

Author biographies

Sean Paul Abrahams is the director of the UCT Flourish Programme and founding strategic lead of the Centre for Wellbeing and Flourishing at the University of Cape Town. His PhD (under examination) introduced the GRIT Paradox Equation. He developed the NARMA model of languishing and the TURN method. He founded the Flourishing Future Foundation, led South Africa's WOOP translation initiative, and co-chairs the UCT Flourish Summit and African Positive Psychology Conference (2026).

Prof. Ahmed Bawa is a professor at the Johannesburg Business School. Until September 2022, he was CEO of Universities South Africa (USAf) and before that he was vice-chancellor and principal of the Durban University of Technology. He has an interest in the understanding of universities as social institutions and the relationship between science and society. He is a theoretical physicist.

Liz Brenner, a biochemist, with an MEd degree, spent many years at Wits University, where she was assistant dean (teaching and learning) in the Faculty of Science before her retirement in 2019. Having been recognised with the vice-chancellor's most Distinguished Individual Teacher Award as well as receiving the National Excellence in Teaching and Learning award in 2010, her interest in ways to improve student success has been ongoing throughout her years of teaching undergraduate students.

Prof. Anita L. Campbell is an associate professor who teaches engineering mathematics at the University of Cape Town. Her research focuses on student success in mathematics, with a particular interest in growth mindsets, positive psychology, and academic coaching. She explores how these approaches can support thriving in the transition to university, especially in mathematically demanding programmes and with students who struggle in their first year. Anita is also involved in developing interventions that enhance resilience, motivation, and meaningful engagement with mathematics.

Prof. Diane Grayson was senior director of academic affairs at the University of the Witwatersrand from 2018 to 2023, responsible for teaching and learning, student success and quality assurance, and personal professor in physics. Before that she ran the Quality Enhancement Project at the Council on Higher Education to drive systemic approaches to student success in all higher education institutions and held academic and leadership positions in several universities and on national committees related to strengthening STEM education.

Dr Nazar Hilal is a PhD holder at the Gulf Studies Centre within the College of Arts and Sciences at Qatar University. His primary focus is the political economy of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries, economic diversification, the interplay between the GCC countries and the Horn of Africa, and migration. Dr Hilal obtained two master's degrees from Canadian universities. He currently serves as an instructor in the Social Sciences Department, teaching different courses in the sociology programme.

Dr Juanita Jonker is an academic and researcher with over 15 years of experience in higher education. She began her career at the Central University of Technology in 2008

and lectures in the Faculty of Health and Environmental Sciences. Her research, focused on student well-being and female empowerment, centres on health, nutrition, and food security in academic and extreme environments, reflecting her commitment to improving student resilience and quality of life.

Dr Mzwandile Khumalo is a Siyaphumelela institutional lead and teaching, learning and development practitioner at the Centre for Excellence in Learning and Teaching (CELT) at the Durban University of Technology. His work focuses on advancing student development and success through strategic academic support initiatives. With a passion for transformative education, he contributes to institutional projects aimed at improving learning outcomes, equity, and student retention in higher education.

Dr Sibeso Lisulo is a postdoctoral research fellow at the Johannesburg Institute for Advanced Study (JIAS) and a lecturer in the Educational Administration and Policy Studies Department at the University of Zambia (UNZA). With over 15 years in academia, she has contributed significantly to the intellectual development of her students and the broader academic community, specializing in critical issues confronting higher education and the philosophy of education. Her scholarly work notably centres on the critical theme of academic freedom, a topic explored in depth in her PhD thesis, 'Perceptions of Academics on Academic Freedom at the University of Zambia'. Her extensive expertise is demonstrated by published articles on academic freedom and higher education, addressing contemporary impediments to intellectual enquiry. Beyond this, her research also extends to other significant pedagogical investigations, such as open and distance learning and feedback mechanisms in undergraduate assessment processes at the UNZA. Her work has earned international recognition, notably through the Hans de Wit Fellowship runner-up prize awarded by Boston College's Center for International Higher Education (CIHE), which underscores her global relevance as a scholar. At JIAS, Dr Lisulo actively advances her research interests, contributing to contemporary discourse on higher education policy, academic governance, and the vital academic freedom across African universities and beyond. Her extensive background as a lecturer, coupled with her specialized research and publications, positions her as a thoughtful and valuable contributor to ongoing academic debates.

