



iYunivesithi

Walter Sisulu

In pursuit of excellence



RESEARCH
EXCELLENCE

NURTURING
NEW VOICES

ENTREPRENEURIAL
FUTURES

TECHNOLOGY
& HUMANITY

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FOREWORD

Dr Thandi Mgwebi
Vice-Chancellor

It is my distinct privilege to introduce this edition of our Research Magazine, which chronicles the scholarly trajectory of iYunivesithi Walter Sisulu, and affirms our institutional commitment to civilisational project 'of socially responsive inquiry. At Walter Sisulu, we advance a research agenda that is African-centered, community-engaged, and globally competitive. Our NRF-rated academics and emerging scholars interrogate complex variables that shape health outcomes, rural development, entrepreneurship, institutions and Indigenous Knowledge Systems. Across our faculties studies are designed with methodological integrity, ensuring validity, reliability, and ethical compliance in sampling, data collection, and analysis. This is not scholarship in isolation; it is co-created through sustained partnerships with communities, industry, donors, and government, ensuring that peer-reviewed findings translate into policy impact and societal benefit. The recent rebranding of the University has sharpened our epistemic focus on multilingualism, inclusivity, and transformation.

Our rebranding itself was an intense research exercise that translated our cultural heritage, our different traditions, communal assets including inguni livestock, soils, clay, imbola, umthoba, intsimbi, mentioning a few, to articulate who we are as an African university rooted in the Eastern Cape. These principles are embedded in our research culture, where multiple knowledge systems are critiqued, validated, and integrated through ethical review processes and scholarly discourse. The postgraduate and early-career researchers profiled in this edition exemplify this tradition. Their work trans-navigates disciplinary boundaries, employs robust methodological frameworks, and draws on representative samples from community partnerships to contribute to the evidence base required for sustainable development.

I commend the Directorate of Research and Innovation for curating this publication, which underwent internal editorial review to ensure academic quality and coherence. My appreciation extends to, and is a call to our researchers, reviewers, partners, and funding agencies to continuously safeguard the ethical research standards that support the dissemination of new knowledge at Walter Sisulu, as this is fundamental to the validity and impact of the knowledge we produce. May the empirical insights and conceptual contributions presented in this publication stimulate further interdisciplinary collaboration, critical inquiry, and excellence in scholarship. It is deeply fulfilling and rewarding to work with a team that is committed to advancing the public good and interrogating the critical questions of our time, committed to scholarship that transforms, uplifts, and endures.

Guided by our vision, "A leading African university focusing on innovative educational, research, and community partnerships", our university remains steadfast in its role as a catalyst for knowledge production and transformation in the Eastern Cape and beyond.

Let us continue to observe, reflect, interrogate and propagate for a better university and society.



RESEARCH & INNOVATION COMMENTARY

Prof. Nosisi Feza
Deputy Vice-Chancellor

Advancing Knowledge, Inspiring Innovation, Transforming Society

At the core of our institution's research agenda is a commitment to impactful knowledge that addresses pressing societal challenges. With a focus on One Health, Future Foods, and Societal Justice and Governance, we position ourselves as a hub of innovation and meaningful scholarship. Our unique research culture harmonizes scientific excellence with societal relevance. Our dedicated researchers are not just generating groundbreaking findings; they are translating them into tangible solutions that uplift communities and contribute to sustainable development. This synergy between scientific impact and social transformation exemplifies our belief in research as a catalyst for positive change.

Under the One Health signature theme, we promote a holistic approach to the well-being of humans, animals, and the environment. Our researchers develop innovative solutions to health challenges through interdisciplinary collaboration, advancing healthcare and policies that address local and global needs.

In Future Foods, we aim to rethink food systems by focusing on food security, nutrition, and sustainable practices. Our work drives discussions around resilient food production and leverages indigenous knowledge, creating opportunities for agro-processing and community-driven innovations.

Our emphasis on Justice and Governance engages scholars in dialogues about democracy, ethical leadership, and social justice. Through evidence-based research and community engagement, we support equitable policies and practices. We invest in researchers at all career stages, fostering intellectual curiosity and innovation. This investment nurtures a pipeline of scholars capable of driving future discoveries and entrepreneurial success. Recognizing that collaboration and mentorship spark innovation, we position research as a springboard for entrepreneurship. Our focus on commercialization and industry engagement creates an environment where ideas turn into scalable solutions, enhancing societal value.

As the world evolves, our commitment to courageous and transformative research remains strong. Our scholars are redefining how research serves humanity, advancing innovation, and working towards a sustainable and just society for all. Let's embrace this journey of discovery and positive change!

EDITOR'S NOTE



Dear readers,

Thank you for taking the time to read through the contents of our magazine. I hope you will engage and grow from it as much as we have.

In this issue we explored the impact of research at iYunivesithi Walter Sisulu. We looked at creative outputs as a way of producing research material. We also investigated innovative programs and how research at our institution addresses key sustainability goals for local communities and the global sphere.

To the researchers we worked with in this issue, thank you for adding value to our magazine, for availing yourselves and sharing your unique journeys with us and for diligently serving Walter Sisulu and its community.

Thank you for being part of this community.

Namhla Mbongendlu
Editor-in-Chief

WALTER SISULU CELEBRATES PRESTIGIOUS SARCHI RESEARCH CHAIR AWARD IN RURAL HEALTH INNOVATION

Yunivesithi Walter Sisulu has reached a significant milestone in its research journey with the award of a highly competitive Research Chair for 2026 under the Department of Science and Innovation (DSI) and National Research Foundation (NRF) Decadal Plan Aligned Research Chairs programme. This initiative formed part of the renowned South African Research Chairs Initiative (SARCHI), which is dedicated to strengthening research excellence and capacity across South Africa's higher education sector, particularly within historically disadvantaged institutions, universities of technology, and emerging universities.

The newly awarded Chair, titled Chair in Rural Health Systems Research and Development: Integrating Indigenous and Allopathic Health Systems in the Eastern Cape, represents a groundbreaking step toward addressing the unique healthcare challenges faced by rural communities.

The award affirmed the University's growing stature as a hub for impactful, community-responsive research that is both locally grounded and globally relevant. Housed within the Faculty of Medicine and Health Sciences, the Chair will be led by the esteemed Prof Constance Rusike, whose work is widely recognised for advancing rural health systems, integrating indigenous knowledge, and community-based health research. Under Prof Rusike's leadership, the Chair is set to focus on understanding how people in rural communities' access and use healthcare, documenting and validating indigenous health practices, and developing practical ways to integrate these with conventional medical systems. This research agenda is particularly vital in the Eastern Cape, where many communities continue to rely on indigenous health practices alongside formal healthcare services. By fostering collaboration between these systems, the Chair aims to develop innovative, integrated models of care that respect cultural traditions while enhancing the quality and reach of modern medical services. The award is not only a recognition of the University's research potential but also a strategic investment by NRF and DSI in transforming South Africa's health landscape. It highlights the university's commitment to addressing pressing societal challenges through interdisciplinary research, capacity development, and community engagement. As the University celebrates this achievement, a new era of

opportunity, one that would empower researchers, strengthen partnerships, and contribute meaningfully to equitable healthcare delivery in rural South Africa.

Prof Rusike reflected that in the upcoming years the Chair will contribute meaningfully to "strengthening rural health systems, empowering communities through knowledge and participation, training the next generation of researchers from disadvantaged backgrounds, and developing locally relevant, evidence-based solutions that improve health outcomes and inform policy in South Africa."



Prof. Constance Rusike
Leader of the South African Research Chairs Initiative (SARCHI).

