

ALUMNI

RU 120
1904-2024
YEARS
OF EXCELLENCE



RHODES UNIVERSITY
Where leaders learn

NEWSLETTER

Issue 78 | Year-end Review | Dec 2024

Student inspiration

ZOZIBINI MALI

Prof Rod Walker steps down
after almost two decades

**DISTINGUISHED
ALUMNI AWARDS**

KoHD HOMECOMING WEEKEND

**GREAT FIELD IS
NAMED THE ALLY
WEAKLEY FIELD**

Professor gets
highest research rating

Africa redefining what is possible

**WORLD-LEADING
NANOTECHNOLOGY
HUB LAUNCHED**





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CALL FOR STORIES

As alumni, you are encouraged to **share your stories** of interest for consideration in the newsletter. These can be sent to alumni@ru.ac.za

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St John's College
Sunday Times (Business Times)
Whistleblowers Awards

All past editions can be found at <https://bit.ly/3ORBDSf>

The next edition of the alumni newsletter will be released in June 2025.

ALUMNI

NEWSLETTER

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2024 SUCCESS SHAPED BY #RU120 CELEBRATIONS, STRONG ACADEMIC YEAR

THE 2024 ACADEMIC YEAR HAS GONE OFF SMOOTHLY AND WHAT AN EVENTFUL YEAR IT HAS BEEN FOR THE UNIVERSITY!

Since the beginning of this year, the University hosted **more than 50 events locally and internationally** to celebrate the 120th anniversary of the University.

Homecoming weekend celebrates Ally Weakley

On the weekend of 23-24 November 2024, a large group of 1965 to 1975 alumni from different parts of the world descended on our campus with much fanfare and excitement for their homecoming weekend which coincided with the **naming of the Great Field after Ally Weakley**. Read more on page 25.

The homecoming weekend programme included the welcoming cocktail at the Gavin Reilly Postgraduate Village (Motel), the campus tour led by Phillipa Irvine from our Geography Department and the Final Countdown Dinner at the Great Hall.

We also hosted a celebratory dinner for the 2024 recipients of the coveted **Distinguished Alumni Award**. Read more on page 31.

Student enrolment grows steadily

The student enrolment figures continue to grow steadily, and our recruitment team travelled around the country in the last quarter of this year to host parents and guardians of our 2025 prospective students and the feedback from the engagements was encouraging.

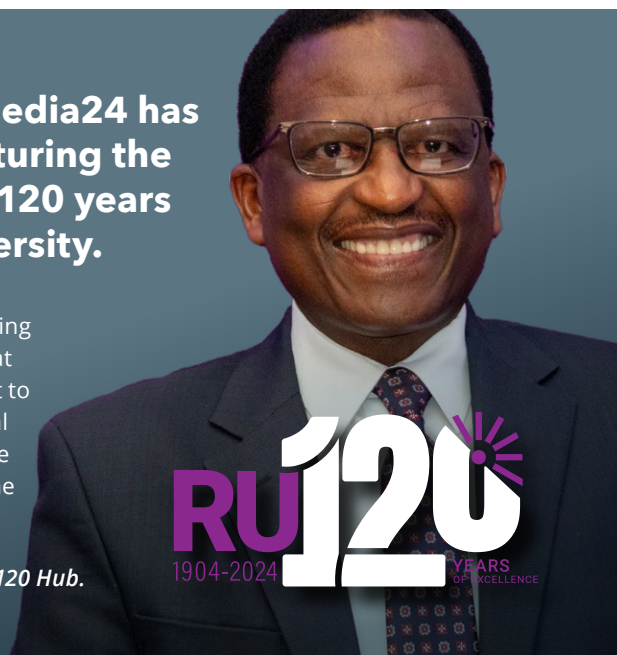


Our ongoing partnership with Media24 has seen the addition of a video capturing the Vice-Chancellor's reflections on 120 years of achievements at Rhodes University.

"Our vision is to be foremost in generating and advancing locally responsive and globally engaged knowledge that seeks to create a just and sustainable society. We want to remain firmly committed to the betterment of our local community, our society, our continent, and at the same time contribute to our global stock of knowledge for the betterment of humanity," he said.



Watch the video on our dedicated Media24 #RU120 Hub.



Investing in becoming a strong research University

In our continued efforts to become the only research-intensive University outside the major metropolises, Dr Kwezi Mzilikazi, DVC: Research, Innovation and Strategic Partnerships has invested significant time and resources to drive postgraduate enrolments and funding opportunities this year.

On 3 December 2024, the Tebello Nyokong Institute for Nanotechnology Innovation which houses the best cutting edge research equipment on the continent was officially opened.

This momentous occasion also marked the launch of the Tebello Nyokong Scholarship Fund which Distinguished Prof Nyokong has established from the funds she received for her research accolades and invested over the years.

Prof Sizwe Mabizela, Vice-Chancellor

Local student admission contingent grows

Our Community Engagement Division, in collaboration with GADRA, continues to help in improving the quality of basic education in Makhanda.

SOME HIGHLIGHTS:

20% improvement in pupil retention

in Makhanda education system

25% improvement in matric pass rate

since 2015 which has translated to **160 local students being admitted to the University** at the beginning of this year from just 11 in 2012.

NEW AOR LEADERSHIP SHARES VISION

THE ASSOCIATION OF OLD RHODIANS (AOR), A VIBRANT COMMUNITY OF THE RHODES UNIVERSITY ALUMNI, HAS ELECTED PROFESSOR ROSA AS PRESIDENT AND QONDAKELE SOMPONDO AS DEPUTY PRESIDENT.

VISION IN A NUTSHELL

... encompasses supporting branch activities and regional events, expanding membership engagement and participation, fostering a sense of community among alumni, and enhancing collaboration between alumni and the University.

... increase membership engagement and participation, support bursaries for members' children and enhance alumni relations and communication.

... plan to leave a legacy of diversity, collaboration, and a strong alumni network.

... envision a vibrant and inclusive association where alumni can connect, share experiences, and support one another.

... recognises the importance of technology in alumni engagement.

... envision a future where virtual events, social media and digital platforms facilitate connections among members.



**Professor
Rosa**

Associate Professor in Organic Chemistry at Rhodes University, for over two decades.

Professor Rosa shares her inspiration to take on the role: "I have been a member of the Old Rhodians since my graduation in 2000, and I have seen the excellent leadership of Rod Walker in serving the Association. So, when he asked me to stand, I did not hesitate to say yes."

"As President, I am to leverage my experiences as a lecturer and researcher to benefit the Association."

On the significance of alumni engagement in supporting the University's mission: "Alumni represent us out in the world, and they hold us accountable to maintain our reputation for integrity and excellence in the here and now."



**Qondakele
Sompondo**

CEO of United Through Sport and a proud alumnus of Rhodes University.

He brings a unique blend of leadership expertise and passion. My motivation stems from my positive experiences as a student and staff member.

Qondakele's inspiration for this role: "Rhodes University gave me a lot of good memories as a staff member and the rugby club coach. I felt the same while studying for my post-graduate qualifications at the University. It is a very supportive environment that I wish to keep for the next generation to experience.

"We need to be visible as the association, which will require a closer working relationship with the Alumni Relations Office."

EVER-PRESENT CHANGE: YOU CHOOSE HOW TO RESPOND TO IT

IN PREPARATION FOR THIS ARTICLE, I ASKED CHAT GPT PRO FOR THE THREE MOST TOPICAL NEWS ITEMS FOR THE YEAR. THE APP RESPONDED THAT IT COULD NOT DO THE NEWS IN REAL TIME BECAUSE ITS LAST UPDATE WAS IN 2023.

So many of us rely on news on social media and other platforms and believe that what we're reading is "true". Our world has become more accessible via these platforms, but algorithms dictate what we see and gain access to. The lesson in this for me is that I need to be more conscious about how I source media and information and that I need to go one step further and question my reading biases.

2024 has been a tough year with many changes on the home front.

A Government of National Unity promised many changes, some which have begun to take root while others will take time. Corruption is still in our news, but the independent media appears to be unearthing stories that would not otherwise have been exposed in the past. Small shoots

of hope are emerging as individual citizens claw back our country from unlawfulness and selfish behaviours. Our amazing sports teams and athletes create national cohesion as they compete and win (sometimes) internationally.

Internationally, we have a volatile world that is divisive and creating categorical "them" and "us" in different contexts. As we go into the 2024 festive season and think about what's been and what's possible in 2025, let's think about how we can contribute to positive change in a world that seems to be spinning out of our control.

Our locus of control is only in our own beliefs and behaviours. With all the changes coming at us, we are the only ones who can change how we act, think and believe.



I wish you happy and peaceful holidays wherever you are in the world and pray that we may see peace in war torn regions around the world in 2025.

Dr Michele Ruiters, *Convocation President*





Africa redefining what is possible

WORLD-LEADING NANOTECHNOLOGY HUB LAUNCHED

"WE NEED TO MULTIPLY EXCELLENCE AND STOP CELEBRATING MEDIOCRITY CONSTANTLY." DISTINGUISHED PROFESSOR TEBELLO NYOKONG, A GLOBALLY RECOGNISED EXPERT IN NANOTECHNOLOGY, AT THE OFFICIAL OPENING OF THE STATE-OF-THE-ART TEBELLO NYOKONG INSTITUTE FOR NANOTECHNOLOGY INNOVATION IN MAKHANDA IN DECEMBER 2024.

About the Institute

The R90-million facility, hosted by Rhodes University and led by Distinguished Prof Nyokong, represents a groundbreaking step for scientific research in Africa. It houses world-class scientific instruments and fosters collaborations with researchers globally.



Watch the official opening

The new Tebello Nyokong Institute for Nanotechnology Innovation building hosts high-end, state-of-the-art technology and purpose-built research facilities to advance nanotechnology research.

Nanotechnology is a field of science and engineering that focuses on designing and manufacturing minute devices and structures on the scale of atoms.

