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AND MANAGEMENT



WiL
WOMEN in
LEADERSHIP

WOMEN IN LEADERSHIP

SOUTH AFRICAN HIGHER EDUCATION

WiL 2025-6: A Compendium

Women in Leadership - the flows of potential



Prof Francis Peterson
Chair: USAf

It gives me great pleasure to reflect on the journey of Women in Leadership over the period 2020 to 2026. Now in its sixth cohort, with 190 women leaders having participated to date, the programme has become far more than a by rote leadership initiative. It has grown into a space of encouragement, growth, reflection and possibility within South African higher education. It is, in many ways, one of the clearest expressions of our commitment to nurturing leadership not only for the benefit of individuals, but for the strength and future of our institutions and the sector as a whole.

What has always struck me about Women in Leadership (WiL) is the care with which it has been shaped. This is not a programme that treats leadership as a matter of the gaining of a replicable skill-set. Instead, it understands that meaningful leadership begins with the person: with self-awareness, confidence, courage, identity and voice. From there, it steadily opens outward into the wider institutional world, helping participants to navigate complexity, engage with governance and culture, manage people and systems, and think deeply about the academic project itself. To some extent, current thought is sadly shaped by monolithic thought, consumerism and self interest. The women in leadership programme represents a flow in the potential of human relations. The ability to listen, empathise, to simply be there, is what matters. One woman leader at a time, shaping an institution into a innovative, humane and collegial space. In this way, the programme has consistently offered something richer than conventional leadership training. It has invited women leaders into a process of genuine transformation and a transformation that constantly emanates from the leaders in this programme.

Over the years, that has become one of the programme's greatest strengths. Women in Leadership has created a space in which participants can think seriously, speak honestly, and learn in ways that are both intellectually demanding and personally affirming. Through seminars, peer groups, coaching, reflection, writing and the Portfolio of Learning, participants are encouraged not simply to absorb ideas, but to test them against their own realities, fears and aspirations. They are invited to learn from experienced leaders, from one another, and often from the quieter moments of insight that come through reflection and conversation. That kind of learning leaves a lasting impression.

The strides made by WiL are therefore visible in more than the growing number of cohorts. They are visible in the confidence that participants carry back into their institutions, in the stronger sense of agency they develop, and in the networks of support and solidarity that

continue beyond the programme itself. It is especially heartening to know that this initiative has helped create a community of women leaders who are not only advancing in their own careers, but also contributing to healthier, more thoughtful and more inclusive institutional cultures.

Looking ahead, I believe the potential of WiL is enormous. Higher education is facing a period of real challenge and change. Our institutions need leaders who are not only capable, but grounded; not only strategic, but humane; not only ambitious, but attentive to the people and purposes that make universities matter. Women in Leadership is helping to develop exactly this kind of leadership. Its future promise lies not simply in continuing to grow, but in deepening its influence across the sector through the women it has already supported and the many more it will reach in the years ahead.

If there is one thing this journey has shown us, it is that when women are given the space to reflect, connect, develop and lead, the benefits extend far beyond the individual. They are felt in departments, faculties, institutions and, ultimately, across the higher education system itself. It is also why WiL's future matters so deeply.

Why WiL works and how WiL works

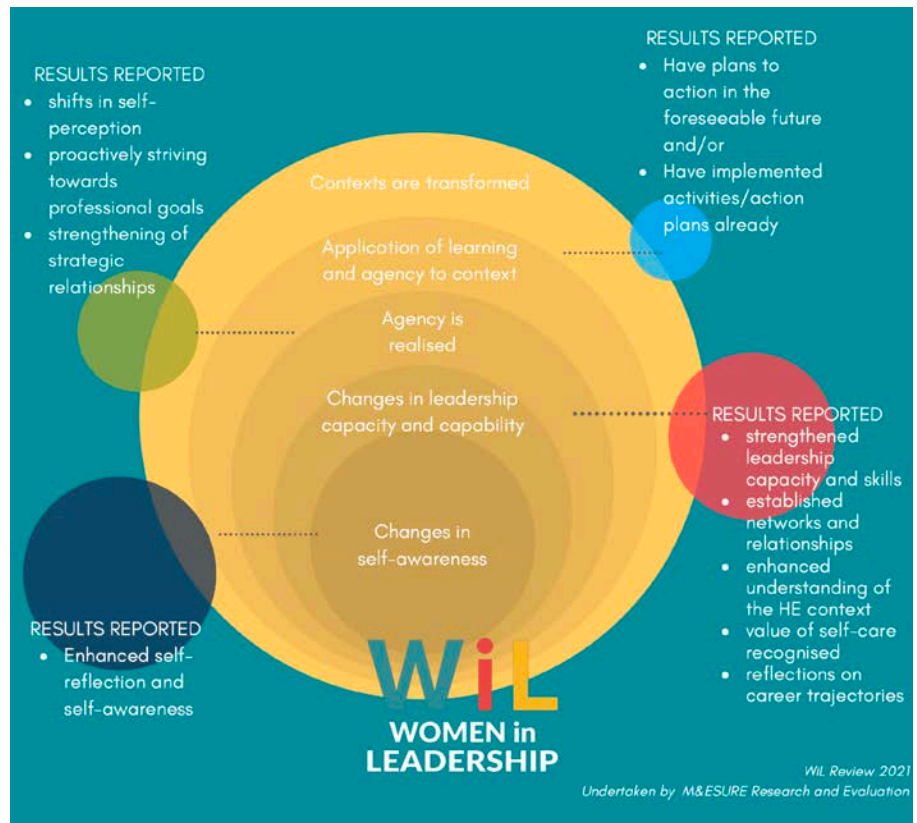
Since 2020, over 190 women leaders have participated in the WiL programme, equipping them with skills and insights necessary for recognising their strengths within the higher education environment. This programme fosters a growing network of leaders who are not only empowered to harness their agency but are also emboldened to shape their institutional contexts into environments where they can excel in leadership roles and ultimately thrive.