SHAPING THE FUTURE OF RESEARCH THROUGH RESPONSIBLE AI USE

Artificial Intelligence (AI) is rapidly reshaping the global research landscape, emerging as a powerful tool for catalysing innovation, enhancing data analysis, efficiency and productivity. At iYunivesithi Walter Sisulu, efforts are underway to ensure that researchers are not only aware of these technological shifts but also equipped with relevant skills to harness them effectively and responsibly. The University's e-access and digital library services manager, Lungile Mdanyana, has been spearheading the implementation of capacity-building workshops for both senior and emerging researchers. These workshops focus on empowering academics with the practical skills needed to responsibly integrate AI tools into their research processes, thereby enhancing productivity while maintaining academic integrity.

Mdanyana views AI not as a replacement for human intellect, but as a complementary force.

"AI should enhance scholarly rigour, not replace it," he said. He emphasised the importance of researchers retaining full intellectual ownership of their work. To Mdanyana, these AI tools are more like "thinking partners," supporting a range of research activities, including brainstorming and refining language, exploring literature, and summarising lengthy academic texts." "Importantly, AI can reduce administrative burden, allowing researchers to focus on conceptual thinking and theoretical contributions," he said.

Mdanyana perceives tools such as Scopus and Web of Science as having the potential to significantly accelerate evidence synthesis, especially when combined with AI-supported features. Despite the benefits of AI tools, Mdanyana also highlighted their disadvantages, asserting that "Generative AI tools may generate inaccurate or fabricated information (often referred to as hallucinations)". "He further emphasises that "they do not truly 'understand' content; they predict likely responses based on patterns in the data. This requires researchers to do fact-checking and verify that the responses indeed exist," he said.

He cautions researchers not to rely heavily on AI tools, as this can pose ethical risks, such as plagiarism. As the landscape of research evolves, the University remains committed to equipping its scholars with the skills they need to navigate this new era with confidence, thereby shaping a future in which AI is harnessed responsibly to

propel academic excellence. To date, AI training workshops have been rolled out across the four campuses.

By Namhla Mbongendlu

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Importantly, AI can reduce administrative burden, allowing researchers to focus on conceptual thinking and theoretical contributions.



Mr Lungile Mdanyana
E-access and Digital Library Services Manager.

TURNING WASTE INTO OPPORTUNITY: POSTGRADUATE NESP SCHOLAR ADVANCES ECO-FRIENDLY PEST CONTROL

The Nurturing Emerging Scholars Programme (NESP), an initiative of the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET), is playing a transformative role in shaping the next generation of South African academics. Designed to support high-achieving postgraduate students under 35, the programme offers fully funded Master's scholarships, with a clear pathway into doctoral training and academic careers. The programme also plays a critical role in advancing transformation in higher education by increasing the participation of Black South Africans in postgraduate studies and academia.

At iYunivesithi Walter Sisulu, NESP continues to produce promising scholars, including Bongumusa Charles Gumede, who recently completed his Master's degree cum laude and is now pursuing his PhD.

Gumede's research focused on developing sustainable alternatives to chemical pesticides. His research is driven by a desire to support smallholder farmers, improve food security, and reduce the widespread reliance on harmful agrochemicals. His Master's study explored the use of citrus waste as a natural pesticide, offering an environmentally friendly solution that could benefit both farmers and consumers. His work aligns with key universal Sustainable Development Goals, such as reducing poverty, hunger, and land degradation by reducing post-harvest losses and developing safer pest control methods that are less harmful to the environment. "When a farmer relies on a single pesticide, pests can become resistant over time. This is why developing new, safer alternatives is so important," he explains.

He added that the widespread use of chemical pesticides not only targets pests but can also pose risks to human health. Through his work, Gumede exemplifies the impact of targeted research support programmes like NESP in developing researchers who are not only academically excellent but also committed to addressing real-world challenges. Through innovative research and a strong sense of purpose, Gumede's research as he pursues his PhD studies has the potential to contribute to a more sustainable and food-secure future.

By Namhla Mbongendlu

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When a farmer relies on a single pesticide, pests can become resistant over time. This is why developing new, safer alternatives is so important.



Mr Bongumusa

Recipient of the NESP grant and a PhD candidate.

FROM CLASSROOM TO CULTIVATION: GROWING AN ENTREPRENEURIAL FUTURE THROUGH SCHOOL GARDENS

At the intersection of education, sustainability, and economic empowerment, a groundbreaking initiative is taking root in South Africa's rural schools. Spearheaded by Prof Thobeka Ncanywa of iYuniversity Walter Sisulu, the One School, One Garden project is set to redefine and transform how schools engage with food security, entrepreneurship, and community development. Launched on 24 February 2026 at the East London Health Resource Centre, the project is a response to growing concerns about dependence on the National School Nutrition Programme (NSNP).

Thus, the initiative seeks to reposition schools as self-sustaining agricultural and learning hubs. Ncanywa posits that at the heart of the project is the integration of entrepreneurial education with agricultural practices. "By embedding agribusiness concepts into the commerce curriculum, learners are equipped not only to grow food but also to understand the business of food production", she noted. She further asserts that "this approach develops critical skills such as financial literacy, strategic thinking, and resource management, preparing learners to actively participate in the economy".

Beyond the classroom, the initiative promotes collaboration between schools, communities, and stakeholders, positioning schools as catalysts for rural economic development. Small-scale agribusiness activities developed within schools can extend into surrounding communities, contributing to broader economic resilience and self-reliance. Highlighting the wider impact, Prof Pretty Mpiti noted that the initiative contributes not only to educational development, but also to social and community upliftment. "It promotes self-reliance, knowledge transfer and applied learning, demonstrating how collaboration can create tangible benefits at the grassroots level," she said.

The expected outcomes of this initiative are far-reaching. Schools are envisioned to become self-sustaining entities, capable of supporting their own nutritional needs while generating additional value through agricultural enterprise. Learners, in turn, gain practical skills that enhance employability and entrepreneurial potential, positioning them as active contributors to the economy. The One School, One Garden initiative represents a

sustainable and viable model for addressing food insecurity and youth empowerment. By nurturing both crops and entrepreneurial mindsets, it offers a compelling vision of how education can drive community.

By Namhla Mbongendlu

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By embedding agribusiness concepts into the commerce curriculum, learners are equipped not only to grow food but also to understand the business of food production.



One School One Garden initiative stakeholders in attendance at the program's launch on 24 February 2026 held in East London Health Resource Centre,

NURTURING NEW VOICES IN RESEARCH: THE FIRST TIME AUTHOR PROGRAMME

Since its introduction in 2019, the First-Time Author Support Programme at iYunivesithi Walter Sisulu has been quietly transforming the institution's research landscape. Anchored on a mentorship model that pairs first-time authors with experienced researchers, the initiative creates a supportive environment where knowledge is transferred, confidence is built, and academic writing is demystified. First-time authors who have never published are empowered with the relevant skills needed to write, submit, and successfully publish their work within a defined timeframe. The programme is playing a strategic role in growing the pool of active researchers and increasing the number of accredited research outputs.

Over the past six years, the programme has demonstrated promising results, with many participants progressing from first-time authors to independent researchers. This has not only contributed to the growth of research outputs attracting subsidy from DHET, but has also supported the career advancement of academics, with some rising to professorial ranks. One of the programme's success stories is Dr Asanda Boboyi, a lecturer in the Department of Social Work whose research focuses on the psychosocial development of high school learners. Having begun his research journey during his Master's studies from 2017 to 2019, Dr Boboyi published his first work and has since grown into a prolific emerging scholar.

