Siyaphumelela 2022
Programme and Abstracts

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Table of Contents

Introduction

Welcome to the virtual Siyaphumelela Network Conference 2022

Welcome to the virtual Siyaphumelela Network Conference 2022

To enhance your conference experience, please read through the important information provided here.

The conference programme is available in print and as a website. While anyone can access the print or website programme, you will need to complete the One-Time-Pin (OTP) request on the website. Only registered and paid-up participants will receive the OTP. Once verified, all the Zoom Rooms will be accessible to you. A click, or tap on the Zoom button will open a new browser tab and launch the usual Zoom connecting dialog box. We have not made use of the waiting room function. Please access the website prior to the conference to ensure that your registration is correct and up to date. Should you require any further technical support, please contact Pierre Marais at any time before or during the conference: pierre@dreamstream.co.za

The plenary sessions will be presented in webinar mode, while the concurrent sessions, will be presented in meeting mode. However, during the plenary discussion sessions, you can raise your hand if you wish to ask a question. During all the sessions you can pose a question, or make a comment using the chat function.

Each session will have a chair and be supported by one of our technical team. A *Saide* staff member will monitor the chat function.

All the plenary sessions will also be streamed live to our YouTube channel and will be freely accessible.

If you wish to tweet, use #Siya2022

We look forward to an interesting conference filled with stimulating ideas and discussions.

Best wishes

Alan

Introduction

Programme

21 June

Chair: Bill Moses
Technical support: Pierre Marais
Session support: Fatima Rahiman

15:00 - 15:15

Welcome

Jenny Glennie   *Bill Moses*
Saide   The Kresge Foundation

15:15 - 15:45

Keynote
Producing more equitable student outcomes through data and proactive supports
Timothy Renick
Georgia State University
Atlanta
United States

15:45 - 16:15

Keynote
Understanding Higher Education: Alternative perspectives
Chrissie Boughey
Rhodes University
Rhodes
South Africa

16:15 - 17:00

Discussion with *Chrissie Boughey* and *Timothy Renick*

22 June

Morning Session 09:00 - 12:10

Chair: Fatima Rahiman
Technical support: Pierre Marais
Session support: Maryla Bialobrzeska

09:00 - 09:30 ● **Success beyond the classroom: Developing adaptive graduates at DUT**
Koo Parker
Durban University of Technology

09:30 - 10:00 ● **Data-informed actions to support year 2 of Phumelela@UWC Siyaphumelela 2.0 project**
Subethra Pather
University of the Western Cape

10:00 - 10:10 ● Comfort break

Concurrent Session 1 10:10 - 11:40

Chair: Ephraim Mhlanga
Technical support: Pierre Marais
Session support: Fatima Rahiman

5

10:10-11:40 ● **Supporting first year students' university transition: A data-driven approach to mapping and responding to the student journey.**
Lauren Oosthuizen (UFS); Danny Fontaine-Rainen (UCT); Subethra Pather (UWC); Ruth Hoskins (UKZN); Sharmla Rama (UKZN); Neo Taimo (Wits); Takalani Muloiwa (Wits); Kudayja Parker (DUT); Mzwandile Khumalo (DUT); Livingstone Makondo (DUT)
University of the Free State

Concurrent Session 2 10:10 - 11:40

Chair: Wendy Kilfoil
Technical support: Onkgopotse Vincent Moteka
Session support: Tony Lelliott

10:10-10:40 ● **Decentring the tutor: Reflections of the online undergraduate theatre tutorial space.**
Luna August
University of Cape Town

10:40-11:10 ● **Incorporating monitoring and evaluation practices as part of educational interventions planning: From theory to practice.**
Polite M. Nduru and Riashna Sithaldeen
University of Cape Town

11:10-11:40 ● **Student reflections on student participation: What is the value of the student's voice, and is it heard?**
Precious Mahlalela, Dimakatso Sebothoma and Riashna Sithaldeen
University of Cape Town

Concurrent Session 3 10:10 - 12:10

Chair: Elizabeth Booi
Technical support: Nasha Tshabuse
Session support: Maryla Bialobrzeska

10:10-10:40

Academic success - what counts?
Penny Morrell
Rural Education Access Programme

10:40-11:10

Analysing the influence and impact of student support structures on first-year law students.
Ninette Crous
North West University

11:10-11:40

Student support and development with technology: Embracing change for academic advising in Higher Education
Thembinkosi Kalanga and Nokuthula Mavela
Durban University of Technology

11:40-12:10

Teaching assistants using electronic writing devices for explaining mathematics online.
Frikkie George, Ekaterina Rzyankina
Cape Peninsula University of Technology

Concurrent Session 4 10:10 - 12:10

Chair: Delysia Timm
Technical support: Lesego Moloi
Session support: Alan Amory

10:10-10:40 ● **Access and success of Black students at university: An ideological argument from the global south.**
Loyiso Maciko and Mulamuli Nkosingphile Hlatshwayo
University of KwaZulu-Natal

10:40-11:10 ● **Data democracy: A shared platform for the managed exposure of institutional research records.**
Randhir Rawatlal and Ashton Maherry
University of KwaZulu-Natal

11:10-11:40 ● **Identifying course combinations that inhibit minimum-time graduation: A student population balance approach**
Randhir Rawatlal and Rubby Dhunpath
University of KwaZulu-Natal

11:40-12:10 ● **Reimagining the success discourse in a Higher Education Institution: Undergraduate student success.**
Samukelisiwe Khumalo, Randhir Rawatlal, Victor Ndadozie, Cedric Mpungose, Phakamile Mazibuko and Ashnie Mahadew.
University of KwaZulu-Natal

Afternoon Session 15:00 - 18:15

Chair: Alan Amory
Technical support: Pierre Marais
Session support: Fatima Rahiman

15:00 - 15:30

Invited presentation
A new *Quality Assurance Framework for Higher Education in South Africa*: What does it involve and what are its implications for institutions?
Whitfield Geen
Council on Higher Education

15:30 - 16:15

Keynote
Collaborative togetherness to develop quantitative business skills: Implementing Carnegie Math Pathways® at a South African university
Corlia Janse van Vuuren, Annari Muller and Francois Strydom
University of the Free State
Bloemfontein
South Africa

16:00 - 16:15

Discussion with *Corlia Janse van Vuuren, Annari Muller* and *Francois Strydom*

16:15 - 16:30

Comfort break

Concurrent Session 5 16:30 - 18:00

Chair: Ermien van Pletzen
Technical support: Onkgopotse Vincent Moteka
Session support: Maryla Bialobrzeska

16:30-17:00 ● **A shock to the system: Assessing inequalities in university student outcomes during COVID19 closures.**
Emma Whitelaw, Nicola Branson and Murray Leibbrandt
University of Cape Town

17:00-17:30 ● **Know your course and students: Providing actionable insights to course convenors.**
Stephen Marquard and Kende Kefale
University of Cape Town

17:30-18:00 ● **The Siyaphambili website: Tracking post-school qualification attainment in South Africa.**
Nicola Branson and Emma Whitelaw
University of Cape Town

Concurrent Session 6 16:30 - 18:00

Chair: Balakrishna Pillay
Technical support: Nasha Tshabuse
Session support: Ephraim Mhlanga

16:30-17:00 ● **Co-creating the First Year Student Experience Programme for enhanced impact: Unsilencing the student voices in the design of student development initiatives.**
Mzwandile Khumalo and Shubnam Rambharos
Durban University of Technology

17:00-17:30 ● **Reflections on the One Residence One Garden Project at Durban University of Technology.**
Makhosazana Twala, Mzwandile Khumalo and Koo Parker
Durban University of Technology

17:30-18:00 ● **The nexus between teaching and community engagement in an undergraduate curriculum.**
Firoza Haffejee
Durban University of Technology

Concurrent Session 7 16:30 - 18:00

Chair: Elizabeth Booi
Technical support: Lesego Moloi
Session support: Tony Lelliott

16:30-17:00 **Analysing the influence and impact of student support structures on first-year law students.**
Ninette Crous
North West University

17:00-17:30 **Learning culture as a strategy for student success - moving from theory to practice.**
Rafael D. Alvarez
San Diego City College

17:30-18:00 **Mentoring support programme for rural origin health science students.**
Gavin MacGregor
Umthombo Youth Development Foundation

23 June

Morning Sessions 09:00 - 12:10

Chair: Maryla Bialobrzeska
Technical support: Pierre Marais
Session support: Fatima Rahiman

09:00 - 09:30
Staying the course: Lessons from the UFS journey
Francois Strydom
University of the Free State

09:30 - 10:00
Advising for access and success: Perspectives from UKZN
Rubby Dhunpath and *Randhir Rawatlal*
University of KwaZulu-Natal

10:00 - 10:10
Comfort break

Concurrent Session 8 10:10 - 12:10

Chair: Wendy Kilfoil
Technical support: Pierre Marais
Session support: Ephraim Mhlanga

10:10-10:40 ● **Analysis of BUSSE survey: Is race and gender associated with student experiences and expectations at the Vaal University of Technology?**
Percy Mdunge
Vaal University of Technology

10:40-11:10 ● **Automating tutorial attendance register capturing, preliminary results from a pilot project.**
Sivuyile Nzimeni and Mosa Mofokeng
University of the Free State

11:10-11:40 ● **Enhancing data management in academic advising through a Learner Case Management system to optimise student support.**
Gugu Tiroyabone and Rohan Posthumus
University of the Free State

11:40-12:10 ● **The SASSE 3.0: New insights on student engagement.**
Francois Strydom, Sonja Loots and Hanle Posthumus
University of the Free State

Concurrent Session 9 10:10 - 12:10

Chair: Balakrishna Pillay
Technical support: Onkgopotse Vincent Moteka
Session support: Maryla Bialobrzeska

