

DUT ENGAGED

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SOCIAL IMPACT NEWSLETTER

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SYDNEY KHANYILE: TURNING WATER LOSS INTO COMMUNITY ACTION

The Durban University of Technology (DUT) is pleased to spotlight Sydney Mandla Khanyile, a Master's in Chemical Engineering student from the Faculty of Engineering and Built Environment, whose work on water security earned him the ENVISION2030 Institutional Award.

Born on 11 January 2002 in the vibrant township of Alexandra, Johannesburg, Khanyile has built an impressive academic record that includes a Bachelor of Engineering Technology in Chemical Engineering, an Honours degree in the same discipline, and a Silver Medal from the South African Institution of Chemical Engineers for being the Best Chemical Engineering Student of 2023. He is also a proud GreenMatter Fellow, a distinction that reflects his dedication to sustainability.

Khanyile's award-winning initiative tackles one of South Africa's most pressing challenges: non-revenue water loss. The platform he helped design blends community reporting, digital analysis and a coordinated municipal response to spot leaks early and act swiftly. His motivation stems from the country's ongoing water crisis, where aging pipes and inefficient reporting waste billions of litres each year. By merging technology with grassroots involvement, Khanyile aims to create a solution that conserves water, empowers local residents and encourages youth participation in the stewardship of critical infrastructure.

What makes this project compelling is the way it translates academic research into tangible societal benefit. While serving as a research assistant on a Water Research Commission project under DUT's Green Engineering Research Group, Khanyile contributed to several conference proceedings, including presentations on innovative wastewater treatment systems in Midrand, Cape Town and Durban, as well as international forums in Denmark and Vietnam where he represented South Africa as part of the national innovation team. These experiences broadened his perspective and underscored the global relevance of his work.

The initiative also embodies DUT's ENVISION2030 strategic objectives. It promotes innovation in service of society, fosters entrepreneurial thinking, and advances sustainability and resilience. By building partnerships between the university, industry and municipal authorities, the project demonstrates how student-led efforts can drive economic development, create jobs and transform lives; core elements of DUT's mission. Khanyile's emphasis on collaborative problem-solving reflects the university's



Pictured: Deputy Vice-Chancellor: Research, Innovation and Engagement, Professor Fulfhelo Nemavhola acknowledging Sydney Khanyile at the ENVISION2030 Institutional Awards ceremony. Photographer: Khulasande Tshayile..

commitment to producing graduates who are both technically skilled and socially responsible.

The road to impact was not without obstacles. Moving from a conceptual idea to a real-world solution required earning the trust of municipal partners, who needed proof of technical viability and practical utility. Khanyile met this challenge by developing a functional prototype and seeking validation on international stages, notably being selected for the Denmark Data-Driven Water Challenge in 2024 and the P4G Summit in Vietnam in 2025. These milestones provided global exposure and credibility, turning skepticism into partnership and opening doors for further development.

Among the outcomes he is most proud of are the successful creation of a working prototype, the international recognition that has highlighted the project's potential, and the expressed interest from a major public utility to pilot the system. The initiative has also established a framework for skill development, showing how young engineers can meaningfully address infrastructure challenges and inspire future innovations. Through this award, Khanyile hopes to convey a simple yet powerful message: community engagement is not an add-on to education but its very heart, and when students collaborate with communities, they forge solutions that are both technically sound and socially just.

As the DUT community celebrates Khanyile's achievement, his story serves as a reminder that the pursuit of knowledge, when coupled with compassion and ingenuity, can generate lasting impact; locally, nationally and globally.

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DUT EMPOWERS YOUNG INNOVATORS AT THE 45TH ESKOM EXPO INTERNATIONAL SCIENCE FAIR



Pictured: The recipients of the Special Awards.

The Durban University of Technology (DUT), through its Technology, Transfer and Innovation (TTI) Directorate and the Community Engagement Office, proudly participated in the 45th Annual Eskom Expo International Science Fair (ISF) 2025, held at the Emperor's Palace Convention Centre in October 2025.

The Eskom Expo for Young Scientists is a science fair that provides a platform for learners to present their scientific investigations and innovative projects. Each year, top participants from 35 regions across South Africa advance to the prestigious International Science Fair, where they compete against the country's brightest young scientists as well as international participants. This year's ISF brought together 319 learners, selected from more than 17,000 participants who initially took part in regional, provincial, and district-level science fairs throughout the year.

DUT was among the proud sponsors of the event, presenting special awards and prizes to outstanding participants. The prizes included laptops, tablets, and the incubation of selected projects through a Technology Development Fund valued at R15,000 per project, awarded to nine deserving learners.

Among the standout winners was Grade 11 learner Zanele Witbooi from R.T. Mokgopa Secondary School in the Free State. Witbooi impressed the judges with her innovative project titled Glow-in-the-Dark Highway Paint,



Pictured: Grade 11 learner Zanele Witbooi, winner from R.T. Mokgopa Secondary School in the Free State.

which aims to reduce road accidents by using a special pigment that absorbs sunlight during the day and reflects it at night, thereby improving road visibility and safety. Her passion for finding practical solutions to everyday challenges earned her recognition as one of South Africa's promising young innovators.

"I wanted to help South Africa reduce the number of road accidents, so I came up with this idea. The paint absorbs light and then glows at night. It felt amazing to see my idea win. I was so excited; I can't even explain it, but I'm truly grateful," said Witbooi, who walked away with a tablet and a R15,000 Technology Development Fund from DUT.

Another exceptional winner was Itumeleng Chiloane, a learner from Unity Secondary School in the North West Province, who received the Grand Prize from DUT, a laptop for her outstanding project titled Investigating the Efficiency of the Use of AI Imagery Technique for Eye Diagnosis. Her project explores the use of artificial intelligence to detect diabetic retinopathy, a serious eye condition that often develops without noticeable symptoms. Itumeleng designed a website that allows users to upload retinal images for rapid analysis, providing diagnostic results in under 30 seconds and recommending medical consultation if signs of the disease are detected. Her innovation aims to improve early detection and accessibility to eye care, especially in communities with limited healthcare resources.

