

# FOR THE LOVE OF EDUCATION

**FACULTY OF EDUCATION**

**FEBRUARY 2026 BULLETIN**

Monthly Newsletter | Vol. 1, Issue 2







February 2026 has been a month of remarkable momentum and strategic positioning for the Faculty of Education. As we welcomed 1,828 First Time Entering Students across our Mthatha and Komani campuses, we simultaneously advanced critical quality assurance processes, strengthened our partnerships with the provincial education department, and established national and international partnerships. This bulletin captures our collective achievements as we align our operations with the WSU strategic plans and respond proactively to national education challenges.



## **STUDENT SUCCESS & TRANSITION**

### **Orientation Programme: 2-6 February 2026**

The 2026 orientation programme was successfully conducted across our two sites, welcoming a total of 1,482 First-Time Entering Students (FTENs). At the Mthatha Campus, orientation took place on 2 February 2026, with 1,014 students in attendance. The Komani Campus followed on 3 February 2026, where 468 students were orientated.

FTENs were introduced to the faculty community, marking an encouraging start to the academic year across both campuses.







**Departmental Deep-Dive Sessions (9-10 February)** Following the central orientation, individual departments conducted specialised sessions where FTENs met academic and support staff, examined programme-specific curricula, and received detailed guidance on registration verification, class attendance monitoring, and the Duly Performed (DP) requirements essential for examination admission.





FTENs received comprehensive guidance on university governance structures, academic integrity protocols, and critical support services including the Academic Advising, Writing Centre, Counselling Services, and the Library and Information Services. The programme established a foundational understanding of the Learning Management System (Moodle) and introduced students to the Tutor Development Programme and Work Integrated Learning-School Based Experience (WIL-SBE) placement and attendance.

## ACADEMIC ENHANCEMENT & INNOVATION

### Tutor Development Programme: State of Readiness (3-5 February)

The faculty convened a strategic three-day stakeholder summit to optimise the 2026 Tutor Development Programme (TDP), bringing together the TDP Office, Departmental Representatives, Teaching and Learning Chairs, ICT Services, and the Work Integrated Learning Office.



The operational distinctions between student support roles were clarified to strengthen implementation and accountability as follows: PALLs support Level 1 modules with foundational pedagogical training focused on first-year engagement; Academic Tutors assist students from Level 2 to postgraduate level with advanced subject expertise; and WIL Tutors, under TDP governance, provide specialised support for the WIL-SBE content.

The Digital Innovation Suite was officially launched, marking a significant milestone in advancing technology-enhanced teaching, learning, and administrative efficiency within the faculty:

| Platform                                 | Function                                                            | Access                                      |
|------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------|
| <b>TUTORIA (Sinawe Tutorial Chatbot)</b> | AI-driven administrative and academic support                       | WhatsApp integration + WordPress web portal |
| <b>Online Tutor Training Course</b>      | Self-paced professional development (8 comprehensive units)         | Moodle LMS                                  |
| <b>TDP Dashboard</b>                     | Real-time monitoring, evaluation, and reporting                     | Looker Studio visualisation                 |
| <b>Airtable Database</b>                 | Centralised tutor management and "Get to Know Your Tutor" profiling | Cloud-based collaboration                   |

The TUTORIA chatbot represents a significant advancement in student support accessibility, providing instantaneous responses to queries regarding recruitment processes, remuneration, and programme procedures. Future iterations will incorporate Subject Matter Guides (SMGs) for direct academic support. The Moodle training platform ensures standardised, scalable tutor preparation covering session facilitation, inclusive education practices, digital pedagogy, and assessment literacy.

## QUALITY ASSURANCE & ACCREDITATION

### 11-13 February 2026: Programme Self-Evaluation Reports Finalisation Retreat

In response to the Council on Higher Education's (CHE) National Review of Initial Teacher Education qualifications, the faculty undertook an intensive three-day retreat to refine our Self-Evaluation Reports (SERs) for the Bachelor of Education (BEd) and Postgraduate Certificate in Education (PGCE) programmes.

