P2 UPINGTON GRADUATES URGED TO ADD VALUE TO SOCIETY

P3 ENGINEERING STAR REMEMBERS HIS ROOTS

P5 STUDENT LIVING WITH A DISABILITY DEFIES ALL ODDS

P13 A SURPRISE ON GRADUATION DAY

Vaal University of Technology

Your world to a better future

VUT

What's Up @ VUT

YOUR MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

Graduation Edition

Student bags two notable awards on Graduation day

2017 Overall Best Student of the year: Mpho Mmoto

Nontobeko Zondi and Lungelo Magwaza

He lives by the words: "Do more." Not only have they inspired him to push forward and graduate, they also allowed Mpho Mmoto to walk off with two awards at the Vaal University of Technology's Faculty of Human Sciences Autumn Graduations' ceremony on 13 April.

Mr Mmoto, a quiet, humble young man, graduated Cum Laude with a National Diploma in Safety Management. He also received the Vice-Chancellor's Award, which is awarded to students who've obtained the highest average in their Faculty for the National Diploma, Postgraduate Diploma, Baccalaureus Technologiae or Magister Technologiae.

To put a cherry on top, he also received the Council's Award: House of Roleen Floating Trophy – Overall Best Student. This award is given to the student with the highest average on a completed qualification at the University. This means his name will now be added to the history books!

Mr Mmoto is currently registered for the Advanced Diploma in Safety Management, after which he wants to pursue his Master's.

He says that he surrounded himself with friends who had the same vision as his. They all focused on their studies and avoided partying too much or succumbing to societal pressures. He was motivated to enrich himself and he also wanted to prove that 'you can do anything that you put your mind to'. He is grateful to everyone who assisted him throughout his journey.

Upington graduates urged to add value to society

2017 graduates from the VUT Upington Campus

Kediemetse Mokotsi

The Upington Campus graduations took place on Thursday, 19 April and marked the end of the Vaal University of Technology's 2018 Autumn Graduation ceremonies.

Graduates were excited to be receiving the qualifications that they had worked so hard for while guest speaker, Ms Nongo Dibete, Regional Manager at Upington International Airport, motivated them for the road ahead.

She said: "You have reached the end of your academic journey, the new beginning and a dawn of new hope. Go out there, roll up your sleeves and make South Africa proud. Without education you cannot compete in the work market. Competencies and attitude will determine your presence in the work environment – it takes effort and it will set you apart from the rest of the team."

She further challenged them to think entrepreneurship by applying the 80%/20% rule, where they use 80% of their time as employees and 20% for trying out new ideas so as to become future employers. In conclusion, she said that they should "go out there and add value to society".

Ms Dibete was the first black women to manage Terminal Operations at OR Tambo International Airport in Johannesburg, the biggest airport in Africa. Her main interest and professional skills are in Operations and Strategic Management. The Vice-Chancellor and Principal, Prof Gordon Zide, reminded the graduates not to forget their roots after achieving their success. He mentioned that education is not about the academic gown and a hood, it is about competency and attitude. In closing, he urged them to grow and develop their community.

"go out there and add value to society".

F'SASEC lecturer uses brilliant results to help others

Ms Lydie Mayoudom graduated with a Cum Laude BTech in Operations Management

Thomas Rasehloka

Both the Vaal University of Technology and F'SASEC celebrated on 12 April as one of its lecturers, Ms Lydie Mayoudom graduated with a Cum Laude BTech in Operations Management.

Ms Mayoudom was one of four students to have gained her BTech Cum Laude – and she did it while working. She said her work didn't in any way affect her studies although she had long nights of studying and long days of lecturing.

According to Ms Mayoudom, she doesn't have any special techniques other than determination and good time management.

This is Ms Mayoudom's third qualification from the VUT: she first did a National Diploma in Chemical Engineering, then a BTech in Chemical Engineering and now the BTech in Operations Management.

