

DUT ENGAGED

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SOCIAL IMPACT NEWSLETTER

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The Durban University of Technology (DUT) in collaboration with non-profit organisation Ikusasa Lentsha, continues its commitment to rural education through the annual Book Club/Literacy Programme. On 23 and 24 July 2025, the partnership successfully distributed reading books to six primary schools in the Bergville region of KwaZulu-Natal.

Now in its third year, the Book Club/Literacy Programme is an initiative launched in 2023 under DUT's Bergville Schools Engagement Project. The Programme was developed to enhance literacy, encourage a love for reading, and develop learners' writing and creative thinking skills in rural communities where educational resources are often limited. This year saw the inclusion of two new schools – Inkosi Nogaga Primary School and Inkosi Masumpa Primary School – bringing the total number of supported schools to six. These join the original group of Intumbane, Bambanani, Vulamehlo, and Sbvane Primary Schools.

Lungelo Khumalo, Project Officer at Ikusasa Lentsha and a DUT Language Practice alumnus, was present during both days of the handover and reflected on the organisation's motivation for this collaboration. "As IkusasaLentsha, we chose to partner with DUT to help schools in our area because rural communities often face unique challenges in accessing quality education," said Khumalo. "By implementing this programme, we aim to bridge the literacy gap and provide learners with the skills they need to succeed. The programme will help improve reading and writing abilities, enhance critical thinking, and foster a love for learning among learners." Khumalo, who is currently pursuing an Advanced Diploma in Language Practice at DUT, was born and raised in Bergville. His passion for rural education stems from personal experience, and he has also served as a tutor in IsiZulu and Digital Communication and Multimedia I01.

The literacy initiative has had a tangible impact on the schools and their learners. Mr

THIRD YEAR OF DUT'S BOOK CLUB SEES EXPANSION TO SIX RURAL SCHOOLS



Pictured: Learners from Vulamehlo Primary with books from the literacy initiative.

Mazibuko, Principal of Intumbane Primary School, welcomed the initiative and shared his optimism, "This initiative will help our children read fluently and with understanding. I believe a child who reads well will succeed anywhere in life," said Mr Mazibuko. Ms Shabalala, an educator from Bambanani Primary School, also noted the growing enthusiasm among learners. "We have seen more and more kids visiting the reading corner in classes, and it's not only the kids in the Book Club but also other children. Though the Book-A-Thon is a cherry on top, the learners are looking forward to the competition."

Mthetheleli Meyiwa, one of the DUT's Community Engagement unit's interns, shared his personal connection to the initiative, "The excitement and determination from the schools is heart-warming and showcases the potential of this initiative. As someone who hails from the rural areas, I see the importance of this and wish we had initiatives of this sort growing up. Reading is important, and this upcoming competition will

help the learners to read for comprehension and understanding. This will spill over to their academic performance as well."

DUT will conduct a series of workshops at all six schools through the support of its Library Unit. These sessions will focus on preparing learners for the upcoming Book-A-Thon, a reading competition designed to reinforce comprehension, creativity, and academic engagement. Through sustained collaboration and community-focused programming, DUT and Ikusasa Lentsha are shaping brighter futures for young learners in Bergville – empowering them with critical literacy skills that serve as a foundation for lifelong learning and success.

SIHLE NZIMA





DUT SCIENCE WEEK INITIATIVE EMPOWERS OVER 1,600 LEARNERS IN MAHLABATHINI

The Durban University of Technology (DUT) Community Engagement Office, in collaboration with the DUT Chemistry Department and the Mahlabathini Circuit Management Centre (CMC), successfully hosted the Mahlabathini Science Week from 14 to 18 July 2025. This impactful initiative reached 50 high schools in Ulundi, engaging with more than 1,600 learners from the Mahlabathini Circuit.

The workshops were held at several venues across the circuit, including Mnyamana High, Ivungu High Hall, Nsabekhuluma High Hall, Tholukukhanya High Hall, Ulundi Teacher Development Centre, Masibumbane High Hall, Mpungamhlophe High Hall, Nsikayendlu High, Zwelonke High Hall, and Mthunziwoxolo High.

Science Week forms part of the broader Mahlabathini Schools Engagement Programme (MSEP), which was launched in 2020 to support schools in the Zululand District. The programme aims to improve access to quality education and address specific challenges faced by rural schools. One of its primary objectives is to improve learner performance in Physical Sciences by promoting conceptual understanding through hands-on, interactive learning.

Since its inception, the MSEP has contributed to notable academic improvements, particularly in science subjects. The Mahlabathini Circuit's matric pass rate increased from 81.27% in 2023 to 85.51% in 2024, a testament to the programme's contribution to growing impact.

Mrs Xoliswa Cele, Chief Education Specialist in the Mahlabathini CMC, expressed her appreciation for the DUT team's efforts. "I am very thankful to the DUT team for your efforts and for investing your time in our children. Your hard work and dedication are evident in the rise of our science results every year," she said.

Throughout the week, learners participated in interactive workshops facilitated by DUT Chemistry Department staff and postgraduate students. The sessions featured live science experiments aligned with the Grade 12 Physical Science CAPS curriculum, giving learners practical experience and a deeper understanding of key scientific principles.

Sbahlle Mbatha, a Grade 12 learner from Vukuza High School, shared her excitement: "Honestly, it was my first time seeing a live experiment. I've always watched it on the school laptop. I wish we could have done more experiments. Science Week will help us improve our Physical Science marks as we now have a better understanding of what is going on."

