DUT
DURBAN UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY
INYUVESI YASETHEKWINI YEZOBUCHWEPHESHE

STUDENT GOVERNANCE



WOMEN'S EDITION
NEWSLETTER
SPECIAL EDITION

"STORIES OF WOMEN BRAKING BARRIERS. INSPIRING CHANGE. EMPOWERING OTHERS"

ENVISION2030

transparency • honesty • integrity • respect • accountability
fairness • professionalism • commitment • compassion • excellence

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CELEBRATING WOMEN, HONOURING HERITAGE, INSPIRING FUTURES





As we celebrate Heritage Month, the Student Governance and Development Unit reflects on the values, cultures, experiences and stories that shape who we are and the communities we build.

This edition shines a light on the journeys of inspiring women within our DUT community whose stories reflect resilience, courage, leadership, service and determination. Their experiences remind us that our heritage is not only about where we come from, but also about the values we carry forward and the legacy we create for those who come after us.

From interns and student leaders to administrators and professionals, these women continue to make a meaningful difference in the lives of students, colleagues and communities. Their stories celebrate diverse backgrounds, personal journeys and the strength that comes from embracing who we are.

As we honour our heritage, we celebrate the people who continue to shape our present and inspire our future. Their stories remind us that our past gives us roots, our experiences give us strength, and our vision gives us purpose.

Celebrating women. Honouring our heritage. Inspiring futures.

A CAREER ROOTED IN COMPASSION, RESILIENCE AND STUDENT DEVELOPMENT: MS THOKOZANI SIBONGILE SIBIYA'S JOURNEY OF COMPASSION, RESILIENCE AND LEADERSHIP

MS Thokozani Sibongile Sibiya, Student Governance Officer within the Student Governance and Development Unit at Durban University of Technology (DUT), has dedicated more than two decades to supporting students, developing young leaders and contributing to a positive university environment.

Over the years, Ms Sibiya has served in various roles at the institution, including as a Cultural Officer, before moving into her current position in Student Governance. She holds a Bachelor of Social Science in Social Work and a Master of Arts in Public Policy, qualifications that have strengthened her understanding of social development and the challenges faced by individuals and communities.

Ms Sibiya grew up in Pietermaritzburg, in Imbali Unit 13. Her experiences of apartheid and the injustices suffered by her family had a profound influence on her life and initially inspired her to pursue a career in law. However, as she grew older, she realised that her desire to pursue law was partly driven by anger and a desire for revenge against the injustices of the time. This realisation led her to social work, allowing her to channel those experiences into a profession focused on supporting and developing people.

Her passion for working with young people began during her university years when she became involved in the Students' Health and Welfare Centres Organisation (SHAWCO). Through the organisation, she participated in community outreach programmes, including mobile health clinics and tutoring at schools in local townships.

"My love for working with young people – nurturing and developing – only grew from that point on," she says.
After briefly practising as a social worker, an opportunity arose at the then M L Sultan Technikon, which Ms Sibiya embraced. This marked the beginning of a career in higher education that would span more than 20 years.

The transition was not without challenges. As a young graduate, she encountered cases that were often overwhelming, particularly given the socio-economic difficulties faced by students.



These experiences, however, helped shape her understanding of student needs and strengthened her approach to supporting young people. Today, Ms Sibiya provides support to student governance structures, including the Student Representative Council (SRC), while also contributing to developmental programmes aimed at empowering students and student leaders.

For her, student governance is not simply about leadership structures. It is about developing responsible individuals and ensuring that DUT's Living Values are reflected in the everyday lives of students. One of the most rewarding aspects of her work is witnessing the transformation of students as they progress through their university journeys.
"It has to be seeing the evolution in a student as you walk their journey with them," she says.

She is particularly humbled when former students recognise her in public and remind her of the role she played in their success.
"I am always humbled when a past student recognises me in the street and reminds me of how I was a part of their current success," she reflects.

Over the years, she has watched many student leaders mature into respected professionals and leaders in their industries. While she is proud of the various initiatives undertaken by the Student Governance and Development Unit,

,community engagement remains particularly close to her heart, especially the Unit's engagements with schools. Ms Sibiya's career has also taught her the importance of resilience.

