

Lentšu La Sechaba

THE VOICE OF THE CE COMMUNITY

Department for Education Innovation
Unit for Community Engagement



Summer: Volume 26 – December 2025



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1. Celebrating the Textiles 411 Clothes to Good project

Dr Nadine Sonnenberg (Coordinator, TKS 411, University of Pretoria)



Based in the Department of Consumer and Food Sciences, the Textiles 411 Clothes to Good (CTG) project team is honoured to have received the 2024 Institutional Curricular Community Engagement (CCE) Award at the University of Pretoria. The initiative has also been named among ten international programmes advancing to the second round of consideration for the prestigious 2025 MacJannet Prize for Global Citizenship.

At the centre of this recognition is Clothes to Good, a textile recycling and disability empowerment organisation that, over the past decade, has diverted large volumes of post-consumer textile waste from schools, corporate volunteer programmes, and retail stores nationwide.

However, by focusing on more than just recycling, Clothes to Good empowers over 300 micro-businesses (many led by mothers of children with disabilities) by providing access to quality second-hand clothing for resale and entrepreneurship.

Formally established in 2022 as part of the Bachelor of Consumer Science Clothing Retail Management programme, the Textiles 411 CTG project is narrowly aligned with the Textiles 411 module outcomes.

Each year, students collaborate with Clothes to Good through site visits and applied assignments, gaining practical experience while helping to develop income-generating solutions for South Africa's textile overflow. This engagement not only equips students with professional and leadership skills but also fosters socially responsible approaches to clothing and textile management.

The partnership exemplifies how classroom knowledge can be applied to real-world sustainability challenges through recycling, upcycling, and downcycling initiatives that benefit the broader Clothes to Good community.

The project thus aligns closely with the University of Pretoria's strategic commitment to embedding community engagement in academic

programmes and connecting research with teaching and learning.

At the same time, it advances the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals 8 and 12, promoting decent work, inclusive economic growth, and responsible consumption and production. In doing so, it demonstrates how academic-community partnerships can simultaneously address poverty alleviation, disability inclusion, and environmental stewardship.

The 2024 CCE Award is received with deep gratitude to the students, departmental staff, the Unit for Community Engagement, and CTG community members, whose collective efforts have shaped a project that meaningfully integrates teaching, learning, and social impact.

This recognition serves as inspiration to continue building on the work of fostering sustainability, inclusivity, and innovation in South Africa's clothing and textile sector.

The contributions illustrate UP's positive impact on communities and reaffirm that our students embody the UP WAY.

Email: nadine.sonnenberg@up.ac.za, (TKS 411 Module coordinator)

2. Matters of interest

Meetings, conferences and training

- EASA 2026 Conference, Fruits of the vine: Navigating the disruptions through transforming and transformative education. On 11–14 January 2026 at the Protea Hotel Stellenbosch and Conference Centre, Stellenbosch, Western Cape, South Africa.
- Postgraduate Diploma in Higher Education Community Engagement (PGDip HECE), launching in January 2026. For more Information & Application Details Visit: <https://www.ru.ac.za/communityengagement/pgdip/#d.en.361303>
- The Global Community Development Conference 2026, 7–20 November 2026, University of Johannesburg

Newsletters

- Lentšu la Sechaba publications [here](#) or copy and paste the following link into your browser: <https://www.up.ac.za/community-engagement/article/3196610/community-engagement-newsletters>.
- Teaching Matters publication here or copy and paste the following link into your browser: https://issuu.com/universityofpretoria/docs/teaching_matters_vol_2?fr=sZmMwNjg1MTUzMTI.
- Faculty of Veterinary Science Community Engagement Newsletter: https://www.up.ac.za/media/shared/415/ce_news_2025-1-1.zp275782.pdf

Recommended journals

- *Journal for Applied Research in Higher Education*: <https://www.emeraldgrouppublishing.com/journal/jarhe>
- The Learner journals: <https://thelearner.com/journals>
- *Community Development*: <https://www.tandfonline.com/journals/rcod20>
- *Journal for Community Practice*: <https://www.tandfonline.com/journals/wcom20>
- *Journal of the Community Development Society*: <https://www.tandfonline.com/journals/rcod19>

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Acknowledgement

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From left: Mr Albert Matlhekethla, Ms Kanye Rampa, Dr Eugene Machimana and Ms Londiwe Mahlangu

3. Bridging the digital divide in social work: Towards inclusive service delivery

Dr Elmien Claassens (Lecturer, Department of Social Work and Criminology)

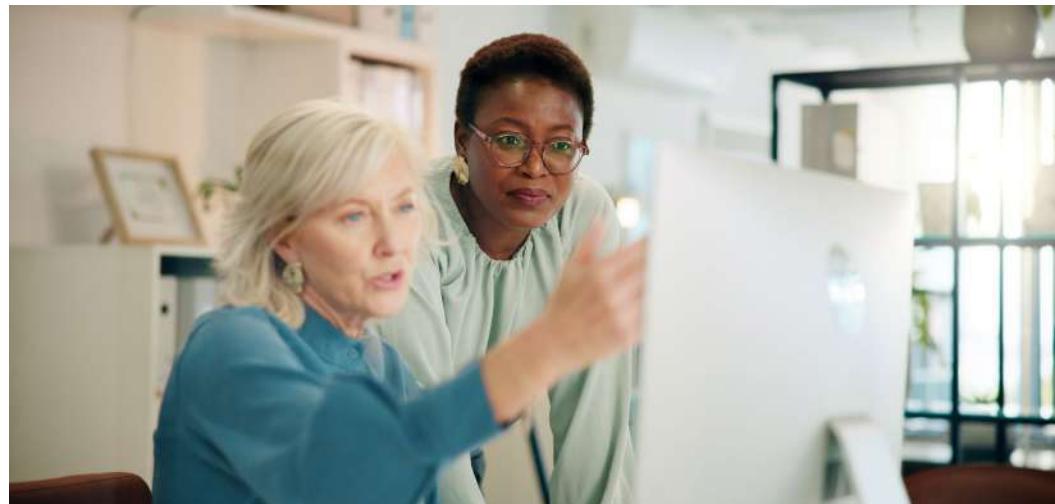
Technology and social work are not often used in the same sentence. However, technology has become an integral part of everyday life, and social workers are no exception. While digital tools create new opportunities for reaching people in need, many vulnerable groups remain excluded due to limited Internet access, inadequate devices, or low digital literacy.

This raises important questions about fairness and inclusion in how social services are delivered.

