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Leading and managing higher education institutions is becoming a challenge, not only in South Africa but all over the world. The context within which universities has to operate has changed fundamentally over the last two decades, driven largely by a rapidly globalising international system, the intense use of information and communication technologies, a changing regulatory environment, and a general funding decline for the university sector. Such changes call for a more agile, anticipatory, and responsive university management and leadership.

Professor Linda Hill of Harvard University’s Business School made a quite pointed observation:

“There is a crisis in leadership in many sectors of society today, and higher education is not immune to these concerns. We need to build communities of leader-scholars, willing and able to learn and tackle together the challenges of contemporary academic life.”

HESA’s Higher Education Leadership and Management (HELM) Programme seeks to build the requisite leadership and management capacity of our university sector to cope with these emerging challenges. In 2013, a total of 63 candidates from various universities in South Africa participated in the programme and gained valuable leadership and management knowledge applicable to the university setting. The programme has equipped the participants with a set of skills to serve as change-agents, and to articulate its relevance to diverse contexts and environments within the higher education sector. In this booklet, 14 of those participants share their general experiences and what they learnt from the programme.
Judging by the responses, it is becoming abundantly clear that the HELM Programme has enabled the participants to, amongst other things:

- Discover their true selves (self-knowledge) and what their career aspirations are;
- Muster the courage to make decisions and face their worst fears;
- Make good and sound judgements when faced with decision-making dilemmas;
- Appreciate the value of teamwork in the workplace; and
- Make career decisions between the academic and management tracks.

Through the HELM Programme, HESA is committed to building a broad-based leadership and management capacity across the university sector. I trust that you will enjoy reading the reflections and experiences of the HELM participants summarised in this booklet.

Dr Jeffrey Mabelebele
Chief Executive Officer

For more information on the HELM Programme, contact
Dr Berene Kramer
Director: Operations & Sector Support at
berene@hesa.org.za

Note

Dr Kathija Adam
Charting a Course Ahead

The HELM Lead Fellowship came at just the right time for Dr Kathija Adam. She had just returned to South Africa after 20 years away, and had been appointed to her most senior leadership post yet, as Director of the School for Continuing Professional Development (CPD) in the Faculty of Education at Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University. The Fellowship proved to have a tremendous impact on her, helping her to become much better informed and prepared for her new role as Director.

Having been away from South Africa for so long, Kathija needed to build a network of contacts. HELM Lead also proved invaluable here, providing as it does an immersion kind of fellowship with participants living, socialising and working together, drawing from all 23 ■ Designation: Director of the School for Continuing Professional Development, Faculty of Education
■ Institution: Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University
■ Area of specialisation: Leadership within the context of change
■ Outcomes: Enabled work as Director of the School, stimulated thinking, practice and awareness; created effective community of practice; helped envisage her future course.
higher education institutions (HEIs) in the country. The networking opportunities and sense of community that are created are very strong, and are ongoing.

“Now when things happen within the cohort or an opportunity arises, the information is shared amongst us. Also, if I hit a snag, I can call on them for suggestions as to how to deal with it. A few deans were also taking part, and I often consulted with them.” She also selected two mentors who are in fairly senior positions in her own faculty, and they are able to assist her on an ongoing basis, especially with people-related issues.

Kathija reports that HELM Lead provided exactly what she needed in terms of a macro picture of the higher education sector and its systems, as well as providing a bird’s eye view of various aspects that would impact on her role as Director. The information and examples were directly relevant and useable, could inform her practice, and were a good fit for the work she was doing. All of this becomes all the more valuable when you consider that at certain levels in HEIs there is no induction process – it is presumed that incumbents come fully equipped with the requisite information because they have been in the university system for some time.

She describes HELM Lead as the ideal induction into her appointment. “The institution could not offer the kind of mentoring related to policies, funding models, strategic objectives, and debate around the purpose of a university, and so on. The Fellowship enabled me to understand the deeper and bigger picture within which my institution was functioning, as well as the wider environment that I was directly influencing in my role.”

HELM Lead was thus the perfect fit for Kathija’s development needs as an emerging leader, and even more powerful because she was already in a position where the learning could be meaningful. It helped her to bridge the gap between knowing and doing: “As my doctoral work was in the area of education leadership within the context of transformation, I have taught a number of leadership modules and had a decent theoretical understanding of the concept. However, knowing the theory and enacting it in practice are two very different things!”

Re-entering the South African environment brought with it a number of unexpected perspectives. Although she had expected to work on relationships and relationship building as part of her role as Director, the fractured society of post-apartheid South Africa
and institutional experiences of the past (including the mergers) called for a high level of sensitivity around relationships and a steep learning curve. Kathija found that visions of ideal academic, intrapersonal relationships in the teams she needed to work with and of a comprehensive university with a strong and pervasive transformative agenda required much more of her than simply leading and managing: “The ‘people work’ consumed and continues to consume me as we collectively rebuild our identities as teachers, researchers and academics.”

She says that HELM Lead also allows people to envisage where they are going, and she foresees further developing in the arenas of transformation in academic projects and teaching and learning. “Exposure to HELM was one of the most exciting and rewarding experiences. It exposes you to so many different sections of the university and what is possible in education leadership in HEIs, enabling you to make informed decisions about where you see yourself in future. It guided and directed me to where I see myself – and now I can actively navigate there.”

**Note**

1 HELM Lead focuses on the development of academics and researchers in middle management positions.
Professor Rantoa Letšosa says he has many reasons to be grateful for the role that completing the HELM Lead Fellowship has played in his academic life. He says that before participating he “was a real novice” with very little knowledge about the structure of higher education institutions (HEIs) themselves, their management and how they are run, since he was an academic and focused on that.