She describes uncertainty and instability in the workplace as some of the most difficult experiences she has faced. During challenging periods, however, she has remained focused on the bigger picture and refused to allow circumstances to compromise her principles and values.

"My mantra has always been that we are all on a mission and we all need one another – students and staff – for its successful completion," she says.
Her approach to mentorship is similarly rooted in respect and compassion. Ms Sibiya believes that every interaction with a student presents an opportunity to contribute to their development.
"**I consider every contact or engagement with a student a developmental and mentoring opportunity, so I never miss an opportunity to leave an impression,"** she says.

She believes that anyone working in student governance and development should possess qualities such as compassion, resilience, integrity, accountability, honesty and humility.

For Ms Sibiya, the impact of student development can be seen in the changing calibre of student leaders and the increasingly positive institutional culture at DUT. She is encouraged by the growing participation of students in activities outside the classroom, which contribute to positive student life and personal enrichment.

She believes that the work being done in governance, development, entrepreneurship and culture is increasingly visible both within the university and in the wider national, continental and international spaces where DUT students and graduates are making their mark. When her work becomes challenging, Ms Sibiya draws motivation from knowing that simply being present can make a difference in a student's life.

"It has to be that showing up could be just what a student needed at that precise moment," she says. Her advice to students aspiring to become effective leaders is to remain visionary, value diversity, be willing to learn, demonstrate integrity and ethics, show compassion, communicate effectively and remain accountable. For young professionals considering a career in higher education and student affairs, she offers an honest perspective.

"Student affairs is not for everyone nor is it for the faint-hearted," she says. She believes the field requires resilience and genuine passion, but also offers the opportunity to make a meaningful difference in the lives of young people. Reflecting on her career, Ms Sibiya identifies one important lesson she wishes she had learned earlier: **"The right decision can be the wrong one if it is too late."**

Ms Thokozani Sibongile Sibiya's journey is a testament to the power of resilience, compassion and service. From growing up in Imbali Unit 13 and experiencing the injustices of apartheid, to discovering her passion for social work and dedicating more than two decades to higher education, her career has remained centred on people.

Through her work in student governance, mentorship and community engagement, she continues to contribute to the development of confident, responsible and capable young leaders at DUT.

Written by Lwazi Chiliza

FINDING PURPOSE THROUGH SERVICE: MS ATHENKOSI MDALA'S JOURNEY IN STUDENT DEVELOPMENT.

MS Athenkosi Mdala, an Intern in the Student Governance and Development Unit at Durban University of Technology (DUT), is a young professional whose journey reflects resilience, advocacy and a deep commitment to supporting young people.

Ms Mdala has been part of the DUT community since 2021, with a two-year period spent pursuing opportunities outside the institution. Her relationship with DUT extends beyond her current professional role. She has experienced the institution as a student, student leader, Residence Advisor and now as a professional working in student development. Growing up in KwaZulu-Natal, with part of her childhood spent in the Eastern Cape, Ms Mdala describes her upbringing as loving and supportive. However, it was her university experience that played a significant role in shaping the person she is today.

University exposed her to people from different backgrounds and helped her understand that many young people face challenges that are not always visible to those around them. Her own experiences with financial challenges and navigating life away from her parents strengthened her empathy and desire to support others. **"I realised that sometimes people are carrying challenges that you cannot see, and that strengthened my desire to understand, support and advocate for young people,"** she says.

Ms Mdala's passion for working with young people developed through her involvement in student leadership. She served as a House Committee member before becoming an SRC member and eventually taking on the role of Social and Welfare Officer.

Ms Mdala's passion for working with young people developed through her involvement in student leadership. She served as a House Committee member before becoming an SRC member and eventually taking on the role of Social and Welfare Officer. These experiences showed her that student development extends beyond academic achievement. Students also require social, personal and emotional support as they navigate university life.



