



Communication and Marketing Department
Isebe loThungelwano neNtengiso
Kommunikasie en Bemerkingsdepartement

Private Bag X3, Rondebosch 7701, South Africa
Welgelegen House, Chapel Road Extension, Rosebank, Cape Town
Tel: +27 (0) 21 650 5427/5428/5674 Fax: +27 (0) 21 650 5628

www.uct.ac.za

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UCT construction studies students help special needs school alleviate challenges

The University of Cape Town's construction studies students recently got their hands dirty at the Tembaletu School for learners with special needs in Gugulethu. Over the past few weeks the students have raised R52 800 for the community build, which forms part of one of the first-year courses in the Faculty of Engineering and the Built Environment at UCT.

First-year construction studies students have to do practical training. Each year the department organises a community build, which allows students to participate in community building projects.

The students learn and apply typical trade skills used in the construction industry and engage with informal settlement communities. At the end of the community build, students should be able to identify the variety of skills required to perform tasks that are associated with the building process and gain an appreciation of the significance of the tasks performed.

Learners with disabilities from across the Western Cape attend the Tembaletu school, which was in need of repairs and a revamp.

The UCT students received donations in the form of equipment, materials, cement, free plants and paint from various local industries. They restored a tyre garden, fixed a run-down caretaker's cottage, connected a walkway to make it easier for the children to reach the dining room, planted shrubs and plants, and organised the library.

"The help we have received from various companies has been tremendous. Without their help, this build would not have been possible," said Ryall Jacobs, chair of the Association of the Built Environment Students at UCT.

The school faces tremendous challenges in maintaining the grounds as its budget goes into the maintenance and running of transport to collect the children from all

over the Western Cape.

Mr Bernard Pather, principal of the school, said, "The UCT students do not realise the difference they have made to the school, and how they have changed the lives of the learners. We greatly appreciate their input and hope it will be a lasting relationship."

Yusuf Abrahams, a UCT student, said he was proud to be a part of the initiative. "It has been a very humbling experience to see how these kids battle with the basic day-to-day activities."

NB: Pictures are available on request.

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Kemantha Govender

Tel: (021) 650 5672

Fax (021) 650 5628

Cell: 084 737 6522

E-mail: kemantha.govender@uct.ac.za

University of Cape Town

Rondebosch

Website: www.uct.ac.za