Gauteng Region Highlights Newsletter



Unisa - Preserving the legacy of an ethical leader





From the Regional Director's Desk

It is hard to believe that we are approaching the end of yet another productive year!

The Tambo Memorial Event was a marvel to behold. This attests to the fact that we have a number of dedicated staff members in this Region, who are prepared to go beyond the call of duty for the sake of the Unisa brand and the reputation of our Region. The leadership of this Region acknowledges and applauds the selfless dedication of all colleagues who always ensure that the Region delivers on its mandate.

We have hit the right note in 2021, as evidenced by the number of times the Region has been featured in the newly introduced Gauteng eNews and Intcom, as well as on our own social media platform. As a region, we need to promote the culture of exposing positive narratives and good-news stories based on the activities of our staff and students, especially out in the communities where we are changing people's lives. We have done exceptionally well in this regard in 2021. Well done, Gautengers! I don't have the space here to mention all the events, functions, individual achievements and accolades of the collective – let alone to highlight the names of our shining stars. But never fear: if you read further, you'll see that we have put together a summary of these activities. It makes for good reading and you will enjoy reflecting and reminiscing about the excellent year that 2021 turned out to be.

It is also important to applaud all our colleagues who were involved in the development and implementation of the Regional myUnisa site, which has been set up to improve communication between the University and our students. According to the latest information, 90 000 students are registered on this site and they now have access to Counselling, Facilitation of Learning (tutorials and academic literacy), the Library, Technology-enhanced Learning, information on workshops and various other supporting material.

We must also applaud the sizeable body colleagues who took up the opportunity to attend the Building Tomorrow's Leaders programme, offered by HRD. We congratulate them for reaching yet another important milestone in their careers and we look forward to their continued contributions to the excellence and stature of the Gauteng Region.

Without further ado, please enjoy summative highlights of 2021, as presented below!

Happy holidays and all the best for 2022!

Ms MC Masalesa

Regional Director: Gauteng Region



GAUTENG REGION HIGHLIGHTS



Partnerships

OR Tambo Memorial Lecture launch was a pivotable event for the Region. having taken two years to be crafted, it came to successful fruition during the peak of the Covid-19 third wave. Accordingly, the event – which was hosted virtually by the Gauteng Region, Unisa, in partnership with the Oliver and Adelaide Tambo Foundation – took place on the last day of youth month, 30 June 2021.

Preceding the event, an MOU (memorandum of understanding) signing ceremony was held,

This was followed by the inaugural memorial lecture in honour of the late liberation struggle icon, Oliver Reginald (OR) Tambo. The theme for the occasion was: "OR Tambo reimagined: Lessons in student leadership for contemporary South Africa"

In setting the scene, the Director of Unisa's Gauteng Region, Ms Moipone Masalesa, said that the event was meant to uphold the spirit of OR and Adelaide Tambo. "We would," she remarked, "definitely like their legacy to remain alive throughout our lives."



Professor Puleng LenkaBula

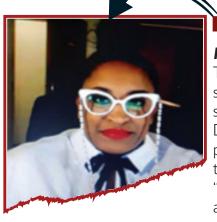
The VC stated that the partnership between Unisa and the foundation celebrates and creates a multiplicity of platforms for more rigorous engagements in the institution and outside, where the legacy of Tambo is recorded, published and made accessible in varied formats. LenkaBula recalled Tambo's legacy, which includes the pursuit of social justice, freedom for all and human dignity. She said: "His legacy is in line with Unisa's mission of taking seriously the need to serve humanity and ensure access to higher education, particularly for the marginalised."

During the lecture, the MoU was signed by both the VC and Duma Nkosi, the Chairperson of the Oliver and Adelaide Tambo Foundation, with Ms Masalesa as a witness.



Dr Bunkie Pitsoane

Our special appreciation goes to **Dr Bunki Pitsoane** (Head of Counselling: Gauteng Region) for leading the project and, most importantly, for encouraging the Adelaide Tambo Foundation to form a partnership with Unisa Gauteng Region.



