

**Dr Thizwilondi  
Ananias Magadze**

*CEO of Cullinan Hospital*

Physiotherapist  
and Entrepreneur:

*Ms Noyedwa Mlambo*

**Meet Dr. Kgoale Moabelo**

*SMU alumna, an Aesthetics Doctor, and  
one of South Africa's first black females  
who underwent hair transplantation training*

*The story of*

# Nicholus Magongwa

SMU Alumnus and Manager of GEMS Pharmacy Networks

# Choosing to enrol and study at SMU was a no-brainer:

## The story of Nicholas Magongwa



**G**rowing up at a small village called Kalkspruit, Ga-Magongwa, in the Limpopo Province, there were no pharmacists in the surrounding areas. He was always curious about how medication works, and how people get healed. He only learned about the pharmacy profession in his late high school years. At the end of his matric, his aunt encouraged him to volunteer at the Pietersburg Provincial Hospital for a few weeks, where the Pharmacy Department welcomed and oriented him on what pharmacists do. From that short encounter, he was motivated and convinced that he wanted to be a pharmacist.

The Pharmacy Networks Manager's role is a very dynamic, filled with “no free drama days,” as his mentor Prashnee

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### Editorial Team

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Writer

*Other photos  
supplied by interviewees*

**Tumelo Moila**  
Writer

**Tsireledzo Mandane**  
Writer

### CONTACT US

E-mail: [lusani.netshitomboni@smu.ac.za](mailto:lusani.netshitomboni@smu.ac.za)  
**Sefako Makgatho Health Sciences University**  
Molotlegi Road | Ga-Rankuwa | Pretoria 0204



would say. From running campaigns with public institutions to fostering public and private relations to mentoring young graduates in the corporate sector. In addition to that, implementing policies that influence good governance. The vastness of Magongwa's role allows for a wide scope in advancing positivity in healthcare. Collaborating with different stakeholders to enhance preventative health has resulted in over 120,000 claims for preventative and screening services, positively providing awareness and education to the public.

Instilling a culture of innovation, collaboration, and compassion, always leads to a greater output from a coherent team. This is what has assisted his team to be efficient, reliable, innovative, and creative. He further stated that, "My leadership style advocates for everyone in the team to have a voice. To lead a successful organisation, you need to understand how to treat your employees, how to understand people's strong traits and weaknesses and lastly, how to delegate. Understanding those principles will lead to a team that is goal-driven with the same mission."

Magongwa further stated that "There are four philosophies that I subscribe to: be the leader you needed when you were a junior; treat your employees well and they will take care of the client; No one gets left behind and if they are smarter than you, work harder. If they work harder than you, work smarter. If they out-work and outsmart you, learn from them. Appreciate competition and embrace collaboration. In addition, integrity is necessary, as it is the cornerstone of trust and leadership. I always aim to ensure I follow the 5 Cs of leadership: Commitment, Core Values, Communication, Calmness and Courage."

The drive to prevent Fraud, Waste and Abuse is one of the key activities that Magongwa performs, saving the schemes millions of rands in potentially fraudulent activities. The culture which the Network advocates is

making primary healthcare a priority whilst, also, enforcing compliance and ethical practice in managed healthcare.

Evaluating priorities is crucial to making the correct decisions with high priorities getting first preference and thereafter understanding how to delegate duties follows. Furthermore, consultation with relevant subject matter experts gives Magongwa the leverage to make more informed decisions. The trick is to acknowledge where he lacks as a leader and never be afraid to ask for help. Lastly, he makes informed decisions based on expertise and creative thinking.

"On the 20th of April 2024, we participated in a campaign where we donated fridge magnets on the eve of Africa Vaccination Week to a public healthcare clinic. This was to

assist parents in being aware of their child(s) vaccine schedules. The intention was to make sure that no child gets left behind. Childhood vaccination must be at the top of the healthcare priorities. Private and public collaboration as envisioned by the National Health Insurance (NHI) is at the core of the efforts I am currently undertaking. We also collaborate with community pharmacies to drive preventative health education, screening, and testing. The goal is to ensure that we provide ease of accessibility for wellness services in primary health whilst positioning pharmacies as one of the key service providers due to their proven ease of accessibility and invaluable service to clients," shares Magongwa.

During his tenure as one of the very few practising clinical pharmacists in Southern Africa, he worked in the critical care units as well as COVID-19 units. He noticed that a large number of patients who had deteriorating health were patients who had co-morbidities which could have been prevented. Furthermore, there were a lot of challenges with the affordability of medicine and health-related costs due to out-of-pocket expenses. The position he currently

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occupies deals with improving services in those gaps that he identified.

“I can drive preventative and screening interventions to reduce the risk of health deterioration at a large scale.” I am also able to intervene to reduce healthcare-related out-of-pocket expenses, thus potentially improving medicine accessibility and compliance. Those two reasons drove me to the field that I am currently in,” he said.

As he continued, he stated that; “SMU has an incredible reputation for producing some of the best healthcare professionals in the country. For me, choosing to enrol and study at SMU was a no-brainer. The reputation that the institution has is what led me to consider it to advance my career. I started my undergraduate degree in 2013. I managed to finish my academic schooling within four years. In the last year of my undergraduate degree, I fell in love with Clinical Pharmacy. In 2016, I pursued my master's degree in clinical pharmacy at SMU. I completed my Masters in 2017 with excellent results on my dissertation. I had the privilege of presenting my study which was focused on the appropriate use of antimicrobials in Community Healthcare Centres (CHCs) at SMU's research day, as well as at the South African Society of Clinical Pharmacy conference in 2018. These were without a doubt the best years of my academic journey. I was able to grow and learn. SMU shaped my professional qualities that I still rely on to this day,” he reminisces.

As with most underprivileged students, his biggest worry was how he was going to pay for his studies. He was privileged to receive a merit bursary from SMU due to his excellent matric results, having obtained five distinctions. That assisted in paying for his first year study fees. For the remainder of the years, he received a bursary from Imperial Health. He also had support from his extended family who assisted with other payments for which he is eternally grateful. In his third year, he started working locums, which is how he started to support himself. Adjusting to a different culture and environment was one of the challenges. With support from friends, fellow students, and family he was able to overcome those challenges.



“The problem-based learning (PBM) programme that the School of Pharmacy at SMU adopted has assisted me to be a researcher, analytical person and ethical leader. My professionalism was shaped by the institution whilst my leadership and networking skills were shaped by involvement in the student organisations at the institution. I had the opportunity to be shaped by leaders of the profession like Prof Patrick Demana, Prof David Katerere, Prof Natalie Schellack and many other esteemed leaders and pharmacists that I am still motivated by to this day,” concludes Magongwa, a natural-born leader with a strong drive for youth development, leadership, entrepreneurship, and family values.



*Leadership lessons from*  
**Dr Thizwilondi  
Ananias Magadze**  
*CEO of Cullinan Hospital*

**S**MU Alumnus, Dr Thizwilondi Ananias Magadze, is an accomplished professional with a substantial background in healthcare. He began his career in nursing, where he gained first-hand experience in patient care. Building on his nursing foundation, with several nursing degrees, advanced diplomas in nursing, and Business Administration, Dr Magadze expanded his expertise into healthcare management, demonstrating his ability to oversee and improve healthcare systems and operations efficiently. Currently, he serves as the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of Cullinan Hospital, in Pretoria, utilizing his extensive knowledge and experience to lead and innovate within the healthcare industry.

“My career shift into governance was driven by a desire to impact healthcare on a larger scale. While clinical practice allows for direct patient care, governance offers the opportunity to influence policy, improve healthcare systems, and enhance overall service delivery, ensuring better health outcomes for a broader population,” enlightens Dr Magadze.