“I was a newly appointed Director in the School for Ministers’ Training, and still had a lot to learn – especially about academic leadership. HELM Lead made it possible for me to meet with experts in the field, and enabled me to learn from their experiences and to become aware of resources and material that I could consult. This immediately improved my leadership skills and I could directly apply what

- **Designation:** Vice Rector Teaching-learning Designate
- **Institution:** North West University, Potchefstroom Campus
- **Area of specialisation:** Liturgics, worship, sacred music, African cultural issues, youth ministry, pastoral counselling
- **Outcomes:** Increased confidence in and understanding of leadership and management in higher education; successful application for post of Vice Rector Teaching-learning Designate
I had learnt in my workplace. It also gave me direction in terms of what was expected of me.”

Rantoa also experienced a much broader positive impact, being interviewed by the national Beeld newspaper and filmed for an insert on Kwela for television. He says “I would like to thank the HELM Fellowship for putting me on the map!”

After attending the Fellowship he felt much more confident, knew which sources to consult with regard to leadership and management in higher education, and understood that one should participate fully in this task and not regard it as an extra burden in addition to one’s academic responsibility. He adds that most candidates that attended HELM Lead made the same comment – that they were still ‘just’ academics. However, the programme changed their perspective. “It made us realise that while we are academics, we also need to put a little bit more into what we are doing in order to achieve success. It woke up something else in our heads, showing us how important management is in this field – that we are here to manage and to make things run and work properly, not just to maintain the status quo. Management and leadership have a huge role to play in the success of the School or Faculty.”

Shortly after completing the HELM Fellowship Rantoa applied for – and was successful in achieving – the post of Vice Rector Teaching-learning Designate at the Potchefstroom Campus of North West University.

He says that the fact that he was part of the HELM Lead project and that this had developed his management and leadership skills played a significant role in this appointment. He is designated to succeed the Vice Rector who retires at the end of 2014.

While he had anticipated that completing the Fellowship would create awareness in him of what is happening at more senior levels in higher education, so that he could become more proactive, he says that the outcomes were better than he expected. He met people from different institutions with different portfolios; all experts in their different disciplines, and many of the presentations were both practical and open, and says that it was wonderful to have this direct contact with such persons in the field.

“I can’t wait to take part in the next HELM opportunity.”

Rantoa’s increased interest in the process of management in addition to his academic responsibilities has enabled him to be of greater support to the academic staff, including encouraging them to execute their tasks in a much more responsible manner and to build their CVs.

He has already promoted more than 10 Master’s and six doctoral students, with others under supervision and guidance.
His aim now is to contribute towards creating a much better-blended learning environment where students can study anywhere with convenience. “I also intend to promote a positive attitude towards teaching, so that learning may become a joyful activity. I can’t wait to take part in the next HELM Fellows Exchange opportunity.”
Dr Chrisna Botha
Captain of a Different Ship

Dr Chrisna Botha regards herself as a ‘late starter’ in the academic world, having been in private practice for 7 years after obtaining her PhD. First she was a Captain in the Medical Unit of the South African National Defence Force, then going on to serve as a director of small and medium enterprises, two of which were her own companies. In 2010 she realised that to really be able to influence and inspire people to be leaders no matter what, shaping the young minds and leaders of tomorrow, she should return to her alumnae to pursue an academic career. In 2011 she accepted a position as Senior Lecturer in the Department of Nutrition at North West University.

The realisation that her students “are not living in my times, I am living in theirs” inspired Chrisna to study the generation

- **Designation:** Senior Lecturer in the School for Physiology, Nutrition and Consumer Science
- **Institution:** North West University, Potchefstroom Campus
- **Area of specialisation:** Biokinetics; technology-enhanced learning in higher education
- **Outcomes:** Clarified future career path in management of higher education; empowered to know and understand the workings of higher education
Dr Chrisna Botha – Captain of a Different Ship

that she teaches in order to understand them better. She is one of the first lecturers to roll out an electronic multimedia package with embedded study guide and study material on her campus, which is not only her research interest but – true to form – is also developing into a commercial opportunity for her university.

The experience she gained and personal growth she achieved through taking part in HELM Lead were tremendous. She has now clarified her career path as definitely being in management of higher education institutions (HEIs), and has a better understanding of the workings of higher education – this usually only being gained through many years of experience.

Chrisna believes that HELM Lead enables qualifying candidates to take up leadership positions in institutions of higher education even if they have not been immersed in the system for years. She has known that she wanted to enter the world of the management of HEIs since 2010, and wishes she had been able to participate in HELM Lead earlier, since her career path would have been clearer. She is now keeping her eyes peeled for an opportunity to actively take her career in this direction.

She says that if you want to grow in the academic field, HELM Lead helps you to better understand the academic world and its management. It helped her to bridge the gap between the corporate world and the management of HEIs, and also readied her for the next step.

As she puts it: “Management is management wherever you are, whether you are in private practice, run a business, or are in the corporate or university sector. The management of people stays pretty much the same – but the financial and strategic issues and the politics of running the machine that is a university are very different. In the private sector some things are pretty straightforward – it is about making money by doing X, Y and Z. In the academic world there is also the huge responsibility of service orientation to the students and of producing quality. All this while working with personnel who all also want to grow, have their own ideas, and are experts in their own fields. I think managing a university is much more challenging than managing a large corporate company.”

She found the HELM Lead material to be excellently customised to address the day-to-day challenges confronting managers within the university environment, and really enjoyed the networking and workshop days.

*I built some good relationships and gained constructive input and insight into myself*

“I built some good relationships and gained constructive input and insight into myself as a
person. It was really valuable, and we can continue to network and support each other in growing our careers.” Her hope is that HELM Lead grows even bigger and gets promoted more widely.

Chrisna feels that while you do need to understand the higher education sector before you can run it, you don’t necessarily have to have been in it for 20 years before you can do both. She also believes that both HEIs and the management thereof are changing. “HEIs are becoming larger, and some professors don’t necessarily want to be managers – although this may seem to be the next step for them – or they just don’t have the know-how. So even for them this is an opportunity to grow and gain knowledge. I believe that more people coming in from outside or from the corporate world have a greater chance to enter into the field of management of HEIs, and have a great deal to offer.”
Dr Shahed Nalla
Springboard to a New Career

Dr Shahed Nalla has a solid academic background, with a tenure of more than 20 years. He has published in the prestigious journal: *Science*, is an active participant in the Rising Star Expedition studying hominin evolution in the Cradle of Humankind, and was recently invited to the Golden Key International Honour Society as one of the top 15% of academic achievers at the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg.

