

Welcome to the newly appointed executive director: Advancement & Internationalisation, Tandi Mapukata

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Tandi Mapukata, executive director, Advancement & Internationalisation, assumed duties on 1 December 2021. She joined VUT from the University of Fort Hare where she was in a similar role (director, Institutional Advancement).



Prior to leading the Advancement department at UFH, Mapukata worked as manager in the office of the vice-chancellor. Her tenure in the higher education sector extends beyond VUT and UFH. Earlier in her career she worked at UKZN's International Office as a principal international advisor. She has also worn a purely academic hat when she lectured in Communications during the mid-to-late '90s at the Eastern Cape Technikon (now WSU).

Mapukata's qualifications include a master's in Media and Cultural Studies (UKZN), an Honours in English Language Teaching (WSU), a certificate in Public Relations (Damelin) and an advanced secretarial diploma. She also completed the coursework element of a Senior Management postgraduate diploma with the University of Stellenbosch. Her current academic project is a PhD journey that, in her own words, has been rather slow. Mapukata is determined to focus more and

acquire the doctoral degree 'soon'.

A corporate communication specialist, Mapukata brings with her over 25 years' experience in the field of marketing communications. In addition to practical experience in the HE sector, Mapukata has also occupied senior management roles at national government, the SoE sector as well as the petroleum industry. At the Department of Trade and Industry, Mapukata served as deputy director responsible for Internal Communications. She rose through government ranks and was appointed as director (Communications) at the Department of Education, followed by another appointment as chief director (Communication Services) at the Department of Water Affairs and Forestry.

Within the SoE sector, Mapukata worked for the Trans-Caledon Tunnel Authority (TCTA) as head of Communications and later, senior manager, Strategic Partnerships. In the private sector, Mapukata was employed by the multinational energy company, Shell Downstream South Africa, where she occupied the role of External Relations Advisor, specialising in external stakeholder relationship management.

Although she considers herself an all-rounder within the Marketing and Communication space, Mapukata's expertise lies in story telling, utilising multiple platforms such as newsletters and other publications, the websites, face-to-face interactions, social media and mainstream/community media engagements. She is passionate about brand and stakeholder relationship management and considers them as critical tools for reputation management.

She is the mother to two adult sons.

Mapukata is excited about her future at VUT, especially that the institution is committed to a journey of recovery. She believes the appointment of a new council as well as the imminent start of the new vice-chancellor and principal are triggers for change. She is confident that the Advancement department will play a central role in changing perceptions about VUT. She anticipates a fast-paced environment in the coming weeks and months. Her wish is to fill critical positions in Advancement as soon as possible, in order to maintain pace with executive leaders, student leaderships and other

colleagues across the institution. Mapukata's job will be done if, during her tenure, VUT is perceived by the student market as a stable study destination, and by current and future employees as an employer of choice.

She looks forward to getting to know her Advancement team and together achieving the goals set out above. Through easy access, an open-door policy and skills empowerment, Mapukata hopes to lead a highly motivated team of marketing communication specialists. She believes the work is happening already and there are pockets of excellence all round. All that remains is for the executive director to harness hunger for success across the entire department and emerge with a high-performance Advancement team.

Mapukata believes her interpersonal skills will enable her to foster and reciprocate healthy relations with the VUT community in its entirety. "Without supportive stakeholder relations that permeate all layers of the institution, the Advancement department will fail to achieve its mandate".

VUT welcomes Mapukata and wishes her all of the best in her new role.

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Vaal University of Technology

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