As the CEO, he is responsible for the overall management and strategic direction of Cullinan Hospital, including overseeing daily operations, ensuring compliance with healthcare regulations, implementing policies, and fostering a culture of excellence in patient care. His role also involves collaboration with healthcare professionals, stakeholders, and the community to enhance service delivery.

“My leadership philosophy centres around servant leadership, with a focus on empowering my team, fostering collaboration, and prioritizing patient care. I believe in leading by example, being transparent, and making data-driven decisions to ensure sustainable growth and improvement,” he expressed.

Furthermore, he said his leadership style emphasizes compassion, integrity, and excellence, which aligns perfectly with Cullinan Hospital's mission to provide quality healthcare services. By promoting a patient-centred approach and encouraging continuous improvement, he ensures that the hospital's values are reflected in





daily operations. He further stated that, “I am focusing on several initiatives, including upgrading our healthcare infrastructure, improving patient care protocols, enhancing staff training and development, and expanding our community outreach programmes. Additionally, we are adopting modern technologies to streamline operations and improve patient outcomes.”

His big-picture decisions are made through comprehensive analysis, stakeholder consultations, and strategic planning. He relies on data and evidence-based practices, seeks input from his leadership team, and considers the long-term impact on the hospital's mission and vision. The hospital is fostering partnerships with leading healthcare organizations, academic institutions, and technology providers. These collaborations aim to enhance its clinical services, research capabilities, and patient care technologies, thus improving its overall strategic operations.

“As a leader, I am most proud of fostering a collaborative and inclusive culture at Cullinan Hospital. Seeing the tangible improvements in patient care and staff satisfaction as a result of our collective efforts brings me immense pride. Empowering others and witnessing their growth is incredibly rewarding,” he explains.

He further stated that he stands for integrity, compassion, and excellence. Leading with empathy, making ethical decisions, and striving for the highest standards in healthcare are values he upholds dearly. His goal is to create a supportive environment where everyone is motivated to achieve their best. In order to improve the hospital's performance culture, he is focusing on clear communication, recognition programmes, and professional development opportunities. He, furthermore, promotes a healthy work-life balance, fostering an inclusive environment where every team member feels valued and heard.

To tackle staffing shortages, he plans to implement comprehensive recruitment strategies, offer competitive salaries and benefits, foster a positive work environment, provide professional development opportunities, and establish mentorship programmes, focusing on staff wellness and work-life balance to retain talent.

The financial sustainability of the hospital is essential to maintain high-quality care. As such he makes decisions that ensure both fiscal responsibility and excellent patient outcomes. This implies investing in efficient practices and technologies that also enhance patient care. Balancing the hospital's financial goals with patient care priorities requires a nuanced approach.

“Financial decisions are made based on a thorough cost-benefit analysis, alignment with our strategic goals, and potential impact on patient care. We consider factors such as return on investment (ROI), compliance with healthcare standards, and feedback from clinical staff to ensure prudent investments,” alluded Dr Magadze. His alma mater, SMU instilled in him values such as integrity, compassion, resilience, and a commitment to lifelong learning. These values shaped his approach to both his professional and personal life, ensuring that he prioritises ethical practices, empathy in patient care, and continuous improvement. He recalls his motivation to enrol at SMU, saying it was driven by its formidable reputation in healthcare education and its comprehensive, firsthand approach to learning. He sought a programme that would provide a solid foundation in nursing and opportunities for clinical experience, and SMU was the perfect fit.

“My journey at SMU was both challenging and rewarding. The rigorous research honed my clinical skills and theoretical knowledge, while the supportive school and my peers provided a stimulating learning environment. The research opportunities were instrumental in shaping my professional outlook,” he recalls.

Like many students, he faced academic pressure, time management issues, and the balancing act of studies meanwhile working. However, the supportive environment at SMU and the resilience he developed helped him overcome these obstacles.

“I would advise those students struggling academically to stay focused and resilient. Seek support from professors and peers, utilize available resources like tutoring and counselling services, and remember that perseverance is key. Break tasks into manageable steps, maintain a healthy work-life balance, and never hesitate to ask for help when needed,” concludes Dr Magadze, a resolute father, who balances his professional responsibilities with family life.

# From a dietitian to a farmer: a reflection on **Lungile Mkhonto's** journey



**S**efako Makgatho Health Sciences University (SMU) produces globally competitive graduates and entrepreneurs who make an enormous difference in the community. SMU Alumna and Dietician, Lungile Mkhonto is a notable example of the calibre of graduates SMU produces, yearly.

Besides her dietetics profession, Lungile is an entrepreneur in the farming fraternity. She indicated that she always wanted to be able to feed the nation one way or the other. Coming from a family with a long history of farming, she has always loved farming, working and connecting with the land, and caring for the land that feeds people.

“As a Dietician, I noticed a high prevalence of malnutrition also known as SAM/MAM (Severe Acute malnutrition /moderate acute malnutrition), a high unemployment rate among youth and women, poverty, and hunger. That is when I knew I had to do something that would assist my patients and their families, hence, farming came to mind as it is also in line with being a Dietitian,” informed Lungile.

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The farming entrepreneur wanted to become a Dietitian from Grade 9 due to the inspiration she got from winning the healthy plate competition where she made it 15 minutes before the draw. "I did not know the name of the dish., All I knew was that I had to work with food and how it helps the body heal itself and prevent disease," said Lungile.

Before she enrolled at SMU, she knew about the institution, which was then known as MEDUNSA and how well it trained its students. Since SMU is a dedicated health sciences university, she knew that she would someday become the best dietitian. In 2014, she obtained her Bachelor of Science (BSc) in Dietetics (Honours) from the University of Limpopo - Medunsa campus.

Lungile's professional career began in 2010 at Albert Luthuli Municipality, Mpumalanga, where she was an Administration Officer in the Housing Department. She later completed her Community Service at Impungwe Hospital (Mpumalanga) in 2015. She was responsible for the provision of dietetic services to patients and caregivers in paediatrics, surgical, and medical in and out-patients. She organised calendar health days and participated in community outreach programmes in the hospital's catchment areas of Thubelihle Primary Health Care, Ogies Primary Health Care, and Kriel Primary Health Care (Nkangala district, Mpumalanga).

After her community service, she worked as a Dietitian (Grade 1) at Middelburg Hospital (Mpumalanga) where she served in the food service department and offered therapeutic nutrition in the wards. In the process, she got promoted to the position of Dietetics Manager in 2017. In 2019, Lungile was allowed to work at Nestlé as a medical delegate. Her role was to train and educate healthcare professionals on the correct feeding of infants and young children.

Out of all the experience she acquired from her career journey, she was now able to begin her journey as an entrepreneur. The experienced Dietician currently owns @LuLu Farms which she launched in 2020 amid the Covid-19 pandemic.

"I do hydroponic farming that focuses on bell peppers and cherry tomatoes, poultry, and eggs. My farming goal is to improve food security in the community and schools by teaching basic agricultural skills and starting vegetable gardens. Our focus is to give practical training to community members and teach them the business side of agriculture. We also find markets for their produce and arrange for seeds where needed," informed Lungile.

She highlighted that her hydroponic farm is productive all year round without being affected by the change in

seasons and climate. Lungile and her team chose to use hydroponics to meet the demands of their clients. She pointed out that her business is set apart from others because there is no commercial tomato farm in Nelspruit and believes that when companies and individuals buy their products, they are not just customers but become part of their community. She added that @LuLu Farms invests back into the community. Hence, it works with the University of Mpumalanga (UMP)'s Department of Agriculture through their student programme Enactus. "We are innovative and aim at contributing towards the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals 2030," said Lungile.

