

Author biographies

Brittany Ann Adams is an Academic Student Success Advisor at the University of the Western Cape. With a background in Law, she brings a multidisciplinary perspective to her work within the first-year experience (FYE). Her professional interests focus on promoting academic engagement, holistic student development, and equitable access to learning support. She is passionate about fostering student success through inclusive, evidence-based academic development initiatives.

Prof. Raisuyah Bhagwan is a full Professor in the Department of Community Health Studies at the Durban University of Technology. She is also a National Research Foundation C2-rated researcher. She completed her doctoral study at UKZN in 2002 and used her research to guide how spirituality and indigenous knowledge may be embedded within social work education. She is passionate about issues of social justice, community engagement, spirituality and indigenous knowledge systems and has published extensively on these topics.

Prof. Carolina Botha is an Associate Professor in the School for Professional Studies in Education at North-West University, Potchefstroom. With twelve years in basic education and extensive experience in work-integrated learning, she contributes to national debates on pre-service teacher education. Her research focuses on professional identity development and the emotional readiness of beginner teachers within COMBER.

Prof. Anita Campbell teaches Engineering Mathematics in the Academic Support Programme for Engineering at the University of Cape Town, where she is also a Deputy Director in the Centre for Research in Engineering Education and a co-founder of the Centre for Wellbeing and Flourishing. Her research focuses on student success in mathematics, with a particular interest in growth mindsets, positive psychology, and academic coaching. She explores how these approaches can support thriving and well-being in the transition to university, especially in mathematically demanding programs and with students who struggle in their first year. Anita is also involved in developing interventions that enhance motivation and meaningful engagement with mathematics.

Dr Darlington Tawanda Chigori is a Business Management scholar and Senior Fellow of the Higher Education Academy (UK) with 5 peer-reviewed publications. His research spans several thematic areas including digital management, digital economy, business capabilities, human well-being, and capability development in digital contexts. His recent work also integrates digital marketing and firm-stakeholder co-creation, highlighting how digital platforms enable collaboration, innovation, and sustainable business performance.

Dr Gift Donga is a Part-time Lecturer at the University of Fort Hare. He holds a PhD in Business Management, specialising in consumer behaviour. He has published 23 journal articles and four book chapters, with research spanning e-commerce, consumer behaviour, women's entrepreneurship, and digital marketing. He has also consulted to industry, applying rigorous analysis to practical business challenges. He continues to shape business management research, focusing on innovation, social impact, and inclusive entrepreneurship.

Dr Bramwell Kundishora Gavaza is a Lecturer at the University of Fort Hare. His research interests are in business management, entrepreneurship, and marketing. His research in township economy, township entrepreneurship, marketing in small businesses, and educational technology provides critical insight into the future of townships and rural development. He is a member of the Professional Body for the Southern African Institute for Management Scientists and Advance for Higher Education.

Tina Hlanjwa is an Academic Student Success Advisor at the University of the Western Cape. With qualifications in Arts and Humanities, she works passionately to further the first-year experience project and enhances students' connectedness and belonging through social media engagement and advising.

Reggiswindis Thobile Hlengwa has practised child and youth care in various residential settings from 1991-1998. She is registered as an Assessor with the Health and Welfare Sector Education and Training Authority (HWSETA). In 2004, she obtained a B. Tech Degree in Child and Youth Development at the then Durban Institute of Technology. She has an Honours degree in Social Development from the University of Cape Town (UCT) and a master's degree in Education (Higher Education) from the University of KwaZulu-Natal. Her research interests include Child and Youth Care Practice and issues affecting students in institutions of higher learning. Ms. Hlengwa has been a Lecturer in the Child and Youth Care Programme at Durban University of Technology from 2007 to date.

Michelle Jaftha is an experienced higher education practitioner with over a decade in student development, academic advising, and tutor enhancement. She holds a master's in Adult Education and Global Change and is currently pursuing doctoral research in Educational Studies at the University of the Western Cape. Her work focuses on student voice, social justice in teaching and learning, and strengthening institutional practices that enhance student success.

Prof. Kotie Kaiser is an Associate Professor and the Deputy Dean for Teaching and Learning in the Faculty of Education at the North-West University in South Africa. Her work focuses on the teaching and learning of English as a second language within South Africa's multilingual context, with a commitment to cultivating passion and a culture of care in the training of future language teachers.

