

Lentšu La Sechaba

THE VOICE OF THE CE COMMUNITY

Department for Education Innovation
Unit for Community Engagement



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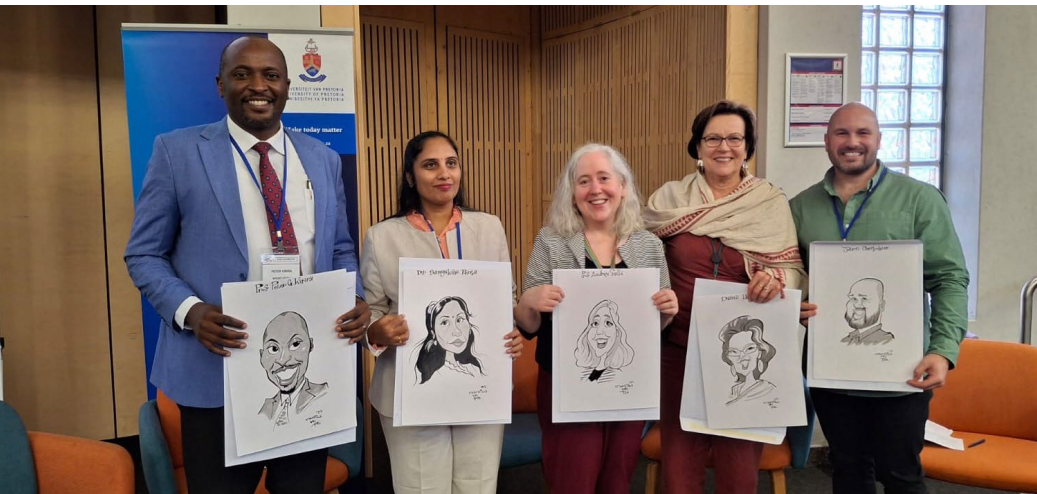
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1. Engaging students and communities

Prof Audrey Falk (The Arc of Massachusetts, previously from Merrimack College, USA)



In November 2025, I had the unique privilege and pleasure of attending 'Anchoring conversations: Connection, collaboration and co-creation for the future', an event that combined the 10th International Research Symposium of Problem-Based Learning, the 7th South African Society for Engineering Education Conference, and the 5th Scholarship of Teaching and Learning in the South Conference. The programme took place at the University of Pretoria's Future Africa venue and was organised under the leadership of Prof Lelanie Smith. The three-day programme was preceded by a two-day Change Makers in Engineering Education event and a one-day Community Engagement Seminar, which showcased the University's community engagement work. Participants were also offered the opportunity to pay an afternoon visit to the University of Pretoria's Mamelodi Campus during the main conference. Finally, several further learning convenings were available during the three days following the conference. In total, about 250 attendees from 25 countries in Africa,

Asia, North America, and Europe participated in the programme.

Initially apprehensive about how the organisers could coordinate a seamless programme among such diverse groups, I was pleasantly surprised and quickly realised the brilliance of this approach. It was eye-opening to explore the synergies among engineering, community engagement, and innovations in teaching and learning that prioritise social-emotional learning, student empathy, problem-based learning, and hands-on experience.

It was also fascinating to hear about best practices and exemplars from different parts of the world with respect to the preparation of professionals and citizens for our evolving human, social, political, economic, and technological challenges. The structure of the conference offered ample time for sharing effective practices and dialoguing about critical contemporary issues, while also considering relevance to and application within our home

institutions and communities. It was inspiring and transformative. I had the opportunity to serve as a keynote speaker for the Community Engagement Seminar and the main conference. The title of my keynote at the main conference was 'Engaging students and communities', and it included a follow-up panel with Ms Diana Hornby of Rhodes University, South Africa; Samyuktha Penta of KG Reddy College of Engineering and Technology, India; and Peter Gakio Kirira of Mount Kenya University, Kenya. The keynote and panel were expertly moderated by Jason Oberholser of the University of Pretoria. Through my presentation,

I shared numerous examples of how my colleagues and I have worked with students, alumni, and community partners through our graduate programme in non-profit management and community engagement. At the Community Engagement Seminar, my focus was 'Pathways beyond the bachelor's degree', and I provided an overview of the structure and rationale for a postgraduate programme in community engagement. I was heartened to see Ms Diana Hornby launching a similar programme at Rhodes University in January 2026. I believe the time is right for the University of Pretoria to develop its own community engagement academic programme, and I am eager to support these efforts. Along with my colleagues at Merrimack College, I am honoured to be your partner in strengthening higher education to develop students and facilitate social change.

2. Matters of interest

Conferences

- The 12th Flexible Futures Higher Education Innovation Conference, Future Africa, University of Pretoria, 26 to 27 August 2026. For more information, visit the [conference website](#).
- Community Engagement Symposium, co-hosted by the Faculty of Health Sciences, the Unit for Community Engagement, and Mamelodi Campus, 8 October 2026. [CE Symposium Registration Link](#)
- International Conference on Community Engagement (ICCE) 2026, Nelson Mandela University, 28 to 30 October 2026. For more information, email icce2026secretariat@gmail.com.
- HELTASA Annual Conference, University of the Witwatersrand (Wits), 1 to 4 December 2026. For more information, visit <https://heltasa.org.za/heltasa-annual-unconference-2026/>.

Newsletters

- Lentšú la Sechaba publications <https://www.up.ac.za/community-engagement/article/3196610/community-engagement-newsletters>.
- Teaching Matters publication https://issuu.com/universityofpretoria/docs/teaching_matters_vol_2?fr=sZmMwNjg1MTUzMTI.
- Faculty of Veterinary Science Community Engagement Newsletter: <https://repository.up.ac.za/collections/57b3f7a5-45a9-496a-ade2-ffa3e6b9a1fb>

Awards

- UP Teaching Excellence Awards 2026
- Curricular Community Engagement Award 2026, Faculty closing date: 4 September 2026.
All nominations must be submitted to Jeovitah Chimhamhiwa by 18 September 2026.

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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3. Community engagement in practice: Reflections on community engagement in 2025

Prof Lelanie Smith (Associate Professor: Head of Community-based Projects) and
Ms Bonolo Mokoka (Lecturer: Community-Based Projects (JCP))



Organising the 2025 Community Engagement (CE) Seminar was both a rewarding and a strategically significant experience. The CE Seminar, co-hosted by the Faculty of Engineering, Built Environment and Information Technology (EBIT), the Unit for Community Engagement, and the Mamelodi Campus, took place on 17 November 2025 as part of the Combined 10th IRSPBL, 7th SASEE, and 5th SoTL in the South Conference, which was hosted in Africa for the first time. This milestone provided the University of Pretoria (UP) with

a valuable opportunity to showcase its community engagement and social responsibility initiatives to an international audience.

Aligned with the broader conference theme, 'Anchoring conversations: Connection, collaboration, and co-creation for the future', the seminar focused on 'Community engagement in practice', emphasising applied examples of partnership-driven initiatives rather than purely conceptual discussions. The intention was to create a space where academics, students, and

community partners could reflect on how engagement practices translate into meaningful social impact while enriching teaching and learning.

The CE seminar opened with an introduction and welcome by Prof Alta van der Merwe, delivered on behalf of Prof Loretta Feris, Deputy Vice-Chancellor: Academic. This was followed by the keynote address by Prof Audrey Falk, titled 'Academic pathways in community engagement beyond the bachelor's degree'. Her

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presentation explored postgraduate pathways in non-profit management and community engagement, highlighting the evolution of such programmes, their curriculum design, and their impact on students, community partners, and institutions.

The keynote also provided strategic insights for universities seeking to formalise and expand engaged scholarship within their academic structures.

The academic programme comprised three themed paper sessions and an interactive unconference session, reflecting interdisciplinary collaboration across the nine UP faculties. Paper Session 1, chaired by Dr Martina Jordaan, focused on responsible citizenship and collective action in urban contexts.

Presentations explored participatory urban governance, community empowerment in urban landscapes, homelessness interventions, co-design in informal settlements, and early childhood development initiatives. These discussions emphasised the importance of participatory approaches and long-term capacity building within communities.