This was the motivation for a recently completed doctoral study at the University of Pretoria that explored how technology can be combined with face-to-face services to make social work more inclusive in South Africa.

Guided by the Technology Acceptance Model and Fraser's theory of social justice, the study worked with social workers and managers from the Department of Social Development and the National Association of Social Service Organisations in South Africa, across nine provinces in South Africa. Using both interviews and surveys, the research gathered insights from over 150 participants.

Findings show that a hybrid approach combining digital tools with in-person services has strong potential to improve access for disadvantaged communities. However, challenges such as the digital divide, ethical concerns, and training gaps remain significant barriers. The study highlighted the urgent need for clear guidelines to help social workers and organisations use technology responsibly and effectively.



Recommendations from the research study included:

- stronger ethical standards for digital practice in social work
- improved training for social workers and students
- supportive government policies and sustainable funding
- partnerships between organisations and communities for improving technological infrastructure
- ongoing advocacy to ensure no one is left behind

This research underscores the vital role social workers play in bridging inequalities and ensuring that technology serves the goal of building a more just and inclusive society. From a social justice perspective, social work plays a critical role in advocating for access to technologies, particularly for vulnerable communities.

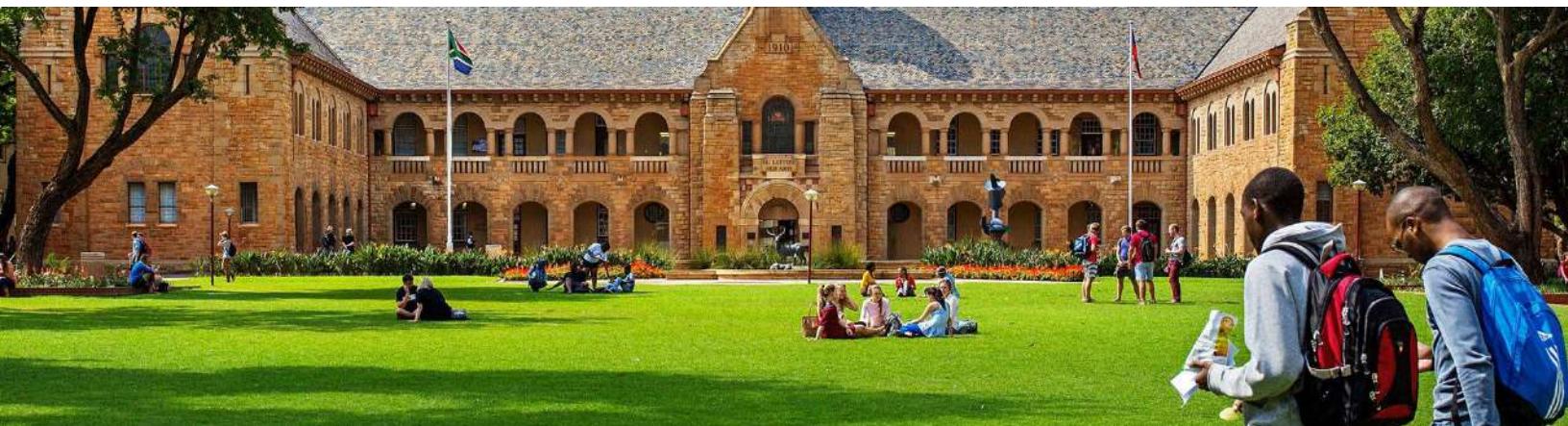
One way to empower social workers and give back to the industry is by providing them with training. Thus, as a result of the research study and ongoing community engagement, social workers from the Social

Workers Association for Wellness and Training in the northern and eastern Free State were trained on the developed guidelines as part of their ongoing professional development. The training was accredited with the South African Council for Social Service Professions (SACSSP) for continuous professional development (CPD) points, and all social workers who attended received a certificate. The Social Work Council requires social workers to continually develop themselves, and it awards points to training that provides ongoing development opportunities for social workers.

This is one example of the Department of Social Work and Criminology's efforts to stay engaged with the professional community of social workers across South Africa and join hands with the industry. It is an ongoing effort not only to help develop our social work students' professional identity but also to support our colleagues in communities across South Africa in understanding technology and playing their part in bridging the digital divide.

4. Learning through leading: My journey at the University of Pretoria

Ms Khanyisile Sithole (Honours in educational psychology, Faculty of Education)



I am currently enrolled in the honours in educational psychology programme at the University of Pretoria (UP). This year has been an intense yet enriching chapter in my academic and personal journey, allowing me to deepen my understanding of the psychological and educational needs of diverse learners across different contexts.

Before entering the programme, I was actively involved in student development and leadership initiatives. Over the past three years, I served as a mentor in the STARS Mentorship Programme, where I supported first-year students in navigating the challenges of university life. I also participated in the Ready, Optimistic, Achievable, and Driven (ROAD) Leadership Programme for Girls, which equipped young women with leadership skills, confidence, and a platform to make a meaningful social impact.

My passion for educational psychology was shaped by these experiences, especially my time in teaching practice, where I worked directly with learners in schools.

During this period, I also took the initiative to tutor learners from less advantaged backgrounds, offering academic and emotional support. This hands-on experience affirmed my calling: to be a source of guidance and care for learners who face both academic and socio-emotional challenges.

Community engagement has been central to my development. Through mentorship, tutoring, and leadership roles, I have developed my empathy, communication skills, resilience, and reflective thinking abilities. These skills are not only relevant to psychology but are also foundational to building human connection and trust.

Although I am currently focused on completing my honours degree, I remain connected to social responsibility efforts, including informal peer mentoring and involvement in youth empowerment spaces. These activities continuously remind me of the power of education to transform lives and the responsibility we have to make that transformation accessible.

To students considering community

engagement: do not hesitate to get involved. You don't have to be perfect or have all the answers; what matters is that you care and are committed.

The growth you will experience through serving others is irreplaceable. One of the highlights of my community engagement journey was mentoring in the STARS Programme. Watching students find their feet, discover their strengths, and grow in confidence made me realise how vital support structures are in any learning environment.

If there is one skill I wish I had explored further during community engagement, it would be advanced conflict resolution and trauma-informed approaches, which are essential for the environments in which educational psychologists often work.

As I continue on my academic path, I am proud of how my time at UP has shaped me, not only as a student but as a compassionate future practitioner. Leadership, service, and learning have walked hand in hand, and that is a lesson I will carry with me for life.

