



RHODES UNIVERSITY
Where leaders learn



Community Engagement Awards

1 OCTOBER



2025

RUCE Staff 2024



Standing: Eric Kamu, Anelisa Toni, Gamu Chakona, Anna Kinsler, Masixole Jonono, Monica Canca, Lihle Manene, Thandie Ngowana, Nikki Green, Thandiwe Matyobeni

Seated: Kristena Reddy, Claire McCann, Aviwe Ndawuni, Diana Hornby, Nosi Nkwinti and Hlengiwe Mlambo.



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Message from the Deputy Vice-Chancellor, Academic and Student Affairs

Community Engagement at Rhodes University – *The Past, Present, and Future*

Every time we celebrate our students, staff, and community partners who have dedicated themselves to making the Rhodes University Community Engagement and Makhanda better and better, we are compelled to reflect on our achievements and the journey well-travelled.

Community Engagement (CE) has become a defining pillar of South African higher education since its formal recognition in the Education White Paper 3 of 1997. Rhodes University is among the few universities in the country that have made significant strides in community engagement, building reciprocal partnerships with communities, strengthening engaged scholarship, and contributing meaningfully to sustainable development.

At Rhodes University, the past 18 years mark a period of significant growth and institutionalisation of community engagement. Key milestones include the establishment of the Rhodes University Community Engagement Division (RUCE) in 2007; the gradual but thoughtful integration of service-learning and engaged research into the academic project; the expansion of engaged citizenry and student-led initiatives across faculties and residences; the establishment of faculty community engagement committees, chaired by deputy deans for teaching and learning as well as community engagement; establishment of social innovation hubs, and the formation of strong, sustained partnerships with local communities in Makhanda and beyond. More recently, we celebrated the launch of the *African*

Journal of Higher Education Community Engagement (AJHECE) (2023) and the accreditation of the *Postgraduate Diploma in Higher Education Community Engagement (PGDip HECE)* (2024), the first of its kind in South Africa. This academic programme will be offered in 2026, while the journal – a repository of impressive CE knowledge and scholarship - will soon receive full accreditation. We established a strong CE community of practice and collaborative projects with other universities to share best practices, build engaged scholarship, and democratise community engagement in the country. All these developments, and many others, reinforce Rhodes University's leadership in shaping the scholarly and practical foundations of the emerging field of community engagement.

As South Africa reflects on 30 years of democracy, the challenges of inequality, unemployment, and poverty remain urgent, highlighting the need for universities to integrate teaching, research, and engagement more deeply, ensuring their relevance and responsiveness to society.

Achievements and collaborations celebrated at the *2025 Annual Community Engagement Awards Gala Dinner* aim to recognise and inspire further innovation, commitment to social justice, excellence, and engaged scholarship for better impact and sustainable community development.

Warm congratulations to all the awardees and all those who make community engagement a priority (RUCE staff, students, community partners, and the academic and support staff).

Prof 'Mabokang Monnapula-Mapesela

Deputy Vice-Chancellor: Academic and Student Affairs

Annual Community Engagement Awards Gala Dinner Programme

18h15

Welcome Address – DVC Prof Monnapula Mapesela

18h20

RUCE Highlights for 2025 – Director Di Hornby

18h30

Transforming Education in Makhanda Video

18h40

Community Partner of the Year

18h45

Hall/Residence of the Year

18h50

Sports Club/Society of the Year Award

19h00

Main course is served

19h25

Engaged Researcher of the Year

19h30

Gold Awards for Excellence in Community Engagement

19h40

Closing Remarks: Vice Chancellor Prof Mabizela

Dessert

Programme Director: Dr Sandie Phakathi

Certificate Awardees

2025 Student Leaders

To our certified Student Leaders: we thank you for stepping up to lead and co-manage the Engaged Citizenry Programmes—mobilising peers, sustaining effort, and meeting the benchmarks of excellence in your chosen Programmes. We honour and celebrate your dedication and thank you for your meaningful contribution to reshaping the education landscape in Makhanda.

BuddingQ Programme Student Leaders

Anela Kuta
Azazole Dastile
Chumisa Mama
Desiree Mabotja
Emihle Luvalo
Iviwe Khohlakala
Jessica Guzinski
Jessicah Sibuyi
Khanya Dunga
Khanya Norman
La-Keesha Grootboom
Lalelisile Mncwabe
Lindokuhle Menze
Londeka Gumede
Lungile Sibande
Nqoba Boyi
Philisiwe Ngwenya
Rosina Nthunya
Sibulele Ngamntwini

Siphesihle Mtongana
Tsebo Mantje
Vuyokazi Ngaleka
Wendy Baloyi

Nine Tenths Programme Student Leaders

Akhanyile Ngqiyaza
Akimu Rajab
Anesipho Tshisani
Asive Mafani
Chidinma Iheanetu
Christophina Ndahambeleda Anima
Eddie Khunoana
Enver Lottering
Lance Myburgh
Lusanda Witbooi
Lusive Matya
Luviwe Mngcambe
Markan Andreas Nkhwazi
Ntsako Chauke

Phumelela Tsili
Siyanda Mjoli
Vukonah Worship

Project Read Programme Student Leaders

Elihle Hange
Tshegofatso Manana
Lindokuhle Pama
Tanesha Gibbs
Zandile Mnisi
Zukhanye Dladla

High School Tutoring and Mentoring Programme Student Leaders

Aphelele Nkwinti
Emily Morgan
Evuya Nomapelana
Kamogela Radebe
Moko Ombesa
Ntsika Tyopo
Qhamani Somhlahlo
Shakhola Emmanuel Sekeleme
Sinenhlanhla Mthlane
Siyamthanda Ngesi

Reading Club Programme Student Leaders

Felicitus Dlamini
Khanya Dunga
Lunika Kondile
Okuhle Mfeka
Sindi Xolo
Siphosethu Ngesi

Vulindlela Programme Student Leaders

Alungile Lukhangela Mraxo
Anela Kuta
Aphelele Mjobo
Asive Dywili
Azakhiwe Bizela
Azile Matha
Caylin Gillies
Charlize James
Felicitus Dlamini
Khayelihle Nzimande
Lisakhanya Ngogwana
Luviwe Mngcambe
Manelisi Mxolisi Mlangeni
Mohau Madiope
Njabulo Dlamini
Nthabiseng Rebecca Banda
Samkelo Nkanyiso Seme
Sibonokuhle Zuzile
Siyanda Mjoli

CE Residence Rep Programme Student Leaders

Abenguni Mpapela

Amyoli Gaika

Anelisa Mabindisa

Angela Sibanda

Aphelele Goswana

Aphiwe Dlamini

Asakhe Nzimela

Asemahle Gwayi

Asenako Ntame

Azakhiwe Bizela

Bahle Maqina

Brianna Msiza

Emihle Mgobo

Emihle Shushu

Faith Hahane

Kamvalethu Mavuso

Khanya Kofi

Khumo Mononyane

Lathitha Gxekwa

Lihle Tsholoba

Linathi Malgas

Mahlako Sebapu

Mihlali Mzini

Milisa Klaas

Mpho Mpanza

Mphonyane vilakazi

Mthenjwa Mtolo

Mxolisi Mlangeni

Njabulo Howard Mnguni

Nkosiyapha Mngomezulu

Nosipho Ngcobo

Nsindisoyethu Ndwandwe

Onela Bam

Oratilwe Muthavhi

Rendani Mathoho

Rethekgile Mamabolo

Rosina Mpolokeng Nthunya

Sanele Khumalo

Sibongile Letsatsi

Sibusiso Ngubane

Siviwe Matshoba

Sphesihle Witbooi

Thina Manqeza

Tumiso Mothema

Vukona Worship Khobani

Yamkela Dyonase

Yonela Tshaka

Zekhethelo Xakaza

Zininzi Bhhekizulu

2025 Volunteers

Congratulations to the volunteers who have earned Certificates across the Engaged Citizenry Programmes. Your sustained commitment exemplifies principled, community-centred engagement and leadership. We celebrate your contribution to creating a just and equitable society, thank you!

