

# Walter Sisulu University leads the way

The Accountancy programme at Walter Sisulu University (WSU) is becoming a beacon of hope and transformation - for its students and for the country.



If you ever need an example of the success and transformative effects of working together, look no further than the Accountancy Department at Walter Sisulu University (WSU). Despite a spate of strikes in 2013 the department achieved a remarkable 90% pass rate. This is a success born of committed students, dedicated and inspired lecturers, and the combined organisational support of WSU, The Department of Higher Education (DHET), The University of Cape Town (UCT) and the South African Institute of Chartered Accountants (SAICA).

These elements have all come together as part of the R84-million investment being made by the DHET towards ensuring that WSU receives accreditation from SAICA - a process that will enable the university to offer the BComm (Accounting) degree. Having completed its first academic year, the project has been an overwhelming success: 325 talented African and Coloured students, who lack the financial means, have already gained access to a high quality undergraduate degree that was not available to them previously.

Many highly-qualified and motivated lecturers and support staff have been attracted to the WSU programme, often taking up their posts in preference to corporate opportunities. The attitude of lecturer Senzo Ndlangamandla is typical of the team: "I came to WSU, specifically, for one reason: To join forces with a young, vibrant and dedicated team, working so hard to collectively develop and make WSU (particularly the Department of Chartered Accountancy) the most preferred University in South Africa within the next three years."

One staff member who has a particular appreciation for the project is Alatha Ndlebe, a former Thuthuka graduate who put aside a career in corporate finance and entrepreneurial opportunities when a position at WSU became available. "I was inspired to come here," Ndlebe explains. "The first reason is my love for education, both teaching and learning. The second is that I come from a village near Peddie in the Eastern Cape, which is a similar background to a lot of the students here. So I understand the challenges that are faced here and how much an education can do to uplift a family and a community." And, having a background as a Thuthuka graduate, to work as part of that programme is just a cherry on the top."

And it is not only the staff that are proving to be inspirational. As Sharron Webb, a senior lecturer, describes her surprise at the positive attitudes of her students. : "When the top performers in accounting volunteered to help the bottom performers, I was blown away. I've never heard of anything like this before, usually top achievers are too concerned about their own marks to help any other students. Each of them took responsibility for one or two students. They promised me they would ensure everyone would pass, and they delivered on their promise."

WSU is becoming a beacon for transformation in South Africa, drawing on the best of what our country has to offer and working towards an outcome that will be a benefit to us all - and is doing so in an undeniable spirit of hard work, optimism and togetherness.

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