The South African higher education context faces chronic and severe challenges relating to gender equality and the access of women to senior management and leadership roles. Prozesky and Mlitwa (2018) reported that in 2016, only 27% of professorships were held by women and 33% of NRF-rated researchers were women. By 2025, this situation has not shifted in any significant way.

The inaugural Women in Leadership (WiL) programme was launched in the middle of a pandemic (September 2020) and has been offered successfully annually since then with 2025 seeing the 6th cohort of 23 senior women leaders seeking to embolden themselves to change

the higher education context towards an equitable one.

WiL's content design is informed by the results of a national Training Needs Analysis conducted by HELM that provided insight into the leadership development needs of women within higher education in South Africa. The research based on this Training Needs Analysis (Seale, Fish & Schreiber, 2021) is captured and discussed here and formed the bedrock of the objectives of this programme. As Prof Zinn



#	Session	Dates 2024
1	Introductory Session & Orientation	Wednesday 10 July Online 12.30 – 4.30
2	Leading from Self & Beyond	Wednesday 24 July
3	Self-Care Paradigms & Purposes	Online 1.30-4.30 Wednesday 7 August
4	Successful higher education institutions - Key components:	Online 1.30-4.30 Wednesday 21 August
5 & 6	Leading the Key Institutional Missions Leadership in times of Challenge and Crisis Leading & Working with People	Thursday 5 & Friday 6 September (1.5 days) In-person; venue TBC
7	Leadership & Finances	Wednesday 18 September Online 1.30-4.30
8	Career planning and advancement Self-care Continued	Wednesday 2 October Online 1.30-4.30
9	Building Strategic Networks: National, Regional & International	Wednesday 16 October Online 1.30-4.30
10	Review of WiL programme; Preparations for Final Qualifying Assignment FINAL DINNER	Friday 1 November In-person; venue TBC

notes, "since then, the programme, its objectives and design moved beyond the TNA and incorporated international best practices and the programme designers' experience and understanding of leadership for women in the higher education context."

The programme was initially conceptualised as a face-to-face intervention consisting of an opening seminar, a mid-term seminar and a closing seminar, i.e. a series of multi-day workshops. The prevailing context within which the pilot WiL programme was implemented, however, was characterised by uncertainty and unpredictability due to the Covid-19 pandemic and was adapted to accommodate new conditions, realities and risks. Since the inaugural programme the process included online sessions, peer support learning groups, two hybrid 'block sessions' which included both face to face and online simultaneously, coaching and reflective learning in regular assignments and reflections as well as a final long reflective essay and an accumulative portfolio. The entire WiL programme has moved onto a learning management system through Canvas which allows participants a repository of resources and a space where they can build their portfolio of learning.

OVERVIEW: WiL Seminar Sessions

1 November 2024 marked the culmination of the current cohort's transformative journey—one launched with the explicit intention of reshaping the leadership landscape of higher education by emboldening women to assume roles of executive authority and institutional governance. Through a strategic combination of seminars, peer learning groups, and individualised coaching, WiL seeks to challenge systemic barriers that have historically excluded women from leadership positions. The seminars, for instance, provide targeted awareness on navigating institutional politics and gender dynamics, while the peer learning groups offer a sustained support system for addressing leadership-specific challenges unique to women in academia. Together, these elements cultivate participants' capacity to address biases and advocate effectively for more equitable practices within their institutions.

