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UCT lecture to explore how universities can cultivate intellectual growth, belonging and transformation



Professor Kasturi Behari-Leak

Photo: Supplied

The University of Cape Town (UCT)'s Professor Kasturi Behari-Leak will position academic and professional staff development as a critical site of institutional and sectoral transformation in her UCT Inaugural Lecture on Tuesday, 26 May 2026 at 18:00 SAST.

In this lecture, Professor Behari-Leak, the dean of the [Centre for Higher Education Development](#), will argue that this work is central to advancing epistemic justice, curriculum change and socially responsive teaching and learning.

Professor Behari-Leak will present the lecture, titled "Biographies and Geographies: Who Teaches Matters – Reimagining Knowledge, Belonging and the University", at The Atrium, Hasso Plattner School of Design Thinking Afrika – d-school Afrika, UCT's middle campus.

Reflecting on her journey as an activist, scholar, practitioner and institutional leader, she will explore how universities can cultivate environments that support intellectual growth, belonging and transformation. The lecture will reframe academic development as essential to building humane, engaged and future-facing institutions.

"I chose this title because it brings together the questions that have shaped my intellectual work and my own journey in higher education. Biographies and geographies speak to the ways our histories, identities and locations shape how we come to knowledge and how we participate in the university," said Behari-Leak.

"Over time, my work in academic staff development has convinced me that transformation is about more than changing curricula, policies or institutional structures. It is recognising that who teaches – their experiences, their positionalities, their sense of belonging and purpose – fundamentally shapes what and how students learn, and what universities are able to become. This lecture therefore reflects my ongoing commitment to understanding universities not only as sites of knowledge production, but as human projects, shaped by the people who inhabit them and the possibilities they are able to imagine together," she added.

Behari-Leak's scholarship focuses on higher education transformation, decolonial and social justice pedagogies, curriculum change and the scholarship of teaching and learning.

She has held national and international leadership roles, including serving as president of the Higher Education Learning and Teaching Association of Southern Africa from 2017 to 2021, and president of the International Consortium for Educational Development from 2021 to 2023. She continues to shape global conversations on academic development and institutional change.

- Media interested in attending the lecture are requested to [RSVP](#).

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