

HERStory



2024 EDITION



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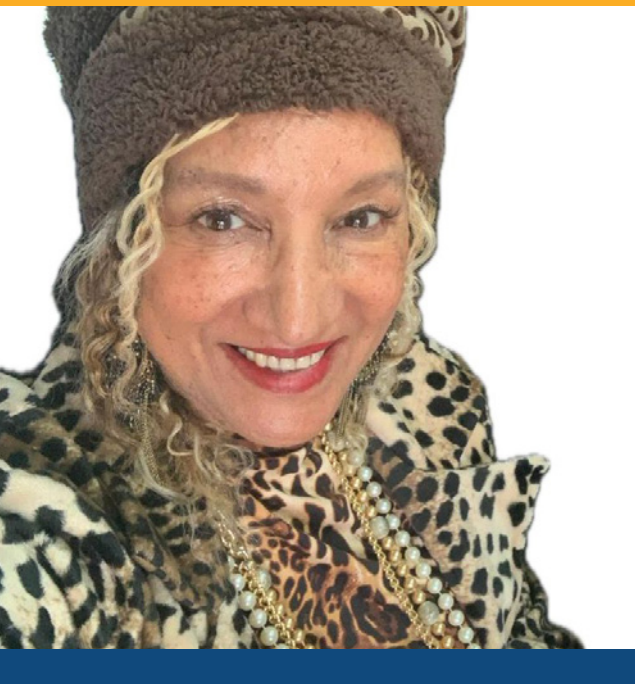
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Foreword from the Chairperson

HIGHER EDUCATION IN SOUTH AFRICA 1994-2024: The illusive women's empowerment in leadership



DR SORAYA BEUKES
HERS-SA Chairperson

In the Government's 30-year report, 'A Better Life for All' they sketch the gains South Africa has made as a democracy. Alluding to the final Constitution 1996, National Development Plan 2030, launching of the 10-year National Strategic Plan on Gender-Based Violence and Femicide, tackling all forms of violence and abuse against women and children. Most importantly, the Office on the Status of Women was established in 1997 as the apex of South Africa's national gender machinery, steering the National Policy Framework for Women Empowerment and Gender Equality.

These developments stem from the Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP) which the government adopted in 1994 in order to meet basic needs, build the economy, democratise the state and society, and develop human resources. The effect of the RDP resulted in the number of black Africans with higher education more than tripled in the three decades of democracy from 9.40% in 1996 to 34.7% in 2022. As part of the process of transformation, South Africa has developed several documents that contribute to women's advancement. These include:

- The Women's Charter for Effective Equality (1994)
- The First Reconstruction and Development White Paper (1994)
- The National Policy for Women's Empowerment (1995)
- Batho Pele: The White Paper on Transformation of Public Service Delivery (1997)
- The Higher Education Act (1997).

In addition, the Higher Education Quality Committee and the Council on Higher Education were established to closely monitor and oversee the implementation of policy priorities associated with the transformation of higher education institutions.



The African Charter entrenches the pursuit of non-sexism as a human rights priority on the continent of Africa.



On the international front, South Africa has ratified, the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW). This calls on state parties to condemn discrimination against women and to take appropriate measures to eliminate it in all spheres of life. On the regional front, the African Charter entrenches the pursuit of non-sexism as a human rights priority on the continent of Africa.

Marking 20 years of democracy in 2014, was the adoption by parliament of the Women Empowerment and Gender Equality Bill (WEGEB) (RSA 2013). The WEGEB calls for the progressive realisation of at least 50 percent representation of women in decision-making structures, and it aims at improving women's access to education, training and skills development. Overall, the data indicates that the 50 percent equity target as set in the WEGEB as well as by the former president in 2004 has not been achieved in HE leadership. This Bill has not been enacted into law thus it cannot be implemented.

Moodly (2014) posed the question as to where South Africa is in gender equity leadership in higher education, after 20 years of democracy. The author summed it up that gender equity is not practised within HE leadership in that it is still male dominated. Exemplary of the snail's pace of transformation is the seven female VCs that contend with the 19 male VCs in the 26 public universities in South Africa. The strides for transformation in this regard remains unacceptably slow.

South Africa was further aided by the USAID programme for Women in Higher Education Executive Leadership to focus on the empowerment of women 'through training and coaching to assume executive leadership roles in higher education'. A 'strategic partnership' was formed with Higher Education South Africa to ensure the continuity of the programme. The findings of the USAID 2006 report reflected that since the 2003 survey, there had been either a marginal decrease or no change in women

representation at management level (USAID 2006:40). The "underrepresentation" remained a "concern and area for targeted action".

The Commission for Gender Equality (2017) laments the fact that government routinely fails to demonstrate the engendering of policies. This failure scuppers the attainment of substantive equality for women in HE. Gender equality is not a modern-day construct; Socrates recognised gender equality during the year 300 BC. Today, gender equality is one of the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Tertiary institutions and governments are obliged to realise the SDGs and in particular promoting gender equality SDG5.

South Africa emerged in 1994 as a constitutional democracy with social justice as its moral compass, a preamble that promises to 'set free the potential of each person' and a clause on equality. It is this promise of 'free the potential' of women in leadership roles in HE that remains elusive.

The Higher Education Quality Committee and the Council on Higher Education tasked with oversight in transformation in HE institutions is encouraged to lean on these HE institutions and nudge them to implement the women's empowerment machinery. We should pause and recognise the effect of gender-based violence, on all the programs through which women attempt to achieve their ultimate development goals and immediate activity goals.

As women in HE we should be deliberate in supporting structures for women in leadership positions. Therefore, when rising to higher positions women should send the escalator down to promote her peers left behind in the wake of her promotion.

We at HERS-SA tread this protracted road to equality alongside our women; we are relentless in equalising the plateau for women in HE.

Foreword from the Director and Editor



**BRIGHTNESS
MANGOLOTHI**

As we celebrate 30 years of democracy in South Africa, HERS-SA has been able to help change the gender inequalities in the higher education sector, despite having limited funding. We are proud to see that the majority of our alumni are now women at the helm of leadership. Yet, appreciating that more work still needs to be done.

As I bid farewell to all after 5 years and 11 months in office as the HERS-SA Director, if there is anything I have learned, it is knowing when to leave! I leave with both sadness and a great feeling for all the people I have worked with to drive the vision of HERS-SA. Starting with the staff, the board members, the HERS-SA alumni, the university leaders, women, other sectors and almost everyone who made it possible to achieve many “HERStories” re-written.

A year into office, the world was severely impacted by COVID-19, which required us to review our services and tactics to better serve our constituents. Driving women’s activism and leadership development in the volatile, uncertain, complex and ambiguous arena presented both opportunities and challenges. As a result, online webinars and coaching and mentoring programmes were created to address issues that emanated from the new normal.

Further, we had robust engagements with partners such as the universities, Transformation Management Forum, Commission for Gender Equality, Inyathelo and other stakeholders, steering conversations on gender transformation in higher education. We also signed memorandums of understanding with various stakeholders who share the vision and mission of HERS-SA. Some universities invited HERS-SA to be part of their Gender Forums. This also included participating as a speaker, facilitator, trainer and/or panellist at

conferences, seminars, women’s day events and more, creating an awareness about the programmes of HERS-SA and using such spaces to comprehend the needs of women in higher education, to empower women and to create a sense of agency.

Internationally, we formed collaborations with universities in the United Kingdom, Germany, USA, East Africa and Nigeria, to name a few, and strengthened existing partnerships. One of the collaborations led to the edited book, “Women’s Empowerment for a Sustainable Future: Transcultural and Positive Psychology Perspectives”.

Over the past five years, HERS-SA has rebranded, modernising our logo and website, and positioning HERS-SA as the preferred higher education women leaders’ capacity development organisation in South Africa. We reimagined HERS-SA’s role and paved a new trajectory guided by our new strategy and board members. We launched the HERS-SA Higher Education Women Leaders Awards and the Emerging Women Leaders Programme last year and hosted our second one this year.

This edition, our third annual magazine, sets the tone on how universities can use succession planning to advance gender transformations. Take pleasure in reading thought-provoking articles written by local and global experts, and further deep diving on programmes rolled out this year and collaborations formed. I hope you have a great time and wish you all the best. My final remarks: “We should be the change we wish to see; we are the ones we have been waiting for.”

I’m excited for the incoming Director to help mould HERS-SA’s future and establish new benchmarks, and I wish her all the best!

Thought Leadership

Succession Planning in Higher Education

PROF GRACE KHUNOU



The question of sustainability of the higher education sector is an ongoing one.

Are we training the right people for the right jobs? Are we attracting them? Most importantly, are we retaining them?

These are some of the issues raised in the debate on succession planning. There are further nuances on these issues, influencing whether we can succeed in all three of these important factors for sustainable institutions.

The main challenge to higher education sustainability in South Africa stems from our history of apartheid and colonialism, and continuing coloniality. Whilst succession planning can be simply defined as a plan focused

on long-term sustainability of an organisation (Richards 2009), how such planning is undertaken and the factors influencing its implementation are unfortunately far from simple. In the South African context, racism and sexism have played a role in how succession planning was implemented. This is true not only in universities but in other societal sectors as well.

It would be great if these exclusionary sexist and racist attitudes towards organisation-building were a thing of the past. However, 30 years into democracy, we unfortunately sit with the same challenges, and we see a few more emerging. On top of the sexist and racist factors, we now see other challenges –cadre deployment, ethnic enclaves, and unprecedented mafia-style harassment for jobs and tenders.

Here I am talking particularly about the attempted assassination of Prof Sakhela Buhlungu, the current Vice-Chancellor of the University of Fort Hare. Unfortunately, the use of violence as a tool of exclusion in the higher education sector is not a new phenomenon. Prof Nhlanhla Maake writes about how he contended with similar harassment in the early 90's as a Black professor in an historically white institution. We are now seeing new forms of such uses of violence and harassment.

On succession planning, my observations indicate that in endeavours to transform the sector,

important succession planning principles are ignored.

I have witnessed an appointment at the Vice-Principal level with only one candidate contesting for the job. If the argument was that we needed to appoint a female professor in that role, then we can't still be arguing that we did not have a broader pool to draw from to make the process equitable and rigorous.

The literature on succession planning warns of replacement planning and its limits: if we have only one qualifying candidate, then we have not done the necessary work of training multiple individuals to make it possible to have a pool of qualified and available candidates from which to select. Again, according to Richards, "*it is the focus on multiple individuals rather than the development of a single leader that advances business objectives and raises the level of leadership competency in an organization*" (Richards, 2009: 3).

Another example of a clear lack of succession planning is of an exclusively male shortlist for the role of Dean of the Faculty of Humanities at one of the top universities in the country. This I think is sexist, and shortsighted in a country with a growing female professoriate. How do we justify being so ill-prepared for making it possible for women to contest for these roles? This is clearly



The it is the focus on multiple individuals rather than the development of a single leader that advances business objectives and raises the level of leadership competency in an organization on the continent of Africa.



another example of ineffective succession planning in the context of transformation.

Succession planning has its origins in the private sector, but there is growing literature indicating the importance for higher education institutions of considering it as a strategy for sustainability. In South Africa we have been challenged with questions of transforming the sector in terms of employment equity – what are the best ways to get Black people and women into key university positions? Succession planning becomes fundamental to systematically addressing these issues.

Hatcher (2023: 10) speculates that the reasons we don't see systematic engagement with succession planning in the higher education sector is because, first, that internal leadership development, a core tenet of succession planning, may be viewed with scepticism in the education sector, due to not knowing if an internal candidate is more qualified than an external candidate. Secondly, identifying and training a replacement may be considered nepotism or a threat to the current leader's competence and job security. Thirdly, launching a succession planning programme may be perceived by higher education institutions as a complicated, expensive and long-term process with overwhelming alternatives and approaches that require customisation based on the needs of institutions and the varied perspectives of administration, faculty and staff.

In our context, with our race and gendered history, these new challenges and speculations are very real.

Succession plans are important because they allow for institutional stability in times of transition. One aspect to consider in succession planning is how your pool of candidates will be developed. Will you focus only internally, that is, "grow your own timber"; or hire from external candidates; or draw from both pools?

Ahmad, Keerio, Jameel, and Karem (2020) weigh the conundrum of promoting from within versus hiring from external sources and argue that external hiring for leadership positions might disenfranchise worthy internal candidates. Similarly, Hatcher (2023) notes that "the appointment of external hires might be costly as they might lack familiarity with the organisation and cause delays in strategic initiatives".

Many of us know how it burns not to get the job you thought was coming to you as an internal candidate. However, we must remember that in public institutions, appointments to positions are competitive endeavours and not inherited like chieftaincies.

I believe that both internal development and external hiring strategies should be used, in order to encourage the building of a dynamic institutional culture, as I have found that a solely internally-focused promotions practice has the potential to lead to complacency and rigid and exclusionary institutional cultures.

In conclusion, without well-articulated and balanced succession plans we will see previously strong institutions collapsing during times of leadership transition.

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SYSTEMS AND PROCESS CHANGE

Gender Equality Plans – Core Elements for Structural Change in Higher Education

PROF BRITTA THEGE

Gender Equality Plans (GEPs) are one of the most important steering elements for establishing gender equality at institutions of higher education in Europe, particularly due to the support from a robust legislative framework.

The Gender Equality Plan of Kiel University of Applied Sciences (Kiel UAS) in Germany is presented as a case study to illustrate this point.

European Union (EU) policies have a pivotal influence on the European gender equality landscape. These policies mandate a systematic pursuit of gender equality across diverse sectors, including academia, research, and public administration, by leveraging legal instruments that indirectly inform the implementation of GEPs. Directives on gender equality, anti-discrimination, and work-life balance, among others, have to be transposed into national law by member states, thereby strengthening the legal and operational framework for GEPs. This transformation ensures GEPs transcend their function as mere policy documents, embedding them within a compulsory legal structure geared towards gender equality. It compels institutions to adopt a structured and strategic approach to achieving gender equality.

Within the German federal system, where legislative authority over education lies with the individual federal states, the Higher Education Act of Schleswig-Holstein exemplifies this approach. This Act mandates the deployment of GEPs (§12) and outlines the significance of Equal Opportunities Officers (EOOs) (§27) in fostering gender equality within universities, as evidenced also in the practices of Kiel UAS.

Equal Opportunities Officers play a crucial role in driving effective gender equality implementation in universities and other institutions, since they are highly qualified and, mostly, full-time employees. Their significance in promoting an inclusive and equitable academic environment cannot be overstated.

Among their responsibilities, they develop concepts and plans for equality, monitor progress, and operate independently of any directives from university management in their activities. This autonomous approach to addressing gender equality issues within an institution has proven to be highly effective.