The imperative for such a programme is indisputable. As the programme leader Prof Denise Zinn notes, "the gender composition of South African higher education reveals a paradox: although women are well represented within academic and professional ranks, they remain conspicuously absent from senior leadership positions". The WiL programme thus aims not only to increase the numerical representation of women in these roles but also to foster a leadership culture that is diverse, inclusive, and innovative. This ambition is embodied in the programme's design, which focuses on enhancing participants' leadership, management, and personal development skills, all while building a resilient community of support that extends beyond the programme itself.

A poetry quilt

The WiL programme concludes with a final reflection of the impact of the programme and the participants have to complete a reflective 'portfolio of learning' (PoL). This is the final requirement leading to certification of WiL as a short learning programme by Nelson Mandela University. As the programme leader, Professor Denise Zinn, puts it, "the pervasive gender discrimination at our universities meant that we needed to create a new kind of space for these women leaders to safely explore their own power in shaping the higher education sector." A distinguishing feature of the WiL programme is that it utilises input from a range of experienced executive and senior leaders – Vice-Chancellors, Deputy Vice-Chancellors, Registrars, Executive Directors, etc. – most of whom are women. Guest presenters include subject experts and international academics, as the programme covers areas that are critical to emboldening the participants in shaping the higher education spaces in ways that promote diversity and transformation.

This programme is shifting the higher education landscape into an equitable one where diverse leaders can powerfully impact the sector, lead and thrive.

During the course of the WiL 2023 programme, there were many occasions where the participants spent a few minutes freewriting, reflecting on your own stories, on what you had heard or read, what struck you as meaningful, or perplexing, and what you were thinking at a particular moment on this journey. In the final session, reflecting on the WiL programme as a whole, of course, there had to be freewriting again. But we then asked you to take a closer look at your writings, and to choose sentences, phrases, ideas that stood out for you. In a rather rushed exercise, we asked you to put together a poem – some of you followed the guidelines for constructing a palindrome poem. Others exercised their freedom to write in the form that came more readily or easily to them.

As part of our celebration today, we extracted all your poems from your Portfolios Of Learning, and chose just a few to read. These seemed to form a representative snapshot of the WiL journey, one that could resonate with most of you.

We have 'curated' them to form a poetic narrative: seven poems have been strung together, interspersed with some connective sentences and phrases. Perhaps like a necklace or garland of precious gems, they will remain as a sparkling reminder of WiL 2023.

WiL 2023: The Journey through a poetic narrative

Where did we start on this journey? It really started a long, long time ago, with our own stories, as far back, perhaps, as our childhood selves.

"A note to my 8 yr old self"

Time to Heal

I want to acknowledge your beauty and bravery—yet fierce, terrified, confused.
On the surface, you are a brave joyous child, but deeply startled.
Your mother's outward beauty and smile conceal your emotional and mental wounds.
Though it's time for you to heal, you're still unsure.
It is time to get up, crawl, walk, and ultimately fly!

I want us to trek towards healing.
If you keep bleeding, I cannot recover; I cannot heal.
When you keep hiding in that corner, I cannot fly.
Come along with me as we set out for a new season.
A soothing yet unsettling season
Time to get well!

Time for us to get better.

It's time to stand up.

Let us stand up!

Let our undeniable energy, strength, and gifts lead us to completeness!

Let us allow our flaws and perfections to be celebrated and criticized.

It's time to rejoice that we have survived IT ALL.

We have a contribution, a voice, and a Place on this planet.

It's time to get up.

GET UP WITH ME, LET'S BE BRAVE, LET'S FORGIVE, LET'S LIVE AND MOVE FORWARD

[A note to my eight-year-old self © Ntombozuko Langa Duku 2023]

An Ode

In halls where ivory shadows cast, a leader rises, bold and vast.
A woman of the African sun, her journey, a tale just begun.
Melodies of strength, resilience heard, a testament in every word.
In the crucible of diversity's light, she weaves a tapestry, bold and bright.
In every step, a story unfolds, Of courage, grace, as history moulds.
A palindrome of power and grace, Her leadership style, a timeless embrace.

[Nhlanhla Mpofu © 2023]

However, it is not that straightforward, as we seem to wrestle with ourselves, and others, constantly. Imposter syndrome looms large, as does self-doubt, juggling multiple roles in different contexts, in different cultures - leading women leaders to question themselves,

Who am I as a leader and a woman?

Diversity, individuality

Institutional Culture is complex

Do I have multiple selves or,

One self, divided into multiple roles?

Surveilled being

Surveilled Being

One self, divided into multiple roles?

Do I have multiple selves?

Institutional culture is complex

Diversity, individuality

Who am I as a woman?