"I was inspired to develop this project because I was once diagnosed with an eye disorder similar to diabetic retinopathy. That experience motivated

“I was inspired to develop this project because I was once diagnosed with an eye disorder similar to diabetic retinopathy. That experience motivated me to raise awareness about eye health and help others through technology. I am truly honoured to have received this award from the Durban University of Technology, it inspires me to continue using science and innovation to make a positive impact.”

– ITUMELENG CHILOANE

me to raise awareness about eye health and help others through technology," said Chiloane. "I am truly honoured to have received this award from the Durban University of Technology, it inspires me to continue using science and innovation to make a positive impact."

Dr Farai Dziike from DUT's Technology, Transfer and Innovation (TTI) Directorate has been actively involved in supporting the Eskom Expo for the past two years. He began his involvement as a mentor and his mentorship helped learners develop innovative projects that went on to compete at regional and provincial levels.

This year, Dr Dziike served on the judging panel alongside Dr Thobela Bijela, where they were both inspired by the creativity, ingenuity, and determination displayed by young learners tackling real-life community challenges through science and technology.

"The level of innovation from these young learners is truly inspiring. They are proving that even from communities often overlooked, bright minds are rising and ready to shape a future driven by home-grown solutions and technological excellence," said Dr Dziike.

Adding to these sentiments, Phumzile Xulu, DUT's Engagement Practitioner, reflected on the university's broader role in fostering innovation and community impact. "I am truly inspired by the commitment our university continues to show in supporting young learners as they transform their creative ideas into tangible innovations. This initiative not only ignites curiosity in science and technology but also strengthens the bridge between academia and communities. Through the combined efforts of the Technology, Transfer and Innovation (TTI) Directorate and the Community Engagement Office, DUT is helping to cultivate a generation of socially conscious innovators who are equipped to address real-world challenges through science, creativity, and purpose," she said.

The participation of DUT in the Eskom Expo reflects the university's continued commitment to supporting young scientists, promoting innovation, and driving community engagement through science, technology, and education.

PHUMEZA MSONGELWA



Pictured: DUT Team with the recipients of the Special Awards.

DUT EMPOWERS LEARNERS THROUGH ACADEMIC SUPPORT WORKSHOP

The Durban University of Technology (DUT) hosted the 'Empowering Learners and Academic Support for All' workshop at Lugaju Secondary School in Impendle in October 2025, to support learners and teachers in improving academic performance and motivation.

Led by the Department of Finance and Information Management (FIM) under the Faculty of Accounting and Informatics, the initiative forms part of the FIM Community Engagement 2025 programme. It was developed in response to a major drop in the school's matric pass rate from 87.5% in 2023 to 46.7% in 2024. The workshop aimed to enhance teaching practices, boost learner engagement, and promote access to higher education.

In the Learning Strategies session, Mr Emanuel Matlala, a Lecturer in Finance and Information Management, introduced practical study and time management techniques that teachers

immediately embraced. "The strategies shared have already transformed the way I approach lessons," said a Lugaju teacher, highlighting the immediate impact of the training.

Mr Samuel Kwarteng, a Lecturer in Finance and Information Management, conducted a Career Guidance session that helped learners connect subject choices with future study and career goals. "This session gave us direction and helped us understand what to focus on for our careers," said a Grade 11 learner.

Dr Mbalehle Khumalo, a Lecturer and CAO Process Facilitator, guided learners through the Central Applications Office (CAO) process. "Now I know exactly how to apply for university," said another Grade 12 learner, describing the session as 'eye-opening'.

The workshop concluded with an awards and donations ceremony led by Mr Lyod Zingwe, a Finance and Information Management Lecturer, who recognised top-performing learners. "Celebrating excellence motivates continued

achievement," he said, as learners proudly received certificates and prizes.

Positive feedback and sustainable growth from learners described the workshop as 'motivating and enjoyable'. One of the Grade 12 learners described the session as eye opening, "Now I know exactly how to apply for university," he said. Teachers noted improved participation and enthusiasm from the learners, parents and community members praised the initiative for strengthening the bond between the school and the community and encouraging discipline and accountability among learners.

To ensure sustainability, the FIM team plans to continue progress monitoring, strengthen collaboration with parents and local education offices, and recognise outstanding learners annually. The school has also begun integrating workshop outcomes into its professional development plan.

SIHLE NZIMA

“Now I know exactly how to apply for university.”
– GRADE 12 LEARNER



Pictured: Legaju Secondary School Teachers, parents and learners. Photo supplied by Mr Samuel Kwarteng.

“This session gave us direction and helped us understand what to focus on for our careers.”
– MR SAMUEL KWARTENG



Pictured: Bambanani Primary School teachers and Learners, with DUT Team and IkusasaLentsha team.

BAMBANANI PRIMARY TRIUMPHS AGAIN AT THE 2025 BERGVILLE BOOKATHON

Song and dance echoed through the halls of Inkosi Nogaga Primary School as Bambanani Primary School claimed first place in the Bergville Literacy Programme Bookathon Competition for the second year in a row. The Bookathon, hosted by the Durban University of Technology (DUT) Community Engagement Office in partnership with DUT Library and IkusasaLentsha NPO, was held in November 2025 in Bergville and drew an enthusiastic audience of learners, teachers, and community members.

The event, part of the broader Bergville Literacy Programme is the Bergville Book Club, an initiative created to encourage reading with understanding among learners, an urgent priority in South Africa where national assessments continue to highlight significant challenges in literacy comprehension. By exposing learners to age-appropriate books and structured reading activities, the programme aims to cultivate meaningful engagement with texts and strengthen foundational literacy skills.

