

# Lentšu La Sechaba

THE VOICE OF THE CE COMMUNITY

Department for Education Innovation  
Unit for Community Engagement



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# The University of Pretoria Senate Conference 2024



Teaching with impact: Advancing curricular community engagement for societal transformation

The 2024 University of Pretoria Senate Conference, themed 'Teaching with impact: Advancing curricular community engagement for societal transformation', convened at the Future Africa Campus on 15 and 16 February 2024.

The Senate Conference was hosted by the office of the Vice Principal: Academic, Prof Loretta Feris. This annual event focused on reimagining curricular community engagement (CCE) amidst global challenges, emphasising the integration of teaching, learning, and research in advancing social justice and academic projects.

The conference featured a series of presentations, case studies, and discussions that encouraged senators to rethink and apply social justice principles across disciplines to create

impactful community engagements. Key sessions highlighted the importance of transdisciplinarity, indigenous knowledge systems, and innovative teaching methods that go beyond traditional academic boundaries to address societal issues.

Day 1 included discussions on the role of universities in societal transformation, leveraging indigenous knowledge, and the practical application of CCE in fields like healthcare and the built environment. Panel discussions focused on ensuring that community engagement activities are rooted in respect for local knowledges and aimed at genuine partnership and impact.

Day 2 continued with themes on the sustainability of CCE initiatives, addressing the transient nature of

student involvement, and exploring interdisciplinary approaches to teaching and research that respond to community needs.

Discussions also covered the challenges of implementing CCE in higher education, such as resource limitations, logistical issues, and the need for supportive institutional frameworks.

The conference underscored the necessity of embedding CCE in the curriculum and fostering an academic culture that supports engaged scholarship, interdisciplinary collaboration, and responsiveness to community needs. This aligns with the University's strategic intent to enhance social responsiveness and empower students as agents of societal change.

Overall, the event was a platform for robust dialogue on enhancing the impact of academic work through community engagement, advocating for a curriculum that is responsive to societal challenges and embraces the complexities of local and global community needs.

# Matters of interest

## Register for

- Community Engagement Seminar coming up on 10 October 2024

## Recommended Journals

- Community Development: <https://www.tandfonline.com/journals/rcod20>
- Journal for Community Practice: <https://www.tandfonline.com/journals/wcom20>
- Journal of the Community Development Society: <https://www.tandfonline.com/journals/rcod19>

## Meetings and conferences

- The next Community Engagement Forum meeting will be held on Monday, 18 November 2024
- Education Association of South Africa (EASA) Conference, 19–22 January 2025: <https://www.easa.ac.za/conference/easa-2025/>

## Community Engagement Short Courses

- Rhodes University Short Courses: <https://www.ru.ac.za/communityengagement/about/shortcourses/#Community-Based%20Service%20Learning>

## Call for Articles - Community Engagement Newsletter:

- [https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1zwT\\_FMLheJkKpRxGQSYNqFC\\_JBeh7us8](https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1zwT_FMLheJkKpRxGQSYNqFC_JBeh7us8)

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# Community engagement and clinical associate training: A personal journey of transformation

**Dr Sanele Ngcobo (Clinical associate lecturer: Department of Family Medicine)**



I am Dr Sanele Ngcobo, a clinical associate lecturer in the Department of Family Medicine. My journey at the University of Pretoria (UP) commenced when I was recruited from a rural community to pursue a Bachelor of Clinical Medical Practice in 2008.

Emerging from a highly disadvantaged background, this opportunity promised to transform my life and that of my family. As I embarked on my journey to UP, my rural community rallied together, generously donating essentials to support me along the way.

Fast forward to 2009: we commenced our practical training 460 kilometres from the University at Tintswalo Hospital in Acornhoek. What initially served as a platform to enhance my medical knowledge and clinical skills soon evolved into a profound sense of community.

Alongside seven colleagues, I became deeply integrated into this rural community, engaging

with its members regularly and unconsciously. Our patients ceased to be mere recipients of care; they became an integral part of our community, deserving respect and dignity.

Hailing from KwaZulu-Natal, where isiZulu was my primary language and English my medium of education, I initially encountered challenges with the predominant language in Acornhoek, Xitsonga. However, by the time I bade farewell to this community in October 2011, I had acquired proficiency in communicating effectively with its members in their native tongue.

While lecture halls and skills labs were instrumental in shaping my academic trajectory, the immersion in the Acornhoek community transcended mere clinical knowledge and skills. It gave me invaluable insights into a deeply respectful community, its rich cultural tapestry, and a newfound mode of communication. This community, in essence, became my classroom.

Many of the lessons I learned here could not be found in textbooks but were lived experiences integral to being fully integrated into the community.

The profound impact of community engagement and work-integrated learning enabled me to bridge the gap between theory and practice while imparting a comprehensive understanding of life.

Hence, I strongly advocate for sustained community engagement, especially in programmes where graduates are expected to serve communities post-graduation. It is imperative to deeply comprehend these communities, as it fosters meaningful and sustainable impact.