Her career journey has taken her through several sectors. After graduating, she worked as a Procurement Intern at Rhodes Food Group, but soon realised that the role did not align with her passion for working with people. She returned to DUT, where she worked as an Administrative Assistant and Residence Advisor before moving to Gauteng. There, she worked as a Programme Coordinator at OUT LGBT Wellbeing, facilitating training and workshops on issues affecting the LGBTI community, sexual and reproductive health, gender-based violence, and sex, gender and sexual orientation.

She later worked as a Research Administrative Assistant at Wits Health Consortium, gaining experience in research relating to students and sexual and reproductive health. Despite these diverse experiences, Ms Mdala eventually realised that her sense of purpose remained strongly connected to students and student development. Her return to DUT brought her professional journey full circle.

Today, she contributes to programmes focused on developing student leaders across structures such as the SRC, Student Parliament, clubs and societies, Living Values Champions and the Vuna Academy.
For Ms Mdala, the most rewarding part of her work is witnessing students grow.

"There is something incredibly fulfilling about seeing a student start as a House Committee member, develop their confidence and leadership abilities, and eventually progress to other leadership positions," she says.

One experience that broadened her outlook was being selected as part of a DUT delegation to China through a South African youth leadership programme. The opportunity exposed her to different leadership structures and approaches to student development. More importantly, the experience challenged her to think beyond the limitations she had placed on herself.
"It made me realise that I could go much further than I had imagined. It taught me not to think small," she reflects.

Another achievement that holds special meaning for Ms Mdala is being awarded the Hlomisa Scholarship. For her, the scholarship represents more than financial assistance. It has provided opportunities for academic, professional and personal development while connecting her with other aspiring leaders.
"Being a Hlomisa Scholar is not simply an achievement I can put on my CV. It is a responsibility to use the opportunities I have been given to grow myself and, in turn, create opportunities for others," she says.

Her journey has not been without challenges. As a young woman entering leadership and professional spaces, particularly in environments influenced by patriarchy, she experienced situations where her abilities and place in leadership were questioned. She has also navigated financial challenges, contract-based employment and workplace difficulties. These experiences taught her the importance of speaking up, seeking support and handling challenges professionally. Most importantly, they reinforced her belief that other people's perceptions should never determine how far a person can go.

Ms Mdala credits her parents, including her late father, as important influences in her life. Her father taught her that being a woman should never mean standing behind someone else and encouraged her to recognise her own worth and potential. She also acknowledges the influence of lecturers, managers and mentors who supported her professional and academic development. From them, she has learned the importance of confidence, resilience, professionalism and using one's position to create opportunities for others.

Today, students remain her greatest motivation.
"I want students to leave DUT with more than just a qualification. I want them to leave with confidence, leadership skills, knowledge about social issues and the ability to contribute meaningfully to society," she says.
Her advice to young professionals is to remain open to learning while being confident in what they bring to the workplace.
"Your first job does not have to be your final destination. Sometimes you have to experience different things before you discover where your purpose lies," she advises.

Ms Mdala also believes strongly in the power of using one's voice responsibly, particularly when addressing issues that affect young people and communities.
"Throughout my career, I have learned that your journey does not have to be linear for it to be meaningful. Sometimes you have to leave, explore, fail, learn and start again before you find where you truly belong." She says.

Her journey reflects the importance of purpose, resilience and service. From being a DUT student and student leader to gaining experience across different sectors and ultimately returning to student development, Ms Athenkosi Mdala continues to use her experiences to support and empower the next generation.

Through her work at DUT, she remains committed to helping students recognise their potential, find their voices and become active contributors to society.

Written by Lwazi Chiliza

A CHAMPION OF GROWTH AND SERVICE:MS AGENDRI NAIDOO'S COMMITMENT TO STUDENT DEVELOPMENT.

MS Agendri Naidoo, Secretary within the Student Governance and Development Unit at Durban University of Technology (DUT), has dedicated more than a decade to supporting students, colleagues and community development initiatives.

Since joining DUT, Ms Naidoo has served in various administrative and staff development roles across different units. In her current position, she supports development officers and students with project-based events while contributing to the effective functioning of the Unit. Although her responsibilities include office management and minute-taking, Ms Naidoo's contribution extends far beyond traditional administration. She is passionate about student development, mentorship and helping young people reach their full potential.