This year's event brought together learners from six participating schools: Bambanani, Intumbane, Sbavana, Vulamehlo, and newly added competitors Inkosi Masumpa and Inkosi Nogaga Primary Schools. Participants showcased their talents across five categories namely poetry writing, book review, short story writing, skits, and debate, all inspired by the books selected earlier in the year to promote creativity, comprehension, and critical thinking.

District English Subject Advisor, Mrs Mathonti, expressed deep appreciation for the programme and the collaborative partnerships



Pictured: Trophies and medals and a Laptop Prize for the Bergville bookathon.

“You took us into a world of books, and as a department with limited staff, your support has truly been our right and left hand. This initiative shows that it really does take a village to raise a child.”
– MRS MATHONTI

that make it possible. “It has been a long day, but a day well spent,” she said. “You took us into a world of books, and as a department with limited staff, your support has truly been our right and left hand. This initiative shows that it really does take a village to raise a child.” She commended the learners for their originality and confidence, adding, “What I saw today was a lifelong gift, creativity, confidence, and a real love for books. We are proud of this partnership and hope even more schools can be included in future.”

IkusasaLentsha Projects Coordinator, Mukelani Radebe, also praised the ongoing collaboration with DUT, highlighting the positive impact it continues to make in Bergville. “The 2025 Bookathon was truly exciting, and the schools we have been visiting since July showed great enthusiasm,” he said. He extended his gratitude to educators for their commitment to preparing learners and ensuring smooth participation across all categories. Radebe emphasised that the partnership has strengthened literacy development by deepening learners’ engagement with books, expanding their vocabulary, and building public-speaking confidence through debate. “DUT has supported us greatly, and we hope this partnership continues for many years to come,” he added.

Among the standout performers was Sbahle Hlatshwayo, a Grade 6 learner from Sbavana Primary School, who thrived in most of the categories, going home with numerous medals. Her achievement demonstrated both her dedication to learning and the growing confidence nurtured through the literacy initiative. Reflecting on her win, Sbahle said, “I worked very hard and practiced every day. Winning today makes me believe that reading can take me far. I am proud of myself and grateful for everyone who supported me.”



Pictured: Inkosi Nogaga Primary School teacher, with top three learners in the Spelling Bee Category, during the Bookathon.

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– SBAHLE HLATSHWAYO

The 2025 Bookathon once again highlighted the transformative power of literacy programmes in rural communities, reinforcing the shared commitment of DUT, IkusasaLentsha, and local schools to nurturing lifelong readers and confident young leaders. With growing

participation, strengthened partnerships, and rising learner excellence, the Bergville Literacy Programme continues to shine as a beacon of educational empowerment.

PHUMEZA MSONGELWA

DUT TRAINS 80 YOUNG WOMEN ON DRONE TECHNOLOGY

A total of 80 young women from Grades 9,10 and 11 received training on drone technology at the Durban University of Technology (DUT). They were part of a five-day RoboGirl 2025 programme which was hosted by the Departments of Information Technology and Electronic and Computer Engineering at DUT in partnership with Lenovo Southern Africa and Toyota South Africa.

This exciting initiative aimed to empower young women in technology and innovation was officially launched at the Moses Kotane Research Institute offices in Durban in December 2025.

At the launch, 80 young innovators from 16 high schools based in Durban and surrounding areas were in high spirits, excited to be part of this groundbreaking initiative. Each school was represented by five participants who competed in the Drone Technology Competition.

Delivering the welcome remarks Ms Jane Govindsamy, Corporate Social Investment (CSI) Champion at Lenovo Southern Africa said the launch marked a proud moment for the next chapter of a programme that will be transforming

the future of young women in technology.

“To our students, you are the heart of this programme. RoboGirl exists because we believe in your potential, your ideas, your talent, and your future. This platform is designed to expose you to robotics, coding, engineering, innovation while showing you that the world is wide open for you to explore. As we kick off RoboGirl 2025, we are excited to see your passion, your curiosity and incredible projects you will create. You are the next generation of problem solvers, leaders and innovators,” said Ms Govindsamy to the young women.

“ **This week, students will learn to design, build, and programme drones, mastering skills in electronics, coding, and mechanical design. These sessions are not just about technology, but also about teamwork, problem-solving and innovation.** ”

– MR MUBEEN SULEMAN

In his address, Mr Mubeen Suleman, Services Ops Support Manager at Lenovo Southern Africa said they believe at Lenovo technology should be an enabler for every learner, despite where they are from. He shared that their strategy focuses on bridging the digital divide, fostering science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) education and creating platforms for creativity and critical thinking.

“RoboGirl began in 2022 with a simple yet powerful vision to close the gender gap in STEM and empower young women to become future leaders in technology. Over the past three years, this programme has grown from coding and robotics to AI applications, and now, in 2025, we enter our fourth chapter, Drone Technology. This week, students will learn to design, build, and programme drones, mastering skills in electronics, coding, and mechanical design. These sessions are not just about technology, but also about teamwork, problem-solving and innovation,” shared Mr Suleman.

Mr Ebrahim Asmal, Head of Department in the Department of Information Technology at DUT said globally, women remain underrepresented in STEM fields. He indicated that this was not because

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Pictured: The 80 young innovators from 16 schools at the RoboGirl Media Launch. Photographer: S'bonelo Dlamini.



of ability, but because of barriers-social, cultural, and economic. “RoboGirl exists to break those barriers. We want every girl to know you belong in technology, you belong in innovation, and you belong in shaping the future,” said Mr Asmal.

In terms of what the programme offers, Asmal shared that students attended a three-day workshop where they were taught to design, build, and programme robots using industry-standard tools by Mr Imtiaz Haniff, a Senior Technician in the Department of Electronic and Computer Engineering at DUT.

