

# what's UP @ HRM

keeping you in touch

*In this  
edition*

**Student's experiences of our  
PhD learning programme**

**Dealing with online teaching**

**Celebrating the success of  
our women colleagues**



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## FROM THE EDITOR

And so another year of lockdown, restrictions, online teaching, virtual graduations and social distancing is nearly at an end. Last year we reckoned that by the end of 2021 things would be back to normal again. However, here we are 18 months into the outbreak of the pandemic, and the new normal has become the norm. During 2021, we continued with online teaching and learning and, despite the challenges, our department and students performed excellently. In this edition, we would like to continue to celebrate Women's Month by showcasing the women stars of our department's staff and students. Regardless of the trying times we experience, our department is moving forward strongly (being nominated on various fronts for its excellent services) and our students are provided with outstanding online teaching and support. Providing high-quality support to our students remains one of our key goals during the Covid-19 pandemic, and we will continue to serve our students, community and profession during this ongoing "new normal".



Prof Eileen Koekemoer

# EXCEPTIONAL ACHIEVEMENTS WITHIN OUR DEPARTMENT

## Prof Stella Nkomo makes history again

Prof Stella is known for her illustrious and trailblazing career and, once again, she has done the department proud by making history at the 2021 SIOPSA Conference. Prof Stella was awarded the Honorary Affiliate Fellow Award at the 2021 SIOPSA Presidential Merit Awards. This award recognises her outstanding contribution towards the science and practice of Industrial and Organisational Psychology. While receiving this award on its own is an achievement for the stars, Prof Stella has outdone herself by becoming the first person who is not a trained industrial and organisational psychologist to win such an award. Her contribution to the field of Industrial Psychology is indeed one that will be remembered for years to come and has set the foundation for ground-breaking research in the field of gender and diversity in the management sciences. In addition to holding the honorary title, Prof Stella was one of the keynote speakers at the 2021 SIOPSA Conference. She delivered an exceptional presentation, Imperatives for Re-Humanising Work.



Just when the department couldn't be any prouder of Prof Stella, she wowed us again by appearing on the Podcast "The Goop Lab", which is hosted by popular actress Gwyneth Patrol. The show focuses on a range of challenging wellness topics and Prof Stella shared her insights on black and white women and the struggle for professional identity. This discussion was inspired by her new book, sharing the same title as her presentation at the 2021 SIOPSA Conference, which was published in conjunction with Prof Ella Belle Smith of Dartmouth University. Prof Stella together with Prof Smith also shared their insights on the book in the popular Bloomberg News, and will also appear in the Wall Street Journal promoting their book.

The department wishes Prof Stella all the best with her future endeavors and would like to thank her for her contributions to our field of study and to our department.

## Celebrating Prof Carrim's work on diversity

Prof Nasima Carrim needs no introduction, as she is popularly known for her excellent work in gender and diversity. Prof Carrim is the leading co-editor of the first ever diversity textbook being published in South Africa, is an executive member of the Society for Industrial and Organisational Psychology of South Africa and the chairperson of the Diversity and Inclusion Interest Group at SIOPSA. Prof Carrim has dedicated her life to empowering employees and students to deal with diversity issues in the workplace as well as fighting for diversity and equality in the workplace. This has earned her the nomination for Academic of the Year at the 2021 SIOPSA Presidential Awards.

In addition, Prof Carrim was celebrated as an inspiring woman in IOP by SIOPSA during Women's Month.





*"Her contribution to diversity management has touched on controversial topics that affect minorities in organisations. I look up to her for inspiration for the obstacles she had to overcome professionally and still maintain a standard of excellence. She deserves more than salutation for the great work she has done in this industry."*

This was indeed a proud moment for the department.

The pandemic did not stop Prof Carrim from spreading her intellectual insight on diversity challenges in the workplace. As the chair of the Diversity and Inclusion group at SIOPSA, Prof Carrim hosted various SIOPSA webinars, which included Embracing a kaleidoscope of ethnicity in the corporate world and Gender across borders: women's authentic identities in the African workplace. She was also featured in many of the online conversations hosted by SIOPSA on Understanding sexual harassment in the workplace and Bullying in the workplace.

