



VUT

CENTRE FOR  
ACADEMIC  
DEVELOPMENT

Centre for Academic Development

# NEWSLETTER

2021 going into 2022

# NEW NORMAL

Mentors & WIL Students

# AWARD CEREMONIES

Student Academic  
Development Unit  
Professional and Academic  
Development Unit

# 2021 O-WEEK

First Year Experience



# 09 REFLECTIONS ON ACADEMIC DEVELOPMENT PRACTICES

Towards professional learning



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# Message from Executive Director.

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By Dr. Muntuwenkosi Chili

**S**tudents, Colleagues, Ladies and Gentlemen, Greetings to you all.

To our students, I wish to congratulate each of you, first on having secured your university place and second, for having the good sense to choose to study in the Vaal University of Technology (VUT). The VUT puts the student at the center of everything it does; your experience here at VUT and your success is important to each and every member of staff who works here. Your arrival at university marks a new chapter in the story of your life. But this chapter is a bit different. The preceding chapters were largely written by others, i.e. your parents, guardians, families, teachers and the like.

Now you will be the principal author of the next chapter, you have the opportunity to determine the direction, the plot and the tempo of your story. This can seem as daunting as it is exciting, as challenging as it is empowering. But the great thing is that you are doing something that you have chosen to do, not something that was chosen for you by others. And while you are here at VUT you will have the opportunity

to learn new things, acquire new knowledge, develop new skills, and enhance your personal attributes in profound ways that will equip you for life after University. At the same time, you will make new friends who will become your friends for life, with whom you will share memories of your VUT days for many years to come.

**H**aving said the above, I wish to share three pieces of advice with you:

## 1. TAKE RESPONSIBILITY FOR YOUR LEARNING

Up to now, most of your learning, and indeed your life, has been very structured. The objective was clear, to secure enough points to get your place in university. You followed a quite precisely defined curriculum or programme. Now you are entering the less structured environment of the University where you will have greater freedom and the responsibility that comes with that.

You will now be expected to be more self-reliant.

You are responsible for what you do, for ensuring that you do the work that will be required of you. There will be no one to check up on you, you are accountable to yourself. Make sure you attend your lectures, practicals and tutorials, that you do the assignments and read the material advised by your lecturers and tutors. You will need to develop a study plan; go to the library; use the on-line learning resources.

And while we expect you to assume a new level of responsibility please realize that you are not alone. If you find things difficult don't run away, seek help. Part of being responsible for yourself is recognising when you need the support of others. TALK TO PEOPLE. Talk to your classmates, your housemates, your friends, etc.

We know that peer support contributes hugely to student success. And I also want you to know that there is an abundance of support services available to you. Contact your student advisor, your mentor, a lecturer or a tutor. There are learning Centres on campus – Mathematics, Science, Engineering and Technology, Writing Lab, that are there to provide specialist support if you require it. And don't forget the important psycho-social support is provided by the Student Health Centre, and the Students Counseling Services. I must also mention the First Student Experience programme that is designed to help your transition to University. Find out more about it and get involved in the activities. Most importantly, understand that while we expect our students to become self-reliant, we are here to help when that is needed. YOU ARE NOT ALONE.

#### 1. MAKE THE MOST OF YOUR TIME AT VUT

One of the great things about university life is the range of new experiences that will be available to you. You will have abundant opportunities to flourish as a student and as a person.

At VUT many of the opportunities are built into your programme while others are extra-curricular. Most of you will undertake co-operative education or practice placements as an integral part of your programme, ensuring that the world of learning is intertwined with the world of work. What you learn in the classroom is applied in the workplace which in turn gives you a deeper understanding of what you have learned in the classroom; it is an incredibly enriching experience.