Sphindile Mdletshe, a Grade 12 learner from Mthunziwoxolo Secondary School, added, "I really enjoyed the experiments and finally putting theory into practice. I do wish the project could also include other sessions we find challenging, like Newton's laws of motion and vertical projectile motion."

In addition to the science experiments, learners received career guidance and educational materials aimed at improving learning outcomes and assisting with tertiary education applications. The programme seeks to inspire learners to pursue further studies in science and technology while equipping them with the tools needed for success.

Dr Phathisanani Hloma, a lecturer in the

Chemistry Department and one of the facilitators, reflected on the personal and professional growth he has experienced through his involvement. "This programme has always improved my leadership abilities. Being a team leader for Team B took me out of my comfort zone and taught me how to work better with a team. I've learned so much from the other teams and leaders. I definitely see myself continuing to participate, most of the initial challenges have been resolved, and the programme is now at its peak."

Samora Buthelezi, a PhD student and facilitator from the Chemistry Department, also praised the initiative. "This was a great experience, and I would definitely do it again. Learners need to take advantage of opportunities like this, it will help them do well in their studies and improve their marks."

Mr Dlodlo, Principal of Nhlungwana High School, emphasised the value of the programme for under-resourced schools. "We are schools that are unable to perform practicals, so our learners benefit greatly from this programme. We feel blessed and hope to continue receiving this support in the years to come."

The Mahlabathini Science Week continues to stand as a beacon of hope, collaboration, and academic advancement in rural communities, embodying DUT's commitment to community engagement and educational transformation.

PHUMEZA MSONGELWA

DUT AND KZND OE EMPOWER PRINCIPALS AT BERGVILLE RISK MANAGEMENT WORKSHOP

The Durban University of Technology (DUT) Enterprise Risk Management Unit, in partnership, the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education (KZNDOE) and the Bergville Circuit Management Centre (CMC), hosted an informative two-day Risk Management Workshop at the Bergville Sports Centre on 29–30 July 2025.

The workshop brought together more than 100 school principals from the Bergville Circuit to address and mitigate critical risk factors impacting schools, while equipping them with practical strategies to enhance safety, governance, and overall school performance.

Welcoming the attendees, Bergville Chief Education Specialist, Mr Francisco Mbongwe, expressed his appreciation for the strong turnout and stressed the need for proactive approaches to challenges in the education sector.

“Risk is everywhere, we need to be able to manage it, and if we don’t, we will have a problem. We appreciate the attendance of all the schools and are delighted to see such a huge turnout from the principals.”

He also extended a warm welcome and appreciation to the DUT team and the KZN DOE team for making this workshop possible.

The programme was delivered through a series of focused sessions. The opening discussion allowed principals to share their expectations and reflect on pressing daily challenges such as inadequate infrastructure, limited resources, and governance concerns. This was followed by an introduction to Enterprise Risk Management (ERM), emphasising the role of strong governance and proactive measures in creating safer and more effective learning environments.

A key activity was a SWOT analysis, which enabled principals to evaluate their schools’ strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats in the context of risk management. This exercise empowered school leaders to identify gaps, improve resource allocation, strengthen safety protocols, and develop actionable strategies for building more resilient institutions.

Highlighting the need for targeted, practical support, Mr Shabalala, principal of Muzochithwayo Primary School, urged for a stronger focus on turning weaknesses into strengths:

“We need guidance on how to turn our weaknesses into strengths. A 100% pass rate doesn’t always reflect quality teaching, true success is when learners genuinely benefit from what they are taught.”

From a Department of Education perspective, participants explored the concept of risk appetite and how it influences decision-making in schools. The final session encouraged interactive collaboration, with principals sharing experiences, best practices, and innovative approaches tailored to their specific challenges.

Representing the Department of Education’s Head Office Organisational Development Unit and also a facilitator, Ms Duduzile Mkize commended the initiative’s relevance and impact:

“This workshop has been invaluable. The

reception has been excellent, and the knowledge shared over the past two days has been relatable and practical for our audience. As a department, we operate in line with prescripts, policies, and governance principles, and risk management is central to this. We truly appreciate the opportunity to engage with DUT and look forward to more initiatives to capacitate principals across the province to better manage risks within their schools.”

Workshop facilitator and DUT Chief Risk Officer, Dr Sikhuthali Nyangintsimbi, praised the seamless collaboration with the Department of Education:

“The workshop went even better than I anticipated. Coordination between DUT and the Department of Education was seamless, and our practical approach to risk management really resonated. The engagement from participants was enthusiastic, though not as broad as we had hoped, an area we will continue to strengthen as we work alongside the CMCs.”

The workshop marked a significant step towards building stronger, safer, and more resilient schools in the Bergville Circuit, reinforcing the value of collaboration between higher education institutions, education authorities, and school leadership in safeguarding quality education.

PHUMEZA MSONGELWA



Pictured: Left to right: KZN DOE Mr NM Nkosi, DUT Mr S Khanyile, DUT Phumeza Msongelwa, DUT Thobile Cele, DUT Phumzile Xulu, KZN DOE Duduzile MKhize, Bergville CMC Mr F Mbongwe, DUT Dr Sikhuthali Nyangintsimbi.

DUT NGODINI PROJECT SPARKS RURAL INNOVATION



Pictured: The capacity building and business skills session with DUT staff, Ms Nozipho Ndlovu as the chief facilitator and the Siyaphakama Ngodini Business Forum.

