

DUT ENGAGED

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SOCIAL IMPACT NEWSLETTER

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DUT HOSTS A SUCCESSFUL COMMUNITY PROJECT MANAGEMENT AND FUNDRAISING WORKSHOP

The Durban University of Technology (DUT) Community Engagement held a highly impactful one-day workshop focused on Community Project Management and Fundraising at the DUT Rendezvous Restaurant.

The workshop was aimed at equipping both staff and students with the skills needed to effectively plan and fund their community outreach projects. Participants learned how to identify community needs, potential funders, and the art of crafting compelling proposals.

Facilitated by Mr Rasigan Naidoo, an Industrial Psychologist with a strong commitment to community outreach and fundraising, the workshop covered critical topics such as personal branding and proposal writing. Naidoo emphasised the importance of promoting oneself and one's initiatives, providing attendees with valuable insights into securing funding and improving project visibility.

Among the attendees was Sinalenjabulo Ndlovu, a second-year Human Resource Management student and founder of the Nonkululeko Catherine Foundation. She shared how the workshop transformed her approach to seeking funding. "I found this workshop to be very impactful. It has elevated the way in which I will be looking for funding in the future," she noted, expressing gratitude to the Community Engagement Office for organising the event. Ndlovu plans to revisit her proposals with the new strategies she learned.

Siphelele Dlamini, a second-year Marketing and Retail student and founder of Maswamhle Youth Development NPC, also praised the workshop's effectiveness. He highlighted the practical tools



Pictured: Attendees of the Workshop.

“It was a great opportunity to connect with others and share ideas. I learned the importance of adaptability and persistence in achieving my goals.”

– SIPHELELE DLAMINI

and strategies he gained, which will enhance both his work and studies. "It was a great opportunity to connect with others and share ideas. I learned the importance of adaptability and persistence in achieving my goals," Dlamini remarked.

The workshop concluded with a certification ceremony for participants, marking a successful day of knowledge sharing and skill enhancement and networking opportunities for participants dedicated to uplifting underprivileged communities.

PHUMEZA MSONGELWA



 **DUT**
DURBAN UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY
INYUVESI YASETHEKWINI YEZOBUCHWEPHESHE

SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY FAIR SPARKS CURIOSITY AMONG YOUNG LEARNERS

The eThekweni Municipality District 8 Libraries recently hosted an engaging Science and Technology Fair at the Klarwater Community Hall, featuring a quiz competition for Grade 7 learners from various schools. This exciting event aimed to cultivate a love for reading and enhance comprehension skills among primary school students, emphasising the importance of these abilities in today's fast-paced world. The event was supported by the Faculty of Accounting and Informatics at the Durban University of Technology (DUT).

The fair introduced learners to the concept of Artificial Intelligence (AI), showcasing its transformative impact across various aspects of life and education. Through a series of demonstrations and presentations, students were encouraged to explore the implications of AI, fostering an atmosphere of curiosity and creativity. This initiative provided a crucial platform for nurturing informed and adaptable learners, equipping them to navigate the complexities of the modern age while enjoying the joys of reading.

District Manager Mr Musa Radebe opened the event with a warm welcome, emphasising the importance of understanding both literature and AI. "The reason why we decided to join the two programmes is because both aim at you, the young ones, in understanding where the world is moving," he stated. "We are moving away from traditional ways of doing things and are being introduced to AI," he said.

The day began with a quiz competition based on three selected books, featuring 10 enthusiastic learners representing libraries from Bayview, Croftdene, Dassenhoek, Klarwater, Malvern, Montford, Moorton, Shallcross,



Pictured: DUT 4IR Excellence Lab Team with NAO the robot and Nalini Dookie from Eskom Expo Office with the eThekweni Municipality District Manager, Mr Musa Radebe.

St Wendolins, and Woodhurst. The competition not only tested their knowledge but also encouraged collaboration and teamwork.

In addition to the quiz, the event featured insightful presentations from the DUT's 4IR Excellence Lab Team. They captivated the audience with their discussion on "My Future in Artificial Intelligence" and showcased DUT's NAO the robot. The team elaborated on the benefits and challenges associated with AI, as well as the fundamentals of coding and robotics.

Additionally, representatives from the ESKOM Science and Technology Expo provided an overview of the Expo, inspiring learners to envision themselves as future innovators and detailing how the Expo could support their aspirations.

The Science and Technology Fair not only celebrated literacy and comprehension but also empowered learners with the knowledge and skills to embrace the technological advancements of the future, ensuring they are well-prepared for the challenges ahead.

PHUMEZA MSONGELWA



DUT HOSTS THE ARCHITHON DESIGN COMPETITION TO EMPOWER LOCAL LEARNERS

The Durban University of Technology (DUT) Community Engagement recently hosted a successful Architecture Design and Engineering (ADE) Programme Archithon in November 2024 at the Urban Futures Centre (UFC). The competition, brought together Grade 10 Science learners from two schools in the Ukhumbane area, specifically in Cato Manor, to develop innovative solutions for pressing environmental challenges in their communities.

The ADE Programme, supported by the DUT Faculty of Engineering and the Built Environment, Umkhumbane Schools Project (USP), and Ikamva Youth, aims to empower young learners to identify and solve real-world problems. This year, the focus was on waste management in Cato Manor, with the learners working closely with DUT student volunteers who mentored them throughout the development of their projects. These efforts culminated in the Archithon competition, where the students presented their prototypes to an esteemed panel of judges.