Reflecting on his journey, he highlighted the importance of mentorship. "You need to have a mentor and have a good working relationship with them. This journey has taught me that you cannot make it on your own. You need someone who knows what they are doing and who has gone before you," he advised. He credited his success to the guidance he received along the way. "I had the honour of having good mentors the likes of Prof Cishe, Dr Mvenene and Prof Kang'ethe, these are people who helped shape me into the scholar that I am today," he added. Dr Boboyi's research addressed critical challenges within the high school system, particularly issues such as school violence and bullying, which hinder learner development. His work not only contributes to academic knowledge but also provided practical intervention strategies and policy-relevant insights aimed at improving school environments.

His academic growth has been remarkable. In 2024, Boboyi published five papers, and in 2025, this number increased to six, bringing his total to 11 publications. He is currently reading towards his PhD studies, and also supervising Honours and Master's students. Boboyi's success has also opened doors to research funding and international collaboration. He has received multiple grants, including a seed grant and funding from the National Research Foundation (NRF), and has collaborated with the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA) through the Sustainable Academic Capacity Building for Excellence in Research Training (SACERT) programme. This initiative supports early-career researchers in South Africa, particularly in the field of mental health. His journey exemplifies the broader success of the First-Time Author Support Programme that is transforming novice academics into confident, productive researchers. By fostering mentorship, building skills, and creating opportunities for growth, the programme continues to strengthen the University's research culture and contribute meaningfully to addressing societal challenges through scholarship.

By Namhla Mbongendlu



Dr Asanda Boboyi

Lecturer in the Department of Social Work whose research focuses on the psychosocial development of high school learners.

WALTER SISULU WELCOMES ITS FIRST MUSIC PHD HOLDER

Yunivesithi Walter Sisulu proudly celebrates a historic milestone as music lecturer Kutala Ngoma earned her PhD in Music from the University of Fort Hare.

Dr Ngoma becomes the first staff member at the institution to obtain a PhD in Music, marking a significant achievement for both the University and the discipline. Dr Ngoma passionately focused her study on the decolonisation of Indigenous African Music with her research study titled: “Indigenous African Music (IAM) Curriculum in Universities: Exploring Possible Approaches of Learning and Teaching at Walter Sisulu.” Her study examined how traditional, community-based music teaching approaches can be meaningfully integrated into university curricula, linking lived cultural experiences with academic study.

Her study was motivated by the struggles of contemporary African music teachers.

“I noticed that some of our teachers are struggling, while most do not know how to teach African music, our African teachers tend to lean more into the Eurocentric genres,” she said. The Afrocentric music fanatic further explained that African music is deeply rooted in the African phenomenon of Ubuntu, which is shared and communal, making it hard for anyone to lay claim to it. “As Africans, we have songs for different occasions, like weddings, imigidi (African boys right-of-passage to manhood ceremony), amagwijo and other African genres,” she said. “All these together give a unique African sound, and African music can be shared and does not just belong to one person,” she added. She explained that the key difference between European and African musical pieces is that African music is flexible and can be modified to suit the current composer, whereas European music offers less flexibility.

“My inspiration to pursue a PhD in Music stems from a deep appreciation of African musical heritage shaped by my upbringing in the rural village of Engcobo in the Eastern Cape,” she said.

“Growing up with musical traditions instilled in me an understanding of music as a communal, spiritual, and cultural practice which is far removed from the largely Eurocentric approaches that dominate formal music education,” she explained.

She said that in many institutions, Western Art Music (WAM) remained unchallenged,

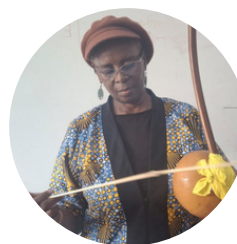
while Indigenous African Music is often perceived as outdated or secondary, and that Music theory frequently dominates practice and performance, resulting in graduates who undervalue IAM.

“This is compounded by a shortage of teachers trained specifically in IAM, despite national policies such as the Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS) explicitly recognising IAM as a music stream of choice and calling for the decolonisation of curricula in schools and universities,” she advocated. Dr Ngoma’s research has challenged this status quo by introducing a new way of teaching African Music that is rigorously Afrocentric. Her achievement not only marks a personal milestone but also represents a significant step towards transforming music education and advancing the recognition of Indigenous African Music within academia.

By Namhla Mbongendlu

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My inspiration to pursue a PhD in Music stems from a deep appreciation of African musical heritage shaped by my upbringing in the rural village of Engcobo in the Eastern Cape.



Dr Kutala Ngoma
PhD in Music.

WALTER SISULU RESEARCHER BECOMES FIRST AFRICAN ORTHOTIST AND PROSTHETIST TO OBTAIN PHD

A Walter Sisulu Head of Department for Rehabilitation Medicine, Dr Luphiwo Mduzana, has made history as South Africa's first African to obtain a PhD in Medical Orthotics and Prosthetics. His achievement stands as a breakthrough that strengthens representation and research capacity in a profession widely recognised as a scarce skill in the country. His study focused on the development of clinical guidelines for lower-limb prosthetic prescription, addressing a significant gap within South Africa's healthcare system where no standardised national guideline currently exists. "Currently, South Africa does not have a standardised national guideline that practitioners can rely on when prescribing lower limb prostheses. As a result, clinicians often depend on guidelines developed in other countries, which may not always reflect the realities of our healthcare systems or patient populations," Mduzana said.

He also believes the framework could benefit countries in the Southern African Development Community (SADC) region that face similar healthcare challenges and may wish to adapt the guidelines to their own contexts.

"It is important for us to start designing care and assistive devices that are grounded in local cultures, and lived realities, rather than relying solely on imported models. The field can advance this approach by developing locally designed and manufactured components, improving affordability and sustainability," he said. "It also requires decentralising services to reach rural communities and strengthening research that reflects African needs and perspectives. In this way, O&P can help build a more inclusive and context driven healthcare system," he added. Mduzana initially aspired to become an engineer, his mother, however, encouraged him to pursue a career in medicine. He later discovered that the field of medical orthotics and prosthetics offered a balance between engineering principles and patient-centred healthcare. "During my third year of study in Tanzania, one of my lecturers explained that the beauty of prosthetics and orthotics lies in the ability to restore mobility. A patient may arrive in a wheelchair, but after receiving a prosthetic device, they leave walking again. Witnessing someone regain their independence whether returning to school, work, or sport is incredibly fulfilling.

That moment is priceless and remains one of the greatest rewards of this profession," said Mduzana.

Mduzana hopes his achievement would inspire more young professionals to pursue postgraduate studies and contribute to the development of specialised healthcare professions that remain in short supply in South Africa.

"This PhD carries a responsibility to grow the next generation of specialists in the field. It is about opening doors for more young professionals, particularly those coming from communities like ours in the Eastern Cape. Our people deserve rehabilitation services that restore dignity and independence," he said. He said through institutions like Walter Sisulu, it is important to continue developing students who strengthen research in orthotics and prosthetics, and design assistive devices that respond to the real needs of the communities.

By Anita Roji

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This PhD carries a responsibility to grow the next generation of specialists in the field.



Dr Luphiwo Mduzana
South Africa's first African to obtain a PhD in Medical Orthotics and Prosthetics.

DR. PHATISWA SIFUBA-MAKAPELA BECOMES EC'S FIRST CHEMICAL PATHOLOGY SPECIALIST

Once again, history has been made at Walter Sisulu's Faculty of Medicine and Health Sciences, with Dr Phatiswa Sifuba-Makapela

becoming the first candidate to obtain her Master of Medicine (MMed) in Chemical Pathology.