Paper Session 2, chaired by Dr Helga Lister, explored collaborative learning initiatives aimed at bridging gaps between universities and communities. Presentations addressed topics such as digital inclusion, youth empowerment, linguistic and contextual adaptations of developmental resources, community-based developmental screening using mHealth tools, and arts-based literacy initiatives. In parallel with this session, an interactive unconference facilitated by Tania Du Plessis and Alison Gwynne-Evans created space for participants to explore how

universities, communities, and local government can move beyond outreach towards genuine co-creation and reciprocal engagement. The final session, 'Integrating learning, service, and community well-being', chaired by Dr Eugene Machimana, highlighted initiatives that connect student learning with tangible community outcomes.

Presentations included interprofessional healthcare education in low- and middle-income countries, student-led social infrastructure initiatives, community-based upskilling programmes, marketing partnerships that support local entrepreneurs, and community animal health interventions.

Across the programme, several cross-cutting themes emerged: co-creation and participatory knowledge production, the integration of student learning with community impact, urban transformation and social infrastructure development, early childhood development and youth education, health and well-being, and digital inclusion in low-resourced settings. These themes underscored the role of universities as partners in addressing complex social challenges through collaborative knowledge production.

The seminar was attended by about 100 participants, including UP staff, students, community partners, and international delegates, with 19 presentations delivered throughout the day. Many presentations were co-presented by academics, students, and community partners, reflecting UP's commitment to collaborative and reciprocal engagement practices. Beyond the formal programme, the seminar also provided valuable opportunities for networking and scholarly exchange across faculties and institutions.

In line with UP's sustainability commitments, the seminar also sought to minimise its environmental impact through the use of digital materials, vegetarian catering, and the elimination of bottled water in favour of reusable glassware and water jugs. These measures reflected the principle that responsible engagement extends beyond partnerships and pedagogy to the ways in which institutions organise and host events.

The seminar concluded with closing remarks by Dr Rejoice Nsibande, who reflected on the insights shared throughout the day and emphasised the importance of sustaining collaborative partnerships between universities, communities, and broader society. The event ultimately reinforced a shared vision of higher education that is socially responsive, collaborative, and grounded in reciprocal engagement with communities.

We would also like to express our sincere appreciation to Dr Rejoice Nsibande, the Deputy Director: Academic Development, Dr Eugene Machimana, the Head: Unit for Community Engagement, and colleagues Ms Kanye Rampa, Mr Albert Matlheketha, and Ms Londiwe Mahlangu, as well as Dr Martina Jordaan, Head: Community Engagement Research and Postgraduate Studies at the Mamelodi Campus, for their guidance and support throughout the planning and implementation of the seminar. Their contributions were instrumental in ensuring the success of the event.

Overall, the CE Seminar reinforced a shared vision of higher education that is socially responsive, collaborative, and grounded in reciprocal engagement with communities.

4. Transformative community engagement: Restorative encounters between criminology honours students and offenders

Dr Laetitia Coetzee (Senior Lecturer: Criminology, Department of Social Work and Criminology)



The KRM 710 (Crime and Criminal Justice) module in the Department of Social Work and Criminology culminates four years of criminology study, bringing theory and practice together through a community engagement project. This intent was echoed by one of the students, Ms Vuyo Xabanisa, when reflecting on her community engagement experience:

The visit was an eye-opening experience ... The main purpose of the visit was to bridge the gap between the theoretical knowledge we gain in class and the practical realities of the correctional environment.

Our first community engagement outreach took place at the Emthonjeni Youth Correctional Centre (EYCC). We were welcomed by the Head of the centre, Mr David Young, the Section Head, Mr KG Motaung, and one of the wardens, Mr Maxwell Tshabalala, who shared valuable insights into the centre's vision, mission, and challenges. Thereafter, we were given the opportunity to view the youths' living quarters before proceeding to the hall for our presentation. It was a privilege to engage with approximately 50 inmates and hear their testimonies.

Ms Vuyiswa Nhlapo encapsulates the transformative effect of this restorative encounter, drawing on a popular Zulu saying, *indlela ibuzwa kwabaphambili*, which translates to 'ask those who have walked the path; you will find knowledge there'.

One of our honours research projects highlighted that many offenders were victims of domestic and/or sexual violence either in childhood or as adults. This finding guided our decision to focus on these themes during our presentations. Based on the feedback from the young offenders, the presentation empowered them. They not only heard about the impact of domestic violence on both partners, but also learned about its profound effect on children, even if they only witnessed the abuse. Through this encounter, they came to understand that while the past cannot be undone, they can learn from mistakes and even from the trauma they have experienced. To reinforce this message of resilience and agency, we shared a quote from Carl Jung: 'I am not what happened to me; I am what I choose to become.' Our second community outreach took place at the Atteridgeville Gender Responsive Correctional Centre (AGCC).

One of the honours students, Ms Nadia Martins, organised a book drive in collaboration with the Inklings, the University of Pretoria's literary society, with the AGCC as one of the beneficiaries.

When we entered the dining hall at the centre, we were deeply moved to see it filled with women in conflict with the law who had voluntarily chosen to attend our presentation on sexual victimisation (we visited this centre the previous year and presented on domestic violence, hence the focus on sexual victimisation this year). The programme began with praise and worship, a moment so powerful it gave us goosebumps. Subsequently, Adv Masinga-Thobejane presented on the centre's achievements, highlighting its progress and resilience. One of the inmates courageously shared her personal testimony.

Her sincerity and vulnerability touched everyone in the room, and it was so heart breaking that there was not a dry eye in the hall. To instil a renewed sense of purpose, we concluded the session with the music and lyrics of 'Rise' performed by Calum Scott.

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Ms Robyn Knowles recounts:

Hearing directly from the inmates about how their socioeconomic circumstances influenced their choices gave me a deeper understanding of the factors that contribute to criminal behaviour. Some spoke about being driven by poverty, while others were motivated by greed or the pursuit of financial gain. Listening to their personal stories allowed me to see the human side of crime and reinforced the importance of understanding context when studying criminology. This experience was truly invaluable, and I am deeply grateful to everyone involved for making it possible. As a criminology student, it provided me with meaningful insight into the realities of rehabilitation and the transformative power of opportunity and support.

Our third community outreach took place at the Kgoši Mampuru Correctional Centre. The day began with a walk through the centre's museum, which offered us a glimpse into the punitive history. This was followed by a life-changing opportunity to visit the gallows, where we were confronted with the stark reality of the death penalty.

In reflecting on this experience, Ms Julia Campbell shared:

Having the opportunity to go into the museum and into the gallows was honestly life-changing. This is such a prominent part of South African history, yet much of it remains unknown. Going through the gallows

was very educational but also very difficult. Sitting where families sat and feeling the remnants of grief and pain in that little church, walking those stairs and feeling the weight of each step, seeing the ropes that hanged so many individuals...

Ms Refilwe Motha said: *The tour of the gallows was gut-wrenching, yet so educational.'*

Although only a few inmates attended our presentation on domestic violence, it was a privilege to respond to their questions and hear their feedback. We closed with 'You're the voice' performed by the Shout Trust (Artists for a Safer South Africa). Afterwards, the Area Commissioner, Mr Khoza, met with us in the museum, generously taking time to address us.

My colleagues, Ms Londiwe Mahlangu and Ms Kanye Rampa from the Community Engagement Offices, the students, and I can attest that the three community engagement events will be etched in our memories forever. The impact of these visits is best captured in the voices of the students who participated in the engagement:

Ms Juliette Garnette: *'I am grateful I was able to experience this, as I am now able to form a deeper understanding of how rehabilitation and retribution operate together.'*

Ms Khensani Rivombo:

The anxiety I had felt previously was replaced with an eagerness to make some sort of impact in the individuals' lives ... Essentially, this confirmed my passion to be involved in the criminal justice system, specifically in correctional centres focusing on the rehabilitation and reintegration of individuals in conflict with the law.

Ms Kutlwano Mangani:

As a BA Law graduate now studying criminology, I have learned that while the legal system can make us view crime in a black-and-white way, criminology teaches us to look beyond the offence and understand the human and social context behind it. This project strengthened my belief that while not every offender can be rehabilitated, many can, if society gives them a real chance. Overall, this project was meaningful and transformative.