5. Feast of the Clowns and the Arcadia Faith Community: A shared but distinct response to homelessness

Mr Gospel Radipere and Mr Keamogetswe Malope (Faculty of Theology and Religion, Centre for Faith and Community, University of Pretoria)



Community and context

The University of Pretoria's research and training hub, Centre for Faith and Community, enables students to learn beyond textbooks, with Mr Lance Thomas and Professor Stephan de Beer guiding them to engage, reflect, and develop as community developers. The purpose of this project was to engage students in meaningful community development while supporting marginalised populations. As part of this, our group of five students spent time with the Arcadia Faith Community under the PEN (Participate, Envision, and Navigate) Homelessness Programme, a faith-based initiative in Sunnyside, Arcadia, to accompany the homeless, foster dignity and inclusion, raise public awareness, and develop reflective, collaborative skills as future community developers.

Homelessness is often reduced to numbers and stereotypes, yet behind every figure lies a story of resilience, struggle, and hope. Through PEN, Arcadia sustains quiet, year-round pastoral care, walking alongside those on the margins. In contrast, the Feast of the Clowns festival, most recently held on 30 August 2025, operates as a city-wide, event-based advocacy

platform. Feast of the Clowns is a community-based festival in Pretoria. Together, these initiatives highlight complementary approaches: Arcadia nurtures relational care, while the Feast publicly raises awareness and draws attention to exclusion.

Voices of leaders

In our engagement with Arcadia Faith Community, we learn that community work is not charity but a relational partnership. This includes being part of their story by engaging in conversations with them, providing food, and sharing thoughts that counter stereotypes about the homeless. Festival organisers and faith leaders of the Feast of the Clowns give voice to the city's marginalised, using creativity and performance to make visible the struggles of the homeless, demonstrating a bold, prophetic leadership style distinct from Arcadia's relational approach. Both initiatives centre on dignity, inclusion, and hope. We learned to value relationships above projects, which built trust and created space for dialogue, collaboration, and shared ownership. The Feast celebrates public advocacy and solidarity, using performance to confront exclusion and provoke

public reflection. Both reflect the biblical mission as described in Isaiah 61:1-3 and Luke 4:18-19. The Feast embodies prophetic advocacy, making the invisible visible, while Arcadia enacts daily accompaniment, restoring trust, and walking with people through lived struggles.

Restoring worth and nurturing hope

Faith drives both responses, but in different registers. Arcadia's faith enables participants to see beyond appearances and stereotypes, inviting patience, presence, and partnership. The Feast expresses faith publicly, boldly, and prophetically, refusing to let the city ignore its marginalised residents. Moreover, these initiatives demonstrate that faith is inseparable from action, whether quietly relational or publicly prophetic, while restoring dignity and fostering hope for a better community regardless of class. Arcadia sustains quiet, daily rhythms of care, rebuilding trust and affirming worth, while the Feast provides a public, celebratory stage that raises visibility and inspires solidarity. Together, they offer a comprehensive approach to homelessness, combining personal care with public advocacy.

Conclusion

Despite challenges such as limited university funding and reliance on the National Student Financial Aid Scheme (NSFAS) allowances, which can hinder student participation, we maximised participation through strategic scheduling and resource sharing. Arcadia and the Feast of the Clowns exemplify complementary, faith-rooted responses to homelessness. One nurtures transformation through presence and partnership; the other provokes awareness through public witness.

6. Beyond the classroom: Learning through engagement

**Mrs Kim-Tamsin Williams (Lecturer, Department of Humanities Education, Faculty of Education) and
Mr Tumisho Kegaugetswe Kenosi Ingwane (Teaching Assistant, Higher Certificate in Sports Sciences)**

The first-year human movement studies and sport management students from the University of Pretoria BEd programme facilitated a community engagement initiative at Tsholetseg Primary School in Kagiso, Krugersdorp. This initiative formed a practical assessment component of the JMB 113 Motor Development module. It aimed to promote physical activity and motor development among learners while allowing students to translate theory into practice by planning, designing, and facilitating a physical activity station for Intermediate Phase learners.

As part of the module assessment during the semester, student groups created physical education apparatus from recyclable materials, showcasing innovation and resourcefulness. This apparatus, together with their developed movement calendars and the integration of at least one movement theme from the module, such as games, yoga, aerobics, or gymnastics, guided the planning of the physical activity station, ensuring that activities were intentional, progressive, and developmentally appropriate. This integrated application reinforced key theoretical concepts covered throughout the module.

The collaboration created a space of shared learning. For the University, students gained valuable hands-on experience, applying their understanding of motor development in real-life contexts. They demonstrated creativity, inclusivity, and adaptability while learning to manage groups, apply age-appropriate content, and work collaboratively. It also served as a valuable assessment opportunity aligned with their coursework.



Following the initiative, students completed a structured group reflection and a digital group poster to critically evaluate their planning, delivery, and teamwork and deepen their understanding of motor development in real-world school contexts. Through this experience, students demonstrated academic growth and developed practical, professional, and pedagogical competencies essential for future physical education practitioners.

At Tsholetseg Primary School, learners enjoyed a morning of movement filled with healthy, competitive elements that incorporated educational experiences, highlighting physical development. The learners were enthused, and they were saddened when we approached the end of our community engagement.

This engagement emphasises the efforts of the school's management, allowing their learners to partake in physical movement and providing role models and positive exposure to movement and tertiary education.

Two primary challenges emerged: late delivery of consent forms and transport delays. As a result, learners of varied age groups participated, which required on-the-spot adaptability from the students. Secondly, delayed bus arrivals affected the activity schedule. However, despite these setbacks, teamwork and communication among students, teaching assistants, and tutors ensured smooth rotation between activity stations and full learner participation.

By merging academic goals with community needs, initiatives like this build socially responsive graduates and foster a passion for inclusive education. As mentors and mentees witnessed, physical movement is not only an academic focus but also a bridge to joy, connection, and transformation.

7. Buzzing with purpose: The Garden and Bees Initiative

Mr Ponstro Masele (Assistant Site Manager, Moja Gabedi) and Mr Lennox Wasara (Project Coordinator, Mastercard Foundation Scholars Program)



A unique partnership between Moja Gabedi and the Mastercard Foundation Scholars Program is bringing learning, sustainability, and entrepreneurship to life through the Garden and Bees Initiative. This initiative is more than just planting flowers; it is about creating a living classroom where nature, people, and opportunity intersect. The project's core mission is to promote

biodiversity, ecological balance, and the vital role of pollinators, especially bees, in food production. By designing and maintaining a pollinator-friendly garden, the students gain first-hand experience in caring for the environment while building practical skills for the future.

