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Higher Education and Training
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA



New Generation of Academics Programme nGAP, University of Cape Town

Newsletter #1 March 2019

As we approach the end of the academic year and The weather is turning towards autumn so it is probably too late to wish you all a Happy New Year. But this is the first newsletter of 2019 so it is appropriate to do some welcoming. We have the great good fortune to be welcoming five new NGAP lecturers to UCT, two located in the Commerce Faculty, two in Health Sciences and in in the Science Faculty. We now have seventeen NGAP lecturers and we await the outcome of our Phase 5 application to see if the numbers grow still further. In the issue of the newsletter, each of the new lecturers writes a short introductory biography. This is followed by descriptions of the End of year (2018) function we held at the River Club and the formal welcome to the Phase 4 lecturers held in February. Musa Nxele, Nelson Mandela School of Public Governance, describes the launch of a new multi-disciplinary masters module, 'The Practice of Policy Making and Implementation' and the newsletter closes with a mother's love poem to Thithiba Mtya – congratulations Amanda!

Welcome to UCT's New (Phase 4) nGAP Lecturers



Ayanda Pekane; Lindokuhle Njozela; Miengah Abrahams; Melissa-Rose Abrahams; Frissiano Honwana [Photo: Nceba Lolwane]

Frissiano Honwana (School of Public Health & Family Medicine)

Frissiano grew up in a rural place called Masibekela (in Mpumalanga Province). He believes that his humble beginnings did not deter him from achieving academically. Looking back to his high school years, he feels a career in academia was foretold by his classmates when they used to call him professor due to his serious approach into his studies. Like some people, Frissiano followed a consistent path in academia. Obtaining a BSc Degree and Honours in Statistics (cum laude) in Faculty of Agriculture, Engineering and Science at the University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN) in 2014. His enthusiastic interest in academia was rewarded with the publication of his Statistics' Honours project. Frissiano was fascinated with the collaboration opportunities research could make. This saw him complete his Masters in Statistics (cum laude) in 2017 at UKZN. Driven by the passion of giving back the knowledge he has and still accumulating- while pursuing postgraduate studies at UKZN, Frissiano mentored, tutored students and served as an Ad-hoc Lecturer for an undergraduate statistics courses.



In October 2018, Frissiano joined the School of Public Health & Family Medicine (SPHFM) at the University of Cape Town as an Assistant Lecturer in the Division of Epidemiology and Biostatistics. Working in the field of public health has opened doors and showed him that research involves collaboration amongst researchers with a common goal. With an interest in infectious disease modelling and longitudinal models, he believes he is building a research profile that will contribute to knowledge of the field. His PhD in SPHFM focuses on dynamic prediction with application to biomarkers in clinical trials.

Melissa-Rose Abrahams (Division of Virology)

I'm very excited to be joining the NGAP team as part of phase 4 of the program. I received a warm welcome from the team even before officially starting my post in February of this year and was pleasantly surprised to be introduced to this exciting group of individuals.

Born and raised in the Southern Suburbs of Cape Town, I pursued all my tertiary education at UCT from undergraduate level onwards, only switching campuses from main to medical campus when beginning my post-graduate studies. From an early age I had a fascination with living organisms, understanding how natural systems work and solving problems, so it wasn't surprising that I pursued a degree in biological sciences and ultimately became involved in research in this area. I began my journey into studying science with a BSc in Chemical, Molecular and Cellular Sciences, graduating in 2001. I then pursued an Honours and Masters in Medical Virology at UCT, with a focus on the characterization of poxviruses from 2002-2005.



I was originally very determined not to pursue a PhD and instead took on a technical scientific post in the UCT HIV Diversity lab, working on determining genetic characteristics of transmitted HIV for a number of years. Mentored by Prof Carolyn Williamson, I was given the opportunity to broaden my skills to data processing, analysis and manuscript writing and played a key role in discoveries on HIV transmission that the group published. I received short-term training at international institutions in the US, including the University of Alabama at Birmingham and Duke University and eventually registered for a PhD in 2011 and graduated in 2014. My PhD focused on five HIV-infected women from Kwazulu-Natal, and specifically characterised the viral strains that were transmitted to these women and how these influenced HIV disease severity.

