

Rhodos

Special Graduation Edition

May 2014

A much
BIGGER WORLD
out there

20
fourteen



Rhodes celebrates record graduation numbers

6



Humanities Faculty graduates a record number of PhD students

8



Local student graduates with distinction

23

Rhodos: Special
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20 years as the

There's a tangible atmosphere that everything is under control when you enter Rhodes University's Registrar Dr Steve Fourie's office. You won't find piles of backlog documents, or any evidence of clutter and fuss. Much like the man himself.

Candid, modest and with a ready sense of humour, this is the person who has anchored Rhodes over the past 20 years. During this time he has headed its academic administration and university committee structures, as part of the University's top management.

He's worked with three former Vice-Chancellors at Rhodes - Dr Derek Henderson, Dr David Woods and Dr Saleem Badat (outgoing Vice-Chancellor) - and he will be here for another good few years to work with the next.

In his role as the Secretary of Council, Dr Fourie is the custodian of the process of selecting a new Vice-Chancellor, ensuring that the considerable administrative processes required are in place for the Chair of Council to lead the appointment.

Perhaps his training in matters of the soul and our brief experience of this mortal coil, has equipped him with the perspective required to guide the University through the inevitable changing of the guard.

He has a doctorate in Theology - his thesis is on salvation as a perichoretic union - he'll explain it to you if you're interested - and he served as a Methodist Minister for 19 years before being seconded to the Institute for Democracy in South Africa (Idasa) as the co-director of the Border region, followed by the Director of the (then) Transvaal region.

His relationship with Rhodes started shortly thereafter, when he was appointed as the Director of Rhodes' East London Campus. Four years later, he moved to Grahamstown to take up his post as Registrar on 1 June 1995.

Twenty years later he has seen considerable change at Rhodes:

"Transformation and modernisation are two of the most prominent changes during this time," he explains. "The university environment that I entered in 1995 was on a stable financial footing, due to Dr Derek Henderson's strong input in this regard. At the same time it was on the brink of great change given that post-1994 universities were highly contested places.

"There was a transformation forum in place that was trying to bring about broad-based change, with the labour unions, student organisations - such as the South African Students Congress - and some staff groupings calling for radical change in the demographic composition of the staff and student body.

"The University, particularly during Dr Badat's time, has prioritised this need, and though we are still working on achieving our transformation goals in the academic body, the student body is certainly there.

"Dr Badat has been highly proactive about making the University a home for all, and while it is still a work in progress, Rhodes is a far more transparent, democratic place than it was before."

It is also a highly research-active University today, thanks to the input of A-rated scientist Dr David Woods, who wanted to see research thrive at Rhodes in his time.

"He supported research across faculties and changed a part-time Dean of Research position into a full-time post," Dr Fourie explains.

"Dr Badat took the research and postgraduate agenda further, and established the post of Deputy Vice-Chancellor: Research and Development, to which Dr Peter Clayton was appointed in 2008. In the same year Dr Sizwe Mabizela was appointed Deputy Vice-Chancellor: Academic and Student Affairs."

Together with Dr Fourie and the Director of Infrastructure, Operations and Finance, Dr Iain

L'Ange, this is Dr Badat's top management team, which meets every Friday.

Modernisation-wise, Dr Fourie says the administration of the university today is completely reformed. "We had a paper-based admission system, for example, that is now electronic, and students will soon be able to apply to the University online."

Students today get a response to their application by email and via sms within 24 hours. In years past this process would take weeks.

"We've had a very favourable response to this from students and parents," says Dr Fourie who is part of the team that annually meets with prospective parents during the recruitment roadshows in Johannesburg, Cape Town, Durban, Pietermaritzburg, East London and Port Elizabeth.

He is also responsible for the graduation process. "The graduation week at Rhodes today is a far larger affair, given our considerably higher numbers of graduate and postgraduate students. Graduation remains a very special time for me - it's a celebration of the success of the individual students and of the institution," says Dr Fourie who caps each student.

Registrar of Rhodes

This year he introduced a deeply moving addition to the capping ceremony when he invited Rhodes staff members whose children were graduating, to cap their children.

Nineteen staff members who had children graduating said how thrilled and honoured they were to be afforded this opportunity.

“Parents were taught how to efficiently hood somebody,” adds Dr Fourie who says this part of the capping ceremony highlighted Dr Badat’s ‘home for all’ ethos, and the University’s commitment to ensuring that all South Africans are afforded the opportunity to develop their intellect and sense of citizenship to the full.

Law faculty member Professor Laurence Juma said: “This is one of the greatest honours the University has conferred on me,” he said. “Capping my daughter, Ida, was very special to me and my family. I’ve never heard this being done anywhere. It made the day extra special for us proud parents.”

Amongst the proud Rhodes parents was Nomathemba Sixaba, who works in the University’s Grounds and Gardens Department. Her son, Vuyile Sixaba, graduated with a BSc degree, achieving an exceptional 19 distinctions out of 22 modules in his triple major in Applied Maths, Maths Statistics and Physics.

“It was sheer hard work that got me here. Work and God and my family,” said Sixaba who was awarded a full university scholarship from the Square Kilometre Array project. He is now doing a joint Honours in Physics and Applied Mathematics, and is adamant that there are ample opportunities for hard-working young South Africans who want to study further. Too many young people seem to want things on a silver platter without putting in the work. Life doesn’t work like that.”

An equally moving aspect of the 2014 graduation ceremony was the Rhodes choir’s farewell tribute to Dr Badat and Ms Shireen Badat.

“The first five verses were their own composition, which they sang to the tune of Gaudeamus igitur, before continuing into the official words,” says Dr Fourie.

In July he will say goodbye to Dr Badat with whom he has worked alongside, closely and collaboratively, since 2006.

“It’s a poignant time. I have thoroughly enjoyed working with Dr Badat, and I wish him the very best. These eight years have passed quickly, as have my 20 years in this position. I have thoroughly enjoyed all of my 20 years at Rhodes. If I could have it all over, I’d choose the same path again, and, as we head into the era of our next Vice-Chancellor, I look forward to my next chapter at Rhodes.”

A family affair

Rhodes University Registrar, Dr Stephen Fourie has introduced a deeply moving addition to the capping ceremony. He invited Rhodes staff members whose children were graduating in 2014 to hood their children.

“Parents were taught how to efficiently hood somebody,” said Dr Fourie. He said this part of the capping ceremony highlighted Dr Badat’s ‘home for all’ ethos, and the University’s commitment to ensuring that all South Africans are afforded the opportunity to develop their intellect and sense of citizenship to the full.

Ms Nomathemba Sixaba had this to say about the occasion:

“I was very frightened of going up in front of everyone but I prayed hard not to be scared and it was fine. I am very proud of Vuyile. It is not easy to do what he has done but he has achieved now.”

Mr Mzamo Mjoli had this to say when asked how he felt when he hooded his daughter Nwabisa:

“Every parent on the whole continent will be happy and excited about the achievement of the child. Wow, what a feeling, I cannot explain it - somethings are self-explanatory but this one I have no words for.”

What do you think of the offer from the University to allow parents to hood their children this year?

“To be afforded this kind of opportunity, makes you feel part of the University system. You feel like you belong to the institution and you are recognised by it. It also stimulates a parent to start thinking about his or her own education in terms of studying further, including enrolling for matric or a diploma. In a nutshell it really motivates an individual.”





Dr Jo Dames had this to say when asked how she felt when she hooded her son Michael:
"I was very proud and delighted that I had this opportunity."

What do you think of the offer from the University to allow parents to hood their children this year?
"I think it was wonderful and I hope the University will make this a graduation tradition."

Prof Robin Palmer had this to say when asked how did he felt when he hooded his daughter Zoe:
"Very proud, especially when she gave me a hug, which not all did!"

What do you think of the offer from the University to allow parents to hood their children this year?
"I liked it, because I had witnessed it in the case of my son at UCT."



Prof Dennis Hughes had this to say when asked what it means to him when he hooded his son Gareth:
"Satisfaction that Gareth reached his academic goal."

What do you think of the offer from the University to allow parents to hood their kids this year?
"I think it was a good idea and adds a bit of a personal touch to the proceedings. It also seemed to go very smoothly without even any minor disruptions and therefore I see no reason for not repeating it."



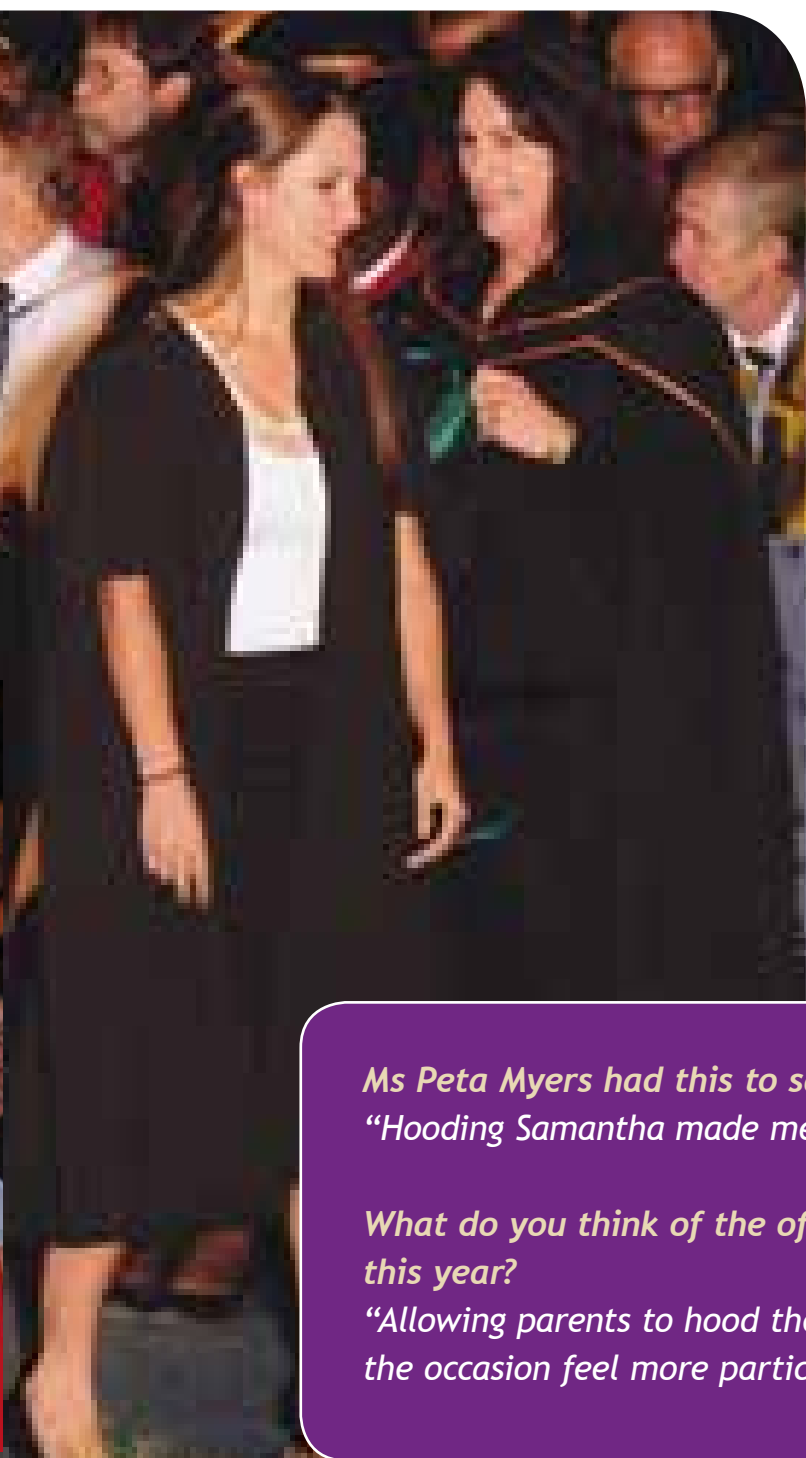
Professor Emeritus, Paul Walters hooding his fourth and youngest son, William.



Ms Nocawa Mzembe hooding her daughter, Ziyanda.



Prof Anthea Garman and husband Brian hooding their daughter, Gemma.



Ms Dawn Long hooded her two daughters, Caitlyn and Roxanne and she has this to say when asked what does it mean to her:

"It means the end of an era for me. Both my daughters and I have entered a new phase of our lives."

Was it a special day for you and your daughters after all the sacrifices you have made to ensure that they graduate at Rhodes?

"It was certainly a very special day - I felt very proud of my daughters, and myself, for having pushed through to the finish line."

Ms Peta Myers had this to say, when asked how she felt when she hooded her daughter Samantha:
"Hooding Samantha made me feel a special part of this important day."

What do you think of the offer from the University to allow parents to hood their children this year?

"Allowing parents to hood their children was a generous gesture on the part of the university and made the occasion feel more participatory and more inclusive."

Rhodes celebrates record graduation numbers

Rhodes University graduated a total of 2 367 students, a new University record, at six graduation ceremonies. The graduation ceremonies took place at the 1820 Settlers National Monument in Grahamstown.

Last year, Rhodes graduated 2 288 students. “Given our total student body of 7 485 students, this is by far the best graduation rate among South African universities,” says the outgoing Vice-Chancellor, Dr Saleem Badat.

Of the total graduating 1 286 students received undergraduate degrees, and 1 081, or 46% postgraduate degrees. The 46% postgraduate degrees also constitute new University records.

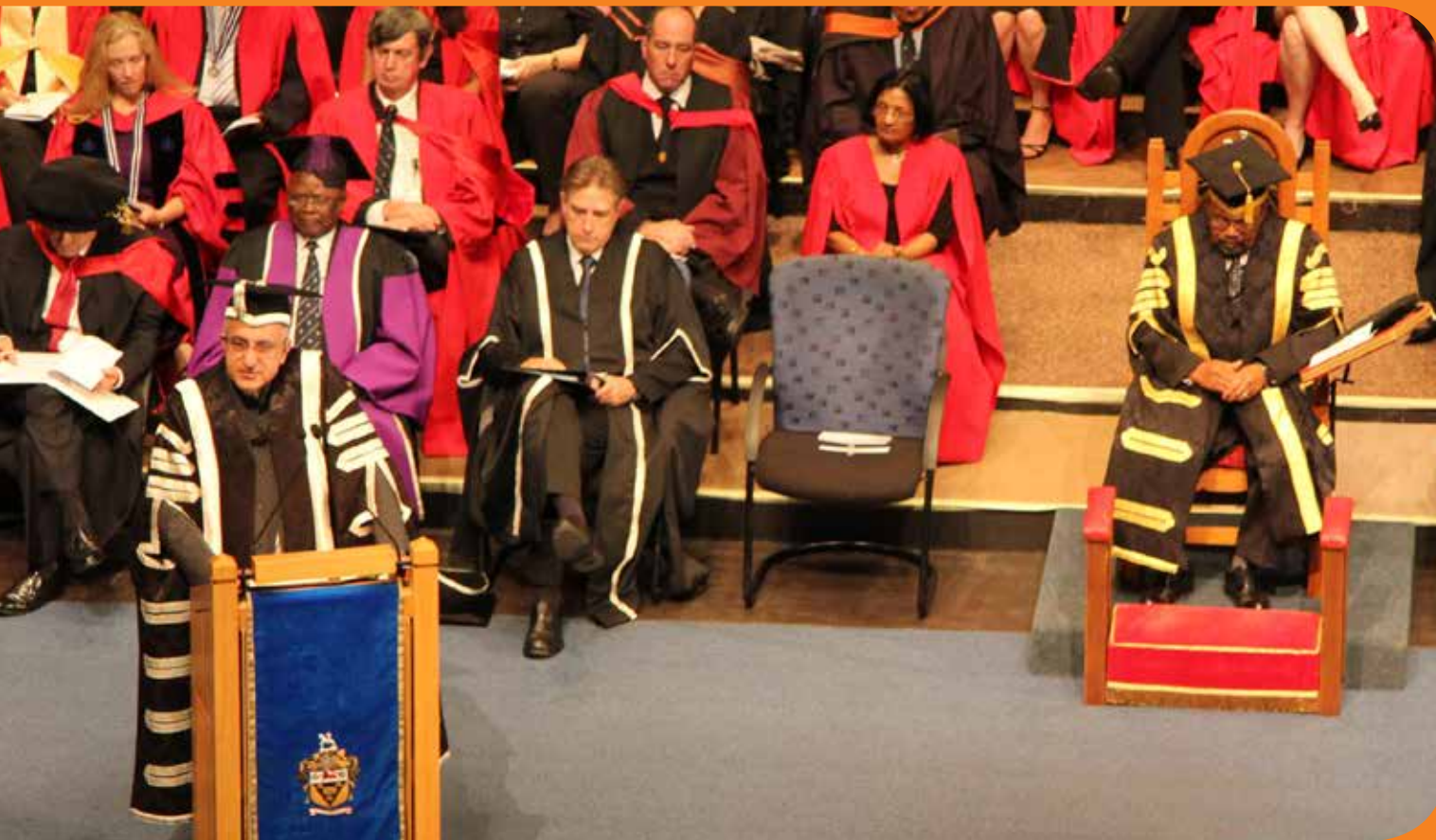
One thousand four hundred and thirteen (1 413) graduates or 60% are women. Five hundred and four (504) students or 21% are international students from 37 countries in the rest of Africa and around the world.