Reflecting on my journey, it is evident that my research focus revolves around community health, human resources for health, and HIV/AIDS.

This passion was ignited by my deep affection for the Acornhoek community, where the prevalence of HIV/AIDS was alarmingly high, coupled with a severe shortage of healthcare professionals.

Our country is rich in diversity yet marked by inequality, with myriad facets to explore. As students journey through university, they should seize every opportunity to engage with various communities. Embracing such opportunities exposes them to real-life situations, fostering a deeper understanding and appreciation for the complexities of society.

# University of Leeds delegation visits the University of Pretoria and local communities

**Prof Danielle M Williams (Associate Professor of Enhancing Employability: University of Leeds) and Prof Sonia Kumar (Associate Dean of Community Engagement: University of Leeds)**

**'Nothing for us without us'.**

**- Lyrics written by the Brainlife Music Therapy Group in Mamelodi**

A six-person delegation from the Community-Engagement Network for Research, Education and Civic Engagement (CENTRE) and the Faculty of Medicine and Health at the University of Leeds in the United Kingdom visited the University of Pretoria (UP) and its surrounding communities from 22 to 26 April 2024.

CENTRE is an inclusive, dynamic, and transdisciplinary education, research, and civic community engagement network at the University of Leeds. It is committed to addressing local inequalities and challenges for the benefit of local people in the city and region, including its staff and students.

Our goal during this trip was to begin the process of learning from each other as civic universities that prioritise the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in research, student education, and civic engagement to initiate a reciprocal relationship with UP to progress our understanding and vision of what it means to be a civic university.

Our expectations were far exceeded as we learned more every day about the far-reaching, meaningful, and impactful partnerships between UP (driven by the Unit for Community Engagement and the Faculty of Health Sciences) and local communities, non-profit organisations (NPOs),



and healthcare providers. We saw tangible evidence of productive community-based partnerships, like the peaceful and beautiful garden of Moja Gabedi and inspiring visions for ongoing transdisciplinary work at Future Africa.

We learned about the potential of integrating indigenous knowledge systems (IKS) into practice-based medicine and research and how indigenous music and dance can challenge knowledge-sharing and community health norms.

One of our favourite parts was meeting the community organisers and community members. We were welcomed into a music therapy drum circle at Brainlife's Mamelodi Branch and had the opportunity to experience the spirit of Ubuntu through rhythm and percussion. We met brain injury survivors who sang a song they had written

that reinforced a core community value we witnessed throughout our trip: 'Nothing for us without us'. Effective community engagement in education, research, and civic engagement is co-designed, co-envisioned, and co-created.

We also saw this ethos at work when we visited the Circle of Life HIV/AIDS support clinic in Eersterust and when we toured the Malusi Youth Development Organisation (MYDO). The depth and commitment of partnership with the communities was evident and exemplified the trust cultivated and earned over time. In a short time, we experienced and learnt so much about the culture and practice of community engagement in South Africa, which will transform our vision of working with our local communities in Leeds.

*continued on page 5*

The global partnership and friendship that MYDO centre and the Faculty of Medicine and Health have forged with the University of Pretoria is just beginning, and we look forward to inviting a UP delegation to Leeds this autumn to continue with our exchange of ideas and practices in how universities can address local inequalities. With deep gratitude, *re a leboga* [we thank you].



# The University of Pretoria hosts successful transdisciplinary workshop

**Prof Alta van der Merwe (Deputy Dean: Engineering, Built Environment and Information Technology)**

**O**n 13 March 2024, the Transdisciplinary Task Team at the University of Pretoria hosted a highly successful transdisciplinary (TD) workshop, attracting 122 registered participants. The event provided an invaluable platform for fostering collaboration, sharing knowledge, and advancing the understanding of transdisciplinary research, teaching, and learning and their practical applications.

Participants expressed high satisfaction with the workshop, describing their experience as informative, enjoyable, and enlightening. The preparation and expertise of the presenters stood out, contributing significantly to the event's positive reception.

The workshop also facilitated numerous networking opportunities, allowing attendees to engage in meaningful cross-departmental interactions and meet colleagues with similar interests.

The fact that diverse TD initiatives and projects were presented was particularly well-received. Attendees appreciated the wide range of topics, which offered a comprehensive insight into different research efforts and their impacts. The event successfully highlighted the educational value of transdisciplinary research, with many participants noting its relevance to their work.

Participants enjoyed the academic exchange and gained valuable insights into how others incorporate TD into their work, inspiring new ideas for future collaborations.

Several presentations were particularly noted for their interesting topics and practical applications, such as the cochlear implant study, which showcased TD research in action. Networking was a highlight of the workshop, with many attendees valuing the opportunity to meet new colleagues and explore potential collaborations.

The event successfully facilitated connections across various departments and disciplines, fostering community among participants.

The workshop also served as an educational platform, clarifying and specifying the concept of TD in education and research.

Participants gained a comprehensive understanding of transdisciplinary research and its possibilities, appreciating the opportunity to see practical examples and case studies from different fields.

