

ANNUAL ENGAGEMENT REPORT 2024



Executive Summary

At Nelson Mandela University, transformative engagement is a core pillar of our academic mission, standing alongside learning, teaching, and research. This commitment is more than rhetorical—it reflects our shared praxis of embedding engagement and transformation across institutional portfolios to serve the public good and realise socio-economic impact. At the heart of this approach lies the imperative to enable inclusive student access for success while fostering partnerships that support meaningful contributions to society. This vision is intricately aligned with our Vision 2030 strategy, which positions the University as a dynamic African institution—locally responsive, nationally active, regionally vibrant, and globally aware. Our strategic intent is to co-create transformative, contextually responsive solutions by engaging with all publics in equalising partnerships.

The engagement mandate serves as a catalytic force in advancing the university's transformative agenda by deepening the social value of research, learning, and teaching through critical scholarship and praxis that interrogate the university's role and relevance in society. It works across all institutional portfolios to embed engagement and transformation as

core functions, addressing systemic inequalities while fostering innovation, equity, and redress. Through pioneering initiatives such as the Hubs of Convergence, transdisciplinary short learning programmes, and community-based research, the engagement mandate bridges academic excellence with societal responsiveness. These efforts are grounded in a firm commitment to cultivating a culture of solidarity and social justice, inspired by the constitutional values of human dignity, fairness, non-racism, and non-sexism.

This 2024 Engagement Annual Report captures a range of activities, case studies, and narratives across our campuses and communities. It documents the vibrancy of our intellectual culture, the evolution of programmatic collaboration, and the steady reimagining of a university in service of society. It reflects the feedback loops of learning and unlearning, of praxis and reflection, and of research and relationships that define the evolving spirit of engagement at Nelson Mandela University. We thank all partners, staff, students, and stakeholder-communities who have walked this path with us. Your work is shaping a university that not only teaches and researches but listens, learns, and leads—together.

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Preamble/Introduction and Background

Nelson Mandela University is a comprehensive academic institution committed to being in service of society. This commitment is realised through its various portfolios, faculties, divisions, and engagement entities. At the heart of this orientation lies a transformative approach to engagement—one that views communities not as passive recipients of knowledge but as integral partners in knowledge generation, innovation, and societal change. The university's role in society is deeply rooted in its belief in mutual respect, shared responsibility, and the co-creation of a more just and humane future.

Within this broader institutional commitment, the Engagement Office plays a coordinating, supporting, and facilitative role. It works across faculties and divisions to strengthen the quality, visibility, and alignment of engagement practices with the university's strategic imperatives as articulated in Vision 2030. A key responsibility of the office is to create enabling environments for staff, students, and support personnel to meaningfully contribute to society through socially responsive action.

This 2024 Engagement Report offers a reflective snapshot of the engagement activities submitted by faculties and divisions at the time of compilation. While it does not capture the full scope of engagement occurring across the university, it provides a window into the diverse ways in which the university community is living out its commitment to transformative, socially embedded education. The report celebrates partnerships, acknowledges collective efforts, and affirms that every engagement—no matter how small—is a valuable contribution to our institutional mission.

We recognise that many impactful activities may still be unreported and extend an open invitation to all members of the university community to continue sharing their engagement work. This report aims not only to account but also to inspire: to affirm the worth of every idea, and to spark new ways of thinking about how we serve society together.

Activities by the Law Faculty are through three entities/divisions, the Labour and Social Security Law Unit, the Law Clinic and FishForce as presented below.

1.1. LABOUR AND SOCIAL SECURITY LAW UNIT (LSSLU)

► 1.1.1. Practical Labour Law Programme (PLLP)

The Unit develops and offers training to Labour relations practitioners, human resources managers, trade union officials, legal advisors, CCMA members and interested individuals. This training is provided in various locations, including in Gqeberha at Nelson Mandela University, Pretoria, East London, Empangeni, as well as online. At Nelson Mandela University, Staff members of NEHAWU and NTEU participated.

As a training programme, *“the preferred engagement of the PLLP is face-to-face. After completion of a unit, learners must complete worksheets with questions on the unit’s training”*, says programme leader Prof JA vd Wal.

The Programme leaders indicate that they have received very good feedback regarding the PLLP training, a programme that is also a bridging course for individuals who do not have an LLB, B Tech in HR or Ba/BCom in HR or Organisational Behaviour to apply for the Post-graduate Diploma in Labour Law Practice. Their final mark for the PLLP must be 65% or more to be able to apply for the Post Graduate Diploma in Labour Law Practice. In this regard, the PLLP is affording access opportunities for individuals aspiring to have a law qualification. Helping such individuals realise their dream is an important impact this project boasts about.

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Deputy-Head: Mr T Qotoyi, thanduxolo.qotoyi@mandela.ac.za

► 1.1.2. How to prepare for, present in and chair a disciplinary enquiry

The training project targeted employees of Nelson Mandela University, with Employment Relations at Nelson Mandela University as the key stakeholder. The training, as an internal engagement project, took place in Gqeberha at the Nelson Mandela University.

The training was presented face-to-face with practical engagement, to equip potential chairs for a disciplinary enquiry on how to effectively function. In the daily operations of the university, there are many employee relations matters that require disciplinary enquiry. Given that there are no full-time

chairs, often middle management and senior employees are appointed as chairs per case; training is essential to guarantee justice in the process of enquiry. The skills used go beyond chairing, but in leading teams, helping to resolve conflicts and promoting of conducive work environment. The team indicates that they have received very good feedback regarding the training.

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► 1.1.3. *How to prepare for, present in and chair a disciplinary enquiry*

This project targets Community members and runs from 20 Cuyler Street, Central, Port Elizabeth. Nelson Mandela University staff, namely Prof Adriaan van Der Walt, Thando Qotoyi, Admiral Njanike, Godsent Chabo, Elize Grobler, Dan Danisa, Wongalethu Simayile, Unathi Mbadlanyana drive the project. With three main activities:

01 Pro bono legal advice and representation.

02 Assistance with access to documentation, including referring disputes to the CCMA.

03 Training students and the broader community in labour and social security.

Engagement with members of the public in equalising partnerships to co-create transformative contextually responsive solutions in pursuit of social justice and equality. The impact is of various forms, living with the expectation of engagement and Nelson Mandela University, that multiple forms of impact are essential for broader relevance. The impact of the project includes, among others:

01 Legal skills in that the members of the office represent the clients at arbitrations.

02 Labour knowledge is enhanced as the majority of the work labour advises the clients referred.

03 Provision of free legal services to vulnerable employees; and

04 Assisting the vulnerable employees to achieve justice.

In the process, although such a significant impact is made, the programme is not without its challenges. These challenges, as listed below, also present an opportunity for further learning for the team.

01

Limited Resources,

i.e., funding Constraints, as our labour advice office operates on tight budgets, which can limit the ability to maintain office infrastructure and expand services.

02

Staffing Shortages,

i.e., high demand for our labour services outstrips our capacity of available staff, leading to burnout or long wait times for clients.

03

Complexity of Cases,

i.e., diverse legal issues as vulnerable individuals often face multifaceted problems, such as unfair dismissal, unpaid wages, discrimination, or unsafe working conditions, which require specialised knowledge.

04

Language and Literacy Barriers,

i.e., clients struggle with language proficiency as most of the clients are comfortable in communication in their mother tongues and hence makes it difficult to communicate their issues or understand legal advice.

05

Systemic Barriers,

i.e., bureaucratic hurdles: Navigating labour laws, filing claims, or engaging with the CCMA can be time-consuming and frustrating for both clients and our office as advisors.

06

Awareness and Accessibility,

there is a limited reach of our services: Vulnerable individuals, such as domestic workers and farm workers or those in informal employment, may not be aware of the services offered.

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1.2. LAW CLINIC

► 1.2.1. Project- HIVELAW

The project, located at Missionvale Campus within a community of mainly indigent households, is aimed at final year LLB students, staff of the Nelson Mandela University Law Clinic, and indigent members of the community in need of legal advice and services. Several stakeholders formed a partnership to ensure effective service delivery. The main participants from Nelson Mandela University are all staff members of the Law Clinic; HoD of Criminal & Procedural Law Department; 1 lecturer of Criminal & Procedural Law Department; 1 Adjunct Professor of Criminal & Procedural Law Department; Deputy Dean of the Faculty of Law; members of ICT Department; all final year LLB students.

In that vein, key partners are Nelson Mandela University, Lawlabz, and the indigent members of the community. By identifying these stakeholders, the project lives up to the expectation of the multiple stakeholder approach with equal engagement as per the Mandela University Engagement Strategy. There is no superior stakeholder; each is equally important to the other.

HiveLaw is an innovative software platform with a built-in SharePoint environment that brings technology and practice management in the Nelson Mandela University Law Clinic up to date when compared with systems and processes used in legal practice. The Hive Law system has the potential to capacitate employees and students at the Nelson Mandela University Law Clinic to use the same type of technology that they would encounter in a modern legal practice. It furthermore has the potential to expedite legal services by providing document-generating possibilities that will reduce the time of drafting documents and, in the process, provide efficient and professional legal services to the community. The key activities

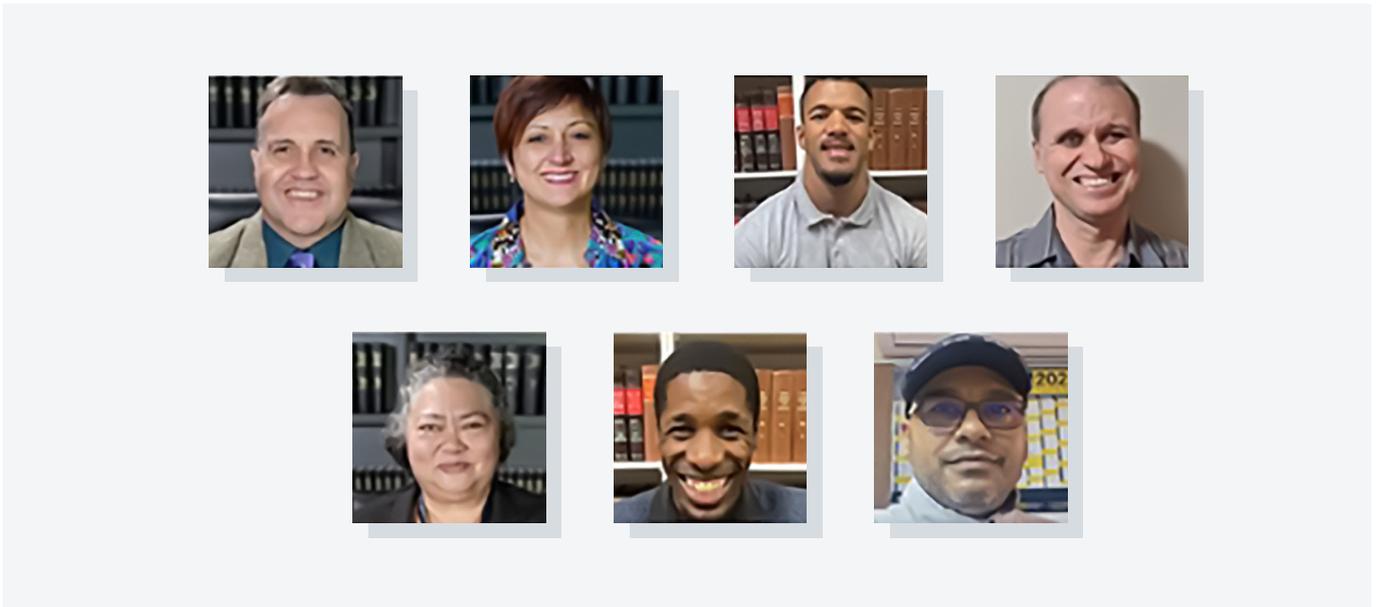
offered by HiveLaw include onboarding of clients and students into the system, generating templates of legal documents and letters, providing statistics, digitisation of a paper-based administrative and case management system, and storage of e-mail messages to relevant stakeholders in dedicated digital client files.

The project leader claims '*...the project is transformative in that it engages a modern and transformative manner of learning and teaching of law students, while serving the community by way of innovative and spearheading technology in the law clinic and legal aid industry*'. It reflects how the university is being in service to society in an emancipatory manner to all partners, that is, the community members, students, and staff, as all stakeholders stand to gain from the engagement.

The Engagement Excellence Award-winning project is ground-breaking and pioneering in bringing change in the world of law in the sense that the Nelson Mandela University Law Clinic is the only law clinic in South Africa with the HiveLaw system in place. The university has the opportunity to take the lead in breaking new ground as far as work-integrated learning, transformative legal education, and access to justice are concerned.



The HiveLaw Project Team



As with any project, there are challenges and lessons to be learnt, which is in line with the Monitoring, Evaluation, Reflection, and Learning (MERL) encapsulated in the Mandela Vision 20230. Through that, it has been noted that the project requires funding to keep running, which funding might become challenging soon. Funding is, for example, required for the annual licensing of the software that the HiveLaw system employs. Another challenge is the shortage of technical staff, who are referred to as super users at the Law Clinic. Super users are necessary for training staff and students on the system and must at all times be present at the Law Clinic to render assistance.

Additional funding will be required to pay the salaries of the mentioned superusers. An important lesson is that the HiveLaw system can also be used away from the law clinic offices, such as in a mobile law clinic setup, which makes community outreach projects viable options for the Faculty of Law and the university.

The responsible Persons for the project include the senior management of the faculty, namely the Executive Dean, Deputy-Dean, HoD of Criminal and Procedural Law, Director of the Law Clinic, as well as relevant staff of Lawlabz.

1.3. CENTRE FOR LAW IN ACTION

▶ 1.3.1. UN Food and Organisation (FAO)'s Compliance and Enforcement (ACE) Programme

The ACE Programme is still at its inception and will adopt a One Health approach and address climate change as a cross-cutting issue. As a programme, it will focus on the Southern African region, including Eswatini, Lesotho and Zimbabwe, with the key stakeholder being the UN Food and Organisation, while the programme is driven by

the Centre for Law in Action. The programme is one of the engagement activities geared towards enabling the university to meet its vision 'to be a dynamic African university, recognised for its leadership in generating cutting-edge knowledge for a sustainable future' as the expertise within Mandela University is being expanded for the betterment

of the African continent, with a global impact. The university, through the CLA, is living the maxim 'act locally, impact globally'.

The Centre for Law in Action was appointed by the Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations for Governing Sustainable Agrifood Systems: Strengthening Legislation, Developing Curricula and Building Capacity to support implementation, compliance and enforcement in Southern Africa. To start the programme, FAO LEGN, in collaboration with the relevant FAO technical divisions, FAO Subregional Office for Southern Africa and the relevant decentralised country offices and partners, organised an inception workshop with the main goal of launching the ACE Programme. The workshops aimed to:

- ▶ Provide comprehensive information about the Programme, its components and implementation.
- ▶ Discuss key issues underpinning the compliance and enforcement of agrifood systems, which will feed into the Curriculum to be developed by the Programme.
- ▶ Raise awareness and build technical capacity of participants concerning the One Health approach and the components of the programme focused on antimicrobial resistance (AMR) and climate change.

The programme has a unique transformation focus, recognising that legislation remains the most powerful tool to create the backbone for the operationalisation of accepted international guidelines regarding the sustainable management of the environment and natural resources towards realising food security and nutrition objectives. Having national laws and regulations in place to govern essential agrifood systems and natural resource sectors is undeniably important; however, ensuring that the appropriate governance mechanisms and resources are in place to give effect to these laws

is a critical element often lacking. To address this weakness, the ACE Programme aims to strengthen existing inter-disciplinary and cross-sectoral approaches to assess regulatory reform and ensure the integrity of the legal frameworks for effective implementation of these laws, as well as assess the adequacy of knowledge, capacity, and resources available to ensure effective compliance and enforcement of these laws.

As implementation is yet to be done, CLA envisage implementing, ensuring compliance and enforcement of their national laws. Governments require that appropriate mechanisms, resources, capacity, and knowledge be in place, which will be the focus of this project. Prof Hennie van As, the entity leader, claimed, *"This Programme is therefore fundamental to achieving the objectives of the laws in the long term, to uphold good governance, and ultimately the rule of law."*

▶ **1.3.2. Ubuntu Project:**

Student hunger has been rife on campuses across the country. The Faculty of Law continues to assist in alleviating student hunger, which remains a problem at the university. During the first half of the year, bread and coffee/tea were provided to approximately 75 – 100 students on Mondays and Wednesdays. Student volunteers from the Law Student Society and Black Lawyers Association (Student Chapter) assist on a weekly basis, overseen by Mrs Elize Grobler. It is desired that more students will make use of this service in the future. We do not currently have the capacity to provide the service more than twice a week.