After taking part in HELM Lead, his eyes were opened to new options as to how he may spend the next 20 years of his career.

In 2011 Shahed was promoted to Senior Lecturer and obtained his MSc (Palaeontology) – his registration being upgraded to a PhD due to the quality of his dissertation. In 2012 he was nominated to the Vice Deanship, and in 2013

- **Designation:** Vice-Dean of the Faculty of Health Sciences and Senior Lecturer in the Department of Human Anatomy and Physiology
- **Institution:** University of Johannesburg
- **Area of specialisation:** Quality assurance and policy compliance; strategic support and direction for the academic projects of the Faculty and the institution
- **Outcomes:** Clarity on future career path options in higher education institution (HEI) management; clarity on challenges in portfolios of middle and executive management of HEIs; networking with HEI role-players
Dr Shahed Nalla – Springboard to a New Career

He graduated with a PhD in Palaeontology. He says that his enrolment on HELM Lead came at a perfect time for him to look at embarking on a management career path.

As Chairperson of the University of Johannesburg branch of the National Tertiary Education Union during 2008–2012, Shahed had started noticing a lack of transformation among especially the middle managers that one day will step up to upper management in higher education. He saw HELM Lead as an opportunity to look at options in terms of career and personal development, and to perhaps move into higher management: “I had been an academic for over 20 years, and thought it was time to contribute in a different role.”

He describes HELM Lead as nurturing ‘talent’ that has been identified within institutions, allowing an opportunity for them to either be nominated or to put their hands up and say “I am here – how can HESA capacitate me even further to be able to contribute to the higher education sector?” He says that is why he ‘put his hand up’: “I saw this as a perfect opportunity to be self-reflective and to launch my ‘other’ career. I am midway through my career at the HEI. I have done the teaching/academic bit, and I now have a doctorate so can go into research. HELM Lead afforded me the opportunity to also look at the possibility of moving into middle and upper management.”

Shahed wanted to gain a better understanding of the higher education landscape within South Africa and internationally, as projected and experienced by other individuals at both an equivalent (mid-managerial) and higher (executive) level, and to receive guidance as to the career path that he should follow.

The approach used in HELM Lead facilitates interaction between participants and invited leaders in different domains at various South African HEIs. Both formal and informal interactions provide invaluable information and open up shared experiences. Formal structured sessions during workshops with ‘real people discussing real issues’ provided tangible strategic guidance and allowed reflection on possible career paths within HEI management. Informal exchanges with other Fellows comprising culturally and institutionally diverse individuals of different statuses provided further insight into defining leadership of HEIs.

During the Fellowship Shahed was therefore exposed to a wide spread of persons currently in upper and middle management at HEIs, giving him a dipstick view of challenges which other institutions experience in the higher education

I saw this as a perfect opportunity to be self-reflective and to launch my ‘other’ career

HELM Lead afforded me the opportunity to also look at the possibility of moving into middle and upper management.
realm in various professional domains – for example, financial management, registrars, vice chancellors and deans. This allowed him not only to sort out softer issues, but to truly grasp what possible career choices are available in the upper and middle management echelons in HEIs.

He was also enabled to become aware of his own strengths and weaknesses – the former to be used optimally, the latter to be addressed through appropriate programmes.

The outcome was that Shahed was able to clarify a number of uncertainties that he had prior to the Fellowship, and could confidently determine which career path to choose. “Meeting senior managers and discussing with them the challenges faced within their domains allowed me a clearer insight into the inherent strengths required for higher education leadership. Having completed the HELM Fellowship and hoping to take part in the full project, I now definitely see myself as stepping up within the management leg of the institution. It has provided me with a great springboard.”
Dr Munita Dunn

Unleashing One’s Voice

Dr Munita Dunn is Deputy Director of the Centre for Student Structures and Communities at Stellenbosch University, which includes managing co-curricular development of students, leadership development, transformation, integration of different cultures and multicultural education. She couldn’t believe it when she was nominated to HELM Lead, but says that taking part turned out to be a highlight of her career.

Student support is an area that does not offer formal training; most people arrive in the field by accident, or do it because they have a passion for helping and assisting students with training. She found it particularly useful to be able to talk to people from other institutions who were also working in student support, to reflect upon activities.
at her own institution and learn best practices from others.

We could ask experts in their fields – people that you would not ordinarily be able to access – questions that normally one would not be able to access – questions that normally one would not be able to. HESA has really invested in middle management through this fellowship, giving us a message of hope that they are looking at how we can build and empower our people."

Munita is a firm believer in continuous development – especially within higher education – and says that HELM Lead will help her to make a significant difference in her environment. “The programme speaks to the enhancement of managerial competence, strategically planned leadership and management development. It assisted and equipped me to deal with daily challenges I face in change management, staff management, development and implementation of policy and, most of all, aiming to be an efficient leader with integrity.”

During the HELM Lead experience Munita and her colleagues had many “courageous conversations”, where they often discussed issues that have a major impact in higher education but are not often spoken about.

The programme speaks to the enhancement of managerial competence, strategically planned leadership and management development

These included topics such as getting a promotion if you are female, and appointment on merit and not due to positional factors. “While often we can't see the influence that these factors have on each individual's functioning, they can be demoralising. It was refreshing to be able to talk openly, unpack issues, and call a thing on its name.”

The Fellowship also led her to view her role from an entirely different viewpoint, when participants were tasked to think about what their future was going to hold: being a passive bystander who criticises, or active involvement in making a difference. “The presenters really challenged us with difficult scenarios, questions and examples. You can go back to your own institution and really make a difference – it is your choice. One thing that I learned was that you need to empower yourself and to know where you are heading – and have a plan of action for getting there. HESA indicated that they
are working on other opportunities to empower us further – and that is just wonderful.”