“The girls are connecting with inspiring women and tutors in tech who have walked the path and are ready to guide them as role models and mentors. On Thursday and Friday the girls will be given the opportunity to innovate and develop a working drone which will be judged by a panel of esteemed judges and assessed and the results will be announced at a glitzy gala dinner at Elangeni Hotel. For those who excel, doors will open to internships, bursaries, and future careers in technology,” he said.

More than 50 educators also attended an Artificial Intelligence (AI), coding and robotics workshop from 08 December 2025 to 10 December 2025 at DUT in partnership with Lenovo Southern Africa.

In his message of support, Professor Matthys Swanepoel, Deputy Dean in the Faculty of Accounting and Informatics at DUT shared his eagerness in witnessing the young women designing and operating their own drones after their training. He believes the RoboGirl programme solidifies DUT’s commitment to shaping the technology landscape of KwaZulu-Natal.

Sharing similar sentiments, Ms Zama Dlamini, Acting Executive Manager in Development Services at Moses Kotane Research Institute said by providing structured mentorship and hands-on experience, the initiative fosters research-driven learning, knowledge creation, and skills development among young female learners. She said that this collaborative programme reflects a shared commitment to promoting research, advancing knowledge dissemination, and supporting community-centred innovation.

In closing Ms Subashnie Soobramoney from the Department of Information Technology at DUT said that through this initiative, DUT was not only nurturing future engineers, programmers, and technologists; but also nurturing problem-solvers, leaders, and changemakers who will contribute meaningfully to society.

SIMANGELE ZUMA



Pictured: Verulam Islamic School, winners of the RoboGirl 2025 announced at the gala dinner at the Southern Sun Elangeni Hotel.



Pictured: Professor Matthys Swanepoel, Deputy Dean in the Faculty of Accounting and Informatics, at the RoboGirl 2025 programme.

“The girls are connecting with inspiring women and tutors in tech who have walked the path and are ready to guide them as role models and mentors. For those who excel, doors will open to internships, bursaries, and future careers in technology.”
– MR IMTIAZ HANIFF



Pictured: The Umbono Project 2025 team, including industrial stakeholders: GroundTruth, EDTEA, and Edendale community representatives, and Water Engineering 2nd year students.

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

When the Civil Engineering Department at the Durban University of Technology (DUT) reflected on its Diploma in Civil Engineering Technology, one gap stood out: the absence of a Work-Integrated Learning (WIL) component. For many students, especially those from disadvantaged backgrounds, this meant that their studies offered limited exposure to real engineering environments.

In 2019, determined to change this, three dedicated lecturers in the Department of Civil Engineering – Dr Zesizwe Ngubane, Mr Shanley Hay, Dr. Luvuno Jele, and Mr. Jacob Adedeji; came together with a shared vision. They asked a simple but powerful question: What if students could learn by working directly with communities, solving real problems while building professional skills? From that idea, the Umbono Project was born.

“Umbono,” meaning “vision” or “idea” in isiZulu, has since grown into one of DUT’s most inspiring learning initiatives. It bridges the gap between theory and practice by using undergraduate research as a platform for hands-on, community-based learning. Through the project, students step outside the classroom to identify real challenges in nearby communities and design practical, sustainable engineering solutions.

“The moment they leave the classroom, you can see the transformation,” said Ngubane. “They start to understand that engineering is more than formulas and designs; it’s about people, purpose, and problem-solving.”

The Umbono Project has already made a meaningful impact through initiatives such as the Howick Bridge Project, where students assessed a deteriorating pedestrian bridge and proposed affordable, safe design improvements that caught the attention of local authorities. In another

project, students collaborated with environmental mentors on the Greater Edendale Wetland Restoration, learning how hydrology, ecology, and community engagement come together to protect natural spaces.

For students, these experiences have been eye-opening. Theory came alive in the field, and for the first time, they understood what it means to work with the community; not just for them. Many have also expressed how the project built their confidence, teamwork, and communication skills, attributes that are essential in the engineering profession.

For lecturers, Umbono has redefined what teaching can be. Instead of simply delivering content, they now act as mentors and facilitators, guiding students through research and encouraging them to take ownership of their learning.

“When students are trusted to explore and solve problems, they surprise you,” said Ngubane. “They become thinkers, innovators, and collaborators.”

The project’s strength also lies in its partnerships. Industry mentors and community leaders contribute valuable insights, ensuring that the work students do is both technically sound and socially relevant. Despite challenges such as limited resources, tight semesters, and occasional campus disruptions, the Umbono team has remained committed to its mission.

The initiative reflects DUT’s commitment to engaged learning and innovation for community impact. It promotes adaptability, entrepreneurship, and social responsibility; all while giving students a chance to see the real-world significance of their studies.

Looking ahead, the Civil Engineering Department aims to formalize Umbono as a recognised component of the diploma, aligning it more closely with Work-Integrated Learning and DUT’s innovation hubs. Strengthening ties with municipalities, businesses, and community organisations is also a key goal to ensure long-term sustainability.

What began as a creative response to a curriculum gap has grown into a model for transformative education. The Umbono Project has shown that when students are given space to connect learning with life, everyone benefits; the students, the university, and the communities they serve.

“Our students have proven that innovation doesn’t depend on resources alone. It begins with curiosity, compassion, and courage. Through Umbono, we’re not just teaching engineering; we’re nurturing change-makers who build hope,” said Ngubane.

PHUMEZA MSONGELWA

DUT HR MANAGEMENT DEPARTMENT PARTNERS WITH THE DEPARTMENT OF MARKETING AND RETAIL MANAGEMENT TO PROVIDE SKILLS DEVELOPMENT TO HOMELESS PEOPLE

Following the successful community engagement initiative centred on a critical human resources skills development workshop for the homeless in 2023, the Durban University of Technology's (DUT) Department of Human Resources Management recently partnered with the Department of Marketing and Retail Management to provide human resource management, labour law, entrepreneurship, and marketing skills to residents at the Kickstart Homeless Shelter in Durban.