I've since been serving in an academic capacity at the Institute of Infectious Disease and Molecular Medicine, gradually becoming more entrenched in research, taking on leadership roles and expanding my teaching portfolio. Of the many hats worn by academics, I most enjoy the excitement of critically analysing and interpreting laboratory results and determining what story they have to tell. I also find teaching and mentoring students very rewarding. I am currently part of a team of scientists who are taking a leading role in South Africa in driving HIV cure research, an area which is gaining increased attention to due to the fact that infected individuals have to remain on treatment life-long.

I'm grateful for this opportunity to be nurtured and developed as a teacher and researcher!

Lindokuhle Njozela (School of Economics)



Lindokuhle Njozela, began his journey towards becoming an academic with a Bachelor of Business Science majoring in Economics at UCT. After completing his BBusSci, he immediately began a Masters in Applied Economics, followed by his PhD in Economics with which he is still busy.

His area of interest is broadly empirical microeconomics with a focus on behavioural economics, issues of social power and identity. However, he has worked on a wide range of topics including child support grants and maternal mental health; the effects of power and privilege on social cohesion; defining and measuring social cohesion; as well as power and its legacy on group cooperation.

Image supplied

He has worked with the Institute of Justice and Reconciliation, the Institute of Economic Justice, the South African Labour and Development Research Unit, the Research Unit in Behavioural and Neuroeconomics and the Poverty and Inequality Initiative. In addition, he has taught micro and macroeconomics courses at

UCT as well as facilitated courses in community engagement and social justice. The latter fostered his interest in innovative teaching and learning through popular education, where knowledge is co-created and the teacher is also the student.

Miengah Abrahams (Department of Geological Sciences)

Walking with Dinosaurs



Growing up in Cape Town it was easy to gain an appreciation for the natural world. This coupled with my deep love for reading and storytelling made studying geology a logical path to pursue. By understanding the processes acting on earth I am able to read the rich, 4.5 billion year long rock record.

Throwback: When I saw my first dino track I had to compare it to the size of my hands and feet!

When I stand in my study area, the vibrant maroon-red rocks of the Elliot formation, I can time travel to ~200 million years ago when dinosaurs roamed the earth, rivers and flash-flooding dominated the landscape and the climate was aridifying ... Sometimes I even skip a few pages ahead and glean snapshots of when dinosaurs were walking in little pools of water during desert-like conditions, or extensive outpourings of lava were burying southern Africa.



Theropod tracks in the Elliot Formation (left) with a colour-mapped model of an individual track (right).

Images supplied

My PhD, which focuses on three-toed dinosaur tracksites from the Triassic – Jurassic periods, has 2 main aims:

- Using U-Pb geochronology methods to date the tracksites and provide the first absolute dates for the Stormberg group (the Triassic-Jurassic is the chapter and my goal is to narrow down the page numbers)
- Use my large track database (100s of tracks) for statistical analyses to determine and quantify morphological variations in the tracks

During my post-grad studies I've co-authored 6 peer-reviewed journal articles and contributed to 16 conference abstracts. To date, my personal highlights include winning runner-up student presentation at

an international ichnology (trace fossil) conference, featuring in UCT's Science Matters magazine and getting a shout out for my research enthusiasm at a local palaeontology conference.

"To the accomplished tracker, each day's new landscape is like a new page, alive with the writings of animals."
(Tom Brown Jr., *Nature Observation and Tracking*)

Ayanda Pekane (Department of Information Systems)



I was born in Johannesburg and grew up in Katlehong on the east Rand. I started school at Monde Primary School and remember being surrounded by teachers who were passionate about education and about developing the competencies of their learners. I was also brought up by wise and strong women; my mother and my late grandmother. They have been the greatest influencers in my life. They valued education and continuously encouraged me to pursue it. Little did I know, that these early stages of my life would form a valuable foundation for my life and career. I matriculated at Bedfordview High School and then completed a National Diploma in Electrical Engineering at Cape Peninsula University of Technology (CPUT).

