

# HELM Fellows Exchange Programme:

Building the next generation of managers and leaders

Stories from higher education leaders in South Africa  
Higher Education Leadership and Management (HELM) Fellows 2011



THE VOICE OF HIGHER EDUCATION LEADERSHIP



## Background

HESA's Higher Education Leadership and Management (HELM) Programme identifies outstanding professionals in middle and senior management positions within the South African university sector who display exceptional qualities and who exhibit top management and leadership potential in their respective university and/or professional environments. The HELM Fellows Exchange Programme, one of the two capacity building programmes within HELM and one of the flagship projects of HESA, targets incumbents in senior leadership positions.

This publication profiles the 2011 cohort of fellows.

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## Preface

Universities are places where thoughts and views are expressed with an understanding that they will be challenged and refined. The university is a place where various forms of knowledge are nurtured and given recognition for what they are and can be. A university is a place where dilemmas co-exist, and where paradoxes are allowed to find expression in a deliberate and intentional way. The name university should therefore be protected, not only by the Vice-Chancellor (VC), but by all members of the university leadership and management team who are expected to help the VC uphold the institution's vision and traditions.

In our own country, universities are continually required to balance a struggle of the opposites. This includes managing the struggle between knowledge and education, on the one hand, and skills and training on the other; between access and success; higher education as a public good versus higher education as a private good; national relevance versus international credibility; pursuit of the humanities versus science, engineering and technology; as well as teaching and learning versus research.

In this regard, universities are complex places to manage, to lead, and in which to work. This complexity gets compounded when a university operates on funding received from numerous sources. To this end, higher education leaders and managers have to be alive to all these realities. They have to continually mediate inherent tensions between these dilemmas and paradoxes.

***“South Africa’s HEIs still need to grow in years and stature in order to fully claim their rightful place in the global system. Our universities must better craft their future in the context of both national and global developments. The Higher Education Leadership and Management (HELM) Fellows Exchange Programme is one of the most important initiatives within HESA that will help craft this future.”***

**Dr Jeffrey Mabelebele**

The HELM Fellows Exchange Programme is a frontline response to the governance and management challenges facing our universities in South Africa. It is focused on preparing a cadre of leadership and management experts who will be able to resonate with the emerging lexicon and the challenging management environment in which they find themselves.

These managers and leaders have to assist their universities in responding to the public accountability requirements of the state, as well as to the requirements of partners such as donors, business, industry, the public, and so on.

## Expanding the programme in depth and breadth

In order to launch a full-scale assault on these complex challenges, HESA is committed to continuing, scaling-up and expanding the HELM Fellows Exchange Programme. It is doing so to ensure that we build a system in which people and institutions are able to collaborate and strengthen each other's capacity in a wide range of areas. Secondly, we would like to continue this programme because of the experiential learning dimension, which allows fellows to learn at the feet of experts and mentors from other institutions.

It is common knowledge that higher education leaders and managers have, for the most part, achieved a great deal academically. They have accomplished much in their areas of scholarly interest. This programme is about giving them access to an enhanced professional management and leadership dimension. It is against this background that we would be expanding the exchange programme to cover, more in depth, three additional areas:

The first area is institutional planning; without a strong institutional planning unit, it becomes difficult for a university to operate. This unit deals with the collation and analysis of data; it constructs the storylines of the university that provide management with ready-made data enabling informed decision-making about the future of the institution. The unit also generates important information about admissions, throughput, and attrition rates of students, the number of graduates produced and their destinations, etc.

The second area is higher education financing; and by that I mean understanding the economics of higher education funding. Due to the complexities of the landscape, universities are required to be creative in terms of how best to resource their ambitious plans. We need quite a number of people who can produce creative ideas on how universities can survive in the context of:

- diminishing state funding;
- the threat of increasing tuition fees in order to balance the books; and
- declining resources, at least from the private sector, for research and innovation purposes.

The third area is the need for strengthening the capacity of the Office of the Registrar, which is crucial to the proper functioning of a university. All student records, both of an academic nature and pertaining to conduct while at university, are lodged with the Registrar. And, increasingly, the Office is called upon to provide quality advice to Council on a range of corporate governance matters facing the university. The Registrar plays an interfacing role between the Vice-Chancellor and Council to ensure that there's unity of purpose and action in relation to where the university is going. So, we are determined to ensure that Registrars, aspirant and serving, are well capacitated to play that role.

*“HESA is looking at expanding the Fellows Exchange Programme in terms of annual numbers and in terms of areas of specialisation represented. We are looking at increasing the focus on especially those areas within Higher Education Leadership and Management that we think are gradually coming under threat.”*

**Dr Jeffrey Mabelebele**

At a time of uncertainty, it is more important than ever before that South Africa invests in its universities to sustain long-term economic growth and to ensure that they remain competitive. The HELM Fellows Exchange Programme is a catalytic intervention that allows for cross-pollination of perspectives that will continue to play a crucial role in the effort to ensure sustainability and competitiveness.



**Dr Jeffrey Mabelebele**

Chief Executive Officer, Higher Education South Africa (HESA)

## Introduction

The HELM Fellows Exchange Programme is a crucial link in HESA's comprehensive response to strengthening management and leadership at higher education institutions (HEIs). Its focus is peer-to-peer learning and its mission is to explore and create relevant and cutting edge solutions that address organisational and individual capacity needs in higher education leadership and management.

Initially, the HELM Fellows Exchange process sent people across the Atlantic for a six-week period, at most, to learn from counterparts at universities in the United States of America (USA). Embracing the theory of change, the idea was that on their return to South Africa, fellows would implement what they have learnt. However, HESA realised that this format was unsustainable, both from a cost perspective and also because the US higher education system is quite different from what prevails in South Africa.

### A home-grown exchange programme is launched

Thus, in 2011 HESA piloted a home-grown intervention that built on the successes of the past, while laying a solid foundation for the design and implementation of a local variant. Again the focus was on peer-to-peer learning. There is a general acknowledgement that peer learning is of growing importance in the leadership and professional development fields. It is an approach that values practitioner knowledge and promotes reflective practice as a way to make knowledge explicit, so that it can be applied with intention and shared with others.

Written in November 2013, this booklet therefore explores the impact that the 2011 intervention has had on the fellows and their careers. It has been written two years down the line purposely, allowing enough time for proper reflection on the programme's emerging value.

The home-grown approach has paid off, as corroborated by the success stories featured in this booklet. All fellows indicate that the intervention met their expectations, allowing them to establish networks across the sector far beyond what they assumed would be possible. Consequently, the nine fellows who participated in the 2011 HELM Fellows Exchange Programme have already taken their careers to the next level:

- Some have **received promotions**.
- Others have **implemented new ways of doing things** at their respective institutions.
- And there are those who, while **continuing to grow in knowledge and leadership capability**, prefer to remain in their current management positions where they are likely to create the best value for their particular institutions.

The purpose of the HELM Fellows Exchange Programme is to expose fellows to a world different to their own. On returning to their home environment, the newly empowered and confident fellows can select a few catalytic interventions to spearhead and implement at their own institutions.

The idea is not for fellows to adopt a maximalist approach and try and replicate everything they have learned. They must rather take into account the context, historical evolution and state of maturity of their specific institution. Fellows have to be alive to the fact that sending and receiving institutions are very different from each other. Then they may identify two or three interventions which, if adopted and implemented effectively, could bring about a bigger change in the environment in which they find themselves. By interrogating what they've learned, repackaging it for their home environment, and taking along the people who might not have had the benefit of HELM Fellowship exposure, they can truly have an institution-wide impact.

The new home-grown approach pairs a "high-impact" mentor from a developed institution with a fellow from a relatively undeveloped institution to enable a cross-pollination of perspectives. It is envisaged that this shared knowledge will continue to play a crucial role in ensuring sustainability and competitiveness in South Africa's higher education system. As you will see when reading the profiles in this booklet, what starts out as collaboration between two individuals – a mentor and a fellow -- often grows into an inter-institutional collaboration that extends well beyond the six-week interaction.

Since the South African system is unevenly capacitated, the new approach allows for universities to learn from each other. This twinning arrangement will go a long way to ensuring that those institutions notably stronger in a specific field share their expertise with those still grappling with building capacity in a particular area.