The event commenced with a warm welcome from Ms Nonhlanhla Nyandeni, from the Community Engagement at DUT. "I am grateful to see learners who seize opportunities and make the most of them. This is why we are here," said Nyandeni, highlighting the importance of such initiatives in empowering the youth. Ms Precious Ngcobo, Operations Manager of the Umkhumbane Schools Project, also offered words of thanks, praising DUT for its consistency and commitment. "I always say that education is a pyramid – many will enter, but few will persevere. I want to thank DUT's partnership to this programme and for giving our learners such an incredible opportunity," Ngcobo remarked.

The competition featured a variety of creative and practical solutions to local waste management challenges. Some of the standout prototypes included the Picker Vacuum, a user-friendly vacuum system designed to reduce waste left behind during municipal collection; the Zero Waste Organic Compost, which helps local farmers reduce chemical use by creating liquid fertilisers from biodegradable waste, the eMobile Digital Waste Remover, a mobile waste service



Pictured: The winners of the ADE Archithon 2024, in the first and second places.

“I always say that education is a pyramid – many will enter, but few will persevere. I want to thank DUT’s partnership to this programme and for giving our learners such an incredible opportunity.”
– MS PRECIOUS NGCOBO

designed to tackle land pollution, and the Water Wise Water Cleaning System, a solution to water pollution that converts wastewater into clean water, suitable for discharge into the environment.

The judging panel, which included Ms Namhla Faith Mtukushe, Electrical Power Engineering (DUT), Dr Oluwatoyin Joseph Gbadeyan, Mechanical Engineering (DUT), and Mr Mhleli Luthuli, from a Civil Engineer from the Pholela Business Advisory, was impressed by the creativity, functionality, and community impact of the prototypes.

The awards for the best prototypes went to Mukelani Ngidi and Senamile Mthintelwa from Wiggins Secondary, who claimed first place for their Water Wise Water Cleaning System. Sphehile Mjwara and Smangalis Mthembu from Umkhumbane Secondary School won second place for their Picker Vacuum, while Thobani Semofumu from Umkhumbane Secondary secured third place

for his Zero Waste Organic Compost.

Ecstatic about their win, Ngidi shared his excitement: "I feel shocked because I went up against such great competitors. Winning has inspired me to push myself further and work toward a better future." Mjwara, who placed second, reflected on the challenges of the competition, saying, "This programme has pushed us beyond what we thought we were capable of. It was difficult, but it was worth it. I'm happy to have come out at number two."

The learners also received words of encouragement from the judges, who emphasised the importance of perseverance and continuous development, they encouraged them to continue finding innovative solutions to solve real problems in their communities.

Ms Phumzile Xulu, Engagement Practitioner at DUT, congratulated all participants for their hard work. "All of you are winners. You've all worked hard, and your ideas are valid. Just because there are first and second place winners doesn't mean the others are less important. There is always room to develop your ideas and take them to the next level," she said.

The Community Engagement team expressed sincere appreciation to the learners, mentors, Umkhumbane Schools Project and Ikamva Youth, for their support and collaboration. Through these partnerships, DUT continues to provide young people with the tools and skills to address critical environmental challenges, fostering a new generation of innovators and problem-solvers.

PHUMEZA MSONGELWA



Pictured: DUT Executive Deans, Guest speakers and DUT engagement practitioner at the Volunteers Appreciation Day 2024.

DUT SALUTES COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT VOLUNTEERS FOR THEIR GAME-CHANGING IMPACT

The Community Engagement at the Durban University of Technology (DUT) hosted the Volunteers Appreciation Day 2024 at the Durban Botanical Gardens in November 2024.

Under the theme “Building Bridges and Changing Lives,” this event marks the first of its kind, bringing together students, staff, representatives from other universities, social partners from NGOs, industry leaders, and government officials. The purpose of this gathering was to honour and celebrate the invaluable contributions of DUT student volunteers who actively support the Community Engagement diverse programmes.

Community Engagement is supported by all faculties and units at DUT, working on a range of initiatives that not only enhance the academic and professional development of students but also address the pressing social needs of the communities. This event offered an opportunity to reflect on and showcase the positive impact of these initiatives, while reaffirming DUT’s commitment to social responsibility and the overarching goal of ENVISION2030.

The Programme Director, Ms. Runyararo Marima, a lecturer from the Department of Food and Nutrition: Consumer Sciences, took a moment to acknowledge the student volunteers for their exceptional contributions to the community. She also played a crucial role in maintaining the energy

“We need to integrate meaningful community services with an instruction and reflection at the end. After completing every community project, we need to come back to classes and apply what we have learnt from our communities. This approach teaches us not only academic knowledge, but also the critical skills of empathy, collaboration and social responsibility.”
– PROF BUSISIWE NKONKI-MANDLENI

and flow of the event, ensuring that participants remained both entertained and well-informed throughout the proceedings.

Director of Special Projects in the Office of the Vice-Chancellor and Principal at DUT, Dr David Mohale extended the words of welcome to all the attendees and briefly contextualised community engagement in the context of ENVISION2030 strategy, which provides the institutional long-term strategic thinking and planning.

“The intention is to produce adaptive graduates that can initiate change and respond to change. We are doing that because we are conscious of the society that we live in, that it is faced with different socio-economic issues,” said Dr Mohale.

Delivering the opening remarks on behalf of the Deputy Vice-Chancellor: Research, Innovation and Engagement, Professor Fulufhelo Netswera, the Executive Dean of Faculty of Management Sciences at DUT emphasised the importance of collaborations in solving societal concerns.

“As the institution, we should work hand in glove with the corporate sector and public sector. It is important that the institution continuously get involved with the society it serves, so that the work that we do in teaching and research



resonate with the interest of the community. The engagement work that we have been actively participating in ought to resonate strongly with stakeholders of the DUT," he said.