#### 2. EMBRACE DIFFERENCE

The University is a melting pot. You have come from different backgrounds and communities to pursue your ambitions as students. In a large institution it can be tempting to stick with the familiar and that is especially true with respect to the people with whom you associate. But it would be a lost opportunity to stick with your own all the time. Get to know people who are different to you. It could be someone from a different part of the country, or from another country, of a different ethnicity, a different religion, who has different views to you, or who has different interests and perspectives. You might or might not change as a person by embracing difference, but you will get a better understanding both of yourself and of those who are different to you. Knowing others and understanding others will help you develop as tolerant individuals.

And with those few words of advice I wish you every success at the Vaal University of Technology. I want you to know that the entire University community is here to support, sustain, and encourage you as you commit to study at VUT. We could not be more privileged to welcome you into this vibrant learning community. It is you who make us what we are, and we look forward to the fresh ideas and energy you bring to our campus.

We are thrilled you have joined the VUT Community.



*Signature*

Dr. Muntuwenkosi Chili  
**CENTRE FOR ACADEMIC DEVELOPMENT  
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR**

# VUT 2021 O-WEEK SUCCESS!



By Chriselda Kok

**A successful orientation programme blending both online and contact interaction was hosted by The Vaal University of Technology and Centre for Academic Development. The programme took place from 23 - 27 March 2021 at the VUT Vanderbijlpark campus where the COVID-19 restrictions were firmly adhered to.**

With all of the planning the CAD staff, Faculty representatives, mentors and peer educators put into the o-week, it should come as no surprise what was what a huge turnout we got. First year students came in numbers! The security officials,

**C**entre for Health Education and Development (CHED), VUT Clinic, Safety Healthy Enrollment (SHE) department, and Occupational Health Safety (OHS) department assisted in reinforcing the COVID-19 protocol restrictions by taking temperature and sanitizing the students upon arrival and proceeded to the registration stations to confirm their attendance.

The students were swiftly ushered to the computer labs to access VUTELA (blackboard) and watch the video sessions to watch videos containing messages from the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (DVC), Professor Maggie Linington: Teaching, Learning and Student Support Services; Dr. Corneli Van der Walt, Acting Executive Director: Centre for Academic Development (CAD); VUT Faculty Executive Deans, namely: Prof Raymond Mabuza, Executive Dean: Applied and Computer Sciences; Prof Riana van der Bank, Human Sciences; Prof Roy Dhurup, Management Sciences and Prof Peter Osifo Engineering and Technology (Acting), Student Governance Dr. Sibusiso Mchunu and SRC member, Nomvula Mphuthi.

Finally the students went on an exclusive tour of the school campus where they were afforded the opportunity to familiarize themselves with the facilities and architecture of the university in an effort to give them a taste of the varsity experience.

In good MaVuti spirit, each student in attendance received a custom goody bag. If a student was able to answer a question related to their course/faculty, they also took home a laptop bag from Vaal Triangle Computers (VTC).

**D**on't take our word for it though. Here is what the attendees of O-week had to say: "I am really happy that I can see the University from a closer perspective and I've learnt a lot about it, and how to navigate my way around campus," said Pulane Mathe, First-year Internal Auditing Student.

"I am impressed with how the orientation was conducted, it was quite informative. I look forward to studying at VUT," said Thokozani Ngwenya, First-year Engineering student.

