conduct, saying it imposed unfair restrictions on how they could wear their hair.

Published by Jacana Media, as part of a story writing competition, the 29-page children's book is a story of how Wanda, a primary school learner, was humiliated by her peers on her school bus trip every day for her natural hair.

This went on until her grandmother showed her how to plait her hair and taught Wanda to be confident in her natural hair. Tlali said the book took them less than a day to write, because these were some of their personal experiences while at Kingsbridge High School in King William's Town.

"This book is based on our high school experiences but has been translated to younger audience. This is not an attack on the school but we are making commentary on the colonial formation of these schools.

"We were excellent at school but there were particular cultural elements that made us feel as though we needed to compromise our blackness in order to fit into the school. Look at the issue of language for an example. We can't finish a single isiXhosa sentence without mixing it with English and so your



Rhodes student Mathabo Tlali with the copy of the book she co-authored with her high school friend, Sihle Nontshokweni.

knowledge production, your social understanding of language is premised in English. I'm 29 but I've never had a dream in isiXhosa," said Tlali.

Her narration, even in the deepest of her psychology is in English and that speaks to a particular trauma, she says.

"That speaks to a particular socialisation. A particular grooming. I sometimes think and say if my ancestors come and visit me today, would I be able to have a conversation with them and

hear what they say? But Jan Van Riebeeck's ancestors would be able to converse with me in a dream. So that disconnect is the one that I am addressing through this book," added Tlali.

When Nontshokweni recommended that she script the book, Tlali scribbled some ideas in her phone and sent them to her friend via WhatsApp as she did not have a laptop at the time.

"When Sihle told me about the story writing competition, saying I was perfect for it, that faith in me made enough for me

to say yes. So she sent me a few lines. I added a few more using WhatsApp. Sihle helped transpose my contribution onto a word document. The book was so easy to write because it just resonated with our lives," said Tlali.

She said they chose hair as the entry point of this hard conversation because "hair is a sign of beauty for black people but, at the same time, a sign of violence for colonial powers. The symbolism of hair to us was a doorway to a broader conversation," she said.

Within two months of being published, the book was doing so well that the publisher had to print more copies.

"What we have achieved so far is beyond our expectations because this book addresses conversations that parents are having with their children. Even more surprising is how schools have received the book," Tlali added.

In addition to the schools, the book has also grabbed the attention of government departments with the Eastern Cape Department of Sports, Recreation, Arts and Culture having hosted a launch event for the book recently.

Tlali gives credit to her mother who has given her unwavering support. She is resolute that she will be complete her degree this time.

"Coming back to Rhodes University this year has been rehabilitating and a redeemer for me. It's important to come to these institutions knowing who you are. I am here now not wanting for Rhodes to tell me that I'm smart. I'm going to the library, getting my marks and my marks should reflect what I already know.

"I am here to get a paper that states the obvious. My degree is just to state the obvious," said Tlali.

She has some advice for other struggling students who may also face academic exclusion in their lifetime at university. She says they must realise that there will be setbacks in life but their strength will see them through.

"Be patient with yourself and understand that you will be vulnerable no matter how strong you are. I refuse to accept that I was weak because I had always been told that I am stong. That is what largely contributed to my depression," said said. ●

We can't finish a single isiXhosa sentence without mixing it with English ”

I want Rhodes to reflect with my hard work that I'm smart ”

Finding ways to make isiXhosa work

Looking at languages as tools for transformation

It is a widely known fact that Rhodes University introduced a language policy that allowed students thesis in isiXhosa – breaking from a decades’ old tradition of English being the only language of teaching at the university. But what is little known is that PhD student Zakeera Docrat was among the task team of five which recommended the change in language policy.

When one gets to know Docrat it becomes little wonder as to how she would have ended up as part of that task team, which also included widely respected academic and Professor of African Language Studies, Russell Kaschula.

Docrat speaks fluent isiXhosa and even studied it in high school. Docrat said she acquired isiXhosa at home where everyone can speak the language. “I learnt it formally at school and ended up doing it in Matric at the Diocesan School for Girls as my first additional language,” said the 28 year-old who holds Honours and Masters Degrees in African Languages.

