

## Dear SPU Community

The 2019 academic year at SPU has mostly started well. This is our 6th academic year and we have registered around 2000 students, including the first group of postgraduate students in our Honours level programmes. This is rapid growth from the 124 students that we registered in 2014 and our systems have not fully caught up with preparations and student needs. We are learning and getting better at it as our young university grows.

There has also been exciting development in the expansion of our university to include a research and education focus on rural development issues in the Northern Cape region. SPU has proposed to establish a Knowledge Hub for Rural Development (SPU-KHRD) outside the town of Carnarvon. The SPU-KHRD is conceived around six focus areas that are expected to lead to evidence-based social and economic development opportunities for the greater Carnarvon area.

The current focus areas are in data science; agriculture under water-stressed conditions; climate change;

teacher education and rural school development; rural public health (in partnership with Stellenbosch University) and science-based tourism. Knowledge and data from these focus areas will be synthesised at the SPU-KHRD as the evidence base for policy development by provincial and national government.

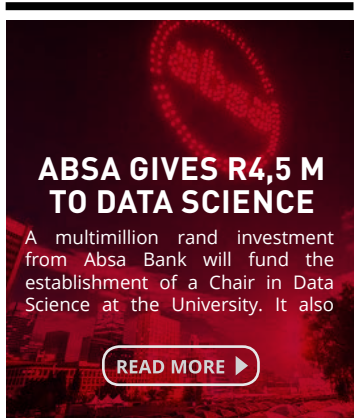
We were recently informed by the MEC in the Provincial Department of Agriculture, Land Reform and Rural Development that a land area of approximately 24 ha on their research farm outside of Carnarvon, has been approved for grant to SPU to establish the SPU-KHRD. The land area is situated about 80kms from the Square Kilometre Array (SKA) site and is adjacent to the SKA administrative offices and the farm research management facilities.

In the medium term, we envisage that our facility will be able to accommodate the management staff, with accommodation for around 50 students, researchers and visitors, a teaching and seminar venue and basic life science laboratory.



This is an important development for SPU as it expresses our commitment to ensuring that our academic efforts find real expression in social development in the region.

**Prof Yunus Ballim**  
Vice-Chancellor



### ABSA GIVES R4,5 M TO DATA SCIENCE

A multimillion rand investment from Absa Bank will fund the establishment of a Chair in Data Science at the University. It also

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### HSRC PARTNERS WITH SPU FOR RESEARCH PROGRAMME

The Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC) and SPU have signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) that will

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### DATA SCIENCES' ATSIIE HELPS PUTS SPU ON THE MAP

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Members of the Presidential Infrastructure Coordinating Commission (PICC) conducted a series of interviews

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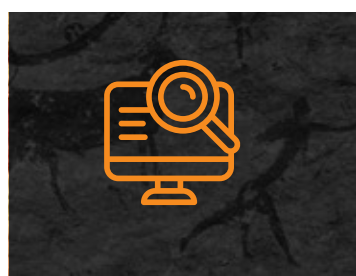
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### MINISTER PANDOR ADDRESSES STUDENT ISSUES

On 9 February, Minister Pandor met with the SRC presidents from all 26 public South African universities along with

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### BICYCLE HERO

At the basement entrance of Luka JantjeHouse, there is a hive of activity. It's there that you will find Benjamin

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### FOCUS ON RESEARCH: SPU ACADEMIC EXPLORES KAROO HUMAN PASTS

Published recently in the African Journal of Range and Forage Science, Professor David Morris has researched

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### SPU TODAY

**1,910 STUDENTS**  
**775 FIRST YEAR STUDENTS**

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### 2019 CAREER FAIR

SAVE THE DATE  
17 MAY

UPCOMING EVENTS:  
**3<sup>RD</sup> ANNUAL CAREER FAIR**

FRIDAY, 17 MAY 2019  
10:00 to 15:30

EXHIBITORS ARE ENCOURAGED TO PARTICIPATE. HOWEVER, REGISTRATION IS ESSENTIAL.

