

HOW DID A CHILD, born and raised in the remote rural areas of Mvezo and Qunu in the Eastern Cape, grow up to become Nelson Rolihlahla Mandela, the greatest statesman of the 20th century and a global icon? The answer lies in his hunger for knowledge, justice and freedom and his belief in the possibility of a democratic South Africa.

Mandela repeatedly emphasised two things during his lifetime: that his contribution was just the beginning, and that a quality education should be at the centre of political change. “If there is one appeal I could make, it is that young people must take it upon themselves to ensure that they receive the highest education possible so that they can represent us well in future as future leaders,” said Mandela, who believed that every university should be a living laboratory for experimentation and innovation.

This is the mantle worn by every student, graduate



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WORDS: HEATHER DUGMORE

NELSON MANDELA UNIVERSITY – ONE OF A KIND

The only university in the world that carries Nelson Mandela’s name is building on his legacy of promoting education, culture, innovation and inclusiveness

and academic at Nelson Mandela University, which officially changed its name from Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University last month. Situated in Port Elizabeth, it’s the Eastern Cape’s largest university, with 27 000 students, more than 4 000 staff members and seven faculties.

“We will honour Nelson Mandela’s name by leading our university into a new era of change,” says Nelson Mandela University Vice-Chancellor, Prof Derrick Swartz. “Our goal is to nurture thinkers, entrepreneurs and innovators, not simply graduates seeking jobs. Our graduates will increasingly open opportunities in new growth areas such as the ocean and township economies, ICT, renewable energy and food security.”

The university has an in-depth understanding of the challenges facing young people in both the rural and urban areas and is increasingly building partnerships with schools and communities throughout the Eastern Cape. The aim is to help address the chasm between school and university and to help all those with academic potential to study and succeed at a university level.

“A tertiary education contributes to the lives of our young people in many inestimable ways, including the opportunity to develop themselves, achieve financial independence and stability, help to support their families, contribute to society and inspire other young people to complete their education,” says Swartz.

The university contributes to the education of the nation’s children through its Faculty of Education flagship – the four-year Bachelor of Education Foundation Phase degree.

“Foundation Phase teachers guide the development



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of each child’s mathematical ability, language and literacy, self-concept and self-confidence. How and what they teach and how they engage in the classroom profoundly influences the rest of these children’s lives,” says Nelson Mandela University Dean of Education, Dr Muki Moeng.

Swartz adds that investment in education from the earliest age is non-negotiable: “No society, no civilisation has ever been successfully built without present generations investing in the education of future generations. As South Africans, we must find ways of augmenting our universities’ strained resources. It is extremely important, because it is about creating a strong culture of giving together for education, and coming together to create a more just and equal society.”

Mandela emphasised that freedom is not only about casting off one’s chains – it’s about living in a

OPPOSITE, TOP: Nelson Mandela.

OPPOSITE, BELOW: Nelson Mandela University’s new Foundation Phase Faculty of Education building on its Missionvale Campus.

ABOVE: Nelson Mandela University music students.



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THE DOLPHIN CAPITAL OF THE WORLD

Port Elizabeth is situated in Nelson Mandela Bay, which is home to large dolphin populations. Its exceptional marine life is matched by a choice of malaria-free Big Five game reserves, five unique biomes, arts and culture tours and excellent accommodation and fine dining facilities.

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ROUTE 67

Route 67 showcases 67 public artworks that symbolise Mandela’s 67 years of dedication to the struggle for freedom in SA. Visit: www.route67tours.co.za

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- **Addo elephant national park** The Addo Elephant National Park is SA’s third-largest national park. It’s home to more than 450 elephants, as well as a range of other animals, including the rest of the Big Five. Visit: www.sanparks.org/parks/addo
- **Shamwari Game Reserve** This Big Five Game Reserve leads the way for many of the region’s game reserves. Visit: www.shamwari.com or visit the Nelson Mandela Bay Tourism website for more information: www.nmbt.co.za

way that respects and enhances the freedom of others. Through their pursuit of knowledge and innovation, universities are the flag-bearers of freedom. As Mandela said: “The great universities are those built on a solid record of achievement and custom, while constantly exploring, creating and adapting to the new.”

To this end, Nelson Mandela University is launching South Africa’s first Ocean Sciences Campus this year, which will form part of the university’s plans to be globally strategic and locally entrepreneurial, offering many new opportunities for young people. It will position the university as South Africa’s and Africa’s leading marine and maritime university, with extensive local and international partnerships with other universities, the South African and other governments, industry, business and communities.

The Ocean Sciences Campus is situated in Port Elizabeth, which has two harbours. The university has a range of established marine and maritime programmes across its seven campuses, including its George Campus on the Southern Cape coast.

“Our strategy is to advance our existing strengths in Ocean Sciences, as well as to introduce a whole new range of education, training, research, innovation and engagement programmes to support and unlock Africa’s blue economy, while at the same time protecting the continent’s exceptional marine biodiversity,” says Swartz.

One of its new qualifications is the Bachelor of Engineering Technology Marine Engineering, which will be offered from 2018, the year Mandela would have turned 100.

The university has entered into a number of strategic partnerships, such as one with the Norwegian government for the establishment of a Fisheries Law Enforcement Academy, called FishFORCE, at the university. “Its focus is on knowledge- and intelligence-led investigations to combat sea fisheries crime in our waters and internationally,” says Nelson Mandela University Deputy Vice-Chancellor: Institutional Support Dr Sibongile Muthwa, who signed the agreement with Norwegian Ambassador Trine Skymoen in 2016.

Another addition to the university will be a medical school, which is set to open by 2020 as part of its Faculty of Health Sciences, which currently trains health professionals in 10 disciplines, including pharmacy, nursing, psychology, social work and emergency medical care.

“Our goal across all faculties is to provide strong study paths and specific career opportunities for our young people in the Eastern Cape who might otherwise have been lost to us,” says Nelson Mandela University Chair of Council, Judge Ronnie Pillay. “This is already happening in areas such as software innovation through the pipeline of talent coming through our Department of Computing Sciences and Centre for Community Technologies. We are continuously growing key opportunities so that students and staff from the province, other parts of South Africa and the world will choose to pursue their studies and careers with Nelson Mandela University, and to contribute to the growth and prosperity of the Eastern Cape.” 🌈