The Durban University of Technology (DUT) launched the DUT-Ngodini Bunduz Entrepreneurship Advancement Project in 2022 to empower rural entrepreneurs in Ngodini, Eshowe, with the aim of transforming the local entrepreneurial landscape.

The Ngodini Bunduz Entrepreneurship Advancement Project is a community-engaged initiative that unites DUT academics, students, and local entrepreneurs to address economic marginalisation in the rural area of Ngodini, Eshowe. Developed as a collaborative model for sustainable change, the project is led by academic champions Dr Thulile Mofokeng and Mr Nyane Mofokeng, with support from various departments within the Faculties of Management Sciences and Applied Sciences. It showcases how teaching, learning, and research can actively drive community development. A key milestone has been the formation of the Siyaphakama Ngodini Business Forum, a formal network of local entrepreneurs and the establishment of a structured local marketplace. Through accredited skills training, the project has boosted business confidence and stimulated economic activity in the region.

In 2022, the DUT-Ngodini Bunduz Entrepreneurship Advancement Project earned the Social Partner of the Year award at the DUT Community Engagement Awards, recognizing its meaningful impact and collaborative approach. But this was just the beginning. In 2023, the project gained national recognition by securing First Place at the EDHE Teaching and Learning Excellence Awards, cementing DUT's role as a leader in entrepreneurship education. Reflecting on this recognition, Dr Thulile Mofokeng, one of the project's co-founders, emphasized the significance of the awards not just as accolades, but as a validation of a broader mission, "Winning these awards has validated our belief that community-engaged learning can redefine both academic outcomes and social impact," said Dr Mofokeng.

Adding to its growing prestige, the project has been selected as a case study for publication in a Scopus-accredited academic volume, positioning DUT as a national benchmark for community-engaged, interdisciplinary education. What sets the Ngodini Bunduz project apart is its dynamic,

evolving nature. It has grown into a living model applied across multiple academic disciplines ranging from sustainable horticulture and ecotourism to applied management and marketing. Innovations such as sustainability mapping, tree-tagging on DUT campuses, and the co-creation of tourism tools with community members illustrate how education can be leveraged to empower rural communities. Discussing the heart of the project's philosophy, Mr Nyane Mofokeng, co-leader of the initiative, highlighted the deep mutual learning that takes place, "We've seen students and community members become co-creators of knowledge and solutions. This is not about outreach, it is about shared growth." Looking ahead, the project is expanding its horizons through the development of digital tools and mentorship programmes in collaboration with international institutions. These new directions align closely with DUT's ENVISION2030 strategy, particularly its pillars of people-centredness, sustainability, and innovation.

The response from the Ngodini community has been overwhelmingly positive. Local entrepreneurs have welcomed the training and support, noting real improvements in their businesses and outlook. One entrepreneur, Mr Mabaso, shared his experience with the initiative's student-led programmes, expressing heartfelt gratitude, "The student-led interventions have transformed my business and inspired the entire community." While the project has achieved significant success, challenges persist, limited funding, logistical constraints, and technological infrastructure gaps remain ongoing hurdles. Nonetheless, the project team is actively addressing these obstacles through strategic planning and new partnerships aimed at long-term sustainability. At its core, the DUT-Ngodini Bunduz Entrepreneurship Advancement Project is not merely an academic initiative—it is a replicable model for community-driven innovation. It demonstrates how universities can act as catalysts for sustainable rural development, effectively blending teaching, research, and social engagement. Summing up the project's deeper purpose, Dr Mofokeng offered a reflection on what truly drives their work, "Ngodini Bunduz proves what is possible when education is rooted in compassion, creativity, and a commitment to community," she shared.

SIHLE NZIMA

DUT HOSTS WORKSHOP ON STREAMLINING ETHICS FOR COMMUNITY-ENGAGED SCHOLARSHIP

The Durban University of Technology (DUT) Community Engagement hosted an informative workshop titled “Streamlining Ethics for Community-Engaged Scholarship” on 21 August 2025 at the DUT Hotel School. The workshop provided a platform to explore the evolving role of community engagement in higher education and to examine how universities can integrate teaching, learning, and research with real-world societal challenges, while ensuring that academic work remains socially responsive, ethical, and impactful.

Speaking about the significance of the workshop, Ms Phumzile Xulu, Engagement Practitioner at DUT, said: “As institutions of higher learning, we have both a responsibility and an opportunity to use our knowledge and technical expertise to address real issues facing our communities. Community engagement is not just about outreach activities, it is about building impactful partnerships that produce solutions, strengthen scholarship, and ensure that our work remains responsive to local, regional, and national needs.”

Grounded in the principles of the 1997 White Paper on Higher Education and the 2001 National Plan for Higher Education, the workshop emphasized the importance of fostering ethical and sustainable engagement between students, academics, and communities. Participants explored how project-based and problem-based learning approaches can enhance scholarship, ensure relevance to local and national needs, and contribute meaningful solutions to societal challenges.

The workshop was opened by Dr Nkululeko Zungu, the Engagement Coordinator for the Faculty of Management Sciences, who welcomed participants and encouraged active involvement in discussions, group activities, and collaborative exercises throughout the day.

Prof Pavitra Pillay, Deputy Dean in the Faculty of Health Sciences, in her presentation on Understanding Community Engagement and Engaged Scholarship, highlighted the evolution of engagement in higher education and stressed the integration of community-based practices into scholarship. She said, “Engagement cannot be separated from teaching, learning, or research, it underpins everything we do as universities. True engaged scholarship goes beyond community service, it requires reciprocal partnerships, measurable impact, and scholarly outputs that can be shared and reproduced. In doing so, we not only serve our communities but also strengthen the university’s role in driving societal change.”

