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UCT VC to host online sessions on using the science of the future to shape the present

University of Cape Town Vice-Chancellor Professor Mamokgethi Phakeng will host a series of virtual engagements with thought leaders from Africa and elsewhere under the theme “Using the science of the future to shape your present”.

The events are intended to involve African youths in conversations about issues where their voices are critical but often not heard.

Phakeng will host the sessions at the invitation of the [Geneva Science Diplomacy Anticipator \(GESDA\)](#), of which she is a board member. GESDA is a Switzerland-based ‘think and do tank’ whose mission is to anticipate, accelerate and translate into concrete actions the use of emerging science-driven topics.

The sessions will be livestreamed on UCT’s [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#) platforms over four Sundays in July. Each session will address the four areas of the [GESDA Science Breakthrough Radar®](#).

The first session, to be held on Sunday, 10 July from 16:00 to 17:00 SAST, will address “Quantum Revolution & Advanced AI”. This will be followed by a session on “Human Augmentation” on Sunday, 17 July. The last two sessions will focus on “Eco-regeneration & Geoen지니어ing” and “Science & Diplomacy”, scheduled for 24 July and 31 July respectively.

Using, among other tools, the Science Breakthrough Radar®, GESDA aims to anticipate scientific breakthroughs, and to ensure that predicted advances are used to improve well-being and promote inclusive development.

Phakeng said: “We are facing global challenges which place people and the planet under stress and uncertainty. Locally, the Durban floods of April, water crisis in Gqeberha and loadshedding are some examples of challenges putting our nation under immense strain.

“At the same time, breakthroughs in science and technology are happening at an extraordinary pace: just last month South African-born entrepreneur and businessman Elon Musk announced he would be unveiling Tesla’s artificial intelligence (AI) humanoid in September 2022. Yet I have found that the impact of these scientific breakthroughs is not always evident.

“To bridge our understanding of how science might shape our future, how we can use these predicted futures to shape the present, and how to ensure that decisions and discussions include voices of the African youth, GESDA has invited me to host this series of virtual engagements”.

As part of these sessions, and to enhance the sharing of knowledge, there will be a challenge announced that invites participants to submit ideas about how they can use the future to shape our present, based on any of the topics covered in the sessions. The prize is an all-expenses paid trip to attend the [GESDA Summit 2022](#), a global summit of thought leaders, which will take place in Geneva, Switzerland from 12-14 October 2022.

The summit will bring together academics, politicians, diplomats, executives and investors from around the world to participate in a series of plenary and parallel sessions of rich and engaged discussions.

- [Read the full communication by Professor Phakeng.](#)

ENDS

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