Ms Luyanda Phethile Fakude:

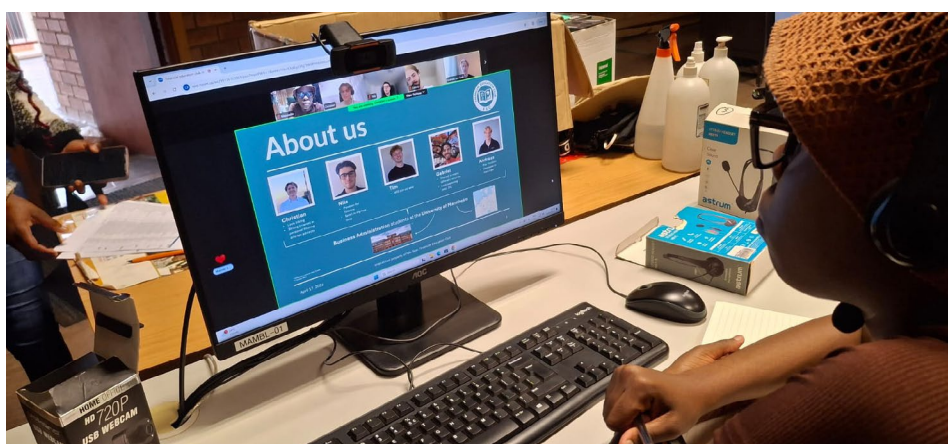
Being part of the community engagement has been transformative. I also felt incredibly connected to my classmates. The bus rides, the laughter, the shared nerves and reflections—all of it created a bond that feels unbreakable... Many students complete their degrees without ever seeing the realities we've seen, the real and human side of criminology.

We extend our heartfelt thanks to all the DCS role-players for granting us the opportunity to visit the facilities and engage with the inmates. As Nicole said, 'I am thankful for the opportunity to have visited and presented at the centres. I gained insight but also had my own preconceptions challenged.'

We also commend the DCS staff on the remarkable job they are doing, not only in incarcerating offenders, but also in their tireless efforts to rehabilitate and redirect offenders towards more positive trajectories. Their commitment to balancing justice with humanity inspires us to continue bridging academic knowledge with practice, always striving to empower and transform.

5. Bridging the digital divide through collaborative ecosystems in Mamelodi

Dr Martina Jordaan (Head: Community Engagement Research and Postgraduate Studies, Mamelodi Campus, University of Pretoria) and Mrs Lorraine Makena (Senior Management Assistant: Head: Community Engagement Research and Postgraduate Studies, Mamelodi Campus, University of Pretoria)



The computer training initiatives at the University of Pretoria's Mamelodi Campus represent a vital intersection between higher education and community empowerment. Historically designed to serve a township with limited access to high-end technology, the campus has evolved into a digital sanctuary where residents of all ages can gain essential 21st-century skills. By leveraging the expertise of University staff, student volunteers, and industry partners, the campus offers a structured pathway from basic computer literacy to advanced technical applications, ensuring that the digital revolution is inclusive and accessible to the surrounding community.

At the foundational level, the campus hosts comprehensive computer literacy programmes that cater to a remarkably diverse demographic, including job-seeking youth and senior citizens.

These courses move beyond theoretical knowledge, providing hands-on instruction in the Microsoft Office suite, with a particular focus on Word and Excel. Participants are taught to navigate the Windows operating system, manage digital files, and master professional email communication.

For many in the Mamelodi community, these sessions are their first formal introduction to

computing, serving as a critical first step in overcoming 'technophobia' and gaining the confidence required to participate in the modern digital economy.

Building on these basic skills, the Mamelodi Campus has expanded its curriculum to focus on specialised employability and entrepreneurial tools. Workshops now include digital branding through platforms like Canva, where local small business owners learn to create their own marketing collateral, and LinkedIn training to help job seekers build professional online identities.

Furthermore, the campus facilitates unique 'Digital storytelling' projects in collaboration with the Historical Society of Mamelodi. In these sessions, residents are trained to use cloud-based media tools to document and digitise local history, ensuring that the community's cultural heritage is preserved in a format that can be shared globally.

The campus also serves as a site for high-level international collaboration, bringing global technological trends to a local context. Through partnerships with institutions like the University of Konstanz and the University of Mannheim, the Mamelodi Campus has hosted workshops on digital financial literacy and social media awareness.

By fostering these global connections and providing practical, localised training, the University of Pretoria's Mamelodi Campus is effectively bridging the digital divide and fostering a culture of lifelong learning.

6. Production Animal Mobile (PAM) Clinic

Dr Maxine Breytenbach (Lecturer: Community Engagement,
Faculty of Veterinary Science, Onderstepoort Campus, University of Pretoria)



The Production Animal Mobile (PAM) Outreach Clinic is an integral part of the curricular community engagement programme for veterinary students. Over the course of their 18-month clinical training, each student travels once or twice to the communities of Ratjespane, Makapanstad, and their surrounding villages in a fully equipped mobile clinic. The PAM Clinic works alongside and through local tribal authorities to promote and improve animal health and welfare.

Farm visits entail treating sick animals and advising on herd management using a holistic health approach (encompassing nutrition, welfare, and preventative medicine), all with the goal of increasing the animals' value and productivity to benefit their human partners. Meanwhile,

companion animal care focuses on primary healthcare, vaccination, deworming, nutrition, welfare, the human-animal bond, and population control.

Students treat and provide advice on a diverse range of animals, from geese and kittens to mules and prize village breeding bulls. They also assist in formulating information sheets for distribution on livestock vaccination, supplemental feeding, pet sterilisation, and the control of diseases such as rabies, distemper, and transmissible venereal tumours.

Through these interactions, students learn to engage with community members and provide practical solutions within local means, ultimately improving the lives of both the animals and the residents. We have seen a remarkable shift in how

village residents view their animals. Weekly requests for vaccinations and parasite control have risen as the community experiences the benefits of preventative medicine. Spin-offs from the PAM Clinic include the implementation of a dog and cat sterilisation project and livestock vaccination days.

The impact of the mobile clinic is incredibly rewarding; the number of animals treated grows every week as the community increasingly recognises the importance of investing in animal health. Both clinicians and students find it an enriching educational experience.

As one final-year student noted:
Our job does not get much better than sitting under a tree with a village elder discussing the communal herds and chatting about life in general.

7. Bridging heritage and innovation: The evolution of EFK 758 at the University of Pretoria

Mr Hannes Engelbrecht (Lecturer: Department of History, Heritage and Cultural Tourism), Dr Charlene Herselman (Lecturer: Department of History, Heritage and Cultural Tourism), Dr Martina Jordaan (Head: Community Engagement Research and Postgraduate Studies, Mamelodi Campus, University of Pretoria), Rev Chris Nkomo (Historical Society of Mamelodi), and Mr Mfana Mathibela (Historical Society of Mamelodi)



In the rapidly shifting landscape of global travel, the management of heritage and cultural tourism is no longer just about preserving the past; it is about navigating the future. At the University of Pretoria, the Managing Tourism (EFK 758) honours module in the Department of History, Heritage and Cultural Tourism, previously the Department of Historical and Heritage Studies, stands as a flagship for this evolution.

By intertwining technology-enhanced teaching, research-led instruction, and community engagement, the module creates a transformative educational ecosystem that prepares students to be more than just graduates; it also prepares them to be ethical future leaders. The module was established in the early 2000s to promote a more socially conscious and anthropological perspective on tourism; however, it has undergone significant changes over the years.

Most recently, in 2022, Mr Hannes Engelbrecht, in collaboration with Prof Berendien Lubbe, Dr Martina Jordaan, Rev Chris Nkomo, and Mr Mfana Mathibela, spearheaded the redevelopment of the module to include a curricular community engagement component that involved the active participation of community members of Mamelodi in the research and digitisation of the community's history and heritage. Dr Charlene Herselman joined the teaching team in 2024 and has since further developed module content and added AI activities.

These changes added a transdisciplinary layer to the module. As a teaching approach, this develops an often-neglected competency within broader human development: civic responsibility. This is also particularly relevant to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goal 11 (Sustainable Cities and

Communities) in that it aims to guide student thinking towards the development of heritage and tourism in the service of the community in an inclusive and transformed way, which asks questions first before imposing a potential solution.