Prof. Ryk Lues holds a master's in microbiology and a PhD in food science from the University of the Free State. He is the director of the Centre for Applied Food Sustainability and Biotechnology at the Central University of Technology and holds the leadership chair in Food Safety Culture and Sustainability. His fields of specialization comprise social-behavioural aspects impacting food safety culture, and sustainable food innovations. He has held an NRF-rating uninterrupted since 2001.

Dr Thierry M. Luescher is the director of Postgraduate Studies and Researcher Development at the University of Cape Town and adjunct professor at Nelson Mandela University in South Africa. His research on higher education and student affairs in Africa, with special focus on the student experience and student politics, is highly published and has earned him research awards internationally and in South Africa.

Dr Lindi A. Mabope graduated from the University of Havana, Cuba, with an MSc in Biochemistry in 1987. She joined the School of Pharmacy at the former MEDUNSA in 1998 and contributed significantly to the implementation of the problem-based learning (PBL) BPharm programme. Her responsibilities as student support officer in the school include recruitment, selection, orientation and induction of first years, training on PBL pedagogy, and mentorship. She also obtained an MSc (Med) in 2007, focusing on student selection and outcomes. Lindi's personal involvement and experience gained as a student and mentor have shaped her values and beliefs about student success and failure. She prioritizes knowing students individually within a professional relationship to be able to assist when the need arises. Her immense commitment towards teaching and learning is evident from being the recipient of the HELTASA Teaching and Learning Commendation award (2011), and the Vice Chancellor's Senior Distinguished Teaching and Learning Excellence Award (2016). Dr Mabope's PhD in pharmacy (2021) addressed concerns regarding the under-preparation of South Africa's school leavers for higher education, leading to attrition and low throughput rates, with graduates not adequately prepared for the world of practice.

Dr Isheachida Manatsa serves as a teaching and learning development practitioner at the Durban University of Technology's Centre for Excellence in Teaching and Learning. With a PhD in public administration, his work centres on promoting student growth and achievement by implementing targeted academic support strategies. Driven by a commitment to transformative learning, he contributes to institutional efforts that enhance academic performance, foster equity, and strengthen student persistence within higher education. Dr Manatsa also assists in running residence-based programmes aimed at holistic student development.

Prof. Johanna C. Meyer is a professor in the Department of Public Health Pharmacy and Management at Sefako Makgatho Health Sciences University (SMU), and head of the South African Vaccination and Immunisation Centre at SMU. Prof. Meyer is an internationally recognised scientist who serves on the World Health Organization Global Advisory Committee on Vaccine Safety and chairs the African Union Smart Safety Surveillance Joint Signal Management Group, facilitating cross-country signal management for health products in Africa. She is also a public health pharmacist who has served the South African pharmaceutical and public health sectors for 40 years. The Minister of Health appointed her to the National Immunisation Safety Expert Committee (which she chairs), the National Advisory Group on Immunisation, and the Board of the South African Health Products Regulatory Authority. She specialises in vaccine safety, vaccine hesitancy and vaccination as a pillar of antimicrobial stewardship. She is an NRF-rated scientist, and her research aims to strengthen healthcare services, improve public health, and contribute towards reaching the sustainable development goal of good health and well-being.

Dr Linda Meyer is the managing director of IIE Rosebank College and Rosebank International University College. She holds multiple advanced degrees and over 25 years of leadership experience in higher education, governance, and innovation. Her scholarly work focuses

on transformation, equity, and policy in post-school education. Dr Meyer is an active researcher, external examiner, and peer evaluator, committed to social justice, quality assurance, and advancing inclusive academic practice.

Prof. Teboho Moja is clinical professor of higher education at New York University, USA. She is also a visiting research fellow at the Centre for the Advancement of Scholarship, University of Pretoria, South Africa, and an extraordinary professor at the Institute of Post School Studies, University of the Western Cape, South Africa. Prof. Moja is a recipient of the Lifetime Achiever Award of the National Research Foundation of South Africa. She is JSAA's Editor-in-chief.

Dr Bongani V. Mtshweni (PhD) is a licensed research psychologist and senior lecturer in the Department of Psychology at the University of South Africa. His research interests include student well-being, support, retention and belongingness in higher education.

Dr Daizy Shoma Nalwamba, SARChI Chair's Higher Education and Human Development Research Programme (HEHD), University of the Free State, Bloemfontein, South Africa.

Dr Chimwemwe Phiri, SARChI Chair's Higher Education and Human Development Research Programme (HEHD), University of the Free State, Bloemfontein, South Africa.