10:10-10:40 ● **An emerging story of student success coaching at Nelson Mandela University.**
Unathi Silo, Terry-Anne Jones and Kim Hurter
Nelson Mandela University

10:40-11:10 ● **Evaluating how the structural design of an institution responds to the student voice.**
Hlumelo Sonjani, Ronelle Plaatjes and Francisco de Vega
Nelson Mandela University

11:10-11:40 ● **Intake data: Insights into the student journey.**
Dave Jenkings, Caroline Davies and Andrea Watson
Nelson Mandela University

11:40-12:10 ● **Processing change, our transition from traditional to virtual orientation at Nelson Mandela University.**
Duncan Estrais
Nelson Mandela University

Concurrent Session 10 10:10 - 12:10

Chair: Delysia Timm
Technical support: Nasha Tshabuse
Session support: Fatima Rahiman

10:10-10:40 ● **Academic advisors engaging towards success: Student and lecturer interactions in a town hall setting**
Tshepiso Maleswena, Siyasamkela Jinoyi, Aneshree Nayager and Mbongeni Shungube
University of the Witwatersrand

10:40-11:10 ● **Digital abilities and academic integrity as keys to unlocking the gateway to success.**
Arshad Moolla, Marike Kluyts, Raazia Moosa and Janus van As
University of the Witwatersrand

11:10-11:40 ● **Giving voice to academic advisors: Insights into student support needs from the University of the Witwatersrand**
Danie de Klerk
University of the Witwatersrand

11:40-12:10 ● **Student sentiments during emergency remote teaching at the University of the Witwatersrand: Implications for academic advisory support**
Lindiwe Tshuma, Nokulunga Ndlovu, Kgomotso Theledi and Innocent Mamvura
University of the Witwatersrand

Concurrent Session 11 10:10 - 12:10

Chair: Ermien van Pletzen
Technical support: Lesego Moloi
Session support: Alan Amory

10:10-10:40 ●
Exploring the potential of a service-oriented chatbot at the University of Cape Town – initial outcomes and lessons learnt.
Megan Bam, Deepti Charitar and Riashna Sithaldeen
University of Cape Town

10:40-11:10 ●
Peer support during the pandemic and beyond.
Charl Nel
North-West University

11:10-11:40 ●
Project Making a Difference: Meeting students' basic needs for retention and success.
Venicia McGhie
University of the Western Cape

11:40-12:10 ●
The use of disaggregated data to identify opportunities, gaps, and barriers to first year student success.
Sue Pather, Elizabeth Booi, Bradley Khumalo and Vanessa Brown
University of the Western Cape

Afternoon Session 15:00 - 18:00

Chair: Jenny Glennie
Technical support: Pierre Marais
Session support: Alan Amory

15:00 - 16:15 ● **Panel presentations and discussions**
All about OER textbooks

Glenda Cox
University of Cape Town

Gino Fransman
Nelson Mandela University

Tony Lelliott
Saide

Richard Sebastian
Achieving the Dream, USA

Michelle Willmers
University of Cape Town

16:15 - 16:30 ● Comfort break

16:30 - 17:00 ● **Further towards designing a system for student success**
Riashna Sithaldeen
University of Cape Town

17:00 - 17:30 ● **Student success at Wits in 2022**
Kevin McLoughlin and *Fezile Mdluli*
University of the Witwatersrand

17:30 - 17:45 ● **Student Success: Looking backwards, looking forwards.**
Bill Moses
The Kresge Foundation

24 June

Morning Session 09:00 - 11:00

Chair: Ephraim Mhlanga
Technical support: Pierre Marais
Session support: Fatima Rahiman

09:00 - 09:30

Promoting student success @Mandela University
Cheryl Foxcroft
Nelson Mandela University

09:30 - 10:45

Panel presentations and discussions
Why student tracking?

Lynn Biggs	*Mzwandile Khumalo*
Nelson Mandela University	Durban University of Technology
Kevin McLoughlin	*Randhir Rawatlal*
University of the Witwatersrand	University of KwaZulu-Natal

10:45 - 11:00

Closure

Alan Amory	*Jenny Glennie*
Saide	Saide

Programme

Abstracts

Digital abilities and academic integrity as keys to unlocking the gateway to success.
Arshad Moolla, Marike Kluyts, Raazia Moosa and Janus van As

The transition that students need to make between their school experience and university has been a concern for tertiary institutions prior to the COVID-19 pandemic and remains a concern for those institutions operating in a blended learning mode. In order to address this concern, novel transition initiatives were piloted. These took the form of two online courses to address digital abilities and academic integrity, the Gateway to Success courses were implemented during a university-wide 3-week first year induction programme. The purpose of this paper is twofold. First, to unpack the design, build, and tool use of both courses and second, to explore students' perspectives of their acquisition of fundamental digital abilities and academic integrity skills, both through the lens of deep and meaningful learning (Mystakidis, 2021). The deep and meaningful learning framework focuses on student-centred course development practices to better support students in the acquisition of 21st century skills such as deepening thought processes, the creative application of knowledge/skills, and critical analysis of arguments. To obtain feedback from students on these two online courses, questionnaires were administered to the cohort of first-year students after completion of the Gateway to Success programme in 2022. We triangulate the students' feedback with the learning analytics, course outcomes, and end of session checklist that students completed in order to establish students' learning experiences. The results linked to our first purpose indicate that both courses were well received. Students found the courses useful, informative, well structured, and felt that the courses provided them with the opportunity to engage and explore key concepts. For the second purpose, the results show that students felt confident and competent in applying skills learned in both courses as they enter their first academic year at the University of the Witwatersrand. The study concludes by highlighting the next steps needed to improve both courses, as well as implications for future online academic skills courses. Suggestions for how deep and meaningful learning can be used to enhance student success in the first year are also offered. Reference list: Mystakidis, S. 2021. Deep Meaningful Learning. Encyclopedia. 1 (3): 988–997. DOI: 10.3390/encyclopedia1030075.

Peer support during the pandemic and beyond.
Charl Nel

Peer support, which involves trained senior students who provide, primarily, academic support to fellow students through academic support programmes such as Supplemental Instruction (SI) tutoring and mentoring, offers a significant addition to the existing student support centres on university campuses. There are vast differences between the various peer support programmes with some being more lecturer-centred whereas others tend to be more student-centred. This impacts not only on the way in which the programmes address support and learning opportunities for students, but also the role and responsibilities of the SI leader (facilitator), tutor or mentor serving within these programmes. Since the COVID-19 pandemic started, the traditional roles/duties of the tutor, facilitator and mentor within the peer support programmes have become blurred and intertwined to the extent that there is very little that distinguishes these programmes and the roles of the senior peer students involved in them, from one another. The objective of this study is to determine to what extend the roles of the peer students as facilitators, tutors or mentors have changed since the COVID-19 pandemic has started and offer some recommendations on what these programmes might look like post pandemic by looking at qualitative and quantitative feedback from end of semester questionnaires completed by lecturers, student attendees and SI leaders (facilitators) during the first semester 2022 at the North-West University. Preliminary results suggests that the roles of the tutor and facilitator may fall to the same senior peer student in future and a process of peer support programme alignment is eminent.

Collaborative togetherness to develop quantitative business skills: Implementing Carnegie Math Pathways® at a South African university
Corlia Janse van Vuuren, Annari Muller and Francois Strydom

The development of quantitative skills in South African business students remains challenging due to, amongst others, the negative perceptions of students towards the relevancy of mathematics-based content to their studies, inequitable secondary school development of quantitative skills, stereotypes about the achievement of different groups. Therefore, the university partnered with WestEd around the Carnegie Math Pathways (CMP) programme presented in the USA. The CMP is a leading initiative aimed at transforming the acquisition of quantitative skills in students. The CMP uses evidence-based practices and improvement science to create contextualised learning and teaching environments that promote inclusivity and equity. The contextualisation process includes modification of curriculum content and continuous monitoring and evaluation to inform the creation of a unique learning experience. CMP embeds peer collaboration within curriculum design and pedagogy to specifically create a sense of belonging amongst students. In support of improved student engagement and success during the COVID-19 pandemic, the CMP pedagogy supported literature findings, and provided the university with a viable option for online quantitative business skills teaching and learning. The implementation of the CMP included the introduction of two quantitative business skills modules for first year business students, to replace the existing Business Calculations modules. All lessons followed the typical CMP learning pathway of Preparation, Collaboration and Exercises. This pedagogical approach is aimed to facilitate integrated learning to prepare students for the business world of work through the development of quantitative business skills needed to be successful as a professional. The Collaboration component is facilitated during module contact time to enhance peer learning through group-based discussions and exercises. During the COVID-19 pandemic this collaboration occurred within a synchronous online space. The aim of this presentation is to reflect on the implementation of CMP within a South African context, focusing on the Collaboration component. In addition, results of student performance and student perceptions of this collaborative learning experience will be shared. The study employed an action research methodology with quantitative and qualitative data sets. All business students enrolled for the quantitative skills modules in 2021 were included (n=1207). Quantitative analyses included descriptive statistics, correlation, and regression analyses of student academic performance. Qualitative data was collected via voluntary feedback from students. Key themes were identified through a thematic analysis of the qualitative data sets. The analysis of video recordings of collaborative sessions also contributed to the qualitative data set. At the end of the second semester module success increased with 6% from 2020 (78%) to 2021 (84%) and students passing with distinction increased with 8%. A statistically significant positive correlation was evident between student attendance of Collaborations and academic performance. A positive trend in Productive Persistence metrics, such as growth mindset, was also observed. Qualitative feedback indicated that students were invested in peer collaboration to support their learning and success in the modules. The role of students in shaping their own and their peers' success through peer learning was highlighted with the positive outcomes achieved through specifically the Collaboration component of the implemented modules. The peer collaboration component embedded in the modules created, not only a learning space for students during COVID-19, but also a space of togetherness, going beyond the previous (and basic) understanding of groupwork and/or collaboration. This collaborative togetherness additionally and unexpectedly transferred to other modules, supporting student success on a broader platform.