According to the Vice-Chancellor, Rhodes is also celebrating a “new record of 71 PhDs - beating the previous record of 63 PhDs of last year - a fabulous achievement for the smallest university in the country!”

“We congratulate our Education and Humanities Faculties for their new records of graduating 14 PhDs and 12 PhDs respectively,” says Dr Badat.

“To appreciate the significance of the 71 PhDs,” he says, “you have to note that a sister university that is four times our size and has over 30 000 students will award 72 PhDs at its graduation ceremonies.”

Yet another record being celebrated this year is - “the award of 286 Masters degrees. One hundred and seven (107) of these Masters degrees are from the Humanities Faculty, establishing a record for the Faculty.



Out-going Vice-Chancellor,
Dr Saleem Badat

Appointing a new Vice-Chancellor

These are changing times for Rhodes University. Dr Saleem Badat resigned after eight years to take up a post in New York with the Andrew W Mellon Foundation. And the Chairperson of Rhodes Council, Judge Jos Jones, resigned earlier this year, after leading Council for 18 years.

The Council Chair position has been filled with the appointment of Mr Vuyo Kahla who took office in March 2014.

“Regarding choosing the new VC, to date Council has approved the process as well as the membership of the selection committee, after consultation with the Senate and Institutional Forum,” explains Dr Fourie. The 17-member committee includes the Chair of Council, members of Council and Senate,

executive members of Rhodes’ administration, Deans, the SRC President and Rhodes’ two Labour Unions.

The committee shortlists applications and make recommendations to Senate and Council for final ratification. The time period for this depends on how the committee decides to advertise - internally, nationally or internationally.

“We would expect to have a new Vice-Chancellor in

“The greatest challenge facing the new Vice-Chancellor, says Dr Fourie, will be to boost the financial sustainability of Rhodes.”

office within a few months or by the beginning of next year at the latest. It all depends on the notice period the person has to give,” says Dr Fourie.

He says it will be important for the new Vice-Chancellor to build on Dr Badat’s ethos of a university that is a ‘Home for All’ - for all the academic staff, non academic staff and students at Rhodes. “He has led us to a place where Rhodes today is a far more inclusive, democratic institution.”

The greatest challenge facing the new Vice-Chancellor, says Dr Fourie, will be to boost the financial sustainability of Rhodes.

Council Chair Mr Kahla agrees: “We will need to work with the new Vice-Chancellor in closely examining the risks to the financial sustainability of the University, and to inclusively address what needs to be done to sustain the momentum of transformation and progress that has characterised the era of Judge Jones and the outgoing Vice-Chancellor, Dr Badat.”



CHERTL PhD graduates from l-r: Dr Bernadette Millar (CPUT), Dr Sherran Clarence (UWC), Dr Pamela Johnson (UFH), Dr Jacqui Lück (NMMU) and Dr Hilda Freimuth (Abu Dhabi)

Record number of PhDs for Education

With 14 PhDs awarded at this year's graduation, the Education Faculty has celebrated a record number of doctoral graduates and believes that growth in the number of students studying at doctoral level will benefit the Faculty as a whole.

"Having a strong post-graduate group creates a certain intellectual atmosphere which benefits undergraduate students as well," said Professor Sioux McKenna, director of doctoral programmes at the Centre for Higher Education, Teaching and Learning (CHERTL).

According to Dean of Education Professor Di Wilmot, CHERTL's new doctoral programmes have contributed significantly to growing the number of PhD students graduating from the Faculty. This is in addition to other recent initiatives, including the introduction of two new research chairs in mathematics to complement the already existing chair in environmental education. Having more staff with PhDs also allows for expansion by providing greater supervision capabilities.

Prof Wilmot emphasised the need to harness

the potential of the Faculty's research capacity to inform and enrich both the pre-service and in-service teacher training which form part of the Faculty's work. "One of our aims is to have a balance between these thrusts," she said.

Prof McKenna added to this by emphasising that an increased number of postgraduate students means more potential tutors and sharing of research, referring particularly to how this will advantage the new BEd undergraduate degree.

"The record number of PhDs is hugely positive for the BEd because it gives the Faculty the ability to engage in all sorts of intellectual initiatives," Prof McKenna said, highlighting that exposure to doctoral research will likely generate greater critical thinking and theorising among undergraduate students.

The Faculty's growth at PhD level thus falls in step with the University's plans to develop its post-graduate sector and establish itself as a research-intense university able to build the intellectual field.

The growth is not merely in terms of figures, however. Prof McKenna believes that a significant contributing factor is the innovative approach to supervision being

taken within the Faculty which she feels improves the overall experience of students at doctoral level.

She referred specifically to the Faculty's doctoral programmes, in which students who would normally be fairly isolated in conducting their research are able to come together in project teams and collaborations to discuss their progress and workshop ideas. "The use of those kinds of models has been absolutely fundamental," she said.

Prof Wilmot stated, however, that the Faculty will take care to grow modestly in future, ensuring all the while that the focus remains on balancing their various teaching and research roles.

Nonetheless, the overall feeling is that this record is an achievement to be pleased about. "It was very exciting and we were delighted," said Prof Wilmot, when asked how the Faculty felt awarding so many PhDs this year.

Prof McKenna added to this by saying how wonderful it had been to have almost all the doctoral graduates in attendance at the graduation ceremony, particularly as many within the CHERTL division are from Universities across Africa.

Humanities Faculty graduates a

The adoption and implementation of the Research and Development Plan (RDP) in 2008/2009 has paid dividends if the Faculty of Humanities' 2014 graduation numbers are any indication. The faculty saw a record number of students graduate with Masters and PhD's, with the highest numbers coming from the Institute for the Study of English in Africa's new Masters in Creative Writing Course, Psychology, School of Journalism and Media Studies, Sociology and Politics and International Studies.

Accounting for 40% of the entire student body, the Faculty of Humanities comprises 11 departments and two schools. Like many other South African universities, the Humanities at Rhodes has tended to lag behind the Sciences in terms of the outputs of postgraduate students and the publication of research, but efforts to reverse these trends is gaining momentum.

According to Professor Fred Hendricks, Dean of Humanities at Rhodes University, while there seldom is a causal relationship between plans

and outcomes, the implementation of the RDP which involved a variety of mechanisms designed to encourage research within the faculty, could be a contributing factor in the record number of graduates.

One of these aims, Prof Hendricks explained, was to establish new research and postgraduate focus areas within the faculty, facilitated by generous grants from the Andrew W Mellon Foundation. The grants formed part of a comprehensive programme to promote research and postgraduate development, and to increase the numbers of women and black researchers in the Faculty and at Rhodes.

The focus areas include Critical Studies in Sexualities and Reproduction (Psychology and Political and International Studies), Visual and Performing Arts of Africa (Fine Art), The Media and Citizenship: Between Marginalisation and Participation (School of Journalism and Media Studies) and South African Literature (English).

Prof Hendricks said, the four research areas represented the four main disciplines within the faculty (arts, languages, social sciences and journalism) and enabled the university to carry out its strategic objective, as established in the RDP, of developing concentrations of research and expertise around certain topics to facilitate cooperation and engagement around these topics.

Given the expectation of creativity and theoretical contribution by the time of postgraduate study, Prof Hendricks said the difference in numbers of Science and Humanities graduates is somewhat understandable, but hopefully initiatives such as these have paid off.

According to Prof Hendricks, "even now the dominant mode of research within the Humanities is that of the lone researcher. Our efforts over the last few years have been aimed at complimenting that and to strive to facilitate levels of cooperation amongst colleagues dealing with particular topics. This helps to ensure cooperation between senior academics, postdoctoral students, and postgraduate students which all works toward encouraging research within the faculty," he said.

The broad aims of the research conducted in the area of Critical Studies in Sexualities and Reproduction, among others, have been to analyse discourses concerning sexualities (sexual orientation, 'adolescent' sexuality) and reproduction/pregnancy deployed in public and private spaces; the range of taken-for-granted assumptions or absent traces that underpin interventions with respect to sexuality and reproduction; the governmental technologies of representation and intervention that achieve or undermine particular gendering, racialising and class-based effects, and lead to the continuation/discontinuation of sexual and reproductive health



record number of PhD students

inequities; and the manner in which particular discourses regarding sexualities and reproduction are perpetuated or resisted in the everyday lives of men, women and their families.

“External examiners’ reports on the theses submitted have been excellent and this has definitely been a major factor in the increase of our graduate numbers.”

Implemented in 2011, the Visual and Performing Arts of Africa programme focused on the research theme ‘The Audacity of Place’, which encouraged discussions about ‘place’ and ‘space’ in the discourse

of Contemporary Art. The key aims of the team were to produce high quality research outputs in the form of publications, exhibitions and performances, to foster academic cooperation and collaboration by working on related topics, and to engage with society by addressing pertinent social, political and economic concerns in Africa today.

The Media and Citizenship: Between Marginalisation and Participation critically examines the ways in which the South African media realise their potential to contribute to the reconstruction and renegotiation of citizenship. The project seeks to establish to what extent South African media across a wide variety of outlets and expressions facilitates democratic participation and voice in the public sphere, especially for the most marginalised of citizens.

Prof Hendricks said the “unprecedented success” of the Masters in Creative Writing, located within the Institute for the Study of English in Africa (ISEA) has contributed to an increase in graduates for 2014 and he attributes this to the “dogged determination” of the coordinators and lecturers involved.

“This model is extraordinarily intensive and it has borne fruit. External examiners’ reports on the theses submitted have been excellent and this has definitely been a major factor in the increase of our graduate numbers,” he said.

In addition to the effects of the Mellon focus areas Prof Hendricks said he has noticed a definite

improvement in the quality of proposals received at the Higher Degrees Committee.

“When I took over chairmanship of the committee there were many more proposals that got sent back to their respective departments than they are today. There is no doubt there has been a definite improvement in the quality since then,” he said, also crediting the internal departmental vetting systems which are tasked with checking the quality of the proposals before they are submitted to the Higher Degrees Committee.

“I’m very pleased that it happened in my 10th graduation swansong that we got more than 100 masters graduates. We can say that we got a century and are not out,” Prof Hendricks said.



Record distinctions in Creative Writing



2014 Masters Graduates in Creative Writing

What does it mean to achieve a distinction in Creative Writing? The eight distinction graduates out of the 22 MA Creative Writing (MACW) students who graduated this year said they felt honoured and overwhelmed.

“A distinction doesn’t always suggest greatness,” says Limpopo poet Vonani Bila, adding further insight. “Assessing writing is usually determined by the taste and preference of the reader. But [a distinction] is still a useful motivation.”

Bila is publisher of Timbala Books and the literary journal Timbala, and the author of over 10 books in English and Xitsonga. He has been writing poems for 20 years, some of which has been published in French and German.

He strongly recommends the MA course at Rhodes. “It’s not paternalistic, it’s experimental. Each writer is guided along their taste but pushed hard to take risks that are aimed at giving the writer a solid voice.”

Unlike Bila, the majority of the five part-time and three full-time distinction students were not published writers before doing the course. Gideon Strydom, who was teaching Afrikaans full time prior to the course and is focusing much of his energy on turning his MA thesis novella entitled *Saligia* into a novel.

“Being the first writer to submit a thesis in Afrikaans makes [my distinction] even more special,” says Strydom. He believes the course at

Rhodes is unequalled in South African universities. “What makes the course so special is that you have access to all these varied writers as teachers, but with a constant focus on using your own voice.”

Another distinction first for the course was an MA in isiXhosa by Mangaliso Buzani, who wrote a variety of poems focussing on the musicality of language. Buzani admits that he struggled with language proficiency in both English and isiXhosa, but he was encouraged by the course teachers to concentrate on creative expression and not be held back by his anxieties about linguistic correctness. “We don’t necessarily judge a writer’s use of language, but the content,” said Assistant Coordinator Paul Wessels. “[It’s about] the stories being told, and how they are told.”

Course Coordinator Robert Berold says that reading plays an integral role in the course. “We want to go for writing that takes risks. But we’re also in an environment, nationally and globally, where literacy and literary proficiency is falling. We don’t only encourage our students to read, we try to show them how to read with curiosity, with passion, to take the same risks in reading that we expect them to take in writing.” Students are given recommendations from an extensive reading list, with individually tailored suggestions added as their own writing emerges.

Further fresh perspectives and inspiration are provided by two Mellon Foundation writing residencies a year, which allow invited writers the time and space to work on their own creative projects while doing some minimal teaching on the course. Besides the benefits to the writers, the writing fellowships raise the visibility of the course



on campus and nationally, and allow students to witness the discipline with which established writers work at their writing.

Another Mellon sponsorship, the Scholar in Residence programme, facilitated a month-long visit by Lance Olsen, a writer and professor of creative writing from the US. His visit in October 2013 galvanised the course coordinators into hosting a colloquium on the teaching of creative writing in South Africa, the first of its kind. The colloquium will take place in September this year, and will coincide with the ISEA’s 50th anniversary.

Ultimately, the course provides structure and motivation for students to complete a creative work. “But,” adds local poet and distinction graduate Marike Beyers, “... it also gives you a lot of freedom to do what you want.” The combination of guidance, prodding towards risk, and letting go, has been the source of the Rhodes MACW success a mere four years after its inception.

The Department of Sociology graduates fifteen Masters students

The Department of Sociology saw a record number of 15 Masters students graduate in 2014, up on the previous record of three. Of the 15 theses, 12 focused on South Africa, two on Zimbabwe and one on Mozambique and covered a range of research around commercial farms and labour, informal taxi industries in South Africa, social grants and child support, religion and autism.

According to Professor Kirk Helliker, Head of Department of Sociology, this year's dramatic increase may be as a result of the sustained efforts to facilitate postgraduate research within

In an effort to extend the record Prof Helliker said he believes the university's efforts to facilitate dialogue across disciplines and departments have a crucial role to play. "There is often quite a lot of overlap between departments in terms of the type of research we are doing. It would be good to get an overview of the various research areas and overlaps," he said.

One of their Masters students Nomzamo Kheswa graduated with distinction. She said she did not think she would be back at Rhodes so soon to pursue her Masters in Sociology, let alone graduate with distinction.

"I was expecting to work after my Honours and then return for my MA and PhD but the truth is I fell in love with the last course I took during undergrad (Sociology and labour markets). This course changed my outlook on labour, labour

workers are controlled on farms, and naturally that comes with the co-ordination of work, inevitably touching on wages, hours of work, employment/management relationship, and so on," she said.

Ultimately, Kheswa undertook her research thesis entitled 'Changes and continuities in the labour process on commercial farms in post-apartheid South Africa: Studies from Eastern Cape and KwaZulu-Natal provinces'.

Originally from Durban in KwaZulu-Natal, she struggled with the transition from Honours to Masters - "I didn't think it would be so emotionally draining either. You've only got yourself and your supervisor for two whole years. But it teaches you to motivate yourself and to really manage your own time and money. It was a roller-coaster."

However, unflinching support from supervisor

"No doubt, Prof Helliker has played a bigger role in my life than he even knows. He inspires me because he's always in his office, come rain or shine, any time of day."

Professor Kirk Helliker and her desire for a better life for herself, her family and loved ones kept her going during the challenging times.

"No doubt, Prof Helliker has played a bigger role in my life than he even knows. He inspires me because he's always in his office, come rain or shine, any time of day. And he's there for us, his students," she said. In addition, "My mom has always instilled that concept of education being a gateway to a better life. When she reminds me of how I was growing up, it actually feels like that was a different person, always in my books, I'd even sleep while reading a book or doing my homework, so aside from wanting a better life, I guess I've always been a person that wants to know more."

Sociology graduates, from l-r: Nomzamo Kheswa, Matsepo Motsetse, Prof Kirk Helliker, Ana Ndlovu and Kayla Knight.

the department and enable students and staff to pursue their studies.

"I am very proud of the record number of graduates this year and I'm particularly proud of the students. It can be quite a lonely road to travel, especially for Masters students who are used to being part of a cohort in the Honours and then find themselves working alone. I am very proud of them for pursuing their studies despite this," he added.

processes and how people influence and are influenced by the labour market in a specific time and space," she said.