Promoting indigenous languages, she said, was important if South Africa was to fully transform.

In 2018, the task team went on to review the 2013 Language policy which declared English as the only language to be used for teaching and learning at Rhodes.

Docrat said the initial policy had to be reviewed, “because if you only have English as the language of teaching and learning, what you are doing is to stop students who are not comfortable in expressing themselves in English from participating in lectures. “We can’t have an English-only policy when we are trying to encourage people from all walks of life to access our institution. We reviewed the 2013 policy and said ‘what can we change?’. We said ‘we don’t believe that English should be the language of learning and teaching because we must make allowance for other languages to be used where possible’.

“That is being done in the School of Languages where we teach isiXhosa as a subject. There we don’t use English in class. In the German class, we only use German. In those instances it’s acceptable. But we said ‘what about in Science and in Anthropology?...Why can’t we allow students to express their thoughts in their mother tongue?’

“These students might have a positive contribution to make but because of the language barrier, they are afraid to comment. Their point won’t come across. So we introduced translanguaging,” she explained.

Translanguaging involves the promotion and encourage-



Not only does Rhodes University PhD student Zakeera Docrat speak fluent isiXhosa, but she was also part of the task team which introduced a policy allowing students to write their theses in the language.

ment of students to use their mother tongue more frequently in lectures. Translanguaging is a process which occurs when bilingual or multilingual speakers draw on a wide range of languages and language varieties to create meaning and to communicate. For example, reading, speaking or writing simultaneously in multiple languages.

A multilingual tutor would then be assigned to that group and “is responsible to translate and summarise the points in English. That is really positive”.

“This policy seeks to promote isiXhosa and develop it at the intellectual level. At Rhodes you can write your thesis in IsiXhosa, regardless of what faculty you are in. You can be in Sciences, and write your thesis in IsiXhosa. For me that is so significant because this will actually prove that our languages are

What are the disadvantages faced by African language speakers?



developed and they are on par with English. If not, then they can be,” said Docrat.

Docrat was featured as one of the 2018 Mail & Guardian 200 Young South Africans, under the Law and Justice Category. She matriculated in 2009 and the following year she registered at Rhodes for a BA degree. Her intention was to do Law so that she could practice. She also decided to register isiXhosa as one of her BA degree courses. “A part of me just couldn’t leave it (isiXhosa) behind. When you enjoy something so much, you do not know how to leave it behind. So instead of doing my LLB in 2013, I decided to do my Honours in African Languages. I graduated with a distinction. Then went back to the Law Faculty and did my LLB. Then I realised the importance of languages in Law and how as African language speakers people are marginalised in our courts and don’t have the same access an English speaker would have. So I went back to African Languages department to do my Masters in African Languages,” she said, adding that she graduated cum-laude.

Her findings at Masters level were the basis for the research she is currently doing as part of her PhD, which Docrat hopes

to finish by the end of 2019. Her PhD research was bolstered by the award of the Albertina Sisulu Doctoral Fellowship at the Women in Science Awards hosted by the Department of Science and Technology.

Her thesis went on to be declared, by the African Languages Association of SA, as the most outstanding thesis in Southern Africa for 2018.

“I wanted to highlight and investigate what are the issues concerning the use of African languages, in particular, in the legal system. And what are the disadvantages faced by African language speakers. So in my MA I looked at Language as a transformative tool to transform our legal system. I actually tried to argue in my thesis that by excluding African languages in the court and legal system as a whole, we are marginalising people,” she said. Her findings at MA level were the basis for the research she is currently doing as part of her PhD, which Docrat hopes to finish by the end of 2019.

Her PhD research specifically explores language used in the courts and how it relates to one’s Constitutional rights and what effect the language of record (English) has in South African speakers of other languages. Docrat said she wants these questions answered because the majority “of our people in South Africa speak an African language or Afrikaans as their mother tongue, and not English. The argument I am making is that for the language of record to change we need to look at our education system. So my PhD is very multi-disciplinary. It’s looking at languages at universities and how universities are contributing to making students monolingual when they get out of university. So we are producing monolingual English mother tongue students who then enter a legal system where the language of record is English. So universities adopt language policies that are feeding the current system. I am in no way undermining the role of interpreters. But what I am suggesting is if everybody in the courtroom speaks isiXhosa, why are we proceeding, in the Eastern Cape, with English?”