Aligned with the DUT ENVISION2030 Values Framework, the workshops focused on making a meaningful impact in society through human resource management, labour law, entrepreneurship, and marketing skills to assist them in joining the workforce or starting small businesses and leaving the shelter and lives of poverty behind.

DUT lecturer Mrs Humairaa Mohammed coordinated the week-long programme, which included presentations by DUT lecturers on Entrepreneurship by Ms Patience Mutsvairigwa, Basic Labour Law by Mr Eugene Makhoba, Work Preparedness by Dr Pauline Eyono, Basic Marketing by Dr Tessa Reddy, and Dr Sandile Mkhize, as well as Values in the Workplace by Mr Kudzai Nigel Makuwe.

Speaking on this year's programme, Mrs Mohammed mentioned that in 2023, they focused on human resource management, labour law, and basic financial literacy. However, this time around, they decided to include entrepreneurship and marketing because some of the residents within the shelter are trying to start businesses or are talented and need to learn how to market themselves and their products.

"For example, one woman makes her own cleaning products, and another is an exceptional painter. They needed the skills to market themselves and their products. We partnered with the Department of Marketing and Retail Management for this request from the Shelter," she said.

She mentioned that this initiative shows the institution's commitment to giving back to the community and upskilling citizens who have no way of attaining formal education due to their circumstances.

"Those residents who are seeking jobs will benefit from our human resource management workshops, which teach them how to prepare for entry into the labour market, behave as professional employees, and understand their rights as employees. Those who are starting their own businesses will benefit from the lessons in entrepreneurship and marketing," said Mohammed.

She added that the participating residents will receive certificates of attendance from DUT, which they can include in their CVs, and can help them find employment, earn an income, and leave the shelter to lead normal lives as productive members of society.

THULASIZWE NKOMO



Pictured: Attendees at the workshop.

DUT STUDENTS EMBARK ON A VACCINATION OUTREACH AND HEALTH EDUCATION DRIVE AT THE DENNIS HURLEY CENTRE



Pictured: Students embarking on a community health initiative at the Dennis Hurley Centre.

The Infection Prevention and Control (IPC) 2025 students from the Durban University of technology (DUT) recently embarked on an important community health initiative at the Dennis Hurley Centre. Their mission for the day was twofold: to administer the first dose of the Euvax B hepatitis vaccine to staff members and to deliver a series of health education presentations.

The day began with careful preparation. Before any vaccine was administered, the students conducted pre-vaccination screenings, checking each staff member's health status, verifying medical history, and ensuring there were no contraindications. Once cleared, participants received their first dose of the hepatitis vaccine, administered safely under the supervision of qualified healthcare professionals. Every vaccination was meticulously documented, and staff members were given information about possible side effects as well as the date of the next dose. After receiving their injections, each person was observed briefly for any immediate reactions none of which occurred.

Alongside the vaccination clinic, the students also facilitated a lively health education session for both staff and patients. Using visual aids and interactive discussion techniques, they covered a wide range of crucial

topics: hepatitis, tuberculosis, HIV/AIDS, common skin infections among homeless populations, and essential hygiene practices. Their presentations were well received; participants expressed gratitude for the practical, accessible information that directly related to their daily lives and work.

Earlier on, the students returned to complete the next stage of the vaccination programme. With the same level of professionalism, they reviewed each participant's vaccination record, assessed for any adverse reactions from the first dose, and administered the second dose of the vaccine. The turnout was exceptional, every staff member who had received the first dose returned for the second. Updated documentation was completed, and students offered final counselling on booster schedules and overall vaccine series completion. Once again, post-vaccination monitoring ensured that all participants remained well after their injections.

The two-phase vaccination project, combined with targeted health education, strengthened disease prevention efforts at the Dennis Hurley Centre. It also provided the students with valuable real-world experience, reinforcing the importance of community health outreach and the positive impact that informed, compassionate healthcare can have on vulnerable populations.

PHIWAYINKOSI SIBIYA

DUT AND KZN DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION STRENGTHEN STUDENT READINESS THROUGH SATAP PARTNERSHIP

The Durban University of Technology (DUT) is redefining how universities support student success through its Access for Success Project, one of the institution's major Big Rocks initiatives spearheaded by the Centre for Excellence in Learning and Teaching (CELT). Central to this project is the Standardised Assessment Tests for Access and Placement (SATAP), an important diagnostic tool used by some academic departments to assess students' academic preparedness.

SATAP serves two critical functions. It helps departments identify the academic strengths and weaknesses of enrolled students, enabling targeted Learning, Teaching and Assessment (LTA) interventions; and it supports departments in placing students according to discipline-specific requirements. Because these tests influence early academic support and student placement, ensuring that they remain valid, reliable, and reflective of current educational realities is essential.

Recognising that students' learning experiences begin long before entering university, DUT sought to strengthen alignment between higher education expectations and the basic education system. This led to the establishment of a significant partnership with the Department of Education (DoE) in Pietermaritzburg (PMB). High school teachers from the PMB district were purposively selected to review SATAP tests and contribute directly to the development of new assessment items.

This collaboration has proven invaluable. Teachers brought first-hand knowledge of the school curriculum, current pedagogical approaches, and learner capabilities, allowing DUT to refine its diagnostic tools in ways that are realistic, relevant, and grounded in the lived experiences of South African learners. At the same time, teachers gained deeper insight into university readiness expectations, enabling them to better prepare learners for the transition to higher education.