[Juliet Ramohai © 2023]

Integrated Intelligence Diversified

Mind blowing Experience

Collaboration at its best

Transformation intensified

Power of WiL

Power of WiL

Transformation intensified

Collaboration at its best

Mind blowing Experience

Integrated Intelligence Diversified

[Refilwe Mogase © 2023]

Quality of your leadership

Beautiful solutions
Learning from blind spots
Prioritising reflection
Community is a lifeline
Community is a lifeline
Prioritising reflection
Learning from blind spots
Beautiful solutions
Quality of your leadership

[Jacqueline Moodley © 2023]

Questions arise: How does one enhance the quality of leadership? Where do the beautiful solutions lie? What could be the outcome of being in a programme like this, and of taking on the challenge of being in a leadership role? How do we build up our courage to lead? And what support is needed? The next poem ponders these issues:

I aspire to become the finest rendition of myself,
Coaching, not a luxury, but a vital necessity,
Empowerment courses through my veins,
The skill to delineate boundaries, a source of strength.
Insightful, I seek to be
Insightful, I seek to be
The skill to delineate boundaries, a source of strength.
Empowerment courses through my veins,
Coaching, not a luxury, but a vital necessity,
I aspire to become the finest rendition of myself.

[Sibonsile Zibane © 2023]

Do these aspirations resonate with your own in any way? Have you felt yourself growing into 'the finest rendition' of yourself? What does that look and feel like?

In the final poem in this poetic narrative on the WiL journey, one participant reflects on her experience of the road travelled thus far:

Poem

I feel a change on the horizon, like the beating of a heart.
I hear the voices of all the women who came before.
My inadequacies disappear as I walk towards the goalposts.
It's amazing how success can elicit fear and frenzy while also bringing forth inner peace.
Those fears are there; they walk beside me on my journey, yet I am no longer afraid.
Those fears are there; they walk beside me on my journey, yet I am no longer afraid.
It's amazing how success can elicit fear and frenzy while also bringing forth inner peace.
My inadequacies disappear as I walk towards the goalposts.
I hear the voices of all the women who came before.
I feel a change on the horizon, like the beating of a heart.
[Dr Odeshnee Naicker © 2023]

The Class of 2024

Title	First name	Last name	Name of university	Current position
Prof	Ma	Seheri	Sefako Makgatho Health Sciences University	Director
Dr	Emma	Groenewald	Sol Plaatje University	Senior Lecturer
Dr	Laetitia	Orlandi	Tshwane University of Technology	Assistant Dean: Teaching and Learning
Dr	Gina	Ziervogel	University of Cape Town	Director
Dr	Kim	Schmidt	University of Fort Hare	HOD
Dr	Juliet	Townes	University of Fort Hare	Senior Lecturer / HOD
Prof	NAM Ntsamaeeng Annah Moteetee	Moteetee	University of Johannesburg	Executive Dean
Dr	Vanessa	Gregory	University of KwaZulu-Natal	Senior lecturer/Academic leader financial accounting
Ms	Kgahliso	Maoto	University of Limpopo	Acting Head of department
Prof	Mapitsi	Thantsha	University of Pretoria	Chair of Microbiology Division: Department of Biochemistry, Genetics and Microbiology
Dr	Audrey	Legodi	University of South Africa	Chair of the Department
Prof	Matseliso	Mokhele-Makgalwa	University of the Free State	Vice-Dean: Research, Engagement and Internationalisation
Dr	Nontobeko	Ntombela Akoi-Jackson	University of the Witwatersrand	Lecturer and Head of Department
Dr	Emaculate	Ingwani	University of Venda	Head of Department
Prof	Maria	Mabusela	University of Zululand	Head of Department
Dr	Lufuluvhi Maria	Mudimeli	University of Venda	Senior Lecturer, HOD
Dr	Nolwazi	Qumbisa	Central University of Technology	Head of Department
Dr	Iitumeleng	Maome	Durban University of Technology	Lecturer and Deputy HOD
Dr	Phumeza	Kota-Nyati	Nelson Mandela University	Dean: LT
Prof	Lisebo	Tseane-Gumbi	North-West University	Deputy Director
Prof	Hyla	Kluyts	Sefako Makgatho Health Sciences University	Head of Department
Dr	Dimpho	Mothibi	Sol Plaatje University	ACTING HEAD OF DEPARTMENT
Dr	Mmashakoane	Lebambo	Tshwane University of Technology	Senior Lecturer and Section Head Research and Postgraduate studies
Prof	Juanitta Christelle	Calitz	University of Johannesburg	Vice Dean: Research & Internationalization
Dr	Samukelisiwe	Khumalo	University of KwaZulu-Natal	Senior Lecturer, Academic Leader: Teaching and Learning
Prof	Mamare	Bopape	University of Limpopo	Head of Department