INFO/INQUIRIES:  
feroza.nooroodien@spu.ac.za

### STAFF APPOINTMENTS

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### COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

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### NEWS FROM ACADEMIC SCHOOLS

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THE SPU E-BRIEF IS PRODUCED BY THE SOL PLAATJE UNIVERSITY FOR ITS EMPLOYEES.

Contributions, comments and suggestions are welcome and these can be sent to [comms@spu.ac.za](mailto:comms@spu.ac.za)

The next edition is due out in March 2019.

Interim editor: Prof Patrick FitzGerald



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UNIVERSITY

MARCH 2019

e-BRIEF

## ABSA GIVES R4,5 M TO DATA SCIENCE



A multimillion rand investment from Absa Bank will fund the establishment of a Chair in Data Science at the University.

It also will also fund 10 bursaries annually (over three years) for Bachelor of Science students in Mathematical and Data Science, provide research support for SPU academics and assist with the upkeep of research operations at the University.

At the handover, Vice-Chancellor & Principal of SPU Professor Yunus Ballim explained that the R4,5 million was a significant investment for SPU and the Northern Cape.

*"Data science is set to become the cornerstone of future economies. It is a niche area that will help to develop local intellectual capacity and give meaning to unstructured data," said Prof Ballim.*

Rodda Ontong said that ABSA was honoured to partner with SPU on this initiative for the Northern Cape Province and lauded SPU for its foresight and initiative.

In closing, Head of the School of Natural and Applied Sciences Prof Aifheli Gelebe explained that two cohorts of Data Science students had graduated in the last two years.

### **OF THE 28 GRADUATES, 48% WERE FEMALE.**

Of these graduates, 19 graduates all are now employed. Another nine students are pursuing their postgraduate studies in Data Science.

The handover was officiated by the Premier of the Northern Cape Sylvia Lucas skills who explained that the "skills base of young people is being increased through institutions like SPU and that we are achieving a better life for all in our lifetime at SPU".

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## HSRC PARTNERS WITH SPU FOR RESEARCH PROGRAMME

The Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC) and SPU have signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) that will focus on the higher education and development nexus of SPU in Kimberley and the Northern Cape.

**The MoU centres on four initial broad themes:**

- urban and regional development and higher education as a 'growth pole';
- community engagement;
- linking popular culture, industry linkages, higher education well-being, the student experience; and
- public understanding of science and innovation, and the SKA.

**The HSRC will support SPU's emerging research identity to:**

- develop research infrastructure;
- link SPU academics to HSRC researchers;
- link the HSRC to SPU's developing postgraduate programmes through co-supervision arrangements and, where possible, with internships for postgraduate students;
- consider mutual formal secondary affiliations of HSRC staff to SPU and SPU staff as fellows to the HSRC; and
- collaboratively raise funding for the proposed research programme and in the process, build SPU capacity among emerging researchers/academics to raise funds in the future.

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Research projects will impact on the teaching and learning function of the university curriculum development, infuse research into the undergraduate and postgraduate curriculum and keep the curriculum cutting edge and relevant by being research engaged.

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## DATA SCIENCES' ATSILE HELPS PUTS SPU ON THE MAP

SPU's Data Science Honours programme began on a high note this year with the University receiving a mention in Minister Ebrahim Patel's speech at the closing of the SONA debate.

In the speech, which highlighted the need for new skills as data skills, the Minister pointed out that Sol Plaatje University was empowering students such as Atsile Itumeleng, one of the university's Data Science Honours students.

Atsile says that the honour of the mention came unexpectedly and with some pressure. However, "this is really a start for SPU which was the first university to offer this programme in Africa. And it is great timing to stand out when new skills are needed and are in short supply."

*"Data Science incorporates many other fields, one that fosters skills and innovation while at the same it attracts investments and opens doors of opportunity," he explains.*



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## PICC TALKS TO SPU ABOUT ITS INFRASTRUCTURE

Members of the Presidential Infrastructure Coordinating Commission (PICC) conducted a series of interviews on campus on 14 February 2019, with members of the Senior Management Team (SMT) about the infrastructure developments at SPU since its inception.