Director: Community Engagement and Development (CEAD) Directorate at Mangosuthu University of Technology (MUT), Prof Busisiwe Nkonki-Mandleni delivered a keynote address on Future of Service Learning and Community Engagement. She explained Service learning as a fulfilment of the requirement in the dynamic educational system.

"We need to integrate meaningful community services with an instruction and reflection at the end. After completing every community project, we need to come back to classes and apply what we have learnt from our communities. This approach teaches us not only academic knowledge, but also the critical skills of empathy, collaboration and social responsibility," she said.

Prof. Nkonki-Mandleni added that service learning provides a space for theory and practice to come together, where students can engage and have a hands-on experience with problem solving techniques.

The event proceeded to a panel discussion under the topic: Innovation Through Social Enterprising with the following speakers:

- Moderator: Ms Kanye Rampa (Education

Consultant from the University of Pretoria)

- Mr Nikhil Sewdass: Director of South African BRICS Youth Association
- Mr Fanie Ndlovu: Founder of VarsityGenie
- Ms Portia Nene: Founder ENEN Enterprise

Mr Andile Masuku, Student Development Officer conveyed a message of support on behalf of Dr Clement Moreku, Dean of Students, acknowledging the outstanding work of the DUT Community Engagement. Dr. Moreku expressed his appreciation for the contributions of students in positively impacting and transforming the lives of communities. He highlighted that true leadership is not defined by the pursuit of recognition or power, but by the ability to use one's skills and opportunities to create meaningful change in the lives of others.

During the ceremony, Ms Phumzile Xulu, the Engagement Practitioner at DUT, facilitated the awarding of certificates to all the volunteers. She shared heartfelt words of appreciation with the attendees and provided a brief overview of the initiatives, which aim to foster collaboration, increase civic participation, and strengthen social ties within the community.

"It is our first time doing an event like this and we are learning a lot from it. As we run community engagement programmes at DUT,

we work with a lot of student volunteers which many of them are here today. Hosting such an event allows us the opportunity to share our experiences, reflect, and evaluate the work that we have done to support communities. Community Engagement at DUT has grown over the years, as we see more students and staff are getting involved in community projects that has social impact, aligning with the ENVISION2030 goal," shared Xulu.

Ms. Xulu expressed her hope that the event would inspire more volunteers to join and contribute to the community engagement projects in the upcoming year. She highlighted the importance of growing volunteer participation, which would not only enhance the impact of these initiatives but also foster a stronger sense of community involvement and collaboration.

Prof. Oludayo O. Olugbara, the Executive Dean of the Faculty of Accounting and Informatics at DUT, delivered the vote of thanks, extending his sincere appreciation to the distinguished speakers, panelists, and all participants. He emphasised that their knowledge, expertise, and active engagement were pivotal in ensuring the event's success, and their contributions added significant value to the discussions and outcomes.

THUBELIHLE DUMAKUDE



DUT HOSTS SUCCESSFUL BOOKATHON COMPETITION IN BERGVILLE

The Durban University of Technology (DUT) Community Engagement hosted a successful Bookathon Competition at Intumbane Primary School in Bergville in November 2024. The event which forms part of the Bergville Literacy Programme and the Bergville Book Club, saw young learners from four primary schools—Bambanani, Intumbane, Sbavana, and Vulamehlo competing in five categories: poetry writing, book review, short story writing, skits, and debate. These categories were inspired by books selected earlier in the year for the book club.

The event was officially welcomed by Mr SC Mazibuko, Principal of Intumbane Primary, who expressed his excitement about the day. “We are here to celebrate the work done by our learners with the help of their educators. I hope we all enjoy this day,” he said. The opening remarks came from Ms T Zuma, Principal of Bambanani Primary School, who began the ceremony with a prayer and words of encouragement for the learners.

The competition commenced with creative categories for Grades 5 and 6 learners, including short stories, poetry, book reviews, and skits, judged by Ms Hlengekile Lubanyana, Lecturer at DUT’s Chemistry Department, Ms Nthatuwa Leeke from the DUT Writing Centre, and Mr Lungelo Khumalo, a third-year language practice student from the Faculty of Management Sciences at DUT. The Grade 7 learners then participated in the debate, which was judged by Mr Mukelani Radebe, Technician at DUT’s School of Education, Mr Apehele Makhaza, third-year ICT: Business Analysis student from the Faculty of Accounting and Informatics, and Ms Sanelisiwe Makabate, a DUT masters graduate from the Faculty of Health Sciences and also an educator at Leondale High School.

Ms Zodwa Nzuzwa, District Subject Advisor for School Libraries in Bergville, expressed her gratitude to DUT for organising the event and supporting the schools. She also encouraged educators to inspire more boys to join the book club, as most of the participants were girls.

Ms Sarah Khan, Team Leader, DUT Library Community Outreach Team, shared her message of support to the Bookathon: “The success of the Bergville Bookathon 2024 is a testament to the power of community and

collaboration,” she said. “I am deeply grateful to Ms Xulu for her exceptional leadership, the volunteers for their dedication, and the staff and learners of Intumbane Primary School for providing such an inspiring environment. Together, we have created a transformative experience for the youth, and we are excited to continue this impactful partnership in the future.”

Thameka Khumalo, a Grade 5 learner from Bambanani Primary, who was named the best overall learner in the competition, expressed her joy. “I practiced hard for this day. I can’t believe I won,” she said. Zandile Ndaba, a Grade 5 learner from Vulamehlo Primary, also shared her excitement after winning bronze in her category. “The tears I was crying were from the shock and joy I felt. I can’t wait to show my mom the medal I won,” she said.