Natasha Allie

Reflecting on the leadership of the African son of the soil

The Acting CEO of the Oliver and Adelaide Tambo Foundation, Natasha Allie, spoke briefly on the ongoing project between Unisa and the Foundation. She said: "It will be achieved through the newly established debate series (Tambo Day), and the many research documents that will be produced by young people on the lives of the Tambos." Allie also provided some background on the mandate of the Foundation. "Through all our projects," she remarked, "we teach people about the Tambo values, which include integrity, humility and selfless, servant leadership.



The role of education and leadership

by the youth in their own communities."



The incumbent of Unisa's Chief Albert Luthuli Research Chair, Professor Puleng Segalo, reflected on Tambo's journey and his great contribution to the African National Congress as its longest serving president. She described him as an empathetic leader, who fought for human rights. As she concluded, Segalo spoke strongly against corruption in South Africa. Commenting on the moral degeneration in our society, she noted that "The elderly in particular were close to Mama Adelaide's heart, and she worked tirelessly to create safety zones for them". She continued: "Today,

our elderly grandmothers live in fear of being attacked and raped





Bafana Nhlapo, an activist for social justice and an advocate for social change, raised a concern on how there is gradual loss of confidence in not just institutions of higher learning, but in institutions in general. He noted: "Like OR Tambo, we need to see beyond what our immediate reality dictates and the role that these institutions can play in the transformation of society." In her closing remarks,

GAUTENG REGION HIGHLIGHTS Partnerships



• The Library partnership agreement with **Mogale City Municipality**, which started in 2016, is still active and continues to benefit our students from Krugersdorp and Kagiso.



• We also have a partnership agreement with the **City of Johannesburg Metropolitan Municipality Libraries.** The partnership started in 2018 and continues to benefit our students from Soweto and Orange Farm. The MoU is in the process of being renewed.

a world class african city



• Gauteng Region successfully hosted its Library Week event in March in collaboration with Library and Information Association of South Africa (LIASA). The LIASA president-elect, Mr Nazeem Hardy, was the keynote speaker.



• Gauteng Region Library, in collaboration with the Unisa UNESCO Chair on ODL, hosted an International Literacy Day (ILD) seminar. The keynote speaker was Prof Moeketsi Letseka who delivered an address on the topic "Literacy for a human-centred recovery: Narrowing the digital divide".



• Unisa Sunnyside Library and TEL Unit successfully hosted training using Microsoft Teams in collaboration with the Atteridgeville Community Library. The aim of the event was to raise awareness about services offered by the libraries and TEL Unit. The Region wishes to express its appreciation to Mr Moses Molapise and Ms Mahlodi Moroamodishi (Atteridgeville library) for ably organising this event. Presentations were done by various departments, including the Library, TEL unit's Mr Ronald Mulaudzi and Atteridgeville Community Library.

GAUTENG REGION HIGHLIGHTS



Gauteng Region celebrated Women's Month under

under the theme, "She believed she could, so she did!". **Ms Lesedi Ledwaba-Mbangwa**, a UNISA Law graduate, entrepreneur and a gender activist, and **Ms Thembi Khumalo**, an adventurer, explorer and leader in her field, were the guest speakers. Gauteng Region management would like to thank Ms Lindelwa Mahonga for ably leading the preparations, supported by Ms Pat Lethole, Manager, Ekurhuleni Regional Service Centre and Ms Lizzy Mashiane of the Sunnyside Regional Service Centre and the Communications Unit.



Gender-based violence (GBV) is a profound and widespread problem in South Africa, impacting almost every aspect of life. GBV (which disproportionately affects women and girls) is systemic and deeply entrenched in institutions, cultures and traditions in South Africa. Gauteng Region, through the Counselling Unit, commemorated Women's Month by calling on the Unisa community to join the march against GBV



The TEL Unit successfully hosted its Technology day with the purpose of exploring the future of information or misinformation and being digitally streetwise: The topics covered were, "Dealing with Online Misinformation Threats Now and in the Future" as well as "Personal Privacy Today—2030".