"Due to the hype at the time about labour rights and labour legislation violations on farms I was quite intrigued and, because of that interest I chatted to Prof Helliker about the idea of pursuing a masters in this area and we formulated a topic around labour processes on commercial farms," Ms Kheswa explained.

"I remember wanting to look into how farm



A much bigger world out there

As a young girl living with her Gogo in KwaZulu-Natal, Gcina Mhlophe thought she was “the most travelled thing on two legs”.

“My Gogo, Mthwalo Mhlophe, was full of adventure and she would spontaneously say ‘let’s go visit our relatives in Nongoma’ or ‘let’s go to Port Shepstone’ and we would hop on a bus and explore the length and breadth of KwaZulu-Natal,” says Mhlophe who, until the age of 10, was raised by Gogo Mthwalo - her father Thomas’ older sister - in Hammarsdale between Pietermaritzburg and Durban.

“Gogo Mthwalo had lost her own children to illness and she started looking after me when I was just two years old and she was in her 50s. She gave me all the love and adventure a little girl could desire. With her, I truly imagined I had seen the world.”

Then one day Gogo Mthwalo sat her down and explained there is a much bigger world out there. “She told me that our Hammarsdale is a very small place near Durban and that Durban is only one of cities in South Africa; that there are many, many other places and a far bigger world out there for me to discover.

“Her words were prophetic and I have been traveling for the past 33 years,” says Mhlophe who has journeyed from Japan to Kenya, from South America to Sweden, sharing and performing stories and gathering material for more stories, books and plays.

In this time she has significantly contributed to the revival of the African storytelling tradition, and performed in theatres from Soweto to London. She has 18 books to her name, including children’s books, adult poetry, short stories and plays, published all over the world and translated into German, French, Italian, Portuguese, Swahili and Japanese.

Gogo Mthwalo is no longer with us but Mhlophe closely feels her presence. “When I am given wonderful recognition like this Honorary Doctorate from Rhodes University, I feel her smiling at me,” says Mhlophe, adding that various traditional healers and people attributed with powers to see beyond have told her that Gogo Mthwalo is constantly with her, shining a light for her.

For Mhlophe the lives of the living and those who have passed are all part of a great circle of knowledge that needs to be honoured.

In 2001 she started the Nozincwadi Literacy Campaign in honour of her paternal great grandmother Nozincwadi MaMchunu whom her



Dr Gcina Mlope

father told her had collected “a suitcase full of words”.

“She is said to have collected anything with words - books, articles, old Bibles, newspapers - and she kept them all in a suitcase. She told my father that these words were magical things that would speak to her one day.”

Mhlophe never saw inside that suitcase, which was lost in time, but the power of the message spoke so strongly to her that she launched her literacy campaign 14 years ago and has continued with it ever since.

“It’s like Nozincwadi is delivered from the grave through this campaign, and since 2001 I have travelled throughout South Africa, visiting schools, doing performances, donating books and encouraging young South Africans to read. And my goodness, we have a beautiful country!” says Mhlophe who would have loved to share her adventures with her Gogo.

“A lot has happened since those wonderful times in her company. Like all of us, I’ve had my fair share of crying and hardship but I was so lucky to have the foundation of love she gave me at the beginning of my life. It’s the all-important foundation - like when you are going to build a high-rise building.”

From the age of 10 Mhlophe’s life dramatically changed when her estranged mother Nomanina Shezi came to fetch her. “My mother had been working as a domestic worker in Brighton Beach,



Durban, where she had met my father who worked nearby. She was Xhosa-speaking and from a village in Mount Frere in the Eastern Cape where she had returned, leaving me with my father. Then one day she arrived out of the blue in a white car driven by her employer and took me away.” It was highly traumatising for Mhlophe. She

emphasises that if she hadn't been obsessed with reading and books she does not know what would have happened to her.

"When the river is flooding and you are being sucked by the current, and a branch comes along, you hold onto that branch for dear life. For me books were the branch and I held onto them for dear life," she explains.

During this time Mhlophe got to know her mother better, and discovered she had been a celebrated wedding dancer when she was young.

As part of the Xhosa tradition, the wedding dancer would dance at weddings just before the bride emerged. Mhlophe discovered her mother was known far and wide for her exceptional dance ability.

"People would say 'turn around, let me see your legs. Can you dance like your mother?'" continues Mhlophe who wrote a poem titled The Wedding Dancer for her mother.

In time, Mhlophe mustered sufficient courage to ask her mother why she had abandoned her as a baby. "In those days it was taboo to ask these questions and parents didn't give you proper answers. My mother said she had been in a very difficult marriage in the Eastern Cape, which didn't explain anything to me when I was young.

"As I got older I understood better and I learnt that she had run away from that marriage to KwaZulu-Natal where she had met my father and given birth to me. I realised that sometimes no matter how hard it is, you have to return and sort out what you left behind, which she did. When her abusive husband passed away, she came to fetch me."

Those were hard times for the teenage Mhlophe who was separated from her beloved Gogo and her Zulu-speaking family, and who was sent to boarding school for her high school years. Displaced from all that was familiar she was also treated like a foreigner in the Xhosa-speaking Eastern Cape.

"With hindsight I can appreciate that those hard times made me stronger and gave me a sense of self love and self reliance. My mother also taught me to work hard - she worked like mad and never ever walked slowly. She couldn't tolerate it when people dragged their feet."

During school holidays Mhlope's mother would awaken her before sunrise so that they could start tackling all the tasks that needed to be done around the house.

"I hated it at the time but it groomed me to be hard-working. To be a successful person you have to work hard. And it never stops. The more successful you are, the harder you work," says Mhlope who believes that she would not have achieved the success she has if she had not been taught to work hard. "We need to inculcate this in our children."

Today she has a 17-year-old daughter, Nomakwezi, with her husband Karl Becker whom she met while she was on tour in Germany in 1988.

"I have been blessed with many, many awards but I regard being a mother as one of my top achievements and one of my greatest challenges. How do you protect a child and at the same time let them be free? It's not easy."

Mhlophe has traveled the world with Nomakwezi since she was six months old. Home is the Bluff in Durban overlooking the Indian Ocean. "I always wanted to live in a house where I can see the ocean and where I can hear the ocean when I awaken and go to sleep."

This year she will head for Grahamstown on two separate occasions: to receive her Honorary Doctorate and to attend the National Arts Festival. For once she's not performing, she is going to enjoy the experience of being an audience member in the university town.

"If I had had the money to go to university when I was young, I would definitely have headed straight for the Linguistics Department because I really love languages," says Mhlope whose writing career started in 1981 with a magazine called Learn and Teach.

"I was living in Alex township working as a domestic and freelance journalist when the then editor of Learn and Teach, Mark Suttner, saw a story I had written about an arranged marriage called Nokulunga's Wedding, and he offered me a writing job. The magazine was aimed at the recently literate and I learned to write strong stories in simple English."

At the same time she was writing and performing praise poetry, which landed her a part in a 1983 production at the Market Theatre called Umongikazi or The Nurse, based on the true life experiences of nurses at Baragwanath Hospital, and directed by Maishe Maponya.

She has since performed all over the world and she has a long list of accolades including an OBBIE Theatrical Award in New York, for her role in Barney Simon's Born in the RSA - about a cross-section of characters living in South Africa during the 1980s state of emergency.

Today, with decades of writing and performing behind her, Mhlophe remains entirely dedicated to the art of storytelling, education and the growth of women:

"Storytelling is the basis of all cultures and the mother of all art forms," she says. "A dancer needs a story to dance to; every song is based on a story, irrespective of whether it's a traditional African song or a more contemporary classic like Lady in Red," she explains.

Two of her favourite songs are Joan Armatrading's Baby I and Miriam Makeba's Gauteng.

"Gauteng tells a beautiful, poignant story of how our gold ends up being worn as jewellery by Americans and Europeans who know nothing about the men who physically mined that gold and who will never be able to afford a beautiful gold ring for their own wives."

Where women are concerned, she says that as patriotic as she is, she feels it is "a scourge on our society" that women and children are not safe in their own country.

"This isn't something we can blame on the apartheid government, this is a situation where our own men are making life unsafe for us," says Mhlope who wishes that more men and religious leaders would stand up and say 'This is not the way'.



"Where are these voices? Where are the political and religious leaders who used to be so vocal about these issues?"

At the same time she urges young women to develop their sense of identity to find out whom they are and what they want to study.

"A strong sense of identity and self-respect starts with informing yourself," she says.

"Today there is so much information available to us and it all starts with literacy. You need to be able to read and write well, and you need to achieve this for yourself because this is your path to freedom.

"This year government is going to spend tons of money celebrating 20 years of freedom, this is wonderful, but if they spent more on education and skills development, we would have so much more to celebrate."

Nurturing an African Einstein

Johannesburg-born cosmologist and theoretical physicist Professor Neil Turok spends his time breaking new ground in our understanding of the beginning of the universe.

Partnering with fellow researchers in his field, like Stephen Hawking, he is currently using holography to study the Big Bang singularity that will in all probability produce new theories about the beginning of time.

What is refreshing about Prof Turok is that between deciphering the universe, he jogs and plays the guitar. He enjoys writing his own songs and he's a fan of Arcade Fire and Imogen Heap.

When you speak to him, what he most wants to talk about is not theoretical physics but about South Africa and the advancement of science and mathematics on the African continent.

He's intent on nurturing brilliance here of the order of the person who first opened the doors of the universe for us: theoretical physicist Albert Einstein. Prof Turok believes it is absolutely possible to achieve.

"To appreciate this we need to look at how a man like Einstein arose. He came from a historically disadvantaged people - the Jewish people in Europe - who were excluded from studying subjects like engineering, mathematics or physics in Europe until the middle of the 19th century. Only certain trades were thought to be appropriate for Jews. This is similar to the circumstances in which black people found themselves in Africa in the 20th century."

When Jewish people were finally admitted to study all subjects at university, they were extremely motivated to prove what they could do. Aiding their ambitions was their background in Jewish culture, which greatly values learning and scholasticism.

"This generation of young Jewish people revolutionised physics in the early 20th century," explains Prof Turok.

"Amongst them was a brilliant young physicist called Einstein who saw things in a non-traditional way, who didn't accept the standard wisdom and saw the contradictions that others failed to see clearly.

"He changed the world. He discovered the principles of nuclear and quantum theory that govern everything at a microscopic level and he discovered relativity, which explains how the universe evolves."

The beauty of all this is that Prof Turok doesn't just talk about nurturing similar brilliance here in South Africa and Africa, he is actively doing something about it. Formerly the Chair of Mathematical Physics at



Prof Neil Turok

Cambridge University, and currently the Director of the Perimeter Institute for Theoretical Physics, in Ontario, Canada, he is drawing on his global network to advance postgraduate mathematics and science education on our continent.

In 2003 he founded the African Institute for Mathematical Sciences (AIMS) in Cape Town and the Next Einstein Initiative (NEI), which aims to roll out 15 such institutes across Africa.

It all started with the institute in Muizenberg, Cape Town, in 2003 and three others have since followed - in Senegal, Ghana and Cameroon. AIMS-Tanzania is due to open this year.

"Africa is full of super-talented young people, many from extremely disadvantaged backgrounds, and we decided to bring a group of pan-African students together and give them the best Masters-level postgraduate teaching in mathematics and science we could," he explains.

Step onto the AIMS campus in Muizenberg - situated in a renovated 1920 art deco hotel - and you will experience Prof Turok's vision firsthand in the excitement, energy and motivation of the students. They are representative of South Africa and Africa's

top science and mathematics graduates and you can tangibly feel a new scientific culture at work.

To get into the ten-month AIMS Masters by coursework programme, students have to get top marks in their undergraduate and Honours degrees.

Over 1200 applications are received each year. The AIMS centre in South Africa admits 50-60 students every year while the centres in Senegal, Ghana and Cameroon admit 30-50.

There's no slacking or secret smoking and drinking at the back of the building. It's not tolerated in this 24/7 learning environment where the students and lecturers live together, eat together and learn together. The students call it 'the house of no sleep' but they would not swap it for any other educational institution.

"We have a pool of over 500 volunteer lecturers from all over the world who teach at AIMS for three weeks a year," says Prof Turok who himself teaches at one of the four existing centres each year.

The students are visibly happy and healthy and there is a strong sense of safety and trust. Laptops are left unattended in the computer lab during

breaks because they know they won't be stolen. Women students feel secure and at ease in the AIMS environment because a strong culture of mutual respect is engendered as part of the programme.

No less than 30% of women are selected in every cohort and AIMS is highly proactive about recruiting women students.

The students support the idea of a strict environment where smoking, drinking or drugging is not permitted. There are cameras throughout campus to maintain the sense of order and safety, with the students' full blessing.

In addition to maths and sciences, students are schooled in a range of communication skills to help them develop into well-rounded individuals who have every chance of succeeding.

"They work like hell for the ten months they are at

mathematics, one has joined the Barclays Bank Financial Modeling Group in London. It isn't our goal to support the corporate or banking environment there but we ask that when they make a fortune they, in turn, fund scholarships for other AIMS students. The culture amongst the alumni is very strong and ten years from now the AIMS alumni want to be funding AIMS."

Where South African students are concerned, the first few years of AIMS saw very few South African students being enrolled. The students came from many other African countries including Ghana, Uganda, Cameroon, Nigeria, Sudan and the Congo.

"When the AIMS programme started, maths and science schools education in South Africa was rated among the worst in Africa. We are finally starting to see the numbers improving," says Prof Turok.

Of the 60 students currently studying at AIMS' Cape

grandmother and I was not allowed to visit them," he recalls.

When Ben was released in 1966 after serving the full three-and-a-half years, he escaped re-arrest by fleeing South Africa. The Turok family lived in exile in Tanzania as political refugees.

Throughout their lives Ben and Mary Turok emphasised education as the key to liberation on a personal and national level in South Africa. Prof Turok has followed in their footsteps, and his daughter Ruby is currently attending Oberlin College in Ohio - the first college in North America to admit women and black people.

"Given that I am from South Africa, and I frequently visit, it is very important for me that South Africa succeeds. It's one of the most exciting countries in the world because it's a new, multiracial democracy, with the whole world closely watching what happens. This strongly motivated me to make a contribution through the work we do at AIMS because it is vital that education in South Africa significantly improves if the country is to succeed."

"What deeply bothers me is that currently there is a scarcity of leaders of the same quality as Mandela and his generation, with their positive vision and commitment to South Africa. The country is going through a difficult period because the second generation of leaders are less visionary and less capable of inspiring people to think positively about the future."

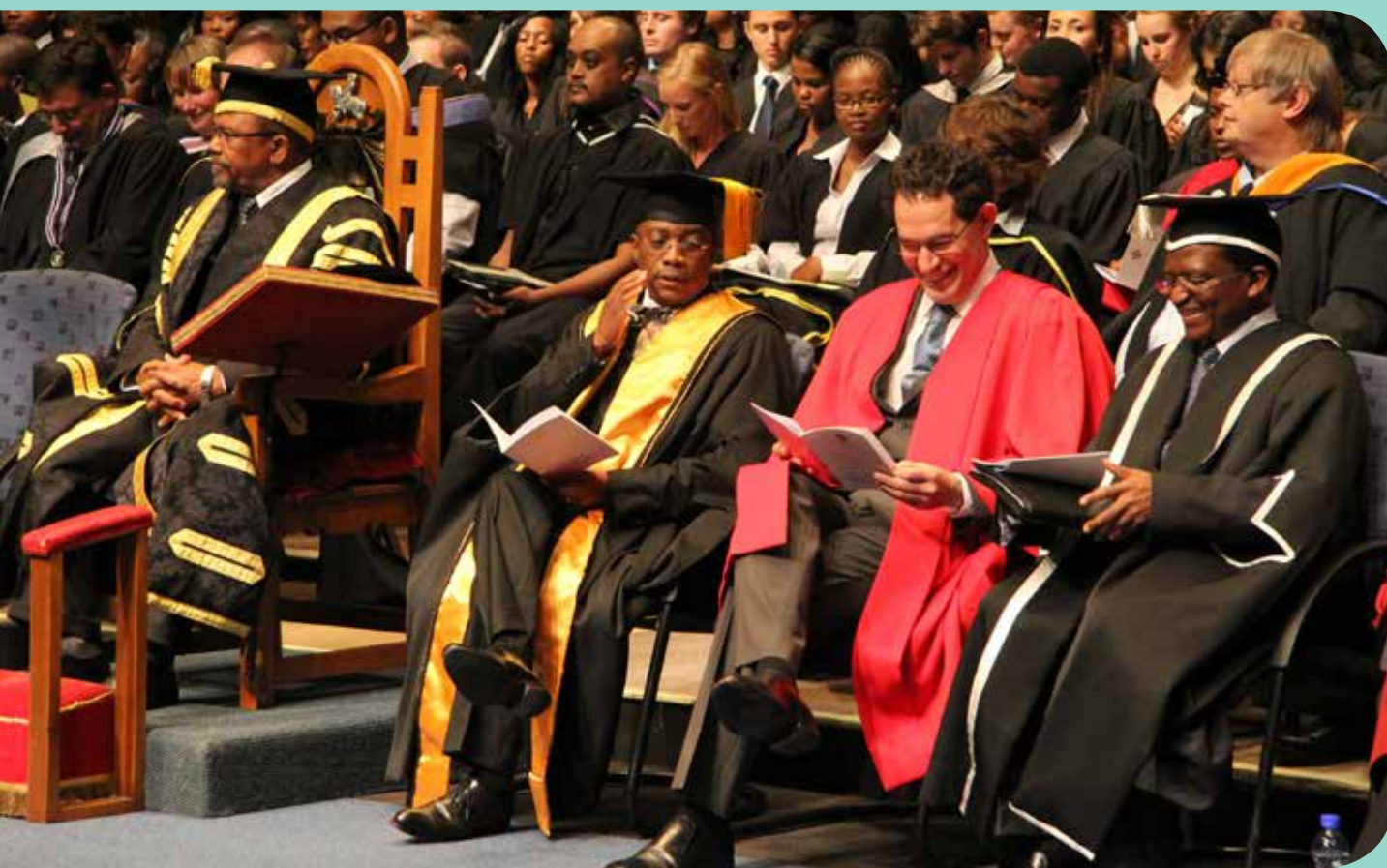
He specifically refers to the "failures in dealing with crime" and "the education system, which to a large degree, is not giving young people the training and opportunities they deserve".