The GEP of Kiel UAS for 2024 to 2028 utilises a quantitative analysis to examine the distribution of genders across various academic and administrative strata, aiming to

identify and ameliorate disparities. This includes an analysis of gender representation within management and decision-making positions such as executive boards, deans' offices, the senate, and conventions, as well as within different status groups, including professors, academic staff, students, and technical and administrative staff. It also looks at gender-related disparities in employment conditions, such as the prevalence of fixed-term contracts and part-time employment rates.

This data is instrumental in identifying inequitable structures and relevant action fields. To foster greater equality, the plan establishes specific, achievable numerical goals to address areas where women are under-represented, with the objective of meeting these targets by 2028.

Complementarily, qualitative goals and interventions are formulated to complete the picture, and are specified across five fields of action in accordance with the eligibility criteria of Horizon Europe, the EU's key funding programme for research and innovation, namely:

- Work-life balance and organisational culture.
- Gender balance in leadership and decision-making.
- Gender equality in recruitment and career progression.
- Integration of gender dimensions into research and teaching content.
- Measures against gender-based violence.

By stipulating that organisations must have a GEP implemented to qualify for funding, Horizon Europe endeavours to incentivise the resolution of systemic gender bias and inequality issues.

In conclusion, Gender Equality Plans emerge as essential instruments for advancing gender equality within higher education institutions, drawing strength from a solid legislative backbone. The European Union's policies play a transformative role in shaping a framework that mandates a targeted and methodical approach to gender equality, transcending sectors and embedding GEPs within a legal context that necessitates action rather than mere documentation.

In the case of Germany, emphasis has been placed on the vital role of Equal Opportunity Officers. These officers are key in promoting an inclusive academic environment through their expertise and in creating equality plans and monitoring progress. The example of Kiel UAS further illuminates the practical application of a GEP.

Empowered Women Leading Higher Education – Towards sustainable systemic and global change

PROF RENÉ PELLISSIER

Introduction

As we reflect on 30 years of democracy, the question arises: What are we missing? Despite significant progress, gaps remain in representation, particularly in leadership positions. The future requires more than just filling these gaps — it demands a rethinking of how leadership is structured and what values drive organisations.

Women, with their unique perspective and leadership style, are ideally positioned to lead this transformation (Eagly & Carli, 2007). In the rapidly evolving world of higher education (HE), women have emerged as key figures driving leadership that promotes sustainability, innovation, and inclusivity (Blackmore, 2014).

With the theme of succession planning and future-ready leadership, the focus is now on building robust leadership pipelines that ensure institutions remain adaptive, collaborative, and visionary. From championing the integration of new technologies to fostering ethical global collaborations, women leaders are not only the architects of change but also the champions of progress and the visionaries shaping tomorrow.

Succession planning is about building sustainable leadership

Succession planning in higher education ensures that institutions can address the challenges of an increasingly uncertain world by developing future leaders who are prepared to navigate emerging trends (Avolio et al., 2009). With the Fourth and Fifth Industrial Revolutions accelerating the transformation of the workforce, higher education institutions must adapt quickly. This transformation calls for leaders who can integrate advanced technologies such as artificial intelligence (AI) into education, research, and administration. Women leaders are particularly well-suited for this role due to their human-centric approach, ensuring the well-being and growth of staff and students while embracing the power of technology (McKinsey & Company, 2021).

Women in leadership are uniquely positioned to prioritise diversity, equity, and inclusion in succession planning. By mentoring and developing leaders from diverse backgrounds, they help create a leadership structure that reflects the student populations and global perspectives necessary for HE to thrive in the 21st century (Madsen, 2008).

The four urgent calls for change

There are four pressing global challenges that higher education leaders, particularly women, must address:

Urgent call 1: World Population Growth

Rapid population growth is leading to resource depletion, increasing pollution, and environmental degradation. Higher education institutions have a role to play in mitigating these effects by promoting sustainability and resource management through research, curriculum reforms, and community engagement (Blackmore, 2014). Women leaders are driving these initiatives by integrating sustainable practices within institutional strategies (McKinsey & Company, 2021).

Urgent call 2: Climate Imbalance

The impact of climate change is profound, with growing divides in populations at risk due to hunger, displacement, and natural disasters. Higher education institutions must equip students with the skills and knowledge to develop mitigation strategies, adaptation plans, and sustainable solutions (Blackmore, 2014). Women leaders in higher education are well-placed to lead climate resilience efforts through curriculum development and research that focuses on sustainability (McKinsey & Company, 2021).

Urgent call 3: The Importance of Knowledge Production

Knowledge production is a critical resource for advanced economies and societies. Higher education institutions generate and recycle knowledge, making it essential for driving economic performance and enhancing democracy (González-Rivera & Arámbula-González, 2016). Women in leadership are shaping research agendas that foster innovation and generate knowledge outputs that address global challenges (Blackmore, 2014).

Urgent call 4: The AI Spring

The rapid development of AI is reshaping industries and redefining the future of work. Higher education must prepare students for this AI-driven world by embedding digital and AI literacy into curricula (Avolio et al., 2009). Women leaders are advocating for ethical AI development, ensuring that AI is used in ways that align with societal values such as fairness, transparency, and privacy (McKinsey & Company, 2021).

Quantum being focusing on the self

Women leaders often exhibit a blend of emotional intelligence, empathy, and inclusiveness that fosters

collaboration and innovation (Eagly & Carli, 2007). In an era of quantum leadership, where management paradigms shift away from rigid structures toward adaptability, women's natural inclination toward relational leadership is crucial (Madsen, 2008). This approach embraces interconnectedness, complexity and the unpredictability of modern management, positioning women to lead with both courage and compassion (Blackmore, 2014).

A key aspect of such a leadership model is quantum being — the idea that leadership is more about “being” than “doing.” Women leaders embody this principle by architecting change and championing progress with a deep sense of purpose and humility (Eagly & Carli, 2007; Pellissier, 2001). They are often visionaries willing to challenge the status quo and embrace the future with conviction, transforming organisations and societies through their strategic foresight and inclusive practices (Blackmore, 2014).

Margaret Wheatley's Six Circle Model emphasizes a holistic and interconnected approach to leadership, aligning well with the themes of inclusivity and adaptability that women leaders champion in higher education. This model consists of six key areas: leadership, relationships, meaning, learning, sustainability, and engagement. Each circle represents a vital aspect of leadership that supports the development of resilient, future-ready organisations. For instance, Wheatley's emphasis on relationships and meaning complements the human-centric approach that women leaders bring to succession planning and mentoring (Wheatley, 2006).

By fostering interconnectedness and collective learning, women leaders can create environments that are not only innovative but also sustainable. This aligns with the need for higher education institutions to develop future leaders who are adaptive, ethical, and capable of navigating the complexities of global challenges. Wheatley's model underscores the importance of relational leadership, where collaboration and emotional intelligence are key — areas where women have been shown to excel.

Fostering innovation through digital transformation

A central component of modern leadership is the ability to navigate digital transformation. The integration of AI, machine learning, and robotics into the higher education landscape is essential for driving innovation in both learning and research (Avolio et al., 2009). Digital skills are no longer optional; they are critical for preparing students

“With the theme of succession planning and future-ready leadership, the focus is now on building robust leadership pipelines that ensure institutions remain adaptive, collaborative, and visionary.”

for future jobs that may not even exist yet. Women leaders in higher education must lead the way in integrating technology into curricula, equipping graduates with the necessary skills for an increasingly digital workforce (McKinsey & Company, 2021).

Mentorship and lifelong learning

Mentorship is fundamental to succession planning, and women excel at fostering relationships that support the development of future leaders (Madsen, 2008). Through mentorship, women leaders guide emerging professionals in navigating organisational complexities, fostering resilience, and embracing adaptability — key traits in today’s volatile, uncertain, complex and ambiguous (VUCA) world (Blackmore, 2014).

In addition, women leaders promote the concept of lifelong learning. As the future of work requires constant upskilling, women in leadership ensure that higher education institutions offer flexible, modular learning opportunities that cater to professionals at various stages of their careers (Avolio et al., 2009).

Global engagement and expanding impact

International collaborations are vital for fostering innovation and solving global challenges. Women leaders excel at building global partnerships, enabling higher education institutions to expand their influence beyond national borders. These partnerships allow for the exchange of knowledge, best practices and resources, ensuring that higher education remains relevant and responsive to global trends (Eagly & Carli, 2007).

Women leaders are also instrumental in developing transdisciplinary approaches to education and research, which are critical for addressing complex global challenges, including climate change, economic inequality, and technological disruption (Blackmore, 2014). These collaborative efforts ensure that higher education institutions are not only responding to but actively shaping the future.

In regions like Southern Africa, where higher education institutions are increasingly focused on collective action, women leaders are playing a vital role in shaping research agendas that prioritise sustainability, innovation, and inclusive growth (McKinsey & Company, 2021). Their leadership not only expands the impact of these institutions but also ensures that diverse voices are heard on the global stage.

Sustainability and future-ready leadership

Sustainability is a key priority for higher education, not only in terms of environmental responsibility but also in ensuring the long-term viability of institutions (González-Rivera & Arámbula-González, 2016). Women leaders are champions of sustainability, advocating for practices and policies that promote ecological responsibility, financial stability and social equity (Blackmore, 2014). By embedding these values into their leadership strategies, women ensure that higher education institutions remain future-ready and capable of addressing the changing needs of society.

Moreover, women leaders foster a culture of innovation and adaptability, ensuring that succession planning is about more than just filling roles — it’s about developing leaders who are forward-thinking, collaborative and capable of driving an institution’s mission in an ever-changing landscape (Madsen, 2008).

Recommendations for action

1. **Women shaping the future:** Establish mentorship programmes specifically designed for women in leadership to foster resilience and adaptability in future leaders (Madsen, 2008).
2. **Leading with courage and innovation:** Encourage women leaders to take the lead on technological advancements such as AI integration while maintaining a strong ethical compass (Avolio et al., 2009).
3. **The power of women in leadership:** Advocate for institutional policies that support work-life balance and leadership development, ensuring a sustainable leadership pipeline (Eagly & Carli, 2007).
4. **Building the next generation:** Integrate succession planning into strategic planning processes within institutions, with a focus on diversity, equity and inclusion (McKinsey & Company, 2021).

The challenge is not just to bring women into leadership roles but to empower them in reshaping the systems and processes that govern organisations. The future of leadership is not about replicating the past but about architecting a new way forward — one that is inclusive, innovative, and adaptable to the changing needs of society. Women are shaping the future of higher education by leading with courage, vision and a commitment to innovation, sustainability and inclusivity (Avolio et al., 2009). Through their leadership, they ensure that higher education institutions are prepared to navigate the complexities of the modern world, from digital transformation to global engagement. By championing ethical AI, fostering global partnerships, and promoting sustainability, women leaders are not just preparing the next generation of leaders — they are shaping a legacy that will influence the future of higher education for generations to come.

Conclusion

As the world moves into an increasingly complex and interconnected future, women are stepping into critical leadership roles, championing innovation and progress across industries. The trajectory of women's development in leadership highlights not only the strides taken toward equality but also the essential qualities women bring to transformative leadership, especially in times of rapid technological and social change (Eagly & Carli, 2007). From mentorship and coaching to driving international collaborations and pioneering research, women continue to shape the future of global development (Blackmore, 2014).

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Thriving as women academics: A call to action

PROF LINDA RONNIE

As we navigate the evolving landscape of higher education, it's crucial to reflect on our roles, challenges, and opportunities. This message aims to inspire you not just to survive but to thrive in your academic careers. Let's explore the current state of higher education, the unique challenges we face, and how we can work together to create positive change.

The Changing Face of Higher Education

Over the past two decades, South African universities have undergone significant transformations in terms of moving from providing elite education to offering mass education, dramatically altering the academic landscape. As universities now operate more like corporations, with measurable performance targets and increased accountability, academics are now expected to excel in multiple areas - research, teaching, produce employable graduates, and engage in entrepreneurial activities.

The Gendered Academic Environment

It is essential to recognise that academic institutions often reinforce rather than reduce gender inequalities as the "ideal academic" is still often perceived as someone with few commitments outside work. This expectation disproportionately affects us, especially those juggling caregiving responsibilities. As women academics, we face unique challenges in the academy through biased recruitment, selection, and promotion processes, increased

demands for student support and administrative duties, and the undervaluation of our academic endeavours.

Surviving versus thriving

Women academics should not merely aim to survive in higher education; we should strive to thrive. Thriving means experiencing both vitality and continuous learning in our work. It's about feeling enthusiastic, valued, and believing that our work is meaningful. Thriving is not feeling overwhelmed or depleted, or experiencing meaninglessness, hopelessness, or lack of self-efficacy in our roles.

Moving from surviving to thriving

To shift from survival mode to a thriving state, we need deliberate support and systemic changes. Here are some suggestions for how we can work towards this goal:

- Advocate for appropriate workloads that allow for research development.
- Propose and champion women-friendly and parent-friendly policies.
- Collaborate with male allies to create institutional change.
- Share experiences and strategies for success.
- Mentor younger colleagues and seek mentorship from senior women academics.
- Prioritise our physical and mental wellbeing.
- Don't hesitate to say "no" to tasks that don't align with our career goals.
- Learn from setbacks and use them to fuel our progress.

A Call to Action for Senior Leadership

While individual efforts are crucial, systemic change requires action from senior leadership. If you're in a leadership position, these are strategies that need to be considered:

- 1. Implement Fair Policies:** Review and revise policies to ensure that women academics are supported at all career stages.
- 2. Provide Resources:** Allocate resources for mentoring programmes, research support, and professional development opportunities targeted at women academics, especially those at junior levels.
- 3. Address Bias:** Conduct regular training on unconscious bias and implement strategies to mitigate its impact in recruitment, promotion, and daily interactions.
- 4. Promote Work-Life Balance:** Create a culture that values work-life balance and supports academics with caregiving responsibilities.
- 5. Increase Representation:** Actively work to increase the representation of women in senior academic and leadership positions.
- 6. Foster Open Communication:** Create channels for women academics to voice their concerns and ideas without fear of repercussions.

Conclusion: Our Collective Power

As women academics, we have the power to shape the future of higher education. By supporting each other, advocating for change, and continuously striving for excellence, we can create an academic environment where all of us can truly thrive. Remember, your voice matters. Your research matters. Your teaching matters. Your leadership matters.

Together, we can transform academia into a space where women don't just survive, but flourish and lead. Let us commit to being the change we want to see in academia. Share your experiences, support your colleagues, and never stop pushing for a more equitable and fulfilling academic environment. Our collective efforts today will pave the way for the next generation of women academics to thrive.

INTERNATIONALISATION: Advancing Women's Careers and Promoting Gender Transformation in Higher Education

DR ORLA QUINLAN

This article considers how internationalisation can advance women's careers and promote gender transformation, drawing on the experiences of women in the sector.