This milestone achievement not only marks her as a trailblazer within the faculty, but also establishes her as the first home-trained chemical pathology specialist in the Eastern Cape. The collaborative partnership between the National Health Laboratory Service (NHLS), Nelson Mandela Academic Laboratory (NMAL) and the University, provided a robust training environment that enabled Sifuba-Makapela to reach this historic milestone.

"It is a deeply humbling and emotional achievement. It represents years of sacrifice, prayer, hard work, and perseverance. It is not only a personal milestone, but also a meaningful moment for the Faculty, NMAL, WS, and the Eastern Cape. Being the first means the door has been opened, and I hope it encourages others to believe that specialist training in Chemical Pathology is possible within our region," she reflected. Her interest in chemical pathology started during medical school when she was fascinated by laboratory results and how they helped explain what happens in the body and guide patient care. Often behind the scenes, she said she realised that pathologists played a very important role. From then, she knew she wanted to be part of laboratory medicine and contribute to diagnosis, monitoring, and improving patient outcomes. Meanwhile, as the first candidate in this growing programme, Sifuba-Makapela admitted that it came with challenges.

"Because the programme was still growing, it lacked the structures of a long-established training platform. After two years in the registrar post, I had to relocate to Pretoria to continue my training in a more established programme. That transition was not easy, as I had to adjust quickly and catch up in many areas." However, she navigated these challenges through hard work, faith, support from family, and guidance from mentors and colleagues who believed in her. Sifuba-Makapela said her dissertation focused on evaluating the quality control performance of a clinical chemistry laboratory using Six Sigma metrics. "In simple terms, the study examined how well laboratory tests performed and whether quality control processes were strong enough to ensure

accurate and reliable patient results. The potential impact on patient care is significant because clinicians depend on laboratory results to inform diagnosis, treatment, and monitoring." She shared that by identifying tests that perform well and those that need closer monitoring, the study could help improve laboratory quality, reduce errors, and support safer patient care. Looking ahead, Sifuba-Makapela said that she would love to be part of something innovative one-day. Innovation that would be made using data to guide practical laboratory decisions that can directly improve the reliability of patient results. Furthermore, she believes that chemical pathology is a rewarding and meaningful speciality for anyone who enjoys science, clinical reasoning, and problem-solving.

Her advice students to aspiring chemical pathology specialists is to remain curious, work hard, and never underestimate the importance of laboratory medicine in patient care. "The journey may be demanding, and at times lonely or difficult, but it is worth it. Find good mentors, ask questions, stay disciplined, and remember that every result in the laboratory represents a patient who depends on accurate, timely care," she concluded.

By Thandeka Mgqibi

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The journey may be demanding, and at times lonely or difficult, but it is worth it.



Dr Phatiswa Sifuba-Makapela
Master of Medicine (MMed) in Chemical Pathology.

MFIKOYI SET TO COMPLETE HER PHD THROUGH USDP SUPPORT

IYunivesithi Walter Sisulu staff member Thandokazi Mfikoyi is on the path to achieving her doctoral ambition after receiving support through the University

Staff Doctorate Programme (USDP). This initiative, led by the Department of Higher Education and Training, aims to increase the number of PhD-qualified academics at South African universities by providing targeted funding to early-career researchers. Currently serving as Acting Manager in the Learning and Teaching Directorate, Mfikoyi is pursuing her PhD at Lancaster University in the United Kingdom. Her journey has not been without challenges, particularly the financial demands associated with studying abroad. "Pursuing a PhD in Europe is a significant financial commitment, and at the time I began my studies, I was not fully aware of the extent of the cost difference compared to studying in South Africa," she reflected. She noted that her first year was marked by financial strain, requiring her to actively seek support to continue her studies.

The USDP funding, however, proved to be a turning point. "Beyond financial support, the grant affirmed the value of my research and its relevance to the institution. It enabled me to focus more intentionally on my work, engage meaningfully with my research, and contribute to the broader goals of advancing teaching and learning through technology at iYunivesithi Walter Sisulu," she said. Mfikoyi's research focuses on Technology-Enhanced Learning (TEL), specifically examining how collaboration between instructional designers and educational technologists can support the inclusive design of digital learning practices within a South African university context. Her interest in this area was sparked by the disconnect between technologically driven learning materials and the lived realities of students, particularly those from under-resourced and rural backgrounds. "While digital technologies are increasingly embedded in higher education, their implementation is often uneven and not always inclusive, particularly in historically disadvantaged contexts," she explained.

"There is often a gap between the design of digital learning and the lived realities of students, especially those from rural and under-resourced backgrounds," she added. Her study addresses critical issues such as digital inequality, inclusive education, capacity building, and sustainable teaching practices. Through this work, she aims to contribute to the development of a more equitable and responsive higher education system.

"Ultimately, the research contributes to building a sustainable digital learning ecosystem that supports both the university and the communities it serves," she concluded. Mfikoyi's journey highlights the importance of strategic funding initiatives like the USDP in empowering academics, advancing research, and strengthening institutional capacity, while addressing real-world challenges in higher education.

By Namhla Mbongendlu

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There is often a gap between the design of digital learning and the lived realities of students.



Ms Thandokazi Mfikoyi

iYunivesithi Walter Sisulu's Acting Manager in the Learning and Teaching Directorate Thandokazi Mfikoyi who currently is pursuing her PhD at Lancaster University in the United Kingdom.

DRIVING OCEAN SCIENCE: IYUNIVESITHI WALTER SISULU NATIONAL POLLUTION LABORATORY EYES ACCREDITATION MILESTONE

Prof Motebang Nakin, a leading senior researcher at iYunivesithi Walter Sisulu, is spearheading efforts to position the University at the forefront of marine environmental research through the National Pollution Laboratory (NPL). Established in 2016 through a Memorandum of Understanding with the Department of Forestry, Fisheries and Environment (DFFE), the laboratory forms part of the national Operation Phakisa initiative, which seeks to unlock the ocean economy while addressing critical challenges such as poverty, unemployment, and inequality. Hosted and managed by the University, the NPL plays a vital role in monitoring and safeguarding South Africa's coastal ecosystems. Its mandate includes the collection and analysis of marine water-quality, sediment, and biota samples across the country's coastal regions, spanning KwaZulu-Natal, the Eastern Cape, the Western Cape, and the Northern Cape.

Through its monitoring programme, the NPL has been actively assessing pollution levels, ecological health, and environmental trends, with a strong focus on protecting human health in recreational coastal areas. The laboratory currently operates multiple monitoring sites across provinces, contributing valuable data to national environmental management efforts.

Beyond its scientific mandate, the NPL is actively contributing to capacity building and skills development. Through a partnership with the South African International Maritime Institute, the university has trained students and staff in water-related skills, while laboratory personnel have also participated in international environmental research expeditions in Antarctica, Gough and Marion Island. The facility further supports postgraduate research, providing laboratory analysis for MSc and PhD students.

A major focus for the laboratory is achieving accreditation from the South African National Accreditation System (SANAS). Significant progress has been made in this regard, including the development of quality management systems, standard operating procedures, and participation in Proficiency Testing Schemes. "We are performing well in Proficiency Testing Scheme results for nutrients and microbiology. However, we need to improve our performance in heavy metals,"

he remarked, pointing out that challenges with the ICP-MS equipment, which frequently malfunctions, present a significant obstacle. According to Prof Nakin, accreditation will be a turning point for the University. It is expected to position the University as a "magnet for funding", enabling partnerships with government, industry, and international research institutions, while also strengthening postgraduate training and research output. Overall, the National Pollution Laboratory represents a strategic investment in scientific innovation, environmental sustainability, and research capacity development, positioning the University as an important contributor to both national and global ocean research efforts.