"I am not seeing sufficient determination to solve these problems and it is very sad that the right initiatives aren't being put in place - such as top quality teacher training, which is essential," says Prof Turok.

"In maths and science, for example, we are not finding anything near sufficient numbers of teachers being trained, and for this there is no possible excuse. The motivation amongst young South Africans to advance themselves is tremendous; and the motivation amongst leading educationalists the world over to assist with teaching and training in South Africa, is significant. But government is not being proactive and not taking advantage of all this motivation and support".

"I try to take every opportunity to share with the Ministers in the Department of Education here that there are solutions, and there are opportunities but they require out-of-the-box thinking and committed support," says Prof Turok.

"My core belief is that the only people who can build a bright future for Africa are talented young Africans. By unlocking and nurturing their educational and creative potential, we can create a significant change in South Africa and Africa's future."



AIMS because they know that from here doors will open and they will be able to do their Doctorates at the best universities in the world. 250 PhDs are being completed through AIMS as we speak," says Prof Turok.

The students have exceeded their expectation and they have seen several students with extreme abilities come through AIMS.

"They astonish us with their ability to formulate and solve mathematical problems - these are genius levels. Whether they become an Einstein ... the future will tell," says Prof Turok.

The problem faced by many of the students from financially impoverished backgrounds is familiar: there is huge pressure on them to go into financially lucrative professions to help their families.

"Some of our top students have gone into financial

Town, 10 are South African. In November 2013 the first South African ever won a distinction at AIMS. He is Matthews Sejeso from Taung in the North West Province who is now doing his PhD in mathematics at Wits University. "He is a remarkable individual who has overcome many difficulties," says Prof Turok.

Sejeso is the recipient of the highest scholarship awarded by AIMS for future study: the Ben and Mary Turok Award for Excellent Achievement, donated by Prof Turok in honour of his parents who were anti-apartheid activists within the ANC. Police raids were a regular event in the Turok Johannesburg home when Prof Turok was a little boy.

"My father was a land surveyor and my mother was a health programme administer. Both of them were imprisoned for opposing apartheid. When I was three years old my father was imprisoned for three-and-a-half years in jail, and when I was five my mother was imprisoned for six months. I lived with my

A World Created Mostly in One's Head

At the age of 87 Dr Sydney Brenner remains a hard working researcher and daunting intellect. There's no rambling in his discussion or indulging in what he now knows that he didn't know at 20.

"The difference is I now know 66 additional years of life. Your life at any age is what you make of it, and you should continue pursuing things that are new to you," he says.

He's equally to the point about his rise to giant molecular biology heights: "I was born at the right time, I knew I had a gift for science, I learned how to use libraries very early on in life - a habit that has remained with me - and I knew how to exploit the opportunities presented to me."

Life for Dr Brenner started in Germiston on Johannesburg's East Rand where he was born in 1927 and where his parents settled. Jewish immigrants from Eastern Europe, his father repaired shoes and their first home was at the back of his shop.

While at Germiston High School Dr Brenner discovered the public library, which, like many libraries the world over, was established with funding from the Andrew Carnegie Foundation.

A rather unusual young man, Dr Brenner became obsessed with biochemistry. He read everything he could find on the subject and tried to discover why flowers have their distinctive colours.

At age 15 the Germiston Town Council gave him a bursary of 60 pounds to study at Wits University, where in 1942 he started what was to become his lifelong research career.

While at Wits he lived at home, cycled to the local railway station every morning, caught the train to town, then walked to campus. It was here that he started his lifelong research pursuit in the field that fascinated him most: cells and their functions.

Dr Brenner has been directly involved in genetic code and human genome breakthroughs since the 1950s when he worked with the English molecular biologist Francis Crick on elucidating the genetic code. Crick is widely known as the co-discoverer of the structure of the DNA molecule in 1953, together with American molecular biologist James Watson.

Breaking new ground is no easy journey, and, as Dr Brenner says in his autobiography *A Life in Science*, published in 2001. "Living most of the time in a world created mostly in one's head, does not make for an easy passage in the real world."

He gratefully thanks the many people who have helped him along this passage, including his parents

"who would have preferred him to become a surgeon or physician", and his wife and children "who lived with a preoccupied husband and father".

Throughout his life he has collaborated with outstanding scientists and kindred spirits. Two especially kindred spirits were Crick and Watson in the United Kingdom whom he met while he was doing his PhD at Oxford University from 1952 to 1954.

"I went to Oxford after completing my medical degree at Wits University in 1951," he explains. "I must add that I was not a good medical student and had an erratic career, brilliant in some subjects, absolutely dismal in others.

"By then I had already decided that I wanted to pursue a research career and that I needed to go abroad because I would rather be a small frog in a big pond than a large tadpole in a big pond. South Africa was also very isolated then and the politics were not acceptable."

He had also decided that the subject he was interested in pursuing was molecular biology, which did not exist at the time.

He applied to the Department of Biochemistry at Cambridge University but never even received a reply. He was subsequently awarded a scholarship by the Commission for the Royal Exhibition of 1851 and was accepted by Oxford University's Professor of Physical Chemistry, CN Hinshelwood. In October 1952

he arrived in Oxford to begin his PhD in the Physical Chemistry Laboratory.

Life was not easy at Oxford as there were still food rations in the aftermath of World War II, and Dr Brenner and other 'colonial' students were treated as outsiders. Fortunately he made some firm friends with fellow outsiders like Jack Dunitz, a crystallographer, and Leslie Orgel, a theoretical chemist, both of whom remained lifelong friends and colleagues.

"We had many discussions on DNA, for I had come to Oxford with two half ideas, both of which were more than half wrong," he recalls. "One was a way of working out the structure of DNA using dyes and the other was how nucleic acids could participate in the synthesis of proteins."

In April 1953 his life changed when he heard about two researchers in Cambridge, Francis Crick and Jim Watson, who had solved the structure of DNA. He immediately headed over there to see their model. "This was the watershed in my scientific life. The moment I saw the model and heard about the complementing base pairs I realised that it was the key to understanding all the problems in biology we had found intractable - it was the birth of molecular biology."

During this time he also got married to May Covitz and became a father, worked harder than ever before and longed for the food and warmth of South Africa. He then applied for and was awarded a Carnegie



Dr Sydney Brenner

Corporation Travelling Fellowship, which took him to the United States to visit other laboratories on a drive across America with Jim Watson.

He returned to South Africa at the end of 1954 - he was committed to do so by the terms of the Carnegie Corporation Fellowship. "I started working on a bacteriophage system that we thought might be useful to solve the genetic code. I also continued to work on some theoretical aspects of the genetic code."

Crick subsequently helped him to secure an appointment at the Medical Research Council Unit in Cambridge, and in December 1956 Dr Brenner and his family left South Africa for England.

"I spent 20 years sharing an office with Francis Crick and many new and exciting ideas (both right and wrong) were generated from our conversations."

They went their separate ways in 1976: "The centre point of our interests had begun to diverge," Dr Brenner explains. "Whereas we were both interested in the nervous system, I was far more interested in finding a simple experimental system, which might tell me how brains were constructed, whereas Francis wanted to know about the complex activities of higher nervous systems."

Five years later Dr Brenner was awarded the Nobel Prize in Physiology/Medicine 2002 (together with Robert Horvitz and John Sulston) for his pioneering work in understanding the principles of animal and neural developmental using the nematode worm.

On receiving the Nobel Prize he remarked that choosing the right organism to work on (the nematode worm) was as important as choosing the right problem to work on.

His achievements are vast and plentiful, and Rhodes was honoured to welcome Dr Brenner to the University to bestow on him an Honorary Doctorate on the 12th April.

Regarding his Honorary Doctorate (of which he has quite a few) he says: "I believe that a scientist should be judged by the quality of the people he has helped to produce and not by prizes or other honours bestowed on him.

"At the same time I am very happy to accept this doctorate, and, better still, it is free. You should always accept something that is free and how wonderful to get a very high degree for doing nothing. Students have to work so hard to get what I am getting just for turning up!"

Dr Brenner last visited Rhodes 66 years ago when he attended a conference held by the National Union of South African Students (NUSAS) in 1948.

"The National Party came to power in June that year and the thrust was to get students to stand together in the battle against what was to become institutionalised apartheid."

Academically, Dr Brenner has had ongoing involvement

with Rhodes since 2001 through the coelacanth genome-sequencing project. It was completed in 2012 and the first results were recently published in the leading international scientific journal, Nature.

He lent his weight to support a funding proposal for a flagship research project focused on the South African coelacanths and their environment, which is now the African Coelacanth Ecosystem Programme.

2013 was the 75th anniversary since the discovery off the coast of South Africa of the first living coelacanth. Dr Brenner explains that fish and sharks are the representatives of the oldest vertebrates, and that the coelacanth and the even older elephant shark from Tasmania tell us that vertebrates started around 500-million years ago and have survived through this extraordinary length of time.

"If you think about it we descended from those very fish, which, 500-million years ago were already very sophisticated animals with brains and blood and all the attributes that vertebrates have," says Dr Brenner who is currently working on another aspect of the human genome - trying to find clues to our very early history."

"Lodged in our genes are the molecular sequences of these vertebrates because they gave us their genes. This research is an attempt to reconstruct, theoretically, the remnants of these genes. We want to see what the vertebrates and pre-vertebrates gave us. We want to work out what they could see and smell, and understand how our brains arose."

"I can already do parts of this - I can, for example, tell you how certain molecules in the muscles arose. But this is a long, long conversation."

Looking to the future of cell regeneration and whether science can regenerate a new brain for Dr Brenner to extend his extraordinary life, he replies: "Cell regeneration is already happening but it would take 20 years to programme a new brain for me - so there is no point. Fortunately the existing one is surviving and that is good."

After the graduation ceremony, Dr Brenner and his brain headed home, which, these days, is "anywhere" he says.

"I spend time researching at institutes in Singapore, California, Europe...I don't belong anywhere anymore; I belong in an airport."

He does own a house though, in a small town outside of Cambridge in the United Kingdom, where he has based himself for 50 years.

At 87 he regards his own mortality with respectful indifference:

"I live, and one day I will stop, that is all.

"Until that day I will continue to be excited by scientific research. Science is something one is tied to for life, and the endless quest for knowledge will continue as long as humans exist."



Dr Brenner donates his airfare

Dr Sydney Brenner generously requested that the funds set aside for two air tickets for him to fly to South Africa to receive his Honorary Doctorate from Rhodes University, be donated to one of Rhodes' existing scholarship funds for deserving students.

Rhodes Vice-Chancellor, Dr Saleem Badat, thanked Dr Brenner who has been a generous supporter of developing the next generation of scientists, throughout his long and brilliant career.

Dr Badat has advised that the funds be put into the Jakes Gerwel Rhodes University Scholarship Fund for deserving, disadvantaged students from the Eastern Cape.

Over the past eight years, Dr Badat has given more than R1.2million of his University salary to this fund, which he founded in 2006, and named after the late Dr Jakes Gerwel, an anti-apartheid activist, academic and the former Chancellor of Rhodes.

JMS Focus Area graduates its first seed of Masters students

The Journalism and Media Studies Mellon Media and Citizenship Focus Area has graduated its first seed of three Masters of Arts students at the recent graduation in April 2014. All three students have registered to study further for their PhDs and continue with their Masters research topics within the same Focus Area.

The three graduates, Azwihangwisi Mufamadi, Mvuzo Ponono and Stephane Meintjes, each researched a facet of citizenship and its relationship to the media. Mufamadi researched the relationship between equal education and learners and equal education, learners and the media. The research project focused on the interaction between equal education and learners and the role that the media played and could play within this context.

He found that there was a complex web of communication between equal education and learners, which ensured that the social movement remains relevant by representing the causes that are suggested by learners. The newspapers' contribution to the cause depends on the respective paper's approach to equal education's activities and the role that the journalists see themselves playing.

Ponono investigated a popular SABC show, *Intersexions*, and its viewing in the context of a family home in Gingsberg.

"One thing I wanted to do was to research the township because I am from one, another interest was television studies," said Ponono. "So *Intersexions* presented itself as the opportune vehicle to merge these

"What each of the Masters studies did was more or less take a small facet of citizenship in South Africa and its relationship to the media..."

and HIV between adults and young people, so *Intersexions* is a useful intermediary." He said that the country could benefit from more research and the Masters enabled him to research further. "South Africa is a young nation and major groundwork still needs to be done. The degree means I still need to work to improve the country."

Meintjes' research project interrogated Afrikaans identity construction in relation to the music group 'Die Antwoord'.

"As I specialised in photojournalism during my undergraduate studies, I chose to investigate the impact of visual media on different aspects of citizenship and the work of the music outfit 'Die Antwoord' provided an ideal opportunity for research in this field," said Meintjes.

In her research, Meintjes found that although there was no clear evidence or indication that media constructed the identities of participants, "the video prompted discussions regarding identity and provided evidence that media texts are capable of stimulating an interrogation of identities".

She also found that participants valued the Afrikaans language and did not regard race as an important aspect of citizenship.

For Meintjes, the Masters experience was rewarding both academically and personally. "I have found the MA programme richly rewarding, both personally and academically and I regard myself as very privileged to have had the opportunity to work under the guidance of dedicated teachers and recognised experts in the field of my interest."

Professor Anthea Garman, co-director of the Media and Citizenship: Between Marginalisation and Participation Focus Area said that each of the Masters research theses treated real life situations as a case study on the relationship between media and citizenship.

"What each of the Masters studies did was more or less take a small facet of citizenship in South Africa and its relationship to the media and look at one particular example of how something particular, on the ground, an actual real situation and people's media use and their understanding of citizenship and how that relationship was being worked out," said Prof Garman.

She said that the focus on citizenship in the study of journalism and media studies was important because many theorists have made grand assumptions attached to the fact that journalism contributes to citizenship. Although South Africa's constitution guarantees citizen participation, the vehicles through which being a citizen can be realized are not always accessible to all.

"In fact our media space has got narrower, many of our media houses are talking to niche markets and people with particular incomes and so on," said Prof Garman. "So we still have the problem of how does the majority of people not only get their hands on the kind of information they want to negotiate their lives and to figure out their politics and citizenship, but how do they voice themselves, how do they get the listening, how do they get a hearing."

She said that this inaccessibility of the media as a platform for political discussions and for the formation of public opinion by the majority of South Africans was a factor in South Africa's history.

"The thing is, probably because of the circumstances of South Africa, we came from a situation where many people were marginalised. Millions in a majority were marginalised, not only from politics, not only from citizenship but from the public sphere," added Prof Garman.



two interests."

Going into the field, Ponono expected young children not to watch the programme because of the age restrictions and the explicit nature of its content but this was not the case.

"Parents allow their children to watch the show despite the sensitive nature of the content," said Ponono. "This is because cultural restrictions disallow talk about sex

Flying Colours for MFA

Simone Heymans, a Master of Fine Art student who was part of the Fine Art Focus Area, Visual and Performing Arts of Africa, graduated with a distinction at the Graduation ceremony this year. Her research explored the way in which individuals negotiate both the movement of self as well as interactions with others in 'non-places'.