After exposure to the HELM Fellows Exchange, the mentee is better equipped to identify where he or she is in the hierarchy of their own institution and to identify key thought leaders within that environment. This would include the vice-chancellor and deputy vice-chancellors and others who, due to their expertise, history, and so forth, are facilitators or enablers of change.

## Focus areas for the 2011 cohort

Six-week fellowships were offered in the following professional areas:

- **Institutional planning:** advancing university planning, assessment, evaluation and research; refining, directing and co-ordinating a participatory process of institutional planning, and evaluating and determining how well the institution is achieving its

goals (at certain host institutions this professional area included financial management and quality assurance).

- **Registrar's office:** looking at records management; its role as secretariat for different administrative committees, including University Council meetings; its role as a steering committee for University Council committees; data management for institutional research activities; computerisation of records, admissions, registration, and other procedures.
- **Financial management:** including budgeting; the development of short and long-term financial planning models; monitoring and reporting on financial results; co-ordinating the university's annual budget process, managing the investment portfolio, and overseeing the issuance of external debt notices.
- **Student affairs:** including student engagement; optimising the university experience, and preparing students to serve local, national and global communities; creating and maintaining a healthy campus environment; experiences beyond the classroom; development and implementation of relevant institutional policies and student leadership opportunities.

In addition to the focus areas above, six additional fellowships were also made available in the following areas:

- **Academic development and support.**
- **Research administration.**
- **Institutional advancement:** with specific focus on branding, marketing, and events management.
- **Teaching and learning:** with specific focus on the development of academic staff as educators; quality assurance; the development of the next generation of academics; post-graduate programmes and research on higher education; and student development.
- **Executive leadership:** exposing fellows to executive leadership skills and knowledge in the context of higher education.
- **University leadership:** mentoring and exposure to all aspects of university leadership.

It is heartening to note that several of the fellows report a renewed and enhanced appreciation of the value of 'listening'. This is a critical attribute in stakeholder relations management – a role central to leadership in all environments, and more so in institutions of higher learning.

## Profiles of the Fellows



### Dr Clever Ndebele

**Designation:** Head of Academic Development and Support (at time of fellowship)

**Institution:** University of Venda

**Host institution:** University of Johannesburg

**Mentor:** Prof Elizabeth de Kadt

**Area of specialisation:** Academic Development and Support

**Outcome:** Promotion to Director: Centre for Higher Education Teaching and Learning.

Timing is of the essence when building one's career. Dr Clever Ndebele's 2011 HELM Fellowship at the University of Johannesburg (UJ) could not have occurred at a more opportune time. It coincided with the establishment of an academic development and support unit at his own institution, the University of Venda (UNIVEN).

This meant that, as head of the UNIVEN Academic Development Unit (ADU) at the time, he was able to benchmark academic development activities and conceptualise an appropriate organogram for the unit reflecting the human resources needed for staff and student academic support. These improvements were based on the UJ model. In addition, he was able to develop a five-year strategic plan for the ADU based largely on insights gained during his six-week stint at UJ.

*"Two years down the line, the Fellowship has greatly contributed to enhancing my leadership capabilities and the realisation that I could contribute to the university's core business at a more strategic level. As a result, when UNIVEN advertised the post of Director of the Centre for Higher Education Teaching and Learning (CHETL) I immediately applied. The post was advertised in national newspapers and amid stiff competition I emerged as the most suitable candidate and was appointed as a substantive director. My success in the interview process can be attributed largely to the experience I gained under the tutelage of Professor Elizabeth de Kadt, Executive Director of Academic Development and Support (ADS) at UJ."*

Dr Clever Ndebele

Dr Ndebele has subsequently been appointed Director of the Centre for Higher Education Teaching and Learning at UNIVEN, under which the ADU falls.

As CHETL Director, Dr Ndebele has been able to develop a five-year strategic plan for the Centre. Today, however, as a result of his HELM Fellowship, the influence of his leadership is felt way beyond his university --- it has impacted at both the institutional and national levels.

For example, Dr Ndebele served as task-team leader in the crafting of UNIVEN's strategic initiative, *Enhancing the Quality of Teaching and Learning*, during the development of the university's 2012-2016 Strategic Plan.

Until 2012, he was a panel member of the National Excellence in Teaching Awards, jointly administered by the Council on Higher Education and the Higher Education Teaching and Learning Association of Southern Africa (HELTASA). He is currently a member of the HELTASA executive committee.

Dr Ndebele has collaborated in several research projects in the higher education field, including two National Research Foundation (NRF) projects --- more than five universities were involved in each case. The NRF recently drafted him onto a panel of experts responsible for evaluating and reviewing academic development proposals.

"I was a task-team member of the Council on Higher Education (CHE) group of experts that drafted the initial criteria for the CHE's second round of institutional audits (dubbed the Quality Enhancement Project). My expertise has also been recognised at ministerial level; towards the end of 2011, I was appointed by the Minister of Higher Education and Training to his reference group of experts on extended degree programmes", he adds.

UJ mentor Prof de Kadt says there is considerable value to be had for the host institution in hosting a HELM Fellow. "An external visitor promotes reflection on one's own work. Being asked to explain one's own approach, and why various decisions had been taken, allows for considerable fruitful reflection in a non-threatening environment (as opposed to a formal review.) There was no sense that this was experienced as unduly onerous."

A presentation by Dr Ndebele allowed UJ ADS staff members to gain a sense of how their division was seen from the outside and, indeed, to become aware of the considerable progress that had been made.

*“The visit was seen as a new and useful approach to building interactions between various higher education institutions, and as supporting the work of the various collaborative special interest groups (SIGs) that had recently emerged through the work of HELTASA.”*

**Prof Elizabeth de Kadt**

In addition to the great strides he has made in his career, Dr Ndebele directly attributes his new and successful approach to leadership and management to the HELM Fellows Exchange Programme. “I had the opportunity to attend both leadership meetings and staff meetings at UJ and was inspired by the openness with which these meetings were conducted. ADS staff members felt free to contribute and in some cases differ with the views of management. I have adopted this model of management in which issues concerning the core business of the Centre for Higher Education Teaching and Learning are debated freely by all staff members before binding decisions can be taken.”

Looking ahead, Dr Ndebele hopes for a time when there is greater recognition of the role of academic development centres in promoting and ensuring the success of students.

At most institutions of higher learning the academic status of academic developers is contested and most are employed on contract. He argues: “In order to gain the recognition of the higher education community, academic developers need to demonstrate that their profession is a discipline in its own right --- that is, that they are indeed academics. To achieve this recognition, it is prudent that academic developers conduct their work in both a professionally and academically sound way.” Dr Ndebele adds that this emphasises the need for professional development courses for educational developers in universities to assist them to gain the appropriate knowledge and expertise in discharging their duties.

The need for the training of educational developers is even more urgent, considering that this is an emerging field that recruits largely from other disciplines. From the literature, it is apparent that educational developers should operate from an informed perspective, as they need to offer strategic support on wide-ranging issues in the field of teaching and learning, as well as on research into such issues.

“In addition”, says Dr Ndebele, “I feel that greater collaboration needs to be nurtured among academic developers across the country. I recommend a national code of conduct for educational development, a national academy for educational development, and increased funding from central government to facilitate adequate staffing of these crucial educational development centres. I also advise that more research be conducted nationally on the enablers and constraints of educational development work. For a sound induction into the discipline, it is necessary to establish a National Fellowship Fund to enable new entrants into the field to visit universities with well-established academic development centres for specified periods of time.”



## Mr Takalani Dzaga

**Designation:** Director: Communications and Marketing

**Institution:** University of Venda

**Host institution:** University of Johannesburg

**Mentor:** Mr Kerry Swift

**Area of specialisation:** Institutional Advancement with specific focus on branding, marketing, and events management

**Outcome:** Effective management of his institution's 30th anniversary celebrations. Acquisition of an Accredited in Public Relations (APR) status, an internationally-graded and South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA) approved designation.

The world's greatest universities all have one thing in common: they prioritise their branding, marketing, and strategic communications functions. In South Africa, without exception, our leading higher education institutions do the same.

That is why Mr Takalani Dzaga, Communications and Marketing Director at the University of Venda (UNIVEN), chose to spend his HELM Fellowship at the University of Johannesburg under the mentorship of the well-known and highly experienced UJ Executive Director of Advancement, Mr Kerry Swift.