The event concluded with an awards ceremony for the top three in each category, with prizes including trophies, medals, stationery packs, uniform vouchers, and school shoes. The schools were also given first aid kits as a token of appreciation. The overall winning school received a laptop and a trophy.

Gratitude goes to the sponsors, the KZN Oils and IQRAA Trust. Also, to the programme partners, the Department of Education Bergville CMC and Ikusasalentsha.

Congratulations went out to Bambanani Primary School for winning the Bookathon 2024. The DUT’s Community Engagement extended its heartfelt congratulations to all the learners who had participated and showcased their incredible talent, saying all were winners.

PHUMEZA MSONGELWA

Pictured: The winning Bambanani Primary School learners with their principal and educators.





Pictured: Learners attending the Thuthuka Kasi Initiative STEM workshop.

THUTHUKA KASI INITIATIVE STEM WORKSHOPS IGNITE INNOVATION IN HIGH SCHOOLS

The Innovation for Sustainability Group (ISG) from the Durban University of Technology (DUT), Faculty of Accounting and Informatics, launched an initiative called the Thuthuka Kasi Initiative STEM Workshops. The aim of these workshops was to introduce high school learners to cutting-edge technology through hands-on learning using Arduino and sensor kits. The goal is to inspire STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) education among the learners. The initiative received support from Professor Oludayo Olugbara, the Executive Dean of the Faculty of Accounting and Informatics at DUT.

The workshop recently took place at Emachobeni Secondary School in Emachobeni and the Inanda Newtown Comprehensive High School in Inanda. The workshops provided learners with an engaging platform to explore critical concepts in computer coding, science, engineering, and technology. Learners worked in groups, demonstrating high levels of teamwork, creativity, and curiosity as they designed and constructed simple electronic circuit projects such as traffic light circuits and used sensors, including photoresistors, with Arduino Uno boards.

The driving force behind this initiative is Dr Oyeniyi Alimi, the ISG team leader and coordinator for the BICIoT Programme at DUT. He is supported by his team of lecturers, Mr Amahle Khumalo and Mr Phirime Monyeki from DUT's Information Systems Department, as well as a group of enthusiastic second-year students from the BICIoT Programme. The student team members, including Ms Nomcebo Nxumalo, Ms Mbalenhle Duma, and Ms Nicole Manyathela, among others, played an instrumental role in ensuring the success of the workshops.

The Thuthuka Kasi Initiative focuses on Quintile 2 and 3 high schools in rural communities around Durban. It aims to empower learners who may not have easy access to such resources. The ISG hopes that through this initiative, STEM education will become more accessible, especially in underserved communities.

The impact of these workshops is already evident. At Inanda Newtown Comprehensive High School, the principal was elated. Meanwhile, Mr Sizwe

Makhathini, the deputy principal and physical science teacher at Emachobeni Secondary School, expressed his gratitude, emphasising how vital practical learning is for the students. "Siyabonga kakhulu, we are very happy nge-workshop eniyenzile. The workshop was very important, the kids get bored with the theories. So, the workshop that you gave was very important for us and you can see that our kids are very excited," he said.

Grade 11 learner Amahle Magwaza, from Emachobeni Secondary School, shared how the workshop had opened her eyes to the world of technology. "I wasn't familiar with technology like that so I am grateful to have just learnt a lot of things that I did not know like on LEDs, how they work, motion sensors, and how they work," she remarked. She added that the workshop had changed her perspective on future career possibilities, saying, "I think that I can now also add technology as an option."

Dr Alimi, speaking on behalf of the ISG team, emphasised the significance of such workshops in shaping the future of high school students. "The questions asked by the students during the workshop were truly remarkable. We are excited to see what the next generation will create as innovators and engineers in the near future," he said. Following the workshops, the ISG team donated Arduino starter kits and sensor kits to the Emachobeni Secondary School, furthering their commitment to nurturing the students' interest in STEM.

SIPHOKAZI DLAMINI



Pictured: Attendees at the Representative Council of Learners (RCL) Leadership Capacity Building event.

DUT EQUIPS HIGH SCHOOL LEARNERS WITH LEADERSHIP SKILLS

The Student Governance and Development unit at the Durban University of Technology (DUT) hosted a successful Representative Council of Learners (RCL) Leadership Capacity Building event to equip learners with vital skills to excel in leadership roles. The RCL event was held over two days at the Mansfield Hall, Ritson campus in September 2024.

Mr Andile Masuku, Student Development Officer under the Student Governance and Development unit gave a brief insight on the aim of the programme. “The purpose of the programme is to educate RCLs with leadership competencies which will eventually contribute to how they behave in school among their peers and the skills that they would need to possess to leverage their performance in executing their duties,” said Masuku.

He further unpacked the objectives of the Representative Council of Learners Leadership Capacity Building Programme, which are to:

- Unleash the potential of leadership, holistic growth, and development among the RCLs.
- Enable the RCLs to understand their role while executing their duties within the school.
- Equip RCLs with appropriate skills and knowledge for them to create needed networks to harness their passion and to contribute to a culture of positive social change.
- Build and strengthen the learner’s level of self-awareness and confidence for them to identify and recognise their weakness and strengths which will eventually improve their abilities of leadership.

Welcoming the guests, the Student Governance and Development Officer, Ms Thokozani Sibiya indicated that the event was aimed to groom and to sharpen young leaders from high schools, equipping them with the values and principles necessary for effective leadership.

Sihle Nkosi, a Student Representative Council (SRC) Finance Officer at DUT, expressed his gratitude to the learners and teachers for joining them on the RCL event. He shared the duties of the SRC and student leaders within the institution.