"Non-places are 'habitually transient' spaces for passage, communication and consumption, often viewed from highways, vehicles, hotels, petrol stations, airports and supermarkets," Heymans explained. These places, according to Heymans, are spaces in which material excess and psychological lack come together to create a feeling of disorientation and disconnection.

"The non-place is a contested space as it does not hold enough significance to be regarded as a place, and yet, despite its banality, is necessary - and in many ways a privilege - in everyday living," Heymans elaborated.

Heyman's research was directly related to the Visual and Performing Arts of Africa research group theme "The Audacity of Place" which is funded by the Andrew Mellon Foundation. Her thesis was titled *Habitual Transience: Orientation and Disorientation within Non-Places* and accompanied her exhibition titled *via*, which she described as "a phenomenological site-specific series of inter-media interventions and installations at the 1820 Settlers National Monument in Grahamstown."

Much preparation went in to producing her final Master's work. Heymans conducted research by installing a series of interventions around Grahamstown during the National Arts Festival. She then observed and documented how people reacted to these, a project which she described as particularly exciting. In addition to this and at the level of theory, Heymans explored questions of globalization, time-space compression, site-specific art, and absentmindedness.

To have all this effort recognized in her final results made Heymans feel a combination of

relief and achievement. Though she had moments of uncertainty when challenges arose due to the logistical challenges of the exhibition and concerns about the impact it would have on the viewer, Heymans tried to deal with these by throwing herself in to the work with dedication.

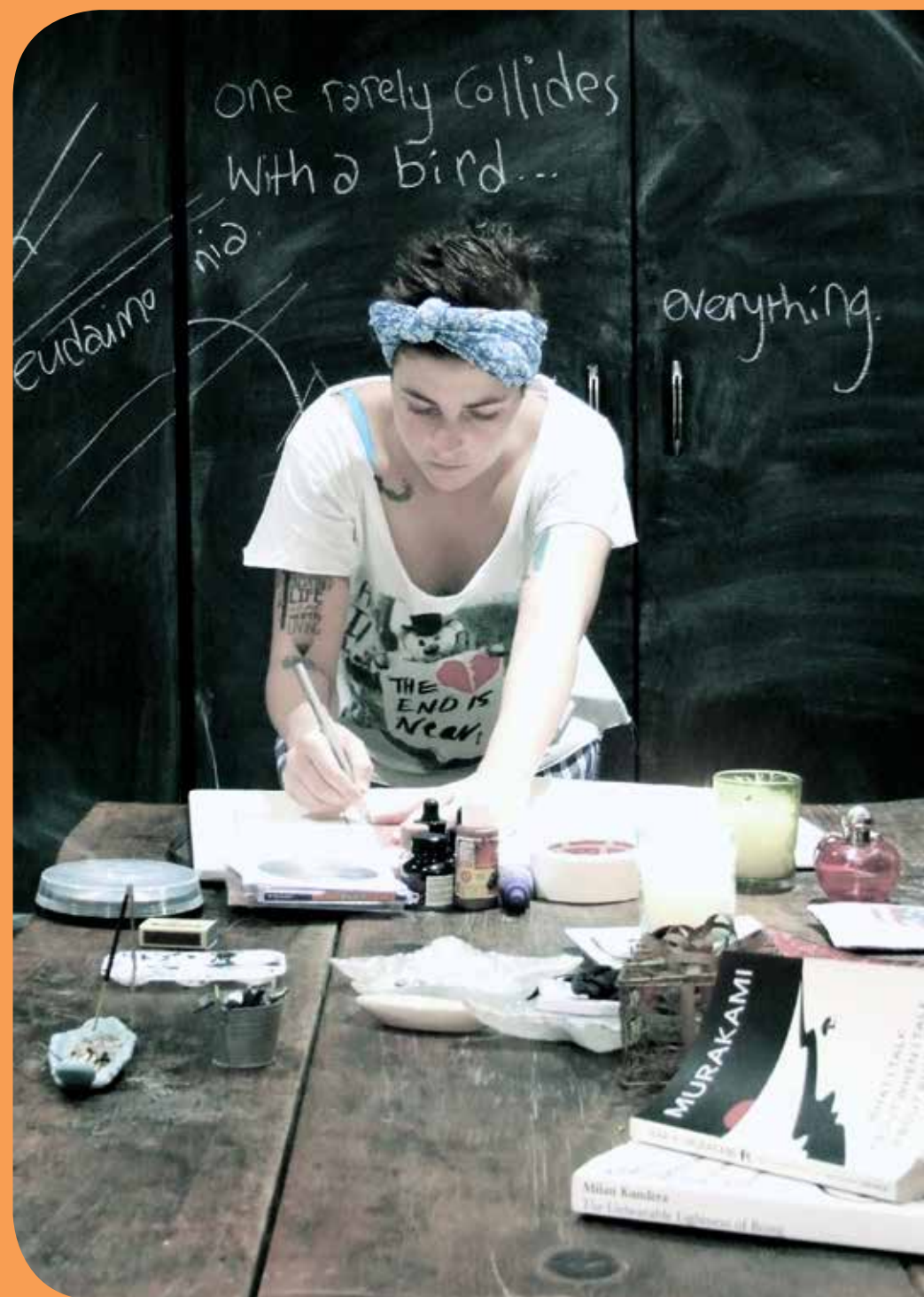
"By suppressing the feeling of doubt and transforming it into active creative problem solving, I put my all into the two year Masters programme and it was beyond rewarding to have the effort recognized," she said.

Heymans is going to be part of a project for the Performance Art section of the National Arts Festival which will see a number interventions being placed around Grahamstown as well as two site-specific performances during the festival. The project is titled 'Blindspot' and commissioned by Professor Ruth Simbao, one of Heymans co-supervisors.

Speaking about having worked with both Prof Simbao and Professor Dominic Thorburn during her Masters, Heymans said, "I am exceptionally grateful for their advice, support and the confidence they had in me to achieve the most I could."

Prof Simbao was highly complementary when speaking about having worked with Heymans, describing the Masters graduate as "humble despite her intelligence and always willing to learn". "Simone is an incredible individual who completely throws her entire being into everything she does," she added.

Support is something Heymans both contributed to and experienced throughout her six years with the Rhodes University Department of Fine



Simone Meymans

Art. Being involved in tutoring, teaching, and running the stockroom allowed Heymans to foster relationships throughout the department and created a support structure which she described as conducive to experimentation. "The relationships established, and everyday routine, is really one that I will miss," Heymans said.

Prof Simbao added that this involvement in the growth of others' intellectual and creative abilities was a major contribution Heymans made to the department. "Her success and her contribution go way beyond being awarded a distinction," she said. Heymans is currently doing freelance work, writing academic papers, and completing a few practical projects, but looks forward to applying for various residences in the near future and hopefully becoming established with a full-time studio in Cape Town after some travelling and working.

"Visual and Performing Arts of Africa" is a Mellon funded research team based in the Fine Art Department and is one of four Humanities Focus Areas at Rhodes University.

Machona investigates political identity

The first in his family to pursue postgraduate study, Zimbabwean-born Gerald Machona needed to do something to make his parents feel proud. “Coming from Zimbabwe it’s quite difficult; one’s sense of achievement is really limited. It was important for me to give my parents something to be proud of,” he said.

heard about the course offered at Rhodes from a colleague. Following successful contact with potential supervisors in the Fine Art Department, Machona made the move. “I suppose you could say I was in the process of changing careers when I got the acceptance letter to study Masters at Rhodes. I realized this was the moment to pursue my dreams.” During his Masters, for which he was awarded a distinction, he constructed a space suit out of Zimbabwean dollars. Machona believes it was this portfolio that led him to be noticed and ultimately represented by the Goodman Gallery, one of South



From left to right: Gerald Machona, Prof Ruth Simbao and Kelebogile Marope

Machona was named as one of the Mail & Guardian’s Top 200 Young South Africans in 2013 and as one of the top 10 young artists practicing in South Africa today in 2011 by Business Day and the Johannesburg Art Fair. It was also Machona’s experience of identity as a Zimbabwean and foreign national living and working in South Africa during a spate of xenophobic attacks that swept through South Africa in 2008, that prompted his interest in exploring notions of identity specifically relating to ‘the Other’.

At the time of the violence, Machona was studying at the Michaelis School of Fine Arts in Cape Town and had been exploring issues of migration, which seemed all the more meaningful given the intensity of the violence.

“I was interested in engaging with political identity in relation to foreign identity and the experience of being foreign in South Africa and needed to make my contribution to the discourse of identity politic and the representation of ‘the Other’ in art. My approach in questioning identity was definitely inspired by the xenophobic violence and even though I never experienced the violence firsthand, I felt the effects of it manifesting in attitudes. I experienced it in an emotional way and being aware I was someone from another place considered alien in this space, wanting to blend in so I wasn’t victimized,” he said, adding that he had altered the way he dressed to fit in more. After taking a gap year to decide whether he wanted to pursue art as a full-time career, Machona

Africa’s most prestigious commercial galleries. “I’ve found the use of currency as material to be a very interesting concept. I chose to use something that is quite loaded, and currency symbolizes national identity. I decided to mix other currencies in and explore what it could all mean,” he explained.

He also created a protea made from old South African currency, and inserted other African currencies into the leaves of the sculpture. “I was trying to question national identity in relation to ‘the Other’ and how it is all constructed. Through my work I try to engage with social, economic and political questions we have within postcolonial society,” he said.

Maureen de Jager who supervised Machona’s studio practice, said she was impressed with his “open and optimistic approach” to making art, despite being a perfectionist. “As is often the case in art-making, one’s technical solutions don’t always work, or don’t necessarily work as planned, and Gerald embraced these challenges and setbacks with good humour. He accepted them as part of the process and didn’t let them break his stride.”

Since graduating he has participated in a number of group exhibitions and is anticipating his upcoming solo exhibition in Johannesburg with The Edelweiss, a delicate sculpture of Switzerland’s national flower, made with decommissioned currency and suspended under a glass dome, that speaks powerfully of the

“Rhodes has nurtured my growth as a scholar”

PhD graduate Nomusa Makhubu’s passion for art and art history was inspired by her parents’ enduring love of education and teaching. So much so that she completed a Postgraduate Diploma in teaching after completing her Masters in Fine Art and while working on her doctorate.

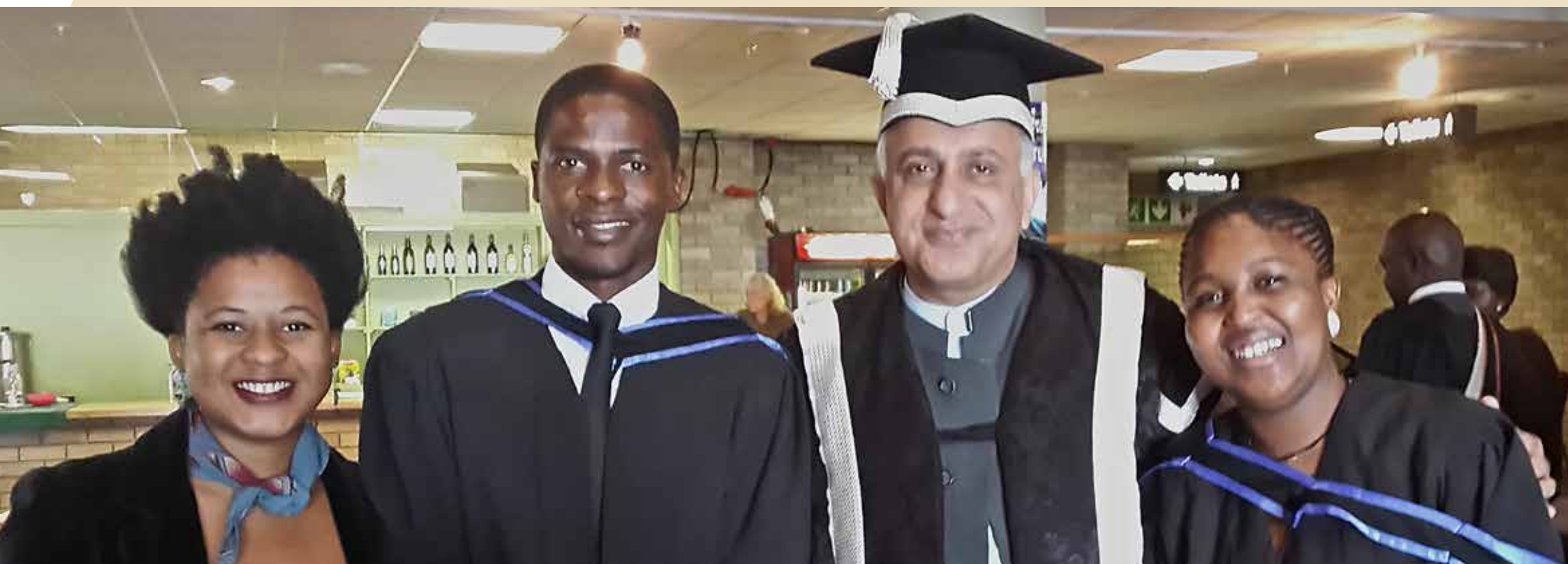
Originally from the Vaal Triangle, Gauteng, Makhubu decided to study at Rhodes after attending a presentation by a recruitment team while she was at school at Riverside High. Her passion for art had started during her final years at school. “I studied art at high school and my highest marks were in art. I did consider pursuing other things like architecture or medicine at other universities but settled on art at Rhodes,” she said.

Describing the experience of postgraduate study as “mind-opening” she said the 10 years she spent at Rhodes as a staff member and working on her Masters and Doctoral research enabled her to meet an array of artists and art historians who she could engage with on different levels. “In all these 10 years there are more pleasant memories than unpleasant ones. Rhodes has nurtured my growth as a scholar,” she said. Her advice for aspiring artists and art theory enthusiasts? “If you must procrastinate, do so in the company of good-minded people because the best ideas happen within communal discussion.”

Today she works across a range of different areas and fields with a variety of themes in her practical work as with art history. She counts her supervisor, Professor Ruth Simbao as having had a significant influence on the completion of her PhD, as well as her partner Greg Ruiters, dearest friends Tanya Poole, Injairu Kulundu, Lindi Arbi and Khona Dlamini and lecturers at Rhodes Fine Art Department Brent Meistre and Dominic Thorburn for their support and advice.

impact that seemingly abstract economic policies have on our daily lives.

Visual and Performing Arts of Africa (ViPAA) is a Mellon funded research team based in the Fine Art Department at Rhodes University and is one of four Humanities Focus Areas. The ViPAA research unit was launched in January 2011 and is led by Prof Ruth Simbao. Machona is one of the students who graduated from the Focus Area.



Zamansele Nsele (PhD candidate and newly appointed staff member in Art History and Visual Culture starting in July 2014); Gerald Machona; Dr Saleem Badat and Kelebogile Marope.

MFA graduate explores the use of domestic objects in arts

Rhodes Master of Fine Arts (MFA) graduate, Kelebogile Marope, investigated the role of household objects in arts in her thesis and exhibition.

She produced an exhibition on household objects and a thesis on the same topic in order to fulfil the requirements for the MFA degree.

“Throughout my thesis I was trying to work out the emotional value that we do put on objects,” she said. “Sometimes we don’t even notice them because the objects become over familiar, we don’t realise it because we need them and we need that structure around us.”

Investigating the role of house objects in arts, she started with a question of whether household objects had emotional value? She ended up exploring how these objects acquired ‘emotional value’ and found that all these objects’ stories were linked to her. “It’s almost like you are getting surprised at the fact that the household object that has become normalised in the house has become special when you put it in the art space,” she said.

Marope’s co-supervisor, Professor Maureen de Jager said during her exhibition, Marope was initially interested in ‘quiet violence’ of families and homes, a theme that is evident in her Masters work.

“I remember the conversation vividly, and though the work has shifted in several ways,

the image of ‘quiet violence’ remains for me a compelling sub-narrative,” said Prof De Jager. “Implicit for instance, is the ‘quiet violence’ of cleaning as gendered labour, of housework as woman’s work - a stereotype that persists in popular culture.”

A woman or the female figure has always been the focus point in painting throughout history. These women were depicted when they were “either washing or ironing or cleaning the house”, said Marope.

For Prof De Jager, household work can be more than just work.

“The gentle labour of maintaining the home - of cleaning, mopping, dusting, painting, sanding, wiping, whitening; the endless litany of wash, rinse, dry, repeat - could also be seen as a labour of love,” said Prof De Jager. “It mirrors the relentless maintenance of familial relationships: the smoothing of unsightly seam-lines; the rending, repairing, rebuilding of bonds.”