She said that she would take a break and then go back to studying to get her Master's in Engineering Management as she wants to gain sufficient knowledge in order to help all the upcoming engineers. She would like to become one of the best female engineers around, she said.

Engineering star remembers his roots

Metallurgy graduate: Mr Ndlovu Muxe

Owen Talane

Ndlovu Muxe, who achieved his BTech Engineering: Metallurgy Cum Laude, received a Vice- Chancellor's award during the Vaal University of Technology's Autumn Graduation ceremony on 12 April.

He achieved the highest average in the Faculty of Engineering and Technology.

Growing up, Mr Muxe was fascinated by fixing cars and computers in his spare time. One day while browsing on the internet, he came across metallurgy and started learning more about it. (Metallurgy is the "study of the physical and chemical behaviour of metallic elements, their inter-metallic compounds and their mixtures").

Originally from Phalaborwa in Limpopo, Mr Muxe came to VUT in 2014 to do his National Diploma Engineering: Metallurgy which he completed in 2016, before embarking on his BTech. He is currently doing his Honours in Engineering Metallurgy at the University of Pretoria.

"We all come from different backgrounds and our background determines where we are going," he said.

He also shared his future goals by saying that he wants to become a CEO in the mining industry.

Graduates encouraged to serve humanity

Tebello Theledi

Hats off to the class of 2017! No matter the economic landscape, no matter the background, the 2018 VUT graduates have set the bar high.

It was impossible for many to hold back tears during the Secunda Campus graduation ceremonies held on Tuesday, 17 April. About 60 students received their National Diplomas and BTech qualifications and celebrated their achievements with family and friends.

Mr Mabila Mathebula, a highly esteemed academic who has spoken at numerous international conferences and is currently working as a Senior Researcher at the Railway Safety Regulator in Gauteng, was the guest speaker at the ceremony. His words were chosen to send the graduands into the world with snippets of wisdom and encouragement ringing in their ears.

Mr Mathebula informed graduands that it is not the heights to which a man climbs that matter, but the depth from whence he came. He went on to challenge graduates on the responsibility they now carry in the building of a South Africa in which the principle of serving humanity will be paramount.

He drew on quotes from statesmen Benjamin Disraeli who said: "Upon the education of the people of this country, the future of this country depends" and Calvin Coolidge who said: "Nothing in the world can take the place of persistence". He suggested they remind themselves of these wise words when life got tough or setbacks came their way.

"These graduands are ready for the world to see what they have to offer", he said.

Mr Mathebula was ushered in with the procession, followed by the acting Vice-Chancellor and Principal, Professor Ray Mabuza.

Vision for life

Mr Siphamandla Mnguni

Owen Talane

Siphamandla Mnguni celebrated his graduation with a Postgraduate Diploma: Education after a journey "strewn with thorns" at the Vaal University of Technology's Autumn Graduation at the Desmond Tutu Great Hall on 11 April 2018.

Mr Mnguni's dreams almost came to halt in 2003 when he lost his vision temporarily. In 2004 he enrolled at Durban University of Technology (DUT) to do his National Diploma in Human Resource Management (HRM) which he completed in 2007. Then, seven years later in 2014, Mr Mnguni joined the VUT family to study towards his BTech: HRM part-time.

In 2016, he enrolled for another BTech, in Human Resource Development (HRD). However, the company he worked for moved and things became difficult for him as he no longer had an income to pay for his tuition.

Mr Mnguni did not give up studying, however he created debt. He also made use of Student Support Services (SSS) programmes. His luck changed immensely when he received a bursary from CBI Electric which paid for his tuition and all his debts making him able to obtain his Human Resource Development BTech certificate.

"I would like to thank Social Justice and Transformation (SJT) and Student Support Services (SSS)," he said.

With all the achievements in hand, Mr Mnguni is currently studying to complete his BTech: Business Admin and aims to keep on achieving big things.

