

Aim for academic excellence!



Unisa staff and management met with students at the Sunnyside Campus.

Led by Principal and Vice-Chancellor Professor Mandla Makhanya, Unisa management encouraged students to become owners of their academic future by obtaining distinctions instead of being satisfied with passing. They met with new students at Sunnyside Campus to spur them on and listen to their views on the institution.

Dean of Students Convy Baloyi facilitated the meeting and was encouraged that many of the students were studying and completing assignments before the gathering started. He introduced the University Registrar, Professor Louis Molamu, who had students laughing when quoting a well-known brain surgeon. "The brain is a

wonderful thing; it never stops working from the time you are born until you register for university." Professor Molamu was, however, serious about his message. "Study hard; this country and continent require that you qualify."

National Student Representative Council (NSRC) President Sabelo Mhlungu assured the hall that his team would be working hard to change the perception that the NSRC is ineffective. He also endorsed the new rule that SRC members must be patterns of academic excellence. "We cannot have members of the SRC who do not make good academic progress. You must have good grades to be a member," he said.

Professor Makhanya emphasised just how important students were to the university and cited that Unisa had turned out more than

90 000 graduates in the past few years. He challenged students to be disciplined in their goals and to aim very high. "Students should dream big. Study to get a doctorate or to get a higher qualification; don't just settle for a diploma or degree." Professor Makhanya urged students to remain self-disciplined, and said that he hoped to see all of them at their respective graduation ceremonies.

A question-and-answer session followed, with the Nation Student Financial Aid Scheme (NSFAS) being prominently discussed. Convy Baloyi assured students that Unisa was streamlining the process, and recommended that students gave accurate information when applying for NSFAS.

After the meeting, Inspired asked some of the students for their reactions:



Louis Mokoena
Bachelor of Science
3rd year

"Certain things are being ironed out and management is delivering on promises so that academic excellence can become a reality."



Lethogonolo Thipe
Bachelor of Law
3rd year

"I think that it was good that they came together today and acknowledged the concerns raised by students."



Siyabonga Gazu
Accounting (BCompt)
2nd year

"The talk by Professor Makhanya was very beneficial, more especially the issue of NSFAS and helping students to apply."



Moses Lekgoathi
BA Communication Science
2nd year

"Unisa is very good! Since I'm also working, it's given me the freedom to work and study at the same time."



Nomfundo Nzima
BCom Finance
3rd year

"Studying at Unisa means you have to work hard. You have to be disciplined and it makes you grow up because you have to be responsible."



Kalani Mashele
Internal Auditing
Final year

"Unisa is a good institution. I'm glad we are getting new labs and there are tutor classes."

Promoting a positive and productive community



Reading feeds the mind and Liberating the power of reading workshops proved to be a hit with these students.

Unisa's Chance 2 Advance (C2A) programme once again offered students an opportunity to discover the link between learning and a better life when the team hosted a range of valuable workshops from 5 to 9 March.

This round of free workshops got to the crux of student challenges, allowing for a platform of intense learning, creativity, experience sharing, and a better lease on life.

Discover the artist in you, facilitated by Zuanda Badenhorst, who is a self-employed artist, was the place for artists and creative thinkers to use their imagination and skills to communicate ideas in a visual form. Students also created a collage on a box using a combination of drawn and found materials.

Food, drugs and sex – on being a healthy student spoke to the everyday challenges and pitfalls of being a student under pressure. Facilitated by Professor Annalie Botha and Helen du Toit of Unisa's Department of Health Studies, the workshop stressed the importance of a good diet and discussed the imminent dangers of alcohol and substance abuse as well as unprotected sex and promiscuity.

As many students are learning to drive, *How to pass your learner's licence* was a relevant workshop. Facilitated by Commander Johnny Dekela of Tshwane Metro Police, this session explored the growing importance of having a driver's licence for the world of work and steps that need to be taken to obtain one. Most useful was the practical session of taking students through a typical set of examples and questions that could be asked in a learner's licence test scenario. Not only was this valuable in equipping students with information, but ensured that they also understood the rules of the road.