"**I do more than perform the traditional tasks of office management and minute-taking. I often assist development officers and students with project-based events, ensuring that we provide the best possible support service to our students,"** she says.

Her commitment to learning is reflected in her academic journey. Ms Naidoo holds a Master of Business Administration, a diploma in Child Psychology, a Project Management Certificate and qualifications in facilitation and mentorship. She is currently a third-year PhD student in Management Sciences, specialising in Business Entrepreneurship and Administration.

Her research explores third-stream income strategies supported by artificial intelligence within a university of technology. Through her studies, she hopes to contribute to innovative and sustainable solutions that can help address resource challenges within higher education.

Ms Naidoo's determination to pursue education was shaped by her own experiences. She describes herself as an ordinary student who became more focused after losing her father during her second year of study.

The experience became a turning point, motivating her to take her future more seriously, not only for herself but also for her two younger siblings. Her mother was another important source of inspiration. Despite having only a Grade 3 education and working as a tea lady, she encouraged Ms Naidoo to pursue education and greater opportunities.



"My mother wanted more for me. She encouraged me to study because she believed education could open doors and create a better future," she reflects.

These experiences strengthened Ms Naidoo's desire to support young people who face social, personal or financial challenges. Her passion for giving back has seen her become involved in community initiatives, including volunteering with the Eskom Youth Mentorship Programme in 2020 and supporting disadvantaged children at SMJ Primary School

"**I am passionate about giving back and helping disadvantaged children, because I understand what it is like to face challenges while growing up. Helping others become great individuals is one of the most fulfilling parts of my work,"** she says.

Ms Naidoo has also contributed to the academic environment as the author and co-publisher of two papers published in a business journal, further demonstrating her commitment to professional and personal development.

During her time at DUT, she has witnessed changes in student leadership and engagement. One development she is particularly proud of is the progress made in student protests and engagement. She believes that greater emphasis on communication, support and constructive engagement has contributed to an environment where students can express their concerns while respecting the principles of peaceful protest.

"For the first time, students are expressing their concerns without violating the principles of peaceful protest. This shows that we are doing something right," she says.

Her professional journey has also been influenced by people who demonstrated the importance of mentorship and generosity. Among them was the late Professor Rogers Ragavan, who supported her during her studies by sponsoring textbooks when her mother could not afford them. His generosity left a lasting impression on Ms Naidoo and reinforced her belief in the importance of investing in the future of others. It is a lesson she continues to carry into her work with students and young people.

For Ms Naidoo, integrity, discipline and hard work remain essential to personal and professional growth. She believes that people should remain committed to learning, take opportunities to develop themselves and treat others with respect. Her advice to young people beginning their careers is simple:
"It does not matter where you came from; what matters more is where you are going. Stay focused."

Ms Naidoo continues to pursue opportunities to learn and improve herself, regularly completing online courses to strengthen her knowledge and skills. Her work is ultimately guided by a desire to see people succeed.
"I want better for myself and for everyone I come into contact with," she says.

Ms Agendri Naidoo's journey is a testament to the transformative power of education, resilience and service. From overcoming personal and financial challenges to pursuing a PhD and supporting students and disadvantaged children, she continues to demonstrate the importance of lifelong learning and giving back. Through her work, mentorship, research and community engagement, Ms Naidoo continues to contribute to a supportive university environment while inspiring those around her to grow, learn and strive for better.

Written by Lwazi Chiliza

A CHAMPION FOR STUDENT LEADERSHIP: Ms VERAH MPANZA'S COMMITMENT TO SUPPORTING STUDENT DEVELOPMENT.

MS Verah Thenjiwe Mpanza, Administrative Assistant: Clubs and Societies within the Student Governance and Development Unit at Durban University of Technology (DUT), has dedicated more than eight years to supporting students and contributing to their growth as leaders and engaged members of the university community.

Ms Mpanza joined DUT in January 2018 as an SRC Administrator and has since served in roles that have allowed her to work closely with student leaders, student organisations and development initiatives. With a background in marketing, public relations and communication, her career has been shaped by service, compassion and a desire to help others grow. Born and raised in Ngcengeni, Msinga, KwaZulu-Natal, Ms Mpanza grew up in a loving Christian family where she was taught the importance of respect, humility and compassion. Her late mother was one of her greatest influences, teaching her the value of welcoming others, supporting people and making them feel accepted.