▶ **1.3.3. Nelson Mandela University Law Clinic**

The Law Clinic, on the Missionvale Campus, serves an important two-tier purpose. Firstly, it provides practical training to final year law students in that students get to work with real-life clients of the Clinic and provide legal advice, draft documents,

negotiate settlements, as well as other practical legal duties. Secondly, the Clinic provides access to justice to indigent members of the public. This two-tier approach is an excellent way of facilitating learning-by-doing by the students while providing valuable legal assistance to members of

the public who do not have the necessary funds to approach private legal practitioners.

The law clinic provides its services on a weekly basis at satellite sites in Motherwell and Kariega

2

FACULTY OF EDUCATION

2.1. SCIENCE AND MATHEMATICS IK TEACHING ANNUAL HERITAGE DAY COMMEMORATION

The project targets students in the faculty of Education, learners in schools, students, teachers, and community members, with geographic location being Sakhisizwe High School. Nelson Mandela University was presented by Dr Ayanda Simayi (Project Team leader) and Mrs Makhosi Madimabe-Mofokeng, both from the Secondary School Education Department. Key stakeholders involved include teachers in schools, DBE officials, and SGB members.



Image: Project Team Members and stakeholders during the event

The aim is to integrate cultural heritage with educational enrichment, showcasing the dynamic relationship between Indigenous Knowledge Systems (IKS) and STEM education. For example, Dr Simayi taught scientific principles of anaerobic respiration through fermentation using traditional sorghum beer. The link between the scientific pro-

cess of fermentation is illustrated by showing the different steps of Xhosa Indigenous Knowledge. The project emphasised the importance of educating the current generation about our rich culture, the preservation and recognition of traditional practices that contribute to contemporary science. Mrs Madimabe-Mofokeng used SeSotho

IKS to teach trigonometry principles. Integrating different knowledge systems is possible through equalising engagement, and this project demonstrates just that. It is imperative to note that the knowledge systems are being recognised as equally important to open learning opportunities.

The event, which was held on the 13th of September 2024, rightly during the heritage month, was preceded by a full week of preparations as a testament to how the team members are committed to this project and the need for a quality event which resonates with Mandela University values, such as excellence. In the process, the event addresses several transformative engagement goals such as respect for values, recognition and preservation of diverse cultures, epitomise Africanisation, and bring Integrated IK-STEM knowledge to the global sphere.

The project team reports that learners, teachers, parents, and officials gained new insights into how different cultures can be used to learn and teach STEM subjects. However, it is worth noting the challenges encountered as a lesson for others and future events. Most notably, getting traditional sorghum beer was a huge challenge as it is not readily available in liquor stores. Brewing sorghum beer in a school was not allowed due to barriers set by the culture known to parents in the SGB.

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2.2. MANDELA DAY 2024

Tangible Africa, in partnership with Nelson Mandela University's computer science department, hosted a Mandela Day coding tournament at both the Boardwalk Mall and Ocean Sciences Campus in Gqeberha. This event was a vibrant celebration of the remarkable life and enduring legacy of Nelson Rolihlahla Mandela.

The Faculty of Education joined forces with Tangible Africa to bring this electrifying event to life. At the Faculty Stall, our dynamic STEM team, consisting of Dr Tarryn Lovemore, Mr Josh Jacobs, and Dr Rochelle Thorne, took turns answering all learners' inquiries about admissions at Nelson Mandela University.

Learners from various schools across the country, including five African countries, enthusiastically participated in the coding tournament. This competition provided a platform for learners to master coding skills through the use of a captivating mobile app called "Rangers."

Let us always remember to make every day a Mandela Day, as we continue to honour the extraordinary legacy of this iconic leader.

ICYMI: <https://www.instagram.com/reel/C9kc-CpgCJH1/?igsh=MTB2MXN6c2Z3dno4Nw==>



The Faculty also answered the call to participate in Mandela Week activities at Zamukukhanya Primary School that started from July 15-18, 2024, organized by Nelson Mandela University, alongside the Nelson Mandela Foundation, PE Community Chest, and Zwide Development Forum, came together to honor Nelson Mandela's legacy.

The literacy team, represented by Dr. Eileen Scheckle and Mrs Nozuko Rhayi, spent the day engaging young minds with stories and donating books to foster a love for reading. The smiles and curiosity of the children reminded us of the power of education to inspire change.

ICYMI: <https://www.instagram.com/p/C9katYJCKJT/?igsh=MTVob3hINDZuNjNmbA==>



2.3. Autism SLP

In 2011, when the Faculty of Education embarked on curriculum renewal, it was realised that one of the gaps in the inclusive education curriculum was on preparing student teachers to teach children with autism. As much as the existing module introduces them to characteristics of children with autism and support strategies teachers could use, it does not fully prepare student teachers to teach such children.

In February 2020, at the Education Deans Forum, one of the parents presented concerns about the lack of Autism modules in South African universities and urged all Faculties of Education to consider offering an Autism education module for teachers. All Deans agreed to the idea, and the department representatives referred universities to the University of Johannesburg, which had just established a centre for neurodevelopmental disorders.

The Faculty hosted a consultative meeting with local stakeholders to officially request input and expertise on the Autism programme(s) that we envisaged offering in the future. We based our presentation on benchmarking that had been done with partner universities over the past 7 years.

The Faculty's approach to Autism curriculum development encompassed a series of inclusive and participatory conversations drawing on various voices across a wide spectrum of stakeholders. They believed that such engagements could contribute immensely to the development of a programme that would address real issues. In 2023, we finalised the design of two Autism modules, which could be offered as SLPs:

- ▶ *Introduction to autism spectrum disorder (ASD)*: This module provides an overview of autism across the lifespan and examines characteristics, definitions, eligibility criteria,

incidence rates, and etiology. Assessment, diagnostic, and identification criteria are described, and understanding the process of interacting and collaborating with parents and relevant professionals is explored.

- ▶ *Teaching children with autism spectrum disorder (ASD)*: The purpose of this module is to empower educators with strategies to support and teach learners with autism in a classroom and provide support in home settings.

In designing the modules, they partnered with Quest School for children with autism, College Street, Autism Eastern Cape, Umphanda Foundation as well as Autism South Africa. Autism South Africa also critically reviewed the two modules.

This is also benchmarked against American universities such as the Dominican University of California and Liberty University in Virginia, where colleagues shared their curriculum for us to adapt or learn from. We visited autism schools to understand how children are taught.

The faculty looks forward to hosting the first offering of these modules in 2025 after finalising discussions with the DBE.

2.4. FIRST YEAR EXPERIENCE PROGRAMME (FYEP)

The faculty's First Year Experience Programme (FYEP) continued its first-year student support initiative in the form of multilingual and multi-modal formal and informal tutorials (in person and online), WhatsApp conversation groups, in-person referrals, and academic guidance.

This support is quintessentially student-centric, with support being offered by senior Education students appointed as Peer Helpers and coordinated by staff member, Ms Nozuko Rhayi.

Support is multilingual and multimodal, varying according to the type of support required for individual modules. There are structured tutorial sessions (in historically challenging modules), ad hoc group sessions (f2f and online), individual check-ins, WhatsApp conversations and sharings, and formalised SharePoint resource sites.

The programme also ensures that cultural and creative avenues are not ignored by hosting Fun Days, where students are invited to participate and enjoy meeting students from other programmes in the faculty. The Future Teachers Choir is a spin-off from the FYEP and proudly boasts over 60 members.



Informal tutoring sessions with first years – consolidation of content covered in lectures



Mr Khusela Joni (B Ed IP student) leads the Future Teachers Choir during one of their vibrant and polished performances



Executive Dean, Prof H Sathorar (centre, blue jacket) and Ms N Rhayi (front, scarf) pictured with the 2024 Peer Helpers at a workshop held to acknowledge and express gratitude for the hard work and contribution to the faculty and students. The peer helpers also debriefed and gave reflective sharing that contributes to 2025 planning for the programme.

2.5. TINARAH MATHS AND LEADERSHIP PROJECT

Dr Vuyani Matsha and his team continued to offer extra Maths classes during 2024 school recess periods to learners from selected Kariega High Schools as part of the Tinarah Maths and Leadership Project.

2.6. STUDENT JOURNAL PROJECT

This project was funded by the Siyaphumelela Project and the Kresge Grant and continued in 2024 with Dr Lucky Maluleke. The project aims to encourage students to initiate a Student Journal to improve their writing, which is also supported by additional tutoring on academic writing.

Dr Maluleke's aims were to improve the overall performance and pass rate in the full-time cohort of the Advanced Diploma in Technical and Vocational Teaching with these interventions.

2.7. SODLA SONKE INITIATIVE/PROJECT

A small group of Faculty Administrators continued to operate a 'pop-up thrift shop' throughout 2024; a fundraising initiative where they sell gently used items that have been donated to the project. The funds raised ensure the **Sodla Sonke initiative** is able to provide basic food and toiletry parcels to unfunded Education students.



2.8. HOPES PROJECT SYMPOSIUM

A HoPES Project Symposium was held on 11 September 2024 at the MV Campus, where students of this NRF-funded project presented and showcased their research work done alongside the Faculty of Education's Centre for the Community School.

In 2019, Nelson Mandela University's Centre for Community Schools (CCS), based on Missionvale Campus, received a National Research Foundation (NRF) grant to address educational challenges in marginalised South African communities. Their research, under the HOPES community of practice, aimed to reimagine schools as sources of hope. CCS collaborated with stakeholders to explore effective, hopeful educational models.

The diverse expertise and perspectives shared at the symposium underlined the urgency of working together to foster sustainable and inclusive improvements in the education system.

The event was also used as an opportunity to elect a multi-stakeholder community coordinating structure to drive the cluster of programme activities to contribute to resolving issues.



2.9. LITERACY PROJECTS



Dr Margie Childs facilitates a project where wordless books are developed and disseminated to schools. They have also embarked on reading books to patients in hospitals.

On Read Out Loud Day, a group of personnel went to the Omega Daycare Centre (Helenvale) where they read aloud to the children at the centre.



As part of our continued support of the Omega Day Care Centre, the faculty initiated a **Santa Shoebox project** where all colleagues were invited to participate by contributing a wrapped shoebox consisting of a toy, stationary, outfit, sweets and toiletries. These were delivered to the Omega Day Care Centre a week before Christmas.



2.10. GRASLAAGTE PRIMARY SCHOOL VEGETABLE GARDENS

Graslaagte Primary School in Humansdorp is a Full-Service, Inclusive Community School. The school faces many challenges, one of which is the ecological crisis. Dr D Geduld's engagement with the school and its community has highlighted the urgency to develop practices and pedagogical approaches that inspire hope and possibilities amongst teachers, children, and community members to address such a crisis.

This project explores ways to enhance eco-pedagogical awareness through the powerful tool of play among foundation-phase children in the South African context. To date, eco-pedagogical awareness has been peripheral, and Dr Geduld argues that play, with its unique ability to engage and educate, could be instrumental in developing the consciousness toward ecological justice amongst 3- to 9-year-olds.

This community-based engagement project relates directly to one of the critical elements of the institution's development trajectory, reflects the University's stated values, and uses the wisdom and knowledge of all people, irrespective of their

backgrounds, intersecting for a shared purpose to assist in solving societal challenges.

Teachers and communities are central to the success of eco-pedagogical approaches. Effective facilitation involves teachers comprehending and employing essential strategies, understanding their learners, scaffolding learning experiences, adjusting their approach to meet individual needs, and assuming the roles of mentors or guides. This requires a profound understanding of eco-pedagogical methodologies and sufficient subject matter knowledge to guide children's learning.

As the pictures depict, this approach advocates for a dialogic teaching approach. This approach strives to discover people's language, particularly in discussions about issues like the environmental crisis, fostering communication in people's language.

During the lesson, as depicted in the photographs, the learners are taught about climate change and environmental issues in an age-appropriate way. The teacher asked the learners how they think they can make a difference in protecting the environment. They responded by saying through

actions like planting, recycling, and composting. Eco-pedagogy takes kids outside the classroom and encourages learning in natural environments. This helps them build a connection to nature and appreciate its beauty. During this lesson, learners were discussing concepts like reducing waste and living more sustainably.

By making environmental awareness and action a central part of the learners' upbringing, we can raise a generation that will build a sustainable future for all. The time for change is now - and it starts with the little ones and with little things.



2.11. CENTRE FOR THE COMMUNITY SCHOOL

- ▶ The Centre for Community Schools (CCS) is involved in several projects which include The Bookery, Motherwell COP-biblioref reading project, Psychology Clinic Educator Wellness Programme, and Sakhingomso. Three projects target learners and educators: Bookery – learners and teachers, Biblioref – grade 1 – 3 teachers and learners, Educator wellness programme – teachers from Manyano schools. For the Sakhingomso project, the target groups are: SMTs, SGBs, RCLs, Teachers, Community members. The first 3 projects take place in Gqeberha, Nelson Mandela Bay Municipality. Sakhingomso project in Cala, Sakhisizwe Local Municipality, Chris Hani District Municipality. The library launch at Sapphire Road PS took place on 6 June 2024

The key activities include:

- ▶ Reading project in Motherwell – September 2023 to September 2024
- ▶ Educator Wellness programme: September 2024
- ▶ Sakhingomso: Capacitation of newly elected SGBs – April 2024
- ▶ Career Exhibition – 25 April 2024
- ▶ SGB, SMT, SBST workshops: 12 – 16 August 2024

CCS, as a service and outreach as well as an engagement entity, is engaged in activities that seek to respond to the complex socio-economic challenges faced by the schools in the Metro and beyond. The approach is aligned to Nelson Mandela University's repositioning as a transformative, responsive university, in service of society. The outlined activities and programmes aim to develop capacity for efficient and effective school leadership, management, and governance among the members of the School Management Teams (SMTs) and School Governing Bodies (SGBs). The training for RCLs contributed to the capacitation and development of capable and knowledgeable learner leadership. Challenges: Funding is a big issue when it comes to engagement work. It is difficult to find sustainable support, hence projects are not sustainable.

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2.12. ISTEAM SKILLS DEVELOPMENT WITH PROFESSIONAL ASSOCIATE, DR RON BEYERS

▶ 2.12.1. Paterson High Hub School

This initiative is proving to be a 'quiet unstoppable revolution'. Mr. Kenneth Prins has done incredible work empowering his senior learners to train juniors, as well as extending training to other schools' learners and teachers. Mr. Prins believes the initial schools must now take responsibility for their own Coding and Robotics programs rather than relying on Paterson High learners. This shift will allow the core team to

expand their reach to additional schools as part of the Hub School concept, which is proving to be highly effective. We commend Mr Prins for showing Digital Leadership and breaking new ground in the Coding and Robotics space.

► **2.12.2. Initiating Code Clubs in Gqeberha**

Dr Beyers is working with David Campey to establish Code. Clubs in schools are using the “Code on a Stick” approach as an entry point. Two schools in the Gqeberha area have already signed up. Encouragingly, word is spreading, and he is receiving more invitations to help set up additional Code. Clubs, which will be run by learners using whatever technology they have available at their school. It is possible to use unplugged resources as well.

► **2.12.3. Raspberry Pi Digital Suitcase (DS)**

The initial focus of the DS was as a content server. Dr Beyers has researched broadly to integrate Coding and Robotics resources onto the 64 Gig MicroSD card. This makes provision for entry-level to advanced users, taking into account the devices that schools have at their disposal. There are countless schools with 30 tablets locked in strong rooms, which is a great concern, as they should be used for teaching and learning every day. He has extracted these devices, powered them up (often as the first user for the past 12-15 years), and made use of them, although the outdated technology limits some of the upper-end coding apps.

► **2.12.4. Digital Suitcase Laptop**

Dr Beyers repurposed an old, unusable Windows 8 laptop by installing Ubuntu 16.04 and uploading the Digital Suitcase content. After configuring the WiFi connections, he was able to use the laptop as a WiFi hotspot, making digital content accessible wherever the device was taken. While it has the same limitations to your Moodle-on-a-laptop setup regarding connection issues, it presents an interesting mobile alternative worth exploring further, albeit using a Linux Operating system.