“There will be judges, lawyers who do not speak isiXhosa so you need interpreters. There can be a SiSwati speaking person living in Eastern Cape who will need an interpreter. But the problem as it stands now, is solely on interpretation. We need to plough a lot of money in order to get proper training and have legal interpretation programs at our universities. So it is unregulated,” she said.

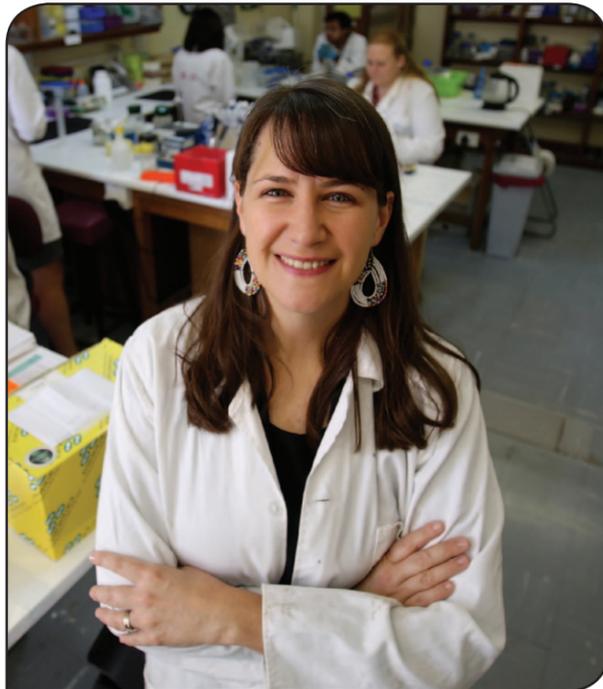
Docrat is willing to continue studying further and has applied for Post doctoral studies. “It’s important that when we do research, we publish it and approach government and our legal system and the minister and President, and say I’ve done this research, what are doing about it? Should I be awarded the post doctoral, I will use it to engage the affected stakeholders and say ‘let’s try and implement this in the form of policy so that in the next five to 10 years we can help improve the situation for our people’.

“Research is not about sitting in a journal but is about helping somebody. If I help one person in the whole country, I will feel like I have done something.

“I want to work with people to help in solving these problems in our courts,” she added. ●

Unlocking the code: common cancer linked to HIV/Aids

Working out the mechanisms of Kaposi sarcoma



The awarding of a R2 million cancer research grant to Rhodes University's Professor Adrienne Edkins may have brought us a step closer to unravelling the complex HIV/Aids related cancer that has not been properly studied in South Africa until now.

Kaposi sarcoma (KS) is most common among people infected with HIV/Aids and is an area where Professor Edkins, has focused her research - leading to her being awarded the Newton Advanced Fellowship from the Royal Academy of Sciences in the UK.

Edkins is the Director of the Biomedical Biotechnology Research Unit and is also a South African Research Chairs Initiative (SARChI) Chair for Molecular and Cellular Biology of the Eukaryotic Stress Response.

"We were able to get some grants to establish collaboration with a leading group at Leeds University in the UK and this is to look at a type of cancer that is associated with HIV. This cancer is called Kaposi Sarcoma and it is considered an AIDS defining cancer and it's linked with another virus called human herpesvirus 8 (Kaposi Sarcoma Associated Herpesvirus). It's a specific type of cancer which is linked to HIV and it occurs on your skin or on your mucus membranes.

"It is made from the type of cells that make blood vessels in your body. So these tend to be very dark-coloured tumours. It causes skin and blood cancers. This virus can infect certain cell types in your body and in some of them it can cause cancer," said Edkins.

Edkins says their research on the virus is quite unique.