The facility was designed to support African researchers through scholarships and international collaborations and has already cemented its role as a driving force in Africa's scientific development. Distinguished Prof Tebello Nyokong, a globally recognised expert in nanotechnology, leads the Institute.

VICE-CHANCELLOR PROFESSOR SIZWE MABIZELA SHARES INSIGHTS

It is a “one-stop shop for innovation” and the first on the continent. It focuses on cutting-edge research areas, including nanomaterials for drug delivery, water purification, sensor development for detecting diseases and outbreaks, and a non-invasive alternative to chemotherapy.

“The Nyokong Institute will continue to build on the formidable intellectual power and global networks developed over the years, shaping the future of African science.”



ABOUT DISTINGUISHED PROFESSOR NYOKONG

Distinguished Professor Nyokong is an honorary fellow of the Royal Society of Chemistry and a Fellow of the Royal Society.

She serves on the Pontifical Academy of Science.

She has six honorary degrees, three from international universities, and is the recipient of the Order of Mapungubwe in Bronze for her outstanding scientific contributions.

Distinguished Professor Nyokong has supervised 71 PhD and 64 master's graduates. She has also written four books and 1,000 journal articles.

She is researching a new cancer diagnosis and treatment methodology called photodynamic therapy, an alternative to chemotherapy.

“Many of our students, carrying the legacy of the Nyokong Institute, now benchmark their world-class experience without needing to leave the African continent.”

Others comment

At the launch, Prof Kenneth Ozoemena, a former student and collaborator, praised Distinguished Prof Nyokong as “a mentor you cannot avoid learning from.”

Dr Iain L'Ange, who witnessed the Institute's journey from a research group to a premier facility, described it as “not just a place for research, but a space for redefining what is possible.”

Dr Gugu Moche of the National Research Foundation echoed this sentiment, highlighting the Institute's potential to “enhance South Africa's research capabilities and explore Nobel frontiers in technology.”

TSOMO'S PEARL QWANE IS AN INSPIRATION

AT 30 YEARS OLD, PEARL QWANE'S JOURNEY IS TESTAMENT TO PERSEVERANCE, RESILIENCE, AND A DEEP-ROOTED PASSION FOR MAKING A DIFFERENCE IN HEALTHCARE.

About Pearl

Born and raised in Tsomo in the Eastern Cape, Pearl was the only girl in a family of four older brothers who felt a strong sense of responsibility from an early age. The belief that education was the key to success has guided her throughout her life.

After qualifying with a Bachelor of Science in Health Sciences, she pursued a Bachelor of Pharmacy (BPharm) at Rhodes University.

Why a Bachelor of Pharmacy?

Despite financial challenges, Pearl's determination to pursue a career that would allow her to impact people's health and well-being directly kept her moving forward. For Pearl, pharmacy was more than just a career choice; it represented an opportunity to merge scientific expertise with patient care.

She admired pharmacists' critical roles in ensuring the safe and effective use of medication, managing chronic diseases, and providing essential health advice. This blend of scientific knowledge and human interaction deeply appealed to her, as it aligned with her values of helping others and giving back to her community, particularly in underserved communities.



Why Rhodes University?

She was drawn to Rhodes University's esteemed reputation for producing graduates who have gone on to lead in the pharmaceutical profession and health policy development.

What set Rhodes University apart was its openness to students like Pearl, who had already completed one degree but were eager to pursue another.



Read more about Pearl's story

Pearl's journey is a powerful reminder of education's role in transforming lives. The financial assistance she received has inspired her to give back to others through mentorship or community initiatives and to help future students access the same opportunities made available to her.

BY SUPPORTING STUDENTS THROUGH BURSARIES, SCHOLARSHIPS, AND DONATIONS, YOUR CONTRIBUTIONS ALLOW STUDENTS TO OVERCOME FINANCIAL OBSTACLES AND REACH THEIR FULL POTENTIAL.

Invest in the future today. Join us on the journey toward positive change by supporting Rhodes University student initiatives through your generous donation.



www.ru.ac.za/donate

Given Gain

Read more on the GivenGain initiative

HER CHALLENGES

She struggled financially for the first three years of her BPharm degree, with no consistent funding to cover her tuition, rent, and basic living expenses.

The financial uncertainty was immense, and at times, it left her sleepless with worry about how she would continue her studies.

As her family's only hope, she felt pressure to succeed, but the mounting debt threatened to derail her dreams of becoming a pharmacist.

Relief at last

In her final year, Pearl received the Hillensberg Trust Bursary. The bursary served as a lifeline, covering her tuition, rent, and books and allowing her to focus entirely on her studies.

With the financial burden lifted, she could finally dedicate herself to excelling academically without the constant fear of being unable to complete her degree. The bursary provided her with peace of mind and restored her confidence, reminding her that there were people who believed in her potential and were willing to invest in her future.

GOING FORWARD

The Hillensberg Trust Bursary has laid the foundation for Pearl's long-term career aspirations. She is particularly interested in pursuing further studies in pharmaceutical research, focusing on drug delivery systems and clinical pharmacy.

Her research mini-thesis, which explores stimulatory drug delivery systems, has sparked a desire to contribute to advancements in healthcare through innovation and research.

SUBSTANTIAL FUNDING SECURED FROM OMT

RHODES UNIVERSITY'S EDUCATION FACULTY, LED BY TAMMY BOOYSEN, PROF MELLONY GRAVEN AND DR LISE WESTAWAY, HAS SECURED SUBSTANTIAL FUNDING FROM THE OPPENHEIMER MEMORIAL TRUST (OMT) TO BOOST EDUCATION, RESEARCH AND STUDENT LEARNING.

 *Tammy Booysen*

 *Prof Mellony Graven*

 *About the Faculty of Education*

What it means?

This investment empowers the faculty to enhance opportunities to use digital technologies with pre-service and in-service BEd Foundation Phase students, aligning seamlessly with the University's priority projects.

This generous contribution demonstrates the Trust's commitment to excellence in education, research, and community engagement, which are values shared by Rhodes University.

The funding provides
100% SUPPORT
for the Education Faculty's Place
Value project in the **first year** and
50% SUPPORT
for the **subsequent two years**.



The Oppenheimer Memorial Trust has a rich history of supporting Rhodes University, with contributions totalling over R6 million since 1999.

OTHER PROJECTS IN WHICH THE OMT HAS BEEN INVOLVED AT RHODES UNIVERSITY

In 2018, the Trust awarded **R300,000 to support Grocott's Mail**, a student-run publication. This ensures that future journalists receive hands-on experience in the field.

The Trust has also committed a remarkable **R2,0 million to the Fine Arts department** in recent years. It enabled the department to enhance its programmes and provide students with exceptional learning opportunities.

The Trust also recognised the importance of community engagement, providing **R110,000 in 2018 and R100,000 in 2017 to support outreach initiatives**. These funds have facilitated critical programmes that connect students with the broader community, fostering a spirit of service and collaboration.

Furthermore, the Trust has long supported the **Financial Aid Office, contributing R10,000** in the early 2000s and **R75,000** in 2016 to bolster student bursaries. This financial assistance has significantly impacted student lives, enabling them to pursue their academic goals without financial burden.

In 2021, the Trust made a significant contribution of **R3,8 million to the Centre for Higher Education Teaching & Learning (CHERTL)**, highlighting its commitment to enhancing teaching methodologies and learning environments at Rhodes University.

This funding milestone demonstrates the University's commitment to educational excellence and student empowerment.



Read more on the OMT

STUDENT INSPIRATION

ZOZIBINI MALI

AT 22, ZOZIBINI MALI EMBODIES FORTITUDE AND DETERMINATION. A THIRD-YEAR BCOM ACCOUNTING STUDENT AT RHODES UNIVERSITY, HIS JOURNEY IS ONE OF PERSEVERANCE AGAINST THE ODDS.

About Zozibini

Raised in Bhisho in the Eastern Cape by his grandmother and mother, Zozibini grew up without a father figure, navigating his formative years in a challenging environment. From a young age, he attended a boys' school, where he balanced the influence of the strong matriarchs in his life with the values of independence and self-reliance instilled at school. This unique blend of influences has moulded him into the resilient and driven man he is today.

Zozibini is inspired by the mantra: "Never take anything for granted because life is unpredictable. You must keep working hard to achieve what you want." These words are a source of strength for him, reminding him to persevere and work diligently towards his dreams, no matter the obstacles.



[Read more on Zozibini](#)

Why a Commerce Degree

His decision to pursue a Commerce Degree, specifically the chartered accountancy (CA) stream, was driven by a deep interest in finance and the workings of the business world.



Why Rhodes University?

Zozibini chose Rhodes University partly to honour his late father, who was admitted to the University but could not attend. His love for the Eastern Cape, his home province, and the University's esteemed reputation further cemented his decision.

And the future?

He hopes to inspire other kids in similar situations by showing them that dreams are achievable with determination and hard work.

Zozibini on the youth's role today

Today's youth should actively engage with societal issues, from climate change to gender-based violence. He advocates maintaining and improving systems through innovative ideas and creating an environment that encourages improved life.

POWER OF FAMILY

His grandmother and mother worked tirelessly to provide for him, instilling in him a profound appreciation for hard work and sacrifice. Their unwavering support has been the cornerstone of his success.

"Nothing is impossible if you want it and work hard enough for it," he says.

ABOUT THE THUTHUKA BURSARY

The bursary, which covers **tuition, accommodation, and daily living expenses**, has alleviated a tremendous financial burden for him and his family.

The impact of the bursary

He says that the Thuthuka bursary has been a transformative experience. It has allowed him to focus on his studies without worrying about how to afford his education. The bursary brings Zozibini one step closer to becoming a chartered accountant. More importantly, it enables him to provide for his family, easing the financial burden on his grandmother, the family's breadwinner.