By Namhla Mbongendlu

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We are performing well in Proficiency Testing Scheme results for nutrients and microbiology.



Prof Motebang Nakin
Leading Senior researcher at iYunivesithi Walter Sisulu.

INNOVATING MOBILITY: GODLIMPI PIONEERS GROUNDBREAKING PROSTHETIC TECHNOLOGY

Yunivesithi Walter Sisulu innovator **Zanodumo Godlimpi** is making waves in the field of prosthetics with the development of a groundbreaking pneumatic, shock-absorbing prosthetic foot. Godlimpi's innovation is designed to reduce reliance on electricity by utilising pneumatic pressure. The innovation promises a more accessible, adaptable, and cost-effective solution for amputees. Godlimpi's design aims to restore a sense of normalcy for users by enabling the prosthetic foot to adapt to various surfaces, enhancing both comfort and mobility.

"I wanted to build something that can replicate people's normal lives," he said. "By the end of March, we will be done with control system refinement, which includes testing it on different surfaces like incline," he added. The innovation is the result of collaborative efforts, including partnerships with the Central University of Technology and the University of South Africa (UNISA) Biomechanics Research Group. The project has also received significant support from the Technology Innovation Agency, which awarded a grant of R485,000 to further develop the technology. Importantly, the prosthetic foot is being developed using locally sourced components, potentially making it up to 50% more affordable than existing products on the market.

This innovation could significantly improve access to assistive devices in resource-constrained settings. Godlimpi, a lecturer in Mechanics, Biomechanics, and Principles of Orthotics and Prosthetics at iYunivesithi Walter Sisulu, is currently pursuing a Master's degree in Mechanical Engineering at UNISA, balancing academic commitments with cutting-edge research and innovation. His work has already gained national recognition. In 2025, he emerged as the top winner in the Entrepreneurship Development in Higher Education Competition, outperforming over 1,500 applicants to claim the title of Studentpreneur of the Year at the finals held at the Birchwood Hotel and Conference Centre.

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I wanted to build something that can replicate people's normal lives.

"Winning this competition was a huge confidence booster, and it feels good to be recognised for my work and scientific advances," he reflected.

Godlimpi's innovation not only highlights the growing research and innovation capacity at the University but also demonstrates how locally driven solutions can address real-world challenges, bring transformative impact to the field of prosthetics, and improve the quality of life for many.

By Namhla Mbongendlu



Mr Zanodumo Godlimpi

Godlimpi emerged as the top winner in the Entrepreneurship Development in Higher Education Competition, outperforming over 1,500 applicants to claim the title of Studentpreneur of the Year at the finals held at the Birchwood Hotel and Conference Centre.

HONOURING THE FORCE BEHIND STUDENT ENTREPRENEURSHIP AT IYUNIVESITHI WALTER SISULU

Behind the growing success of student entrepreneurs at iYunivesithi Walter Sisulu is a dedicated leader whose work continues to shape and inspire a new generation of innovators. Nombulelo Blaai, Manager of Student Governance and Leadership Development within the Student Affairs Division, has been instrumental in driving and coordinating student entrepreneurship initiatives since assuming her role in 2015.

Based at the Butterworth Campus, Ms Blaai has played a pivotal role in supporting studentpreneurs throughout their journey—from idea development and enterprise creation to competition participation and global exposure.

Reflecting on her experience, she describes the journey as both inspiring and transformative, noting that working with student entrepreneurs requires far more than administrative oversight. “What stands out most is the resilience, creativity, and potential of our students, particularly those from resource-constrained backgrounds. Supporting them has required not only administrative, financial, and technical entrepreneurship support but also mentorship, confidence-building, and access to networks and opportunities,” she said.

Under her guidance, students have participated in a wide range of prestigious programmes.

“Past and present students have benefited through participation in programmes such as Hult Prize Global, ENACTUS, Young African Entrepreneurs Institute (YAEI), EDHE Intervarsity, Student Women Economic Empowerment Programme (SWEEP), Wadhvani Ignite Academic Entrepreneurship Programme, Green Youth Innovation Program (GYIP), innovation bootcamps, business model workshops, and national and international competitions.,” she said.

“Many alumni have gone on to start enterprises, secure funding, gain employment through innovation networks, or pursue further studies with a strong entrepreneurial mindset,” she added.

These platforms, along with innovation bootcamps and business model workshops, have provided students with critical exposure to national and international entrepreneurial ecosystems. At an institutional level, the impact has been equally significant. Student entrepreneurship programmes have enhanced graduate

attributes, strengthened community engagement, and elevated the University’s reputation as a university that actively responds to societal needs through innovation.

By Namhla Mbongendlu

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What stands out most is the resilience, creativity, and potential of our students, particularly those from resource-constrained backgrounds.



Ms Nombulelo Blaai

Manager of Student Governance and Leadership Development within the Student Affairs Division.

SAMSUNG PROGRAMME PRODUCES TOP INFORMATION AND TECHNOLOGY (IT) GRADUATE

A partnership between iYunivesithi Walter Sisulu and Samsung Electronics is continuing to shape the next generation of tech talent, with Tsegofatso Thlodi emerging as the top graduate in the latest cohort of the Samsung Innovation Campus skills development programme. Among the 50 IT students who completed the intensive three-month programme, the 24-year-old stood out for her exceptional performance, earning top honours and a Samsung S24 smartphone as recognition of her achievement. Since its launch in 2022, the initiative has demonstrated steady growth, with 119 IT students successfully trained in high-demand digital skills. Designed to equip aspiring developers and programmers with cutting-edge technical competencies, the programme focused on building expertise in areas such as coding, problem-solving, and software development, which are skills that are increasingly critical in today's digital economy.

Originally from Thaba Nchu in the Free State, Thlodi is currently pursuing an Advanced Diploma in Application Development and aspires to become a software engineer. She credits the programme with giving her a competitive edge.

"Being part of this program helped me a lot because even now I can apply the same knowledge I gained from the course," she said.

Her journey into the programme began with outstanding academic performance. "I got total marks in the selection test when I was in third year last year and I joined the program that way," she recalled. As part of a select group of 25 final-year IT students, Thlodi demonstrated advanced proficiency in Python programming, further cementing her position as a rising talent in the tech field.

Beyond the classroom, she has already begun applying her skills to real-world challenges. During South African Innovation Week held in Johannesburg, she was part of iYunivesithi Walter Sisulu team that developed a flood alert application.

The application is designed to assist vulnerable communities by providing early warnings, enabling timely evacuation and reducing the impact of disasters.

Thlodi's success highlights the impact of strategic industry–university partnerships in developing future-ready graduates and showcases how young innovators are using technology to address pressing societal challenges.

By Namhla Mbongendlu

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Being part of this program helped me a lot because even now I can apply the same knowledge I gained from the course.



Ms Tsegofatso Thlodi

Top graduate in the latest cohort of the Samsung Innovation Campus skills development programme.

WALTER SISULU HOSTS WORLD IP DAY AT IBIKA CAMPUS

Patents, copyrights and trademarks came into a sharp focus on 30 April when iYunivesithi Walter Sisulu held high-level discussions around ownership and protection of intellectual property to mark the annual World Intellectual Property Celebration Day at its iBika Campus in Butterworth.

This globally recognised annual event was co-hosted by the Faculty of Management and Public Administration Sciences (FMPAS) and the Directorate of Research & Innovation through the Department of Tourism, Hospitality, and Sport Management and the Office of Technology Transfer to increase awareness to staff, students, researchers, innovators and entrepreneurs on the interlinkages of sport, innovation and IP.