"**My mother taught me the importance of welcoming people, supporting others and making them feel accepted and valued. These lessons continue to guide the way I work with students and colleagues,"** she says.

Her passion for working with young people comes from her desire to support and encourage those around her. Through her work in Student Governance and Development, she has found an opportunity to contribute to students' personal and leadership growth while helping them develop confidence, communication and organisational skills.

In her current role, Ms Mpanza provides administrative and operational support within the Clubs and Societies portfolio. Her responsibilities include supporting student organisations and leaders, coordinating programmes and activities, assisting with meetings and events and facilitating communication between students and university stakeholders.



"For Ms Mpanza, however, her work extends beyond administration. It is about creating opportunities for students to learn, participate and become responsible members of the university community.

"The most rewarding part of my work is witnessing transformation. It is fulfilling to see students who may initially lack confidence develop into capable, responsible and effective leaders," she says.

One experience that significantly strengthened her confidence was being entrusted with inducting and supporting a new intern. Although she initially questioned whether she was ready for the responsibility, the encouragement of her supervisor helped her recognise her own potential.

Ms Mpanza's passion for working with students comes from her desire to support, develop and encourage the people around her. She enjoys engaging with young people, learning from their different experiences and perspectives, and contributing to their personal and leadership development.

For Ms Mpanza, however, her work extends beyond administration. It is about creating opportunities for students to learn, participate and become responsible members of the university community.

"The most rewarding part of my work is witnessing transformation. It is fulfilling to see students who may initially lack confidence develop into capable, responsible and effective leaders," she says.

One experience that significantly strengthened her confidence was being entrusted with inducting and supporting a new intern. Although she initially questioned whether she was ready for the responsibility, the encouragement of her supervisor helped her recognise her own potential.

She is currently pursuing a postgraduate qualification in Public Relations and Communication, with plans to continue her studies towards a Master's degree. Throughout her career, Ms Mpanza has experienced personal challenges, including the loss of her mother and another close loved one. These experiences strengthened her faith, resilience and compassion, while teaching her that people may be facing difficulties that are not always visible. As a result, she believes in approaching others with patience, empathy and understanding rather than rushing to judgement.

Her former supervisor, Dr Shozi Nxumalo, has also played an important role in her professional development. Ms Mpanza credits her with encouraging her to take both her work and studies seriously, strive for excellence and maintain balance between professional responsibilities, personal wellbeing and family. Ms Mpanza believes that every interaction with a student is an opportunity to mentor and make a difference. Her approach is based on mutual respect, openness, patience and a willingness to listen.

One important turning point in Ms Mpanza's professional journey came when she was entrusted with inducting and supporting a new intern in her office. Although she initially questioned whether she was capable of taking on the responsibility, the encouragement and support of her supervisor helped her to recognise her own potential. The experience strengthened her confidence and improved her leadership and communication skills. It also taught her that the belief someone places in you can help you discover abilities you may not yet recognise in yourself.

"She believes that professionalism, honesty, compassion, transparency, accountability and approachability are essential qualities for anyone working in student governance and development.

"When things do not go according to plan, I try not to respond while I am angry or frustrated. I believe in remaining calm, assessing the situation and looking for solutions," she says.

For Ms Mpanza, student governance plays an important role in giving students opportunities to develop leadership, communication, decision-making and democratic participation skills. Looking ahead, she would like to see continued investment in leadership development through mentorship, training and programmes focusing on emotional intelligence, conflict resolution, ethical leadership and communication.

Her advice to aspiring student leaders is to focus on service rather than titles.

"Leadership is about service, responsibility and integrity. Do not focus only on the title or position; focus on the people you are representing. Listen to others, communicate respectfully, be accountable for your decisions and lead by example."