A vital and increasingly important role is played by public relations as the "eyes and ears" of any institution, as well as building and maintaining institutional reputation. Stakeholder feedback should always be taken into consideration when taking decisions. The Fellowship approach was such that theoretical knowledge was integrated with practical, hands-on learning, as well as practical assignments done in close co-operation with the mentor.

"Kerry played a crucial role in ensuring that I return with a lot of information. As an experienced person in the field, he made time available for me, including one-on-one sessions. He took me through all the activities that they are involved in and I, in turn, shared with him the structure of my department and our activities", notes Mr Dzaga. "He arranged for me to meet various colleagues in the division, and we shared insights relating to media relations, student recruitment, fundraising, alumni relations, and functions and events. So it was a very good experience."

While at UJ, Mr Dzaga invested time in exploring the university's approach to strategic marketing, strategic media relations, branding and rebranding, corporate identity, fundraising and advancement, as well as the application of social media to improve communications with stakeholders.

*“Communications should be considered as a support function that directly impacts on the financial strength of higher education institutions (HEIs). In many institutions, communications and marketing practitioners are not taken seriously. They are viewed as event managers. It is, therefore, imperative to create space or make provision for them to participate in decision-making forums such as in Executive Management and in Council. Communications and marketing should further be considered among the core activities required for the effective functioning of HEIs, because they support the strategic project and other initiatives by developing and delivering clear messages to internal and external stakeholders.”*

#### Mr Takalani Dzaga

On his return to UNIVEN, Mr Dzaga was able to immediately put into practice what he had learned, since his institution was preparing to celebrate its 30th anniversary in 2012. He says: “As a result of the Fellowship, I was able to prepare an anniversary marketing plan that was subsequently effectively implemented. We hosted a very professional and successful birthday celebration.”

Among the specific lessons he learnt from team UJ were issues pertaining to the development of a comprehensive project plan. “We spent a lot of time on preparation for the 30th anniversary celebration in order to ensure that we would have an effective and successful event”, explains Mr Dzaga. “We did careful budgeting, we identified all the individual items that needed to be attended to, and we allocated responsibility to individual staff members. We involved a number of stakeholders and put together a competent project team.”

Another key to success was the effective management of people. “It is important for one to be patient when dealing with people”, notes Mr Dzaga. “When working in a marketing and communications environment you are working with many different personalities and that is why I think I was successful in hosting this event, because having completed the Fellowship I was blessed with infinite patience.”

## Career development

Mr Dzaga emphasises that his mentor encouraged him to study hard and consider various opportunities for career development. Thus, after completing the Fellowship, he attended a number of activities with the Public Relations Institute of Southern Africa (PRISA), which provides registered practitioners with formal education and training.

*“Prior to the Fellowship, I had the status of Chartered Public Relations Practitioner (CPRP) with PRISA”, says Mr Dzaga. “However, following the Fellowship, I was encouraged to upgrade my status and was awarded an Accredited in Public Relations (APR) status. This is an internationally recognised accreditation. The designation is also a South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA) approved status and signifies a high professional level of experience and competence. APR is a mark of distinction for those in the field who demonstrate their commitment to the profession and to its ethical practices, and who are selected based on broad knowledge, strategic perspective, and sound professional judgement.”*

Mr Takalani Dzaga

“I am very proud of the accreditation. My Vice-Chancellor was also very impressed. I am now also encouraging my colleagues within the department to follow the same process.” Mr Dzaga notes that he has realised the advantage of empowering colleagues through effective delegation. This is done by ensuring that when you delegate responsibility, you make sure that the tasks are clearly identified and clearly communicated. It means ensuring that the person to whom one is delegating a task is capable of handling it. If not, it is important to assist that person to ensure that the delegated assignments are effectively accomplished.

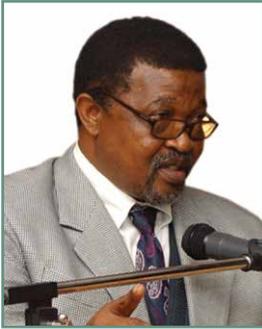
As a colleague and as a person, Mr Dzaga considers himself someone who is prepared to learn, and a person prepared to give everything to the cause of accomplishing the objectives of his institution. “My colleagues will testify that I devote most of my time to my work. I consider myself someone who loves my work, while making time available for my family.”

He acknowledges that he always wants to do things in an exceptional manner, making sure that he has enough time to assist in achieving the goals that UNIVEN has set as an institution. He, therefore, wants to encourage his colleagues to devote their time to their work and show commitment.

## Continued co-operation between UNIVEN and UJ

The HELM Fellows Exchange Programme was an opportunity for UNIVEN to establish a benchmark for best practice. It was an opportunity to compare the performance of various activities in both sending and hosting institutions, and to share valuable information in the quest to improve such performance. Mr Dzaga argues that the programme's strength is the integration of theoretical knowledge with practical experiences.

Two years down the line, Mr Dzaga and Mr Swift have continued to co-operate and share experiences. "I am still in communication with Kerry and, unfortunately, he has informed me that he is leaving soon", says Mr Dzaga. "But I have undertaken to ensure that we identify someone else within UJ with whom I will continue to communicate on a regular basis in the absence of Kerry. We still need each other to ensure that we advance the objectives of our respective institutions", he concludes.



## Dr Sukude Mangwevandile Matoti

**Designation:** Academic Planner

**Institution:** Walter Sisulu University

**Host institution:** Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University

**Mentor:** Professor Heather Nel

**Area of specialisation:** Institutional Planning

**Outcome:** Contributed to setting up the framework for a new institutional improvement plan, and contributed to laying the foundation for improving the integrity of institutional data.

Dr Sukude Matoti's HELM Fellowship in late 2011 coincided with the announcement that Walter Sisulu University (WSU) would be placed under administration. The University Council, management, and labour requested the intervention of the Minister of Higher Education and Training to assist in propelling the WSU towards a better-resourced and more efficient organisation to serve the Eastern Cape.

In his role as WSU Academic Planner, Dr Matoti rose to the challenge by significantly contributing to the university's turnaround strategy. Following the Fellowship, he not only assisted in setting up the framework for a new institutional plan – which also encompasses an institutional improvement plan --- but also contributed to laying the foundation for improving the integrity of the WSU's institutional data. The latter was guided by vital information and tools provided by the host institution, the Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University (NMMU), during the course of the HELM Fellowship.

*“I work well with my colleagues in a collegial atmosphere. The HELM Fellowship placement helped to boost my confidence and this arises mainly from the realisation that although institutions may face similar problems and follow similar steps in developing plans to solve them, their plans will be different because institutional contexts differ.”*

### Dr Sukude Matoti

He notes that for the WSU, the HELM Fellowship came at the right time. The university was the last to be audited by the Higher Education Quality Committee (HEQC); and when this Fellowship commenced, the WSU had already received a draft audit report. Dr Matoti believes this made it easier to pinpoint areas on which to concentrate in order to empower himself.

“My learning contract was drawn up with not only the challenges in mind, but also with a view to my empowerment as a planner.” This meant learning best practice on models of institutional strategic planning, learning how best to link institutional planning to resource allocation, and how to develop and manage a plan that links institutional planning and quality assurance, while simultaneously embedding a culture of planning in that institution.

Dr Matoti emphasises that realising the objectives of the Fellowship was made possible through frequent interactions with relevant NMMU staff members (including senior management). He was provided with comprehensive strategic and governance documentation and also attended committee meetings. He met regularly with his mentor Prof Heather Nel, who is the Senior Director: Strategic Planning and Information Analysis at NMMU, and weekly feedback sessions proved invaluable.

He realised that there are areas of commonality between the WSU and the NMMU, points of difference in approach to some issues, areas of strength, and points of growth. “I learnt much about various aspects of planning and feel empowered. In some cases, I found that the NMMU and the WSU had set similar systems in place --- for example, policies --- and this was a source of joy for me. In some instances, I learnt that the problems we face at the WSU are not peculiar to us.”

Finally he adds that the key lesson learnt is that although institutions can face similar problems and even follow the same steps in developing plans to solve the problems, their plans will be different because institutional contexts differ.

Although he has now retired, the key inputs that Dr Matoti was able to make during a challenging time at the WSU were enhanced by the HELM Fellows Exchange. He argues that this helped to lay a foundation for the institution, from which others have since continued and benefitted.