DONATE TODAY

Education is a powerful tool that can change lives and communities. Your support can transform dreams into reality, creating a ripple effect of positive change.

 www.ru.ac.za/donate

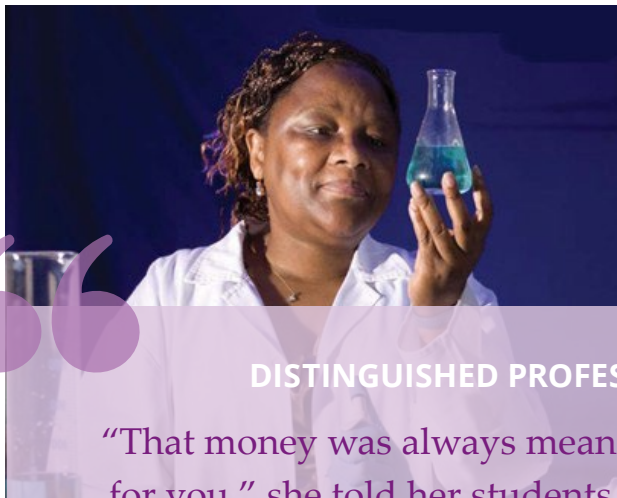


**Given
Gain**

"Never limit your dreams. Dream big and work hard. With hard work, determination, and courage, you can achieve any goal you set out to achieve."

Award-winning distinguished professor launches scholarship fund

DISTINGUISHED PROFESSOR TEBELLO NYOKONG MARKED THE LAUNCH OF THE STATE-OF-THE-ART TEBELLO NYOKONG INSTITUTE FOR NANOTECHNOLOGY INNOVATION (TN-INI) IN MAKHANDA BY ESTABLISHING A SCHOLARSHIP FUND FOR MASTER'S AND PHD STUDENTS.



How is it funded?

The initiative is funded by her personal award-winnings accumulated over the years. Earlier in December, she announced that her invested winnings - now totalling to approximately **R3,5 million** - have been used to establish the **Tebello Nyokong Scholarship Fund**.

DISTINGUISHED PROFESSOR TALKS ON THE FUND

“That money was always meant for you,” she told her students, many of whom had travelled to Makhandla for the launch of the Nyokong Institute.

“The awards are a testament to the academic excellence of my students. We need to constantly multiply excellence and stop celebrating mediocrity.”

“I urge my current and former students, industry stakeholders, and the broader scientific community to contribute to the fund’s growth.”

Nyokong Institute Deputy Director talks

“To tap into the brightest young minds we need them to be sustained and supported. Starting this fund is meant to do that.” Professor Philani Mashazi.

OVER 80 ALUMNI PLEDGES MADE TO SUPPORT SPIRALLING STUDENT DEBT

A COMBINATION OF RHODES UNIVERSITY ALUMNI PHILANTHROPY AND GOODWILL AND THE DEDICATION OF ITS STUDENTS NETTED AN IMPRESSIVE 84 PLEDGES DURING A FIVE-DAY FUNDRAISING TELETHON.

The pledges were made as part of a campaign to respond to the spiralling student debt currently pegged at R321 Million. The fundraising target for students' financial aid is R75 Million.

"We are thrilled by the incredible success of our telethon, which we held recently, in pursuit of resource mobilisation for good causes as part of our university's 120-year celebration," Development Fundraiser Ms Chubeka Kulu said.

"This is significant in many ways, not least as a demonstration of the distinct Rhodes University spirit and abiding human solidarity. We are indebted to our students who patiently and professionally placed the calls to our alumni and invited them to be part of this initiative and to our alumni for their gracious responses."

All donations from the pledges are earmarked to alleviate student debt, a critical issue impacting many families and communities. Debt hinders the progress of our graduates in their careers and in contributing to society and the economy, Ms Kulu said.



IF YOU MISSED THE TELETHON, YOU COULD STILL HELP ROLL BACK STUDENTS' DEBT!

Rhodes University alumni and friends are invited to consider contributing **a monthly gift of R120 could make a significant impact.**

To make a pledge, please contact development@ru.ac.za or call 046 603 8457. You can also donate by **clicking here**.

This convenient and secure platform allows you to choose the frequency and duration of your donation.



Together, let us continue to unlock the futures of young, deserving Rhodes University graduates.

"We extend our deepest gratitude to all the alumni who generously pledged their financial support. Your commitment to Rhodes University and its students is truly inspiring."



DONATE NOW

An act of giving is an act of empowerment. A Rhodes University education is a powerful, transformative experience.

Experience the fulfilment of giving while making a meaningful contribution to the lives of our future leaders and society.



RHODES UNIVERSITY PRIORITY PROJECTS

Fundraising Priority Projects

<https://www.ru.ac.za/donate>



UNLOCKING FUTURES

Student Historical Debt

<https://www.givengain.com/campaign/unlocking-futures-rus-student-debt-fundraising-campaign>



LEAVE A LEGACY

To leave a bequest

email: alumni@ru.ac.za



046 603 8509

www.ru.ac.za

Drostdy Rd, Makhanda

JHB chapter committee with Andrew Buckland.

CELEBRATIONS AS JOHANNESBURG, DURBAN CHAPTERS ESTABLISHED

THE PROPOSAL TO REVIEW THE CONSTITUTION OF THE ASSOCIATION OF OLD RHODIANS TO PAVE WAY FOR THE FORMATION OF REGIONAL CHAPTERS WAS APPROVED AT THE CONVOCATION'S ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING LAST YEAR.

The goal

The regional chapters aim to connect past, present and future Old Rhodians to strengthen the awareness of and advocacy of the University and enrich various alumni networks for skills transfer and mentoring.

About the regional chairpersons

The Johannesburg and Durban regional chapters are chaired by **Terry Sutherland** and **Lucky Mtolo**.

ABOUT TERRY

Terry Sutherland is no stranger to alumni structures and has been working with the University for decades to organise the annual Old Rhodian Golf Day which has raised over R7 million for sports bursaries.

"The Johannesburg chapter seeks to connect University alumni in the region and get them to not only celebrate the achievements of other fellow Old Rhodians but to support them as and when needed".

ABOUT LUCKY

Mtolo is a great ambassador for Rhodes University and a regular at the alumni affinity events in Durban. He has convened a diverse group of proud Old Rhodians in the region to get the structure in the region off the ground.



More chapters? The drive to establish more chapters in different regions both locally and internationally is ongoing and alumni are encouraged to avail themselves to join the founding structures.

IF YOU ARE INTERESTED TO JOIN OR HELP ESTABLISH A CHAPTER IN YOUR REGION, PLEASE CONTACT ALUMNI@RU.AC.ZA OR CONTACT MANDILAKHE KILA AT +27(0)46 603 7024.

A photograph of Prof Rod Walker, a man with short grey hair and a mustache, wearing glasses, a dark suit, and a bright blue scarf. He is standing behind a podium, looking slightly to his left. The background is a repeating pattern of the Rhodes University crest and the text "RHODES UNIVERSITY Where leaders learn".

PROF ROD WALKER STEPS DOWN AFTER ALMOST TWO DECADES

FOLLOWING ALMOST 20 YEARS AT THE HELM OF THE ASSOCIATION OF OLD RHODIANS, PROFESSOR ROD WALKER STEPPED DOWN AS PRESIDENT IN SEPTEMBER THIS YEAR.

His history with the alumni

Rod's involvement with the association goes as far back as 2005 when he was elected vice-president and two years later president.

His curiosity to explore all possibilities for the involvement of University alumni in key University decision making constituencies is admirable.

In 2023, Rod proposed the review of the constitution of the Association to pave way for the formation of regional chapters.

An AOR milestone

Treasurer of the Association for several years John Gillam who worked closely with Rod credits Rod's leadership for stabilising the Association's finances which led to the value of the Old Rhodian bursaries increasing significantly over the years.

Rod's hope for the AOR

Rod strongly believes that the formation of regional chapters is likely to increase the interaction of alumni with the University. It will provide strategic opportunities to bridge the gap between past, present and future Old Rhodians to ensure the sustainability of the University.

His relationship with the alumni

Rod says it is relatively easy to engage meaningfully with alumni from different generations and was always the last person to leave at the events he attended.

“Reunions are always special events and what never ceases to amaze me is the enthusiasm and appreciation of alumni for Rhodes University.”

WHAT VICE-CHANCELLOR PROF SIZWE MABIZELA SAYS

Mabizela paid tribute to Rod at the Distinguished Alumni Dinner in November and described him as a servant leader who had solidified the Old Rhodian legacy.

“He sets a great example in advancing the Rhodes University leadership ethos that leadership is collective, responsible, accountable, and selfless.”



2024 OLD RHODIAN BURSARIES

THE ASSOCIATION OF OLD RHODIANS (AOR) HAS AWARDED BURSARIES TO 27 STUDENTS WHO ARE CHILDREN AND GRANDCHILDREN OF OLD RHODIANS (INCLUDING RHODES UNIVERSITY STAFF MEMBERS).



Bursary amounts range from **R10,000 to R25,000** awarded once in an academic year.

Criteria

The bursaries have no threshold for gross annual family income. However, a means test is applied to determine the level of need. Satisfactory academic performance is also taken into consideration. Previous recipients are encouraged to reapply. However, applications are assessed afresh, and applicants are not guaranteed assistance.

For all enquiries: email alumni@ru.ac.za or finaid@ru.ac.za.

#RU120 Fundraising Campaign

Choose a fundraising priority of your choice to continue the legacy and make a monthly donation of R120 via our revamped online donation page

Scan to Donate Today



RHODES UNIVERSITY
Where leaders learn

RU120
1904-2024
YEARS



HONORARY DOCTORATE AWARDED TO ACCLAIMED ART ACTIVIST, EDUCATOR



RECIPIENT

Michael Barry, South African art activist and educator

RECOGNISING

... social justice, equality, and access to the arts have been the mainstay of his lifelong journey as an artist, activist, and educator.