To young professionals entering higher education and student affairs, she encourages them to remain professional, continue learning and build positive relationships with students and colleagues. She emphasises that patience, emotional intelligence, confidentiality and a willingness to assist are just as important as academic qualifications. Ms Mpanza's journey is a testament to the power of compassion, resilience and service. Through her work at DUT, she continues to support student leaders, strengthen student organisations and create opportunities for young people to grow in confidence and responsibility.

She is currently pursuing a postgraduate qualification in Public Relations and Communication, which she plans to complete during the spring graduation period. Thereafter, she intends to pursue a Master's degree. Throughout her career, Ms Mpanza has faced personal challenges that have shaped her approach to working with others. The loss of her mother and another close loved one had a profound impact on her life. During this difficult period, her faith, perseverance and the support of those around her helped her to continue moving forward.

Her story demonstrates that meaningful change often begins with simple acts of support, encouragement and believing in the potential of others.

Written by Lwazi Chiliza

SIBONGILE "MABEE" NDHLOVU'S JOURNEY OF LEADERSHIP AND SERVICE

Sibongile Bongeka "Mabee" Ndhlovu is an Advanced Diploma in Marketing student at ML Sultan Campus and serves as the SRC Social and Welfare Officer (Durban) for the 2025–2027 term. Her journey in student leadership is grounded in the values she gained growing up in Ladysmith, KwaHlathi, eZihlabathini, where she learned the importance of respect, resilience, humility and caring for others.

Her leadership journey at DUT began with her involvement in student activities and continued when she was elected as a House Committee Member in 2025. These experiences gave her an opportunity to engage with students, understand their concerns and contribute to addressing the challenges they face. They also helped shape her understanding that leadership is not simply about holding a position, but about listening, serving and making a meaningful difference in the lives of others.

As a young woman in student leadership, Mabee understands the importance of having women represented in decision-making spaces. She believes that women bring unique experiences and perspectives to leadership and that their presence can encourage other young women to recognise their own potential.

"Being a female student leader means being a voice for other students, especially young women who may sometimes feel that their voices are not heard," she says.

Her journey has not been without challenges. Mabee recalls moments when she struggled to have her ideas taken seriously, particularly in spaces where male voices were often perceived as stronger. Rather than allowing these experiences to discourage her, she chose to remain confident and demonstrate her abilities through **knowledge, consistency, hard work and service.**



One of the experiences that has stayed with her was helping a student who approached her with a personal welfare concern. Being trusted enough to listen and guide the student towards the appropriate support reminded her of the true purpose of leadership.

"Student leadership is about people, not just a position."

Mabee draws inspiration from **Winnie Madikizela-Mandela,** whom she admires for her courage, strength and determination. Her story has taught Mabee the importance of standing firm in one's values, speaking up and using one's voice to represent others.

Her experience as an SRC member has also contributed significantly to her personal and professional growth. Through working with students and fellow leaders, she has strengthened her communication, teamwork, leadership and problem-solving skills while learning how to navigate different perspectives and responsibilities.

For young women aspiring to leadership, Mabee's message is simple: believe in yourself and do not be afraid to take the first step. She encourages women to know their worth, use their voices and understand that they deserve a place in leadership spaces. Take your place, speak up and never be afraid to lead. Learn from your experiences, support one another and create opportunities for other women to succeed."

As Mabee continues her journey, she hopes to inspire future generations of women to pursue both academic excellence and purposeful leadership. Her story is a reminder that where we come from forms an important part of who we are, while the values we carry forward can help shape the future we create.

Written by Lwazi Chiliza

A STORY OF RESILIENCE: Ms SINQOBILE NTULI'S COMMITMENT TO GROWTH AND EMPOWERING OTHERS:

MS Sinqobile Ntuli, a student and intern in the Department of Student Governance and Development at Durban University of Technology (DUT), is a determined young woman whose journey has been shaped by resilience, perseverance and a strong desire to make a difference in the lives of others.

She holds a Diploma in Business and Information Management and is currently pursuing an Advanced Diploma in Business and Information Management, which she plans to complete in 2026. She has also gained valuable work experience as an Administrative Assistant at Zamazisa Primary School in Kwa Maphumulo, KwaZulu-Natal. Ms Ntuli grew up in Ntombiyehlulunina, Kwa Maphumulo, and attended Vukile High School. Her upbringing was not without challenges, and she experienced moments when people questioned her abilities and suggested that she would not succeed.

