Inspire

A reflection on TUT women with inspirational stories
2004-2016
TUT is honoured to launch the first edition of Inspire, a publication which recognises and celebrates a number of inspirational women, all connected in one way or another with this University. This publication acknowledges ordinary women doing extraordinary things. They weren’t hard to find. They were right here, in our offices, kitchens, classes, libraries and on the sports field.

It is heartening to see that the walls of discrimination and inequality are steadily being dismantled and that our institution is transforming to become the equal opportunity university it should be. Importantly, this transformation is not being achieved by a few individuals in powerful positions. It is the result of the continued efforts and determination of courageous women who believe in the importance of equality and wish to see all members of society given the opportunity to achieve their dreams and goals, whilst making a positive contribution.

The inspirational women featured in this first edition are living proof of just what can be achieved by strong, determined, passionate and talented women - irrespective of the odds that may be stacked against them.

However, more Important, Inspire not only focuses on the extraordinary achievements of a few women, but celebrates the fact that all women are amazing.
The late Adelaide “Mama” Tambo, the first Chancellor of TUT, was a prominent anti-apartheid activist and political exile - regarded as a hero of the liberation struggle against apartheid in South Africa.

Born as Adelaide Frances Tshukudu, she was involved in South African politics for five decades and was married to the late Oliver Tambo: President of the African National Congress (ANC) from 1956 until his death in 1993. They had three children - one of whom, their son Dali is a television talk-show personality.

Following the end of apartheid, she served as a Member of Parliament from 1994 to 1999.

In recognition of her involvement in, and contribution to the nursing profession, TUT honoured the late Dr Tambo as the institution’s first Chancellor in 2006.

Dr Tambo had a Master’s degree in nursing and a passion for the profession. She worked tirelessly to improve the image and working conditions of nurses.

The late Nelson Mandela described Dr Tambo as an exceptional person: “she exemplified and embodied all that was good and noble in our liberation struggle and in our dreams for our nation. She was a builder, not a destroyer. She brought together rather than divided. Her love for her country was all inclusive. She remained true to her calling as a nurse throughout her life as she pursued healing in personal, organisational and national relationships.”

Adelaide Tambo received the Order of the Baobab in Gold, one of the highest honours bestowed by the post-1994 South African Government. The South African Anglican Church awarded her the Order of Simon of Cyrene, the highest award given to lay people for distinguished service.

Mrs Tambo died on 31 January 2007, aged 77 at her home in Johannesburg and was buried next to her husband in her home town of Wattville.
Humzile Mlambo-Ngcuka is a United Nations Under-Secretary-General and the Executive Director of UN Women. The former Deputy President of South Africa was inaugurated as the second Chancellor of the Tshwane University of Technology in 2010, where she served successfully until 2012.

Upon her installation as Chancellor, Mrs Mlambo-Ngcuka stressed the importance of education saying that “the task of advancing education is the greatest single shield we have to protect this nation from the invasion of poverty, the burden of incurable and avoidable diseases, the helplessness and marginalisation of whole communities and generations”.

In 1994, Mrs Mlambo-Ngcuka became a Member of Parliament, chairing the Public Service Portfolio Committee. She was Deputy Minister in the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) from 1996 until 1999, during this time she was also a founding member of the Gugulethu Community Development Corporation. From 1997, she served as member of the National Executive Committee of the African National Congress (ANC) and was the provincial Vice-Chairperson of the ANC in the Western Cape.

Mrs Mlambo-Ngcuka was Minister of Minerals and Energy from June 1999 to June 2005. She also served as acting Minister of Arts, Culture, Science and Technology from February 2004 to April 2004.

In addition to her numerous accolades, she successfully led the Southern African Development Community mission to observe the controversial 2005 Zimbabwe parliamentary election.
Dr Gwendoline Malegwale Ramokgopa was born in Atteridgeville, City of Tshwane (then Pretoria). She qualified as a Medical Doctor (MBChB) in 1989 and attained her Master’s degree in Public Health (MPH) in 2007. She has undertaken other postgraduate studies in Public Health, Health Economics and Strategic Management and Marketing.

Dr Ramokgopa is no stranger to firsts. Her pioneering repertoire includes being elected as the first female President of the SRC at MEDUNSA, the inaugural CEO of the South African Medical and Dental Practitioners Association, the first woman to chair the executive committee of the then City Council of Pretoria and later the first woman Executive Mayor of its successor - City of Tshwane - from 2006 to 2010 as well as the first woman MEC for Health in the Gauteng Province.

She served as a non-executive board member of NETCARE Private Health Company as well as the Deputy Chairperson of the Black Economic Empowerment Committee, representing the medical sector. She also served on the University Councils of the Medical University of Southern Africa (MEDUNSA) and the University of Pretoria.

As a health professional, Dr Ramokgopa worked as a Medical Officer at the Dr George Mukhari (then Ga-Rankuwa) Hospital until 1992, when she joined the Independent Development Trust (IDT) as the National Health Programme Manager. In 1995 she was invited by the MEC for Health to participate on the Strategic Management Team and later as a Medical Advisor, assisting in the establishment of an integrated, unified and de-racialised Gauteng Department of Health.

From 1998 to 2006 she was a member of the Gauteng Legislature, serving as the Chairperson of the Portfolio Committee for Health, as well as being a member of the Portfolio Committees of Finance and Local Government respectively before being the MEC for Health from 1999 to 2006.

As MEC for Health she chaired the Social Development Committee, served as member of the Political Labour Committee, coordinated the Government Multi-sectorial AIDS Programme and was Head of the Gender Mainstreaming and Women’s Development Programme within the Gauteng Government, she was appointed as the Deputy Minister for Health - a position she held from 2010 to 2014.

The Tshwane University of Technology was honoured to welcome, as its third Chancellor, a woman of her stature and a visionary who is passionate about success and excellence in every cause she commits to.
Karabo Mohale (24) was born and raised in Ga-Matipane Village, Limpopo by her grandmother, while her mother, a single parent was working tirelessly to sustain the livelihood of the entire family. She attended primary and secondary school at PEPPS in Polokwane and later completed her matric in the Northern Academy with distinctions.

“I have always been a hard worker. Anything with my name on it had to be excellent. In Grade 7, I was awarded the De-Beers Dux Learner Award for having graduated top of the class. Since then, I have never looked back”, she said.

Karabo mentions that throughout her high school career she has always wanted to study at TUT. This came as a result of her interaction with the University in 2006, when she was selected by Old Mutual as Limpopo’s Young Entrepreneur of the Year. She was then given an opportunity to present her ideas to the former SuperSport United coach, Pitso Mosimane. The presentation took place at one of the University’s residences, Magalies, and it was during this event that she finally decided TUT is her University of choice.

She enrolled for a National Diploma: Marketing in 2010 and completed it in record time. In both her first and second year, she received merit bursaries for academic excellence. Her interest in politics came alive in 2012, after she volunteered at the Directorate of Student Life and Governance as a student assistant. That same year, she was deployed to be the 2012/2013 treasurer of the Local Representative Student Council (LRSC), at the Pretoria Campus.

While serving her term as treasurer, she enrolled for a BTech in Marketing. She admits that this was the hardest year of her tertiary life. “I had responsibilities that to me were all equal priorities. I had to graduate with my BTech and in the same breath leave a legacy in student politics that would change the way society viewed women. And by the Grace of God I did just that. At the end of my term as Treasurer, I was awarded the most helpful activist/student by Student Life and Governance and similarly, graduated with my BTech in record time. That to me was the greatest blessing yet. To top it all, I was immediately deployed as the first female President of the LSRC, Pretoria Campus after 10 years of TUT’s existence” she said.