... his extensive work in documenting the histories of marginalised communities, particularly those affected by apartheid's forced removals, which serves as a powerful tool for healing and remembrance. These include the South End Museum and the Northern Areas Heritage, Research, and Interpretive Centre (NAHRIC).



Watch: Michael Barry on receiving the honorary doctorate from Rhodes University

About his work

His contributions to public art are nationally and internationally recognised, with his works featured in galleries and public spaces.

He has played a pivotal role in public art initiatives and community projects, such as Route 67 and the Helenvale "Boy and the Kite" public artwork, symbolising hope, peace, and resilience in communities facing social challenges, and artwork in Gqeberha

Barry's art has transformed physical spaces and societal narratives due to his involvement in the Helenvale Urban Arts Renewal Project to his leadership roles in initiatives like the Sunday Times 100-Year Heritage Project.

View his work at www.michaelbarry.co.za



- / His creative journey began with a Fine Arts Honours degree from the prestigious Michaelis School of Fine Art at the University of Cape Town.
- / He later earned a Higher Diploma in Education and a Master's in Art Education from Nelson Mandela University.
- / Michael continued to promote community development through the arts after teaching art at St Thomas Senior Secondary School in Gqeberha, where he pioneered creative arts education in the Northern Areas.
- / His work with the Arts & Teaching Initiatives (ATI) and his involvement in numerous heritage and public art projects have impacted the Eastern Cape and South Africa.

“He has inspired a generation of vulnerable youth to take up the arts as a viable career option and to use the medium to express their lived realities.”

Vice-chancellor Professor Sizwe Mabizela

About Michael's career

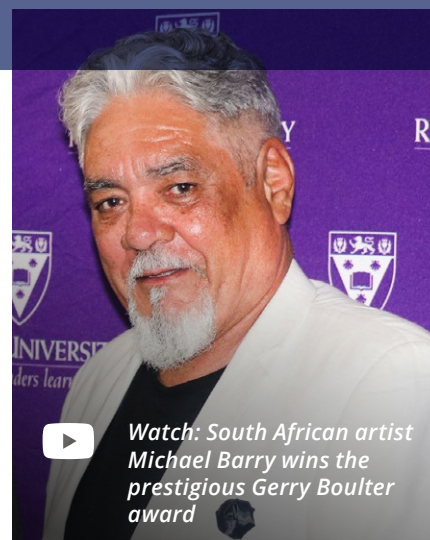
Despite the challenges of apartheid, Michael channelled his experiences into his work as an artist and educator, always driven by the desire to uplift others. His influence extends beyond the canvas. His commitment to community engagement is evident through his roles as a teacher, mentor, and arts advocate.

As a pioneer of public art and cultural activism, Michael has fostered international collaborations between South African and European cultural organisations. These projects have created platforms for young people from diverse backgrounds to connect and engage in meaningful dialogue about culture, history, and identity.

His ability to merge art with historical memory and education has made him a compelling artist, scholar, and humanitarian. Michael Barry's impact on the South African arts and cultural landscape is profound and far-reaching.

Over the decades, Barry has used the arts as a platform for social justice, community upliftment, and cultural preservation. His work as an arts activist has empowered marginalised communities, including vulnerable youth, by encouraging them to view the arts as a viable career path and a means of expressing their lived realities.

Barry's life and career have been shaped by the turbulent times of South Africa's apartheid era, particularly his early experiences of forced removals from Fairview, Port Elizabeth.



Watch: South African artist Michael Barry wins the prestigious Gerry Boulter award



AWARDS

2018 Eastern Cape Department of Sport, Recreation, Arts and Culture
Provincial Cultural Award

Recognised by Nelson Mandela University Alumni Association
for the impact of his lifelong dedication to the arts

Gerry Boulter Award.



Read: Arts as a means for healing: Activist Dr Michael Barry inspires postgraduates at RU120 graduation

SPRING GRADUATION 2024

AN INTIMATE SPRING GRADUATION TOOK PLACE ON 11 OCTOBER 2024, WHERE 216 GRADUATES WERE BESTOWED WITH THEIR PARCHMENTS.



216
GRADUATES



122

MASTERS

94

POST DOCTORAL

25%

INTERNATIONAL
STUDENTS





In October, Rhodes University hosted a **graduation ceremony** for master's and doctoral graduates. Of the **216 degrees** conferred, slightly over half (**52%**) are **male** graduates and a **quarter (25%)** are **international students**.



Watch Instagram reel





KNOCKING ON
HEAVEN'S DOOR
Homecoming
WEEKEND

GREAT FIELD IS NAMED THE ALLY WEAKLEY FIELD



RHODES UNIVERSITY
HONOURED ALASTAIR
WEAKLEY, AFFECTIONATELY
KNOWN AS ALLY, FOR HIS
SPORTS ACTIVISM DURING
ONE OF SOUTH AFRICA'S
MOST TURBULENT PERIODS,
BY RENAMING THE
GREAT FIELD TO THE ALLY
WEAKLEY FIELD.



1975

He played in mixed-race teams despite facing personal threats, including a notorious confrontation with Dr Danie Craven, who threatened to ban him from rugby.

After qualifying as an attorney in 1984, Ally devoted his life to advancing social justice as a lawyer and community activist. A sports bursary has been established in his memory at Rhodes University.

He became a legendary figure on and off the field, serving as the longest-ever captain of the Rhodes University 1st XV rugby team. He led the team to historic victories, including a momentous win over the University of Port Elizabeth on the Great Field.

To keep the legacy of Ally alive, the University wishes to award the bursaries to perpetuity from the funds invested in the Foundation.

A robust endowment secures the future of the annual awards and upholds Ally's legacy for future generations. By making a personal contribution, you will help the University grow the capital of the invested funds.

HOW TO DONATE

www.ru.ac.za/donate

Choose ANNUAL FUND General, specify Alastair Weakley Memorial Fund, and follow the prompts.





MEMORIES GALORE AT KoHD HOMECOMING WEEKEND

ALUMNI WHO GRADUATED
BETWEEN 1965 TO 1975
WHO CALL THEMSELVES THE
KNOCKING ON HEAVEN'S
DOOR (KoHD) GROUP.

The University welcomed this group from 22 to 23 November 2024 to celebrate their final homecoming reunion.

The weekend comprised a welcome cocktail on the Friday evening at the PGV, or the Old Motel, where the group reminisced about their earlier exploits at the same location. This was followed by a campus tour on Saturday which showed several developments to the group.

65-1975



A “final countdown” dinner was held on the Saturday evening, an apt closing to a successful weekend where many friendships were renewed and made.

ALUMNI COME TOGETHER TO ELEVATE SPORTS, AND FUND BURSARIES AT JHB GOLF DAY



AS PART OF RHODES UNIVERSITY'S RU120 CELEBRATIONS, THE OLD RHODIAN GOLF CLUB, UNDER THE LEADERSHIP OF TERRY SUTHERLAND, ORGANISED A GOLF DAY IN JOHANNESBURG TO BRING THE ALUMNI TOGETHER TO DEMONSTRATE THEIR DEDICATION TO FOSTERING A VIBRANT, SUPPORTIVE ENVIRONMENT FOR CURRENT STUDENTS.



More on the golf day



From a modest 60 participants to an incredible 200, this event led to awarding a bursary to psychology student **Luyolo Nketsheni**, who was the Sports Star of the Year 2023 and the Sportsperson of the Year 2023.

“I was inspired by other universities’ models to build substantial funding reserves and sought to establish similar opportunities for a range of sports at Rhodes University.”

Terry Sutherland, Rhodian Golf Club

DISTINGUISHED A

2024

RHODES UNIVERSITY COMES OUT TO MEET THE STARS

It was full on 20 November 2024 when Rhodes University stakeholders joined the University at its prestigious Distinguished Alumni Awards Dinner. Eight alumni were recognised (see page 31 and 31) for their exceptional contributions across various fields, reaffirming the University's legacy of producing leaders and innovators.



ALUMNI AWARDS



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to INDEX

DISTINGUISHED ALUMNI AWARDS

2024



**Dr Alistair
Mokoena**

*Former Google
Country Director:
Southern Africa*

Established the Dr Alistair Mokoena Education Fund at Rhodes University, North-West University, and the University of Johannesburg.

Award-winning marketing and technology guru.

Author of *Servings of Self-Mastery: Bite sized pep talks to Unlock Greatness*

Sought after speaker for conferences, graduations, and guest lectures.

Extraordinary Professor of Practice at North-West University Business School.



**Bruce
Whitfield**

Financial Journalist

Multi-award-winning journalist, best-selling author, and sought-after speaker.

Conducted about 50,000 interviews with politicians, including Nelson Mandela, Eugène Terre'Blanche, business luminaries and global leaders.

Author of *The Upside Down: How chaos and uncertainty create opportunity in South Africa* and *Genius: How to Thrive at the Eagle of Chaos*.

Recipient of the Sanlam Journalist of the Year Award (three times), Citadel Financial Journalist of the Year, Citi Financial Journalist of the Year and Best Business Radio Show in Africa.



**Prof Alan
Chalmers**

*Professor of Visualisation
at the International Digital
Library, University of Warwick*

Published over 270 papers in peer-reviewed journals and presented at international conferences on various topics, including high-fidelity graphics, multisensory perception imaging, virtual archaeology, and parallel rendering.

Successfully supervised 51 PhD students.

Led the formation of the Graphics Association, Afrigraph, affiliated to SIGGRAPH and remains Honorary President of Afrigraph.

Instrumental in developing graphics in Africa by facilitating major collaborative research opportunities and creating effective knowledge transfer between academia and the industry.



Prof Robert O'Donoghue

Emeritus Professor of Environmental Education, Rhodes University

Authority in the field of Environmental Learning and Sustainability Education.

Published over 35 papers in peer-reviewed journals.

Champion for the development of teachers, promotion of community engagement in teaching and learning to foster environmental stewardship and social justice.