Dr Matoti acknowledges that the Fellowship has also developed his leadership abilities. “My leadership style veers more towards the participative style, than the directive or autocratic style. This comes from the realisation that one achieves much more by cascading planning and allowing participation in planning activities by all relevant sections and structures in the institution.”

Commenting on the state of institutional planning in South Africa in the years ahead, he envisages a situation where institutional planning is aligned to, and supported by, the National Plan for Higher Education which provides the strategic framework for re-engineering the higher education system for the 21st century. However, warns Dr Matoti, there should still be room for institutional autonomy so that universities are not overly directed by the Department of Higher Education and Training.



## Dr Soane Joyce Mohapi

**Designation:** Head: Centre for Continuous Professional Teacher and Community Education and Training

**Institution:** University of South Africa, Pretoria

**Host institution:** Rhodes University

**Mentor:** Professor Chrissie Boughey

**Area of specialisation:** Teaching and Learning

**Outcome:** Promotion to Head: Centre for Continuous Professional Teacher and Community Education and Training in the College of Education.

Dr Soane Joyce Mohapi's career has literally taken off since she completed the HELM Fellowship in 2011. Hard work, reinforced by a fruitful fellowship alliance, has paid off for her as she was recently appointed Head: Centre for Continuous Professional Teacher and Community Education and Training in the College of Education (CTCET) at the University of South Africa (UNISA).

Delighted that college management has appointed her as manager of the Centre, Dr Mohapi says it goes without saying that they have recognised her achievements, and that they have also noted that her leadership may have a huge impact on the development of teachers in our country.

The accolades do not stop there. Dr Mohapi received a prestigious National Science and Technology Forum (NSTF) Billiton Award nomination in 2013 for her work in the field of Communication for Outreach and Creating Awareness of Science, Engineering, Technology, and Innovation.

*"I can honestly say that I attribute the NSTF Award nomination to my HELM Fellowship under my mentor, Prof Chrissie Boughey of the Centre of Higher Education Research Teaching and Learning (CHERTL) at Rhodes University. We built an alliance that created space for dialogue, but at the same time allowed for reflection, action, and learning.<sup>1</sup> She taught me the art and science of creative strategic foresight. There was a synergetic relationship between my mentor and me, because we were determined to achieve more than each could on her own."*

Dr Soane Joyce Mohapi

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<sup>1</sup> Ann Rolfe, mentoring expert <http://mentoring-works.com/about-us/ann-rolfe/>

In the true spirit of the HELM Fellows Exchange Programme – which aims to engender a cross-pollination of perspectives – Dr Mohapi adds: “Although my mentor had broad knowledge of higher education, our differences provided potential for greater discovery, challenges and growth, because she was able to make contact with other colleagues in my Centre and outside the Centre, and in the process she also learned from our discussions.”

Education, training and development are important aspects of a democratic, vibrant and prosperous society. The new education system in South Africa stresses an integrated approach to good-quality education and training. The CTCET provides opportunities for individuals to gain access to, and succeed in, lifelong education, training and community development.

The CTCET, now in the capable hands of Dr Mohapi, is striving to become the African innovative and transformed centre for teacher in-service educational knowledge and skills-transfer, as well as community education and training.

In addition to heading up the Centre, Dr Mohapi’s research interests include education management, and school governance and professional teacher development, while her field of specialisation is education management and policy studies. She is a member of Educational Management of South Africa, and a member of the National Teacher Adjudication Panel.

Dr Mohapi’s vision for the development of teaching and learning as a field of expertise within the higher education landscape in South Africa is for a link to be created between the grade 10 to 12 curriculum and first-year university offerings. “Unless institutions of higher learning consider working closely with schools, especially schools that cater for grades 10 to 12, the challenges related to learners not progressing to the second year of university study will continue to dog us.”

## Reflecting on the Fellowship

She notes that time spent at Rhodes University marked a new beginning. “Meeting the CHERTL staff and being part of discussion forums was an eye-opener. Together we will continue to make a difference in education.”

Prof Boughey, who also serves as Dean of Teaching and Learning at Rhodes University, has been involved in a number of national initiatives directed at the assurance of quality and the improvement of teaching and learning in higher education. She was able to share knowledge and expertise in these areas with Dr Mohapi.

Dr Mohapi’s stay at Rhodes University coincided with the submission of a funding proposal to the National Research Foundation (NRF) for a Continuous Professional Teacher

Development Project; and Prof Boughey was able to assist in drafting the proposal in order to ensure that it met the submission requirements.

Other activities that contributed to the success of the Fellowship included visits to the Centre for English Study in Africa, and the Rhodes University Mathematics Project. Dr Mohapi was given access to their material and learned how their programmes are aligned with a BEd in-service degree. She attended an assessor's course and evaluation workshop, and she had exposure to the process of approving short courses at Rhodes University. She attended a six-day research design workshop, and was encouraged to publish at least two articles per year to secure NRF funding for a teacher development programme.

Her experiences fed directly into HESA's search for finding ways in which quality teaching can be developed and supported across the higher education sector, and provided inputs and guidance on the coherence and balance of measures derived from policy instruments and proposals aimed at improving teaching and learning across the sector.

As a result of what she has learned during the Fellowship, Dr Mohapi is now a very confident and capable leader. She believes leadership is a choice one makes. She sees herself as an assertive leader who wishes to improve education for South African learners --- because they are the future. This philosophy is evident in a project that Dr Mohapi is currently leading, involving 500 schools, no less than 3 000 teachers, and 2 000 learners. Like any true leader, she recognises that she cannot achieve the deliverables of this project on her own.

Good communication skills are inherent of her management and leadership style. By communicating well with project team members, they have managed to successfully complete phase one and two of the project within the timelines set. "Among the project team members were professors. I believe I am able to create an atmosphere that's conducive to all team members being able to excel and best use their talents to the benefit of the project", she adds.

With enhanced leadership skills, she is now tackling even bigger projects. Dr Mohapi has secured a project with the North-West Department of Education to train 500 life-skills teachers and 54 Foundation Phase life-skills subject specialists (in other provinces they are called learning area specialists, or curriculum implementers).

As a result of the HELM Fellows Exchange Programme, fellow and mentor have endeavoured to continue their inter-institutional relationship. Dr Mohapi has kept Prof Boughey informed about the further development of teaching and learning activities at UNISA, and the extent to which she has found it appropriate to implement approaches similar or dissimilar to those at Rhodes University.



## Ms Ruby-Ann Levendal

**Designation:** Director: Transformation  
**Institution:** Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University  
**Host institution:** University of Cape Town  
**Mentor:** Ms Judy Favish  
**Area of specialisation:** Institutional Planning  
**Outcome:** Continued commitment to leading transformation at a strategic level, serving on strategic institutional structures (including the Council) and on-going post-graduate supervision.

The smooth operation of any higher education institution (HEI) is dependent upon sound planning. That is why Ms Ruby-Ann Levendal, Transformation Director at Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University (NMMU), focused her fellowship activities on refining her knowledge and skills in institutional planning, particularly pertaining to transformation, strategic planning, and monitoring and evaluation (M&E).

She says her HELM Fellowship, spent with the University of Cape Town (UCT) Institutional Planning Director Ms Judy Favish, enabled her to engage with various stakeholders on issues pertaining to transformation, and to share the lessons learnt. Such an opportunity would not have arisen outside of this programme.

“It has made our reporting richer. It helped tremendously in terms of efficiency by allowing greater integration of the various units as far as their functioning and reporting is concerned. We now generate less but richer reports, using what is already within the system”, she adds.

On a more personal level, Ms Levendal says her leadership philosophy and managerial approach was reaffirmed by her mentor.

*“Judy is a fantastic mentor. Just in terms of the questions I had, she was really open to sharing her experience and I really liked the way she interacted with her staff. She is all about empowering and uplifting them, and really giving them a whole range of exposures; not limiting them, but providing the “stretch” type of projects that will expose them to new challenges and new avenues. It has always been my philosophy, but it was good to see another individual practising that as well. Seeing the success that Judy is having using this approach has convinced me that it is the correct approach.”*

Ms Ruby-Ann Levendal

When a new staff member joins her division, Ms Levendal reminds them not to think of it as the last stop in their careers. "If the opportunity to move forward arises, I encourage them to take it. I don't believe in holding people back. I believe in giving them exposure, encouraging them to learn beyond their job descriptions, so that when the opportunity arises they can move forward." Ms Levendal says that when people leave her unit, she does not see it as a bad reflection on herself but a good one, because they are not moving laterally but become upwardly mobile. That, for her, is most important.