EFK 758 is a collaborative effort that includes multiple stakeholders in projects to reimagine teaching and learning hierarchies by incorporating many forms of knowledge and knowing. The teaching philosophy centres on the principles of practical, active, experiential, and enquiry-based learning, integrated with the transformation of the teaching and learning environment into a collaborative space where students, communities, businesses, and teachers act as co-creators of knowledge. The involvement of community members through the Historical Society of Mamelodi is integrated into the functioning of the module, and they act in various roles, including as teachers, assessors, guides, liaisons, and co-researchers in research activities.

At the heart of EFK 758 is the University of Pretoria's commitment to research-led teaching. This approach ensures that the curriculum is never static; it is constantly informed by the latest findings from students who are not just consumers of knowledge but junior researchers conducting their own research through site visits, community interviews, and archival

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work. This 'teaching through research' approach develops a high level of critical thinking, allowing students to analyse the construction of identity and the responsible use of heritage as a tourism resource.

The primary objective of EFK 758 is to dissect the complexities of tourism and heritage resource management through the lens of economic, cultural, and environmental sustainability. In a world where 'over-tourism' and cultural homogenisation threaten local identities, this module serves as a critical laboratory.

It challenges students to move beyond the theoretical and engage with the real-world tensions in the heritage and tourism sectors, ensuring that heritage remains a living, breathing asset for South Africa. Perhaps the most unique feature of EFK 758 is its commitment to the 'third mission' of higher education: community engagement. The module transforms students into consultants for local community partners, ensuring a human-centric design. By working directly with communities, students learn the ethical nuances of cultural representation, ensuring that tourism development empowers rather than exploits local populations.

One of the core projects requires students to assist community partners in Mamelodi by producing and publishing ArcGIS StoryMaps that document and highlight often neglected local histories on a digital platform. These StoryMaps relate

to a theme or topic that connects their chosen heritage site to a larger heritage landscape and potential tourism route, informed by current scholarly and industry-specific approaches to heritage landscape and tourism route development, and guided by community needs.

This approach recognises that heritage resources or tourism attraction features rarely exist in a vacuum and are shaped by the processes and products of larger socio-political, economic, and environmental contexts. Additionally, students conduct interviews that reflect on community perspectives of heritage production, reproduction, and meaning-making. Community partners act as intermediaries, liaising with other local community members who can share specialised local and indigenous knowledge on heritage-related topics, including education, art, music, spiritual life, politics, and the natural environment. The ArcGIS StoryMaps are available on the [website](#) of the Historical Society.

The collaborative work by students, lecturers, and community members has been showcased in academic publications, national and international conferences, and other public platforms, including [news articles](#), the [Talloires Network](#) and [UP's community engagement newsletters](#). It has also culminated in several contributions to online teaching and learning resources and the final output of the SUCSESS project: ['SUCSESS' Project digital](#)

[handbook: A practical guide for teaching & learning, published in May 2023](#). Ultimately, the 2024 publication of a chapter entitled '[Mapping memories and making meaning: Community-engaged heritage studies and research](#)' in the Routledge anthology entitled *Museum studies in a post-pandemic world* was based on the EFK 758 module.

Students, lecturers, and community members have found this an extremely rewarding process, leading to skills development for the students and empowerment for community participants. The revision and community engagement elements of EFK 758 have significantly improved the teaching and learning environment with continuous innovation sparked by teacher reflections, community and student involvement, and a flexible, engaging learning environment that continuously refines teaching practice.

Students often reflect positively on their experiences, and some have even been inspired to continue their postgraduate research on related topics. The convergence of teaching, learning, research, and community engagement creates a unique value proposition for students.

Those who complete the module emerge with a diverse toolkit of skills and competencies, including adaptability, problem-solving, digital literacy, critical thinking, empathy, practical experience, and research skills.

EFK 758 at the University of Pretoria is the co-winner of the 2025/6 Community Engagement Award and a testament to what modern higher education should be: a blend of high-tech innovation, deep academic inquiry, and grassroots social responsibility. It does not merely teach heritage and tourism; it redefines them, ensuring that the next generation of managers is equipped to protect our past while pioneering our future.

8. Moja Gabedi beekeeping project

Miss Kamvelihle Mapundu (Mastercard Foundation Scholar, Second year MA Diplomatic Studies)

In 2025, I discovered the Moja Gabedi Community Engagement Hub for the first time. I visited the site following an invitation from the Mastercard Foundation Scholars Program at the University of Pretoria (UP), and I had no idea what I was walking into. I remember being both surprised and pleased to find that such a serene space existed in the midst of Hatfield's bustle.

It was on our second visit that Mr Lennox Wasara told us about the two projects the foundation was partnering with Moja Gabedi on, and he asked for volunteers to lead the crop production team and the beekeeping group. Having spent years in student leadership at high school and university, I had promised myself that I would commit to getting to know myself outside of leadership. However, following Lennox's request for volunteers, my hand shot up, and just like that, I was once again leading something.

After deciding to volunteer, I reflected on what it meant to lead and on being worthy of being called a leader. For me, effective leaders lead from the back and always follow through on commitments, no matter what. I underestimated what I was undertaking as I did not have prior experience in beekeeping. I had no clue what I was supposed to do to make the project a success, except that I wanted it to be successful. My 32-person team's lack of beekeeping knowledge meant we had to rely heavily on the guidance of the Moja Gabedi staff, especially Mr Innocent Chauke and Mr Pontsho Masele. Initially, it was challenging. However, I appreciated how responsive they were to our need for knowledge and guidance as we engaged with the bees. Mr Chauke and Mr Masele invested a lot of time teaching. Mr Masele provided practical lessons



in beekeeping in his spare time, explaining the components that make up a hive, what bees can be found in South Africa, and the roles different bees play within a colony. These lessons were supplemented with readings shared from a copy of *Beekeeping in South Africa* by MF Johannsmeier and YouTube videos. The first six months were disappointingly unsuccessful; we constantly faced challenges, with bees abandoning the hives, ants and moths invading the boxes, scholars losing enthusiasm due to various constraints, and the lack of tangible results despite the effort put into maintaining the hives. After seven months, I decided to continue encouraging scholars to visit the site and conduct the necessary inspections. However, it was equally important that I fill the gaps where the project needed to move forward and where other members of the group were unable to do so. I began reading voraciously about bees and beekeeping, leaning on Mr Masele's guidance and visiting the site after hours to ensure the bees did not disrupt other activities within and around the site.

By being more present at Moja Gabedi, I began to appreciate the knowledge sharing that happens when people engage in casual but intentional

conversations. I learned how to come up with creative solutions when the resources needed to move a project forward were not readily available and to persevere when there was no visible evidence of our efforts. We continued to work diligently despite the lack of apparent progress.

In February 2026, almost a year after joining the beekeeping project at Moja Gabedi, we harvested close to 10 kg of raw honey. This may seem like an insignificant amount, but it is worth its weight in gold for everyone who contributed time and effort to the project. None of this would have been possible without the assistance of Mr Chauke and Mr Masele, who, without ever complaining, always opened the gates to Moja Gabedi after hours so we could open the hives for cleaning and other maintenance, brainstormed with us when we got stuck, and went as far as reaching out to their network when we needed processing equipment after harvesting the honey. As I wrap up my time at the UP, I leave the University with not only a qualification in diplomacy but also a deep appreciation for community engagement and youth leadership, as well as practical knowledge of beekeeping, feeling confident that I could go out into the world and start my own honey business.

9. The Centre for Faith and Community celebrates the Feast of the Clowns

Mr Lance Thomas (Project Manager: Centre for Faith and Community,
Faculty of Theology and Religion)



The Feast of the Clowns (FOTC) marked its 25th anniversary in 2025. What started as a small street festival has evolved into a major annual event attracting nearly 6 000 participants celebrating a journey that began in 2000. Prof Flavia Senkuguge, Dean of Health Sciences, Prof Juen Serem and Prof Yvette Hlophe of Health, Mr Lance Thomas of the Centre for Faith and Community in the Faculty of Theology and Religion, and Prof Stephan de Beer, Director of the Centre for Faith and Community, were joined by the Tshwane Leadership Foundation (TLF), an inner-city, faith-based non-profit organisation (NPO) that seeks to create pathways out of homelessness for some of the City of Tshwane's most vulnerable people.