Whether directly due to HELM Lead or to a shift within herself, Munita says she is now more easily able to deal with many issues, including difficult situations and challenging colleagues. The Fellowship also challenged her to use her own voice more. She says that it “unleashed many things in a lot of us” – not least of which was the realisation among participants that their voices have merit and their opinions are valuable.

Munita is a registered Counselling Psychologist with the Health Professions Council of South Africa, and completed her doctoral degree (DDiac in Play Therapy) in 2004 at the University of South Africa. She views the role of HELM Lead as crucial, and is particularly passionate about the empowerment which it enables: “They empowered us to such a level that I feel that we must use the voices which we have been empowered with, created and developed, and get them together to talk again, and use the power of the collective. In this way we will really be able to make powerful changes in South Africa. It is our attitude going forward from this that will make the difference.”

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They empowered us to such a level that I feel that we must use the voices which we have
Prof Fulufhelo Netswera
Catalyst for Development

Professor Fulufhelo (Fulu) Netswera has always perceived his role as that of a catalyst: he wants to develop new and future generations of researchers and academics for the benefit of South Africa and the African continent. His drive towards continental research and collaborative empowerment efforts are informed by his strong Pan-Africanist leanings. Taking part in the HELM Fellowship inspired him and led him to realise just how serious a challenge it is for the South African higher education system to attract and retain competent, motivated and capable leaders and get to grips with facing the challenges to higher education nationally.

Fulu sees the HELM Lead Fellowship as extremely useful in introducing higher education managers to trends and challenges in the higher education management.
Prof Fulufhelo Netswera – Catalyst for Development

system throughout South Africa, so that they do not just focus on their own institutions and lose a broader perspective. “When you listen to vice chancellors you learn what they are doing and what they are currently challenged with. You also come to realise that they are not superhuman – and that some of the challenges they face are the same as those which you face. You are touched and feel that you too can make a significant contribution and aspire to a higher level.”

He stresses that while we all have contributions to make, these can combine to have a cumulative effect on the entire system. “For example, if I can help 4–5 women to develop to doctoral and postdoctoral levels here at my own institution, and others like me do the same across the entire system, you can imagine how this would contribute to the imperatives of the National System of Innovation.”

Fulu is a firm believer in continuous skill and network expansion, and previously attained an Emerging Leaders International Fellowship at the Center for the Study of Philanthropy at the Graduate Centre of the City University of New York. He has served as an adjudicator for the National Science and Technology Forum Awards, is currently on the Board of the Human Sciences Research Council and serves as Deputy Vice President for Operations and African Partnership of the Southern African Research and Innovation Management Association.

He applied for the Fellowship in order to broaden his higher education leadership networks and leadership skills, as well as to broaden his understanding of the South African higher education system. “I hope HESA can and will facilitate this kind of training for all higher education managers.”

He believes that every higher education manager should be exposed to facets of the higher education system beyond their immediate employ, to enable them to understand the importance and pressing imperative for human capital development as well as for the prudent and ethical leadership which South Africa, the higher education sector, and the economic and political realms require.

Thanks to the skills and know-how which he acquired through HELM Lead, he now feels highly comfortable participating in national debates about the higher education system and can articulate its pressing deficiencies, as well as contribute positively to optimisation of the system’s functionality. “This kind of training and exposure is something that I hope HESA can and will facilitate beyond this formal programme, for all higher education managers,” he says.

Since completing the HELM programme Fulu has been appointed Adjunct Professor by the Uganda Technology and Management University, and is currently working on a long-term collaborative research programme that brings together academics and researchers from...
higher education institutions as well as City Municipalities in Uganda, Tanzania and South Africa to research city planning, service delivery and responsible citizenry, among other.

He wishes that every director of a higher education institution could get exposure to a programme such as HELM Lead, to encourage networking, exchange of ideas and peer learning. “One way or another, the reach of this Fellowship should be expanded. Every year we should expose especially those who have come into senior positions in higher education for the first time to the imperatives of the National System of Innovation. Then, when they do their work within their own institution, they will do so with an understanding of the big picture. This is why what HESA is doing through this programme is extremely important.”
Prof. Linda Jewell

New Perspectives

Prof. Linda Jewell says that although she has worked for universities for 15 years, she has spent most of this time “in the trenches”, teaching, supervising and researching. She applied for the HELM Lead Fellowship in the hope that it would provide her with a perspective of higher education that most people involved in academic departments are not usually able to get.

Being addressed by the likes of vice chancellors, deputy vice chancellors and registrars enabled her to see their institutions in overview, and as a person who works ‘on the ground’ in an academic department she found this perspective both interesting and beneficial. The presentations she was privy to during HELM Lead opened her eyes to many new perspectives and ideas, including the overall strategy that the Department of Higher Education

- **Designation:** Chair of the Department of Civil and Chemical Engineering
- **Institution:** University of South Africa
- **Area of specialisation:** Catalysis, Chemical Engineering
- **Outcome:** Gained further understanding of specific aspects of higher education in South Africa, particularly around funding and accreditation of qualifications
and Training (DHET) has for higher education and how the various stakeholders contribute towards this vision.

Growth in the higher education sector and in the number of students who wish to access it has exploded in South Africa, partly because of a worldwide trend but also because of South Africa’s unique history. As Linda points out: “In the last 20 years there have been 14 new pieces of legislation that directly impacted on our work in higher education, bringing with them huge change – and the Fellowship gave me an insight into some of this and an overview of this evolving and expanding environment.”

The networking that she experienced also proved to be very important and valuable, opening up opportunities that she otherwise would not have experienced. She explains: “I had to do an assignment for HELM Lead, and looked at and analysed the Engineering qualifications. Engineering education is a special issue since the Engineering Council of South Africa requires 140 credits a year, while DHET funds 120 credits a year. This means that we teach more than we actually get funded for.”