Recipient of the WESSA Lifetime Conservation Achiever Award, WWF Green Trust Award and Telemecanique Nature Conservation Research Award.



Dr Solomzi Makohliso

Deputy Director: Essential Tech Centre, Swiss Federal Institute of Technology

A healthcare, biotechnology, nanotechnology, innovation, and entrepreneurship champion for social good.

A scholar and researcher at the forefront of developing and implementing essential medical technologies that have the potential to significantly contribute to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals.

Co-founder and Board Member of Pilani Sárl, a company that aims to bring the health benefits of the African plants that originate from the sub-Saharan region into the daily lives of ordinary people for personal health and well-being.

Currently driving a project which utilises cutting-edge technology to address global problems, such as the development of a solar-powered X-ray machine.



Fortune Sibanda

Director: Public Policy and Government Relations at TikTok (Sub-Saharan Africa)

A community engagement champion for developing essential skills at the basic education level through extensive school outreach programmes and initiatives.

Outstanding media practitioner who has made a significant contribution to the upliftment of social justice, democratic values, and strong community empowerment on the African continent.

Passionate about social media to advance a user-friendly and safe digital environment for all users.

A scholar, great ambassador and collaborator for the University who continues to position Rhodes University as an intellectual and professional hub for journalism and media studies training in South Africa.



Prof Stephanie Burton

Professor in Biochemistry and Faculty Fellow at Future Africa, University of Pretoria

Plays leading roles in the Academy of Sciences of South Africa, and national programmes for research capacity development and doctoral training.

Published over 80 papers in peer-reviewed international journals, eight book chapters, six patents, 12 technical reports, 228 conference presentations both locally and internationally.

Successfully supervised 23 honours, 13 master's, 16 PhD students and 10 postdoctoral fellows.

Recipient of the South African Society for Biochemistry and Molecular Biology Beckam Gold Medal for achievement and service in Biochemistry (2010).

Interim President of the Academy of Science of South Africa. Former President and Council member: Royal Society of South Africa (2024).



Alumnus Sim Tshabalala is SA's 2024 business leader of the year

STANDARD BANK'S SIMPHIWE TSHABALALA, ITS FIRST SOLE CHIEF EXECUTIVE, HAS BEEN AWARDED THE SUNDAY TIMES' BUSINESS LEADER OF THE YEAR AWARD.

The award is given to an individual who has contributed significantly to the economy and is chosen by the CEOs of the previous year's Sunday Times Top 100 Companies. Standard Bank, with a market capitalisation of R383,5 billion, is currently the second largest of the top five banks in South Africa*.

About Sim

Tshabalala obtained a Bachelor of Arts and Bachelor of Law degrees from Rhodes University in 1988 and 1990, respectively. He also holds a Higher Diploma in Tax Law from Wits and a Master of Laws from the United States of America. See factfile or visit Sim's LinkedIn profile.



What they say!

"As institutions of higher learning, we prepare graduates who add value and contribute meaningfully to the transformation of our great country. Mr Tshabalala epitomises this objective."
Vice-chancellor Prof Sizwe Mabizela

"Sim always does the right thing. There's a lot of pressure when running a bank, from politicians, from difficult clients, et cetera, and Sim would always never get flustered."

"He would always say we are going to stick to the four corners of the law. Then he would respectfully disagree if he thought you were wrong. He wouldn't be bullied." Jackie Maree, former Standard Bank CEO.

"... If I look at all my friendships, this has been the deepest, most complex and yet most enduring." Lincoln Mali, fellow Rhodes University alumni, CEO of Lesaka Technologies and family friend.

With thanks to Sunday Times.

Born: 15 December 1967 (age 56)
Hlabisa, Umkhanyakude,
KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa

Nationality: South African

Alma mater:

Rhodes University
University of Notre Dame
University of the Witwatersrand
Harvard University

Occupation(s): Lawyer, Businessman
and Banker

Years active: 1994 - present

Title: Group CEO, Standard Bank Group

Term: 2013 - present



Sim Tshabalala: The best leaders show up during tough times

UNIVERSITY RECOGNITION

In 2006, Sim Tshabalala received the coveted **Distinguished Alumni Awards** from Rhodes University.

ANOTHER ALUMNUS TAKES THE SUNDAY TIMES LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT AWARD

Rhodes University's honorary doctorate recipient and former visiting professor at its Business School, **Dr Reuel Khosa**, was honoured with the prestigious **Lifetime Achievement Award** at the Sunday Times Top 100 Companies event. Reuel says that this award is the most prestigious of his career.



Reuel on receiving the award



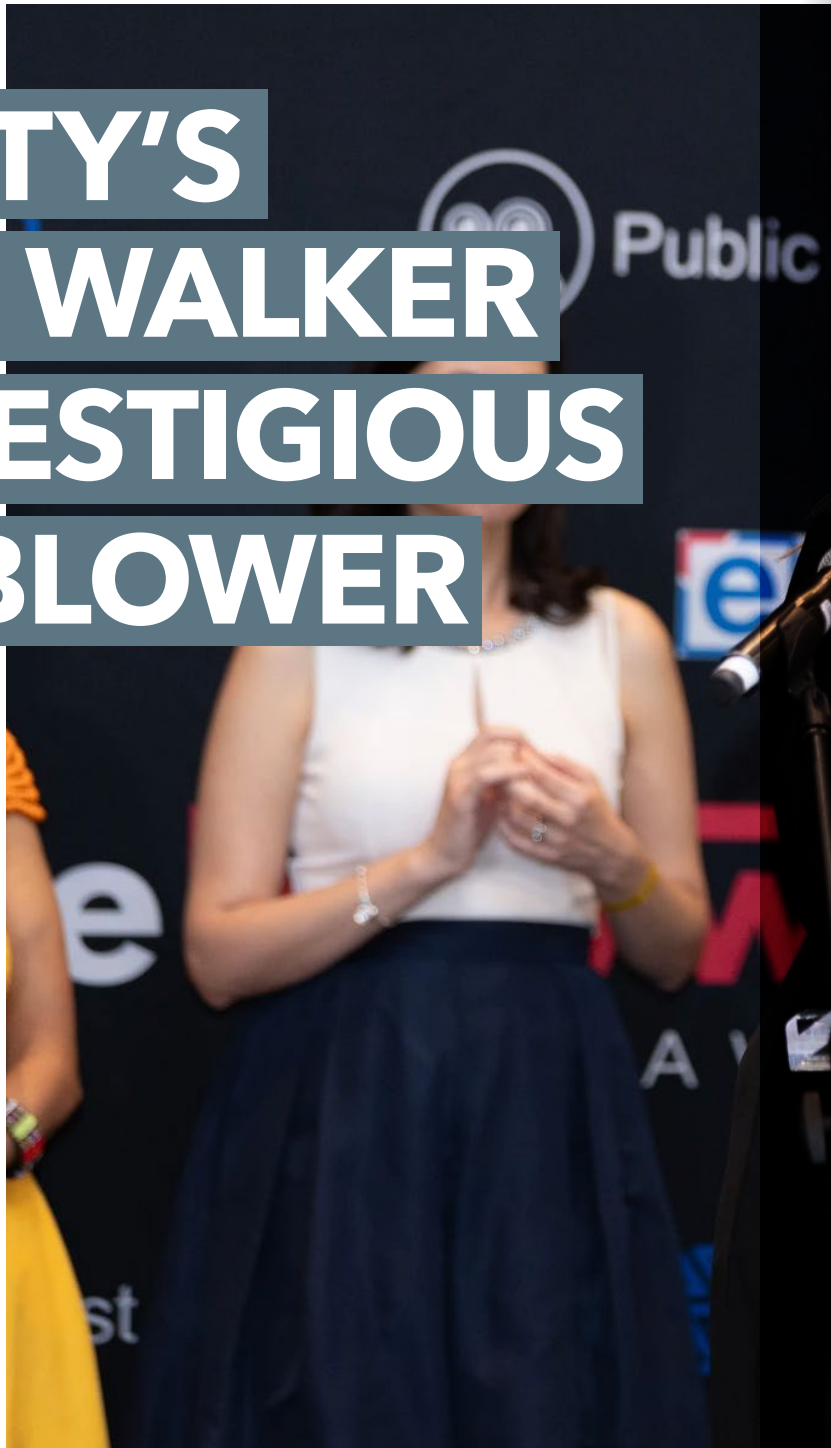
Dr Ruel Khosa



* <https://businesstech.co.za/news/banking/790996/battle-of-the-banks-2024-capitec-vs-standard-bank-vs-fnb-vs-absa-vs-nedbank/>

UNIVERSITY'S DANIELLE WALKER TAKES PRESTIGIOUS WHISTLEBLOWER AWARD

DANIELLE WALKER WAS AWARDED ONE OF FOUR INDIVIDUAL EXCELLENCE WHISTLEBLOWER AWARDS AT PUBLIC INTEREST SA'S RECENT CEREMONY FOR EXPOSING A SUSPECTED PREDATOR IN THE EDUCATION SYSTEM, UPHOLDING ACCOUNTABILITY, AND PROTECTING VULNERABLE STUDENTS.





The Whistleblowers Awards is an annual event dedicated to honouring individuals who have displayed extraordinary courage and integrity by exposing corruption, malpractice, and unethical behaviour in the public and private sectors.

These awards celebrate whistleblowers' pivotal role in fostering accountability, transparency, and good governance, often at significant personal risk.

Public Interest SA is a politically agnostic, non-profit organisation that promotes transparency and public accountability in society. Its focus is on open procurement, whistleblowing, governance, ethics, and ESGs.

Danielle thanked the University for all its support: "It means a lot to be part of a community where safeguarding is a top priority."

Public Interest SA says the award reflects her exceptional commitment to transparency, integrity, and ethical leadership. It believes that recognising her efforts will inspire many others in the community to pursue the values she demonstrated.