In her session titled “Research Ethics: Principles and the Processes (Developing Robust Scholarship in Community-Based Practice),” Dr Dumile Gumede, Faculty Research Coordinator in the Faculty of Health Sciences, unpacked the experiences, tensions, and solutions encountered in community engagement practice. She highlighted the key ethical principles of justice, autonomy,



Pictured: Attendees of the Streamlining Ethics for Community-Engaged Scholarship Workshop.

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– PROF PAVITRA PILLAY

non-maleficence, and beneficence, stressing the importance of recognising community contributions, respecting decision-making rights, anticipating and mitigating risks, and ensuring initiatives bring tangible benefits. Her session encouraged participants to move beyond theory through actionable reflections that strengthen both scholarship and community well-being.

Prof Innocent Nojiyeza, Head of Research and Innovation at the Business School, Faculty of Management Sciences, facilitated an interactive session on “Practice to Scholarship: General Principles and Processes.” Through insightful case studies, participants openly discussed and shared strategies for translating real-world community engagement into impactful scholarly outputs.

In a session titled “Streamlining Ethics Processes for Engaged Scholarship,” Prof Pfano Mashau, Director of the Business School and Chair of the Institutional Research Ethics Committee (IREC), guided participants through strategies to improve and simplify ethical review procedures for community-engaged research. The session emphasized the importance of clear and efficient

ethics processes to support impactful scholarship while ensuring that community engagement initiatives adhere to high ethical standards.

Reflecting on the workshop’s profound outcomes, Dr Zungu underscored the intertwined importance of collaboration, ethics, and scholarship in community engagement. “Participants are leaving this workshop with a clear understanding that engagement is far more than simply running projects or taking photographs,” he affirmed. “It is about working collaboratively, ethically utilising data, and producing meaningful scholarship that adds significant value to both the university and the community. Engaged scholarship is a truly reciprocal process: communities gain solutions to real challenges, while the university strengthens its brand, generates impactful research outputs, and fulfils its vision of becoming a truly engaged institution.”

The workshop successfully combined presentations, open discussions, and group activities to ensure participants gained practical, actionable insights into ethical, impactful, and scholarly community engagement.

PHUMEZA MSONGELWA



Pictured: DUT students and staff at Emuseni Centre for the Aged. Photographer: Sihle Nzima

DUT NURSING DEPARTMENT CELEBRATES MANDELA MONTH AT EMUSENI CENTRE FOR THE AGED

The Department of Nursing at Durban University of Technology (DUT) recently celebrated Mandela Month at Emuseni Centre for the Aged in Pietermaritzburg, an essential facility supporting 55 indigent senior citizens from the Greater Edendale community.

Most of these residents are frail and lack family support. The event, themed '67 Minutes of Nurturing the elderly in unity', aligned with the call to action to dedicate 67 minutes of community service, reflecting Mandela's 67 years of fighting for social justice. By taking this initiative, DUT Nursing students and staff demonstrated their commitment to building a better world, echoing Mandela's values of empathy, compassion, and equality.

In 2023, the Department of Nursing launched a community engagement project to address the Centre's needs. Recognising that the Centre's challenges required a holistic, university-wide response, the project strategically expanded to involve other DUT Faculties including Management Sciences, Arts and Design and Applied Sciences.

On the day of the event, the Department of Hospitality and Tourism at DUT prepared and served a scrumptious meal with love to the elders, while Fashion and Textiles in collaboration with the Textile Science and Apparel Technology jointly committed themselves to design and produce custom bedspreads and pillowcases, leveraging their academic skills to directly enhance the comfort and dignity of the residents.

Department of Emergency Medical Care and Rescue at DUT, joined the venture this year by offering educational sessions and demonstrations on essential first aid, including responses to common emergencies while Medical Orthotics and Prosthetics students conducted assessments for individuals who may require prosthetic or orthotic devices and a need for repair of any walking aid devices. A significant outcome of this expansion was the inclusion and commitment of

external partners namely; the Ward Councillor, Mr Dumisani Zondi, UNILEVER, The Optometrist by Yousuf Seedat and Vuyisiwe Nxumalo who is a Private Social Worker.

The Deputy Dean of the Faculty of Health Sciences at DUT, Professor Pavitra Pillay, delivered opening remarks, expressing gratitude to the Emuseni Centre for the Aged's management for their valuable collaboration. She also highlighted the strong partnership between DUT and the centre, which is essential for successful community engagement initiatives

"On behalf of the Durban University of Technology and everyone present, we want to make today a special day for you, filled with happiness and joy. We also hope to establish a long-lasting partnership that will continue to make a positive impact in your lives, making things a little bit easier and brighter for you," said Prof Pillay.

The event continued with the official opening of the Emuseni garden, a collaborative effort led by Nursing students and Ward Councillor, Mr Zondi. He expressed gratitude to all stakeholders and individuals who contributed to the event's success, acknowledging the teamwork and effort that made it possible.

Ms Sue McAlister, General Manager of Emuseni Centre, expressed heartfelt gratitude to DUT and the Edendale community for their ongoing support. This acknowledgement highlighted the significance of the partnership and the positive impact it has on the centre's operations and the lives of its residents.

"We are thankful for the community support, which has brought us to where we are today, and we also appreciate DUT's visit, which holds great significance for us. Your support has been vital to

our success, and we will forever be grateful to DUT for taking the time to connect with us – it truly means a lot," said McAlister.