In other words, unless a university cross-subsidises its Engineering Faculty, the engineering departments will be stretched thin and have little in the way of resources to address the challenges of underprepared Maths and Science matriculants. Engineering is a field in which South Africa has a skills shortage. Coupled with the high demands of an engineering qualification and the many matriculants who are under-prepared for tackling these qualifications, those responsible for delivering engineering qualifications are essentially short of capacity even when they are fully staffed according to DHET’s funding formula. Not only do they lack the extra capacity required to address under-preparedness, they actually lack the basic capacity to deliver the qualifications.

Says Linda: “I realised what the impact of that was once I had done the assignment, and have since spoken about it at a number of fora. I believe that as a result of this I was invited to join a Council of Higher Education Standards Working Group which will develop qualification standards in the field of Engineering – a tough challenge.”

I discovered through an assignment I did for HELM Lead that in terms of funding we receive to produce engineers required by industry, we actually teach more than we actually get funded for

I realised the impact of that and started speaking about it. I have since been invited to join a Council of Higher Education Standards Working Group

In terms of practical skills gained through HELM Lead, she says that most important was just to understand how various things work, such as submitting
documents and qualifications for accreditation and approval, and why the deadlines have to be set so far ahead. The module on marketing and branding was also very thought-provoking, and led Linda to liaise with her university librarian to look at her personal profile on the various web-based platforms, and to update and link them together in a coherent whole.

She describes HELM Lead as “a very important experience for maturity as an academic manager”, and says she will recommend it to anyone in her department who indicates that they are interested in management.

It has also had an impact on her aspirations going forward. “Although I am still not sure whether my long-term goal is a management position or an academic one, before, I would not even have considered options available in management. Higher education is in a flux, and so it is both exciting and exhausting to be involved in this most important aspect of South African society at this moment in history.”
There are three facets to his role academic teaching and specialist training, service and research.

He says that he wishes he had experienced a programme such as that offered by the HELM Lead Fellowship many years earlier: “It would have helped me to navigate the sometimes confusing waters of universities. Nevertheless, it is never too late to learn, and I gained a very good overview of the challenges that managers and executives have to face on a daily basis when balancing the demands of students, infrastructure, staff and funding constraints.”

Professor Tahir Pillay is responsible for the leadership and management of the academic Department of Chemical Pathology at the University of Pretoria in his role as Chief Specialist, as well as of the diagnostic chemistry service of the Steve Biko Academic Hospital.

### Infusion of Insight

- **Designation:** Chief Specialist, Professor & Head of Chemical Pathology and Clinical Pathology; Director of the Clinical Pathology programme; Chair of Pathology
- **Institution:** University of Pretoria
- **Area of specialisation:** Chemical pathology; molecular cell biology
- **Outcomes:** Gained insight into the higher education system which can be applied to current and future roles in leadership and management in academia
The programme gave him insight into university issues in a concentrated form that otherwise would have taken many years to achieve, infusing participants with generations of experience from the presenters and lecturers. Tahir benefitted from overviews of how universities are structured and managed, the role of council and executive management and how they come together, and the role of the Minister of Higher Education and Training in terms of university management. All of this would normally take a few years to comprehend, whereas HELM Lead provides this understanding in a very short period of time.

Says Tahir: “Most university executives and management have gained their experience by working in the system. The HELM Fellowship is extremely important to higher education in South Africa because there is no other programme that offers this type of management training in the South African context in such a short time frame. We need this programme in order to provide a head start – especially to those planning to go into management.”

The programme gave him the opportunity to network with new connections across the academic world and to gain insight into how different academic institutions operate. It also shaped his view about what he wishes to do in future, whether to remain in fulltime academia or enter a leadership and management position. He feels that he currently enjoys the ‘best of all worlds, without too much of just one’ in his current role, where he is involved in management but can still pursue his intellectual interests.

No other programme offers this type of management training in the SA context in such a short time frame

Tahir found it highly illuminating to listen to senior current and former university executives, including vice chancellors, registrars and deputy vice chancellors, covering aspects of management from their own experience or generic issues pertaining to university management. This included the legal and legislative structure of universities, the origins of university budgets and funding mechanisms/frameworks, the process of change management and challenges facing universities. One presentation that made a great impression on him was by the Vice Chancellor of the University of Zululand: “I was amazed at her resilience in dealing with the massive problems she went through. She had a really tough time, but she stuck it out, dealt with it, coped and endured.”

He says that a particularly interesting session was that on marketing and branding, given by the branding manager of Nando’s – a company whose marketing success, from having one branch in South Africa to branches all over the world, fascinates him. “I have gone on to apply the lessons I learnt from this. Branding and reputation are so important in many of the situations that we deal with in higher education. I
got the members of my department to complete a branding exercise which gives insight into how others perceive you – which is very important to know.”

Tahir describes his own background as “eclectic”, including as it does a Wellcome Senior Clinical Fellowship at Imperial College, as well as tenures at the University of Nottingham (Associate Professor and Clinical Reader in Molecular Medicine), University of Cape Town (Professor and Head of Chemical Pathology) and University of KwaZulu-Natal (Deputy Vice Chancellor and Head of the College of Health Sciences). Having returned to fulltime academia only in 2013 when appointed in his current post, he says that both his life and his insight have been significantly enriched and bolstered for the future – thanks to the HELM Lead Programme.
When Dr Polly Mashigo embarked on HELM Lead she was Senior Lecturer and Head of the Economics Department at Tshwane University of Technology, and hoped to obtain knowledge and skills to manage effectively and navigate the challenges of change/transformation in her institution. She was also looking for guidance on functioning from a position of seniority, and adds that completing the Fellowship “contributed massively” to her subsequent appointment as Assistant Dean of the Faculty of Economics and Finance.

Completing the HELM Fellowship as a professional then in a middle management position changed the way that she perceived, viewed and did things, particularly with regard to management and leadership. She says: “My exposure to this
programme assisted me, as the Head of Department then, to acquire exceptional management and leadership qualities and skills which I previously did not have.”