Student living with a disability defies all odds

Constance Tshivhase being capped by the Vice-Chancellor and Principal: Professor Gordon Zide

Qhawekazi Memani

Gunning for her goals, motivated by her background and her disability, Constance Tshivhase defied all odds and was conferred with a Baccalaureus Technologaie (BTech) at the Desmond Tutu Great Hall on 11 April.

Her journey at VUT started in 2012 when she enrolled for a Diploma in Labour Relations Management. She finished within record time. She was then fortunate to get an opportunity to join Barclay's Africa in a learnership programme as a compliance trainee. After completing her 12 months' learnership she then joined ArcelorMittal SA in Vanderbijlpark where she still works. In 2016 she decided to enrol for her BTech.

"What really inspired me were all the people who fought for me to get an opportunity to go to school and an education like any other normal kid. I would like to express my gratitude to them: Dr Sathekge, my parents, Mrs Ndou, Peter Masombuka, Professor Dzvimbo, Professor Rabali and all my lecturers," she said.

"It doesn't matter where you come from; you may be coming from disadvantaged backgrounds but that does not define who you are. If you put your mind to anything, you can achieve it," she concluded.

PR masters VUT lecturer graduate says with dedication, focus and support it's doable

Qhawekazi Memani

Ms Sibongile Mokaeane a lecturer at the Vaal University of Technology (VUT) Human Sciences Faculty was conferred with a Magister Technologiae (Masters) in Public Relations Management on 13 April during the autumn graduations.

Her thesis titled "Examining corporate reputation management in a local government in the Vaal region: a case study," under the supervision of Professor Connie Moloi and co supervisor Miss Oksuitycz-Munyawiri.

"I feel very jubilant that it's done! It's such a fulfilling experience... It was such an amazing experience, especially with a supervisor of Professor Connie Moloi's calibre, she wants nothing but the best from you. Her knowledge of research, she pushes you to work hard so that you are proud of your end research, and for that I am eternally grateful," she said.

"It can be done, with dedication, focus and support from colleagues, friends, family and a conducive workplace, you can do it," she says to those aspiring to walk in her footsteps.

She is inspired by her children, because they look up to Mommy, their love kept her going, her late parents, es-

pecially her mother, she always believed that she could complete her research, her Public Relations Management students because, through her, they can see that it is possible, her family that supported her throughout her journey, her friends who were always there to listen to her moan about her work, her colleagues also assisted who assisted with her work when she really needed them, her faith also kept her very grounded , her supervisors as well, they believed her more than she believed in herself. She says that used to scare her, but it certainly pushed her to work even harder to complete her qualification.

She says she will be doing her PhD, in Public relations, communication or strategic communication management and she believes the field of public relations needs more experts at a strategic management level.

She closed off by saying she wants the title of "Dr" next to her name, she laughed out loud.

Ms Sibongile Mokaeane, a VUT PR lecturer

Mistake turns to passion

Sithembile Lembethe a graduate for BTech in Information Technology

Owen Talane

The Vaal University of Technology's Ekurhuleni Campus held its Autumn Graduation ceremony at the City Hall in Kempton Park on 18 April.

Students in the Faculties of Applied and Computer Sciences, Human Sciences and Management Sciences collected their National Diplomas (N.Dip) and Baccalaureus Technologiae (BTech) certificates with joy.

Sithembile Perseverance Lembethe, a graduate achieving her BTech in Information Technology (IT), started her journey to success by completing her National Diploma in IT at the Durban University of Technology (DUT) in 2011. She completed her BTech at VUT, graduating Cum Laude.

"Studying Information Technology was not really one of the courses I wanted to study; I did it by a mistake! However, I started loving the course and having passion for it," she happily disclosed.

Currently, Ms Lembethe works as a business analyst at the Bearing Man Group (BMG) and wants to further her studies by doing her Magister Technologiae (MTech): Information Technology next year.

"After I am done with my MTech, I want start a new career path by studying artificial intelligence," she said.

Con-GRAD-ulations!