Marope has been working with domestic objects since her second year and said that it was easier for her to talk about these objects because they were like her “favourite toys”.

“I did a project in my third year where about a hundred plates were on the wall and all of them were dirty,” said Marope. The dirty plates represented “the loss of intimacy” and a sense of “no family”.

Marope has made making sculptures her art

and household objects the tools with which she creates her masterpiece.

“Where many of us may look across the exhibition and see masses of mops, toilet rolls and folded sheets, each barely distinguishable from the next. I am almost certain that Kele would recognise every sculpture as uniquely individual, having laboured with such care over each and every one,” said Prof De Jager.

During the cause of her MFA degree, Marope discovered that her grandmother used to travel from Botswana to South Africa to find work as a washerwoman in the 1950s.

“She was known to be the best washerwoman and they used to call her ‘magic-hands’,” she said. “It felt like the sculptures were a monument to my grandmother and I didn’t intend to do it like that, I wasn’t even aware when I was working through those sheets.”

Prof De Jager said that there was an ironic link between Marope’s grandmother’s story about being known as the best washerwoman and Marope’s exhibition.

“There is a delightful irony in the perfectionism with which Kele has produced and refined her lowly domestic objects, crafting them as if with her own ‘magic hands’.”

Prof De Jager said that Marope’s “MFA submission is really the product of a tender and thoughtful unfolding; and with it, a lifetime of ‘small’ meditations on the insurmountable ambivalences of ‘home’”.

Barrett scoops S2A3 award

Master of Science (MSc) graduate, Dennis Barrett received the S2A3 award at the 2014 Graduation ceremony. The award is given to the top MSc graduate and Barrett believes the achievement is testament to the support he received from his supervisor and fellow students at the Department of Mathematics.

Though he had kept the award in mind during his MSc studies, Barrett was still very happy to come out as the top Masters graduate. "It was still a pleasant surprise to find out I had actually won it, particularly since I know there were some very smart people graduating with their MSc alongside me," he said.

Having initially intended to study Computer Science and Linguistics, the Johannesburg-born Barrett found that he greatly enjoyed Pure Mathematics at undergraduate level and chose to continue in this field.

"As for how I became interested in my particular field, I'd say it was mainly because of my supervisor Dr Remsing," Barrett explained. "He took an interest in me during my undergraduate, and got me excited about the research he was involved with. By the middle of my Honours year, I had decided to do a PhD and become an academic."

This is the path that Barrett is currently following. As a PhD candidate under the co-supervision of Dr Claudiu Remsing of Rhodes University and Dr Olga Rossi at the University of Ostrava in the Czech Republic, he is continuing his research in the field of geometric control theory, which was the broad topic of his Master's thesis.

"Control theory is the study of dynamical systems that can be compelled to behave in a particular fashion (i.e. they can be 'controlled')," Barrett explained. He cited the example of a car to explain how research goes in to establishing how systems can be optimally controlled, though stated that the applications of control theory broadly range from engineering to economics and even ecology.

"'Geometric' control theory is a field of mathematics that develops and uses geometric tools to answer the sorts of questions posed by control theory," he elaborated. "It is a relatively recent development in mathematics, and has become increasingly important not only in control theory, but also in broader fields of geometry."

His interest in this topic stems from the fact that it draws from a number of different fields in Mathematics, allowing for a range of approaches to be taken in resolving problems. This is something he finds exciting in combination with the many open problems to be tackled due to this being a recent development in Mathematics.

His time with the Mathematics Department has been enjoyable, particularly at postgraduate level. "I think the Maths Department is great for postgraduate study. It has nice facilities for working in the department, and since there are now quite a few of us maths postgrads despite being a fairly small department, there is a good environment for study," he concluded. support and advice.

Two RUBi students graduate with distinction

Rhodes University Research Unit Bioinformatics (RUBi) has graduated two students with distinction, Ngonidzashe Faya and Caleb Kipkurui Kibet, for MSc Bioinformatics and Computational Molecular Biology on 11 April 2014.

Both students had a wonderful experience in the programme and now they are pursuing PhD degrees in Bioinformatics in the Research Unit of Bioinformatics (RUBi).

Faya, whose thesis was entitled 'A step forward in defining Hsp90s as potential drug targets for human parasitic diseases' said "I think joining this programme was one of the best decisions I have ever made in my life. Studying at Rhodes University, with such a diverse and international environment, I made new friends and learnt from the best lecturers who are experts in their fields."

"The journey was not smooth, as the program was too demanding and both coursework and research had to be completed in one academic year. At first, it seemed impossible to do 10 courses and research in one year, but the way everything is handled in this program compels you to work hard and at the same time enjoy what you are doing."

"I managed to graduate with a distinction and I wouldn't have achieved this if it weren't for the oneness that is in the Bioinformatics Lab. We were like a family and everyone was just willing to help throughout the entire year," he added.

Faya said that his supervisor Prof Ozlem Tastan Bishop was very helpful and she was there to guide him throughout. "She allowed me to bring in new ideas, challenging my intellectual skills, in driving my research in a direction of my own and helped me when I was getting lost."

"Coming from a different country (Kenya) with a slightly different education system and culture, I wasn't sure how I would adapt. However, the community at Rhodes University and colleagues at RUBi were so helpful in ensuring a seamless incorporation into the Rhodes culture," said Caleb Kipkurui Kibet. His thesis entitled 'Analysis of transcription factor binding specificity using ChIP-seq data'.

"The program requires some sharp research and problem solving skills, ability to ask the right question to solve your problem. I had this skill to some level, but the guidance from my supervisor, Prof Phillip Machanick helped me to grow it a lot," said Kibet.

RUBi is a young, dynamic, fast growing and enthusiastic research unit, open to new ideas and challenges. It comprises staff members from the Departments of Biochemistry, Chemistry, Computer Science, Mathematics and Statistics. RUBi is spearheaded by Prof Bishop who has worked tirelessly to develop it. The class of 2013 had two students supervised by Prof Bishop and the other two by Prof Machanick.



Ngonidzashe Faya



Caleb Kipkurui Kibet

Local Student graduates with distinction

While growing up in Fingo Village in Grahamstown East, the idea of attending university seemed like a far-off dream to Vuyile Sixaba, son of Rhodes University gardener Ms Nomathemba Sixaba. That one day he would graduate from Rhodes years later with a triple major in Maths, Applied Maths, Maths Statistics and Physics and 19 distinctions out of 22 modules, “is the stuff of dreams”. Sixaba graduated with a BSc degree with distinction in April 2014.

His mother, Ms Nomathemba Sixaba works in the Grounds and Gardens Division. She said there were times she would tell him to work hard and focus on his books “then my nieces would talk to him and tell him not to study too hard because he would go mad. I told him no, education is the key to life.”

“We must pull up our socks and work harder and then we can be who we choose to be and do what we want in the future. He would listen to me every now and again. He is the only one of my children who got into university and it did not happen with ease. He worked hard and now he is doing well,” she added.

Vuyile is currently doing joint Honours in physics and applied maths. He is adamant that there are ample opportunities for hard-working young South Africans who want to study further. “Too many young people seem to want things on a silver platter without putting in the work. Life doesn’t work like that.” Describing his years at various primary and high schools in Fingo Village as “the most awesome part of my life” Sixaba explains he has a very simple idea of success which has underpinned his somewhat mammoth undertaking and secured him a triple major

degree in Pure Math, Applied Math and Mathematical Statistics.

“My idea of success is being able to afford what you like, be with the people you love and do what you love. Being rich brings a lot of problems; some people tend to like you only for your money and you never can tell who your real friends are. Loyalty is the one trait I adore the most, and you hardly ever find loyal people around rich people. Rich people can be really lonely at times.”

This view was cultivated by a living example close to home. Sixaba’s uncle, Mzwandile Sixaba is a “walking inspiration” to the young man. “He is the head of the family and he was never rich but he could afford to support the family. Up to this day he still has a wife, his children love and respect him and what he says is respected. I really just want a life like his,” Sixaba explains.

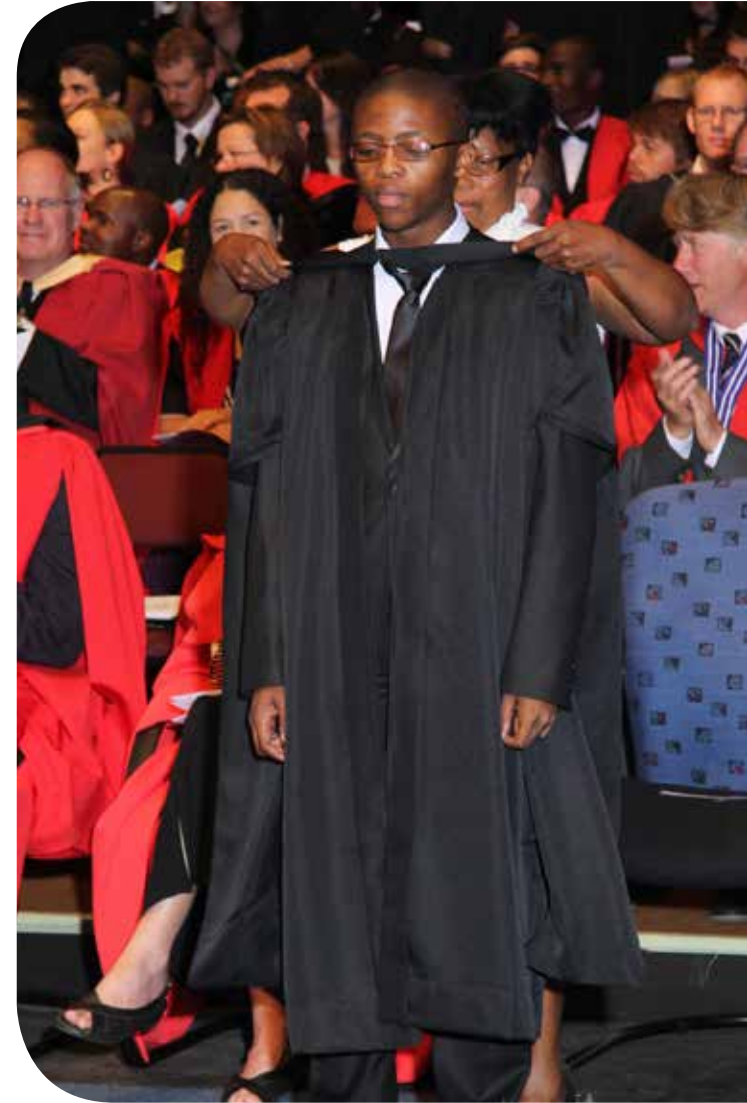
In considering how this role-model differs from those of his peers, he notes his ambition differs from a lot of people in that “I strive to be like the person who is within my household, who has gone through and experienced exactly the same things I have and who was raised by the same person who raised me, unlike a lot of young people who idolise people they have never even seen face to face and might never meet.” Describing his journey through Rhodes as a long one made easier by the support and care of friends and family, Sixaba recounts the shift from being “one of the naughty boys” at high school to falling in love with learning and education.

“At that stage I hung out with the ‘big boys’. It’s only when my mother got sick of being called to school when I was in trouble that she told my maths teacher, Mr Babu, that he should give me a hiding if I do something again. After that, I listened in class and worked hard at home with my studies, and studied with a friend of mine who always had a ‘mind for school’.”

The year of his Grade 9 exams he came top of the class in every subject, nine in total, and he credits the high calibre of teachers at the school. “Ntaba Maria Primary was where it all started. At the time this school was known to be the best primary school in the township, so I got the chance to be taught by some of the best teachers in the township.”

He then moved on to complete the last three years of schooling at Nathaniel Nyaluza Secondary School. “They took 30 learners from three different schools in the township and we had to write an English and a maths test to enter a certain after school programme and I came up first out of all of them. From then on I kind of got attention at my new school,” he said.

This coincided with meeting his maths teacher, Dr Humphrey Atebe, who would go on to be Sixaba’s mentor and very close friend. “He saw potential in me



Ms Nomathemba Sixaba and her son, Vuyile.

and he pushed me to go the extra mile and without him, I wouldn’t have gotten 100% for my final year of matric. Unfortunately he’s no longer with us.”

Sixaba’s mother is a constant pillar of strength. “My mother was always there for me at times when I thought I shouldn’t be studying I should just be with friends. She used to ask me every day if I had a test coming up or how was school that day and all those supportive things. She really was there from the word go for me and I owe a lot to her.”

Sixaba’s studies were made possible by the Square Kilometre Array Africa (SKA) scholarship, one of many for which he applied during school. SKA is a global collaboration, which is part of an international group building the world’s biggest radio telescope in South Africa.

“During my matric year, I knew I had to find funding somehow and a friend of mine, Sivuyile Madikane, helped me with this. We used to check online almost every week for bursaries and scholarships and I applied to many of them. At the time I didn’t believe these internet things could actually work because I applied online. All the other ones rejected me for some reason but the SKA proved to be the successful one. I’ll forever be indebted to them to giving me such a wonderful chance to further my education.”



Prof Snowball awarded the Vice-Chancellor's Distinguished Research Award

Professor Jen Snowball has been acknowledged for her contribution to research at Rhodes University by being awarded the Vice-Chancellor's Distinguished Research Award for 2013, an initiative aimed at stimulating research and research-related scholarly activities, and recognise an exceptional young staff member engaged in research at Rhodes University.

Prof Snowball, who is a senior lecturer in the Department of Economics and Economic History at Rhodes was described as "an asset to the research community", "a true inspiration to many", and "an exceptional and worthy nominee" for this award by peer reviewers.

In the 17 years since the publication of a study of the National Arts Festival in Grahamstown in 1997, co-authored with Professor Geoff Antrobus entitled 'The present nature and future expansion potential of accommodation at the Standard Bank National Arts Festival, Grahamstown', Prof Snowball has explored a core set of research areas spanning Cultural Economics, Environmental Economics, and Teaching and Learning in the discipline of Economics.

According to her citation, read out at the 2014 graduation ceremony, Prof Snowball has adeptly focused her research efforts on matters pertinent to Grahamstown and its surrounds, and has framed them within generalizations that have gained her an international reputation. "It is an example to all that her research results exhibit national and international acclaim, while retaining local relevance and impact," it read.

Prof Snowball describes her research area as mostly in non-market valuation, "finding ways of valuing things that are not sold in the market, so that informed decisions about public and private funding can be made".

One of her case studies focused on the economics of art and culture, exploring the National Arts Festival and the ways in which it could contribute to social cohesion, meaning making and interpretation of life experiences, and education.

Prof Snowball has a record for her high levels of scholarly quality and productivity, and her high standards of teaching and postgraduate supervision, having been the recipient of the Vice-Chancellor's Distinguished Teaching Award for 2012 and recipient



Prof Jen Snowball

of a National Excellence in Teaching and Learning Award from the Council on Higher Education in 2011. She is known for her embedded community engagement approach, broad academic leadership, and reputation as amongst the most generous hearted of colleagues. According to Deputy Vice-Chancellor Dr Peter Clayton, Prof Snowball is an example of efficiency in getting the three pillars of the university working together, in which the research, teaching and learning, and community engagement aspects of her work are inherently integrated and interrelated.

She was thrilled upon hearing the news of the award: "It was a big surprise, because the Dean of Commerce submitted my CV without me knowing it. It is great to know that the university values my research activities," she said, explaining that a genuine curiosity about her areas of research in

cultural and environmental economics underpins her research endeavours.

"Research partnerships are a vital part of doing good research in my areas of economics. I mostly publish with others - students and academics from Rhodes in Economics and other departments, and academics from other universities. These really rich collaborations make for good research, as in interesting and hopefully useful," she said.

Apart from the extensive research and lecturing responsibilities she is currently focused on getting a new project, Environmental and Natural Resource Economics Focus Area (Enrefa) off the ground in conjunction with Professor Gavin Fraser. This includes six PhD and three Masters students at the moment. "There are huge benefits to working in a research group studying related topics," she said.

Prof Hill scoops Community Engagement and Senior Research Awards

Professor Martin Hill and the Biological Control Research Group comprising Dr Julie Coetzee, Dr Jaclyn Hill and Dr Grant Martin from the Department of Zoology and Entomology are the recipients of the 2013 Vice-Chancellor's Distinguished Community Engagement Award.

He also received the Vice-Chancellor's Distinguished Senior Research Award an initiative aimed at stimulating research and research-related scholarly activities at Rhodes University. Prof Hill is the first academic to receive two VC's Awards in one year. To date the Biological Control Research Group (BCRG) has undertaken research throughout Africa, Europe, America, Australia and New Zealand; but it is their efforts closer to home that has earned them this accolade.