Fellow award winners in the individual category

Clinton van Niekerk: For cooperating with authorities to expose money laundering and corruption at great personal cost.

Roshan Lil-Ruthan: For exposing corruption in water infrastructure management, bringing much-needed attention to public service delivery failures.

Bianca Goodson: For exposing Trillian Management's corrupt dealings, contributing to uncovering state capture in South Africa.

whistleblowers
AWARDS



Read more on the other awards

Prof Magadla's recount of SA's women's armed struggle celebrated

THIS YEAR'S VICE-CHANCELLOR'S BOOK AWARD WAS MADE TO ONE OF THE INSTITUTION'S MOST DISTINGUISHED SCHOLARS, ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR SIPHOKAZI MAGADLA, FROM THE DEPARTMENT OF POLITICAL AND INTERNATIONAL STUDIES.



PUBLISHED WORKS:



Guerrillas and Combative Mothers: Women of the Armed Struggle in South Africa
(Available in Kindle and hard cover)



Ubuntu: Curating the Archive
(Thinking Africa)

The book award is given annually to a staff member whose work brings recognition and credit to Rhodes University through its scholarly contributions.

Prof Magadla talks about the book

Prof Magadla's reflection on the concept of "village work" was a central theme in her lecture.

She cited scholars like Bell Hooks and Cornel West, explaining how intellectuals are nurtured by their communities and shaped by their socio-political environments. She used this to highlight how her academic journey and book were grounded in the histories, traditions, and struggles of African women.

Her lecture illustrated how these women not only engaged in armed resistance but also democratised and transformed liberation movements in South Africa, ultimately laying the foundation for gender equality in the country.

She explores the multiple fronts on which these women fought, not only for national liberation but also for gender equality, emphasising how their contributions have been central to shaping democratic South Africa.

ABOUT THE BOOK

In *Guerrillas and Combative Mothers: Women of the Armed Struggle in South Africa* (published by the University of KwaZulu-Natal Press in 2023), Prof Magadla provides a thorough examination of women's roles in South Africa's armed struggles against apartheid from 1961 to 1994.

She meticulously traces the journeys of women who were formally trained in guerrilla warfare with Umkhonto weSizwe, as well as those who participated in the rural and township insurrections led by the Pan African Congress.

She explores the multiple fronts on which these women fought, not only for national liberation but also for gender equality, emphasising how their contributions have been central to shaping democratic South Africa.

Her work offers a powerful narrative of 40 women who participated in the armed struggle against apartheid and their lives in the post-apartheid era.

These women's stories shed light on the complexities of South Africa's fight for liberation, detailing their involvement in Umkhonto weSizwe (the ANC's military wing) and the Pan Africanist Congress's armed wing, APLA.

“The ways in which this book has travelled since its publication in February of 2023, have affirmed my view of intellectual work as village work.”



[Read more](#)



[Prof Magadla](#)

VICE-CHANCELLOR PROF SIZWE MABIZELA REFLECTS

The lecture is not only a tribute to Prof Magadla's book but reflects her broader academic and social impact. She is to be praised for her academic rigour and the depth of her research.

DISTINGUISHED PROFESSOR GETS HIGHEST RESEARCH RATING

DISTINGUISHED PROFESSOR CHARLIE SHACKLETON, HOLDER OF THE SOUTH AFRICAN RESEARCH CHAIR IN INTERDISCIPLINARY SCIENCE IN LAND AND NATURAL RESOURCE USE FOR SUSTAINABLE LIVELIHOODS AT RHODES UNIVERSITY, HAS BEEN AWARDED THE PRESTIGIOUS A1 NATIONAL RESEARCH FOUNDATION (NRF) RATING, THE HIGHEST IN THE SOUTH AFRICAN NATIONAL SYSTEM OF RESEARCH INNOVATION.

ABOUT THE ACHIEVEMENT

He is the first Rhodes University academic in its 120-year history to earn the A1 research rating, a testament to his exceptional research prowess.

Distinguished Professor Shackleton's A1 rating places him in an elite community of approximately 100 nationally combined A1 and A2-rated researchers. This is a rare feat for interdisciplinary researchers like him.

The NRF rating system is a critical driver and a unique feature in building a globally competitive research and innovation system in South Africa. National and international peers evaluate candidates, and their rating reflects how peers across the globe view one, Deputy Vice-chancellor for Research, Innovation, and Strategic Partnerships Dr Nomakwezi Mzilikazi said.



Rating process

The rating process involves a comprehensive review of a researcher's outputs and **impact over the past eight years.**

The quality and impact of these outputs, especially in high-impact journals, along with the researcher's role in mentoring the next generation of researchers, are critical considerations ensuring the **highest research quality standards.**

The system identifies researchers who are **leaders in their fields of expertise** and recognises those who **consistently produce high-quality research outputs** over sustained periods.

UNIVERSITY'S RESEARCH TRACK RECORD

Rhodes University has a burgeoning community of just under 100 rated researchers, the highest proportion of all South African universities, across all categories, from promising young researchers, recipients of prestigious awards, established researchers, and internationally acclaimed researchers to leading international researchers in the top A category.

Distinguished Prof Shackleton says sustained and quality interdisciplinary research productivity is only possible with a mix of strong and stimulating research collaborators and a cohort of enthusiastic and questioning postgraduates.

About his distinguished career

- He notched a full **professorship in 2008**, a **SARCHi Chair in 2013**, and a **Distinguished Professorship in 2023.**
- Over the past eight years, Distinguished Prof Shackleton lists **130 journal articles**, of which 95 per cent appeared in international journals, and 70 per cent were in the top quartile for his disciplines.
- He has published over **320 journal articles** during his career.
- He has also edited or co-edited **five books**, written **20 chapters** and **22 articles** in popular magazines and other platforms for non-academic audiences.
- He has mentored **10 doctorates**, **20 master's**, **27 honours** students, and **six postdoctoral** fellows.
- Currently, he supervises **10 doctorates** and **seven master's** students.
- Distinguished, Prof Shackleton was an **associate editor of eight journals** and was on the **editorial board of six others** during this period. He enjoys a **Google Scholar h-index of 82** with just over **23,000 citations** and a **Scopus h-index of 56** with over **11,000 citations.**



Deputy Vice-Chancellor for Research, Innovation, and Strategic Partnerships Dr Nomakwezi Mzilikazi congratulated Distinguished Prof Shackleton on the “extraordinary academic feat that earned him unanimous recognition by local and international peers as a leading international researcher in his field.”



[Read more](#)



“Weird” and world-renowned entomology researcher:

PROFESSOR

JULIE COETZEE

2023 Vice-Chancellor's Distinguished Senior Research Award

Recognises exceptional research contributions within the University - Presented to Professor Julie Coetzee, Deputy Director of the Centre for Biological Control, Faculty of Science.

Made significant strides in biological control, particularly in understanding the interactions between freshwater aquatic plants and insects.



“This talk tonight is largely a tribute to all the people that I’ve worked with over the years because I did not get this research award on my own. Through my collaborative projects, the synergy of these partnerships has been indispensable in my successful and impactful research career.”

Professor Julie Coetzer, Faculty of Science, Deputy Director of the Centre for Biological Control.



**CLICK HERE FOR MORE DETAILS ABOUT
THE CENTRE FOR BIOLOGICAL CONTROL.**

Rhodes University on Julie’s accolades

In nominating Professor Coetzee for the award, Professor Iain Paterson explained that the work reduces the negative impacts of invasive alien plants, which results in the protection of ecosystems and the biodiversity that they hold, and allows the ecosystems to provide the essential services, such as provisioning of clean water, buffering of diseases and nutrients cycling, to South Africa’s people.

Prof Coetzee’s work has also resulted in the reduced use of harmful pesticides that damage ecosystems and have negative health implications for people.

Over the 15 years at Rhodes University, Professor Coetzee has established herself as a leader in research that addresses some of the most pressing environmental challenges of our time.

Her work is academically significant and has real-world applications, influencing policy and practice in managing invasive species in aquatic environments. Her research portfolio spans continents, including significant projects in South America (Argentina) and East-Central Africa.



Read more about Julie here.

MORE ON THE LECTURE

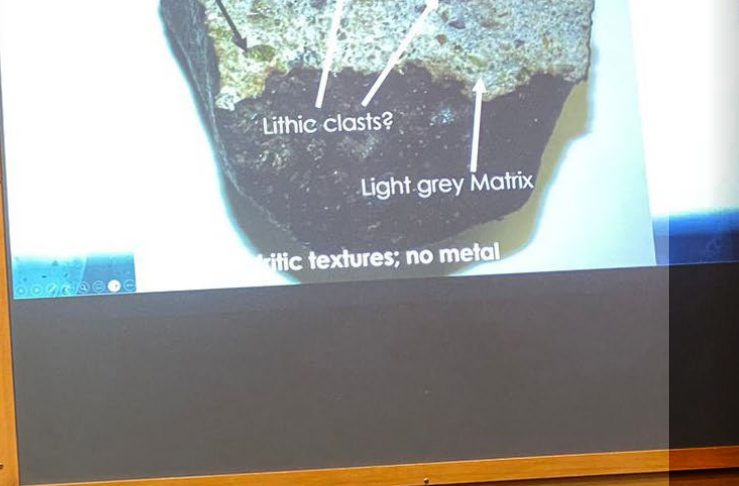
- It covered the complex challenges posed by aquatic weed invasions and the importance of interdisciplinary approaches in addressing these issues.
- She illustrated how her research has integrated diverse expertise, from entomology and aquatic ecology to community engagement and citizen science, to develop effective strategies for managing invasive species.
- Through collaborative projects, the collective strengths of various disciplines, fostering innovation and enhancing the robustness of research findings, have been harnessed.
- One key theme was the impact of collaboration on advancing scientific knowledge and achieving practical outcomes.
- She highlighted how these partnerships have not only accelerated the identification and implementation of biological control methods but facilitated the dissemination of knowledge and best practices across different regions and stakeholders.
- The collaborative approach has been instrumental in promoting sustainable ecological management and contributing to a more resilient and informed response to environmental challenges.