Dr	Mantoa	Molete	Central University of Technology	Departmental manager
Dr	Mphagahlele	Ndlovu	University of South Africa	Head of Department
Dr	Nomalungelo	Ngubane	University of the Free State	Director
Prof	Tholaine	Matadi	University of Zululand	Associate Professor and HOD Law department
Prof	Nirmala	Deenadayalu	Durban University of Technology	Head of Department of Chemistry
Prof	Krishnavani Shervani	Pillay	Nelson Mandela University	Acting Deputy Dean
Dr	Khumoetsile	Shopo	North-West University	Deputy Director
Dr	Janeke	Thumbran	Rhodes University	Senior Lecturer, Head of Department
Dr	Nolutho	Mkhumbeni	Vaal University of Technology	Head of Department



Prof Donita Africander

I serve as Deputy Head of Department in Biochemistry at Stellenbosch University and contribute to faculty leadership through my roles as employment equity representative for academic appointments and Chair of the Transformation Advisory Committee in the Faculty of Science. I lead a research group focused on women's health and disease, and I previously held a visiting scientist position at the Population Council in New York. I am also Senior Editor for the Journal of Molecular Endocrinology and the Journal of Endocrinology. Alongside my research, I supervise postgraduate students and mentor postdoctoral fellows and emerging academics.



Prof Ayanda Pamella Deliwe,

I am an Associate Professor at the University of Fort Hare and hold a PhD in Commerce with a focus on leadership. My experience spans more than a decade in higher education and public sector leadership. Previously, as Head of Business Management at Nelson Mandela University, I worked to strengthen teaching, staff wellness, and departmental engagement. My work in strategic leadership and e-learning has received international recognition, including a keynote address at the Digital Learning Africa Summit in 2022 and the 2024 Regional Women Leadership in Education Award. I also serve on the JLSIA editorial board and continue to advance scholarship and leadership practice.

Prof Nicole Brooks



I am Dean of the Faculty of Health and Wellness Sciences at the Cape Peninsula University of Technology and hold a PhD in Physiology from the University of the Western Cape. Over more than 24 years at CPUT, I have served in roles ranging from junior lecturer to Head of Department and now faculty leadership. I oversee seven departments and work to strengthen interdisciplinary teaching, research, and stakeholder partnerships, particularly with the Western Cape Department of Health. My research has focused on antioxidants and the metabolic effects of natural products. I am also committed to advancing women's leadership in higher education.



Prof Sanet Deysel,

I am the Head of Department for Primary School Education in the Faculty of Education at Nelson Mandela University, a role I assumed on 1 April 2025 after nearly two decades in academia. My field of expertise is inclusive education, and my research focuses particularly on Participatory Action Learning and Action Research, including its application in School-Based Support Teams. I supervise postgraduate students, present at international conferences, and contribute to scholarship through book chapters and collaborative research. I also engage internationally through DAAD partnerships with German and Dutch universities, which enrich both my research and my broader contribution to inclusive education.

Prof Lebo Gafane-Matemané,



I am an Associate Professor of Physiology at North-West University and a member of both the Hypertension in Africa Research Team and the South African Medical Research Council Extra Mural Unit for Hypertension and Cardiovascular Disease. I hold a PhD in Physiology from NWU and additional training in global health from University Medical Centre Utrecht. I lead the Translational and Implementation Science sub-theme within HART and serve on the unit's executive committee. Beyond my institution, I chair the International Society of Hypertension Mentorship and Training Committee and serve as Secretary/Treasurer of the Physiology Society of Southern Africa.

Prof Kulsum Kondiah



I am an Associate Professor and Vice Dean of Teaching and Learning in the Faculty of Science at the University of Johannesburg. With more than 15 years of experience in higher education, I have built my career as both an educator and a researcher. My research focuses on developing nano-based assays for the surveillance of water-borne pathogens in low-income communities, work that aligns closely with the Sustainable Development Goals. I have supervised 19 master's and PhD candidates and hold an international patent. One of my recent honours was receiving the Mail & Guardian Power of Women in Education Award in 2025.



Dr Fatima Ismail

I am the Head of the Chiropractic Department at the University of Johannesburg. Over the past six years, I have progressed from Senior Lecturer into departmental leadership while pursuing a PhD focused on interprofessional musculoskeletal education. My work centres on patient-centred, collaborative, and culturally responsive chiropractic education that aligns with South Africa's health priorities. I have received national and international recognition for my teaching and research, secured external funding, published widely, and supervised master's students to completion. I also serve on the ECCE, CCEI and WFC, and I remain committed to leadership, scholarship, mentorship, and the balance between academic life and motherhood.