To market her business while it was still new, Lungile went to local markets and supermarkets to introduce herself and what her business offered. She included the local university students as her customers and mentees. She also marketed herself through an incubator (a place with support staff and equipment made available at a low rent to new small businesses) as it already had a huge national and international market.

She indicated that the most challenging part of being an entrepreneur is trying to be at multiple places at once and securing skilled and dependable employees. "In farming, nothing is guaranteed because not all things go according to plan. Sometimes this can have a detrimental impact on all the produce and result in animals dying," emphasized Lungile.

Her favourite part about being an entrepreneur is getting the opportunity to feed the nation as part of her purpose in life, having flexible hours, being her own boss, implementing her strategies, accordingly, having an unlimited income, and personal and leadership development, personal satisfaction and working with the team she chose, and lastly, networking and mentoring the youth.

The Dietitian said that studying at SMU taught her how to be grounded and know that not all people are equally blessed.

"Buying a meal for someone can open a bigger blessing for you. To those who are struggling academically, get a mentor, join a study group and know what works for you. If you are a morning or evening person, make it count. Attend all your classes and be a chapter ahead of the class, so that you can get a better understanding during the lecture. Sit in front and ask questions. If you are shy, make an appointment with your lecturers. Stay focused and know why you are there. You worked hard in high school, and you deserve to be in that institution," concluded Lungile.



# From a village girl to a remarkable **Clinical Psychologist**

**S** MU Alumna, Mrs Mpho Nekhavhambe, a Clinical Psychologist at Siloam Hospital in Nzhelele, Limpopo Province, was born and grew up at Tshilapfene village, located in Ha-Tshivhasa, Venda where she completed both her primary and secondary education. "I wanted to become a doctor, so I ended up doing a Bachelor of Science (BSc). Through my journey in the field, I then realized that I am good in Psychology as I was always attaining good grades. It was then that in my third year of studies, I started taking Psychology seriously and I learned more about the field and developed an interest," Nekhavhambe explained.

Nekhavhambe's qualifications are impressive, as she holds a BSc degree in Molecular and Life Sciences, a BSc Honours in Psychology, and a Master of Science in Clinical Psychology, all obtained from Sefako Makgatho Health Sciences University (SMU). Her experience is equally diverse. In 2018, she served as a part-time lecturer at SMU, where she lectured interpersonal skills, supervised students, and provided support to mothers with infants in the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit (NICU) at the Dr George Mukhari Academic Hospital. "I have a variety of experiences as the field has a way of exposing one to many challenges. This includes play therapy with children, and psychotherapy with adolescents, adults, and generic persons. Furthermore, cognitive, forensic, and psycho-legal assessments for all age groups," Nekhavhambe explained.

Nekhavhambe loves seeing patients regaining strength and healing, which always comes with personal empowerment and a sense of hope. However, she acknowledges the challenges within the public sector, particularly the lack of mental health awareness and the stigma surrounding help-seeking behaviour which, prevents many from receiving proper treatment. The rise in teenage suicide due to social media pressures and family dynamics is another concern she highlighted.

"Being intentional about your work is crucial, understand your limitations and seek help when needed. Supervision is instrumental in managing stress," she advised, sharing her coping mechanisms.

Currently, Nekhavhambe's role at Siloam Hospital involves providing treatment, rehabilitation, and therapy to a wide range of patients. She conducts medico-legal assessments, debriefs staff during traumatic incidents, and collaborates with counsellors on outreach programs.

Her journey as a clinical Psychologist started in 2021 during her internship where she honed her therapeutic skills. Her responsibility as an intern included the provision of therapy to children and adolescents and adults, assessing, evaluating, and conducting assessments for diagnostic and therapeutic purposes while writing reports and providing appropriate referrals. Management and treatment of psychiatric patients through a multidisciplinary team, facilitating family therapy and providing intervention. "There is no health without mental health. Our mental health channels us towards the position of self-awareness which helps us to pour out to others with healthy attitudes, love and empathy," Nekhavhambe remarked.

Nekhavhambe indicated that that she is not where she wants to be, since she just started with her career. She aspires to open her practice one day. Her academic ambitions also reach high, as she envisions pursuing a PhD, to delve deeper into the world of teaching, training, and supervising students. "Psychology demands passion and resilience and self-understanding is paramount. Your purpose should be centred on giving, not what you gain, as compassion is the central to the work that I do. Remember, you're a tool for healing, and you must be whole to pour into others. Each client is unique, so treatment methods need to be flexible and adaptable," Nekhavhambe advises aspiring psychologists.

Nekhavhambe observes a positive shift in societal attitudes towards mental health. "People are taking mental health more seriously, just like physical health. We will see more consultations, not just during crises but also for self-discovery. The current generation prioritizes self-awareness, which will lead to better mental health outcomes," she concludes.

From selling ice cream and cool drinks  
to becoming President of SMU Convocation  
**the story of**

# Mr Japhta Phala



**B**orn and bred in the small and impoverished village of Mamone in Jane Furse, Limpopo Province, Mr Japhta Phala grew up under the care of his unemployed mother and two sisters. His father was a domestic worker in Gauteng, coming home only twice a year. During school holidays, Phala used to visit his father in Springs, Ekurhuleni, where he sold ice cream, cool drinks and snacks at the taxi rank, to be able to assist with the dire situation at home.

Coming from a poverty-stricken village with no motivation to further his studies, after completing matric and having not attended any career exhibition, he had no desire to study dentistry until his high school principal recommended it as a good programme. He initially enrolled for the Bachelor of Dental Surgery (BDS) at Sefako Makgatho Health Sciences University (SMU). After facing many challenges while studying BDS, he was eventually redirected to the Bachelor of Dental Therapy (BDT), which he successfully completed in 2021.

He lauds his alma mater, SMU, for breaking the generational curses of many families through the educational empowerment of many poor Black African children who broke their chains of poverty. At the tender age of 21, he was elected to serve as the President of the SRC and part of the historic Interim Council of SMU in 2014/2015, which saw the demerger of Medunsa Campus from the University of Limpopo. He eventually served in all statutory bodies of SMU in various capacities for many years. The experience he gained, throughout, was exceptional for him to land the role as the President of SMU Convocation.

“One of the most challenging issues for me was balancing my academic life and being President of the SRC. I think that is one issue I seriously struggled with, which led to me not being able to complete my studies recorded time. Therefore, I am indebted to SMU; it will forever be in my heart. Thank you very much SMU for the opportunities you have presented to me and continue breaking new grounds in the higher education space,” said a thankful Phala.

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He further stated that as the President of the Convocation, “I preside over all meetings of Convocation. Our primary function is to reconnect the Alumni with the University and provide them an opportunity to participate in the affairs and governance structures of the University, to establish collaborative partnerships with local and global organisations on behalf of the University to enhance the image of the University through excellence in our areas of work”.

His leadership philosophy is largely influenced by the principle of collective leadership. He believes in the potential of the collective wisdom of the people with whom he serves. Secondly, his leadership is characterized by a commitment to good and ethical governance, transparency, efficiency, accountable leadership and proactive citizenry. He subscribes to Pan-Africanism and Socialism as socio-political drivers towards the total emancipation of African people.

“My leadership philosophy is embedded in good and ethical governance and accountability among others, which SMU has embedded on its institutional values such as accountability, effective leadership, efficiency and big picture perspectives. I strongly believe that building a credible and sustainable institution needs such fundamental principles and values as enshrined in the University's 2024-2028 Strategic Plan” elaborates Phala. He envisages an extraordinarily strong Convocation and Alumni Relations Office with systems in place to manage daily convocation and alumni activities. He further stated that the Convocation Executive will develop their 5-Year Operational Plan which aligns with the university's 2024-2028 Strategic Plan.