► **2.12.5. Digital Suitcase on a Stick**

Some of the Digital Suitcase content has been uploaded to a flash drive, allowing it to be run directly from the device or downloaded to a PC, laptop, or network. This can complement the “Code on a Stick” approach, further increasing access to high-quality digital educational materials that are customizable for both teachers and learners.

► **2.12.6. Coding and Robotics Education (CARE) Program for Teachers**

Dr Beyers initiated this program in 2024 and successfully had it accredited by SACE for 16 hours, awarding teachers 15 points. The program consists of three courses:

- **CARE101** – Introduction
- **CARE201** – Intermediate
- **CARE301** – Advanced

These courses focus heavily on pedagogies and hands-on coding and robotics experiences. So far, S4-sponsored training has reached over 50 teachers in the region, with the goal of exceeding 100 by year-end 2025. He would like to explore a collaborative effort with the faculty to identify and train teachers, initially in Gqeberha, before expanding across the Eastern Cape, subject to funding. He also sees an opportunity to integrate the Digital Suitcase on a Stick to support teachers beyond the training sessions.

► **2.12.7. Micro: Bit Education Challenge**

The pilot phase of this initiative has been completed with very positive results. The next step is securing funding to roll out this solution, which integrates multiple subjects into Coding and Robotics using the Micro: Bit, Maqueen, or similar bots.

► **2.12.8. Building Bridges Across Africa Project**

Funding remains a challenge for this project, but it is still available. Many of its core concepts have been integrated into other initiatives to test their viability.

► **2.12.9. Northern Lights Education Project**

Dr Beyers is interlinking three high schools and three primary schools as part of the **Northern Lights Education Hub**, using a fibre-optic network with an extranet. This will further enhance the Hub School concept. Additionally, he is working on establishing a **Coding Academy for the Bay**, which will serve as both a physical training centre and a virtual support system, boasting a skills development portfolio.

2.13. PEACE GARDEN

Mr Koketso Nthimbane with his 3rd year Foundation Phase students established a Peace Garden on the Missionvale Campus as part of the Faculty SHINE Project initiative. This small 'grow your own food' project yielded crops of fresh produce which were donated towards the Sodla Sonke Project that supports unfunded Education students. According to the project leader,

“On harvest day, we’ll come together to pick the ripest vegetables, pack them with care, create healthy meals and deliver them to the Sodla Sonke initiative and needy students. This act of giving will not only provide nourishment to those who require it but also instil in our students and University community members the importance of empathy and contributing to the well-being of others.”





Mr Koketso Ntimbane with two B Ed Foundation Phase students ready to hand over harvest to faculty food parcel recipients



3 FACULTY OF SCIENCE

The vision of the Faculty of Science at the Nelson Mandela University is to be a world-class, engaged, and transdisciplinary African Faculty of Science in the Service of Society. Their brand promise is 'Discovering, Educating, and Engaging to Change the World.' They believe in the intermingled nature of research and innovation, learning and teaching, and engagement.

The Acting Executive Dean, Prof Tshentu, mentions that a purely scientific approach to sustainable wellbeing and planetary health is not the answer; instead, we must advocate for comprehensive transdisciplinary approaches to achieve the plan of action for people, planet, and prosperity. In alignment with our mission, we present a diverse range of life-changing pure and applied science-based learning, teaching, research, training, innovation, engagement, and transformational experiences, and in so doing, develop excellent graduates and staff attributes for sustainable futures. This supports the Faculty's vision of be-

ing a dynamic and engaged African Science Faculty recognized for generating relevant and cutting-edge knowledge for a sustainable future. We strive to be a world-class, engaged, and transdisciplinary African Faculty of Science that responds to socio-economic and environmental challenges in society. As we embark on new programmes in fields such as oceanography, biotechnology, and applied statistics, we believe that, alongside existing programmes, these too will find space to contribute to the end goal of a cleaner and healthier planet.

There are many initiatives, clusters, and new programmes in the faculty that harness the kinds of training we envisage for our students. There are four strategic priorities utilised to develop a transformative engagement culture within the Faculty of Science to proactively engage with society for the mutual benefit of all parties in a sustainable manner. These strategic goals involve creating the necessary conditions for a culture of engage

ment to thrive in the Faculty of Science; to develop knowledge and skills exchange between the Faculty of Science, our partners, stakeholders and wider society; enhance the faculty brand, and expand and advance partnerships with local, na-

tional, African and international stakeholders to strengthen the faculty's footprint. Lastly, it wants to embed cultural, socio-economic, and environmental stewardship as a faculty culture and practice.



From left: Mountain honeybush (*Cyclopia intermedia*) and rooibos (*Aspalathus linearis*) are South African plant species used to make honeybush tea and rooibos tea, respectively. Both are commercially successful products.

The strategic approach to addressing Decolonisation and Africanisation of the Science Faculty is informed by aligning its strategic objectives with those of the institution to account for a cohesive and integrated approach. Several approaches are adopted by various practitioners across the faculty that begin to indicate a sense of self-awareness. During March 2024, the inaugural Nelson Mandela University 'Africanisation– Decolonisation Indaba' was held. Here, it was revealed that academics in the natural and agricultural sciences and resource management are grappling with the call for Africanised curricula and teaching praxes within the faculty.

A key area of focus is the diversity of knowledge systems within the South African context, particularly how certain systems were undermined through the colonial project. This includes acknowledging the variety of knowledge systems and incorporating traditional curricula alongside other perspectives on the environment. In the teaching of Conservation and Environmental Management, Indigenous Biocultural Knowledge (IBK) is integrated into the classroom. Students



Dr Lungelwa Mahanjana and Ruan Hall processing fresh plant material on aluminium foil pre-solvent extraction in an oven

are encouraged to use their languages in these discussions. Indigenous languages offer rich expressions, idioms, and cultural practices that are crucial for understanding ecosystems, biodiversity, and protection efforts. These valuable resources are often lost when discussions are confined to English. Ethnobotany also explores Indigenous Knowledge Systems (IKS), where students are invited to contribute by sharing traditional uses of plants from their families or cultures. The classes also highlight the history of biopiracy by Western science, addressing how colonial power dynamics enabled and continue to enable the exploitation of South Africa's unique natural products, the value of which is embedded in IKS.

In Agricultural Management, IKS is engaged through innovative teaching methods. One such approach is storytelling, where the lecturer shares historical African stories related to traditional farming methods. This method has proven to foster deeper conversations among students and a stronger connection to course content. From these "experiments" in Africanisation, it is clear that integrating IKS and IBK into curricula enhances the learning experience. It provides valuable resources for conservation, fosters creative teaching practices, broadens the range of languages in the classroom, and positions students as active contributors to knowledge creation.

The ongoing Revitalisation of the Curriculum project within the Faculty of Science offers a meaningful opportunity to further advance these practices and explore additional pathways toward Africanisation.

Expanded community engagement initiatives with a focus on sustainable and long-term impact are one of the goals of the faculty. It would like to strengthen collaboration with industry partners to provide students with real-world experiences, and it wants to continue to explore innovative and effective ways of engagement, ensuring inclusivity and accessibility for all stakeholders.

3.1. CHEMISTRY DEPARTMENT

▶ 3.1.1. Transforming the Teaching Lab for Medicinal Plants Chemistry

The faculty of science is involved in a project, Transforming the Teaching Lab for Medicinal Plants Chemistry. Which aims to help students understand chemical concepts and make it easy to remember and understand the relationship between theory and context. The project is located at the Chemistry Department – Katherine Johnson Building. Dr Buyiswa Hlangothi and Dr Nehemiah Latolla are involved in the project. This project aims to make chemistry more engaging and relevant for students by developing innovative learning materials and transforming how certain topics are taught. The focus is on improving the understanding of basic and advanced chemistry concepts, particularly in the areas of organic chemistry and natural product chemistry, by linking theory with real-world applications, such as using medicinal plants in traditional medicine. Their approach consists of three phases:

01

Upgrading a specific lab space with new teaching equipment to enhance the learning experience for two advanced chemistry modules.

02

Connecting traditional medicine practices, such as using herbs for health care, with modern chemistry through hands-on, augmented learning experiences.

03

Sharing the knowledge gained from these new teaching methods through research papers and possibly a booklet to share with the communities.

The goal is not only to improve students' understanding of chemistry but also to equip them with practical skills and knowledge that are relevant to the current needs of South Africa, especially in the context of challenges like diseases such as diabetes, COVID-19, and malaria.

The project supports the University's Vision 2030 by aiming to serve society through innovative teaching methods in organic chemistry. It incorporates Indigenous Knowledge into the curriculum, making learning more inclusive and relevant. Students also include their families in their learning process by leveraging the knowledge passed from generation to generation. This more engaging and human-centred learning experience transforms how chemistry is taught, preparing students for success in the workplace and equipping them with skills for entrepreneurial ventures.

This helped to develop innovative chemistry learning materials to help students understand chemical concepts and make it easy to remember and understand the relationship between theory and context. It is also designed to help develop the academic skills of the team involved, including experience in curriculum design, assessment, and teaching methods.

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► 3.1.2. *Science Institutional Public Lecture*

The highlight of the year was hosting the Inaugural Science Institutional Public Lecture on the George campus on 25 September 2024. The keynote address was delivered by Dr. Albert van Jaarsveld, former Director General at the Institute

for Applied Systems Analysis in Austria. His lecture, entitled "Systems Approaches to Fast-track Sustainable Wellbeing," provided an insightful exploration of various models developed for sustainability inquiries. Dr. van Jaarsveld emphasized that achieving sustainable well-being transcends scientific advances; it requires a holistic approach that incorporates sociological insights, business innovations, and crucially, behavioural changes in resource consumption and procurement.

Dr. van Jaarsveld highlighted that financial incentives, green rewards, and legislative changes can effectively drive behavioural change, creating practical pathways toward sustainable practices. He underscored that sustainable solutions must not only aim to preserve the environment but also ensure equitable societal growth. Following the keynote, respondents Dr. Rhoda Malgas and Ms. Nelsiwe Mpapane offered critical insights into the adaptability of sustainability models at the local level. They advocated for the integration of Indigenous Knowledge and citizen science into sustainability discussions. Audience participation was robust, reflecting a strong enthusiasm for learning and engagement with the topic. This report attempts to highlight the Faculty of Science's commitment to fostering engagement, collaboration, and community impact in line with Nelson Mandela University's mission. The accomplishments and lessons learned in 2024 offer excellent guidance on creating a foundation for future endeavours, building a dynamic and inclusive academic environment. The faculty has had a busy and productive year, which indicates that growth and opportunity lie ahead for further collaboration and engagement.

3.2. GOVAN MBEKI MATHEMATICS DEVELOPMENT CENTRE

In 2024, Nelson Mandela University, through the Govan Mbeki Mathematics Development Centre (GMMDC), advanced its mission of transformative engagement by spearheading impactful, fu-

ture-facing initiatives across the Eastern Cape. Anchored in the constitutional values of equity, redress, and human dignity, these initiatives represent the university's deepening commitment to creating accessible, innovative, and contextually relevant STEM education opportunities. They also reflect how meaningful partnerships and grounded community engagement can shift trajectories not just for individuals, but for public education systems as a whole.

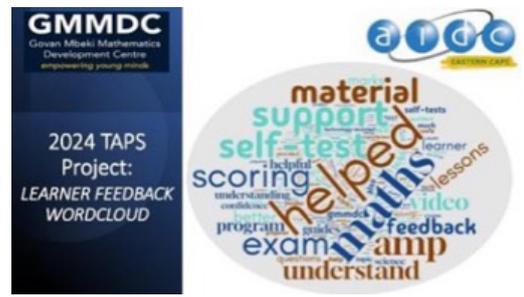
Two key engagement projects stood out this year: the Integrated Technology-assisted Support Project (ITSP) and the Provincial STEAM Seminar for Mathematics, Science, and Technology (MST) Teachers. Together, these efforts illustrate a coherent strategy of supporting under-resourced schools, strengthening the professional capacity of educators, and responding directly to the skills demands of the Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR) and the knowledge economy.

► 3.2.1. Bridging the STEM Divide: The Integrated Technology-assisted Support Project (ITSP)

Implemented in collaboration with the Automotive Industry Development Centre Eastern Cape (AIDC EC), the ITSP is part of a multi-year STEM skills development initiative targeting three historically under-resourced schools two in Nelson Mandela Bay (Paterson High School and Ethembeni Enrichment Centre) and one in East London (Buffalo Metro Inner City High School).

The ITSP has successfully delivered:

- A tablet-assisted after-school Mathematics programme for 60 Grade 11 and 12 learners, run over 20 structured sessions during nine months. Participation exceeded 95%, with many learners reporting increased academic confidence and clearer aspirations toward STEM careers.



Word Cloud of Learner Feedback

- An accredited professional development programme for Mathematics teachers, integrating technology, pedagogy, and content knowledge. Four intensive one-day workshops were held in 2024, equipping teachers with the tools to implement active learning strategies in their classrooms.

- Mobile Gamma Tutor resource centres, which provided interactive, offline, tech-enabled Maths and Science content to schools, reaching beyond the immediate project participants to an estimated 500 learners overall.





In addition to structured classroom interventions, learners also participated in STEM workshops that fostered creative problem-solving and introduced real-world applications of STEM disciplines. The inclusion of career awareness components ensured that learners could better connect their studies with tangible opportunities, helping to shift dispositions towards long-term engagement in STEM fields.

► 3.2.2. STEM Workshops for Teachers & Learners

Critically, this project also fostered whole-school engagement, highlighting the need for integrated approaches involving school leadership, teachers, and learners. Despite funding limitations that constrained scalability, particularly to include Grade 8 and 9 cohorts, the initiative demonstrated the high return on investment when schools are supported holistically to improve learner outcomes in Mathematics and Science.



In May 2024, GMMDC hosted the first-ever Provincial STEM Education Seminar for in-service MST teachers across the Eastern Cape. Held at Kingswood College in Makhanda and organised in partnership with the Independent Schools Association of Southern Africa (ISASA), the two-day seminar attracted over 140 teachers, with more than 60 sponsored by the Eastern Cape Department of Education.



This initiative, self-funded by GMMDC, provided a much-needed platform for professional networking, knowledge exchange, and showcasing of innovative teaching practices. With contributions from 10 national and 2 international STEM education experts, the seminar reinforced the importance of 21st-century skills in the classroom and aligned directly with the university's Vision 2030 commitment to sustainable development.



Teachers engaged in hands-on workshops, panel discussions, and demonstrations exploring:

- The integration of STEM methodologies into existing curricula
- Strategies for fostering learner engagement and interest in STEM
- Resourceful approaches to teaching Mathematics and Science in low-tech or no-tech environments



Catalysing Change in the Teaching Profession: The Provincial STEM Seminar

Representatives from the national Department of Basic Education attended the seminar, signalling strong institutional support and affirming the potential of this engagement to address long-standing education inequalities in the province.

By prioritising both innovation and inclusivity, the seminar not only elevated the professional development experience for participants but also established a foundation for ongoing collaboration among educators, schools, and higher education institutions. It is envisioned as an annual flagship event that will continue to grow in reach and impact.

Both the ITSP and the Provincial STEM Seminar are clear examples of how Nelson Mandela University is operationalising its transformative engagement vision. These programmes embody the principles set out in The Call, centering inclusive access to success, embedding digital literacy as a core competency, and contributing meaningfully to national development imperatives through education.



Across both engagements, the following outcomes were evident:

- ▶ Expanded access to high-quality STEM education resources for learners in historically underserved communities.
- ▶ Professionalisation and empowerment of teachers through accredited training, exposure to global best practices, and ongoing support networks.

- ▶ Institutional collaboration between the university, provincial education departments, and local schools, ensuring that knowledge production and community impact are not siloed but mutually reinforcing.
- ▶ Practical responses to 4IR challenges, with learners and teachers alike being exposed to the digital tools, mindsets, and problem-solving skills needed in an evolving labour market.

Challenges such as constrained funding and the difficulty of scaling to include more schools and grade levels underscore the need for sustained investment and cross-sectoral partnerships. However, the 2024 engagements have laid a strong foundation for expanded impact in the years ahead.

As the university reflects on the year's achievements, these two STEM-focused initiatives illustrate the power of engaged scholarship and

strategic outreach in realising a more just and equitable education system. In doing so, Nelson Mandela University continues to assert its role as a transformative public institution, locally grounded, nationally relevant, and globally aware.

By building the capabilities of educators and learners alike, these programmes are not just addressing current gaps; they are shaping the future of inclusive knowledge economies in South Africa.