Gender equality is a priority enshrined in South Africa's Constitution and supported by global frameworks such as the UN's Sustainable Development Goal 5 and the African Union's Agenda 2063. Yet, achieving gender equality in higher education remains elusive, thus the annual scrutiny by South Africa's Commission for Gender Equality.¹

Prof Pamela Dube, Vice-Chancellor of the Central University of Technology, observes: "More attention is required, in particular post the Covid-19 pandemic, to address gender disparities in the higher education workspace."

The "Policy Framework on the Internationalisation of Higher Education in South Africa"² encourages institutions to develop tailored, contextually-specific internationalisation strategies. As one of the institutional priorities, gender equity may be incorporated into the institutional internationalisation policy. The policy and strategy should be purposeful about pathways for women to gain access to career-enhancing international opportunities, from entry level to leadership, fostering gender equity in each institution.

For undergraduate women, experiences such as semesters abroad and study tours expand aspirations, influence career choices, improve employability, and foster personal growth. They also enable the building of lasting global networks of friends and professional allies. Bilateral study abroad programmes as well as scholarships such as those listed on the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET) website,³ provide transformative opportunities to study a full undergraduate or postgraduate degree abroad. Recently, DHET women leaders have gone on roadshows to SA universities to share how "life-changing" study abroad experiences have shaped their own careers. Postgraduates can benefit from mobility schemes like Erasmus+ and intra-Africa programmes.⁴

Attending international conferences further enhances

emerging academics' networking opportunities. Dr Kwezi Mzilikazi, DVC for Research at Rhodes University, recounts: "International conference attendance as a Master's student exposed me to world experts in my field. It was life-changing to share the stage with authors whose work I cited. These interactions later helped secure my postdoctoral fellowship abroad."

Such postdoctoral experiences also assist with career progression at home. "At a practical level, the international experiences on my Curriculum Vitae were very appealing to potential employers and generated a lot of interest in interviews," shared Dr Alex Halligey, who has recently accepted a Head of Department position at Witwatersrand University.

Progressing through academic careers, internationalisation enriches research visibility, collaboration, and funding opportunities. Dr Mzilikazi highlights the national benefits of international partnerships: "South Africa's bilateral and multilateral collaborations have unlocked funding pipelines and access to world-class research infrastructure globally." Incorporating global perspectives in the curriculum fosters diversity and creativity in teaching and learning. Prof. Dube believes "internationalisation promotes deeper engagement with diversity across gender, cultures, and perspectives. It dismantles epistemic hegemonies and amplifies new voices in knowledge spaces."

Prof Ingrid Schudel of Rhodes University, whose research area is Science, Technology, Engineering, Math and Arts (STEAM) education, shares how international experiences fuel intellectual creativity: "Contextualising everything in new environments is intellectually stimulating and uplifting and enhances the creative process."

In the same vein, Dr Halligey's international exposure has shaped and enhanced her teaching and research on comparative urbanisation. By working in partnership with academics and international students from Malmö, and filming public performances in Johannesburg, she has not only contributed to shifting perceptions of urbanisation in

the city; she has contributed to the global discourse, from the Global South perspective, elevating her work's impact both globally and locally.

When the costs are prohibitive, Collaborative Online International Learning (COIL) initiatives allow staff and students to engage with cross-cultural curricula, without the need for physical travel, broadening horizons and enabling an empowering international engagement cost-effectively. Special events like Women's Month or International Women's Day provide opportunities to host webinars online with global women leaders, fostering inspiration and dialogue. Community Engagement may also involve global engagement and the development of global citizenship. For example, Rhodes University won the MacJannet Foundation and Talloires Network prize for Global Citizenship for their Nine-Tenths Matric Mentoring Programme.⁵

Recognition through international awards, grants, and publications fosters professional growth and inspires innovation.

The purpose of international education associations is to enable internationalisation of higher education, across the world. Getting involved can lead to new opportunities and the development of new skills, including intercultural competency. A more recent initiative, the World Council on Intercultural and Global Competence offers a free platform for engaging with open and curious researchers from all over the world.⁶

Internationalisation develops leadership skills by exposing professionals to diverse planning and resource management approaches. Prof Dube reflects: "My personal and professional growth was greatly enriched through a DAAD scholarship, opening doors to engagements across Africa, Europe, and beyond. In my role as Vice-Chancellor, I leverage international networks to advance my institution's profile, prioritising equitable access for women."

Formerly in academic leadership, Prof Nonceba Kekana, Director of International Affairs at the University of Limpopo, shares: "Internationalisation used to be just one of those things to be done. Now that internationalisation has started a new career for me; I am interested in the scholarship and leadership of internationalisation. Development of partnerships has become a passion that has opened many paths for my career."

For professional career trajectories, internationalisation also offers growth. A recent HERS-SA publication, *Celebrating Women in International Education*, showcases 26 South African women whose international engagements have advanced careers and fostered gender transformation.⁷ International Education Association of South Africa (IEASA) Manager, Tohiera Bagus notes: "*Exposure to diverse perspectives has broadened my worldview and shaped my leadership journey.*"

Prof Dube acknowledges that the internationalisation experience continues to add value to her current leadership role: "*I continue in my role to rely heavily on leveraging networks built over time, and to engage with new strategic partnerships to advance my institution's profile and expertise in research, innovation and engaged scholarship that is locally relevant and globally competitive. It goes without saying that considerations in our planning prioritise equitable access for women staff and students in the various international education opportunities.*"

In conclusion, internationalisation is a powerful tool for advancing women's careers and fostering gender transformation in higher education. From undergraduate exchanges to academic leadership, global engagement equips women with the confidence, skills, and networks needed to break barriers and achieve equity. Institutions must prioritise equitable access to these opportunities, ensuring that internationalisation becomes a driver of gender justice in higher education.

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Unleashing your ‘Zebracorn’ – a woman leader with a voice

PROF JEANETTE HEAD

A ‘Zebracorn’ is a woman leader who shatters her self-imposed glass ceiling to be uniquely and authentically different, crafting her own story despite her circumstances. In the realm of women in leadership, the ‘Zebracorn’ definition blends the powerful symbolism of a zebra, known for its adaptability and distinctive stripes signifying uniqueness, with the magic and rarity associated with a unicorn, symbolising innovation and individuality

Here are a few guidelines to unleashing your ‘Zebracorn’:

Quieten the critical inner voice

Women often experience feelings of inadequacy at home and work more than men, frequently falling short of their own high standards. Your critical inner voice consists of ingrained patterns of self-destructive thoughts. Consider which of these resonates with you: I must be perfect, I need to fit in, I must sacrifice to succeed, I have to do it alone, I must have it all to be successful, failure is not an option. These persistent thoughts form your internal dialogue and can impact every aspect of your life — affecting your self-esteem, confidence, personal relationships, and overall performance.

Drop your masks

Wearing masks can lead you to lose touch with your true identity, as you strive to meet others’ expectations rather than living authentically. Reflect on this: Am I wearing a mask? Am I hiding from myself, or concealing my true self from others? In my efforts to fulfill others’ desires, have I lost sight of my own identity — both as an individual and as a leader? What is the cost to me, in terms of anxiety, stress, burnout?

Live grounded in self-leadership

Root yourself in your values and purpose, allowing yourself to sway with life’s challenges. Focus on developing:

- **Self-Awareness:** Recognise who you are, imperfections and all.
- **Self-Confidence:** Accept that you are enough just as you are.
- **Self-Efficacy:** Trust in your ability to navigate life and lead — you’ve got this

Develop emotional agility

According to Susan David, emotional agility involves loosening up, calming down, and living with intention. It's about choosing how to respond to your emotional signals. Here's how to cultivate it:

- **Show Up:** Approach your thoughts, emotions, and behaviours with curiosity and kindness.
- **Step Out:** Detach and observe your emotions as they are — just thoughts, just feelings.
- **Walk Your WHY:** Calm your mind and focus on your core values. Use these values as a compass to guide your choices.
- **Move On:** Small, intentional adjustments rooted in your values can create significant change.

Be courageous, authentic, vulnerable

Be vulnerable — meaning not weak, but strong and courageous. As Brené Brown states, vulnerability is the courage to show up, even when you can't control the outcome. It encompasses the emotions we feel during times of uncertainty, risk, and emotional exposure. Vulnerability, courage, and authenticity are essential elements that define your leadership.

Navigating the system within which you lead

Don't allow organisational challenges, particularly those related to gender equality and women in leadership, to overshadow your identity as a leader. Use the guidelines above to stay grounded in who you are, enabling you to navigate the system and its obstacles. Embrace your unique strength and show up as the 'Zebracorn' leader you truly are!

Remember, who we are is how we lead.

Lead like a 'Zebracorn'

A 'Zebracorn' embodies a leader who navigates challenges with grace, embraces her uniqueness, and inspires others through an adaptive and visionary approach to leadership, fostering an inclusive and vibrant organisational ecosystem.

Lead by Example:

- Build trust by acknowledging your mistakes.
- Encourage your team to embrace their own missteps.
- Leave egos at the door.

Call It Out:

- Recognise and celebrate others' successes.

Be the Project You're Working On:

- Start small, find your comfort zone, and gradually build from there.
- Transformation won't happen overnight, but when it does, the results will be remarkable.

In closing:

- Allow yourself to be seen for who you truly are.
- Love wholeheartedly, even without guarantees.
- Practice gratitude and joy, especially in times of fear.
- Don't feel the need to know everything — ask for help.
- Embrace failure as a part of growth.
- Believe that you are enough.
- Be kinder to yourself.

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Systems and Process Change: Leading in Uncertain Times

DR SHARON MUNYAKA



The success of an intervention depends on the interior condition of the intervener.
– Bill O’Brien.



As a leader in these disrupted times, I find myself going back to this quote by O’Brien. What is being asked of me and the many leaders who are tasked with navigating complex systems and making decisions when the data is incomplete?

What is the system in which you are trying to intervene? What is the common goal that you are working towards?

I often find myself, in the world of work, supporting leaders at different points in their leadership journey. I often ask them what matters most deeply to them. For some the answer is readily available. For others, it is a question that they must ponder.

The positional title often gives us a clue as to what our work is, yet I have found over the years that there is something much bigger than us that demands our attention. For me, it is the ability to understand what matters to me, to be clear on the work I am tasked with and to understand how I can contribute to the system in which I work.

For example, education matters deeply to me and my greatest desire is for education systems that enable access and success for every person who wants to learn. Holding that intention allows me to navigate conversations within education systems with a lens that supports this intention.

What is being asked of you in the system that you operate in? What is your interior condition that will help support the work that lies ahead? What are the questions you need to be asking when you are tasked with being the formulator of policies in your system? What are the questions you need to be asking when you have the task of working with a limited budget?

In my view, the real deal for making lasting impact in your leadership journey starts with you. Take the time to understand yourself better. What matters most deeply to you? Why do you do the work you are doing? What impact are you wanting to leave behind?

For many of us, it takes a few attempts to get to these answers. For others, the answer is evolving. The idea is to get started. Clumsy as it may be, get started. I dare to dream of a day when leaders can look within and clarify what matters most deeply to them. For leaders to be idealistic and declare the kind of world they want to leave behind for future generations. For leaders to ask what it will take to get to their highest future possibilities.

I value the various tools and modalities that are available to us to get started on the journey. They give us a clue into the work we want to do and how we can intervene for impact.

Otto Scharma (Presencing Institute) in his extensive work on large-scale systems transformation and Theory U writes about the blind spot of leadership in helping leaders understand why they fail in dealing with the challenges of the present times. He explains that the blind spot is the lack of knowledge of that inner place from which we operate.

Understanding that inner place from which we operate requires leaders to shift the quality of their attention and intention. Ask yourself about the kind of conversations you are having within the systems in which you operate.

Are we merely confirming what we already know, and no new information emerges? Are we listening and paying attention to what is different. To notice these differences and disconfirm data, we will need to drop the voice of judgement that keeps us locked in the current way of operating. We will need to activate the curiosity that allows us to ask questions and engage with the different responses we receive.

Are we listening and engaging in conversations where we create space for dialogue to occur, spaces where we can suspend our cynicism and allow our open hearts to activate the compassion which helps us adjust the opinions we hold and create dialogue where many voices can emerge.

Lastly, Scharmer helps us to recognise what is possible when we access the highest future possibility that can emerge. At this level, a profound change has connected us to a deeper source of knowing which we are invited to explore. At this stage we need to let go of the voice of fear and step into courage. Courage helps us to move towards the highest future possibilities we have for ourselves and the systems within which we operate.

This journey of transforming ourselves and the systems in which we find ourselves, requires intentionality and understanding of what matters deeply to us. It requires curiosity, compassion and courage to meet that emerging future self.

As we continue with our individual and collective work in the systems in which we operate, step into courage and ask yourself what matters most deeply to me and what is this system asking of me?

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We're living in a world where we as women, we are so devalued, we have trained ourselves to think we don't deserve it, that we don't even deserve to take care of ourselves.... When I get up and work out... I want them [my daughters] to see a mother who loves them dearly... but who also invests in herself.

Michelle Obama



THE IMPORTANCE OF SELF-CARE AND WELLNESS FOR WOMEN

DR COLLEEN GAIL MOODLEY

Michelle Obama so aptly states this about women and self-care: *"Many of us, ... have a hard time putting ourselves on our own priority list, let alone at the top of it.... And that's what happens when it comes to our health as women. We are so busy giving and doing for others that we almost feel guilty to take that time out for ourselves."*⁷

Self-care is an important practice that improves overall well-being and enables individuals to be better leaders and enjoy fulfilling lives.

Understanding the concept of self-care

The term "self-care" describes the intentional and conscious efforts an individual takes to preserve or enhance their mental, emotional, and physical well-being. This may include having a healthy diet, frequently engaging in exercise, getting enough quality sleep, and taking up enjoyable pastimes. Most importantly, self-care is necessary to maintain the energy required to take care of ourselves and others and furthermore, to fulfil our everyday obligations.⁴

What are the benefits of self-care?