African knowledge **think tank** launched



Strong women supporting the launch of AMRI are, back, Mandu Makhanya (wife of the Principal and Vice-Chancellor), Brigalia Bam (former Chairperson of the Independent Electoral Commission), and Prof. Mamokgethi Setati (Vice-Principal: Research and Innovation); and front, Joyce Seroke (former Chairperson of the Gender Commission), Prof. Hlengiwe Buhle Mkhize (Deputy Minister: Higher Education and Training), and Zanele Mbeki (former South African first lady).

The Archie Mafeje Research Institute (AMRI) is ready to influence progressive social transformation, with its launch on 4 May drawing support from intellectuals and leaders from different spheres.

Under the theme *Archie Mafeje and the rethinking of knowledge in and on Africa: Past, present and future*, the launch came after intensive talks and planning. The institute has been established to become an African knowledge production think tank that will provide thorough research in areas of social change to contribute towards Africa's renewal agenda and global peace – a vision strongly associated with the late Professor Archie Mafeje's beliefs.

Officially launching the institute, Professor Mandla Makhanya, Principal and Vice-Chancellor, said, "As a unique, dedicated social policy institute, AMRI is poised to make a telling impact on social policy research, development and implementation on South and pan-Africa."

Expounding on this mandate of social policy, Professor Makhanya admitted that it was not merely altruism in action, but instead a highly contested and often controversial terrain. "In a world focused relentlessly on self-development, self-promotion, personal acquisition, and shaped and directed by quite ruthless power relations, social policy is as much an urgent necessity as it is an oasis of benevolence and a vehicle for social justice," he claimed.

Many fond memories were highlighted by the different speakers who were also friends of the late Professor Mafeje,

including Professor Peter Anyang' Nyong'o, Minister for Medical Services in the Republic of Kenya. He shared his pride at the launch of AMRI, as the institute honours the memory of Professor Mafeje by addressing his concerns over many decades. "Archie was a very dear friend, an expert in wine and a renowned academic, and had a voice that was passionate about the creation of knowledge."

Keynote speaker Professor Hlengiwe Buhle Mkhize, Deputy Minister of Higher Education and Training, endorsed a similar belief system to that held by Professor Mafeje. "He was a frontline partisan in the struggle for social justice; hence his work remains relevant today and is a source of inspiration for generations to come. His work also became a crucial point of reference in our transformation agenda of the education system landscape." Driving the point of transformation further, Professor Mkhize stated her belief that, irrespective of the number of higher learning institutions planned for South Africa, these would not mean much if questions of transformation were not addressed.

She also made a plea that institutions of higher learning be located within society as this talks to community engagement and development.

Other speakers included Professor Jimi Adesina, Head of the Department of Anthropology and Sociology, University of the Western Cape; Professor Puleng LenkaBula, Director: Vice-Principal: Projects/Advisor to the Principal, Unisa; Dr Siphamandla Zondi, Director of the Institute for Global Dialogue; Professor Sam Moyo, Executive Director of the African Institute of Agrarian Studies, Zimbabwe; and Dr Onalenna Selolwane, Senior Lecturer in the Department of Sociology, University of Botswana, and Editor of the *African Sociological Review*.

The Archie Mafeje we knew

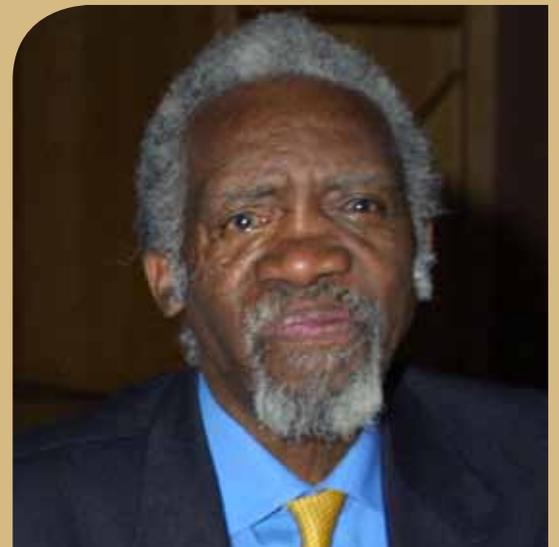
Professor Monwabisi Archibald Mafeje was born on 28 March 1936 in Engcobo in the Eastern Cape. After completing his schooling, Mafeje studied for a year at Fort Hare University before being expelled for political activities. He then moved to the University of Cape Town in 1957, where he enrolled for a course in Zoology. He quickly changed tack, however, and read for a BA degree in social anthropology. After obtaining his master's degree in political anthropology *cum laude*, Mafeje headed abroad to Cambridge University to write his doctoral thesis, which was based on fieldwork conducted in rural Uganda. In 1966, he obtained a PhD in anthropology and rural sociology.