Without a doubt, Prof Carrim is the epitome of ambition, having a significant impact on the industrial and organisational psychology community. To have Prof Carrim as a member of the Department of Human Resource Management is an honour.

## 2021 SIOPSA Presidential Awards

The 2021 SIOPSA Presidential Awards celebrated excellence in Industrial and Organisational Psychology and it was definitely a night to remember! These awards are given annually to members of the IOP community and SIOPSA who are making a significant impact in terms of science and practice. The presidential awards proudly reflect achievements that make the field of Industrial and Organisational Psychology an exciting discipline. They celebrate people at every stage of their career, from those just starting out to those at their peak. These awards also recognise and celebrate companies which are successful in implementing and promoting the best IOP and HRM practices that contribute to the success of today's businesses and make them a better place to work.

The University of Pretoria were given the honour of co-hosting the 2021 SIOPSA Presidential Awards. The star-studded event included our very own HOD, Prof Alewyn Nel, and senior professor in the department, Prof Karel Stanz, as co-presenters of the event. It was a big night for us, as many of our colleagues were nominated for these prestigious awards. Prof Carrim and Prof Olckers were both acknowledged and nominated for Academic IOP of the Year. This category was fiercely competitive, and being recognised among the best is an honour for the department. We are proud of Prof Carrim and Prof Olckers. In addition to our colleagues being nominated, alumni of the department, Sherwyn Rossouw, Carmen Latre and Amy Goble, were also nominated in the category Emerging Psychologist of the Year. Their nominations once again serve as proof that the Department of Human Resource Management continues to set the bar high in terms of best practice standards.



**She was powerful, not because she  
wasn't scared, but because she went  
on strongly despite the fear.**

**-Atticus-**

# TEACHING MATTERS

## Our virtual prize-giving for top students in the Department of Human Resource Management in 2020

The Department of Human Resource Management held its annual prize-giving ceremony in April to recognise and congratulate its top achieving students in Human Resource Management and Industrial Psychology of 2020. This year was no different from last year, as it was once again hosted virtually due to the coronavirus pandemic. This, despite some obstacles, was a success, as everyone has become accustomed to doing things virtually. The event was hosted on an online platform that allowed the prize-winners and their families, as well as other students, staff and sponsors to join in the celebration.

Our department would like to thank AHI Employers' Organisation, LexisNexis, Institute of People Management, Human Capital Business Solutions and South African Board for People Practices (SABPP) for sponsoring the respective prizes.



### Human Resource Management Undergraduate Prize: Sponsored by AHI Employers' Organisation and LexisNexis



*Natasha de Ravel de L'argentière*

Best Achievement During the Three-Year Study  
Period for the Degree BCom in Human Resource  
Management. Average obtained: 83%

### BCom Honours in Human Resource Management Prize: Sponsored by the Institute of People Management

*Caela Gauche*

Best Overall Achievement for the Degree BCom  
Honours in Human Resource Management. Average  
obtained: 76.18%





## BCom Honours in Industrial Psychology Prize:

Sponsored by Human Capital Business Solutions



*Morné Bester*

Post-Graduate Prize for Best Overall Achievement  
for the Degree BCom Honours in Industrial  
Psychology. Average obtained: 79.75%

## Institute of People Management Research Prize:

Sponsored by the Institute of People Management

*Anicia van der Westhuisen*

Best Achievement in Research Modules for the  
Degree BCom Honours in Human Resource  
Management. Average obtained: 83%



## BCom Honours in Industrial Psychology Community Project Prize:

Sponsored by the Human Resource Management Department

*Palesa Letansana*



*Deborah Brown*



*Marlé Scholtz*



*Morné Bester*



**MCom Industrial and Organisational Psychology Prize:**  
Sponsored by the SABPP



*Amy Goble*

Best Overall Achievement for the Degree MCom in  
Industrial and Organisational Psychology. Average  
obtained: 80.27%

**MCom Human Resource Management Prize:**  
Sponsored by the SABPP

*Marubini Franscisca Milubi*

Best Overall Achievement for the Degree MCom  
Human Resource Management.  
Average obtained: 70.50%



