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UCT medical graduate's journey to excellence and leadership anchored by father's sage words



Luxolo Mdolo and family during graduation

Photo: Brenton Geach

The personal and academic journey of Luxolo Mdolo, a Bachelor of Medicine and Surgery (MBChB) graduate and recipient of the Bongani Mayosi Student's Academic Prize at the University of Cape Town (UCT), was anchored on sage words from his father who would often say: "I am raising leaders, not followers."

"This influenced me to not just be an observer in life but an active participant in any stride that improves the quality of living of our people. Through this mindset, I quickly learnt that at the heart of leadership, you find a deep desire to serve others that transcends your own innate sense of self-preservation," he said.

True to his father's words, he went out to do just that and emerged as a leader and beacon of excellence. Mdolo graduated with his medical degree at UCT's Sarah Baartman Hall during UCT's recent 2025 autumn graduation. Mdolo is currently a first-year medical intern at Greys Hospital complex in Pietermaritzburg.

Mdolo was not going to let slip the opportunity to take an intercalated molecular medicine course during the pursuit of his MBChB. Students can add a molecular medicine course to their third-year coursework and subsequently take a year out of medicine to pursue said BSc honours.

"I completed my MBChB at UCT in 2024. During the third year of my medical degree, I joined the intercalated programme that allowed me to complete my third year along with a BSc in Molecular Medicine. In 2021, I then took a year off my medical degree to pursue an honours degree in neuroscience and physiology with the financial aid of the Bongani Mayosi Foundation.

"I did this under the amazing supervision of Dr Rachael Dangarembizi, where I was investigating the neurological immune effects of cryptococcus neoformans in mice brains with the hope that it will improve the current management of this rampant fungal infection on the African continent."

Outside the classroom, Mdolo is an avid social media content creator under the alias "Ta Mdizo" on TikTok. While it may be an extra curricula activity, his content is very much aligned with inspiring people.

"I currently have 194 000 TikTok followers, 19 000 YouTube subscribers and 5 000 Instagram followers. Through this brand, I strive to make education fashionable to our youth and to equip them with the necessary tools to escape the mentality of helplessness and actively shape a better future for themselves and their communities."

Breaking point

His experience at UCT has also influenced Mdolo's desire to use platforms closer to the youth. He said UCT provided him with the highest quality of education on the continent, which has allowed him to thrive in the working environment.

"UCT provided me with a community of like-minded people that have now become my lifelong close friends and brothers. UCT offered me employment opportunities to be financially independent and self-sufficient while studying in order to lessen the burden on my parents. UCT allowed me to explore my leadership potential in roles such as faculty mentorship, Kutlwanong Promaths Society chairperson, student wellness representative, MBChB class representative, residence head mentor, residence disciplinary committee, residence academic representative, residence sub-wardenship, and co-founding the African Research Society," he said.

Mdolo added: "The academic pressure took me very close to a breaking point as my life was fully revolving around the two courses. It felt like a pot with boiling water on a very hot stove. You cannot switch off the heat, and you cannot remove yourself from the hot plate.

"I went through a long process of reflecting on ways of becoming more efficient, maximising the little time I had to study for both courses through carefully planning my weeks. I reviewed my daily schedule to identify pockets of time I could capitalise on. I would often ask myself, 'What can I do now to make life easy for myself later?' I read books, I watched podcasts, I reached out to lecturers for help and asked friends who were thriving for advice. With a heart willing to do anything to better my handle on my academics, I became stronger."

Mdolo said his character is a culmination of life experiences and inherited traits. As a result, he has viewed his Pietermaritzburg community as one where he can redefine himself.

“I am enjoying the process of building new friendships and bonds with amazing young people from all over the country who are now working as first-year medical interns in the same complex. I am taking interest in new hobbies, and I am always on a hunt for the next amazing coffee shop and braai place in town.”

Reflecting on the Bongani Mayosi award, which is voted for by classmates and places a premium on academic achievement, emotional intelligence and social responsiveness, Mdolo saw it as “unique”.

“It does not reflect how you see yourself but more so what others see in you. More than 70% of the class has to vote for who they think portrays the amazing characteristics of our late Professor Bongani Mayosi who was a wholistic leader par excellence. To me, this prize represents a mirror that reflects my potential to make a difference in people’s lives. It represents a call to serve through leadership and inspire through excellence,” he said.

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