BuddingQ Programme Volunteers

Abenguni Mpapela

Abongile Sikutshwa

Alakhe Kondilati

Alakhe Kondilati

Alnecia Vuma

Anelisiwe Thiso

Asanda Khomo

Asithandile Dlwathi

Atang Sebake

Ayolile Ncunuka

Botshelo Kgwele

Chiamaka Mapheelle

Cleo Junior Mbatha

Emihle Matiwane

Inam Mbekwa

Indiphile Maguga

Karabo Madumo

Khanya Dapo

Khanya Mlokoti

Khutso Mokonyane

Koketso Ntuli

Lelethu Ntshulana

Likhona Ngemntu

Lindokuhle Masuku

Lisakhanya Masingile

Liso Tyhaliti

Liyabona Notuku

Luviwe Mngcambe

Malebo Mabilu

Micaela Grant-Thomson

Mihlali Tibini

Minentle Mpukuzela

Nombuso Myeza

Nonceba Sogcwayi

Nthabiseng Khonkco

Ntombiyenkosi Myeni

Okona Mncanca

Olona Mzimba

Oratile Lusiba

Pachao M'Tamila

Phawu Gumatana

Qhama Ngoma

Qhama Zondani

Robynne Benjamin

Sarah Jegels

Sesethu Gaga

Sesona Mlobeli
Sibabalwe Dywili
Sinethemba Mayekiso
Siphokazi Kunene
Siphosethu Ntsangani
Unakho Notuku
Ziyanda Mayisela
Zwakele Zondo

Nine Tenths Programme Volunteers

Anathi Bayi
Angalakha Shosha
Asemahle Kweta
Asive Hloyi
Athenkosi Mtwla
Avuzwa Tyini
Baxolise Gazi
Cleopatra Shabangu
Cynthercea Mbhalati
Dumisani Klaas
Emihle Stamper
Indiphile Maguga
Itumeleng Komane
Karabo Banda
Khanya Stamper
Likhanyile Zonke
Mbalentle Agumba
Mercia Marandela Kalumba
Minentle Silumko
Nande Ngindana

Neo Mathanzima
Neo Seganye
Nozipho Maphalala
Philile Sixaba
Qhama Sandi
Sandisa Sandi
Sandra Mushi
Sanelisiwe Dyaloyi
Sibabaza Nkatsha
Sihle Baliso
Sinovuyo Nombila
Sinoxolo Jauka
Siviwe Mginywa
Siyamthanda Mdingi
Solulele Mata
Thina Shaanine Stamper
Unganathi Mazwana
Xihlovo Nukeri
Yonela Mtshaula
Zenande Rooi
Zoliswa Mdawini

Project Read Programme Volunteers

Abongile Mjiyako
Alizwa Makeleni
Aphelele Goswana
Aza Mboniswa
Azukiwe Ndyokolo
Busisiwe Majeke
Carlin Du Plessis

Judy Gazide
 Khiran Butt
 Lisakhaya Mayekiso
 Lisoletu Masumpa
 Lizzy Ngele
 Mbali Mvambo
 Okuhle Rwambi
 Phiwokuhle Mvalo
 Rethabile Botsane
 Sonwabile Geleba
 Tshegofalo Moloto
 Tyrah Knock
 Yamanguni Mnguni
 Yandile Mcube
 Zenani Zungu
 Zubenathi Sigoyo

High School Tutoring and Mentoring Programme Volunteers

Abenathi Mantshiyose
 Athini Baleni
 Ayabulela Mankayi
 Ayamkele Mzongwana
 Anganathi Mkhathali
 Andisiwe Duma
 Amtandile Ndaliso
 Asixolise Mbeki
 Anesipho Mtati
 Alutha Botha
 Bahle Maqina

Banzi Ngwenya
 Bridged Magaela
 Brenna Doyle
 Emihle Marambana
 Evuya Nomapelana
 Fhulufhelo Thikathandi
 Goodhope Mafokeng
 Hlonela Ncopo
 Hlumelo Mvuyiswa
 Iviwe Mhlakane
 Julia Ramere
 Kabelo Selepe
 Kamvalethu Mzayiya
 Keamogetse Oratile Ramokgadi
 Kealeboga Makgatlo
 Khanani Kubayi
 Lesego Selamolela
 Lihle Mkuzangwe
 Lelethu Mkonjeni
 Likhokele Salayi
 Lindokuhle Toto
 Lisakhanya Mavi
 Lisakhanya Tali
 Lithalethu Mashiya
 Longezo Phatho
 Luyelwanda Tsimbomvu
 Matlhodi Mashishi
 Makabongwe Nxumalo
 Mihle Qase
 Muelelwa Mulovhedzi
 Mufanadzo Netshiozwi

Mpho Keabi
 Mpho Nelly Mokwena
 Mvume Nkosi
 Ncubane Samukelisiwe
 Ndileka January
 Njabulo Mnguni
 Noluthando Xaba
 Nomusa Ntuli
 Nomvelo Mpala
 Nokukhanya Maseko
 Nwabisa Bangani
 Onke Sentile
 Oikarebetse Ramaoka
 Onesimo Ngqoyiyana
 Oratile Ramokgadi
 Owethu Takatshane
 Palesa Kanana
 Precious Simmers
 Ramaoka Oikarabets
 Rethabile Botsane
 Revaine Ngobeni
 Saxola Mgidlana
 Sibusisekile Nkosi
 Sinalo Pupulu
 Siyanda Ngculu
 Sinenhlanhla Ncube
 Sisipho Ngcani
 Siyamanga January
 Siyamthanda Mpini
 Sinovuyo Peter
 Sinenceba Sogexe

Siphesihle Mkhwanazi
 Sebapu Mahlako Moeltsi
 Sesona Jack
 Soyama Ngquleka
 Shakira Izally
 Siphesihle Mbekela
 Tshego Mohale
 Unathi Mdletshe
 Usisipho Nqinana
 Vusi Msimango
 Yanga Magaga
 Yolisa Mgolodela
 Zanaxolo Nyangiwe
 Zikhona Aba
 Zikhona Hanabe
 Zimi Linda Libala
 Zenande Jika

Reading Club Programme Volunteers

Cleo Smith
 Jess Guzinski
 Kamvelihle Keswa
 Melodie Govender
 Phomolo Ledwaba
 Sinenjongo Xeza

Vulindlela Programme Volunteers

Albert Mjilibe
 Alnecia Vuma
 Andile Mhlanga
 Andile Mtotywa
 Aphiwe Siphika
 Asemahle Luke
 Asemahle Siquiti
 Asisipho Lukwe
 Asivile Kise
 Aubrey Mahashu
 Fezeka Maziya
 Fezile Gumede
 Hlela Thembeka
 Indiphile Nongauza
 Jessica Sibuyi
 Julius Malaheke
 Karabo Madumo
 Khunou Keemeuao
 Lehopo Lepheana
 Lilitha Qwase

Lisakhanya Ngogwana
 Luthando Mbangwa
 Lwandle Ndlovu
 Makungu Shiwundlana
 Melissa Mokoena
 Melva Mphaha
 Mfundo Madlala
 Moses Moyo
 Ogijonke Makaula
 Okuhle Tsolo
 Onele Ramba
 Oyama Matsolo
 Qwabe Bongekile
 Sihle Moyeni
 Sinothando Ndayi
 Siphesihle Mngqontshi
 Siphosethu Njaba
 Sisanda Mantshongo
 Sithokozile Mogale
 Tasha Matsiyila
 Thabile Zwanga
 Thembeka Hlela

Community Partner of the Year

Holy Cross School

Holy Cross School has demonstrated exceptional commitment to music education and cultural enrichment by actively engaging with Rhodes University student volunteers and working closely with the Music Department.

