

# BOOK OF ABSTRACTS

University of Pretoria, Faculty of Economic and Management Sciences,  
Unit for Community Engagement and Mamelodi Campus



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# Community Engagement Seminar 2024

**Theme:** Transformative collaborations: Bridging academia and communities

**10 October 2024**

**Pretoria, South Africa**

## Organisers

### **Prof Natasja Holtzhausen**

Professor of Public Administration and Management

Faculty of Economic and Management Sciences

Tel: +27 12 420 3474

Email: [natasja.holtzhausen@up.ac.za](mailto:natasja.holtzhausen@up.ac.za)

### **Dr Eugene Machimana**

Head: Unit for Community Engagement

Department for Education Innovation

Tel: +27 12 420 5199

Email: [eugene.machimana@up.ac.za](mailto:eugene.machimana@up.ac.za)

### **Dr Martina Jordaan**

Head: Community Engagement research and postgraduate studies

Mamelodi Campus

Tel: +27 12 842 3581

Email: [martina.jordaan@up.ac.za](mailto:martina.jordaan@up.ac.za)

## Acknowledgements

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### **Organising Committee:**

Prof Natasja Holtzhausen

Ms Charmaine Galante

Ms Londiwe Mahlangu

Ms Refilwe Mabula

Dr Martina Jordaan

Dr Eugene Machimana

Ms Kanye Rampa

Mr Albert Matlheketlha

School of Public Management and Administration (SPMA) tutors

### **Speakers:**

Prof Loretta Feris, Vice Principal: Academic

Prof Theus Steyn, Faculty of Economic and Management Sciences

Prof Gerrit Stols, Director: Department for Education Innovation

Dr Brian Chicksen, Advisor to the Executive: Special Projects

Ms Annie Johnson, Director: Community Engagement, Sacred Heart University, USA



## Foreword from the co-host faculty



On 10 October 2024, the University of Pretoria proudly hosted a transformative Community Engagement Seminar, bringing together academics from multiple faculties, students and community partners. This gathering reflected the University's unwavering commitment to fostering meaningful connections between academic inquiry and societal needs.

The seminar commenced with a warm welcome from Prof Theuns Steyn of the Faculty of Economic and Management Sciences, setting an inspiring tone for the day. Following this, Prof Loretta Feris, Vice-Principal: Academic, provided a comprehensive overview of community engagement at the University of Pretoria, emphasising its integral role in the institution's mission and strategic goals.

The highlight of the event was the keynote address delivered by Annie Johnson from Sacred Heart University in the USA, who joined virtually. Her thought-provoking insights on global trends in community engagement and the importance of sustainable, reciprocal partnerships resonated deeply with all in attendance.

This seminar exemplified the collaborative spirit that defines impactful community engagement. Bringing together diverse voices from across faculties and communities fostered a shared understanding of the challenges and opportunities we face in making a tangible difference. The active involvement of students and community partners enriched the discussions, ensuring that the outcomes were academic, practical and grounded in lived experiences.

As we look back on this significant day, let us carry forward its key lessons: that community engagement thrives on partnerships built on respect, inclusivity and shared purpose. It is not merely a responsibility but an opportunity to co-create knowledge that drives real-world change.

We extend our deepest gratitude to all participants and contributors who made this seminar a success. May the ideas and collaborations born from this gathering inspire continued innovation and meaningful action for years to come.

**Prof Natasja Holtzhusen**

Professor of Public Administration and Management

Faculty of Economic and Management Sciences

University of Pretoria

<https://www.up.ac.za/faculty-of-economic-and-management-sciences>

## Welcome address



**Prof Theuns Steyn**

### **A warm welcome to all the champions of community engagement!**

The Faculty of Economic and Management Sciences is delighted to host the annual Community Engagement Seminar, where we will highlight various community engagement projects across all the faculties at the University of Pretoria. We are also pleased to have students and some of our community partners join us.

I am reminded of Margaret Mead's famous quote: 'Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it's the only thing that ever has.'

It is crucial to instil in our students the values of thoughtfulness and commitment to their communities, as these qualities can drive global change. Community projects are a powerful

means to achieve this. To provide more insight into community engagement at the University of Pretoria, it is my privilege to introduce the Vice-Principal: Academic, Prof Loretta Feris.