With a focus on processes of implementation and technology transfer, the BCRG has undertaken extensive exploration of invasive aquatic weeds, both floating and submerged, which pose an increasing threat to national aquatic ecosystems and the quantity and quality of potable water. Much of this work has been based on understanding the ecology, biology and management of invasive aquatic weeds and reducing the increasing costs of managing them. According to Professor Hill, the weeds cost millions of rands in control mechanisms every year. To combat this, the BCRG has undertaken extensive research aimed at the development of biological control methods for invasive plants which would ideally involve a range of stakeholders including landowners, governmental organisations and local communities. However, the group retains a focus on the implementation of their findings.

Prof Hill said, "We believe our research should go beyond the lab bench and should be implemented through open communication and the transfer of appropriate technology. We maintain that biological control, and the science behind it, has the ability to empower local communities to manage their own natural resources." To extend their vision the BCRG has established the Disabled People's Weed Biological Control Short Course in partnership with Grahamstown Area Distress Relief Association (GADRA) with the ultimate goal of providing trained individuals with job opportunities within the greater Grahamstown community, as well as South Africa. In addition, they run the accredited Weed Biological Control Short Course through Rhodes University which equips community members with the necessary

skills and basic tenets of invasive weed ecology and biological control.

Their mass-rearing programs, in which biological control agents are cultivated for study and distribution, have been run in partnership with the Working for Water (WfW) initiative, SAEON Elwandle Node, GADRA, and local Grahamstown schools. According to Prof Hill the mass rearing programs have employed people with disabilities

"We believe our research should go beyond the lab bench and should be implemented through open communication and the transfer of appropriate technology."

from the Grahamstown local community to assist in the general maintenance of the mass-rearing facility, as well as the collection of insects for release.

In addition, the BCRG has set up a mass rearing programme at Ntsika Secondary School in Joza, where biological control agents for water hyacinth, South Africa's worst aquatic weed, and agents for various cactus species are mass reared for release around the country.

In an effort to expand their project beyond the science of biological control and with the hope of "demystifying the science", Prof Hill helped establish the Biology Internship programme run in collaboration with Victoria Girls High School, Graeme College and Ntsika Secondary School which aims to

equip the layman with the necessary skills to play an active role in the production and distribution of bio-control agents, ultimately enabling citizens to take responsibility for the control of invasive alien weeds.

"The programme is envisaged to help encourage environmental stewardship in our local community, improving the quality of young science graduates and initiate a positive and productive relationship between a tertiary institution and school learners," he said.

When it comes to Research, Professor Hill highlights collaborative relationships within the university as being a crucial factor in the success of various initiatives he has spearheaded over the years.

Having previously worked at the Agricultural Research Council before moving to Rhodes, Prof Hill said he did not change research direction during his time at Rhodes but has rather embraced a collaborative attitude and fostered mutually beneficial working relationships with a range of academics representing a wide array of disciplines and focus areas.

"Collaborations must grow organically. As academics we are often criticised for not undertaking transdisciplinary research but in my opinion if there's no need, why do it? In my case there was a need and it was the best thing I could have done to have embarked on various collaborations," he added.



Prof Martin Hill

Integrated approach for an integrated department

If the Department of Human Kinetics and Ergonomics (HKE) was a tripod, it would rest on these three legs: the biophysical, the physiological and the psychological. Or, as lecturer Mr Andrew Todd simplifies, the what, the how and the why of human movement.

It is not difficult to see why he has received the VC's Distinguished Teaching Award for his teaching in the HKE Department. He effortlessly converts the technical jargon of his specialisation (the biophysical aspect of human movement) into accessible language, and uses appropriate examples to illustrate concepts.

He starts by explaining that the HKE Department is interested in understanding human performance from different perspectives. This includes activities that sportsmen and women are engaged in, ergonomic performance (the working environment) and activities of daily living.

The bones, or 'levers' of the body which make up the mechanical basis for human movement, fall under fundamental biomechanics, which Mr Todd teaches. Since many people are susceptible to something like back pain, he would explore proactive interventions for avoiding back pain with his students.

Anthropometry, which is the size and shape of the human body and its implications for human health, is another area of Mr Todd's expertise. He teaches students how to measure different factors such as elbow length for optimal human performance during a simple task such as sitting at a table.

But he emphasises that collaboration within the Department is vital. "We promote the idea of a holistic, integrated approach," he says. "It is [also] in the nature of humans, therefore we are almost always working as a team."

Most of Mr Todd's over 20 published research papers are written with a colleague. But more significantly, the students are provided with the benefit of integration. "Ideally, students connect the dots between what I'm teaching and what somebody else is teaching. The more we collaborate, the easier it is to demonstrate the links to the students," he says.

Being awarded the VC's Distinguished Teaching Award is particularly meaningful to him, who started in the Department in 1996 as a student, and was employed full time in 2004. "I was a nervous public speaker. I was absolutely terrified for my Honours presentation. I went blank halfway. I didn't finish." But thanks to Prof Pat Scott seeing potential in him, he completed his MSc and was encouraged to become a lecturer.

"I never saw myself as somebody who would receive an award like this," he says, but adds that Candice Christie, the current Head of Department, has also been vital to his support system for her openness to teaching in different ways and maintenance of high standards in the Department.

He adds that the award itself encourages lecturers to strive in their teaching. "There is always room for improvement," he says. He constantly adapts his lectures to bring the world to the classroom.

"The content may be the same, but the context changes from day to day," he



Mr Andrew Todd in the HKE gym with a lumbar motion monitor, which is attached to the spine to give information about its movement.

explains, citing the use of Oscar Pistorius' participation in the main Olympic Games as an example of science in everyday life explored in class.

"Our subject lends itself easily to being able to use day to day activities to demonstrate. Students never look at the world in the same way again. Something like pushing a trolley is seen from a new perspective," he says.

But he adds that being able to provide this perspective, and being rewarded for it, would have been impossible without the Department's help. "I think it is a massive privilege to be given the award, and the Department has played a massive role in facilitating it especially the education afforded to me when I myself was an HKE student."

“We can afford to see the students as individuals because we are a small department. And I’m fully aware that not every teacher has that luxury.”



Ms Undine Weber with a group of third year and Honours students in the German Seminar Room.

Not just about teaching German

When Ms Undine Weber left Germany for Rhodes 1996, she intended to stay for two to three years only. Eighteen years later, she is the Head of German Studies and recipient of the Vice-Chancellor’s Distinguished Senior Teaching Award.

But what sets her apart from other lecturers at Rhodes? Scanning over her 200 page teaching portfolio leaves little room for questioning. Apart from overwhelmingly complimentary testimonials and teaching evaluations, her teaching portfolio gives evidence of research output, course design and a vital contribution necessary for the transformation of higher education in South Africa.

But if you ask her what teaching is about, she will not hesitate to focus on the students. “It’s about the people you are teaching. You can have all the knowledge as to how to teach, but if you don’t like the people, it’s not going to work,” she says.

Linking learners with backgrounds very different to that of German language and culture is a priority. “Any topic should be relevant to why we are here,” she says. “As an example, a question such as ‘Is there such a thing as German culture?’ would be raised in class, and followed by the question, ‘Is there such a thing as a South African culture?’”

German Studies is therefore much more than simply being able to speak another language. Learning

about the culture allows students to engage with an ex-colonial heritage that has had a profound impact on the South Africa we live in today. This allows plenty of room for critical thinking. “We enrich the students and at the same time we give them transferable skills - useful skills that they can use for learning another language and culture,” adds Ms Weber.

Ms Weber’s own teaching style encompasses an impressive number of different methods because, as she says, “One method actually won’t get you anywhere. In order to make any subject accessible, you have to try a multitude of approaches.”

These include the direct method (speaking German only to third year and Honours students), the grammar translation method, the audio-lingual/visual method, and the intercultural approach.

“I think it must be a healthy mix of those,” she adds. “Different methods appeal to different learner types. Only that will give meaningful results.”

It is this broad approach to teaching, combined with Ms Weber’s ability to treat students as individuals, that the students themselves appreciate. MA student Gwyn Ortner adds to a long list of opportunities made available to her through Ms Weber, the Department’s intimate knowledge of the students. “They even know your handwriting,” she says.

Ms Weber acknowledges that being able to provide a personal touch is the result of fortunate circumstances. “We can afford to see the students

as individuals because we are a small department. And I’m fully aware that not every teacher has that luxury.”

Still, she is known to put in many extra hours for her students, including unpaid work as an examiner for the Goethe Institute, which affords Rhodes Students a real chance to study at a German University. Even now, while on sabbatical until July, she comes to Rhodes every Tuesday to oversee post-graduate students.

Ms Weber, who was nominated for the VC’s Distinguished Senior Teaching Award in 2012, feels proud to have won it in 2013. “I am very pleased that this award exists, not only because I won it, but because at university level, people forget that teaching should be equally important to research. It is what I enjoy the most: the interaction.”

In order to receive the Senior Award, the candidate has to be involved in national or international curriculum design, and engage with teaching (methods) in an academic way.

Ms Weber’s experience in this field is rich, and one only has to look at the changes in the German Studies Department during her lectureship to see what a remarkable positive impact she has made on the structuring of courses and tutorials.

However, it is yet again the personal impact of her teaching that she values most. Her holistic approach boils down to one word: empathy. “I think empathy sums it up quite well,” she concludes.

Making no bones about HIV/AIDS positivity



Dr Patricia Henderson

Two lovers discover that they are both HIV positive. Deciding not to separate in the face of adversity, they hold an elaborate set of wedding ceremonies, and support each other through oncoming hardships. The woman encourages the man to take anti-retroviral drugs, which prolongs both their lives. He in turn speaks out openly about his experiences with the virus - something that was unusual for men to do.

This is but one of the positive stories told in Dr Patricia Henderson's book 'A Kinship of Bones: AIDS, Intimacy and Care in Rural KwaZulu Natal'. The 254 page monograph of original research earned Dr Henderson the Vice-Chancellor's Book Award at the recent graduation ceremony.

Where much focus has been placed on the stigmatisation of people living with HIV/Aids, 'A Kinship of Bones' highlights the generosity of many home-based carers and family members in the Northern Drakensberg sub-district of Okahlamba.

"The book deals with care outside the institutional domains of hospitals and clinics - that is within homes where people afflicted due to the illness were cared for by family members and volunteers from the home-based care network," says Dr Henderson.

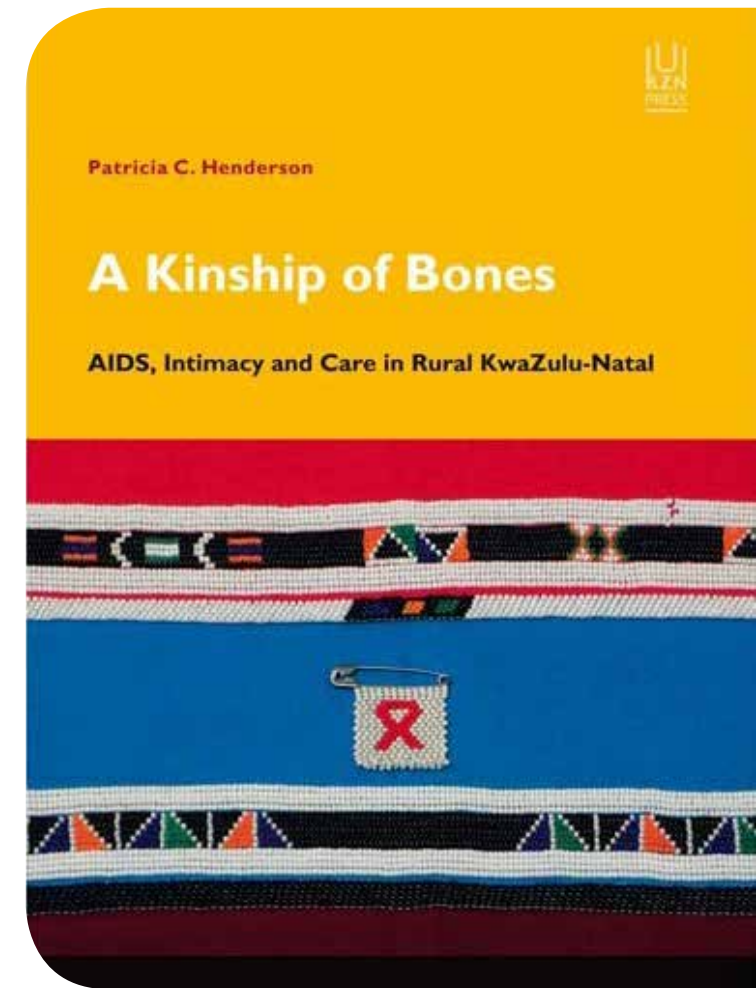
Dealing with everyday life centered around death and dying and the visceral aspects of the disease, her work looks in particular at "what it means to touch and be touched, to carry and be carried, and to exchange speech in the context of illness," as she states in her Introduction.

Dr Henderson's research period in Okahlamba from 2003 to 2005 straddled the time when anti-retrovirals became available in the area. This provided her with a unique perspective, and allowed her to offer an ethnographic record of a period where illness was not only acute, but death was initially inevitable.

This was captured in the local phrase referring to what it was like to undergo illness through HIV/Aids: "Usala'ngamathambo." "You are left with bones." Without the assistance of two local women with backgrounds in home-based caring and children and youth, Dr Henderson says the book would not have been possible. Zanele Mchunu and Phumzile Ndlovu worked tirelessly as research assistants, and also helped to clarify points of translation until Dr Henderson was fluent enough in Zulu to understand conversations with her interlocutors.

"Utterly thrilled" is how Dr Henderson describes her reaction to receiving the VC's Book Award. "Not just for myself, but for the people with whom I worked. Because for me, the award constitutes recognition of ordinary people's lives and the humanistic value of anthropology in capturing the details of such lives," she says.

A nominating colleague for the award said of the



book, "The incredible detail in this book makes it a worthy recipient of the award, for Dr Henderson presents anthropological fieldwork at its finest, indicating the intricacies of everyday life and stepping back to explain the broader social and human significance".

This broader significance may well have to do with the fact that Dr Henderson does not shy away from challenging predominant discourse that circulated about the consequences of the disease. For example the prediction that HIV/Aids orphans would inevitably become involved in criminal activities because they were not being socialised properly.

"That really wasn't happening in these communities at all," she says. Instead, the ethnography demonstrates "the patience and repeated attempts to access services on the part of people in the face of institutional incoherence and the absent presence of the state."

Ultimately, the book is a tribute to the lives of ordinary people and the courage they showed in their support of one another. As in the story of the two lovers who got married, Dr Henderson foregrounds issues such as desire instead of much more clinical descriptions of the virus.

This renders the book accessible to a wide range of readers outside the field of anthropology, to people interested in language, literature, philosophical aspects of care, health and the reconstitution of sociality in the aftermath of widespread death. "It's a book for people who are interested in people," concludes Dr Henderson.

Forty students from Commerce Extended Studies Programme graduated in 2014

A total of 40 undergraduate and postgraduate students from the Faculty of Commerce graduated at the 2014 Graduation ceremony. They were all from the Commerce Extended Studies Programme (CESP) and many attribute their success to the guidance and supervision they received from their lecturers and mentors.

Twenty-six graduated with a BCom degree, five with a BCom Honours, seven with a Post-Graduate Certificate in Education and others graduated with a Bachelor of Science in Mathematics and a Post-Graduate Certificate in Enterprise Management.

These successes are testimony to the strong foundation laid by former and current Extended Studies staff and members of the Faculty.

Established as an alternative route to the BCom degree at Rhodes University, the CESP provides opportunities for students who show potential but are not accepted onto the BCom degree mainstream programme due to insufficient Grade 12 points, to pursue their studies.

For Pheello Makhele, being a student on the Extended Studies Programme afforded him the opportunity to assess his strengths and weaknesses and wisely select his avenue of study.

“One great advantage of being in Extended Studies is that while you are adapting to University, you may be wise enough to assess your strengths and weaknesses in that first year, so that by the time you do the mainstream first year you have convinced yourself about what you are capable of doing. The majority of BCom students want to become Accountants and we all know what it takes to become an Accountant,” he said.

Also, the smaller classes and engagement with lecturers helped in this regard. “It was great doing CESP because all my lecturers were more than just lecturers to us. And personally for me, the most influential person in my career has been Mrs Coetzee. The way she believed in me made it difficult for me not to believe in myself,” Makhele said.

Phumeza Tshaka, of East London, is the first in her family to go to university but had all but given up hope of attending Rhodes University due to a lack of funds until a chance meeting with CESP course coordinator and lecturer Mr Oscar Eybers.