SUPPORT FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES



Janine Preesman, Regional Academic Coordinator in the Gauteng Region had an opportunity to experience the amazing application of a visual processing technology founded by the Irlen Institute which is now available locally. The technology is used as part of the screening and support process for individuals dealing with challenges brought on by dyslexia, autism, traumatic brain injury, flickering lights, to name but a few. Ms Preesman subsequently trained as an Irlen screener. Irlen screeners are certified to administer the first testing session to determine if an individual will benefit from this intervention. In response to the principle of leaving no one behind, Ms Preesman motivated for Gauteng Region to consider acquiring the coloured screen overlays and smart device clings as part of support for students living with such challenges. Gauteng Region appreciates her efforts in supporting students on their journey to success.

Support to students with disabilities (ARCSWID)



- The Region compiled a student profile that indicates the specific disabilities of the students. Workshops were organised for managers and included the services of a sign language interpreter as part of the workshops, to cater for students. Due to COVID-19, the resource centres for students with disabilities are closed and the Region has requested ARCSWID to budget for Irlen screeners to assist students with dyslexia.
- As part of the student orientation, staff were trained by ARCSWID on how to develop study material for students with disabilities.

SUPPORT FOR OUR STUDENTS



• The region developed a Regional *myUnisa* site to improve communication between the University and students. At last count, 90 000 students had registered on this site and now have access to the following regional support units: Counselling: Facilitation of Learning (tutorials and academic literacy); Library service; Technology-enhanced Learning. In addition, information on workshops is available to them and they have access to *supporting material*. To complement the services mentioned, and to enhance student services, a technical support booking system has also been created. This is a space for students to engage in virtual meetings with Digital Learning Advisors and is aimed at resolving multiple technical challenges experiences, such as issues with myUnisa passwords and MS Office 365 and others. The booking system secures meetings on both staff and students' official calendars and sends confirmation e-mails.



• **Postgraduate students** are supported through academic literacy sessions and various research workshops covering topics such as ethics, plagiarism, referencing, research proposals and methodology.



• The Region has appointed 38 face-toface tutors. All the tutors have been activated to conduct sessions online with students. The Three Colleges were identified for tutor support, these being CAS, CHS and CLAW, as along with 54 high-risk modules.

SUPPORT FOR OUR STUDENTS

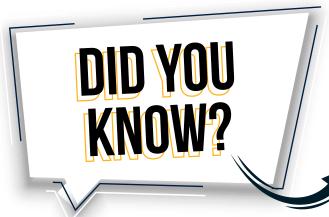


• Gauteng Region has appointed quantitative literacy facilitators to assist students with modules dealing with numeracy – such as Financial Accounting, Mathematics and Statistics. Workshops are facilitated online, using MS-teams. One-on-one consultations are conducted for those needing individual support. A total of 22 reading and writing workshops took place during the course of the year with 302 students attending.



• Gauteng Region has set up an enquiry system called Gautengtl.

The system now plays a pivotal role in student enquiries. This email-based service is meant to improve student communication and student satisfaction. It has been used successfully in the reporting of fraud and examination leaks as well as many other matters affecting students in their learning journey.



• Gauteng Region has also introduced a tutorial support project named, "Did You Know". This campaign is a proactive effort by the Region for sharing snippets of useful information with students, such as exam tips and available services (support and other) that the University offers.

SUPPORT FOR OUR STUDENTS



The newly refurbished Unisa Johannesburg Regional Centre, under the leadership of **Mr Ramotsoa Modiselle,** is available to assist students. Students can now make use of the following Unisa services that are provided online: counselling, tutorials, academic literacies service, applications and registrations. Students will, however, have onsite access to the computer lab, ARCSWiD lab, postgraduate lab, study space, library services (information search and books) and the general enquiries desk. Nonetheless, it is important to make an appointment via the Unisa booking app and to complete the health check via the Higher Health App before coming to the Regional centre.

Mr Ramotsoa Modiselle, Regional Service Centre Manager, Johannesburg office (Gauteng Region)













NEW STUDENT LEADERSHIP INDUCTED IN THE REGION







Siyabonga Lushaba, Johannesburg Chairperson

The student leadership of the Gauteng Region attended induction workshops at the Unisa Science Campus in Florida and the Sunnyside Campus.