"My group is interested in studying how cells cope with stress. If you think about humans, we are multi-cellular organisms, so we have millions and billions of cells in our bodies. They all have to integrate and talk to each other and they have to function in unison. So every cell has its particular function and it has to do that properly," she said.

Cancer, said Edkins, is driven by mutations. "Genetic mutations destabilise many proteins. So you've got this kind of cocktail of destabilisation in environmental stress that means that a system that would normally function to help you, becomes hijacked by the cancer cells in order to allow them to survive."

"In terms of the context of cell stress, viruses have their own proteins which are essential because viruses are the simplest form of life. A virus needs a host cell and it needs to hijack all the machinery from the host cell that it doesn't have in order to propagate itself.

"KSHV is a very big virus so it's got quite a lot of proteins... We had some preliminary data which is the subject of these grants to say that one of the proteins we've done a lot of re-

A virus needs a host cell and it needs to hijack all the machinery it doesn't have



Adrienne Edkins: Director of the Biomedical Biotechnology Research Unit.

search in over the years trying to understand it in other systems and understand it in just normal cell biology, it looks like this protein is required for virus production. We are asking how does it do that?," she said.

Edkins then unpacked the project.

"So there are two arms of this project. One is to look at trying to understand the biological pathways of the virus, and two, to look at whether we can develop inhibitors to this protein that will take out the virus but not the normal cells. Majority of virus infected cells require the virus for growth so if you take out the virus you cure the cancer.

"In Sub-Saharan Africa we have a very high level of people with KSHV infection so we get it probably in childhood. We're dealing specifically with viruses that cause the cancer, either to treat it or to improve current treatment. We also need to understand it because not everybody who gets HIV gets KSHV. We don't know why some people get it and some people don't. For some people ARVs are very good in controlling KS as well but for others with KS, when they start with Anti-Retrovirals their immune response can be fatal," she said.

In Sub-Saharan Africa we have a very high level of people with KSHV infection



Nobody has studied this protein system. We are one of the few groups doing the molecular virology on this system," she said.

Much of the research that has been done has been on the most prevalent types of cancers - breast, colon, lung and cervical cancers.

In October 2019, Edkins and two Masters students jetted off to the UK to link up with Professor Adrian Whitehouse, an expert on the virus, based at Leeds University. They will return with cell-lines, as work is underway to set up a facility to grow the cells at Rhodes University here.

Growing the cells at Rhodes bodes well for the country's research capacity. "Having the cells here means that we can start to dissect the biology of the virus and use these as easily accessible tools for our drug discovery. So we can for example compare how effective this compound is against a normal cell and a cell with a virus in it. You don't want to kill off all your normal cells, you want something that specifically targets this and not that.

"We still don't understand much about this cancer. It was prevalent in America and a lot of researchers in this area are in the states and two in the UK.

"There's very few of us in Africa and a lot of the work has been done by those scientists using model systems in their countries, using our patient samples. It's important that African scientists get involved in this because we're the ones that are going to benefit." ●

RHODES BY NUMBERS

No 1

Rhodes has the highest throughput rate of any university in SA

The contribution of Rhodes towards the GDP of Makhanda

65%

3.2

The average per-capita Research Outputs by Rhodes University, placing Rhodes in 3rd position after the University of Pretoria and University of Stellenbosch

63%

The number of Rhodes academics with a PhD

76.7%

The percentage of students in a specific 3-year undergraduate degree that graduate at Rhodes. The average for the Higher Education sector in SA is 52%

50%

of RU's student population is accommodated at its various residences

11,000

meals are served every day at RU residences

FOREIGN STUDENTS

Academic excellence gains international attention

Institution of choice for enrolments from abroad



Orla Quinlan (left), the director of Rhodes University's International Office.

Rhodes University continues to be the institution of choice for international students with a tenth of its postgraduate enrolments coming from outside the country.

Despite the university not marketing itself, as others do, over 1500 of the students registered at Rhodes University were from the rest of the continent and other parts of the world.

According to Orla Quinlan, the Director of Rhodes' International Office, the popularity of Rhodes has to do with its traditional of academic excellence and its ability to attract the most qualified academics.