“Initially, I thought being an SRC member meant engaging solely in politics. However, DUT showed me that it’s also about excelling academically,” shared Nkosi.

He then went on and explained that as a leader one needs to lead by

example and get better marks in order for the students being led to do the same.

Dr Mzwandile Khumalo from Siyaphumelela Institutional Lead at DUT presented on the definition of leadership and qualities of a good leader, referencing renowned leaders past and present. Learners actively participated in the discussion by asking questions and engaging on the topic.

Ayabongwa Gwamanda, a learner from Sibusisiwe Comprehensive Technical School, appreciated the opportunity. “I gained valuable leadership skills and I am eager to apply them at school as a leader,” said Gwamanda.

To foster teamwork, learners participated in a team-building exercise at the Fred Crookes Sports Centre, in Steve Biko campus.

On Day two, the event proceeded with Ayanda Mthethwa, a psychologist at DUT speaking on mental health and leadership duties. “Maintaining your well-being is important before supporting others,” she emphasised. Mthethwa discussed various mental health aspects and offered tips on managing mental health as a leader.

Asanda Makhaye, a Grade 11 learner from Edendale Technical High School, found Mthethwa’s presentation particularly impactful, “Maintaining mental health in leadership is challenging, but I gained valuable insights,” she said.

Ms Refilwe Twala, Senior Residence Life Officer at DUT, reflected on leadership duties: “As a leader, understanding your strengths, weaknesses, and areas for growth is essential,” she advised.

Learners participated in a reflective exercise to introspect. Expressing his gratitude to DUT, Mr Mholi Nkosi, a teacher from Mnconjwana High School said: “The programme was fruitful, especially the mental health session. Our learners gained significantly from that presentation, as mental health is a pressing issue in leadership.”

Student Governance and Development Manager, Mr Masiza Ngculu extended his words of appreciation to all the attendees for making the event a success.

SINAMILE SITHOLE

HIGH SCHOOL LEARNERS EXPLORE THEIR COOKING ABILITIES DURING SUPER CHEFS COMPETITION AT DUT

The Department of Food and Nutrition, in collaboration with the school engagement project of the Durban University of Technology (DUT), hosted a successful super chefs' competition for high school learners at the Steve Biko campus in October 2024.

The Super Chefs competition was attended by 24 finalists who had made it through to the finals as well as teachers, parents, and guardians who came to support their children. They were very grateful for the opportunity that DUT provided.

The aim of the competition was to encourage learners to use indigenous and healthy ingredients in cooking to enhance the nutritional quality of meals while celebrating the rich heritage of South African cuisine. Additionally, it showcased the facilities within the Department of Food and Nutrition.

The event began with a briefing where learners were taught the rules of the kitchen. They were provided with kitchen sets (including equipment, aprons and chef hats) and given 30 minutes to familiarise themselves with

the ingredients in their mystery baskets before creating their menus. The judges allotted three hours for the learners to plan, prepare and present a three-course meal.

The learners prepared their meals with passion, presenting two plates, one for the judges and the other for their teachers and parents. The food was impressive and looked delicious. The learners truly outdid themselves with their dishes.

Dr Heleen Grobbelaar from the Department of Consumer Sciences Food and Nutrition congratulated every participant and thanked everyone for their presence. "We have seen a lot of creativity in your dishes, and I am very impressed," she remarked. She also expressed her gratitude to the teachers for their dedication.

All 24 finalists in the Super Chefs competition were awarded certificates to encourage their continued cooking endeavours. Each finalist also received the gift of a kitchen utensil set, apron and cap. After the judges' deliberation, the top three winning pairs were announced and all received prizes.

Andiswa Mthethwa and Mvelwenhle Makhona, Grade 12 learners from

Please turn over...

“It was a great experience for us and our fellow classmates from other schools. We never thought we could win first prize, but our hard work and dedication brought us here. We are grateful for the opportunity that DUT has given us; we learned a lot.”
– ANDISWA MTHETHWA

Photography: Mngqobi Ngobese



HIGH SCHOOL LEARNERS EXPLORE THEIR COOKING ABILITIES DURING SUPER CHEFS COMPETITION AT DUT (continued)

Pinetown Girls High School, shared their experiences as first-prize winners. "It was a great experience for us and our fellow classmates from other schools. We never thought we could win first prize, but our hard work and dedication brought us here. We are grateful for the opportunity that DUT has given us; we learned a lot," they explained. They noted that the competition was challenging, but they were proud of their achievement.

Second prize was awarded to Montseng Lepheane and Unami Mkhize, also Grade 12 learners from Pinetown Girls High School. They expressed their excitement about their achievement and conveyed their gratitude to DUT. "We feel very happy and shocked at the same time. We are grateful for the opportunity from DUT; this was not just a competition but also a valuable lesson, and we learned so much," they shared.

Akhona Dlamini and Zinhle Mngwengwe, Grade 12 learners from Durban Girls Secondary School, secured the third prize and were thrilled with their accomplishment. "We are very excited about the competition. We benefited a lot, and we are happy to have made it to third place," they stated.

The competition was a success, with teachers and parents showing tremendous support for their children. One teacher from Durban Girls Secondary School, Mrs Pillay, expressed her appreciation: "I am very proud of my girls; they outdid themselves. their work is amazing. I loved all the food

they made. Thank you to DUT for this great opportunity."

Speaking on behalf of the parents, Lindokuhle Ntuli shared his thoughts on the event: "I had a great experience supporting our children in what they love most which is cooking. The Super Chefs competition was very informative for our children because they not only participated but also learned valuable lessons."

Bérénice de la Croix, DUT School Engagement Project Manager, extended her appreciation to all the attendees and participants. She shared her excitement and thanked everyone for giving up their time to attend the Super Chefs competition.