Her voice exudes enthusiasm on transformation. She notes that the NMMU's conceptual framework for transformation is much broader than just demographics; for example, if one looks at student transformation, it includes increasing access and success. She emphasises that accessibility is used in its broader sense to include disabled students and access to knowledge.

"We are looking at the 'academic project'; the framing of the idea of knowledge and how we recognise not just the Western philosophy that underpins knowledge, but also indigenous knowledge traditions and looking at how those are being integrated into the experiences of students. We see ourselves as an African university. Transformation is about ensuring that we reflect that in our curriculum and student experiences", she adds.

The philosophy explained above is reflected on the academic side in terms of curriculum development and also the research being conducted at the NMMU. "Transformation is looking at issues broadly, while becoming more efficient and effective in our business practices. That's why we found the Equity Index that's been published problematic, because of its over-emphasis on demographics."

Her institution sees transformation as a complex, multi-faceted and integrated process: continuous institutional renewal in all facets of its functionality (academic, administrative, and support services). This is an on-going effort to represent excellence through diversity, with the aim of achieving its vision and mission towards providing liberating education.

## Career-pathing

A physiologist by discipline, Ms Levendal has been with the NMMU for the past 15 years, serving initially in an academic teaching capacity until 2007. She has since become a "hybrid" in the system, functioning in her current position while continuing her involvement with research through the supervision of post-graduate students within the Department of Biochemistry and Microbiology. She has served as supervisor and co-supervisor and contributed to the successful graduation of 12 post-graduate students (ranging from Honours to PhD level). Research findings have been disseminated through

peer-reviewed international journal articles, and national and international conference papers.

She has also developed proposals for research funding and successfully sourced funding from the Medical Research Council (MRC), the National Research Foundation (NRF), and the South African Reserve Bank.

Ms Levendal became a member of senior management some five years ago, serving on various strategic institutional structures, including the NMMU Council.

When she did the HELM Fellowship, she was still busy with her own PhD, which has now been submitted, and she expects to receive her doctorate shortly.

*“When I came to the NMMU I was on an academic career path but then, when the position of Director: Transformation came up, I moved into the administrative side of higher education, because transformation is another of my passions. Post-graduate supervision allows me to remain involved in research on the academic side, but my primary job is transformation monitoring and evaluation. Both career paths speak to my passions, namely, student development and growth in the sciences, and then also in terms of advancing the objectives and goals of the transformation agenda.”*

**Ms Ruby-Ann Levendal**

She explains that she loves the centrality of the Institutional Planning Unit. It really has insight into every aspect of the institution. The strategic positioning of this unit enables it to give input into the different operational dimensions of the institution, whether academic or support. “I really enjoy that!”

Ms Levendal says now that she’s handed in her PhD dissertation, she is not clear yet whether she will stay on the administrative side or move back to become an academic. “If I look at the academy and its competitiveness, looking at my age as well, then I will probably continue with supervision, but I don’t see myself moving back as a full-time academic. The impact that I can bring about across academic and support services within the institution would be best served in my current position”, she explains.

She notes that being accepted onto the HELM Fellows Exchange Programme has forced her to reflect on her career path within her place of employment and to identify a developmental path over the next five to ten years. “I’ll probably look at advancing my career within institutional planning, if there is an opportunity, because that is another aspect I am interested in. I don’t know that there would be upward movement necessarily,

but I believe I can be highly effective at the level at which I am operating now.”

In her current position, as part of senior management, Ms Levendal says she can have strategic impact. This means giving effect to the transformation agenda, about which she is extremely passionate, while still having the “luxury” of supervising students in her discipline. “I’m basically having the best of both worlds”, she adds with a glint in her eye.

## HELM Fellows Exchange Programme in action

With the HELM Fellowship complete and her PhD submitted, Ms Levendal is looking at how she can enhance her capabilities within her portfolio in order to be more effective. “I have applied for a scholarship to do an online quality assurance course with the University of Melbourne, because quality assurance goes hand in hand with M&E. Unfortunately, I had to turn down the scholarship because it does not cover the full costs of the course, and despite having the support of my supervisor my institution could not support me. It simply does not have the funds.” But, she adds: “Right now I am looking at other ways of getting the quality assurance knowledge and verification. That is an area I would like to explore more.”

Ms Levendal says that whatever information she gathered during her Fellowship, she has shared freely with colleagues who needed it. They have been able to adapt the information to their institutional environment and build on it.

“One of the key results was being able to put together an M&E reporting framework with regard to transformation at the NMMU. I’ve done that now and it has been accepted by Council. I’ve also given Judy feedback so that she’s aware that I’ve completed that aspect.”

As a colleague and as a leader, Ms Levendal sees herself as loyal, supportive, engaging, and open to change. “In terms of my interactions with individual colleagues, I hope to be open-minded and very reflective on my own behaviour. For me it’s about the collective. I don’t believe in individual advancement at the expense of others.”

She notes that being a senior manager, she totally identifies with the values of the NMMU and tries to enact them on a daily basis. She considers herself collegial and her approach is co-operative and participative. “There are very specific objectives that need to be achieved, so whatever I can do to assist, I will do. I constantly resist the temptation to think in silos and make a concerted effort to look at how we can work across areas of responsibility in order to achieve the objectives that we’ve set out to attain”, she concludes.



## Dr Bhelekazi Mhlauli

**Designation:** Deputy Registrar: Academic Administration

**Institution:** Mangosuthu University of Technology

**Host institution:** University of Pretoria

**Mentor:** Dr Dawie Marais

**Area of specialisation:** Registrar's Office/Academic Administration

**Outcome:** Interrogated what was learnt and repackaged for own institution, improved leadership and management style (which has allowed benefit to filter down to staff as well), and improved productivity.

One of the aims of the HELM Fellows Exchange Programme is for the participant to experience a world different from the one that she or he is used to. In this instance, Dr Bhelekazi Mhlauli, who is from a relatively small, traditionally-black university of technology, was posted to one of the country's biggest, previously historically-white universities.

As the Deputy Registrar: Academic Administration at Mangosuthu University of Technology (MUT), Dr Mhlauli realised it would be impossible to replicate everything she was exposed to during her fellowship at the University of Pretoria (UP). She has therefore endeavoured to identify one or two catalytic interventions that could bring about change.

Dr Mhlauli notes that she has interrogated what she's learnt from her mentor Dr Dawie Marais – for whom she has only praise – and repackaged it for the MUT. In this process she has also ensured that she takes her staff members along with her.

*“One of the main reasons for selecting the University of Pretoria was its decentralised students' academic administration and its multi-campus. I learnt a lot about the management and co-ordination of such a system. At present at the MUT, academic administration is decentralised but there are no terms of reference on the relationship between faculties and the central academic administration. This loose relationship sometimes creates tensions. Therefore, the Fellowship has provided me with the opportunity to learn about how to formalise the relationship between these two stakeholders.”*

Dr Bhelekazi Mhlauli

Since completing the HELM Fellowship, Dr Mhlauli says that although her institution did not promote her, she has the confidence to move ahead and has been applying for positions at other institutions in order to move in an upward trajectory in the world of higher education leadership and management. "In fact", she adds, "I have begun applying for senior posts elsewhere and am currently awaiting the outcome of an interview at another university."

She acknowledges that she has gained a lot from the Fellowship. "I gained an additional home. Whenever I have a problem, I feel free to call, not just my mentor but the various managers in his division. They have always been helpful and are my extended collegial family. I have therefore made friends and acquired another support system. To me that's very reassuring."

Commenting on her mentor, Dr Mhlauli believes it is extremely fortunate that Dr Marais is an industrial psychologist, which is evident in his democratic and motivational leadership and management style.