4

FACULTY OF HEALTH SCIENCES

4.1. HUMAN MOVEMENT SCIENCE

▶ 4.1.1. *Mandela/FIFA/CIES international programme in sport management*

A 2010 World Cup legacy project, with Mandela University's partnership with the International Centre for Sports Studies (CIES) starting in 2007 as part of the 2010 FIFA World Cup "Win in Africa, with Africa" campaign. Making Mandela University one of 19 countries worldwide that offers a Short Learning Programme (SLP), giving rise to the unique FIFA/CIES International University Network.

The SLP within the Sport Management discipline targets managers and individuals working in the sports world, from amateurs to professionals. The targeted groups include national and international federations, continental organisations,

NOCs, clubs, regional associations, ministries, and municipalities seeking to broaden or refresh their knowledge of sports. The professionals are drawn from all backgrounds (such as legal practitioners, economists, and journalists) who wish to start working in sports and become familiar with the specialist aspects of the sports industry. In addition, the SLP also caters to young graduates who want to complement their existing academic training with a specific qualification in the field of sports management.

The SLP helps achieve the Mandela Vision of being an African university, in that it is one of only three universities in the CIES (International Centre for Sport Studies) University Network to offer this programme in Africa. Mandela University, presenting the SLP at the Summerstrand campus, is responsible for recruiting students across the whole of South Africa, as well as the English-speaking countries of Africa.

The programme involves a multidisciplinary team of five core members from Mandela University led by Mr Vernon Oosthuizen (Adv. Daryl Newton, Former Director, Legal Services, Nelson Mandela University Speciality: Labour Law and Sports Law; Mr Vernon Oosthuizen, Senior Lecturer, Department of Human Movement Science, Speciality: Sport Management, Event Management & Programme Director; Ms Rayghana Abrahams, Lecturer, School of Accounting, Nelson Mandela University, Speciality: Management accounting and financial management; Ms. Cindy Preller, Lecturer, Public Relations and Corporate Communication, Department of Media & Communication, Nelson Mandela University Speciality: Communication & Public Relations; and Mr. Cameron Matebeni: Administrative Manager).

There are multiple stakeholders are various levels of sports management and administration, including FIFA, CIES, National and Provincial Sports Federations, Government Departments, and specific entities such as the NMB Stadium.



Educational excursion to the NMB stadium 2023/24 Class



Graduating class of 2023/24 together with CIES staff and Mandela University staff

The MANDELA/FIFA/CIES International Programme in Sports Management is an academic SLP that aims to provide present and future sports leaders with the necessary knowledge and skills to be able to better understand their working environment and to deal with the types of situations modern sports organisation can be confronted with. 6 modules are taught, namely, Strategic Management, Sport Law, Sport Communication, Sport Event Management, Sport Finance and Sport Marketing. In addition, students must also complete a final group research project.

The programme is geared towards realising transformative engagement goals as set out in Vision2030 of the university. In that regard, it is a mutually beneficial international partnership which aims to enhance social, economic, and ecological sustainability.



Participants who have completed this qualification are adding value to the professionalism with which sport is being managed in South Africa and Africa in that their training has not only encouraged but also motivated and facilitated them to become responsible global citizens capable of critical reasoning, innovation, and adaptability.

According to Mr Oosthuizen, the programme allows for equity of access and opportunities to give students the best chance of success in their pursuit of lifelong learning and diverse educational

goals. In this regard, the course furthermore aims to attract students from the whole of South Africa as well as Southern Africa.

An adult-learning approach is adopted in the teaching of the programme. This approach is dependent on and acknowledges the diverse knowledge, experience, and backgrounds of the students and engages them in critical dialogue to nurture a participative approach to problem-posing and -solving, and the ability to contribute to a multi-cultural society.

Mr Oosthuizen retorted about the transformation goals achievement: 'Feedback from alumni, the present 2023/24 cohort, students, as well as from our CIES partners, bears testimony to the fact that we adopt a people-centred, caring, values-driven approach in all our work as it relates to this partnership'. He further recounts that 'since the inaugural programme in 2007, the qualification has attained a 90%+ pass rate which can be directly attributed to the excellence in teaching, learning and assessment practices of the course'.

The programme furthermore aligns itself in various ways with each of the core values of Vision 2030, namely, diversity, excellence, ubuntu, integrity, and respect for the natural environment.

As part of their commitment to transformative engagement, the 2023/24 cohort embarked on a fundraising campaign. This money was then used to purchase products needed by the Walmer Angel Project, a project that aims to provide relief and upliftment to children in need, especially those living in the Walmer Township. This sees the project impacting beyond sports.

That said, sport, with its profound impact on society, holds a special place in our hearts, particularly in South Africa and across the African continent. It has the power to unify communities, transcend cultural boundaries, and instil a sense of pride and identity.

In this regard, our commitment to the CIES programme is not merely academic; it is a testament to our belief in the transformative power of sport to bring positive change, interpersonal skills, social responsibility awareness, and international networking (in particular in Africa), says Mr Oosthuizen. One of the many highlights for the 2023/24 Edition of the Mandela/FIFA/CIES qualification was the press conference role-play exercise that they completed as part of the Sport Communication module.

The 2023/24 Edition had 26 students enrolled on the qualification. There was an almost even split between South African students and students from other countries in Africa. The class achieved a 93% pass rate. Given this, the Sport Industries of countries such as South Africa, Zimbabwe, Namibia, Kenya, Botswana, Zambia, Tanzania, Nigeria, and Seychelles have gained better-qualified sport managers, and as such, one can expect an upliftment in the professionalization of sport in these countries.

Through this project, Nelson Mandela is being 'in service of society', living the maxim "think global and act local" as encapsulated in how Mandela University contributes to the **Sustainable Goals**.



4.2. UNIVERSITY PSYCHOLOGY CLINIC

► 4.2.1. Empowering Communities through Psychological Support

This project is situated within the Faculty of Health Sciences and operating across both the South and Missionvale campuses, UCLIN plays a dual role as a registered training institution under the Professional Board of Psychology (HPCSA) and as a responsive service provider to communities across the Nelson Mandela Bay.

In 2024, UCLIN's engagement efforts extended beyond its daily provision of individual psychological services to include two significant outreach programmes: psychometric screenings and psychoeducational workshops. These initiatives reflect the University's ongoing commitment to integrating in-service learning with real-world applications, while supporting under-resourced schools and community-based organisations.

► **4.2.2. Psychometric Screenings: Unlocking Potential, Supporting Access**

The first of UCLIN's community-facing projects centres around psychometric screenings for children and young people aged 5 to 28 across the broader metropolitan area. These services, delivered in response to direct requests from schools and NGOs, are designed to assess scholastic potential, school readiness, and placement needs for learners experiencing academic difficulties.

Under the supervision of qualified NMU Psychometrists and Psychologists, student psychometrists engage in structured, supervised outreach coordinated by Ms Fihliwe Klaas and Ms Lauren Maythem, with programme oversight in 2024 initially led by Dr Justin August and later by Ms Maythem.

The impact of this initiative is tangible. Across the year, the South Campus clinic conducted screenings for 147 learners, while the Missionvale campus reached 102 learners, bringing the total to 249 children and youth served. Typically, each campus engaged with at least one school per semester, with individual sessions reaching between 20 and 50 learners. The programme has not only helped identify learners' academic support needs but has also contributed to greater institutional understanding of educational inequality and resource limitations.

Importantly, these engagements offer students hands-on training in a real-world setting while di-

rectly responding to community calls for support. The need, however, far outweighs current capacity. Schools and NGOs continue to face systemic under-resourcing and a growing demand for assessments. UCLIN's ability to respond is constrained by limited human resources, yet the clinic's efforts are consistently welcomed by partners who value the guidance and clarity the screenings provide.

► **4.2.3. Psychoeducational Workshops: Responsive Learning, Transformative Dialogue**

The second flagship project delivered by UCLIN in 2024 focused on psychoeducational workshops. These sessions were designed around the specific needs identified by schools and NGOs, ranging from issues like bullying and emotional regulation to parenting support and care for vulnerable mothers. Each request resulted in a tailored workshop, delivered by student and intern psychologists under the leadership of Dr Ulricha de Klerk and supported by the outreach coordinators.

In 2024, this project reached 361 learners and community members, with 78 served through the South Campus clinic and 283 through the Missionvale campus. These engagements positioned students not only as facilitators of knowledge but as listeners and learners embedded in community realities. Through these workshops, the University played a vital role in addressing psychological well-being as an essential component of social development.

As with the screenings, the workshop programme faced the shared challenge of limited staffing capacity. Still, the impact on participants and the value placed on these sessions by community partners underscored the vital role universities can play in promoting mental health literacy and empowerment.

Lessons from the Field:

Deepening Impact through Localised Practice

Across both programmes, a recurring theme emerged that schools and NGOs in the Nelson Mandela Metropole are eager for psychological support but lack the necessary resources to provide it internally. UCLIN's work helps fill this gap, acting as both a bridge to essential services and a site of practical training that prepares future psychologists to work in complex, real-world environments.

Moreover, UCLIN's engagement model advances the university's goal of being locally rooted and socially accountable. These projects showcase the power of collaborative partnerships between academia and community-based institutions, and they remind us that sustainable change often begins with listening, presence, and targeted response.

The limitation of visuals due to confidentiality reinforces the ethical integrity underpinning all engagements. Still, the absence of imagery does not diminish the impact; the data speaks for itself, and the lived experiences shared through workshops and screenings serve as lasting testaments to the importance of this work.

Looking Forward:

Building a Culture of Care and Capacity

As Nelson Mandela University reflects on the progress made in 2024, the work of UCLIN demonstrates the enduring relevance of embedding transformative engagement at the heart of academic practice. By pairing student learning with responsive community service and by aligning health-related outreach with broader goals of equity and justice, UCLIN exemplifies the University's mission to serve society through innovation and care.

To scale the impact, there is a need for continued investment in human resources, training, and support infrastructure. The engagement work undertaken by UCLIN in 2024 reminds us that transformation is not an abstract idea; it is embodied in every assessment offered to a struggling learner, every workshop facilitated for a concerned parent, and every student trained to meet the demands of a complex world.



5.1. STEM IN ACTION

► 5.1.1. Learner-focused groups

STEM in ACTION operates from facilities on the Missionvale Campus of Nelson Mandela University and collaborates with various departments and entities in the university.



Target groups are in Nelson Mandela Bay, Makanda, Alexandria, Port Alfred, Tsitsikamma, Humansdorp, Kirkwood, Somerset East, Cookhouse, and Jeffrey's Bay. The following groups are targeted:

**GRADE
R & 3**

Mathematics educators

**GRADE
8 - 12**

Physical Science
learners

**GRADE
8 - 12**

Educators engaged in
Physical Science teaching
and learning

To date, a total of ninety schools have participated in the STEM in ACTION offered.

STEM in ACTION worked with several entities within Nelson Mandela University and private companies involved in the Science and Engineering sectors. In addition, several outreaches to schools not directly involved in STEM in ACTION activities were engaged in activities presented by STEM in ACTION. The STEM Careers Day was based on existing partnerships, as well as new industry partners, collaborating with:

► 5.1.2. University of the Free State, Science for the Future

STEM in ACTION and the Science for the Future project at UFS have been collaborating for the past 13 years, as both projects have been sponsored by SANRAL. As a partner in the 6-University Collaboration, STEM in ACTION worked closely with UFS in the execution of the Key Concepts in Science for Grades 8 and 9, as well as the Family Math for Grade 3 projects.

During 2024, STEM in ACTION was associated with thirty-five schools in the Key Concepts for Science and 24 Schools in the Family Math projects under the guidance of UFS. The collaboration with the University of the Free State is extremely successful. All milestones were achieved, and STEM in ACTION is looking forward to a continued good working relationship and to expanding the collaboration to Grade R and Grade 4 Family Math.

► **5.1.3. Department of Basic Education**

STEM in ACTION consulted with two Grade 8 and 9 Natural Science Education Specialists in the Nelson Mandela Bay districts. The Chief Education Specialist for the Sarah Baartman school district, Mrs Hanisi, assists STEM in ACTION to identify schools from Makanda, Alexandria, and Humansdorp to participate in the Key Concepts project. Mr Jerome Ellie, the circuit manager of the Sarah Baartman school district in Graaf Reinet, was most helpful in referring us to the schools in his circuit. This enabled STEM in ACTION to recruit several schools in that area for 2025.

► **5.1.4. Action Volunteers Africa**

Action Volunteers Africa (AVA) is a non-profit organisation that has been working in the field of youth development, since 2013. AVA's innovative programs contribute to resolving the crisis of youth unemployment in South Africa as we envision a country in which every unemployed young person is empowered to build a sustainable future and contribute to society.

AVA collaborated with STEM in ACTION to inspire visually impaired learners with science activities. STEM in ACTION fostered a good relationship with AVA, which resulted that we could assist them with their Mobile Career Cafe program to expose the youth previously part of the GATE project and who could not secure places in tertiary institutions to the career mentoring activities.



Mr Clibert Mukasvanga, the primary facilitator for the GATE 10-12 project, with Bungane receiving his prize as the best GATE 12 learner.

► **5.1.5. ESKOM Science Expo**

STEM in ACTION assisted several learners to perfect their projects to participate in the ESKOM Science Expo.

► **5.1.6. Careers Day partners**

S4 Integration, Jendamark Automation, SANRAL, Aloe Consulting, Propella Business Incubator, Drone operations, Air traffic Controllers, Paxton Access, and Microcare partnered with STEM in ACTION for the STEM Careers Day.

► **5.1.7. Other partners**

To achieve the objectives of the project, STEM in ACTION also collaborated with the NMU Engineering, Built Environment and Technology Faculty, the SRC, and other roll players.

STEM in ACTION is a Physical Science and Mathematics intervention program on the Missionvale Campus of Nelson Mandela University. The objectives of the program are:

- To promote and develop Physical Science and Mathematics skills of Grade 9 to 12 learners.
- To expose learners to and promote careers in the fields of science, technology, engineering, and mathematics.
- To empower educators to improve the quality of Physical Science education.
- To develop human capital involved with the program, to become self-sustained, and to have the skills to become employed.

The following projects were implemented during 2024 to address the objectives of the program:

01

Development and Training of Educators

1.1 Family Math for Grade 3 educators in collaboration with Free State University.

1.2 Key Concepts in Science for Grade 8 and 9 Educators.

1.3 Physical Science educators – SACE accredited training material.

02

Presenting ICT-based Physical Science experiments for Grade 10, 11, and 12 Physical Science classes from selected marginalised schools through the Selected Schools Project (SSP)

03

Offering curriculum support, ICT Physical Science experiments, and Career Exploration sessions to selected Grade 9, 10, 11, and 12 learners from the SSP schools through the "Getting Ahead in Technology and Engineering" (GATE) project.

04

Offering selected Grade 10 learners coding of instruments to perform ICT experiments for Physical Science.

05

Developing learning and teaching materials for Grade 5 educators and learners, focusing on concrete activities to facilitate memory and understanding of the concepts.



**Left: Lungisa Gr 11 Learners investigating Newton's 2nd Law.
Right: Ethembeni Enrichment Centre, Gr 10 learners investigating current and voltage in a series circuit**

The program strategy is driven by the objectives as listed in the introduction. Specific groups of learners and educators are targeted, using relevant selection strategies to identify participants. At the core of the success of the program is a suitable transport solution for all learners participating in and from the STEM in ACTION venue on the Missionvale Campus of Nelson Mandela University.

The program consists of several interdependent projects complementing one another to result in a cumulative effect on educators and learners by supporting them from Grade R to Grade 12. Educator development projects were presented as per the 10-University Collaboration project led by the University of the Free State.



Image: Grade R educators interacting with teaching material during a training session on the Missionvale Campus of Nelson Mandela University.

STEM in ACTION statistics

STEM in ACTION intervened in the Mathematics and Physical Science fields, involving a total of 16,122 individuals during 2024.

Project Statistics





Parents attending a Family Math workshop at Malabar Primary School, interacting with the material supplied to the parents to assist their children at home.

Educators from Limekhaya High School (KwaNobuhle) and Kuyasa Combined School (Alexandria) at the Grade 8 KC in term workshop investigating static electricity.



Educators from St Thomas Secondary School, at a grade 9 workshop, investigating the reaction of metals (magnesium) with oxygen, which produces the white light as can be seen from the image.



Educators are reading the temperature of the melting ice



FET educators embarking on developing professionals in presenting the Heating Curve experiment to their grade 10 learners for the following year.