After numerous unsuccessful attempts at securing funds, Tshaka heard about the CESP and opportunities it afforded. According to Tshaka, “it was through this man’s tireless efforts, things started looking up, he managed to help with sorting out the difficulty I had with my fees and I finally got in at Rhodes a week before academics started and registered as an undergraduate in the commerce extended studies, and all of this was from a little miracle at the hiking spot down town.”

She said she found her first year very challenging, coming straight from high school and entering a completely different system, “whereby you are basically responsible for your own well-being, academically and socially; failing tests and your assignments and making new friends which was something foreign until I

got here,” but the CESP assisted in various areas.

“University is different from high school and presents a lot of challenges both good and bad, if your knowledge falls short seek help, it does not make you stupid because if you were stupid you would not be here in the first place, engage yourself with things that happen in and around you and lastly remember why and what you came here for,” Tshaka said.

Students who are admitted to the programme, usually a maximum of 50 per year, normally would not have been granted admission to Rhodes University due to insufficient points but the university recognizes that not all students emerge from homes, schools or social contexts which encourage preparation for higher education. According to Mr Oscar Eybers, course coordinator and lecturer at Rhodes, “the university sees potential in CESP students which will enable them to succeed and ultimately attain their degrees.”

The CESP is characterised by three course types including extended, augmented and fully-foundational. With regards to extended courses (Accounting and Theory of Finance), the length which a student engages this discipline is doubled, contrasted with the normal “mainstream” equivalent. With augmented courses (Management and Economics), CESP students attend “mainstream” lectures but receive supplemental instruction from within the CESP.

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“Responsibility has never been a problem for me because Rhodes prepared me well”



Mr Vuyo Kahla

Enormous responsibility is nothing new to Mr Vuyo Kahla, who, at the age of 26, was appointed Assistant Legal Advisor to former President Nelson Mandela in 1996. Four years later, at age 30 he was the Chief Legal Advisor to former Minister of Finance, Trevor Manuel.

Ten years later, at age 40, he was appointed Group Executive of Advisory & Assurance and Company Secretary of Sasol Ltd in 2011. And now, at the age of 44, he has been appointed as the Chair of the Rhodes Council.

“I was given wonderful opportunities at a young age by people who believed in my ability, and I believe in doing the same,” he says. “Irrespective of whether a person is younger or older, I appoint them for their ability and professionalism and not their age.”

Wise words but the responsibility that comes with heavyweight appointments is significant, and, at any age, not easy to bear, unless you are Kahla who takes it in his stride.

“Responsibility has never been a problem for me because Rhodes prepared me well,” he explains. “Not only in the quality of the education I received during my law degree in the 1990s, but also outside the classroom in my engagements as a student leader where I developed a strong sense of responsibility along with an awareness of how things are done.”

A driving force for transformation since his student days, his style has always been ‘change from within’. He demonstrated this when he first sat on Rhodes’ Council in 1992 at the age of 22, after being elected as the first black Vice-President of the Rhodes Students Representative Council.

The then Vice-Chancellor of Rhodes, Dr Derek Henderson, well knew the voice of the young man from Mthatha who confidently spoke his mind. Calling for an alternative admissions system at Rhodes at Council level back then, Mr Kahla emphasised that admitting historically disadvantaged black students into Rhodes was essential for the sustainability

of the University.

“We made it clear that it was not about lowering the standards at Rhodes, it was about effecting academic access to students who did not have the kind of education they should have received at school. This way, they could attain the high standards of Rhodes while the academics would also be challenged to adapt the standards of teaching and learning by factoring these students’ prior learning challenges into their approach.”

He explains that he was fortunate that his parents invested everything they had into giving him and his siblings a good school education. His mother Liamiso was a nurse and his father Vusumzi was an advisor in the Department of Agriculture. They sent them to excellent Catholic schools, including the Holy Cross High School in Mthatha, which was run by Catholic nuns.

“It was the benefit of a good education that got me into a great university like Rhodes in 1990, where I headed with my schoolfriend Mzi Mgudlwa who is now the Deputy CEO of the law firm ENSafrica. But many other learners were not so fortunate. Which is why I strongly argued the admissions case, as well as the need to increase the number of bursaries and scholarships for people from historically disadvantaged backgrounds.”

An alternative system of admission was subsequently implemented, and the number of bursaries and scholarships for historically disadvantaged black students has significantly increased over the years.

This year, Mr Kahla’s son Lubabalo (18) is in the first year of his BA at Rhodes, bringing back strong memories for Kahla of his student years:

“I had incredibly exciting times at Rhodes. My first year, 1990, was the same year that Mandela was released. The ANC had been unbanned and we were filled with a sense of victory and hope for South Africa.”

A politically active student, he was Chairperson of the South African Student Congress, Chairperson of the South African Tertiary Institutions Sports Council, and Secretary of the Law Students Council and editor of its journal, In Camera.

At the same time he was also just “one of the boys” in his residence where, he explains, that despite their diverse backgrounds there was a strong sense of collegiality and camaraderie.

He achieved well academically and was awarded the prestigious Abe Bailey Fellowship for academic and leadership prowess.

After graduating with his BA LLB his life took a radical upward turn when his credentials awarded him the appointment of

Assistant Legal Advisor to President Nelson Mandela in 1996, working alongside the Mandela's Chief Legal Advisor, struggle stalwart and legendary human rights lawyer, Fink Haysom.

"I learnt in the company of great men like Fink Haysom, Jeremy Gauntlett SC, Marumo Moerane SC and Wim Trengove SC to be very sure of the legal position one sought to advance. With these legal giants, we did pioneering work on the application of the constitutional powers of the President under the new constitution."

What he lacked in years, he made up for in guts, and he spoke out with authority against high-level decisions on several occasions.

On one of occasion he advised Mandela to oppose the head of the South African Defence Force's decision to turn down an application by a female lieutenant colonel to have the same medical benefits awarded to the families of male officers extended to the families of female officers.

It fell under what is called the 'Redress of Wrongs' process. As the President of the Country, President Mandela was also the Commander in Chief of the Defence Force and the final arbiter on military grievance matters. He turned around this decision and granted the lieutenant colonel's appeal.

"One of the many wonderful aspects of working with President Mandela was that he valued professional excellence irrespective of age," says Mr Kahla.

His next post, as the Director: Corporate and Transformation, in the Department of Justice, led to his appointment as the first Special Advisor to the National Director of Public Prosecutions. In this capacity he advised on the establishment of the National Prosecuting Authority and the Directorate of Special Operations, or what became known the Scorpions.

From here he joined the National Treasury where he became Chief Legal Advisor to Minister Trevor Manuel and the National Treasury. "I had always had an interest in the financial workings of the economy, particularly the public fiscal system under the new constitution," he continues. In this position he helped draw up new legislation, such as the Public Finance Management Act of 1999.

"I enjoyed working with Minister Manuel who highly respected my opinion and took my advice, sometimes against his own comfort, as did the Director General of the National Treasury, Maria Ramos."

Ramos subsequently asked him to join her when she became the Group Chief Executive of Transnet. He joined the Group Executive Committee, Transnet's highest decision-making committee, at the age of 34. His latest career move was to Sasol in 2011, as he wanted to acquire global experience working for a South African company with global reach.

On 13 March 2014 he took office as the Chairperson of the Rhodes Council, bringing with him his substantial public and private leadership credentials, as well as his substantial education sector contribution.



Mr Kahla has served both as a Rhodes Council member and as a member of the Rhodes Board of Governors for many years. He succeeds Judge Jos Jones who served as the Chair of Council for 18 years.

His first, most pressing duty will be to lead the process of selecting a new Vice-Chancellor for Rhodes University as its current Vice-Chancellor Dr Saleem Badat has resigned to take up a post in New York with the Andrew W Mellon Foundation higher education programme.

"Appointing a new Vice-Chancellor for Rhodes is a very urgent matter and I will be leading this process in partnership with all affected stakeholders at Rhodes, including my fellow Council members, academic staff, non-academic staff and student leaders."

In addition to this, he wants to focus on boosting the sustainability of the University. "I want us to closely examine the risks to the sustainability of the University and to address what needs to be done to sustain the momentum of transformation and progress that has characterised the era of Judge Jones and the outgoing Vice-Chancellor, Dr Badat,"





Rhodes University students winning final year moot, from left to right: Jaryd Mardon, Tamsyn Harrison, Hon Justice John Smith, Adv Kerry Watt and Prof Jonathan Campbell

Harrison takes top place in Law

“I always did well at Rhodes, but I was always a fly under the radar student. I don’t think any of my lecturers knew my name until I was in fifth year,” said Tamsyn Harrison who graduated as the top final year LLB student for 2014. She described her achievement as humbling, unexpected and unbelievable.

Harrison’s name was certainly noticeable in the Graduation books despite her being unable to attend the ceremony. She received the Judge Phillip Schock Prize for being the final year LLB student, the Lexis Nexis book prize for being the final year moot competition winner, and a Phatshoane Henney Incorporated Medal for having obtained her LLB degree with distinction.

From the small town of White River, Harrison chose to study at Rhodes after having visited Grahamstown and fallen in love with its charm. She embarked on a BA with a wide selection of subjects as she was uncertain what path her future studies would take. Finding that she enjoyed the Law, Harrison majored in the subject together with Psychology and then went on to start her LLB.

Things really picked up for Harrison after she and her partner won the final year Moot competition last year. Entering the second semester having placed top of her class in the June examinations, Harrison worked hard to maintain her marks while preparing for the All Africa Moot competition and trying to enjoy her last few months at Rhodes.

Although she initially thought there had been a mistake upon hearing how well she had done in June, the achievement gave Harrison the confidence to push towards the end of the year. “Once it sank in I think I finally realised ‘Hey, I can do this!’” she said.

And she succeeded despite something of an unusual set-back at the last hurdle when a sky-diving accident during the final examination period resulted in



From left to right: Leanne Voerman, Gabrielle Knott and Tamsyn Harrison

injury. “A body covered in cactus spines and a sprained right hand later, I had to type out my exams at about the same speed as an 85 year old blind receptionist,” Harrison relayed. “Gratefully, karma was on my side because I somehow maintained my results.”

Harrison is currently teaching in Korea after having spent a bit of time travelling through Thailand, Cambodia, and Laos. Signed with law firm Webber Wentzel, she will serve articles in Cape Town next year upon her return to South Africa.

Despite enjoying her travels and being excited at the prospect of moving to Cape Town after five years in Grahamstown, Harrison does miss what she described as the ease of Grahamstown life and the camaraderie of her classmates.

“I have learnt that Rhodes University creates bonds for a lifetime. I have made friends with a number of ex-Rhodents in Korea and even though we never knew each other before, instant friendships were formed.” she concluded.

Top law student receives Academic Honours

For Lee Crisp, returning to Grahamstown this April for Graduation was not simply an opportunity to celebrate significant academic achievements, but also a valued chance to catch up with the classmates and lecturers who made her time at Rhodes so special.

“It is easy to become so engrossed in work that you lose track of people, so what I enjoyed most [about Graduation] was being able to celebrate with my classmates and touch base with them again,” said Crisp, who walked away with Academic Honours, the Juta Law Prize for being the top LLB student based on results from both penultimate and final year, and a Phatshoane Henney Incorporated Medal for having obtained her degree with distinction.

Crisp was born and raised in East London and came to Rhodes to complete a BComm in Economics and Legal Theory before continuing to a LLB. Her love for the Law was born of the realisation that the subject is always changing and evolving. “The law requires that one keeps learning and expanding one’s knowledge base so that one remains forever a student of the law in one way or another which I think is wonderful,” Crisp elaborated.

Crisp is now serving her articles at Norton Rose Fulbright in Johannesburg. “There are days when it is really difficult to reconcile the fact that just last year I was in a lecture room in Grahamstown and now I spend my days in an office in Johannesburg, as the two worlds are polar opposites,” she remarked.

She continued to say, however, that she could not think of a better place than the Rhodes University Law Faculty to have begun her career. “I do believe that my years at Rhodes as a law student have laid a strong foundation for my success beyond my studies and I can look back and be proud of the skills and knowledge with which I left,” she said.

A particularly special feature of the Rhodes Law Faculty, according to Crisp, is that the small size of the University allows for greater contact and concern between students and lecturers. This was a factor in Crisp’s academic success.

“Never did I feel like any of my law lecturers did not have any regard for my well-being and development as a student and never did I feel like I could not go to any of my lecturers and speak to them about matters concerning their course,” she said.

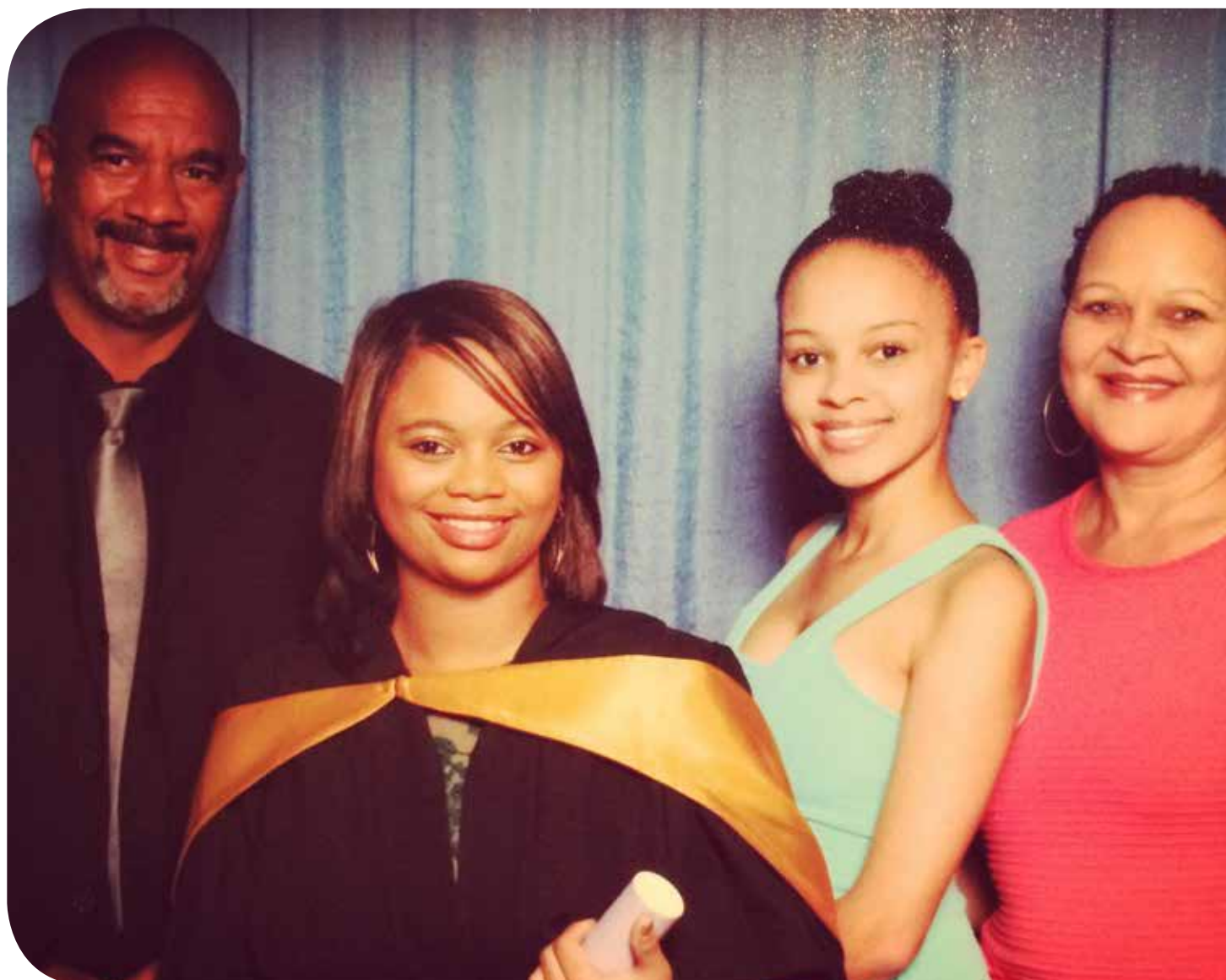
Adding strength to this support from the Faculty was Crisp’s faith, which she believes gave her the strength to persevere in her studies continuously. “That faith, coupled with the constant prayers of my loved ones, the fact that I have always truly loved studying law and my appreciation for the value of education is the truth behind my success,” she explained. Hard work, faith, and setting goals combined with the support of family, friends, and lecturers ensured that



Crisp crossed the Graduation stage feeling honoured by the awards she received.

“While I had always set goals for myself at the beginning of each academic year, I was really

overwhelmed because I did not expect to receive the prize. It’s often difficult for me to see myself as the ‘best’ at something because I look around and see people either equally or more deserving of recognition,” she said.



Lee Crisp and her family