Prof Feris's portfolio includes responsibility for all nine faculties and GIBS and focuses on promoting excellence in teaching and learning at the undergraduate level. Prof Feris also oversees and ensures that the University's academic plans and policies are implemented.

Before joining the University of Pretoria in July 2022, she was the Deputy Vice-Chancellor for Transformation and Student Affairs at the University of Cape Town (UCT) from 2017 to March 2021, where she developed a framework for transformation that draws on her scholarly work on spatial justice and spearheaded an approach that introduced transformation benchmarks for higher education.

Before taking up the Vice-Principal: Academic position at UP, she had a brief stint as an environmental law professor at the University of Pretoria. At UCT (2009–2016), she was a law professor and director of the Institute of Marine and Environmental Law. She was an associate professor of law at UP from 2004 to 2009. Before that, she was a research fellow and an assistant director of the International Legal Studies programme at the Washington College of Law, American University in the USA. She holds BA (Law), LLB and

LLD degrees from the University of Stellenbosch in South Africa and an LLM from Georgetown University in the USA.

Loretta Feris is a transdisciplinary scholar interested in environmental justice, environmental human rights, indigenous knowledge systems, trade and the environment.

As an environmental law consultant, she has worked with various government departments, industry and international organisations such as the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), where she was part of a group of international experts on the Programme for the Development and Periodic Review of Environmental Law (Montevideo Programme).

Prof Feris has always maintained a strong relationship with civil society. She is currently the Chair of the Board of Natural Justice, a non-profit organisation that focuses on social and environmental justice in Africa. She is also a board member of Biowatch South Africa, a non-profit that works with small-scale farmers to promote agroecology.

Prof Feris, the floor is yours.

## Curricular community engagement



**Prof Loretta Feris**

Over the last few years, the University of Pretoria has made strategic efforts to ensure that curricular community engagement (CCE) is an integral part of the academic project and supported at the highest levels in the institution. By establishing CCE as integral to the curriculum, the University has ensured that it is institutionally consistent in supporting positive societal change as it draws closer to the society for which it exists, as noted in the UP Integrated Academic Framework launched in 2023.

The Curricular Community Engagement Framework and Toolkit highlights that the University of Pretoria's 'CCE is rooted in and arises from its teaching, learning and research. It is not an adjunct to them. As a critical interface between the University and society, it brings theory, practice and research together by embedding the philosophies of citizenship and lifelong learning.'

Furthermore, CCE practices at the University of Pretoria are based on democratic principles, which promote

a shared responsibility between the University and the community in an active partnership of trust.

This pathway of two flows is a critical partnership that grows and develops based on authenticity. This is supported by the Curricular Community Engagement Framework and Toolkit, which states that 'it is a pathway of two-way flows of knowledge'.

These two flows of knowledge promote the co-design of initiatives that ensure the University and its faculties have an impact and remain relevant to the needs of the community and industry. In essence, CCE enables and leverages institutional collaboration, co-design initiatives and the implementation of actions that bring transformational change that benefits our country.

In practice, CCE extends the classroom environment outside the walls of the academy. This is done by connecting student learning to real-world scenarios and helps students apply transdisciplinary concepts more robustly. Learning from community and industry partners brings authentic and practical learning that augments textbook and classroom learning.

It should, however, be recognised that CCE differs from work-integrated learning (WIL). WIL is an umbrella term for purposefully designed learning programmes that integrate theoretical knowledge with authentic practice in the workplace, which count towards the students' final qualifications. Conversely, CCE promotes the planned, purposeful application of knowledge and resources between community

and industry-based partnerships and the University of Pretoria through transdisciplinary teaching and learning and epistemological extracurricular activities as agents of positive social change.

The University of Pretoria, in its delivery of CCE, recognises that epistemological non-curricular activities can enrich the learning experience, promote critical thinking, personalise teaching and allow students to bring their own ideas and consider knowledge from their own communities.

CCE also allows for the introduction of diverse knowledge systems into the curriculum, thereby supporting the curriculum transformation objectives of the University of Pretoria. It allows students to create awareness of and respect for the development of knowledge generated outside the classroom, such as community and indigenous knowledge.