A vibrant collaboration of diverse talents then came together in service, showcasing remarkable synergy and connection across various stations, including the Garden Hub, Wellness Sanctuary, Nourishment Station, Style and Dignity Corner, Safety Zone, Heart-to-Heart Listening Corner, and Clear Outlook.

Clinical Instructor in Nursing Department, Sister Thembeni Ngcobo extended her deepest gratitude to all participants in the Mandela Month celebration held at the Emuseni Centre for the Aged, saying their involvement embodied the spirit of Nelson Mandela's legacy, focusing on community service and compassion.

"A special thank you to the Community engagement team for facilitating DUT branding and thoughtful gifts, recognizing the staff's passion and dedication to making a difference in the lives of our golden agers. The Faculty of Health Sciences and the Innobiz Centre for Entrepreneurship and Innovation for generously providing lunch, satisfying our physiological needs. The Real Estate Management, Innobiz; Nursing Alumni for the garden project material supplies and PSAM Printings for sponsoring branded t-shirts and caps. Moreover, Insika Men a 3rd year nursing student led NPO. The transport team for ensuring safe and reliable shuttle services that facilitated the visit to Emuseni. Every contribution was a vital thread in a beautiful tapestry of care. Most importantly the smiles and heartfelt engagement from the residents of Emuseni were the greatest reward of all," said Sister Ngcobo.

THUBELIHLE DUMAKUDE

IXOPO CAREER DAY 2025 OPENS DOORS OF OPPORTUNITY FOR RURAL MATRICULANTS

The Albaraka Bank, in collaboration with the Durban University of Technology (DUT), and the Bringer of Light to Young Souls spearheaded the Matric Career Day at Jolivet Hall in Ixopo on 2 August 2025.

The Ixopo Matric Career Day is aimed at equipping matriculants with essential insights and opportunities for their future endeavours, proved to be an invaluable experience for over 250 learners from five esteemed schools. The primary objective of the Career Day was to empower matriculants by providing them with vital knowledge and resources to navigate their transition into tertiary education and beyond. Through engaging presentations and interactive sessions, learners were exposed to various career paths, entrepreneurship opportunities, and educational prospects.

Distinguished presenters from educational institutions such as DUT, Rosebank College, MUT, UKZN and Richfield College alongside representatives from municipalities, local businesses, and BMW, offered valuable advice on career selection, university applications, and the importance of self-discipline. Cheryl Ramkumar of Albaraka Bank reflected on why events like these are so important for rural learners. She explained that the bank believes true community empowerment begins with the youth, and therefore the Ixopo Career Day was the perfect opportunity to make a lasting impact. "The Ixopo Career Day provided an ideal platform to reach learners in rural areas, share practical financial knowledge, connect them with higher learning institutions, and inspire them to see beyond their current circumstances towards brighter, more informed futures," said Ramkumar.

Albaraka worked closely with DUT's Community Engagement Office and the Bringer of Light to Young Souls to ensure their participation was both impactful and memorable.

Ramkumar further highlighted that collaborating with higher education institutions like DUT bridges the gap between education and the world of work. "Together, we can provide



Pictured: Representatives from DUT, Albaraka Bank, Rosebank College, MUT, UKZN and Learners who attended the event.

learners with practical insights, credible guidance, and pathways to opportunities that they might not otherwise have access to," she explained. She recalled a particularly moving moment when a learner expressed feeling "seen and cared for" by the bank, noting that nourishment, both educational and physical plays a vital role in keeping young minds engaged.

Businessman and founder of Lethabokgosi (Pty) Ltd, Thabo Maduna, used the Ixopo Career Day to share his journey from rural schooling in Harding to entrepreneurial success, explaining that his own experiences drive his commitment to uplifting rural learners. "These initiatives are extremely important to me because I am a product of a rural schooling system myself. I understand the challenges our learners face from limited resources to lack of exposure. Being able to share knowledge, provide support, and inspire hope is something I hold very close to my heart," he said.

Through outreach and educational support programmes in KwaZulu-Natal, he works closely with schools to provide guidance and motivation. As part of his ongoing efforts, Maduna announced his company's pledge to cover registration fees for the top five performing matric learners from rural schools each year, an initiative launched three years ago to ease the financial burden for deserving students. "My motivation stems from my own upbringing in Harding, Kwajali. I know what it's like to dream big with limited means. My

educational and professional journey has shown me the power of opportunities, and I want to be the bridge that connects deserving learners to theirs," he emphasised. Selected based on academic excellence, financial need, and teacher recommendations, this programme continues to grow each year, opening doors for rural youth to turn big dreams into reality.

For many learners, the Ixopo Career Day was life changing. Okuhle Mbatha from Siphapheme High School, who aspires to become a nurse, shared how the event shifted her perspective. She explained that coming from a rural area can sometimes make dreams feel distant, but the speakers gave her renewed hope. "Today I learned that there are so many opportunities out there if you work hard and know where to look. I've already applied for nursing at different institutions, and now I feel even more confident about my future," she said.

Similarly, Yolanda Ntaka from Sinevuyo Secondary School, who has applied for Radiography at DUT, described the career day as a turning point. She said it gave her the information she needed to plan ahead. "This career day gave me so much clarity. I now understand what steps I need to take and how to prepare myself. Hearing from people who have made it despite challenges motivates me to work even harder," she expressed.

SIHLE NZIMA

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DUT VIDEO TECHNOLOGY DEPARTMENT EMPOWERS YOUNG GIRLS AT GCINIMFUNDO SECONDARY SCHOOL



Pictured: DUT Team with Learners from Gcinimfundo Secondary School.