In conclusion, the transdisciplinary workshop on 13 March 2024 was a resounding success. It provided a platform for innovative ideas and meaningful academic exchange and fostered a strong sense of community among participants. The event highlighted the importance of transdisciplinary research and teaching, offering valuable insights and inspiration.





## Winners of the 2023 UP institutional community engagement award—Department of Community Dentistry, Faculty of Health Sciences

**Prof Ahmed Bhayat, Prof Thomas Khomotjo Madiba, Prof Ntombizodwa Rosemary Nkambule, Prof Candice van Wyk, Dr Tabeho Godfrey Mmethi, Dr Tshepiso Mfolo, Mr William Masinga, Ms Esme Schoeman, Dr Don Chiwaya and Mr Tabang Maluleka**

**T**he Department of Community Dentistry is humbled and honoured to have won the University of Pretoria institutional community engagement (CE) award. This achievement could not have been made without the support of all the staff members, both past and present, who laid down the foundation and principles for the outreach projects we currently undertake.

This award must also be shared with the communities that trust us to provide much-needed dental services. Lastly, thanks to the University of Pretoria, the Gauteng Department of Health, and private stakeholders who provide financial, educational, and academic support.

The Department's CE projects are aligned with the UP 2025 strategic goals 4 and 5, which focus on using research for teaching and learning and embedding CE in academia. The projects are also built on the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals 3 and 10 (good health and well-being and reduced inequalities).

The aims of the CE projects include exposing the students to underprivileged communities, providing quality dental care in primary health care (PHC) settings, providing access to dental services for underprivileged communities,

improving and maintaining the oral and general health of marginalised communities, and preparing the dental students for their year-long community service programme.

The various outreach projects have been shown to improve the students' social and civil responsibilities, and the Department is thankful to the students and communities who have exposed us to their lives and environments. We believe that CE projects must benefit the students, the University, and the communities we serve.

The Department has two mobile dental units (MDUs), one stationed at Daspoort Polyclinic and the other at selected primary schools in underprivileged communities. These MDUs provide a range of basic educational, preventative, and curative dental services as required by the community.

The Department comprises three community dentistry specialists, two registrars, one dentist, and two full-time and three part-time oral hygienists. All staff members are actively involved in the CE projects, fulfilling various roles, including coordination, administration, and supervision. All staff members are integral in planning and maintaining the CE projects and ensuring they

run smoothly and efficiently.

The dental and oral students work together as a team during the CE projects, preparing them to work in a multidisciplinary team and promoting teamwork and respect between the different oral health cadres. The OH students also work with other disciplines at Daspoort Polyclinic, which further emphasises the roles of different healthcare providers and teaches them the importance of working with other disciplines.

The Department has undertaken various research projects on the impact and perceptions of CE activities among students, the community, and the University. These have been published in peer-reviewed journals and presented both locally and internationally. The key pillar in ensuring these CE projects are sustainable is support from the communities, schools, and private stakeholders, such as Colgate and GlaxoSmithKlein.

Once again, we are humbled and honoured to have won the University of Pretoria institutional community engagement award for 2023. We pledge to continue providing high-quality dental services to rural and underprivileged communities.



# Adult Aural Rehabilitation Clinic revamp—navigating individuals through the challenges of hearing loss

**Mrs Isabel Schimper (Part-time lecturer: Speech-language Pathology and Audiology and coordinator for the Adult Aural Rehabilitation Clinic and Paediatric Aural (Re-)habilitation Programme, Department of Speech-Language Pathology and Audiology)**



**A**dult aural rehabilitation (AR) is aimed at assisting individuals to cope with the challenges of hearing loss. It goes beyond simply amplifying sound through hearing technology and offers a range of strategies to improve communication. This personalised approach is crucial, as hearing loss can significantly impact a person's ability to connect with others, participate in activities, and maintain a good quality of life.

According to the National Institute on Deafness and Other Communication Disorders (2022), hearing loss is a growing epidemic, with statistics indicating that nearly one in three adults aged 65–74 years

experience hearing impairment. This translates to a vast population struggling with social isolation and a diminished quality of life. However, a hidden weapon exists in the fight against these challenges: interprofessional collaboration between speech-language therapists and audiologists.

The combined expertise of speech-language therapists and audiologists fosters a comprehensive approach to managing hearing technology, informational and social adjustment counselling, communication strategy training, frequent communication partner training, auditory training, assistive listening device training,

telephone and music training, and assertiveness training. This teamwork ensures that adults with hearing loss receive the full support needed to navigate communication challenges and thrive in daily life.

The Adult Aural Rehabilitation Clinic operates from the Department of Speech-language Pathology and Audiology.

It caters specifically to teenagers and adults with hearing loss who utilise advanced technology like hearing aids, cochlear implants, and bone-anchored hearing aids (BAHA).

The programme caters to clients referred from across the public and private sectors within the Pretoria area. Recognising travel limitations, the programme offers tele-intervention services to ensure accessibility for all who require these vital services.

The aim of including the fourth-year speech-language pathology and audiology students is to provide high-quality, person-centred, evidence-based adult aural rehabilitation services in a real-world clinical setting.