Following 2025 SER development and a rigorous internal mock review facilitated by the Quality Management Directorate (QMD)-incorporating feedback from academics, DBE representatives, current students, and alumni-the faculty engaged three critical reviewers to evaluate our submissions: Dr A. Simayi and Dr Z. Made from Nelson Mandela University, Dr P. Tyilo from the University of Fort Hare and Ms P. Magangxa from Rhodes University.



The retreat resulted in a comprehensive revision of the SERs, addressing inadequately documented areas identified in the mock review feedback. Quality Improvement Plans (QIPs) were drafted to respond directly to critical reviewer recommendations. Additionally, programme documentation was aligned with CHE submission requirements.



The final QIPs will be submitted to the QMD, followed by executive sign-off by Prof BD Bantwini, ED PME Ms O Mokgatle and the VC, Dr T Mgwebi, prior to submission to the CHE.

## STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT & POLICY DEVELOPMENT

### Secondary Curriculum Standard Setting Meeting (Subject Advisors Indaba)

4-6 February 2026

Prof Bantwini, invited by the Office of the Director of Secondary Curriculum Management of the Eastern Cape Department of Education (ECDoE), attended the Subject Advisors Indaba, accompanied by Prof Mpiti, Dr Seleke, Ms Ndamase and Mr Sihele. At the event, Prof Bantwini led a session on “Transformational Leadership”, further affirming the faculty’s thought leadership in advancing educational reform



### Student Module Guides Workshop

4-6 February 2026

In partnership with DLT and the WSU TDS team, the faculty conducted comprehensive SMG development workshop, bringing together lecturers from both sites to collaborate closely with their counterparts. This joint engagement ensured consistency in curriculum delivery across the two campuses and promoted a shared academic approach.



By collectively refining learning outcomes, course content, teaching strategies and assessment guidelines, the workshop strengthened alignment between what is taught, how it is taught and how it is assessed. This coordinated effort not only promotes uniform standards across both sites but also contributes to a more coherent and meaningful learning experience for students.



### **Validation of isiXhosa Module Guides Advances Bilingual Education**

The Department of Initial Primary Teacher Education successfully validated 16 isiXhosa-translated Student Module Guides from 16-18 February 2026. Lecturers collaborated with the Unit of Languages and Indigenous Knowledge Systems to ensure the translations accurately reflected the original academic content and intent.



This milestone strengthens the implementation of mother-tongue-based bilingual education in the B.Ed. Foundation Phase programme. From February 2026, students will receive bilingual module guides, lecturers will teach in both English and isiXhosa, and assessments will be offered in both languages to promote inclusivity and academic success.

The initiative aligns with national education priorities and the University's language policy, demonstrating a strong institutional commitment to transformation, equity, and improved learning outcomes in the Foundation Phase.



# First Ordinary Faculty Board Meeting

On 19 February 2026, the VC Dr T Mgwebi addressed the first ordinary Faculty Board of the year, articulating three institutional imperatives:

- 1. Intent and Vision:** Clarifying the university's strategic direction
- 2. Strategy Refocusing:** Aligning faculty operations with institutional priorities
- 3. Signature Themes:** Emphasising skills development as foundational to all thematic areas

The VC stressed that faculties must interpret institutional goals at the implementation level through ongoing consultation. The session also featured strategic presentations from support directorates, including Library and Information Services, Student Tracking, Learning and Teaching, Quality Assurance, Postgraduate Studies, and Internationalisation & Partnerships. The Student Representative Council submitted substantive recommendations to enhance student success initiatives.

## WORK INTEGRATED LEARNING EXCELLENCE

### WIL-SBE Guidelines Review and 2026 Planning Session

**20–21 February 2026**

The faculty conducted a comprehensive post-placement review of WIL Guidelines and Procedures (Sections 1–11), addressing operational gaps identified during 2025 implementations. This annual planning imperative ensures quality assurance compliance and resource alignment with the university's academic calendar.

The Annual Operating Plan (AOP) for 2026 WIL implementation was approved, establishing stability and providing clear directional frameworks. The Executives also endorsed the adoption of the Digital Placement Model for 2026, designed to minimise departmental placement challenges through automated systems and digital tracking.

# SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY, COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT & INTERNATIONALISATION

## SheSTEAM Summit 2026

14 February 2026 | Whittlesea Site

**Theme:** Empowering Girls in STEAM

In partnership with the African Research Collaborative (ARC) from Georgia State University in the USA and the South African Council for Natural Scientific Professions (SACNASP), the faculty hosted approximately 282 Grade 8–12 female learners from the Chris Hani and Alfred Nzo District Municipalities, 39 teachers from schools, and over 12 exhibiting organisations.



The event offered immersive learning experiences. These included AI hackathons, where learners designed solution-driven websites using artificial intelligence; coding and robotics laboratory sessions featuring hands-on drone and robot construction through both plugged and unplugged computational thinking approaches; and a STEAM career pathway exposition that provided learners with the opportunity to engage directly with female professionals in scientific and technological fields.





## Official Opening Address-Prof Bongani Bantwini:

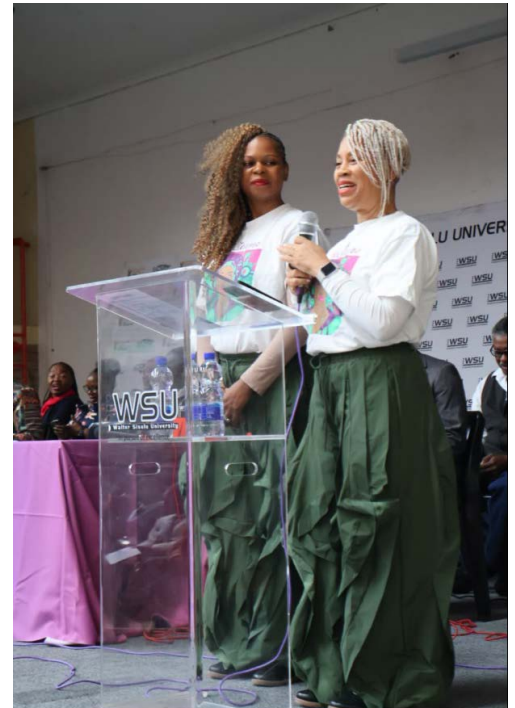


"The world is changing faster than ever before. We are living in a time of artificial intelligence, climate change, and rapidly evolving healthcare; all of which demand scientific innovation, research, and creative problem-solving. The future will not wait, and it requires diverse thinkers. When women are included in scientific and technological design, solutions become safer, more inclusive, and more effective."

The co-founders of the African Research Collaborative, Dr Melissa Speight Vaughn and Dr Erica Bass-Flimmons, based in the United States of America, shared their commitment to advancing science, technology, engineering, arts and mathematics (STEAM) education among young women and learners in rural communities.

Reflecting on their journey, Dr Vaughn emphasised the importance of inclusive education, noting that their focus on rural areas is intentional, as urban centres often already have greater access to resources. Their mission, she explained, is to broaden opportunities and extend meaningful support to communities that are frequently underserved.

Dr Bass-Flimmons offered a personal reflection on the origins of their initiative, describing how formative experiences in South Africa inspired and shaped their work in expanding access to STEAM education.





Dr Matshidiso Matabane of SACNASP emphasised the critical importance of placing young women at the forefront of STEM-driven societal transformation. She highlighted how empowering women in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics not only promotes gender equity but also serves as a powerful driver of innovation and progress. Dr Matabane affirmed that science and technology are key catalysts for social and economic development, and she encouraged initiatives that provide young women with access, mentorship, and practical opportunities to actively contribute to shaping a knowledge-based and technologically advanced society.



The team from the Department of Basic Education, led by the Acting Director General of the ECDoE, Ms Chulekazi Xundu-Bula, provided invaluable support for the event. Their involvement included offering strategic guidance, facilitating coordination with schools, and ensuring that the programme aligned with broader educational objectives. Their presence underscored the Department's commitment to advancing innovative learning initiatives and fostering partnerships that enhance student engagement and outcomes.