Owen Talane

Karabo Sarona Mokgalapa, a National Diploma in Internal Auditing recipient, was ecstatic to receive her certificate during the Vaal University of Technology's Ekurhuleni Campus Autumn Graduation ceremony which was held at the City Hall, Kempton Park on 18 April.

"The journey was awesome, hard but awesome," she said happily and she continued to share how super proud her parents are of her achievement.

She has developed a love for the career path that she chose and is planning on one day establishing her own practice and being one of the most respected Certified Internal Auditors (CIA) around!

Ms Mokgalapa, from Soshanguve, joined the MaVU-Ti's family in 2015. She will be starting her BTech at Tshwane University of Technology in June.

Personal drive leads to Cum Laude at end of difficult journey

Ecstatic Jose Elonga Cum Laude recipient in Public Relations

Qhawekazi Memani

"It was a long and tiring journey with moments of doubt and low self-confidence, however overall it was a thrilling and exciting experience," was how Ampim Elonga Jose described his achievement of a Cum Laude in his Baccalaureus Technologiae (BTech) in Public Relations.

Mr Jose, a VUT Corporate Affairs staff member, said he was inspired by nothing other than his personal drive for success and desire to accomplish what he started. He set his goals and worked towards achieving them.

"I am motivated by the inspiration I can be for other people," he said, giving advice to those who follow in his footsteps: "Persevere and believe in yourself. The journey might be awful, but think about the bigger picture."

He shared that he feels fulfilled. It has been his target from day one and he feels he has done justice to his purpose.

Jose says while he feels fulfilled in attaining his dream, he intends on going on to find his place in the industry and work for a couple of years. Thereafter he would like to establish his own business and create jobs for others.

"If someone else's son can do it, so can you," says VC award recipient

Vice- Chancellor recipient award, Bonga Mbuso in the Faculty of Human Sciences

Qhawekazi Memani

"I can't explain how I feel. I haven't really processed the fact that I've graduated with a Cum Laude, yet alone a Vice-Chancellor's award. All I can say is that God is good," said Bonganjalo Mbuso after his graduation.

Mr Mbuso received his award on 13 April at the Vaal University of Technology (VUT) Desmond Tutu Great Hall for achieving the highest marks in the Faculty of Human Sciences.

The BTech graduate describes his journey as a student as an "amazing one" - a journey that has not only taught him more about his field of study, but also about who he is and who he is yet to become. His drive comes from knowing that everything he does, regardless of how insignificant it seems, fits into God's plan for his life and the lives of those around him.

He then further shared that his mother's words of encouragement were: "If someone else's son can do it, so can you." He said these are the words that inspired him to work harder and that he would like to pass them to other students.

He is currently working on his Master's degree in Public Relations.

Graduate living with disability encourages others

Sandile Moyo dedicates his achievement to every student living with a disability or physical challenge

Qhawekazi Memani

The dream of making his family proud and other VUT students who have succeeded was what kept Moya Sandile going after an accident left him disabled.

Mr Sandile was pushed by other students and fell from a height, sustaining injuries that led to his disability when he was doing his second year in Hospitality Management. When he had recovered from the injuries, he came back to VUT to finish his qualification. He obtained his Diploma on 13 April and dedicated it to others in a similar situation.

"This qualification goes to every to every student living with a disability or physically challenged kid sitting at home without any hope. I say to him or her, education is the only hope to heal and clear your soul," he said.

He said that life has not been easy, but with the support of his family, friends and office officials as well as the prayers he received from different people surrounding him, "I have made it and I am very proud of myself".

"I am now a proud VUT alumni," he said.

"We all go through difficulties in life and there are turning points. We should not give up at any point and informed decisions must be taken at all times. For one to achieve their goals they need a mentor or things that will inspire them to make it big in life. Removing a mountain is not an easy job because you will have to remove rocks, trees and other things that surround it. No journey is easy unless you find the true meaning of your existence."

He is now working at a student accommodation and catering department within VUT as a hospitality administrator and is also working towards his final year in his second qualification - Safety Management.

