

Women's Month Profile: 15 minutes with...

Cheryl Wyngaard



Mentor. Office administrator. Leader.

My name is Cheryl Wyngaard, office administrator in the Department of Anaesthesia and Perioperative Medicine. Office administration is a complex role. It requires a wide range of professional skills. I believe that humility and good interpersonal and communication skills are crucial. In addition, leadership skills and a flexible time management approach in a well-organised workplace results in a successful and happy Department with satisfied members. The position of Office Administrator is therefore a big responsibility.

Can you describe yourself in three words?

Wise. Loyal. Mentor of people. I can be fun too! A devoted Christian.

How do you think your colleagues would describe you in three words?

Professional, loyal team-player, who cares about the wellbeing of others, especially the vulnerable. Hardworking, with unlimited energy and good work ethic. Integrity.

Describe your work in two sentences or less

I coordinate office activities and day-to-day operations to ensure efficiency according to the needs of the HOD and Department, allowing him the space to implement his vision for the Department. Through multi-tasking I supervise administrative staff and delegate responsibilities to facilitate excellence.

What do you find most fulfilling about your work?

The most fulfilling part of my work is mentoring, nurturing and inspiring others to reach greater heights. It is gratifying to make a difference in the lives of others through my actions. Over the past 7 years, I have seen young colleagues grow from strength to strength. I believe that these newly qualified professionals will create opportunities for others to follow. I feel proud of members who contribute, spread their wings



and go back into their communities to inspire others to reach for the stars.

What have been some of the highlights of your time at UCT?

Participating in the successes of the Department of Anaesthesia and Perioperative Medicine at UCT. I am proud to be part of an all-inspiring team that opens the gateway for excellent service, education, and research. I enjoy coordinating and supporting outreach and development of our continent, Africa. I love being part of a team who create change and make advances in medicine nationally and at a global level. I enjoy representing our Department on the Faculty Transformation Equity Committee (TEC), and try my best to make a positive and constructive contribution. I am excited to be trusted with the responsibility of ensuring that transformation isn't just paid lip-service but is prioritised and implemented through small kindnesses and larger policy change.

What are the main challenges of your work?

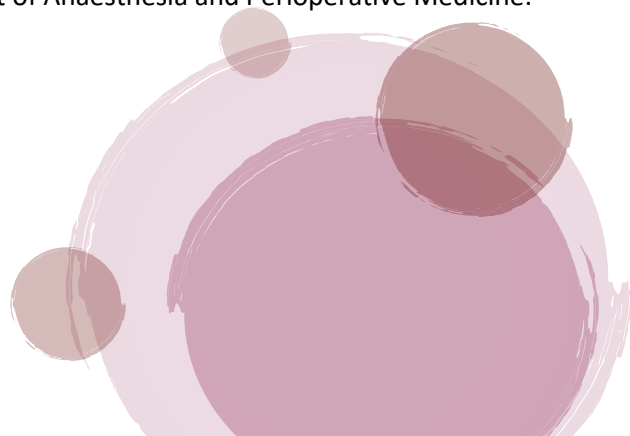
To deliver projects on time, especially in a complex environment such as our Department. Challenges and deadlines often arise at short notice, requiring flexibility and energy from me. I find that reaching the balance between managing diverse personalities and the specific tasks is a major challenge. It is imperative to my HOD, the Department and the team with whom I work, that I am able to deliver what is expected of me as an administrator.

What do you love or hate about UCT or FHS specifically?

UCT is a world-renowned university with a long legacy and successful history. It is good to be part of this excellence, and we have taken big strides to participate internationally. Our Department has made excellent advances especially on Global Health and perioperative surgical outcomes, as well as the establishment of our Pain Management Unit. I appreciate the Department's willingness to share knowledge and expertise beyond South Africa on our continent and globally.

What's the biggest risk you've ever taken?

Exposing myself to possible failure. Under very difficult personal circumstances, I undertook to do part-time studies at UCT whilst working full-time in the Department of Anaesthesia and Perioperative Medicine.





How do you conquer your fears?

I reflect and look in the mirror. I remind myself of the steps towards achieving my dreams. Of course, it is important to identify fears and tackle them head-on. I am very aware of the dreams and vision, and how to get there. I believe in positive outcomes and often take a leap of faith in the direction of my dreams. I believe that I can do whatever it takes to facilitate the outcome of a challenging situation.

What's your version of self-care?

- Self-respect equals self-care.
- Sleep - I always aim to get seven hours of sleep each night. The rest allows me to rebuild my strength and maintain a balanced life.
- Exercise – I brisk-walk for 20 minutes every day.
- I enjoy spending enough time with my family and friends, talking, laughing, and having some fun.
- Church activities and Outreach projects – I regularly attend church and community activities, and I am active in charitable and outreach projects.
- I try to make time for myself and as a result, I reflect and enjoy myself.

If you could change something overnight at UCT, what would it be?

I wish that there were more opportunities and funding available to educate those in need, and those who truly deserve it, not only locally, but also for Africa. I wish there was a way in which the training programmes and successes of the Department of Anaesthesia and Perioperative Medicine could be shared with other institutions in South Africa so that everyone being trained truly has equality of training and learning. This philosophy is already in the process of implementation. Since UCT is a world-renowned institution, it would be ideal if more doctors could be trained here. There is a desperate need in our country for education, expertise and honest leadership in all facets of life, including in medical care.

If you had a choice between two superpowers; being invisible or flying, which would you choose?

Flying - there is a peaceful aspect to flying. Wings would help one to rise above challenging situations. A planned flight over open ground will allow a birds-eye view to assess a situation. The purpose is to get a solution quickly and successfully. Communication, flexibility, transparency and humility are always crucial. This is a good lesson for us as our situations changes all the time. It is important to support, encourage, inspire, uplift and motivate people to rise above challenges. I would like to play a role in influencing situations in the hope of unlocking the full potential of others.



What was the last gift you gave someone?

Apart from gifts for family members and friends on their birthdays/special celebrations, I believe that the greatest gifts you can give others are respect, your uninterrupted time, and believing in them when times are tough.

What is your advice to young people building a future in academia?

Education is a powerful and priceless tool. It unlocks the future and helps you to realise your dreams. Academics break down barriers, unlock and set the mind free. Without knowledge one is closed off to the world. Of course, hard work should always accompany acquisition of knowledge.

If you could have dinner with any woman (or anyone), who would it be and why?

Michelle Obama, she is a force to be reckoned with, advocating for women's rights. She is an intellectual powerhouse who represents strength, wisdom and change. She is a smart, confident, wise, strong individual, and a phenomenal role model for all women.

What are your future plans at UCT? What would you like to achieve?

My dream is to be a mentor and coach to those less fortunate than me. Our communities need strong leadership, with leaders who are willing to be accountable. If I can touch one life and make a difference to that person, it can affect a whole family positively, and ultimately change a community and our country.