Although the numbers decreased compared to previous years, the impact on those involved is still significant. The decrease in numbers is due to the termination of participation in the Key Concepts in Science for some schools due to non-implementation. In addition, the number of SSP learners did not reach the heights of previous years because of austerity measures regarding to transport of learners.

Mathematics and Physical Science are required as basic skills in all but 19 of the 142 critical skills listed in the Government Gazette. Science, Technology, and Engineering are at the forefront to support any industrial development and technological advancement in the future. Should more learners be equipped to have the entry requirements to study towards qualifications in these areas, it would address unemployment, poverty, and economic development. The same applies to educator development in these fields, as the quality of learning and teaching is advanced to equip learners with the necessary mathematics and science skills.

Like any project, its success was registered in the backdrop of some challenges, which 2024 in particular was challenging in terms of procuring funding from our regular funder, SANRAL. The 3-year funding cycle ended on 31 March 2024. "SANRAL changed the funding model to a retroactive model. Activities had to be scaled down to adapt to this model", reports the responsible person, Isabel van Gend from Nelson Mandela University.

5.2. INDUSTRY AND INNOVATION ENGAGEMENTS

► 5.2.1. Jendamark x EBET Industry Partner Engagement

On the 9th of April 2024, the Faculty of Engineering, the Built Environment, and Technology had the privilege of hosting Jendamark South Africa's Owner, Founder, Group Manager, and Director,



Mr. Quinton Uren, and Ms. Jeannie Serfontein (Solutions Engineering Manager), both alumni of this faculty's School of Engineering.

The engagement aimed to initiate a Development and Training Programme in partnership with Nelson Mandela University to equip graduates with entrepreneurial skills tailored to industry demands related to "Digitising the workspace". We gained valuable insights into industry best practices and emerging trends.

► 5.2.2. Engineering Council of South Africa (ECSA) CEO Visit

Dr. Ssamula took the time to connect with each student, answering their questions and sharing her wealth of knowledge and experience. Her approachable and inspiring demeanour made a significant impact, sparking lively discussions and offering invaluable insights into the world of engineering and the profession's future.

Students thoroughly enjoyed this unique opportunity to gain experience directly from a leader in the field. The enthusiasm and curiosity were palpable, and it's clear that Dr. Ssamula's visit has left a lasting impression.



► 5.2.3. RS COMPONENTS VISIT

We had an incredible time hosting RS Components at the Faculty of Engineering, the Built Environment and Technology. Over the past few years, RS Components has been a fantastic partner, supporting various projects across our school and faculty.

During their visit, we were thrilled to host their roadshow display, where students had the opportunity to explore a range of options for their current and future projects.

The RS Components team also had productive meetings with our staff members and enjoyed tours of our facilities. It was a wonderful chance to highlight the amazing work happening in our venues and projects, and to discuss future collaborations.



5.3. SCHOOL & COMMUNITY OUTREACH

► 5.3.1. Andrew Rabie Careers day

Andrew Rabie Careers Day was a huge success! The Faculty of Engineering, the Built Environment and Technology highlighted their exhibitions, offering opportunities for future careers.

Amidst many learners eager to explore the forefront of technological advancements, the faculty's exhibitions represented by the School of Engineering and School of Information Technology presented remarkable displays of the programmes offered providing a glimpse into the future of technology and engineering.

As the day ended on yet another successful note, the importance of the engagement of the School of Engineering and School of Information Technology's participation cannot be understated. Our dedication to pushing the boundaries of innovation and excellence serves as a beacon of hope for future generations of engineers.



► 5.3.2. STEM in ACTION Careers Day

The Stem in Action Careers Day 1 event proved to be an enriching event for Grade 11 learners from various schools. The event was organised with the aim of bridging the gap between academic learning and real-world application by offering valuable insights into various STEM Career paths offered within Nelson Mandela University.

Throughout the day, the event saw the participation of Industry leaders from Jendemark Automation, SANRAL, Aloe Consulting, Propella Incubator and Neil Brand – Paxton Access and staff members from the Faculty of Engineering, the Built Environment and Technology (EBET). The industry leaders provided valuable information about their respective fields, shedding light on the current trends and opportunities within STEM sectors. In addition to industry-specific knowledge, the speakers emphasised the importance of university education and the requirements for pursuing degrees in STEM fields. They discussed the academic requirements, essential skills, and the importance of a solid foun-

dition in mathematics and science. The leaders also shared their personal journeys, offering advice on how to succeed in these demanding yet rewarding careers.

Overall, the STEM In Action event was a success, providing Grade 11 learners with a clearer understanding of the STEM fields and the educational pathways to enter these industries. The insights and advice shared by the industry leaders and university faculty members were not only motivational but also instrumental in helping the grade 11 learners make informed decisions about their future academic and career pursuits.



► 5.3.3. *Newton Technical Careers Day*

Our staff from the School of Engineering and the School of Built Environment and Civil Engineering were thrilled to meet so many enthusiastic learners eager to explore the world of engineering and technology.

The students showed great curiosity and interest in our programs, asking insightful questions and engaging with our faculty members. It's always inspiring to see the next generation so passionate about learning and excited about their future careers.

A big thank you to Newton Technical High School for hosting such a fantastic event.



► 5.3.4. *International Women in Engineering Day Tours*

What an inspiring day spent with our young learners, exploring the exciting world of engineering!

The students were eager to learn, asking insightful questions and diving into hands-on activities that sparked their curiosity. It's moments like these that remind us of the importance of encouraging and empowering the next generation of female engineers.

A huge thank you to everyone who joined us in celebrating Women in Engineering Day! Let's continue to support and champion diversity in STEM fields, inspiring young minds to dream big and achieve even bigger. Together, we can build a brighter, more inclusive future.



► 5.3.5. Youth Quake Tour

The Youth-Quake Tour is an empowering initiative that supports high school learners from disadvantaged communities in the Eastern Cape by connecting them with young professionals and university students from various fields. The goal is to inspire and inform learners about academic and career opportunities, particularly in STEM. From 20–24 June 2024, the Faculty of Engineering, the Built Environment and Technology (EBET) took part in the tour across the Amathole and Alfred Nzo districts. Representatives from EBET, including Thabelo Mohlala from the Advanced Mechatronics Technology Centre and marine engineering master's student Sabelo Khosa, displayed engineering programmes, research projects, and career pathways at Nelson Mandela University. Members of the NMU Youth Quake Society also contributed. Their efforts sparked enthusiasm, answered questions, and guided learners on application processes. The tour engaged over 2,000 learners and continues to create lasting academic impact.



► 5.3.6. Victoria Park Careers Day

The Faculty of Engineering the Built Environment and Technology, displayed their exhibitions, offering opportunities for future careers and collaborations.

Amidst many students eager to explore the forefront of technological advancements, the Faculty of Engineering, the Built Environment and Technology exhibitions stood out with their remarkable displays of innovation and expertise, offering

a glimpse into the future of technology and engineering.

As the day ends on yet another successful careers day, the importance of the engagement of the Faculty of Engineering, the Built Environment & Technology's participation cannot be understated. Our dedication to pushing the boundaries of innovation and excellence is a beacon of hope for future generations of engineers, architects, and technologists.



► 5.3.7. Careers Evening at Alexander Road High School

The Advanced Engineering Design Group enjoyed taking part in the Careers Evening at Alexander Road High School. I was genuinely impressed by the passion and curiosity displayed by the Grades 10 and 11 learners who visited their booth.

"It's clear that these young changemakers are gearing up for their future careers, and we couldn't be more optimistic about what lies ahead for them," said Mr Clive Hands.

We look forward to seeing many of them at the Faculty of Engineering, the Built Environment and Technology - Nelson Mandela University in the coming years, contributing to rebuilding our beautiful country. The future of Engineering is indeed in good hands!



► **5.3.8. Community Chest of Eastern Cape**

Staff members from the Faculty of EBET recently joined Mandela University’s Engagement Office, Communication Department, and S4 for a charity golf day at the Port Elizabeth Golf Day to raise funds through the Community Chest of Eastern Cape for the Hostel of Hope.

Picture: University Staff Golf Club four-ball team, Four-ball team Ettienne Gerwel (S4), Bruce Dammers, Director of the Engagement Office, Karl du Preez from Mechanical Engineering and Gregory Bennet (S4).



► **5.3.9. The AIDC Eastern Cape and Nelson Mandela University jointly host the Third Annual AIDC-EC Careers Expo**

The two-day event occurred at the newly built Science Centre at Nelson Mandela University. The Career expo aimed to promote STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, the Arts, and Mathematics) to Grade 9-12 learners.

Over 1,000 learners from various high schools attended the expo, which strongly emphasised mathematics and science in the Nelson Mandela Bay and Uitenhage region.

The Executive Dean of the Faculty of Engineering, the Built Environment and Technology - Nelson Mandela University, Professor Marshall Sheldon, welcomed the learners, setting the stage for the exciting event! Chaneé Louis, our postgraduate student currently working at eNtsa and pursuing her master’s degree, delivered a motivating talk and reminded all the learners that “It’s Possible”.



► **5.3.10. The South African Young Academy of Science (SAYAS) in collaboration with Faculty of Engineering, the Built Environment and Technology, The Academy of Science of South Africa (ASSAf), iGEMS, and Jendamark.**

On 11 September 2024, the Faculty of Engineering, the Built Environment and Technology (EBET) hosted a vibrant outreach event in partnership with the Academy of Science of South Africa (ASSAf), the South African Young Academy of Science (SAYAS), iGEMS, and Jendamark.

Held at the university’s new Science Centre, the initiative welcomed 50 learners for a day of STEM

exploration. The event began with a welcome by Executive Dean Prof. Marshall Sheldon, followed by talks from Prof. Usisipho Feleni on STEAM career paths and Lauren from iGEMS, who outlined their four-phase model for developing employable engineers. Learners also engaged with exhibitions by Jendemark and a nanotechnology display. The day concluded with a captivating experience in the science dome. This collaborative effort aimed to spark interest in STEM careers and guide learners in making informed educational choices, leaving them inspired and eager to pursue future opportunities in science and technology.



5.4. STUDENT-LED AND INTERDISCIPLINARY INITIATIVES

▶ 5.4.1. Moot Court Competition

The Moot Court Competition was a huge success. High school students across the Nelson Mandela Bay Municipality gathered to present arguments in a cyberbullying case before a panel of esteemed judges. Their enthusiasm, extensive research, and commitment were remarkable as they addressed intricate legal matters concerning cybercrime and human rights. Taking place on October 3, 2024, at the Science Centre, the event was organized by Professor Noluxolo Gcaza, Professor in the School of Information Technology, in partnership with the Faculty of Law, the Faculty of EBET - School of IT, and The Centre for Research in Information and Cyber Security (CRICS). It highlighted the students' ability to engage thoughtfully with South



Africa's legal framework on cybercrime, deepening their insights into legal and human rights issues in the digital realm. The lineup of speakers featured Prof. Kerry Lynn Thomson, the director of CRICS; Lindi Coetzee, the Deputy Dean of the Faculty of Law; and Phumezo Mhletywa, the Deputy Chief Education Specialist from the Department of Education Eastern Cape Province. In line with Nelson Mandela University's Vision 2030, this initiative fosters interdisciplinary collaboration, promotes digital literacy, and tackles crucial legal and ethical challenges facing society today. The competition has helped the university and the community by enhancing students' critical thinking, public speaking, and research capabilities.

▶ 5.4.2. Best Creche in Gqeberha Gives Hope to Pupils

New Brighton Early Childhood Development Centre was designed in partnership with architecture students at Nelson Mandela University. We take immense pride in the significant project our students undertook at the Sume Centre, which was established through the visionary efforts of former Charles Duna Primary School principal Nombulelo Sume. This Early Childhood Development Centre (ECDC) was launched by the Masinyusane Development Organisation in September, following a generous R1 million sponsorships from the Ezethu Development Trust in 2023. In February 2023, Masinyusane collaborated with our architecture department at Nelson Mandela University (NMU) to achieve the ambitious goal of creating the best crèche in Gqeberha by November 2023.

Our second-year students crafted the design and played an essential role in the construction process, ensuring that the project met its deadline. A panel of representatives from Charles Duna Primary School, Masinyusane Development Organization, and the Ezethu Development Trust selected the winning design.



Deputy Principal Mtobi Peppeta emphasised the excitement around the ECDC’s operation, which provides critical early education. He pointed out that many children come from homes where their challenges might not be fully understood, making the centre vital for nurturing their creativity. Chair of the school governing body Lizo Ndzuvo expressed enthusiasm for the centre, noting its importance in delivering quality education, especially for children from disadvantaged backgrounds. “Through this centre, children can pursue their dreams and support their families,” he said. Masinyusane co-founder Fiks Mahola highlighted their decision to keep Sume’s name a secret until the launch to honour her contributions. “Even in retirement, she remains active in education, and our NMU students not only conceptualized but also executed the project,” he noted. NMU senior architecture lecturer John Andrews praised the students for their dedication and creativity, with the Tree design ultimately selected from the finalists. He described the structure as resembling a tree, featuring a thoughtfully designed playground that enhances the joy of learning.

5.5. STRATEGIC PROJECTS AND FACULTY DEVELOPMENT

▶ 5.5.1. 2024 Faculty of EBET Staff Induction – Amazing Race

The Faculty of Engineering, the Built Environment, and Technology is excited welcomed new staff members. The EBET Amazing Race is an event designed to welcome and introduce new staff members to the faculty and campus environment. The adrenaline-fueled excitement of the Amazing Race has left the team exhilarated!

The newly appointed staff embarked on a journey of exploration, collaboration, clue solving and fun-filled challenges to find places, spaces, and people on campus that can and will help, support, assist, and advise them on their journey as a valued member of the faculty and institution.



► 5.5.2. SASEE/IEC Workshop

On July 10, 2024, the Faculty of Engineering, the Built Environment and Technology - Nelson Mandela University hosted the Regional Hybrid SASEE/IEC Workshop at Nelson Mandela University. The event took place at the Engineering building, Mapungubwe, on North Campus and brought together a group of professionals dedicated to engineering education.

The recent workshop was an incredible opportunity for participants to engage in meaningful discussions, share best practices, and explore innovative approaches to engineering education. The hybrid format allowed for both in-person and virtual participation, ensuring broad accessibility and inclusivity. We are excited about the ongoing collaboration of SASEE and the IEC project team and look forward to more enriching workshops that will continue to shape the future of engineering education.



► 5.5.3. 2024 Humanising Pedagogy Faculty Conversation

Exciting conversations at the 2024 Humanising Pedagogy faculty discussion!

On October 28th, 2024, we had the privilege of engaging with Dr. Jean-Pierre Basson, our HP Learning and Teaching fellow from the Faculty of Engineering, the Built Environment, and Technology. Together, we explored the vital concept of Humanising Pedagogy (HP) in our faculty.

The session, held in the vibrant Architecture main studio, had dynamic discussions and the chance

to connect with fellow educators! Let's continue to foster a human-centred learning environment.



► 5.5.4. Prof Soyez's Visit to Nelson Mandela University

We are excited to announce that the Department of Building and Human Settlements hosted Prof. Konrad Soyez, Chair of Plant Ecology and Nature Conservation from the University of Potsdam, Germany, from November 11th to 15th, 2024.

As a long-standing partner of our university through the Chair for Human Settlements, his visit marked a special moment in our ongoing collaboration.

During his time with us, Prof. Soyez had the opportunity to review the progress of the Ndlambe Eco Sun project—an exciting joint initiative between our universities. Additionally, productive discussions were held about the expansion of our research partnership, culminating in a new Memorandum of Agreement. This marks a significant step towards deepening our collaboration and advancing our shared goals in sustainability and eco-innovation. We look forward to the continued growth of this partnership and the impactful research projects that lie ahead.



Nelson Mandela University is championing transformative engagement as a central pillar of its academic mission, alongside learning, teaching, and research. More than an institutional commitment, this approach represents an active responsibility to create real, measurable socio change.

In alignment with its Vision 2030 strategy, the University continues to drive innovative and impactful projects that foster community empowerment, inclusive student success, and strengthened industry-academic relationships. The Faculty of Business and Economic Sciences (FoBES) has been at the forefront of these efforts, implementing strategic initiatives that address urgent societal challenges and equip individuals, whether students, informal traders, or industry professionals, with the skills to thrive.

In a world where economic uncertainty is the only certainty, small businesses need more than just survival strategies; students need more than just degrees; and industry leaders need more than just echo chambers. The projects pioneered by FoBES are more than academic exercises or outreach initiatives; they are bold interventions equipping individuals with economic agency and ensuring that the University remains relevant beyond its campus walls.