Rather than allowing these opinions to define her, Ms Ntuli used them as motivation to prove to herself that she was capable of achieving her goals.
"Some people said that I would not succeed, but the inner voice in me reminded me that my name is Sinqobile and that I will prosper," she says.
Her name became a personal reminder of her strength and determination. Through hard work, she completed matric with good results and continued her studies at DUT, which became an important step in building the future she envisioned.

Her experiences have also influenced her desire to support young Black women and others who may experience exclusion or isolation. Having faced such challenges herself, she understands the importance of creating spaces where people feel heard, valued and supported.
"I want to help young Black women and people who experience exclusion and isolation, because I understand how difficult it can be. No one should feel that they have to face those experiences alone," she reflects.

Education has played a significant role in Ms Ntuli's journey. After completing her Diploma, she spent two years away from her studies because she did not have the financial support needed to register for further studies. During this period, she took on temporary work and saved towards her registration fees.The experience strengthened her belief that difficult circumstances do not have to determine a person's future.



One of her proudest academic achievements came during the first semester of her final year, when she was required to complete eight modules in one semester. Although she initially doubted whether she could manage the workload, she successfully passed all eight modules.

For Ms Ntuli, the achievement was a reminder that she was capable of overcoming challenges when she remained focused and committed.

Her graduation was another particularly memorable moment. Hearing her name being called while the audience applauded gave her a renewed sense of hope and confidence.
"That moment gave me hope that I could still do better. It encouraged me to continue working hard and becoming a better version of myself," she recalls.

Ms Ntuli has also been involved in student and community initiatives, including the DUT Cultural Festival in 2022, as well as community engagement initiatives such as Innobiz and Vuna. These experiences have allowed her to gain practical skills, engage with diverse groups of people and contribute to activities that support development.

For her, one of the greatest rewards is knowing that her efforts can make a positive difference, whether through assisting someone, contributing to a successful project or helping solve a problem.

"For me, the greatest reward is not the position you hold or the recognition you receive, but the positive difference you make and the lives you influence along the way," she says.

Throughout her journey, Ms Ntuli has faced financial limitations, personal challenges and negative opinions from others. However, she has remained determined to continue learning and improving herself.
"I have learned that challenges can make us stronger if we do not give up," she says.

Her experiences have strengthened her desire to build a better future for herself and her family while inspiring others who may be experiencing similar challenges.

Ms Ntuli encourages young people beginning their careers to believe in themselves and remain committed to their goals. She believes that challenges should be viewed as opportunities to learn and grow rather than reasons to give up. She encourages young professionals to continue developing new skills, listen to advice, accept constructive criticism and remain open to learning.

Her guiding principle is simple: never stop learning.
Ms Sinqobile Ntuli's journey is a testament to the power of resilience, education and self-belief. From overcoming doubt and financial challenges to pursuing further studies and gaining valuable work experience, she continues to turn difficult experiences into motivation for growth.

Her story serves as an encouragement to young people who may feel excluded or limited by their circumstances. It reminds us that progress may not always be easy or immediate, but with determination, continuous learning and belief in oneself, it is possible to keep moving forward.

Written by Lwazi Chiliza

FROM RURAL ROOTS TO PURPOSEFUL SERVICE: MISS NOMTHANDAZO ZULU'S JOURNEY IN STUDENT DEVELOPMENT

MS Nomthandazo Siphumlile Zulu, an intern in the Student Governance and Development Unit at Durban University of Technology (DUT), is a young professional whose journey reflects determination, resilience and a commitment to supporting students.

A graduate in Public Relations and Communications Management, Miss Zulu has been part of the DUT community for four years. Her journey began as a first-year student when she volunteered in programmes hosted by the Student Governance and Development Unit. She later progressed to an in-service trainee and now serves as an intern, returning to the Unit on 3 August 2026.

Miss Zulu grew up in Jozini, northern KwaZulu-Natal, where her rural upbringing shaped her appreciation for education and the opportunities it creates. Her late grandmother, a former teacher, played an important role in encouraging education and personal development within the family.