As a university in a country with deep-seated social and economic inequalities, we cannot teach or conduct research in a vacuum. Our teaching must matter so that we contribute to a positive societal impact through the graduates we produce and the new knowledge we create.

As a university, we remain committed to fostering partnerships with community and industry partners that will allow us to ensure that UP produces graduates who will make an impact on the development of the country, the continent and the world and CCE supports that endeavour.



## Curricular community engagement framework and toolkit



**Dr Brian Chicksen**

Curricular Community Engagement (CCE) is central to the academic project and as a University we aspire to be at the frontier of thinking and practice in the field. The University of Pretoria CCE framework and toolkit has been developed through a process of co-design involving academics, students and community partners.

The framework addresses our overarching intent for CCE, the guiding principles which shape the way in which we give expression to

it, the key enablers and the set of process requirements as we put CCE into practice. It has been designed to enable consistency in the approach across the University, while creating sufficient space and discretion for locally relevant translation and application at faculty and departmental levels.



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## Abbreviations and acronyms

ADM	: Amathole District Municipality
CCE	: Curricular community engagement
COSUP	: Community-oriented substance use programme
COVID-19	: Coronavirus disease 2019
CRM	: Clothing retail management
EAR	: Emancipatory action research
FA	: Future Africa
FACE	: Future Africa Community Engagement
JCP	: Joint community project
LDARD	: Limpopo Department of Agricultural and Rural Development
PGSA	: Postgraduate Student Association
SDGs	: Sustainable Development Goals
SPMA	: School of Public Management and Administration
STEM	: Science, technology, engineering and mathematics
UNAIDS	: Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS
UP	: University of Pretoria
UUC	: Unit for Urban Citizenship

# ORAL PRESENTATIONS



# 1. Transforming community engagement: Strategies for sustainable impact

Prof Lelanie Smith, Ms Bonolo Mokoka and Mr Thabang Ngwenya (Faculty of Engineering, Built Environment and Information Technology, University of Pretoria)

**Corresponding author**

**Prof Lelanie Smith**

Email: [lelanie.smith@up.ac.za](mailto:lelanie.smith@up.ac.za)

EBIT offers a compulsory community engagement module (JCP) for second-year students, with an average cohort of 1 600 students participating in 350 projects annually. Beyond the scale, the challenge lies in equipping students to engage and collaborate effectively with community partners from diverse backgrounds and generations while also applying their disciplinary knowledge in real-world settings.



Over the past three years, strategic and systematic changes have been made to enhance student engagement with sustainable practices, foster collaboration with communities and expand the impact of these



partnerships into long-term, scalable initiatives. In this presentation, we will share key strategies, successes and challenges encountered throughout this process.

## 2. Moja Gabedi: From a neglected site to a curricular community engagement hub

Mr Innocent Chauke and Mr Ponstho Masele (Moja Gabedi Community Engagement Hub)

**Corresponding author**

**Mr Innocent Chauke**

Email: [u0509607@up.ac.za](mailto:u0509607@up.ac.za)



Moja Gabedi is a model university-student-community partnership. The project began as a neglected site, which gradually attracted social problems like homelessness and drug use. The University of Pretoria's Unit

for Community Engagement adopted it and relocated the homeless people to Reliable House. The University then arranged a clean-up operation where 3 000 tons of rubbish was removed from the site. During the COVID-19 lockdown,

students began to use it for Curricular Community Engagement (CCE) and practical work. Currently, several faculties undertake CCE initiatives that mutually benefit the University

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and the community. From its humble beginnings, Moja Gabedi has become an innovative hub for CCE activities and research. For example, students from the Faculty of Natural and Agricultural Sciences conduct food production research, while occupational therapy students facilitate life-changing sessions with the local community. Furthermore, the ambient therapeutic

garden, with 100% organic vegetables and fruits, elevated its neighbourhood significantly, adding significant value to the local surroundings. The future vision for Moja Gabedi is to use it as a model to showcase the regeneration of neglected urban spaces through collaboration between the University and the external community. The UP staff, students and community partners

played a significant role in creating the current space. It is an ongoing research hub for transformative university-student-community partnerships. There is a need for more awareness so that more CCE projects can be implemented there and other services, such as educational tours, workshops, photoshoots, market days and recreational activities, can be offered.