6.1. FROM SURVIVAL TO SUSTAINABLE GROWTH (THE PERI-URBAN TRAINING PROGRAMME)

Many informal traders operate on the margins of the economy, with little access to structured business support. The Missionvale Peri-Urban Training Programme directly responds to this need. Conducted in partnership with the Missionvale Care Centre and the local ward councillor, this programme provides training to 60 community members each month. Participants receive guidance on business incubation, identifying entrepreneurial opportunities, and developing sustainable business practices.

Unlike traditional training programmes, this initiative extends beyond the classroom. Traders receive ongoing business consultations through Microsoft Teams, ensuring continuous mentorship and adaptability to real-world challenges. This hybrid approach ensures continuous mentorship and support, making business education more accessible. Led by Dr Paul Tai-Hing, the initiative underscores the University's commitment to capacity-building in underprivileged communities. By creating a sustainable ecosystem of learning and practical application, this programme is fuelling local economic development while positioning Nelson Mandela University as a catalyst for small-business success.



Dr Paul Tai-Hing
during a session



6.2. ADDRESSING FOOD SECURITY

Hunger remains a significant barrier to student success. While access to education is expanding, food insecurity continues to threaten students' academic performance and well-being.

To address this, FoBES launched the Food Parcel Distribution Programme, which provides essential food supplies to unfunded students within the faculty. This initiative, led by Prof. Michelle Mey, Dr Nuraan Agherdien, Yonela Dube, Rifqah Felix, and Kim Alexander, ensures that students can focus on their studies without the burden of daily survival.

Food parcels are distributed from the Second Avenue Campus, with support from industry sponsors and faculty departments. However, sustainability remains a challenge. The project currently relies on inconsistent funding, highlighting the need for long-term financial solutions to ensure no student is forced to choose between education and basic nutrition.

Food parcel distribution has transformed into a shopping-like experience for students. Instead of receiving pre-packed parcels, students are allocated credit and can choose items from our cupboard that best suit their individual needs. This approach not only empowers them to make informed choices but also helps develop essential budgeting skills.

By advocating for a more structured funding model, this programme is not only a lifeline for students today but a step towards ensuring food security as a fundamental right within higher education.



6.3. THE INTERSECTION BETWEEN ACADEMIA AND INDUSTRY (THE BREAKFAST CLUB)



Prof Paul Poisat, Mr Arthur Goldstuck

The gap between what is taught in classrooms and what is practiced in boardrooms has long been a sore point in higher education. If universities are to be more than just factories for degree-holders, they must actively engage with industry, not as an afterthought, but as a fundamental part of their intellectual ecosystem. So, how do we ensure that students and academics remain at the forefront of industry trends and business evolution? The answer lies in open, insightful discussions with industry leaders.

The Breakfast Club is an intellectual forum where academia and business intersect. Hosted at the Nelson Mandela University Business School, these sessions provide an opportunity for alumni, faculty, and industry experts to exchange knowledge and shape the future of business in South Africa.

In 2024, the series welcomed the likes of Arthur Goldstuck, who dissected the digital transformation wave, and Nico Claassen, who tackled economic resilience in an era of uncertainty. Facilitated by Prof Paul Poisat, these discussions aren't just about networking; they are about reshaping how academia and industry can collaborate.



Prof Paul Poisat, Mr Nico Claassen

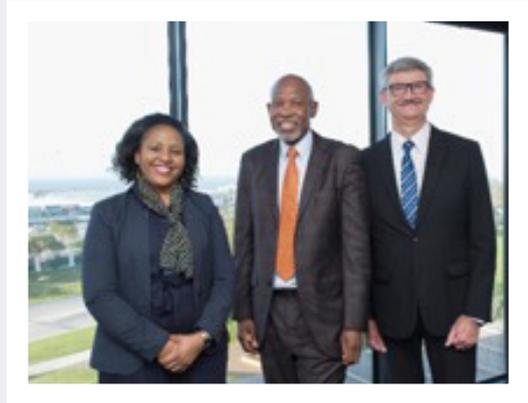
The Breakfast Club isn't afraid to ask hard questions: Are our graduates truly prepared for the modern workforce? Is business education keeping pace with global change? How do we train leaders for jobs that don't even exist yet? By challenging conventional wisdom and pushing intellectual boundaries, these sessions are proving that engagement between universities and industry shouldn't be transactional; it should be transformative.

6.4. THOUGHT LEADERSHIP IN ACTION (PUBLIC LECTURES)

Beyond industry discussions, FoBES has also created another platform for intellectual exchange: the Public Lecture Series. Designed to engage a broad audience, including students, community members, and business professionals. These lectures provide a space for critical thought and leadership development.

The 2024 Public Lecture Series, featuring South African Reserve Bank Governor Lesetja Kganyago and Volkswagen South Africa's Martina Biene, did exactly that. Kganyago's deep dive into monetary policy and economic stability provided more than just textbook analysis; it gave attendees a front-row seat to the complexities of economic governance. Meanwhile, Biene's exploration of automotive innovation and sustainability forced the audience to confront an industry amid a seismic shift.

These lectures reinforced the University's commitment to making expert knowledge accessible, engaging, and actionable. At a time when misinformation is rampant and intellectual rigor is under threat, the importance of public discourse spaces like these cannot be overstated.



Dr Muki Moeng, Mr Lesetja Kganyago, Prof Hendrik Lloyd



(From left to right: Prof Michelle Mey (Deputy Dean of Faculty), Ms Martina Biene (VW), and Prof Hendrik Lloyd (Executive Dean of Faculty))

6.5. SERVICE BEYOND THE CLASSROOM (MANDELA DAY INITIATIVES)

Engagement isn't just about industry and academia – it's also about active citizenship. Honouring the legacy of Nelson Mandela, the Faculty participated in various Mandela Day Initiatives, reinforcing its commitment to social responsibility. In 2024, partnering with SANCOBB, faculty members supported seabird rehabilitation efforts, recognising that sustainability isn't just an academic buzzword, it's a responsibility.



6.6. SUPPORTING HIGH SCHOOL LEARNERS (THE GELVANDALE HIGH SCHOOL MATRIC PROJECT)

Meanwhile, the Gelvandale High School Matric Project tackled another critical issue: the education pipeline. Recognising the challenges faced by learners in under-resourced communities, this initiative aimed to provide academic support and career guidance to matriculants.

If we want more students to access higher education, we cannot wait until they reach university to support them. The initiative, led by the Applied Accounting Department in collaboration with the Department of Mathematics, brought high school learners onto campus for study sessions, campus tours, and crucial guidance on navigating university applications and funding.

In 2023, 46 learners were welcomed onto the Nelson Mandela University campus for two intensive study sessions focused on Business Studies and exam techniques. Inspired by the overwhelming success of the previous year, the project was expanded in 2024 to include Mathematics tutoring, addressing a critical gap identified in the earlier engagement.

Second-year Diploma in Accountancy students were also integrated into the project, providing them with an opportunity to participate in a real-world engagement initiative. Learners were given access to the University library, taken on a campus tour, and provided with information about NSFAS funding, AS score calculations, and the application process.

Led by Lynn Schoeman, this project has played a crucial role in inspiring and preparing young learners for higher education, demonstrating the University's commitment to widening access to quality education. For many learners, this was their first tangible experience of higher education, a moment where the dream of university transformed into a possibility. This is engagement in its purest form: not just reaching out but lifting.

7.1. THE CENTRE FOR WOMEN AND GENDER STUDIES & THE DSI-NRF SARCHI CHAIR IN AFRICAN FEMINIST IMAGINATION

The Centre for Women and Gender Studies (CWGS), in partnership with the DSI-NRF SARCHI Chair in African Feminist Imagination (AFEMI Chair), continues to build a powerful intellectual and activist platform within Nelson Mandela University and the wider Eastern Cape. Their 2024 activities reflect a deep-rooted commitment to advancing gender transformation, intersectional feminist research, curriculum development, and public intellectual life, anchoring their work in collaboration, care, and critique.

Operating from the Bird Street Campus and across NMU's sites of delivery, the CWGS and AFEMI Chair have successfully convened and contributed to regional, national, and global engagements that interrogate and reimagine dominant paradigms in gender discourse. Their work continues to centre historically marginalised voices, create intellectual spaces of resistance, and shape critical conversations about justice, representation, and power.

Strategic Vision and Leadership

Under the leadership of Director Prof Babalwa Magoqwana and SARCHI Chair Prof Pumla Dineo Gqola, the CWGS and AFEMI Chair team included postdoctoral fellows, researchers, interns, and a growing communications unit. Their coordinated efforts allowed the entities to execute a rigorous programme of events, publications, and knowledge-sharing initiatives, building a consistent presence in both academic and public life.



26 April 2024: Book Launch of Tumi Mampane's *Pentecostal Charismatic Women: Constructions of Femininity in Alexandra Township* (HSRC Press, 2023)



New appointments in 2025, including a Research Coordinator and three Research Interns, reflect a strategic response to staffing limitations that previously challenged implementation and output. These additions strengthen the unit's capacity to deliver its ambitious transformation and engagement agenda.

▶ **7.1.1. Building the Intellectual Gender Corridor in the Eastern Cape**

Key Engagements and Intellectual Outputs

In 2024, the CWGS and AFEMI Chair curated a vibrant series of public lectures, seminars, workshops, and book discussions. These included:

- ▶ Author Fridays launched with seminars on Colonising Palestine by Dr Areej Sabbagh-Khoury and Pentecostal Charismatic Women by Dr Tumi Mampane—each exploring the intersections of religion, gender, memory, and resistance.
- ▶ A seminar titled ‘2024 Elections: A Feminist Perspective’ critically analysed patriarchal political structures, women’s participation, and representational challenges in African democracies.
- ▶ The ‘Transitions’ Dialogue with queer scholars Jabu Pereira and Prof zethu Matebeni offered a powerful exploration of legacy, vulnerability, and community 30 years post-Apartheid.
- ▶ A landmark Institutional Joint Public Lecture with the University of Fort Hare, honouring Dr Phyllis Ntantala and Prudence Mabele, themed Black Feminist Work(s), featured keynotes by feminist writer Nana Darkoa Sekyiamah and activist Koketso Moeti.



Other notable events include the Sankofa Epistemology seminar with Nigerian scholar Prof Nkiru Nzegwu, engagements with Dr Stella Nyanzi on religion and queerphobia in Uganda, and a seminar unpacking the Ministerial Task Team’s report on GBV in higher education institutions.

The 2024 Summer School, themed The Internationalisation of Gender Studies, was co-hosted with Carl von Ossietzky University (Germany), contributing to global conversations around precarity, digital feminism, and knowledge production in neocolonial contexts.

▶ **7.1.2. Teaching, Learning, and Curriculum Innovation**

A major achievement in 2024 was the approval and launch of the Master of Arts in Gender Studies (Research) – the first of its kind in the Eastern Cape. The programme’s implementation in 2025 marks a significant milestone in feminist curriculum development, widening access to postgraduate education that centres gender justice and critical theory.

Complementing this was the awarding of the Carnegie African Diaspora Fellowship, with the upcoming residency of Prof S.N. Nyeck (University of Colorado Boulder), which will further enhance research and pedagogic depth in 2025.

28 June 2024: Transitions: A Conversation on Queer Politics, Social Movements, and Apartheid Legacies 30 Years on with Jabu Pereira and Prof zethu Matebeni

► 7.1.3. Publications, and Knowledge Production

CWGS and the Chair's scholarly contributions include the publication of *Inyathi Ibuzwa Kwabaphambili: Theorising South African Women's Intellectual Legacies*—co-authored by Prof Magoqwana, Siphokazi Magadla, and Athambile Masola. The text is a bold intervention into conversations about Black women's knowledge systems and intergenerational learning.

The Author Fridays series continued to serve as a key platform for emerging scholarship, public engagement, and narrative disruption.

International engagements were equally robust. Prof Gqola's participation in the AFROLUTION Festival in Berlin, a lecture series at the University of Exeter, and Africa Writes Festival in the UK, alongside Postdoc Dr Vidhya Sana's and researcher Simran Juglal's contributions to conferences on archives, colorism, and cultural politics, collectively signpost a globally embedded and intellectually vibrant community of scholarship.

The CWGS maintained strong partnerships with civil society actors like Masifunde Changemakers Academy, engaging high school students on gender roles and consent, and elevating the role of youth-led dialogue in reshaping cultural norms. Public platforms like the Council Seminar Series on the MTT Report reinforced the CWGS and Chair's commitment to institutional accountability and responsiveness, especially regarding gender-based harm in higher education.

Other strategic alliances with the Brigalia Bam Foundation, Zanele Mbeki Development Trust, and the University of Fort Hare's SARChI Chair in Sexualities and Queer Studies have further amplified the reach of NMU's feminist knowledge architecture.

► 7.1.4. Digital Engagement and Communication

CWGS significantly increased its digital visibility in 2024 with the launch of new media platforms, including YouTube and TikTok, and the production of educational reels and video content. These platforms have helped translate academic work into accessible public knowledge and engage broader, especially younger, audiences.

Technical challenges around website functionality under new university guidelines were noted as a constraint, but adaptive strategies are being explored. While staff capacity and technical limitations created constraints, the CWGS and Chair's response has been forward-facing, expanding human resources, deepening intellectual output, and strengthening regional, national, and international partnerships.

Projects still in progress, like the Gender Transformation Framework and Gender Mapping Project, highlight the unit's long-term vision and its commitment to structural change within and beyond the university.

Looking ahead, the work of the CWGS and AFEMI Chair is poised to shape not just academic discourse but also public policy and social consciousness. As they continue to build what they term the "intellectual gender corridor," their work embodies the essence of transformative engagement, rigorous, rooted, and responsive to the urgent demands of justice, identity, and belonging in contemporary society.

7.2. TRANSFORMATION OFFICE

In 2024, the Transformation Office (TO) at Nelson Mandela University deepened its commitment to social justice, gender equity, and inclusive institutional culture through a wide-reaching portfolio of engagements. Working in alignment with the

broader mission of the Engagement and Transformation Portfolio (ETP), the TO acted as a critical interface between the university and its surrounding communities, responding to the lived realities of gender-based violence (GBV), institutional harm, human rights violations, and marginalisation.

The TO's efforts this year were rooted in co-creating spaces for learning, healing, and systemic change. Its activities spanned stakeholder training, awareness events, exhibitions, partnerships, student-facing dialogues, and cross-institutional collaboration. By anchoring its work in intersectionality, the TO ensured that issues of race, gender, sexuality, mental health, and access were addressed with the nuance and care they demand.

► **7.2.1. Human Rights, Conflict, and Global Solidarity**

The TO collaborated with the Refugee Rights Centre and the International Office to host a panel discussion addressing human rights violations in the Democratic Republic of Congo and the ongoing genocide in Palestine. These conversations, held in partnership with the Palestinian Solidarity Organisation (PSO@Mandela), created space for students, staff, and civil society to engage in critical discourse on global injustice and the politics of solidarity.

Complementing this, the TO also supported film screenings and reflective webinars on the lived experiences of LGBTQIA+ individuals in the context of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, bridging the local with the global and fostering empathy-driven understanding.

As part of the TO Human Rights Series, dialogues were hosted at various student residences (on and off campus), linking the Bill of Rights (Chapter 2 of The Constitution of South Africa) to equality promotion and social inclusion.

► **7.2.2. GBV Prevention and Gender Justice**

At the heart of the TO's work was a sustained focus on addressing GBV and building a culture of accountability and care.

Key partnerships included:

- The Hawks Directorate for Priority Crime Investigation (Trafficking in Persons Unit), which facilitated a powerful Human Trafficking Awareness Programme, shedding light on the mechanisms of exploitation and institutional failures.
- Conducted First Responders Trauma Training with Siyaphakama Community Kitchen staff which was funded by the Kolisi Foundation. Similar training was conducted with the University of Limpopo colleagues.
- Department of Social Development, KwaNobuhle One-Stop Centre, and Thuthuzela Care Centres provided support, shelter referral pathways, and coordinated service delivery for survivors.
- The Christian Revival Church (CRC) and other faith-based actors contributed to healing-focused workshops, integrating spiritual counselling into broader support systems for survivors.

Public awareness was enhanced through multiple resource exhibitions, which shared legal, medical, and psychosocial support resources with students. These were held in partnership with the National Prosecuting Authority, the Department of Justice, and other key agencies.