Tshwane Chairperson, Inganathi Ketwa, stressed how important it is for student leaders to have an unbiased view of what is important to all students and for all views and opinions to be represented. "The best way to do this is to constantly consult students on what action they would like to see taken in our institution and bring this to meetings of the RSRC". (RSRC stands for Regional Student Representative Council.) **Johannesburg Chairperson, Siyabonga Lushaba,** identified their main objectives as being to serve as the bridge between students and management, along with building good and healthy relationships for years to come. He encouraged the RSRC to champion the interests of students and deal comprehensively with their enquiries.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT HIGHLIGHTS



Ms Moipone Masalesa, Regional Director, Gauteng Region

Challenges resulting from COVID-19 have not prevented the Gauteng Region from flourishing in its various community engagement initiatives. This was all possible because of the encouraging environment enabled by the Gauteng Region, under the leadership of Regional Director, Ms Masalesa Moipone. For more information on some of the successful projects undertaken, please see below.

COLLABORATION WITH UWF, COLLEGES AND SAWID

(Ms Pat Lethole, Manager, Ekurhuleni Regional Service Centre)



• Ms Pat Lethole has identified and assisted the Tshidzivhe community to register a cooperative called Tshidzivhe Bamboo Primary Cooperative Limited. Making use of the bamboo tree, the community Engagement project focuses on developing the skills necessary to empower the community. The project is registered under the College of Education and Unisa Community Engagement and represents a collaboration between two international universities (one in Indonesia and one in Australia). It is important to note that the researchers participating in this project are from Unisa and the University of AdelaideThe project has the important task of is ensuring gender diversity and well-being, as well as the involvement of youth in setting up sustainable social enterprises.



• Ekurhuleni Regional Service Centre, under the leadership of Ms Pat Lethole, the Centre Manager, is being used as the pilot site for various community projects led by the UWF, in collaboration with CAES, SAWID, C2A, CSET and the Gauteng Region, and with Mr Hector Mothudi as co-ordinator.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT HIGHLIGHTS





Dr Enid Bunki Pitsoane, Head of Counselling, Gauteng Region

Under the leadership of Dr Bunki Pitsoane, Gauteng Region contributed to Mandela Day by giving back to the community she grew up in, namely Seabe village. On 17 August 2021, the Counselling Unit embarked on a programme of learner empowerment at Ramoshidi Technical School. The programme focus fell on offering 1000 sanitary towels and toiletries to the girls, empowering boys on how to love themselves in order to be able to show respect towards others, addressing issues of diversity and respect for one another; and sharing career information with learners on the programmes offered by three universities.

CellC "Take a Girl Child to Work Day" went digital



The COVID-19 pandemic did not stop the Sunnyside Counselling Unit from hosting girls and boys from across the country as part of the Annual Cell C "Take a Girl Child to Work Day". The event took place virtually, in collaboration with the Unisa Women's Forum. The main aim and purpose of this initiative was to invigorate the spirit of hope and to inspire and empower girl children under theme of #MoreThanADay.

TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT HIGHLIGHTS



Congratulations to the following colleagues in the Gauteng Region for participating in this year's BTL programme, organised by Human Resource Development. Gauteng Region Management is proud to have been represented, in such significant numbers, in this highly competitive and powerful leadership programme. WELL DONE to these colleagues:



Project Management for Gauteng Region leadership

In the midst of challenging times, managers need to take the lead, build teams that can bounce back from setbacks and move forward with a vision. Following a strong recommendation by **Ms Moipone Masalesa, Regional Director,** the Gauteng Region afforded all leaders the opportunity to attend a five-day intensive project management course offered by SBL. The process was ably led by the Department of Human Resources in the person of **Mr Daniel Kekane, Manager Finance and Operations.**

COMMUNICATION AND MARKETING HIGHLIGHTS

Communication about the availability of Johannesburg Regional Service Centre (JRSC) was rolled out to students.



In order to promote positive narratives and highlight the achievements of the Region, the Communications Unit introduced an electronic news platform, **Gauteng Region e-News.**



A **Gauteng Region eNotice** platform was also introduced to share general notices, instead of having to distribute notices using the individual work e-mails of colleagues in the Communications Unit.



The Communications Unit also developed and implemented an improvement plan to enhance student support.



The Communications Unit developed a document on protocol for the RSRC (Tshwane and JHB) **and further hosted training for the student council on branding and communication** so as to introduce the newly elected leadership to the Unisa brand.