### 3. Occupational therapy in Tshwane inner-city settings

**Dr Helga Lister (Department of Occupational Therapy, Faculty of Health Sciences, University of Pretoria),  
Dr Michelle Janse van Rensburg (Department of Occupational Therapy, University of the Witwatersrand),  
Joenita Friedrichs and Nthabiseng Phalatse (Affiliations to the University of Pretoria)**

#### Corresponding author

**Dr Helga Lister**

Email: [helga.lister@up.ac.za](mailto:helga.lister@up.ac.za)

Occupational therapy students from the University of Pretoria have been actively engaged in inner-city communities since the COVID-19 lockdown, partnering with non-profit organisations, faith-based organisations and the Community oriented substance use programme (COSUP). Utilising an adapted participatory action research method alongside the occupational therapy process, final-year students address the specific needs of marginalised populations, including people experiencing homelessness and people who use drugs, during their community-situated work-integrated learning. Occupational therapy interventions support individuals and groups, including older adults who are destitute, survivors of gender-based violence, children and youth in shelters and people who use drugs and projects have primarily focused on enhancing life skills, mental health and work opportunities. Key areas of intervention include supporting advocacy, understanding safe spaces,



addressing socio-emotional needs and developing prevocational and vocational skills. Especially in recent times, the precarious nature of this sector due to a lack of funding has demonstrated the essential role of occupational therapy in supporting staff and clients. This presentation will share highlights from work done in homeless settings, demonstrating the community engagement model and practice of the Department of Occupational Therapy and how partnerships with the community and interdisciplinary practice have enhanced impact. Challenges experienced will be addressed and recommendations for future practice to enhance positive social change will also be discussed.



## 4. Sewing threads of change: Empowering communities through clothing and textile projects

Dr Hanri Taljaard-Swart and Dr Nadine Sonnenberg (Department of Consumer and Food Sciences, Faculty of Natural and Agricultural Sciences, University of Pretoria)

**Corresponding author**

**Dr Hanri Taljaard-Swart**

Email: [hanri.taljaard@up.ac.za](mailto:hanri.taljaard@up.ac.za)



The Bachelor of Consumer Science Clothing Retail Management (CRM) programme is paving the way in integrating community-based textile and clothing projects into its curriculum, focusing on four key initiatives: Mapula Embroideries, Clothes to Good, Raslouw Sewing Classes and Patch-Up. These projects exemplify the intersection of education, social responsibility and sustainable development, aligning with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly SDG 8, SDG 11 and SDG 12.

Mapula Embroideries is embedded within the final-year Product Development module. This initiative nurtures entrepreneurial and business skills and emphasises the importance of focusing on the triple bottom line: the environment, society and the economy.

By working directly with the women of Mapula Embroideries, students co-create embroidery designs, experiment with textiles and provide skill-enhancing training, contributing to product diversification and income generation. CRM students enrolled for 'Textiles' work hand-in-hand with Clothes to Good, a textile recycling and disability empowerment organisation, to gain insights into sustainable clothing and textile industry practices. Through hands-on experience in sorting and upcycling textiles, students develop proposals for enhancing the

organisation's operations, resulting in meaningful employment and entrepreneurial opportunities. The Raslouw Sewing Classes, run in partnership with Raslouw Church, offer domestic workers sewing skills training. As part of their experiential training, CRM students assist the church in presenting basic to intermediate sewing classes, empowering the participants to explore income-generating opportunities and creative expression. Patch-Up focuses on aiding vulnerable communities by distributing essential items like clothing and blankets. CRM students contribute by repairing and upcycling donated clothing, which is re-distributed to communities in need. All these projects highlight the mutual benefits of university-community partnerships, fostering sustainable development, social empowerment and practical education.



## 5. WellNurse framework

Ms Jessica Anne Donachie and Ms Poopedi Lehlogonolo (Department of Social Work and Criminology, Faculty of Humanities, University of Pretoria)

### Corresponding author

Ms Jessica Anne Donachie

Email: [u20520302@tuks.co.za](mailto:u20520302@tuks.co.za)

Cancer impacts millions of individuals worldwide and often necessitates hospital-based treatment. This is also the case in South Africa, where over 85 000 people were diagnosed with cancer in 2019.