**PHD Award:**

Sponsored by the Human Resource Management Department.  
Awarded by Prof Jenny Hoobler (PhD Programme Leader)



*Elonya Coetzee*

Best PhD Student in the PhD Learning Programme.  
Average obtained: 70%

**What you get by achieving your goals  
is not as important as what you  
become by achieving your goals  
-Henry David Thoreau-**

# Hosting our annual virtual Career Networking Evening

Faculty of Economic and  
Management Sciences

100  
1920 - 2020  
Advance

On 19 August 2021, the Department of Human Resource Management held its annual networking event. Although the event had to be virtual because of Covid-19 restrictions, it was a great success, thanks to the input of the six companies that attended the event, namely Vodacom, Evalex Talent Solutions, Momentum, Shine Consulting, HCB Solutions and the South African Board for People Practices, as well as the 30 students who also joined. The companies' representatives delivered presentations and held question-and-answer sessions, allowing students to gain priceless advice ranging from what organisations looked for in a graduate to how students could better integrate into the working environment. This initiative has allowed our students to find out exactly what the HRM, IOP and LRM industries are like in the real world, enabling them to prepare better for their future careers. We would like to thank Prof Alewyn Nel, Ms Lynette Govender and Ms Tyla Loubser for their help in arranging such a successful event, and also the representatives of the companies for taking time off from their busy schedules to come and speak to our enthusiastic students.

*A big thank you to our industry partners:*



shine

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# Dealing with online teaching and learning in the past year

The Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic and corresponding adjusted national restriction levels necessitated the rapid shift from traditional teaching and learning methods to online methods. The use of technology to design learning and assessment and the overall digitalisation of the learning space have challenged old ways of doing things and promoted creativity and the exploration of new ways of doing things. Differences in preparedness for the new reality among students and staff as well as their preferences regarding online aspects created a challenge and what they learnt was varied and interesting. Below are some opinions of our students and staff regarding online teaching and learning.

*"Online teaching encouraged me to explore innovative methods of assessments. Students seemed more open to participate, which resulted in better student engagement. However, with online teaching, class attendance is very low, as students are aware that they can simply download the recorded lectures and some do not see the need to join the class. Therefore there are challenges in maintaining the integrity of the assessment process."* (Senior lecturer, DHRM)

*"Completing an Honours year virtually was quite challenging; however, the University of Pretoria exceeded my expectations with how well the classes were presented. There were virtual platforms established for us as students to communicate with one another and with our lecturers. Each class was recorded and we were able to re-watch it at any time."* (Honours student)

*"Online learning has taught me how to actively communicate with students and lecturers more effectively, as it was not easy to just speak to them in class. It has also brought me to the realisation that there is a huge need for social interaction. However, it was awesome to have lecturers late in the evenings online, so that we didn't have to be on campus so late at night or in the cold. But I felt like although we were not connected, we were more connected because it was more important now to speak more, and work together more in order to overcome the year together."* (Honours student, undergrad tutor)

*"I enjoyed not going to the class but delivering work; the flexibility of working from anywhere without restrictions; working in my space that I can control."* (Prof, DHRM)

*"I liked the fact that the platform was interactive and the students were engaging with the lecturers. The video recordings, group chats etc were very useful as the students had an opportunity to go back and check for information. I just did not really like that we did not have an opportunity to meet with fellow students in person; however, this is understandable with the current COVID-19 situation. I learnt that it is possible to study remotely and create a suitable interactive environment, and there was improvement in my use of technology."* (Master's student)

*"What I enjoyed about online teaching is that it is convenient for both the lecturer and students, such as that you can conduct classes anywhere. On the other hand, it becomes difficult to engage students and tell if they understand the content being delivered, which is easier to identify when you have contact classes. In a nutshell, I have realised that online teaching can be as effective as having contact classes if both students and lecturers engage, such as students asking questions and lecturers giving students activities to do."* (Lecturer)