Through the guidance of their Creative Arts teacher, Mr Klaas, and in partnership with university volunteers, Holy Cross has successfully integrated marimba, recorder, choir, and music theory into the learners' curriculum and assessments. The school's openness to innovative teaching approaches, attention to learners' development, and reliable volunteer management have supported both the growth of the programme and the sustainability of the initiative.

Holy Cross has also collaborated with other community organisations through workshops and the RU Ensemble Festival, fostering an environment of respect, collaboration, and growth for both the learners and students. The learners have not only gained musical skills but also developed confidence, leadership, and personal skills that prepare them to be active, engaged citizens. By strengthening the link between the university and the wider Makhanda community, Holy Cross School exemplifies the principles of effective community engagement.

CM Vellem Primary School

Over the past couple of years, CM Vellem has consistently demonstrated exceptional commitment to holistic development, combining creativity, inclusivity, and sustainable practices to address immediate needs while fostering long-term growth.

In 2025, CM Vellem has led and supported a wide range of initiatives that enrich learners' educational, physical, intellectual, and emotional development. From creating a dedicated reading space through the Making the Lab a Conducive Space

project, to promoting wellness and holistic growth via Sports Day, CM Vellem has ensured learners have access to both resources and opportunities. Their Importance of Reading and Book Giving Day initiative promotes literacy and equality, while the ongoing Chess Club cultivates critical thinking, problem-solving, and strategic skills. The Fun Day event reflects their dedication to celebrating achievements, recognising challenges, and fostering community spirit.

Beyond programming, CM Vellem demonstrates exceptional care for learners' well-being, connecting them with psychological support where needed and promoting a culture of empathy, resilience, and ubuntu. Their partnerships with Rhodes University, including collaborations with student volunteers and clubs, exemplify a deep commitment to community engagement, resourcefulness, and sustainable impact.

Residence or Hall of the Year

Drostdy Hall

Drostdy Hall is recognised for its outstanding student leadership, organisation, and commitment to meaningful community engagement. A shining example was the student-led pageant, coordinated and delivered entirely by students with the active support of the Warden and Hall Admin. What made the event especially impactful was that the pre-schoolers from Noncedo were the participants, gaining confidence, joy, and a sense of belonging. The pageant also raised over R3000, which was directed towards enhancing Noncedo's learning environment, reflecting Drostdy's commitment to sustainable partnerships.

In addition, students worked with Noncedo Pre-School on initiatives linked to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). A Spring-Cleaning Day taught children about healthy, clean spaces (SDG 3: Good Health and Well-being). Planting flowers promoted care for the environment (SDG 15: Life on Land). School readiness activities addressed early learning and literacy (SDG 4: Quality Education).

Through these efforts, Drostdy Hall students, the Warden, and the Hall Administrator have modelled empathy, reciprocity, and socially responsive citizenship.

Nelson Mandela Hall

Nelson Mandela Hall has demonstrated exceptional dedication to community engagement, collaboration, and student leadership. Guided by community mapping, the Hall ensures its initiatives respond meaningfully to the needs of community partners while enriching the student experience.

Among its most impactful initiatives is the Chess Club project, which fostered sustainable partnerships by allowing Rhodes Kings and Queens Chess Club members to coach learners while strengthening their own skills. The Hall also championed literacy through the Book Giving and Reading initiatives, addressing inequalities in access to resources and nurturing a culture of education.

Further collaboration was showcased through Sports Day, which united Rhodes sports clubs, learners, and local families, promoting social cohesion and engaged citizenship. These events not only offered relief from academic pressures but also exposed students to the realities of Makhanda's community.

Through thoughtful planning, active participation, and visionary leadership, Nelson Mandela Hall embodies the true spirit of service and social responsibility.

Ellen Kuzwayo House

Ellen Kuzwayo House is recognised for its strong student leadership and commitment to cultivating socially responsible citizenship. From the very start of the year, house leaders and the Community Engagement representative organised structured activities that introduced students to the importance of justice, equality, and their role in society. The Community Engagement Orientation (CEO) Course sessions exemplified excellent planning, moving from foundational discussions to deeper conversations on privilege and social change through

interactive methods such as videos, games, and group dialogues, each concluded with meaningful reflection.

This spirit of awareness and empathy was evident in outreach projects like the Home of Joy visit, where students created safe and joyful learning spaces for children through games, dance, and language activities. These efforts reflected an understanding that true community engagement is not about charity but about mutual respect and shared humanity.

Through leadership, organisation, and empathy, Ellen Kuzwayo House has made a lasting impact on both students and the broader community.

Societies and Sport Clubs

SWEEP Rhodes

The Student Women Economic Empowerment Programme's Rhodes Chapter (SWEEP Rhodes), established in May 2024, is recognised for its remarkable impact in a short time through purposeful and collaborative community engagement. Despite being newly formed, the Chapter has built meaningful partnerships with CM Vellem Primary School and Inkululeko Social Enterprise, extending its reach well beyond campus.

Highlights of their work include the Grade 7 Market Day at CM Vellem, which introduced learners to entrepreneurial thinking through practical trade, creativity, and teamwork, and the implementation of the Seeds of the Future Curriculum with Ntsika High School learners, cultivating knowledge of the green economy, sustainability, and business planning.

SWEEP has also responded to pressing social needs through annual sanitary towel drives, ensuring dignity and access to education for young girls. By combining education, entrepreneurship, and empowerment, SWEEP Rhodes exemplifies the power of student leadership in building a more sustainable and inclusive future.

Rhodes University Law Society

The Law Society is recognised for its outstanding commitment to leadership, service, and community responsiveness. In a year that marked a significant shift in engagement with the Makana community, the Society built lasting partnerships with Ikhaya Losizo and Andrew Moyake School, ensuring that its impact will continue beyond this term.

Through a blend of legal education, community service, and advocacy, the Society empowered students with practical knowledge of lease agreements and inspired young learners to pursue careers in law through its collaboration with RUPSA. At Ikhaya Losizo, members dedicated Fridays to building relationships with children in need of care, while at Andrew Moyake School, they led vital discussions on bullying, sexual assault, harassment, and abstinence.

The Society's participation in the Pride March further demonstrated its commitment to inclusion and equality. Together, these initiatives reflect a holistic approach to justice and social responsibility.

TASA Society

The TASA Society is commended for its generosity, initiative, and commitment to uplifting the Makhanda community. In 2025, the Society partnered with Lithalethu Day Care Centre, a long-standing community partner, to make a tangible difference in the lives of young learners.

On 4 May 2025, TASA collaborated with the Community Engagement Representatives of Hobson Hall to provide much-needed financial support to the centre. Building on this partnership, on 13 August 2025, the Society donated R1000 towards the renovation of a classroom, with plans to install tiles and improve the learning environment for the children.