Her message of inspiration summarizes precisely where she is today and where she is heading towards. “I was delighted as my grandmothers’ teachings had come to life and women were being recognised for their strength and leadership qualities. The deployment wasn’t just about me, but it was for all women who went day by day and had people downplay their abilities just because they were women”. Karabo is currently pursuing a Masters in Entrepreneurship whilst working at Standard Bank as a Data Analyst learner. She is also a TUT Council member representing the Convocation of the University.

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Widely known as the glamorous first lady of musical theatre in South Africa, the late Joan Brickhill was a force to be reckoned with in the entertainment industry.

Her contribution and exceptional work in the entertainment industry earned Joan Brickhill an Honorary Doctorate from the Tshwane University of Technology, which was conferred in 2005.

Born and bred in Durban, Joan made her stage debut at the age of two in 1924. Her career - which included work in theatre, radio, television and film - spanned more than six decades.

For more than 20 years, Ms Brickhill and her husband Louis Burke were the dominant force in musical theatre in South Africa, including a heroic battle to save His Majesty’s Theatre in Johannesburg for seven years. From the mid-1960s to the mid-1980s, they staged a series of long running and well-attended productions.

Ms Brickhill’s first feature film was Not the Moon by Night in 1958, in which she played the lead role, Harriet Carver. Follow That Rainbow in 1979 was her second feature film.

One of her greatest triumphs was playing the part of Miss Hannigan in Annie in 1978, and the title roles in Hello Dolly in 1980 and Mame in 1982.

She was also a child star, winning the “most talented child in the country” award. Her honours and awards were many. She was twice winner of the Best Radio Actress Award and twice winner for best performance in musical awards. She was nominated for a Tony Award on Broadway for her choreography in Meet Me in St Louis.

Together with husband Louis, she presented the musical Meropa/ KwaZulu as a command performance at the London Palladium. During its long run in London, it played the Royal Command Performance before Queen Elizabeth.

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Theatrical and television roles were a significant part of Brickhill’s career, with engagements at the London Palladium, and the Royal Command Performance before Queen Elizabeth.

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Often referred to as the Mother of the Nation, Albertina Sisulu was a nurse, political activist and one of the most important leaders of the anti-apartheid resistance in South Africa. She acted on her ideal of human rights throughout her life, assisted by her husband and fellow activist, the late Walter Sisulu.

It was with Walter that she attended the first conference of the ANC Youth League where Albertina Sisulu was the only woman present. In 1948 she joined the ANC Women's League and in the 1950s she began to assume a leadership role - both in the ANC and in the Federation of South African Women (FEDSAW). She was one of the organisers of the historic anti-pass Women's March in 1956 and opposed inferior 'Bantu' education. Her home in Orlando West in Soweto was used as a classroom for alternative education until a law was passed against it.

It’s no surprise that in 2006 TUT conferred the late Albertina Sisulu with an Honorary Doctorate for dedicating her entire life as an anti-apartheid activist.
Graça Machel, is a Mozambican politician and humanitarian. She is the widow of both the former South African President Nelson Mandela as well as Mozambican President Samora Machel. She is an international advocate for women’s and children’s rights, and in 1997 was made a British Dame for her humanitarian work.

Graça Machel is the only woman in history to have been first lady of two separate Republics, serving as the First Lady of Mozambique from 1975 to 1986 and the First Lady of South Africa from 1998 to 1999. Born in rural Incadine, Gaza Province, Portuguese East Africa (modern-day Mozambique), she attended Methodist mission schools before gaining a scholarship to the University of Lisbon in Portugal, where she studied German and first became involved in independence issues. She is also fluent in French, Spanish, Italian, Portuguese and English, as well as her native Shangaan language. She returned to Portuguese East Africa in 1973, joined the Mozambican Liberation Front (Frelimo) and became a school teacher.

Following Mozambique’s independence in 1975, Ms Machel was appointed Minister for Education and Culture. In the same year, she married Samora Machel, the first President of Mozambique. Following her retirement from the Mozambique ministry, Ms Machel was appointed as the expert in charge of producing the ground-breaking United Nations report on the impact of armed conflict on children. Her first husband died in a plane crash in 1986. She received the 1995 Nansen Medal from the United Nations in recognition of her longstanding humanitarian work, particularly on behalf of refugee children.

She married the South African President Nelson Mandela on 18 July 1998, his 80th birthday. President Mandela died on 5 December 2013 after a long illness including pneumonia.
With a combination of qualifications that encompasses all areas of Metallurgical and Materials Engineering, she holds a National Diploma in Materials Technology which deals with the study of Metals, Polymers, Ceramics, Glass and Cement Technology. She has a BSc (honours) degree in Metallurgical and Materials Engineering; Master’s and Doctoral degrees in Metallurgical Engineering; she worked on the Quantitative Analysis of Cementitious Materials using Non-destructive Ultrasonic Testing. She completed her Doctoral degree in Physical Metallurgy/Laser Materials Deposition at TUT, with five Journal Papers (4 ISI Journals) and three peer-reviewed conference papers published.

Her career began in 1988 as an intern at Aluminium Rolling Mills in Otta, Nigeria. She then moved to Carnaud Metal Box PLC, where she served as a Quality Control Officer in Lagos, Nigeria. Between 1992 and 2002, Dr Popoola worked as a Customer Service Engineer for Beem Petroleum Services in Port Harcourt and later moved to JK Ventures Limited, where she honed her skills as a Field Service/Client Manager. She then took office at the Tshwane University of Technology in 2003 as a part-time lecturer in Metallurgy.

Dr Popoola has published a total of 89 peer-reviewed journal papers. One of the papers she has written on real life engineering applications of laser has been labelled the most downloaded and read paper of the Journal of Laser Applications for July 2011. In addition, the Laser Institute of America highlighted this paper on their website for laser users and inventors. It brought international recognition for TUT and the CSIR.

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Prof Sivakumar has an outstanding research interest, namely post-harvesting of fresh produce. This is a research field contributing enormously towards the reduction of food loss and the sustainability of food security. Her research career started in 1993 as a young research officer at the Ceylon Institute of Scientific Industrial Research (CISIR) at the Postharvest Technology Group, Food Technology Division. During this period, she was involved in numerous research projects and was privileged to participate as a resource person representing Sri Lanka at the 25th FAO-IAEA Research coordination meeting of the Asian Regional co-operative project on food irradiation held in Bangkok.

Another successful project undertaken and completed was on the postharvest management of foliage plants in order to promote the foliage export in Sri Lanka. She also undertook research projects to alleviate poverty with the farming community by introducing proper harvesting, field handling, pre-cooling as well as storage and transportation practices. This research project ensured Prof Sivakumar a research fellowship by the British Council in Sri Lanka.

Prof Sivakumar received her doctoral degree in 2001 from the University of Colombo and since then she has worked in the higher education sector. Prior to this, she worked in a variety of research-related positions including the Ceylon Institute of Scientific and Industrial Research and the Industrial Technology Institute in Sri Lanka.

She has received some outstanding awards, including the Commonwealth Science Council Award and the MASSV award from the Israeli Foreign Affairs Department.
Prof Maggie Momba was born and bred in Bikoro, Province of Equator in the Democratic Republic of Congo. Growing up in the heart of Africa taught her the value of having access to clean running water. Today, after years of specialising in the field of water research, she is the Research Professor at the Department of Water Care.