The students develop the essential clinical skills for interprofessional collaboration and judgment to navigate the complexities of working with adults with hearing loss.

*continued on page 8*



The referral process begins with clients taking the initiative to contact the programme coordinator. Upon scheduling an appointment, a team of 10 to 12 speech-language pathology and audiology students plan the initial session collaboratively, considering both in-person and tele-intervention options.

While one student from each profession leads the session, the entire team contributes to the planning, assessment measures, and intervention strategies based on jointly established client goals.

Clients have provided positive feedback about the services received at the clinic: *'The clinic has been a game-changer for me. I finally feel like I can understand conversations again, even in noisy restaurants. The students were so helpful and patient, and it was clear they were really learning a lot. They are so lucky to learn from the best therapist. Thank you for helping me to use my cochlear implant and hearing*

*aid together in real-life situations. Students have also given encouraging feedback.'*

The Adult Aural Rehabilitation Clinic serves a dual purpose. First, it provides crucial services to individuals with hearing loss who utilise advanced technologies like bimodal or binaural hearing aids.

Students gain invaluable experience working with these clients, developing their clinical skills to optimise participation in everyday life. Secondly, the clinic fosters a dynamic learning environment. Students observe peers in action, honing their interprofessional collaboration skills. This collaborative approach extends beyond sessions, as students engage in critical reflection on their own learning and clinical development.

*'In the past few weeks, I have gained a profound understanding of the critical role that speech-language*

*therapists and audiologists play in the aural rehabilitation of adults and the enhancement of lives through hearing devices. As a speech-language therapist, my capacity to deliver the full spectrum of necessary services was limited. I relied heavily on my audiologist partner, from whom I acquired substantial knowledge and skills. Together, we were able to deliver optimal treatment to our patients, showcasing the indispensable nature of our collaborative efforts.'*

*'I loved the structure of the adult AR sessions. It was nice that everyone would receive the information and plan together and that we would all be part of the session somehow, even if just observing. This gave us a lot of exposure to different kinds of cases that we wouldn't have had if we just saw the clients by ourselves. I really felt like we were working together as a team. I also think it was helpful to observe other students and learn from each other. It is not always easy to realise when you, yourself, make mistakes, or even why we should not be doing something in a certain way. Through this process, when it was then my own turn to see a client, I would be able to apply what I learned while observing other students. So, in a way, I feel that with the adult AR sessions, we were building our skills together as a group or team, which definitely reduces the pressure.'*

## Reference

National Institute on Deafness and Other Communication Disorders. (2022, 3 March). *Hearing Loss in Adults*. National Institutes of Health. <https://www.nih.gov/about-nih/what-we-do/nih-almanac/national-institute-deafness-other-communication-disorders-nidcd>



# Reflections on the Community Engagement Conference at Rhodes University



Londiwe Mahlangu (Projector Coordinator: Unit for Community Engagement)

pivotal roles in shaping discussions around the practice and influence of community engagement.

The conference provided a platform for sharing insights and experiences, allowing attendees to gain valuable perspectives on implementing CE initiatives within varying socio-cultural contexts.

Ethics emerged as a central and recurrent theme throughout the conference in discussions surrounding community engagement. Attendees engaged in thoughtful reflections on the ethical dimensions of their work, including the application of and adherence to ethical principles in research and practice.

The nuanced exploration of ethics extended beyond mere compliance to ethical guidelines, delving into the complexities of measuring and documenting impact while ensuring ethical integrity.

Dr Imtiaz Sooliman, founder and Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of the Gift of the Givers Foundation, emphasised the need for research to directly benefit the communities it serves, prompting attendees to assess critically the value and ethical implications of their engagement efforts.

The conference provided a platform for institutions to showcase their CE initiatives and reflect on their ongoing efforts to enhance

community engagement practices. The Unit for CE at the University of Pretoria (UP) shared insights into its focus on curricular community engagement (CCE), emphasising the importance of transdisciplinary collaborations and the integration of CE into the curriculum.

While UP demonstrated commendable progress in CE initiatives, there was recognition of the need for systematic impact documentation and the institutionalisation of ethical practices.

Moreover, discussions highlighted the imperative for institutions to address epistemological justice by actively involving and respecting the perspectives of community stakeholders in research and engagement activities.

In conclusion, the Community Engagement Conference catalysed advancing ethical practices and fostering institutional collaboration in community engagement. Through diverse representation, thoughtful deliberations on ethics, and sharing of institutional experiences, attendees gained valuable insights into the complexities and opportunities inherent in CE initiatives.

Moving forward, it is imperative for institutions not only to strengthen their commitment to ethical engagement but also to prioritise systematic documentation of impact and the promotion of epistemological justice. By doing so, academia can continue to play a meaningful role in addressing societal challenges and advancing the well-being of communities.