These efforts reflect TASA's dedication not only to financial contributions but also to creating lasting, practical impact. By investing in spaces where young children learn and grow, the Society has demonstrated leadership, compassion, and a strong

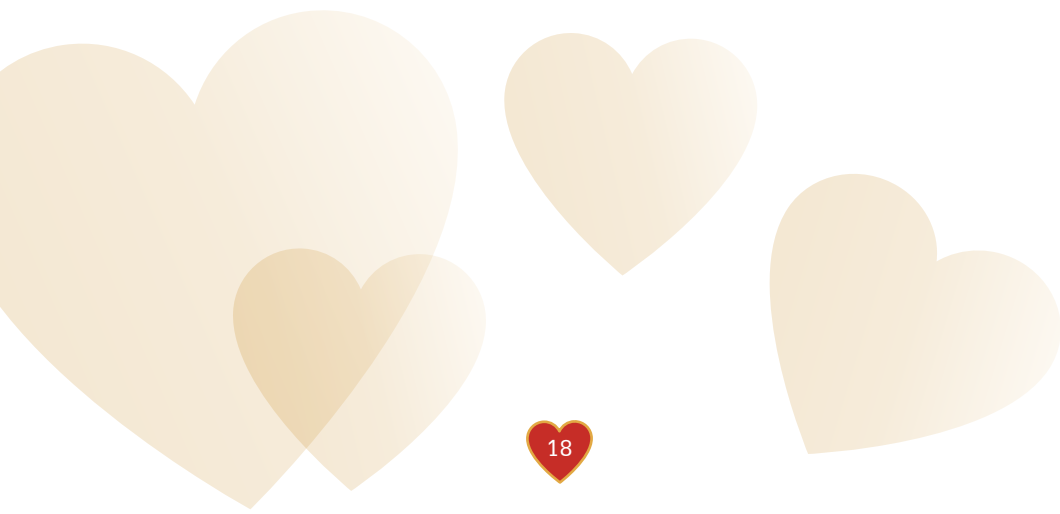
sense of social responsibility. TASA stands as an example of how student organisations can create meaningful community change.

Engaged Student Researcher of the Year – 2025

This award celebrates a student whose work exemplifies the transformative power of community engagement through the art of music. Their research explores the role of non-profit music projects in fostering inclusivity, empowerment, and social development in marginalised communities of the Eastern Cape. Focusing on the Access Music Project in Makhanda and the Inkwenkwezi School of Artistry in Port Alfred, the study highlights how community-rooted music education cultivates leadership, confidence, and collaboration, helping to break cycles of poverty and disempowerment.

Beyond research, this student has actively embodied the ethos of being an engaged citizen — founding a music school project that provides vital opportunities for youth, expanding music programmes into under-resourced schools, and mobilising student volunteers and community partners to sustain these initiatives. Their work demonstrates that music education extends far beyond artistic skill to become a catalyst for education, transformation, and long-term community development.

For their vision, leadership, and impact, the Engaged Student Researcher of the Year for 2025 goes to Sambesiwe Mavela.



2025 Gold Awards for Excellence in Community Engagement

Siyanda Mjoli – Commerce:

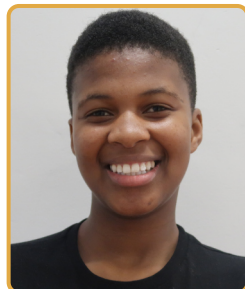
Siyanda Mjoli's journey at Rhodes University reflects an extraordinary commitment to leadership, learning, and service. From tutoring and mentoring Grade 12 learners in the Vulindlela Parent Engagement Programme to guiding young people in Inkululeko, Siyanda has consistently embodied the role of mentor, role model, and changemaker. His leadership has also extended to the wider community through initiatives such as the Basic Computer Skills training course, where he worked alongside others to empower Rhodes staff and members of the Makana community with essential digital literacy.



Beyond practice, Siyanda has enriched his engagement through short courses in Community Engagement and Engaged Research, pairing reflection with action. His achievements have already been recognised with prestigious leadership and engagement awards, yet he continues to serve with humility, passion, and a deep commitment to social justice. Siyanda's energy, dedication, and example inspire all those who work alongside him, leaving a lasting legacy of impact.

Bahle Maqina – Humanities:

Bahle Maqina's journey in community engagement is defined by vision, innovation, and impact. What began with tutoring isiXhosa at T.E.M. Mrwetyana in 2023 grew into a deep commitment to improving literacy and opening pathways into higher education. As a 9/10ths mentor, she walked alongside two Grade 12



learners, both of whom are now pursuing degrees at Rhodes University—an enduring testament to her guidance and care.

Her influence extends beyond individual mentoring. As the Community Engagement Representative for Adelaide Tambo House, Bahle revived a residence once marked by low participation, inspiring her peers and leading the house to win its first Community Engagement Hall Award in a decade. She has pioneered innovative projects such as the First Aid Club, a sustainable safety initiative for schools, and a chess coaching partnership that empowers learners with new skills. Now elected as the 2026 CE SRC, Bahle continues to embody leadership, reciprocity, and the true spirit of engaged citizenship.

Sibulele Ngamntwini – Humanities:

Since 2022, Sibulele Ngamntwini has lived out the very heart of community engagement—showing up consistently, leading with integrity, and creating spaces where learners, peers, and partners thrive together. Beginning as a volunteer in the BuddingQ Programme, Sibulele has grown into a trusted Student Leader, guiding volunteers, supporting teachers, and directly impacting the literacy journeys of more than a hundred children in Makhanda. Her leadership was central to the student-driven evaluation of BuddingQ, where she modelled initiative, critical thinking, and the spirit of partnership that underpins sustainable community work.



But her contributions extend far beyond BuddingQ. From mentoring through the Seventh Day Adventist Student Movement, to shaping conversations at Rhodes University's Community Engagement Conference, to hands-on projects that uplift schools and preschools—Sibulele has poured her time, energy, and skills into building bridges between the university and community.

Sibulele's journey reflects reciprocity, resilience, and hope. She stands as an exemplar of what it means to lead with love and to serve with vision.

Londeka Gumede – Commerce:

Londeka Gumede's journey is a powerful story of growth, courage, and leadership. From a timid first-year student to an inspiring driver of community change, she has embraced community engagement with enthusiasm and insight. Since 2023, Londeka has been a consistent presence in Makhanda, building relationships that reflect her deep understanding that engagement is not about charity, but about creating partnerships where all are uplifted.



Her leadership reached new heights in 2025 when she pioneered an innovative approach to early childhood development at All for Christ. By encouraging children to lead warm-up exercises, she transformed them from passive recipients of support into active agents of change. This simple but profound shift empowered children to see themselves as capable leaders and nurtured their confidence from a young age.

Londeka's ability to inspire others—whether peers or young learners—demonstrates a rare gift: not only to serve but to empower service in others.

Luviwe Mngcambe – Humanities:

Luviwe Mngcambe has dedicated her time at Rhodes University to empowering young people and expanding their horizons. For three years, she has been a committed mentor in the 9/10ths Programme, guiding six high school learners—four of whom are now pursuing higher education at Rhodes, with the others well on their way. Through the Vulindlela Tutoring and Mentoring Programme, she continues to walk alongside learners, providing encouragement, guidance, and practical support as they prepare for life after matric.



Her work is more than tutoring; it is youth empowerment. Luviwe inspires learners to follow their passions, access opportunities, and believe in their own potential. Her commitment also reaches younger children through her involvement in the BuddingQ Literacy Programme, where she helps close the literacy gap and motivates learners to remain in school. Luviwe's service is leaving a lasting impact on reducing school dropouts and expanding pathways into higher education.

Ntsika Chumisa Tyopo – Science:

Ntsika Chumisa Tyopo has shown herself to be a dedicated and thoughtful volunteer whose leadership reflects creativity, reliability, and humility. With outstanding attendance across her roles as a House and Hall Community Engagement Representative and as a volunteer at the Khanya Maths and Science Club, Ntsika has invested both time and energy into strengthening university-community partnerships.



At Khanya, she is not only a committed tutor but also an innovator—bringing fresh ideas and creative approaches to help learners grasp complex concepts in maths and science. Her contributions extend beyond teaching to shaping the overall learning experience, ensuring that learners feel supported, motivated, and capable. Ntsika works collaboratively with her peers and community partners, always recognising the assets that the community itself brings to the engagement process. In doing so, she embodies reciprocity and respect, promoting good practice while growing through her own learning.