Giving voice to academic advisors: Insights into student support needs from the University of the Witwatersrand
Danie de Klerk

[Background]: Academic advising is a proven, high-impact practice (Moodley & Singh, 2015, p. 95; Strydom & Loots, 2020) with the potential to enhance the student learning experience, the holistic student experience, and student success (Surr, 2019, p. 9). Although well-established in the global north and Australia, academic advising remains an emerging profession in South Africa (Obaje & Jeawon, 2021, p. 18). [Problem]: There has been a shift since 2017 though, with the Siyaphumelela Network contributing significantly to this shift (Tiroyabone & Strydom, 2021). However, despite an increase in evidence-informed contributions about advising in and for South Africa of late (see, for example, the special issue of the Journal of Student Affairs in Africa, Vol. 9 No. 2, published in 2021), the voices of practicing academic advisors remain largely absent. In particular, there is a dearth of literature about the first-hand experiences of academic advisors working within the South African higher education sector. [Purpose]: This paper aims to make such a contribution. [Focus]: The focus of the paper is on the responses to one question posed to academic advisors during a series of interviews held in 2020. Fifteen practicing academic advisors working across five faculties at the University of the Witwatersrand took part in these interviews. The interviews consisted of three parts: i) a freewriting exercise; ii) questions about academic advising prior to the COVID-19 pandemic and Emergency Remote Teaching and Learning (ERTL); iii) questions about academic advising during the COVID-19 pandemic and ERTL. The interview question focused on in this paper formed part of part (ii) and reads as follows: What would you say are the five most common things students seek advice about? [Methodology]: As a phenomenological study that aims to make meaning of academic advising as the phenomenon being studied, the emphasis of the paper is on the collective experiences of practicing academic advisors who provide insights into the most common reasons why students seek advice. These insights are useful to help understand the scope and complexity of the work South Africa advisors do. [Data Collection]: Data was collected through interviews. Semi-structured, open-ended questions were posed to advisors to allow some degree of flexibility of response. All interviews were conducted virtually, recorded, and then transcribed by a professional transcriber. The data generated during these interviews were exceptionally rich, which is why this paper focuses on only one of the interview questions. [Findings]: What emerges are a variety of reasons why students seek advice, ranging from time management and study support, to funding, accommodation, and assessment matters. [Contribution]: These insights are significant, as they clarify student support needs, highlight factors that are likely to affect student success, and foreground possible areas of professional development for academic advisors working in South African higher education. [Conclusion and Way Forward]: The larger study from which this paper emanates makes use of both a quantitative baseline dataset based on the researcher's own engagements with students as an advisor between 2015 and 2018, and a qualitative dataset created from the aforementioned interviews. Further research (in addition to what has already been done – see de Klerk, 2021; de Klerk, 2022) will involve analysing and interpreting other components of the qualitative dataset, conducting a comparative analysis of the quantitative and qualitative datasets, and conducting focus group sessions with students who have made use of academic advising services. The ultimate aim is to continue to make evidence-informed contributions to the knowledge base about academic advising in and for South African higher education.

Intake data: Insights into the student journey.
Dave Jenkings, Caroline Davies and Andrea Watson

For the 2020 intake Nelson Mandela University implemented new undergraduate admissions criteria. The rationale behind these new criteria was twofold: first to continue to ensure fair and equitable access to applicants; and secondly to identify students who may benefit from developmental support early in their academic careers. The process undertaken in developing these admissions criteria, their nature, and the rationale behind them, were outlined at the 2019 Siyaphumelela Conference. In the development of the admissions criteria, research had identified "flags" based on school leaving results as potential indicators of early developmental support. Initially, six flags were identified for the 2020 Intake of first-year students and the Student Success Coaches contacted those students with three or more flags, with the intention of providing them with the opportunity of academic support. At the 2021 conference further feedback was given on the positive impact of the new admissions criteria on the number of students accepted and, through the tracking of first-year performance in one faculty, relationships between the intake data flags and credits passed were identified. Currently two cohorts of students are being tracked, namely, the 2020 and 2021 intakes, comprising a sample of over 6000 students. Initial tracking of their first-year academic performance reflects how flagged students are progressing across faculties and qualification types compared to students with no flags. This presentation will firstly share the emerging picture of which flags appear to be most applicable in identifying students who may benefit from developmental support at the start of their academic journey. Secondly, it will provide insight into the role of first-year credits earned in potentially identifying additional groups of students in need of support. The identification of this second group of students highlights the importance of focussed support initiatives provided by faculties and support programmes as these students proceed into their second year of study.

Processing change, our transition from traditional to virtual orientation at Nelson Mandela University.
Duncan Estrais

This paper focuses on the transition of our First Year Success (FYS) Orientation programme at Nelson Mandela University from a fully face-face programme to an online offering in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. It will reflect on the qualitative feedback received from first-year students, FYS Buddies, staff, and the orientation team. The paper will draw out and explore the qualitative themes that have emerged from online student and staff feedback discussions with various stakeholders during the pandemic. The feedback includes future recommendations, and the areas of reflection include: the strengths of the current operating model; possible areas for improvement and constructive guidelines for developing future projects

A shock to the system: Assessing inequalities in university student outcomes during COVID19 closures.
Emma Whitelaw, Nicola Branson and Murray Leibbrandt

During the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, universities closed and rapidly moved to implement remote learning solutions. However, many students lack access to data and learning devices, and glaring structural inequalities shape the household environments to which many students returned – and in which they were expected to learn new academic material. To-date, however, there is a dearth of literature quantifying the effects of the pandemic on learning loss and academic outcomes among South African university students. Despite expectations of incomplete learning experiences, anecdotal evidence from South African universities suggests that academic outcomes may, in fact, have improved. This may owe to increased marking leniency, a change in the content taught, different assessment practices, increased cheating, students adopting better learning strategies through online learning, and learning at their own pace. Thus while we expect learning losses to have occurred, identifying the extent of loss is hampered by students and staff changing their behaviour during the pandemic. Nevertheless, documenting the effects of the lockdown on students' academic outcomes – whether positive or negative – may offer valuable information that can guide recovery strategies going forward. For example, unanticipated increases in student performance may be accompanied by dips in outcomes in coming years. That is, spuriously improved or even constant academic performance during the pandemic could unintentionally impact academic performance in the long term if students proceed to higher levels without sufficient baseline knowledge and competencies. In South Africa, university education is frequently viewed as a solution for addressing inequality and poverty, but the system itself is plagued by systemic inequalities. Documenting the effects of the lockdown on students' academic outcomes will thus provide valuable knowledge on how the pandemic may have impacted existing achievement gaps and inequalities. We explore changes in students' academic performance during the pandemic using longitudinal institutional data from the University of Cape Town [UCT]. Since existing household inequalities are likely to have disadvantaged students at this time, we fit a regression model that allows for varying effects on student academic performance by students' socio-economic status. Moreover, we explore whether students in different quantiles of the performance distribution experienced different changes in outcomes. Thereafter, we examine academic outcomes in 2021, considering that changes in academic performance during the pandemic could affect performance in following years. We draw on data from UCT, rather than national-level HEMIS data, since the UCT data is more comprehensive in the information that it captures about students compared to the corresponding data in the national database. For example, the UCT data contains measures of Grade Point Average, information on students' school-leaving results, as well as information on which students hold various forms of financial aid. This information is lacking in the national data but is central to our empirical strategy. This study thus provides insight into the experience of students at one of the better-resourced institutions in South Africa. Preliminary findings show a significant increase in the share of courses passed in 2020, with students on financial aid experiencing a higher share of courses passed compared to non-financial aid students in 2020. Moreover, students in lower quartiles of the previous year's GPA distribution experience a greater increase in the share of courses passed relative to those in the top quartile. We further intend to explore the extent to which courses were dropped in 2020 relative to previous years as an outcome measure, as well as explore changes in outcomes in 2021.

The nexus between teaching and community engagement in an undergraduate curriculum.
Firoza Haffejee

Rationale and Objective Recently higher education has seen a move away from solely didactic teaching of the curriculum to self-directed learning. Studies have shown that this has improved learning and critical thinking. Graduates are required to meet the varying needs of both the workplace as well as local societies. This study used photovoice, a participatory method to engage Health Science students in a project to enhance learning and engage with local communities or environments in order to improve the location with subsequent advancement of the people's health. Intervention and Method A photovoice assignment was presented to the students registered for Epidemiology: Public Health in 2021. Students (n=22) working in self-selected groups were required to take photographs of factors within their own environments, which were involved in causing disease. Students were subsequently required to work in the same community and assist them in improving the environmental conditions. Oral presentations were held, where each group was required to present their photographs indicating the adverse environmental conditions. Photographic evidence of their intervention to improve these conditions were also required together with a discussion on how this would alleviate adverse health conditions. Presentations were assessed based on the picture, presentation quality, the intervention and ability to answer questions. Focus group discussions were held to ascertain the students' experience of the contemporary learning design. Module marks before and after the intervention were compared. Results Students worked in varied environments ranging from informal settlements to polluted rivers. They indicated clearly how the adverse living conditions, in informal settlements contributed to disease. These included overcrowding, lack of ventilation, the absence of piped water and sanitation as well as poor municipal services such as garbage removal. They articulated how overcrowding and poor ventilation could exacerbate the occurrence of communicable diseases such as tuberculosis, influenza and COVID-19. The lack of water was linked to a high prevalence of diarrhoea. They reported on polluted rivers having downstream effects, which could adversely affect communities in more distant regions. Community engagement largely included cleaning up of waste material both in informal settlements as well as in rivers. One group initiated a cleaning campaign where they recruited members of the community as well as others via social media to assist in the clean up operations. Letters of appeal on behalf of the communities were written to the local municipalities and other governmental structures. Focus group interviews indicated that the students enjoyed this new learning pedagogy. They appreciated interacting with the communities, providing health advice and assistance. Students expressed that the assignment taught them to collaborate with each other and with communities and that this would be important for them in their future careers. Although the pass rate was 100% prior the intervention, the marks improved post intervention from 71% (Range: 50%-83%) to 82% (Range: 66%-92%). The number of distinctions scored increased from 11 to 19, strongly indicating moving the middle students towards becoming high achievers. Conclusion This contemporary learning design permitted students to critically analyse their own and surrounding environments while creating a space for students to work within these environments in order to improve living conditions as well as the health of the people. It generated a mindset that would make them concerned about societal issues well beyond the classroom, thus formulating a lifelong learning process.