Prof Momba successfully completed her undergraduate studies in Biology at the University of Kisangani, Democratic Republic of Congo. Thereafter she continued with her postgraduate studies in the Republic of South Africa at the University of Pretoria, where she completed an MSc and PhD in Microbiology. Today, Maggie Momba is recognised as an expert in the field of wastewater management and potable water management.

She started her career at a pharmaceutical laboratory in Kinshasa, later joining the Zairian Institute for the Conservation of Nature (IZCN). Prof Momba then accepted an appointment at the Environmental and Forestry Technology Department at the CSIR as a PhD postgraduate researcher while she was registered at the University of Pretoria.

Membership of scientific committees is indeed an indication of researchers’ ranking and assessment in a specific environment. Prof Momba is a member of not less than 13 national and international scientific committees, which include membership of the South African Society of Biochemistry and Molecular Biology in Eastern Cape Water, Water Research Commission (WRC) steering committees, International Advisory Board of the South Africa Centre for Essential Community Services, the Water Institute of South Africa and the DNA bar coding of Life Committee, to mention a few.

"Today, after years of specialising in the field of water research, she is the Research Professor at the Department of Water Care."
Prof Sandra Combrinck started her career in 1983 as a researcher at the Medical Research Council in Tygerberg. Her research focussed on mycotoxins in food and feeds and included analytical chemistry as well as isolation and bioactivity determination.

In 1988, she obtained a Master of Science degree, specialising in Chemistry. After a few years at the CSIR, working again with fungal toxins, she moved to the academic environment of the former Technikon Pretoria. On completion of the upgrading of some laboratories, Prof Combrinck started afresh and changed her research interest to plant chemistry. She enrolled for a Doctorate and became engrossed in the world of plants, including some work on plant trichomes. She obtained her D Tech Chemistry in 2007 and her preference is to work towards practical applications of plant products, whether they are volatile metabolites or non-volatile polar metabolites and use these as the plant was originally intended, mainly for protection against insects, fungal and bacterial threats.

Future research opportunities and possibilities are endless and include projects such as the development of alternative methods to apply essential oils and other plant extracts to fruit surfaces without causing physiological blemishes and achieving the same levels of protection afforded by synthetic fungicides.

She received numerous awards including Women Researcher of the Year (runner-up 2009), Research Team of the Year (2003 runner-up, and 2004 winners); she is a regular reviewer of manuscripts for the South African Journal of Botany, Australian and New Zealand Journals of Botany, Journal of Herbs, Spices and Medical Plants and Household and Personal Care Today in Italy.

Prof Combrinck recently initiated a research project with the University of Lublin (Poland) and the University of Bayreuth (Germany) dealing with secondary metabolites of lichens and liverworts from Southern Africa. She is also a popular study leader and regularly acts as supervisor for masters and doctoral students.
Professor Ntebogeng Mokgalaka, Head of the Chemistry Department, is one of only a handful of women in South Africa who is, without any doubt, a pioneer in the field of phytoremediation. Refusing to accept the status quo, she forged new territories, paving a way for others to follow in her footsteps.

Prof Mokgalaka began her research career in 2007 at TUT after a two-year postdoctoral fellowship at the University of Texas-El Paso under the mentorship of the world-renowned Prof Jorge Gardea-Torresdey. The quest to find sustainable solutions for mitigating soil and water pollution prompted her research interest of using indigenous plants to rehabilitate soils and waters contaminated by mine wastes through a green technique called phytoremediation.

She holds an NRF C-3 rating since January 2015 and research grants, including the NRF Thuthuka Grant for the project Phytoremediation of mine tailings, the NRF SA/Germany Cooperation in Science and Technology Grant for the project Chemistry and biological activities of secondary metabolites produced by lichens and liverworts from southern Africa and creation of a freely available database.

She also co-wrote a proposal which was funded by the NRF/BMBF Cooperation in Science and Technology Grant for the project Remediation Chemistry. In addition, she successfully organised and chaired the scientific committee for ENVIRONMIN 2012 Conference, which was attended by delegates from SA, USA, Canada, Norway, Russia, Botswana and Lesotho. Prof Mokgalaka is the author and co-author of more than 25 articles in high impact accredited journals and 4 chapters in books. She has served as chairperson of a number of research committees including the TUT Annual Faculty of Science Research Day and has reviewed numerous papers in accredited journals and delivered papers at world-acclaimed conferences.

Despite Prof Mokgalaka’s phenomenal capabilities and work ethic, she admits that it was not an easy ride to the top. She says she has learnt not to waver and to stick to the core values that she was raised with - one of which is to make a difference in other people’s lives.

She has learnt not to waver and to stick to the core values that she was raised with - one of which is to make a difference in other people’s lives.
Dr Agnieta Pretorius is a Y-rated researcher and Assistant Dean in the Faculty of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) at the eMalahleni Campus. She exudes confidence and allure that leaves many in awe.

She holds a Diploma in Programming, a B Com degree and BSc (Hons) in Information Systems and a Master’s degree in Business Leadership, all obtained at the University of South Africa (UNISA). Her D Tech degree, with the thesis titled “Model of a knowledge management support system for choosing intellectual capital assessment methods”, was obtained in 2008 at TUT.

Dr Pretorius’s career begin in 1998 when she was appointed learner official (programming) at Barlow Rand Computer Services. She worked her way up to becoming an analyst programmer until 1995, when she joined Electronic Data Systems (EDS) as a consultant. In the same year, she serviced Middelburg Mining Services as a consultant. Later, she joined Highveld Steel and Vanadium as an analyst programmer and thereafter promoted to senior systems analyst.

In 1999, she left the industry and joined TUT as a junior lecturer and has never looked back. Dr Pretorius lectures National Diploma and B Tech students and is currently supervising and co-supervising a number of Master’s students. She is author and co-author of a variety of articles in international and locally accredited journals and conference proceedings. She regularly reviews articles for journals and conferences and recently participated in collaborative research projects with research partners from Germany and Sweden.

Not only is she an insightful researcher, she successfully completed the Comrades Marathon and represented the Mpumalanga Province at the South African Cross Country Championships in Potchefstroom.
You are rarely in control of circumstances, but you will always be in control of how you would react to and handle those circumstances...
Dr Nalini Moodley is the Assistant Dean and senior lecturer in the Faculty of The Arts.

She was born and raised in Durban on the east coast of South Africa and as a result spent most of her life in the warmth of the Indian Ocean. Upon completing secondary school, she attended the University of Durban Westville (UDW) where she completed degrees in Fine Art, a Masters in Art History and a Post Graduate Diploma in Education.

She lectured at UDW for five years and left just before the merger to take up the position of Education Curator at the Johannesburg Art Gallery. Subsequently after being offered a similar position in Durban she moved back to the east coast to work at the Durban Art Gallery. Her career path and passion for art led her to teach Visual Art at Kingsway High School for six years. During that time she developed an interest in the visual art produced by Indian South Africans and noted their silence in the South African art historical narrative. This later developed as the focus of her PhD.

She completed her PhD in Art History at the University of KwaZulu-Natal which focused on the visual art produced by Indian South Africans from 1961 to 1999. Her present areas of research include minority politics, race and identity politics and the challenges of being Indian in post-apartheid South Africa.