*"Online learning is living proof that we don't have to be in the same room to teach and learn from each other. It is flexible, as one can learn from anywhere in the globe, oceans away. It eliminates unnecessary travelling and the expenses which it brings, while also allowing everyone to be productive. It encourages self-discipline and introduces everyone to the benefits of modern communication technology. This is good for all of us, as we are heading into the 4th Industrial Revolution. Online learning brings equality into the education system, as students do not need to come to campus. This reduces peer pressure in various aspects of student life. It also grooms students to be technically savvy, as all research and learning are done online. Another good thing about online learning is that it enables everyone to use their time wisely and productively, as one can continue with certain tasks until the hour to teach or learn comes, instead of being stuck in traffic for some time."* (PHD student, teaching assistant)



# RESEARCH MATTERS

## Showcasing our department's PhD learning programme

The Department of Human Resource Management has designed a PhD programme not for those who simply want to add a doctoral degree next to their name, but for those who have a passion for research and want to become academics. The programme aims to train researchers and, therefore, teaches individuals how to do quality research. Our programme stands out from most others, as we provide a one-year learning programme for students to complete during their first year of PhD studies, before selecting a topic and supervisor. The overall aim of the first-year learning programme is to provide our students with a wide range of skills to use towards their own publications and, one day, to supervise other students who have a variety of research interests. We want our students to leave our programme as experts in their discipline. Our PhD students have three years to complete their PhD studies. The experiences of three of our current PhD students in the programme are captured below. They are Lonwabo, a first-year PhD student, Elonya, a second-year student, and Esli, who has just graduated!

Lonwabo  
Makapela



Lonwabo began her PhD journey in Human Resource Management at the beginning of this year. Her interests involve gender and diversity in organisations as well as identity work and transformational change management. She plans to conduct research on identity among black female professionals, despite hair biases against them in mainstream media and school codes of conduct throughout their lives. Her PhD experience thus far has been incredibly challenging. Even though she is a hard worker, the programme has stretched her beyond anything she could have imagined. Contributing to this challenge, Covid-19 has made the experience times lonely, and it often feels like she is up against an enormous mountain of work. She remains motivated, though, as she trusts it will be very rewarding at the end of the academic year. When asked what she is looking forward to once she has finished her PhD, she replied,

**"I look forward to celebrating with my family, taking up a postdoctoral position at a university abroad for a few years (hopefully) and travelling a lot."**

The best advice that Lonwabo could give to future PhD students is that you need to be driven by something bigger than only wanting to become a doctor. When you experience the sense of being overwhelmed and demotivated, your "big drive" is what will help bring you back emotionally and mentally. She also recommends making friends within your degree, going for regular walks, and just enjoying the journey.