Her work is a shining example of how interdisciplinary partnerships can lead to significant breakthroughs in ecological research and beyond.



RHODES UNIVERSITY
Where leaders learn

NELSON MANDELA
UNIVERSITY



UNIVERSITY COLLABORATES ON RARE METEORITE FIND

THREE UNIVERSITIES—RHODES UNIVERSITY, NELSON MANDELA, AND WITWATERSRAND—HAVE POOLED RESOURCES TO CONDUCT A COLLABORATIVE SCIENTIFIC INVESTIGATION OF A SIGNIFICANT METEORITE THAT FELL TO EARTH ON 25 AUGUST 2024

The find involves microscopic and geochemical analysis of the recovered meteorite fragment to classify it and fully understand its origin. This investigation could provide insights into the meteorite's source region in space and possibly identify its parent body.

The meteorite event

The event, witnessed by residents across the Garden Route, the Karoo, the Western Cape and Free State, led to the recovery of a rare meteorite fragment, provisionally named the "Nqweba Meteorite" after the nearby town of its discovery.

They observed a bright blue-white and orange streak of light in the sky in the early morning. The meteorite, after splitting into several smaller fragments, disappeared from view. Shortly after, witnesses reported hearing loud explosions and sensing vibrations.

THREE UNIVERSITIES LAUNCH INVESTIGATION

Rhodes University geologist and the Head of the Electron Microscopy Unit, Dr Deon van Niekerk, responded and obtained a permit from the Eastern Cape Provincial Heritage Resources Authority to recover all fragments from this meteor for scientific analysis.

Upon learning of the meteorite's discovery, Dr Carla Dodd from Nelson Mandela University (NMU) quickly secured the sample collected by Elizé du Toit, who found a meteorite part, recognising the rarity and importance of such a find.

Professor Roger Gibson from the University of the Witwatersrand says: "Our response time was critical to collecting valuable scientific data and meteorite fragments. It would also help to explain this natural event and how the individual parts link together."

Dr Leonidas Vonopartis, also from the University of the Witwatersrand, agrees:

"Events such as these are incredible and are very exciting, both for the public who witnesses these falls and the scientists who gain invaluable information from studying the bolides and rocks."



Dr Dodd



Dr Vonopartis



Prof Gibson



Watch the conference

Observant nine-year-old star of the show

Elizé du Toit, sitting on her grandparents' porch in Nqweba (Graaff-Reinet), saw a dark rock fall from the sky and land near a Wild Fig tree in the garden. The rock, black and shiny on the outside with a light grey, concrete-like interior, was still warm when she picked it up.

Astronomical Society of South Africa joins investigation team

In the coming weeks, a joint team of researchers and astronomers affiliated with the Astronomical Society of South Africa (ASSA) will collect data from official observatories, and eyewitness accounts to piece together the details of the bolide event. They will also conduct extensive searches for further meteorite fragments over a wide area of rugged terrain.



[Click here for more on ASSA](#)

THE NQWEBA METEORITE

The Nqweba Meteorite is considered an achondritic meteorite, a rare type within the Howardite-Eucrite-Diogenite (HED) group. Such meteorites provide valuable insights into the inner workings of other planetary bodies, offering scientists a glimpse into processes similar to those that formed Earth's rocks.



[More on Howardite-Eucrite-Diogenite](#)

Dr Deon van Niekerk has participated in collecting meteorites in Antarctica and in scientific studies of meteorites from the Asteroid Belt and Mars to understand their origin.



[Read more about Deon here](#)

OLD RHODIAN LEADS SEARCH IN ANTARCTICA

DR KIM BERNARD, SECOND RUNNER-UP IN THE BEST YOUNG WOMAN SCIENTIST IN THE 2009 DEPARTMENT OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY WOMEN IN SCIENCE AWARD, IS LEADING A NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC SOCIETY-FUNDED PROJECT IN ANTARCTICA.

Her society-funded work, which began in December 2024, aims to illuminate two previously understudied habitats used by Antarctic krill: the seafloor and the region beneath sea ice.

The research will provide important information needed to develop marine protected areas.

Kim, a marine biologist, biological oceanographer, and zooplankton ecologist, earned her PhD in marine biology in South Africa. She is a professor of biological oceanography at Oregon State University in the United States, where she mentors students and conducts research in marine ecology.

She earned her PhD, master's (2003) and undergraduate (2001) degree at Rhodes University in 2007.

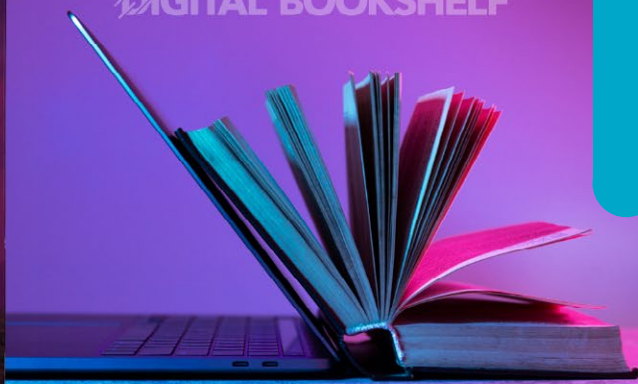


More about Kim





DIGITAL BOOKSHELF



IN ROCKLANDS, LIEZILLE JACOBS REFRAMES PSYCHOLOGY NOT ONLY AS A PROFESSION BUT ALSO AS A PROFOUND CALLING INTERTWINED WITH PERSONAL AND SOCIETAL EVOLUTION.

Traversing her journey from her adverse childhood experiences in Rocklands, Mitchell's Plain, to be the first black Head of Department at Rhodes University in 120 years, Jacobs illuminates the interconnectedness of personal, professional and public roles, advocating for a shift from careerism to a movement grounded in shared values and principles.

 [Watch more from Liezille](#)

 [Read more about Old Rhodian authors on the Digital Bookshelf](#)

ALUMNI reunion EVENTS

THE RU120 CELEBRATIONS BROUGHT AN EXTRA CELEBRATORY ELEMENT TO THIS YEAR'S ALUMNI EVENT. IT'S CLEAR THAT OUR ALUMNI ARE EXTRA PROUD OF THEIR ACADEMIC ROOTS IN MAKHANDA. **THEIR BLOOD IS UNASHAMEDLY PURPLE.**



GQEBERHA

19 July 2024



Our alumni share their thoughts:

- ▶ Dr S Mbena
- ▶ Miss Siba Makeleni
- ▶ Dr C Edworthy
- ▶ Chirikure & A Witbooi



CAPE TOWN

13 September 2024



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DURBAN

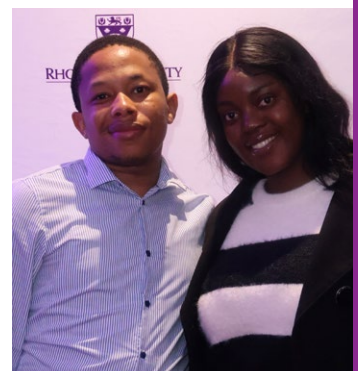
23 August 2024







JHB
4 October 2024





IN MEMORY OF OUTSTANDING OLD RHODIANS



Hugh Henry Huggett

By Libby Huggett and St John's College

**"A remarkable man
and a legendary
educator. He brought
wisdom, humour, and
compassion to everyone
he interacted with. He
will be sorely missed."
Paul Channon, Director
of Alexandra Education**

Hugh passed away in May this year. As a BA student in 1969, he represented Rhodes University and Eastern Province in hockey.

According to St John's College, where Hugh taught and who shared details after his death, Hugh is an education activist and throughout his life, a man who followed the principle of ubuntu in his varied and memorable career and in all that he had done.

It explains that Hugh was destined to become an English teacher. He studied education at Rhodes, Unisa and York University (UK), gaining the degrees BA, B Ed, M Ed, and a diploma in Educational Technology. Hugh taught at Jeppe High School for Boys and Pridwin Preparatory School and finally found a home at St Stithian's College, where he served from 1969 for 33 years.

During his time at Saints, Hugh coached hockey and cricket was a selector for Gauteng Hockey and served on the SA Schools Hockey Committee. He was the English User Group Chairman and a marker for the IEB. In 1984, Hugh spent a year at York University studying English literature. Hugh became widely known as an inspiration to boys in the classroom and on the hockey field.

Hugh Huggett was lauded for his many interests in varied fields of school life, his hockey leadership, his leadership in the school choir, the founding of the Duke of Cornwall singers, and his constant amusing antics in the staff room.

A quote recorded on Facebook by David Vaughn Rossouw:

"I worked with Hugh at Sekolo sa Borokga. He was undeniably the BEST English teacher I ever came across, and he was in his seventies then. I also sang with him in the Men in Red choir".

After his second retirement in December 2016, Hugh Huggett continued to give to the educational empowerment of formerly disadvantaged youth. He continued his teaching career and mentorship at the Alexandra Education organization, founded by Deane Yates.

Hugh Huggett also found time to pursue his other favourite occupations—singing in The Welsh Men's Choir and the Johannesburg Symphony Choir. He was also known as an accomplished trout angler.

The St John's College Community extends its condolences to Libby Huggett, his children, his grandchildren, and his brother Peter and his family.

With thanks to St John's College and the writer Jenni Millward, retired St John's College Archivist for the use of extracts from a website story.



Read more



WERE YOU AT RHODES IN 1960? YOUR HELP IS NEEDED

RESEARCHERS FROM LOCATE INTERNATIONAL REQUIRE THE ASSISTANCE OF RHODES ALUMNI. NEARLY 45 YEARS AGO, ON 9 DECEMBER 1979, SKELETAL REMAINS OF A MAN WERE FOUND ON THE MOUNTAINSIDE IN RESOLVEN, SOUTH WALES, UK.