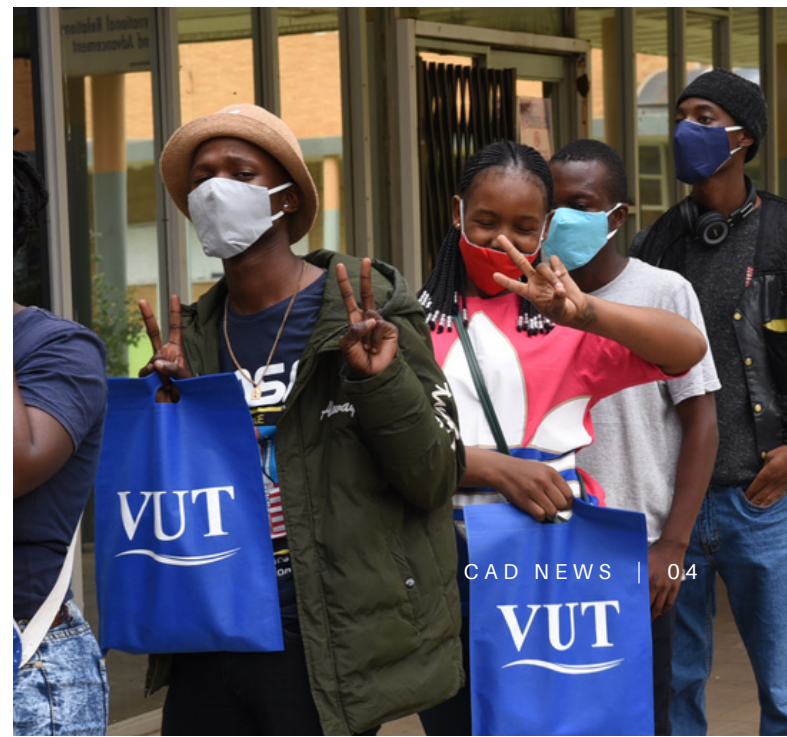
"Ushering the students around made us reminisce about the good times that we had on campus. We didn't realize that we missed it this much. We were so happy to feed off that vibe to the first-year students." said Nhlakanipho Dube, Human Sciences Faculty mentor

How we plan to better o-week:

- Further develop the blended orientation programme as the mode of delivery for the future.
- Optimize the online module to include practical advice (How to access VUTela, students email and ITS as considered important).
- Provide extra information useful/relevant to students at times of high stress in context of the Covid19 pandemic and life happenings.

**"We believe that providing a compelling orientation offering, and weaving it into a cohesive student journey, is the way to move this forward. Having developed and implemented the first blended orientation programme at VUT, assisted us to see how we need to approach the future," said the CAD organizing team.**

As we move into a digital space, VUT is still determined to give the students the best of both worlds (contact and virtual).



To

Our valued reader

2022, We made it!

Compliments of the new year!

*With love*

Centre for Academic Development



# Future Educators set for orientation

By Chriselda Kok

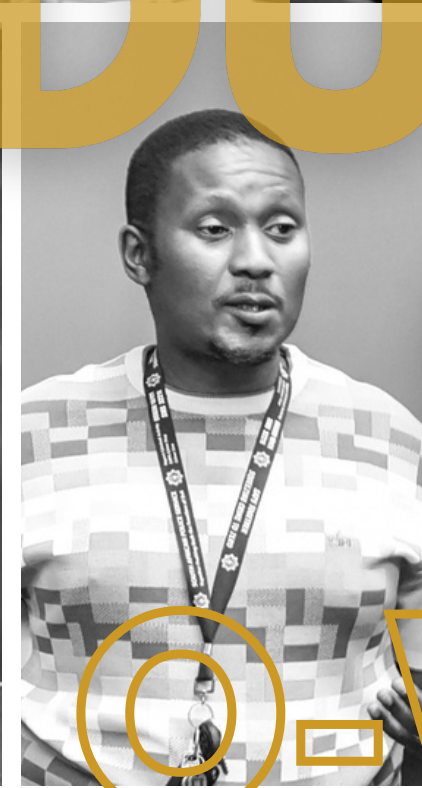
Yet another successful orientation day for the bachelor of education (B.Ed.) hosted on Thursday, 15 April 2021, by the Centre for Academic Development (CAD) at the VUT Southern Gauteng Science and Technology Park (VUT SGSTP). There was a firm COVID-19 protocol in place to ensure that only a certain amount of people within the auditoriums, where they received a warm welcome from Mr. Sipho Nkosi; Event Coordinator and Administration (CAD) and Mr. Vincent Mdluli; Assistant HIV Coordinator: Centre for Higher Education (CHED).

The Vaal Triangle Computers (VTC) had a giveaway where the students were required to send an SMS to the VTC contact number, and the first 10 students to complete the task were given a complimentary gift. The first year B.Ed. students were introduced to their assigned mentors and peer educators, to ensure their overall success at the Vaal University of Technology (VUT).