They also interviewed academics in the School of Natural and Applied Sciences (NAS), and students studying towards a Data Science qualification.

The interviews form part a public awareness campaign about the government's infrastructure development programme.

**The completed campaign material will be rolled out on different media platforms nationally in early March 2019.**



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## FIRST FULBRIGHT SCHOLARS AT SPU

The two American women cycling up the hill daily (on SPU bikes), from Belgravia to SPU, are our first Fulbright Scholars.

**ADEOLA AJIROTUTU** is from New York City. She has an undergraduate degree, in Religious and Italian Studies, from the University of Pittsburgh; and obtained her Masters in International Human Rights from the University of Denver.

**Maria Mulrooney** is from Florida and obtained her undergraduate degree, in English Language Arts Education, from the University of Central Florida. She then went on to the University of Mississippi where she studied towards her Masters in Higher Education and Student Personnel.

They arrived at SPU at the end of January this year to begin their nine-month placement in the Centre for Teaching, Learning and Programme Development under the mentorship of Dr Nhlanhla Mpofo. They are assisting in developing an Academic Literacy Framework for the University.

The Fulbright Program is an educational exchange programme sponsored by the US government and designed to increase mutual understanding between the people of the United States and the people of other countries.

Adeola and Maria are in Kimberley as part of the Fulbright English Teaching Assistantship (ETA) Program, an element of the Fulbright US Student Program.

It provides recent US graduates or graduate students opportunities to engage in a cultural exchange experience as English Teaching Assistants in the host country.

Fulbright ETAs have strong leadership skills, have reached high levels of academic achievement, are dedicated to community service, and are enthusiastic about adapting to new environments.

Both women chose to come to South Africa because they were curious about the cultural and political similarities between South Africa and the United States of America.



They had expected to be placed in secondary schools as English Teaching Assistants but since they both have Masters degrees, they were placed at SPU to work with Dr Mpofo.

Both have embraced this opportunity to make a lasting contribution to the development of SPU.

Maria has already been given an opportunity to guest-lecture in the School of Education, an experience which she thoroughly enjoyed.

Adeola and Maria have adapted very well to life in Kimberley. They have found the people welcoming, friendly and helpful. They recently attended their first cricket match and were treated to seats in a hospitality suite.

They are looking forward to seeing more of our beautiful country and experiencing their first braai.

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## DHET NEWS: MINISTER PANDOR ADDRESSES STUDENT ISSUES

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On 9 February, Minister Pandor met with the SRC presidents from all 26 public South African universities along with SAUS, USAf and NSFAS in response to a call from SAUS to address 12 high-level demands made by SAUS in calling for a national shutdown of all universities.

### THE ISSUES DISCUSSED WERE:

- Accumulating student debt and the financial exclusion of students from the 2019 registration at universities;
- The crisis of student accommodation, student transport services and collapsed campus health services;
- Lack of postgraduate funding and the shrinking of enrolment quotas for postgraduates;
- The problem of NSFAS appeals and confusion on the allowances;
- The outstanding 2018 SBux funds;
- Student funding delays from other sponsors and bursary funders leading to students being denied access to registration;
- Denial of universities to issue academic records and certificates;
- Academic exclusion and poor conditions of learning;
- The plight of students with disabilities and international students;
- Unfair treatment of security guards and cleaners and the insourcing of general workers;
- Compromised student safety and security, victimisation of student leaders through suspensions and expulsions, security and police brutality;
- The urgent challenges of higher education transformation affecting both students and workers.

Minister Pandor's full response may be viewed at <http://bit.ly/2tuDu7y>

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## FOCUS ON RESEARCH: SPU ACADEMIC EXPLORES KAROO HUMAN PASTS

### Before the Anthropocene: Human pasts in Karoo landscapes

Published recently in the African Journal of Range and Forage Science, Professor David Morris has researched the fascinating subject of early human settlements in the so-called “untouched, pristine and wide open” typically characterised Karoo landscapes.