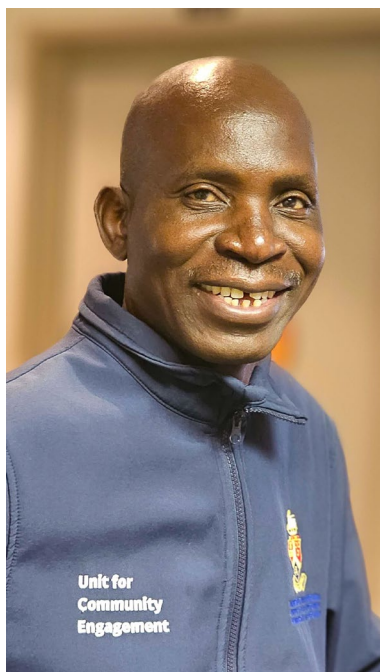
The recent Community Engagement (CE) Conference, hosted by Rhodes University under the theme 'Community engagement and the trajectory of community-university-society relationships: Past, present, and future possibilities, marked another milestone in the discourse surrounding the integration of academia with broader societal needs.

This report aims to provide insights into the conference's key discussions, themes, and outcomes, emphasising the significance of ethical considerations and institutional collaboration in driving effective community engagement initiatives.

One notable aspect of the conference was its inclusive approach, which attracted participation from various institutions nationally and internationally. Notably, stakeholders such as the Human Sciences Research Council of South Africa (HSRC) and the National Research Foundation (NRF) played

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

Innocent Chauke (Site Manager: Moja Gabedi)



I started working at Moja Gabedi in 2020 as a site manager. Moja Gabedi is important for the University of Pretoria (UP) and the surrounding communities because it provides a space for community engagement (CE).

Moja Gabedi is an innovative space for transdisciplinary CE and research. For example, students pursuing degrees in agriculture conduct their research on food production at the garden, while some occupational therapy students conduct life-changing sessions with homeless people from the local community and beyond, enabling them to realise their full potential.

The garden also provides a healing space for visitors. The beautiful space created by Moja Gabedi has added significant value to the local community. I have witnessed many changes

at Moja Gabedi, ranging from regenerating the degenerated space to transforming people's lives for the better. The community's production of 100% organic vegetables and fruits is another notable achievement.

My personal highlights include witnessing an increase in students using the space for curricular community engagement (CCE) initiatives and studying purposes. Moreover, there was a bumper harvest of grapes in 2024. The future plans and vision for Moja Gabedi are for it to become a model for regenerating degenerated spaces in the local communities and beyond.

Through collaborative CE initiatives, the University and community can transform other degenerated spaces and make them places of meaningful engagement. The UP community (staff and students) is truly appreciated for their vast

contribution to making Moja Gabedi what it is today, and we still require their ongoing support in making Moja Gabedi an effective place for CE.

I want UP and the local communities to know that Moja Gabedi provides a true healing space where individuals can commune with nature, and lavender and rosemary ginger provide a sweet-smelling aroma for the therapeutic garden. We also pride ourselves on the availability of an outstanding stage for performance arts, which both the University and the community utilise.

Moja Gabedi has been significantly developed and admired by local and international community partners. The recent positive feedback from visitors from the University of Leeds affirmed our commitment and dedication to continuing to make Moja Gabedi accessible and supportive for CE projects.



# Pure Hope on the horizon: An early literacy success story

Prof Salomé Geertsema (Department of Speech-Language Pathology and Audiology)



**F**rederick Douglass was inspired by his quote, 'Once you learn to read, you will forever be free'. However, this is not an option for everyone.

That is why the second-year speech-language pathology students from the Department of Speech-Language Pathology and Audiology are so proud to be part of a practical module where such dreams can come true.

Moreover, their enthusiasm and passion for supporting—and learning from—these children are truly inspirational. In 2024, the students started their practical journeys at the Pure Hope Pre-Primary School.

On the outskirts of the informal settlement across from the Woodlands Boulevard Centre in Pretoria East, the school opened its doors in 2010. Its vision was

to provide equal opportunities and access to education for underserved communities and to bring hope to a broken world.

This private school comprises a pre-primary, primary, and high school. In most cases, the children accommodated here have not received any educational stimulation, as mere survival in terms of basic needs is a luxury to them.

At Pure Hope Pre-Primary School, learners from many linguistic and cultural backgrounds are exposed to a new and positive world where their horizons are broadened and their hopes and spirits lifted.

Moreover, they receive high-quality education and physical and emotional care, as well as the basics, such as food and clothing, to support them on their journey.

The institution is rooted in the Christian faith and depends on donations from all over.

The students' roles are to provide basic speech therapy (articulation and pronunciation) and to support the children in phonemic awareness of English, as this is the language of learning and teaching and supports the basic building blocks of literacy.

They specifically target the Grade R group, supporting the staff in preparing these children for the rest of their foundation phase, in which they will transition from early literacy to literacy skills.

Indeed, literacy provides freedom. But love, high-quality education, care, and upliftment will pave the way to that freedom, which is Pure Hope.