“We have already begun with our Annual Fundraising Gala Dinner which raised R2.2 million. The gala dinner was hosted on the 16 May 2024, which was SMUs 10th anniversary. The

main objective of the Dinner was , to raise funds to assist students who are academically deserving but do not have sponsors or bursaries to pay their university fees. We are currently building strong relations with graduates and academics to formulate a platform for them to engage in discourses that involve their Alma Mater and contribute in many ways to ensure the sustainability of the University,” he said.

Phala further stated that;“The current student debt is too high to be resolved at a go. We have already implemented plans to reduce the students' debts. Our Operational seeks to raise R10 million over five years. This is a small value in relation to student debt. We, however, take this as work in progress We are building systems from the ground up. Given enough time and support, we will achieve even beyond our target,” explained Phala.

Appealing to SMU alumni, Phala further stated that “I think one of the areas we need to improve as SMU Convocation is meaningful participation in projects that seek to better the University. We are not highly involved in the affairs of the Institution and therefore that informs our shrunk third-stream income of the Institution. We are beginning to build platforms where every alumni can contribute monthly to the account of the Convocation. We are going to launch regional chapters of SMU Convocation in each province,” outlines Phala.

As he concludes, Phala stated that “ SMU made me to be who I am today both as a Dental Therapist and Leader; further stating that “ I want to establish collaborative partnerships with big biotech, science and research companies nationally and globally to assist our science students and graduates to get practical training platforms and employment and to mobilise resources”.



## From Unexpected Career Choice to Lifelong Passion that gives hope to hopeless patients

“ My journey to dietetics began with a last-minute decision at the doorstep of the university. It was during the late application process when I was enrolling at the Medical University of South Africa (MEDUNSA) currently known as Sefako Makgatho Health Sciences University (SMU), that dietetics captured my heart and I decided to register for a Bachelor of Science (BSc) in Dietetics,” says Mr Shandukani Manenzhe. *continues to page 12...*

Shandukani was born and raised in Shakadza village, Venda, in the Limpopo Province, where he completed both his primary and secondary education. He matriculated at Malilele Secondary School in 2010. He holds a BSc degree in Dietetics obtained from SMU.

Shandukani is a qualified dietician with extensive experience in hospital and community settings. He brings a wealth of experience in dietetics to the table, having worked in various healthcare settings throughout his career. He previously served as a Community Service Dietician at the Helene Franz Hospital in Bochum, a Clinical Dietician at Glen Excel Medical Centre, and a Part-time Clinical Dietician at Phodiso Medical Centre in Botlokwa, in Limpopo Province where he was responsible for assessing patients, implementing Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Point (HACCP) principles, identifying clients needing dietetic services, providing treatment plans and referrals. Moreover, he contributed to service plan development and implemented dietetic standards. "A significant challenge I often encounter is the misconception that healthy eating necessitates expensive ingredients. I strive to educate patients to create nutritious meals that are affordable and accessible," Shandukani remarked.

He finds his fulfilment in collaborating with patients battling with hypertension and diabetes, further indicating that

these chronic conditions provide a clear link between daily dietary choices and overall health. The educational aspect is rewarding, allowing him to explain complex concepts in a way that resonates with even long-time patients, and avoid scientific jargon.

Shandukani is currently working as Dietician Grade 2 at Botlokwa Hospital which is located outside Polokwane in the Limpopo province. His responsibilities include attending ward rounds, assessing patients, monitoring food service operations, menu review, implementing HACCP principles, identifying clients needing dietetic services, providing treatment plans, and compiling reports, and referrals. He also contributes to service plan development, implementing dietetic standards, and participates in quality assurance initiatives.

"One of my memorable cases involved a patient suffering from myasthenia gravis, diabetes, hypertension, and recurrent vomiting. Initially obese, she entered a cycle of hospitalization and weight loss, eventually reaching an unhealthy underweight Body Mass Index (BMI). Feeling hopeless, she confided in me, expressing a desire to end her suffering. Fuelled by her despair, I intensified my efforts, implementing a comprehensive nutritional plan that extended beyond the hospital walls, involving collaboration with the allied team. Thankfully, her condition is now under control, and she thrives with a healthy weight. This experience solidified my belief in the profound impact a dietician can have on a patient's life," he shared.

Shandukani stated that too much of everything is toxic and urged people to eat in moderation and explore a variety of foods. "Staying up to date in this ever-evolving field is paramount. I rely on credible sources such as accredited websites and Google Scholar articles for evidence-based information," Shandukani further alluded that being a registered dietician is empowering, because a dietician plays a crucial role in a person's health journey, starting from infancy to old age. With effective marketing, this expertise can translate into financial security, further enhancing one's life.

"The key to success in this field is a passion for collaboration with people and a dedication to lifelong learning. Dietetics offers a unique form of therapy, requiring kindness and a willingness to adapt to the ever-changing needs of our patients. There is a vast area of specializations within dietetics which guarantees a plethora of opportunities across various departments and sectors," says Shandukani.

His journey from an unplanned detour to a fulfilling career path is a testament to the transformative power of dietetics. It is more than just a profession; it is a chance to make a tangible difference in the lives of others.





# I wanted to become a teacher, but ended becoming a doctor: *Dr Tlangelani Vivian Masia-Silinda's journey towards becoming a Haematopathologist*

**S**MU Alumna, Dr Tlangelani Vivian Masia-Silinda's childhood dream was to become a teacher and follow in the footsteps of both her parents. Things changed at high school when her Physical Sciences teacher noticed she was excellent in Chemistry, suggesting that she takes the route of Biochemistry as she would make a great Biochemist. Eventually, this was the only course she applied for and registered at Wits University. However, upon receiving her matric results, in which she obtained seven distinctions, her brother decided to bring her to SMU, where she made a late application and got accepted to study a fully funded Bachelor of Medicine and Bachelor of Surgery (MBChB) degree from 2011 until 2016. "This was not an easy journey, but by God's grace, hard work and dedication, I managed to complete my degree, record time, with cum-laude endorsement."

"During my final year Internal Medicine end-of-block exam, one of the clinical cases that I got was a haematology patient with significant lymphadenopathy. As much as most students feared encountering a haematology case during examination, I found that experience intriguing. The way I approached the case and the response I got from both internal and external examiners made me decide that I would be coming back to specialise in clinical haematology," said Dr Masia-Silinda, who did her primary and secondary schooling at Mahlahle Combined Independent School in Malamulele township, Limpopo Province.

For one to be a clinical haematologist, you can either enrol for internal medicine or haematopathology, followed by super-specialisation. Although she did apply for both, she

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got a call back from haematopathology and has recently completed her specialisation with the CMSA and Wits University. During her 4 years of training, she fell in love with laboratory medicine and decided to end her career journey in haematopathology. Her daily practice involves diagnostics of haematological conditions, both benign and malignancies, and then relaying her findings to the clinicians, mostly clinical haematologists, and oncologists for them to further manage the patients. Her day-to-day work involves looking at the morphology of peripheral blood smears, bone marrow aspirates and trephine biopsies, together with analysis and interpretation of coagulation/haemostatic parameters and haemoglobinopathy screens. She is also involved in the interpretation of flow cytometry findings and molecular studies such as fluorescence in situ hybridization (FISH), polymerase chain reactions (PCR) and next-generation sequencing (NGS).