The DUT School Engagement Project sincerely appreciates their partners and funders that made this event possible: DUT Food and Nutrition, DUT Corporate Affairs, Victor Daitz Foundation, Iqraa Trust and Albert Wessels Trust.

Pictured: Dr Heleen Grobbelaar from the Department of Consumer Sciences Food and Nutrition, together with all the winners of the Super Chefs competition.

SINAMILE SITHOLE

DUT POSTGRADUATE TEAM EMBARKS ON THEIR THATHA ULWAZI COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT INITIATIVE IN KWAMAPHUMULO

The Postgraduate Office of the Faculty of Management Sciences (FMS) recently engaged in the second edition of their Thatha Ulwazi Community Engagement Initiative- Taking Information to the People, in KwaMaphumulo, north of KwaZulu-Natal.

First introduced in 2023, this initiative aims to raise awareness among teachers in remote areas about the postgraduate study opportunities offered at the Durban University of Technology (DUT).

The delegation, led by Mrs Phindokuhle Khoza, the Postgraduate Staff and Students Development Coordinator, included postgraduate administration officers, as well as staff members from postgraduate finance and communications. Despite the heat, they dedicated part of their day to engaging with teachers and students at Umphumulo Primary School and Amaphupho Esizwe Secondary School.

Providing an overview of the visit, Khoza said although the Postgraduate Office calendar for 2024 was packed with events, it needed to ensure that this visit took place.

"This initiative was realised during a boardroom meeting in early 2023 and holds significant importance to our team as it aligns with DUT's ENVISION2030 strategy. It has been a long and busy year but the trip to KwaMaphumulo had to happen because we are dedicated to ensuring that DUT continues to be an actively engaged institution," said Khoza

"Many of us on the FMS Postgraduate team come from schools in remote areas that helped shape who we are today. This initiative is also our way of expressing gratitude to the teachers who imparted knowledge to us despite having limited resources. Supporting their academic aspirations and goals is a small gesture of thanks for their impact on our lives," she continued.

Ms NR Zungu, Acting Principal of Amaphupho Esizwe Secondary School, expressed her gratitude for DUT's visit, describing it as an eye-opener for their students who lack information about the possible opportunities to enroll in higher education institutions as they are from the rural areas. "We were excited to have DUT with us today, and we hope that the words of motivation that they have shared with our students will reflect in their results and push them to do well," said Zungu.

"Many of us on the FMS Postgraduate team come from schools in remote areas that helped shape who we are today. This initiative is also our way of expressing gratitude to the teachers who imparted knowledge to us despite having limited resources. Supporting their academic aspirations and goals is a small gesture of thanks for their impact on our lives."

– MRS PHINDOKUHLE KHOZA



Photography: Nondumiso Sibiya

She added that they would like DUT to visit again next year and that they have a good working relationship with the institution.

Umphumulo Primary School Principal, Ms Nonhlanhla Msibi, conveyed their appreciation for the valuable information they received regarding postgraduate studies offered by DUT indicating that some of the teachers will be taking up these opportunities to further their studies.

DUT's Phindokuhle Khoza stated that the plan is to incorporate these visits into the Postgraduate Office's 2025 calendar, to schedule school visits each semester.

"This recent trip reminded us of the pressing need for both teachers and students to have access to information. While our original plan for this initiative was to focus exclusively on engaging with teachers, schools

increasingly request that we include matriculants in our day's programme, as they also lack critical information. To maximise the impact of this initiative, we aim to commit ourselves to regular community engagement visits in 2025. It's entirely possible and would benefit the community greatly," said Khoza.

Khoza shared that her vision for 2025 is for the team to reach the deep rural areas of KwaZulu-Natal.

"The plan is to go to places like Msinga, KwaMhlabuyalingana, and Nquthu. We hope to reach as many schools as possible," shared Khoza.

Pictured: The Postgraduate's team with teachers from Umphumulo Primary School.

THULASIZWE NKOMO



DUT HOSTS SUCCESSFUL WORKSHOP FOR GRADE 9 LEARNERS IN FILM AND TELEVISION

Durban University of Technology (DUT) Video Technology Department, supported by the DUT Journalism Department and the Community Engagement, held a successful workshop for Grade 9 learners at City Campus in October 2024. The event aimed to introduce learners to the dynamic world of film and television production, offering hands-on experiences across various aspects of the industry.

Themed “An Introduction to the World of Film and Technology,” the workshop welcomed 20 learners from Mhawu and Nwabi High Schools. In addition to familiarising them with film and technology, the workshop also provided valuable career guidance.

Samuel Ntsanwisi, a Lecturer at the Video Technology Department, directed the program which began with a welcome address from Ms Irene John, Secretary in the Department of Video Technology, who outlined the workshop’s objectives. Ms Phumzile Xulu from DUT’s Community Engagement encouraged the learners to embrace the opportunity, stating, “Make sure that you have an open mind, be eager to

“*I really enjoyed myself. This workshop was an eye-opener for me. I know what I want to be – I want to be a Vision Mixer. You will definitely see me here at DUT in the coming years.*”
– LWAZI MDLULI

learn, and ask as many questions as you like.” She emphasised the importance of curiosity in exploring the many opportunities within the film and television industry.

Participants toured the Video Technology Department, experiencing the life of a filmmaker and the behind-the-scenes processes involved in production. The tour, coordinated by Mr Ntsanwisi, and facilitated by Mr Lance Lugte, Video Technology Acting Head of Department (HOD) explored key areas such as the Operations Room, where they learned about vision control, lighting, sound handling, and the functioning of studio cameras. The hands-on experience allowed them to produce, direct, and engineer their own show, sparking creativity and

highlighting the significance of teamwork.