The SASSE 3.0: New insights on student engagement.
Francois Strydom, Sonja Loots and Hanle Posthumus

The COVID-19 pandemic disrupted the national administration of the South African Survey of Student Engagement (SASSE) in 2020. The SASSE network institutions collectively decided to make use of this time by reviewing the survey items to serve the sector's needs. Representatives from 14 institutions, and national bodies such as the Council on Higher Education, the Department of Higher Education and Training, Universities South Africa, and Saide participated in a workshop, resulting in the SASSE 3.0. Along with revised items, the SASSE 3.0 includes four topical modules: Academic Advising, Experiences with Writing, Inclusiveness and Decoloniality, and Learning with Technology. Administration of the SASSE in 2021 included ten institutions that produced a sample of over 14,000 students. This presentation will share the findings of the first administration of the SASSE 3.0, with particular emphasis on the relevance of the new data points for the sector and for the Siyaphumelela institutions' pursuit of using data to advance student success.

Teaching assistants using electronic writing devices for explaining mathematics online.
Frikkie George, Ekaterina Rzyankina

The implementation of emergency remote teaching and learning (ERTL) at tertiary institutions because of the COVID-19 pandemic necessitates exploring the affordances of technology to improve teaching practices. Various affordances have already been produced, most of which focus on the migration of the teaching and learning practices to virtual environments, thus serving to address students' and/or lecturers' challenges. However, the challenges faced by teaching assistants during the transition have been mainly neglected. This paper focuses on how teaching assistants in a first-year engineering mathematics course make use of electronic writing devices, in combination with the university's learning management system (LMS), to support students academically. Ten postgraduate students (teaching assistants) assisted 36 engineering students with an electronic writing device to explain mathematics during online tutorial and consultation sessions, which were recorded. The teaching assistants were then interviewed using unstructured questionnaires. This study revealed that the teaching assistants demonstrated prodigious competence in explaining concepts and the use of electronic devices. However, some instances of disjuncture were observed during the online engagements with the students. The teaching assistants also experienced challenges with interactive student engagement during the online session. However, overall, the teaching assistants had a positive perception of using digital writing devices to teach mathematics, although some mentioned challenges in terms of internet connectivity and technological devices. This study recommends that the use of electronic writing devices and various affordances offered by technology be an essential part of teaching assistants' training. It is important that tertiary institutions accommodate the challenges of teaching assistants during ERTL, especially considering the socio-economic reality of South Africa.

Mentoring support programme for rural origin health science students.
Gavin MacGregor

Objective: To support rural origin, underprepared, health science students to succeed in their higher education journey. Methodology: An compulsory academic and social mentoring support programme, developed in 2008, has been replicated on 16 campuses. Description of the intervention: Since regular face-to-face interaction with students is considered essential to assist students to address the challenges they face, a network of "local mentors" was established providing at least one mentor on every campus where Umthombo Youth Development Foundation (UYDF) students are enrolled. A template was developed for mentors to use in order to critically assess how students were coping academically, socially and emotionally, and to develop strategies and actions plans to address challenges. The completed template is submitted as a report to the UYDF's Student Mentor in order for them to access how every student is progressing, and whether further intervention is needed. Participation in the mentoring programme is compulsory for all students for the duration of their studies. The mentoring programme starts in February each year, and is seen as a good method of holding students accountable for addressing their own issues early on in the academic year. As part of the mentoring support programme, all students are required to complete at least 4 weeks work exposure per annum at their local hospital. This enables them to complement their theory with practice, and learn in a non-threatening environment. It also orientates them and equips them for rural practice after graduation. The third aspect of the mentoring support programme is the compulsory attendance of "Life Skills" workshops covering important topics such as "soft skills", financial literacy, managing oneself well etc. In addition to the mentoring support, students receive comprehensive financial support, as well as mental health support from professionals. Results Throughput rates from 88% to 100% for cohorts 2010 to 2015 have been achieved. For cohorts 2010 to 2015, 63% to 87% of students completed in the minimum time, whilst between 83% to 97% completed with one additional year. This is better than the national throughput statistics of medical students where 69.7% completed in the minimum time, and 81.7% completed after one additional year. Conclusion Provision of academic and social mentoring support is beneficial in assisting rural health science students navigate their higher education journey as seen by the relative high throughput rates, and time to completion rates, of these rural origin students.

Enhancing data management in academic advising through a Learner Case Management system to optimise student support.
Gugu Tiroyabone and Rohan Posthumus

As part of the Siyaphumelela Project, the University of the Free State (UFS), in collaboration with the University of Pretoria and IDSC, has developed a Learner Case Management (LCM) system that is available to the sector to support data management of academic advising efforts. Such systems are vital in a higher education context plagued by disruptions and where most teaching, learning and support efforts are taking a more blended approach in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic. In addition, the advancement of academic advising in the South African context and beyond, depends largely on a stronger data-driven approach to inform practice. This paper will reflect on how data is advancing academic advising through enhancing the effectiveness and efficiency of record keeping, promoting data-informed decisions, and guiding interventions in the development and design of holistic advising. From there, we will share a case example of how academic advisors at the UFS have been using data analytics and an LCM system to respond to recent disruptions on the rural Qwaqwa campus of the UFS to make sure that students are able to continue with their studies. We will focus on sharing the high-tech-high-touch approach, where data analytics flag students not participating in assessments, not accessing Blackboard, or underperforming in relation to their peers, which enables the Graduate Positioning Support contact centre to contact these students and refer or offer relevant and responsive support. All data are captured on the LCM, which, in turn enables text analytics of narratives inform a better understanding of students' experiences. The LCM also helps to quantify the magnitude of certain challenges in relation to others. Ultimately, we share these experiences to promote the uptake of an LCM among institutions associated with the Siyaphumelela Network to enable the advancement of a more data-driven approach to academic advising in the sector and to optimise student support and success.

Evaluating how the structural design of an institution responds to the student voice.

Hlumelo Sonjani, Ronelle Plaatjes and Francisco de Vega

At the 2021 Siyaphumelela Conference, a Nelson Mandela University student presented a paper that spoke about the advancement of the quintile 1-3 student support interventions to reduce the dropout rate and students getting lost within the system or taking more time to graduate. The paper proposed a model that could be used to deepen student support. A one-on-one, quantile 1-3 senior to first year student mentoring was proposed as a humanizing strategy that would draw close attention to each individual needs of a quantile 1-3 first year student for better and advanced student support. The proposal was adopted as a pilot programme by Nelson Mandela University management. The project reflects on the implementation of the Q1-3 student support. In the reflection, the focus will be on how the university structures and systems are designed to respond to student voices for student success initiatives. How an idea, that is supported by the top university management would get lost within the system while trying to imbed it into the institutional culture. The project uses documents of the Nelson Mandela institutional redesign of 2019, that influenced a more decentralized system and evaluates how that decentralisation affects the extent of the implementation of key decision making. The institutional redesign of 2019 might have given rise to a system of silos, where each faculty, pulls in its own direction to achieve the same objectives of student success. Now, for a centralised idea like the Q1-3 student support, it becomes difficult to imbed it within the institutional culture because each faculty is busy with their own mechanism of student support. The project then evaluates the unintended disconnects within the system because of decentralization. It will use a case study of the University of Georgia with evidence-based and data-driven framework, in how they invested on student support interventions, centralised student support and therefore yielded much greater outputs. Furthermore, the project will look at the disconnect that the online space has created for student success with the shift from face to face to an online/hybrid model of learning and teaching. It seeks to position the centralisation of student support interventions as the primary solution to its effectiveness on student success. Finally, it ends off by putting an emphasis on the importance of structures and systems on the achievement of the Nelson Mandela University vision 2030.

Supporting first year students' university transition: A data-driven approach to mapping and responding to the student journey.

Lauren Oosthuizen (UFS); Danny Fontaine-Rainen (UCT); Subethra Pather (UWC); Ruth Hoskins (UKZN); Sharmla Rama (UKZN); Neo Taimo (Wits); Takalani Muloiwa (Wits); Kudayja Parker (DUT); Mzwandile Khumalo (DUT); Livingstone Makondo (DUT)

Student support, particularly in the first year of study, is critical to students' transition into university. To ensure that first year students get the much-needed support during this transition phase, various initiatives are delivered at higher education institutions. One of these is the First Year Experience (FYE), which is a High Impact Practice (HIP). HIPs, delivered at scale, seek to entrench effective pedagogical interventions that are designed to support student engagement, retention and success. Within FYE programmes in South Africa, there are a variety of approaches to support students in their transition into and during their first year. Key indicators that inform a university's FYE intervention include: data-informed actions, student characteristics, university context, and institutions' strategic student success goals. In this interactive workshop, we will explore the key points across a student's journey in their first year and discuss: a) the data that should be collected at these key points; b) how to respond to that data through interventions such as onboarding and orientation, advising, mentoring, first year seminars, etc., and c) how to engage in monitoring, evaluation and quality assurance to gauge if the intervention(s) is working. Ultimately, the goal is to develop a comprehensive map of the first year of an incoming university student so as to better support students in their transition into university. Key words: First Year Experience; student journey; student success; data-driven student support.