The festival remains centred in Burgers Park, Tshwane, where it celebrates the city's diversity and advocates for social justice.

For the past few years, the Centre for Faith and Community has managed the project alongside other inner-city partners.

The theme for the 2025 FOTC was '#JustTables', which evolved from the 2024 theme, 'Come to the table'. It challenged participants to consider whether the 'tables' created in society, representing access to housing, healthcare, education, and employment, are inclusive and just or exclusionary.

The theme encouraged the creation of new, transformative tables while 'turning over' those that dehumanise.

The objectives of the FOTC are to:

- **celebrate the city:** to counter negative narratives that the inner city is dangerous by showcasing its beauty, hope, and resilience;
- **playfully protest:** using the 'clown' or 'jester' of the medieval period as a prophetic voice to speak truth to power and engage with injustice through non-violent, creative, and playful protest;
- **build community from below:** breaking social boundaries through collective action and celebration to transform society by bringing people from various backgrounds to celebrate the city; and
- **promote socially conscious art:** providing a platform for emerging local artists to use their craft to address social ills.

Key activities and participation

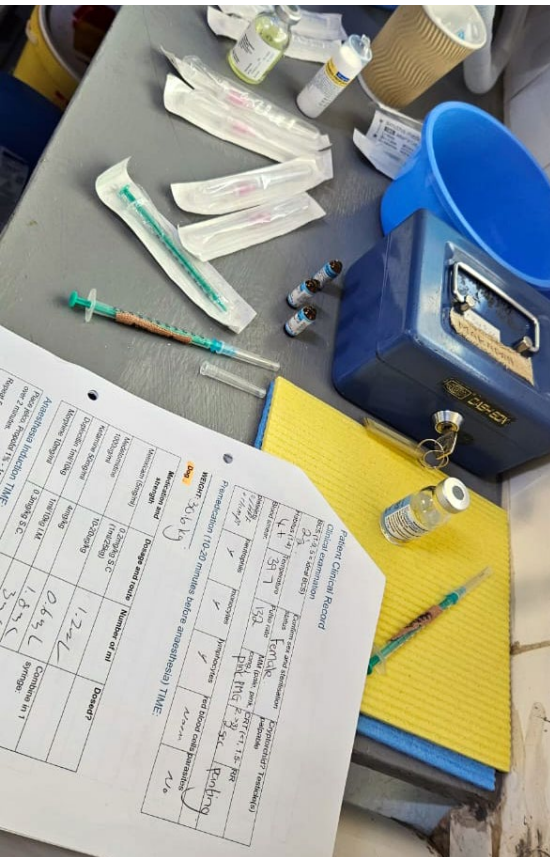
- **Workshops:** A series of 33 interactive workshops attracted over 1 000 participants. These sessions addressed topics such as homelessness, refugees, gender-based violence, and environmental justice and were run as the community engagement projects of various CE programmes at the University of Pretoria. Workshops were facilitated by staff and students from UP's Centre for Faith and Community, the Unit for Street Homelessness, the Faculty of Theology and Religion, the Faculty of Health Sciences, the Centre for Sexualities, AIDS and Gender, the Javett Art Centre, and UP's School of the Arts.
- **Mamelodi Expo:** Held at the University of Pretoria's Mamelodi Campus, the expo seeks to bring together UP's postgraduate researchers and non-profits working in the community of Mamelodi. It launched the two weeks of workshops leading up to the FOTC and drew approximately 500 people.
- **Main feast day:** The festival culminated on 30 August 2025, with over 4 500 people participating in the 'March of the clowns', a free music concert with arts and educational exhibits.

Partnerships and implementation:

The FOTC is a collaborative effort involving TLF and formal partners, including the University of Pretoria (Centre for Faith and Community), the University of South Africa (Unisa) (Chance 2 Advance), Lawyers for Human Rights, and the Thandanani Drop-In Centre.

10. Hammanskraal-Moretele dog and cat sterilisation project

Dr Maxine Breytenbach (Community Engagement Lecturer:
Faculty of Veterinary Science, Onderstepoort Campus, University of Pretoria)



to undermine these efforts. With the assistance of Faculty members and veterinary students from the Onderstepoort Campus, the pet sterilisation project was officially launched in October 2025. Regular sterilisation days are now held and are typically fully booked weeks in advance. The dedicated support and hard work of both staff and students have been vital to keeping the project running smoothly.

The Hammanskraal-Moretele (HM) Sterilisation Project was established in response to an urgent need for dog and cat sterilisations within the greater communities of Hammanskraal (Tshwane Municipality, Gauteng) and Moretele (Moretele Municipality, North West). This large pet population consists of both owned and community dogs and cats. Unwanted litters and diseases negatively impact animal welfare and carry significant public health implications for these areas. There is also a major concern that without population control, a rabies outbreak is imminent. While rabies is currently well managed in these regions through yearly vaccination and awareness campaigns, a rapidly growing dog population threatens

Words truly cannot express our gratitude for the ongoing financial support and donations that make the sterilisation days possible. We would like to extend our heartfelt thanks to:

- **#Let's Spay SA** for their ongoing generosity in subsidising client fees. In many instances, their support enables us to offer fully subsidised procedures to pet owners facing severe financial difficulties.
- **Zoetis** for their exceptionally generous sponsorship of anaesthetic and pain-relieving medications for our patients.
- **F10 South Africa** for providing their excellent range of products, and to Sister Linda Muller from F10 for attending the campaigns and providing indispensable

organisational, administrative, and technical support.

- **MSD** for donating Bravecto tablets and Spot On treatments, keeping our patients safe from external parasites.
- **Professional Linens** for a large donation of surgical drapes, which were skilfully altered and sewn by Sister Cornelia Hanekom to suit patients of all sizes.
- **Kyron Laboratories** for donating two brand-new spay sets, sterilising fluid, and ointments. Having access to our own top-tier equipment brings an immense sense of pride and joy to our daily work.
- **SAVA CVC** for providing this and other community veterinary clinics with structure and support.

Every donation, large or small, has a profound impact—not only on the lives of the animals receiving care but also on the individuals who work tirelessly to organise and run the sterilisation days. The gratitude from pet owners is overwhelming, while the confidence and skills of participating students grow exponentially as they have the opportunity to practise high-quality veterinary care.

11. Cultivating hope: Mastercard Foundation Scholars uplift students through sustainable agriculture

Ms Zanele Valencia Ntshangana (Second-year student: LLM Mercantile Law) and Mr Lesedi Diphofa (Second-year student: MScAgric in Animal Breeding and Genetics)



The Mastercard Foundation Scholars Program (MFSP) at the University of Pretoria (UP) continues to advance its mission of developing transformative leaders through practical, community-driven initiatives. Guided by the belief that education is a catalyst for social and economic transformation, the programme equips scholars with the knowledge and leadership skills needed to uplift and strengthen their communities.

This vision has been brought to life at the Moja Gabedi community engagement hub in Hatfield, Pretoria, where Mastercard Foundation scholars have dedicated their time to growing and harvesting fresh, organic produce to support fellow students in need.

Moja Gabedi, meaning “one who eats twice a day” in Setswana/Sepedi, embodies the principles of nourishment and dignity. Although the United Nations recognises food as a universal human right, many students continue to experience food insecurity, often driven by financial constraints that limit their access

to nutritious meals. The MFSP Crop Production Project at Moja Gabedi, in partnership with the Student Nutrition and Progress Programme (SNAPP), seeks to address this pressing issue through sustainable agriculture and community engagement. The initiative, led by MFSP crop production leaders Mr Sakhwiwo Sukati and Ms Lesedi Diphofa, is supported by a committed team of scholars, including Ms Zanele Ntshangana, Ms Anna Tendenedzai, Ms Clara Mensah, and Mr Lucky Masemola. Under the mentorship of Mr Innocent Chauke and Mr Pontsho Masele, the team successfully cultivated a variety of vegetables, including spinach, carrots, onions, cabbage, and lettuce, using organic and environmentally sustainable farming practices.