Mentors and peer educators escorted the students to a different auditorium for a preview of a welcome message video by Professor Maggie Linington, Deputy Vice-Chancellor (DVC): Teaching, Learning and Student Support Services; Dr. Corneli van der Walt, Acting Executive Director: Centre for Academic Development (CAD); VUT Faculty Executive Dean: Prof Riana Van der Bank, Human Sciences; and SRC member, Nomvula Mphuthi. The videos were viewed on Blackboard (VUTELA), Facilitated by Mr. Mothusi Samosamo, Learning Development Coordinator at CAD.

Students then received questionnaires on sexual health and awareness as they received their first Blackboard training. The question, "why a degree in education?" came up, to which some students answered that they have a passion to disseminate information and influence the educational sector for better sustainment and results. Finally the event concluded with a thorough campus tour to familiarize the students with the university.





# EDUCATORS WEEK.

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Yes! A hardcopy book. They are still relevant.

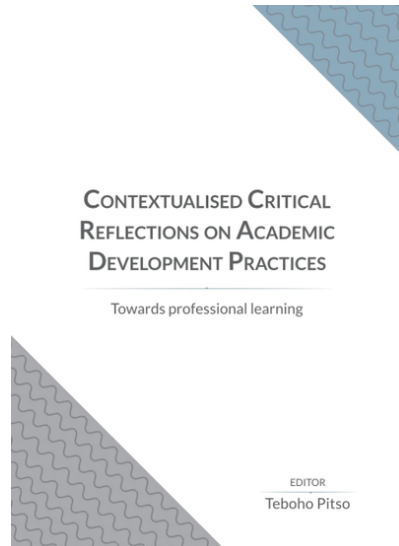
# VUT BOOK LAUNCH!

By Tshegofatso More and Phillip Mangorombane

The Center for Academic Development (CAD) on June 9th launched their book to much applause. The book editor, Tebogo Pitso of the Centre for Innovation and Entrepreneurship, Prof T Olsson of Lund University Sweden, and Prof Dzimbo, a former VUT DVC were all in attendance.

The book title, Contextualized Critical Reflections on Academic Development Practices Towards Professional Learning, is based on reflections on academic development activities. The book dwells on the dynamics and complexity of professional learning and effective teaching. Prof Olsson noted that the book is mandatory reading for anyone interested in teaching and learning. He remarked, "conversations about teaching and learning are important in the academic space", he says. He states this book is an important artifact to stimulate teaching and learning conversations which these conversations consist of informed, research-based, and developmental conversations.

"The book is mainly at a local level for the Vaal University of Technology but it is intended for the public interest", he says. "The importance of the book is that it is public, documented, relatable and it's an arena of teaching and learning for many in just one book.



Usually, at personal levels as a teacher or lecturer, you're used to literature, observations are performed, you evaluate your teaching, you talk to your colleagues but to make a better impact go up a higher level from the personal and local level." This is where the book comes in, it assists individual lecturers at personal levels to become more and more scholarly which will assist them in going further and doing more systematic observations and analysis and generate their own knowledge as the participants in this book have done.

He touched on pragmatism/pragmatic teaching which refers to the teaching to students about the practical things in life and things to encourage them to do better. He also mentioned the importance of informed subjectivity and objectivity by saying we should not be afraid to be subjective but our subjectivity should be informed.

In his conclusion, Prof Thomas Olsson spoke of decolonization of higher education which refers to the need of higher educational institutions to meet the needs of all students and staff members at large and not just a selective group. "We can learn from it, you can get knowledge from different perspectives, we can learn from each other, we don't have to learn from European and American countries but each other".

The second speaker, Prof Vuyisile Msila noted that critical aspects of the book help lecturers unmask their practice.

He further elaborates this statement by saying that most books of the same sort are filled with theory whereas the difference with this book is the balance between theory and practical work and how the current COVID 19 pandemic will shape and navigate the future possibilities and dynamics of the academia especially with regards to professional development.