Dr Bongie Mcata



I am an Agricultural Economist with more than a decade of experience in academia and research, and I currently serve as Senior Lecturer and Programme Leader for the BSc Agriculture degree at the University of Mpumalanga. My work brings together academic leadership, research, and community-focused engagement, with a particular commitment to inclusive agricultural development and the empowerment of rural communities and women in agriculture. I hold a PhD in Agricultural Economics from the University of Fort Hare and have contributed to national projects on food systems and socio-economic development. I also publish, supervise postgraduate students, and serve on several academic and national bodies.

Dr Mashudu Manafe



I am a Head of Department and Senior Lecturer with more than 15 years of experience in Dietetics and Nutrition. Throughout my career, I have worked to create a dynamic and research-intensive academic environment while mentoring students and junior colleagues. My leadership is shaped by a commitment to innovative curriculum development, academic excellence, and impactful research in nutrition and public health. I care deeply about strengthening institutional success and helping prepare the next generation of leaders in the field. My work combines teaching, academic leadership, and research in ways that I hope contribute meaningfully to both the university and the broader health sector.

Prof Hilda Mfengwana



I am an Associate Professor and Head of Department in Health Sciences at the Central University of Technology, Free State. I hold a Doctorate in Biomedical Technology and am registered with the HPCSA as a Medical Technologist in Immunohaematology. My research focuses on biomedical and preclinical studies, especially medicinal plants, natural products, and their therapeutic potential, including anticancer activity. I have supervised postgraduate students extensively, published in peer-reviewed outlets, and remained actively involved in academic leadership. I am especially committed to student academic success and to building stronger research capacity within the health sciences.



Dr Thembelihle Makanya

I am a Senior Lecturer and Programme Leader in Social Work at the University of Mpumalanga, and I previously lectured at the University of KwaZulu-Natal. I also worked with the Department of Correctional Services as a facilitator and coordinator for Victim Offender Mediation Dialogue. I hold a PhD in Applied Human Science from UKZN, where I explored students' experiences of decoloniality in social work education. My research engages decolonial and Afrocentric frameworks, Ubuntu, climate change, green social work, access and transformation in higher education, and questions of gender, identity, and social justice. My work is grounded in African epistemologies and social justice.

Dr Rirhandzu Sharon Mhinga



I am the Director of Library and Information Services at Sefako Makgatho Health Sciences University. I hold a PhD in Information Science from UNISA, along with qualifications in knowledge and information management, information science, knowledge management, and library and information science in education. Before joining SMU, I served as Head of Library at the Tshwane University of Technology's Polokwane Campus. I have also contributed to the profession through service on bodies such as the National Council of Library and Information Services and as Chair of the Limpopo Provincial Library Board. My published work often examines the barriers students face when seeking information.

**Dr
Nomampondomise
Mpondi Molefe**



I am a Senior Lecturer and Head of Department in Chemistry at Rhodes University, South Africa. I earned my PhD in Chemistry from the University of the Free State, where I focused on organometallic complexes. My research expertise includes the synthesis and characterisation of organometallic compounds, liquid crystals, and renewable energy materials, with notable work on molecular solar thermal systems. I teach across undergraduate and postgraduate levels and supervise MSc and PhD students. I have received National Research Foundation funding and remain active in academic and community engagement through external examination, moderation, and conference presentations.



**Dr Florence Mazwi
Murungweni**

I am the Head of the Department of Geography and Environmental Sciences in the Faculty of Science, Engineering and Agriculture at the University of Venda. I hold a PhD in Environmental Sciences and a Master's degree in Geoinformation Science, together with qualifications in geography, environmental studies, higher education, and geoinformation. My role includes strategic planning, curriculum development, staffing, budgeting, teaching and learning, research, community engagement, and institutional representation. My leadership approach is sustainable, participatory, and inclusive, with a strong commitment to gender equity, student-centredness, engaged scholarship, and internationalisation. My research focuses on remote sensing, GIS, wetlands, climate change, and land-use change.



Prof Lebo Mudau

I am an Associate Professor and Head of Department at Tshwane University of Technology, where my responsibilities include teaching, research, and community engagement. I participate actively in teaching and learning initiatives such as curriculum development, and I have also contributed internationally through auditing health-related qualifications and writing related reports. My research interests include machine learning and artificial intelligence applications in water monitoring, as well as broader environmental health concerns. I have published articles and book chapters in peer-reviewed journals and serve as Director of the Environmental Health Centre. My work focuses especially on water, sanitation and health, waste management, and environmental health more broadly.