Acting CELT Director, Dr Shoba Rathilal, emphasised that this initiative is deeply rooted in DUT's Philosophy of Education and its commitment to Quad Helix partnerships. By involving academia, government, communities, and other stakeholders, the university ensures that its teaching and learning strategies are informed by diverse expertise and grounded in social relevance. "Bringing teachers into the development process enriches our assessments and strengthens our understanding of where students come from," she noted.

The collaborative nature of the partnership is captured in the conference paper emerging from the project, which highlights how high school teachers contributed meaningfully to enhancing the validity and reliability of the SATAP tests. The paper also demonstrates how such collaborations can serve as a model for broader school-university partnerships aimed at improving student outcomes.

SATAP results often reveal disparities between what learners encounter in high school and what is expected at university, especially in foundational academic literacies such as numeracy, scientific reasoning, and discipline-specific skills. By identifying these gaps early, departments can offer targeted interventions that significantly improve academic performance and student retention. This approach moves beyond traditional narratives that blame Basic Education for underprepared students; instead, it promotes shared responsibility and constructive collaboration.



Pictured: Partnership meeting with PMB District DoE officials (made of educators from Howick high, Zululwazi Secondary, Umthoboqo High and Georgenau Combined School) and DUT CELT Team (made of SATAP test project coordinator, Teaching and Learning Development Practitioner, and unit administrators).

One of the project's early challenges involved aligning university expectations with the realities of the school curriculum. Ensuring that the assessments did not drift too far from what learners were taught required open dialogue and continuous engagement. This was achieved through collaborative workshops and review sessions, where teachers and DUT staff co-developed test items and collectively reflected on curriculum alignment. The result is a set of diagnostic tools that both sectors feel ownership of, and which more accurately capture student readiness.

Looking forward, the initiative is set to expand into a broader ecosystem of support. Future plans include continued collaboration with DoE schools in Pietermaritzburg, joint curriculum discussions, professional development opportunities for teachers informed by SATAP findings, and district-level engagement strategies. There is also strong potential to use SATAP data to inform long-term educational interventions at both school and university levels.

Ultimately, this project demonstrates that meaningful community engagement thrives when universities build genuine partnerships rather than one-way outreach initiatives. By valuing the expertise of high school teachers and education officials, DUT is strengthening its assessment practices, enhancing student readiness, and contributing to the wider transformation of the education landscape. Through sustained collaboration and shared learning, the Access for Success Project stands as a powerful example of how institutions can jointly drive educational innovation and improve student success across sectors.

PHUMEZA MSONGELWA



DUT SCHOOL ENGAGEMENT CLUBS CELEBRATED FOR BEING CHANGEMAKERS

Pictured: Social Entrepreneurship Clubs and Peace Clubs at the 2025 graduation ceremony. Photographer: S'bonelo Dlamini.

The Durban University of Technology (DUT) School Engagement Project hosted a successful Social Entrepreneurship Clubs and Peace Clubs graduation ceremony at the Sastri College main hall. The event aimed to congratulate club members who achieved at least 70% attendance, completed the full curriculum requirements, and were change makers in their school communities.

The event drew participation from six local schools: Sastri College, Hunt Road Secondary School, Overport Secondary School, Durban Girls Secondary School, Dr JL Dube High School and Bechet High School.

Project Chair, Mr Zwakele Ngubane, delivered the opening remarks, acknowledging partners and sponsors for their important role in making the project a success. He further recognised the Project Manager of the DUT School Engagement Project, Bérénice de La Croix for being the heart of the entire project.

“The school engagement project is the brainchild of Ms. Bérénice de La Croix. Through her various experiences, she is the one who approached me at the DUT Advancement and Alumni Relations office to explore the possibility of hosting such a project in 2017. In 2018, we were able to kickstart the project. The reason I was convinced about the need to launch this project is because I had understood that there was a gap between high school education and the transition to tertiary education, but we did not know how to really address this and so this project for me seemed like one of the interventions we could pilot,” he explained.

DUT School Engagement Project Manager, Ms Bérénice de La Croix, then shared the purpose of the day, which was to celebrate the young leaders who have dedicated themselves to being the change their communities need.

“Our main purpose today is to celebrate the achievements of our young leaders. Everybody here today has been working the whole year in completing their curriculum in the Peace Club or the Social Entrepreneurship Club. They have attended at least 70% of their tutorials and they have been learning the skills of peace building, social justice and social entrepreneurship in practice. During this period, they did a community needs analysis and then decided on a project

that they really felt could enhance their school community,” she explained.

IsiZulu first additional language teacher, Ms Slindile Cele from Hunt Road Secondary believes the School Engagement Project was a valuable initiative that had strengthened the relationship between school and learners.

“The project provided meaningful opportunities for learners to develop skills beyond academics, such as leadership, collaboration, creativity and social responsibility,” said Cele.

At the graduation event, each Peace Club and Social Entrepreneurship Club had the opportunity to do their final presentation focusing on impact achieved in 2025. A certification ceremony then followed, during which learners were awarded certificates of achievement for their full participation in the 2025 DUT School Engagement Project, with the hope of inspiring them to continue doing more in the future.

Grade 11 learner, Amahle Mkhonza from Sastri College and a member of the Social Entrepreneurship Club Trailblazers, explained the project as an eye opener and one that would shape her future.

“Through this experience, I developed valuable skills in financial management, marketing, and teamwork, while learning the importance of adaptability and creative problem-solving in a fast-paced environment. I’m proud of what we accomplished and believe it will have a lasting impact. Through this project we have learned to work with each other in a civil manner with the help of our amazing tutors. We thank the DUT for this amazing programme where learners can come together and do amazing work for the community at large,” said Mkhonza.

THUBELIHLE DUMAKUDE

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– AMAHLE MKHONZA



Pictured: DUT's Phumzile Xulu, Dr Lekoa, Mrs Xoliswa Cele, Mr L.F. Mbongwa, Dr Zungu, Dr Hloma, S.R. Ngcobo and Mr Ntsanwisi with the recipients of awards.