Qualities that describe his style of management are transparency, humility, outstanding inter-personal relations, a relaxed working environment, the treatment of staff members with dignity and respect, delegation of responsibilities and tasks, as well as the development of staff members at all levels. He believes that a healthy working environment results in high staff productivity. Consequently, staff members are committed and passionate about their work. They have been empowered to such an extent that they work independently, with very minimal supervision. "From Dr Marais I have learnt how to bring out the best in my staff members", she adds. As a result, staff members are now committed and passionate about their work. Once staff members are working independently like that, all that remains is for Academic Administration to steer the ship with clear policies and procedures, and to hold regular interactive meetings.

*"The HELM Fellowship helped me to up my game from being a manager to being a leader. I now learn from my experiences. I develop transferable points of view and focus on the development of other staff members. I actively generate sound ideas for how the business can add value and succeed in the marketplace, and I try to instil a set of values that will help us achieve our goals. I am willing and able to make tough decisions and pull all elements together to motivate others to reach for a better future. My sojourn, over six weeks, in the UP Department of Academic Administration helped me to see all these points applied in practice. Where feasible, I have implemented these practices in my department and it has worked very well thus far."*

Dr Bhelekazi Mhlauli

Although she has made progress in some respects, Dr Mhlauli admits that she has also experienced frustration at the MUT in her attempts to implement some of the lessons that she'd learnt from UP.

"Some of the ideas have not been well received by my own institution. I think the main reason is that we are dealing with two very different universities." Dr Mhlauli emphasises that one's institutional background is extremely important. Sometimes, what works at one university may not necessarily work in another institution. "My challenges appear to be primarily because of these different backgrounds."

In conclusion, Dr Mhlauli observes that as someone who has worked for the past five years at a relatively new university of technology, being a fellow at a long-established university has worked very well for her. She feels that this has enabled her to add another feather to her cap. "I can add the HELM Fellowship experience to my CV and confidently apply for positions at any university. Having had exposure in that multi-campus environment has given me the confidence to know that going forward I can make a valuable contribution to academic administration in any university in the country."

At the time of printing this booklet, December 2013, Dr Mhlauli had left the MUT.



## Professor Prince Ngobeni

**Designation:** Associate Dean, Faculty of Science  
**Institution:** Tshwane University of Technology  
**Host institution:** University of Johannesburg  
**Mentors:** Prof Marie Muller and Mr Derick Eyssen  
**Area of specialisation:** Academic Administration  
**Outcome:** A new understanding of leadership that allows engagement from a vantage point of authority, entrusted with leading and managing high-level, audited projects for key stakeholders, and an ability to exert an influence across faculties and contribute to the strategic direction of the institution.

Prof Prince Ngobeni says the HELM Fellowship has instilled in him an increasing confidence and capability to engage in meaningful discussions concerning academic management within his faculty and beyond. It has given his Executive Dean the confidence to entrust him with leading and managing high-level, audited projects for key stakeholders such as government departments.

Prof Ngobeni – who is Associate Dean in the Faculty of Science at Tshwane University of Technology (TUT) – says spending time with the doyenne of registrars in South Africa, Prof Marie Muller of the University of Johannesburg (UJ), has given him a new understanding of leadership that allows him to engage with authority in his working environment, but still showing humility.

*“Strategically, the HELM Fellowship has helped me a lot and the positive influence of my UJ mentors, Prof Muller and Mr Eyssen, has extended beyond my immediate working environment. It has empowered me to have an influence across departments, across faculties, and even contribute to the strategic direction of my institution.”*

### Prof Prince Ngobeni

Prof Ngobeni has been playing a more strategic role in all aspects of his work environment; for example, he was central to the recent introduction of the Higher Education Qualifications Sub-Framework (HEQSF) at the TUT. Designed to introduce a single qualifications framework for a single co-ordinated higher education sector, the policy provides for the integration of all higher education qualifications into a National Qualifications Framework (NQF) and its relevant structures for the purposes of standards generation and quality assurance.

“I was involved in helping the 14 heads of department (HoDs) in our faculty to develop programmes that are aligned with the HEQSF. I come from the Associate Deans’ side, so I was able to strategise how to align or inter-link our existing programmes with the new framework”, explains Prof Ngobeni.

The introduction of the HEQSF improves coherence in the higher education system and facilitates the articulation of qualifications, thereby enhancing the flexibility of the system and enabling students, over time, to move more efficiently from one programme to another as they pursue their academic or professional careers.

Some of the priorities during the introduction of the HEQSF included establishing educational offerings at the TUT that realise the vision, mission and plans of the institution, and to meet the varying needs of the clients and communities it serves.

Time spent at UJ, especially with the planning division, has served Prof Ngobeni well. He now understands the processes that should be followed when designing and implementing an institutional strategic plan, the strategies required to get buy-in into an institutional values charter, and the roles and methodologies when conducting internal and external environmental scanning. The key skills that he refined during the HELM Fellowship include financial governance, academic administration and governance, institutional planning and quality promotion, and research strategy.

The future of institutional planning in South Africa looks bright as a result of efforts such as the HESA HELM Fellowship Exchange Programme. Primarily responsible for, among others, advancing university planning, assessment, evaluation, and institutional research activities, and for promoting planning and evaluation at the university level, the overarching function of a planning office is to refine, direct and co-ordinate a participatory process of institutional planning and evaluation. It is designed to guide the university in fulfilling its purpose, accomplishing its mission, and determining how well it performs in achieving its goals.

The benefits of this HELM Fellowship – which focused on institutional planning – have filtered through beyond Prof Ngobeni’s close staff members and unit. “It has benefitted the 14 HoDs that I work with, as well as people in other faculties, especially related faculties such as the Faculty of Engineering.”

“In fact”, adds Prof Ngobeni: “It goes beyond the academic environment; for example, on the HEQSF, it helped me to realise there are other avenues, other groups of people such as the Sector Education and Training Authorities (SETAs), that need to be involved when we plan as an institution. It assisted me to identify all the relevant SETAs involved

in our environment and helped me to align my curriculum relative to the appropriate SETAs.”<sup>2</sup>

An additional spin-off of this process was the networking element, as the HELM Fellow was inevitably exposed to a wide range of people and organisations as a result of the programme.

Prof Ngobeni says that on a personal level, the Fellowship helped him to improve his management style tremendously. “For example, in order to take a decision you have to first engage in debate. As part of my working environment, I learned the importance and need for sometimes robust debate – albeit in a friendly manner – that does not disadvantage or favour one or the other party.”

He argues that his improved leadership skills have resulted in greater respect from his peers. “When they hear that I am a HESA HELM Fellow and that I have worked with the well-known and highly-respected Prof Muller at UJ, they respect me. To get into the HELM Fellows Exchange Programme is not easy. It was an honour and a privilege to be selected from all the available candidates at the TUT. Once they saw my CV, they selected me and I was honoured to be their recommended candidate.”

Prof Ngobeni adds that he is more assertive, in the sense that he now has the confidence to perform additional, high-level tasks that are delegated to him by his Executive Dean. “The Faculty has entrusted me with managing the ear-marked grants that we get from key stakeholders, such as the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET). These are our special projects that have to be well-managed and controlled. These are audited projects and the audits have been extremely positive.”

As an example of such a responsibility, Prof Ngobeni cites the Clinical Training Grant from the DHET, which is allocated to some of the TUT’s health science programmes, such as nursing, clinical technology, veterinary technology, and biomedical technology. “For these grants, I need to appoint staff to do clinical training, budget carefully for equipment and operational costs, identify problems and intervene before they manifest themselves, as well as write motivations to the DHET to approve any necessary adjustments via the Office of the Vice-Chancellor.”

“HoDs are actual recipients of the grants, so I play a central role in engaging with them, the Vice-Chancellor, and the DHET. I make recommendations for them to sign-off on. I help them in that way too. So, I am confident and comfortable dealing with stakeholders at all levels!”

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2 The aim of the SETAs is to design and implement sector skills plans, promote learnerships, and allocate funds in their sector.



## Dr Lambert Mahlekefane Makhalemele

**Designation:** Faculty Administrator and part-time Senior Lecturer

**Institution:** Central University of Technology, Bloemfontein

**Host institution:** University of the Free State

**Mentor:** Dr Kelebogile Choice Makhetha

**Area of specialisation:** Higher Education Leadership and Management

**Outcome:** Moved into full-time academic administration (academic support) and now lectures only part-time. Introduced a paperless environment for the Management Committee and Faculty Board.