Student sentiments during emergency remote teaching at the University of the Witwatersrand: Implications for academic advisory support

Lindiwe Tshuma, Nokulunga Ndlovu, Kgomotso Theledi and Innocent Mamvura

The Covid-19 pandemic forced many higher education institutions (HEIs) to introduce temporary measures to minimise the learning losses resulting from institution closures, something which affected learning environments globally. Some of the measures introduced by HEIs included emergency remote teaching (ERT) to minimise the time lost in the academic project. Many students faced huge challenges with adapting to the new way of learning. Students' biggest challenges were insufficient resources and fear of failure. This study conducted a sentiment analysis on opinions shared by students from a South African public university on the introduction of ERT. Analysing these sentiments will assist HEIs with designing strategies on faculty (organisation) and academic support (teaching and learning) that would in turn provide quality (accurate, relevant and timely) and equal access to information and knowledge. This study is guided by activity theory focusing on student interaction, faculty empathy, faculty feedback, administrative staff interactions, university reputation and provision of digital infrastructure. The study applied a qualitative methodology grounded in an interpretivist-constructivist paradigm. Qualitative data (sentiments) collected from an online social network (Twitter) were analysed qualitatively by the researchers to establish themes addressing issues that can be taken into account by higher education institutions in their academic advisory strategies. These findings revealed how a catastrophe in the education sector may expose inequalities amongst HEIs and how this can result in students uniting to support each other. HEIs can draw from this spirit of care in their academic advisory support strategies.

Access and success of Black students at university: An ideological argument from the global south.

Loyiso Maciko and Mulamuli Nkosingphile Hlatshwayo

It has been at least seven years since the emergence of the #FeesMustFall and #RhodesMustFall protests in South African higher education, in which students and progressive academics highlighted the colonial/apartheid/neoliberal nature of the higher education system in the country, and the need to dismantle it. In this paper, we adopt an ideological perspective in arguing for the importance of access and success of Black students in higher education in the global South. We think through and conceptualize access as having three central aspects - that is, access in the epistemic sense (knowledge and curricula), access in the social sense (institutional culture and belonging/non-belonging), and finally, access in the material sense (economic/financial). We rely on the American philosopher and critical theorist Nancy Fraser's social justice framework to theorise Black students' experiences and challenges in negotiating their entry and belonging in the university. We end the paper with some conclusions and recommendations on the need for structural/decolonial reforms in the academy. This includes, reforms that consider the proposed triad conceptions of access and success in the academy, that is, engaging with the politics of knowledge (production), engaging with the alienating and colonising institutional culture, and finally grappling with the prevalent financial exclusion and hunger on our university campuses. Keywords: Access; success; Black students; global South; decolonization; higher education

Decentring the tutor: Reflections of the online undergraduate theatre tutorial space.

Luna August

The onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, and its consequent drive to the intentional use of the online realm to deliver learning experiences, provided an opportunity for academics, teachers, lecturers and tutors to reflect on which kind of learning environments they provide for students. The pandemic also required academic disciplines (i.e. theatre, dance and performance studies, in my context) to consider ways to deliver learning experiences that both uphold the quality of the academic project, and consider the various challenges that students experienced (and arguably have always experienced) during this time. Lister and McFarlane (2021:187-188) argue that learning designers are a key stakeholder in designing inclusive learning experiences, and may derive benefit from student-centred collaborative design approaches. As a tutor in the theatre, dance and performance studies, the opportunity was taken to design tutorial experiences using the Universal Design for Learning (UDL), which broadly ensures (a) multiple means for representation, (b) multiple means for engagement, and (c) multiple means for action and expression (Dalton et al., 2011:3). In light of this, this conference presentation aims to reflect on the student experience in the tutorial space. This is done through a reflection on the using UDL in the online theatre, dance and performance tutorial space. The student voice is pertinent to the project, and reflections obtained from students have found that the tutorial space was an engaging environment which allowed for scaffolded and deep engagement with the course content. Students have also experienced the tutorial space to be insightful as a deliberate effort was made to link course content to the socio-political, economic and cultural contexts that students faced. Lastly, students have recommended that tutorials continue to be interactive, and drew comparisons between their tutorial experiences in other courses, citing that they would like for all their courses to be offered in this way. The conference experience hopes to be generative, and immersive by incorporating audio-visual materials by students, examples and reflections of practice, in an attempt to get participants to think about implementing UDL or other student-centred learning design experiences in their courses. References: Dalton, E.M., McKenzie, J.A., Kahonde, C. 2011. The implementation of inclusive education in South Africa: Reflections arising from a workshop for teachers and therapists to introduce Universal Design for Learning. African Journal of Disability. 13: 7 pages. Lister, K., & McFarlane, R. 2021. Designing for wellbeing: An inclusive learning design approach with student mental health vignettes. Open Praxis. 13(2): 184-200.

Reflections on the One Residence One Garden Project at Durban University of Technology.

Makhosazana Twala, Mzwandile Khumalo and Koo Parker

The past two decades have seen increased global focus on climate change and the importance of control strategies and policy instruments for environmental protection to enhance sustainability and planetary resilience for current and future generations (Khan and Chang 2018; Pasillas et. al. 2019). The 2012 United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development affirmed the leadership role of Higher Education in education for sustainable development (United Nations 2012). According to Benjamin et. al. (2018) universities have a crucial role to play in expressing the ways in which campus communities are shaping a sustainable vision of the future and generating new knowledge for sustainable development. The Green Campus Initiative (GCI) is a programme that promotes environmental sustainability interventions, underpinned by the belief that universities will exercise leadership within their broader regions by modelling ways to minimize global warming emissions, and by providing the knowledge and the educated graduates to achieve carbon neutrality (Regreen 2018). In South Africa GCI was only adopted in 2011 during the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (COP 17) held in Durban. The National Minister of Higher Education, Dr Blade Nzimande, formally constituted GCI in 2012 as a framework for students to play their part taking urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts (Anderson et al., 2017), making GCI a relatively new paradigm. The One Residence One Garden (OROG) Project is a central undertaking of the Green Campus Initiative (GCI) at DUT, with a particular focus of putting students at the centre of the resolution to their own social challenges. Instituted in 2021 in selected residences, the OROG project seeks to alleviate food scarcity amongst students, responding directly to poverty and food insecurity within the University. This initiative is driven by students and is aimed at helping improve nutritional levels and livelihoods by giving students the ability to produce healthy foods for consumption and sale of surplus crops. Although implemented through Student Housing, OROG draws on other academic and non-academic units, thereby serving to break silos and emphasize the role of the entire university community in student success. Further, the project is directly aligned to several of the University's strategic objectives including green ecosystems, innovation and entrepreneurship, adaptive graduates and an engaged university that contributes to improving lives and livelihoods. This paper presents empirical evidence on the implementation of OROG since 2021, and how it has contributed to the growth and development of students beyond academic success.

Exploring the potential of a service-oriented chatbot at the University of Cape Town – initial outcomes and lessons learnt.

Megan Bam, Deepti Charitar and Riashna Sithaldeen

The use of chatbots in higher education has become more prolific as the need to provide students and staff with faster and more efficient communication services became evident during the global COVID-19 pandemic. In addition, universities are required to become more innovative in how they create services that are able to reach a diverse audience of students and staff in an era of financial austerity. The focus of this research is on the service-oriented chatbot that was developed at the University of Cape Town (UCT). The UCT CARES (Central Advising and Referral Services) chatbot was launched in August 2021 in an attempt to replace the UCT CARES mailbox so as to improve the quality, efficiency and efficacy in responding to student queries, to reduce costs and to support the broader university response team in providing timely and specific information on emergent "hot topics" that arise at certain times of the academic year. Data was collected from the chatbot analytics dashboard and from responses logged by advisors handling the helpdesk. Findings indicate that the chatbot can serve more students in a much shorter time. It was also found that the volume of queries vary over time, with the peak volume of queries occurring at the beginning of the academic year. In terms of costs, it was found that a chatbot is more economically feasible as opposed to having advisors manually handling a mailbox. A chatbot is thus an important addition to student support services in higher education. There are key elements that are required to plan, develop and implement a service-oriented chatbot within a complex institutional environment and contribute towards its success. These elements include collaboration between different departments and units, communication of the initiatives with different stakeholders across the institution so as to get buy-in, and proper advertising. The outcomes and lessons learnt from the first-year implementation of the chatbot at UCT will be used for further development and implementation of an advising chatbot at the institution.

Co-creating the First Year Student Experience Programme for enhanced impact: Unsilencing the student voices in the design of student development initiatives.
Mzwandile Khumalo and Shubnam Rambharos

Student support and development initiatives are crucial in supporting students' chances of success in higher education. Such initiatives potentially enhance students' experiences that are enabling, and individually and socially transformative, though this goal may not be always fulfilled (Schendel, 2015). The holistic approach to student development has identified dimensions, including, the need for students to transition and to adapt to the university environment; the need for curricula to be designed to support students' personal engagement with disciplinary and professional knowledge; and the need for students to experience teaching and learning in ways that are supportive and that set high standards (McLean, et al, 2015). However, the involvement and engagement of students has always been at the level of implementation and less at the level of the design, with limited probable indicators on the relevance, de-alienating and identity of the students each initiative intends to support and develop. This paper employs design thinking methodology to collaborate with students to design and implement the first year student experience programme at Durban University of Technology. This, on progress paper, will share data collected from a pilot cohort on collaborating with students to create a first year student experience programme, to enhance their lived campus and academic experience, applying a design thinking approach.