Dr Urisha Naidoo

I am a researcher and academic who earned a PhD in Higher Education from the University of KwaZulu-Natal in 2019. My interdisciplinary research has been recognised through publications in national and international journals, as well as presentations at international conferences. I contribute to the broader academic community through peer review for scholarly journals and for the National Research Foundation, where I support the advancement of research excellence in South Africa. I currently serve as Head of the Discipline of Speech Language Therapy at UKZN. Through my scholarship, leadership, and service, I remain committed to strengthening higher education research



**Prof Mikateko
Ndhambi**

I am an Associate Professor and Head of the Department of Natural and Rehabilitative Sciences at the University of Fort Hare. As a registered Speech-Language Therapist, I have developed extensive experience in academic leadership, curriculum development, quality assurance, and professional accreditation in the health sciences. My scholarly work focuses on child language development, multilingual and culturally responsive assessment, and the strengthening of training programmes within historically disadvantaged contexts. I also serve on national professional boards and review panels, where I contribute to policy development and governance in both higher education and the health professions. My work is grounded in transformative leadership, mentorship, and equity-driven academic excellence.



Prof Thembi Phala

I am an Associate Professor with a PhD in Inclusive Education and currently chair the Department of Early Childhood Education at the University of South Africa. Before joining higher education, I worked in the Department of Education as a Senior Education Inclusive Specialist. My research interests centre on early childhood education and inclusive education, with particular attention to the teaching of reading in African languages, preservice teacher education, and support for practising teachers. I supervise postgraduate students and have published in my field of expertise. I am also co-editor of *Global Perspectives on Leadership in Early Childhood Education* and participate in several international scholarly networks.



**Prof Ellen Chenesai
Rungani**

I am an Associate Professor in Business Management and Acting Deputy Director in the School of Management Sciences at North-West University, Mahikeng. I hold a PhD in Business Management and am an NRF Y2-rated researcher. My scholarship focuses on entrepreneurship, SMMEs, financial management, and innovation, and has led to publications, keynote invitations, and contributions to national policy. I have extensive experience in academic leadership, curriculum development, postgraduate supervision, and digital teaching innovation. As a Senior Fellow of the Higher Education Academy in the UK, I am passionate about transforming teaching, empowering young academics, and advancing Africa-rooted entrepreneurial development and student success.



**Prof. Nontuthuko R.
Ntuli**

I am an Associate Professor and Head of the Department of Botany at the University of Zululand, KwaDlangezwa Campus. I am also a C2 NRF-rated researcher and serve as a Handling Editor for the *South African Journal of Botany*. My research focuses on variation studies of indigenous and traditional edible plants, including their morphology, phenology, nutrition, genetics, and phytochemistry. In addition to leading the department, I teach first- and third-year students and supervise research at Honours, Master's, and PhD levels. I work closely with my students and regularly co-publish with them in accredited journals.



Palesa Sekhejane

I am Deputy Executive Dean of the Faculty of Natural Sciences, where I work to advance science, innovation, and STEM futures in higher education. My career has spanned senior roles in academia, policy, and research, including leadership positions at the Human Sciences Research Council and the Africa Institute of South Africa. I hold a doctoral degree in health sciences in biomedical technology and specialise in biophotonics, with advanced training from the University of Illinois. My work across Africa has addressed innovation, digital technology, gender equity, youth empowerment, food systems, and science diplomacy. I remain deeply committed to leadership, mentoring, partnership-building, and challenging systems of exclusion.



Prof Iize Vermaak

I am Professor and Head of the Department of Pharmaceutical Sciences at Tshwane University of Technology. I am a registered pharmacist with the South African Pharmacy Council and completed both my master's degree, cum laude, and my doctorate in herbal medicine. I am an NRF C2-rated scientist and also serve on the executive committee of the Academy of Pharmaceutical Sciences of South Africa. In addition, I work as Associate Editor for the South African Journal of Botany and subject editor for Phytochemistry Letters. I am also a fellow of TAU, reflecting my strong commitment to teaching advancement in universities.



Prof Catherine Odora Hoppers
(Previously Chair in Dev Ed & IKS at
UNISA)



Prof Pumla Dineo Gqola (NMU)



Professor Pamela Dube, VC at
Central University of Technology



Professor Ruksana Osman (Wits)



Dr Bruce Damons, Dir Engagement,
(NMU)



Prof Sibongile Muthwa, VC



The Coaches 2024



Joyce Ras

Joyce Ras is the Owner and Director of Capability2Lead as well as a Registered Industrial Psychologist with HPCSA, and certified Results Driven Coach, Lumina Practitioner, Neurozone Practitioner and Coach. She specialises in Executive Development and Coaching.

Dr Bernadette Johnson

Dr Bernadette Johnson is the Director: Transformation and Employment Equity at the University of the Witwatersrand. She is an accredited CEDR (UK) and Conflict Dynamic (RSA) Mediator and Thoughtsmiths Certified Coach.



Dr Colleen Moodley

Dr Colleen Moodley is a mentor and qualified Leadership coach registered with COMENSA. With a PhD in Educational Psychology, and Master's in Leadership Coaching, she has lectured in various higher educational institutions including CPUT and UNISA.