"We don't do any direct marketing...For instance we have Prof Tebello Nyokong in Chemistry who has a global continental reputation, so she attracts a lot of students. Also the School of Journalism has a good reputation internationally and on the continent.

"They want to find the best supervisors," said Quinlan.

In absolute terms, Rhodes University's international student contingent may be small compared to the University of Pretoria which attracted over 5,000 students from the rest of Africa and elsewhere. But proportionally Rhodes University is the university of choice for international students as it had a total student population of just over 8,200 students registered in 2019 - compared to the 50,000 students at UP.

Another contributing factor to Rhodes' popularity is its location as a rural university and so international students find the engaged research focus of the university attractive.

That way, says Quinlan, the international students get to work with local communities for their research.

Having international students is also good for any institu-

The School of Journalism has a good reputation internationally and on the continent



tion's coffers as they are fee-paying.

Most of the work of the international office involves helping the students with their student visas and immigration issues.

Rhodes managed to convince the department of Home Affairs to send an immigration officer to the campus to assist students on site and save them a trip to Port Elizabeth, where the nearest immigration office is located.

"We had a lot of students who couldn't get the help they needed. We used to have an immigration office in the local (Makhanda) office that was stopped and the nearest point was PE. So of course that brings in transport costs, time costs," said Quinlan.

The institution is particularly popular with Zimbabwean students who also make up one of the most active international students' society - called Zim Unlimited - at Rhodes.

It is these students who usually need help from Quinlan's office. This, says Quinlan, is as a result of a lack of capacity in the country.

"Across Africa we don't have immigration officers in each of embassies or high commissions," said Quinlan - adding that this problem makes it difficult for students to apply or renew their visas. We always encourage students to renew their student visas here," she said.

Besides the unending work of assisting students with visas and other immigration issues, Quinlan also organises the Internationalisation Programme where the various campuses participate.

Each residence picks a country and participants get to research the culture, food and lifestyle of that country. Students from those countries also get to teach their counterparts about their home country.

This does not only create awareness about other cultures but also makes international students feel welcome - having shared knowledge about their home country with other students. ●

ALUMNI IN THE NEWS

Trading wedding gifts for donations to students

Matrimonial vows with a touch of pure generosity

Toni Parsons and James Rycroft made headlines in October for their kind gesture when they asked guests to their wedding to consider donating money to settle students' fee debts at their *alma mater*, Rhodes University, instead of the usual gift registries.

The couple did not expect the reaction they received from fellow South Africans and were pleasantly surprised. "When we told our family and friends, they thought it was just a nice gesture. It was not discussed much. It really was not a big deal.

"We didn't expect the reaction. We were very surprised because all we wanted was to help students who could not pay their debts."

The couple hoped that everyone who saw their story would feel inspired and compelled to do something similar to help the less fortunate.

Parsons (37) and 36-year-old Rycroft met at the university while they were students in the early 2000s. They exchanged wedding vows in Port Shepstone, KwaZulu-Natal.

Their "gesture of goodwill" as Rhodes University Vice-Chancellor, Dr Sizwe Mabizela, described it, was inspired by another Old Rhodian and mutual friend, Natasha Joseph, who, since 2017, runs an annual call for contributions to clear students' fee accounts. Earning a degree is often a key life moment for a

They have both actioned a social purpose and are living proof of our alumni



Toni Parsons and James Rycroft.

young person and we felt strongly about directing our community resources to helping a few young people at the university to graduate," said Rycroft.

Parsons added: "We believe that earning a degree should not be inhibited by your [in]ability to pay. A degree from a quality institution like Rhodes University can lead to serious opportunities when you enter the world of work. The contributions made by our community are intended in that spirit – to help those students who are unable to graduate."

Dr Mabizela, in a letter to the couple, welcomed the "profound gesture".

"This has impacted me deeply. It proves, once again, the calibre and well-roundedness of our graduates. At a time when young couples would normally and naturally only think of their own comfort and improving their lives, they have both actioned a social purpose and are living proof of our alumni."

