UNIVERSITY OF CAPE TOWN
IYUNIVESITHI YASEKAPA | UNIVERSITEIT VAN KAAPSTAD
FACULTY OF HEALTH SCIENCES

Quarterly News

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Place of the Stars - Sterrewag - Indawo Yeenkwenkwezi

The Faculty of Health Sciences' (FHS) newsletter series returns for its first issue of 2025. In this edition, we recap faculty developments, staff and student achievements and new staff appointments for the period December 2024 to early April 2025. Some highlights include the welcoming of 475 gleaming first-year students in February; our much-celebrated April graduation ceremonies; and the University of Cape Town (UCT) climbing the global ranks for the subjects of medicine and health.

A heartfelt thank you to everyone willing to share stories and photos with us. We particularly encourage professional, administrative support and service (PASS) staff to submit contributions.

We hope you all enjoy reading this issue and feel inspired by the stories that continue to reflect the outstanding activities of our Faculty of Health Sciences' community.

Activities & Highlights

Autumn graduation — just like the trees change colour, our graduates enter a new season of their lives

Every graduation season represents a milestone in the lives of our qualifiers and their loved ones, and the UCT 2025 autumn graduation ceremonies filled the iconic Sarah Baartman Hall with celebratory cheers and ululation. The Faculty of Health Sciences' postgraduate ceremony took place on **1 April 2025** and the undergraduate ceremony on **2 April 2025,** for 2024 qualifiers. We commend our graduates for their years of commitment, perseverance and hard work and wish them well as they take their place among other health professionals in our communities. Read more about the autumn graduation season and some of our inspiring graduates.

Graduation April 2025

853 HEALTH SCIENCES GRADUATES

UNDERGRADUATES BY PROGRAMME

- **21** AUDIOLOGISTS
- **197** MBChBs
- **48** OCCUPATIONAL THERAPISTS
- **35** PHYSIOTHERAPISTS
- **26** SPEECH-LANGUAGE PATHOLOGISTS
- **8** HIGHER CERTIFICATES IN DISABILITY PRACTICE
- **5** ADVANCED DIPLOMAS IN COSMETIC FORMULATION

POSTGRADUATES

- **44** PhDs
- **84** Honours
- **139** Masters
- **246** PGDips

Orientation week for first years brings fresh energy to campus

Cultivating calm: Student Wellness Day takes place on Health Sciences campus

We welcomed 475 first-year students to our 2025 undergraduate cohort in February. The packed orientation programme included an Amazing Race and its accompanying prize-giving, a Zumba class, a mentor meet-up day, and a student society sign-up day. Thank you to all first years, mentors, lecturers, conveners and the Student Development and Support Office for creating an atmosphere of vitality and excitement. View the full album here.

On 26 March the Department of Student Affairs (DSA) held a wellness day on our campus as part of its mandate to provide students access to a range of wellness services to support their physical and mental well-being. Faculty students enthusiastically participated in a range of services and activities, such as knitting, crocheting and painting; mental and sexual and reproductive health screenings; and blood pressure and blood sugar level testing. The DSA was delighted at the turnout and returned for a follow-up programme in April.

Sixth UCT annual Bongani Mayosi Memorial Lecture: "*Ukuba Ngumntu:* Love, Compassion and Solidarity"

"We must first wish for the transformation of relationships still shaped by historical divisions, [and] hope that Professor Mayosi's story will inspire us to rethink [and] reground ourselves in the meaning of humanness." This was a key message of guest speaker Professor Pumla Gobodo-Madikizela delivered at the 2025 annual Bongani Mayosi Memorial Lecture on 31 January. The lecture is a celebration of the legacy of Professor Bongani Mayosi, a former dean of the faculty who died tragically in 2018. A recording of the lecture is available on the FHS YouTube page. Read more.

UCT climbs the global ranks in Medical and Health

UCT has advanced in rankings in the *Times Higher Education* subject list, going from 81st to 78th for Medical and Health. Read more.

South African Medical Students Union sets up branch at UCT

The South African Medical Students Union (SAMSU) was founded on 26 February 2024 at the University of Limpopo. SAMSU's vision is to unite medical students across the country, providing a platform where their voices are heard and their concerns addressed. This year, SAMSU proudly established a branch at UCT. For enquiries, contact the chairperson, Takalani Makhwathana, at MKHTAK010@myuct.ac.za.You may also visit the SAMSU website.