CELEBRATING IMPACT: DUT HONOURS ITS DEDICATED COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT VOLUNTEERS

The Durban University of Technology (DUT) Community Engagement Office hosted its annual Volunteer Appreciation Day on 21 November 2025 at the DUT Hotel School. Themed “Beyond the Classroom: Building Change Together,” the event honoured the invaluable contributions of student volunteers and staff who champion the university’s diverse community engagement initiatives.

The Community Engagement Office collaborates closely with all DUT faculties to deliver programmes that not only enrich students’ academic and professional development but also address pressing social challenges in surrounding communities. Volunteers remain at the heart of these efforts; serving as ambassadors of DUT’s commitment to positive societal impact.

Guests were warmly welcomed by SR Thembeni Ngcobo from the Faculty of Health Sciences; whose opening remarks highlighted the spirit of unity and shared purpose that underpins DUT’s community engagement efforts.

In his opening address, Dr Nkululeko Zungu, Engagement Coordinator in the Faculty of Management Sciences, outlined DUT’s holistic

“Without our volunteers, engagement would be impossible. You are the bridge between the university and our communities, and the knowledge you bring back helps shape our research, our teaching, and the future we are building through the ENVISION2030.”
– DR NKULULEKO ZUNGU

approach to integrating community engagement with teaching, learning, and research. He emphasised that meaningful engagement begins with understanding community needs, building strong partnerships, and developing projects that produce tangible outputs – including research, curriculum enhancement, and social innovation. Dr Zungu expressed gratitude to volunteers for representing DUT with dedication and integrity, noting their essential role in advancing the goals of ENVISION2030.

“Without our volunteers, engagement would be impossible. You are the bridge between the university and our communities, and the knowledge you bring back helps shape our research, our teaching, and the future we are building through the ENVISION2030,” he said.

“Our students become active and relevant citizens when they understand the world around them. Community engagement is not an extra task – it is the heartbeat of higher education, because our research, our teaching, and even our titles are shaped by the communities that taught us.”
– DR MAMMUSA LEKOA

Delivering the keynote address, Dr Mammusa Lekoa, Social Engagement Consultant at Bioepidem Research Consultants, presented an insightful talk titled “How Institutions of Higher Learning Can Nurture Active, Engaged, and Responsible Citizens.” She highlighted the importance of community engagement in producing socially conscious, relevant, and adaptive graduates. Dr Lekoa stressed that engagement is strengthened when classroom learning connects with real societal issues and when communities are recognised as co-creators of knowledge. She also cautioned that without sustained institutional support, engagement risks becoming a mere checklist item rather than a transformative element of higher education.

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titles are shaped by the communities that taught us,” said Dr Lekoa.

Stakeholders who work closely with the Community Engagement Office also delivered messages of support. These included Mrs Xoliswa Cele, Chief Education Specialist (Mahlabathini CMC); Mr Sandile Khanyile, DUT Risk Officer; and Mr L.F. Mbongwa, Chief Education Specialist (Bergville CMC). Their reflections highlighted the lasting impact of community-based projects and the value of partnerships that prioritise social upliftment.

Speaking on behalf of Uni4All volunteers, Samkelo Gumede, a student from the School of Education under the Faculty of Arts and Design, expressed heartfelt appreciation for DUT’s community engagement programmes. He described them as life-changing experiences that broadened his understanding of leadership, service, and empowerment. He extended gratitude to all speakers and acknowledged the guidance of Dr Lekoa, as well as the unwavering

support of Community Engagement Office, whose commitment reflects DUT’s Living Values. Gumede noted that the event’s theme served as a reminder that meaningful education extends beyond lecture halls.

“Uni4All has taught me that real education happens not only in our lecture rooms, but in how we serve, lead, and uplift our communities. Progress means nothing unless we lift others with us,” he said.

The day concluded with a warm vote of thanks from Ms Nonhlanhla Nyandeni, Community Engagement Administrator, who expressed deep appreciation to all staff and student volunteers for dedicating their time, skills, and talents to serving communities. She also extended her gratitude to colleagues in the Community Engagement Office, acknowledging their teamwork, resilience, and unwavering commitment.

PHUMEZA MSONGELWA



Pictured: Guests from the Bergville CMC.

IKUSASALENTSHA NAMED AMONG 1 000 BENEFICIARIES OF AVBOB ROAD TO LITERACY CAMPAIGN

Ikusasalentsha has been named among 1 000 winning non-profit organisations (NPOs) selected as beneficiaries of the national AVBOB Road to Literacy campaign, one of South Africa's most extensive mobile library initiatives aimed at improving literacy and numeracy at foundation phase level.

Ikusasalentsha is a Bergville-based non-profit organisation focused on advancing education, youth development and literacy in rural communities. The organisation is driven by a collective of committed members, some of whom are Durban University of Technology (DUT) students, alumni, and staff members, strengthening its connection to higher education and community engagement initiatives.

The organisation entered the competition following a nationwide call for nominations for the AVBOB Road to Literacy campaign and submitted a collective motivation in support of its work.

Confirmation of their selection was received in October 2025, when the organisation was officially informed that it had been chosen as one of the beneficiaries of the AVBOB Road to Literacy campaign.

Implemented in partnership with Oxford University Press Southern Africa (OUPSA), the AVBOB Road to Literacy campaign addresses South Africa's ongoing challenges of low literacy and numeracy levels among young learners by providing culturally and linguistically relevant learning materials in all eleven official written languages. The books are aligned

with the CAPS curriculum and are designed to support early reading and numeracy development during the critical foundation phase.