Technology Transfer Manager Dr. Ncebakazi Galada welcomed attendees to the prestigious event and reaffirmed Walter Sisulu's affiliation with the World Intellectual Property Organisation through the National Intellectual Management Office (NIPMO) which was represented by Ms Lindiwe Mashimbye, the Deputy Director of Productivity and Engineering Excellence. She further explained that the university is mandated by the National Intellectual Property Management Office to host events of this nature. "These commemorations are done globally, and the main purpose is to create awareness around intellectual property so there are various themes each year and this year the theme is sports", Galada said. Speaking on the different ways of protecting intellectual property, legal expert from Spoor and Fisher law firm's trademark department, Thembokuhle Danca, delved into different types of Intellectual Property varying from patents, copyrights and trademarks. He sparked robust discussions around "copyrights" for the curious audience in attendance.

Danca explained that "copyrights ownership rests solely on who created the program" before advising students and innovators to keep records of their designs and original copies to prove ownership of their inventions. iYunivesithi Walter Sisulu's Sports Department Coordinator Professor Philani Nongogo expressed his gratitude on the efforts made by all teams to ensure a successful day of celebration and noted the unique challenges that they faced while trying to organise the event. "I am very excited because we took under a month to organise this and organising under difficult

circumstances because the Technology Transfer Office is in Mthatha and we are in Butterworth," Nongogo said. He further highlighted the importance of collaborating with other departments. "I must say that Directorate of Research agreeing to have money circulating within was very important to us, because we used this event not only to create awareness on World IP Day and importance of IP but we made sure that we action that. So, getting students who are studying culinary studies and hospitality to create dishes that ae innovate in nature was very important," Nongogo added.

As the celebrations drew to a close, students got an opportunity to display their creativity by pitching innovative ideas for prizes. Out of five students who entered their brilliant ideas, three students were crowned winners for ideas that were cited by judges as having great potential and for being aligned with the day's theme.

The winners were:

- 1.Boitumelo Nkosi (B. Accounting Sciences)
- 2.Sophila Emihle Sweli (FMPAS Department of Management)
- 3.Lukhanyo Kilivile (National Dip. Fashion)

By: Namhla Mbongendlu



FROM RESEARCH TO IMPACT: IYUNIVESITHI WALTER SISULU EMPOWERS SCHOLARS TO SHAPE POLICY

At a time when evidence-based decision-making is critical to addressing complex societal challenges, iYunivesithi Walter Sisulu is taking deliberate steps to ensure that its research does not remain confined to academic journals but actively informs policy and public discourse.

In November 2025, the University hosted a Policy Brief Training Workshop at the Garden Court in East London, bringing together 22 senior and emerging researchers for an intensive programme focused on translating research into clear, concise, and impactful policy and media briefs. The initiative reflects a growing recognition that research must be communicated in accessible formats to effectively influence decision-makers and society at large.

Over the two-day workshop, participants were equipped with practical skills to distil complex research findings into actionable insights tailored for policymakers, media, and development stakeholders. By the end of the training, all participants had successfully developed and presented draft policy briefs, marking a significant step towards strengthening the University's research impact. The journey, however, does not end with the workshop. Participants are currently refining their briefs in preparation for an upcoming symposium that will bring together various government, national research councils (HSRC, CSIR), and the National Research Foundation. This platform will provide researchers with a unique opportunity to engage directly with policymakers, ensuring that their work contributes meaningfully to real-world solutions.

The initiative is anticipated to produce significant benefits, including enhancing collaboration among the University, government, and development agencies. It will position the University as a vital contributor to policy development and offer researchers a platform to present their draft policy briefs to an informed audience. Ultimately, this intervention is about more than skills development; it is about amplifying the voice and relevance of research.



RISING MOMENTUM: WALTER SISULU RESEARCH OUTPUT ON AN UPWARD TRAJECTORY

Yunivesithi Walter Sisulu is demonstrating a steady and impressive rise in research productivity, as evidenced by the growth in accredited research outputs attracting subsidy from the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET).

In recent years, the University has recorded significant gains in research output units, with the most notable increase occurring between 2023 and 2024, as illustrated in the graph below.

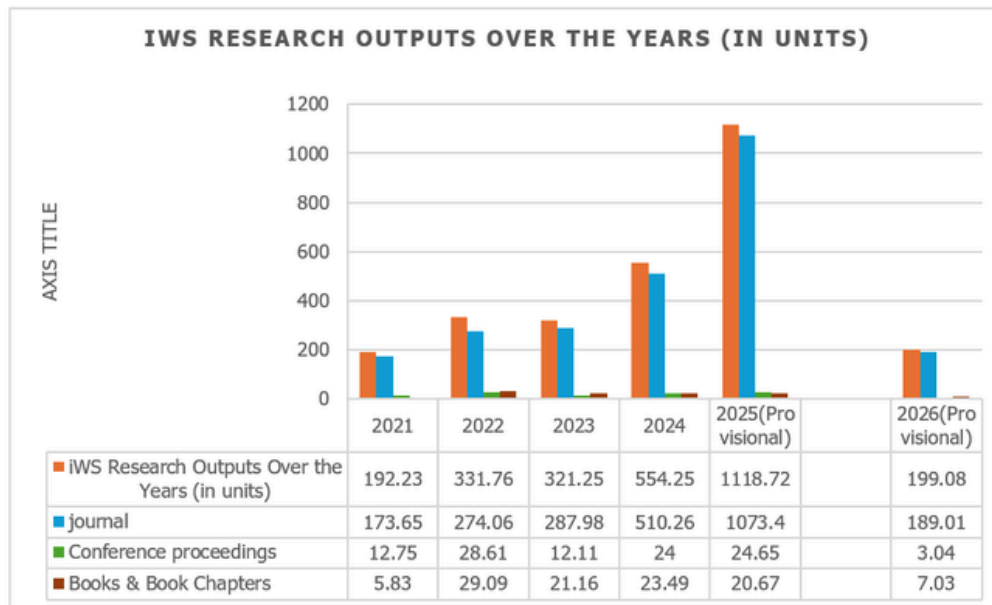


Figure 1: Growth of Research Outputs at Walter Sisulu over the years

Research outputs that earned DHET subsidy increased from 321.25 units in 2023 to 554.75 units in 2024, reflecting a substantial improvement in research productivity. The provisional 2025 research outputs submitted to DHET for subsidy claims amount to 1,118.72 units, pending the outcome of DHET's evaluation and verification process.

This growth is driven by a strong and diverse research community. Key contributors include academic staff (both emerging and senior), NRF-rated researchers, 72 postdoctoral research fellows, and 49 academic associates, all of whom play a critical role in advancing and deepening the University's research agenda and culture. Reflecting on this progress, Dr Clarah Dapira, Manager for Research Management, noted: "The upward trend reflects the impact of sustained institutional investment in research. Targeted capacity-building and training programmes have strengthened the capabilities of both early-career and senior researchers,

leading to a steady increase in academics actively engaged in research and producing accredited outputs." She further noted that, "despite this progress, per capita research output remains relatively low, underscoring the need to expand participation in research among the academic staff".

Overall, the consistent growth in research outputs signals a maturing and increasingly vibrant research ecosystem at Walter Sisulu.