Akimu Rajab – Science:

Akimu Rajab exemplifies the heart of ethical and impactful volunteerism. As a student leader in both the High School and Mentoring Programme and the Nine Tenths Programme, he has walked alongside Grade 12 learners with empathy, care, and authenticity, helping them navigate one of the most important years of

their lives. His mentoring has not only supported academic growth but has also built confidence, resilience, and a belief in possibility.

Akimu's leadership style is marked by inclusivity, emotional intelligence, and humility. He creates spaces where learners feel valued and supported, and his ability to collaborate across diverse teams amplifies the impact of his work. Beyond RUCE, he has strengthened student life through roles such as Drostdy Hall Head Student, Graham House Representative, and Geology Peer Mentor, while also extending learning into the wider community through the Khanye Maths and Science Club. Akimu's service reflects integrity, vision, and a profound commitment to collective upliftment.



Azazole Dastile – Humanities:

Azazole Dastile shines as a student leader whose service is grounded in passion, humility, and an unwavering commitment to justice in education. Since joining the BuddingQ Programme in 2023, he has been a constant presence—attending every session, meeting, training, and camp with energy, reliability, and enthusiasm. His work in literacy development has not only supported learners in building the foundational skills of reading and writing but has also created a joyful and nurturing learning environment where children feel encouraged to thrive through play.



Azazole's understanding of the educational injustices in South Africa fuels his determination to be part of the solution. With a smile on his face and patience in his approach, he inspires both learners and fellow volunteers alike. His leadership combines organisational strength with genuine care, leaving a lasting impact on the BuddingQ Programme and all who have the privilege of working alongside him.

Emily Morgan – Science:

Emily Morgan has distinguished herself as an exceptional student leader within the Khanya Maths and Science Club, where her dedication and creativity have left a lasting mark. With consistent attendance of over 85%, Emily has given generously of her time and energy, committing weekends and additional hours during the week to both teaching and administration. Her leadership has been defined by her ability to guide not only the learners but also the team of tutors she works alongside, fostering a collaborative and supportive environment that enables everyone to grow.



Emily's approach to community engagement reflects both responsibility and reflection. She recognises the importance of the lessons for learners, while also valuing the learning and growth that tutors themselves gain through the process. By promoting these principles of mutual exchange and respect, Emily has modelled what true, ethical engagement looks like, ensuring the sustainability and impact of the programme.

Shakhola Emmanuel Sekeleme – Science:

For over six years, Shakhola Emmanuel Sekeleme has dedicated himself wholeheartedly to community engagement, demonstrating passion, consistency, and a deep belief in the transformative power of education. As a student leader in the Khanya Maths and Science Club for the past two years, Shakhola has been more than a tutor—he has been a mentor and role model, inspiring young learners to see possibility in STEM subjects and pursue futures filled with potential.



His investment of time and energy goes far beyond the Saturday morning lessons. Shakhola has built strong relationships with his peers and learners, fostering an

environment of trust, encouragement, and growth. He approaches community engagement as a two-way process, recognising not only what he gives but also what he learns through service. His unwavering love for this work and his ability to inspire others mark him as a leader of integrity and vision.

Rosina Mpolokeng Nthunya – Humanities:

Rosina Mpolokeng Nthunya embodies the spirit of Ubuntu through her dedication, creativity, and care in community engagement. As a BuddingQ Student Leader, she has gone far beyond the basics of coordinating literacy activities—training and mentoring volunteers, liaising with teachers, and creating safe, respectful, and inclusive learning spaces where children can thrive. Her reliability and commitment



shine through her excellent attendance and her ability to lead with both professionalism and warmth.

Rosina's leadership extends beyond the classroom. As the Oppidan Community Engagement Representative, she inspired students to take collective responsibility for their community, most notably through her organisation of a Clean-it Day for Nelson Mandela Day 2025. By mobilising peers and partners to revitalise a children's playground in Joza, she showed how collaboration can leave a tangible and lasting impact. With her consistent service, strong relationships, and visionary leadership, Rosina has strengthened both the BuddingQ Programme and the wider community.

2024 Vice Chancellor's Distinguished Community Engagement Award

Prof Samantha Naidu

*Department of Literary Studies in English,
Humanities Faculty*

The Vice-Chancellor's Distinguished Community Engagement Award is a prestigious annual award, which recognises academics who have successfully established meaningful and sustainable partnerships between members of the University and community partners in the areas of teaching, learning and research to contribute to sustainable human and community development.



We are honoured to announce that Prof Samantha Naidu is the winner of the **2024 Distinguished Vice-Chancellor's Community Engagement Award**.

The word literacy is defined as the ability to read, write, speak and listen in a way that lets us communicate effectively and make sense of the world. To be able to read, is to be empowered to navigate one's own world and to travel vicariously to a myriad other worlds. Kofi Annan, the secretary-general of the United Nations from 1997 to 2006, further described literacy as:

a bridge from misery to hope. It is a tool for daily life in modern society. It is a bulwark against poverty, and a building block of development.... Literacy is a platform for democratisation, and a vehicle for the promotion of cultural and national identity....For everyone, everywhere, literacy is, along with education in general, a basic human right.... Literacy is, finally, the road to human progress and the means through which every man, woman and child can realise his or her full potential.

Developing a culture of reading is an essential part of achieving that personal and collective potential and building a healthy society. In South Africa, 81% of young children cannot read for meaning in their mother tongue. While the rate in Makhandla is significantly better at 60%, it is nevertheless, a matter of concern (GADRA, 2023). The adult literacy rates are even more devastating; although 'only' 10,5% of adults are illiterate (a decline of 5% from 2019 to 2021) this accounts for nearly 4 million adults who were functionally illiterate in the country. This disproportionately affects the black population and women (DHET, 2023). And ultimately, significantly affects the social, economic and political participation of society members and our national progress. As such, developing a reading culture, that is, not just learning to read but becoming literate is an essential part of social and cultural construction. Literature is a springboard not only into other worlds through our imaginations (which is critical for human development), but it is also essential for understanding ourselves and unlocking knowledge from various sources and disciplines.

The above-average literacy rate in Makhandla can be attributed in part to the contributions of a city-wide collective of actors dedicated to improving education at a foundational level. A strong and consistent link in this chain of development in the Foundational Learning sector in Makhandla, is Rhodes University's Professor Sam Naidu. As a Literary Studies academic, teacher, researcher and practitioner, Prof Sam Naidu recognises that reading and sustained reading cultures are essential not only to her discipline but also to the broader success of higher education, knowledge production and community well-being. A professor in the Department of Literary Studies in English, Sam has coordinated community engagement initiatives since 1992, when she was chairperson of the Rhodes University Student Community Organisation (an SRC-based organisation). More recently, in 2012, she led a collaborative project to set up a fully-fledged library in Ntsika Secondary School in Joza. Her work spans many decades of commitment to building sustainable reading cultures and literariness. By 2024, Prof Naidu had positioned herself as a community activator, actively seeking out partnerships and connecting people and projects within Makhandla to nurture synergies and share resources for literacy and literary work. In all her CE efforts she emphasises the

need for compassion, empathy and reciprocity to address the fractures in our society and to build strong, ethical citizens of the future.

Being in this position requires cultivating strong, long-term relationships through sustained engagement, active listening and a commitment to community-led solutions. Rather than imposing top-down directives, she works alongside stakeholders of all sorts to co-create meaningful interventions. Sam was nominated, therefore, not for one particular project, but for demonstrating over decades an emergent, responsive approach to community engagement that sought to bring people and resources together as community needs arose.