The Durban University of Technology's Department of Video Technology, in partnership with the Community Engagement Office, hosted the Empower Her Essentials outreach programme on Friday, 29 August 2025, at Gcinimfundo Secondary School in Malangeni, Ndwedwe.

The purpose of Empower Her Essentials Outreach is to uplift and inspire young girls by providing essential resources, motivational support, and career guidance to encourage confidence, personal growth, and future success.

The DUT team received a warm welcome from the school principal, Mr Chili, who expressed his gratitude for including Gcinimfundo in such a special initiative. He encouraged the learners to make the most of the day, saying: "These kinds of opportunities are very rare, so listen attentively and ask as many questions as you possibly can."

Opening the programme, Ms Irene Rajeshree John, Secretary of the Video Technology Department, highlighted the vision behind the initiative. "Our aim is to be in partnership with schools and communities because we believe that together we can shape a brighter future," she said. Ms John explained that the programme aligns with DUT's ENVISION2030, which imagines "a future where education, opportunity, and innovation empower every young person to reach their full potential." She added that the department's visit sought not only to introduce learners to opportunities in video technology, filmmaking, and scriptwriting but also to motivate them to see themselves as future leaders, innovators, and change-makers.

Motivational speaker and Video Technology lecturer, Mr Samuel Ntsanwisi, addressed the learners under the theme "Open Your Eyes and See." "Being alive and breathing is the greatest gift

Our aim is to be in partnership with schools and communities because we believe that together we can shape a brighter future where education, opportunity, and innovation empower every young person to reach their full potential.

– IRENE RAJESHREE

we have," he told them. Using the story of two hospital patients, one blind yet describing rivers and mountains to his bedridden friend, Ntsanwisi reminded the girls that perspective shapes reality. "It's not about the village you come from, but where you're going," he said. "Be like an eagle, see further than others, hold onto your vision, and don't let anything take it away." He further emphasised the importance of education, urging the learners never to leave DUT or any institution without a qualification. "Books and knowledge are treasures no one can take from you. People will always talk, but I prefer they talk while I'm moving forward."

The learners also heard inspiring testimonies from current DUT students. Video Technology student, Ms Alondwe Cele, shared her journey of navigating university life and reminded the girls of

the importance of focus and self-love. "You need to take care of yourself and always remember where you come from," she said.

Adding to the programme, Video Technology Lecturer, Mr Sicelo Nxumalo, gave learners a deeper understanding of video technology, highlighting the behind-the-scenes creativity of storytelling and the exciting career opportunities in the field.

Mr Sibongiseni Mthlana, a technician in the department, also shared his personal journey, inspiring learners by recounting how he pursued his studies in engineering despite coming from a humble background. He emphasised the value of perseverance, hard work, and belief in oneself, illustrating that success is possible regardless of one's starting point. His testimony reinforced the programme's message that determination and education can open doors to careers that once seemed out of reach.

The event also included a career guidance session, equipping learners with practical knowledge on applying to university, exploring different courses, and choosing careers that best align with their strengths and personalities.

The day concluded with the handing over of essential items to female learners in celebration of Women's Month, leaving the girls not only motivated but also supported in tangible ways as they pursue their dreams.

PHUMEZA MSONGELWA

DUT SCHOOL ENGAGEMENT TEAM HOSTED A SUCCESSFUL CAREER DAY AT SASTRI COLLEGE

The Durban University of Technology (DUT) School Engagement Project recently hosted a transformative Career Day on 6 September 2024, at Sastri College. The event drew participation from four local schools: Sastri College, Hunt Road Secondary School, Overport Secondary School, and Durban Girls Secondary School. The aim was to empower learners to take charge of their futures, and the impact of the event was noticeable, marking a significant step in guiding students toward their career paths.

Bérénice de La Croix, Project Manager of the DUT School Engagement Project, shared that the purpose of Career Day was to provide learners with the opportunity to become architects of their future. In small, diverse groups the learners actively engage with facilitators to explore their most urgent and alive career questions.

Nonhle Radebe, a Grade 11 learner from Overport Secondary School, shared her inspiring thoughts. "From this experience, I have learned that all successes stem from personal values and principles. You must be respectful and humble to everyone you meet, as you never know who might be important in the future. I have also learned the importance of knowing what you want in life and taking the necessary steps to achieve your goals. You must believe in yourself and have the

confidence and courage to chase your dreams," she explained.

Ms Rauwa Kallie, an educator from Hunt Road Secondary School, highlighted the importance of Career Day, saying that it was an excellent programme because it gave learners direct access to experienced professionals, broadening their understanding of career opportunities beyond what they had seen in newspapers or media. She added that she was optimistic that this exposure would help them become more focused, make informed decisions, and adjust their academic efforts towards their chosen careers.

Interacting with learners from different schools, Khanyisa Thusini, a Grade 11 learner from Hunt Road Secondary School shared her favourite sessions: Understanding The New World of Work and Building a Career Plan. She also added that choosing a career plan in this stage will help them make informed decisions, set realistic goals, and prepare for their future careers. She said that what she had learned from attending Career Day was that at this stage you can be whatever you want to be if you believe in yourself, have good grades, trust in yourself, and don't let others influence your decisions.

Facilitators from the Department of Marketing and Retail, Dr Faith Chibvura and Dr Tessa Reddy, shared strategies for building a career plan, emphasising the importance of connecting dreams with real, actionable steps. They highlighted key objectives, including understanding the importance of career planning,

creating a plan aligned with personal values, and developing leadership skills through goal setting, focus, and motivation.