Mafeje left South Africa at the height of apartheid after being refused a university position. He worked in various universities and research centres, including in Cairo, Dar-es-Salaam, Harare, Windhoek, and The Hague, where he produced innovative research on different dynamics of societal transformation.

During the long years of his exile from South Africa, the Council for the Development of Social Science Research in Africa (CODESRIA) became Mafeje's home, where he contributed in no small measure to charting an Afrocentric approach to the study of African issues.

In 2000, Mafeje finally returned to South Africa, joining Unisa as a professor in 2002. Throughout his academic life, he inspired the wider community of African scholars to pursue independent and critical approaches to knowledge production to contribute towards Africa's renewal agenda and global peace.

Archie Mafeje died in Pretoria two days before his 71st birthday on 28 March 2007.



Archie Mafeje, academic and anthropologist, has been honoured by Unisa with the opening of AMRI.

Conscious that challenges not only lie with "old" students but new ones too, the C2A team included a workshop aimed at preparing students for the commencement of their journey at a tertiary institution. Facilitated by C2A Project Director, Dr Genevieve James, *Romeo and Rosie go to university* was a starter guide for new students (and returning students) on preparing for study, life, and work. The well-attended workshop was based on the everyday fears, challenges, and anxieties faced by new university students, with very real discussion and experience sharing. Through this workshop, students were taught to recognise and overcome anxieties about family commitments, relationships, leaving home, managing work and studies, organising childcare and coping on a low income. Students were also urged to make use of the various support student structures available at Unisa. Just as important is a support structure from family and friends. As Dr James pointed out, "You must have a support structure reminding you to stay the course till your graduation day, which is a most joyful experience".

Excited by the value received from the C2A workshops, a few Unisa students shared their experience with *Inspired*.

Belinda Matseke, second-year Industrial Psychology student, is now motivated to keep going with a purpose. "Chance 2 Advance has helped me stay focused and I also want to help others in their journey."

For second-year BCom Accounting student Phumelele Nokele, the workshops were most informative. "From workshops such as *Free yourself from debt*, I have learnt so much about responsibility and good habits from the start. I am enlightened."

Just as informed was second-year HR student, Seipati Motlopye. "Before coming here, I didn't even understand open distance learning (ODL). Not only do I understand that better, but I also understand how to deal with the pressures of studying and managing my time well."

It seems the *Discover the artist in you* workshop has inspired creative juices and uncovered the entrepreneurial side of second-year HR student Koketso Manaka. "I was so fascinated when learning about decor and making jewellery boxes. It's because of this that I would like to open up a business one day where I can make and sell items like these."

Dr James is extremely pleased by what has been achieved. "The programme provided opportunity for prospective students, current students and those of disadvantaged communities to engage with Unisa. It has optimally used the university's academic capacity in providing relevant and interactive engagement with the student community, thereby nurturing a culture of continuous learning. ... It has also provided the opportunity for Unisa academics and students to grow their intellectual capability through their contribution to the social justice mandate of the university. Students have developed an understanding of community engagement as a social justice imperative. In addition to this, they understand the role of higher education in development."

Participants received Unisa Chance 2 Advance certificates of attendance. Many are already incorporating these certificates as part of their CVs to show would-be employers their commitment to learning and personal development.



Belinda Matseke, Phumelele Nokele, Koketso Manaka, and Seipati Motlopye enthused about their C2A experience.



Discover the artist in you sparked the latent creativity of attendees.