These crops are donated to SNAPP, a University initiative that provides food parcels to students experiencing food insecurity. The first donation took place in July 2025, during which 44 bunches of carrots were delivered. Subsequent contributions were made in September 2025, consisting of 39 bunches of carrots, 30 bunches of spinach, 10 cabbages, and 47

lettuces. A further donation followed in October 2025, consisting of 44 cabbages and 32 bunches of spinach. More recently, in February 2026, 61 packages containing onions and green bell peppers were also donated to SNAPP. Each harvest stands as a testament to collaboration, compassion, and the Mastercard Foundation Scholars Program’s commitment to inclusive progress.

Rooted in the spirit of Ubuntu, the belief in shared humanity and mutual care, this initiative demonstrates that giving back extends beyond charity. It is about fostering community resilience and ensuring that no student is left behind. For the Mastercard Foundation scholars involved, the experience has not only strengthened their leadership capabilities but also deepened their understanding of sustainable development and social responsibility. The partnership between the MFSP, UP, and SNAPP exemplifies how education, innovation, and compassion can converge to make a meaningful and lasting impact. Together, we are making a difference one vegetable at a time.

12. Stories and seeds—growing young minds: ECD reading and garden activity at Moja Gabedi

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 Department of Library Services (DLS), through its community engagement (CE) portfolio, recently hosted an early childhood development (ECD) reading and garden-based learning activity titled 'Stories and seeds: Growing young minds'. Held on 13 November 2025 at the Moja Gabedi Community Engagement Hub, the initiative formed part of the University of Pretoria's (UP's) ongoing commitment to promoting literacy, environmental awareness, and meaningful University-community partnerships. This outreach was conducted in collaboration with Reggae Pre-School and Day Care, whose leadership attended the programme together with three community members and an enthusiastic group of Grade R learners.



donated heads of cabbage for the ECD learners to take home, reinforcing themes of healthy food choices and community sharing.

The purpose of the project was to support early reading development, introduce basic information literacy, and encourage environmental learning through interactive, hands-on garden experiences. The programme opened with welcoming remarks that emphasised the importance of integrating education and community participation within the Moja Gabedi garden space.

The reading session featured *The very hungry caterpillar* by Eric Carle, delivered in an engaging and interactive manner. The story was linked to themes of healthy eating, the life cycle of living things, and the value of fruits and vegetables. The children were actively involved, counting along, responding to questions, and interacting with the

colourful illustrations. Following the reading, the group moved outdoors for the garden-based learning component, where they explored real fruits and vegetables as part of a sensory learning experience. It helped bridge the gap between literacy and environmental understanding. A hands-on planting activity was the highlight of the day, with each learner planting a seed in a container filled with soil and manure.

This activity introduced them to key concepts such as watering, sunlight, and care, fundamental elements that support plant growth. The learners expressed pride and excitement as they took home their small 'garden projects'. The programme was further enriched by a generous contribution from a UP Mastercard scholar, who

This CE project has strengthened the relationship between the Department of Library Services and the Moja Gabedi Community Engagement Hub, demonstrating UP's continued commitment to fostering early childhood development, collaboration, and community engagement. The University and its community partners both benefited from shared learning and strengthened connections. Combining literacy promotion with environmental education, the project had a meaningful impact on the children and educators who participated. It highlighted the value of integrating reading with practical learning and demonstrated the strength of University-community partnerships. Moving forward, the CE team hopes to expand similar initiatives, together with Moja Gabedi, to ensure that more young minds can grow through stories, creativity, and nature.

13. Doing, being, and becoming: How COSUP enables occupational identity development

Miss Jana Muller and Miss Nthabiseng Nkosi (Fourth-year occupational therapy students),
Mrs Marike Smit (Student supervisor: Occupational therapy)

The Community Oriented Substance Use Programme (COSUP) is a harm-reduction programme that focuses on decreasing health-related risks and meets substance users where they are on their journey.

Many substance users experience occupational deficit, the inability to participate in primary occupations, resulting in a loss of their occupational balance and identity. The authors interviewed Ms M (41), Ms S (33), and Mr N (34) to get a glimpse into their transformative journeys as COSUP clients.

Ms M shared that substance use pushed her into 'survival mode', where simply getting through each day became the priority. It took a challenging hospital stay to finally drive her towards seeking help at COSUP a decade ago. Now, she serves as a peer mentor and plans to study forensic psychology. She explained that COSUP helped her find a community and 'let me redefine my purpose without any judgement'.

Ms S became a COSUP client after her boyfriend, also a client, encouraged her to seek support. At the time of the interview, she proudly shared that she was 'nine months substance-free'. She recalled the difficult decisions she had to make along the way, including letting go of unhealthy friendships and leaving familiar places that 'kept pulling her back into old habits'.



She has since joined a book club and is currently awaiting feedback from several job applications.

She keeps motivated by remembering a quote: 'Do not let your circumstances and addiction define who you are.' Mr N became a COSUP client after being referred by a healthcare clinic.

During the interview, he shared that he could not remember things he used to enjoy. He explained that substance use had taken over many areas of his life, including routines, relationships, and his sense of purpose. When asked how he feels about himself now compared to before, he simply said that he feels 'more hopeful'. All three clients' stories showed



that they are in the process of reconstructing their occupational identity. They shared a glimpse of who they were, who they are, and who they are becoming as occupational beings.

Ms M is stepping into the mentor role she always wanted, Ms S is learning to choose her own surroundings, and Mr N can picture a different version of himself for the first time in a long time.

Occupational therapy, through COSUP, engaged them in the process of doing by rediscovering meaningful activities, being by becoming part of a supportive community, and becoming by actively working towards new goals.

14. Reading Day

Ms Kabuba Masule (Student: Department of Speech-Language Pathology and Audiology) and Prof Mia le Roux (Professor: Department of Speech-Language Pathology and Audiology)



Mason Cooley wrote, *'Reading gives us some place to go when we have to stay where we are'.*

According to the Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS) reports, South Africa ranked last among participating countries in literacy performance. For many, this statistic is a disheartening, vivid real-world challenge. While collecting data for her PhD research, Prof Mia Le Roux encountered Grade 3 learners who were unable to read an English word list designed for Grade 1. Her PhD study focused on phonological awareness and early literacy skills among English second-language learners, revealing that targeted support in foundational literacy, such as phonological awareness, significantly enhances reading and spelling development.

Since 2019, Prof Le Roux has been building bridges of support and collaboration with organisations such as the World Literacy Foundation (WLF) and Sun Books, which share a mission to improve literacy outcomes in South Africa. Together with Dr Carmen Milton and Prof Salome Geertsema, they have initiated an impactful and delightful initiative, Reading Days. Reading Days are hosted annually at schools involved in their research across Gauteng.

Reading Days are more than events; they are a celebration that brings together children, teachers, and university students under the adventure of stories. Each year, first-year students from the Department of Speech-Language Pathology and Audiology volunteer their creativity and passion for the project.

They select age-appropriate storybooks and create fun, educational activities to embed into shared book reading, inspired by their chosen stories. Under the guidance of Prof Le Roux, Prof Geertsema, Dr Milton, and selected master's students, who are part of the Reading Day team, the students bring these stories to life. This year, the team included Ms Kabuba Masule, a master's student in the Department of Speech-Language Pathology and Audiology, who is doing her master's degree under the supervision of these staff members.

Ms Masule worked closely with these preschools as part of her research and organised the Reading Day, which included all the preschools involved in her research activities. The aim is to give back to the community that was involved in the research process.

For Reading Day activities, learners are divided into small groups, where they interactively read together and create crafts, such as a woolly sheep, based on a story like 'Sheep in a Jeep'.

An educational activity focusing on an aspect of phonological awareness is included, for example, phonemic awareness, which refers to the understanding of individual sounds.

The learners demonstrate their awareness of these sounds by clapping out and identifying the first, middle, and final sounds of a word from the story, which the student vocalises.