“The human footprint is relatively diffuse across this region, compared with other places, but it is clear that the Karoo is not an “untouched” landscape. Socially and historically, as well as environmentally, the changes of the last 300 years have been dramatic.

*“However, if any contrasts are to be drawn between the present and the beginnings of the colonial era, they should still not imply a Karoo void of people beforehand, for these marks of modernity are but the most recent episode in a long human history stretching back hundreds of millennia in the region.”*



This article looks to the evidence of human life and land-use patterns in the Karoo landscapes from the deep past.

Beginning in Early Stone Age times, potentially up to a million and a half years ago, it goes on to consider periods of cultural and technological innovation in the late Pleistocene era, which archaeologists debate and relate to the emergence of anatomical and behavioural modernity as Homo sapiens evolved.”

To read the full article, go to: <https://doi.org/10.2989/10220119.2018.1533584>

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## BICYCLE HERO

At the basement entrance of Luka JantjeHouse, there is a hive of activity. It's there that you will find Benjamin Jonas, quietly going about his business as the University's only bike technician who takes care of SPU's fleet of bicycles.

He was appointed to the job in 2016 after working here part-time. Since then he has lost count of how many bicycles he has repaired but "it's more than 500 bicycles," he says.

Bicycle repairs wasn't something new for Benjamin who says that "since I was a little boy my father taught me how to do any repair work."

And that skill has come in very handy because "every student has their own way of riding a bicycle. For some, it is their first time. When I am alone, I smile and think to myself that I was the same when I was growing up."

He says that offering bicycles to the students is a "good thing because some of them didn't have bicycles while growing up. Also since they don't have exercise classes, it's a good way for them to exercise daily."



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SOL PLAATJE UNIVERSITY

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## SPU TODAY

**1,910**  
STUDENTS

**775**  
FIRST YEAR  
STUDENTS

### SCHOOL STUDENT POPULATIONS



SCHOOL OF ECONOMIC & MANAGEMENT SCIENCES

**199**  
10%



SCHOOL OF EDUCATION

**993**  
53%



SCHOOL OF HUMANITIES

**298**  
16%



SCHOOL OF NATURAL & APPLIED SCIENCES

**394**  
21%

**120**  
ACADEMIC  
STAFF

**291**  
SERVICE &  
ADMINISTRATIVE STAFF

**411**  
TOTAL  
EMPLOYEES

### APPLICATIONS & REGISTRATIONS: IT'S IN THE NUMBERS

**4,424**  
APPLICATIONS  
RECEIVED  
FOR THE 2019  
ACADEMIC YEAR

#### MOST POPULAR COURSES BY NUMBER OF APPLICATIONS:

1. Bachelor of Education
2. Information and Communication and Technology
3. Bachelor of Arts
4. Retail Business Management
5. Higher Certificate in Heritage Studies

#### MOST APPLICATIONS RECEIVED FROM 5 LOCATIONS:

1. Kimberley
2. Kuruman
3. Taung
4. Upington
5. Vryburg

#### SCHOOL POPULARITY BY NUMBER OF APPLICATIONS:

- 54%** School of Education
- 17%** School of Natural and Applied Sciences
- 13%** School of Economic & Management Sciences
- 16%** School of Humanities





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## STAFF APPOINTMENTS

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### EFFECTIVE 1 MARCH 2019

#### SCHOOL OF NATURAL AND APPLIED SCIENCES

**Dr Edward Inyangala**

Senior Lecturer: Pure Mathematics

#### SCHOOL OF EDUCATION

**Dr Tshele Moloi**

Senior Lecturer: Mathematics Teaching

#### OTHER DEPARTMENTS

**Sabelo Chizwina**

Director: Library and Information Services

**Simone Williams**

School Registrar

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## TERMINATIONS

#### SCHOOL OF NATURAL AND APPLIED SCIENCES

Lethani Ndwandwe, 31 Jan 2019

Mandla Mthembu, 28 Feb 2019

Ayanda Zungu, 31 March 2019

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**Please note the following corrections  
about appointments, published in the  
February edition:**

The Delpport Olvee, Clint Adam and Kashini Maistry  
were appointed effective from 15 January 2019.