The Siyaphambili website: Tracking post-school qualification attainment in South Africa.
Nicola Branson and Emma Whitelaw

The Siyaphambili website tracks the proportion of South Africans aged 25 to 64 with a post-school qualification; against a target of 28% by 2030. Currently in its third year of existence, the authors present recent updates to the website. The key updates include: • A change in the sample – we track the share of 25-64 year olds with a post-school qualification, where before we tracked 15-64 year olds. • Further disaggregation by age group and qualification type. • New information on province rankings and growth rates over time. In 1994, the proportion of working age South Africans with a post-school qualification was 9%. Attainment has almost doubled since, reaching 17% in 2021. This growth in post-school qualification attainment is a remarkable feat. At the same time, the attainment rate is a reminder of how few South Africans successfully reach, and complete, this education milestone. Motivated by the need to reduce South Africa's high level of income inequality, Siyaphambili has set a post-school qualification attainment goal which aligns with the South African National Development Plan (NDP) 2030 goals. Goal 2030 strives for 28% of South Africans, between the ages of 25 to 64, to hold a post-school qualification by 2030. This goal provides a reference point to track year-on-year progress in qualification attainment. The analysis on the Siyaphambili website uses the Post- Apartheid Labour Market Series data version 3.3, augmented with the Quarterly Labour Force Survey 2020 and 2021:Q1. This is publicly available Statistics South Africa data. The surveys ask the question "What is the highest level of education that you have successfully completed?" and respondents choose from a list of post-school qualifications such as degrees, diplomas, certificates or N-qualifications. The Siyaphambili website groups all of the types of post-school qualifications and defines this as "any qualification." This is the measurement used to track attainment of post-school qualifications. In addition, Siyaphambili tracks a subset of this group, namely diploma, degrees and higher qualifications i.e. post-graduate degrees. Social and economic inequalities in South Africa lead to different rates of school completion and varying opportunities to achieve a post-school qualification. Recognising the need to factor in inequalities, the post-school qualification attainment indicator is also disaggregated by population groups, gender, age groups, and province. Although all population groups have seen an increase in the share with a post-school qualification since 1994, the share within the White and Indian population groups has grown faster than the share within African and Coloured population groups, resulting in a widening gap in post-school attainment between population groups. The share of men and women with a post-school qualification grew with women slowly closing the post school qualification gap. Attainment of post-school qualifications has stagnated for the 25 to 34 age group; 9% of 25-34 year olds had a post school qualification in 1994 and 10.5% in 2021. This aligns with the country's concern regarding the vulnerability of youth in South. All provinces have experienced growth in post-school attainment. While the share with post-school qualifications was similar in Gauteng and the Western Cape until 2007, Gauteng has since pulled ahead of the Western Cape. In 2021, 22% of Gauteng residents had post-school qualifications compared to 19% in the Western Cape. Institutional providers, the Department of Basic Education and the Department of Higher Education and Training, along with public and private sector partnerships, need to work together to increase post-school qualification attainment in South Africa. This collaborative effort is necessary to enact the large-scale systematic change needed to reach Goal 2030.

Analysing the influence and impact of student support structures on first-year law students.
Ninette Crous

This paper is a reflection on a three year programme, wherein tutors and peer mentors were appointed to assist first-year law students. Prior to this programme, the Law Faculty had not utilised the services of tutors and mentors for their students to this extent. The CHE Report on accreditation of the LLB curriculuma also emphasised the importance of proper student support structures. The aim was inter alia to provide the necessary support to the law first-years and to help them transition to Higher Education and be successful in their studies and chosen profession in the future. It focuses on how students' support structures can assist students from the transition of self-study to self-direction, from High School to Higher Education, and promotes social and collaborative learning. It further reflects the growth that students who are appointed as tutors and academic peer mentors experience. What was the impact and influence of student support structures on first-year law students? A mixed methodology approach was followed by using questionnaires, interviews, marks, and data analysis to answer the research question. The following were considered: how to identify suitable candidates; training for students and lecturers; how to introduce the services to the students and lecturers; the benefits for the tutors, mentors, and students; the impact on their results; and the general influence of the program. In conclusion, the tutors and peer mentors helped developed the soft skills that students need to be self-directed, and how to adapt to Higher Education and blended learning. They played and continue to play an important role to assist students in managing their expectations, setting their goals, engaging with the content, and engaging with one another to form collaborative learning and support groups. The appointed tutors and mentors grew in leadership and confidence, students gained confidence in their abilities and became tutors and mentors. The programme had a far-reaching impact and influence on the first-year students, mentors, tutors, and lecturers. It assisted in our goal and duty to ensure that the law students receive the best possible education with the necessary support to equip them to deal with the challenges of the legal profession.

Academic success - what counts?
Penny Morrell

While student success is increasingly understood to be achieved through – and measured in terms of – a range of factors that are not only academic, the number of students that graduate continues to prevail as a primary measure of student success. The proportion of graduates of a particular cohort – of those who started in the same year, or those who were subsidised by NSFAS etc. is equally important. These indicators of relative success are then used to make comparisons – across institutions, within and across fields/ faculties, across genders and 'race' etc. In so doing they locate the respective institutions, faculties etc in relation to one another. If these comparisons are to be meaningful, however, everyone needs to count the same things in the same ways – and this does not always seem to be happening. In a recent research project on the role of the bursary support provider sector in promoting student success, a focus on measuring academic outcomes found that organisations within the sector were not counting similarly – and that they could not be sure they were counting in the same way as some of the national statistics available, where these were available. Working with practitioners in the sector, the research did two things. Having checked what already existed, we developed a range of definitions, after which we tested three of these – throughput, progression rates and time to completion – on the student outcome data of eight projects. In mapping the variables across these projects, the importance of not making assumptions from statistics was once again made; in this case some of the differences are in dosages and types of support offered, and in the profiles of the students themselves. The sector is particularly interested in pursuing consistent ways of counting – partly so that organisations can be clearer about the extent of the difference they may be making, but also to identify which practices may be producing better academic outcomes so that these can be shared across organisations. It is also interested in a larger discussion around developing some uniformity of what is counted and how. Some of the definitions and findings from the research will be presented, with a view to opening up the vagaries of how to count student success to a wider audience.

Analysis of BUSSE survey: Is race and gender associated with student experiences and expectations at the Vaal University of Technology?
Percy Mdunge

The Beginning University Survey of Student Engagement (BUSSE) is a cross-sectional survey which measures first-year students' pre-university experiences and their expectations regarding participation in educationally purposeful activities during their first year of study. After it has been administered at the Vaal University of Technology, an institutional report with descriptive statistics was provided to said institution. The purpose of this study was to examine the utility of this survey in providing staff who work with the aim of enhancing student success with information that could direct their intervention programmes. The study intended to find out if race and gender were in any way associated with any of the student experiences and expectations regarding participation in educationally purposeful activities during their year of study. Preliminary results showed that race and gender were associated with at least ten student experiences and expectations at the Vaal University of Technology.

Incorporating monitoring and evaluation practices as part of educational interventions planning: From theory to practice.

Polite M. Nduru and Riashna Sithaldeen

Often as educators we implement interventions with just the outcome and no supporting evaluation framework in mind. This is particularly true in emergency situations such as those brought about by the advent of COVID19 pandemic which disrupted higher education processes as we know them. Higher educational institutions had to roll out educational interventions quickly considering the COVID19 lockdown. Interventions require huge commitments in terms of both financial and personnel resources. Having a shared conceptual evaluation framework allows for the optimal usage and achievement of maximum impact of these limited resources. We review theoretical frameworks for the evaluation of education interventions. Four models emerge from literature each with its own pros and cons (Anh, 2018). These four models include Tyler's objective model, Stake's responsive model, Scriven's goal free model and Stufflebeam's Context, Input, Process, Product (CIPP) model. The CIPP model emerges as the most exhaustive model that can be used in the evaluation of different aspects of an educational programme. We conclude by applying the CIPP model to evaluate/plan the evaluation of the University of Cape Town's Phambili project which was launched to support students to get back on the path to academic success following disruptions from COVID19 pandemic.

Student reflections on student participation: What is the value of the student's voice, and is it heard?
Precious Mahlalela, Dimakatso Sebothoma and Riashna Sithaldeen

Engaging the student voice has become an essential strategy for institutions seeking to become more student-centred and inclusive. Many initiatives encourage and actively seek out student participation at every level, from conception to implementation. Student participation is critical to the successful design of such initiatives because they are the ultimate beneficiaries and thus, better equipped to inform this design and speak to its impacts or limitations. While the student voice is included, the influence of the students' contributions is often unknown; there is little feedback on whether it is integrated into the final design/outcome. It is, therefore, difficult for the student to know if the time and energy spent engaging with these issues add value. Here we present the reflections of students who have participated in activities that focused on student success to determine whether they believe their contributions are valuable and whether they would participate in similar projects in the future. A follow-up survey was conducted, with students who attended a data ethics workshop, student representatives on the Data Analytics for Student Success committee (DASSC) at the University of Cape Town, and several other students represented at various fora. Most responses were positive, with students feeling heard and eager to participate in future activities. However, the findings also indicate a need for a diverse representation of faculties, disciplinary backgrounds, and levels of study. The feedback also highlighted a lack of involvement of postgraduate students and representation of postgraduate concerns. Higher education serves an ever-changing and transient student population. It is essential to continuously engage with students in designing more relevant and impactful initiatives, especially those related to student success. However, for the maximal impact of student engagement, the inclusion of the student voice must be part of a well-thought-out approach to student-centeredness where engagement in structured representation is; well thought out; and integration of student feedback is deliberate. An adaptive approach to serving students could also refine the design process of student initiative projects with a central focus on students. Empower students to engage in the design process and use the student voice when marketing the initiatives. A detailed analysis of the experience and ideas the students shared; is essential; methods of communication can improve; some students indicated that the use of social media is key; some students felt the activities were not accessible to them. The student voice, if accurately presented, is powerful and enterprising; with the constant changes in Higher Education, the current students are better placed and most relevant to define, measure their success, and indicate factors that might affect it.