His plans include helping students living with disabilities to get bursaries because he knows what it is like to be living with a disability and not having food, textbooks or pocket money while studying.

He wants to be his own boss and says he was further inspired by Professor Dzvimbo during the graduation procession when he said that they should be a generation that opens businesses, creates jobs and above all be a solution to the economy of the country.

He salutes Mrs Maureen Ngwenya and Mr Jerry Molutsi for believing in him.

"Giving up is the weakest thing to do"

Tebello Theledi

"Success is not final, failure is not fatal." That is the empowering motto of David Matsaung who graduated with his Baccalaureus Technologiae (BTech) in Public Relations and Management on Friday, 13 April 2018.

This 25-year-old is a junior lecturer in the Public Relations Department. He is passionate about dedicating his life's work to others, especially helping to increase the quality of life of those around him. His involvement at VUT as a mentor for the Centre of Academic Development demonstrates his commitment to helping students.

Coming from a very rural environment, Mr Matsaung witnessed his parents' resilience and passion as they sought the best for him and his brother. This also pushed him to work hard and plot the route out of poverty.

He considers himself a lifelong learner. His ultimate goal is to see himself one day being called Dr Matsaung.

Mr Matsaung would love to thank all his lecturers. "My lecturers pushed me and supported me in challenging times, they told me that I can do this and that I was just as intelligent, which at once lifted my spirit to continue. I thank them for rebuilding me and giving me my confidence," he said.

He is currently pursuing his MTech in Public Relations and Management.

If he were to give advice to other students, he would tell them: "You must be patient, because time is essential; dreams do come true."

As a student who performed exceptionally well, he emphasises that giving up is the weakest thing to do.

All it takes is dedication, discipline and determination

National Diploma Graduate: Mfumo Hector Ngobeni

Owen Talane

Mfumo Hector Ngobeni, a National Diploma graduate in the faculty of Management Sciences: Human Resources, was awarded the Vice-Chancellor's Award on 9 April having obtained the highest average in the faculty.

Mr Ngobeni studied accounting at the University of Johannesburg but, due to a financial crisis. was forced to take a gap year in 2014. He then enrolled to study Human Resources at the Vaal University of Technology (VUT) in 2015.

Dedication, discipline and determination are the three Ds that this young star believes maintain his focus. He will be doing his Baccalaureus Technologiae (BTech) in Business Admin (BA) next.

"My future plan is to complete my BTech, open up a small business and continue studying for a Magister Technologiae (MTech) in Human Resources and, with some grace, I might opt for a Doctor Technologiae (DTech)," he stated.

"You have to commit, be disciplined and believe in yourself to achieve your goals," he added in encouragement to others.

Education is key

VUT staff members and BTECH Business Administration graduates: From left; Johannes Dakile,Nkabane Refilwe,Ntebo Ntaoleng and Malaka Solomon

Qhawekazi Memani

Mr Johannes "Jabu" Dakile and his friends Mr Malaka "Solly" Solomon, Nkabane Refilwe and Ntebo Ntaoleng are the happy and proud VUT staff members to have been conferred with their Baccalaureus Technologiae (BTech) degrees in business administration last week.

"It is possible to study at VUT, especially in the Management Sciences Faculty, because the University offers some of the courses part-time. As an adult I have faced many challenges, like looking after the family affairs and finding time to assist the kids with homework, but time management was the key for my success. My inspiration to study is basically the personal growth because there is a lot of opportunity within and outside the University that one can align for through education," said Mr Dakile.

Dr Aubrey Mokoena; VUT Registrar, Academic Support is one of the people who inspired them, say the staff members. Every time they would meet he would ask them how far they were with their studies, he motivated them and kept them on their toes and helped them to realise they needed to finish what they had started.

"Education helps you accumulate knowledge and opens up a lot of opportunities for a person. Let's study brothers and sisters... education is the master key," the staff members agreed.

Some of them are looking into studying towards their Honours and Master's Degrees.