Parsons and Rycroft met in 2001 while both were reading for a Bachelor of Arts degree with English as a major. Parsons would go on to complete her BA (Hons) in Philosophy.

Rhodes University has a unique aura about it: exclusive yet accessible and pursuing transformation through excellence. We have change agents for our engaged alumni. Our data shows healthy growth in giving by the 29 – 39 years cohort. It gives a great feeling just how young professionals are getting increasingly involved in positive social advancement of our communities through Rhodes University as their vehicle of choice, Director for Communication and Advancement, Luzuko Jacobs, said.

Rycroft is a third-generation Old Rhodian. His grandfather was in Milner House, and his father and brother also studied at Rhodes University. ●

Old Rhodian leads winning oceanography team

Dr Wigley curately plumbing the depths of the oceans

Old Rhodian and geologist Dr Rochelle Wigley has made history by being the first woman to lead a winning team in the Shell Ocean Discovery XPRIZE competition.

The competition requires teams to develop an autonomous underwater vehicle capable of transmitting high-resolution photographs and generating complex bathymetric maps at depths of up to 4.500m.

Wigley, who majored in geology and chemistry for her BSc degree from Rhodes University and achieved her honours in 1990, is currently serving as project director of General Bathymetric Chart of the Oceans/Nippon Foundation (GEBCO-NF) Projects at the Centre for Coastal and Ocean Mapping/Joint Hydrographic Centre at the University of New Hampshire in the USA. She was chosen to lead the GEBCO-NF team which entered the competition in 2016.

"This was a three-year long project where 78 people from 22 countries all worked together with a the single goal of a successful solution to the challenge set before us by XPRIZE.

"We worked alongside industry partners, suppliers, academia and others to achieve this goal," said Wigley.

GEBCO-NF managed to make it through to the finals which saw them travel to Kalamata, Greece for the final 24-hour ocean mapping challenge.

Finalists had to produce a 5-metre horizontal resolution bathymetric map as well as high-definition images of biological, archaeological or geological features of the ocean environment.

In the given 24 hours, Wigley's team managed to map 278km², produce 10 high-resolutions and produce eight 3D

A three-year long project where 78 people from 22 countries all worked together



Dr Rochelle Wigley, centre, with members of the GEBCO-Nippon Foundation Alumni Team.

surfaces of the sea floor. As a result, they were crowned overall winners at a ceremony held at the Oceanographic Museum of Monaco on 31, May. They were awarded \$4m (about R58m).

The money will go back to the Nippon Foundation to invest in further ocean mapping initiatives.

"The competition meant so much to me on so many levels. We worked with so many skilled individuals that it was an honour. Our team is unique in its diversity of nationalities, education, culture, age, gender and colour.

"Our backgrounds and careers represent academia industry, national governments and non-profit corporations from around the world," Wigley said.

"In addition, it showed the world the skills in our training programme and the value of capacity building and that no matter what, passion and dedication wins out," she said.

After graduating from Clarendon High School in 1986 and achieving her honours in 1990, Wigley went on to achieve a Master's degree in geochemistry from the University of Cape Town in 1995.

According to Wigley, her interest in geology came from her time spent wandering the veld near her home with her grandfather.

In 1997 she was employed as the lead geologist at Werner Marine Research, a job she she held until August 1998. Wigley then moved on to serve as head geologist at Gal Marine until March 2000.

Wigley was accepted as a PhD student in 2005 and achieved her PhD in geology in 2005. In 2008, she obtained her Ocean Mapping Advanced Graduate Certificate from the University of New Hampshire in the US.

In 2012, she was appointed as the project director of GEBCO-NF projects at the Centre for Coastal and Ocean Mapping at the University of New Hampshire. ●

ALUMNI IN THE NEWS



Keamogetswe Kuypers

Old Rhodian building a future

For a long time, the construction industry has been perceived as male-dominated, but pioneering women and organisations such as South African Women in Construction (SAWIC) are challenging this perception.

SAWIC is a non-profit organisation that was established in 1999 to empower women to gain access to business opportunities, training, finance and networks in the construction industry. It has helped many women, including 37-year-old Keamogetswe Kuypers who studied her BCom in Accounting at Rhodes University.