My exposure to this programme assisted me, as the Head of Department

She reported back to her university on the programme, skills that she had acquired, and how they had helped her – stating that she now felt that she was ready as a manager going forward. This seems to have been highly regarded by the powers that be, and when the position of Assistant Dean became available, all of these factors were considered and she was appointed.

She tempers her achievement with a large dose of humility and humour, saying that while she had been a manager and Head of Department for a number of years – and had felt that she ‘had a right’ to participate in HELM Lead – it was to show her that in order to be a an effective leader in higher education, one requires many and varied skills. “It certainly opened my eyes in terms of problem-solving when you are managing people. The good thing is that we also identified developmental areas, and I have been attending programmes on these to address them.”

Polly says that she will be implementing the new skills that she learnt, area by area. For example, one revelation for her was the extent of the acts and policies relating to higher education, which she became aware of when completing the required reading for the Fellowship. Now, having read all of the relevant policies, she makes a point of raising the issue when she finds that policies are not being followed in practice. The concept of branding was another area that was new to her, that she will now be using: “I will be branding myself so that people know who I am and what I can do – and that I can also mentor people, for example.”

Her interest in Economics, teaching and training are golden threads that run throughout her career. She received a Research Excellence Award from the South African Savings Institute and Metropolitan in 2004, and the Special Research Recognition Award in 2008 for her PhD in Economics. Other awards include Faculty Female Researcher of the Year (2008) and Woman Researcher of the Year (2009, 2012 and 2013). Polly is also a qualified trainer and says she is going to actively promote the HELM Fellowship and encourage especially female potential candidates to apply for it in future.

What impressed her is that HELM Lead not only deepens participants’ knowledge and understanding of the governance of public universities in South Africa, it also addresses the socio-economic and political
landscape of institutions of higher learning. This means unifying a fragmented higher education system and reforming the culture of higher learning institutions, including increasing the number of black people and women who are participating. “Programmes like HELM have proved to have the potential to assist leaders and managers to acquire the skills needed to lead and manage exceptionally well. This impacts positively on me as a black woman, since it supports both gender and racial equity.”

Polly is emphatic that such skills and management training needs to be continued and expanded. “HELM Lead is excellent for South Africa and in advancing leadership skills for lifelong learning. It has to continue because new managers are appointed all of the time, and they all need this training experience. It should also be cascaded up to very senior people such as deans, chancellors and vice chancellors.”

Her enthusiasm is infectious as she talks about her ability to now contribute to improved leadership and management practices in her own institution as well as in the broader higher education sector. She is going to share her experience of the HELM Lead programme at an upcoming multi-university forum. “I attained positive outcomes to a degree that I would not have thought possible, and the skills and knowledge that I acquired have already had such a positive impact on my career. I will continue to implement and apply what we learnt.”
Professor Edward Rankhumise describes the HELM Lead Programme as “a wonderful opportunity” which impacted very positively on his career, since he was able to use some of the knowledge he acquired in a successful interview for the post of Associate Dean in the Faculty of Management Sciences at Tshwane University of Technology. “HELM Lead exposure shaped my knowledge and skills, particularly in the areas of research management and policies in the higher education sector. This has enabled me to successfully manage the research portfolio and some of the day-to-day activities within the Faculty.”

He says that presentations by seasoned high-level officials such as vice chancellors and executive deans were impressive and helped him to improve his management style. He also picked up...
skills in change management and financial management, where he acquired knowledge as to how the Department of Higher Education and Training functions when allocating money to the universities, and how the funding formula is used in terms of research outputs. “These presenters shared very interesting experiences which were transferable to any setting. I have been able to put what I learnt into action by reflecting on what was presented and using it as a grounding for my implementation strategy.

Presenters shared very interesting experiences which were transferable to any setting

This has been a great help to me since my new appointment. I am certainly using the knowledge that I acquired – and I reflect on it every day.”

The presentation by one vice chancellor in particular had an impact on him, indicating that you need to have a very thick skin – and an excellent grasp of the legislation governing the organisation where you are working – to hold certain posts in higher education. In this instance the vice chancellor was prepared to take the relevant Minister to court since Government’s application of legislation – especially when it came to a disagreement – was flawed.

He regards the impact of HELM Lead on the higher education sector in South Africa as vital: “In South Africa we do not have a large enough pool of qualified people who can take up higher positions at various universities. Others are ageing and will soon be leaving their posts, and yet there is no succession plan in place. This fellowship is vital for creating a pool of prospective academics who can take the lead in higher education going forward.”

Edward’s own career started off in hospital administration until, in March 2002, it took off on a new path when he resigned to take up an academic position as a Lecturer at Technikon North West. In 2003 he was promoted to Senior Lecturer and in 2009 appointed Sectional Head: Postgraduate and Research, in the Department of Management and Entrepreneurship. In 2011 he was promoted to Associate Professor and in April 2013 appointed as Associate Dean in the Faculty of Management Sciences.

In his latest role Edward guides staff members and students on research matters as well as building capacity within the faculty and encouraging staff members to improve their qualifications. He says that he will be promoting HELM Lead as a great developmental intervention: “Prospective and recently appointed leaders should be exposed to this programme to ensure that self-efficacy is created. Up and coming academic
managers should make use of the programme to enhance what they have already learnt, and it is also a very good platform for networking.”

Having had an impact on his current role, HELM Lead also looks set to impact on Edward’s future: “The Fellowship has inspired me to look at a future in higher education institutions. I am optimistic that in due course one day I will reach the level of executive dean at one of the universities.”
When Dr Cina Mosito took part in HELM Lead she was a Senior Lecturer, and wondered if she was a befitting candidate for this programme. Then, at one of the sessions where the speaker was addressing the qualities necessary for professional and personal leadership in higher education in South Africa, she had an epiphany. “I realised that my ambition to go much further in this field affirmed me as an ideal candidate for the programme! After that I reflected on professional targets and strategies which I needed for reaching my goals.”

