



# UMP NEWS

October 2022 EDITION

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## LETTER FROM THE VICE CHANCELLOR

October is Mental Health Awareness Month in South Africa. UMP Student Affairs actively drove Mental Health awareness through a series of events that empowered our students with all the knowledge needed to navigate this silent killer.

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## STARS CAME OUT TO SHINE AT 5TH CO-CURRICULAR AWARDS

The University of Mpumalanga (UMP) recognised individuals, students, societies and teams that have excelled in co-curricular activities, at a prestigious event held in the Multipurpose Hall at the Mbombela campus.

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## UMP ETDP-SETA PARTNERSHIP OPENS DOORS FOR GRADUATES

As the world celebrated Teachers' Day on 05 October, the University of Mpumalanga (UMP), has made it possible for 25 Bachelor of Education (BEd) in Foundation Phase graduates from Siyabuswa campus to embark on their professional careers by availing to them each a two-year internship at various schools across the province.

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## WATER SCARCITY POSES SIGNIFICANT





# HEALTH HAZARDS FOR MPUMALANGA COMMUNITIES

South Africa is experiencing a water shortage and this in addition to the acid mine drainage challenges, present a significant threat to human health. Mpumalanga communities are at the risk of contracting waterborne diseases from streams that are poisoned by acid mine drainage and toxic chemicals, says University of Mpumalanga lecturer, Dr Tatenda Dalu.

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Dr Dalu, who has experience in aquatic ecology, environmental quality monitoring, biodiversity and conservation, says creating a global science-policy interface platform should be a priority to ensure minimal to zero-emission of emerging contaminants to protect the health of freshwater ecosystems.

***Q: What are the dangers of emerging freshwater pollutants and how could this problem be dealt with?***

At present, there is little mention of emerging contaminants in regulations on water and the environment, as they are not considered priority pollutants.

This has the spinoff effect that monitoring of wastewater and drinking water excludes these contaminants from testing, even though the technology exists. Generally, water quality monitoring and standards focus on a handful of basic physical and chemical parameters such as pH, temperature, nutrients, turbidity, faecal coliform, total coliform, Escherichia coli (E. coli) and Enterococci.

Even if the technology exists, it is costly and time consuming to test and remove a wide range of these complex emerging pollutant compounds. Conventional wastewater treatment techniques are not up to the task, although advanced techniques, such as membrane filtration, nano-osmosis, reverse osmosis and ultrafiltration technologies, can remove, at least partially remove the chemical active compounds.

***Q: In cases where problems are caused by chemicals used by illegal miners to process their minerals, what should be done to clean up the water?***

With cyanide, it generally does not persist when released into water or soil and will not be likely to accumulate in aquatic life environment, below a certain threshold concentration. At this point, the test results as they have been presented have not indicated the concentrations of cyanide found in the water samples tested.

That aside however, cyanide rapidly evaporates and is easily broken down by microbes within the natural environment. However, measures must be put in place to stop the illegal mining which is the main source of the chemicals within the natural environment. This suggesting that all stakeholders need to come together to stop this rampant illegal mining.

***Q: The Mpumalanga Department of Water Affairs recently released a Blue Drop test result, which indicated that the province has unclean water; can you elaborate?***

The main problem emanates from lack of monitoring and evaluation of our natural environment. We strongly need more men and women on the ground that will be able to pinpoint the point-source pollution as it occurs.

The fines or penalties for environmental pollution need to be substantial high enough to deter would be offenders and should be given consistently supported by efficient enforcement.

Furthermore, policies and regulations also need to go beyond the water sector to tackle the source of pollution. Measures are needed to ensure the clean, safe, and sustainable production, use and disposal of all chemicals in line with SDG's.

Currently, the province will need millions if not billions to rehabilitate its natural environment. It is obvious that clear, up to date and enforceable policies and regulations are urgently needed to control the masses number of chemicals polluting our water today and p the new generation of emerging chemical pollutants from adding to these in the future.



Thus, a lack of bi-directional communication between scientists and legislators has contributed to the dominance of chemical-by-chemical approaches and, in some cases, the relaxation of environmental regulations to profit polluting industries.

***Q: South Africa is facing a serious looming water shortage and the little water we have is being contaminated. How do we avert this crisis?***

The water crisis is considered to be mainly due to climate change where South Africa is projected to face physical scarcity by 2050 and also in large part due to a turn away from management based on science and risk assessment towards a more populist approach. With the little water we have, we are currently facing a serious threat from urban, agricultural, and industrial or mining pollution.

With regards to pollution, we need to have proper monitoring so that we can identify the perpetrators and, in some instances, these are known, however, the fines/penalties that they pay are not substantial enough high to deter them from further pollution.

The fines/penalties should be high such that it will make economic sense for industries to treat their wastewater before discharging it into the environment and they will also ensure that there are no leakages coming from their facilities.

Wherever possible, we need to push for pro-environmental behaviour across all sectors of South African society.

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**@ Story by Lisa Thabethe. Pictures supplied.**



## UMP VOLLEYBALL STAR SHOOTS HIGHER

University of Mpumalanga (UMP) first-year Bachelor of Education Foundation Phase student and captain of the UMP Volleyball ladies team, Bongiwe Mahlangu was recently crowned the Sports Woman of the Year at the 2022 Co-Curricular Awards.

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## STUDENT DIALOGUE DRAWS ATTENTION TO IMPACT OF SOCIAL MEDIA ON MENTAL HEALTH

Social media is the predominant tool through which we communicate and network, giving us international exposure and profile building. A recent University of Mpumalanga (UMP) dialogue on the topic discussed the impact of social media on individuals' mental health.

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## CHAPTERS BOOK CLUB LAUNCH BENEFITS LOCAL SCHOOLS

Local schools around Mpumalanga have benefitted from an initiative by the University of Mpumalanga (UMP) Library and Information Services in partnership with the Faculty of Education under the leadership of Professor Hilda Israel.

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## UMP STUDENT SHARES RESEARCH PAPER AT MPUMALANGA ORAL HISTORY CONFERENCE

University of Mpumalanga Honours student and entrepreneur, Siphesihle Shabalala, presented his research paper at the 8th Mpumalanga Oral History Conference, recently held at Nkangala in Mpumalanga.

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## DIRECTOR: HOTEL AND CATERING SERVICES GRADUATES WITH PHD

University of Mpumalanga (UMP) Director: Hotel and Catering Services at Tfokomala Hotel, Dr Tenson Nkosana recently graduated with a PhD in Management Sciences: Hospitality and Tourism from Durban University of Technology (DUT), which is set to empower him with intellectual skills needed in the field of student training and research capacity building.

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## LESSONS FROM THE SUSTAINABILITY WORKSHOPS

Sustainability has become a sensitive and pertinent issue over the last few years. As an African university leading in creating opportunities for sustainable development through innovation, it is only fitting that UMP representatives, Dr Woudi von Solms and Dr Precious Shabalala from the Faculty of Tourism and Hospitality recently visited Gatz in Austria to attend several sustainable development workshops.

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