Prof. Dr Birgit Schreiber, PhD, has served in senior leadership positions in sub-Saharan Africa and Europe higher education with a focus, among others, on leadership, student success, DEI and gender. Birgit has worked with a range of national and trans-national bodies, notably USAf, SARUA, DAAD and ERASMUS, teaches, does research and supervision, programme design and policy development. She is extraordinary professor at her alma mater, the University of the Western Cape. Her PhD is in psychology. Birgit has over 90 publications, including authored books and monographs, on various themes around social justice, student affairs, student engagement and higher education leadership, gender and the SDGs. She was the founding editor and is part of the editorial executive of the *Journal of Student Affairs in Africa* (JSAA). She is on the board of the *Journal of College Student Development* (JCSJ) and is a column editor for the *Journal of College and Character* (JCC). She serves as president of the International Association of Student Affairs and Services (IASAS) after being the Africa chair and vice-president. She has received numerous awards, most recently the Noam Chomsky Award for international research and the NASPA and ACPA Award for international practice. She is a member of the Africa Centre at the Albert Ludwig University Freiburg, Germany, research associate at Pretoria University, and she is Germany country director for the STAR Scholars Network and sits on various boards (SANRC at the University of Johannesburg, and CASHEF at the University of Pretoria).

Jerome September is dean of student affairs at the University of the Witwatersrand, where he holds executive oversight for campus housing and residence life, counselling and careers development, campus health and wellness, the Centre for Student Development and Wits Sport. He was previously head of student affairs at Sol Plaatje University and manager of Student Governance and Leadership at the University of Cape Town. He serves on a number of national committees and task teams.

Prof. Beverley Summers is a full professor in the School of Pharmacy at Sefako Makgatho Health Sciences University (SMU). She was born and educated in the UK; completed her BPharm at the University of Nottingham and worked in hospital and community pharmacy there for ten years before moving to South Africa in 1983, with her husband, Prof. Rob Summers. She is a South African citizen and a registered pharmacist in the UK and South Africa. She obtained her MSc (Med) in Pharmacy cum laude and her PhD at the Medical University of Southern Africa (MEDUNSA). She has extensive experience in collaborative research and postgraduate supervision. She currently teaches in the MPharm in Radiopharmacy course and heads the Photobiology Laboratory which is a clinical studies laboratory and a third-stream funding entity of the School of Pharmacy at SMU. She was involved in the curriculum development of both the integrated, modular PBL BPharm course and also the MPharm in Radiopharmacy at SMU. The latter degree is unique in Africa. She has supervised 50 master's degree students and 4 PhDs. She has served on working groups for the DoH, CANSA, the International Standards Organisation and the SA Bureau of Standards. She has published more than 50 peer-reviewed papers and made over 150 presentations at national and international congresses.

Dr Corneli van der Walt is a manager of the first-year experience at the Centre for Academic Development, Vaal University of Technology. An experienced higher education and student development practitioner, she specializes in first-year student success. She also teaches in the master's in education programme and supervises postgraduate research in higher education. A registered counselling psychologist with the Health Professions Council of South Africa, Dr van der Walt has over 18 years of experience in private practice. Additionally, she is an academic associate of the Viktor Frankl Institute of Logotherapy in Dallas, Texas. Her research interests focus on meaning in life, student success, and the scholarship of teaching and learning.

Prof. Anna-Marie Wium has a PhD in speech-language pathology, a postgraduate certificate in higher education (University of Pretoria), and a postgraduate diploma in medical research ethics (Stellenbosch University). She qualified as a speech-language pathologist and audiologist at the University of Pretoria in 1977 and hence started her career as a speech therapist/audiologist working in schools in several districts. She then worked for two years as a speech therapist at a state institution in Massachusetts, USA, where she serviced adult clients with severe communication challenges; with a special interest in augmentative and alternative communication. On her return to South Africa, she became a founding member of the Centre for Augmentative and Alternative Communication at the University of Pretoria. For her PhD she obtained funding from the Shuttleworth Foundation for her research in the development of a support programme for foundation phase teachers in the facilitation of language skills for literacy and numeracy. She joined the Sefako Makgatho Health Sciences University (former MEDUNSA) in 2009 where she was until her retirement in December 2021. She has developed a keen interest in learning and teaching in higher education, as well as service learning. She has served on several committees focusing on curriculum development and the accreditation of academic programmes.