WALTER SISULU GROWS ITS FOOTPRINT IN PRODUCING CREATIVE RESEARCH OUTPUTS

Yunivesithi Walter Sisulu is making notable progress in advancing creative research outputs, with increasing contributions in areas such as literary and fine arts that have attracted subsidy from the DHET. Over the past three years, the University has strengthened its presence in this space, showcasing how creative work can meaningfully contribute to research and community engagement.

At the forefront of this growth is Fine Arts lecturer Sonwabiso Ngcai, whose work continues to gain recognition in renowned galleries across the country. His latest body of work, titled *Ulimo*, a term meaning to plough, drew inspiration from agricultural traditions in the Eastern Cape and reflects on the region's evolving relationship with farming.

Rooted in the philosophy of Ubuntu, *Ulimo* captures the spirit of communal farming, where communities would come together to cultivate and harvest crops collectively. Traditionally, this practice brought people of all ages together, from sunrise to sunset, fostering not only food production but also social cohesion. Harvest periods were marked by shared celebrations, during which produce was divided among community members and festivities featured traditional foods such as *umqombothi* and *umngqusho*. Despite the Eastern Cape's rich agricultural heritage, Ngcai noted a decline in farming practices, with many once-productive fields now lying fallow. This shift became a source of creative inquiry for the artist, whose upbringing was deeply connected to agricultural life. Through his work, Ngcai sought out to spark dialogue around sustainability, food security, and community self-reliance.

Using ceramics as his medium, he has created a seed-shaped artwork, a powerful symbol of regeneration and continuity, intended to provoke reflection and inspire renewed engagement with agricultural practices. "The University is looking into concepts of sustainability, and part of that sustainability is looking at how the university helps and encourages the community to be self-sustaining. And I looked into that as an artist, and I wanted to help grow the conversation so that communities don't have to rely so much on the government," he said.

He further emphasised the role of artists in society: "It is important for artists to take responsibility and lead conversations of sustainability for community development." Ngcai's contributions have not gone unnoticed. He has received multiple accolades, including recognition at the Provincial Arts, Culture and Heritage Excellence Awards, where he was honoured in the 3-Dimensional Artist category. While the University has made progress in advancing creative research outputs, significant untapped potential in this area remains. There is a need to develop tailored capacity-building and training programmes that will unlock and strengthen this potential in the near future. Creative outputs can serve as powerful research tools, bridging the gap between academia and communities while contributing to sustainable development and cultural preservation.

By Namhla Mbongendlu

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It is important for artists to take responsibility and lead conversations of sustainability for community development.



Mr Sonwabiso Ngcai

Collecting his award for his brilliance at the Provincial Arts, Culture and Heritage Excellence Awards in 3-D Artists category.

REFLECTIONS ON THE REVIEW PROCESS OF CREATIVE OUTPUTS AT IYUNIVESITHI WALTER SISULU

In line with its Creative Output Policy and Guidelines, iYunivesithi Walter Sisulu continues to strengthen the quality and integrity of its creative research outputs.

through a rigorous internal review process. All submissions are evaluated by the Institutional Internal Evaluation Committee prior to being forwarded to the Department of Higher Education and Training for subsidy consideration.

The Committee plays a critical role in ensuring that submitted works meet the required standards of policy compliance, quality, and academic integrity. Leading this process are experienced researchers with deep expertise in their respective disciplines, including Kholekile Dr Ngqila and Prof Y Madolo, who bring both scholarly insight and contextual understanding to the evaluation of creative outputs. Reflecting on the process, Dr Ngqila, an Anthropology lecturer and advocate for cultural knowledge, emphasised the importance of broadening perspectives on culture within creative research:

“People often make the mistake of thinking that culture only refers to rural life, whereas it is not the case; culture is broad and forms the basis of various creative outputs whose genuineness is unparalleled.”

She further highlighted the strength of the University's creative outputs in their ability to engage meaningfully with lived realities. “Researchers are increasingly making intentional efforts to link their work to social contexts and everyday experiences, ensuring that creative outputs remain both relevant and impactful”, she noted. Through this structured and reflective review process, the university is not only safeguarding the credibility of its creative research but also reinforcing the role of creative outputs as authentic expressions of cultural knowledge and social engagement.

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People often make the mistake of thinking that culture only refers to rural life, whereas it is not the case; culture is broad and forms the basis of various creative outputs whose genuineness is unparalleled.

By Namhla Mbongendlu



Dr Kholekile Ngqila
Anthropology Lecturer.

IZIMVO ZOMKHWETHA WOBUNJINGALWAZI KWISEBE LEELWIMI ZESINTU KWIYUNIVESITHI IWALTER SISULU NGOMSEBENZI OJONGENE NOBUGCISA BONCWADI

Imzimvo zomkhwetha wobunjingalwazi kwiSebe leeLwimi zesiNtu kwiYunivesithi iWalter Sisulu ngomsebenzi ojongene nobugcisa boncwadi eWalter Sisulu. Lo kaMadolo uthe le komiti ijongene noxanduva lokujonga uncwadi nobunye ubugcisa obupapashwe ngabasebenzi baseWalter Sisulu. Eyona njongo iphambili kukujonga umgangatho wobu bugcisa ukuze kucetyiswe iSebe leMfundo ePhakamileyo noQeqesho malunga neeyunithi ezinokunikwa loo msebenzi. Uthe xa kuqhutywa uphononongo lwezobugcisa boncwadi kubalulekile ukuqwalasela imixholo enxulumene nentlalo ethi ifumaneke kuloo ncwadi. “Siyixabisile kwaye siyithathela ingqalelo into yokubhala uncwadi loqobo kwakunye nokubhala into entsha enyanisekileyo,” uphemfule watsho. Njengendlela yokuqinisekisa ngoncwadi olusemgangathweni noluloloqobo, uMadolo ukhankanye ukuthelekiswa kwencwadi entsha neencwadi ebezikhe zabhalwa ngamphambili. Oku kwenzelwa ukuqinisekisa ukuba umbhali akakopanga okanye ahlaziye incwadi ebikhe yakho ngaphambili. Loo nto ke iqinisekisa ubunyani, ubutsha, umgangatho kwakunye nomtsalane wencwadi leyo.

“Xa siphonononga incwadi yakho, sijonga ukuba ingaba le ncwadi ayisekelwanga kwenye na okanye yinto umbhali aziqambeleyo, ukuba ibiyinovelile wayiguqula wayisa kwidrama okanye ukuba ibiyintsomi sijonga ukuba yintsomi aziqambeleyo na okanye yintsomi esekelwe kwebikade ikhona na,” uvakale esitsho. Walekela ngelithi xa uza kuba ngumphololongi woncwadi kufuneka nawe ube uyazifunda iincwadi uzokutsho ukwazi ukuqaphela uncwadi olukhe lwakhona ngaphambili noncwadi olufikayo. Ukongeza, uNjing. Madolo uthe ngokubhekiselele kwibali elisekelwe kwelinye, izinga lobuchule bokubhala baliphawula ngokuthi baqwalasele indlela ochaza ngalo elo bali okanye loo ncwadi nangona ingelobali okanye incwadi entsha. Into ebalulekileyo yindlela yokuveza ubugcisa ukuze kuphuhle uncwadi olusemgangathweni.

Ukhankanye iindlela ezahlukeneyo zokuqinisekisa ngoncwadi olunomtsalane, ukuqinisekisa ukuba kudingeka ukuba kungabi lula ukuyibeka phantsi incwadi xa ubani eyifunda.