Childhood cancer, in particular, requires specialised care as patients require hospital treatment, heavily relying on nurses, who play a crucial role in delivering complex and compassionate care.

This often results in nurses neglecting their well-being, which can compromise their health and the quality of care and service. Moreover, the lack of recognition and appreciation for nurses' efforts exacerbates their challenges, leading to burnout and reduced job satisfaction.

This issue was identified and addressed through the emancipatory action research (EAR) cycle model steps by Ledwith (2016): being, problematising, conscientisation, action, making sense and communication in the Paediatric Oncology Ward at Steve Biko Academic Hospital. The EAR model guided the project in identifying the problem, planning interventions, taking action and reflecting on the outcomes.

In this instance, a community work project was implemented to improve the well-being and acknowledgement of nurses caring for children with cancer. The project focused on



developing and implementing a holistic wellness and appreciation framework underscored by the recognition that successful cancer treatment relies on the dedication and well-being of the nursing staff.

A holistic wellness framework was established through active collaboration with the nurses and other hospital stakeholders. An appreciation ceremony was conducted. By fostering a supportive work environment, the project aimed to enhance the resilience and morale of paediatric oncology nurses, which will improve the quality of care provided to patients over time.

This project serves as a potential blueprint for similar settings, highlighting the crucial role of supporting caregivers as they care for others in the fight against cancer.



## 6. Supporting community development through urban citizenship in design

**Prof Carin Combrinck and Mr Jason Oberholster (Department of Architecture, Faculty of Engineering, Built Environment and Information Technology, University of Pretoria)**

### Corresponding author

**Prof Carin Combrinck**

Email: [carin.combrinck@up.ac.za](mailto:carin.combrinck@up.ac.za)

The Unit for Urban Citizenship (UUC) in the Department of Architecture at the University of Pretoria (UP) is dedicated to trans-disciplinary engaged research and teaching, particularly within informal settlements across the City of Tshwane. This reflection on the UUC's studios demonstrates how intentional collaboration between academic institutions and government entities can drive development policies forwards, fostering sustainable community development.

Over the years, the UUC's approach has evolved, embedding rigorous and consistent methods in research and teaching, thereby establishing long-term relationships with the communities involved. The rise

in informal settlements signals deep-seated inequalities and a systemic urban failure, challenges which municipal authorities cannot tackle alone. In response, the UUC introduces postgraduate students to public interest design through methodologies like participatory action research, community action planning, spatial agency and co-design within its community-based studios.

Over a decade of these engagements, it has become evident that students and community participants contribute valuable insights, potentially addressing the significant hurdles of policy implementation. Reflecting on these experiences, the UUC argues for strategic collaboration between anchor institutions such as universities, research bodies like the National Research Foundation and government agencies to advance development policies that benefit communities. This collaborative model exemplifies



the transformative collaboration theme and provides a blueprint for sustainable urban development driven by informed community-centric approaches.

**Keywords:** Urban citizenship in architecture, engaged research, engaged curriculum, informal settlement upgrading, community participation

## 7. Art education for social awareness and transformation: Challenging stereotypes

**Prof Raita Steyn (Department of Education, University of Pretoria)**

### Corresponding author

**Prof Raita Steyn**

Email: [raita.steyn@up.ac.za](mailto:raita.steyn@up.ac.za)

This study highlights how art education can promote critical thinking and social change through inclusive pedagogy, using the arts to challenge preconceived notions and fight destructive stereotypes. This study uses two case studies as a pedagogical paradigm to promote socio-cultural awareness and empirical

knowledge through arts education. The first case study, 'Vision in visual arts: Inclusion through shared participation', explores the creative process in which UP students engage with art through tactile and sensory methods. Art education students collaborated with community members, including visually impaired individuals and an occupational therapist and actively contributed to developing tactile books for visually impaired learners in schools, ensuring accessibility and educational values. This collaboration



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helped students focus on the capabilities of the visually impaired, pushing the boundaries of traditional visual arts while broadening artistic expression. The direct involvement of community members played a critical role in shaping the outcome and practicality of the resources produced. Furthermore, the community involvement stimulated empathy and mutual understanding, making the project a collaborative success. The second case study, 'Horrors of albinism: Fighting destructive stereotypes through awareness', addressed harmful stereotypes

associated with albinism, engaging art education students in awareness-building through creative expression. This project sought to dismiss misconceptions surrounding albinism and promote inclusivity through art education. Both case studies align with broader efforts in inclusive pedagogy, aiming to promote critical thinking and societal transformation. The research highlights how art education can be a powerful tool for social change, breaking down barriers between the theoretical academic environment and the realities of social life, individually and collectively.