The TO's interventions extended to rural and peri-urban communities, with roadshows such as the Indwe Secondary School Open Day, creating accessible forums for students, educators, and families to engage with GBV-related education.

▶ **7.2.3. Institutional Culture and Safety**

A major strand of engagement focused on campus safety and GBV case management in collaboration with:

- ▶ SAPS through safety forums and dialogues with first-year students;
- ▶ Metro Police, providing visibility, referral, and safety presence.
- ▶ The Campus Community Safety Forum, which was officially launched in 2024 as a long-term initiative to drive prevention and response work on NMU campuses.

Collaborative spaces for intersectional safety were created, such as the Men's March and wellness-focused webinars under the Phila Ndoda banner, which focused on redefining male identity and mental health beyond toxic norms.

The Transformation Office Hosted human rights dialogues at various student residences (on and off campus), linking the Bill of Rights (Chapter 2 of The Constitution of South Africa) to equality promotion and social inclusion.

▶ **7.2.4. Intersectionality: LGBTQIA+ Rights and Inclusion**

The Transformation Office took an intentional turn toward supporting the LGBTQIA+ community more meaningfully. Some key actions included:

- ▶ Partnering with Gender Dynamix, OUT LGBTI, Sibanye LGBTQI+, and others to offer staff training and sensitisation workshops that explored the unique challenges facing LGBTQIA+ individuals in education and healthcare settings.
- ▶ Supporting the LGBTQIA+ Forum launch in

George, bringing together stakeholders from the Department of Health, Community College, ABSA, and the Department of Social Development to strategise on safer systems for queer students.

- ▶ Hosting workshops and dialogues on LGBTQIA+ men's health, rights, and psycho-social safety.
- ▶ Contributing to national platforms, including a UNICEF conference through the Youth Exchange Canada/South Africa programme, where students reflected on access to healthcare and discrimination in service provision.
- ▶ Hosted a Gender Dysphoria Workshop in collaboration with UADS and Social Health and Empowerment Feminist collective of Transgender women of Africa.

▶ **7.2.5. Health, Wellness, and Mental Health Advocacy**

Recognising the mental health toll of GBV and marginalisation, the TO partnered with:

- ▶ Indlela Mental Health, delivering a two-part webinar series tailored for GBV survivors and persons with disabilities, amplifying psychosocial support within an intersectional lens.
- ▶ Revive, distributing pamphlets and counseling referral materials to students in need.
- ▶ TBHIV Care and Engage Men's Health, who co-facilitated events focusing on HIV, LGBTQIA+ health, and GBV intersections.

TO hosted a dialogue about adolescent and Youth-friendly services. A Conversation with teenage girls, young women, and young adults about GBV, HIV, sexual and reproductive health and rights, with approximately 100 attendees. This

event involved collaboration with the following stakeholders: DSD, DOH, UNICEF, NMB municipality, DOXA, UNFPA, NMU Law Faculty, NMU HIV & Aids Unit and Canadian Officials. Members of the Transformation Office served as a panellist and facilitators in group discussions during the dialogues.

These wellness engagements not only addressed mental health stigma but also promoted a proactive approach to care-seeking among vulnerable student groups.

► **7.2.6. Culture, Sport, and Media as Tools for Change**

The Transformation Office extended its engagement into unexpected but impactful arenas:

- A Rugby Sport Event under the Legally You banner used competitive sport to drive GBV awareness among young men, challenging locker room culture and promoting allyship.
- Collaborations with Social Health and Empowerment Feminist Collective of South Africa (SHE) facilitated an LGBTQIA+ workshop with a strong cultural lens.

► **7.2.7. Strategic Partnerships and Scholarly Engagement**

Cross-university knowledge sharing was prioritised through:

- A Gender-Based Violence training workshop for Psychology students at the University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN).
- A focused workshop with Fort Hare University's Gender Unit, strengthening inter-university collaboration.
- Participated in a CGE research project on sex-

ual harassment in higher education institutions to enhance and refine policy and processes based on the studies findings.

- Co-authored the paper entitled, Changing the Face of Gender-Based Violence Responses, which was presented at the 2024 International Higher Education Teaching and Learning Association Conference hosted by the Nelson Mandela University in Gqeberha, Eastern Cape, South Africa. The paper has been submitted to the Journal of Applied Research in Higher Education - Manuscript ID JARHE-11-2024-0633 for publication.

Through these activities, TO demonstrate its role as both practitioner and thought partner in driving institutional and societal change.

Forward Outlook and Lessons

The scope of work delivered by the Transformation Office in 2024 reflects a robust ecosystem of collaboration, responsiveness, and accountability. The TO's approach has been holistic, situating GBV and transformation within broader discourses of masculinity, race, class, mental health, disability, and global inequality.

However, the intensity and breadth of this work signal the need for sustained resourcing, long-term strategy, and institutional embedding beyond advocacy to curriculum mainstreaming. Lessons from the year reveal that:

- Integrated service delivery models work best when built on strong partnerships across institutional portfolios and inter-sectorally.
- Student and staff trust and participation increase when interventions are co-cre-

ated, inclusive, and mindful to their lived social justice experiences (insitu-tional, local, national and global).

- Gender mainstreaming is not an add-on but a core element underpinning social justice, inclusion and equality.

► 7.3. Engagement Office

The Engagement Office (EO) is tasked with strategising, coordinating, capacitating, intellectually sponsoring, and initiating engagement activities within the university. EO continues to strive to make a meaningful contribution to Mandela University's Vision 2030's focus on social justice, environmental responsibility, and community empowerment. By implementing a variety of innovative projects and fostering partnerships, it strives to continue to strengthen its leadership in sustainability, impacting both the higher education sector and the wider community. The Hubs of Convergence (HoC) are central in the clarification of the EO role in institutional sustainability efforts, fostering collaboration with diverse internal and external stakeholder communities. As the HoC activities have been predominantly at Gqeberha campuses, the George campus activated its HoC in 2024 to promote interdisciplinary work on environmental conservation, eco-tourism, and agriculture. This initiative is a key part of integrating sustainability across campuses and advancing community engagement.



The Engagement Office has adopted a dynamic approach to fostering relationships with various stakeholder communities. The EO has made progress in several key areas, including the broadening of the HoC to incorporate a student version, specifically the Student Convergence Hub (SHoC), which aims to co-construct inclusion and advocacy programs with students. This initiative aims to foster a collaborative environment where students can actively participate in creating a more inclusive and supportive university community. The Office hosted several events, dialogues, and community engagements during the reporting year. Most significantly, in March 2024, EO hosted a national Climate Change seminar with the Nelson Mandela Foundation and Old Mutual.



Participants from across the country attending the national Climate Change Seminar in March 2024



Invitation to the SS Mendi Documentary screening.

Some of the staff, students, and community stakeholders present at the GHOC Workshop on 24 July 2024

The SS Mendi Documentary Screening saw participation from primary and high school learners, community-based organizations, and local businesses, highlighting a commitment to community engagement and historical remembrance.

On another note, the EO facilitated an institution-wide ethics workshop to enhance ethical frameworks and the development of the Uthethathethwano Olungenasiphelo (UO) model, designed to promote effective community-based engagement. In addition, the EO successfully executed Mandela Day activities in collaboration with the Zwide Development Forum. Support for the Mandela University Food Systems programme's signature projects was strengthened through a documentary project, and planning for various collaborative publications and projects, such as the Hostel of Hope, was advanced. Additional efforts included ongoing support for Short Learning Programmes (SLPs), international collaborations like the UNESCO K4C hub initiative, and enhancing student employability through the UNV Roll-out program and Career Services Fair. These activities are explained below.

Hubs of Convergence (HoC) and Student Hubs of Convergence (SHoC)

Building on the success of Hubs of Convergence (HoC) the EO conceptualised Student Hubs of Convergence (SHoC) as a way of scaling up the proven HoC concept. Leveraging the HoC blueprint, SHoC aims to establish itself and actively shares practices through various platforms, fostering engagement across faculties, lectures, and entity meetings. The conceptualisation of the SHoC within the EO is envisioned as a collaborative space for student engagement, aligning with the university's Vision 2030 (V2030) and guided by the Institutional Stakeholder-Community Engagement Framework (ISCEF). SHoC's key organising principles include promoting deep student engagement, incorporating student perspectives

into institutional goals, building strong stakeholder relations, and fostering a culture of engaged participation. Programmatic initiatives involve facilitating meetings, residence activation visits, dialogue series, student-based projects, and exploring publishing for revenue generation.



A Mina Cup activation with students

These efforts support V2030's focus on impactful research, innovation, internationalisation, and transformative engagement, aiming to support the creation of a vibrant, inclusive, and empowered student community.

The following diagram offers the initial conceptual framework for the SHoC's intellectual, scholarly, and programmatic activities:



Hub 1's work is in addressing food security, particularly for students, through the Student Nutrition Working Group. Supported by the DVC for Learning & Teaching, the group has launched SNAC sessions and an on-campus garden project, which educates students on nutrition and sustainable agriculture, providing them with fresh produce.

Mandela University has prioritized preparing students for the future of work through engaged learning and teaching initiatives, with Work-Integrated Learning (WIL) as a key focus. Collaborations like the Ikhala Trust documentary project and the involvement of social work students in the SNAC sessions provide hands-on experiences, benefiting both student development and community well-being.

The Engagement Office continues to deepen and widen collaborations with faculties to understand how the places and spaces can support the academic project. HoC collaborates with various faculties to facilitate student placements for work-integrated learning. Students are bringing their discipline knowledge across multiple fields to support the work done in the HOC and, simultaneously, can fulfil curriculum needs through the work. This collaboration ensures students gain practical experience, enhancing their employability and integrating academic learning with real-world social and professional environments.

The EO explores and makes institutional contributions to the intellectual, scholarly, and programmatic to sustainable stewardship and, in so doing, EO constantly reviews its strategic priorities to align with emerging co-constructed knowledge. The efforts to address food security, promote sustainable agriculture, and prepare students for the future of work are just a few examples of how it is actively working to embed sustainability across all facets of its operations. The Hubs of Convergence have proven to be critical in facilitating these initiatives, serving as catalysts for collaboration and

innovation. Furthermore, the university's focus on building solid and equitable partnerships with community stakeholders ensures that its impact extends beyond the campus, driving transformative change in the broader society.

Certification and Continuing Education

A significant achievement in 2024 was the successful certification ceremony of 32 participants in a Non-credit-bearing SLP in Community-based Substance Abuse prevention.



Some of the students who completed the SLP and participated in the certification ceremony

Ongoing efforts include managing Short Learning Programmes (SLPs) and updating the SLP e-marketing materials website, while also aiding faculties and entities in developing new SLPs. The Unit for Continuing Education continues to provide ongoing administrative support to departments offering registered SLPs- departments and entities are encouraged to liaise with the Unit for guidance on setting up and running SLPs. SLPs are a critical vehicle for the university to capacity the broader society, living up to its maxim of *being in service with society*.

International collaborations and third-stream generation

EO has made substantial progress in building international partnerships, for example, an institutional delegation represented Mandela University at the inaugural West Africa Hub Convening in Lagos, Nigeria, on 14-15 March 2024; enhancing our international presence.



Dr Bruce Damons (far left) and some colleagues representing Mandela University in Lagos, Nigeria.

Additionally, participation in Kusini Water's World Water Day event and hosting a national Climate Change Seminar on food insecurity with the Nelson Mandela Foundation underscores our commitment to Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly SDG 2 (Zero Hunger) and SDG 17 (Partnerships for the Goals).

Strategic international collaborations include piloting the HoC concept with Moi University in Kenya, receiving an NRF grant with global collaborators, and hosting workshops with renowned institutions. Speaking to transdisciplinary initiatives in this space, two NRF grants were secured, with international collaborations including Limerick and São Paulo, and national collaborations involving universities such as the University of the Western Cape, Stellenbosch, Northwest, Free State, and Vaal University of Technology. The transdis-

ciplinary work within various Hubs of Convergence progressed, with ongoing co-supervision and mentorship of post-doctoral fellows. NRF and FAPESP jointly funded an International Scientific Seminar (ISS) at Nelson Mandela University from 18-20 March 2024 to advance this partnership. This event brought together researchers from Nelson Mandela University, Sao Paulo State University, the University of the Western Cape, and Stellenbosch University. A significant outcome of the seminar was the development of a multi-year research project proposal focused on addressing inequalities in South Africa and Brazil, covering themes such as gender and sexuality, race and identity, sustainability and wellbeing, epistemologies of the Global South, and various policy frameworks. Successful implementation of this project will require continued funding from NRF and FAPESP, in alignment with the initial Funding Call by NRF-FAPESP

The Engagement and Alumni offices at Nelson Mandela University, in collaboration with the UN Volunteer Coordinator for South Africa, Anthea Hurling, held a workshop to explore creating multiple opportunities to enhance student marketability and employability. They discussed the UN volunteer program and agreed to collaborate on developing a unique program for Nelson Mandela University students, the first of its kind in South Africa. The project will be part of the Student Hubs of Convergence, specifically under Hub 4 for student livelihoods. The Engagement Office continues to seek meaningful partnerships at the local, national, continental, and global levels. The Engagement Office is happy to share that we were successful with Canadian partners in a multi-million grant application focusing on climate change and food security.

Engagement Initiatives and internal collaborations

The Engagement Office remains actively involved in diverse initiatives, such as hosting a national two-day climate change dialogue, co-hosting post-docs, and partnering with library services to create a virtual repository. Mapping exercise and a digital platform to map engagement activities across the university have been initiated.

The EO is also engaged in a leadership sustainability economic project with the Zwile Development Forum, focusing on goat farming.

Calls for the Engagement Excellence Awards (EEA) and Engagement Advancement Fund (EAF) have been informed by the Institutional Stakeholder-community Engagement Framework (ISCEF).

Efforts to generate third-stream income and funding have also continued, ensuring the university's financial sustainability and ability to support its various initiatives. Sustainability also extends to our approach to partnerships and knowledge co-creation.

Through our collaboration with the Mandela Law Clinic, the EO will explore community-based legal interventions that address pressing social justice issues. This partnership not only offers students practical exposure to human rights law but also supports marginalised communities in accessing critical legal services. Another notable collaboration is the ongoing work with the Social Work Student Society, which hosted a Work Readiness event in September. Career Services facilitated the involvement of industry experts who provided insights into career readiness, further demonstrating the university's commitment to empowering students and preparing them for sustainable careers.

Efforts to enhance student employability continued with the extension of five short-term employment contracts for unemployed graduates and awarding contract work to undergraduate

students. Career Services provided workshops on CV writing, interview skills, networking, and job search strategies, equipping students with essential tools for securing internships, part-time jobs, and full-time employment. Workshops and resources for ongoing professional development were also offered to support graduates.

Alumni networks played a crucial role in facilitating work-integrated learning placements across the university. The partnership with SAGEA Virtual Grad Expo offered students a centralized location to find and apply for opportunities, from bursaries and scholarships to work experience and graduate opportunities. The Quantify Your Future initiative, launched in March 2019, continued to promote careers in Management, Quantitative, Computational, and Data Sciences through the Virtual Career Innovation Showcase.

Career Services has played an active role in fostering sustainable employability through various workshops and training sessions. For instance, during the third quarter of 2024, the office participated in the WIL Africa Conference, which focused on enhancing partnerships between educational institutions and industries to improve employability and skills development. Themes such as entrepreneurship, future-ready curricula, and quality standards for WIL were explored, highlighting the university's commitment to integrating sustainability into its educational programs. Additionally, Career Services organized events such as the Work Preparedness Session for second-year Analytical Chemistry students and a virtual workshop on optimising LinkedIn for professional growth, equipping students with the tools needed to navigate the complexities of the modern job market.

Strategic Reviews and Awards

Strategic reviews include the conclusion of five-year reviews for three Engagement Entities, alignment of the Engagement Excellence Awards Framework (EAF) with new trajectories, and a strategic review of Career Services. The Engagement

Office has expanded its digital footprint and collaborated with key university offices to align with institutional goals.

The Hubs of Convergence: A Place and Space to Reimagine Engagement

The Hubs of Convergence (HoC) at Nelson Mandela University is a place and space to explore transformative engagement. Embracing converged engagement as a central methodology, the HoC seeks to integrate environmental considerations into engagement strategies aligned with local, national, regional, and global sustainability goals. The HoC aims to coordinate and facilitate converged engagement, demonstrating the intersection of the university's four strategic focus areas. Like Science Shops of the North, Mandela Uni's HoC is a convergence point for transdisciplinary knowledge exchange and collaboration, fostering innovative solutions within the global South.