“Nawe uzoyibona into enika umdla ebalini, ukuba ndithi xa ndiyifunda ndangakwazi ukuyibeka phantsi, kucace into yoba kuzotsha iimbiza, loo nto ithetha ukuba inika umdla. Kodwa ukuba ndithe ndisafunda iphepha lokuqala ndadinwa, yanomdintsi netyheneba ndathatha iveki ukuyigqiba hayi, kuba ndixakekile kodwa kuba ingafundeki, loo nto ithetha ukuba ayiniki mdla,” utshilo. Ukuqukumbela uthe nangona iYunivesithi iWalter Sisulu iyinika inkxaso inkqubo yobugcisa kubalulekile ukuba inkqubo le igxininise kakhulu kwicala loncwadi njengendlela yobugcisa. Loo nto ke ithetha ukuba amathuba amaninzi ophuhliso aya kuba nogxininiso loncwadi.

By Namhla Mbongendlu



Prof Yolisa Madolo
IsiXhosa Lecturer.

RESEARCH AND INNOVATION WEEK FOREGROUNDS RESEARCH FOR RESILIENCE

In 2025, the University's Research and Innovation (R&I) Week emerged as a vibrant intellectual cornerstone, bringing together scholars, innovators, and postgraduate students across all four campuses in a shared pursuit of knowledge, impact, and transformation. Designed as a dynamic platform, the initiative enabled researchers to showcase their diverse research activities and innovation outputs, reinforcing the institution's commitment to academic excellence and societal relevance. At its core, the Research and Innovation Week was more than a series of events; it was a celebration of ideas, collaboration, and forward-thinking scholarship. Each of the seven Faculties successfully hosted its own Faculty Research and Innovation Day, contributing unique perspectives aligned with contemporary global challenges while remaining rooted in local realities. These Faculty-level engagements collectively built momentum toward the Institutional Research and Innovation Day, the pinnacle of the programme. Scheduled for 27–28 November 2025, and guided by the unifying theme "Research for Resilience: Advancing Justice, Sustainability, and Innovation in an Age of Global Uncertainty," the event brought together the best of faculty-driven research into a cohesive institutional narrative.

This culminating platform not only showcased high-impact research but also fostered interdisciplinary dialogue, encouraging scholars to transcend traditional boundaries in pursuit of innovative solutions. The R&I Week continues to cultivate a culture of academic vibrancy across all four campuses. Importantly, the initiative emphasized the role of research in responding to issues affecting local communities and the broader African continent. From health and governance to economics, technology, and social justice, the showcased work reflected a deep commitment to advancing knowledge that is both relevant and transformative.

As the University reflects on the success of the 2025 R&I Week, it is evident that such platforms are essential in nurturing a resilient research ecosystem. By aligning faculty strengths with institutional priorities and national and global development imperatives, the initiative has laid a strong foundation for future innovation.

In a world increasingly shaped by uncertainty, the message from this year's programme is clear: through collaboration, creativity, and commitment, research can serve as a powerful force for resilience, sustainability, and inclusive progress.



FACULTY RESEARCH AND INNOVATION WEEK IN PICTURES:







INSTITUTIONAL R&I WEEK



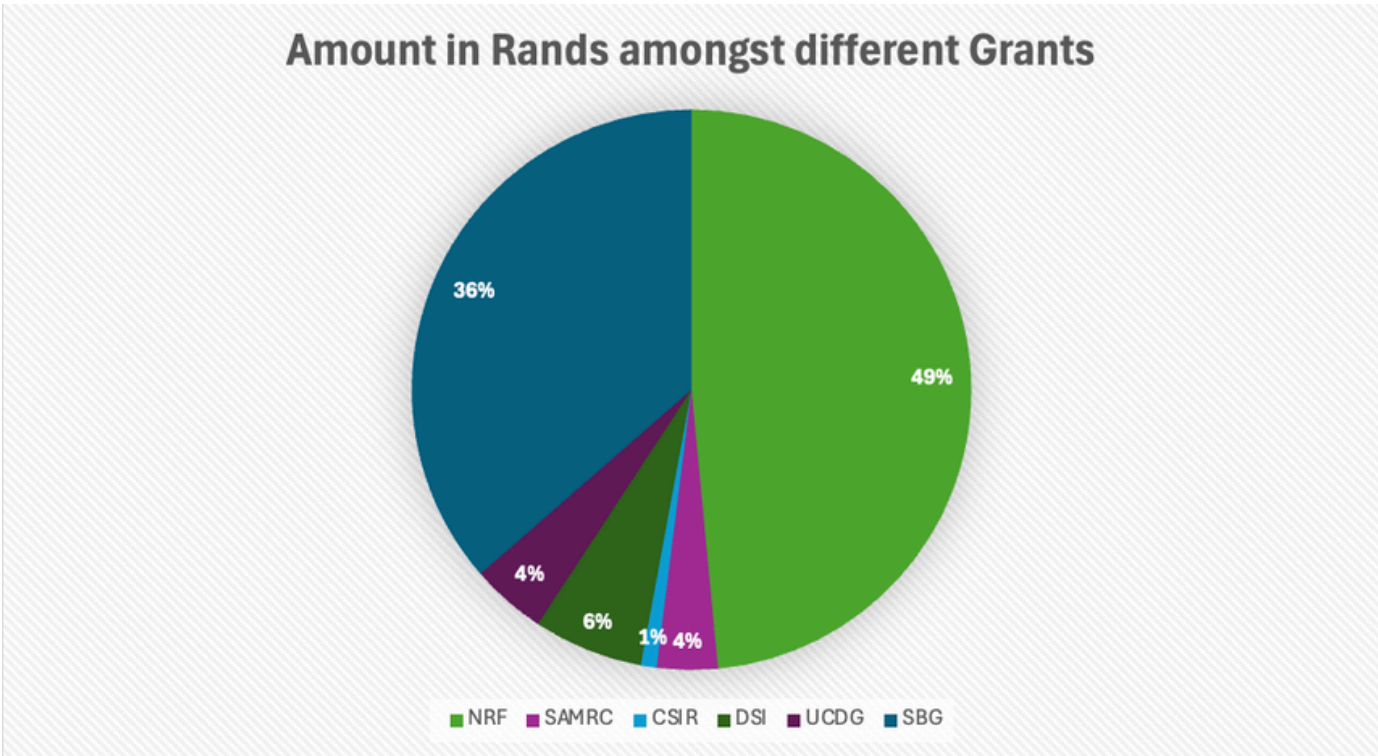
POWERING PROGRESS: STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS DRIVING RESEARCH AT WALTER SISULU

The steady rise in research productivity at Iyunesithi Walter Sisulu is not only a reflection of institutional commitment and academic excellence, but also the result of strong partnerships with key funding agencies that continue to invest in the University’s research enterprise.

Over the years, WS has benefited from the support of several national funders whose contributions have significantly enhanced research capacity, infrastructure development, and knowledge production.

Among these are the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET) through strategic funding instruments such as the University Capacity Development Grant (UCDG) and the Sibusiso Bhengu Development Grant. These initiatives have been instrumental in strengthening postgraduate training, supporting emerging and senior researchers, and advancing institutional research priorities.

The figure below provides a summary of the amounts that the University has received from key external funders.



Collectively, these funding streams have enabled WSU to expand its research footprint, increase the number of active researchers, and improve the quality and quantity of accredited research outputs. They have also enabled the University to facilitate capacity-building programmes, international collaborations, and the development of early-career researchers, ensuring a sustainable pipeline of future scholars.

WS extends its sincere appreciation and gratitude to these funding partners for their continued support and investment. Their commitment not only strengthens the University’s research ecosystem but also plays a vital role in advancing inclusive development, innovation, and knowledge generation in South Africa.

GALLERY



GALLERY





iYunivesithi

Walter Sisulu

In pursuit of excellence