She has published papers on Hindu and Indian artists, Indian dance and the position of Indians in the new South Africa in peer reviewed journals nationally and internationally.
Going back to basics is what drives the first female Assistant Dean of the Faculty of Engineering and the Built Environment (FEBE), Dr Grace Kanakana. Formerly the Head of Department of Industrial Engineering, she assumed her new post on 1 June 2015.

Born and raised in Venda, she furthered her studies at Technikon Pretoria, studying Industrial Engineering. She qualified for her doctorate at the University of Johannesburg.

Dr Kanakana believes that the success rate of the Faculty can be improved by applying a sound strategy. This strategy, she says, should ensure relevant curriculum content and teaching methods as well as classrooms with the state-of-the-art equipment. This should be followed up with regular class inspections to ensure that the standard of services offered to students are of a high quality.

Dr Kanakana adds that her appointment gave her the opportunity to assist in improving the image of the Faculty. “My biggest challenge is to make sure that the Faculty produces exceptional graduates who will be preferred by industry and who can make a meaningful contribution to the engineering fraternity and the country at large,” she said.
Prof Polly Mashigo was born and raised in the Mamelodi township in the Gauteng Province where she completed her primary and high school.

She obtained a B.A Ed degree from the then Vista University in 1991 with Economics, Business Economics and Education as major subjects. She completed a B.A (Honours) degree in 1994 and an M.A degree in Economics in 1999; both qualifications were obtained from the University of Pretoria. The title of her dissertation was Consequences of bank regulation on the economic welfare of society in South Africa. She received her Doctoral degree in 2007 (D.Litt et Phil) in Economics at the University of Johannesburg with the thesis entitled Extending credit to the low-income and poor households in South Africa: A system of principle.

Prof Mashigo was appointed as an economics lecturer in 1996 at the TUT (then Technikon Northern Gauteng) and promoted to a senior lecturer in 1997. She has been teaching economics since then and was appointed the HOD: Economics in the Faculty of Economics and Finance from 2008 until January 2014. Currently she holds the position of Assistant Dean in the Faculty of Economics and Finance at the Ga-Rankuwa Campus.

Her message of inspiration: do not be an invisible woman but discover what you can do to make yourself heard. Equip yourself and others with skills and enhance your ability to advance your career. Do the best you can and do not give in to self-doubt and/or back down from challenges.
The following quote from President Mandela still keeps her going: “It will always seem impossible until it is done.”

Dr Ingrid Mokgobu
Faculty of Science
Being ambitious and assertive is not arrogance, it’s knowing what you want; don’t let anyone belittle your ambitions.

Prof Motaung’s academic career started at TUT in March 1998 as a lecturer. Positions prior to her appointment as Assistant Dean include medical research scientist at National Health Laboratory Services (NHLS) and Section Head at the Department of Biomedical Sciences.

In 2001 Prof Motaung was awarded the German scholarship DAAD which enabled her to enrol for a Master’s degree in Biomedical Technology at the former Technikon Pretoria. She obtained this qualification in 2003. Three years later, in 2006 she enrolled for her D Tech degree at the University of California, USA after she received a Fulbright Scholarship. She obtained her Doctoral degree in 2010.

Prof Motaung is a regular speaker and visiting researcher at several international conferences and universities including Spain, China, USA, India and the California State University. She is also a registered Medical Technologist (Chemical Pathology) with the Health Professions Council of South Africa (HPCSA).

“Being ambitious and assertive is not arrogance, it’s knowing what you want; don’t let anyone belittle your ambitions.”®
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Dr Pretorius’s career started as a learner official (programming) in 1989 (directly after completing high school) at Barlow Rand Computer Services. She progressed from junior programmer in 1990, to programmer, senior programmer and to analyst programmer in 1995. She worked as consultant for Electronic Data Systems (EDS) and for Middelburg Mining Services. Later, she joined Highveld Steel and Vanadium as an analyst programmer and thereafter was promoted to senior systems analyst.

In 1999, she left industry and joined TUT as a junior lecturer. She was later promoted to lecturer and to senior lecturer.

Dr Agnieta Pretorius is currently (since January 2014) the Assistant Dean: Postgraduate Studies, Research and Innovation of the Faculty of Information and Communication Technology (ICT).

Her words of inspiration come from Oprah Winfrey: “doing the best at this moment puts you in the best place for the next moment.”

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"Doing the best at this moment puts you in the best place for the next moment"
Dr Yvonne Senne graduated in 1985, with both a B Comm and Higher Education Diploma in Education at the University of the North. She taught at Mabopane High School for three months in 1986 and, in the same year joined the Setlopetla Technikon as a lecturer (later known as Technikon North West). During that period at TNW, she was also involved with Technikon Northern Gauteng as a part-time lecturer.

Subsequently Dr Senne studied and obtained, on a part-time basis, an Honours degree in Industrial Psychology at the University of South Africa (UNISA) and a Master’s in Business Leadership from the UNISA School of Business Leadership (SBL) in 1993 and 2002 respectively. She further went on to obtain a PhD in Leadership Performance and Change at the University of Johannesburg (UJ) in 2013.

Her academic career span thirty years in different roles. These include lecturer, senior lecturer, Head of Department and currently Assistant Dean in the Faculty of Management Sciences. She is also actively involved in conducting research. She has participated and published in both local and international conferences, workshops and seminars. Her publications include accredited journals and conference proceedings in the area of Leadership and Gender in Work Organizations.

Dr Senne draws inspiration from her family and her deep spirituality. She strongly believes in values such as, honesty, integrity, fairness and equity in both her personal and professional relationships. She has a strong believe that “we can do everything we set our minds to, if we remain focused and committed. I attribute my success in my career to hard work, commitment to set goals and, the belief in the value of lifelong learning.”

We can do everything we set our minds to, if we remain focused and committed. I attribute my success in my career to hard work, commitment to set goals and, the belief in the value of lifelong learning.
Prof Sue Geldenhuys has 14 years’ experience in the retail travel sector and started her academic career as a lecturer in the Department of Tourism Management at the then Technikon Pretoria in 1992 and was appointed Head of Department in 1994. She obtained a PhD in Tourism Management from the North West University.

Under her leadership, Tshwane University of Technology is the only Higher Education Institution in South Africa that offers specialised under- and postgraduate programmes in Ecotourism, Adventure Tourism and Events Management.

As part of a USAID Grant, she was part of an international team, comprising of academics of the University of Florida, the University of Jacksonville and the University of South Carolina, that designed undergraduate programmes in Casino Resort Management and Aviation Operations. TUT will be the 1st university on the African continent that will offer these programmes. Under her guidance, student numbers in the Department of Tourism Management have grown from 90 registered students in 1992 to more than 1200 students on two (2) sites.

She was appointed Assistant Dean of the Faculty of Management Sciences in March 2015, where she is responsible for the faculty success rates, Work Integrated Learning (WIL), managing the Teaching Development Grant as well as the Faculty HEQSF alignment process.

Her message of inspiration is simple: “If you can dream and believe it, you can achieve it.”

—if you can dream and believe it, you can achieve it.
Find a field that will inspire you into making a difference to the lives of those around you.

Having grown up in Meadowlands, Soweto, with an innate interest in science, Prof Keolebogile Shirley Motaung, a devoted mother, researcher and teacher, is living her dream and loving it. She is the only black woman in South Africa to hold a Doctorate specialising in tissue engineering of articular cartilage. “My job energises me, so I’m able to give 100% in what I do,” she says. She is a registered Medical Technologist (Chemical Pathology) with the Health Professions Council of South Africa (HPCSA). In 2015 she was appointed Assistant Dean at the Faculty of Science. Before this appointment she held the position of Medical Research Scientist at National Health Laboratory Services (NHLS) and Section Head at the Department of Biomedical Sciences.