DID YUU Know? The "Did you know?" campaign was introduced and implemented to enhance ongoing student communication. This campaign is a proactive effort by the Region to share snippets of useful information with students, for example, available services, exam tips and all of the available support services made available to students by the University.



The Region **hosted monthly staff assemblies**, to share information with staff and to engage on COVID-19 matters.



The Alumni office in collaboration with the Region hosted the **Sunnyside** and **Ekurhuleni** Chapters.

RESEARCH HIGHLIGHTS

A special word of appreciation to **Ms Lindelwa Mahonga** and her team (**Ms Mosima Makola, Mr Philani Zulu, Ms Maserame Dipale, Mr Thabo Modibedi, Ms Pat Lethole, Mr Kagiso Mekoa, Ms Catherine Boonzaaier and Mr Albert Nematandani) for all the research highlights that the Region managed to achieve this year. The Gauteng Research and Innovation Committee (GRIC)** was established with the aim of encouraging staff members to participate in research activities. To this end, it has over the years hosted research seminars and workshops at which staff presented their ideas and feedback was provided by academic experts invited from the CEDU. Over time, the committee broadened its focus towards encouraging innovation awareness through research-informed solutions to day-to-day operation. In addition, it has emphasised how the research agenda could be further embraced by working with communities as knowledge co-creators and by promoting the idea of the Region positioning itself as a hub of research activities beyond physical or structural boundaries for everyone interested in collaborative interaction.



Ms Lindelwa Mahonga (Chairperson)

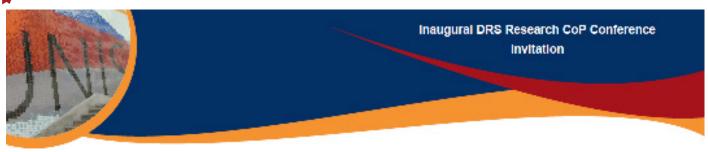


RESEARCH HIGHLIGHTS

Gauteng Region hosts an Innovation Day under the leadership of GRIC



Dr Nozipho Gumbi (CSET-iNanoWS) was the guest speaker at this event. She discussed the power of grabbing opportunities for impactful and innovative solutions in academic research, service delivery and community development. She also enthralled the audience with her inspirational presentation titled, 'The Art of Innovation: A perspective of a PhD Scholar', sharing words of wisdom on how she navigated her student walk to success. Gauteng Region hopes to continue drawing on her inspirational journey through collaborative projects in 2022 and beyond.



The DRS Research CoP hosted its inaugural conference on 20-22 October 2021. **Prof Sioux McKenna** (**Rhodes University**), **Prof Thenjiwe Meyiwa** (**Unisa**) and **Prof Les Labushagne** (**Unisa**) delivered keynote addresses covering pertinent issues in the research landscape. The event included a preconference workshop on The Decolonial Role of Indigenous Knowledges presented by **Prof Soul Shava** (**Unisa**). Gauteng Region was actively represented by Ms Lindelwa Mahonga, Mr Hector Mothudi and Dr Mangi Ntuli in various tasks. The region appreciates the staff members who took time to attend and contribute to discussions over the three-day event.

CONTRIBUTION TO SCHOLARLY KNOWLEDGE

Publications and Projects



- Ms Pat Lethole and Prof Norma Romm contributed a chapter, titled "Prospects for Sustainable Living with Focus on Interrelatedness, Interdependence and Mutuality: Some African Perspectives", to the book From Polarisation to Multispecies Relationships, published by Springer.
- Ms Pat Lethole, through the Ekurhuleni Regional Services Centre, is part of a collaborative effort with Prof Janet McIntyre from Pak Rudolf Wirawan (Padjadjan University in Indonesia), Prof. Norma Romm and Prof Arko-Achemfuor Akwasi (Unisa ABET and Youth Development), Dr Bunki Pitsoane (Gauteng Region) and Tshidzivhe Community members titled Social enterprise to address the sustainable development goals and circular green economy project.