The newly qualified Haematopathologist said, “Although I did state that I spent most of my time in the lab, I still manage patients, especially those with benign haematological conditions such as bleeding and clotting conditions (i.e. haemophilia, ITP, DVT), red cell conditions (i.e. thalassemia, sickle cell disease, anaemia) and some malignancies that require oral chemotherapeutic drugs (i.e. Polycythemia vera, ET). I am also involved in teaching undergraduate students, student technologists and technicians and also bringing awareness to nurses involved in the management of haematological conditions (i.e. those in the INR clinic).

She further stated that, “One of my biggest roles involves being a key player in maintaining quality assurance within the laboratory. Making sure we authorise results that are accurate and reliable.” This entails making sure that the quality of the laboratory environment (from pre-analytic to post-analytic phase) is maintained, guaranteeing that the customers get quality and reliable results”.

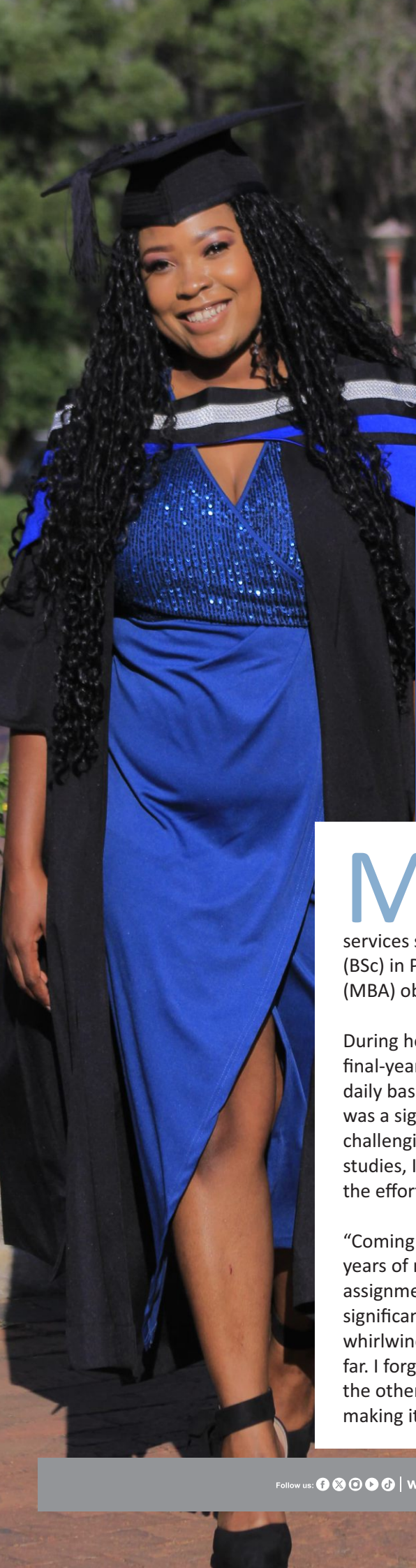
Lastly, she is also always available to give clinical advice to clinicians when faced with tough cases, especially, of rare haematological conditions, since her training did include a significant amount of benign clinical haematology. As noted above, “The most important aspect of any laboratory is Quality Assurance and making sure this is maintained. A lot of integral parties are involved in this, thus I will only be highlighting a few. Before any patient sample is run, we have to analyse our calibration and control materials (which comprise both normal and abnormal controls). Only after both calibration and controls have passed, do we analyse patient samples. All these are performed according to the standard operation procedures to maintain reproducibility and make sure that everything is documented as proof that

it has been done and can be accounted for, she advised. In addition, she said; “We participate in internal quality and external quality assurance activities. In doing this we get to be accredited by an external accreditation body (i.e. SANAS), making us comparable to most laboratories across the world. This also allows our clients to have faith in the quality of results we provide to them,” she elaborates. Being new in the Haematopathology field, there is limited research that has been conducted. However, she is looking forward to playing a fundamental role in the field. She has only managed to validate and implement a new chromogenic FVIII assay that can quantify FVIII and FVIII inhibitor levels in patients with haemophilia that are being managed with the new novel drug (Emicizumab). This, then, allows further management of the patients, especially in times of significant bleeding and before major surgical procedures.

With regard to her interests she said, “During my Haematopathology studies, I developed a love for flow cytometry. I still maintain that this is the missing piece to the puzzle after one has analysed morphology while awaiting molecular studies results. This allows for a 24-hour turn-around time permitting clinicians to start therapy while awaiting molecular results (that have a longer turn-around time). My second interest is coagulation/hemostasis because you get to work out why one has a bleeding or clotting disorder and manage it accordingly,” said Dr Masia.

Reminiscing about SMU, she says the University is one of the institutions that teaches Ubuntu. It has taught her to be kind to everyone and be always willing to offer a helping hand. It also strengthened her faith in God through the fellowships she had in the Student Christian Fellowship. Being an introvert, she spent most of her time alone or indoors with her small circle of friends. However, she did try to join the aerobics team that met at the SMU Sports Complex. Being the two-left-footed person she is, she failed to keep up with the energy and atmosphere there, so she stopped attending the sessions.

“Although this might sound weird, the 2014 student strike was one of my highlights. The anticipation of what will happen next. When the men in blue came to campus, it made the whole experience interesting. I remember at some point we were instructed to take our belongings and leave the campus. This was both sad and interesting, in that since we were a large group it allowed me to socialise with others, but also had a lot of uncertainty when it comes to our careers. Interestingly, this was the period I got to socialise with my then-boyfriend, now husband and know him more. I finally agree that SMU is indeed a home away from home,” she concluded ecstatically.



# Physiotherapist and Entrepreneur: **the story of Ms Noyedwa Mlambo**

*“Being the sole high school graduate in my family, I harboured aspirations of serving my community. Initially, my ambition was to pursue a career in medicine, but upon delving into research on various healthcare professions, I found that physiotherapy resonated more strongly with me. Given its esteemed reputation, I set my sights on obtaining my education from the prestigious Sefako Makgatho Health Sciences University (SMU),” says SMU Alumna Ms Noyedwa Mlambo.*

**M**s Mlambo is a qualified Physiotherapist and the founder of Ekasi Health Care Center which is located at the heart of a township called Mamelodi, East of Pretoria. Ekasi Health Care Center provides physiotherapy and other medical services such as dietetics, podiatry, and orthotics. Mlambo holds a Bachelor of Science (BSc) in Physiotherapy obtained from SMU, and a Master of Business Administration (MBA) obtained from Tshwane University of Technology (TUT).

During her time at SMU, she attended the Comrades Marathon as a Physiotherapy final-year student, and frequented the sports complex, engaging in gym workouts on a daily basis, after her classes. “Having to repeat the third year of my academic journey was a significant setback, marking the first instance of grade repetition. It was a challenging experience. Therefore, to any student facing difficulties in completing their studies, I would advise them to maintain patience, faith, and perseverance. Ultimately, the effort is rewarding and worthwhile,” Mlambo motivates.

“Coming from a modest upbringing, I lacked a personal computer during the initial two years of my academic pursuits. Consequently, I relied on the library for all my assignments and study needs. Additionally, the absence of key textbooks posed a significant challenge that I found, particularly, daunting. My journey at SMU was truly a whirlwind of an experience, one that I would describe as the highlight of my life thus far. I forged lifelong friendships and enjoyed unforgettable moments with my peers. On the other side, the workload was demanding and the pressure to excel was intense, making it quite challenging at times,” she shared her experience.