School of Humanities' Dr Lynette Masuku is known as  
Dr Sibongile Masuku.

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## COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

### DEVELOPING MATHEMATICAL PROWESS AT KIMBERLEY HIGH SCHOOLS



SPU has partnered with the South African Mathematical Foundation ([www.samf.ac.za/en/siyanqoba-training-programme](http://www.samf.ac.za/en/siyanqoba-training-programme)) to open a Department of Science and Technology-funded Siyanqoba regional mathematics Olympiad Training Centre in the Northern Cape.

The training centre is based at Sol Plaatje University and is being run by the Department of Mathematical Sciences in the School of Natural and Applied Sciences. Three members of the department and one student are involved in the training programme:

- Dr Stephen Sikwila, Regional Coordinator ([stephen.sikwila@spu.ac.za](mailto:stephen.sikwila@spu.ac.za))
- Dr Dimpho Mothibi, Coach ([dimpho.mothibi@spu.ac.za](mailto:dimpho.mothibi@spu.ac.za))
- Ravindraw Bappoo, Coach ([ravindraw.bappoo@spu.ac.za](mailto:ravindraw.bappoo@spu.ac.za))
- Tau Mokuene, Trainee Coach

The Siyanqoba SPU Olympiad Training Programme is an outreach programme for high school students who show particular ability and interest in mathematics.

**THE PROGRAMME CONCENTRATES ON DEVELOPING PROBLEM-SOLVING SKILLS, UNLIKE IN REGULAR SCHOOL CURRICULA WHERE THE FOCUS IS MORE ON SOLVING ROUTINE-TYPE QUESTIONS. DUE TO SAMF BUDGET CONSTRAINTS, THE TARGET GROUP ARE LEARNERS BASED IN KIMBERLEY.**

Training sessions started on 9 February with one school (Kimberley Boys High) participating.

Since then, four more schools (Kimberley Girls High, St Patricks, Emmang Mmogo and Floors High Schools) have joined the programme.

Training takes place from 09:00 to 11:00, every Saturday (C015, Central Campus, Sol Plaatje University) and is open to all Grade 8 to 12 learners.

The programme is free of charge.

**For more information you may contact Dr Sikwila, the Regional Organiser on (email) [stephen.sikwila@spu.ac.za](mailto:stephen.sikwila@spu.ac.za) or (telephone) 053 491 0211.**

## NEWS FROM ACADEMIC SCHOOLS

### EDUCATION



#### THAILAND'S DR PRASONG SAIHONG VISITS SPU

Prof Gregg Alexander (Central University of Technology, Free State) and Dr Prasong Saihong (Faculty of Education, Maha Sarakham University, Thailand) visited Sol Plaatje University on 13 February. As part of Prof Gregg Alexander's funded NRF Thuthuka project, Dr Prasong Saihong visited South Africa as visiting scholar for the period 11-18 February 2019. Dr Saihong engaged lecturers and Teacher Education students on the topic of Story telling.

On their visit to the School of Education, they facilitated a workshop seminar on the topic: Story telling as a teaching tool in enhancing learning of Special Needs learners. Staff of SPU, Dr Glynnis Daries, Ms Tracey Herman, Dr Bommie Du Plessis and second year Intermediate, Senior and FET phase students were part of the deliberations. During these interactive sessions with about 307 students, Dr Saihong demonstrated various Story telling activities such as picture book story analysis, performance, fine and gross motor skills, drawing and movement. Students also engaged in various Story telling activities. Students enthusiastically participated in activities.

An engagement with lecturing staff of SPU's School of Education also took place. Various viewpoints on Story telling were expressed between SPU lecturing staff, Dr Saihong and Prof Alexander. Discussions for joint collaborative research projects between institutions were also tentatively identified and discussed.