According to one definition, leadership is “the art of leading others to deliberately create a result that wouldn’t have happened otherwise”. As a direct result of the HELM Fellowship, Dr Lambert Makhalemele spent two years introducing a paperless environment for the Management Committee and the Faculty Board at his institution --- sometimes, he felt, against all odds.

“But I achieved this despite many issues beyond my control, remained determined, and pushed it through in the end. Secondly, I have learned to appreciate people more, and I know how to work together as a team for the benefit of the institution”, adds Dr Makhalemele.

Support for excellence and delivering quality education forms part of the Central University of Technology’s (CUT) vision. The CUT supports knowledge production and human capital development to improve the lives of people of the Free State Province. Dr Makhalemele applied for the HELM Fellowship in 2011 in order to help the executive leadership of the CUT to take its vision to the next level. He spent six weeks working with Dr Choice Makhetha at the University of the Free State (UFS).

*“I learned a lot under the mentorship of the evergreen, but strict, Dr Choice Makhetha. To be honest, the HELM Fellowship opened my eyes, allowing me to see university administration from another angle. I learned not to be selfish, and that transparency, dedication and honesty will take an individual far and make him/her more productive. Challenges will always be there. However, my management style has improved a lot. I communicate far better than before, and always listen before making a decision.”*

Dr Lambert Mahlekefane Makhalemele

Since the Fellowship in 2011, Dr Makhalemele has moved into full-time academic administration (academic support) and now lectures only part-time. He is the Faculty Administrator in Health and Environmental Sciences at CUT's Bloemfontein campus.

Passionate about his field of expertise, Dr Makhalemele believes that faculty administration is the heart and soul of the higher education business. "Without faculty administration, the Faculty will cease to exist. Faculty administration operates at the same level as the institutional Registrar's Office. If done well, then the entire unit runs like a well-oiled machine."

Commenting on the HELM Fellowship, mentor Dr Choice Makhetha (who is Vice-Rector: External Relations at the UFS) said: "The UFS has committed itself to continue to mentor and support Dr Makhalemele's development and between our two institutions, time will be allocated, whenever possible, for this purpose."

*"As an institution, we too have learnt a lot. Feedback from a person coming from outside the institution is always valuable, even though some parts are not nice to hear, but it provides an opportunity to grow. As an individual, it was an eye-opener to take responsibility for mentoring a colleague formally. I learnt more about my strengths and my weaknesses in the process, and it was a great experience. In Dr Makhalemele, I have gained a friend and colleague against whom I can bounce ideas and plan innovation within the higher education field."*

#### Dr Kelebogile Choice Makhetha

A UFS host team was assembled and briefed prior to the fellowship. Senior people were assigned to assist the mentor with making the most of Dr Makhalemele's six weeks at the UFS. The Rector and Vice-Chancellor, Prof Jonathan Jansen, welcomed Dr Makhalemele on his arrival and from time to time, Dr Makhalemele accompanied Dr Makhetha to weekly briefings with the Rector on special projects, allowing for more high-level interaction. In the last week of the fellowship, the Rector allocated an hour for feedback.

The UFS community exposed Dr Makhalemele to meetings, functions and events where he was afforded the opportunity to grow, to learn something new, and build a network for the future. They embraced Dr Makhalemele's presence on campus and especially in meetings. This happened while operations carried on as normal, allowing space for learning and growth of the HESA Fellow. More importantly, individual members within the Rectorate made time available to mentor Dr Makhalemele during this short period, at least those who were locally based.

Dr Makhalemele worked with the Vice-Rector Institutional Affairs, with the Registrar, and frequently with the Vice-Rector Operations. All these colleagues are highly experienced within the higher education sphere. He also attended many meetings, including critical meetings of the Rectorate, University Management Committee, Employment Equity Committee, the Senate Executive, as well as the Senate and Council.

During this period, there were also international guests and academics presenting public lectures and willing to have one-on-one discussions to share their expertise with and for the benefit of the Fellow. Dr Makhalemele was fortunate to be present during several important UFS events, including the annual Business Liaison Visit, when business people from around the country experience the university atmosphere, see exceptional work being done in the seven faculties, and meet with students and staff members. This visit is one of many events geared towards fundraising for the university.

The Mangaung Multi-Faith and Religious Community Lunch also coincided with the HELM Fellowship. Through exposure to this event, Dr Makhalemele was able to experience the relationship the UFS has forged with the religious communities of the Mangaung Metro and the Eastern Free State, where its campuses are based.

Other events included graduation ceremonies, a Wellness Fun Walk, luncheons with guest speakers at the UFS Business School, the International Education Association of South Africa Annual Conference, and the Schools' Partnership Project in which the UFS works with secondary and intermediate schools within the Free State and beyond. Dr Makhalemele was able to sit in on and contribute to discussions. During a visit of representatives from the Free State Department of Education, he got to experience how discussions develop into agreements and, ultimately, action plans.

In describing himself as a colleague and a leader, following the HELM Fellowship, Dr Makhalemele says he is a humble and loyal servant, with good communication, listening and people skills. One might endeavour to add that he is also a committed and efficient leader, who is well-positioned to assist in propelling the CUT to the next level as a leading and proudly South African institution!

At the last Rectorate meeting on 28 September 2011, the UFS Rector gave Dr Makhalemele an opportunity to address the meeting and share a summary of his feedback. Directly after this meeting, the Rector and Dr Makhalemele went behind closed doors for more detailed feedback.

The UFS has committed itself to continue to mentor and support Dr Makhalemele's development.



## Mr Gcinibandla Mtukela

**Designation:** Deputy Registrar (at time of Fellowship)

**Institution:** Rhodes University (at time of Fellowship)

**Host institution:** North-West University

**Mentor:** Prof Themba Mosia

**Area of specialisation:** Registrar's Office

**Outcome:** Refined skills in policy formulation, records and data management, as well as archiving best practice. Moved out of higher education sector to assume a research position at Parliament.

During his HELM Fellowship, Mr Gcinibandla Mtukela was the Deputy Registrar at Rhodes University and spent his tenure at North-West University (NWU). Following the Fellowship, Mr Mtukela remained with Rhodes University for another 16 months before accepting a position on the research team of the African National Congress (ANC) based at Parliament in Cape Town.

Mr Mtukela says his many interactions at the NWU with seasoned practitioners, who work within strategic planning processes, proved to be extremely helpful both at Rhodes University and, subsequently, in his current position. The same can be said of the lessons learned at the three campuses of the NWU, especially as far as records and data management and archiving best practices are concerned.

Mr Mtukela initially elected to be mentored by NWU Registrar Prof Themba Mosia. However, circumstances led to Prof Mosia being appointed Administrator at the Tshwane University of Technology, and the reins of the Fellowship were ably taken over by Institutional Registrar Mr Frans du Preez and Ms Amanda van der Merwe of the Records Management and Administration Unit.

*"The receiving university's policy-formulation process was a particularly interesting exercise given its demographics of complex multicultural constituencies and student profile. It was enlightening to learn how interest groups and stakeholders in the university had come together to shape policies which would comply with the country's redress imperatives, while simultaneously seeking to continue to attract historically disadvantaged communities. Admissions policies, programme mixes versus sites of offering, and organisation of co-curricular activities and events were areas from which I learned a great deal. The point is that lessons drawn from all these areas have generic application across a number of fields of endeavour."*

Mr Gcinibandla Mtukela



The learning areas covered in the Fellowship were varied and wide-ranging, stretching across the critical support functions of a university. This was an expression of the Fellow's desire to experience the university's support environment organically and holistically, with particular reference to the generic performance areas of a University Registrar, as well as with the supportive infrastructure of the Registrar's environment, even if that infrastructure does not fall within the Registrar's portfolio. These included management information, transformation management, and leadership.

Mr Mtukela says the single most important strength of the HELM Fellows Exchange Programme is that it gives a Fellow time for reflection away from the hustle and bustle of office routines and deadlines. The relatively stress-free environment of the receiving institution, which provides distance from the constraints of routine, pattern and expectations, enables the Fellow to think about and reflect on work processes more closely. In addition, the programme enables the Fellow to see an institution as a whole, because of non-attachment to a particular division and free from direct institutional accountability.

The Fellow also has the opportunity to develop a broad network of newly acquired colleagues that will last well beyond the tenure of the Fellowship. Finally, resulting from the inspiration of an interestingly new exposure, the Fellow may discover new areas of academic endeavour that could be pursued in future.