# Be teachable

Sibusiso Mabotja (Honours studies in English: Faculty of Education)



**Q:** Which degree were you enrolled for at the University of Pretoria (UP), and when did you graduate?

**A:** I was enrolled for a Bachelor of Education (Senior and FET, majoring in English and Geography) and graduated on 8 May 2024.

**Q:** Can you briefly describe your career trajectory since graduating?

**A:** I have been job hunting with no luck, but I am confident I will get a job before the year ends.

**Q:** What motivated you to choose your current profession?

**A:** I was motivated by my love for the subjects I teach and my goal to change people's lives through education. I believe that quality education is the key to moving this nation forward.

**Q:** How did your experiences in community engagement (CE) projects at UP contribute to your professional development/career path?

**A:** Community engagement allowed me to gain experience and learn more about what it takes to be an educator in our country. It exposed me to various schools and learners, which helped sharpen my communication, problem-solving, and ability to show compassion because learners need to know that their educators care. I learned how important it is to be professional through community engagement.

**Q:** What advice do you have for current students planning to participate in community engagement projects?

**A:** Do not hesitate, as the projects are beneficial, and always be willing to learn—you cannot know everything. Create room for improvement and take every opportunity to learn.

**Q:** Are there any specific community engagement projects you have been involved in at UP that you are particularly proud of?

**A:** I am particularly proud of the mentoring and teaching practice projects.

**Q:** Do you wish you could have learned any specific skills or qualities during community engagement to prepare you for your field?

**A:** No, I am confident I have gained the necessary skills that will help me excel in my career.

**Q:** Are there any specific accomplishments or milestones you would like to highlight in your career?

**A:** A particular highlight was being awarded the National Research Foundation (NRF) scholarship for my honours studies in English.



# The power of community engagement: Giving back to our roots

Abigail Chemutai (Master of Development Studies, Mastercard Student: University of Pretoria)



The REACH Programme and Compassion International have profoundly impacted me, and I look forward to continued collaboration with them. We can reduce ignorance through collaboration and encourage community members to strive for better.

To echo the lyrics of Joyce Langat's song, *'Let me not forget where I have come from / Do not forget your humble beginning / When we look back, there is strength'*. Community engagement is the backbone of development, and organisations must embrace it. By doing so, we cultivate a culture of giving back, especially in Africa. The University of Pretoria and Mastercard are exemplary models of integrating community engagement into their programmes.

My research on Ugandan government policies on intimate partner violence in Kapchorwa District led me to participate in community engagement with the Reproductive, Educative and Community Health (REACH) Programme. This pioneering organisation has successfully ended female genital mutilation in the region and collaborates with other organisations, including Compassion International, a non-profit organisation. Together, they uplift

community standards, providing hope for a brighter future.

On International Women's Day, I joined Beatrice Chelangat, founder of REACH and Compassion International, at Kutung Child and Youth Development Centre. Together with health experts, we empowered parents with knowledge on family planning, self-care, and early disease detection.

I shared my journey of perseverance in education, from primary school to enrolling for a master's programme at the University of Pretoria. The children's enthusiasm and desire to pursue further studies were inspiring. I encouraged them to stay in school, emphasising that education is the key to unlocking their potential. Community engagement was a significant aspect for me, as I realised our efforts are needed in our communities. We must share our success stories and experiences to motivate others.

Community engagement can contribute to education in our communities. It adds value to our academic pursuits, making them meaningful and impactful. Through community engagement, we develop essential skills, build relationships, and better understand the world around us. We are responsible for giving back to our communities and sharing our knowledge and skills to create a better future. Furthermore, community engagement is a powerful tool for development. It is through giving back to our communities that we find true fulfilment.

I am grateful for the opportunity to partner with the REACH Programme and Compassion International during my research collection activities in Kapchorwa District, and I hope to continue making a positive impact in the lives of others. Let us embrace community engagement to foster development and progress in our communities. Together, we can create a brighter future for all.

# 2024 Community Engagement Conference at Rhodes University: Reflections and insights

**Bonolo Mokoka (Lecturer: Community-Based Projects [JCP])**

Recently, I had the privilege of attending the 2024 Community Engagement Conference at Rhodes University, an event dedicated to exploring the dynamic relationships between communities, universities, and society. The conference theme, 'Community engagement and the trajectory of community-university-society relationships: Past, present, and future possibilities', set the stage for deep discussions and rich exchanges. The conference focused on four main sub-themes: conceptual perspective, pedagogical perspective, ethical perspective, and social responsibility perspective. Each sub-theme provided a unique lens through which to examine community engagement.

The conference featured an impressive line-up of keynote speakers, each bringing a wealth of knowledge and experience to the discussions. The most captivating speaker was Dr Imtiaz Sooliman, Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of the Gift of the Givers Foundation, who shared inspiring stories and insights from his extensive work in humanitarian aid. The event attracted a diverse group of participants, including representatives from civil society organisations and community members, as well as academics and students from institutions in South Africa and other African countries and institutions from the Global North who have partnered in community engagement activities in South Africa and other parts of Africa. The conference was a week-long journey of insightful presentations,



dynamic dialogues, and extensive networking. The event's highlight was engaging with such an intelligent and passionate group of individuals. Key discussions revolved around the historical context of community engagement, current best practices, and innovative future possibilities. One significant outcome of the conference was the selection of papers for the online open-access African Journal of Higher Education Community Engagement (AJHECE) 2024 publication. This initiative aims to maximise knowledge distribution and foster continued dialogue on community engagement.