Prof Motaung started her career at TUT in March 1998 as a lecturer. In 1999, she was granted a Technikon Pretoria Research Fund Bursary and in 2001 she received DAAD (a German Scholarship) to complete a Master’s degree. She then enrolled for a Master’s degree in Biomedical Technology at the former Technikon Pretoria, which she completed in 2003. In the same year, she won a Catalyst Innovation Competition for the most commercially viable innovation developed at a South African University or Technikon. In 2003, she received the Vice-Chancellor’s Award in recognition for exceptional excellence and achievement. Prof Motaung is the first black South African woman to be promoted from senior lecturer to Full Professor at TUT.

In 2006, Prof Motaung became the first woman at TUT to receive a Fulbright Scholarship to pursue her D Tech at the University of California, Davis, USA. She obtained her D Tech in 2010 at TUT, in collaboration with the University of California, where she worked under the supervision of Prof Hari Reddi, a world-renowned scientist in Morphogenetic Proteins and Regenerative Medicine. Self-assured and systematic, Prof Motaung has been invited as a speaker and visiting researcher at several international conferences and universities including Spain (University of Malaga), China, USA, India and the California State University. She serves as a reviewer for the Journal of Tissue Engineering and Regenerative Medicine, Medical Technology Journal SA and Journal of Ethno Pharmacology.

From 2004 to 2010, she served as a Board Member of Health Professions Council of South Africa (HPCSA) and Professional Board for Medical Technology. She also served as Chairperson of the Society of Medical Laboratory Technologists of South Africa (SMLTSA), Pretoria Branch from 2002 to 2010. Since 2010 she has been an external moderator of Chemical Pathology IV (Board Examination) for the Society of Medical Laboratory Technologists of South Africa (SMLTSA).

Her inspirational advice to prospective scientists: “Find a field that will inspire you into making a difference to the lives of those around you. Give your best at all times and don’t be distracted by peers who may have started work before you, our circumstances and challenges are never the same. The best time to study is when you’re still young” she concludes. 

"Find a field that will inspire you into making a difference to the lives of those around you."
My job is my passion, and for me there is no better way to make a living.

Cleo Ndhlovu is just one of those rare, impressive persons doing an incredible job with a smile and a unique passion that touches the hearts of all that hear her story. She is the General Manager of the Centre for Tissue Engineering at the Faculty of Science, based at the CSIR which is currently the only multi-disciplinary tissue bank in the country. Their focus is on the retrieval, processing and storage of bone and tendon, cornea, skin and cardiovascular tissue.

The human tissue bank has the ultimate purpose to increase the availability of tissue for transplantation in South African patients. This includes healing for patients suffering from skeletal affliction; offering sight to those facing permanent blindness; saving the lives of burn victims and providing treatment options for those with congenital heart defects.

Nonetheless, Cleo and her team are doing more than expected. They also educate communities and the general public on the importance of registering as organ and tissue donors as the South African donor numbers remain a challenge. However, that is why the CTE strives to make positive contributions to this challenging industry. Unfortunately only a small segment of the South African population are donors and Cleo is convinced that it is mostly due to inadequate information that causes people not to donate. Together with the Organ Donor Foundation, staff members of the CTE are trying to reach as many people as possible from all communities to understand the benefits of donation: not only to benefit individually, but the society as a whole.

Cleo holds a B Tech degree in Biotechnology from TUT, a Total Quality Management Diploma from UNISA and a Master degree in Donation of Organs, Tissues and Cells for Transplantation from the University of Barcelona in Spain. Time spent in Europe contributed towards Cleo gaining invaluable knowledge and understanding of the international practices of tissue banking; knowledge our country desperately needs to improve the lives of patients desperately waiting for tissue transplants.

Her inspiration derives from the dedicated career she has chosen: “I didn’t realise I would still be in this industry 11 years later. I love it, I love how I feel when I see and hear stories of people who have regained control over their lives simply because they received a tissue transplant. Hearing someone tell me about a university degree that they pursued after receiving the gift of sight due to a cornea transplant. A mother who is overjoyed because her child has minimal scars after receiving a skin graft following third degree burns that they sustained. An athlete who goes back to making a living by doing what they love because they received a donated ligament. There are many stories like this and they are what keeps me doing what I do. My job is my passion, and for me there is no better way to make a living.”
Magalie Beuyesadila, an Electrical Engineering Masters’ student at the Faculty of Engineering, brings to ten the number of TUT students who have won the Mandela-Rhodes Scholarship in the past six years. She received the award in 2013.

Magalie was deeply honoured to be selected from the group of brilliant candidates she had the chance to meet in Cape Town. “I also feel empowered because I believe the scholarship opens a door of opportunities for those with clear goals. I am very excited about the future,” adds Magalie.

She says, “I could not think of the path that led me to this achievement. That’s why I would like to express my deepest gratitude to God, my family in the DRC, my friends and my lecturers’ at all academic stages, particularly at TUT.”

Magalie obtained an M Tech in Renewable Energy (Optimisation, Design and Control of Inverters) at F’SATI (French South African Technology Institute).

“It’s OK to have a dream and plan our way around it, but it’s better to start working for it. We all have strength, something special to us, which we need to find and start from, in order to push back the boundaries of possibility. Keep working hard,” is her humble message of inspiration.

“It’s OK to have a dream and plan our way around it, but it’s better to start working for it.”

Magalie Beuyesadila
A Mandela-Rhodes Scholar

Academic Achievers, Sport Stars & Graduates
She exudes brilliance and a strong work ethic. So it came as no surprise that Eliana Ferreira Dos Santos received the Chancellor’s medal during the 2012 eMalahleni Graduation Ceremony for her exceptional demonstration of academic and individual excellence.

In 2009, Eliana enrolled for a National Diploma: Information Technology (Software Development) at the eMalahleni Campus and passed all her subjects with an average of 82%, obtaining 20 distinctions out of 24 subjects. This resulted in her National Diploma being awarded cum laude.

Prior to that, she attended Witbank Technical High School and in Grade 12, she received an award for 100% attendance as well as honourary colours for the academic achievement and half colours for maintaining an average of 72%, with distinctions in Afrikaans First Additional Language (80%) and Life Orientation (96%). She played hockey for five years and received a certificate for participating in the Noordvaal Hockey League in 2006 as a member of the first team.

Eliana praised her family for always being her pillar of strength and support. “They have all inspired me to do my best in everything I do. They helped me to become the great person I am today,” she says.

Eliana added that South Africa is filled with opportunities. “I believe that our education system is on par with the rest of the world, especially at TUT. I am grateful for all the support and encouragement I received from my lecturers and classmates.”

The Faculty of Information Communication and Technology (ICT) depicted her as an intelligent, hard-working and dedicated young woman who possesses all the qualities required of a true professional. She had the ability to grasp and comprehend complex software development and management issues and will undoubtedly remain one of the Faculty’s top students.

She mentioned that she wanted to further her studies in IT Software Development, achieve career success and help others to succeed as well. “I live according to the belief that I don’t know where life is leading me, but that I shouldn’t worry because I trust that God is always by my side,” she says.
There are three prominent achievements Debbie Collins can claim for herself that can hardly be listed by many other women. Firstly, she was crowned runner-up in the Miss Nigeria 2015 Pageant; secondly, she represented her country in the Miss Universe 2015 Pageant; and thirdly, she obtained a B Tech: Business Information Systems from the Faculty of Information and Communication Technology.