- **Improves Physical Health:** Participating in self-care practices such as not smoking tobacco nor consuming drugs or alcohol, ensuring a balanced diet and doing regular exercise can significantly improve physical health. Research indicates that these habits are able to reduce the risk of chronic diseases such as heart disease and diabetes while improving the immune system.^{1,4}
- **Improves Mental Well-Being:** Self-care activities like meditation, mindfulness or the simple act of taking time to relax reduce anxiety and stress. These practices help individuals to manage their mental health more effectively, resulting in less stress, improved mood and emotional resilience.^{2,5}
- **Boosts productivity:** When self-care is prioritised, individuals may often become more productive in their personal and work lives. Taking "time-out" through having short breaks and relaxing helps to prevent burnout and improve focus, making it easier to perform daily tasks.^{1,3}
- **Strengthens Relationships:** By investing time in self-care, healthier relationships are developed. When individuals feel good about themselves, they are more inclined to engage

positively with others. This reduces tension in relationships, and promotes stronger connections with family, spouses, partners and friends.^{2,3}

- **Promotes self-esteem:** Through regular engagement in self-care, self-esteem is improved, promoting the notion that one is valuable and deserves personal care and attention. Thus, practising self-care helps individuals feel more confident about themselves and more competent in their daily lives.^{4,5}

Common Misconceptions About Self-Care

Many individuals struggle to prioritise self-care because of some of the following misconceptions:

- **Self-care is something that one earns:** Taking care of oneself is a fundamental human right. Therefore, giving yourself some care does not require you to have worked a long, productive day, or be close to burnout, or be exhausted because of helping others. We all need time to reboot through self-care.
- **Self-care is indulgent or selfish:** This perception undermines the need for self-care, and its importance for maintaining an overall healthy, balanced life.²
- **Self-care requires significant financial investment or is expensive:** In reality, simple acts like taking a walk, listening to the birds chirping, enjoying some music, etc. cost little or nothing and can be equally effective.
- **Self-care requires significant time:** One does not need lots of time to practice effective self-care. Taking micro-moments of self-care – for example, enjoying a warm bath, short meditation periods, enjoying the sunshine or the outdoors, listening to a short motivational podcast, etc. can be incredibly beneficial without requiring time or resources.^{4,6}

Practical and simple strategies to incorporate self-care into your daily routine

- **Be intentional:** Develop a routine. Set aside specific times daily for self-care activities like morning meditation or evening gym.

- **Keep active:** Have at least 30 minutes of physical activity daily, such as gym, yoga or brisk walking.
- **Follow a good diet:** Fuel your body effectively through a balanced diet rich in fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and proteins.
- **Improve relationships:** Social connections are important for emotional well-being. Spend quality time with family and friends.
- **Practice mindfulness:** Apply mindfulness techniques such as breathing exercises or journaling to manage stress effectively.
- **Establish boundaries:** Setting clear boundaries is key to maintaining your energy levels and ensuring that you do not overcommit yourself. Learn to say “no”.

Conclusion

Women should learn to prioritise self-care as part of their daily lives as it is important for wellbeing. By acknowledging its importance and implementing easy self-care activities into their daily routines, women can improve their physical and mental health, strengthen their relationships and connections, and build self-esteem. Note that caring for oneself is an investment in your capacity to properly care for others, not a sign of selfishness.⁷

Furthermore, as female leaders, you are obligated not just to the people under your direction, but also to yourself. Putting your own health first means that you lead by example and foster an empowered and healthy culture in your workplaces. Taking care of yourself allows you to lead with resilience, compassion and clarity, and it also encourages others around you, to do the same.

To quote Michelle Obama:

“We’re living in a world where we as women, we are so devalued, we have trained ourselves to think we don’t deserve it, that we don’t even deserve to take care of ourselves.... When I get up and work out... I want them [my daughters] to see a mother who loves them dearly... but who also invests in herself.”⁷

Women who prioritise self-care not only flourish, but also serve as role models for those around them.

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Emerging Women Leaders





HERS-SA EMERGING WOMEN LEADERS PROGRAMME: SHAPING THE FUTURE OF HIGHER EDUCATION IN SOUTH AFRICA

EDITION 2024

SIMAMKELE NOMANA

The HERS-SA Emerging Women Leaders Programme brought together aspiring women leaders from across South Africa's higher education landscape in May 2024. The week-long programme in Cape Town, themed "Succession Planning for Sustainable Higher Education", aimed to equip women with the tools and knowledge necessary to thrive in higher education leadership positions.

The Emerging Women Leaders Programme (EWLP) is an initiative focused on developing women aspiring to leadership roles in South African higher education, both academics and support staff. Key speakers and facilitators of the programme included Prof Matete Madiba (University of the Western Cape), Evalancia Jones (University of the Free State), Prof Grace Khunou (University of South Africa), Dr Naziema Jappie (University of Cape Town), Jeanette Head (CEO of Boundless Wisdom), Prof Rachael Jesika Singh (University of Limpopo), Dr Kelebogile Choice Makhetha (Stellenbosch University), Prof Heidi Abrahamse (University of Johannesburg), Prof Nokuthula Sibiya (Mangosuthu University of Technology), Dr Sally Dzingwa (Central University of Technology, Free State), Nashira Abrahams (University of Cape Town), Dr Sindiwe Magona (University of the Western Cape), the HERS-SA team and board members, supported by universities invested in gender transformation.

The EWLP 2024 offered a comprehensive curriculum focused on various aspects of leadership development.

- **Day 1:** The focus was on self-assessment, connecting with other women through a speed networking exercise, and a keynote address by Prof Matete Madiba. She prompted women to envision themselves in 2030 and to begin to manifest their dreams.
- **Day 2:** Themed "Succession Planning for Sustainable Higher Education," sessions delved into self-leadership and self-mastery, along with a panel discussion on crafting institutional and personal succession plans. Jeanette Head, CEO of Boundless Women, presented a masterclass on Women in Leadership.
- **Day 3:** Presentations highlighted the career journeys of prominent women in support and academia, Dr Kelebogile Choice Makhetha and Prof Heidi Abrahamse, followed by parallel workshops tailored for academic and support service staff.

- **Day 4:** Crucial topics covered included institutional governance with Dr Sally Dzingwa, the ombud's office and navigating HR processes and managing conflict with Nashira Abrahams, and leadership lessons from Dr Sindiwe Magona, a well-respected and internationally recognised author.

The Emerging Women Leaders Programme addresses the critical need for increasing the level of female leadership in South African higher education. The initiative supports:

- **Succession Planning:** Universities require effective succession plans to ensure a smooth transition of leadership and maintain institutional stability.
- **Gender Transformation:** The programme aims to bridge the gender gap in leadership positions within South African universities.
- **Leadership Development:** Equipping women with the necessary skills and knowledge to excel as leaders is crucial for the advancement of higher education.
- **Role Models and Mentorship:** A platform where established women leaders share their experiences provides inspiration and guidance for aspiring leaders.
- **Sustainable Growth:** Investing in women's leadership development fosters a more inclusive and sustainable future for South African higher education.

The EWLP serves as a significant step towards achieving gender equality within South African higher education leadership. By providing targeted development opportunities and fostering a network of support, the programme empowers future women leaders who will shape a more inclusive and sustainable educational landscape for generations to come.

This initiative is a collaborative effort, with universities playing a crucial role by investing in the development of women leaders. The ongoing support of the HERS-SA team, board members, and universities committed to gender transformation ensures the continued success of the programme and paves the way for a brighter future for South African higher education.

Author Dr Sindiwe Magona offered a powerful conclusion: "Do not let your layers of wealth lie dead inside of you."

Workshop reflection: Career path journeys for support staff

DR MAMSIE MOTSHEKGA-SEBOLAI

I had the opportunity to present and facilitate sessions during the 2024 HERS-SA Academy and had joy interacting with women. My session with emerging women leaders in support was fascinating, as I have long been supportive of gender equity and advancement in the higher education space.

My approach to the session was to use coaching as a developmental tool. First, the Career Progression Framework was discussed, followed by SWOT (Strength, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats) analysis because I did not want to impose my solutions. I wanted the participants to make their own choices and find their own solutions.

I have been fortunate to have personally experienced the fruits of successful coaching and mentoring by public and private industry giants that had a positive impact throughout my career.

In my coaching approach, I agree with Jenny Rogers in “Coaching Skills: The Definitive Guide To Being A Coach” (2016:7), where she states that: “Coaching is the art of facilitating another person’s learning, development, well-being and performance. Coaching raises self-awareness and identifies choices. Through coaching people are able to find their own solutions, develop their own skills, and change their own attitudes and behaviours. The whole aim of coaching is to close the gap between people’s potential and their current state.”

Topics discussed in the session included:

- Career management
- Succession planning
- Talent management

We also addressed the support that institutions give to academics versus support staff.

The career progression model below was discussed.

CAREER PROGRESSION FRAMEWORK



The first part of the framework, “Reflect on your strengths and interests”, was discussed in full.

I have been in the development space for a long time. As I interact with women support staff in higher education, I have encountered some enrolling for degrees that would not address their developmental ambition or career mobility. From my observation, sometimes the reason for choosing the wrong programme is lack of proper advice. Some enrol because the institution offers study bursaries. It is important for participants to familiarise themselves with their institutions’ Succession Plan and Talent Management strategies. Both strategies might be of help to participants in identifying the right study choices.



Dreams can come true, but it is important to know that a career often entails detours and transitions, either by choice or by necessity.



I once met a woman who had enrolled for a PhD in Theology. She expected to be promoted after completion. However, the institution did not offer any theology-related programmes. She was frustrated that there was no possibility of career mobility. That necessitated the review of the institution's policy to ensure that staff members studied courses related to their jobs, except lower-level staff members.

This experience made me relook my approach to career development, from only mentoring and advising to coaching as well.

SWOT analysis opens an opportunity for self-assessment. The exercise prompted the participants to reflect, and to identify obstacles and barriers. The purpose of using SWOT analysis was to increase awareness of the factors to be considered when participants consider career path journeys and options in higher education.

The SWOT analysis addressed the following questions:

- What do you do well?
- What could you improve?
- What good opportunities are open to you?
- What trends, competition or weaknesses could harm or expose you?

Participants were given empty envelopes at the end of the workshop. They were asked to write their career dreams, actions and deadlines on a piece of paper and put it in the envelope addressed to themselves. They were encouraged to revisit their actions and deadlines regularly to track their progress over the next five years.

I want to create a network of the participants to discuss ongoing progress. It is important to identify career dreams and find solutions. During the SWOT analysis interaction, some participants mentioned that it was not an easy exercise to consciously identify their strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats, however they agreed that the exercise was valuable.

The exercise gave them the opportunity to look at themselves and share with other participants. They had to be honest with themselves and review their career paths and options in higher education based on internal and external factors. Dreams can come true, but it is important to know that a career often entails detours and transitions, either by choice or by necessity.

Reflections as an emerging scholar and a leader

DR VUYO MNTUYEDWA

When I was introduced to HERS-SA in 2022 by one of my professors, Prof Unice Ivala, I didn't realise how much my growth as an emerging scholar and researcher would be advanced and recognised.

To begin with, the programme creates a platform for participating in diverse initiatives, such as mentorship and the HERS-SA Academy. My involvement in mentorship has liberated me through understanding that you need to learn and develop yourself in the process. During my first experience as a mentee, I was assigned to the DVC Research, who was willing to guide and coach me where needed. With my skills and curiosity to explore the research space, I applied for a post-doc programme. I got it because, from the HERS-SA workshop, the development of young women leaders and emerging scholars is always emphasized.

Throughout the past three years of my relationship with HERS-SA, I have been an active member and always follow their events on social media. In 2023, I was fortunate to be invited to attend the HERS-SA Higher Education Women in Leadership awards. At that event, I learned that women in higher education are contributing substantially in diverse areas. These achievements must be celebrated. In 2024, I was also privileged to be part of the HERS-

SA Emerging Leaders' Programme, where Prof Matete Madiba, DVC Student Development at UWC, talked about how to craft your career and see yourself where you want to be in a few years as you are emerging. From that day, I decided to use the opportunities that HERS-SA presents.

The VC of MUT, Prof Nokuthula Sibiyi, focused her presentation on motivating people and being assertive in the workplace. She mentioned the challenges she has overcome in the process of branding herself as a woman in a higher education leadership position. She also mentioned the power of supporting and networking with other women. I have experienced this significantly with the Director of HERS-SA, Brightness Mangolothi, and the other women I have encountered through HERS. While being self-driven, it is also encouraging to have women in leadership like Prof Dina Burger and Prof Tembisa Ngqondi, who consistently open their doors to assist and empower other women in my institutions.

Through HERS-SA, I secured funding to be a post-doc visiting scholar at Magdeburg University in Germany, where I created international collaborations for my project. Such international collaborations are emphasised by my institutions and the British Academy programme,

and we are encouraged to grow our networks globally as emerging researchers. My collaborator, Prof Philipp Pohlenz, was enthusiastic about working with me as I co-presented in his seminars. In response to the kindness and welcome that I received from my collaborator, I presented the “ubuntu” philosophy to the students as a closure to my visit.

I remember seeing a post on LinkedIn inviting applications to an Oxford University programme and thinking about the international collaborations always mentioned in our institutions and in the HERS-SA programmes. I took a chance, because I did not know if obtaining a collaborator at such a prestigious university would be possible for an emerging researcher like me. Still, the teachings of HERS-SA came to my mind: *“As women, we must not fear challenges and miss any opportunity; we must make use of the opportunities that are presented to us.”* The power of networking and support from other women worldwide assisted in the success of my application to Oxford University.

Through participating in the HERS-SA programmes and being assisted by women who are serving in HERS-SA, I have achieved successful applications to the following:

- **The British Academy funds the British Academy Mentorship Programme**, a collaborative partnership between the UK and South Africa. The programme identifies young emerging scholars for mentoring, where they grow their research and publishing skills and gain international networking.
- **The AfOx Visiting Fellows Programme** at Oxford University enhances academic mobility and network building. The programme supports leading African scholars and researchers working in any academic discipline to focus on a project they choose while in Oxford. The AfOx Visiting Fellows Programme enables research leaders from institutions across Africa to make significant contributions to the intellectual life of Oxford while simultaneously gaining opportunities to engage with the range of knowledge and expertise in the University.

I am immensely proud of being part of such a programme that has shaped my career and opened doors for me within a short space of time. HERS-SA opens doors and a growth mindset to those willing to learn and be guided. The profound presentations from various women in higher education make the programme more diverse and exciting.

“HERS-SA opens doors and a growth mindset to those willing to learn and be guided.”

I have observed that everybody treats each other respectfully regardless of university affiliations. HERS-SA has that *Ubuntu*, where everyone feels equal and treated with respect and dignity. I will continue to mentor my fellow sisters so that the skills and knowledge I have gained from HERS-SA can be passed on in preparation for the next generation of leadership in higher education.



HERS-SA Academy

EDITION 2020

30

HERStory

HERS-SA Academy 2024

A Catalyst for Sustainable Higher Education Leadership

SIMAMKELE NOMANA

The HERS-SA Academy 2024, a premier event for women leaders in South African higher education, concluded with a resounding call for sustainable leadership and institutional development. The five-day gathering, hosted at the DoubleTree by Hilton Cape Town, brought together influential figures from universities across the country to discuss critical issues facing higher education and explore strategies for addressing them.

The theme “Succession Planning for Sustainable Higher Education” provided a framework for participants to delve into the challenges and opportunities facing higher education institutions. Key topics addressed during the Academy included leadership development, institutional culture, governance and policy, diversity and inclusion, and external factors impacting higher education.