Kuypers is the owner of Tshagadi Services, which specialises in general building and civil engineering. In March, she was elected as the Provincial Treasurer of SAWIC in Gauteng.

One of her aims is to address gender equality in construction and other male-dominated sectors. "Partnering with men and teaching them about labour inequality, especially unpaid labour and how it affects women at home and in the workplace, is the only way to achieve equality," she said.

For Kuypers, equality means an appreciation of the skill set one brings to an environment without being expected to do unpaid labour as a result of one's gender.

Kuypers said: "I gained most of my experience through a co-operative called Lentsoe Labasadi, which I founded through SAWIC in 2016," she said, explaining that the SAWIC model encourages various women-owned co-operatives to work together on construction projects, by subcontracting into a job. "In that way, the organisation is able to teach and develop many women at once."

After gaining suitable experience, Kuypers started Tshagadi Services.

Kuypers, who grew up in Soweto also has a BCom Hons in Taxation from the University of Johannesburg.

Before embarking on her entrepreneurial journey, she worked for various multinationals and local companies in the mining, food and beverages, consulting, manufacturing and automotive sectors. Among the things that motivated her to start a construction company was the need for low-cost housing.

"I am hoping that we can design houses that are easy to extend while relieving the public purse," she said. ●

Journalism graduate is Ads24's new content head

Gayle Edmunds, who graduated with a Master's degree in journalism from Rhodes University, has been appointed as Ads24 strategic projects editor of its new content hub.

Edmunds worked most recently at City Press, a publication she served for more than 14 years. She started out on the subs desk before moving to the position of managing editor, a position she held for more than seven years.

Speaking about her expectations for the new role, Edmunds said: "I expect to expand on an existing portfolio of work to include those Ads24s clients who want to try something new and exciting to reach end consumers.

"I hope to reinforce the power of well-crafted content and how it can change the world if it is created for that purpose. I believe that moving to this role enhances that ability as it opens up the possibilities of more and more powerful partnerships across platforms, formats and audiences."

Edmunds began her career in journalism in 1999 and has worked across the board for a number of publications taking on roles as layout sub-editor, sub-editor and senior writer, among others.

"We are delighted to have someone with Gayle Edmunds' experience to head up this new and exciting role," says Marise van der Lith, Brand Manager for Ads24.

"This marks an exciting evolution in Ads24's client offerings. We believe she is the perfect person to spearhead this department and we can't wait to see her enthusiasm, professionalism and creativity in action." ●

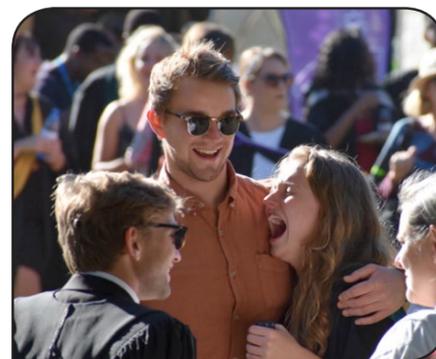
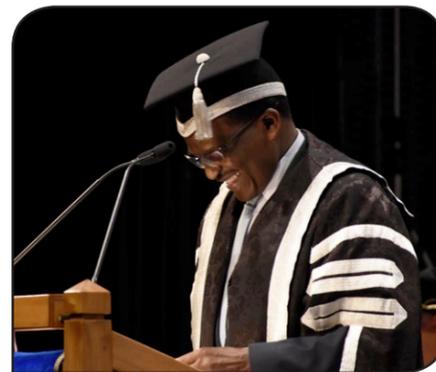


Gayle Edmunds

I hope to reinforce the power of well-crafted content and how it can change the world

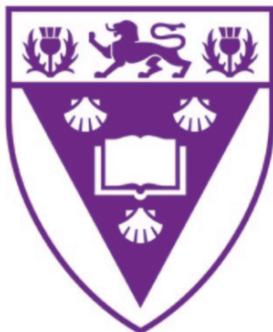


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