Failure pushes Kamogelo to great heights

Ms Kamogelo Mopai, National Diploma: Financial Information Systems graduate

Puleng Maphisa

Ms Kamogelo Mopai, who attained her National Diploma in Financial Information Systems (FIS) during the autumn graduation ceremony last week, said failure had been a huge part of her success.

Ms Mopai said that she had failed her first year auditing module and her second year FIS major subject.

However, her failure never made her feel discouraged and instead she used it as a lesson to improve.

Kamogelo said: "It was never easy, but I have never allowed myself to be discouraged instead I kept pushing."

She also became very active on campus, joining the Voice of the Business in 2016. The Voice of the Business is the German Multidisciplinary Student Research and Development Teams (MSRDTs) which coordinate projects for students' engagement in research. This gave her added impetus to complete her studies.

Her message of encouragement to undergraduates was that they should never allow minor setbacks to let them feel discouraged; they should just continue aiming high and most importantly be active in any varsity activities.

International student broke barriers and now celebrates her resilience

Nirela Pamibo proud National Diploma recipient: Logistics

Qhawekazi Memani

Little did Nirela Pambo from Angola know that coming to South Africa with dreams of her future would not be an easy ride.

She came to the Vaal University of Technology (VUT) with the aim of obtaining a diploma and a PhD in her field of study before returning to serve in her country.

She said that in her first year she 'smooth sailed' and passed all her subjects. In her second year she started encountering monetary problems associated with her visa that affected her concentration, caused stress and led to her failing her subjects.

Most of her fellow citizens had to give up because of this issue. She stood firm and proudly accepted her Diploma in Logistics on 10 April. She said it was with the help of her Head of Department (HOD) who provided a mentorship programme for her, her lecturers and her supportive dad that allowed her dream to become a reality.

"Even though you are going through difficult moment, never lose hope. There's always someone up there waiting to assist you; God. If you stick to your objectives and surround yourself with focused people, you will attain your goals," she said.

FORWARD, FOR BETTER OR WORSE

Tebello Theledi

Solly Chiloane is an orphan, but after joining the VUT family of graduates, he no longer feels alone in this world. This young man, who once felt like giving up, never thought the dream of graduating at VUT with his National Diploma Cum Laude in Logistics would come true.

After losing his parents at a young age, he moved in with his grandmother who raised him and his siblings on her pension fund. It was not easy for him having to grow up without parents and having to push for a better life.

Despite the challenges, Mr Chiloane is grateful for the support he has received from his friends. "There were moments when I felt that life had become too difficult for me, and my friend Kgomotso Mafora, who has become a brother, always pushed me to keep striving," he said.

Now that he has graduated, Mr Chiloane is ready to kick start his career through an internship programme he has enrolled for as well as other educational plans. He believes that education is a lifelong process so he would like to continue to study further.

Having walked the journey he has, Mr Chiloane has this advice to give to students who are facing uncertainty with their studies: "Your background does not define your future, you alone can define your future," he encouraged.

After everything, he remains grateful to the National Research Foundation for having funded his Bachelor of Technology degree.

"Your background does not define your future, you alone can define your future,"

A surprise on Graduation Day

Ms Grace Amani and her fiancé

Owen Talane

When Grace Amani woke up and prepared for her long-anticipated graduation day, little did she know that she was in for the surprise of a lifetime.

Not only did she receive her Baccalaureus Technologiae (BTech) in Cost Management, she received a marriage proposal as well! Her partner decided to propose to her with a huge banner on her special day. Ms Amani, who comes from the Democratic Republic of Congo, first enrolled at VUT in 2012 to study Financial Information Systems (FIS), but in 2014 she changed to Cost Management Accounting instead. She attained her National Diploma in Cost Management Accounting in 2016 and enrolled in 2017 to further her studies.

"I am so proud of myself and I thank God for giving me the strength," she said jubilantly. She added that it was not easy for her to get to where she is and she encourages those who want to give up to persevere and stay focused, because "anything is possible".