The HERS-SA Academy 2024 featured a diverse range of speakers, including Prof Amanda Gouws, Dr Naomi Lumutenga, Ziyanda Mavumengwana, Prof Britta Thege, Dr Zethu Mkhize, Dr Thandi Mgwebi, Dr Masentle Lengane, Dr Nita Lawton-Misra, Prof Boitumelo Diale, Dr Paddy Pampallis, Prof Christa Grobler, Prof Anthea Rhoda, Dr Daisy Selematsela, Dr Menah Pratt, Vuyokazi Dwane, and Prof René Pellisier. These influential leaders shared their expertise and insights on various topics related to higher education leadership, succession planning, and sustainable development.

One of the highlights of the Academy was the keynote address by Prof Amanda Gouws, who explored the concept of feminist institutionalism. Prof Gouws argued that understanding the role of gender in shaping higher education institutions is essential for fostering inclusive and equitable environments. Her insights provided a valuable foundation for the subsequent discussions and workshops.

International speakers from countries like Germany and the UK offered valuable perspectives on global trends and best practices in higher education leadership. Their contributions enriched the Academy and provided participants with a broader understanding of the challenges and opportunities facing higher education institutions worldwide.

Succession planning emerged as a central theme throughout the Academy. Participants discussed the importance of identifying and developing future leaders to ensure the continuity and sustainability of their institutions. Strategies for fostering leadership development, including coaching, mentorship, and professional development programmes, were explored in detail.

The HERS-SA Academy 2024 featured a series of parallel workshops that provided participants with in-depth knowledge and skills on various aspects of higher education leadership. Topics included leadership development, succession planning strategies, diversity and inclusion



initiatives, and career management considerations. These workshops offered attendees the opportunity to engage in interactive discussions, learn from experts in the field, and develop practical skills that they could apply in their roles.

Diversity and inclusion were also key topics of discussion. The Academy emphasised the importance of creating inclusive environments that support the success of women from all backgrounds. Participants explored strategies for promoting diversity and inclusion within higher education institutions, including implementing equitable hiring practices and fostering a culture of respect and inclusivity. Notable speakers also included Ziyanda Mavumengwana, a clinical psychologist and author, who offered insights into self-care and resilience with her topic “You are okay, but stuff that happened to you wasn’t!”.

The Academy offered ample opportunities for networking

and collaboration among participants. Attendees had the chance to connect with peers from other institutions, share experiences, and build lasting, impactful relationships.

The Academy’s success was also made possible by the generous support of its main sponsor, the MTN SA Foundation. The Foundation’s commitment to social transformation and its support for women in leadership contributed significantly to the Academy’s impact.

In conclusion, the HERS-SA Academy 2024 was a resounding success. By addressing critical issues facing higher education and providing a platform for collaboration and learning, the event has the potential to shape the future of South African higher education. The insights and connections forged during the Academy can be leveraged to drive positive change and ensure the sustainability of higher education institutions for generations to come.

BRIDGING THE DIGITAL DIVIDE: MTN ongoing commitment to empowering South Africa's youth and women

During the month of August, we witnessed the impact of a progressive conference that aims to uplift women and empower them to advance themselves and ensure that we continue to advocate for female leadership in higher education, and the advancement of women across all sectors of society.

As MTN, we pride ourselves on being able to partner HERS-SA in this mission to bring about meaningful, measurable and sustainable change. The HERS-SA organisation shares our belief in the transformative power of education and leadership. We are inspired by HERS-SA's unwavering commitment to shaping a future where women's voices are not only heard but lead the charge toward positive change.

Everyone deserves the benefits of a modern, connected life and MTN recognises that technology and connectivity are vital for economic growth and societal progress in this digital age. The journey to sustainable development lies in investing in digital skills and creating opportunities for learning and innovation. MTN is laying the foundation for a more inclusive and prosperous future.

The challenges facing young people and women in education are significant, but through partnerships like this, we are making strides towards a brighter, more equitable future. MTN is committed to empowering women and youth, fostering innovation, and creating opportunities that will shape the next 30 years and beyond.

MTN SA is particularly proud of their efforts aimed at benefitting youth and disenfranchised women. By assisting these vulnerable people with the skills necessary to achieve their dreams, they are making tangible contributions to strengthening the socio-economic fabric of our country.

Here are a number of purpose driven initiatives they are championing that demonstrate our commitment to building a progressive society.

Digital skills for Digital jobs

In 2023 we launched the Digital Skills for Digital Jobs initiative, a program that combines digital qualifications with life and entrepreneurship skills and is focused on addressing the issue of youth unemployment in South Africa, and a total of 900 unemployed youths across all 9 provinces.

The training courses offered by the MTN SA Foundation in partnership with the EBL Institute and Datacomb Development Hub, are designed to be inclusive and are open to unemployed youth who are not enrolled in any formal education or training programmes. Students receive training that includes data analytics, cybersecurity, digital marketing, job readiness, basic end-computing, coding, robotics, artificial intelligence (AI) and other essential skills to prepare them for a future in the competitive digital economy.

Offerings include courses that range from the fundamentals of strategy, the Internet of Things (IoT), data and big data, cybersecurity, data analytics, and artificial intelligence to designing e-commerce websites and the requirements of the Protection of Personal Information Act (POPI).

Structured to also offer opportunities for those with entrepreneurial instincts, the programme includes modules on various facets of establishing a business, life skills, career, and personal development where programme graduates will receive their SETA accredited certificates.



MTN Women in Digital Business Challenge

To further empower South African women in the world of technology, the MTN SA Foundation has since 2022 been offering additional opportunities to ten female alumnae of the Digital Skills for Digital Jobs program to further develop their enterprises through the MTN Women in Digital Business Challenge. (WIDBC).

The WIDBC is the MTN Foundation's practical contribution to fostering scarce skills and encouraging women to enter the sector and inspire others to make sustained contributions to the communities in which we operate. These small enterprises are given the opportunity to strengthen and grow their businesses, through funding.

Through the challenge, MTN extend opportunities for women to benefit professionally through the innovative and entrepreneurial environment they will be creating for their growth. Many of these female-led businesses are focused on meeting community needs, therefore we believe that women can play a vital role in helping address the skills and employment issues that our nation faces.

Hopefully, their success will inspire others and encourage other women to start businesses or seek job opportunities within the IT sector.

MTM Skills Academy

MTN's commitment to build a progressive society is reflected in the purpose driven initiatives they are championing. In December 2023 MTN took a major step towards bridging the digital skills gap by launching the online MTN Skills Academy. This platform aims to equip young people with the necessary skills and knowledge to succeed in the digital age, providing a range of courses and training programmes in areas such as coding, web development, digital marketing, and data analytics. This is testament to MTN's commitment to empowering the next generation to succeed in the digital age.

The platform has been designed to be inclusive and accessible giving young people access to free digital career guidance, and digital and financial courses via the MTN web-based platform. The offering of the MTN Skills Academy has been developed with equipping unemployed youth with the necessary skills that upon completion to exit and launch

their own small businesses. The platform also leverages the strengths of partners, including PACE Career Centre (to provide comprehensive career guidance) and online learning provider Coursera (to provide basic, intermediate, and advanced technology and business skills training).

Free access to the MTN Skills Academy, ensures that youth can look forward to digital and financial career pathways such as Technology Consultant, Business Analyst, IT Project Manager, User Experience (UX) Designer, IT Support Specialist, Project Manager, Sales Operations Specialist, Solutions Architect, Cybersecurity professional, Front-end Developer, Social Media Marketer among others.

Twenty percent of the global population (1.5 billion people) have disabilities that exclude them from using devices to connect online. By integrating accessiBe into the Skills Academy platform, users can tailor their experience to meet their specific needs, whether they are sight impaired, hearing impaired, or experience other cognitive or neurodivergent challenges. Features such as a low-data usage allows for reach to marginalised communities and affords cost effectiveness.

Rands & Sense Programme –

In another cornerstone of MTN's youth empowerment initiatives, the MTN Foundation partnered with youth development leaders Primestars, The YouthStart Foundation and FNB as they launched the Rands & Sense Programme – an innovative new programme specifically designed to enhance financial literacy and to embed an entrepreneurship mindset that fosters success and wealth in high school learners.

Youth education is also a key component of the Rands & Sense Programme, which emphasises the importance of financial responsibility from an early age. By instilling these values in young South Africans, MTN is fostering a generation that is financially savvy and well prepared to meet the economic challenges of adulthood.

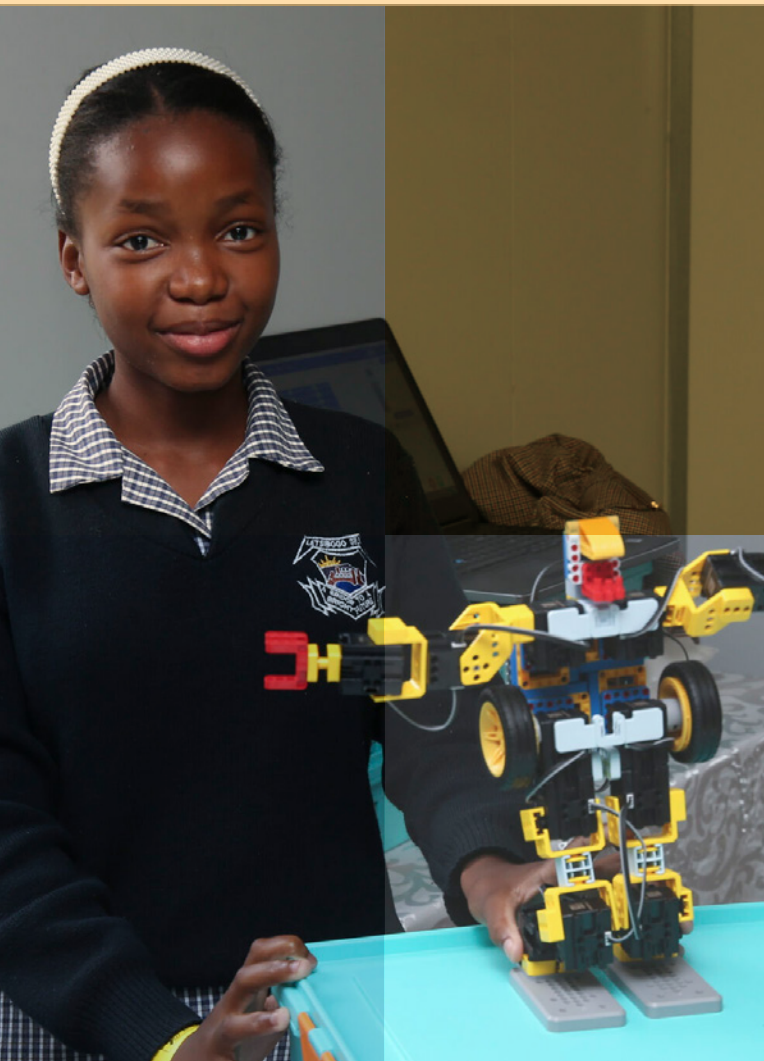
With an emphasis on practical financial management and entrepreneurship development skills, Rands & Sense is set to empower participants with essential financial skills that include budgeting, saving, investing and debt management. These skills will allow them to make informed financial decisions, manage their money effectively and navigate the complexities of modern economics.

Connecting every Child

MTN remains dedicated to building a future where the next generation will be better equipped and prepared to contribute meaningfully to a growing digital economy. In August, MTN SA, together with the Department of Basic Education (DBE) and Department of Communications and Digital Technologies (DCDT) launched a campaign aimed at bridging the digital divide, by bringing connectivity to children at underprivileged schools, called “Connecting Every Child”.

As part of our celebration of 30 years of MTN in South Africa, the Connecting Every Child campaign calls on individuals and businesses within the public and private sectors to donate 30,000 devices to bring connectivity and the promise of a brighter future to learners from over 600 schools in rural and remote areas across the country.

Donations and pledges towards this worthy cause can be done online via the ForGood website at:
<https://www.forgood.co.za/za/campaigns/connecting-every-child>



Looking Ahead:

As we look ahead, our focus is on building on this momentum and continuing to deliver on our promise of a more connected, inclusive, and prosperous future for all. The challenges facing young people and women in education are significant, but through partnerships like like the one we have with HERS-SA, , we are making strides towards a brighter, more equitable future.

The MTN SA Foundation is key to MTN's goal of fostering impactful and quantifiable development in underserved and rural communities across South Africa. Our activities leverage technology to propel social progress, especially in education and entrepreneurship, ensuring that all South Africans enjoy the benefits of a modern connected life.

However, we recognise that digital transformation needs to be inclusive. Hence why we are committed to initiatives that upskill youth and women, giving them the tools to meaningfully participate in our digital economy. We cannot create this change alone.

Through partnerships we are reminded of the power of collaboration and the impact we can achieve when we unite around a shared vision. As we continue to embark on this journey with HERS-SA, we are not just imagining a better future, we are building it!

HERS-SA HIGHER EDUCATION WOMEN LEADERS **AWARDS**



Celebrating Women's Leadership & Excellence in Higher Education – In collaboration with MTN SA Foundation

The highly anticipated HERS-SA Higher Education Women Leadership Awards 2024 took place on 29 August at the Two Oceans Aquarium in the V&A Waterfront in Cape Town. The venue was filled to capacity with 300 guests from higher education and other sectors, and friends and family members who came to celebrate with the finalists.

The programme director was effervescent speaker, entrepreneur and radio host Olwethu Nodada of Heart FM. Nodada guided attendees through a programme that included congratulatory messages, stunning performances, and the recognition of women who are making an impact in South African higher education.

The awards were officially opened by HERS-SA Chairperson Dr Soraya Beukes, who thanked guests for

supporting the 2024 HERS-SA Higher Education Women Leadership Awards.

In a thought-provoking address, guest speaker Prof Menah Pratt, Vice President for Strategic Affairs and Diversity and Professor of Education at Virginia Tech in the USA, invited the audience to have an "I can, and I will" attitude in everything related to their professional careers and personal lives. She quoted a friend who said that "there will always be roadblocks, don't let yourself be one". In her conclusion, she said, "You are ready! And so go get what is yours, destined for you, designed for you, go with some sassiness, some attitude..."

The MTN Foundation, as the collaborating event partner represented by Marco Alfino, spoke on the importance of partnering with HERS-SA.

Dr Mimmy Gondwe, Deputy Minister of Higher Education, provided a congratulatory message to HERS-SA and the award participants.

This year's HEWL Awards were an opportunity for HERS-SA to yet again recognise and celebrate women across all leadership roles in tertiary education, including academia, support and other ancillary roles.

Co-sponsors that made the 2024 Awards possible included: Old Mutual, Fundi, Home Owner Magazine, McDonalds South Africa, Chill Beverages, Igugu Lentokazi Wines, CPU, Havilah Beauty, L&L Traditions, Orisons and Zahara Country Girl guests and/or cash or in-kind sponsorships.

