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## **UCT lecturer honoured with prestigious civil engineering award**



Gundo Maswime

Photo: SAICE

Gundo Maswime, a lecturer at the University of Cape Town's (UCT) [Department of Civil Engineering](#), has been awarded the prestigious 2024 Academic Staff Award at the SANRAL SAICE Awards. The event, hosted by the South African National Roads Agency Limited (SANRAL) and the South African Institution of Civil Engineering (SAICE), took place on Thursday, 5 September 2024 at Monte Casino in Johannesburg and celebrated excellence in civil engineering across South Africa.

Maswime's award highlights UCT's role as a leading institution shaping the future of engineering in South Africa and on the continent. His commitment to preparing students for the complexities of the modern world while fostering professionalism and interdisciplinary thinking embodies UCT's mission to cultivate the next generation of global leaders.

"I was truly humbled when the students approached me for permission to accept the nomination. Competing against numerous distinguished candidates from across the country, I was genuinely surprised to become a finalist and even more thrilled to receive the award. The demanding responsibility of preparing future engineers for the industry while

simultaneously conducting research to influence policy often feels isolating and somewhat unnoticed. Receiving this recognition reassured me that the construction sector acknowledges and values my contributions," said Maswime.

He added that this honour not only reaffirmed UCT's position as a premier institution for research and teaching in Africa, but also underscored the Department of Civil Engineering's commitment to maintaining world-class standards. "It highlights our strategic focus on engaging critically with society to address the pressing challenges related to public infrastructure, something that resonates with UCT's Vision 2030," he added.

Since joining UCT in 2020, Maswime has advanced the civil engineering curriculum and played a pivotal role in UCT's Urban and Public Infrastructure Research Initiative. This dynamic, multidisciplinary research initiative, housed within one of Africa's top civil engineering departments, focuses on solving the critical technical, administrative and policy challenges that impede public infrastructure delivery. Through this work, UCT is positioning itself as a thought leader in addressing South Africa's and the continent's infrastructure needs.

Maswime's innovative approach to teaching – one that mirrors the "Limit State Design" philosophy of engineering – ensures that students are prepared to navigate extreme conditions in their future careers. His teaching philosophy reflects UCT's commitment to pushing the boundaries of traditional education, blending academic rigor with practical, real-world applications.

"Teaching civil engineering in its 'limit state' ensures students are prepared beyond any scenario they might encounter in the industry," Maswime noted in his acceptance speech, underscoring the importance of preparing students for the dynamic and often unpredictable nature of civil engineering practice.

The UCT SAICE Student Chapter admired Maswime's deep insights into South Africa's public infrastructure landscape and commended his ability to distill complex challenges into accessible lessons that inspire future engineers. His contributions to civil engineering education at UCT are shaping both his students and the future of the profession, both locally and internationally.

Maswime attributed much of his success to the support of his colleagues and mentors at UCT, particularly Dr Nicky Walmarans, whose mentorship he said has been instrumental in shaping his innovative pedagogical approach. This commitment to collaborative excellence reflects UCT's academic mentorship and leadership development culture.

Reinforcing the vital role UCT plays in developing the finest minds on the continent and in the world, Maswime said: "UCT attracts the brightest and most talented students in Africa and the world. Our responsibility is to harness that potential by equipping them with the tools to solve complex, multidimensional problems as part of a multidisciplinary team. My recognition is a reflection of UCT's unwavering dedication to producing graduates who will transform the public infrastructure landscape," he added.

Maswime's recognition at the 2024 SANRAL SAICE Awards is a significant endorsement of UCT's standing as a premier institution for civil engineering education, research and leadership in Africa. His achievement underscores the university's ongoing commitment to excellence in education and its critical role in addressing the continent's most pressing infrastructure challenges.

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