### ECONOMIC AND MANAGEMENT SCIENCES

#### STUDENTS MAKE SENSE OF BUDGET SPEECH



Eloquent. Insightful. On point. These are just some of words that described the commentary provided by the three of School's BCom students Luthando Nqakala, Mlungisi Plaatjies and Veronica Ngobeni

The interviews, which can be viewed at <http://bit.ly/2tst48F>, were filmed by the local SABC news team on the day of the budget speech as they were looking to get the views of citizens across the country.

Here are extracts from their comments:

Luthando Nqakala: "The budget is about how the government is creating prosperity by allocating its resources towards programmes like job creation. It's an urgent necessity."

Mlungisi Plaatjies: "There is a lot of focus on SOEs and the low growth economy. Eskom should be unbundled to open up the market. Power generation and distribution could be privatised while transmission should remain with Eskom."

Veronica Ngobeni: "Consequence management for SOEs like Eskom should be applied consistently. Government needs to reduce expenditure but not at the expense of creating opportunities for jobs and entrepreneurs."

Well done, Luthando, Mlungisi and Veronica!

## NEWS FROM ACADEMIC SCHOOLS

### SCHOOL OF HUMANITIES

#### ACADEMICS IN LANDMARK TRANSLATION PROJECT



Three School of Humanities' academics are contributing to a landmark project which will see seven novels and one work of non-fiction translated from English to Setswana.

The seven works, known as *The Repatriation of Letters*, is part of a two-year project which involves four more translators, Wame Molefhe, Lorato Trok, Tuelo Gabonewe and Shole J Shole.

The project, which is expected to be completed by the end of this year and includes *Mhudi*, the work of Sol Plaatje, is being coordinated by Sol Plaatje University's creative writing lecturer, translator and novelist, Sabata-mpho Mokae.

Seasoned translator and academic, Shole J. Shole, who is based at the North West University in Mahikeng, is supervising the team of translators.

Other works which are being translated include *Taug Wells* by Martin Koboekae, *Sarcophagus* by Tuelo Gabonewe, *This Book Betrays My Brother* by Kagiso Lesego Molohe, *Maru* by Bessie Head, *Call Me Woman* by Ellen Khuzwayo and *Matters of Life and Death* by Lesego Malepe.

Interestingly, the criteria for the selection was that the works should be in English but set in Setswana-speaking communities or that the author's mother tongue is Setswana, or both.

Sabata-mpho says that the project intends to increase the number of prose works in Setswana where there is a dire shortage of such. At the moment, schools and universities use the same works year after year as there are not many from which to choose.

He says that it is hoped the project will assist towards mainstreaming literary translations, which is a respectable creative process but has not been adequately done and promoted in South Africa.

The project is made possible by funding from the Northern Cape Department of Sport, Arts and Culture.

The project, which Shole prefers to term "Transcreation," was inspired by the argument he made in the 1980s that Sol Plaatje's *Mhudi* is essentially a Setswana story written in English.

The project is also a case study for literary translation students and scholars. Already several of the involved translators have committed to writing essays on their translation processes or the philosophical argument for literary translation.

It is hoped that DSAC will fund the next phase of the project which will involve 10 non-fiction works.



### NATURAL AND APPLIED SCIENCES

#### BOOTCAMP BONANZA FOR HONOURS STUDENTS



Three academics from the School of Natural and Applied Sciences accompanied six Data Science Honours students to an intensive week-long bootcamp at Future Africa, which is aiming to be a centre for developing future academics and scientists in many areas.

The academics, Dr Alfred Mwanza, Dr Tapiwa Gundu and Marvin Nkomo were on hand while students, Atsile Itumeleng, Omphemetse Mangope, Charles Mathewson, Olatomiwa Akinlaja, Vernon Kok, Kudzai Sibanda joined with their counterparts at the University of Pretoria for orientation week.

The week focused on the research component of the honours degree which included research design, writing and presentation.

In addition, the students experienced hands-on skills training in Latex, SAS, R and Python.

Various researchers also shared their own research journey experiences with the students.

The University of Pretoria's Prof Bekker and Dr Frans facilitated the bootcamp.

During the visit, the staff and students also met with the team from the Presidential Infrastructure Coordinating Commission.

