



Higher Education Women Leaders Awards (HEWLA)

AWARDS CATEGORIES

Empowering & celebrating women whose leadership and influence
have positively impacted universities & the greater community.

About HERS-SA

Founded in 2003, HERS-SA is a self-sustaining non-profit organisation (NPO) that is dedicated to women's advancement and leadership development in the Higher Education sector. In 2022, HERS-SA was awarded a top gender-empowered company award. HERS-SA advocates for and contributes to, the career and leadership development of women employed in the higher education sector via carefully crafted programmes. As an organisation, we also do advocacy, research and strategic collaborations to advance our vision.

The United Nations (UN) 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development sets seventeen interrelated Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), with gender equality at the heart of achieving these goals. Even more reason, the Higher Education Resource and Services – South Africa (HERS-SA) believes that the attainment of gender transformation of leadership in higher education can accelerate the attainment of the SDGs.

The higher education (HE) sector plays a critical role in developing skilled labour and transforming society, economy and politics. Should the HE remain unchanged, we risk the reproduction of inequalities. For this reason, HERS-SA believes that having a gender-representative leadership is critical for universities and that it is of outmost importance to realise the objectives of the UN SDGs 2030, the African Union Agenda 2063 and the National Development Plan 2030.

About the Awards

Women leaders remain underrepresented in South African Higher Education, more so at a Senior Leadership level. Currently, out of 26 universities, we have only six women Vice-Chancellors. Also, women in leadership positions rarely gain the recognition that they deserve.

While there have been some awards for women in academia, the focus is mainly on academics, they tend to exclude the support teams or employees and they do not focus on women in leadership. Currently, there are no national awards that recognise these leaders as it is done in other sectors. The 2024 HERS-SA Higher Education Women Leaders Awards will be our second award ceremony.

The Main Aim/Purpose:

- To capacitate women leaders to overcome and thrive within the higher education sector;
- To recognise the achievements of women who lead, inspire and motivate those around them to be more and do more;
- To attract new leadership talent to the sector, thus advancing gender transformation;
- To give women a national recognition;
- To gain institutional support and credibility for women who are nominated; and
- To encourage higher education and other sectors to contribute to women's leadership development.

The Nine Awards Categories

There are nine awards categories and each will have five finalists. One will be selected as the winner at the awards for each category. The categories are as follows:

a) Lifetime Achiever Award

This is a special recognition that acknowledges exceptional contribution made by women leaders in the higher education sector. To qualify for this award, the nominee needs to have a minimum of 10 years of devoted active service and needs to have made a tangible contribution in the higher education sector. This woman needs to be an exceptional achiever who has been able to overcome various challenges and managed to make a significant impact in the sector.

b) Trailblazer Award

This award is designed to recognise a woman leader who embodies the principle of lifting others up as they rise and actively advocates for the empowerment of women and students. The recipient will need to have a demonstrated track record of consistently supporting other women within the higher education sector for at least a minimum of 10 years. These exceptional women are secure in themselves and are strong enough to encourage the growth and success of others, without feeling threatened.

c) Women in STEM Award

The award celebrates and acknowledges the remarkable female leaders with more than five (5) years' experience in the field of Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) who have excelled in their respective domains. This recognition encompasses women who have made noteworthy contributions to STEM innovations, capacity development initiatives, innovative teaching and learning practices as well as community engagement activities.

d) Women in Humanities and Social Sciences (HSS) Award

The award honours and acknowledges an exceptional female leader with more than five (5) years' experience who has made outstanding contributions to the fields of Humanities and Social Sciences. This recognition encompasses women who have demonstrated excellence in their respective disciplines, including HSS innovations, capacity development initiatives, innovative teaching and learning practices as well as community engagement activities.

e) Women in Academic Administration Award

The award recognises a female leader who has demonstrated exceptional leadership skills over a minimum period of five (5) years in the higher education sector, specifically in academic administration. Nominees in this category will be evaluated based on their innovative interventions and practices that enhance institutional performance, evidence of peer mentoring, as well as community engagement activities such as school visits, mentoring and after-school projects for underprivileged students.

f) Women in Support Services (WiSS) Award

Honours a woman leader who has excelled in a leadership position over a reasonable period of time. A minimum of a five (5)-year service in the HE sectors. The nominees must be in the Support Services space. Innovative interventions or practices that enhance institutional performance, peer-mentoring evidence and community engagement activities.

g) Emerging Young Women Leaders (Academic) Award

Recognises an under-40-woman leader who is making an excellent contribution as a leader, with less than 10 years in a leadership role. Exceptional young leaders with at least three (3) years in the HE sectors. They may be academic or non-academic personnel in the HE industry. Their career trajectory needs to suggest an impactful career for them and other women in the sector.

h) Emerging Young Women Leaders (Support Services) Award

Recognises an under-40-woman leader who is making an excellent contribution as a leader, with less than 10 years in a leadership role. Exceptional young leaders with at least three (3) years in the HE sectors. Their career trajectory needs to suggest an impactful career for them and other women in the sector.

i) Women in Student Development and Faculty Administration (WiSDFA) Award

Honours a woman leader who has excelled in leadership in student development. A minimum of a five (5)-year service in the HE sectors. The nominees must be in the academic administration space. Innovative interventions or practices that enhance institutional performance, peer-mentoring evidence as well as community engagement activities that include school visits, mentoring, after-school projects for the underprivileged to name but a few, may be recognised in this category.