Key objectives of the initiative include cultivating a thriving garden with bee-friendly native plants, educating

participants about the importance of pollination, encouraging sustainable gardening practices such as composting and water conservation, and inspiring community involvement in protecting pollinators.

Hands-on activities form the heartbeat of the programme: selecting and planting nectar-rich flowers, herbs, and shrubs; installing bee habitats to support solitary bee species; monitoring bee activity; collecting observational data; and creating informative guides for garden visitors. Students are not only learning about ecological interactions but also about entrepreneurship opportunities such as organic vegetable planting and small-scale income generation.

The expected outcomes are significant and include enhanced environmental knowledge, stronger partnerships with stakeholders, increased awareness of biodiversity, and student empowerment through practical green skills. As participants engage in this unique garden ecosystem, they also learn how sustainability can create opportunities for both livelihoods and healthier communities.

Ultimately, the project demonstrates that when education, environment, and innovation come together, the results are truly transformative. The garden is not only buzzing with bees but also with knowledge, skills, and hope for a sustainable future.

The project is more than just a learning space. It demonstrates that students gain practical knowledge and develop skills that empower them to utilise coursework to create sustainable sources of income.

8. To live is to be part of science

Miss Thato Semono (Head Girl, TuksSport)

Wa thintha a bafasi, wa thintha imbokodo. (You strike women, you strike a rock.)

When I received the invitation, I was genuinely surprised. I thought, 'Me? A high school learner? Speaking at a science symposium with researchers and professors?' But after a moment of reflection (and perhaps a few panicked WhatsApp messages to my mom), I realised something important.

I may not be a woman in science. I don't even take science as a subject, but I am a young woman, and I am alive. To live is to be part of science, because science is simply humankind's discovery and best use of the world around us.

As the head girl of TuksSport High School, I encourage young girls to dream big and pursue education without fear. At my school, girls in track shoes and goggles are taken just as seriously as their male counterparts. Being pretty and smart goes hand in hand with one's power to change the world.

Now, let me tell you a little bit about where I come from. I was raised in a home and a community surrounded entirely by incredible women who guided and loved me. We did not always have it easy. They taught me to embrace any opportunity and show up, especially when it is hard.

My mother is my role model and often steps in as my science fair partner. Her strength and humour teach me that there is nothing more powerful than a girl with a plan. Then, there was my late grandmother. She was not a scientist, but her wisdom was its own kind of formula of courage, love, and



resilience. She told me, 'Even when the world goes quiet, keep speaking your truth.' She may be gone, but her legacy continues through every step I take. Sometimes I wish she could see how far I have come.

Then, there are my science teachers who somehow manage to juggle knowledge with kindness. They ignite curiosity and instil growth mindsets in us. Our retired principal, Mrs Hettie de Villiers, was truly a queen of calm authority.

Mrs de Villiers not only led a school, she led young women to believe they are capable of more than they have been told. Last but not

least, there were my coaches who pushed through and showed me that power is earned, not given.

My track and field coach taught me how to find that next gear when my legs were burning. My gym coach showed me that strength is built rep by rep, and confidence is just as important as muscle. Today, girls at TuksSport High School dare to transcend their limitations and pursue sports and academics with passion.

Thank you to the University of Pretoria for believing in young voices and to all the role models who helped me find mine.

9. Power from the falls: The Kwa-Madiba hydropower project lights the way for rural electrification

Professor Marco van Dijk (Department of Civil Engineering, University of Pretoria)



Thina Falls, the plant generates 50 kW of clean electricity.

At its core, the project represents a practical, modular approach to renewable energy generation using the natural flow of the Thina River. Instead of damming the river or altering its course, a 450 mm diameter tunnel was drilled through the surrounding rock to divert a small flow of water (approximately 150 litres per second) to a turbine. The water is then returned to the river with no loss or pollution. This type of installation is known as a 'run-of-river' system, one of the most environmentally benign forms of hydropower.



The design minimises visual and ecological impact. The intake structure is located above the falls, and the turbine room, containing the generator, control systems, and regulators, sits inconspicuously at the base. Its containerised design allowed much of the assembly to be done off-site, reducing the time and labour required on location and providing a replicable model for other sites.

In the remote hills of the Eastern Cape, northeast of Mthatha, a quiet revolution is taking place, one that is turning the natural energy of falling water into a sustainable future for a small rural community. The Kwa-Madiba hydropower project is more than just an engineering achievement; it is a model of how clean, decentralised electricity can uplift isolated communities while preserving the surrounding environment.

Led by Professor Marco van Dijk of the University of Pretoria's Department of Civil Engineering and developed in partnership with the Water Research Commission and the Department of Science, Technology and Innovation, this small-scale, run-of-river hydropower project was the first of its kind in South Africa, developed to power approximately 50 households in the rural village of Kwa-Madiba. Housed in a retrofitted shipping container beside the scenic

Overcoming the obstacles

Despite the elegance of the final system, the path to completion was complex. 'Reaching the final stage of the project was not easy,' says Van Dijk. The team faced challenges ranging from adverse geology and difficult terrain to administrative delays due to municipal restructuring. Equipment delivery, adverse weather, and managing various civil, mechanical, and electrical elements added further

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complexity. However, one of the most significant achievements was navigating South Africa's complex water use regulations. The project team played a vital role in revising the General Authorisation (GA) under the National Water Act. Thanks to their advocacy, small-scale hydropower projects of up to 300 kW can now proceed under GA conditions without a full water use licence, provided environmental requirements are met. This drastically lowers both the time and cost barriers for similar future installations.

Empowering communities

The Kwa-Madiba plant is about more than lights and appliances. It is an entrance to social and economic upliftment. Access to electricity can improve health outcomes, enhance educational opportunities, and spur local enterprise. 'Imagine thousands of such systems serving remote villages,' says Mr Jay Bhagwan, Executive Manager of the Water Research Commission. 'This could be the green economy that uplifts local economies and stimulates a renewable industry.'

It was also an educational model. For Van Dijk and his team, the project served as a real-world laboratory, testing new technologies and developing practical skills in hydropower planning, design, construction, and operation. Workshops and training sessions

brought together stakeholders from government, academia, and industry, fostering collaboration and knowledge-sharing.