Naythan Kayser is a Coordinator in the Centre for Student Support Services at the University of the Western Cape. A Registered Counsellor (HPCSA) and certified workplace personal development coach, he has more than a decade of experience in holistic student development and sexual and reproductive health in higher education. He led a University Capacity Development–funded GBV research and interventions project at the CSSS and co-leads the institutional implementation of WYSA, a 24/7 AI mental-health chatbot. He is completing postgraduate studies on the uptake and usage of an AI mental-health chatbot at a South African university.

Palesa Mildred Kekana holds a Master of Nursing (Dissertation) and is currently a Clinical Facilitator in the private healthcare sector. Her research interests include lived experiences and participatory methodologies, with a particular focus on higher education. She is committed to evidence-based practice and critically engages with normative and policy-driven frameworks. Her work aims to contribute to transformative, inclusive research that challenges conventional paradigms and fosters critical engagement within academic and professional settings.

Dr Faeza Khan is the Centre Director for the Council for International Educational Exchange (CIEE) in Cape Town and holds a PhD in Social Work. With over 15 years of experience in student affairs and higher education, she has worked at the University of the Western Cape in teaching, postgraduate supervision, research, and student affairs. Her work spans gender-based violence prevention, social justice, and advocacy for gender rights. She previously directed training and research projects on crime prevention and served on NGO boards.

Dr Janet Kruger is a Senior Lecturer and Subject Group Leader for English at North-West University's Vanderbijlpark Campus. With sixteen years' school teaching and eight years' university experience, she focuses on English teacher education in 21st-century South Africa. A 2021 Institutional Teaching Excellence Award recipient, she models effective teaching to prepare future educators to thrive and make a meaningful difference in a volatile, uncertain, complex, and ambiguous (VUCA) world.

Deerdré le Roux is a full-time Lecturer in the Faculty of Education at IIE EMERIS and the Head of Programme for Inclusive Education. With over ten years of experience in special needs education, she is passionate about supporting diverse learners and students. Her research interests include resilience, student mental health, and support strategies in higher education, with a focus on enhancing well-being and academic success among students.

Dr Thierry M. Luescher is the Director of Postgraduate Studies and Researcher Development at the University of Cape Town and Adjunct Professor at Nelson Mandela University in South Africa. His research on higher education and student affairs in Africa,

with special focus on the student experience and student politics, is highly published and has earned him research awards internationally and in South Africa.

Prof. Matete Madiba is Deputy Vice-Chancellor: Student Development & Support at the University of the Western Cape and an Associate Professor. Previously Deputy Director: Education Innovation and Director: Student Affairs at the University of Pretoria, she works on higher education transformation, student success, leadership development, and educational technology. She has been a JSAA guest editor, led UP's Girls for Girls project, contributed to Tuning Africa, and collaborates with Maastricht, Deusto, Open University, and New York University.

Dr Henry D. Mason (PhD) is a Social Science Researcher at the Tshwane University of Technology (TUT) in Pretoria, South Africa. He is a registered Psychologist with the Health Professions Council of South Africa and holds a C2-rating from the National Research Foundation in South Africa. Henry's research interests focus on studying the role and application of positive psychology and student development theory in relation to student success.

Prof. Mikateko Mathebula holds a PhD in Development Studies and is an Associate Professor at the Centre for Development Support within the SARChI Chair's Higher Education and Human Development Research Programme at the University of the Free State. Using participatory and storytelling methods, including photovoice, her research examines the relationship between processes of higher education and human flourishing, with a focus on youth from low-income households and/or rural communities in South Africa.

Prof. Tebogo Moja is Clinical Professor of Higher Education at New York University, USA. She is also a visiting Research Fellow at the Centre for the Advancement of Scholarship, University of Pretoria, South Africa, and an Extraordinary Professor at the Institute of Post School Studies, University of the Western Cape, South Africa. Prof. Moja is a recipient of the Lifetime Achiever Award of the National Research Foundation of South Africa. She is JSAA's Editor-in-chief.

Morney Conrad Mostert is a Lecturer at Tshwane University of Technology (TUT) with 28 years' experience, where he focuses on resilience in education for engineering students. His research primarily explores the impact of resilience on student persistence, using the socio-ecological model of resilience (Ungar, 2008) as a theoretical framework. This research is particularly relevant in the South African context, where socio-economic and cultural factors significantly influence student outcomes in higher education. He holds a BTech degree from Tshwane University of Technology and a Master of Philosophy (MPhil) from the University of Cape Town (UCT), where he developed a deep interest in understanding the dynamics that contribute to student success in engineering programs.