THE WINNERS OF THE 2024 HIGHER EDUCATION WOMEN LEADERSHIP AWARDS ARE:

Women in STEM

Prof Priscilla Baker, *University of Western Cape*

Emerging Young Woman Leader (Academic)

Dr Maurine Musie, *University of Pretoria*

Emerging Young Woman Leader (Support)

Masimbulele Buso, *Rhodes University*

Lifetime Achiever

Prof Refilwe Nancy Phaswana-Mafuya, *University of Johannesburg*

Women In Support Services

Zanobia Kanjee, *North-West University*

Trailblazer

Prof Refilwe Nancy Phaswana-Mafuya, *University of Johannesburg*

Women in Academic Administration

Prof Nalini Moodley, *Tshwane University of Technology*

Women in Humanities and Social Sciences

Prof Roula Inglesi-Lotz, *University of Pretoria*



This year, we wanted to acknowledge and celebrate the winners, finalists and our sponsorship partners. Without these partnerships, we would not have been able to empower and recognise the achievements of South African women in higher education who lead, inspire and motivate those in and outside their institutions to be more and do more. As HERS-SA, we re-affirm our commitment to helping our partners to create awareness around their brands and enhance their reputation while also creating engagement opportunities with key stakeholders within the higher education space and beyond.

HERS-SA Director Brightness Mangolotho expressed gratitude to the organisation and event partners for cash and in-kind sponsorships.





2024 HERS-SA HIGHER EDUCATION WOMEN LEADERS AWARDS WINNERS

20
24
EDITION

WINNER

PROF REFILWE PHASWANA-MAFUYA



TRAILBLAZER AND LIFETIME ACHIEVER

Prof Refilwe Phaswana-Mafuya is the Founding Director of the first ever SAMRC/UJ PACER and scarce-skills Professor of Epidemiology and Public Health, Faculty of Health Sciences, University of Johannesburg; Research Associate, Arnold School of Public Health, University of South Carolina; Visiting Scholar, Pan African University of Life and Earth Sciences Institute; and Queen Mother for Research and Development, Abeadze Kingdom, Central Ghana. She obtained the NSTF Senior Scientist Award for significant contribution to SET in terms of research and its outputs 15 years after obtaining a PhD

What it means to you to have made it to the Top 5 finalist?

It demonstrates that my contributions are valued, my ideas count, my voice matters and it is also a validation and testament of my hard work, determination, and perseverance

What inspires you?

My noble vision to make a meaningful difference by paying it forward, seeking to empower the next generation for the betterment of society, uplifting others as I rise as Bongani Mayosi once said.

What is your message for women in higher education?

You are game-changers, innovators, and leaders, Be courageous to stick to your career aspirations against all odds. Defy expected cultural norms and practices, challenge patriarchal tendencies and stereotypical views, make tough choices to change the status quo, take risks, push boundaries, exploit your potential to the fullest, surround yourself with mentors, and pay it forward by supporting the next generation to walk where you have walked for the sustenance of the knowledge enterprise and for greater impact.

What is your favourite quote?

"Our deepest fear is not that we are inadequate. Our deepest fear is that we are powerful beyond measure. It is our light, not our darkness, that most frightens us. We ask ourselves, who am I to be brilliant, gorgeous, talented and fabulous?" Marianne Williamson



Our deepest fear is not that we are inadequate. Our deepest fear is that we are powerful beyond measure. It is our light, not our darkness, that most frightens us. We ask ourselves, who am I to be brilliant, gorgeous, talented and fabulous?

Marianne Williamson



PROF PRISCILLA GLORIA LORRAINE BAKER

WINNER

WOMEN IN SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY, ENGINEERING, AND MATHEMATICS (STEM)

Professor Priscilla Baker is Director of the Electrochemical Sensors node of the Nano-micro manufacturing facility (NMMF) hosted at UWC. She is a senior professor of Chemistry and currently NRF B-rated scientist. In 2018 Prof Baker was awarded the DSI/NRF South African Research Chair (SARChI) in Analytical Systems and Processes for Priority and Emerging Contaminants. In 2020, she was appointed as Fellow in Residence at CY Cergy Paris University on the Paris-Seine Initiative for Excellence. Baker seeks to combine her expertise in nanomaterials engineering and high-end analytical instrumentation to advance efficient technological solutions. Prof Baker remains a prolific author and has supervised 35 PhD graduates to date, all of whom occupy leadership positions in public and private sector. She continues to advance the public understanding and implementation of electro-analytical chemistry through community engagements and media interaction on both radio and television. She is well recognised internationally as a scientific leader, plenary speaker, prolific author and knowledge advocate for science and technology.

What it means to you to have made it to the Top 5 finalist?

Excellence in research and education is my life's calling. This recognition by HERSA amplifies the importance of my personal motto, to the students and communities I mentor and train. The value of this recognition will keep appreciating for many years to come, as each generation of young researchers, occupy their space as excellent scientists.

What inspires you?

The illumination in the minds of young researchers when I sit across the mentorship table with them, never ceases to bring joy to my own life. Unlocking their potential and strengthening their own belief in what they can achieve whilst building the integrity of excellence, is a magical journey. We never forget the struggles of the past and the communities we come from, but we are ready to be heard and to embrace the challenges of what lies ahead.

What is your message for women in higher education?

Find your own strength! We have all been empowered with a purpose and strength that ultimately serves to glorify and bring honour to our God and Saviour. Learn from others but also develop the strength and conviction to be the wonder that you have been created to be.

What is your favourite quote?

Some are born great, some achieve greatness, and some have greatness thrust upon them. William Shakespeare



“

Some are born great, some achieve greatness, and some have greatness thrust upon them.

William Shakespeare

”

WINNER

PROFESSOR NALINI MOODLEY



WOMEN IN ACADEMIC ADMINISTRATION

Executive Dean, Professor Nalini Moodley, has led the Faculty of Arts and Design since 2018 with a steely focus on social transformation through creativity. Under her leadership, the faculty will now host its sixth Arts Festival and the Inaugural International Conference on Artivism in 2024. As an activist leader, she earned a Research Niche Area award for addressing Gender-Based Violence through Artivism, was appointed by Senate to Chair a GBV task team at TUT and was the Women Leadership Forum Chair for five years. Professor Moodley champions women’s empowerment in higher education, holds a PhD from the University of KwaZulu-Natal, an MBA on women’s leadership in HE and is a dancer and dance teacher.

What it means to you to have made it to the Top 5 finalist?

“It is a singular honour to be recognised on this national platform. Thank You! To be amongst the top 5 finalists gives me the indescribable impetus to push further into areas of untapped potential. While I am steadfastly working on affording my staff and students the best possible experiences I am humbled to be seen and acknowledged for this work. This work is my life - I live and breathe my foci - this is certainly not my job but a life that has been designed to ensure my purpose is realised. I am grateful to be recognised after many years of dedicated service to the higher education sector in South Africa. I am deeply honoured.”

What inspires you?

Creativity is my biggest inspiration. I have the greatest respect for creative ideas and untapped potential in finding solutions that lead to a more just and safer world. I am constantly seeking out strategies that have not yet been explored such as how “artivism can create a better world for all” at universities and for graduate students. Creative people inspire me. Discovery which emerges from creative struggles, is the driving force that keeps me moving towards innovation.

What is your message for women in higher education?

Globally, women throughout the higher education sector face ongoing systemic and cultural biases, regardless of their position. However, as a collective, women must continue to advocate for themselves and ensure that there is a support system to help steward their careers. As you navigate the challenges remember that your strength and perseverance are paving the way for future generations. Your courageous, respectful and focused leadership is vital in creating more inclusive and equitable academic environments. So, continue to inspire, innovate, and uplift all those around you, for it is only together, that we can transform the landscape of higher education.

What is your favourite quote?

I have two:
“Set a goal so big that you can’t achieve it until you grow into the person who can.” Dokeshi no michi
“Creativity is intelligence having fun.” Albert Einstein



Set a goal so big that you can’t achieve it until you grow into the person who can.



Dokeshi no michi

ZANOBIA KANJEE

WINNER

WOMEN IN SUPPORT SERVICES (WISS)

A dedicated professional with diverse skills in management, projects and technology support, specialising in education technology. Zanobia excels at delivering innovative solutions and empowering support teams and end-users. An optimistic advocate for continuous improvement, she believes in enhancing processes through technology. Zanobia has been recognised for her contributions with an innovation award and is committed to personal growth, currently pursuing her MBA. She serves on the Executive Committee of North-West University’s Unit for Distance Learning, heads the e-Learning team and is a key member of the NWU LMS project team, with an upcoming collaboration with the University of Twente.

What it means to you to have made it to the Top 5 finalist?

“I am truly honoured to be selected as a top 5 finalist for the Women in Support Services (WISS) category. This recognition reaffirms my dedication and perseverance throughout the years and motivates me to continue making a positive impact in my field. I feel humbled to be acknowledged as a woman in leadership and to contribute to the lives of the stakeholders I work with. I hope to inspire my team, peers and other women in higher education, to see that hard work and dedication truly pay off, encouraging all of us to strive for excellence together.”

What inspires you?

That moment, after an upskilling, coaching or training session, when the stakeholder’s face lights up, having had an “aha! moment”... is truly inspiring and heartwarming. It is this very special moment, where deep within me, I feel a sense of contentment and immense satisfaction - knowing I have made a difference. These “moments” drive me to work harder and strive to impact the lives of those we serve. Witnessing stakeholders acquire new skills and implement them with confidence is a profound source of joy and inspiration for me.

What is your message for women in higher education?

Make a difference—because we can! Share your skills, knowledge, and experiences to inspire others, especially young women to strive for excellence in their fields. Engage in open and honest discussions with your teams and collaborators; never hesitate to express your thoughts or challenge the status quo. You might find that your insights resonate with others who share similar concerns but may not feel empowered to speak up. Stay true to yourself! Lastly, prioritize ethics and transparency in all your decisions and actions, as they are essential to building trust and fostering positive change.

What is your favourite quote?

“As we work to create light for others, we naturally light our own way.” — Mary Anne Radmacher

I truly love this quote because it emphasizes how serving others leads to our own fulfilment and growth. Making a difference in someone else’s life can create a “chain reaction,” inspiring them to do the same for others. In a support environment, “lighting the way for others” is essential; it should be seen not just as a job, but as an art form that touches lives while allowing us to learn and grow in the process.”



As we work to create light for others, we naturally light our own way.

Mary Anne Radmacher



WINNER

PROF ROULA INGLESİ-LOTZ



WOMEN IN HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCES

Professor Roula Inglesi-Lotz is a distinguished scholar at the University of Pretoria’s Department of Economics, heading the Energy Economics Unit and leading research for the UNDP’s Just Energy Transition platform. Her research focuses on economic impacts of energy consumption and generation methods, reflected in over 100 academic papers and numerous contributions to books and reports. She holds editorial roles in international journals and serves as Vice President for Membership and Affiliate Relations at the International Association for Energy Economics. Previously, she was President of the South African Association for Energy Economics, recognized with the Women in Science prize and NRF C1 rating.

What it means to you to have made it to the Top 5 finalist?

Making it to the Top 5 finalist for the HERS-SA Higher Education Women Leaders Awards in the category of Women in Humanities and Social Sciences is a profound honour. It reflects not only the recognition of my work by esteemed peers but also the importance of advancing knowledge and fostering equitable, sustainable solutions in economics, and especially energy economics. This acknowledgment motivates me to continue my efforts in creating impactful research, nurturing future leaders, and contributing to the transformation of higher education.

What inspires you?

What inspires me profoundly are my students and my children. Observing my students’ curiosity and their relentless pursuit of knowledge fills me with hope and motivation. For example, witnessing a student develop a groundbreaking research project on renewable energy solutions or actively engage in policy discussions showcases the potential and passion of the younger generation. Similarly, my children’s unbounded creativity and eagerness to learn remind me daily of the boundless possibilities that lie ahead. Their perspectives and questions often spark new ideas and drive me to explore innovative solutions in academia and economics. Their journeys inspire me to push the boundaries of what is possible and to continue striving for a more sustainable and equitable future.

What is your message for women in higher education?

To all women in higher education: believe in your potential and the power of your voice. Embrace opportunities to lead, innovate, and inspire others. The path may be challenging, but your contributions are invaluable in shaping a more inclusive and equitable academic landscape. Support one another, celebrate each other’s successes, fix each other’s crowns, and continue to break barriers for future generations.

What is your favourite quote?

One of my favourite quotes is by Maya Angelou’s. “If you don’t like something, change it. If you can’t change it, change your attitude,” resonates deeply with me. It embodies the essence of resilience and adaptability, two qualities that are essential in both personal and professional life. This quote reminds me that while we may not always have control over external circumstances, we do have the power to change our perspectives and reactions. It encourages proactive problem-solving and a positive mindset, which are crucial in navigating the challenges of academia and economics. This wisdom guides me to continuously seek improvement and maintain a constructive outlook, regardless of the obstacles I face.



If you don’t like something, change it. If you can’t change it, change your attitude.

Maya Angelou



MASIMBULELE BUSO TSHONGWENI

WINNER

EMERGING YOUNG WOMEN LEADERS (SUPPORT)

I am a HPCSA registered Senior Counselling Psychologist, I have extensive experience in GBV response and prevention strategies. I held the position of Manager, Anti-Harassment, Discrimination and Gender Harm at Rhodes University. I am also the Managing Director of the Uyinene Mrwetyana Foundation which is a GBV centred NGO. My aim is to help foster an environment that holistically develops young people into well rounded individuals, that are proactive in taking care of their spiritual, psychological, mental, social, physical, and academic wellbeing. I am passionate about student care and support, and I have been privileged enough to work with different students from all backgrounds. To do my work is an honour.

What it means to you to have made it to the Top 5 finalist?

Having been selected to be a finalist, especially in this category has been so humbling for me. It is a significant achievement to be recognised for such an esteemed award, I am very honoured. We do the work that we do for recognition, but today, I feel a sense of validation. It has motivated me to take a step back and reflect on my commitment to student care and student wellness.

What inspires you?

What inspires me is the concept of servant leadership. I am passionate about helping and capacitating young people to becoming the best version of themselves. I am inspired by women in leadership, that have given their life's purpose to paving the way for us and for all the young women leaders who will succeed them. I am also inspired by the immense growth potential that our country has, and the privilege to contribute to that growth.

What is your message for women in higher education?

May you always remember your "why", your purpose and may that always keep you committed to reaching your goals. Your activism, your leadership and your voice are needed in whichever form it comes in. May you continue breaking barriers, you are an inspiration.

What is your favourite quote?

"We are more powerful when we empower each other"- Unknown that touches lives while allowing us to learn and grow in the process."



We are more powerful when we empower each other.