As part of the award, Ikusasalentsha received a mobile trolley library comprising 500 books for primary school learners from Grades R to Grade 7. The organisation plans to distribute the books to schools participating in the Book Club initiative under the DUT Bergville Literacy Programme. The top-performing school in the 2025 Bookathon competition will receive the trolley library together with an additional 100 books, while five other participating schools will each receive 80 books. Distribution is expected to take place in January 2026, with final dates currently being confirmed.

Speaking on the achievement, Mukelani Radebe, a member of Ikusasalentsha and DUT staff member at the Electrical Power Engineering Department, said, "We are grateful for our partnership with the DUT's Community Engagement Unit, which made our participation in the AVBOB Road to Literacy campaign possible. Receiving a trolley library with 500 books is a meaningful achievement for Ikusasalentsha and the Bergville community, and it strengthens our commitment to promoting literacy."

By being named among the 1 000 beneficiaries, Ikusasalentsha continues to strengthen its commitment to improving early literacy and numeracy, contributing to broader national efforts to ensure that young learners are given a strong foundation for future academic success.

PHUMEZA MSONGELWA



Pictured: Members of IkusasaLentsha at Inkosi-Masumpa Primary School during the activation of the 2025 Bergville Literacy Programme in June 2025. Inkosi-Masumpa is one of the primary schools participating in the programme.



Pictured: The members of the Men Carve, supporters and partners celebrated its fifth anniversary at the third annual gala dinner. Photographer: S'bonelo Dlamini.

THE MEN CARVE CELEBRATED FIVE YEARS OF EMPOWERING YOUTH AND TRANSFORMING COMMUNITIES

The Men Carve Organisation celebrated its fifth anniversary by reflecting on its impactful work in promoting positive masculinity, mental wellness, gender equality, and youth empowerment through a range of community programmes.

In his opening remarks, Mr Lubabalo Mbiko welcomed everyone to The Men Carve fifth Anniversary gala celebrating, expressing appreciation and gratitude for the long journey that led to this milestone. He invited guests to greet one another and shared the joy of celebrating five years of meaningful service to the community. Mbiko thanked all The Men Carve members, and supporters for their continued contribution, noting that the event would not be a success without their gracious presence.

Musawenkosi Ngcongco, the keynote speaker started by introducing the theme: "Redefining manhood for safer and healthier society". He continues emphasising the need for a society where power is not misused, and the guidance of men in leading with courage and dignity. The keynote speaker highlighted the common

“Workshops on gender stereotypes and mental health education are mentioned as practical efforts in reshaping men’s attitudes. We must teach men that true strength lies in empathy, respect, and the ability to recognise responsibility.”

– MR MUSAWENKOSI NGCONGO

knowledge that The Men Carve initiative is praised for its transformational vision of redefining masculinity, moving beyond harmful stereotypes to foster self-awareness, empathy, and respect.

Ngcongco further emphasised, "Workshops on gender stereotypes and mental health education are mentioned as practical efforts in reshaping men’s attitudes. We must teach men that true strength lies in empathy, respect, and the ability to recognise responsibility."

The Deputy Dean of the Faculty of Accounting and Informatics, Professor Thus Swanepoel, praised the progress of The Men Carve mission in reshaping societal discourse and recognising the vital role women play in driving change. Professor Swanepoel emphasised

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the importance of confronting social challenges such as gender-based violence and fostering a culture of respect and inclusiveness. He further urged sponsors and stakeholders to continue supporting The Men Carve initiative, highlighting that their contributions have a long-term impact on vulnerable students and on shaping future male leaders committed to reducing gender-based violence and societal inequality.

Among the speakers who shared messages of support from partner organisations were representatives of Internet Society South African Chapter; Mr Mondli Mungwe, Like a Rainbow; Ms Zamasondaba Mashiyane, Fulfil Consulting; Mr Bradford Wills; and Dr Crispin Hemson. They each offered warm words of encouragement, acknowledging how The Men Carve has grown and urging the organization to continue striving forward.

The Food Parcel Coordinator, Event Coordinator and Donor Relations office; Mr Mandlakayise Nkosi, delivered a crucial passage about the importance of humility, empathy and reflected on greatness of applied humanity.

Using a metaphorical analogy, he describes how our perspective of mountains appears differently depending on our individual proximity to greatness. He explained that when we are closer to them, they tend to disappear, just like unrecognised greatness or success. Our contributions towards a healthy living society may seem small or insignificant but stepping back and gaining a greater perspective reveals its true magnitude. Mr. Nkosi encouraged the audience to recognise and appreciate the greatness in their own lives and the opportunities they may often be overlooked or taken for granted.

Mr Nkosi emphasised the importance of grounding the work of the organisation in its guiding principles. He reminded attendees of the vision and mission, "To create a safer environment for women and girls, and ensure all males promote respectful manhood. The mission, to plant the seed of positive attitudes and behaviours toward women, girls, and marginalised groups while challenging the misuse of power perpetuate gender inequality, and to challenge the misuse of power." He noted

that meaningful change begins with individual responsibility, consistent effort, the fostering of respect, empathy, and accountability among men is essential in creating safer communities.

Ms Runyararo Murima a member of Men Carve, announced the awards for sponsors and appreciation awards for members of the organisation: Bradford Wills, Zamasondaba Mashiyane, Msawethu Ngcobo, Ndumiso Mthethwa, Minenhle Mvune, Anelisiwe Tengimfene, Nomzamo Mashiyane, Linda Zikhali, and Mandlakayise Nkosi.

Acting president of The Men Carve Organisation, Ms Anelisiwe Tengimfene in her closing remarks expressed deep gratitude to everyone who contributed to the journey, emphasising the spirit of community, mentorship, and shared purpose that made their work possible. "I acknowledge the dedication of this young team, the unwavering support of our partners, and the sense of belonging that each person brings into this space," she concluded.

PHIWAYINKOSI SIBIYA

Pictured: Men Carve team celebrating their fifth-year anniversary.





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 1 2026) via the following link:

[Click here](#)

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