Elonya  
Coetzee



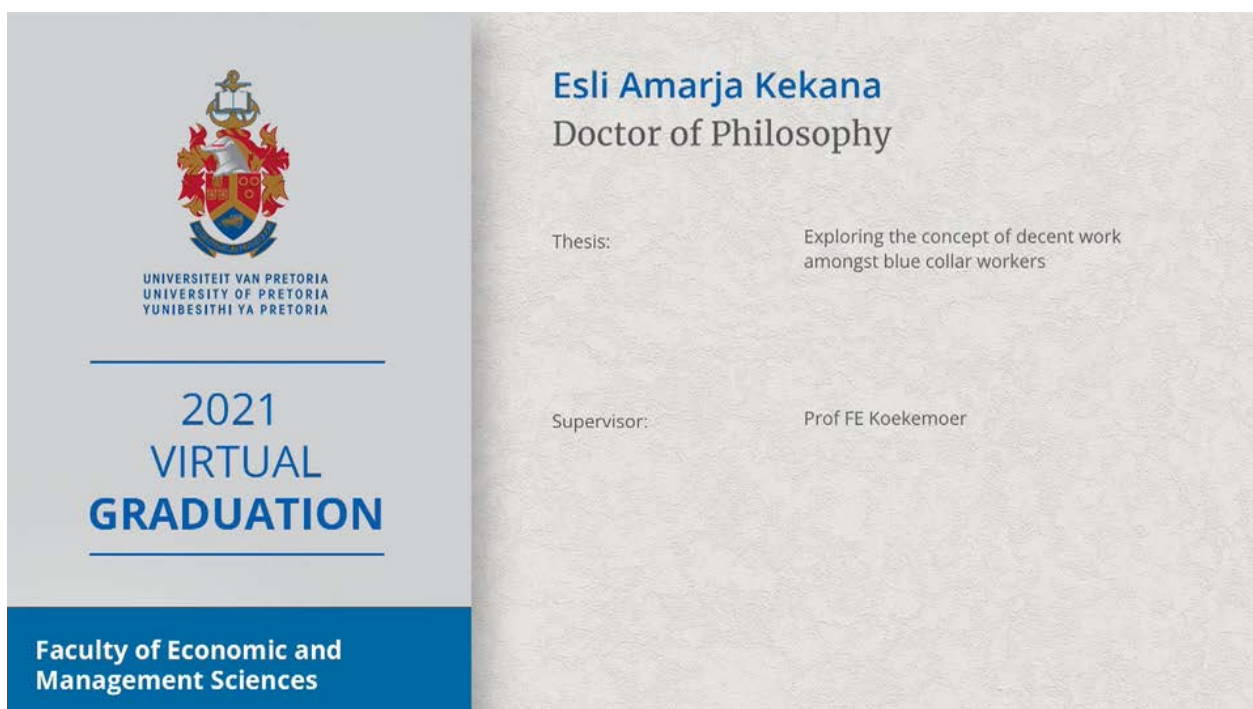
Elonya is a second-year doctoral student pursuing her PhD in industrial and organisational psychology. Under the supervision of Prof Karel Stanz, she is currently completing her thesis, which is about the identity work of leaders who had to adjust their roles in leading people face to face to adjust to a virtual context. Virtuality introduces new complexities and paradoxes that leaders need to negotiate, which impacts not only their role identity constructions of "Who am I as a leader?" but also how they manage their teams. It is at the interface between

identity work and the paradoxical tensions that virtuality poses that the anticipated contribution of this research study is found, as it theorises how leaders negotiate and reconstruct their identities amidst these tensions. Her interest and personal challenge is to conduct research that is applicable and will make a contribution as well as a difference to people's lives. When describing her experience in the programme so far, she explains that the first year of coursework was a privilege to attend, even though it involved a huge workload and required a serious amount of time management. It allowed for amazing growth and a learning experience. The highlight of her experience thus far is the interaction between her fellow students and her, and the thought-provoking engagements with subject matter experts. However, the absence of these engagements after her first year has been a low for her. The flexibility to start exploring other research topics and refining and applying the research skills that she has learnt as a student of the department, is what she looks forward to most when finishing her PhD. Her advice to future PhD students is,

**"Keep your momentum by planning and committing to work on your research every day."**

## Making a difference for blue-collar workers with her PhD study

Esli Kekana was a doctoral candidate within our department during the last three years and graduated in September this year with her PhD in Industrial and Organisational Psychology. Her research interests included decent work, psychology of working theory, unemployment, quality work and social justice. Therefore, it is no wonder that under the supervision of Prof Eileen Koekemoer, she completed her thesis on the concept of decent work amongst blue-collar workers. The research took place in a manufacturing company in South Africa. The findings of her study expand our understanding of decent work at a micro level, for a neglected group of the workforce, namely unskilled and semi-skilled workers in a developing economy (i.e., South African blue-collar workers). In her qualitative study (collecting data from 13 focus groups), the experiences of decent work among 66 blue-collar workers revealed interesting and significant findings for employers and organisations to take note of. Her findings contribute to the promotion of sustainable work for blue-collar workers and her findings will be featuring later this year in the first edition of the University of Pretoria's research magazine featuring the topic of sustainable work.