## 8. E-community engagement as an alternative to traditional community engagement

**Dr Martina Jordaan (Mamelodi Campus, University of Pretoria)**

### Corresponding author

**Dr Martina Jordaan**

Email: [martina.jordaan@up.ac.za](mailto:martina.jordaan@up.ac.za)

E-community engagement is an innovative online virtual platform designed to foster ongoing collaborative partnerships between the University and various interest groups.

It is an alternative to traditional face-to-face community engagement that leverages digital channels to exchange the knowledge, skills, expertise and resources necessary for societal development and sustainability.

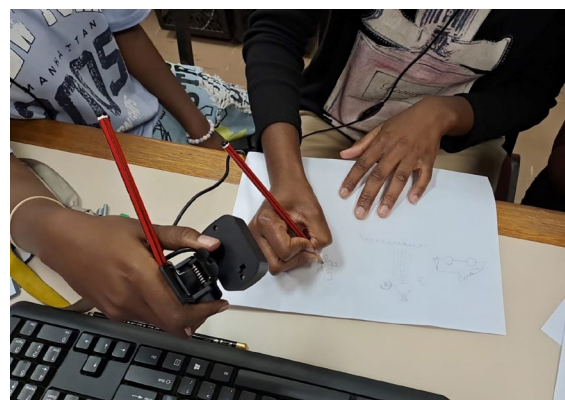
This mode of engagement has the potential to reach a broader audience, transcending geographical boundaries, thereby increasing accessibility for individuals who may face physical participation limitations.

Over the past four years, the University of Pretoria's Mamelodi Campus has

been actively involved in E-community projects with several institutions, including the Hong Kong Polytechnic University, the University of Florida, Merrimack College, Tishk International University, the ICFAI Foundation of Higher Education, Sidi Mohamed Ben Abdellah University and Universidad Centroamericana José Simeón Cañas.

Despite challenges such as differing time zones, time constraints and Internet bandwidth limitations, programme evaluations have validated the continued use of E-community engagement to provide high school learners and community members access to student-led community engagement projects.

The paper will showcase the E-community projects conducted at the Mamelodi Campus, elaborating on the associated challenges and successes and offering recommendations for facilitating future E-community engagement projects.



# 9. Advocating for One Health in communities through impactful collaborations: Ongoing experiences of the Future Africa Research Chair on People, Health and Places (One Health programme)

**Dr Tedson Nkoana (Future Africa Institute, University of Pretoria) and Prof Wanda Markotter (Centre for Viral Zoonoses, Faculty of Health Sciences and Future Africa Research Chair on People, Health and Places)**

## Corresponding author

**Dr Tedson Nkoana**

Email: [tedson.nkoana@up.ac.za](mailto:tedson.nkoana@up.ac.za)

The Future Africa Research Chair on People, Health and Places (FA Research Chair) provides a platform for addressing interconnected human, animal and environmental health challenges through multi-level collaborations that seek to impact communities. It has embarked on programmes to drive impactful collaborations between research, government and communities.

One of the projects driven by the FA Research Chair is an animal health care project in the rural community of Ga Mampa, Limpopo Province. The project was kickstarted after cattle in the community were observed to have high levels of ticks.

Knowing the health risks associated with ticks to cattle, people and the environment prompted a coordinated discussion with the local cattle farmers and the Limpopo Department of Agricultural and Rural Development (LDARD). This revealed challenges in resources and knowledge gaps in livestock health maintenance.

Solutions were co-developed to address these challenges, including hosting annual animal healthcare workshops to increase knowledge and understanding that farmers can implement for their livestock. For the workshop, the FA Research Chair



worked with LDARD and AfriVet, a private sector expert in animal health, to share knowledge with the local cattle farmers. Furthermore, the infrastructural deterioration of the cattle dip station was repaired through collaborative efforts between these stakeholders. The FA Research Chair also collaborated with the stakeholders above to implement a rigorous dog vaccination campaign in Ga Mampa, which has previously proved difficult

due to resource constraints and misinformed reluctance by community members.

