



iYunivesithi

Walter Sisulu



FACULTY OF NATURAL SCIENCES

AUGUST NEWSLETTER

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Executive Summary

August 2026 has been one of the most academically productive periods for the Faculty of Natural Sciences. Across all departments, there was clear evidence of staff commitment to teaching and learning, demonstrated through the effective delivery of notional hours, timely completion of academic activities, and documented implementation of both formative and summative assessments. Administrative colleagues also continued to provide critical support to faculty governance structures through active participation in committee work, ensuring that academic and operational processes remained functional and responsive. The Faculty's achievements during this period reflect a collective commitment to excellence and the restoration of a strong culture of accountability, professionalism, and service. As we approach the final academic term, it is important that we sustain this momentum and continue to strengthen our contribution towards student success, research productivity, and community impact. Institutional success is built on the strength of collective commitment. As we regain and reinforce our culture of dedication, accountability, and excellence, we position ourselves to achieve extraordinary outcomes for our students, our university, and society.



The University's Quality Assurance team continued its important work of fostering a culture of self-evaluation and continuous improvement across the institution. During engagements with the Faculty, Heads of Departments were reminded to finalise all outstanding Self-Evaluation Reports (SERs) to ensure compliance and readiness for future quality assurance processes.

A strategic planning meeting was also convened to prepare for the extensive audit of Faculty Teaching and Learning activities scheduled for the final term of 2026. The audit presents an important opportunity to showcase good practices while identifying areas requiring further enhancement. Departments have been encouraged to hold internal performance review meetings during early September. These discussions should evaluate achievements, identify challenges, and formulate actionable plans for presentation at the Faculty Board meeting scheduled for mid-September. The Faculty further acknowledges the valuable work undertaken by Librarian Ms Bingwa and Faculty Committee Chairperson Mr Mudazu, who produced a preliminary report highlighting interventions aimed at strengthening the library's contribution to teaching, learning, and research. The report documented initiatives designed to enhance student access to information resources, improve academic support services, and build the capacity of students, academics, and library personnel to utilise library resources effectively as an integral component of learning and scholarly research.

Bathandiwe Bingwa is preparing for FACEX delivery on Library transformation efforts

- Library and Information Services (LIS) continues to participate in Read-and-Publish Transformative Agreements negotiated through the South African National Library and Information Consortium (SANLIC).
- These agreements support open access publishing while significantly reducing Article Processing Charges (APCs) and enhancing the visibility of institutional research outputs.



The Faculty is encouraged to actively respond to the Directorate of Learning and Teaching (DLT) student success initiatives, particularly opportunities associated with the University Capacity Development Grant (UCDG). These initiatives provide valuable mechanisms for accelerating staff and student development and improving academic success rates.

DLT Director Explains Benefits of UCDG for Faculties

"Empowering Students, Strengthening Teaching, Enhancing Graduate Success." Dr Kolisa Siqoko

- ✓ Academic Development Workshops
- ✓ Improve student performance in gateway modulesStrengthen foundational academic skills
- ✓ Peer Mentoring & TutoringEnhance student retentionIncrease progression and graduation rates
- ✓ Academic Staff DevelopmentInnovative teaching methodologies
- ✓ Curriculum enhancement and transformationDigital Learning Initiatives
- ✓ Strengthen blended learningEnhance online teaching capabilities
- ✓ Graduate Attributes & Employability
- ✓ Develop workplace readinessBuild professional and transferable skills