The HoC is dedicated to complementing, coordinating, facilitating, supporting, and cultivating engagement-related activities, research, learning, and teaching initiatives. It is a nexus for transformative engagement practices, contributing significantly to a responsive and transforming University's intellectual, scholarly, and programmatic endeavours. The University's engagement strategy involves diverse stakeholders, including internal entities (staff and students) and external stakeholder communities (businesses, government and non-government entities, interest groups, and geographical and other communities).

The HoC aims to co-create generative spaces that embrace diverse engagement practices, deepening the social justice agenda. It fosters an environment where engagement praxis thrives, promoting convergence and solidaristic reciprocity and generating multiple forms of socially useful outputs that enhance the University's impact and accountability.

In summary, the HoC provides a structured environment for integrating engagement practices, fostering collaborative and reciprocal partnerships, and contributing to the University's mission through transformative, impactful engagement. Some of the activities under selected Hubs are detailed below

Hub 2: Food Sovereignty ***The Food Systems Programme***

- ▶ Hosted a national Climate Change Seminar on food insecurity with the Nelson Mandela Foundation, speaking to SDG 2 and 17. Internal collaboration – CCT and Department of Agriculture
- ▶ Participated in Kusini Water's World Water Day event, speaking to several SDGs related to climate and water. Internal collaboration: AEON
- ▶ Collaboration with the Transformation Office concerning the rollout plan of a podcast emerging from the student hunger subgroup.
- ▶ Connected with the Media and Comms department for potential collaboration linked to engaged learning and teaching; the outcome was exploring a from the Hope Revolution Vision (THRUV) project.
- ▶ In partnership with Agricultural Sciences, MUFS co-hosted a two-day seminar/workshop themed: Exploring climate-related challenges and potential solutions for small-scale farmers. To further explore the garden at North Campus concerning its function to serve students and the community.
- ▶ MUFS connects with Stellenbosch University's Food Security Initiative to discuss programmes' similarities, differences, and shared learnings.
- ▶ MUFS hosted a workshop with the Monitoring

and Evaluation Committee of the Borehole Project to write up a framework that can serve as a tool for similar projects of this nature.

- ▶ MUFS connected with Student Entrepreneurship concerning research around student entrepreneurship as a catalyst for food security.
- ▶ connected Ikhala Trust – a partner in one of its three signature projects – with a film module to a) deepen their support of the signature project and b) foster engaged learning and teaching where students can expand their discipline knowledge, build their CVs in a meaningful way, and in doing so, grow in their understanding of how their discipline can be used in service of society



Graphic design students visiting an on-campus garden as part of their engaged learning and teaching work in partnership with Hub 2

Hub 3: Gender Engagement End Period Poverty

- ▶ Two-day distribution of Mina Cups with EPPP advocates – Metro residence in Govan Mbeki and conversations around menstrual health challenges.

Hub 5: Knowledge Sharing

- ▶ Continued Engaged Teaching and Learning Efforts with three modules – honours-level stu-

dents in Media Studies and second and third-year graphic design students.

- ▶ Co-construction of a brief for engaged learning and teaching collaboration will see Honours students working on a project for the THRV in collaboration with the SDP Department.
- ▶ Hosted a commemorative screening of a documentary on the sinking of the SS Mendi in 1917 at Missionvale Campus. Stakeholders present were learners from primary and high schools, community-based organisations, and local businesses.

EO Strategic goals' aligned activities

Anchoring the strategic goals of engagement and transformation within and beyond the University conceptually and programmatically.

- ▶ The 2024 Nelson Mandela Week celebrates the collaborative efforts of our internal and external stakeholder communities in support of a UN international event.
- ▶ The EO, AMTC, and Comms and Marketing supported the S4 golf day to raise funds for our Hostel of Hope project, and Siya Kholisi supported the rugby academy in Gelvandale.
- ▶ Hub 7: IKS - Nelson Mandela Bay Traditional Leaders Legacy Project Workshop was facilitated with the group for the Dora Nginza & Cecelia Makhiwane legacy project.
- ▶ Hub 8: Sports, Arts, and Culture: A Steering Committee named "Thembalabantu" has been established, bringing together various sports organisations from Missionvale and nearby communities. In partnership with Madibaz Sports and with the support of the

SD Missionvale Campus, the project has made significant progress in its development phase. A strategic workshop was held on August 20, 2024, at the Missionvale Campus, which played an essential role in shaping this hub.

Position engagement and transformation as an institutional orientation supporting learning, teaching, and research excellence.

- ▶ Placement of students across the EO for work-integrated learning and project-focused work. August saw the placement of Social Development Professions students across various projects in the HoC.
- ▶ Participation in moderation of the second-year VAPA students' media portfolios, linked to work in the HoC.
- ▶ We mark our third year of exploring a functional link between the Hubs of Convergence (HoC) and the module outcomes of LMC417: Critical Approaches to Media Design. The module challenges students with a fundamental question: Should designers and visual communicators become agents of social change, and if so, how? To explore this, students engaged with The Hope Revolution Student Chapter at Mandela University, creating campaigns for potential future implementation. The session facilitated collaboration between the Department of Media and Communications and the Department of Social Development Professions, where Honours-level students presented their campaigns and engaged with peers on real issues affecting the student community.
- ▶ The EO facilitated a successful Ethics Workshop on 22-24 August 2024 in collaboration with the ETP NRF grant with CriSHET.

- ▶ The EO Third Space Project had a dry run activity in collaboration with the Department of Psychology.



Participants at an Ethics Workshop hosted by the Engagement Office in August 2024

Lead creative and pioneering engagement and transformation projects that differentiate Mandela University in the higher education sector.

- ▶ The SNAC (Student, Nutrition, Advocacy, and Communication) project – part of a UCDG grant – held a workshop on August 16, 2024, bringing together participants from a range of disciplines to co-construct content for SNAC sessions with students. The workshop fostered an interdisciplinary collaboration, including contributions from students in the Faculty of Business and Economic Sciences, Faculty of Education, Faculty of Health Sciences, Faculty of Humanities, and Faculty of Science. The diverse perspectives, ranging from financial planning to agriculture, ensured a holistic approach to developing the sessions, emphasising student representation and active involvement in shaping the program's focus on nutrition, advocacy, and communication.
- ▶ The Draft Stellenbosch Declaration, emerging THRV National Pilot held at Stellenbosch University in September 2024, articulates a commitment to address substance abuse as a societal pandemic through a transformative and empathetic approach.



Participants at the THRV training at Stellenbosch University in September 2024.

- ▶ The convergence of higher education institutions (Mandela University, Stellenbosch, UWC, and MUT) and stakeholder communities aimed to train participants in substance abuse prevention and awareness, aligning with the broader strategy of co-constructing community-based responses. The Declaration emphasises the importance of critical participatory decision-making, solidarity, and co-creating humanising collaborations that foster social justice. By committing to transform oppressive structures and embracing African epistemic humility, the Declaration calls for universities and communities to work together in nurturing hope and developing empowered, socially just communities. It underscores the need to celebrate each milestone, embrace love in collaboration, and defend newly co-created knowledge for societal change.
- ▶ staff members from across the university enrolled for the University of Limerick K4C programme.
- ▶ Hub 3: Gender Engagement collaborated with Cillier High School on 8 August 2024 under its theme of Women’s Empowerment and with other external stakeholders as part of the end-period poverty programme.
- ▶ Hub 6: Education Ecosystem, Westville High School saw the learner incubator programme

take place. The Visual Arts Department, Marketing and Communication, Faculty of Education, History, SD’s Office, Missionvale Campus, Missionvale Library, and Psychology Clinic hosted 30 learners.

- ▶ The Student Hubs of Convergence (SHoC) has been active in a number of collaborative projects, including leading the Mina Cup drive in residences as part of Hub 3: EPP; supporting and strengthening existing projects such as the Grab and Go events held in two residences; and hosting a two-day event with the United Nations Volunteer (UNV) programme to roll out the UNV programme and sign up students on the UNV portal for opportunities.



Engagement Office staff participating in the Africanisation-Decolonisation Indaba in early 2024

Cultivate a vibrant intellectual culture that promotes critical consciousness and diverse knowledge sharing.

- ▶ Hub 6: Education Ecosystem - Supported the Faculty of Education in hosting the HoPES Symposium on Community Schools on 11 September 2024 as part of the University’s Research Week. A multi-stakeholder community will be established to drive programmatic activities in 2025 and support the community school model.
- ▶ Develop and implement policies, systems, and processes to promote social inclusion and eliminate discrimination, microaggressions, and gender-based violence.

- ▶ The EO institutional engagement mapping exercise has gone live.

Key reflections:

- ▶ **Community Engagement Expansion:** The Engagement Office has successfully facilitated and/or led over 40 active projects, with community members providing intellectual and programmatic support. This includes the appointment of a seasoned community activist and a research assistant for grants and other funded projects.
- ▶ **Student and Graduate Involvement:** There is a rise in work-integrated learning (WIL) placements for students within the EO, and post-doctoral fellows are showing interest in contributing to the EO's work. Short-term contract staff, primarily unemployed graduates, have secured better career opportunities.
- ▶ **Strategic Partnerships:** The Mandela Law Clinic has formed a partnership with the EO, and Missionvale Campus will host the "67 Blankets for Mandela" event as part of stakeholder collaboration efforts.
- ▶ **Progress in Strategic Goals:** Significant advancements have been made in supporting the eight strategic goals under Vision 2030, which have influenced the reimagining of stakeholder-community engagement and aligned with the Institutional Stakeholder-Community Engagement Framework (ISCEF).
- ▶ **Development of Hubs of Convergence (HoC):** The Hubs of Convergence (HoC) continue to solidify its role as a dynamic place and space that enhances the engagement mandate of Nelson Mandela University. The HoC has facilitated diverse activities across various hubs, including the development of legacy projects under Hub 7 (Indigenous Knowledge Systems) and sports and arts initiatives under Hub 8 (Sports, Arts, and Culture). These activ-

ities continue to demonstrate the HoC's potential to serve as a catalyst for advancing the university's goals of engagement, fostering active partnerships, and driving transformative societal change.

- ▶ **Engagement and Transformation in Academics:** Efforts to align engagement and transformation with academic learning, such as the LMC417 module focusing on social change through media design, were noted. Collaboration between departments and students for real-world impact is emphasised.
- ▶ **Creative and Pioneering Projects:** Initiatives like the SNAC project, which involves interdisciplinary collaboration on nutrition advocacy and the development of the Stellenbosch Declaration for substance abuse prevention, demonstrate innovative approaches.

Lessons for the Engagement Mandate

The 2024 Engagement Report reveals a vibrant and diverse tapestry of engagement activity across Nelson Mandela University. Yet, documenting activity alone is no longer sufficient. To fulfil the strategic intent of **Vision 2030**, enhance institutional coherence, and strengthen our responsiveness to society's most urgent and complex challenges, the engagement project must shift from mere coordination to deep, critical reflection.

These lessons are shaped by a growing recognition that **engagement is not a discrete function**—it is an ontological stance, an academic necessity, and a strategic catalyst for institutional transformation.

Each lesson surfaces both what has been achieved and what remains possible. They invite the university community to reimagine engagement as **co-creation, convergence**, and a shared **commitment to transformative change**. They affirm the work already done, while also serving as a provocation—to go further, deeper, and more intentionally in embedding engagement as a defining feature of who we are and how we serve.

Lesson 1: From Coordination to Convergence — Reframing the EO's Catalytic and Supportive Role

The Engagement Office (EO) is tasked with strategising, coordinating, capacitating, intellectually sponsoring, and initiating engagement activities within the university. EO continues to strive to make a meaningful contribution to Mandela University's Vision 2030's focus on social justice, environmental responsibility, and community empowerment. By implementing a variety of innovative projects and fostering partnerships, it strives to continue to strengthen its leadership in sustainability, impacting both the higher education sector and the wider community. The Hubs of Convergence (HoC) are central in the clarification of the EO role in institutional sustainability efforts, fostering collaboration with diverse internal and external stakeholder communities. As the HoC activities have been predominantly at Gqeberha campuses, the George campus activated its HoC in 2024 to promote interdisciplinary work on environmental conservation, eco-tourism, and agriculture. This initiative is a key part of integrating sustainability across campuses and advancing community engagement.

Lesson 1 Insight

Collaboration without convergence reinforces silos. Deepening the engagement mandate demands shared vision, robust critical discourse, collective action, and institutional coherence.

Lesson 2: Shift from Outputs to Outcomes — Embedding Monitoring, Evaluation, Reporting and Learning (MERL)

To unlock the full potential of the engagement mandate, output-based reporting must be complemented by outcome-oriented reflection. Engagement activities should be evaluated not only in terms of their reach or frequency but through their **transformative impact**—on communities, institutional culture, teaching and learning, research practices, and knowledge production.

Embedding a Monitoring, Evaluation, Reporting, and Learning (MERL) approach allows the university to deepen its understanding of how engagement contributes to social change, cultivates reciprocal partnerships, and supports innovation within the academic project.

Lesson 2 Insight

Quantity tells a story—but it is quality, depth, and intentional learning that drive real transformation.

Lesson 3: Engagement as Ontological Practice — Not Just What We Do, But How We Are

Engagement must be viewed not merely as a function, but as a way of being. The report could benefit from deeper narratives that explore how engagement is reshaping institutional identity, challenging asymmetries in power and knowledge, and humanising teaching and research through relational accountability.

Lesson 3 Insight

Engagement is not a checklist—it is a shift in posture, from expertise to co-creation.

Lesson 4: Elevating Community Voice — From Beneficiary to Co-Architect

While the report showcases important university-led initiatives, there remains a critical need to **capture and report on community-led reflections, decision-making, and co-authorship**. Advancing the ethos of “equalising partnerships” requires that engagement be approached not as outreach, but as relational, co-constructed, and grounded in mutual accountability. This calls for ethical co-design, recognition of diverse knowledge systems, and storytelling practices that centre the agency, insights, and priorities of stakeholder communities.

Lesson 4 Insight

Engagement without voice becomes extraction. Meaningful engagement requires convergence, reciprocity, recognition, and the intentional inclusion of multiple forms of outputs that reflect community authorship and ownership.

Lesson 5: Thematic Clustering for Strategic Impact — HoC as a Scalable Model

The HoC methodology provides a compelling model for thematic, convergent engagement that transcends disciplinary or faculty boundaries. Future engagement reporting should consider adopting **HoC themes** (e.g., Wellness, Indigenous Knowledge Systems, Environment) as organising frames, which would foster strategic coherence, cross-pollination, and greater societal visibility.

Lesson 5 Insight

A university that learns to organise around societal challenges rather than academic silos becomes truly responsive.

Lesson 6: Engagement as a Core Academic Mandate — Not an Add-on

Vision 2030 positions engagement as a foundational pillar, requiring its full integration into the university's core functions—curriculum development, research, governance, and institutional identity. The 2024 report affirms this potential, but it also underscores the ongoing need for intentional alignment across faculties and portfolios to demonstrate how engagement is actively shaping learning pathways, research priorities, and institutional policies.

Engagement must not be viewed as an external or supplementary activity, but as an **epistemic imperative**—a way of rethinking knowledge production, institutional purpose, and the university's place in society.

Lesson 6 Insight

The future of engagement lies not in adding it on, but in embedding it deeply—as a core academic function that redefines how, why, and with whom we learn and create knowledge.

Final Reflection

The 2024 Engagement Report represents more than a compilation of activities—it marks a moment in Nelson Mandela University’s ongoing commitment to being an engaged, transformative institution. As the university seeks to deepen its engagement mandate, the next horizon lies in reframing **reporting as learning, activity as transformation, and participation as co-creation.**

To guide this journey, the **Institutional Stakeholder-Community Engagement Framework (ISCEF)** provides an orientation—grounding our efforts in shared values, ethical collaboration, and the co-construction of knowledge. ISCEF reminds us that engagement is not a peripheral function, but a deeply embedded academic and strategic imperative that must shape how we teach, research, govern, and relate to our stakeholder communities.

Anchored by ISCEF, the University can move beyond episodic or siloed activities toward a **coordinated, systemic approach** that advances institutional coherence, reciprocal partnerships, and societal impact.

In embracing this path, Nelson Mandela University continues its evolution—not only as a university that serves society, but as one that is **shaped by it, accountable to it, and renewed through it.**



THANK YOU FOR VIEWING THE
ANNUAL ENGAGEMENT REPORT.

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