Prof Msila focuses more on the role that students or learners play in the improvement and development of teaching and learning. Pedagogy, according to the Oxford dictionary - the method and practice of teaching, especially as an academic subject or theoretical concept, is also at the topic as Prof Msila mentions that pedagogy preaches the involvement from students so they get to become part of the learning process which is seen as critical and emphasis in all these chapters is learning more than teaching.

EDITOR



"What I like about many of these chapters is that they seem to be seeing the students as co-creators of knowledge rather than people who sit in the lecture halls to receive from the faculty members who are teaching".

CONTEXTUALISED CRITICAL REFLECTIONS ON ACADEMIC DEVELOPMENT PRACTICES

Towards professional learning

EDITOR  
Teboho Pitso

SPEAKER



Prof Msila differentiates between change and transformation by stating that transformation requires new kinds of thinking about values and how they are expressed and about how work is organized. Therefore, transformational learning refers to learning that shapes people making them different afterward in ways that they and others could recognize.

He touches on epistemic knowledge, which refers to "a process involving dispositions, beliefs, and skills regarding how individuals determine what they know, versus what they believe, doubt, or distrust", influences learning and reasoning amongst students and academics. He further says this book encourages us to come up with social epistemology.

According to Prof Dzvimbo, "In the new normal of the academy, we require different strategies for understanding the functions of knowledge as a material discourse practice as we teach, as we interact with students, as we interact with other academics that teaching and learning must become a material discourse in practice."

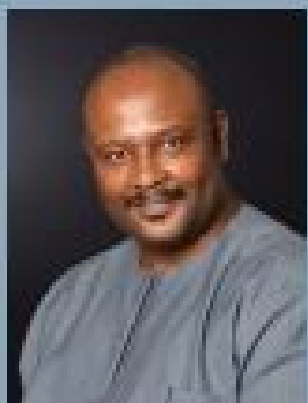
In conclusion of the launch, Biki Pitso hinted more conversations must be had about the book.

SPEAKER



He suggests that the book elaborates on how in all the chapters, the academic space is a "core constructor" of knowledge in and outside classrooms as well as virtually, and it creates imagined structures that enable both student and staff to interact at a particular conceptual level and that learning is fundamentally experiential and fundamentally social and this has been enhanced by the deleterious impact of the COVID 19 pandemic.

SPEAKER



# MENTOR TRAINING

By Chriselda Kok

The CAD hosted a training program for the Vaal University of Technology's mentors. The number of attendees resulted in the group being split with training taking place over the course of two days, the 10th and 11th of August 2021.

Mentors assembled at the VUT bus Shuttle where they were sanitized. Students adhered to wearing of masks and were seated in a socially distanced fashion in the bus for their drive to Quest conference center. Upon arrival the students were met with a second round of Covid-19 protocol by the security at Quest. The training was held in a well ventilated conference room with a capacity of 50 people per classroom setting. The classroom setting ensured social distance seating between each table.

This program was designed to refresh and keep the mentors motivated in fulfilling the major role they are playing in the lives of the students they were mandated to guide. The discussion afforded the mentors a moment to reflect on their experience thus far. Moreover, the outcomes of the training were to enhance mentor skills in areas of student development and success, and referral processes to other student support services available at an institution.

The mentors were addressed by quite a number of provocative guest speakers namely, Mthusi Samosamo- training facilitator- who touched on the essence of a mentors roles and responsibilities.

Mnelisi Mbatha, who spoke on getting to know yourself, having self-awareness, self-management, social awareness and social skills. Academic engagement, learning approaches, and study skills were presented by Remaketse who was then followed by Dr. Tjabane on understanding Higher Education Students, the role and purpose of Higher Education as well as the transition process of becoming a Higher Education student.

The attendees of the training broke for a delectable lunch which was pre-packaged with a wide range of food to pick from. Mentors were provided extra masks and individual water bottles were circulated at intervals. Two paramedics were available on standby during the two-day program.