The broader potential of small hydropower

South Africa is often regarded as having limited hydropower potential due to its arid climate. However, the country's extensive water infrastructure, comprising nearly 4 500 registered dams, numerous weirs, and a vast network of pipelines and water transfer schemes, represents a hidden pool of opportunities. Retrofitting these sites with hydropower turbines could enable distributed generation nationwide without the need for new large-scale infrastructure.

UP's Hydropower Research Group developed the South African Hydropower Atlas, the first of its kind in South Africa. This tool helps identify potential sites for future hydropower projects, taking into account geography, flow conditions, and technical viability. The aim is to support investors, municipalities, and utilities in making informed decisions while aligning with national goals for renewable energy and rural development.

Small-scale hydropower is already proven globally as a mature and reliable technology. In fact, South Africa's own history of electrification

began with small hydro systems. Early installations in places like Pilgrim's Rest and urban centres such as Cape Town and Pretoria were powered by hydroelectricity before coal-based centralised grids took over in the mid-20th century. Now, amid the push for greener alternatives and the realities of grid inaccessibility in many rural areas, micro-hydro is making a comeback.

A model for replication

The Kwa-Madiba project shows that scalable solutions can be delivered affordably and efficiently. The modular design, minimal environmental impact, and relatively short development timeline make it ideal for replication in remote communities, schools, clinics, and cultural centres.

The lessons learned from Kwa-Madiba will inform similar developments in the Eastern Cape, KwaZulu-Natal, and Mpumalanga, which have suitable topography and hydrology for small hydro schemes. The project's success has sparked interest from local authorities and turbine manufacturers, and it stands as a compelling demonstration of public-private-academic partnership.

As Van Dijk reflects, 'What we are saying is: let's harness the water resources we already have responsibly and equitably for the benefit of all'.

10. Making mathematics meaningful through community engagement

Dr Nadia Swanepoel (Lecturer, Early Childhood Education, University of Pretoria)



For me, community engagement has always meant friendly faces, energy, and a spirit of giving. After stepping back from it for a while, I realised it was time to bring that energy back into my teaching.

At the end of 2024, I decided to reinvent my second-year Foundation Phase mathematics module, creating space for pre-service Foundation Phase teachers to work hand-in-hand with communities and show that mathematics can be meaningful, playful, and relevant. This aligns with the global call of Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 4 (Quality Education), ensuring that teaching and learning experiences are inclusive, equitable, and empowering.

Many pre-service teachers know the theory of teaching mathematics well, but they often lack opportunities to apply their knowledge in real-life settings. To change this, I launched a new initiative supported by a

Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL) grant. The goal was simple: give pre-service teachers practical opportunities to teach mathematics in schools and communities while learning from experienced teachers.

The foundation of the community engagement initiative was built on the lesson study approach, which included three phases. Phase one focused on ascertaining the state of mathematics education in the various communities around Gauteng.

Pre-service teachers interviewed in-service teachers to understand the challenges and successes of teaching mathematics in their classrooms. Pre-service teachers collaborated with in-service teachers to plan a mathematics lesson. As part of phase two, pre-service teachers were required to teach their lessons to the classes in the relevant communities. The lessons had to include play, storytelling, indigenous knowledge,

or mother tongue instruction. Phase three was the time for reflection and making improvements to lesson planning and teaching. Seeing that the lessons taught were recorded for later viewing and receiving input from peers, pre-service teachers reflected on what worked, what could be improved, and how collaboration with in-service teachers and community learners shaped their teaching.

The results were inspiring. Pre-service teachers discovered the value of play-based teaching, such as using games to explain counting, and learned to celebrate and integrate indigenous knowledge.

For example, one group used morabaraba, a traditional game, to teach mathematical thinking. Pre-service teachers furthermore experienced how mother tongue instruction makes learning more accessible and meaningful. One

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of the main contributions of this community engagement initiative is the manner in which pre-service teachers experienced mathematics as authentic and meaningful.

This initiative also led pre-service teachers to appreciate the wisdom of in-service teachers, especially in being able to teach with limited resources. Looking back, the pre-service teachers gained more than just experience from the in-service teachers.

They grew in confidence, professional identity and pedagogical skills. One

of the biggest takeaways was how much mathematics came alive when it was linked to games, stories, and real-life community experiences.

This initiative reminded me that learning is most powerful when it is shared. Community engagement not only prepares teachers but also empowers communities to utilise their own strengths and knowledge. By connecting classrooms with culture, language and play, mathematics becomes more than numbers on a page. It becomes meaningful, authentic, and

accessible for everyone. In this way, the initiative contributes to SDG 4 by fostering quality education that is relevant to learners' lives, grounded in community knowledge, and accessible across different resource settings.

I was fortunate to present a workshop on making mathematics meaningful with colleagues from the Department of Early Childhood Education, Dr Nompumelelo Madonda, and Mrs Elsa Marie Kersop on the Mamelodi Campus. Thank you for hosting us, Dr Martina Jordaan.

11. Opening reflections on $\Phi\Omega\Sigma$ (Light): Art, disability, and the power of inclusivity

Professor Raïta Steyn (Art Education, Department of Humanities Education)



Students at the School of Advanced Vocational Training for People with Disabilities performing in $\Phi\Omega\Sigma$, Thessaloniki, Greece



Professor Raïta Steyn delivers a PowerPoint presentation contextualising the importance of art, education, and inclusivity, Thessaloniki, Greece

I was honoured to be invited as a guest speaker at the opening of the theatrical documentary $\Phi\Omega\Sigma$ (Light), hosted at the Athinaion Cinema Theatre in Thessaloniki, Greece, on 23 June 2025. As part of the event, I gave a PowerPoint presentation contextualising the importance of art, education, and inclusivity, particularly in creating spaces where individuals with disabilities are recognised as active

participants in cultural life. The performance $\Phi\Omega\Sigma$, written by Styliani Kantartzzi and Genovefa Ktenidou and performed by students at the School of Advanced Vocational Training for People with Disabilities in collaboration with the Experimental ΣAEK Thermi, was a profound eye-opener. It offered deep insights into the lived experiences of people with visual impairments and

challenged audiences to reconsider their perceptions of disability. The evening underscored the critical role of the arts in promoting inclusivity, awareness, and empathy.

By allowing us to 'see' the world through the perspectives of the visually impaired, $\Phi\Omega\Sigma$ highlighted the importance of creating an inclusive society where diversity is not only acknowledged but celebrated.

