



THENSA

Technological Higher Education Network South Africa

MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

SPRING AWAKENING: THE SIGNIFICANCE OF SEPTEMBER

In 2021, our sense of time has not only been tested, but completely knocked off kilter. There are events from last year which seem like they happened just yesterday and events that happened yesterday which seem like they happened several years ago. As South Africans, we have been dealt enough crises to last a lifetime. From a glacial vaccine rollout that has thankfully picked up steam to a failed insurrection that threatened to dismantle our hard-won democracy, there have been several opportunities where we could have given in to hopelessness and despair. Yet we have stood our ground and carried on, mostly out of necessity but also out of a deep love for this country and a commitment to see it succeed. During all these challenges, it is important for us to remind ourselves of what we have managed to accomplish despite these uncertain times. Staff and students from our member institutions have been involved in exciting and innovative projects that are making an immense impact on society. At THENSA, we have been hard at work on our own programmes and initiatives which are addressing our high unemployment rate, the recovery of the tourism industry, the state of higher education, as well as the promotion of entrepreneurship amongst South Africa's young students. In this edition of the newsletter, we provide an update on our projects and shed light on the activities of our member institutions whose fortitude and perseverance serves as a great inspiration for us.



**SPECIAL REMINDER THAT OUR INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE HAS BEEN
POSTPONED TO 16 - 18TH MARCH 2022**

UPDATES FROM THENSA

HERESA

- In the last few months, we have made tremendous progress with Higher Education Reform Experts South Africa (HERE-SA), our joint project in partnership with OBREAL-Global Observatory and the South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA) which was launched in early March. We have consolidated all our work packages as well as our EU Partners and we have appointed all HEREs and identified synergies between various projects.

Research Clusters

- In partnership with the Irish Embassy, THENSA held the South African Irish Colloquium in October 2019 which brought together the brightest minds from our local member institutions, as well as technology focused institutions in Ireland. What culminated from the event was the establishment of research clusters within the themes of Engineering (biomedical engineering, robotics, and advanced manufacturing), Space Science, Innovation Hubs and ICT, Work-Integrated Learning, Curricula for the 4th Industrial Revolution, as well as Waste Management and the Circular Economy and Agriculture and Food Security. We are excited to announce that the research cluster from Engineering and Space Science, Innovation Hubs and ICT cluster has flown its first drones which will be captured on film and in an interview soon. We are also pleased to announce that the Waste Management and the Circular Economy and Agriculture and Food Security cluster has seen a book chapter on the Circular Economy accepted for publication.

Online Entrepreneurship Programme

- We are a month away from launching our Online Entrepreneurship Programme which will be piloted with 50 students from the Durban University of Technology (DUT). The programme, which is a partnership with Munster Technological University (MTU) THENSA, will walk students through the process of starting a business, writing a business plan, understanding how to manage employees and how to comport themselves as entrepreneurs.

Graduate Employability App

- In response to the scourge of unemployment which continues to affect the South African economy, THENSA will soon launch its Graduate Employability App (GEA), in partnership with the Technology Innovation Agency (TIA). The app, which will be available on our website, seeks to connect graduates from its member institutions with employment opportunities, provide them with the tools on how to start a business and maintain entrepreneurial activities, teach them how to draft a CV and prepare for an interview, as well as improve on their general employability as new entrants into the workforce. The purpose of the GEA is to make a tangible difference in the lives of young South Africans, equipping them with the knowledge, skills, and preparation to make a contribution to the future of this country.

UPDATES FROM MEMBER INSTITUTIONS

- Walter Sisulu University (WSU) is providing digital skills training in churches, nursery schools and homes in rural areas around the Eastern Cape. In partnership with NEMISA, the project is designed to promote access to Information and Communication Technology (ICT) in rural and remote areas and break down some of the economic barriers that prevent the sharing of knowledge.
- The Tshwane University of Technology (TUT) will establish an Institute for the Future of Work later on this year. The Institute will foster mutually beneficial partnerships with organisations in the public and private sectors and will also have four initial programmes, namely the Technology Hub, Smart Campus Platform, 4IR/Future of Work Research and Projects, as well as the Annual 4IR/Future of Work Dialogue.
- A COVID-19 vaccination site will be opened at Mangosuthu University of Technology (MUT) as a part of an effort to get more staff and students vaccinated. The institution is now one of three universities of technology to have vaccination services on campus.
- The Durban University of Technology (DUT) Library will become the first university library in Africa to implement an open-source Library Services Platform (LSP) for the Future of Libraries Is Open (FOLIO) community. Not only will this service contribute to reimagining library software through collaboration with international libraries, developers and vendors, but it will also provide users with more choices and unique features, contributing to the overall democratisation of access to knowledge in South Africa.
- In collaboration with Eskom Expo for Young Scientists, the Central University of Technology (CUT) hosted a virtual award ceremony to recognise young scientists for their innovative research projects. The projects were assessed by a panel of expert judges with selected learners being chosen to represent their region at the Eskom Expo Science International Science Fair (ISF) in October. The prizes awarded were sponsored by the CUT STEM Academy, to the value of R163 500.

**We would also like to congratulate TUT for being ranked as one of the top eleven universities in South Africa, according to the Times Education World Rankings for 2022.*

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