• Ms Pat Lethole with Mphatheleni Makaulule, Rudolf Wirawan and Janet McIntyre-Mills contributed a chapter titled, "Aa!! Venda women and social enterprise: Stepwise progress to sustainable

living" in the volume **The Elgar Companion to Transformative Education for Regenerative Development**



• Ms Lindelwa Mahonga is participating in the South African Centre for Digital Language Resources (SADiLaR) African Wordnet (AfWN) project under the Unisa node. The project's aim is to develop electronic lexical databases for South African indigenous languages using the expand model based on the English Princeton Wordnet.

CONTRIBUTION TO SCHOLARLY KNOWLEDGE



• **Dr Bunki Pitsoane's** manuscript titled, "Exploring the Contribution of Counselling on Challenges Faced by Students with Visual Impairment in an ODeL University" has been accepted for publication in the *Journal of Student Affairs in Africa*, Vol.9, Issue 2.



• **Dr Smangele Ntuli's** abstract titled, "The Provision of Tutor Support Service during Covid-19 Pandemic Lockdown at an Open Distance Learning Higher Education Institution", was accepted for the 14th annual International Conference of Education, Research and Innovation (ICERI) on 8-9 November 2021.



• **Mr Hector Mothudi** presented a paper titled, "Learning Reimagined: Effects of Covid-19 Pandemic on Students and Virtual Learning - A case of Unisa Gauteng Region" at the Inaugural DRS Research CoP conference held on 20-22 October 2021.



• **Gauteng Region** held its research seminar under the theme, Building Bridges and Constructing Pillars with Stakeholders in Evolving Times: Reflections on Service Provision and Collaboration on 30 September 2021. **Mosima Makola** and GRIC members hosted keynote speakers, Dr Nora McRae (Waterloo University, Canada), Dr Genevieve James (Unisa), Ms Pat Lethole (Unisa), Mr Vina Maphosa and Mr Siyabonga Lushaba (Unisa) on the day.

PERSONALIA

Graduations

We at the Gauteng Region wish to extend our heartfelt congratulations to **ALL staff members and students** who completed their studies. We wish you well on your next adventure!



congratulations

to **Ms Mosima Tefo** for completing her Masters' Degree in Education: Curriculum Studies.







Ms Itumeleng Makgwane Completed BA Honours in Psychology



Completed BA Honours in Psychological Counselling



Ms Kgomotso Nyamakazi Completed BA Honours in Psychology

Resignations/Farewells

The Region had to bid farewell to some of our colleagues who have made tremendous contributions.







Gauteng Region would like to express its appreciation to **Dr Keith Jacobs, Regional Director, Western Cape** who retired at the end of August 2021.

Changes are often bittersweet, and your departure is just that. Thank you for being a tireless leader, always there to support the Gauteng Region. We will miss your hard work and your supporting. I wish you all the luck in the world. You will be missed! Onwards and upwards to greater things! **Ms Moipone Masalesa, Regional Director, Gauteng Region.**

Thank you for being a wonderful leader!! You were indeed a leader who served staff and students. You were an activist for the improvement of quality and enhanced service delivery and for that and I salute you! Now, more than ever, it is time to apply the most important three "F"s in your life 1) Faith, 2) Family and 3)Friends! **Ms Erin Naude, Deputy Director, Gauteng Region.**

• **Dr Johleen Mouton,** formerly the Regional Academic Coordinator at the Florida RSC, quietly left Unisa to go into retirement at the end of February. We wish Dr Mouton every happiness in this next phase of her life.

Senior appointments:





• The Region appointed **Ms Thembeka Ntuli Mpapama** as Communication and Marketing Manager. We wish her all the best as she provides service excellence in pursuit of institutional goals.

In memorial



Our thoughts are with all our colleagues who lost loved ones in **2021.**

Ms Deborah Dlamini

As Gauteng Region, we pause to remember our colleague in the Johannesburg RSC, Ms Deborah Dlamini from student administration who sadly passed away.





Editorial Team



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Acknowledgements

- Creating this Highlights Newsletter has required many sharp eyes. Our appreciation goes to the Communication and Marketing Team mentioned above and the entire Regional Communication and Marketing Committee, as well as to management and many of our colleagues, for their valuable contributions, critique and editorial input during the process.
- We would like to make a special mention of **Ms Lindelwa Mahonga** for her relentless support in proofreading the document to ensure that we deliver quality.

Colleagues, YOUR contributions, ideas and participation are always

welcome!