Medical students engage with Bonteheuwel community to strengthen capacity

A cohort of fourth-year medical students visited the Vanguard Community Health Centre in Bonteheuwel to upskill community health workers about HIV prevention. These health workers will impart this knowledge to the populations they serve. The session comprised presentations, rotating workshops and group-led discussions. One community healthcare worker remarked that she "learnt a lot....I work in the field and what they [the students] taught us, helped us to understand what they say in 'layman's terms' ".

Faculty Environmental Sustainability Working Group appeals for more members

The Faculty of Health Sciences is committed to fostering a culture of sustainability, recognising the critical role that environmentally responsible practices play in shaping the future of healthcare, planetary health and scientific research. To drive this commitment forward, the Environmental Sustainability Working Group (ESWG) has been established to lead and support sustainable initiatives across the faculty. If you are passionate about environmental sustainability and would like to get involved, contact Selisha at selisha.naidoo@uct.ac.za.

Quiz for Earth Day

How much do you know about the impact of plastics on human health? Take this quiz and find out. Feel free to share the quiz on your social media pages.

While there has been a groundswell in environmental protection, particularly among young climate activists, plenty of work remains to keep the ecological crisis at bay. For more information on Earth Day, click here.

Professor Mignon McCulloch's work on kids' kidneys a crowd-puller

When academic staff achieve the ranking of professor, they have the opportunity to deliver their findings to the general public. The faculty hosted one inaugural lecture this quarter: "First Aid for Kids' Kidneys in Africa and Beyond", delivered by **Professor Mignon McCulloch,** Head of Division: Paediatric Nephrology and Solid Organ Transplantation and senior lecturer. The event was well-attended by colleagues, mentees and students.

Professor McCulloch's lecture can be viewed on the FHS YouTube page.

Africa Day 2025 event to focus on taking ownership of clinical research and healthcare for generational change

The annual Africa Day event will be held on **19 May 2025** in the **Neuroscience Institute, Groote Schuur Hospital.** This promises to be a stimulating conversation on how Africa can lean into its ingenuity to solve its pressing healthcare challenges. Register your attendance here.

Awards & Achievements

Halala!

Associate Professor Lionel Green-Thompson elected President of the Consortium of African Medical Schools

Dean of the Faculty of Health Sciences, Associate Professor Lionel Green-Thompson, was elected President of the Consortium of African Medical Schools in Kigali, Rwanda, when he visited in late March. In this role he will be responsible for leading a transformative change in medical education across the continent.

Dr Mubeen Goolam recognised as inaugural African recipient of the Goldstein Science Policy Fellowship

Dr Mubeen Goolam, who leads a stem cell organoid lab in the Department of Human Biology and the Neuroscience Institute, has been recognised as the first African recipient of the coveted Goldstein Science Policy Fellowship. Read more.

2024 Vice-Chancellor's Staff Excellence Awards: a toast to distinction

The UCT Staff Excellence Awards is a premier event hosted by the Vice-Chancellor annually, with Professor Mosa Moshabela hosting his first such one at the end of 2024.

A highlight was the Vice-Chancellor's recognition of the contribution of a team of PASS staff members associated with the Institute for the Preparedness and Prevention of Pandemics (UCT IP3 Team). This team received the Global Citizenship Award for 2024, which acknowledges members of the UCT community who have demonstrated excellence in living out the UCT mission through areas of service, the pursuit of knowledge, the dignity of human beings and contributing to the common good.

The award was made to the IP3 pre-awards team, comprising research management and finance staff from UCT support offices, in recognition of the team's pivotal role in an unprecedented national effort to enhance South Africa's capacity to prevent and respond to future global public health emergencies. The FHS was well-represented on this team, with Director of Research Dr Yolande Harley (co-leader), Ms Joy Joachims (Research Finance), Dr Zulfa Abrahams and Dr Rob Huddy (both Research Development) all receiving recognition. Other team members were co-leader Dr Dionne Miles, Dr Jonathan Dugas and Ms Jolene Fransman, all from the International Grants Hub (IGH); and Ms Shamiela Hassiem (Central Research Finance).

The team conceptualised, coordinated and developed a winning proposal to establish a DSI/NRF-funded national Institute for the Preparedness and Prevention of Pandemics. The proposal reflects a national vision to strengthen South Africa's, and later Africa's, research capacity to anticipate, respond to and recover from pandemics, characterised by rapid responsiveness, agility in response to real-time data and broad engagement.