Learning culture as a strategy for student success - moving from theory to practice.
Rafael D. Alvarez

Student success in higher education is dependent on many factors, including a student's college preparation and their academic and social integration in the college environment. More importantly, student success depends on a student's working knowledge of the post-secondary learning culture. This presentation will address how to take academics to a new level using learning culture as a strategy for student success. In moving from theory to practice, this session will highlight the learning culture praxis in the San Diego City College (SDCC) Mathematics, Engineering, Science Achievement (MESA) Program. A Core Praxis Model for a Learning Culture will also be presented for facilitating the adaptation of learning culture practices and strategies for use in classrooms, academic programs and support services. Using an inquiry approach, this session will address each element in the Core Praxis Model.

Data democracy: A shared platform for the managed exposure of institutional research records.
Randhir Rawatlal and Ashton Maherry

A common data structure among institutions would facilitate standardising methods of analysis and easier adoption of modern approaches to supporting student success. At present, each institution implements a data structure sufficiently different to the other that makes any kind of standardisation seem impossible. This imposes certain practical limitations on the establishment of a shared IR methodology. Modern computing methods have largely solved this problem. For instance, it is possible to create a Database View as an interface to an institution's database which returns query results in a different structure to that in which the raw data is stored. By publishing a Database View specification, it becomes possible to bring an institution's data to a standard form to which standard definitions and analysis methods can be applied. In this paper, it is demonstrated that the Modern Scholarship Database View specification has been successfully applied to databases at three academic institutions. As an example of what can be accomplished, the analysis methods in the form of the AutoScholar Advisor system have been applied and analysis methods from the fields of Artificial Intelligence and Graph Theory are demonstrated across these institutions. It is further demonstrated that through the implementation of authentication shielded Application Programming Interfaces (APIs) it is possible for the data flow to remain within closed loops between institution staff and students and the institution itself. Such an approach is POPI-compliant. However, the authors further propose that even the data itself can be shared through various levels of anonymization. The differences between hashing and encryption are described as solutions to institutions wishing to make POPI-sensitive data accessible by parties external to an institution for IR purposes and analysis support. During the session, the audience is invited to complete a basic questionnaire to ascertain the appetite for this relatively high level of methods and data sharing. The results are shared and discussed during the presentation.

Identifying course combinations that inhibit minimum-time graduation: A student population balance approach
Randhir Rawatlal and Rubby Dhunpath

Despite significant investments in supporting graduation in minimum time, higher education continues to be plagued by unsustainably poor success rates. The reasons advanced include student under-preparation, financial barriers and personal non-academic barriers. In this paper, we turn our attention to the role of course combinations as determinants of student success. Using a Student Population Balance Approach to estimate the minimum-time-to-grad characteristics of an academic programme, this approach enables us to determine where support should best be directed. The Population Balance method originates in Particle Technology in Chemical Engineering to determine overall process outcomes when given the probability distributions of characteristics of the contributing elements like particles. Student support structures are well-developed at most institutions, but uptake is often low, particularly by students most in need of such support. By determining the performance characteristics of individual students and applying them to the model, it is possible to customise invitations to a student to engage with support which ranges from voluntary to mandatory. The characteristics of interest include obvious metrics such as mean marks achieved, number of courses passed and number of credits accumulated. In practice, model accuracy is enhanced by the inclusion of "latent factors" which attempt to estimate underlying characteristics such a level of diligence, consistency of efforts and bias for deep learning. Latent factor approaches also tend to generalise models and increase their range of application even in fundamentally different contexts, such a STEM and non-STEM programmes. Besides the focus on student characteristics, it is also possible to optimise curriculum logistic structures such as time tables to support alternative routes to graduation which are still within the minimum time. In this presentation, the AutoScholar Advisor system is used to estimate student characteristic distributions. A set of latent factors are proposed along with their relationship to the available student records data. A model of student support engagement based on population balance evaluation is outlined along with the application to optimising curriculum operating structure.

Reimagining the success discourse in a Higher Education Institution: Undergraduate student success.

Samukelisiwe Khumalo, Randhir Rawatlal, Victor Ndadozie, Cedric Mpungose, Phakamile Mazibuko and Ashnie Mahadew.

South African universities enhance student success by focusing more on the provision of remedial support to the undergraduate students deemed as 'at-risk' of meeting progression, and or completion requirements. Inadvertently, little or no support is being paid to students who are on course to graduate in record time, several with cum laude or summa cum laude potential. As such, the student success discourse becomes informed by individual students' weaknesses rather than students' strengths. Therefore, this qualitative case study is an integral part of a project being conducted in the School of Education which aims to enhance high performing students' self-authorship and performance at full potential. Focus group and individual questionnaires were used to collect data from 10 participants who were purposively selected from a cohort of 1000 high performing undergraduate students. The constructivist theoretical lens was used to guide the study while thematic analysis was used to interpret the findings. Findings suggest that the student success traits of high performing students are learnable, and proactive student support for high performance can detract from a need for current reactive remedial support practices. Therefore this study argues for a holistic student success support discourse to keep all students on track and performing at full potential.

Automating tutorial attendance register capturing, preliminary results from a pilot project.
Sivuyile Nzimeni and Mosa Mofokeng

Tutorial attendance registers are one of the many pillars that support tutorial programmes throughout the South African Higher Education sector. They provide a channel to measure tutorial attendance and its impact on student outcomes. In addition, attendance registers are also an indispensable part of reporting. At scale, the collection, storage, and processing of tutorial attendance registers can be a cumbersome, human resource-intensive and human-error prone process. This paper will report on the preliminary results of automating tutorial attendance register capturing. Our primary aim is to assess whether computer vision software alternatives can lead to measurable differences in tutorial attendance register capturing compared to the current model. Fortunately, advances in Artificial Intelligence (Deep Learning) and adjacent technologies, the open-source nature of these advances, have led to ubiquity, where interested researchers, students and practitioners alike can create viable data products. Advances in text recognition, using Optical Character Recognition (OCR), have made extracting data from images easier. Images containing handwritten text require Deep Learning algorithms such as Convolutional Neural Networks (CNN) and other classes of Artificial Neural Networks to recognise myriad handwriting styles and other variations. Here, there are two major alternatives to consider. Build option: Training, Testing and Deploying a Deep Learning model to handle handwritten tutorial attendance registers. Software as a Service (SaaS) option: such as Amazon's Textract, Google's Cloud Vision API or Microsoft Azure's Computer Vision. The first option has several benefits, including ownership of the training dataset, the ability to calibrate model parameters and ensuring student privacy through in-house data storage. On the other hand, higher capital costs include human resource requirements and additional computing capacity. The SaaS option minimised the disadvantages of building an in-house model by providing models trained with millions of images on advanced infrastructure, Tensor Processing Units in place of Graphical Processing Units, at a relatively low price of $0.20 to $1 for 1000 requests. This option also presents several disadvantages, including student privacy and POPIA compliance. Since implementing the SaaS option involves sending handwritten images to a server that hosts the model, the model returns the predicted values. Other major disadvantages include demand-led cost fluctuations and limited access to training and testing datasets. Given the issues detailed above, we piloted the automatic capturing of registers using the SaaS option given the lower resources required to set up a data pipeline, GDPR compliance of the Google Vision API's Python programming language integration, extensive documentation, and easy set-up. The implementation did not have any cost implications due to Google's free tier. In the first semester of 2022, we extracted 13,000 student numbers (20 minutes of processing) and exported them to a dataset compliant with the specifications of the University's database.

Know your course and students: Providing actionable insights to course convenors.
Stephen Marquard and Kende Kefale

Universities gather and hold a lot of data about students, but this data is often institutional and does not always reach the front lines of teaching and learning where it could inform teaching, curriculum and student support work. To start bridging this gap, the Data Analytics for Student Success (DASS) programme at the University of Cape Town developed and introduced new reports for course convenors through an iterative user-centred design process. The reports support one of the programme's strategic goals of using meaningful data and visualizations about the cohort of students in courses before, during and after the course delivery to provide course convenors and heads of departments with actionable insights that can be used to improve student performance over time. The presentation will describe the process used to identify needs and develop the reports, snags and pitfalls that we ran into along the way, how we distributed and promoted the reports, methods used for gathering feedback, and what we've learnt about communicating data to non-statistical audiences through high-quality visualizations that are both understandable and accurate. In 2022, new dimensions added to the reports include "equity indicators" showing differential performance by race, gender, and a proxy for socio-economic disadvantage, and the National Benchmark Test (NBT) subdomains for the course cohort which introduce a diagnostic assessment component enabling convenors to think through curriculum issues in relation to student preparedness. The reports have been welcomed by course convenors at both undergraduate and postgraduate levels, although National Senior Certificate and NBT attainment is less relevant for senior undergraduate and taught postgraduate courses, and thus different representations of prior student performance in pre-requisite courses or foundational degrees are being explored. Early results are that these reports are welcome and valued by many course convenors, and the visibility of "headline figures" and clearer exposition of previously opaque differences in student performance has started to change the conversation about the achievement gap, how and where it manifests, and where action can be taken to narrow the gap.

The use of disaggregated data to identify opportunities, gaps, and barriers to first year student success.