Attending the conference also provided an opportunity to showcase the Faculty of Engineering, Built Environment and Information Technology (EBIT) community engagement team's work on innovative pedagogical approaches within engineering education to foster a sense of social responsibility among undergraduate students. Our research paper, titled 'The impact of service-learning on the social responsibility attitudes of engineering students', integrates



service-learning (SL) with immersive learning techniques to meet the critical demand for nurturing social responsibility among undergraduate engineering students at the University of Pretoria. The paper was well received and generated considerable interest following the presentation, as it was selected for publication in the AJHECE.

As the conference concluded, there was a noticeable excitement and anticipation for the future. The insights gained and the connections made over the week promise to enhance our understanding and practice of community engagement. I look forward to the 2025 conference, where we will undoubtedly build on this year's discussions and explore new horizons in community-university-society relationships.

In conclusion, the 2024 Community Engagement Conference at Rhodes University was a success, offering valuable perspectives on how universities can more effectively engage with their communities to foster mutual growth and development.



# An opportunity for learning

Richard Mnisi (Green Sebenza, Mpumalanga Tourism and Parks Agency, Manyeleti), Thabani Mduli (Manyeleti Nature Reserve, Mpumalanga Tourism and Parks Agency), and Jeanette Wentzel (Hans Hoheisen Wildlife Research Station, Department of Veterinary Tropical Diseases, Faculty of Veterinary Science)



**M**r Marlo Clarke (<https://marloclarke.com/>), an international rugby player from Barbados turned strategist and TEDx speaker, partnered with the community engagement programme of the University of Pretoria's Hans Hoheisen Wildlife Research Station to run a training session with the Green Sebenzas.

The Green Sebenzas, who work as Educational Educators at Manyeleti Nature Reserve, received training to improve their communication and presentation skills individually and within a group context. Additionally,

Mr Marlo Clarke invited Mr Richard Mnisi to improve his communication and interviewing skills by practising with him.

## **Below is the outcome of Mr Richard Mnisi's interview with Marlo Clarke:**

Marlo Clarke came to motivate the interns in Manyeleti Nature Reserve and teach them about effective communication and presentation methods, building confidence in a crowd, believing in themselves, and delivering a message effectively. We learned a lot from him, including

his background information and why he visited South Africa.

Marlo grew up in Barbados with his parents and siblings. He lived next door to his grandparents. He obtained a BSc in economics and accounting from the West Indies. He was also part of the national rugby team.

However, he had a passion for children and communication. After meeting a particular company's

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chief executive officer (CEO), he asked for a job opportunity. The CEO told him to finish his degree and call him a year later. After qualifying, he sold all he owned and bought a plane ticket to the USA. He believed a phone call would be ineffective, so he went in person and asked for a job. He succeeded in landing a position.

In the USA, he worked as a programme director, which entailed going to schools and speaking to students about their life choices, and realised that it was impactful and developed a passion for it. He started travelling to interview people about their desires, plans, and how to attain their goals, which is how he developed his speeches.

He has a company called Marlo Clarke Presents, where he concentrates his time as a public speaker. He speaks mostly to independent agencies about incremental improvements to schools and companies.

While visiting South Africa with his wife, he dedicated his time to volunteering at various places. His activities include but are not limited to, teaching school learners about clean water and facility development in Acornhoek, Mpumalanga Province. Marlo saw coming to South Africa as 'an opportunity to learn' and to exchange knowledge and culture.

He contributed to several activities in the communities in Bushbuckridge.

Despite the language barrier, Marlo continued assisting the learners in primary schools, creches, and communities in saving water and cleaning our environment.



## Love Circle Senior Club: Weaving community threads with crafts and care

Josina Tellie

### Eersterust Football Association

The 2023/2024 men's league consisted of 14 clubs. The league games were very competitive, and the senior league has finished, with Lighthouse Football Club emerging as the winner of the 2023–2024 season. Trophies were presented on 24 May 2024 at Rueben and Cathy's Hall.

### House for All

House for All is an informal settlement that has grown tremendously from 2 000 to a population of about 10 000 people. Most of the community still experiences challenges. For instance, some people do not have birth certificates, and some children do not attend school. Poverty is rife, and so are abuse and violations of human rights. Churches and non-profit organisations help by providing meals through a soup kitchen drive. Some community members are building houses, and for many, business is booming.

### Community initiatives

Safety officers from the Department of Police patrol school premises. Discipline in schools has also improved, especially regarding the problem of fighting in primary schools.

Services at the Eersterust Health Clinic have also improved. People no longer wait long, and senior citizens no longer stand in queues. Some nurses conduct home visits for those who cannot attend the clinic for help and medication. The Eersterust community has changed for the better.