They further said that individuals can explore various career opportunities, build their CVs, and gain relevant experience through job shadowing, clubs, and societies, ultimately bridging the gap between their aspirations and reality. They left the learners with a motivational message: "Remember, your career journey is yours to shape. Start taking small steps today, and you'll get closer to the career you want."

The learners showed immense interest in learning about careers, with many being exposed to fields they had previously not considered. The facilitators provided tips on choosing a career that aligns with individual strengths and passions. The engagement between facilitators and learners was exceptional, with learners attending in large numbers to gain understanding and explore potential career paths. This interactive session not only broadened their understanding of various careers but also empowered them to make informed decisions about their future.

Bérénice de La Croix, Project Manager of the DUT School Engagement Project said: "The DUT School Engagement Project Management team would like to thank their partners who make it possible to offer these educational opportunities: DUT, UKZN, IQRAA Trust, Victor Daitz Foundation and Albert Wessels Trust."

PHIWAYINKOSI SIBIYA

Pictured: Learners that attended the Career Day together with their teachers and facilitators at Sastri College.





DUT INSPIRES FUTURE SCIENTISTS AT THE THIRD ANNUAL SCIENCE SHOW IN ILEMBE DISTRICT

Pictured: High School learners participating on Professor Megandhren Govender practical experiments. Photographer: Khulasande Tshayile

The Durban University of Technology (DUT) Student Recruitment unit successfully hosted its Third Annual Science Show on Wednesday, 20 August 2025, at the Sibusisiwe Community Hall in Mandeni, iLembe District. The vibrant event attracted over 700 Grade nine and Grade 12 learners from eight different high schools aimed to encourage young people to pursue mathematics and science by showing them the exciting career opportunities available in the STEM fields.

The Science Show was directed by Student Recruitment Officer, Michael Zulu, who served as the Master of Ceremonies. The programme began with a warm welcome from the iLembe District official, Mr Madele, who thanked DUT and Mandeni Municipality for hosting the Science Show. He urged learners to seize the opportunity with seriousness, reminding them that this was their chance to learn more about their future paths.

Ward Councillor Mr Thwala also expressed gratitude to DUT for bringing the initiative to Mandeni, encouraging Grade 12 learners to remain focused and committed to their studies so they could secure admission into universities.

Highlighting the importance of the event, DUT Student Recruitment Manager, Mr Alex Mdletshe, explained that the Science Show was a response to the worrying decline in learners choosing science subjects. "This does not only affect DUT, it affects industries and the entire South African economy. If fewer learners do science, it creates a chain reaction – fewer science graduates, fewer skilled professionals, and eventually, higher unemployment because everyone ends up doing the same courses. We need more scientists, engineers, and innovators to balance our country's economy," Mdletshe explained. He assured learners that DUT was committed to guiding them toward better subject choices. "We are here to help you choose wisely and start building the foundation of your future," said Mdletshe.

Learners were further inspired by testimonies from students and alumni who had walked the same path. Tayyab Mohammad, a second-year Homeopathy student at DUT, reminded them that succeeding in science is possible, saying that with focus and hard work, it can be achieved.

One of the most powerful moments of the day came from DUT alumna, Zine Fikeni, now a Senior Manager for Environmental Health Services at King Cetshwayo Municipality. She shared her journey, explaining how studying for a Diploma in Environmental Studies at DUT changed her life. "Environmental health is not just a career, it is about solving real problems in our communities. If you take Mathematics and Science, your chances of finding meaningful work after graduating are very high because these careers are in demand," said Zine.

Among the many inspiring speakers who motivated the learners was DUT Chiropractic alumna, Dr Khanyi Khumalo. Her message reinforced the importance of science-related studies, as she shared how her career journey created opportunities and growth. She encouraged learners to remain committed to their studies, proving that a strong foundation in science can open doors to professional success.

Adding an element of excitement, Chemistry students Thobelani Radebe and Thubelihle Hadebe from the Faculty of Applied Sciences performed captivating live experiments. Learners watched in awe as the duo demonstrated chemical reactions and explained what studying Chemistry at DUT involves, showing that science is both practical and enjoyable.

The importance of mathematics was strongly underlined during the lively mathematics quiz competitions, which became one of the highlights of the Science Show event. The quiz was led by Professor Deonarain Brijlall from the Department of Mathematics at DUT, who challenged learners to think critically and apply their knowledge in real-time. Separate contests were held

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– ALEX MDLETSHE

for Grade 9 and Grade 12 learners, with each school nominating one representative. The atmosphere was electric as learners cheered for their peers in a fast-paced 20-minute challenge. In the end, the winners proudly walked away with Samsung tablets as their prizes, celebrating both their hard work and the value of mathematics in shaping future careers.

Grade 12 learner, Lethukuthula Malunga, from Udumo Secondary School, was thrilled after winning the Mathematics quiz. "I am very happy for this opportunity. It was an eye-opening event, and I am so grateful for the gift I received. This has motivated me even more, and next year I want to study Environmental Studies at DUT," he said.

Grade 9 learner, Anamile Manqele, from Mbuyiselo High School, also expressed her joy after winning the Maths quiz competition. "I used to doubt myself in Mathematics, but today has shown me that I can do it. I now know that next year I will choose the Science path," she said.

Zulu kept the audience engaged throughout the day by asking learners stimulating questions, encouraging interaction, and rewarding them with calculators to support their academic growth. His lively energy kept learners alert and motivated.