After lunch, Ms. Sanele spoke on success at university, goal setting, and time and stress management. She handed the stand over to Tshogofatso More and Phillip Mangorombane who presented on leadership skills. The Student Support Services (CAD) Presenters Bongani Khoza, Karabelo Matsoane, Kabelo Matsaung, Chriselda Kok then concluded the speaking for the training. Both days of training were a success as the outcomes of the training programme was achieved by sharing all the necessary information for mentors to successfully execute mentoring roles and responsibilities.





Ever been called provocative?

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## THE FIRST YEAR STUDENT AWARD CEREMONY

# FYSA 2021

By Chriselda Kok



On October 15th, the CAD recognized and rewarded the 1st year students who are achieving excellence in their fields. Students and parents attended the online award ceremony on the 15th of October 2021 to honour and celebrate these students. The ceremony streamed live from both Microsoft teams and YouTube.

The contact ceremony was on the 22nd of October and held at the Centre for Academic Development (CAD) building so as to gift the students with their gift bags and certificates of achievement. All Covid regulation protocol was followed in ensuring the students wore their masks, sanitized on arrival by security and kept social distance when signing in.

The MC, Mnelisi Mbatha directed and handed over to Dr. Corneli Van Der Walt who gave a short welcome message. Ms. Zelda Kotze introduced all the Deans from various Faculties, Prof. Mabuza, Prof. Osifo, Dr. Gauda Maseko and Prof. Riana Van der Bank who announced the top achievers in their respective faculties namely, the faculty of Engineering and Technology, the faculty of Human Sciences, the faculty of Applied & Computer Sciences and the faculty of Management Sciences.

Students were encouraged to set their goals high, live in the present and look forward to the future. "You are now beginning a new destination", said Prof. Riana Van der Bank. She wished them good luck with their studies, hoping that they would succeed in what they undertake to do.

"The Faculty of Management Sciences truly believes that good education plays a vital role in building a bright future for the students" said Dr. Gauda Maseko. Prof Margret Linington, Acting Vice-Chancellor and Principal indicated that the first year of university is overwhelming, in comparison to the High school environment. She further mentioned that the institution has suitable support programmes to help first year students to cope with the environment.

The ceremony ended with a message from Dr. Muntuwenkosi Chili who acknowledged the students one last time and concluded the first ever online award ceremony hosted by the CAD. Once again congratulations to our first year top achievers.

Top Achievers:



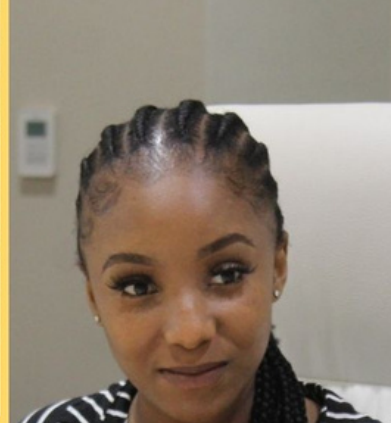


# THE PANDEMIC ISN'T OVER

just because you're over it.



**Wear your mask on campus.**



# WILL STUDENTS

# 2021





CATCH THEIR STORY ON

# YOU TUBE

NAME OF STORY: CAD WIL  
STUDENTS 2021- 2022.

Scan Me:





# MENTORS



# CAD EVENTS 2022.

**Feb.**



7-18 | O- Week

21-24 | Professional & Academic Development and Support

**Mar.**

2 | MSET diagnostic assessment.

2-3 | License to teach.

7-8 | Tutor workshop.

11 | Science Park Mother tongue.

11 | Extended O-week.

29 | Practice workshop for VUT Leturers teaching first years.

31 | First Year Student Awards

# CAD EVENTS 2022.

## Apr.

9 | Colour Fun Run.

TBC | Mentor  
Training.

## May.

10-11 | Mega  
Conference.

11-19 | Corporate  
Education.

2 | MSET  
diagnostic  
assessment.

2-3 | License To  
Teach.

7-8 | Tutor  
workshop.



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