Taking part in the Fellowship reigned Cina’s belief that she has a role other than within the realm of research. She has always applied herself to research and teaching, and thought that management was divorced from what she was doing. Interacting with...
all sorts of people in management at HELM Lead led her to recognise management in higher education as another career opportunity, which runs side by side with the research and teaching that she is so interested in.

What really impressed her was the calibre of the presenters, who included highly rated researchers, deputy vice chancellors and vice chancellors. She says that it dawned on her that it does not help to divorce one of the roles (research, teaching, management) from the others, since once operating at a certain level there will always be some management involved.

Her experience and new realisation gained from the HELM Fellowship carried her forward into applying for and being appointed as Acting Head of the General Education and Training Department in the Faculty of Education and Social Sciences at Cape Peninsula University of Technology. She has never bothered to apply for posts that cropped up before – and had thought that her role in research and teaching was her “role for life.” Exposure to HELM Lead showed her that management is an extension of what she is doing in academic research, she felt that she was adequately prepared for the role.

Cina says that her mentor (a female dean), acquired as part of the HELM Fellowship, also helped to give her the courage to apply for the post. “I had never had a mentor in my career or professional life before – and it has made a huge difference.” Her own research projects reflect her strong interest in training and development in higher education, and she is currently supervising two M.Ed. students and has seen another five through graduation.

HELM Lead helped to prepare her for the Acting Head post by outlining the dynamics of the higher education terrain in South Africa. “I think back to issues highlighted by deans, registrars, vice chancellors and others, and now truly appreciate the links between leadership and academic issues. Even though there are so many micro issues situated within the broader higher education institution context, the Fellowship provided me with a good base from which to understand what I need in order to perform to the best of my ability.”

The Fellowship provided me with a good base from which to understand what I need in order to perform to the best of my ability. HELM was quite life-changing.

In short, she says that the Fellowship made her think in ways that she hadn’t before, look at things in a different way, and recognise importance where she hadn’t before. “I know many other people who are like I was – so focused on their own
little world in their institution. HELM was quite life-changing, because we got to interact with people from other institutions and see things differently. This was a phenomenal opportunity – which I hope many others will get to share.”
Dr André van Zyl
Now Bitten by a Management Bug

Dr André van Zyl was appointed Acting Director of the Academic Development Centre (ADC) at the University of Johannesburg shortly before undertaking the HELM Fellowship. He hoped to further his career by taking up the Directorship full time, but felt a little out of his depth regarding some aspects of the position. He saw HELM Lead as a very good opportunity to develop his knowledge and skills.

He says that the main benefit of taking part was that it opened his eyes to many things that he wouldn’t have known about before – both in terms of information but also experiences and contacts that he built up. The HELM Fellowship was recognised by André’s line managers as an opportunity for him to develop further – and shortly after he completed it he was invited for an interview and made Director of the ADC.

- **Designation:** Director: Academic Development Centre
- **Institution:** University of Johannesburg
- **Area of specialisation:** Academic skills development and student engagement
- **Outcomes:** Successful application for Directorship; commitment to professional management career in higher education
HELM helped me a great deal in positioning myself as Director, and in being able to understand the bigger picture.

HELM Lead not only provided André with excellent information and training but exposed him more broadly to the higher education environment in South Africa: “This helped me a great deal in positioning myself as Director, and in being able to understand the bigger picture. The time spent away from campus with colleagues from different fields and at various institutions allowed us all to develop a more holistic understanding of the higher education endeavour, and a more comprehensive view of the field we are involved in.”

He says the speakers and presenters were generally excellent, and that some of the topics, such as the lecture on the history of universities in South Africa, were really illuminating.

The time spent away from campus with colleagues from different fields and at various institutions allowed us all to develop a more holistic understanding of the higher education endeavour, and a more comprehensive view of the field we are involved in.

“That might sound a bit strange, but it was fascinating to hear where we came from, as well as about the legislative framework within which we function, and financial management. These are all aspects that we don’t get training in as we gear ourselves up for working in the university – but they are integral parts of our role.” He adds that the HELM Fellowship can assist those in higher education who have not received professional management training. “Many have only been trained in their own academic field, not how to manage large budgets and big groups of people. However, if they are going to be a manager of people and of money, these things don’t just come naturally – you need training. For example, I currently have about 50 permanent staff and 50 temporary staff and a budget of millions. Nobody directly prepared me for that. HELM opens your eyes to how people think about these matters in higher education.”

While the impression is often that the academic track is the only real way to build a career in higher education, through the HELM Fellowship André came to realise that a professional track exists and is essential for the effective running of higher education in South Africa. He has committed himself to following a professional management track in South African higher education for the rest of his career.

His focus on the next crop of students and academic development remains ever sharp, and he received a 2014 National Research Foundation Award for the project ‘Measuring and monitoring first-year students’ adjustment, well-being, success and drop-out’. He is currently supervising four doctoral students...
working on factors influencing student success and emerging student identities.

Higher education in South Africa is crucial for our nation’s future, and is a growing field that will definitely need more professional and dedicated leaders to take it forward. André says that anyone who thinks of themselves as possibly being part of that crop of leaders should consider applying. He is looking forward to seeing large parts of the vision expressed in the *White Paper for Post-School Education and Training* being realised during his career, and says: “For this to be the case we will need a strong group of higher education leaders in South Africa – and I think the HELM Lead initiative is crucial to help the system build towards that.”

Dr André van Zyl – Now Bitten by a Management Bug
Filling the Induction Gap

Professor Nokuthula Sibiya has been with the Department of Nursing at Durban University of Technology (DUT) for 11 years. When she took part in the HELM Fellowship she was Acting Head of the Department and aspiring to become its Head. She felt that the Fellowship would allow her to learn more about leadership and management in higher education. It more than fulfilled her expectations, and after completing it she was made Head of Department.