The coordinated efforts of the FA Research Chair on One Health have built relationships between research, government and community, which comprise a vital part of sustaining a space of continued collaboration where challenges can be co-identified and solutions can be co-developed.



# 10. Innovative partnerships for community growth: The Onderstepoort PGSA approach

**Ms Faith Nkosi (Department of Veterinary Tropical Diseases, Faculty of Veterinary Science, University of Pretoria), Dr Tedson Nkoana (Future Africa Institute, University of Pretoria), Ms Granny Hlongwane, Dr Dikeledi Sebola, Ms Ni-mari Smith, Mr Thandikhaya Bambeni, Mr Lungani Mbanjwa, Ms Cara Van Der Byl, Ms Tshenolo Mbaba and Ms Bianca Bezuidenhout (Department of Veterinary Tropical Diseases, Faculty of Veterinary Science, University of Pretoria)**

## Corresponding author

**Ms Faith Nkosi**

Email: [faith.nkosi@up.ac.za](mailto:faith.nkosi@up.ac.za)

The Onderstepoort Postgraduate Student Association (PGSA) at the Faculty of Veterinary Science, University of Pretoria, is key in bridging the gap between academia and the broader community. As a platform for postgraduate students and postdoctoral fellows, the Onderstepoort PGSA facilitates educational and socially inclusive engagements irrespective of tribe, nationality and race.

Through a series of innovative community outreach projects, the association aims to enhance access to quality education and improve the well-being of rural communities. Key initiatives include the ongoing partnership with St Camillus Primary School in Hammanskraal for the #keepagirlchildinschool pads drive, ensuring that young girls have the necessary resources to stay in school.

This initiative is supported by partnerships with local organisations, including Sanlam, Spectroplan Bluestar and Andrea White's Ova the Moon. Another significant project in collaboration with the Future Africa Research Chair on People, Health and Places through its Future Africa Community Engagement in One Health (FACE One Health) held an online tertiary readiness session for Grade 12 learners at Mbuyane



Senior Secondary School, Clau-Clau, Mpumalanga, that exposed learners to course guidance, application process and funding opportunities. This hybrid approach empowers learners in remote areas with the knowledge and support necessary for higher education.

Additionally, FACE One Health hosted Bokamoso Secondary School, Hammanskraal, for their Youth in STEM programme, which engages students in robotics and coding courses, fostering interest in STEM fields. The association also plans a bone marrow donation drive to raise awareness of the shortage of matching donors

across different ethnicities. This initiative seeks to expand the donor database in terms of number and racial diversity, thereby improving the chances of successful matches for those in need. Through these projects, the Onderstepoort PGSA demonstrates a commitment to sustainable community development by using academic expertise to drive meaningful change. These efforts contribute to young people's cognitive and academic growth and inspire hope and resilience within the communities served, ultimately supporting long-term community development and resilience.

# 11. Transformative collaborations: Bridging academia and communities for sustainable development in marginalised areas

Ms Kagiso Mahlangu (Patch-Up South Africa)

## Corresponding author

Ms Kagiso Mahlangu

Email:

[Kagiso.mahlangu@patchupsa.com](mailto:Kagiso.mahlangu@patchupsa.com)

## Introduction

Transformative collaborations between academic institutions and community-based organisations are crucial in driving sustainable development in marginalised communities.

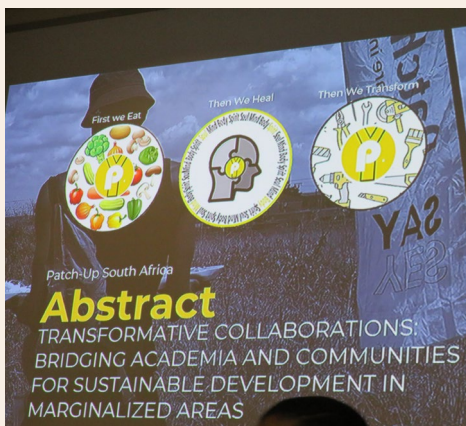
The partnership between Patch-Up South Africa and the University of Pretoria has been instrumental in advancing healthcare, education and social support in these areas.