Sue Pather, Elizabeth Booi, Bradley Khumalo and Vanessa Brown

The University of the Western Cape (UWC) is committed to enhancing student success, retention, and graduation rates, clearly articulated in the Institutional Operating Plan 2021-2025. Strengthening the business intelligence capabilities to use learning analytics and tracking systems will add to the institution gaining a better understanding of who their students are and how best to support them. The data gathered assists with planning a more inclusive and intentional student support structure to address student success and retention effectively. The presentation will highlight the first year's activities in understanding student success at UWC. In particular Phumelela@UWC's Student Success project focuses on first year High Priority Modules (HPMs) across all seven faculties. We will share the process of unpacking data to define high Priority Modules (HPMs) identified. Modules could be classified as HPMs by considering the following factors: high enrolment, high failure and offered in multiple programmes. During year one of the Phumelela@UWC project, we followed an evidence inquiry process by addressing the following questions in identifying HPMs: What is wrong? (Outcome to measure), Why (underlying factors), interventions and possible ways to monitor and evaluate the outcomes. A further step to identifying HPMs in first-year programmes was to investigate the defining characteristics of students in the HPMs. The presentation will share how a holistic approach was undertaken when various quantitative data sets were collected, analyzed, compiled, disaggregated, and presented as dashboards. The results from the data assisted in planning year two of the Phumelela@UWC student success project. Year one was guided by Tinto's Theory of Institutional Action (Tinto, 2010), which considers the institution and how best can the institution's actions, together with understanding students' expectations and engagement, be optimized to support student retention and success.

Student support and development with technology: Embracing change for academic advising in Higher Education
Thembinkosi Kalanga and Nokuthula Mavela

In March 2020 South Africa implemented the national lockdown in response to the global COVID-19 pandemic. All sectors were affected including the education sector. Innovative digital and technological options were then required for the continuation of teaching and learning activities, thus the adoption of remote teaching and learning. Anecdotal evidence has highlighted the technical issues faced by students in accessing and participating in remote teaching and learning, such as self-motivation, data acquisition, and device suitability, as well as the necessity for a suitable environment. This may also translate to much needed student support and development – which also has had to be provided within online spaces. The inquiry to be conducted will be of a qualitative study design and will involve a focus group that will comprise of academic advisors, peer Advisors, and teaching and learning development practitioners, as well as academic development practitioners. The study will explore the methods and significance of the use of technology for student support and development at a university of technology during the global COVID-19 pandemic and beyond. It will also explore the interfaces between face-to-face and technological methods in student support and development. Moreover, the study will seek to design a best practice learning environment that incorporates and promotes the use of technology for student support and development.

Academic advisors engaging towards success: Student and lecturer interactions in a town hall setting

Tshepiso Maleswena, Siyasamkela Jinoyi, Aneshree Nayager and Mbongeni Shungube

Background: Continuous and effective engagement between students and their lecturers contributes to a higher probability of student success in Higher Education Institutions (HEIs). In their analysis of the retention and student success rates in higher education, Yorke & Longden (2004) note that "an institutional commitment to student success appeared to be strengthened when the institutional climate was perceived by students as supportive and 'friendly' and there was an institutional emphasis on support from both academic departments and the university support services" The academic advisors from the Commerce, Law and Management faculty at a research intensive university, while advising students, observed a fissure in the communication between lecturers and students. Although strides have been made at institutional level to enhance the factors contributing to student success and support, the academic interaction between lecturers and students continued to be strained and difficult to navigate (p. 129). Problem: Students spend a significant amount of their time interacting with their lecturers inside and outside of the context of the lecture. The gap, however between student and lecturer misperceptions of each other continues to be prevalent (Jaffer & Garraway, 2016). In reflecting on their interactions with academic staff in the respective schools, the advisors realized that the proximity to and teaching experience of students, appeared to have caused many lecturers to assume that they are well versed when it comes to the needs of students. This assumed knowledge of students' needs however, is not only limited to the academic staff that deliver course content but is endemic in how most members of all staff at faculty and institutional level perceive and interact with students and their needs (Oele, 2017). Purpose: The intervention aims to amplify student voices in decisions that affect them. Focus: The focus of this intervention is on the remodelling of an existing yet underutilized engagement avenue (the town hall) to create a safe space where students could express their academic needs to the academics in their division a controlled, virtual environment. This feedback is to be used by the lecturers to improve or enhance what they do, with those applied changes communicated back to the students. Methodology: This intervention is predicated on a qualitative research model where the structure of these town hall sessions is in accordance with the concept of creating safe spaces at HEIs (Gayle, Cortez & Preiss, 2013). Data collection: Data for this intervention was collected through the focus groups held with students after the respective town hall sessions. The focus groups were conducted virtually with the students who, after attending the town halls came forward and expressed interest in partaking in a reflection session of the town halls. The researchers (advisors) have adopted a semi-structured interviewing style where they encourage an open discussion about student needs in the reflective focus groups. Contribution and way forward: As this is an ongoing intervention, the culmination is envisaged to provide insights that will foreground unexpected and novel ways of enabling greater synergy between lecturers and students, thereby enhancing students' tertiary education experience.

An emerging story of student success coaching at Nelson Mandela University.
Unathi Silo, Terry-Anne Jones and Kim Hurter

In more recent times, academic or success coaching has become recognised globally as a key learning technique in the higher education context and is viewed as being different to other more established roles such as academic advising, counselling and mentoring. Although not new to higher education globally, the concept is new to the higher education environment in South Africa. With the recent emphasis on academic advising at South African universities, academic or success coaching is not yet well conceptualised and defined in South Africa. This presentation will reflect on the emerging story of Student Success Coaching at the Nelson Mandela University as a key strategic student development and support programme. Over the period of 2017 to 2019, the Higher Education and Access Development Services (HEADS) at Nelson Mandela University underwent a "fit-for-purpose" review and reimagination process that led to the restructuring of HEADS with its various Centres, into the Learning and Teaching Collaborative for Success (LT Collab). The LT Collab is made up of a number of inter-disciplinary clusters where staff can co-partner and collaborate with students and other staff on the pathway to success. The focus shifted from "access for success" towards "access for success" with a greater emphasis on lifelong learning and student success after access had been gained. Furthermore, significant changes in the student body and student needs necessitated new ways of fostering student success through supportive learning environments. In particular, through the review it was acknowledged that students require more one-on-one connections that assist them to review their progress, identify challenges and plan a way forward towards a successful academic journey. The Student Success Coaching programme was introduced to allow for one-on-one, collaborative partnerships with students that will foster a sense of care, connection and high-impact personalised learning experiences through the social construction of knowledge and the development of new personal understandings and insights. Since its inception in January 2020, and with the subsequent Covid-19 pandemic, there is a need to review the story of the emergence and ongoing establishment of the Student Success Coaching programme at the Nelson Mandela University; to take stock, review learnings and celebrate successes in order to move intentionally and strategically into the next phase of focused development and growth. The original role and emerging nature of Student Success Coaching will be discussed, followed by the process of engaging with students and further clarification of the role as it unfolded through practice. The unique coaching model developed through a reflective workshop will be outlined as a key outcome of the story so far in moulding the identity and understanding of Student Success Coaching at the university. It will be used to examine the coaching programme in relation to other established and emerging roles within the institution, such as mentoring, counselling and academic advising. This will be an important part in the emerging story as the programme begins to strengthen collaborative partnerships and strategically position itself within the institution.

Project Making a Difference: Meeting students' basic needs for retention and success.
Venicia McGhie

South Africa is regarded as the most consistent country in terms of inequality ranking globally, despite being a developing economy (McKeever, 2016; World Bank, 2018). One of the main causes of inequality in South Africa is linked to educational systems and practices, which mirrored apartheid's policies of discrimination, marginalisation, and oppression of the Black population. Democracy in South Africa brought an urgent need for redesigning the education landscape, including widening access to higher education for the marginalised African, Coloured and Indian youth. Widening access meant not only formal access, but also access to financial support in the form of the National Student Financial Aid Scheme (NSFAS) since 1999. According to the 2017 NSFAS Report, the NSFAS contributes to attaining the rights described in Section 29 of the Bill of Rights in the South African Constitution, by providing financial aid to students from poor and working-class families (NSFAS Ministerial Report, 2010). As such, the NSFAS financial assistance provided to students enabled them to access public post-school education, thereby rectifying the racially discriminatory laws and practices before 1994.While formal access to tertiary education resulted in increased participant rates nationally, the South African public higher education sector is still characterised by low success rates and high dropout and failure rates. Statistics South Africa (2019) notes that many students drop out without completing a qualification, or they take up to six years to complete a three-year qualification, with very few students progressing to postgraduate studies. It is especially the African and Coloured youth who are not succeeding in higher education. These students experience many different challenges in their study journeys. A study conducted by McGhie (2012) showed that the students experienced up to 17 different challenges, with four to five challenges being experienced simultaneously. One such overarching and re-occurring challenge is not having the financial means to provide for their daily basic needs despite receiving financial aid from NSFAS. This paper will report on an intervention that started in the 2012 academic year called Project Making a Difference, a registered non-profit organisation that provides in undergraduate students' basic needs in the Faculty of Economic and Management Sciences at the University of the Western Cape. The theoretical underpinnings of the project are based on Max Neef's Human Scale Development Theory. Max Neef (1991) explains that Human Scale Development is essentially grounded and engrossed in the satisfaction of fundamental human needs, with self-reliance and organic articulation as its support system. The author explains that fundamental human needs are best understood as a system because they are interrelated and interactive (Max Neef, 1991). Max Neef (1991) explains that there are three important factors when one wants to improve people's lives, namely: (i) Development is about the quality of people's lives and not about things. (ii) The quality of life is dependent on the potential people have to sufficiently satisfy their fundamental human needs. (iii) Fundamental human needs are the same in all cultures and in all historical periods, it is the satisfiers that are different. Moreover, Max Neef (1991) states that human needs are satisfied through satisfiers, within three settings, the individual context (oneself), the social group context, and the environmental context, which in this instance, is a higher education context. Hence, Project Making a Difference is providing financial assistance to students so that they can satisfy their basic needs, food and living expenses, transport to commute and attend classes, stationery, course readers and textbooks, to enable them to focus on their academic work and succeed. The Project is actively contributing to students' retention and throughput.

Abstracts