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## UCT honours outstanding student leaders



UCT recognised some of the outstanding contributions made by student leaders and organisations in 2022. Photo: Supplied

The Department of Student Affairs (DSA) recently recognised some of the outstanding contributions made by the University of Cape Town's (UCT) student leaders and organisations during the course of the year. The DSA honoured up to 10 individuals and 10 teams whose efforts have driven the advancement of UCT's vision, mission and values – both within the university and its surrounding communities. This year, there were nine individual awards and six team awards.

Pura Mgolombane, DSA executive director, said that, "Despite many challenges, there were extraordinary examples of students rising beyond the difficulties; to contribute to the national and global COVID-19 efforts." He added, "Others supported the learning project,

mentored other students or supported local communities. We want to acknowledge and celebrate all these efforts.”

Nominations for the awards were invited for individuals or teams that demonstrated consistent or impactful leadership in any of the following areas: student governance or representation and how participation in institutional governance impacted other students, for example, through students’ representative councils or faculty councils; social responsiveness or community engagement or mentoring or any voluntary activity; social entrepreneurship or innovation; leadership through media or creative arts (including music, fine arts or drama); and demonstrating inclusive practices or team development or transformation.

### **Serving and leading**

Daniel Hukamdad, an individual winner, was recognised for having served and led several student organisations, such as the United Nations Association of South Africa (UNASA), Students for Law and Social Justice, and *Altum sonatur* (a student-run law publication). He facilitated a partnership with an external not-for-profit organisation called the Justice Desk, which allowed members to take part in a series of volunteer-based initiatives that work to further transformative justice. Hukamdad represented UNASA and UCT at the annual Umoja African Students’ Summit, where several students from different institutions across the continent met to deliberate and find sustainable ways around climate change and climate justice.

Jessica Chuang received an award for representing students in many faculty and other university committees. Another winner, Mack Makobane, was described as “compassionate and relatable with others as he seamlessly interacts with students from all walks of life”. He started the Faculty of Engineering & the Built Environment’s Proud Friday campaign.

One of Muya Koloko’s many outstanding achievements was being on the ground in policy transformation within sports. Koloko was the chief organiser of the Blind Football Coaching Workshop facilitated by an international facilitator and has been integral in growing UCT ParaSports.

Through her leadership, Yejin Jang’s team hosted the Project Flamingo charity ball in which they managed to raise R25 000, and additionally received R200 000 through sponsorship. Jang is the president of the Surgical Society and a treasurer of Medicine in Motion.

### **Critical thinker**

Described as “a critical thinker who is not afraid to ask questions”, Cheryl Sambadzai’s focus has been student advocacy on fundraising for deserving students who are often unable to continue their registration due to the inability to pay their historical debt. As an international students’ coordinator, her passion and advocacy extends to assisting with upfront payment of fees. This drive for students’ needs led Sambadzai to organise and host the SRC’s *AfriFund Fashion* Fundraiser at which more than R2 million was donated by UCT Chancellor Dr Precious Moloi-Motsepe.

Sikhumbuzo Muchenje served in different student bodies for her entire UCT journey. These include being a mentor, a crucial part of the sports union, and an orientation leader. As the founder of the UCT Ikeys Swifts rugby team, she has opened a door for female students to

be able to participate in a sport that they love, in which they would not otherwise have been able to.

Another student leader who showed crucial engagement within student governance was Cathy Mthenjane. Her passion for student leadership and professionalism has seen her get involved with various initiatives such as airport and bus station transportation upon student arrival at the beginning of the year, and a food programme during the fees protests early in 2022 to help students in need. Her work and leadership extend beyond the UCT community through volunteer work at Columba Leadership Academy and as a member of African Transformation Movement.

The 2022 individual winners are: Daniel Hukamdad, Jessica Chuang, Mack Makobane, Muya Koloko, Katlego Cathy Mthenjane, Yejin Jang, Naledi Mohale, Cheryl Sambadzai and Sikhumbuzo Sophia Muchenje.

The 2022 team winners are: Health Sciences Students' Council, Law Students' Council, Surgical Society, Shawco Law, Women in Computer Science, and Shawco Health.

*Story by Stephen Langtry, UCT News*

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