The man was believed to have been born between the World Wars and would have been between **40 - 60 years old when he died**. He had mixed light brown and grey hair. He was between 5' 8" - 5' 10" (173 - 178cm) in height. He wore a blue shirt and beige jumper (40" chest), with grey trousers (28" inside leg) and size 8 (UK) shoes.

He would have had a distinctive gait as his **right leg was fused at the knee** which would have caused him to walk with a stiff leg. For now, because of where he was found, he is known as Glamorgan Man.

In his possession were several items which showed he came from South Africa. He had a **1978 South African Airways timetable** with pencil notes suggesting he was going to return to the **Durban** area, a change of clothes but no passport, tickets or identifying items. There was a **Salvation Testament** with a hand-written address, PO Box Randburg, Johannesburg, South Africa.

Of particular interest is that he had a **bookmark from the 1960 Easter mission conducted by Rhodes University Varsity Trekkers to Qonce (King William's Town)**. Do you remember the 1960 mission? Was Glamorgan Man in the mission group or a member of one of the participating churches? Did you stay in touch after you graduated and you recognise him from his description?

Please contact investigations2@locate.international if you can help unravel the mystery of the man on the mountain. Any information might be the missing piece to restore this man's identity.

#SomeoneKnows #missingpersons #ShareToSolve

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*On behalf of the Department of Chemistry
by Vincent Smith and Prof Rosa*

Rui Krause

“Rui had a remarkable ability to balance heart and mind, seamlessly blending his deep faith with a rigorous commitment to science. His intellect was vast ...” Vincent Smith

Rui Krause passed away on 19 September 2024, survived by his wife and daughters, and leaving behind a grieving community of students and staff who will never be the same again. His career before Rhodes University, and in the decade since joining Rhodes University, were marked with excellent science and the forging of many deep friendships.

There are many words that come to mind when I think of Rui: Love, kindness, humility, intellect, and generosity of spirit. His love for people was boundless, and he showed this through the immense care he gave to his students, many of whom travelled from far and wide to study under him. He treated everyone with equal respect, regardless of their background or status, never standing on ceremony. Rui was approachable, warm, and always had time to offer guidance, even when his own plate was overflowing.

Rui had a remarkable ability to balance heart and mind, seamlessly blending his deep faith with a rigorous commitment to science. His intellect was vast, and I often marvelled at how he could know so much about so many things.

And yet, despite his brilliance, Rui remained humble. He spoke to everyone, no matter their position, with the same care and respect, always willing to help and uplift others, often placing their needs above his own.

His kindness towards students was remarkable, and each one can tell a story of his generosity and compassion.

His sense of humour, often that of a classic “Dad joke,” never failed to lighten the mood. That humour was just one of the many ways Rui connected with those around him, drawing people in with his warmth and openness.

His humanity touched everyone who knew him, and his entrepreneurial drive, coupled with a deep love for books, reflected his constant pursuit of knowledge and betterment.

In Rui, we found not just a colleague but a dear friend. His memory will live on in the lives of all those he touched – in the students he mentored, the colleagues he inspired, and the countless others who were fortunate enough to know him.

Rui was, and will always be, a man of faith, of science, and above all, of love.

James Matthews

Born in Cape Town in 1929, Matthews grew up in the District Six community, attending Trafalgar High School, where his talents as a writer were first recognised by a teacher who famously awarded him 21 out of 20 for a story about a tramp — this moment marked the beginning of a storied career over seven decades.

His early life was marked by struggle, including an accident at 14 that ended his formal education. However, his resilience saw him rise through the ranks of the publishing world, working as a newspaper seller and later as a chief messenger for the Cape Times and Cape Argus.

Matthews' breakthrough came in 1962 when he self-published his first collection of stories, *The Park and Other Stories*, which captured the brutal realities of Apartheid through the innocent eyes of a young boy. His profound vision of social injustice continued to resonate through his poetry, most notably in his 1972 collection *Cry Rage*, co-authored with Gladys Thomas. The book, banned after only two weeks by the apartheid government, solidified Matthews' reputation as a "dissident poet" whose words were "bullets" aimed at the heart of an oppressive regime.

His political activism earned him six months of solitary confinement in Pollsmoor Prison in 1976, where he continued writing poems, secretly smuggling them out to his daughter through his grandson's nappy.

Matthews was not only a revolutionary in his political stance but also in his philosophy of life. He approached ageing with grace and positivity, famously declaring, "Age is a beautiful phase." His poetry celebrated the wisdom and beauty of growing older, and he shared his work with senior citizens in his community, touching countless lives through his poems and readings. His impact on the community was profound, and his legacy continues to inspire and connect us.

A recipient of numerous accolades, Matthews remained humble, famously describing himself as "just a cat who got lucky with words."

Beyond his public achievements, Matthews cherished his role as a father, grandfather, and community elder. He believed in the importance of compatibility in relationships over love alone and shared a close bond with his children and grandchildren.



His impact on South African literature and society is immeasurable. A lifelong advocate for freedom, he lived his life in the pursuit and expression of personal and political liberation, using his writing as a vehicle for justice, reflection, and transformation.

James Matthews leaves a legacy of literary brilliance, unflinching courage, and profound wisdom. His words continue to inspire, reminding us of the importance of freedom, justice, and the unyielding power of imagination. He is survived by his children, grandchildren, and the many who found solace and strength in his work.



[Read more](#)

"Butterflies are my totem.
They are independent and
free. They are like me."
James Matthews

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Dr William Smith

“... the ... Channel ... became an indispensable platform for young people of our country to receive ... education in Mathematics and Science ... he became the teacher for the entire South African nation.”

Vice-chancellor Prof Sizwe Mabizela

RHODES UNIVERSITY MOURNS THE PASSING OF EDUCATION GIANT, ALUMNUS, AND ORDER OF THE BAOBAB RECIPIENT, DR WILLIAM SMITH.

In 2021, Rhodes University conferred a degree of Doctor of Laws (LLD) (honoris causa) on Smith, already the 2019 recipient of the coveted Distinguished Alumni Award.

Smith completed his BSc and his BSc (Hons), both with distinction, at Rhodes University. His parents JLB Smith (who identified the coelacanth), and Margaret Smith (ichthyologist and accomplished fish illustrator) had deep-rooted ties with the University and Makhanda (then Grahamstown).



Watch as Rhodes University confers a degree of Doctor of Laws (LLD) (honoris causa) on its alumnus and notable educator Mr William Smith – virtual graduation.

His first project in the education sector was establishing “Star Schools” to provide value-for-money education with top-class teachers. During 20 years with 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.

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 videotapes, 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, 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.

In 1970, 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 Smith’s methods and introduced audio cassettes into their correspondence courses.

In 1990, Smith began producing The Learning Channel’s educational television programmes with the financial backing of Hylton Appelbaum, then Executive Director of the Liberty Life Foundation. As a result of his work on this programme, Smith was voted one of the top three presenters on South African television in 1998.

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

A few years later, he pioneered the first live interactive education across the African continent, using the TV-Africa satellite signal and satellite telephone lines back to the studios to talk to students across Africa reaching tens of millions of people daily.

IN 2019, SMITH WAS AWARDED THE ORDER OF THE BAOBAB (SILVER) IN RECOGNITION OF HIS SERVICES TO TEACHING AND THE “DEMYSTIFICATION OF MATHEMATICS AND SCIENCE”.

He was also a renowned conservationist and owned the Featherbed Nature Reserve in Knysna, where he lived until the sale of the land and company in 2004.

On his Rhodes University Distinguished Alumni Award, his nominator, Mr Mandilakhe Kila, Stakeholder Engagement Officer at Rhodes University, had this to say:

“I saw it fit to nominate William Smith, because of the memorable influence he had had on my childhood and my generation. We would come back from school, and there he was, on TV, simplifying maths and physics. His passion made us want to learn more,” he said.



[Read more](#)



Dr Conrad Strauss

DR CONRAD STRAUSS WAS A DISTINGUISHED BANKER, BUSINESS LEADER, AND PHILANTHROPIST. HIS INVOLVEMENT WITH RHODES UNIVERSITY GOES BACK TO THE 1960S WHEN HE WAS A LECTURER IN THE DEPARTMENT OF ECONOMICS AND ECONOMIC HISTORY FOR A SHORT TIME.

He also holds an honorary doctorate from Rhodes University (1997). He passed away this year after a brief illness.

Dr Strauss was an economist by training, with a degree from Rhodes University and a doctorate in economics from Cornell University. He had a long career at Standard Bank, becoming chairman of Standard Bank Investment Corporation in 1992.

Dr Strauss played a vital role in the transition from apartheid to democracy in South Africa and was part of the Brenthurst Group, formed at the request of Nelson Mandela in 1993, which brought together political and business leaders to plan for the post-apartheid economy.

Another close connection to Makhanda was Dr Strauss's influence in supporting the Standard Bank for the National Arts Festival, a key part of the city's cultural, social and economic identity. Dr Strauss was a keen

collector of fine art and was involved in the longstanding headline sponsorship of the Festival by Standard Bank (1994 – 2000) and the founding of the Standard Bank Art Gallery in Johannesburg. More recently, he played an essential role in founding Strauss & Co., one of South Africa's premier art auction houses.

Dr Strauss delivered a guest lecture in 2013 on 100 years of Economics being offered as a subject at Rhodes University. Since then, the Strauss Family Trust has made a generous annual grant to the Economics Department that has enabled staff development in many ways, supporting further study, conference attendance, and research fieldwork, but with a special focus on encouraging international travel and exchange.

Dr Strauss's particular concern was to allow academics to travel internationally and spend time at other universities to experience new organisational cultures and ways of advancing the academic project.



<https://www.straussart.co.za/2024/honouring-the-legacy-of-dr-conrad-strauss/>



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