12. Beyond the gates: Leveraging tourism for local community participation and well-being

Mr Siphiwe William, Professor Anneli Douglas, and Professor Elizabeth Du Preez
(University of Pretoria, Department of Marketing Management)

At the University of Pretoria, curricular community engagement is embedded in the teaching, learning, and research processes. Honours tourism management students from the Tourism Management Division, Department of Marketing Management, participated in a community engagement project at Dinokeng Game Reserve in Hammanskraal in July 2025. Led by their lecturer, Mr Siphiwe William, under the expert guidance of Professor Douglas and Professor Du Preez, the aim of the project was to gain an understanding of the real-life challenges faced by the tourism industry and local communities.

The nature of challenges may be social, economic, cultural, or environmental, depending on the type of tourism establishment. The visit started with a presentation about tourism-related community development initiatives at the game reserve.

This was followed by a visit to the Kwalata Adventure Camp, where students learned about the importance of biodiversity for the natural environment, bee farming, honey making, and pottery. A visit to a nearby daycare centre provided students with the opportunity to engage with staff and children, learning first-hand how their challenges can be addressed through tourism.

Hammanskraal, a previously disadvantaged community adjacent to the Dinokeng Game Reserve, benefits from employment



opportunities from the game reserve. Local businesses, such as Heart of Craft, Honey at Dinokasi, and Koka Pottery, provide a source of livelihood.

'The highlight of the Dinokeng trip was meeting the local community beneficiaries and seeing first-hand how tourism can positively impact lives when implemented responsibly.'

At the end of the project, students are expected to compile a research report and propose possible solutions to the issues that they have identified in class during theoretical discussions and experienced during this day-long field trip. The Dinokeng Game Reserve offered valuable lessons regarding community engagement in

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tourism experience development, conservation, educational upliftment, and employment. It would, therefore, be the ideal case study to learn about the challenges to community inclusion and best practices being implemented by a successful tourism establishment. It was imperative for students to understand the intersection between theory and real-world contexts, as this also strengthens the transformation of curriculum into practical solutions in partnership

with stakeholders, such as Dinokeng Game Reserve, to ensure the well-being of local communities. UP is an impactful vehicle for attaining this goal. To reiterate, students mentioned that there was a direct link between the curriculum and the project by stating:

'Yes, there was a link. The quality-of-life theory is being achieved because the tourism activities from the lodge have improved the lives of community members.'

'Yes, the content learned in class concerning response and sustainable tourism was put into practice in terms of the triple bottom line.'

The Division of Tourism Management remains committed to the Faculty of Economic and Management Science's vision to be at the forefront of teaching, learning, research, and community engagement, developing employable graduates who contribute to society.

13. The University of Pretoria uplifting lives: The inspiring journey of Thandi Mashaba

Thandi Promise Mashaba (Founder: Focus Mamelodi Community)



My name is Thandi Promise Mashaba. I am 34 years old and live in Mamelodi East near the University of Pretoria. UP plays a significant role in uplifting the community through community engagement activities, which I was privileged to attend, including Fathers Matter, Kasi Girls Can Code, and Goal Setting. As a result, I am

an empowered founder of a non-profit organisation (NPO) called Focus Mamelodi Community, which is celebrating its ninth year of serving the community.

Our mission is centred around five key areas: teaching prayer and the word of God, inspiring creativity, bringing dreams to life, nurturing growth, celebrating success, and supporting young people's mental health through counselling and mentorship.

Our vision is to build a society where everyone has the emotional support and resources they need to flourish through helping children recognise their talents and gifts.

The NPO is truly a beacon of hope driven by our passion for transforming lives. We are involved in teaching children netball to keep them off the streets. This initiative is a testament to our dedication to empowering the next generation.

In August 2025, we hosted an anti-abuse campaign aimed at addressing issues that affect the residents. The event was dedicated to educating and empowering the community to recognise, confront, and overcome various forms of abuse. Overall, the campaign was a success, with participants joining together through music and dance.

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14. Feast of the Clowns: A day of fun and sun

Professor Mia le Roux (Department of Speech-Language Pathology and Audiology) and Miss Kabuba Masule (master's student in the Department of Speech-Language Pathology and Audiology)

The Reading Day team from the Department of Speech-Language Pathology and Audiology focuses on literacy enhancement activities within the community. Through the networking of Miss Kabuba Masule, a master's student in the Department of Speech-Language Pathology and Audiology, the Reading Day team, consisting of Professor Mia le Roux, Professor Salomé Geertsema, and Dr Carmen Milton, was invited to take part in the Feast of the Clowns on 30 August 2025.

The Feast of the Clowns is a social justice community festival held annually in Tshwane, organised by the Faculty of Theology and Religion of the University of Pretoria. The festival utilises the imagery of the clown to raise awareness about social justice issues, including homelessness, inequality, and community restoration.

This year, the theme was 'Just tables', which entailed a celebration of justice, community, and togetherness. The festival was organised by the Tshwane Leadership Foundation, the Centre for Faith and Community, and the Lawyers for Human Rights.

This year, the Reading Day team and Mr Prynce Kekana and Mr Benny Mokgwasa from VII Nights Multimedia company participated in the festival. The VII Nights Media Company is a full-service multimedia company that offers a range of services, including high-quality photography and videography. They were responsible for capturing the moments during the festival and assisting in engaging with the people.



The festival began with a peaceful, playful protest. The participants used this as an opportunity to invite people from the street to join in the live music, clowning, dancing, children's village, HIV-testing services, drug and alcohol reduction services, the health village, and an array of informative exhibitions. The literacy enhancement team participated in expanding awareness of literacy and read books with children.

Our participation on the day involved marketing our departmental programmes on a small scale and informing parents and caregivers about the importance of shared book reading, as well as practical strategies for implementing it. Free books from BookDash, organised by UP information specialist Ms Christine Nel, were

distributed to the children and parents during the festival. BookDash is a South African social impact publisher of open, African picture books. Evidently, the children were thrilled to receive the books, as they willingly engaged in reading activities with the master's students, Ms Palesa Molongoana and Ms Kabuba Masule, and the rest of the team.

As evidence of the social impact our exhibition and activities had, even on a small scale, one of the visitors to our table began reading stories to the children and sharing with parents the importance of shared book reading with their children.

Although on a diminutive scale, this shows how community engagement activities can have a positive ripple effect within a community.

