

Dr Marinkie Madiope: Singular strength and energy

By [Eugene Seegers](#), issued by [University of the Free State](#)

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Dr Marinkie Madiope looks up to her mother as an inspirational woman.

Dr Maria 'Marinkie' Madiope is not your average professional woman. Her academic record speaks of vigilant style and resilient independence. The challenge of discovery, innovation, and stretching herself and everyone around her are qualities she values. The University of the Free State benefits from the extraordinary energy that characterises this woman. She is an infectious team leader, spurring others on to ever-greater heights, and is always on the lookout for something she can do for others: whether it is large-scale advocacy for women or smaller acts of empowerment. She describes herself as an "ever-present mother and sister" to those with whom she works. It is humbling to watch her Ubuntu in action.



Dr Marinkie Madiope - Photo Sonia Du Toit - Kaleidoscope Studios

Please tell us about yourself

"My academic interests lie in the realm of ICT and curriculum design and development, which is what drew me to working on the South Campus. Open, Distance, and eLearning (ODEL) is also close to my heart, and I have been the editor of Progressio, the only ODeL journal in South Africa, since 2016.

My expertise in eLearning is another of my strengths; I designed the Unisa online ethics course, which was launched in Geneva in 2015 and is currently being offered internationally in collaboration with Ethics SA.

As part of community engagement, I take part in the Africa Crèche Project to empower women. I enjoy working with young minds and little humans to provide them opportunities to which they otherwise would not have access."

What do you do at the university?

"I am currently the Principal of the South Campus in Bloemfontein. The South Campus is dedicated to delivering quality distance education to sectors of society that would not necessarily have access to higher education. It advances education

through ODeL delivery modes.

“ *It is ... vital to avoid dwelling on past mistakes, because regret robs you of joy. - Dr Maria Madiope, Principal: UFS South Campus.* ”

“I enjoy the opportunity to transform the Open Distance Learning campus of the UFS to a digitised university. I cannot express the feelings I have when welcoming students to the UFS to unlock their future, or when they graduate. Especially students who have gone through very traumatic home, personal, or academic times. They still succeed, even when others have given up on them.”

What advice would you give to a 15-year-old you?

“I see women as proud warriors — resilient and strong guardians of the future generations. I would encourage a 15-year-old me to be enthusiastic, confident, and authentic. It is also vital to avoid dwelling on past mistakes, because regret robs you of joy. The best decision I ever made was embracing Education and making sure that I was not only certified but learned to empower others in a humble way.”

Is there a woman who inspires you and who you would like to celebrate this Women's Month, and why?

“Although I am also inspired by Maya Angelou's poem *Still I rise*, my mother is my biggest inspiration. She always had a smile on her face no matter how hard she worked, and she loved everyone. Her greatest strength is her ability to let nothing and no one remove her crown: ‘Strong winds may blow, but a QUEEN will bobby pin that thang in place and persevere because she is more than a conqueror’.”

“I am also inspired by the united force of women from all walks of life who, through a mass demonstration, marched to the Union Buildings in Pretoria on 9 August 1956, protesting against the unjust pass laws enforced on women in South Africa. This is in line with the 2020 Women's History Month theme, *Valiant Women of the Vote*. The theme honours the brave women who fought to win suffrage rights for women, and for the women who continue to fight for the voting rights of others. I SALUTE ALL WOMEN!

Wathint' Abafazi, Wathint' Imbokodo / You Strike A Woman, You Strike A Rock!!!!

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University of the Free State

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