Prof Naidu's CE journey began as a personal and academic passion during her undergraduate years. Beginning in 1991, she did volunteer work with RUSCO, with her first project being a reading club at Masifunde, a shelter for street children. RUSCO was a groundbreaking student organisation that sought to build community engagement between a predominantly white, affluent campus of students and the then, Grahamstown community. Part of the society's work was



the implementation of reading clubs. In 1992, she became the chairperson of RUSCO, and they successfully lobbied for the organisation to prioritise community engagement rather than charity-based approaches to development. As a post-graduate student, she continued to establish and run reading clubs at various schools.

In 2012, she took on more of a coordination role in her CE activities as a committee member of the Friends of the Library (FOL). With the support of FOL and the Department of Literary Studies in English, Sam led a small team that set up a library at Ntsika Secondary School. Through this experience, Sam noticed a great willingness and need to implement reading interventions beyond the foundation phase. However, there was a lack of structured training for student volunteers and teachers involved in reading clubs that ensured they had the necessary pedagogical, administrative, and engagement skills to effectively support reading clubs in schools. In response, she developed the Community Engagement Reading Club Orientation (CERCO) short course in 2017, which was accredited at Rhodes University. This course was designed to equip volunteers with the essential skills, knowledge, and confidence to effectively facilitate and sustain reading clubs in local schools. Recognising the critical role of reading in cognitive development, academic success, and personal growth, this course addresses the gap in structured training for student volunteers and leaders engaging in literacy-focused community engagement. Prof Naidu has co-ordinated CERCO for seven years, training volunteers, meeting with community partners and schools, organising workshops and reflective sessions, and certifying students involved in the accredited short course she developed.

Nompumelelo Frans, a foundation phase teacher at C.M. Vellem Primary School who has worked in partnership with Sam Naidu since 2015 said;

“Sam always made sure she received feedback from both the reading club managers and volunteers, to keep evolving and improving the programme according to our needs. Not only did she keep track of the impact of the programme but would physically visit the clubs to see for herself.”

Prof Naidu has served as a Humanities Faculty Community Engagement Representative for several years and has also run parent-child reading workshops for Rhodes University employees. She has also published extensively, with much of her work documenting her approach to teaching literature and emphasising the importance of an African-centred, decolonial perspective in using literature to access and engage with local literary knowledge. She is also a regular participant and presenter at local community engagement and literacy conferences, where she shares insights from her work and contributes to broader discussions on reading development and sustainable reading cultures.

In 2025, Prof Naidu will be contributing to another CE initiative by collaborating with 3rd-year Journalism and Media Studies students to explore effective strategies for building reading cultures and documenting these processes. She will also contribute to the lintheto Zobomi course offering an innovative approach to teaching leadership ethics through the use of poetry.

With her understanding of the interconnectedness of individual, family and community well-being, Prof Sam Naidu's trajectory from a student volunteer to an academic deeply committed to community engagement and development through literacy, is an excellent exemplar of engaged citizenry, engaged teaching, and engaged research.

*"From the head alone transformational
Leadership is almost impossible.
From the heart it is inevitable."*

By Rasheed Ogunlaru

Rhodes University Community Engagement 2025 Highlights

The Rhodes University vision is 'to be foremost in the generation and advancement of locally responsive and globally engaged knowledge that seeks to create a just and sustainable society.'

This vision guides everything we do in community engagement across the campus. As Dr Margie Maistry remarked in a workshop, "Community Engagement is the weapon that can transform our society."

This report presents the 2025 highlights, providing evidence of the contribution and impact of the University's community-engagement activities within Makhanda, the Eastern Cape Province, and beyond.

1. External Donor Partnerships

Our donor partners are deeply valued. Without their investment, our reach would be far more limited. We may not see them often, but they remain in close contact—ensuring we feel supported and can work effectively. We strive to communicate clearly and consistently, and we hope they know just how much their investment means, and how many lives are being transformed through these partnerships.

In 2025, we again benefited from the financial and moral support of our donor partners: Zandile Ntuli and Thandi Lekeba (Standard Bank Tutuwa Community Foundation); Mr Paul Smith (Kagiso Fund); Ms Barbara Proudfoot (KAVOD Trust); Guiliana Bland (Jim Joel Trust); Veriza Smith (Davies Foundation), Bonono Pule (Winds of Change Community Trust); Natalie Koenig (Solon Foundation); the HET UCDP grant; and Waldette Lombard (Rhodes University Masakhe funding). We thank them for their meaningful commitment to the transformation of the Makhanda community.

2. Makhandha City-Wide Interventions

(Towards an Integrated Social Development Model)

As we work collectively to revitalise Makhandha—and the region more broadly—we do so in an integrated way, leading and participating in interventions that advance education, health, and economic development simultaneously. Co-creating knowledge and sectoral models is essential so that effective practices can be shared and scaled for broader societal impact.

2.1 Economic Development

The two key drivers in this sector are the Masakhe Programme and the Social Innovation Hub (SIH) located at RUCE.

Masakhe Social Enterprise Development (SED) Programme

Established in January 2023, Masakhe focuses on Enterprise and Supplier Development. It is a partnership between the Finance and Procurement Office, the Business School, RUCE, and community partner the Assumption Development Centre (ADC). Highlights in 2025 include:

- 15 small businesses trained in Business Enterprise Development through the RU Business School.
- Funding secured for the ADC to extend its building to include a training room.
- Purchase of three food trailers for entrepreneurs—one located in Makhandha and two on the Rhodes University campus.
- Equipment purchased for five businesses.
- Refurbishments funded for Sis Dambe Laundry and the Joza Youth Hub.
- 12 framed Chromadek pole signs designed and installed for local businesses.
- ECD branding, signage, and stationery provided for 16 sites.
- Tax administration support finalised for Bob Upholstery and Sis Dambe Laundry.

Social Innovation Hub (SIH)

Established at RUCE to catalyse social innovation, the SIH recorded the following highlights:

- 30+ participants earned SIH-accredited certificates in **Computer Skills Training** and Digital Storytelling for Social Innovation.
- 80+ students in Social Psychology and Education Leadership & Management completed **Digital Storytelling** within credit-bearing courses.
- 16 students completed **Digital Storytelling** through courses with Stenden University and the INITIATE for PhD: A Global Network for Water Research project (UNESCO ICI REWARD).
- **Curriculum recognition:** The Digital Storytelling curriculum was included in an Interactive Digital Narrative syllabus collection (Carnegie Mellon University Press); a Rowman & Littlefield book chapter on Rhodes University teaching was published.
- **Scholarship:** Research on enterprise development presented at the virtual SARUA Conference (Lusaka, Zambia) and at the HSRC Engaged Research Conference (October).
- **Hub usage & support:** Regular partner visits; the Workspace hosted the Talking Technology to Power Media Club and Vulindlela for the #SDCardMakhanda campaign; staff supported partners with business plans, marketing materials, and CVs.
- **Digital Resource Library:** 70 participants supported with basic technologies for events, project planning, and implementation.
- **Mobile Library:** Assisted 70+ learners from Vulindlela and Nine Tenths with university applications and supported the Chemistry Department at the Eskom Expo for Young Scientists.

Accredited Short Courses offered by the Social Innovation Hub

- **Digital Storytelling – Train the Trainer:** Prepare facilitators to teach digital storytelling techniques for community impact.
- **Digital Storytelling – for Social Innovation:** Use digital narratives to drive community-based social innovation.
- **Digital Storytelling – for Engaged Research:** Apply storytelling as a research tool to capture lived experience and community voices.
- **Computer Skills – Train the Trainer:** Equip trainers to teach foundational computer skills in community settings.
- **Computer Skills Training:** Provide basic digital literacy to enhance community and student engagement.
- **Community Assets for Social Innovation (New):** Identify and leverage local assets to foster sustainable social innovation.
- **Photovoice (New):** Introduce visual storytelling as a tool for community engagement and advocacy.