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Mlambo has vast experience in physiotherapy. Her journey as a physiotherapist began in 2017 during her community service at Jubilee Hospital where she was responsible for the management, assessment, and treatment of patients with neuromuscular, musculoskeletal, cardiopulmonary, neurological, and orthopaedic conditions. This also included management of assistive devices such as crutches, walking sticks, and frames, record keeping of patients, participating in cerebral palsy clinics, educating parents in childcare and physiotherapy treatment plans for children with cerebral palsy (CP).

From the experience that she gained working in the Mamelodi township, she noticed that people living in the township needed access to services such as physiotherapy, but unfortunately, these services were not available at nearby facilities. It was heart-breaking for her to see the residents travelling long distances to get the treatment they needed, which was inconvenient and costly. She saw that situation as an opportunity for her to bridge the existing gap. "My desire for personal and professional growth was a significant driving force to entrepreneurship. Witnessing some of my government colleagues stagnating in their positions without any prospect of advancement sparked a concern within me, reinforcing my resolve to chart a different course for myself. Secondly, as an entrepreneur, I identified a glaring gap in the market that needed to be addressed. The lack of physiotherapy services in the townships necessitated residents to commute to central urban areas for such care, resulting in increased expenses and limited accessibility,".

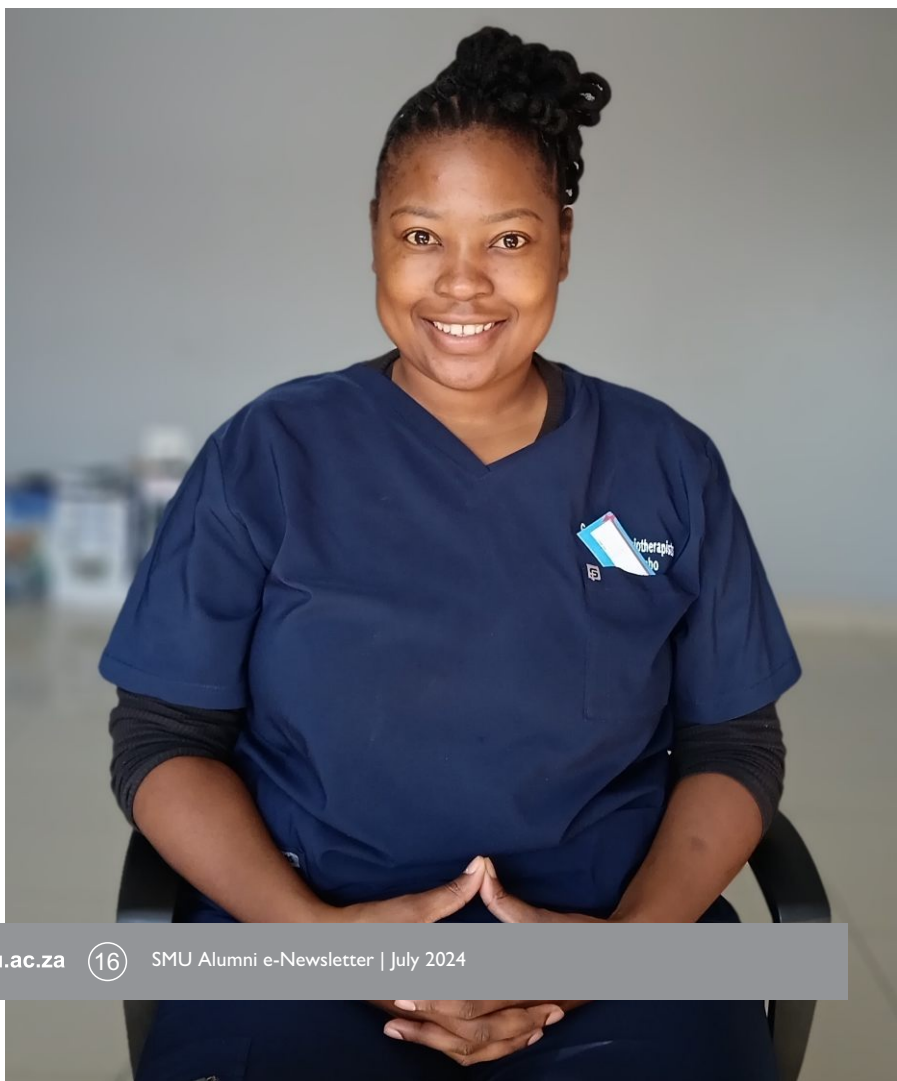
In 2019, before resigning from her job, she had accumulated savings totalling R10,000 to launch her practice. She invested in essential equipment which included a portable tens machine, a foldable bed, a step, 2 hot packs, and a water boiling urn. The remainder of the funds was allocated towards securing a space for a doctor's surgery. And thus, the business was established.

Mlambo indicated that SMU instilled values which help her maintain integrity and show kindness towards her clients. She further indicated that this is a principle, and she cannot envision compromising these values in her life. "Business is akin to a delicate newborn, requiring attentive care to flourish. Dedicate resources to self-improvement and acquire knowledge on effective business management strategies. Marketing stands out as a paramount tool for expanding your enterprise. Therefore, allocate resources towards marketing endeavours. Managing a business is a formidable task, fraught with challenges and risks, yet the ultimate

rewards make the journey worthwhile," she advised the aspiring entrepreneurs.

She further stated that; "Managing employees has proven to be the most challenging aspect of my professional journey. Striking a delicate balance between being an approachable employer and an efficient one presented a personal challenge. At times, I find myself being overly accommodating, which could potentially lead to exploitation by my employees. Conversely, I also struggle with feeling empathy for my employees even in situations where they are clearly in the wrong," She remarked. Mlambo enjoys the autonomy of being self-employed. However, she indicated that great freedom comes with great responsibility. She values the luxury of not having to wake up early in the morning; typically because she works from 10 am to 6 pm.

"Being an entrepreneur has fostered a sense of accountability for my actions. Adhering to a "no work, no pay" philosophy has instilled in me a strong work ethic, enabling me to strive for excellence in all endeavours," Mlambo explained. "When I envision my future in 10 years, I do not see myself simply as a worker bee, but rather as a queen bee overseeing a hive of dedicated worker bees who are helping me to thrive and succeed. My goal is to be in a leadership position within multiple healthcare centres that I plan to establish and manage in the future," she concluded.



# SMU alumni's rise through *the ranks of* *Academic Leadership*



**A**s a child, SMU Alumna Mantepu Tshepo MaseTshaba (nee' Masemola) aspired to make a significant impact in the field of education, but she did not foresee the exact path. Her journey to the top has been shaped by a passion for learning and leadership, which naturally led her to the role of Acting Executive Dean of the College of Economic and Management Sciences at UNISA. Her executive role involves overseeing the academic, administrative, and operational functions of the College.

Dr MaseTshaba is a distinguished academic leader and scholar with a strong background in Financial Mathematics. With experience in higher education, she is known for her innovative approach to academic leadership and her commitment to fostering inclusive and dynamic learning environments. This includes strategic planning, curriculum development, faculty management, research facilitation, and ensuring the alignment of the college's activities with UNISA's mission and goals.

“It is a profound honour to lead at UNISA, an institution that played a pivotal role in my academic and professional development. It feels like a full-circle moment, and I am deeply committed to giving back and contributing to the institution's continued success and impact,” she said fondly.

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Her transition into management was driven by a desire to have a broader impact on the educational landscape and to contribute to shaping the strategic direction of academic institutions. She wanted to leverage her expertise to influence policy, drive innovation, and create an environment that nurtures academic excellence. She is mostly proud of fostering a culture of collaboration and innovation within her teams. “As a leader, I stand for integrity, inclusivity, and continuous improvement. I am committed to equity and leadership, promoting diversity and equity, and fostering a culture of excellence and innovation in all our accomplishments. Seeing the positive outcomes of our collective efforts, such as improved student success rates, enhanced faculty development, and impactful research contributions, is incredibly rewarding,” said MaseTshaba.