Image supplied

After graduating I immediately started working for the South African (SA) Navy in the field of telecommunications. One of my fondest memories at the Navy was being part of the design team (electrical/electronics) of a Navy boat that was successfully commissioned for peacekeeping missions in Burundi. The Navy taught me that I had something to offer and I moved from being just a newbie in industry to somebody who was determined to progress and grow.

I then worked for the Passenger Rail Agency of South Africa (PRASA) in railway signalling engineering. I remember myself having little understanding of railway signalling. I later found that it's a specialized field that was not taught anywhere in SA except in railway organizations like PRASA and Transnet. This meant that I had to be on training for about a year before I could start my duties. I learnt a lot at PRASA including to stretch myself beyond what I thought was possible. As a result, I had great experiences which included heading up a new department that had the purpose of improving the Configuration Management (CM) system engineering functions. I was also selected to work with a regional re-signalling project team in the Western Cape, a project funded by the South African government. Its purpose was to replace the old train operation system with new technology upgrades in operating systems. Throughout this process, I undertook part-time studies in Project Management including a master's degree in Information Technology (IT) where I graduated Cum Laude. The research focus of the Masters thesis was on the adoption of cloud computing to enhance project management processes and outcomes in SA.

At this point I had developed a great interest in Information Technology, which resulted in my studies in IT, particularly on how IT can improve efficiencies of business/organizations with limited resources. This is where I realized my passion for research, which led to my decision to pursue a PhD in Information Systems at the University of Cape Town. My current research is focused on the development of strategies that South African SMEs can use to explore and exploit new ICT's, particularly cloud computing for their competitive advantage. Cloud computing is viewed as a General Purpose Technology incorporated with abilities that can lead to the generation and sustaining of economic gains. Its pervasive use and the pool of IT resources it provides make it ideal for small businesses that may not afford the IT infrastructure and software applications. These tools are often required to run businesses in this knowledge age where the phenomenon of globalization has removed local boundaries and networked the global economy. In this regard information becomes a critical resource and a basis for competition in all business sectors, however, few SMEs possess the knowledge that will enable them to adopt and use the technologies (cloud computing). To this effect, there is a requirement to develop strategies that will enable SMEs to deliberately explore and exploit cloud computing gain a competitive advantage.

In recognition of my research capabilities in the master's program, I was nominated to be part of a program where I went to the Netherlands for 3 months in Vrije University to learn about how economies have changed in the world due to Information Technology. My academic achievements include two conference research articles that were presented in Spain (2015) and Italy (2017). The little time in academia has also given me exposure in interacting with students through teaching and research opportunities. In such opportunities, I have seen the need to contribute through teaching and sharing my experiences. It is not just about teaching but engaging and sharing knowledge in such a way that students would be innovative in applying what they have been taught in the rapidly changing environment that characterizes most industries. I am grateful for the nGAP opportunity as it allows me to apply myself in this regard. I plan to make a valuable contribution at UCT and in academia generally.

UCT welcomes Phase 4 nGAP members

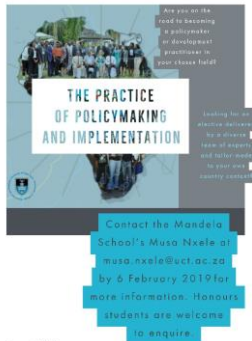


Photo: Nceba Lolwane

In February 2019 UCT welcomed its 5 new NGAP lecturers who you've read about above. The Vice-Chancellor, Professor Kgethi Phakeng opened the event at the Mafeje Room in the Bremner Building by asking NGAP lecturers to seize the opportunity presented to them. She referred to her own career, charting

the course from a student to her status as an internationally recognised Maths Educator, drawing the messages of hard-work, determination, self-belief and vision. She also extolled the virtue of mentors, underlining how important they were to the growth of young academics. She said: “Don’t take your mentor for granted or uncritically accept what they have to say. Respect them – they have experience that you don’t have – but know that they are also human.”