2.2 Health Development

Partnership overview

A long-standing partnership between Rhodes University and the District Health Department was strengthened by the completion of the renovated Extension Building at the Joza Clinic.

- Funded through the RU Masakhe Programme, the project has effectively doubled the clinic's service space. The new wing is fully operational, enabling additional health services.
- Rhodes researchers and lecturers from Psychology, Pharmacy, Information Systems and Human Kinetics & Ergonomics (HKE) continue to deliver service-learning and engaged research in local clinics and hospitals.
- Psychology Department – Assumption Development Centre (ADC) Counselling Facility

- A permanent counselling facility at the ADC offers free daily services to learners and their families. From January–August 2025, the team provided:
- Eight preventative workshops (including career guidance) in schools, reaching 120 clients.
- Individual counselling for 93 clients, averaging 3–4 sessions per client.
- Fifteen psychological assessments (all child scholastic assessments).
- Group therapy for teens and family therapy, together serving over 90 participants.
- Ten workshops for 476 participants on stress, self-care, conflict management, resilience, goal setting, motivation and career guidance.
- Thirty casework supervision sessions covering psychotherapy, consultations and assessments.

Pharmacy Department – Sakh’impilo Mobile Health Unit

Established in 2024, the Sakh’impilo Mobile Health Unit has expanded its healthcare team to two professional nurses, two pharmacists and a doctor. This capacity enables on-site dispensing of medicines and extends services to informal settlements in Makhanda and rural areas that lack regular health services.

Human Kinetics & Ergonomics (HKE) – Teaching and Community Engagement

HKE has integrated community engagement into teaching and research at multiple levels. Programmes currently benefit:

- 130 selected high-performance athletes receiving specialised training and support at the Joza High Performance Centre daily.
- 470 learners participating in Physical Literacy Programmes (Service-Learning and Community-Engaged Learning) across three primary schools: George Dickerson, Grahamstown Primary and St Mary’s Primary.
- The Warriors Cricket Development Programme, a multi-stakeholder partnership between RUCE, HKE and Kingswood College, operating in three primary schools in the Currie Park area.

2.3 Education Development

In a decade, Makhanda has shifted from one of South Africa's lowest-performing districts to the Eastern Cape's leading city for literacy and matric outcomes. This turn-around is the result of a city-wide movement under the VC's Education Initiative, with schools, parents, NGOs, funders, community leaders and the University aligning around a shared goal: quality education for every child. Today, Grade 4 literacy rates are twice the national average, Bachelor passes in the poorest schools have tripled, and record numbers of disadvantaged students are entering university.

Two critical drivers of this success are: (i) high-quality community–university partnerships with organisations that choose to collaborate rather than compete, and (ii) an increasingly dedicated cohort of Rhodes University student volunteers. A culture of mutuality and reciprocity continues to grow through careful nurturing by RUCE and our Community Partner Organisations. Rhodes can be proud that our city's students are graduating not only with credentials for employment, but with strong values and character, ready for life and livelihood. We thank our Community Partner Organisations for creating enabling spaces and for their compassionate mentorship.

GADRA Education continues to play a central role in the VCI, alongside partners including the Lebone Centre, Assumption Development Centre (ADC), Ikamva Youth, Sophumelela, Khanya Maths and Science, Inkululeko and Talking Technology to Power, among others. We also thank Makhanda's preschools, primary and high schools for their active participation and willingness to create shared learning spaces. This is a distinctive education movement with momentum of its own—one that will be recognised as transformational in years to come.

The VC's Education Programme is a multi-stakeholder pathway from ECD through to post-schooling, keeping learners in the system through targeted interventions. RUCE coordinates seven programmes with volunteers contributing along this pathway. Brief highlights follow.

Student Leadership

RUCE is deliberate about nurturing Student Leaders and volunteers, creating safe, supported spaces where staff are present and attentive. Three initiatives in 2025 included:

- **Hogsback Leadership Training Camp:** A two-day camp for 90 Student Leaders in the Engaged Citizenry Programmes focused on leadership growth, reflective practice, understanding leadership styles, and team-building to strengthen community and collaboration.
- **Why R U Engaged!?** A collaboration with the Drama Department using Playback Theatre. Engaged Citizenry volunteers shared stories which Drama students brought to life as part of a third-year Applied Theatre examination. This peer-to-peer learning deepened reflection on engagement, personal growth and volunteerism.
- **R U Coping!?** Held during SWOT week to ensure students felt seen and supported through exams—a check-in space to breathe, connect, have a cup of coffee and recharge.

Nine Tenths Matric Mentoring Programme (Grade 12)

In 2025 this flagship programme continued to shine as GADRA and RUCE co-manage the initiative in partnership with five local high schools to mentor top-achieving Grade 12 learners. A total of 135 student volunteers and 18 Student Leaders were recruited and trained to deliver nine structured mentoring sessions, reaching 255 learners. After the June examinations, a student-led online drive supported 70+ learners to apply to Rhodes University. In 2025, more than 200 local learners were admitted to Rhodes (up from 11 in 2012), of whom 90 were Nine Tenths participants.

Vulindlela Parent Engagement Programme

Targeting RU Support Staff and their school-going children (Grades 8–12), Vulindlela engaged **93 learners** and **119 parents** in 2025, supported by 64 active tutors and 17 Student Leaders working every Saturday in term time.

Highlights:

- Three family events: a **Family Matters Workshop** (Term 1), **Stakeholder Engagement Day** (Term 2) and **FUNancial Games** with creative language and arts activities facilitated by PGCE students (Term 3).
- A service-learning project with Journalism & Media Studies and the Social Employment Fund (Talking Technology to Power) provided **custom SD-card content to 612 Grade 12 learners** from fee-exempt schools, helping to narrow the digital divide; JMS students produced articles on the intervention.
- A five-week **Financial Life Skills** course for Vulindlela parents, linked to the Management Department (Management Honours students) and delivered in partnership with **GBS Mutual Bank**.
- **Advancing scholarship**: the programme coordinator prepared a paper for IARSLCE on integrating service-learning into parent engagement.

High School Tutoring and Mentoring Programme

- Collaboration with five community partners—Inkululeko, Ikamva Youth, Sophumelela, Khanya Maths and Science, and GADRA Education—to provide tutoring and mentoring. We are grateful to partners for creating enabling environments for meaningful student contribution.
- **155 volunteers** registered in 2025; **12 Student Leaders** supported partner organisations with volunteer management. Learners served span **Grades 8–12**.
- The Faculty of Education offered an accredited short course for registered students, led by **Dr Kavish Jawahar** and **Angie Jones**.

BuddingQ Literacy Programme (Grade R)

- BuddingQ remains a cornerstone of RUCE's commitment to literacy justice and engaged citizenship: **11 primary schools**, **14 Grade R educators**, **399 Grade R learners**, supported by **25 Student Leaders** and **84 Student Volunteers**.
- A strong Student Leadership & Training component—mid-year **Reflect and Recharge** sessions helped sustain energy and commitment.

- **BuddingQ Enhanced** (with Jim Joel Fund support) is being piloted in 12 ECD **Sites of Excellence**, integrating explicit literacy components (phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, comprehension) into playful, movement-based activities for pre-Grade R learners.
- BuddingQ now forms part of the **Makhanda Literacy Collective's** scaffolded pathway: **Grade R (BuddingQ) → Grade 1 (Project Read) → Grades 2–3 (Reading Clubs)**—a growing platform that will continue to chart a new course.