Health Sciences academic colleagues who were recognised for distinction were:

- **Professor Keertan Dheda** in the category of the Alan Pifer Research Award. This annual research award recognises scholars whose work contributes to the advancement and welfare of disadvantaged South Africans.
- **Dr Chantal Stewart** in the category of the UCT Book Award. The UCT Book Award honours staff who have produced outstanding publications that bring credit and prestige to the institution.
- **Professor Mohamed Jeebhay** for being inducted into the UCT College of Fellows.
- **Professor Catherine Orrell** for being inducted into the UCT College of Fellows.
- **Professor Victoria Gibbon** in the category of the Global Citizenship Award. Read more.

Professor Keertan Dheda awarded SARChI research chair

Professor Keertan Dheda, Head of the Division of Pulmonology, was awarded a highly competitive grant by the South African Research Chairs Initiative (SARChI). The SARChI was founded by the National Research Foundation (NRF) and the Department of Science and Innovation (DSI) with the purpose of building research capacity, driving innovation and enhancing South Africa's global competitiveness in key strategic fields. Read more.

Professor Robert Wilkson receives OBE decoration

Professor Robert Wilkinson, honourary professor in the Department of Medicine, has been decorated with the Officer of the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire (OBE) honour. This prestigious accolade, announced in the United Kingdom's New Year Honours List 2025, is awarded "for services to infectious disease research". Read more.

Ad hominem promotions continue to affirm academic excellence

Congratulations to all colleagues who were promoted through the rigorous ad hominem process in 2024. Their appointments took effect on **1 April 2025**. Read more.

Dr Anna-Ursula Happel hand-picked for inaugural WomenLift Health Southern Africa Leadership Journey

Senior researcher in the Institute of Infectious Disease and Molecular Medicine (IDM) Dr Anna-Ursula Happel was selected for the inaugural WomenLift Health Southern Africa Leadership Journey. This 12-month programme empowers women to explore their authentic leadership through vulnerability and self-reflection. Participants will build inclusive and diverse networks that foster belonging.

Staff Appointments

Professor Collet Dandara
Professor Collet Dandara, the 2022 to 2024 Deputy Dean for Postgraduate Education, has assumed the position of Head of Division: Human Genetics in the Department of Pathology. He commenced his tenure on **1 January 2025.**

Professor Lebogang Ramma
Professor Lebogang Ramma has been appointed as acting Deputy Dean: Postgraduate Education, succeeding Professor Dandara, and serves **from 10 February 2025 to 30 April 2025** while the faculty undertakes recruitment for a substantive appointment.

Dr Tshepo Matjila
Dr Tshepo Matjila assumed the position of Director: Research Animal Facility (RAF) on **3 March 2025.**

Associate Professor Tasleem Ras
Associate Professor Tasleem Ras has been appointed as the inaugural Head of the Department: Family, Community and Emergency Care (FaCE), effective **1 April 2025.**

Ms Andiswa Tom
Ms Andiswa Tom has been appointed as the administrative and personal assistant to the dean. She began on **1 April 2025** as a permanent member of staff.

Dr Charlotte Schutz
Dr Charlotte Schutz has been named Manager: Clinical Research Centre (CRC), effective **1 April 2025.**

Mr Gavin Matthee
Mr Gavin Matthee has been named Manager: Human Resources Business Partnering (HRBP) in the faculty, effective **1 April 2025.**

Dr Earle du Plooy
Dr Earle du Plooy is the new Director: Faculty Operations. He commenced on **8 April 2025** and is situated in the Office of the Deanery.

Dr Gladness Nethathe
Dr Gladness Nethathe has been appointed as Head of the Department: Anaesthesia and Perioperative Medicine, effective **1 May 2025.**

Associate Professor Shazia Peer

Associate Professor Shazia Peer has been named Head of Division: Otorhinolaryngology (ear, nose and throat surgery) in the Department of Surgery. She has been serving as head in an interim capacity since 1 January 2025 and assumes the role on a substantive basis on **1 June 2025.**

Faculty Research Focus

Are you interested in receiving research-only news?

The Faculty of Health Sciences' Research Office launched its first dedicated quarterly research-focused newsletter in December 2024. This newsletter will continue, and includes research features, news, highlights and achievements. Click here to subscribe.

Do you have exciting news or stories to share?

Reach out to FHSNews@uct.ac.za

Issued by the Communications and Marketing Department, Faculty of Health Sciences

University of Cape Town

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