Debbie is the second daughter of four children, born in Lagos, Nigeria and partly raised in South Africa when her family moved when Debbie was 11 years old. She completed her high school education at the young age of 14 and went on to complete her tertiary education at TUT where after she returned to Nigeria to pursue her dream of becoming Miss Nigeria.

She loves poetry, books, rainfall and the sea. She believes in love, kindness, laughter and spending time with family members, and she also believes that a genuine smile can brighten even the darkest days. Her message is indeed inspirational: “I possess the ability to remain positive in the face of adversity and believe that determination and strength of character are the key components of success.”

“I possess the ability to remain positive in the face of adversity and believe that determination and strength of character are the key components of success.”
I am really humbled by all the people who work tirelessly to see my career advancing. TUT has also been very supportive and understanding, I’m so grateful.

Mary Ntsweng is living proof to validate this statement. Her exceptional soccer skills and tactics saw her jetting off to London for the 2012 Olympics Games. Mary, who studied Human Resources Management, never makes a secret that it is an honour to represent her country in these prestigious games. Just before leaving for the Olympic Games Mary said, “I grew up watching the Olympics and being in awe about the magnitude of the games. The whole world will be glued to their TV screens to see their stars make them proud. This is a dream come true, exciting and scary at the same time”, she continues.

Growing up in Limpopo, Mary never thought she would have a thriving career in football. “I am really humbled by all the people who work tirelessly to see my career advancing. TUT has also been very supportive and understanding, I’m so grateful. I will always raise the South African and TUT flags high and showcase the strong, competent calibre of individuals this country has,” she adds.
Zelda la Grange, alumna of the Faculty of Management Sciences, spent 19 years at the right hand of one of the world’s most beloved leaders and icons, the late Nelson Mandela. Born in 1970, she was brought up in apartheid South Africa. She completed a National Diploma at the then Technikon Pretoria and in 1994, joined the office of the first democratically elected President of South Africa, Nelson Mandela.

Just before his retirement in 1999, Nelson Mandela hand-picked Zelda to remain in his services beyond retirement. She was a founding staff member of the Nelson Mandela Foundation which served as post-presidential office for Nelson Mandela. She has served him her entire professional career, in different professional capacities, growing from Senior Ministerial Typist in 1994 to Head of Office, Spokesperson and Aide-de-camp.

Her unique exposure and the experience gained during this time provided her with the skill and expertise to deal successfully with strategic and crisis communication. Having acted as a “spin-doctor” for a large part of her career, behind the scenes but also as spokesperson in the public domain, she obtained the unique ability to assess a situation, foresee its possible outcomes and prepare for those. Her experience includes media relations, risk assessment and management, strategic planning, reputation management and project implementation. She has travelled extensively across the globe with her boss, and post retirement served as the only negotiator, organiser and media liaison in foreign countries with him.

She often refers to herself as an “emotional billionaire”, having been afforded the opportunity to work so close to the greatest statesman and humanitarian of our time. Zelda has been recognised and awarded by national and international bodies for the commitment, loyalty and dedication with which she served. She has also been serving as Patron for the 1st for Women Insurance Trust since 2010. The trust advocates for women’s issues including but not limited to action against abuse, cervical cancer awareness and supporting care centres for rape victims in South Africa.

She lives with her two beloved Boston Terriers, Winston and Indira on the outskirts of Johannesburg.

“she often refers to herself as an “emotional billionaire”, having been afforded the opportunity to work so close to the greatest statesman and humanitarian of our time.”
Throughout my life, I have learnt that there is a power that I possess which is a gift not only to me but to humanity as well.

The source of Zaza’s drive is a result of a personal tragedy. “I witnessed the death of my mother at the age of seven towards the end of apartheid. I later saw a news bulletin about the death of my mother and I was compelled to tell the world my story. I felt a sense of injustice as my mother was an innocent victim caught in crossfire of the war that was taking place. On top of that she was raising six children with my father and they had a thriving business.”

She wanted to tell the world that what had happened to her was brutally unfair and unnecessary. Throughout her life she had the drive to share her story and wrote about her experience while growing up. Zaza also kept herself busy when she was a teenager; running her own business and creating a social dance group with childhood friends while writing continuously. From this it is also clear why she decided to enrol for a course in Journalism, which she successfully completed.

“The day I overcame societal expectations was at the age of 18 when I met my mentor Zeona Jacobs who herself broke the corporate glass ceiling. She owned an advertising agency back then and she took me to board meetings while helping me with my vision for my life.”

Zeona taught Zaza that she could become anything through hard work, that she has enough strength to make all her dreams a reality and that the onus was on her to become successful.

“T also had a very supportive father who never placed me in a box or limited my thinking. The combination of those two people really formed the foundation on which I have carved my career and life. I have made choices that have allowed me to be a journalist and to start my own business: POUT MOVEMENT (a self-empowerment movement for young women which stands for Powerful, Outstanding, Unique and Talented). I have worked on POUT from the age of 14 and it is a result of my life’s journey as a young woman. The aim is to assist other young women to live their best lives regardless of their backgrounds and circumstances.”

POUT is largely media orientated and Zaza is blessed to work for Hala Media where she continues to harness her skills through the leadership and mentorship of its leaders Khanyi Dhlomo and Ingrid Wood.

Her message of inspiration is clear. “Throughout my life, I have learnt that there is a power that I possess which is a gift not only to me but to humanity as well. I believe in a higher power that places everyone on earth for a reason. It is this power that has allowed me to thrive and to think beyond the general societal expectation of ‘me’ as a woman. It is also this power that makes me believe that I can do and become anything regardless of what happens in my life.”
Siyanda Kwaza, alumna of the Faculty of Humanities, continues to prove that having a vision, being determined, driven and passionate will always get you ahead. This is reflected in her poetry anthology titled Colourless which she launched in 2011.

The anthology consists of 27 poems. All the poems are a concoction of love, reality, nature, politics and everyday life. “The Creator is the absolute inspiration for the book. The poems were put together to bring bliss and hope, heal, nurture and to inspire,” she says.

Her way with words has led to her poems being published in magazines such as love life uncut, soul, the itch online, consciousness online, TrueLove and the Kaffelonline womantask issue, which had a two page article on the 20-year-old.

She studied Versatile Broadcasting in 2008 and in 2009, was selected to have her poem screams of love published in the Poetry Institute of Africa’s poetry anthology. She has performed at the student village’s annual Women’s Leadership Conference and the Statistics SA’s Women’s Celebration and at many other events. Currently a teacher at Step Ahead Primary School, Siyanda also mentors aspiring poets at the Art Museum in Margate, her hometown.

The title of the book (Colourless) has no relation to the dictionary definition of the word, but it seeks a more figurative meaning. Siyanda says that Colourless means that the shape, form, colour and content of the poems contained in the anthology cannot be boxed or linked to one meaning.

Her work draws from African culture; it is distinguished by its warmth and generosity, by its attention to the youth and humanness of previous generations. A great sense of continuity runs through her world view and, above all, by a detailed and instinctive attention to how we experience life through our bodies. She writes about cultural assumptions and conflict, desire, love, mutilation, birth, death, previous generations and an astonishing range of subjects, all treated with great emotional depth.