Research

The Faculty's research productivity trajectory remains encouraging and reflects the growing commitment of academic staff to knowledge generation and dissemination. Continued increases in publication output, postgraduate supervision, and research collaboration provide a strong foundation for future growth. Academic staff are reminded of the importance of maintaining active ORCID registrations. ORCID profiles enhance the visibility of researchers, improve the accuracy of research tracking, and facilitate national and international collaboration opportunities. Staff members who have not yet linked their scholarly outputs to their ORCID profiles are strongly encouraged to do so. The recently announced South Africa-Sweden collaborative funding opportunities present significant prospects for interdisciplinary research partnerships and international networking. Faculty researchers are encouraged to explore these opportunities and engage with potential collaborators. The Faculty also welcomed insights arising from the recent engagement with the National Science and Technology Forum (NSTF). The visit highlighted the important role that the Faculty of Natural Sciences can play in advancing national research priorities, promoting innovation, and contributing to impactful community engagement initiatives. To maximise research impact and subsidy generation, staff are urged to ensure the submission of all eligible 2025 and 2026 publications for institutional records. Researchers should strictly adhere to DHET publication eligibility guidelines and exercise caution when selecting publication outlets by avoiding predatory journals that may compromise the integrity and recognition of scholarly outputs.



GOLD MEDAL
Michael Asemoloye

- Asemoloye, M. D. 2026. "Enhancing the Secretion Systems: Genetic Engineering of Super Bioagents for Effective Plant Disease Control." *Biotechnology and Bioengineering* 0: e70303. <https://doi.org/10.1002/bit.70303>.



SILVER MEDAL

Leonard Chitongp

- Muyambo, N., Chitongo, L., Mulo, P., & Muromo, F. (2026). Volumes of Water, Inequalities and Heritage Loss at Zimbabwe's Tugwi-Mukosi Dam. *Blue Papers*. 6(2) 33-46, <https://doi.org/10.58981/0jk28z03>
- Matindike, R. and Chitongo, L. (2026), Bridging Indigenous Knowledge and Climate Science for Sustainable Adaptation: A Systematic Review", in *Reclaiming the Climate Agenda: Indigenous Knowledge and Global Sustainability*, Jabulani Garwi, Carlos Cadena-Gaitan, eds, Emerald Publishing Limited, <https://doi.org/10.1108/978-1-83742-268-520260010>



BRONZE MEDAL

Paulina Phoobane

- Ledidi, N.P., Masinde, M. and Phoobane, P. (2026) 'A bibliometric analysis of student academic performance prediction using data mining in education research', in Cunningham, M. and Cunningham, P. (eds.) *IST-Africa 2026 Conference Proceedings*. IST-Africa Institute and IIMC, pp. 1-11. <https://doi.org/10.67725/IST-Africa.2026.MBJO7418>



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In pursuit of excellence



FNS Hosted Water Research Colloquium: Advancing Water Security in the Eastern Cape

- ✓ Hosted by FNS, WRC, DWS & UJ (12 August 2026)
- ✓ Eastern Cape confirmed as South Africa's largest groundwater reserve region
- ✓ Strong university-government partnerships to enhance water access and research
- ✓ WRC funding opportunities to drive long-term collaboration from 2026 onward

The South Africa-Sweden University Forum Call For Proposals

- The South Africa–Sweden University Forum (SASUF) is a strategic internationalisation project today uniting 37 partner universities in South Africa and Sweden. [SASUF](#)
- Call for proposals:
 - (i) SASUF - NRF Seed Grants for Intra-African Collaboration, **14 August – 3 November, 2026**
 - (ii) Fieldwork & Data Collection Stipends for Honors and Masters Students, **14 August – 15 October, 2026**
 - (iii) Long-Term Mobility Grants for early-career researchers, **2 October – 4 November, 2026**

South Africa Sweden University Forum



NOLUVUYO VUNDISA WINS ECR Training program for early-career researchers aboard the *SA Agulhas II*

- WHIRLS is a large **research program** focused on how ocean circulation around South Africa impacts **local and large-scale climate and ecosystems** [www.whirls.eu].
- The program, led by investigators from **South Africa, France, Sweden, and Germany**, involves detailed multi-platform in situ observations and a hierarchy of state-of-the-art numerical simulations, aided by **artificial intelligence**.
- The overarching goal of WHIRLS is to **improve our understanding of ocean fine-scale dynamics**, from the sub-mesoscale (1-10 km) to the mesoscale (10-100 km), and their role in ocean-atmosphere interactions.