ECD Sites of Excellence Programme

Starting with three centres, the network has grown to **twelve** ECD sites organised into **four Pods** (“peas in a pod”), each anchored by a lead Site of Excellence. Pods function as mentorship, support and shared-learning spaces, embodying inclusion. Through the **Visions of Possibility** workshop, practitioners co-imagined safe, vibrant learning environments with clearly articulated goals.

Professional growth has been central: the **Wordworks Stellar Orientation** series deepened literacy-development understanding, while post-session dialogues built belonging within Pods. Programme identity has been strengthened through signage, branded folders and posters – celebrating each centre as part of a city-wide movement of excellence.

Next steps include site visits, school-readiness assessments and curriculum-strengthening workshops—moving toward an ecosystem where centres improve individually and flourish collectively.

Project Read (Grade 1) & Reading Clubs (Grade 2-3)

Funded by RUCE and led by the Lebone Centre and targeting Grades 1–3, continuing from BuddingQ in Grade R:

- **Project Read:** 70 volunteers, 5 Student Leaders, reaching 311 learners weekly
- **Reading Clubs:** 25 volunteers, 5 Student Leaders, reaching 168 learners.

Residence CE Programme

Three formal CE initiatives are infused into the Residence system—**Siyakhana@Makhanda (S@M)**, **Student Leadership**, and the **CEO Programme**—

embedding CE as a way of being across residences. The 2025 partnership between DSSD and RUCE strengthened, with DSSD taking greater responsibility.

- RUCE trains 52 SRC CE Reps annually in Asset-Based Community Development (ABCD) to move beyond deficit framings. All CE interventions are conceptualised **with** partner organisations, recognising existing community assets and contributing energy and expertise to identified projects.
- Training for **52 Residence CE Reps** includes three capacity-building sessions replicated with first-years, introducing CE early and signposting opportunities through RUCE and student societies.
- DSSD, with the DVC: Academic & Student Affairs, co-funded the **Hogsback Leadership course**.
- **Siyakhana@Makhanda (S@M)** matches residences with **15 ECD sites** in Makhanda, using a project-management approach to jointly identify, plan, execute and evaluate annual projects—many successfully completed in 2025.
- **375 learners** and their ECD practitioners have benefitted in 2025.

3. Engaged Teaching and Engaged Research for Social Change

The integration of Community Engagement (CE) into departmental teaching and research remained a key focus, with strong progress across programmes.

3.1 Engaged Research

- **Recognition of Excellence in CE:** Prof Samantha Naidu (Department of Literary Studies in English, Faculty of Humanities) won the 2024 Distinguished Vice-Chancellor's Community Engagement Award.
- **2 Day International Dialogue (8–9 May 2025):** *Higher Education Community Engagement: The Cultivation of Humanity* explored higher education's dual responsibility to prepare students for life and for making a living. Sessions ran 12:00–16:00 daily. RUCE will carry this theme into the International Community Engagement Conference in May 2026.

- **Forthcoming Publication:** The dialogue culminated in an online book on the Cultivation of Humanity, scheduled for publication in November 2025.
- **African Journal of Higher Education Community Engagement (AJHECE):** Established in 2022; the third issue was published in May 2025 (<https://journal.ru.ac.za/index.php/AJHECE/>). From Jan 2024–Mar 2025, downloads were recorded from **78 countries**.
- **UNESCO Knowledge for Change (K4C) Consortium:** Integral to RU's engaged research agenda. RU is one of **22 hubs** across **16 countries**. In 2024, RUCE helped establish a regional hub at Gulu University (Uganda). Nelson Mandela University and Eduvos joined our K4C Southern Hub.
- **UCDP National University-Led Collaborative Projects:** RUCE's *Teaching and Research for Societal Impact* project was recommended for approval by the national review committee (grant value R3,748,070). The project advances Community-Based Participatory Research (CBPR) nationally and regionally, focusing on student, staff, and curriculum development; it positions Engaged Research (ER), particularly CBPR, as central to knowledge democracy, co-creation, and community transformation.
- **Accredited Engaged Research Short Course:** Eight academics (seven from RU) completed RUCE's 10-week *Engaged Research: Community-Based Participatory Research* short course.
- **HSRC Webinar (Keynote):** Dr Margie Maistry, Di Hornby, and Claire McCann delivered *Engaged Research in South Africa: Philosophical, Theoretical and Engaged Praxis*.
- **IARSLCE Conference (13–15 Aug 2025, Durban):** RUCE delegates (Thandi Nqowana, Di Hornby, Kristena Reddy) and VC Prof Sizwe Mabizela presented. NPO partner GADRA Education (Dr Ashley Westaway, Kelly Long) also presented.
- **International Partnerships (India):** Diana Hornby and Dr Margie Maistry visited Christ University (Bengaluru, Karnataka) and the Sathya Sai Centre for Human Values (Puttaparthi, Andhra Pradesh) to build mutually beneficial partnerships for online dialogues, co-teaching in service-learning and CE, and participation in conferences and dialogues.

3.2 Engaged Teaching and Learning

- **Student Participation:** 3,602 students participated in department-embedded CE programmes and 972 in RUCE-organised programmes — **over 50%** of Rhodes students are engaged in CE.
- **Postgraduate Diploma:** RUCE's Postgraduate Diploma in Higher Education Community Engagement received full accreditation and has been advertised to start in 2026. It is currently the only PGDip of its kind nationally.
- **Short Courses:** Fourteen (14) accredited short courses developed and offered to support academics, students, and community partners.
- **Inter-University Workshops:** In partnership with **UP**, **UFS**, and **CPUT**, RUCE delivered six online service-learning workshops for academics (March–April 2025).
- **Community-Based Service-Learning Short Course:** Six-week online course commenced August 2025 with 15 participants.
- **DHET UCDP Deliverables:** With the University of Venda, Mangosuthu University of Technology, and Eduvos: developed three short courses in service-learning and engaged research; trained 12 CBPR practitioners via the UNESCO MTP course.
- **Programme Direction:** Service-Learning is shifting towards **Critical Service-Learning**, foregrounding power, reciprocity, and justice in community–university partnerships. Through trust-building with academics, students, and community partners, SL is increasingly a site of transformative learning and social impact.

Much has been achieved to strengthen CE structures at departmental level. We give thanks to the Deputy Deans and CE Faculty Representatives for their commitment to promoting community engagement at Rhodes University.

4. Conclusion

Sincere thanks to the VC, **Prof Sizwe Mabizela**; the DVCs, **Prof Mabokang Monnapula-Mapesela** and **Dr Kwezi Mzilikazi**; as well as Senior Management and colleagues who have helped build the CE space. We are privileged to have leadership and staff who recognise the strategic value of Higher Education community engagement in making our city and our country a better place to live.

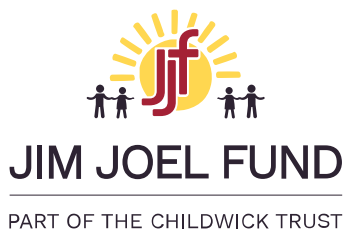
To the RUCE team: it has been a challenging and productive year. Our mantra—*in the words of Mahatma Gandhi*, “being the example you wish to see in the world”—demands focus and effort. Thank you for your passion for CE and your commitment to the journey.

To our Community Engagement Community, thank you for all you have meant to the children and families of our beautiful city of Makhanda, you have dug deep and you have touched many lives this year. Have a wonderful evening of celebration acknowledging your part in this transformative journey, knowing that to reach our goal of being the CITY OF EDUCATION EXCELLENCE nationally and internationally is going to take YOU and YOUR COLLEAGUES AND FRIENDS – please make my night by committing to rounding them all up to join this beautiful movement of social change.

Diana Hornby

Director

**Thank you to our donors for sharing
in our vision:**





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Where leaders learn