Nokuthula says that the HELM Fellowship stepped in and filled a professional gap for her, since a challenge at DUT (as well as among many other higher education institutions) is that there is no programme of induction for newly appointed Heads of Department, the presumption seeming to be that once someone reaches this level, they 'know it all'.

Designation: Associate Professor and Head of the Department of Nursing, Faculty of Health Sciences
Institution: Durban University of Technology
Area of specialisation: Primary health care and women’s health
Outcomes: Equipped to tackle new position as Head of Department; invaluable skills and networking; sharing of best practices
The HELM Programme helped to prepare her for her new role by giving her a thorough grasp of the different structures in HEIs and their roles, as well as an overview of funding, which she describes as “a complete eye-opener”.

When she was subsequently appointed as Head she was equipped and reasonably comfortable that she knew what she was in for. “The subject matter dealt with during the HELM Fellowship really gave me the knowledge and skills I needed.” Most of the issues discussed related to leadership and management at different university levels and positions, with plenty of opportunity to network with people in various positions at different universities. Candidates were also able to share good practices and to come to understand the whole framework of the higher education system.

Before, like many academics, Nokuthula worked within her own silo: “All that I knew about was my own Faculty of Health Sciences and the Department of Nursing. The HELM Lead Programme gave me wide exposure and I came to understand how different universities, faculties and departments operate.” Networking with many of the speakers and also participants who were already heads of departments also helped her to learn more about the role, and the sharing of experiences, challenges and how to overcome them has continued beyond the HELM Fellowship.

“Input on strategies used to deal with ‘difficult stuff’ was invaluable to me, and I picked up many pointers which I am using successfully today.

Input on strategies used to deal with ‘difficult stuff’ was invaluable to me, and I picked up many pointers which I am using successfully today

Some of these have helped me to deal with formerly difficult situations (and people) in the blink of an eye. It is also extremely useful to have this network of colleagues who are specialised in various areas – for example, when I need to find an examiner who is specialised in a certain area.”

Having obtained her PhD at DUT in 2008, Nokuthula is Chairperson of the following nursing professional bodies: KwaZulu-Natal (KZN) Chapter, Nursing Education Association; Practice Portfolio Committee, Forum of University Nursing Deans of South Africa; and KZN Provincial Nursing Strategy (Nursing Education and Training Focus Area). In November 2013 she received a Top University Junior Research Award, as well as the Faculty of Health Science Award for Outstanding Post Graduate recruitment and Most Promising Senior Academic in the Faculty.

She ranks the HELM Fellowship as essential for those
newly appointed in or aspiring to middle and senior management positions in HEIs, as opposed to being ‘thrown in the deep end’. She adds that while she is very impressed by the HELM Lead Programme approach, gained a great deal from it and found it very informative, she would like a follow-up programme or workshops to be held where former participants can come together to share the changes that they have implemented and what they are doing differently after attending the Fellowship.

She reiterates the critical issue of filling the gap in terms of providing skills for those going into middle and senior management roles at HEIs: “I would really recommend that each university should have a programme like HELM Lead to serve as such an induction. This would be extremely useful to strengthening higher education in South Africa.”
Mrs Nonzuzo Zikalala
Encouraging Women to Grow

- **Designation:** Faculty Manager, Faculty of Education and Social Sciences
- **Institution:** Cape Peninsula University of Technology
- **Area of specialisation:** Human resources, finance, academic administration and governance, and marketing
- **Outcomes:** Strengthened leadership and management skills and strategies

She already had what she believed was a good understanding of the challenges and joys of being a leader in higher education. However, she was overwhelmed at the extent of the new skills and abilities that she was able to gain from the programme.

Nonzuzo went into HELM Lead hoping to gain a deepened knowledge and understanding of the higher education environment, and to learn more about the governance, structures and operations of the sector. She reports that the programme provided her with a broader...
understanding of what it means to be a manager and a leader in a changing higher education environment, with a special focus on governance issues, regulatory frameworks and strategic planning. Key skills that she learned were advanced leadership and management, how to operate effectively at a strategic level, and good practice in academic administrative processes. She also acquired her own mentor, from whom she continues to learn.

Her new skills have been put to use to change processes and practices at CPUT, with Nonzuzo making valuable input in terms of ensuring good governance and improving processes in academic administration, which has been welcomed by the different institutional committees that she participates in. She has also put in place more effective team-building strategies to encourage team collaboration, has a greater understanding of quality assurance processes, and can apply legislation and governance principles effectively.

My understanding, analysis and application of governance and leadership concepts within the higher education context have been enhanced. The academic policy and planning module gave me a deeper understanding of the higher education White Paper and its impact. I also gained the wisdom to contribute positively to development and review of CPUT policies for strategic and operational plans and processes for academic administration.”

She now describes herself as a visionary leader that other people look up to – and puts it all down to HELM Lead. In turn she is now motivating her teams in such a way as to inspire them to reach a higher level on the ladder to success, and to engage with development courses that can equip them to get to where they see themselves one day. She has also been successful in motivating three of her team members to register for an MBA.

Nonzuzo places emphasis on how HELM Lead has helped to promote gender equity in leadership and management positions, and says she wishes that all higher education institutions could benefit from it – and ensure that more women attend it. “Our centre is still male-dominated. This is just the beginning, and a great opportunity for women to get to the next level of their careers. Through HELM I think that this is possible. Women often under-estimate their capabilities, so we really need to recognise and encourage them to use their voice where possible.”

Our centre is still male-dominated. HELM is creating a great opportunity for women to advance in their careers.
She says that Fellowship has given her an advantage in dealing with university challenges, governance and student administration matters, implementing the latest innovations and technology initiatives in student registrations and higher education administration.

“I acquired good leadership tips which help me to face challenges in achieving results in very complex conditions, and have been capacitated to be part of the wave towards building a great university. I can see myself growing into a higher and more challenging position, such as that of Registrar.”

Describing her experience and the outcomes of HELM Lead training as “wonderful”, her wish is that the fellowship may grow so that it may have more than two intakes every year: “Then it will reap even more results – and faster.”