WHIRLSchool

Community Engagement

Community engagement remains a cornerstone of the Faculty's mission to serve society through science, innovation, and education. The Faculty proudly recognises the Eskom Science Expo, led by Ms Zinziswa Nokwali, as one of its flagship community engagement initiatives. The programme continues to inspire school learners to pursue careers in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM), while strengthening the Faculty's relationship with schools and communities across the region. Equally commendable are the efforts of the School of Applied Sciences Outreach Programme, which continues to extend scientific knowledge and practical learning opportunities to schools and communities. These outreach activities contribute significantly to promoting scientific literacy, supporting curriculum enrichment, and encouraging future participation in the natural sciences. The Faculty sincerely thanks all staff and students who continue to dedicate their time and expertise to community-based initiatives that make a meaningful difference in society.

Zinzisa Nokwali Organised Eskom Expo for Young Scientists

- The Eskom Expo for Young Scientists (EEYS) is designed to **inspire, develop and support learners** who have an interest in Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics and Innovation (**STEMI**).
- Its broader purpose is to **build a pipeline of future scientists, engineers**, innovators and researchers in South Africa.
- Participants this year were **57 schools and 356 Learners** - Queenstown, Butterworth, Molteno, Alwal North, King William's Town kuGompo, Qumbu, Matatiele, Ngcobo Mthatha.



Applied Science Department: Community Engagement initiative: A Walter Sisulu model for FNS -FED collaboration

- In response to the Department of Higher Education's call for meaningful community engagement, the Applied Science Department implemented a hands-on laboratory outreach programme for Buffalo City high schools in Potsdam.
- Led by **Prof Taziwa, Mr Hasheni and Mrs Caga**, the intervention provided learners with practical exposure to Mathematics, Physics, and Chemistry, fostering interest in STEM disciplines through experiential learning.
- This initiative also highlights a promising model for future collaboration between the Faculty of Natural Sciences and the Faculty of Education, particularly in advancing Work - Integrated Learning (WIL) opportunities that strengthen teacher development, learner support, and community impact.



NSTF CEO AND EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR MET WALTER SISULU DEANS ON 31 AUGUST 2026- IN ADVANCE OF THE ASSAf ANNUAL YOUNG SCIENTISTS CONFERENCE

- In existence since 1915, the NSTF has a proud history of **discussion, consultation** and involvement with SET and innovation policy issues.
- Touched base with **Professor Fortune Ganda**, the recipient of the 2026 NSTF-Technology Innovation Agency (TIA) Green Economy Award.
- Visited **FNS national strategic facilities**– National Pollution Lab, Marine Biology Lab, Herbarium
- **STEMulator** was the most impactful insight-potential to stimulate interfaculty collaborations in community outreach and curriculum review: [STEMulator - Explore > Discover > Learn](#)



Conclusion

As we enter the final term of the academic year, I encourage every member of the Faculty to maintain the dedication and professionalism that have characterised our work thus far. Let us remain focused on delivering excellence in teaching, research, administration, and community engagement. Small, consistent improvements in our daily activities will collectively produce significant gains in Faculty performance. Together, through commitment, collaboration, and accountability, we can conclude 2026 with results that reflect our shared vision of academic excellence and societal impact.

Notices

- **ASSAf Young Scientists' Conference: 13 - 15 September 2026, iYunivesithi Walter Sisulu, Mthatha Campus, Eastern Cape, South Africa** <https://aysc.org.za/2026/08/13/aysc-2026-programme-and-speaker-line-up-now-available/>
- **ASSAf's Institutional Engagement Roadshow: iYunivesithi Walter Sisulu, 15 September 2026, 10AM, Auditorium, NMD Campus, Mthatha. RSVP** <https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSdvHfWzWxNjITQpnAwQJJblyDKeJuaKVss3yfvEuO5LlqDoA/viewform>
- **SACI Postgrad Seminars: Walter Sisulu, BB Campus, 25/09/2026 08:30:00 Link:** [SACI Postgrad Seminars - Chemistry](#)





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