Her leadership style aligns with her employer's mission and values through prioritising open communication, integrity, and a commitment to excellence. She strives to create a supportive and motivating environment that reflects UNISA's dedication to transformative education and societal impact. “My philosophy for leading is rooted in collaborative leadership, inclusivity, and innovation. I believe in empowering my team, fostering an environment of incessant learning and improvement, and driving change through informed decision-making and strategic foresight,” shares MaseTshaba.

She aims to implement changes that enhance student participation, improve faculty development, and advance research capabilities. This includes modernising the curriculum to meet current industry standards, fostering interdisciplinary partnerships, and increasing support for innovative research projects. Her big-picture decisions are made through a collective approach that involves extensive consultation with stakeholders, data-driven analysis, and a thorough assessment of potential impacts.

“I prioritise strategic alignment with the college's objectives and the broader vision of UNISA. When making significant financial decisions, I consider factors such as the alignment with strategic priorities, potential for long-term benefits, cost-effectiveness, and feedback from relevant stakeholders. I also assess the potential to enhance the quality of education and research within the college,” she outlines.

Dr MaseTshaba's motivation to enrol at SMU stemmed from its reputation for academic excellence and dedication to (w)holistic education. SMU's focus on practical learning, research opportunities, and community engagement appealed to her. SMU, instilled in her values of perseverance, reliability, and devotion. These values continue to guide Dr MaseTshaba in her professional and personal life.

“My studies at SMU were transformative. I engaged deeply with my coursework, participated in research projects, and formed lasting relationships with peers and mentors. The rigorous academic environment challenged me to excel and prepared me for my future roles. Like many students, I faced challenges such as balancing academic demands with personal responsibilities and overcoming moments of self-doubt. However, support from the faculty and the collaborative spirit among students helped me navigate these challenges,” she recalls.

Her student life highlights include participating in groundbreaking research projects, engaging in lively academic debates, and a sense of accomplishment from completing challenging courses. She participated in various extramural activities, including soccer. Although at the ripe age of 32, she joined the soccer team at SMU, these experiences enriched her university life and helped her develop essential skills such as teamwork, leadership, and time management. These experiences shaped her academic journey and career trajectory.

Her academic qualifications encompass a PhD in Statistics; a Master of Science in Statistics, Cum Laude; and a Bachelor of Science Honours in Mathematics all obtained from SMU. She also obtained a Programme in Mathematical Modelling of Derivatives certificate; a Bachelor of Science in Mathematics and Statistics; a Diploma in Datametrics all from UNISA; a Higher Certificate in Insurance, an Intermediate Certificate in Business Studies, and a Certificate of Proficiency, all from the Insurance Institute of South Africa.

In conclusion, her fond memories of SMU, include late-night study sessions, cultural events, and the camaraderie among residents. She stayed at the demolished Lost City residence, where she built strong friendships and enjoyed a vibrant community life.

“I would encourage students who are struggling academically to seek support from faculty and peers, stay focused on their goals, and believe in their ability to overcome challenges. Persistence and resilience are key, and there are always resources and people willing to help.”



# SMU Alumna Breaks into Cybersecurity Career Path

**S**efako Makgatho Health Sciences University (SMU) Alumna and Information Technology (IT) Security Analyst, Hangwane Matidza takes the cybersecurity field by storm. Hangwane grew up not knowing she would someday become an IT specialist, especially as a security analyst. She indicated that cybersecurity is a field she only discovered in the last month of her undergraduate degree which did not even have modules related to the discipline.

Hangwane enrolled at SMU in 2015 for a Bachelor of Science (BSc) in Mathematical Sciences which she completed in 2019. Her interest, then, was with numbers and not with cybersecurity. She furthered her studies and obtained a BSc Honours in Computer Sciences from SMU in 2021. She is now a proud graduate of SMU and a good ambassador recognised outside of the health spectrum since the university is a dedicated health sciences institution.

Initially, her dream was to switch her current career path and study medicine but once she learned more about computer science, she chose to study it strictly at SMU. With the vast knowledge she acquired throughout her academic years, she now possesses Python, Statistical Analysis System (SAS), Hyper Text Markup Language (HTML), Cascading Style Sheets (CSS), C++, Java, Hypertext

Preprocessor (PHP), and Structured Query Language (SQL) skills that align accurately with her profession.

Apart from her SMU qualifications, Hangwane was certified as an ethical hacker by the Eastern Cape Council in 2021. She also obtained a CompTIA Security+ ce Certification in 2021, and several other certificates in the field. Her professional journey started in 2021 when she worked as a cyber security intern at Ubank. After completing her internship programme, she landed a job at Redshift Limited as a Junior Cyber Security Consultant. To date, Hangwane is an IT Security Analyst at Bell Equipment. Her duties include searching for weaknesses in common web applications and proprietary systems, phishing email analysis, maintaining the technical mechanisms that enable confidentiality, integrity, and availability (CIA) controls, reviewing and providing feedback for information security fixes, and staying updated on the latest malware and security threats amongst others.

She indicated that being an IT Security Analyst offers her an opportunity to continuously challenge herself intellectually and creatively. She stated that her position brings her great fulfilment knowing that she can contribute towards improving people's experiences with the digital world. "My philosophy as an IT Security Analyst is centred on

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initiative-taking risk management, continuous improvement through collaboration and learning, user-centric security solutions, adherence to standards, and effective incident response and resilience planning. These principles guide my approach to ensuring the confidentiality, integrity, and availability of organizational assets and data in an increasingly complex threat landscape,” explained Hangwane.

During her student life at SMU, she was the secretary to the Computer Science Society (CSS) and participated in Hackathons. She used to reside at Drie Lilies and started solid friendships which still exist to this day. She indicated that the most challenging part of her studies was tackling

linear algebra. “At SMU we were not just numbers of students enrolled in courses, we were individuals that our lecturers tried their best to relate within the process of equipping us for the future. They knew our names and helped our weaknesses while still holding us accountable. SMU instilled tenacity, dedication, consistency, perseverance, and Ubuntu in me,” expressed Hangwane.

“In the long term, I envision myself in a leadership role such as the Chief Information Security Officer where I will oversee an organization's entire cybersecurity strategy, managing teams, and collaborating with senior executives to align security initiatives with overall business objectives,” concluded Hangwane.

# SMU Alumna’s Restoring People’s confidence and Self-esteem through Hair Transplants

## Meet **Dr. Kgoale Moabelo,**

*SMU Alumna, a renowned Aesthetics Doctor, and one of South Africa's first black females who underwent hair transplantation training.*

**D**r. Kgoale was born and raised by her parents in Makobe Village, in Mokopane town, in Limpopo Province. She matriculated in 2002 at Jeppe High School for girls in Gauteng, Johannesburg. Before enrolling for her Bachelor of Medicine and Bachelor of Surgery (MBChB) at SMU, she enrolled at Vaal University of Technology (VUT) for a Bachelor of Technology in Biotechnology (BTech) for a year to avoid taking a

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gap year. She trained for aesthetics and hair transplant at Hair treatment agency in Belgium in 2022.

She is a qualified medical doctor and founder of VYTA Medical Aesthetics and Hair Transplant (VYTAMAHT), located in Waterkloof Ridge, Pretoria. Her practice provides certified, surgical and non-surgical procedures to help people enhance their satisfaction with their physical appearance and hair loss treatments. VYTAMAHT services include Surgical Hair Transplantation and hair Restoration, -ageing treatments, pigmentation treatments, acne treatments and skincare range, hair loss treatment and medical IV Drips.