The atmosphere is joyful as the students arrive dressed as characters from their stories. The learners are also welcome to dress up in simple, affordable costumes, such as paper masks, tissue-paper skirts, or artwork created during the activities. In circumstances where schools lack materials, the students joyfully collect and provide them. No child is left out of the adventure. In 2025, this journey expanded in response to a request from a principal in Eersterust for

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additional literacy support. Ms Masule conducted her master's study at five preschools, piloting an instructional programme in phonological and phonemic awareness adapted from established research.

Alongside the study, a book and toy drive ran from February to October 2025. This initiative blossomed far beyond what was expected. Hundreds of books and toys were collected and donated to the participating schools. At the end of the study, a 'grand' Reading Day was held for all five

preschools. On this day, the teachers received the instructional programme, activity-stimulus materials, books, and hands-on training.

The goal was to help teachers seamlessly integrate phonological and phonemic awareness strategies into their daily shared reading time, as outlined in the Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS). These foundational skills are essential building blocks for reading and writing skills that lead to later academic success.

In our experience, the annual Reading Days are a highlight for everyone involved.

The learners giggle as they wear their masks, the teachers celebrate, the students discover their passion and gain confidence, and the stories find new homes in eager little hearts.

Despite the challenges South Africa faces in literacy, these joyful days remind us of a simple truth: Literacy enhancement through reading is a transformative skill!

15. University of Pretoria donation creates lasting impact at Pheladi Nakene Primary School

Mrs Mpho Maseko (Principal: Pheladi Nakene Primary School)

The University of Pretoria (UP), through the Unit for Community Engagement in its Department for Education Innovation, made a generous donation to Pheladi Nakene Primary School in Mamelodi West, Pretoria. A public school designated as Quintile 3, Pheladi Nakene caters to a learner population of 460 in grades R through 7.

The donation, which consisted of two desktop computers, 16 tables, and 20 chairs, enhanced the school's educational infrastructure.

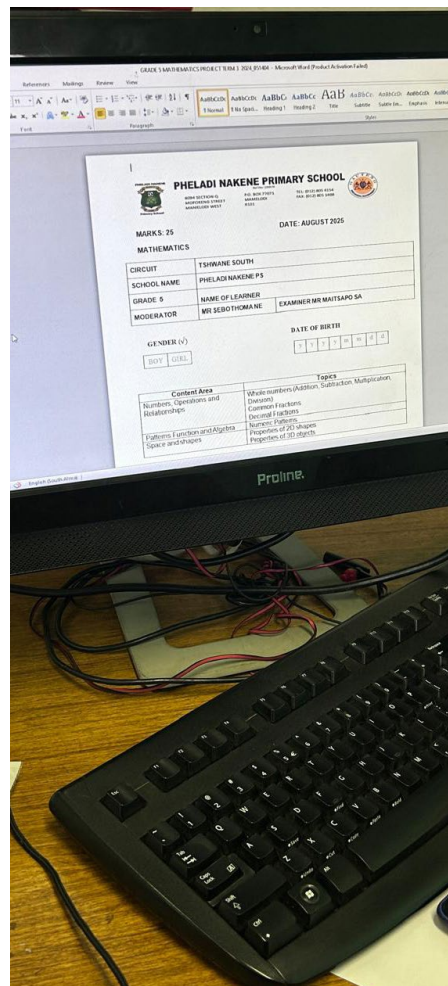
The resources are expected to benefit learners and significantly improve the learning environment.

The principal, Mrs Mpho Maseko, as well as the staff, expressed their gratitude to the Unit for Community Engagement for making this contribution possible, stating that the donation will make a substantial difference in the school's ability to provide quality education.



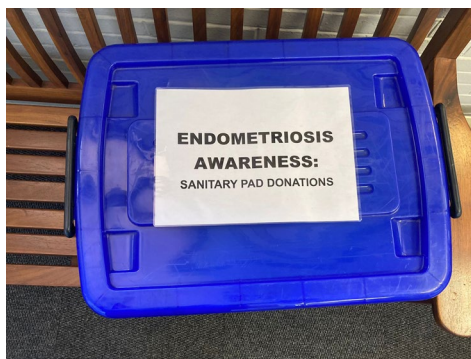
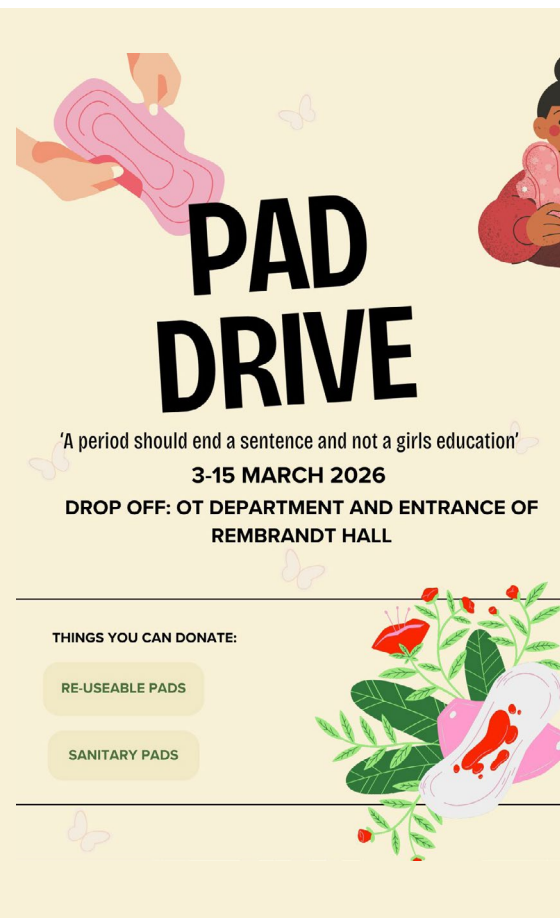
This gesture underscores UP's commitment to community engagement and dedication to supporting local schools.

Pheladi Nakene Primary School looks forward to strengthening its relationship with UP to foster academic excellence and community development.



16. Breaking the cycle of period poverty: How the University of Pretoria's student-led pad drive is making a difference in the lives of young girls in South Africa

Ms Natasha Da Luz and Ms Mishka Gani (Final-year occupational therapy students, Faculty of Health Sciences)



due to pain or fear of leakage because of unreliable sanitary products, such as old pieces of clothing, rags, or tissue paper (Pitsoe, 2023). As a result, these girls often experience stress, social isolation, a loss of dignity, and even urinary infections (Jaafar et al, 2023).

In addition, school absence negatively impacts their future opportunities (Booyzen, 2024), resulting in many of these young girls becoming trapped in a cycle of poverty.

According to statistics from UN Women, approximately 7 million girls in South Africa cannot afford basic menstrual products (Jacobs, 2025), despite the elimination of VAT on all menstrual products in South Africa in 2019. In a household, costs are usually budgeted for essentials such as food or electricity.

Thus, for those who are just able to meet their basic needs, affording menstrual products is increasingly difficult. While there are reusable solutions, they are often very expensive and thus still unaffordable in under-resourced homes and communities (Jacobs, 2025).

As a result, girls often resort to the use of unsafe products, resulting in health issues like urinary-tract infections (Jaafar et al., 2023). In line with this, initiatives such as the University of

Pretoria's pad drive, run by the House OT students, actively collect sanitary products and distribute them to a school in Mamelodi, thereby helping to improve school attendance among young women and reduce the barriers caused by period poverty (Mariri, 2025).

Stigma also plays a significant role in the daily struggles of young girls (Jacobs, 2025). Even in schools where menstrual products are accessible, many girls feel shame due to stigma. Beyond providing menstrual products, the University of Pretoria's pad drive also aims to address the stigma regarding menstruation.

By encouraging students and the broader community to be part of the solution, whether by donating pads, spreading the word on social media, or having open conversations about periods, this initiative helps normalise menstruation as a natural process rather than something to be ashamed of (Mariri, 2025).

Period poverty is a serious issue that affects the education, health, and future opportunities of young girls. However, initiatives like these show that collective action can make a difference in society.

By coming together to provide access to menstrual products and reducing stigma, we can help ensure that no woman is stripped of her dignity due to a natural bodily function. Greater awareness, support, and efforts like these are essential to breaking the cycle of period poverty and honouring young women by improving their quality of life.