The learners were also introduced to journalism and media, gaining hands-on experience in content creation with the journalism team. The tour of the Journalism Department was facilitated by second- and third-year journalism students, who shared valuable insights into the world of journalism. Their expertise helped the Grade 9 learners understand the intricacies of the field and the skills required for success.

Lwazi Mdluli, a Grade 9 student from Mhawu High School, expressed his appreciation for the workshop, stating, “I really enjoyed myself. This workshop was an eye-opener for me. I know what I want to be – I want to be a Vision Mixer. You will definitely see me here at DUT in the coming years.”

Sinqobile Khuzwayo from Nwabi High School shared her excitement: “This was my first time at a university, and I really enjoyed my time here. I have learned a lot. Thank you, DUT.”

The workshop successfully inspired the next generation of filmmakers and provided them with invaluable insights into the film and television industry.

PHUMEZA MSONGELWA

Pictured: Learners from Nwabi and Mhawu High School with the DUT Team.



THE NONKULULEKO CATHERINE FOUNDATION: EMPOWERING COMMUNITIES AND HONOURING A LEGACY

The Nonkululeko Catherine Foundation, established in 2022, is a registered Non-Profit Organisation founded by Sinalenjablo Joy Elizabeth Ndlovu, a third-year Human Resources Management student from the Faculty of Management Sciences at Durban University of Technology (DUT). The foundation is named after her late mother, Nonkululeko Catherine Ndlovu, who passed away in 2019 after battling colon cancer. Ndlovu describes her mother as a loving and life-changing woman who touched many lives, and the foundation was created to honour her enduring legacy.

The primary mission of the foundation is to mobilize the youth, empower communities, and address pressing social issues. Through various initiatives, the organisation seeks to make a lasting impact by providing essential services, advocating for change, and improving individuals' lives. The foundation is committed to bettering communities, focusing on programmes that offer career guidance and tertiary application assistance to high school students, hosting career days, and distributing food parcels and clothing to those in need.

"We aim to make a positive impact in the community by instituting initiatives and programmes that help better individuals," said Ndlovu.

To further its reach, the foundation collaborates with a variety of stakeholders, including schools, churches, and other organisations. These partnerships are pivotal in amplifying the foundation's efforts to tackle the social issues faced by many members of the community.

The foundation's hard work and dedication earned recognition through the prestigious DUT Engagement Showcase and Pitching Award 2024. Ndlovu shared her pride in receiving the honour, expressing how it validated the organisation's efforts and highlighted its impact in the community. The award has significantly raised the profile of the Nonkululeko Catherine Foundation, leading to new collaborations with notable lecturers and academic departments, especially at DUT.

"We were overwhelmed with a sense of pride, fulfilment, and elation upon receiving the



Pictured: Nonkululeko Foundation during their Road to Varsity initiative at Ezithabeni Secondary School. Photo supplied by the Nonkululeko Catherine Foundation.

“ We were overwhelmed with a sense of pride, fulfilment, and elation upon receiving the Engagement Award. It opened doors to new collaborations and has been a game-changer for us. ”
– SINALENJABULO JOY ELIZABETH NDLOVU

Engagement Award. It opened doors to new collaborations and has been a game-changer for us,” she said.

The foundation is currently involved in several impactful projects, including its flagship programme ‘Road to Varsity’, which helps high school students navigate the tertiary application process. Another key initiative is ‘Career Days’, where major stakeholders come together to educate the community on educational opportunities. The foundation also runs ‘Care Community Assistance and Relief Effort’, a programme that provides food assistance to those in need, as well as ‘The NCF Clothing Drive’, which collects and distributes second-hand clothing to community members facing shortages.

“We are excited to collaborate with DUT on several projects this year,” Ndlovu added. “We invite everyone to follow us on social media for updates on our upcoming events and initiatives.”

Over the past year, the foundation has achieved significant milestones, including assisting more than 550 students with career guidance and tertiary applications, hosting a successful career day, and distributing food parcels and clothing to those in need. Furthermore, through collaborations with DUT’s SWEEP Programme and sponsorships from partners like BB Bread, Durban Solid Waste, First National Bank, and the DUT Human Resources Department, the foundation has been able to expand its reach and make a more meaningful impact.

The Nonkululeko Catherine Foundation remains steadfast in its mission to make a positive difference in the community. The foundation's commitment to collaboration and service ensures that it will continue to thrive, and they look forward to growing their efforts to better the lives of many.

“We are always looking for ways to collaborate with others to achieve our goals,” Ndlovu concluded.

PHUMEZA MSONGELWA

EMPOWERING CONSUMERS AND COMBATING COUNTERFEITS: THE JOURNEY OF AUTHENTIC8

In South Africa, counterfeit products have become an alarming issue, affecting everything from food and medicine to electronics, posing serious risks to consumer safety and damaging the local economy. This problem is especially prevalent in townships, where small businesses like spaza shops face stiff competition from counterfeit goods sold at lower prices, but with dangerous hidden consequences. It was in response to this growing issue that Authentic8, an innovative barcode scanning app, was born.

Founded in 2022 by Bheka Mbonambi, a Postgraduate Diploma graduate in Sustainable Horticulture and Landscaping from the Durban University of Technology (DUT) and Project Director of GEOTX, and Sphamandla Fuweka, the CEO and Information and Communication Technology (ICT) graduate from Mangosuthu University of Technology. Authentic8 is an innovative app that helps users scan product barcodes to verify their authenticity instantly. The app also features counterfeit reporting, allergen detection powered by artificial intelligence, and a platform connecting consumers with trusted retailers. Additionally, local authorities can utilize the app to monitor counterfeit activities and take appropriate action.