"**I have come to understand how closely education and good governance work together,"** she says.

Her interest in Public Relations and Communications Management began at Sinethezekile High School, where she was selected as the editor of the school magazine. The experience introduced her to writing, communication and working with an audience, helping her realise that Public Relations was the career she wanted to pursue.

Her involvement with DUT's Student Governance and Development Unit began in 2022 when she volunteered at the Arts, Business and Cultural (ABC) Festival. She later assisted with First-Year Orientation, registration activities, the Remember And Give (RAG) initiative, Student Leadership Week and the Cultural Festival. These experiences provided her with opportunities to interact with students from different backgrounds while developing her communication, organisational and interpersonal skills.

For Miss Zulu, one of the most rewarding aspects of her work has been witnessing students she has assisted eventually graduate.

"Knowing that I played even a small role in someone's journey makes the work meaningful," she says.

Her own academic journey has also been one of perseverance. In 2024, she lost her funding and was faced with uncertainty about continuing her studies. Rather than giving up, she explored alternative funding opportunities, including the SRC grant and various bursaries.



Her persistence eventually paid off when she was awarded a bursary, becoming one of only two DUT students to receive it.

"Whenever I feel like giving up, I remember that someone believed in me enough to invest in my education," she says.

Her graduation remains one of her proudest achievements. Despite the challenges she faced along the way, completing her qualification was a reminder that difficult circumstances did not have to determine her future.

Miss Zulu credits the Student Governance and Development team with playing an important role in her personal and professional growth. From the manager, Mr Masiza Ngculu, to the administrative staff, she says the team welcomed and supported her while she was still finding her way in the professional environment. Her late grandmother remains one of her greatest sources of motivation. The values she instilled in Miss Zulu continue to influence her approach to education, work and personal development.

In 2024, Miss Zulu was recognised as a DUT Living Values Champion after participating in the institution's Essay Writing Competition. The recognition affirmed her commitment to values such as respect, responsibility and dedication. As a young professional, Miss Zulu believes that respect, professionalism and a willingness to learn are essential when starting a career. She encourages young people not to be afraid of being beginners.

"Allow yourself to be a beginner. Be willing to learn, ask questions and remain professional at all times," she advises.

She also believes that individuals must take ownership of their careers and remain committed to their development, regardless of the challenges they encounter.

"Keep learning, keep showing up and never allow setbacks to convince you that you cannot succeed," she says.

Miss Nomthandazo Zulu's journey is a reminder that circumstances may influence where a person begins, but they do not determine where they will end. From her rural roots in Jozini to becoming a graduate and young professional at DUT, she has continued to turn challenges into opportunities for growth.

Through her work in Student Governance and Development, Miss Zulu continues to develop her skills while contributing to the experiences and success of fellow students.

Her story reflects the power of education, resilience and the courage to keep moving forward.

Written by Lwazi Chiliza

OUR STORIES. OUR HERITAGE. OUR LEGACY.

As we close this edition, we are reminded that every story carries a legacy. The journeys shared in these pages are more than stories of achievement; they are stories of courage, resilience, sacrifice, growth and hope.

Our heritage lives in the lessons passed down to us, in the values that guide us, and in the people who dared to dream beyond their circumstances. It lives in the students who find their voices, the leaders who choose to serve, and the individuals who use their experiences to create opportunities for others. The women featured in this edition remind us that greatness does not always begin with privilege or certainty. Sometimes, it begins with a dream, a challenge, a single opportunity or simply the courage to keep going.

Their stories challenge us to ask: What legacy will we leave behind? Who will be inspired by our journey? And what difference will we make while we are here?

As the Student Governance and Development Unit, we remain committed to creating spaces where students can discover their potential, embrace their identity, develop their voices and become leaders who contribute meaningfully to society.

May we never forget where we come from.
May we never underestimate where we can go.
And may we always remember those who will follow the paths we create today.

Our heritage gives us roots.
Our stories give us strength.
Our voices shape our future.

LET US LEAD. LET US SERVE. LET US INSPIRE.

Student Governance & Development Unit
Empowering Students. Developing Leaders. Building Fu