"I am so proud of myself and I thank God for giving me the strength,"

YOUNG MOTHER GRADUATES

Ms Lebohang Letebele with her mother and daughter

Puleng Maphisa

Ms Lebohang Letebele nearly gave up on her studies when she found out she was pregnant. However, she persevered and was able to graduate this month.

Ms Letebele says: "I was so discouraged. My pregnancy was a sorrow to my mother. However, I decided to use my pregnancy to motivate myself and studied hard. That was the year I passed with distinctions. I wasn't sleeping; I would study all night in order to pass so that I would be able to support my baby one day." She said that the most difficult time was when she gave birth as she was about to write her first semester exams. She never thought she would pass, but through the support she got from her family she managed to do so.

Her mother, Mrs Maria Letebele who is a catering assistant at VUT, said it was a most difficult time in their family as her husband was not working. When her daughter fell pregnant it was very challenging: "I thank God for my colleagues and my relatives as they are the ones who supported me through this difficult time, I was very disappointed when she got pregnant but here we are celebrating her achievement, I am very happy."

Baby Bontle is sure to be proud of her mother!

DENIED BUT GRADUATING

Ms Itumeleng Katali

Puleng Maphisa

Family of Ms Itumeleng Katali, who is now a National Diploma: Information Technology (IT) Cum Laude graduate, shared the excitement of her big day with her.

Ms Itumeleng started in Vaal University of Technology (VUT) doing an external course and is now doing her BTech while working as the website administrator in Corporate Affairs at the University.

Ms Itumeleng showed gratitude to her family for being with her through thick and thin, especially her mom whom she referred to her as "a good worker towards my life".

"Today I am very happy despite the challenges that I have been through, what my father denied me... but here I am. I have made my mom proud. She is a wonderful woman in my life and I am what I am because of her," said Ms Itumeleng, who battled to hold back tears.

She further said that she has never allowed her father's abandonment to let her down but instead used it to push herself to be a top achiever.

Ms Katali's mom shared her story saying that it is by God's grace that her daughter is graduating. She said: "I am very excited, I don't even know what to do, I have a very respecting daughter and she has never disappointed me, she always strives to be the best. It's all by God's grace that I managed to raise her as a single parent. I had no one to help me, no brother or sister. I was alone and today I am proud of her."

She concluded by saying that even though her daughter has graduated, she must remain respectful and should never forget where she comes from.

BRIGHT GIRL SHINES FOR ALL TO SEE

Tebello Theledi

The loss of her mother while doing her first year is what pushed Lerato Madike to strive for a better future. Michelle Obama's words: "There is no magic to achievement, it's really about hard work, choices and persistence," inspired her to raise the bar high.

Having received the Vice-Chancellor's Award at the Autumn Graduations, she has jumped that bar. It is an achievement for which she says she owes thanks to God, her supportive family and her Supervisor Professor Michael Pillay. This achievement will also be the first for her family as no one else has reached this level of education.

Born in the small township of Namakgale in the Limpopo Province, Ms Madike faced hardship when her mother passed away. It changed her whole life completely and she had to delay her studies and work part-time to attain enough money to pay her fees.

She received her National Diploma: Biotechnology in 2012. After working for different companies, she decided to quit her job and pursue her studies full-time in 2015. She obtained her Bachelor of Technology in Biotechnology in 2016 and immediately enrolled for her Master's in Technology which she completed in record time. She passed both Cum Laude.

She is currently registered for her PhD in Biotechnology under the supervision of Prof Pillay with the prospect of becoming a doctor.

Her aim is to contribute to the body of knowledge through research.

"As a young, black woman in Science I have learned that the sky is just the beginning and it doesn't matter where you come from; if you dream big, work hard and always believe in yourself you can do anything," she added.

Lerato Madike (centre) with her two lecturers

Ms Madike has other success too. She established a business called Cakes by Lerato in 2016 which also blossomed and helped pay some of her fees. She became Miss VUT SCO (Student Christian Organisation) 2016/2017 and second Princess Miss South Africa Campus 2017.