DVC for Transformation, Professor Loretta Feris, warmly welcomed the new lecturers to NGAP saying that they were going to be part of a family because, at UCT, NGAP operated as a cohort. She hoped that this group context would help the new lecturers to find their feet and enjoy working at UCT. She pointed out that NGAP was making a crucial contribution to transformation at UCT, developing a new spirit and demonstrating future possibilities of a transformed academic staff complement.



Musa Nxele: Bringing practice, multi-disciplinarity and hope

Perhaps what is most exciting about nGAP is that it is changing the landscape of universities in South Africa, by enabling the staffing of universities with young black academics. This era of renewal has the potential to build bridges across departments, across generations, and across races.

This is exactly what Musa Nxele has been up to since joining UCT just over a year ago. As part of pioneering the next frontier of growth of the Nelson Mandela School, which has historically only been open to mid-career public professionals, Musa has headed-up the launching of a new stand-alone master’s elective for fulltime postgraduate students across UCT. The course, called The Practice of Policy Making and Implementation, offers students the opportunity to wrestle with their own field-related problems as development practitioners and policy makers, moving away from 'best practice' thinking to becoming leaders that have the intelligence and courage to explore possibilities that respond creatively to complex problems in complex governance settings: with a bias for hope.



Musa describes the process of starting a new course as daunting but enriching. The main challenge is, given the course is not part of any degree programme, the course relies purely on voluntary subscription by students from other departments, including securing convenor support to recognise the course for credits. This meant Musa had to proactively engage with convenors of various departments to build these relationships. This support would be crucial to secure approval of the course at faculty level. But to achieve all this, Musa had to design a robust and interesting curriculum. To achieve this, he enrolled for a curriculum design course at CILT, leveraged the rich body of coursework offered within the Mandela School, secured the supervision of his directors - Profs Alan Hirsch and Brian Levy - and invited the same convenors in other departments as partners into the design, winning over their hearts in the process. This engagement has resulted in building bridges across departments, across both young and old academics, and across black and white academics: bringing together a practice-driven multidisciplinary course.

The result has been amazing. The course secured ten diverse master's students from fields including economics, politics, sociology, and environmental humanities. There's also a great balance between gender, race, and country representation of the students - enriching the discussion on 'doing development relevantly' in different contexts. Moreover, the interest in the course has sparked discussions for more collaborations towards a new, fulltime degree in the future. Musa hopes more collaborations of such nature will be the norm at the university, breaking away from silos, enabling the university body to respond better to the complex nature of problems in our society. This form of collaboration is how reimagining a UCT for all actualises in practice.

End of Year Lunch

The end of the 2018 year was celebrated with a lunch that brought together members of Phases 1, 2, 3 and 4. The event was held at the River Club, Observatory which describes itself as a “A place to meet and play since 1939, The River Club is a landmark Cape Town conference centre and golfing hub”. But it is not likely to exist as a landmark for much longer because a big urban development project the “Two Rivers Urban Park (TRUP)” is planned. It will be located at the confluence of the Black and Liesbeek rivers and across the road from the old Hartleyvale soccer stadium and Malta Park cricket ground. At the moment there is a protracted discussion between the City and local civic and heritage groups over the form and extent of the development but the glory days of the River Club definitely seem to belong in the past.



Alan Hirsch
@AlanHirsch2

Following

All full-time masters students in politics, economics, sociology, urban studies etc. at UCT should seriously consider our cutting edge course on the political economy of reform in complex democracies, also known as "The Practice of Policymaking and Implementation".



The Mandela School @MandelaUCT
New year, new course! Mandela School lecturer @_MusaNieve has developed an exciting new Master's elective with ...

7:56 AM - 14 Jan 2019



Photo: Robert Morrell

Thithiba

By Mama Amanda Zizikazi Qhamisa Mtya

You are beauty

May you grow knowing that you are beautiful
No words can define the depth of your beauty
May you grow more beautiful

You reflect greatness

May you grow to realise that you are great
No words can describe how grateful I am of you
May you realise your greatness

You are power
Your smile is infectious
Your laughter melts any sombre mood
May you grow more powerful

You are love
I love you
May you grow loving yourself more



Image supplied

Robert Morrell
nGAP (UCT) Manager and Editor