*When summarising her three-year PhD journey, this was her story:*

*"My first year of being a PhD student – I loved the first year – it was very challenging and painful like feeling stiff after a gym session. I am grateful that I was part of the programme at UP, as Prof Hoobler is a visionary when it comes to structuring the programme and she really challenges you to start thinking critically.*

*During my second year, I started doing my focus groups, which was exhilarating because I knew that I was onto something valuable. It was also humbling, as people trusted me with their very personal stories. I also fell pregnant in my second year. I spent a lot of time in the library working away, rubbing my belly, and really just being inspired by people's stories.*

*My final year of studies: In my third year, COVID hit, and I also gave birth. I was once again humbled by how many people were supportive of my pursuit – I relied a lot on my late mother and my mother-in-law to look after my baby whilst I finished my thesis."*





As this chapter in Esli's life closes, another opens and she looks forward to writing articles, presenting her research, and collaborating with other people who are also passionate about decent work so that we can realise the decent work agenda in South Africa.

Esli leaves us with a few words of wisdom for future PhD students,

*"Check your intentions before pursuing your PhD. What I noticed about some of the people I was enrolled with was that they wanted to do a PhD for status. You need much more than that to drive you during this process.*

*Do not succumb to negative talk about the program, we knew that we had to attend classes every second Friday and Saturday and we knew that the work would be a lot. My recommendation for PhD students after year 1 is, to just do it, even if you commit to 1 hour a day staring at a blank screen, just do it. There will always be a reason to not, but if you want to finish your PhD you can't be like everyone else who are swayed and distracted by things happening. You have that privilege once you are finished".*



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# Surviving Covid-19 My life lessons

The virus known as Covid-19 has altered the fabric of our social reality. The world went from a rapidly expanding global village to instantaneously isolated societies where terms such as social distancing became the new norm. In a world where our individuality is our defining characteristic, it became a legal requirement to wear a mask, hiding part of who we are. The virus then took away the rest, our social and physical interaction. With the implementation of multiple stages of lockdown, we were separated from our families and friends. The people with whom we interacted face to face every day were now only seen on the screen of a technological device. Prior to Covid-19, physical interaction was taken for granted and we now find ourselves missing these small interactions that occurred at the workplace, school or even the shopping mall. But perhaps the most devastating effect of this virus is the lives it has claimed and the lives it has forever altered.

The one universal truth of the Covid-19 virus is its lack of discrimination towards whom it attacks. Initially we believed that it attacked the elderly, but as time passed we learnt that this virus attacks all age groups, from infants to the elderly. However, it was not until I had first-hand experience with Covid-19 that I truly understood the effects of the virus. The day I received the text message "Your SARS-CoV-2 test result is: POSITIVE", was the day that Covid-19 became my immediate reality. Soon after this announcement I was admitted into hospital with the diagnosis of Covid-19 with pneumonia. Following my admittance was my daughter, a university student, and my mother, a pensioner. We spent a few days in hospital where we received the necessary medical treatment in order to survive the worst stages of the virus infection. The experience of staying in a Covid-19 ward takes its toll on your mental health. The noises around you range from the common beeping of machines to the din of the oxygenators, interspersed with detached weeping that floats through the walls. This constant influx of noises leaves not a moment of peaceful rest for the mind and spirit. The physical body is treated no better by the virus, and the constant medical procedures and checks performed by the healthcare professionals make your body feel alien to you. Despite the mental and physical toll on an individual, the fact that the affected person can have no contact with family or friends hurts the most. When a person is sick, they usually look to human comfort, but the nature of the Covid-19 virus prevents this basic necessity.

But as isolated as I felt in my home and in hospital while I had the virus, I was not the only one going through this experience. There were other staff members of my department and faculty who had also been affected by the virus. There were those who were more seriously affected by the virus and spent time in ICU and, in some instances, staff were left suffering from long-term Covid-19 side effects that range from hair loss to permanent lung damage. Some staff members also lost beloved parents, family and friends. As one colleague said, "All I seemed to do lately is attend funerals of loved ones who have passed away from Covid-19." As a survivor of Covid-19, I observed that those that have had close encounters with the virus seem to understand the severity of Covid-19 better than those for whom it is just another news announcement or an anonymous statistic.

*I learnt that the value placed on life and on living it to its fullest rises exponentially. And the many common stresses of daily living lose their power over me.*



# A special Thanks to our team

- Prof. Eileen Koekemoer - Editor
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