These roles have enabled her to be a part of charity events and she enjoys being able to give back to the community through donations and her time, especially at the local orphanages.

Her mother must be looking down at her with immense pride.

A family of firsts

Tebello Theledi

Masingita Marhungane has distinguished himself through service. His passion for work started when he joined Enactus: a global, non-profit community of students, academic and business leaders committed to using the power of entrepreneurial action to transform lives.

Mazibuko drew inspiration from his mother who was the first graduate of her family. He also decided to inspire his siblings by becoming the first to graduate amongst them.

And while three years of hard work and dedication has paid off, he is far from done with his studies. He is ready to tackle his Bachelor of Technology degree and after that continue for an MBA.

He hopes this accomplishment will inspire others to attempt the seemingly impossible. "Once you find the rhythm, keep beating to the drum," he said in encouragement to others.

Masingita Marhungane

GRIT AND PATIENCE THROUGH LEADERSHIP

VUT SRC Deputy President: Serge Ntini

Tebello Theledi

Loud and extended applause was received by the VUT SRC Deputy President, Serge Ntini, as he gracefully walked the stage to collect his qualification. Serge Ntini has graduated with his National Diploma in Information Technology.

While serving as the Deputy President of the VUT SRC he says he managed to balance student leadership and his studies. The lifestyle and resources that come with being in student leadership can be very tempting, but Mr Ntini knew what he had wanted.

The Vice-Chancellor and Principal Prof Zide congratulated him on obtaining his qualification. VUT student leaders have always shown themselves to be a cut above the rest and have defied the stereotype associated with student leaders by excelling academically and in their leadership responsibilities.

Mr Ntini plans to complete his Bachelor of Technology in Information Technology.

He was one of the hundreds of students who graduated on April 9 in the Faculty of Applied and Computer Science, standing proud in a navy blue suit.

Although he would have loved for his parents to have been present while receiving his qualification, they were not able to because of distance. However, they were able to call him and wished him all the best while congratulating him.

"My advice to all students is to break all the boundaries and never give up because it is never the end of the world," he encouraged.

A Doctor Technologiae for cutting edge, world standard research in Chemistry

Lungelo Magwaza

The 9th of April 2018 marked a very special occasion for Mr Adeniyi Osikoya, who obtained his Doctor Technologiae (DTech) in Chemistry during the Autumn Graduations for the Faculty of Applied and Computer Sciences, which took place at the Vaal University of Technology.

His thesis for his study was the Synthesis and Characterisation of Electrocatalytic Graphene for Electrochemical Sensing and Bioelectronics.

Mr Osikoya, who can now be officially referred to as Dr Osikoya, was born in Nigeria and obtained his Bachelor of Science in Industry Chemistry in 1990 at the University of Lagos. After his mandatory Nigerian National Youth Service in 1991, Dr Osikoya was employed as a Production Chemist at Eleganza Industries in Nigeria from 1996-2004, he then became a Factory Manager at Linda Manufacturing Company Ltd from 2004-2008 and was later employed as a Production Manager at Vineyard Product Company Limited from 2009-2011

In 2012, he decided to come to VUT where he registered for his Master's Degree in Chemistry and obtained it in 2014. He then started his doctoral studies in 2015 and proceeded to the Biosensors and Bioelectronics Centre at IFM at Linkoping University in Sweden, where he was able to perform cutting-edge, world-standard research under his co-supervisor Professor Ashutosh Tiwari.

Even though it was a long and tough journey, Dr Osikoya feels super excited and very grateful about obtaining his DTech. He said this once-in-a-lifetime achievement would not have been possible without the help of his wife Lola, his daughter Fumi and his supervisor Prof Ezekiel Dikio. He encourages other students to finish their studies and to always keep their eyes on the ball because the secret to success is to never give up, he says.

Dr Adeniyi Osikoya