People are starting new businesses, especially food businesses. Mr Ruwayne Smith, an accountant, took it upon himself to provide opportunities for youth to start their own business. To date, he has assisted more than 100 youth start-ups. Build Africa is an organisation

that provides youth in the community with opportunities such as skills development, life skills, computer skills, matric classes, HIV/AIDs counselling, testing, and screening, as well as sexually transmitted infection (STI) and tuberculosis (TB) testing.

Love Circle has been revived, with meetings now occurring twice a week. The community is very excited about the weekly sewing lessons at Skuilkrans Church, as they always wanted to do this. We will raise funds to buy two machines to get us going. We have new members who joined us.

We need students who can teach knitting and provide physiotherapy sessions, eye testing and first aid courses.

We thank the University of Pretoria's Unit for Community Engagement for their patience and help to our community.



# Empowering future professionals: Employability session with Eastwood student accommodation in Hatfield

Muofhe Murudi (Career Services: University of Pretoria)



In 2024, the University of Pretoria Career Services' commitment to empowering students and graduates with essential employability skills has continued to grow stronger. Recently, we had an enriching session at the Eastwood student accommodation in Hatfield, where we focused on equipping young people with the tools they need to enhance their employability in South Africa's challenging job market.

## Empowering with skills

The session was designed to address the pressing issue of unemployment in South Africa by arming participants with practical skills and knowledge. We delved into various aspects that are crucial for job readiness, including CV writing, crafting compelling cover letters, effective job search strategies, and mastering interview techniques. These skills are essential in ensuring that young people stand out to potential employers and secure rewarding opportunities in their career journey.

Just like Mandela Day celebrates acts of kindness and community service, our session aims to empower young

people through practical, hands-on activities. Participants engaged in mock interview simulations, where they honed their communication skills and learned to articulate their strengths and experiences confidently. This interactive approach built confidence and provided valuable feedback to help refine their interview techniques.

At UP Career Services, we understand the challenges posed by the current job market in South Africa, especially with the high unemployment rate. Our focus was not only on imparting technical skills but also on fostering resilience and adaptability. Through group activities and peer learning, participants gained insights into networking strategies, personal branding, and adapting to AI, which are crucial for navigating today's competitive job landscape.

## Community of support

The session at Eastwood student accommodation was more than just a workshop; it was an opportunity to build a supportive community of aspiring professionals. Participants

shared their experiences, challenges, and aspirations, creating a supportive environment where everyone felt encouraged to learn and grow together. As we move forward, we encourage young people, students, and graduates to continue practising the skills they have acquired.

Whether you are a final-year student preparing to enter the job market or a recent graduate seeking new opportunities, remember that each step you take towards enhancing your employability brings you closer to achieving your career goals.

## Stay connected

Watch for upcoming sessions and workshops geared towards enhancing your employability skills. We are committed to supporting you every step of the way as you embark on your professional journey.

Thank you to all who participated in making the session at Eastwood student accommodation a success. Your enthusiasm and dedication inspire us to continue providing valuable resources and opportunities for career growth.



# Community Engagement Forum Members 2024



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Representative/Secundus	Faculty/Department
Prof Gerrit Stols	<b>Director</b> Department for Education Innovation
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
<b>Faculty support: Department for Education Innovation - Unit for Community Engagement</b>	
Ms Kanye Rampa	Engineering, Built Environment and Information Technology (EBIT)
	Humanities
	Veterinary Science
Mr Albert Matlheketha	Health Sciences
	Law
	Theology and Religion
Ms Londiwe Mahlangu	Economic Management Sciences (EMS)
	Education
	Natural & Agricultural Sciences (NAS)
<b>Community Engagement Faculty Representatives</b>	
Prof Natasja Holtzhausen	EMS
Dr Susan Thuketana	Education
Prof Lelanie Smith	EBIT
Ms Bonolo Mokoka	
Dr Christa Ellis	School of Health Care Sciences (SOHCS)
Prof Ahmed Bhayat	School of Dentistry
Mr Mahlatse Moropeng	School of Health Systems and Public Health (SHSPH)
Dr Felistus Ndamba	Humanities
Mr Eddie Hanekom	Law Clinic
Ms Karabo Ozah	
Prof Nerhene Davis	NAS
Dr Hanri Taljaard-Swart	
Mr Lance Thomas	Theology and Religion
Ms Irene Thomas	
Dr Alfred Kgasi	Veterinary Science
<b>Support departments</b>	
Dr Martina Jordaan	Mamelodi Campus
Mr Edwin Smith	
Mr Rowan Watson	Security Services
Mr Rikus Delport	Institutional Advancement
Ms Isabel de Necker	
Mr Juan-Pierre van der Walt	Ms Bhaviksha Ramouthar
Ms Veronica Israel	Student Affairs (DSA)
Ms Khanyi Mahlangu	Student Representative Council (SRC)
Mr Kamva Diko	
Mr Abe Mathopa	Department of Research, Innovation and Postgraduate Education
Ms Christine Nel	Library Services
Ms Pfano Makhera	