With over 12 years of experience in general medicine, she brings together expertise, innovation, and a commitment to excellence. Her journey towards becoming a medical doctor started in 2011 during her internship programme at Natspruit Hospital in Katlehong, Gauteng Province and community service at Groblersdal Hospital in Groblersdal Limpopo Province. Dr Kgoale previously served as an independent medical practitioner at Jane Furse Hospital in Limpopo, and South African Social Services Agency in Pretoria, Gauteng Province as sessional medical practitioner.

“During my marriage, I worked in a small town Groblersdal, as a General Practitioner (GP) because I was focused more on my family, but after getting divorced that is when I realised that I needed to do something that I enjoy. At first, I wanted to go back to school to specialise, but I realised that it would take me longer to achieve my passion,” says Dr Kgoale.

Dr Kgoale’s passion for aesthetics started when she was in Turkey with her friend. One day when she was walking

around in Turkey, she saw a lot of people with bandages on their heads and she became curious about it. When she asked around, she was told that those people were doing hair transplants. Her curiosity made her to fall in love with aesthetics. “I am most passionate about hair loss and the treatment. One of the treatments includes hair transplant, but there are other medical treatments, like hair restoration treatments that I specialise in when treating patient’s hair loss,” Dr Kgoale stated.

Dr Kgoale saw a gap in the aesthetics industry where there were many technologies available for people with melanin-rich skin. Hence, she does treats for anti-ageing and hyperpigmentation on melanin rich skin. She realised that many black women suffer from hair loss due to styling practices that damage the hair follicles. This inspired her to learn more about hair transplants for black people mainly afro hair.

“Hair loss can be caused by many factors including genetics, hairstyles, and chemicals used to treat the hair. When considering an aesthetic procedure, it is important to conduct your research and choose a qualified provider. It is also important to consider your biggest problem area and focus on fixing that first,” she advised.

Dr. Kgoale believes that aesthetics should be about enhancing natural beauty, not creating a completely new look. “There is a misconception about aesthetics because people believe that aesthetics is for rich people, or a particular class of people, meanwhile, this can be a practice for everyone. Most clients have issues with self-confidence due to hair loss and their physical appearance. Once treatments are done to tackle these issues,” Dr Kgoale remarked. She is a true believer of following one’s dreams and aiming for the sky.





# Q & A with Mr Emmanuel Mohlapi - *Occupational Therapy Entrepreneur*

SMU Alumnus Mr Emmanuel Mohlapi has been self-employed since April 2019, holding the position of Director/ Clinical Manager at Met Occupational Therapy Services. Mr Mohlapi is responsible for Medico-legal assessment and report writing and Functional Capacity Evaluation (FCE). He has experience in running paediatric clinics, assessing and treating clinical patients (adults), and working on hardening programmes and rehabilitation. He has conducted various work site visits in different sectors for work assessments. His current areas of practice are in Psychiatric facilities and mining sectors in Limpopo and Northwest provinces. SMU Alumni reporter interviewed Mr Mohlapi to share his views on entrepreneurship.

## **Why did you decide to start your own business?**

I needed freedom to embrace my leadership skills and to develop my financial freedom.

## **What advice would you give someone just starting their own business?**

It is a risk worth taking and a platform of good exercise that brings joy to owning your time and space.

## **How do you deal with fear and doubt?**

I always stay positive and see light even when it doesn't seem to appear. I stick to my target focus and stay optimistic about my plan.

## **Where do you see your business in five to ten years?**

Opening multiple branches, good financial growth with more employees and business being able to attract investors.

## **How does your business look different now compared to when you first started?**

We have grown vast experience in different sectors over the years and we can apply various strategies that have been proven to work for the business.

## **How do you set your business apart from others in your industry?**

We operate with a unique approach and focus on special areas that our competitors do not pay attention to.

## **How did you market your business when it was brand new?**

Word of mouth (approaching various sectors such as mines, schools and hospitals) and distribution of pamphlets.

## **What is the hardest part of being an entrepreneur?**

You need to be on your toes all the time. No time to relax. You are responsible and need to account for any loss that hit the business. When dealing with a client that does not want to pay when it is payment time and managing a team that is not complying with the business rules.

## **What is your favourite part of being an entrepreneur?**

Taking control of my own time, cognitive empowerment and professional growth.

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### **What qualities do you think every entrepreneur should possess?**

Leadership skills, assertiveness the ability to resolve conflicts and good communication skills.

### **How have you grown personally from becoming an entrepreneur?**

A lot of cognitive empowerment and other areas improved my management skills and assertiveness.

### **What have been some of your biggest learning experiences in running a business?**

Learning to budget, strategic planning and always thinking ahead.

### **What do you look for when outsourcing or hiring?**

Qualifications, experience, employee expectations the demands of the business and business capacity.

### **What will you never compromise on with your business?**

Professional and ethical conduct.

### **At what point did you look at your business and consider it a success?**

When I was able to hire my first employee.

### **What would you change about your business journey if you could go back?**

I would ensure that we start by or with the marketing personnel in our office.

### **How did you raise funding for your business?**

I had put in some savings, I requested extra work from other colleagues of mine to raise funds and my family, friends and colleagues also contributed.

### **Any advice about setting up a business in terms of legal/accounting?**

Draw the business plan and profile to guide your business, know the boards and councils that govern your profession familiarise yourself with the rules and regulations of the governing body and comply with them.

### **How do you plan financially for your business's future?**

Allow and analyse the inputs of the accountant who is responsible for the business and equip yourself with financial management skills.

### **Have you ever taken out a business loan? Would you recommend it?**

Yes, I have, yes to some extent!

### **What motivated you to apply and enrol at SMU?**

The environment felt so homely, the university offered what I wanted to study, and the standard of education.

### **As a child, did you ever think you would become an Occupational Therapist?**

Yes, I have always thought of becoming either a medical doctor or an Occupational therapist that I am today. Tell us about your journey at SMU.

An interesting journey that brought me to the lives of the amazing people I had never thought I would meet. I have learnt so much about medical concepts even from my colleagues from different professions. I have learnt about the cultural dynamics and differences we come with as individuals and groups.

### **What challenges did you face during your academic years at SMU?**

Difficulty coping with my academics after losing my late dad and coping with the academic workload within a short space of time.

### **What values did SMU instil in you that you still uphold to this day?**

Good social skills and participation, respect everyone, irrespective of their background, always taking responsibility for my actions and have independence.

### **Did you participate in extramural activities during your studies at SMU?**

Yes, I was a radio presenter for SMU FM 97.1. I also participated in church activities leading the worship team and mass choir and played badminton.

### **At which residence did you stay at and what fond memories do you have about it?**

Pretoria Hof Hotel, 1A then 5B residences. 5B was the greatness of the community within the residences and the social cohesion we always had when performing various sports activities in the residences.

### **As an SMU alumnus, what would you say to a student, who is academically struggling for them to complete their studies and conquer all the challenges?**

Consultation with the mentor. Identification of their challenges and consultations with the relevant structures. In conclusion, reflecting on all the fond memories you had during your studies at SMU, identify those you believe were your highlights. When I received an award for being the best-dressed male in the School of Health Care Sciences during our gala dinner. I also received an award for being one of the best performing students, overall, from first to final year. When I also received an award for being one of the best students in research in my final year of undergraduate studies. The moments we used to go play sport (Badminton) in Pretoria showground with other teams and the weekly departmental tests we were writing were great. Good company and relationships I always had with my friends and my lecturers, stood out, Mohlapi concluded.

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