As residents of townships, both Mbonambi and Fuweka have witnessed first-hand the detrimental effects of counterfeit products. Their mission with Authentic8 is clear: to empower consumers by giving them the tools to verify the authenticity of consumable products in real time, thereby promoting safety, protecting livelihoods, and fostering a transparent marketplace.

Mbonambi has always been an engaged student during his time at DUT. While he was still a student, he received international recognition for his work concerning the conservation of the environment. He was selected as one of 20 educators in South Africa to participate in the Youth in Climate Robotics Project, when the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in South Africa was implementing a six-month project during 2021 called, Think Big Start Small: Youth-led Robotics for Multi-Dimensional Climate Solutions. This project also won Mbonambi a DUT Community Engagement Showcase and Pitching Award 2020 Prize worth R20 000 to support his project.

The journey of Authentic8 has been nothing short of remarkable. The app was selected as a finalist in the SAB Foundation Social Innovation Awards, a prestigious national competition that recognises projects designed to tackle societal challenges.



Pictured: Mr Bheka Mbonambi and Mr Siphamandla Fuweka.

Out of over 600 applicants, Authentic8 stood out and was awarded a Seed Grant, which has been instrumental in helping to grow the project. This recognition has also opened doors to valuable mentorship and partnerships with key organisations like Innovate Durban and the eThekweni Municipality.

“We are incredibly grateful for the support we’ve received,” says Mbonambi. “Being selected as finalists has provided us with not just validation but also the exposure and resources we need to scale our project. The connections we’ve made have been pivotal in our journey.”

Beyond the awards and grants, Authentic8 has gained significant visibility at national and international events. The app was exhibited at Transforming Africa at the University of Johannesburg and the AfriLabs Annual Gathering in Cape Town, and Mbonambi and Fuweka represented Authentic8 at the YALDA International

iBootCamp at the university of Pretoria in, South Africa earlier this year. These opportunities have allowed them to share their vision with a wider audience and build relationships that will help expand the app’s reach.

Looking ahead, Mbonambi and Fuweka aim to expand the reach of Authentic8 across South Africa and, eventually, into other African markets. They believe that the app’s potential to improve consumer safety, protect businesses, and drive transparency in supply chains is immense. “We want Authentic8 to become the standard for verifying the authenticity of products, not just in South Africa but across the continent,” says Mbonambi. “Our goal is to foster a culture where consumers always authenticate the products they buy, making counterfeit goods a thing of the past.”

As they continue to grow, Mbonambi and Fuweka know that their journey is far from over. They are determined to continue working with stakeholders, funding institutions, and government officials to ensure the widespread adoption of the app. “We’ve seen the dangers that counterfeit goods pose to our communities,” Mbonambi adds. “Authentic8 is a tool that can help protect lives, safeguard livelihoods, and make markets safer for everyone.”

The story of Authentic8 is a testament to the power of innovation driven by passion and purpose.

Mbonambi and Fuweka’s determination to address a critical issue affecting so many people is an inspiring example of how technology can be used to create meaningful change. As they push forward, they are hopeful that more stakeholders will join them in their mission to combat counterfeit products and build a safer, more transparent marketplace for South Africa and beyond.

PHUMEZA MSONGELWA

DUT COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT HOSTS ITS REFLECTION, EVALUATION, AND PLANNING WORKSHOP FOR 2025

The Durban University of Technology (DUT) Community Engagement hosted its reflection, evaluation, and planning (REP) workshop in December 2024. The workshop served as a platform to assess the outcomes of community engagement projects carried throughout 2024, while also setting the stage for the university's annual performance plan and key performance areas for 2025.

The workshop, led by Ms Phumzile Xulu, Engagement Practitioner, brought together the entire team to reflect on the function's progress throughout the year. It also provided an opportunity to evaluate the focus and impact of various community projects. The discussions were centered around understanding how these initiatives align with both the university's goals, and broader objectives of community engagement, to respond to the broader needs of society.

The key topic of the workshop was the role of the Community Engagement in bridging the gap between the university and the surrounding community. Attendees explored how research and innovation at DUT could contribute to this relationship, enhancing the university's social responsibility efforts.

The collaborations within faculties was also highlighted, with many community projects being inter and multi-disciplinary. These partnerships aim to fulfil the university's commitment to community engagement while also advancing structured academic goals.

Looking ahead to 2025, the Community Engagement presented its plans to further enhance its impact. By strengthening collaborations with faculties and forging new partnerships, through community engagement DUT will deepen its involvement in the community and ensures that all community engagement activities are aligned with its' overarching goals and objectives.

As part of the continued effort to foster closer relationships with the faculties, the Community Engagement is determined to create more meaningful, and sustainable partnerships that will contribute to both academic and social development, ultimately driving the university's mission of creating an engaged and responsible citizenry.

PHUMEZA MSONGELWA



Pictured: DUT Community Engagement Team at the REP Workshop.



Engagement at DUT is the portfolio under the office of the Deputy Vice-Chancellor Research Innovation and Engagement (DVC-RIE), Durban University of Technology (DUT). The Engagement Office champions initiatives, efforts and activities that focus on establishing the University as a responsible, relevant and active partner of the community in addressing the needs of society. Through engagement, the University facilitates collaboration among DUT staff, students, alumni and the community for meaningful university-community engagements. This newsletter seeks to capture and showcase community engagement projects that have been initiated by staff and students as part of service learning, community-based research, community outreach or volunteering. Showcasing these projects recognises staff, students and social partners for their exceptional commitment to community engagement in line with the ENVISION2030.

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