The event also showcased the future of technology through a presentation by Ebrahim Asmal from DUT, who introduced learners to the Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR). He demonstrated how robotics, artificial intelligence, and smart manufacturing are shaping industries, emphasising that these fields all depend on Mathematics and Science. Learners were fascinated when Asmal revealed two robots that acted like humans, proving that advanced technology is within reach for those who pursue STEM subjects.

The day concluded with an energetic and entertaining demonstration by Professor Megandhren Govender, whose interactive experiments wowed the learners. With humour and creativity, he showed that science can be both practical and fun. From unexpected reactions to exciting visual effects, his demonstrations brought the entire hall to life. Learners left not only informed but also inspired, with many remarking that they had never seen science presented in such an engaging way.

The event was further supported by the Faculty of Health Sciences, Faculty of Applied Sciences, Faculty of Engineering and the Built Environment, The Faculty of Accounting and Informatics, Student Admissions, and the Central Applications Office (CAO), who were present to provide learners with information about courses at DUT that require Mathematics and Science, as well as guidance on careers and the application process.

SINAMILE SITHOLE

DUT STUDENT BRINGS HOPE AND GUIDANCE TO UMZILIKAZI SENIOR SECONDARY SCHOOL LEARNERS

Siphamandla Asanda Mbatha, a third year Bachelor of the Built Environment in Construction Studies (Quantity Surveying) student from the Durban University of Technology (DUT) visited Umzilikazi Senior Secondary School, Newcastle in July 2025 as part of the UNI4ALL Programme supported by the DUT Community Engagement.

The initiative aims to assist grade 12 learners in applying for tertiary education, particularly through online platforms UNI4ALL not only supports learners with university applications but also provides DUT students with resources to offer career guidance and assist learners making informed decisions.

Mbatha, who hails from a rural area of Vryheid KwaNtobakhulu describes himself as someone passionate about helping others and breaking boundaries. "I love trying new things, especially those that seem impossible in my surroundings. I believe I was born for greater things, and that is why my mind is always searching for new ideas," he said.

Though this was his first time participating in the UNI4ALL Programme, Mbatha has been assisting learners in his community with university and college applications since enrolling with DUT in 2023. He explained the challenges many rural learners face: "Many learners in my area don't know what they want to study after matric. Instead, they want to find work. One of the biggest barriers is access to internet data and the knowledge required to complete online applications. This often leads to incomplete or error-filled submissions."

Mbatha's visit to Umzilikazi Senior Secondary School was well received by the learners, one learner shared their appreciation:

"Your presence was super helpful. You broke down complex concepts into manageable chunks, and I was able to keep up with my applications and understand more about the application process".

Looking ahead, Mbatha aims to establish an organisation dedicated to assisting Grade 12 learners who are unable to afford university



Pictured: Siphamandla Asanda Mbatha

application fees, a challenge he personally experienced. The DUT Community Engagement is excited about the potential of working with Mbatha again in upcoming community programmes, whether initiated by the office or inspired by his own ideas.

MTHETHELELI MEYIWA

I love trying new things, especially those that seem impossible in my surroundings. I believe I was born for greater things, and that is why my mind is always searching for new ideas.

– SIPHAMANDLA ASANDA MBATHA

DUT STUDENT WINS COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AWARD FOR SECOND CONSECUTIVE YEAR



Pictured: Sphelele Dlamini

Sphelele Dlamini, a third-year Marketing and Retail student at the Durban University of Technology (DUT) and founder of the Maswamhle Youth Development NPC, has once again been recognised for his outstanding commitment to community engagement.

At the Faculty of Management Sciences, Department of Marketing and Retail Annual Student Awards 2025, held on 8 August 2025 at the Hilton Garden Inn, Dlamini received the Community Engagement Award for his contribution to the UNI4ALL Project. Remarkably, this is the second year in a row that he has earned the accolade, having won the same award in 2024.

The UNI4ALL Programme, supported by the DUT Community Engagement Office, assists Grade 12 learners with their tertiary education applications, particularly through online platforms. The initiative not only helps learners navigate university entry requirements but also equips DUT students with the tools to provide career guidance, enabling learners to make informed academic and career decisions.

Reflecting on the award, Dlamini expressed his gratitude, "I was very happy upon receiving this award, because it shows that I am being recognised and that my work is being acknowledged as a student of the department."

He added that it was a special moment to share the evening with Ms Phumzile Xulu, DUT's Community Engagement Practitioner who oversees the UNI4ALL Programme.

"It came as a surprise to me when I saw Ms Xulu at the awards. I didn't know she was going to be there, but it made me very happy to see her."

Dlamini further extended his appreciation to the Community Engagement Office for its ongoing encouragement, "I would like to thank the DUT Community Engagement Office for the support they have given me throughout the years. The good communication between us has made me feel valued, not just myself, but also all the other students working with the CE Office. I really appreciate it."

Through his dedication and leadership, Dlamini continues to embody DUT's commitment to engaged scholarship, making a lasting impact on both the university and the wider community.

PHUMEZA MSONGELWA



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 and impactful university-community engagements. This newsletter seeks to highlight and showcase community engagement projects that have been initiated by staff and students as part of service learning, community-based research, scholarly service and community outreach or volunteering efforts. Showcasing these projects recognises staff, students and social partners for their exceptional commitment to community engagement in line with the DUT strategy, ENVISION2030.

The DUT Community Engagement invites you to report on community engagement activities by submitting articles for publication in the following newsletter (Quarter 4 2025) via the following link:

[Click here](#)

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