15. National Oral Health Month celebration

Mr William Masinga (Lecturer, Oral Hygienist, Department of Community Dentistry, School of Dentistry, Faculty of Health Sciences, University of Pretoria) and Professor Candice van Wyk (Adjunct Professor/Assistant Director, Oral Hygiene, Department of Community Dentistry, School of Dentistry, Faculty of Health Sciences, University of Pretoria)



Second- and final-year students of the Bachelor of Oral Hygiene at the University of Pretoria took part in the National Oral Health Month celebration in September 2025, with the theme 'No health without oral health'. The two-day programme featured not only oral hygiene instruction through role-playing but also dental screenings, monitored toothbrushing, and preventive treatments.

The first day of the celebration was held at Nelmapius Primary School, Extension 6, in the east of Pretoria, in collaboration with the Tshwane Oral Health and Therapeutic Services Directorate, as well as with students from Sefako Makgatho

University and the University of the Witwatersrand, which are the sister dental schools in Gauteng. Students who participated included oral hygiene students, dental therapists, and dietitians.

This event allowed students not only to engage in social responsibilities and network but also to explore potential future collaborative relationships. Initiatives like these drive cross-institutional efforts to prevent and promote oral health.

Students actively participated in group oral hygiene sessions in the form of role play, where learners were educated on proper brushing techniques, preventive oral care, and

the importance of routine dentist/oral hygienist visits.

The second day of the celebration was held at Laerskool Oost-Eind in Sunnyside, Pretoria. Around 400 learners (Grades 1–3) were thrilled as they learned how to maintain optimal dental hygiene through prop storytelling. Later, learners were separated into groups for monitored toothbrushing activities.

This exercise not only provided guidance and education to learners but also reinforced proper dental hygiene techniques and promoted healthy oral habits. Service rendering included the placement of fissure sealants, a preventive dental procedure that helps reduce the risk of dental caries among vulnerable populations, such as children. This initiative aligns with the 2024–2034 National Oral Health Policy and Strategy, as well as with the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals 3.4 (reduce premature mortality from non-communicable diseases by one third through prevention and treatment and promote mental health and well-being) and 3.8 (achieve universal health coverage).

16. Driving inclusion in South Africa's technology ecosystem and creating employment opportunities for the youth

Mr Arnold Sigauque (Founder, Kasi Digital)

Kasi Digital is a grassroots initiative focusing on reducing unemployment and improving inclusion in the digital economy. As a tech skills development programme, it aims to contribute to the development of South Africa's technology ecosystem by training young people from townships to become software developers and provide South African tech startups with a sustainable talent pool.

The project was founded in 2024 by Mr Arnold Sigauque, Brand South Africa Play Your Part Ambassador and World Economic Forum Global Shapers Tshwane Hub community alumnus, with support from Brand South Africa, the University of Pretoria, and Zaio Coding School.

The idea for the project emerged when Arnold, the founder of a technology company called Ghea, realised how difficult it was to attract talented developers to join his team. This is a challenge that many technology startups in South Africa face. Finding tech talent in South Africa remains challenging for technology startups because of the general skills shortage and the high cost of tech salaries. Therefore, the prospect of creating a wider talent pool made sense, given that many technology startups face similar challenges.

Solving the problem of high skills shortage in the technology space is too big for any single organisation, which is why there are several initiatives aimed at addressing this problem. What makes Kasi Digital unique is that:

- it aims to produce well-rounded tech professionals with a broad range of skills, not just software



development (future versions of the programme will include skills which range from cybersecurity to digital marketing);

- it works closely with startup partners to develop internships or work experience programmes focusing on talent development; and
- it supports the startup ventures so that they can retain the talent through long-term employment.

The programme will also focus on entrepreneurial education to provide graduates with a solid foundation for starting their own ventures and becoming self-employed.

Kasi Digital specifically targets townships, as that is where the need for access to digital skills is. Young people attending schools in townships often do so without access to computers. Internet access is limited to their phones, making it difficult for them to acquire meaningful digital skills.

'We recognise the need to partner with community development projects such as Kasi Digital because solutions to the problems that communities face must come from people within those communities,

and that is what we aim to achieve through our Play Your Part campaign,' said Masego Mosiane on behalf of Brand South Africa.

Kasi Digital has also received support from the University of Pretoria's Mamelodi Campus. Dr Martina Jordan supported us in obtaining access to the campus facilities for running the workshops. Zaio Coding School provided the curriculum, certification, and a startup network, including Jobox, Fixxr, Ghea, and Tati Software, which subsequently contributed immensely to the project's successful launch.

Initiatives like Kasi Digital are a vital response to South African youth unemployment. 'Through harnessing young industrialists who are building South Africa's technology startup ecosystem, we can begin to meaningfully turn the tide against unemployment and make South Africa's digital economy more inclusive,' Sigauque said.

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17. Advancing higher education through community engagement: Insights from the 2025 Education Association of South Africa conference

Kanye Rampa and Dr Eugene Machimana (Department for Education Innovation, Unit for Community Engagement, University of Pretoria)

The 2025 Education Association of South Africa (EASA) Conference, held at the Sun City Resort in North West, marked a significant milestone for academics, government officials and education practitioners. The conference theme, 'Learning on the rising tides: Inspirational approaches to education, creativity, harmonious collaboration and deeper social connection', set the tone for deep discussions and rich exchanges. The three-day event focused on seven sub-themes: community engagement and teacher learning through collaboration, transdisciplinary research, teacher education, language in education, early childhood education, technology in education and resilience in education. The discussions centred on the present educational context and potential innovations for the future.

The conference featured impressive keynote speakers, each bringing valuable knowledge and experience to the discussions. During her speech, Professor Naledi Pandor, former Minister of International Relations and Cooperation, reminded public institutions to support parents and communities in playing an impactful role in educating their children. She challenged universities to take a more active role in infusing innovation and bold ambition within their programmes, particularly in under-resourced rural and township schools.

The conference offered a valuable platform to showcase the University of Pretoria's commitment to community engagement. Ms Kanye Rampa from the Unit for Community Engagement collaborated with Ms Runyararo Marima from the Durban



University of Technology (DUT) on a joint presentation titled *Transforming Higher Education through Community Engagement: Empowering Students for Social Change at the University of Pretoria and Durban University of Technology*. This presentation underscored the importance of fostering social responsibility among undergraduate students and highlighted the role of inter-university collaboration in advancing the transformation of higher education.

Dr Eugene Machimana's presentation explored *the role of community partners in assessing community engagement (CE) projects to enhance curriculum relevance and quality in higher education*. It highlighted the importance of collaborative engagement between higher education (HE) institutions and community partners in shaping curriculum development, assessment and student learning outcomes.

