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UCT past and present students team up in new initiative to boost GBV efforts

The University of Cape Town (UCT) has called on its alumni around the world to support the [Alumni in Action programme](#). This new initiative provides psychological assistance to UCT survivors of gender-based violence (GBV).

Nationally, incidents of GBV have escalated during the pandemic, affecting students and staff. Funds donated to the initiative will amplify students' access to mental health services.

Existing support for survivors is based within [UCT's Office for Inclusivity & Change \(OIC\)](#) and [Student Wellness Service \(SWS\)](#). The Alumni in Action campaign, centrally led by the OIC, is the brainchild of alumna Zella Fuphe and a current UCT student, Sanda Nyoka. Fuphe and Nyoka are in partnership with the OIC, the [Development and Alumni Department \(DAD\)](#) and SWS. It has also received a strong endorsement from the Students' Representative Council.

On 19 July DAD launched a fundraising drive to support this campaign. Fuphe kick-started the drive by donating R120 000 of her own funds for the first phase of the roll-out. The project has received an additional R100 000 donation from the Mauerberger Foundation Fund, chaired by alumna Dianna Yach. Yach is also chairperson of the UCT Alumni Advisory Board (AAB), which has been advocating for alumni to become more engaged with their alma mater especially by sharing their skills and passion in giving back to society with kindness and compassion.

"The AAB wants to encourage more alumni to show 'leadership in action' by participating in programmes devoted to the well-being of our students and staff, and particularly survivors of GBV," said Yach. "We want to ensure that no one has to suffer in silence [but instead] feel able to reach out and receive appropriate care and support.

"Zella has demonstrated exemplary leadership in working with the Student Wellness Service and the OIC. We look forward to more alumni coming forward to join this programme in action."

Funds and skills needed

In addition to funding, DAD is also calling on alumni who are registered psychologists to come on board by supplementing UCT's existing mental health support services. The call is targeted at South African-based alumni who are current or retired registered counselling practitioners and have the qualifications, skills and time to conduct face-to-face and/or online sessions with survivors.

Director of the OIC Dr Sianne Alves said the 2018 Global Peace Index revealed that South Africa is one of the most violent places in the world, ranked 38 out of 163 countries.

“All of us living in South Africa are inundated by reports of the horrific and senseless murder, rape and maiming of women, children, queer folk and, in some instances, men. Survivors require dedicated resources over a long period of time to help them rebuild their own agency and resilience after trauma.

“The psychological impact of gender-based violence on some survivors can affect their academic performance and the quality of their social interactions. This why this Alumni in Action programme is a necessary initiative that deserves support,” said Alves.

Story by Helen Swingler, UCT News.

ENDS

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