Dr Justice Ngonidzashe Muchineripi holds a PhD in Business Management. He is currently lecturing at the University of Fort Hare. His research interests include entrepreneurship, township economy and strategic management. He has co-authored several journal articles published in peer-reviewed journals. He has also served as a researcher in the Eastern Cape Department of Education, where he was part of the project team in the implementation of the Presidential Youth Employment Initiative.

Prof. Subethra Pather is an Associate Professor and Learning and Teaching Specialist in the Deputy Vice Chancellor's office at the University of the Western Cape. Prof. Pather manages institutional academic support initiatives, such as mentoring, tutoring, and academic advising, to promote student access, retention, and success. Her recent projects include designing for social justice partnerships in the Global South and meaningful mentoring relationships between student and Staff.

Dr Angela Pike-Bowles is a Lecturer at the University of Fort Hare, specialising in strategic management with a focused research interest in the capabilities and sustainability of family businesses in developing economies. Her work seeks to uncover the strategies and philosophies that enable family firms to achieve enduring performance and long-term generational success. With six years of academic experience, Dr Pike-Bowles has taught a wide range of business modules.

Prof. Maryna Reyneke is an Extraordinary Professor in the Faculty of Education at North- West University, South Africa. A double Institutional Teaching Excellence Award recipient, she leads research and training in multilingual pedagogies and English across the curriculum. Her research focuses on assessment, self-directed learning, and multilingualism, with numerous national and international publications and presentations.

Prof. Dr Birgit Schreiber, PhD, has served in senior leadership positions in sub-Saharan Africa and Europe higher education with a focus, among others, on leadership, student success, DEI and gender. Birgit's PhD is in Psychology, and she has worked with a range of national and transnational bodies, notably Universities South Africa (USAf), SARUA, DAAD and ERASMUS. She also teaches, does research and supervision, and engages in program design and policy development. She is appointed as Extraordinary Professor at her Alma Mater, UWC, in Cape Town. Birgit has over 90 publications, including books and monographs, on various themes around social justice, student affairs, student engagement and higher education leadership, gender and the SDGs. She was the founding editor and is part of the editorial executive of the *Journal for Student Affairs in Africa* (JSAA), she is on the board of the *Journal of College Student Development* (JCSD) and is a Column Editor for the *Journal of College and Character* (JCC). She serves as President of the International Association of Student Affairs and Services (IASAS), after being the Africa Chair and Vice President. She has received numerous awards, most

recently the Noam Chomsky Award for international research and the NASPA and ACPA Award for international practice. She is a member of the Africa Centre at the Albert Ludwig University of Freiburg, Germany, Research Associate at Pretoria University, and she is Germany Country Director for the STAR Scholars Network and sits on various boards (SANRC at the University of Johannesburg, CASHEF at the University of Pretoria, South Africa).

Dr Jennifer Sheokarah is an English Lecturer in the School of Language Education at North-West University, Vanderbijlpark. Her research focuses on humanising pedagogy, second language learning, and innovative teaching strategies that enhance engagement and confidence. Drawing on action research and classroom practice, her work explores gamification, outdoor learning, and creative, anxiety-reducing approaches to English teaching. She is passionate about fostering comfortable spaces that leverage joy in language learning among both learners and pre-service teachers.

Dr Renée Smit is a Senior Scholar in the department of Electrical Engineering at the University of Cape Town, South Africa, and a former Director of the Centre for Research in Engineering Education (CREE). Her research interest lies at the intersection of professional education in engineering, the nature of engineering knowledge and the applied philosophy of engineering. The research has implications for educating engineers, but also for collaborative work between practitioners in science and engineering.

Prof. Juliet Townes holds a PhD in Industrial Psychology, with professional certifications in psychological assessments, training, and moderation, including registration as an Independent Psychometrist. These qualifications provide a robust platform for work in psychological resilience, employee well-being, leadership development, and human capital management. As a policy-engaged academic, her work on selection, leadership, and resilience is shaping workforce and education reform. She is a transdisciplinary thinker, integrating industrial psychology, business management, leadership, HRM, and resilience.

Dr Deirdre van Jaarsveldt obtained a Master of Social Science (Psychiatric Nursing) and a PhD (Higher Education Studies) from the University of the Free State (UFS) in South Africa and is currently a Senior Lecturer at the School of Nursing, UFS. Guided by a transformative paradigm, her research interest is in diversity and inclusivity in higher education.