The paper underscored the policy frameworks guiding HE-CE, emphasising that CE modules should align with legislative requirements and the triple mandate of higher

education: teaching, research and community engagement. The assessment of CE modules should involve both internal and external partners, with external assessors holding a higher qualification than students.

Effective integration of CE into academic programmes fosters skill acquisition, connects students to local and global communities and enhances social justice. The presentation highlighted that a well-structured HE-CE curriculum, shaped by community insights, contributes to a just and sustainable society.

The participants' insights and connections enhanced our understanding and practice of community engagement. A further achievement emanating from the conference was the election of Dr Machimana as EASA Chairperson during the EASA Annual General Meeting. The EASA 2026 conference will undoubtedly build on these discussions to explore new horizons in university-community partnerships.

18. Transformative learning through community engagement: Criminology honours project wins institutional community engagement award

Prof Christiaan Bezuidenhout (Professor of Criminology: Department of Social Work and Criminology)

In 2019, the University of Pretoria's Community Engagement (CE) Award was conferred upon Prof Christiaan Bezuidenhout in recognition of his outstanding efforts to integrate criminology education with high-impact community engagement. Through the KRM 710 module, part of the structured Criminology Honours Programme, Prof Bezuidenhout has developed a sustainable model of academic-community collaboration that meets curricular objectives while actively promoting the social well-being of local communities.

The KRM 710 module, introduced in 2005 and anchored in CE work dating back to 1995, equips students with a deep understanding of the structure and functioning of the South African Criminal Justice System. Designed to foster professional knowledge and practical competencies in criminology, the module integrates service-learning initiatives. Over the past three decades, it has consistently evolved, responding to shifting community needs, emerging national safety priorities and innovations in teaching and learning.

In 2018, the featured CE project, titled *Analysing Risk Profiles in the Hatfield City Improvement District (CID)*, demonstrated the transformative impact of student-led research on public policy. Under Prof Bezuidenhout's supervision, students conducted fieldwork, analysed local crime data, and collaborated with key local stakeholders to develop evidence-based and actionable recommendations aimed at enhancing campus and community safety. Many of these recommendations such as improved lighting, increased patrols, rapid-response services, and the



implementation of community-based safety protocols, were swiftly adopted by the CID, Metro Police, and UP Management, underscoring the project's relevance and practical value. The sustained success of this and earlier projects is rooted in strategically coordinated collaborations between honours students, the CE office, and local communities. Each year, 20 selected students undertake CE projects situated within diverse environments, including correctional centres, schools, non-profit organisations (NPOs), police precincts, and care facilities for older persons. These experiential engagements are deliberately aligned with academic outcomes and are instrumental in cultivating students' community responsiveness and social responsibility. Communities, in turn, actively contribute to the design and sustainability of project outcomes, ranging from crime-awareness campaigns to infrastructural enhancements in under-resourced areas, thereby reinforcing reciprocal learning and sustainable impact.

Crucially, under the leadership of Prof Bezuidenhout, CE is purposefully embedded as a capstone experience within the honours curriculum. Students are equipped with essential competencies in project planning, stakeholder consultation,

and reflective practice, which are skills that cultivate professional competence and community responsiveness. The assessment of these CE projects includes structured feedback from both University staff and community partners, reinforcing principles of mutual accountability and collaborative learning.

A standout example is the Kameeldrift Early Learning Centre Refurbishment Project, which brought together students, community members, and incarcerated youth to renovate a school, install water infrastructure, and create a vegetable garden. Lauded for its deep social impact and sustainability, it exemplifies the value of CE in criminology education. Feedback from participating students reveals a profound shift in perspectives and professional identity. While many initially approach community-based work in correctional or marginalised settings with scepticism, they emerge with a deepened appreciation for justice, empathy, and civic responsibility. As one student poignantly reflected: *'Your comfort zone is the most dangerous place to be, because it never allows growth.'*

Through the KRM 710 module, Prof Bezuidenhout has demonstrated the transformative potential of engaged scholarship in shaping both learners and communities. While one of his diversity of Criminology honours projects has received institutional acclaim another was published in peer-reviewed outlets, including *Acta Criminologica*, further extending its scholarly and practical influence. The University of Pretoria commends this initiative as a benchmark for community-engaged teaching and as a model for others seeking to embed CE meaningfully in the curriculum.

Community Engagement Forum Members 2025



Representative/secundus	Faculty/department
Prof Gerrit Stols	Director Department for Education Innovation
Dr Rejoice Nsibande	Deputy Director Academic Development
Dr Eugene Machimana	Head: Curricular Community Engagement Unit for Community Engagement

Faculty support: Unit for Community Engagement, Department for Education Innovation	
Ms Kanye Rampa	Engineering, Built Environment and Information Technology (EBIT)
	Humanities
	Veterinary Science
Mr Albert Matlhekethla	Health Sciences
	Law
	Theology and Religion
Ms Londiwe Mahlangu	Economic and Management Sciences (EMS)
	Education
	Natural and Agricultural Sciences (NAS)

Community engagement faculty representatives	
Prof Natasja Holtzhausen	EMS
Mrs Kim-Tamsin Williams	Education
Prof Lelanie Smith	EBIT
Ms Sharne Mokhethi	
Prof Louise van den Berg	School of Health Care Sciences (SOHCS)
Dr Christa Ellis	
Prof Ahmed Bhayat	School of Dentistry
Mr Mahlatse Moropeng	School of Health Systems and Public Health (SHSPH)
Dr Felistus Ndamba	Humanities
Dr Faranaaz Veriava	Law Clinic
Ms Karabo Ozah	
Prof Nershene Davis	NAS
Dr Hanri Taljaard-Swart	
Mr Lance Thomas	Theology and Religion
Ms Irene Thomas	
Dr Maxine Breytenbach	Veterinary Science
Prof Rhoda Leask	

Support departments	
Dr Martina Jordaan	Mamelodi Campus
Mr Edwin Smith	
Mr Rowan Watson	Security Services
Mr Rikus Delport	Institutional Advancement
Ms Isabel de Necker	
Mrs Daisy Ngwenya	Student Affairs (DSA)
Ms Gomolemo Maluleke	
Mr Eulogy Khoza	Student Representative Council (SRC)
Mr Khutso Manyaka	
Mr Abe Mathopa	Department of Research, Innovation and Postgraduate Education
Mrs Linky Mokgohlwa	Department of Library Services

Community partner representatives