Programmes such as the Care Closet, which addresses sanitary needs and the Community Oriented Substance Use Programme (COSUP), which tackles substance abuse, highlight the benefits of bridging the gap between academia and community organisations.

## Methods

Amixed-methods approach was utilised, integrating qualitative and quantitative data. This included reviewing relevant literature on academic–community partnerships and sustainable development and conducting programme evaluations, participant interviews and community surveys.

These methods were employed to assess the effectiveness of interventions and identify key success factors and areas for improvement in collaborative efforts.



## Results

The partnership between Patch-Up South Africa and the University of Pretoria has led to significant improvements in healthcare access, hygiene and substance use recovery within the targeted communities.

The Care Closet programme successfully provided hygiene products and clothing to over 350 vulnerable individuals, while COSUP offered substance use recovery support to more than 30 participants.

Additionally, the collaboration facilitated the development of new educational resources and training programmes for unemployed youth, enhancing skill development and promoting economic growth.

These initiatives were aligned with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly in health, education and economic development.

## Discussion

The results highlight the importance of academic–community collaborations in addressing complex social challenges. Leveraging academic expertise and



resources enables community-based organisations to implement more effective and sustainable interventions.

The success of the partnership between Patch-Up South Africa and the University of Pretoria demonstrates that such collaborations are essential for fostering resilient and self-sufficient communities, particularly in marginalised areas where traditional development efforts have been insufficient. Expanding the use of partnerships is crucial for achieving sustainable development outcomes.

**Keywords:** Transformative collaborations, sustainable development, marginalised communities, academic–community partnerships, healthcare, substance use recovery, South Africa

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# 12. Exploring drivers of transformative learning experiences: Leveraging community-based projects to cultivate socially responsible professionals

Dr Bianca Lizelle Frost (Department of Marketing Management, University of Pretoria)

## Corresponding author

Dr Bianca Lizelle Frost

Email: [bianca.frost@up.ac.za](mailto:bianca.frost@up.ac.za)

Marketing has the power not only to drive profitability but also to make meaningful contributions to society. To foster civic responsibility and community engagement, marketing educators should strive to engage students in transformative learning experiences that bridge academic knowledge with real-world societal challenges (Everett et al, 2023). This study explores drivers of transformational learning among postgraduate marketing students using an extraordinary experience-types framework.

The project focused on a community-based engagement with an animal shelter that required marketing solutions to raise awareness, encourage adoption and increase donations after a surge in animal

intake during the COVID-19 pandemic. Students visited the shelter, identified challenges and proposed innovative digital marketing strategies, offering a hands-on approach to applying their marketing skills in real-life scenarios.

Grounded in transformational learning theory (Duerden et al, 2018), which suggests that extraordinary experiences can be memorable, meaningful and transformational, this research highlights the personal and professional growth students experienced during the project. Data were collected via open-ended, reflective questionnaires from 48 participants and analysed using ATLAS.ti's AI coding technique to identify main themes.

Findings revealed that students experienced strong emotional responses, deepening their understanding of non-profit challenges while fostering self-awareness. The main themes identified were empathy, surprise, gratitude, sadness,

learning and positive experiences.

Many students expressed a shift in their perception of their roles as marketers, intending to donate, volunteer, or adopt from shelters in the future. Some key reflections included: 'The visit has provided me with the motivation to make a difference in the lives of people, animals and the environment' and 'It brought perspective that the act of giving back is the reward itself.'

This study demonstrates the potential of community-based projects to cultivate socially responsible marketing professionals by creating awareness of societal issues, offering opportunities to solve real-life marketing challenges and fostering students' realisation of their potential as future marketers to make a meaningful difference.

### 13. Community Engagement Forum members 2024





Representative/secundus	Faculty/department
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Dr Rejoice Nsibande	<b>Deputy Director</b> Academic Development
Dr Eugene Machimana	<b>Head: Curricular Community Engagement</b> Department for Education Innovation: Unit for Community Engagement
Faculty support: Department for Education Innovation - Unit for Community Engagement	
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	Veterinary Science
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