The Local Organising Committee (LOC), under the leadership of Dr S. Matope as Chairperson, together with its members-Prof B. D. Bantwini, Prof P. T. Mpiti, Prof S. Chiphambo, Mr S. Peter, Ms K. Serobatse, Ms T. Titi-Mbokodi, Ms A. Ngwabe, Ms B. Mkabile-Masebe, Ms A. Joe, Ms S. Kwepile, Ms N. Mzileni, Ms Y. Gwagwa, Mr S. Gwana, Mr Z. Pantshwa, Mr T. Rabotapi, Ms H. Nxenye, Mr M. Kwababa, Ms S. Mantashe, Mr B. Sindelo, Ms Y. Cata, and Mr M. Ntame-successfully organised and delivered a highly impactful SheSTEAM event, demonstrating strong coordination, collaborative leadership, and a shared commitment to advancing women's participation in Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts and Mathematics.

# FLAGSHIP PROJECT LAUNCH

## 'One School, One Garden' Initiative

24 February 2026

The faculty, through the Department of Business Management, formally launched this transformative collaboration with the Eastern Cape Departments of Education and Agriculture.



Originating from an October 2025 Memorandum of Agreement between WSU and the Department of Agriculture, the initiative addresses the dual crisis of declining commerce education and school nutrition dependency.

The implementation framework was established in partnership with the Department of Basic Education, through which 27 schools were identified to participate in the initiative. Comprehensive profiling was conducted at each school to assess infrastructure requirements, including the need for water tanks and cultivation areas. The Department of Agriculture committed to supporting the programme through soil testing, land preparation, seed provision and ongoing technical mentorship to ensure sustainability.





The strategic objectives of the initiative are to revitalise commerce education by integrating practical entrepreneurship applications, to establish sustainable food security mechanisms that operate independently of state-funded nutrition programmes, and to develop replicable models that can contribute to broader provincial educational and economic development.



# INTER-INSTITUTIONAL COLLABORATION

## WSU-TUT Curriculum Mapping and Alignment Engagement

25 February 2026

The Department of Business Management Education (BME) hosted a critical strategic dialogue with Tshwane University of Technology (TUT) addressing the systematic erosion of Mathematics and Commerce offerings in Eastern Cape secondary schools.



Schools have manipulated matric pass rates by steering learners away from rigorous subjects, leading to the closure of commerce streams and the elimination of Consumer Studies, which has created a skills deficit threatening graduate employability and national economic competitiveness.



TUT experts have highlighted that subject avoidance, driven by performance pressure, undermines secondary preparation and increases university failure risks, while rising matric pass rates mask declining subject quality that leaves many graduates ineligible for competitive tertiary programmes. Interventions such as university-school subject meetings, classroom observation and gap identification, and advisory committees to ensure curriculum alignment have shown measurable impact. Dr Z Seleke, the BME HoD, reported that several principals are reversing commerce stream closures following the BME department engagement.





## SCHOLARSHIP OF TEACHING AND LEARNING

### SoTL Recognition Workshop

26 February 2026

**Theme:** From Insight to Impact: Advancing Our Department's Scholarship of Teaching and Learning

The Department of Business Management Education convened a ceremony honouring researchers advancing pedagogical scholarship within the faculty. The programme interrogated the transformative potential of teaching when subjected to rigorous examination and scholarly dissemination.



Prof Billy Adam, a SoTL scholar at WSU, presented on the theoretical foundations and institutional embedding of teaching scholarship. Dr Munienge Mbodila, also a WSU SoTL scholar, focused on practical applications and methodologies for measuring impact.



## IN CONCLUSION

Collectively, we recognise and respect the right of our students to express themselves and to stand up for what they believe in. As a faculty, however, we must remain mindful that their academic journey remains of paramount importance. Advocacy and academic progress are not mutually exclusive. It is our collective responsibility to ensure that teaching and learning continue with minimal disruption, that academic standards are upheld, and that our students are supported to remain on track in their studies. We must strive to maintain progress in our classes, meet our professional obligations, and safeguard the integrity and continuity of their learning experience.





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