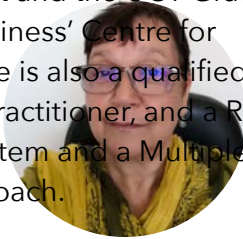
Prof Diane Bell

Prof Diane Bell holds an MBA and PhD in Curriculum Studies from Stellenbosch University. Currently she is Associate Professor at University College of London (remote). She trained as coach at Stellenbosch University's Business School, and obtained Certificates in Coaching for Performance and as a Professional Coaching Manager at the NeuroCoach Institute.



Nothemba Mxenge

Nothemba is Certified Integral Coach® (PCC) through USA-based New Ventures West and the UCT Graduate School of Business' Centre for Coaching. She is also a qualified Enneagram Practitioner, and a Results Coaching System and a Multiple Brain Integration Coach.



Prof Denise Zinn

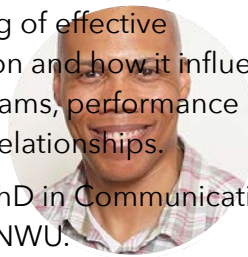
Prof Denise Zinn is the HELM Programme Leader for the Women in Leadership Programme, and the University Lecturer Development Programme (ULDP). She holds Education Masters and Doctoral degrees from Harvard University, and Integral Coaching Practitioner certification from The Coaching Centre (TCC), accredited by the ICF.



Dr Phumzile Mmope

Dr Phumzile Mmope is a leadership and business coach with a deep understanding of effective communication and how it influences leadership, teams, performance and professional relationships.

She holds a PhD in Communication Studies from NWU.



Prof Theodore Petrus

Theo Petrus provides coaching services for individuals and groups in the academic and business/entrepreneurship markets. He is a registered member of Coaches and Mentors of South Africa (COMENSA).



Zodidi Bizana

Zodidi is an Integral Coach and registered Employee Assistance Programs Practitioner. She works as a Client Relations Manager, with extensive experience in the field of Employee Health & Wellness Programmes.



Antonia Wadley





Dr Sharon Audley Munyaka

Dr Sharon Munyaka is an Organisational Psychologist and owner of Sharon Munyaka Incorporated. Sharon is an accredited Coach in the Results Coaching System and the Integrative Enneagram (both coaching systems are accredited by the International Coaching Federation).

The WiL Team 2024

Denise Zinn

Denise Zinn is a semi-retired academic and former Deputy Vice-Chancellor for Learning and Teaching at Nelson Mandela University. She previously served as Executive Dean of the Faculty of Education at both Nelson Mandela University and the University of Fort Hare. Her research focuses on humanising pedagogies and equity issues in educational contexts. She holds Master's and Doctoral degrees from Harvard University's Graduate School of Education. Currently, she is a leadership and education consultant, as well as an Integral Coach working under the auspices of Universities South Africa (USAf).



LifeRighting



Birgit Schreiber:

Birgit Schreiber is a consultant for Universities South Africa (USAf) and the Higher Education Leadership and Management (HELM)

programme, where she develops curricula, teaches, and conducts research. With over 24 years of experience in South African universities, she has held various leadership positions and has also served at institutions in Europe and the USA. She has published extensively on student affairs, engagement, higher education policy, and social justice. Additionally, she serves on the executive of various national and international professional organisations, including the International Association of Student Affairs and Services (IASAS).

Michelle Buchler

Michelle Buchler is a Senior Manager at HELM with a Master of Arts in Development Sociology and a Higher Diploma for Educators of Adults from Wits University. She has over eight years of academic experience and has held middle and senior management positions in NGOs focused on education and training research, policy analysis, and advocacy. Her specialisation in higher education includes research on access issues, HIV/AIDS and graduate competencies, teacher development, and monitoring and evaluation of higher education projects. She has served on the council of the Durban University of Technology and chaired a Ministerial Task Team on Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL).



Molatelo Motswe

Molatelo Clara Motswe is the Administrative Officer for the HELM programme at Universities South Africa (USAf), bringing extensive project administration experience from her previous roles at the Centre for Education Policy



Development and Wits University's Centre for Researching Education and Labour. She joined USAf in 2019 and has coordinated various programmes, including student leadership initiatives, enhancing her exposure to the higher education sector. She enjoys devising solutions to challenges arising from planning events and, in her spare time, reads political leaders' biographies and engages in outdoor activities.

Technical assistance

Special thanks and gratitude are due to those who assist in the vast technical support required in this programme: Patrick Fish who handles the communications and drafting, layout and design of HELM and WiL materials; Rassie Louw who provides technical support for the CANVAS LMS and Tiisetso Mahlaela for his sterling work, providing technical support for the WiL programme.

Prof Yunus Ballim (former VC, SPU)

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