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17. From othering to understanding: Lessons from Prinshof School

Prof Raïta Steyn (Lecturer: Department of Humanities Education),

Ms Valencia Sekgobela and Ms Mpho Tlhatlha (Students: Department of Humanities Education)



A visit to Prinshof School formed part of the ongoing project 'We and the other', which explores the theme of challenging vision in the visual arts. Led by Prof Raïta Steyn from the Department of Humanities Education, the project brings together students, educators, and researchers to critically examine how visual art education can become more inclusive, particularly for those who experience the world differently due to visual impairments. Through experiential learning, reflective practice, and creative engagement, the project seeks to

question traditional assumptions about 'seeing' and 'visuality' in art. It encourages participants to expand their understanding of perception, expression, and accessibility, ultimately aiming to transform visual arts education into a space where all learners, regardless of ability, are seen, heard, and valued.

Below are two student accounts reflecting on their experiences at Prinshof School for the Visually Impaired.

Ms Valencia Sekgobela

During my visit to Prinshof School for the Visually Impaired, I had the opportunity to experience a simulation in which one person was blindfolded and another acted as a guide. This activity offered powerful insight into what it means to be 'othered', to feel excluded or different based on ability. Being blindfolded made me feel disoriented and vulnerable at first. I had to rely entirely on my partner, and this created both a sense of anxiety and trust. I noticed that many participants became quiet,

more cautious and hesitant. After the activity, there was a noticeable shift in our behaviour: we communicated more thoughtfully and expressed more empathy towards the visually impaired learners.

These immediate emotional responses, nervousness, dependence, and increased awareness, helped us better understand the challenges visually impaired learners face daily. It created a space where we could reflect on our own privileges and realise how much we take vision and autonomy for granted. The activity helped dissolve stereotypes and revealed the strength, independence, and resilience of the learners we met.

The educational outcomes of these activities were significant. By entering the world of a visually impaired person, even briefly, we gained a deeper appreciation for inclusive teaching methods. We saw that learners with visual impairments are capable of participating fully in their education

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when given appropriate support. Observing how they read Braille, use tactile resources, and navigate their environment independently helped dismantle the myth that disabilities equate to inability.

To create classrooms where no learner feels othered, educators must adopt inclusive strategies that affirm every learner's identity and ability.

This includes differentiated instruction, the use of assistive technologies, and the encouragement of collaborative group work that values each learner's contribution. Educators should also challenge discriminatory language, foster a culture of respect, and provide opportunities for learners to share their unique experiences.

My teaching philosophy is grounded in inclusivity and empathy. I believe that every learner, regardless of background, ability, or identity, deserves to feel valued and supported.

My aim is to create a classroom environment where learners feel safe expressing themselves and taking risks in learning. I strive to use both teacher- and learner-centred approaches, combining structure with flexibility.

For me, inclusivity means more than just adapting content; it's about creating a classroom culture where diversity is celebrated and no learner feels invisible or excluded.

Ms Mpho Vivian Tlhatlha

During our visit to Prinshof School for the Visually Impaired, we were given the opportunity to experience what it might feel like to live without sight. This experiential learning activity had a profound emotional impact. The initial response was one of disorientation and anxiety.

Having my vision restricted made me immediately aware of how dependent I am on sight to navigate the world. Trusting my guide became essential. With each step, I developed heightened sensitivity to environmental changes, even subtle ones like a shift in temperature or the feeling of light on my skin.

Emotionally, the experience created a sense of vulnerability. I felt hesitant, cautious, and at times, insecure. This made me think deeply about how much courage and self-awareness it must take for a visually impaired person to navigate spaces independently: to cross a road, prepare meals, or move confidently through a school environment.

After the activity, I was not only emotionally moved but also filled with admiration and respect for the learners we met.

From an educational standpoint, the activity was highly effective in building empathy. It moved us from abstract awareness to lived experience. By briefly stepping into the shoes of a visually impaired learner, we were better able to understand their

daily challenges, strengths, and the misconceptions society often holds about disability. It broke down the 'us versus them' dynamic and helped us recognise shared humanity.

To ensure that no learner feels 'othered' in the classroom, teachers need to create inclusive spaces that celebrate diversity and actively support learners with different abilities. This begins with being informed: knowing your learners, identifying their barriers to learning, and adjusting your teaching accordingly. For example, seating a learner with a hearing difficulty near the front of the class, or using tactile materials and large-print texts for visually impaired learners, makes a significant difference.

Moreover, teachers should foster a classroom culture where all learners are encouraged to value differences. Disabilities should not be treated as weaknesses but as part of the rich spectrum of human diversity. This could involve inviting guest speakers, sharing stories of role models with disabilities, and designing group activities that highlight collaboration over competition.

My teaching philosophy is grounded in inclusivity and experiential learning. I believe education should not just be theoretical but should immerse learners in real-world contexts. Whether that means taking them on field trips to art galleries or inviting them to role-play as professionals in various fields, the aim is always to make learning accessible, tangible, and engaging.

Importantly, I strive to make every learner feel valued and capable, regardless of their abilities. Inclusive education is not just about accommodation; it is about empowerment. Through hands-on activities and a deep understanding of learners' individual needs, I aim to create an environment where everyone can thrive and no one feels left out.

18. Lumpyskin vaccination campaign and farmers' day in Mathibestad

Dr Maxine Breytenbach (Lecturer: Community Engagement, Faculty of Veterinary Science, Onderstepoort Campus, University of Pretoria)



On 28 October 2025, a team of 14 veterinary and veterinary nursing students from various academic years travelled to Mathibestad for a critical community engagement effort: the vaccination and tagging of local cattle.

This initiative was a powerful example of collaboration. Local farmer Mr William Matjebe graciously provided

a camp and built a sturdy six-meter crush. Combining this with the Red Meat Industry Services (RMIS) mobile crush, the team had a highly efficient 12-meter processing lane.

The RMIS also supplied AllFlex ear tags and the expertise of two experienced staff members. MSD Animal Health generously donated essential vaccines (SupaVax and

LumpyVax) and highly efficient automatic injectors.

The community showed up in force, ensuring a steady stream of animals throughout the morning. By midday, 201 cattle had been successfully vaccinated, tagged, and aged, with all records uploaded to the RMIS database, ensuring improved traceability.

Beyond the physical work, students engaged in crucial consulting. They performed body condition scoring and distributed information leaflets on the importance of seasonal supplementation for free-ranging cattle.

It was a hugely successful and gratifying morning.

Our sincere gratitude goes to the RMIS and MSD Animal Health. Their generosity, combined with the tireless efforts of our students, means that the Mathibestad farmers now have healthier, traceable animals - a huge benefit for the entire community.

19. Community Engagement Forum Members 2026



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

Faculty support: Unit for Community Engagement, Department for Education Innovation	
Ms Kanye Rampa	Humanities
	Theology and Religion
	Veterinary Science
Ms Londiwe Mahlangu	Health Sciences
	Law
	Natural and Agricultural Sciences (NAS)
Ms Anele Langa	Engineering, Built Environment and Information Technology (EBIT)
	Economic and Management Sciences (EMS)
	Education
Community engagement faculty representatives	
Prof Natasja Holtzhausen	EMS
Mrs Kim-Tamsin Williams	Education
Prof Lelanie Smith	EBIT
Ms Bonolo Mokoka	
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
Prof Faranaaz Veriava	Law
Ms Karabo Ozah	
Prof Nerhene Davis	NAS
Dr Hanri Taljaard-Swart	
Mr Lance Thomas	Theology and Religion
Prof Stephan de Beer	
Dr Maxine Breytenbach	Veterinary Science
Prof Rhoda Leask	
Professional services	
Dr Martina Jordaan	Mamelodi Campus
Dr Edwin Smith	
Mr Rowan Watson	Security Services
Mr Rikus Delport	Institutional Advancement
Mrs Deidré Adams	
Ms Isabel de Necker	
Mrs Daisy Ngwenya	Student Affairs (DSA)
Ms Gomolemo Maluleke	
Mr Eulogy Khoza	Student Representative Council (SRC)
Ms Londiwe Myaka	
Mr Abe Mathopa	Department of Research, Innovation and Postgraduate Education
Mrs Linky Mokgohlwa	Department of Library Services (DLS)