Most recently, she was appointed ambassador of Soul Buddies. Her responsibilities include mentoring young women across the Eastern Cape through the Soul City RISE Club. Young girls are motivated to do better at school, delay sexual activity and be assertive about their goals and future.

With dreams bigger than the confines of her age, she has an inspiring motto: “The best route to success is to create doors for yourself, because the problem with waiting for doors to open is that they might just never open for you.”
The days of Mad Men-style secretaries and typing pools are long gone—nowadays PAs make key decisions, manage budgets, assist in project planning, improve office processes and even conduct smaller meetings in order to keep the office operational and effective.

With 16 years’ experience in the top executive office, Elizma van der Linde can surely be seen as one of this University’s, as well as South Africa’s best Personal Assistants. Since 1995, Elizma has been the right, and left hand of a member of the Executive Management Committee. She initially started her PA career as the Executive Secretary to the Deputy Vice-Chancellor: Student Affairs and Support Services where after she was appointed Personal Assistant to the Vice-Chancellor in 2001.

“In office environments such as mine, we sometimes have to do tasks that come completely out of left field. But learning to expect the unexpected means that you are better able to cope and adapt to situations which may require a bigger degree of flexibility. Though, that’s not to say you should ever do something which makes you uncomfortable or crosses a moral compass” says Elizma.

“Learn a culture of psychology in order to know how to listen, talk and motivate staff when they share themselves with you, whether on personal or work related issues. I have adjusted the word challenge into a daily inspiring exercise:

C - A challenge is a general term referring to things that are imbued with a sense of difficulty and victory. Do not let it undermine the positive you.

H - Happiness. Have a grateful attitude. Bloom wherever you are planted.

A - Apply what you learn. Let your learning lead to action.

L - Love your Job.

L - Loyalty and leadership. Remember you can’t buy loyalty, enthusiasm or devotion. You must earn it.

E - Excellence - making a commitment to excellence is a fundamental step on the success journey.

N - Negotiating knowledge. One is never too old to learn. Share knowledge don’t get stuck in your ways.


E - Ensure you build trustworthy relationships; assure your manager that he/she can rely on you. Creating a high performance manager and secretary team can be a value-added combination that can break through a world of uncertainty.

She concludes with these inspiring words: “Any form of change can be challenging and fun. Make the best of it!”

Any form of change can be challenging and fun. Make the best of it!
Marcia Lebambo, Senior Campus Officer at the Ga-Rankuwa Campus and founder of the Marcia Lebambo Foundation is passionate about community development, a passion ignited when she was growing up in Bushbuckridge, where she was raised in destitute circumstances.

Having “touched and felt poverty” and knowing how it affects women in particular, she resolved to become involved in uplifting communities and making a difference in people’s lives. Despite her difficult family circumstances, she managed to pass matric and enrol at TUT.

At age 19, she graduated with a Diploma in Public Management. Her vigorous participation in university activities landed her permanent employment as Residence Manager at the Soshanguve Campus. Her tenacity saw her rise through the ranks and becoming one of the best residence managers at TUT. She recently completed her Master’s degree in Entrepreneurship and currently pursuing her Doctoral studies.

She introduced the Tshwane debate and spelling BEE initiative, which has seen more than 500 learners from different schools in Tshwane, participating in the competition each year. She says: “I realised that learners from public schools (both rural areas and townships) are not as confident when it comes to communicating in English. I promised myself that after completing my degree I would start initiatives that will instil confidence in public speaking and proficiency in English - both written and spoken, hence the spelling BEE initiative.”

Marcia admits that she couldn’t have done all of this without education. “Education changed my life and my family’s lives. The only thing that could change the poverty situation back at home was education. I wanted to use every opportunity I get to study and become a better person for myself and my country. I had to learn as much as I can so that am able to assist or empower the next person,” she says.

Within the TUT premises, Marcia is not just Senior Campus Officer and an academic, but she’s also a presenter on TUT 96.2 FM.

“I plan to also focus on entrepreneurship and help my community grow its economies. I am in the pipeline trying to establish a tourism attraction site in my home town Bushbuckridge that will have a bed and breakfast facility as well as numerous tourism attractions. I want the business to grow to an empire that will not only provide jobs but change the lives of my community for the better,” she concludes.
Both agree that their way of handling office stress and daily challenges are often an inspiration for the Management team and their personal assistants which they daily serve with a smile.

There are many well-known faces at TUT, many dedicated staff members and magnitudes of skilled people. And then there’s Lizzie and Christina. They are the Office and Floor Assistants on the Management Floor of the Administrative Building, also known as the heart-beat environment of the University.

These two ladies, with emphasis on ladies, comprise all of the above-mentioned capabilities and more. No matter how frantic the day-to-day requests by the five offices are for meeting preparations, functions, faxes, urgent deliveries, cleaning and general office assistance, you will always be greeted with a friendly smile and if time allows a warm cup of tea.

Lizzie’s career started in 1991 at the University as Cleaner on the Vice-Chancellor’s floor but soon she proved to make a difference with a variety of tasks. The year 2000 was Lizzie’s year for promotions; early January as Office Assistant and eight months later as Rectorate Assistant.

Christina started her career as Cleaner in the same year when history was made in our country, 1994. She was initially appointed as Senior Cleaner and later promoted to Supervisor Caretaker Services until she accepted a position as Rectorate General Assistant.

Both these ladies take their jobs very seriously and recently attended a workshop for Tea Ladies and General Office Assistants.

Both agree that their way of handling office stress and daily challenges are often an inspiration for the Management team and their personal assistants which they daily serve with a smile.
She’s an accomplished model and IT specialist at Gijima, one of South Africa’s best IT companies. In 2012 she was crowned FHM magazine’s Model of Year which made her the first Black South African to scoop this title. We took a look at the secrets of the success of Ellen Mahlangu, a multi-skilled alumna of the Faculty of Information Communication Technology (ICT).

Ellen is originally from Machadodorp in the Mpumalanga Province. She’s a full-time Business Intelligence Developer and a professional model. She has more than 12 years’ experience in the modelling industry. “Although I love my IT job, I still keep one foot in the modelling industry,” she says.

The beautiful 29-year-old woman says she owes it all to her mother. “I was inspired by my mom, who was a fashion designer back when I was five years old. She used to host fashion shows and organise models to showcase her designs. I was always with her when they did fashion shows. I took pictures with them and used to love being in front of the camera. In matric, I started to pursue my modelling career and participated in lots of beauty pageants, scooping titles such as, Miss Sihlulwe Secondary School, Miss Ligwalagwila FM, Miss TUT, Miss Pretoria, Miss FTv and many more,” she says.

When Ellen came to Gauteng in 2007, she was spotted by the SA Beauty Modelling Agency while shopping at Centurion Mall. “This is where my journey started. My modelling career quickly went from strength to strength after I had been crowned South Africa’s Next Top Model in 2008. Another big achievement followed when I was crowned FHM Model of the Year 2012, which made me the first Black model to walk away with this title since 2004,” she says cheerfully.

FHM created an online poll where she was competing with more than a thousand gorgeous FHM models and the public had to vote for the top 20. A winner was subsequently chosen from the group. “It was my mom’s birthday when the Editor of FHM called me at work to share the good news. I went straight home and we celebrated both my new title and my mom’s birthday at the same time. It was amazing,” she says.

The forthright young woman admits that she will never give up her IT job for modelling. She says, “I know I won’t be a model forever, but I can be an IT consultant until retirement. I am also working towards growing my own modelling agency, to groom aspiring young models and to be a good role model to them.”