Two years down the line, Mr Mtukela acknowledges that the HELM Fellowship has benefitted his career and management-style in many ways. However, as he was only associated with Rhodes University (RU) for a further 16 months after his HELM Fellowship tenure, he suggests that this period is inadequate to measure the impact of Fellowship lessons on the RU, specifically --- although he does feel the lessons learnt have generic application.

"Learning is an extremely complex process in which what one seems to know often gets challenged in encounters with what is initially considered unknown. During this dynamic interaction it is rather mechanistic to isolate the impact on your environment of what you have learned in a manner which will not be 'tainted' by your 'pre-existing' knowledge prior to the new learning encounter", he argues. "Against the above backdrop, I am willing to concede that the quality, form and content of my praxis after the HELM experience could not have been the same as my praxis before the HELM encounter."

He says his decision to leave Rhodes University was not an easy one and he had to mull over it for a quite a while. Here was somebody who had served within the higher education milieu at all levels, from student leadership and transformation advocacy work,

to teaching, and on to academic administration and management for a total period of 19 years. However, Mr Mtukela admits that he reached the point where he felt no longer able to make a meaningful contribution, as his worldview and the organisational culture within which he had to operate were in constant tension.

He then decided to apply for a senior position at another higher education institution. When that failed, he decided it was time for serious reflection. He subsequently moved out of the higher education sector to assume his current position at Parliament, which entails working in the ANC Caucus Research Unit. He works alongside senior researchers in their responsibilities to ministerial clusters, co-ordinates research support to clusters, study groups and individual Members of Parliament (MPs), and provides strategic leadership in the drafting, analysis and presentation of research information.

“I am comfortable with the intellectual challenge in my new work environment. I could not ask for more in terms of this aspect and the accommodating culture of a back-breaking and hard work ethic, combined with a humane organisational culture and genuine appreciation for work well done. There is also the joy of seeing the results of one’s work translating into value-added benefits for the people of South Africa.”

## The future of higher education in South Africa

Mr Mtukela continues to take an active interest in the higher education sphere in South Africa. He looks forward to an intervention that creates a system and programme mixes that will enable students to follow programmes at any of the 23 higher education sites regardless of any attachment to historical loyalties and considerations.

He argues that the higher education system must provide space and opportunity for those who may wish to pursue knowledge, not as a means to some economic end but rather as an end in itself. “I am referring to those among us who will one day subscribe to a programme not for the advancement of personal prospect aligned to a career growth and better economic opportunity per se, but rather for the sake of acquiring knowledge.”

In addition, he looks forward to a higher education system that will function as part of a society persuading young minds to remain at university until they obtain their doctorates. This would be a system in which talk of ‘growing your own timber’, in the redress development programme of academics, will cease to be a necessity.

Furthermore, he has a vision of a higher education system where community development will not be a necessary add-on to the portfolio of academia, because the university is itself intrinsically embedded among the people. “As a matter of its routine preoccupation, the



university grapples with our common challenges of poverty, inequality and unemployment together with its manifestations of soaring crime, pestilence, gender-based violence and intolerable child abuse, among other challenges”, adds Mr Mtukela.

As a colleague and a leader, Mr Mtukela says he considers himself extremely experienced in matters of leadership and strategic management. “I am an outstanding mentor and coach with vast knowledge on a wide range of subjects. I fully understand who I am and so I am relaxed and comfortable in my own skin. I am a pleasant, principled and, yet, easy-going kind of person. I laugh a lot. My dream is to retire in an academic space one day.”

## Conclusion

As we traverse uncertain and change-dominated terrain in the second decade of the new millennium, effective leadership and efficient management can never be over-emphasised. This requires that higher education institutions become environments conducive to proactive stakeholder engagement, responsiveness, and accountability.

In order to survive, compete and, maybe, even thrive in often chaotic conditions in the modern world, HEIs need to:

1. **Facilitate transformation:** seek and generate funding, maintain standards, and ensure human resources transformation.
2. **Maintain customer-responsiveness:** assure quality, listen attentively, adjust rapidly, and produce high value-added products/services.
3. **Innovate:** promote change and creativity, tolerate well-intentioned failure as a learning experience, and support the champions (entrepreneurs) of innovation.
4. **Empower people:** encourage flexibility and responsiveness, become involved, improve the reward structure, and reduce layers of hierarchy.
5. **Facilitate leadership:** encourage thought leadership, promote the love for change, create an inspiring vision, and implement ‘on-your-feet’ management (by walking about).
6. **Enhance systems:** introduce systems that are action-oriented, and measure the important attributes of quality, flexibility, creativity, innovation, and responsiveness.

By continuing to provide creative capacity development for the higher education sector, the HELM Fellows Exchange Programme is well set to equip current and future leaders to respond effectively to the ever-increasing demands of HEIs and the leadership roles they are required to play.



Candidates in the 2011 cohort	Designation at time of placement	Institution	Outcome as at November 2013	Host	Mentor(s)
Dr Clever Ndebele	Director of the Centre for Higher Education Teaching and Learning Institution	University of Venda	Promotion to Director: Centre for Higher Education Teaching and Learning.	University of Johannesburg	<b>Professor Elizabeth de Kadt</b> Executive Director: Academic Development and Support
Mr Takalani Dzaga	Director: Communications and Marketing	University of Venda	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Effective management of institution's 30th anniversary celebrations</li> <li>• Awarded an Accredited in Public Relations (APR) status by the Public Relations Institute of Southern Africa (PRISA), that is internationally graded and South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA) approved.</li> </ul>	University of Johannesburg	<b>Mr Kerry Swift</b> Executive Director: Advancement
Dr Sukude Mangwe-andle Matoti	Academic Planner Institution	Walter Sisulu University	Contributed to setting up the framework for a new institutional improvement plan and contributed to laying the foundation for improving the integrity of institutional data.	Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University	<b>Professor Heather Nel</b> Senior Director: Strategic Planning and Information Analysis
Dr Soane Joyce Mohapi	Head: Centre for Continuous Professional Teacher and Community Education and Training	University of South Africa	Promotion to head of the Centre for Continuous Professional Teacher and Community Education and Training in the College of Education.	Rhodes University	<b>Professor Chrissie Boughey</b> Dean: Teaching and Learning

Candidates in the 2011 cohort	Designation at time of placement	Institution	Outcome as at November 2013	Host	Mentor(s)
Ms Ruby-Ann Levendal	Director: Transformation	Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Continued commitment to leading transformation at a strategic level</li> <li>Serving on strategic institutional structures (including the Council) and ongoing postgraduate supervision.</li> </ul>	University of Cape Town	<b>Ms Judy Favish</b> Director: Institutional Planning
Dr Bhelekazi Mhlauli	Deputy Registrar: Academic Administration	Mangosuthu University of Technology	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Interrogated what was learnt and repackaged for own institution</li> <li>Improved leadership and management style (which has allowed benefit to filter down to staff as well) and improved productivity.</li> </ul>	University of Pretoria	<b>Dr Dawie Marais</b> Director: Academic Administration
Professor Prince Ngobeni	Associate Dean, Faculty of Science	Tshwane University of Technology	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A new understanding of leadership that allows engagement from a point of authority</li> <li>Entrusted with leading and managing high-level, audited projects for key stakeholders</li> <li>Ability to influence across faculties and contribute to strategic direction of institution.</li> </ul>	University of Johannesburg	<b>Professor Marie Muller</b> Registrar and Mr Derick Eysen Director: Academic Administration

Candidates in the 2011 cohort	Designation at time of placement	Institution	Outcome as at November 2013	Host	Mentor(s)
Dr Lambert Mahlekefane Makhalemele	Faculty Administrator and part-time senior lecturer	Central University of Technology	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Moved into full-time academic administration (academic support) and now lectures only part-time</li> <li>Introduced paperless environment for Management Committee and Faculty Board.</li> </ul>	University of the Free State	<b>Dr Kelebogile Choice Makhetha</b> Vice-Rector: External Relations
Mr Gcinibandla Mtukela	Deputy Registrar	Rhodes University	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Refined skills in policy formulation, records and data management as well as archiving best practice</li> <li>Moved out of higher education sector for a research position at Parliament.</li> </ul>	North West University	<b>Professor Themba Mosia</b> Registrar



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