Unknown



WINNER

DR MAURINE ROFHIWA MUSIE



EMERGING YOUNG WOMEN LEADERS (ACADEMIC)

Dr Maurine Rofhiwa Musie is an Advanced Midwifery specialist and Senior lecturer at the University of Pretoria. She is the youngest PhD recipient in the Nursing Department endorsed by National Research Foundation (NRF). She has held leadership positions Board of Director Secretary of Sigma Theta Tau International (STTI). African regional Lead head of the Nursing Now global committee (NNC) in collaboration with Burnett trust of Nursing and World Health Organization (WHO). As academic, she is leading project on innovative technology-informed continuing professional development (CPD) for midwifery educators to manage obstetrical emergencies and complications, aligned to the Sustainable developmental goals (SDGs). Maurine is Finalist Woman in Education and training by Woman of stature South Africa (WOSA) and received award for Sunday World Unsung hero, Youth is Science, Tech and Innovation. Maurine serves on Editorial reviewers for international journals BMC pregnancy and childbirth and national journals.

What it means to you to have made it to the Top 5 finalist?

This nomination for the emerging young women leaders (Academia) attests to my academic achievements, leadership journey and commitment to inspiring change and innovation within Higher education. It serves as a testament to remain committed as a role model towards supporting the advancement of women in higher education.

What inspires you?

“I am inspired by multiple reasons. Firstly, from my humble beginnings as a village young woman having to navigate a difficult path in Academia, Higher education has long been a challenging field, especially for women but still able to succeed is for me inspiration to motivate others and believe in others. My second inspiration is my midwifery students at the University of Pretoria. I strongly believe in the transformative power of education. Currently the maternal mortality rates undermine the country’s ability to reach the sustainable developmental goals to ensure “Good health and wellbeing”. My role as an educator allows me to mentor and educate future midwives to provide high quality care to improve the maternal and neonatal health outcomes by incorporating innovative strategies and advocating for better healthcare. I am dedicated to fostering a supportive and inclusive environment for both my students and the communities I serve. My passion for making a difference in maternal and neonatal health continues to drive my impactful work in academia and beyond. Lastly, I draw inspiration from family and my three-year-old daughter called murunwa “which means angel”, she constantly reminds and motivates me to excel in my academic endeavours despite the challenges experienced. Another inspiration is from my mentors, who provides guidance, sharing their wisdom and experience to navigate the complexities of academia.”

What is your message for women in higher education?

My message is for young women in Higher education: Success in academia is not a solitary journey. Foster a culture of collaboration and mentorship. Support your peers, mentor students, and build networks that uplift and empower others. “We rise by lifting others”. By working together, we can create a more inclusive and supportive academic environment.

What is your favourite quote?

“For I know the plans I have for you,’ declares the Lord, ‘plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you a hope and a future.” — Jeremiah 29:11



If For I know the plans I have for you,’ declares the Lord, ‘plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you a hope and a future.

Jeremiah 29:11





Mentorship and Coaching

The Way of Transformation: Coaching for Leadership Maturity

DR PADDY PAMPALLIS

Orientation

Everything depends on the way we experience, think and interpret - and how we harness our ability and potential to see, hear and sense - incoming information/data from a range of sources: the environment, our culture, our relationships, our context, our organisation, etc.

That incoming information filters through our own inherent capabilities of sense-making mixed with all the filters and biases of our perceptions. As we grow in our awareness, we also become aware of these perceptions and interpretations that come from inside of us. It is at this place of personal intersectionality that our summations are made, and this meaning then becomes our truth.

As leaders, it is useful to note that we all believe we have the truth, especially if we have been 'trained' into our wonderful expertise in the many fields we occupy. We will so often believe that there is sufficient data available to us to 'prove' our, or the truth. And others may even agree with us!

Yet, as we shift into a discerning leadership, it can be useful to take a moment here and ask ourselves with a sense of wonder and curiosity: What has enabled us to 'know we have a truth' AND can we invite in the idea that the possibility of a larger truth is also relevant?

In this way we can begin to consider the many 'true parts of a greater whole'. If we want to invite others into a truly generative discourse and expand our own capacity to hold and manage more, we need to hone the capability to utilise our own sense-making not as fact - but as a source of data with which to move forward. That is to be in a relationship with and to a broader meaning of learning and knowing.

In the fast-changing world in which we live, where data exchange is moving at monumental speeds, and where we have to include the new intelligence system of AI in our many intelligences, learning and letting go, is a constant. As we are called to embrace even wider, deeper systems of knowledge as we walk (not run) along this path of constant change, our evolution is going to depend upon our capabilities and capacities of inner awareness. This, so that we can become more conscious, enlivened, at ease within relationship, and lean in and onto each other.

Change and Transformation

We often make the error of calling 'change' and 'transformation' the same thing. How does the leader manage this and help others to manage or, dare we say, even thrive through all the changes? And when and how do we trans-form: become that which is far more encompassing than what was before, that comes with a whole new shift in the way we see the world?

Change is constant. Nothing stays the same in the living system of which we are all part - unless of course we are dead, and then who knows?

Transformation - a word saddled with many meanings - is, for a leader, the capability to take on learning in ever widening circles of meaning-making, so that we are able to tell our story of who we are, what we do and what we know from a perspective that is more inclusive and discerning than the one before. What we see in our early leadership years and how we manage self, others, cultures, environment, systems, eco-systems, is related to our capacities and our experience. As we allow learning to filter in, we grow our internal capacities to see more, feel more, be more, and even - but not necessarily - do more.

Transformation is often referred to as a process that changes something from that to that. It is often muddled with change. Inner transformation occurs when we are open to learning - not only taking in information but re-structuring that information in ways that enable ever expanding perspectives to be taken on a situation, or to influence a situation.

Leadership Coaching is one way to enable this inner world to ask curious questions of the self, that person or persona that has a particular story about who we should be. Once we can see that some of our structures and patterns are not serving us, while others may be, we can allow that insight to change us to become more resourceful, more open, more able, and more relational.

Core to teaming is this ability to transcend some earlier belief systems to include the perspectives of others, and new information, so that we can shift from a form that is the earlier self to another, more inclusive and less defended self.

Leadership maturity refers to the growth we do from the inside out as leaders. It enables and frees us from the limited constructs of a particular 'truth' of something, to invite and dialogue with many 'truths' and to truly discern what is important, or not, for the current situation we are in.

How can mentoring play a crucial role in advancing gender transformation

PROF BERNADINE IDOWU

Gender transformation addresses the root causes of gender inequality, allowing for more equitable systems; for example by providing opportunities for leadership and education, allowing everyone to fulfil their full potential regardless of their gender.^{1,2}

Mentoring can play a crucial role in advancing gender transformation by fostering a supportive and inclusive environment.³

Mentoring is a collaborative, mutually beneficial partnership between a mentor who possesses greater skills, knowledge and experience, and a less experienced person, the mentee, who is looking to increase his or her skills, knowledge and experience. The mentor and mentee have to work together to determine what the partnership aims to achieve and how it will be achieved. They are both responsible for its success, and they can also learn from each other.

I am the first to say, I prefer informal mentoring over a formal mentoring programme. We all have busy lives, and some people may perceive a formal mentoring programme as a barrier to day-to-day activities and not sign up for fear of not being able to commit the time. This can result in not fully appreciating the benefits to both the mentee and mentor. If unsure, I would suggest starting off informally and then, by default, notice the benefits which will lead into monthly sessions and, as if by magic, a formal mentoring programme happens.

I wrote an article in Times Higher Education in September 2022, "*As a black, female student, I wish I'd had a peer-mentoring scheme*".⁴ When I was an undergraduate student at King's College London (KCL), mentoring and certainly networking was not a thing. Though I felt a sense of pride in being part of this incredible institution, I struggled with my confidence and sense of belonging at the university. At times I felt isolated, due to being one of just five black students on

our course of approximately 100 students and definitely not seeing representation in the lecturers teaching us.

Mentoring can be very impactful in increasing one's confidence and especially through networking. Having a supportive environment by expanding your professional network supports career progression. Women tend to have smaller networks compared to men, and mentoring can most certainly bridge this gap by connecting them with influential leaders and peers.³

Mentoring also provides inspirational role models. Seeing someone who is the same gender as you in a leadership position provides the confidence to know that you can be in that position too. I can testify what it meant to me seeing Professor Funmi Olonisakin, who happens to be a proud Nigerian like myself, becoming the first black female professor at KCL in 2016.⁵

Prof Olonisakin became my mentor in March 2017, and remains my mentor to the present day. She is currently the Vice President (International, Engagement & Service) of KCL and I am a full professor. I came into post on 1 September 2024, though I found out the fantastic news I had met the criteria to be promoted to a full professor in July 2024.

Mentoring can also lead to organisational change by increasing awareness and sensitivity towards gender issues among all employees.⁶ Having a very supportive Vice Chancellor and Provost who is prepared to listen can make the difference.

I am a proud employee of the University of West London, as I share in my article "*A personal reflection upon navigating into a senior role*".⁷ I am seen, heard and supported in my role by the senior leadership team, I come to work as my authentic self, and I know I am one of the lucky ones, but I do wish this was the norm for everyone!

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1. Scaling-out gender transformation for climate change | UNW WRD Knowledge Hub (unwomen.org)
 2. Gender transformative change - Practical Action
 3. Gender-parity-Mentoring-as-part-of-creating-an-enabling-environment-en.pdf (unwomen.org)
 4. As a black student, I wish I'd had a peer mentor | THE Campus Learn, Share, Connect (timeshighereducation.com)
 5. 'Funmi Olonisakin | King's College London (kcl.ac.uk)
 6. Mentoring for gender equality and organisational change | Emerald Insight
 7. Frontiers | A personal reflection upon navigating into a senior academic role (frontiersin.org)

Women Empowerment, Coaching and Mentorship

DR KELEBOGILE CHOICE MAKHETHA

Giving women opportunities for further development and empowerment, and providing the necessary support, is such a fulfilling and powerful journey.

Very early in my career, I realised that there are women colleagues who spend years working without being entrusted with challenging roles which stretch their minds and capabilities, and no opportunities to use their ideas and creativity. Sadly, some of these women end up going into retirement without reaching their highest potential and without feeling the gratitude of milestones achieved.

Giving women responsibilities and authority to lead, explore, re-imagine and test ideas, in the process learning to trust themselves and their knowledge, experience and ideas, is a powerful way to honour them. This gives them a space to share their wealth of knowledge, experience and expertise and to learn from their own mistakes, trusting the process and gaining the confidence to lead with great authenticity.

I had a wonderful opportunity of working with highly gifted women with expertise in their fields of work at Stellenbosch University (SU). When an opportunity came to give many of them a platform to showcase their diverse leadership styles while they learnt new skills, I grabbed the moment. I gave a team of women the confidence to lead task teams of the University's Institutional Anti-GBV strategic initiative.

At the end of the six months, when this initiative was completed, I challenged more women leaders to serve as task team leaders for another initiative, this time the Campus/Res Life and Culture Review within the Division Student Affairs, consisting of about 13 task teams.

These were exceptionally and unbelievably enriching opportunities.

In both cases, I carefully selected colleagues who would benefit from being pushed out of their comfort zones, giving them a chance to face their fears, self-doubt and self-sabotage. I planned intentionally how I was going to provide support to each task team leader, for them to be successful throughout the period of the initiative. I wanted them to enjoy the journey as well and feel great about themselves.

I supported these women through different processes, creating time to talk in one-on-one meetings about their individual challenges as they led task teams. I also arranged team sessions for the task team leaders to share their experiences and different approaches to addressing challenging issues. I ensured that they created a support system for one another and, in the long term, a network to depend on for partnership in other initiatives and to bounce ideas.

Giving women exposure and making a commitment to remove barriers for them to succeed is essential. At one university where I worked, the HR policy of that time did not allow Residence Heads to go to conferences and other personal development events outside the institution, nationally or internationally. I had a problem with that policy because it was hampering the development of women leaders who were expected to lead the experiential learning and co-curriculum offerings beyond the classroom. These were women leaders who needed to empower themselves further, meet their peers at other universities locally and internationally and share their expertise and different practices, which could benefit other institutions as well.

I challenged the policy and wrote letters motivating why it was important for these women leaders to fly higher and further, for their own development and the advancement of the work of the university. I took risks to ensure that these women felt valued. Over the following years, they just amazed me with their growth, confidence and ownership of their field of work. I left that institution with a broad smile and a dancing heart, knowing that there were women leaders who were going to continue opening doors for other generations of women to prosper.

When funding is possible and available, why say “no” to exceptional opportunities to empower women leaders? I made a commitment to say “yes” as often as possible, then worked with colleagues to put a plan into place for work to continue seamlessly (closing gaps) in the absence of a colleague.

Thinking back to my own journey of leadership, I had the blessing of working with Prof Jonathan Jansen at the University of the Free State (UFS). One morning, I approached him and shared my dream to be on the American Council on Education (ACE) Fellows Programme. I requested that, somewhere during his term of office as Rector and Vice-Chancellor, I would appreciate the opportunity. He smiled and left. To my surprise, early the next morning Prof Jansen called and gave me the application form to complete. I was amazed that he heard the eagerness in my heart and treated my request for further development with serious urgency. He made it possible and removed barriers, including additional costs, along the way.

He did not just support me, but created opportunities for many other women leaders, opening doors for them to become Professors in their fields of expertise. His default answer was “yes”, encouraging women to be excited about their career journeys and making them feel that it’s possible. His contribution towards women empowerment continues to this day.

It is such a fulfilling journey to give other women opportunities and then walk the path with them, always ready to listen, to share experiences and advice where necessary. On this journey, it’s important to be human, to create space for vulnerability, and show humility and appreciation for being part of the journey.



When funding is possible and available, why say “no” to exceptional opportunities to empower women leaders? I made a commitment to say “yes” as often as possible, then worked with colleagues to put a plan into place for work to continue seamlessly (closing gaps) in the absence of a colleague.



Collaborations

ENGAGEMENT WITH INDIA: BUILDING BRIDGES

DR SORAYA BEUKES

Realising the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of the United Nations Agenda 2030 requires an accelerated approach. At HERS-SA, we are fully committed to advancing all these goals in the higher education context, particularly SDG 5 which focuses on gender equality and SDG 17 which emphasises partnerships in pursuit of the goals. Through collaboration of academic and industry partners, we seek to raise awareness and advocate for the advancement of women’s empowerment in higher education leadership.

I represented HERS-SA on a visit to India in May 2024 to learn from other institutions, share our learnings, and explore potential partnerships and collaborations.

BRICS Round Table at Pandit Deendayal Energy University (PDEU), Ahmedabad

In the true spirit of SDG17 partnership, the BRICS/DUT Research Institute invited HERS-SA to present at a BRICS+ round table held at PDEU. The round table focused on “Energy Resilience and Sustainability in BRICS+ Nations - A Policy Analysis Perspective”.