Ellen adds that many people have shown her so much love and support, but her mother is her number one supporter. “Although she suffers from bipolar disorder, she’s always praying and encouraging me to be the best I can be,” she concludes with these inspirational words.
It is one thing to have affection for wild life; it is something else to dedicate your entire life to conserve and protect the most vulnerable and weakest creatures.

Marlice van Vuuren is such a person. This TUT Sport Sciences graduate, with the looks of a Gucci model, but a heart filled with love for animals, is one of the most popular conservationists in Namibia. As a little girl, growing up on her parents’ Namibian farm, the seed was planted to give refuge to injured or orphaned animals. This set the scene for her future involvement, and life time commitment to wildlife conservation and livelihood initiatives for the San community of Namibia. Today she is the co-founder of the N/a’an ku sê Foundation.

The expression N/a’an ku sê means “God will protect us” in the indigenous Bushman language - a language only a handful of people can speak, including Marlice. In 2001, together with her husband Rudie, a medical doctor, they opened the N/a’an ku sê Lifeline Clinic at Epukiro where the San community can be treated free of charge and few years later, in 2007, they opened the gates of their animal reserve known as N/a’an ku sê Charity Lodge & Wildlife Sanctuary, situated 42 kilometres east of Windhoek. The Sanctuary accommodates mostly orphaned and injured animals that cannot be released safely back into the wild.

In 2009, Marlice became an overnight public personality in Namibia and South Africa when she and her cheetah, Lucky, were featured in the Volkswagen Polo advertisement on national television. In fact, Marlice has been working with animals in film productions since the age of 13 and has worked on a number of well-known movies with various celebrities including Angelina Jolie.

Namibia is not only blessed with breath-taking scenery, diverse landscapes and abundant wildlife, the country is truly blessed with Marlice too.

She is currently hosting her own conservationist programme on DSTV, Groen Namibië.
You never know how strong you are until being strong is the only choice you have.

These are the words of Dr Mumthaz Banoobhai, Senior Lecturer and HOD of the Department of Primary Education who has survived cancer, attained academic excellence and still continues to serve selflessly.

An extraordinary motivator and positivist, Dr Mumthaz says that awareness alone of the illness is not enough, but continuous research into its causes and possible prevention methods will assist in the plight. The research needs to target adolescent woman as well, especially our students and young female staff. It’s no secret that woman today are living significantly stressful lives trying to balance personal, family and career demands. “After surviving cancer, I learned that life can change in an instant. In a way, the dark times in life seemed to make my family and work life even brighter. My God, family, colleagues and students were my pillars of strength during that time. They gave me the courage to embrace my fears, appreciate love and open my heart,” she says. “I am where I am today because of them.”

Dr Mumthaz, who describes herself as “loud, passionate, authentic and driven”, was born into poverty in KwaZulu-Natal. She experienced considerable hardship during her childhood. “Things got really bad after I passed Matric. My mother couldn’t afford to finance my studies and that’s when I took on a job at Game stores. My former teachers would meet me at my workplace and always said “you don’t belong here, you have all the potential to do better in life!”. One of them insisted that I enrol for a qualification in teaching. That was the beginning of a long but exciting journey,” she says.

Dr Mumthaz has managed to turn her life around completely. Credited with qualities to serve, engage and inspire students, she holds a Doctorate in Education from Tshwane University of Technology. She is skilled and experienced in various aspects of the general education sector, including higher education, and lectures undergraduate and postgraduate students. She is very knowledgeable in developing, designing and implementing curricula and national legislation pertaining to the registration and accreditation of qualifications.

During 2015, Dr Mumthaz has been seconded to co-ordinate an institutional project (TUT101) which highlights the need for serious attention to first year student’s transitional needs, including academic and social integration. This is an area that she is very experienced and passionate about.

Despite everything she has endured, Dr Mumthaz continues to inspire young minds, balance work and family; and share her loving personality with everyone who crosses her path all the while.

This article is dedicated to all TUT staff and students who have survived cancer too but more so, in special memory to those who were not so fortunate.
“Nobody asks to be born disabled or to become disabled later in life; sometimes it’s just the way the dice falls for you; but it is up to you how to manage and handle this reality; either by choosing life or choosing stagnation. I chose life.”

Born as a normal healthy baby 28 years ago, Jacqueline Kwak would never have foreseen the difficult road lying ahead for her in years to come. She was an extremely active little girl, participating in almost every sports code at school.

One evening, at the age of 12, she suddenly felt ill with a high fever and severe body pain. This led to numerous tests and three months in hospital. After many tests the result came and the outcome was not good news: rheumatoid arthritis; an illness without any anticipation of recovery; a lifelong illness that leads to the deterioration of the body with permanent inflammation in the joints. In simple terms, a life as a disabled person was in the forecast.

After being in a wheelchair for many years, she slowly but surely started to walk again. “Yes, I agree much slower than a normal person but I am walking, and I do get from point A to B, all by myself,” she says. There were times Jacqueline admits that it was really too painful to walk but she decided to keep on pushing herself until she was able to manage to stand on her two feet again.

After school she enrolled at TUT for a B Tech degree in Credit Management. Under difficult circumstances with numerous challenges such as evening classes, transport and periods of being booked off sick, she still managed to obtain her degree in the minimum time required.

Whilst busy with her studies she started working as a student assistant at the Creditors Department. Not for too long as hard work, commitment and dedication supported her to be employed in a full time position in the same department.

In May 2016 Jacqueline walked down the aisle, next to her dad on her way to marry the love of her life.

An inspiring message from a special woman at TUT: “Never give up; appreciate what you have today as there is no guarantee that you might still have it tomorrow. And stop complaining about small things that don’t really matter. Just be happy and live life to the fullest.”

“Never give up; appreciate what you have today as there is no guarantee that you might still have it tomorrow.”

Diversity

Jacqueline Kwak
There might be external forces that you do not have control over, but still there will be something that you do have control over and that is yourself — take charge of that.

Dr Tozama Qwebani-Ogunleye, who is counted amongst the 2016 Top 200 Young Outstanding South Africans by Mail & Guardian is no ordinary woman. She strongly believes that one’s destiny is in one’s hands.

Dr Qwebani-Ogunleye, a lecturer at the Department of Chemistry, obtained her undergraduate and master’s level qualifications at the University of Cape Town (UCT). She obtained her Doctorate degree at the University of the Witwatersrand through a bursary from the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR).

In 2014 she participated in the National Research Foundation role modelling campaign. She is also the author of a motivational book called 20 fantastic life lessons; insights from my life journey.

Her strong work ethic and belief in pushing boundaries have resulted in a number of notable accomplishments: in 2011 she was honoured with a Women In Science Award sponsored by the Department of Science and Technology and Tata Africa. That same year, the Bio-Sciences Unit at the CSIR acknowledged her with the Best Student of the Year Award (PhD).

This year, Dr Qwebani-Ogunleye is one of the 25 emerging women scientists in South Africa that will be profiled in a digital book which will be launched during the National Science Week, an initiative sponsored by the Organisation for Women in Science for the Developing World, the South African Young Academy of Science and the Academy of Science of South Africa. Additionally, she is one of the recipients of the NRF Thuthuka grant and has started with her research.

She admits to having had her fair share of both challenging and great moments. She says these moments carry crucial lessons in one’s life. “There might be external forces that you do not have control over, but still there will be something that you do have control over and that is yourself — take charge of that,” she says.
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