This collaboration provided HERS-SA an excellent opportunity to participate in the policy discussion surrounding SDGs 7 and 13 on affordable clean energy and climate action. I presented on the “Financial Implications of Just Energy Transition for BRICS+ Countries”. The discussion addressed both external and domestic factors driving the clean energy transition, including international climate commitments, the declining costs of renewables, domestic renewable initiatives to enhance energy efficiency, and reductions in air pollution. Presenters from various BRICS+ nations, including India, South Africa, Ethiopia, Dubai and Russia, contributed to the dialogue on policy development related to energy efficiency.



Meetings with Women’s Colleges of the University of Delhi, New Delhi

After my successful participation in the BRICS Round Table, I travelled to New Delhi to engage with three esteemed women’s colleges at the University of Delhi. My meetings with these institutions aimed to explore potential partnerships for collaboration and to align on our shared objectives of gender equality and women’s empowerment. The women at these colleges embody the principles of leadership and gender equality through their diverse programmes, all while maintaining a unified vision of promoting women on a global scale.

Lady Shri Ram College for Women – Delhi University (LSR-DU)

Established in 1956, the LSR-DU is “committed to nurturing and creating women who are equipped to be world citizens. The students are empowered with professional competence,



and ability to assume positions of leadership with ease". The mission of LSR is to "Empower women to assume leadership roles in a globalised world". The College upholds the values of social justice, diversity and inclusiveness.

Productive discussions took place at LSR-DU with Principal Dr Suman Sharma and Prof Gopa Sabharwal, aligning on issues of gender equity and SDG 17 on partnerships. In this regard, we had discussions on exchanging knowledge on our joint areas of focus in gender equality and women's empowerment in higher education. Our discussions ended with a promise of collaboration through a memorandum of understanding (MOU).

Miranda House – Delhi University (MH-DU)

MH-DU was established in 1948 at the dawn of India's independence to provide women with higher education so as to enjoy equal opportunities with men in professional and public fields.

In the words of Madame Principal Prof Bijayalaxmi Nanda: "The Miranda House is committed to the values of providing excellence in liberal education for generations of women who aspire for the stars as alma mater par excellence". The MH-DU envisions a world where women have their rightful place and are given due recognition as leaders to reach top positions in all sectors.

In-depth discussions with Principal Prof Nanda, Vice-Principal Prof Manjari K Srivastava and Prof Hena Singh on issues of women's empowerment led to the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between HERS-SA and Miranda House. This paves the way for future collaborations in the realm of workshops, conferences, joint research and exchange programmes. In realising this, HERS-SA envisions international representation at our Emerging Women Leaders Academy, HERS-SA Women Leadership Academy and HERS-SA Awards.

In my pursuit of raising awareness on the SDGs, I was offered an adjunct professorship to lecture on the realisation of these goals.

We ended our interaction with Madame Principal arranging for a tree planting ceremony in my name, towards realising SDGs 13 and 15 on climate action and life on land.

Jesus and Mary College (JMC) – Delhi University

Established in 1968, JMC is dedicated to its mission of "accompanying and mentoring our students to grow into women of competence, compassion, conscience, and empowerment, equipped with ignited minds and hearts to pursue the transformation of our society".

The JMC is home to a Women's Study Centre that, among various initiatives, focuses on trends in both the international and Indian women's movements, alongside campaigns for gender justice and related issues. I had the opportunity to meet with Principal Prof Sandra Joseph and Prof Sandhya Devesan Nambiar. A significant milestone was reached with the signing of a MOU between HERS-SA and JMC, further solidifying our commitment to gender equality and collaborative initiatives. This MOU outlines our dedication to facilitating the development, discussion, and implementation of various activities, including mentorship and leadership training programmes.

Engagement with University Principals and Staff

Engagements with the Principals and staff members of the three women's colleges emphasised a shared vision of gender equality and forging partnerships with universities globally including in the BRICS+ countries. Through our common goals, HERS-SA seeks to facilitate staff engagement with ourselves and the various other universities with which we have MOUs, to collaborate and raise awareness of women's empowerment in higher education on a global scale.

Prospects for International Collaborations

The visit laid a strong foundation for future international partnerships focusing on women's empowerment, education, research and sustainable development.

Strengthening relations with HERS East Africa

RACHEL NAMUBIRU AND BRIGHTNESS MANGOLOTHI

African organisations have generally looked to the Global North for collaboration opportunities and neglected to look within the continent to co-create solutions for our African context. In an endeavour to build bridges in Africa and solidify relations between HERS in South Africa and in East Africa, HERS-SA Director Brightness Mangolothi participated in the HERS East Africa (HERS-EA) pre-conference activities, the HERS-EA Academy, and the organisation's 10-year celebrations.

The pre-conference activities entailed visits to three Ugandan universities: Makerere University, hosted by Vice Chancellor Prof Barnabas Nawangwe; Ndejje University, hosted by Vice Chancellor Rev. Can. Prof Olivia Nassaka Banja; and Gulu University, hosted by Vice Chancellor Prof George L Openjuru. The meeting at Gulu University included the official launch of the HERS-EA Country Office, a moment of joy as we witnessed the handover of the office key from Prof Openjuru to HERS-EA founder Prof Margaret Loy Khaita.

The meetings at the three universities aimed to explore opportunities for collaboration and how we can co-create gender-responsive workplaces.

During our time in Gulu, we visited Wawoto Kacel Craft Shop, where Dr Dorah Kasozi from Makerere University, a HERS-EA 7th Academy participant, conducted her PhD research. Dr Kasozi introduced us to this incredible cooperative, established in 1997 by the Comboni Samaritans. Initially supporting women living with HIV/AIDS and survivors of the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) war, Wawoto Kacel has since expanded to include other vulnerable groups such as the disabled, war veterans, and single parents. The cooperative creates sustainable crafts that are sold both locally and internationally. We had the pleasure of purchasing some of their beautifully crafted

products, as seen in the pictures, to support the women behind this initiative.

HERS-EA kicked off the first day of its 7th Academy on 20 July at Gulu University, hosted by Prof Openjuru. The day began with warm welcomes from Prof Khaita, Founder and Board Chair of HERS-EA, and Dr Naomi Lumutenga, Co-founder and Executive Director of HERS-EA. The highlights included a keynote address by Dr Gennet Zewide, former Ethiopian Ambassador and Minister of Education, on the significance of gender equity leadership in East African universities. Participants engaged in thought-provoking discussions on leadership styles with Dr Dionne M. Rosser-Mims. Another issue tackled was around gender stereotypes, sexism, and discrimination in higher education institutions (HEIs).

The second day was packed with rich content focusing on grant and budget management and grant writing. The day concluded with discussions on strengthening collaborative partnerships, with presentations from Mangolothi and participating universities on their collaborative interests.

The third day was dedicated to empowering participants through mentoring, leadership case studies and navigating cultural and political challenges in higher education. The day concluded with the first part of a career mapping workshop by Dr Judith White, equipping attendees with strategies to chart their professional paths.

The fourth day focused on advancing impactful leadership through community engagement, economic empowerment, and well-being. Sessions covered evidence-based collaborations between higher education institutions and NGOs, led by Dr Irene Naigaga, followed by insights into managing personal finances from Ms Lillian Katiso. Participants also learned about the Supawoman initiative from

Ms Beatrice Lugalambi and discussed the challenges and opportunities for women in leadership with Dr Julie Jordan. The day concluded with a session by Dr Lori Diprete Brown on incorporating well-being into successful leadership.

The fifth day was a fitting finale to an empowering week. The day began with sessions on academic publishing and career mapping. The highlight was the closing ceremony

where Prof Menah Pratt delivered an inspiring talk and closing remarks. This was followed by the presentation of certificates to the HERS-EA participants, including the speakers. We were entertained by cultural dancers from the Acholi region, which added a vibrant touch to the day. The Vice Chancellor and Deputy Vice Chancellor of Gulu University also gave impactful speeches, marking a memorable end to the HERS-EA 7th Academy.

HERS-EA hosted its 10th Anniversary celebratory dinner at the Mestil Hotel, Kampala, on 26 July. A thought-provoking panel discussion tackled the pressing questions in leadership today: How do we shift the landscape for women's leadership sustainably, and what key elements are we missing? The panel moderated by Prof Edith Natukunda Togboa, Head of Department of the School of Languages, Literature, and Communication at Makerere University included the following panellists:

- Marygorety Akinyi, University of Nairobi, Kenya
- Brightness Mangolotho, Director, HERS-South Africa
- Barbara Ann Steger, Ph.D. Student, Global Leadership Program, Troy University, US
- Rhoda Wanyenze, Dean, School of Public Health, Makerere University
- Catherine Wandera, Dean, Department of Mechanical and Production Engineering, Faculty of Engineering, Kyambogo University

The panellists offered diverse perspectives from academia, global leadership programs, and engineering, as they jointly explored strategies for building a sustainable future for women's leadership. The discussions were rich, engaging, and left attendees inspired and eager to push forward with actionable solutions. This was followed by congratulatory speeches and cake cutting.

Mangolotho said spending time in Uganda, with the various speakers, university leaders and delegates had illuminated areas of collaboration to drive gender transformation. These include collaborations at individual and institutional level, as well as outside the higher education sector. These areas include:

- To increase research on African women's experiences and institutional issues in the sector that hinder gender transformation.

- To explore an opportunity to co-create content and offer seminars/webinars to facilitate knowledge development and sharing on gender issues and opportunities for women across the continent.
- Sharing of opportunities (scholarships, fellowships, grants, mobility and more) and resources that can benefit women in South Africa and East Africa.
- Play an active role in monitoring institutional and government interventions that affect women in the sector by sharing notes and advocating for change where applicable.
- Drive the formation of other HERS chapters across the continent.
- Co-host a continental conference that focuses on women in higher education.
- Draw in other stakeholders from outside higher education to co-create for the betterment of our continent.
- Encourage HERS-SA and HERS-EA Academy alumni to explore co-authoring books, research papers and co-present papers at conferences that will bring the voices of African women in higher education to the centre of the conversation.

"The time for Africa is now. With its young population, we need to see gender transformation in our lifetime. As a follow-up to this visit, it was also befitting to host Dr Naomi Lumutenga at our HERS-SA Academy in August, for her to experience the South Africa Academy and also to share with South Africa the great work they are doing in East Africa," Mangolotho concluded.



Empowering Women and Celebrating Success: CPUT's Inspiring Women's Month Event

SIMAMKELE NOMANA

Cape Peninsula University of Technology (CPUT) marked Women's Month in August with a powerful celebration dedicated to empowering women and fostering gender equality. A diverse audience of women leaders, students and staff came together to engage in thought-provoking discussions on topics ranging from wellness and leadership to financial empowerment and inclusivity.

Championing Neurodiversity and Inclusiveness

One of the event's highlights was a compelling presentation by Vuyokazi Dwane, Executive Director of Human Capital. Dwane's talk focused on creating a culture of inclusiveness for neurodivergent women, spotlighting the unique challenges faced by women and girls with conditions such as ADHD and autism. She underscored the societal biases that often lead to misdiagnosis or neglect of neurodivergent individuals, calling for an educational shift towards greater understanding and accommodation.

"Building a supportive environment where neurodivergent women can thrive is essential for achieving genuine inclusivity," Dwane asserted, inspiring attendees to advocate for changes that enable all women to reach their full potential.

Financial Empowerment for Women

A key session on financial empowerment featured Nkosazana Madinga, Regional Key Account Specialist at

Sanlam. Madinga highlighted the common financial pitfalls that women often encounter, such as underestimating their earning potential or neglecting retirement planning. She provided practical advice on setting financial goals, budgeting, and smart investing. Madinga's insights aimed to equip attendees with the tools necessary to achieve financial independence and navigate financial challenges with confidence.

Mentorship and Leadership as Empowerment Tools

Brightness Mangolotho, Director of HERS-SA, delivered a powerful presentation on the role of mentorship in women's empowerment. She discussed how mentorship not only provides guidance and professional development but also fosters a sense of community and belonging. Mangolotho encouraged women to seek out both mentors and mentees, as mentorship benefits all parties involved, and shared strategies for establishing successful mentor-mentee relationships.

"Empowerment is about giving women the tools and opportunities they need to lead and thrive," Mangolotho stated, emphasising that effective mentorship can significantly accelerate women's career growth.

Gender Equality and Community Advocacy

Sixolile Ngcobo's presentation focused on advancing gender equality through strategic action and policy reform.

She highlighted the systemic barriers that continue to hinder women's progress, including gender-based discrimination and limited access to leadership roles. Ngcobo outlined practical steps for fostering a culture of equality, such as advocating for gender-responsive policies and supporting women's participation in decision-making processes.

Ngcobo's insights resonated deeply with attendees, many of whom engaged in discussions on how institutions like CPUT can take a leading role in driving gender equality.

Environmental Advocacy and Young Women Empowerment

Xoli Fuyani, an environmental activist, brought attention to the intersection of gender and environmental justice. Her presentation emphasised the importance of empowering young women to participate in climate action and community advocacy. Fuyani shared stories of young women leading grassroots initiatives and called for increased support for women-led environmental projects, which can have significant social impact.

"Empowering women to lead in climate action is not just about protecting the environment; it's about ensuring a sustainable future for all," Fuyani remarked.

Career Advancement Strategies for Women in Academia

Lynn Hendricks delivered an insightful session on career advancement for women in academia, focusing on overcoming barriers such as gender bias and limited networking opportunities. Hendricks shared practical strategies for building a professional portfolio, finding allies within the academic community, and navigating the tenure process. Her talk inspired attendees to actively pursue career development opportunities and advocate for institutional changes that support women's professional growth.

A Platform for Student Voices

The event also provided a platform for student representatives, who shared their perspectives on leadership, mentorship, and advocacy. Anelisa, a member of the Student Representative Council (SRC), spoke passionately about the role of student activism in driving

social change, particularly in combating gender-based violence and supporting survivors. Her address emphasised the importance of student involvement in university policies and decision-making processes.

Workshops and Discussions

Participants engaged in various workshops that covered themes such as leadership development, gender equality, and strategies for combating sexual and gender-based violence. The sessions facilitated an exchange of ideas, experiences, and best practices, empowering attendees to identify practical solutions to the challenges that women face.

Key Takeaways and Recommendations

The overarching message from the event was clear: empowering women requires more than dialogue—it demands action. The discussions emphasised the need for supportive policies and practices that champion inclusivity, financial independence, and safety for all women. Recommendations included collaborating with local shelters, developing reporting tools for gender-based violence incidents, and integrating mentorship programmes into the university's support structures.

Looking Forward

The Women's Month celebration at CPUT was not only a tribute to the achievements of women but also a call to action for continued advocacy. By addressing critical issues such as neurodiversity, financial empowerment, environmental justice, and career advancement, the event laid the foundation for building a more inclusive and equitable campus community. CPUT remains committed to driving gender equality and supporting women's empowerment through initiatives that foster leadership, inclusivity, and sustained advocacy for women's rights.



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